

MARIA GABRIELA FERREIRA GOMES

AMERICAN CIVIL WAR PHOTOGRAPHY:
TRACES OF DEATH, INJURY, DISCRIMINATION AND
WRECKAGE

Dissertação de Mestrado em Estudos Americanos apresentada à
Universidade Aberta

Para a obtenção do grau de Mestre em Estudos Americanos

Orientador: Professor Doutor Jeffrey Scott Childs

Janeiro de 2009

INDEX

	Pag.
Acknowledgements	3
Introduction	4
Chapter One: Nineteenth-century photography and the American Civil War	7
1.1. The emergence of photography in nineteenth-century America: from the “aura” of the daguerreotype to the mass-produced paper photograph	8
1.2. Notions underlying the concept of early photography	18
1.3. Photographic production during the American Civil War: the role of field photographers	23
1.4. Staged photography: the case of the moved bodies at Gettysburg	31
Chapter Two: Death, injury, African-Americans and destruction in Civil War photography	35
2.1. “Weird Copies of Carnage”	36
2.2. Photographing African-American Union soldiers: the great invisibility	51
2.3. Photographing the wounded and the sick: catalogs of “notorious” Americans	63
2.4. Photographing America’s ruins: nature’s healing power over a war-torn nation	74
Chapter Three: Walt Whitman and Abraham Lincoln	80
3.1. Photographing Lincoln: an icon in life and in death	81
3.2. “O Western orb sailing the heaven”	88
3.3. Walt Whitman’s poetry: from his “photographic way of seeing” to the shadowy poems in “Drum-Taps”	91
Conclusion	101
Bibliography and webliography	111
Appendix	118

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First, I would like to thank Professor Jeffrey Childs for his enthusiastic support and invaluable advice and feedback. His careful reading of the text offered helpful guidance and positive encouragement. Second, Professor Mário Avelar's seminar on American Literature was crucial for the choice of the topic of this dissertation. Had it not been for the research on nineteenth-century photography, which was partly undertaken during his seminar, none of this work would have materialized. Third, I am especially grateful to my friend Anthony Laudadio. He read over all of this work and offered constructive suggestions about both form and content. He provided me with useful and astute comments on all phases of the project and offered indispensable encouragement along the way. His invaluable, generous help has provided me with the stamina and persistence to go on. Fourth, my brother João Rafael read part of this text and has inspired me with his curiosity, insights and shrewd comments. My faithful longtime friend Maria Filomena de Sousa offered vital support, advice and encouragement early on. She was, indeed, one of the first of my friends to persuade me to embark on this project. Finally, both my parents and my husband Eduardo have been unfailingly supportive during the research and writing of this project. To them I offer my deepest gratitude.

INTRODUCTION

The principal aim of this dissertation is to uncover the ways in which American Civil War photography brought about a shift in the way Americans perceived and dealt with war, death, pain and massive destruction. Therefore, in this work I intend to demonstrate how the photography of this major conflict challenged pre-conceived and established notions regarding the concept of heroic death in battle, the notion of “Good Death” within the private context of familial and communal bonds, as well as the soldier’s body as representative of masculinity and identity. Furthermore, photographs depicting African-American Union soldiers reveal the discrimination these men experienced and records of unblemished landscapes in the albums of war uncover the contradictions underlying the conception of the albums themselves.

I have chosen this topic for several reasons. First, the American Civil War was the first armed conflict to be widely documented in photographs. This fact alone would suffice to arouse considerable interest and curiosity. Second, images of unburied soldiers, wounded army men, African Americans and wrecked landscapes and cities do not belong to the great bulk of photographic production. By opting to deal with these photographs instead of those relating to soldier’s portraits, regiments and encampments, among others, I wish to address the more complex issues underlying the conceptions of war, death, masculinity and discrimination. Third, this theme has not, to my knowledge, been the object of research in our country. Therefore, the challenge of dealing with something new was a determining factor.

This said, it is fitting to describe the structure of this dissertation and the methodology adopted. As for the structure, the text is divided into three interrelated chapters. The over-arching topics of nineteenth-century photography and the American Civil War form the basis for all three chapters and thus provide a sense of cohesion and unity. Within this framework, the first chapter introduces the topic of nineteenth-century photography. Close attention is given to the development of photographic devices as well as to the economic, social and cultural context which enabled such developments to take place. Concepts underlying the notion of nineteenth-century photography are explored, especially as far as their contrast to painting is concerned. The third section in

this chapter focuses on the work of field photographers. The work of these professionals enabled audiences in the cities to view scenes of the war. I end this chapter with a reference to staged photography occurring after the Battle of Gettysburg. Thus, chapter one is the lead-in to the main objective of this work, which will be explored in the forthcoming chapter.

The second chapter, the longest of the three and the most important, considering the principal aim of this dissertation, is divided into four sections, each focusing on particular aspects of Civil War photography. The first section discusses the impact upon an American audience of photographs depicting unburied dead on a scarred battlefield. Of particular concern are the aspects related to the isolation and anonymity of the dead soldier in contrast to antebellum practices concerning the treatment and disposal of the deceased. Issues connected to the public/private divide in the realm of photography are dealt with as well. In section two, attention is shifted to the contradictions and paradoxes underlying photographic records of African-American Union soldiers. Since photographs of black soldiers are the rarest among the Civil War photographic production, they raise issues concerning the representational status of these army men as well as the explicit discrimination they were subjected to. Section three brings into focus the irreversible damage done to the soldier's body. Photographs of men's wounds, stumps and masses of flesh contributed to the abstraction and objectification of the human body. I end this section with a reference to my visit to "Bodies...The Exhibition," which reminded me of some of the practices at the nineteenth-century Army Medical Museum. Chapter two ends with reference to photographs of American landscapes which were incorporated into albums of war. Images of intact, unblemished landscapes somehow helped efface the marks of the conflict and recompose the cyclical order of nature.

Chapter three brings together the issues covered in the first two chapters by focusing on two prominent figures: Walt Whitman and Abraham Lincoln. Both were connected with the two major topics of this text: nineteenth-century photography and the American Civil War.

Having referred to the structure of the dissertation, we can now turn to methodological issues. First, and as far as style is concerned, I have followed the sixth

edition (2003) of the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*. Second, as for written sources, I have relied on contemporary authors as well as nineteenth-century writers, poets, intellectuals and others who wrote about either photography or the Civil War. There were times when access to some sources was difficult, especially in terms of nineteenth-century authors who published their material in magazines and newspapers of the time. Such has been the case with articles published in the *Atlantic Monthly*, the *New York Times*, the *Harper's Weekly* or the *Scientific American*. In these cases, I have resorted to the Internet. Indeed, the articles from the *Atlantic Monthly* and the *Scientific American* were found at the Cornell University Online Library. The *New York Times* has an online site, where articles from older issues can be found. Other texts were taken from the Internet, as well. In these cases, no other means were available.

As for the photographic material, I have relied on two basic online sources: the Library of Congress and the National Archives. Other sources were George Barnard's *Photographic Views of Sherman's Campaign*, first published in 1866 and reprinted in 1977; Alexander Gardner's *Gardner's Photographic Sketchbook of the American Civil War 1861-1865*, first published in 1866 and reprinted in 2001; Andrew Russell's *Russell's Civil War Photographs: 116 Historic Prints*, reprinted in 1982 from an earlier version; and *Photographic Atlas of Civil War Injuries*, edited by Bradley Bengtson and Julian Kuz in 1996 from an 1871 original edition entitled *Photographs of Surgical Cases and Specimens*. Several of the photographs from these albums are included in the Appendix. Since this material is available on the Internet, there are no problems arising from publication rights. Only in three cases has this not been possible, namely with respect to Figures 1, 47 and 48 in the Appendix. These have been reprinted from books, which have been correctly identified both in the Appendix and in the Bibliography.

Finally, I would like to refer to indirect sources. There are seven times when indirect sources were used: twice in chapter one; twice in section two of the second chapter; and three times in section three of the same chapter. My use of these indirect sources has occurred when I have related one person's account of another person's spoken remarks. The very fact that the speech was reported, therefore, has hindered my access to the original source. Nevertheless, these secondhand quotes amount only to brief sentences or short commentaries and comprise only two or three lines.

CHAPTER ONE

Nineteenth-century photography and the American Civil War

With the introduction of the first daguerreotypes in the United States in 1839, the New World marveled at the fascinating possibility of capturing images of both living beings and physical surroundings on silver plates. The daguerreotype, one of the first photographic processes to be implemented in the nineteenth century, allowed for the permanent fixation of images. The consequences of such an invention were overwhelming. Not only did people of all classes rush to the countless portrait galleries of New York, Washington and other cities alike in order to have their portraits taken, but also a new and extremely profitable profession was born. Indeed, daguerreotypists flourished in an era of economic depression and uncertainty: “if you want to know “who makes money in these Jeremiad times,”” asked a New York correspondent in a Washington newspaper in 1843, it is “the *beggars* and the *takers of likenesses by daguerreotype*” (qtd in Trachtenberg, *Reading American Photographs* 21).

The American Civil War attracted “takers of likenesses” who were eager to experiment with their art on the unsafe fields of the battles. Lured by the possibility of profit and adventure alike, three thousand photographers are estimated to have been, directly or indirectly, involved in this large undertaking. The numbers corresponding to the photographic production of the period are even more astounding, since a million photographs are said to have been taken.

In this chapter I intend to provide a social, economic and cultural context for the appearance of photography in America. I will look into nineteenth-century authors who wrote about photography in order better to reveal the conceptual framework underlying this new means of reproducing reality. I will round off with current authors who also discuss notions and concepts underlying nineteenth-century photography. Afterwards, I will try to describe the role of field photographers during the American Civil War and their importance in conveying unknown facts to an American audience. Finally, I will refer to the ethical problems connected to staged photography taken during the battle of Gettysburg.

1.1. The emergence of photography in nineteenth-century America: from the “aura” of the daguerreotype to the mass-produced paper photograph

During the first half of the nineteenth century, America changed from a rural community to an urban, industrial and market-centered society. The cities of the North were swelling with crowds of people coming from the southern territories seeking better jobs and better lives. Also, immigration from Europe increased dramatically from the 1830s onwards and these people would become part of the workforce of the new industrial era. The New World was shifting rapidly from a domestic economy to a capitalist society based on mass production and scientific innovation.

In Europe, the newly founded theory of positivism emphasized the concepts of rational explanation for scientific phenomena, the empirical observation of reality and the idea that all things are ultimately measurable. August Comte, the father of positivism, was a keen supporter of human progress, which he believed to be irreversible, based on the increasing knowledge of the natural world and the ability to use technology and science in order to manipulate nature. This theory influenced many nineteenth-century thinkers. In America, it conformed to the eighteenth-century Enlightenment spirit, whose ideals had influenced much of the American Revolution and had set the ideological framework for the *American Declaration of Independence* and *the Constitution of the United States of America*. The rational, republican and democratic mood of the new nation helped provide the intellectual and scientific context in which major technological developments would occur.

During the nineteenth century, railroads, telegraphs, steam-powered machinery and iron foundries along with the genesis of bacteriology, the dissection of bodies and phrenological analysis shaped the mind of modernizing man. Within the representational arts, the brush of the artist would soon give way to complex mechanical instruments that called for both knowledge of physics and chemistry. Photography emerged in this century of scientific and technological progress. It was unquestionably on safe ground to expand and prosper.

Louis Daguerre's invention, the daguerreotype, became the first mechanical device capable of fixing images on plates. It was received with tremendous excitement throughout the modern world. Across the Channel, in England, William Henry Fox Talbot had also discovered a way to fix images. In order to capture images, Talbot used paper surfaces instead of metal. His invention was announced to the Royal Society of London in the same year as Daguerre's.¹ Lady Elizabeth Eastlake would comment on this historical coincidence.²

However, it was the daguerreotype that first swept the American nation. In "The Daguerreotype" Edgar Allan Poe affirmed:

The instrument itself must undoubtedly be regarded as the most important, and perhaps the most extraordinary triumph of modern science....For, in truth, the Daguerreotypéd plate is infinitely ... more accurate in its representation than any painting by human hands. If we examine a work of ordinary art, by means of a powerful microscope, all traces of resemblance to nature will disappear – but the closest scrutiny of the photogenic drawing discloses only a more absolute truth, a more perfect identity of aspect with the thing represented. (37-38)

Poe understood photography to be a "miraculous" achievement of the nineteenth century. Thus, it was seen as "the most extraordinary triumph of modern science."

Other writers and intellectuals embraced this invention. Walt Whitman, for one, developed a taste for photography early on. The poet of *Leaves of Grass* frequently visited New York's daguerreotype galleries in the 1840s and 1850s. Following one of the poet's visits to John Plumbe's Daguerreotype Gallery in July 1846, Whitman wrote

¹ Louis Daguerre (1787-1851) was the Frenchman who invented the daguerreotype process of photography, although some claim that the invention should be attributed to Joseph Niépce (1765-1833) who had produced the first permanent photograph, known as heliograph, in 1827. William Henry Fox Talbot (1800-1877) had managed to invent the negative-positive system of photography, though his first patented inventions, the calotype and the talbotype, did not have the detail typical of the daguerreotype. Moreover, the periods of exposure were longer and the process lacked the precision and sensitivity of the daguerreotype. Soon after Daguerre's announcement of his invention in 1839, the daguerreotype was introduced into America. Robert Taft set the date of September 20 of the same year for "the beginning of practical photography in America" (14).

² Lady Elizabeth Eastlake (1809-1893) was married to Sir Charles Eastlake, an English neoclassical painter who became the first Chairman of the London Photographic Society. She developed an active interest in art and photography. Her essay "Photography" was published for the *Quarterly Review* in March 1857.

these lines: “What a spectacle! In whatever direction you turn your peering gaze, you see naught but human faces! They are stretch, from floor to ceiling – hundreds of them” (qtd in Folsom 136).³ Furthermore, the poet kept track of the invention’s evolution and transformations. Indeed, his reference to the daguerreotype in the first edition of *Leaves of Grass* would be left out by the poet in the subsequent editions.⁴ The poet was well aware of the rapid development taking place in the realm of photography. The brief era of the daguerreotype would give way to more sophisticated and practical devices, which would, ultimately, lead to reproductions on paper.

The impact of the new medium did not catch other writers unawares. In Nathaniel Hawthorne’s *The House of the Seven Gables* one of the main characters, Holgrave, is a daguerreotypist. Holgrave was concerned with the ability of the daguerreotype to discover inner truth through appearances: “There is a wonderful insight in heaven’s broad and simple sunshine. While we give it credit only for depicting the merest surface, it actually brings out the secret character with a truth that no painter would ever venture upon, even could he detect it” (Hawthorne 85). The daguerreotype was believed to be able to reveal the character of its subjects. “What is within can be made outward,” as Trachtenberg highlighted in “The Emergence of a Keyword” (24).

Despite its popularity, the making of a daguerreotype was a complex and slow process. It required a plate of copper coated with silver, which needed polishing so that no scratches or specks would mar the image. The silver plate was sensitized with iodine and, afterwards, would be placed in a darkroom. It was then brought either outdoors or to the studio and inserted in a camera so that the exposure could be made. This would often last as long as twenty minutes in the early years of this invention. The exposed plate would then be put in a darkroom and, with the aid of mercury, an image would be

³ Walt Whitman visited John Plumbe’s gallery in New York several times in the mid 1840s. John Plumbe (1809-1857) was a daguerreotypist whose enterprising spirit led him to open the first chain of daguerreotype galleries. For detailed information on the opening of daguerreotype galleries in the United States see Robert Taft and George Gilbert.

⁴ In the 1855 edition of *Leaves of Grass* Whitman would write the following verse in “Song of Myself”: “The camera and plate are prepared, the lady must sit for her daguerreotype...” (Whitman, *Leaves of Grass: The First Edition* 38). This line would be eliminated in the following editions of *Leaves of Grass*.

formed. A fixing agent would finally be added to the plate and the process would eventually be brought to an end.

No wonder this would be seen with suspicion and awe by its first audience. As Alan Trachtenberg asserts in *Reading American Photographs* some of the American public viewed this new invention with caution and skepticism, as if endowed with magical powers: “Some suspected this figure, the daguerreotypist, of alchemy and necromancy, the lifelike image he brought out on a blank plate coated with polished silver a piece of black magic” (12). Moreover, the image that appeared was reversed, as in a mirror. This added to the magic-like quality of the daguerreotype.

For the twenty-first-century mind, it is difficult to imagine this suspicion and astonishment. Photographic images pervade our everyday life and it would be unthinkable to conceive of our lives without them. Ed Folsom refers to this aspect and to the fact that imagining a world where such images did not exist “would be a world where our visual experience would seem massively constricted, limited to what we had directly encountered, what had been presented to us instead of re-presented: our experience of such a world would feel more grounded in what was around us, more abstract in relation to what existed outside our field of vision” (8). Photography had enabled the opposite: People were no longer “limited to what [they] had directly encountered.” Instead, they would be transported to other worlds and other realities formerly unknown to them. Their perception of these new worlds and realities would be based on a concrete visualization of the referent/object, rather than on abstract idealizations.

One must, therefore, try to perceive the context in which this phenomenon emerged: it was the first time human beings had seen exact reproductions of themselves. Even the most faithful, objective and realistic painting could not match the exactness and precision of a photographic record. It was, indeed, this capacity to copy reality so fully, in its minutest details that astonished the American audience. The daguerreotype, moreover, stood for uniqueness. Since the image was fixed on a silver plate, this device did not allow for reproduction. Hence, its singularity. In “The Emergence of a Keyword” Alan Trachtenberg comments on the uniqueness of the daguerreotype:

Typically small enough to hold in one's hand or carry in a pocket, it permitted an intimate experience of exact reproduction – a kind of magic realism – unique to photography at the time. The paper prints which succeeded the metal image in the 1850s lost those original daguerreian qualities of brilliance, vividness, and presence. Moreover, as a one-of-a-kind image produced directly on the plate, without the mediation of a negative, the daguerreotype defied mass production; it possessed the aura of a unique thing. It was that uniqueness, the magical verisimilitude and mirror-like presence of an astonishingly new kind of image, that the word photography brought to the common vocabulary. (20)

Thus, Trachtenberg highlights the magical quality of the daguerreotype, its capacity to astonish and wonder both its sitters and the audience that viewed it.

In “A Short History of Photography” Walter Benjamin praised the quality of the daguerreotype as opposed to the mass-produced paper reproductions made possible by the invention of the negative in the 1850s. According to this author, it was the long duration of the exposure and the impossibility of mass reproduction which bestowed on the daguerreotype unparalleled uniqueness and perfection: “There was an aura around them, a medium that gives their glance the depth and certainty which permeates it” (207). Benjamin, thus, criticized the mechanically reproduced object and admired the uniqueness of a beautifully conceived object.

The rage for photography swept urban society. In every major American city common people and “illustrious” citizens alike flocked to the daguerreotype studios in order to have their portraits taken. In his third article on photography, “Doings of the Sunbeam,” published in the *Atlantic Monthly* in July 1863, Oliver Wendel Holmes commented on the popularity of the photo galleries:⁵

The sitters who throng the photographer's establishment are a curious study. They are of all ages, from the babe in arms to the old wrinkled patriarchs and dames whose smiles have as many furrows as an ancient elm has rings that count its summers. The

⁵ Chiefly known for his writing, Oliver Wendel Holmes (1809-1894) had a keen interest in photography, namely in stereographs. This led him to write three lengthy articles in the *Atlantic Monthly* issues of June 1859, July 1861 and July 1863.

sun is a Rembrandt in his way, and loves to track all the lines in these old splintered facesThe picture tells no lie about them. (9)

The light from the sun enabled the images to be captured. Thus, “sun-pictures” was the name often given to photographs. The “Lord of Light,” as it was coined by Holmes in his second article, was the means by which “furrows” and “wrinkles” were captured. No detail was left out. Furthermore, “Heaven’s broad and simple sunshine” was the vehicle by which “the secret character with a truth” was brought out, in Hawthorne’s daguerreotypist’s words. Thus, not only “furrows” and “wrinkles” were captured by sunshine. Through the surface of an appearance, true character could be perceived. The new means of representation catered to precision, detail and truth. Hence, “the picture tells no lie.”

In William Henry Fox Talbot’s *The Pencil of Nature* the author stressed the fact that his album of photographs was “the first attempt to publish a series of plates or pictures wholly executed by the new art of Photographic drawing, without any aid whatever from the artist’s pencil” and the fact that the plates were “impressed by the agency of Light alone...”.⁶ Moreover, there is also the metaphor of light. Light - standing for Knowledge, Reason, Truth, and opposing Darkness, which symbolizes Ignorance, Superstition, Doubt. While using the metaphor of light to characterize the new medium, nineteenth century Americans were endowing the new means of representation with the quality of truth and reason. The metaphor of light was appropriate for an age resonant with scientific and technological knowledge.

The photo galleries were a popular business in the mid-nineteenth century and innumerable photographers profited from this occupation. These galleries were rooms in which walls were literally covered with portraits of people and where very little space was left empty. Mathew Brady had opened his first photo gallery, the Daguerrean Miniature Gallery at Broadway and Fulton Street in 1844.⁷ He would afterwards open other branch galleries, namely in Washington. Aware of the importance of the new

⁶ The first edition of *The Pencil of Nature* was published in London between 1844 and 1846 in six separate fascicles. It comprised twenty four photographs, thus becoming the first impressed book depicting actual photographic records.

⁷ Mathew Brady (1823-1896), a promising photographer of Irish origin, became a prominent professional in the years preceding and during the American Civil War.

medium in shaping American culture and American history, Mathew Brady published *The Gallery of Illustrious Americans* in 1850. In this album, the photographer displayed twelve daguerreotype portraits of representative Americans. Brady would always feel the need to record the most important events for posterity. “From the first I regarded myself as under obligation to my country to preserve the faces of the historic men and mothers,” he would say in an interview to Alfred Townsend in 1891 (Townsend 202). This same “obligation” would lead him to become the first photographer to “depart from commercial business to pictorial war correspondent.” In the same interview Brady explained his urge to go to the front: “I can only describe the destiny that overruled me by saying that, like Euphorius, I felt that I had to go. A spirit in my feet said, ‘Go’, and I went” (205). Furthermore, his participation in London’s Great Exhibition, in 1851, was hailed a success. Three Americans won three of the five medals awarded by the Photographic Committee. Mathew Brady was one of them

The printed press felt the need to inform the new professionals. Two major journals were devoted solely to the new medium, the *Daguerrean Journal* and the *Photographic Art Journal*. These two publications played a vital role in keeping the workers in this new profession abreast of all the recent developments. Among other publications from several contributors, these articles taught the developments of this new invention to a public craving for novelty and innovation.

Throughout this century innumerable photographic devices emerged. The daguerreotype era soon made room for other techniques. Ambrotypes, tintypes and stereographs were some of the different techniques that evolved during the prolific age of photographic development.⁸ The stereograph would become a highly popular means of depicting reality, particularly during the Civil War.⁹ Developed in the 1830s, the stereograph soon entered domestic use, enabling people to look at places they had never been to. Viewed with a stereoscope, the device which allowed for the paired photographs to be seen fully, it created a three-dimensional image. The rage for this

⁸ For detailed information on the photographic processes developed in the nineteenth century see Taft, Gilbert and Newhall. Lady Eastlake’s essay “Photography” also describes the developments that occurred in the new medium.

⁹ Stereographs were cards that contained two separate images which were printed side by side. With the help of a stereoscope, a device invented in the 1830s by Charles Wheatstone, people were able to see three-dimensional images.

invention made people collect stereographs depicting famous monuments, European cities and other landmarks of recognized importance. In his first article written for the *Atlantic Monthly* in June 1859, "The Stereoscope and the Stereograph," Oliver Wendel Holmes embarks on a journey across countries and continents. The stereoscope is the means he uses in order to set out on his journey around the world:

Oh, infinite volumes of poems that I treasure in this small library of glass and pasteboard! I creep over the vast features of Rameses ... I scale the huge mountain-crystal that calls itself the Pyramid of Cheops. I pace the length of the three Titanic stones of the wall of Baalbee ... and then I dive into some mass of foliage with my microscope, and trace the veinings of a leaf so delicately wrought in the painting not made with hands....I stroll through Rhenish vineyards, I sit under Roman arches, I walk the streets of once buried cities.... I pass, in a moment, from the banks of the Charles to the ford of the Jordan, and leave my outward frame in the arm-chair at my table, while in spirit I am looking down upon Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives. (745-746)

These lines closely resemble Walt Whitman's verses in "Song of Myself," where the poet embarks on a journey across the whole world, bridging seas and continents in an effort to embrace everything:

I skirt sierras, my palms cover continents,
I am afoot with my vision.
.....
Walking the old hills of Judaea with the beautiful gentle God by
my side,
.....
I visit the orchards of spheres and look at the product,
.....
I anchor my ship for a little while only,
.....
We sail the arctic sea, it is plenty light enough (*Leaves of Grass* 55-59)

Walt Whitman makes use of his powerful vision in order to describe and reproduce, in his verse, distant views and landscapes.

Indeed, the stereograph was seen as a means of transportation to distant places. With this device, family and friends gathered around and viewed scenes which would, otherwise, be barred to them. It was a source of entertainment as well as education about a world beyond the reach of average and immediate experience. Therefore, the new medium would be perceived not only as a new means of transportation, akin to the railroad, but also as a new form of communication, like the telegraph. The new medium accelerated the change of space-time relations, characteristic of the industrial age. It broke down distances, linking people together from all over the nation. Furthermore, it is curious to notice how different people, acting in different fields, shared interests. John Plumbe, the daguerreotypist, had worked as a construction engineer for the first railroad in the South, whereas Samuel Morse, the inventor of the telegraph, developed a deep interest in the daguerreotype. In this age of scientific development it was not uncommon for various areas of knowledge to overlap.

The negative-positive process, introduced by Talbot, allowed for images to be fixed on paper and to be reproduced in large quantities. Nevertheless, this invention would only become fully implemented with the discovery of the collodion process. The collodion process, invented by Frederick Scott Archer, enabled unlimited reproducibility from a single exposure, which was reduced from the average thirty minutes to ten seconds.¹⁰ This process, or the wet-plate as it would thereafter be called, would be widely used by the field photographers endeavoring to capture images of the American Civil War.

The negative-positive process and the wet plate introduced mass production within the photographic business. Nonetheless, the paper photograph did not possess the glimmer and mirror-like effect of the daguerreotype. Instead of a “one-of-a-kind image” with the “aura of a unique thing,” the reproductions on paper represented the spirit of the industrialized, increasingly consumption-oriented society. The new medium was losing much of its quasi-magical quality but, on the other hand, it was gaining an

¹⁰ Frederick Scott Archer (1813-1857), an English sculptor and photographer, invented the collodion process in 1851. The wet-plate collodion process made unlimited reproduction possible.

efficiency and quickness of production more appropriate to a rapidly changing century. Unlike the agrarian world, where nature set the pace, the urban industrial mind demanded speed and quantity. Photography was becoming a product of an industrialized society, produced according to industrial patterns.

In the article published in the *Atlantic Monthly* in July of 1863, Oliver Wendell Holmes describes his visit to the establishment of E. & H. T. Anthony & Company in New York (Appendix – Fig. 1).¹¹ Curiously enough, this scene gives us a brief glimpse of the Fordist spirit which took over America at the beginning of the twentieth century, further suggested by the following passage:

In another building, provided with steam-power ... is carried on the great work of manufacturing photographic albums, cases for portraits, parts of cameras, and of printing pictures from negatives.... The workmen in large establishments, where labor is greatly subdivided, become wonderfully adroit in doing a fraction of something.... A young person who mounts photographs on cards all day long confessed to having never, or almost never, seen a negative developed, though standing at the time within a few feet of the dark closet where the process was going on all day long. One forlorn individual will perhaps pass his days in the single work of cleaning the glass plates for the negatives. (2)

This emerging industrial economy foresaw a society in which the private domain would become more and more ruled by the public. In *Camera Lucida* Roland Barthes commented on this invasion of the private by the public: “the age of Photography corresponds precisely to the explosion of the private into the public, or rather into the creation of a new social value, which is the publicity of the private: the private is consumed as such, publicly...” (98).

Indeed, the custom of actually collecting photographs of themselves and others would become an increasing trend among Americans. The outbreak of the Civil War fostered the “publicity of the private,” since *cartes-de-visite* portraying both Union and

¹¹ The Anthony brothers, Edward and Henry T., played a key role in supplying the American photographers with materials and chemicals for this new profession. Not only did they publish thousands of *cartes-de-visite* and stereographs to meet the public’s demand, they also purchased thousands of negatives from other professionals. For more information see Robert Taft.

Confederate generals along with portraits of soldiers circulated throughout the nation.¹² Vicki Goldberg refers to the craze that swept the country: “like a species let loose in a new territory with no natural enemies, the photographic population grew unchecked” (*The Power of Photography* 14).

With the first casualties of this fratricidal struggle, photographic records of wounded soldiers or starving war prisoners appeared. Photographs of amputated members and flesh wounds were collected in medical schools and hospitals. Thus, subjects, whose bodies were openly and shamelessly captured by the lenses of the photographic devices, increasingly became mere objects of scientific analysis. The private was being consumed publicly. This would reach its most gruesome aspect with the reproduction of photographs of dead bodies on the battlefield. Unburied bodies would be denied the privacy of a family funeral. Instead, their exposure to an anonymous audience would irretrievably hand them over to the domain of the public, where they would become mere objects which aroused the insatiable curiosity of a perplexed audience.

1.2. Notions underlying the concept of early photography

When, in “The Daguerreotype,” Edgar Allan Poe affirmed that “the Daguerreotyped plate is infinitely...more accurate in its representation than any painting by human hands” (38), he was, in fact, setting the tone for most of the beliefs and concepts regarding nineteenth-century photography: photography was believed to reproduce nature with accuracy and truth. “The picture tells no lie,” in Oliver Wendell Holmes’s words.

Several nineteenth-century authors showed a deep interest in the new medium. In her article “Photography” Lady Elizabeth Eastlake emphasized the mechanical nature

¹² *Cartes-de-visite*, invented in 1854, were small paper photographs mounted on cards. Their small size made them extremely portable and inexpensive, which contributed to their popularity.

of the camera and the fact that this contributed to the “correctness of drawing, truth of detail, and absence of convention” (66). Lady Elizabeth Eastlake highlighted the accuracy and precision of the new medium along with the capacity to represent nature truly. Since photography stood for truth, it would be regarded as an objective means of communication: “[Photography] is made for the present age, in which the desire for art resides in a small minority, but the craving, or rather necessity, for cheap, prompt, and correct facts in the public at large. Photography is the purveyor of such knowledge to the world” and, further down, “her business is to give evidence of facts, as minutely and as impartially as, to our shame, only an unreasoning machine can give” (65-6). For Eastlake, it is precisely this mechanical and “unreasoning” quality of the camera which provided for the objectivity and impartiality of the new medium.

Furthermore, Eastlake denied any artistic pretensions to the new medium and, ultimately, she envisaged the new invention as a social leveler, reaching all social classes. Therefore, photography stood for a ubiquitous, democratic means of representation. In “The Camera and the Pencil,” written in 1864, the daguerreotypist Marcus Aurelius Root emphasized the relevance of the new medium as a social leveler and a new means of supplying facts.¹³

Susan Sontag stresses the relevance of this aspect: “Photographs furnish evidence. Something we hear about, but doubt, seems proven when we’re shown a photograph of it” (*On Photography* 5). In *Camera Lucida* Roland Barthes stresses the fact that photography authenticates the object/referent:

The Photograph does not necessarily say *what is no longer*, but only and for certain *what has been*.... The Photograph’s essence is to ratify what it represents.... It is a prophecy in reverse: like Cassandra...Photography never lies: or rather, it can lie as to the meaning of the thing, being by nature *tendentious*, never as to its existence....

Every photograph is a certificate of presence. (85-87)

¹³ Marcus Aurelius Root (1808-1888) was a successful daguerreotypist who operated, as early as 1846, one of the largest daguerreotype studios in America. He opened his first establishment in Philadelphia and later in New York.

Barthes emphasizes the fact that, by being a “certificate of presence,” photography enables its viewers to believe that photography’s object/referent is something that has actually existed, contrary to other systems of representation, namely painting, which “can feign reality without having seen it” (76).

Interestingly enough, the terminology Lady Elizabeth Eastlake used to describe photography belongs to another means of pictorial representation, painting. When Eastlake referred to “correctness of drawing, truth of detail, and absence of convention,” she was using concepts usually applied to both painting and drawing. Many other authors would refer to the new medium using terms applied to both painting and drawing: “the new art of Photogenic Drawing,” in Poe and Talbot’s words. As photography had been recently invented, it lacked a terminological framework. Therefore, many authors would import terminology from other areas, namely painting, for describing photography.

In an article published in the *Atlantic Monthly* of February 1858, entitled “Something about Pictures,” the author alerts his readers to the dangers of painting being surpassed by the efficiency of photographic techniques:

The mechanical processes by which Nature is so closely imitated, and the increase of which during the last few years is one of the most remarkable facts in science, may at the first glance appear to have lessened the marvelous in Art, by making available to all the exact representation of still-life....The discovery of Daguerre and its numerous improvements, and the unrivalled precision attained by Photography, render exact imitation no longer a miracle of crayon or palette; these must now create as well as reflect, invent and harmonize as well as copy, bring out the soul of the individual and of the landscape, or their achievements will be neglected in favor of the fac-similes obtainable through sunshine and chemistry. (403-4)

By emphasizing its ability to faithfully reproduce reality, the new medium made no pretension to replace the function performed by art. “Mechanical processes” were made possible by “sunshine and chemistry.” Again, an “unreasoning machine” enabled a more objective, unbiased representation of the real world. Painting called for selection, composition and, most of all, the interpretive hand of the painter. The hand and brush of

the painter, now seen as partial and biased, were replaced by a mechanical device which epitomized the qualities of non-discrimination and objectivity.

Ed Folsom called photography an “omnivorous tool for recording reality” and “an absorptive art that gained its effectiveness precisely because it did not discriminate but rather allowed, insisted on, every detail in order to create its overall impression” (8-9). Liz Well has affirmed that “it voraciously records anything in view; in other words it is firmly in the realm of the contingent” (16). Also, Susan Sontag highlighted this aspect: “Photographed images do not seem to be statements about the world so much as pieces of it, miniatures of reality that anyone can make or acquire” (*On Photography* 4). Thus, by being an omnivorous tool, an absorptive art and a miniature of reality, it is implied that photography enabled people to acquire, appropriate its object/referent. Photography was, therefore, perceived to record all details of its referent with unparalleled precision, minuteness and instantaneousness.

Photography, which means literally “writing with light” (*photos+graphis*), would also symbolize a new way of writing. In “The Emergence of a Keyword” Alan Trachtenberg stresses the analogy between photography and writing. According to Trachtenberg, not only did photography stand for a new means of depicting reality, but it also provided a new way of using language. New words were, in fact, absorbed by the American idiom. This was not only a technical vocabulary (“heliography,” “tintype,” “collodion”) but also words which gained a new meaning (“development,” “negative,” “positive”):

Photography ... entered the world not just as a practice of picture-making but as a word, a linguistic practice. It was not very long before “daguerreotype” became a common verb that meant telling the literal truth of something. With its subset of terms, like *image* and *reflect*, *lens* and *shutter*, *light* and *shade*, the words *photography* and *daguerreotype* provided a way of expressing ideas about how the world can be known – about truth and falseness, appearance and reality, accuracy, exactitude, and impartiality. The power attributed to the medium made the name into a keyword, a potential analogy for other human activities. (17)

On the whole, we may sum up the diverse notions here referred to under six broad categories. First, this new mechanical device allowed for accurate records of reality. It was, therefore, associated with the concepts of truth, objectivity, faithfulness. It stood for exact copy, *mimesis*. Second, photography came to be perceived as a new means of communication, capable of reaching a wider audience. In this sense, it could be considered a more democratic medium, since it reached all levels of society. A third aspect, linked to the former ones, was the fact that, since this medium was seen as true, objective and unbiased, it could be recognized as a valuable source of information. Photography provided facts for an expanding audience. It was, therefore, seen as a means of mass education. A fourth characteristic attributed to early photography was its capacity to record its object/referent in all its details. It absorbed all that stood in its way, regardless of hierarchy or composition. Another important aspect is the fact that photography allowed for mass production. Therefore, it was a product of the industrial age which, in itself, reflected the prevailing mood. Finally, photography stood for a new way of writing.

Owing to all these characteristics, photography became an excellent means of recording and conveying, not only people's "likenesses," but also the scenes of the theater of war that was about to begin. Therefore, the photographic image would be recognized as a reliable source of information, since it was able to record the locations as well as the characters that would be performing in the most crucial roles of their lives.

1.3. Photographic production during the American Civil War : the role of field photographers

The American Civil War became the first armed conflict to be largely recorded through the lenses of photographic devices. Although the Mexican and the Crimean Wars had already aroused curiosity and interest among adventurers and professionals, it was only with the American Civil War that photography became a privileged means of depicting an armed conflict.¹⁴ Three thousand photographers are estimated to have been involved in the business of picture-making. By the end of this strife, millions of photographic records had been made, exhibited, and purchased by a vast audience.

In order to understand fully the scope and purpose of the photographic records of the Civil War, we will group the photographic production into two categories: those appertaining to photographs taken in studios (both city studios and improvised studios on the fields of battle) and those recorded by field photographers, outdoors, in the theater of war. To the first group belongs the bulk of the photographic production. These were mainly portraits and could vary from full-body poses to simple busts. Soldiers and officers alike entered the city studios in order to have their “likenesses” taken. They wished to eternalize their portraits before enlisting and, thus, provide their family and friends with a lasting *souvenir*. More adventurous professionals worked hard on the fields of battle with the same aim in mind: to provide the fighters with an opportunity to immortalize themselves (Appendix – Figs. 2 and 3).¹⁵ One article entitled “Photography at the Seat of War” was published in the *Scientific American* on 18 October 1862. This article describes the frantic activity of these professionals:

¹⁴ From the Mexican War (1846-1848) only four daguerreotypes are known to have survived to the present times. During the Crimean War (1854-1856) more developed techniques than the daguerreotype are reported to have been used. Roger Fenton (1819-1869), an English photographer, used the wet-collodion process in this war. His photographs were displayed in several exhibitions and he became one of the first war photographers. See Taft’s chapter “Civil War Photographers” for further information on this topic. See also Frassanito’s “The Evolution of Early War Photography” in *Antietam* for more information on the photographic coverage of nineteenth-century armed conflicts.

¹⁵ See Keith F. Davis’s article “‘A terrible Distinctness’: Photography of the Civil War Era” for further information on the different types of photographic records made during the Civil War.

Decidedly one of the institutions of our army is the traveling portrait gallery. A camp is hardly pitched before one of the omnipresent artists in collodion and amber-bead varnish drives up his two horse wagon, pitches his canvas gallery, and unpacks his chemicals. Our army here (Fredericksburg) is now so large that quite a company of these gentlemen have gathered about us. The amount of business they find is remarkable. Their tents are thronged from morning to night, and “while the day lasteth” their golden harvests run. (247)

The majority of these “omnipresent artists” belonged to the North. Although there were also Southern photographers, these worked under far worse conditions than their Northern colleagues. Several Southern cities had galleries in operation throughout the war, but owing to the Union’s army blockade chemicals and plates were in short supply. Ultimately then, though some Northern photographers and photo galleries helped smuggle materials from the North, the photographic production among Southern professionals remained necessarily limited, accounting for, at least partly, the relative scarcity of photographs taken in the Confederacy.

The second category of photographic production belongs to photographs captured outdoors. Most of the images that were recorded outdoors depict regiments and encampments, construction and maintenance of railroads, roads and bridges, vessels, artillery weapons, and so forth. A smaller proportion of photographs in this category were recorded shortly after military action, namely scenes depicting death and destruction. An even smaller portion of photographic material revealed the indelible traces of a bitter truth: soldiers with amputated limbs and African Americans. This category of photographs represents the major focus of our study, and will be dealt with in the second chapter of this work.

Mathew Brady was the first photographer to go to the front with the aim of capturing images of the First Battle of Bull Run on 21 July 1861, in Virginia. This battle was a severe blow to the Union forces and the photographer himself barely escaped alive (Appendix – Figure 4). An article entitled “Photographs of the War” published in the *New York Times* on August 17, 1861, commented on the dangerous undertaking of Mathew Brady:

Mr Brady, the Photographer, has just returned from Washington with the magnificent series of views of scenes, groups and incidents of the war which he has been making for the last two months. Mr Brady, after visiting all the camps in the vicinity of Washington, and taking views of all the most striking scenes, accompanied the army in its advance into Virginia. He had a full corps of artists and workmen, and embraced every opportunity to add to his collection of illustrative views. He went upon the field of battle at Bull Run, - accompanied HEINTZELMAN'S column into the action, and was caught in the whirl and panic which accompanied the retreat of our Army.

Brady's first engagement in actual battle proved difficult. First, the War Department at Washington did not encourage the American Photographical Society's aim of recording the Civil War. Second, the photographer encountered considerable difficulty in obtaining permission to get to the front, since neither his staff nor he himself had any official connection with the Army. Third, this First Battle of Bull Run culminated in a disastrous defeat for the Union. In the hasty retreat, Mathew Brady lost most of his equipment and was rescued by a group of New York Zouaves.¹⁶

As a consequence, there are no actual records of this conflict. The "series of views of scenes, groups and incidents of the war" to which the *New York Times* makes reference are basically photographs of encampments and troops. There is, however, a more compelling reason for the conspicuous absence of records of actual battle scenes among the thousands of photographs taken during the years of the conflict. This has to do with the type of equipment handled by field photographers. It consisted of an array of instruments and chemical solutions that had to be stored in an enclosed compartment on the back of a horse-drawn wagon (Appendix - Figure 5). These wagons would be coined "whatizzit" wagons by the soldiers. Moreover, the process of recording images was, in itself, awkward. It required that the camera should be put in position, the lens focused, the glass plate coated with collodion, exposed to the light and the negative developed while still wet. The developing process called for the use of a dark chamber,

¹⁶ Zouaves were soldiers belonging to infantry regiments during the American Civil War. They were named after their colorful Zouave uniforms. The original Zouaves were French Zouaves, recruited by the French Army in Algeria in 1831.

usually within the enclosed compartment of the wagon. On the slowness of such procedures, Robert Taft comments:

A record of a bursting shell was regarded as a photographic marvel and was rarely obtained. As a result, the actual conflicts were not photographed, save at some distance, so that the individual figures are scarcely discernible. Occasionally a photograph of a battery firing on command will be found, as the pause between commands made such records possible. The battle scenes... were restricted to the events after the actual conflict, when the leaden slugs had found their mark and rendered their subjects sufficiently still for even the slow wet plate to record their images. (234-5)

Photographic processes were, therefore, too slow and the equipment handled by these professionals too cumbersome. Photographic records focused, therefore, on a battle's prelude and aftermath.

Owing to the duration of the exposure, some scenes were actually staged or posed. Some authors commented on this stillness and posing, which would be considered, by some, as a handicap. In the introductory note to the Illustrations in *The Negro's Civil War* James McPherson justifies his use of woodcut reproductions from *Harper's Weekly* or *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*: "Their finest drawings captured the essential drama and action of the war much better than the stilted and posed photographs of one hundred years ago could do" (ix). Nevertheless, and in spite of their relevance in depicting important cultural and political aspects of the Civil War, many of these engravings were caricatures or exaggerated allegorical representations. They could not match the realism of a photographic record, regardless of its stiltedness or staging. Keith Davies argues that wood engravings often "produced disappointing results" since "the endless detail of the photograph" could not be conveyed in an engraving (150). The editors of *Photographs: George Eastman House* stress that "it [may be] easy for the contemporary viewer to overlook what may have been the most important quality of this work to its public, an audience that received most of its war news in the form of rhetorical, jingoistic prose or in over dramatized, romantic sketches and wood engravings" (Mulligan 254). Thus, photography took precedence over wood

engravings, cartoons and sketches reproduced in the press. Although the printing presses of the time were not compatible with the reproduction of photographs, these circulated freely and were exhibited in the most important galleries of the time.

Realizing the complexity and difficulty of performing the role of “pictorial war correspondent,” Mathew Brady organized and financed a corps of field photographers, whom he sent to areas of conflict. This corps included several professionals working for Brady. Among them there were Alexander Gardner and his brother James Gardner, James Gibson, Timothy O’Sullivan and George Barnard.¹⁷ Many other professionals remained unknown. Mathew Brady was an entrepreneur who ran his business of employing field photographers and then published the outcome of such ventures. Many of his products were published as wood engravings for the *Harper’s Weekly* or *Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper*. The actual photographs were exhibited at his Galleries in New York and Washington or even sold by the thousands as *cartes-de-visite*. Notwithstanding this, very little or no credit was given to the actual photographers and, instead, the epithet “Photography by Brady” would appear connected to most of the pictures. Furthermore, he usually retained possession of his photographers’ negatives. This would lead to disagreements between employer and employees. Eventually, some of the most prominent photographers left Brady in order to run their own businesses. That happened to Alexander Gardner, a Scotsman who would play a major role as a war photographer. He opened his own gallery in Washington in 1863, recruiting some of Brady’s former professionals, namely Timothy O’ Sullivan and James Gibson.

The mechanical nature of this pictorial means of representation allowed for the absorption of reality in a non-discriminatory way. In spite of some staging and posing, which has already been referred to, the photographic record allowed for a non-hierarchical representation, unlike the traditional allegorical or mythical war representations in painting. Painting had favored the importance of hierarchy, where the generals or more important officers were usually placed in the center of the pictorial

¹⁷ Alexander Gardner (1821-1882) was a photographer of Scottish origin. He is best known for his photographs of the American Civil War and his portraits of Abraham Lincoln. James Gardner worked for his older brother during the Civil War (there is no reliable information about his birth and death). James Gibson (1850-1905), Timothy O’ Sullivan (1840-1882) and George Barnard (1819-1902) had worked for Mathew Brady before joining Alexander Gardner in his own business.

representation. The complex arrangement of the different elements that made up a painting, namely proportion, perspective, color and light, contributed to the concept of the symbolic hero and martyr, fighting for a just cause and dying an honorable death. The painting *The Death of General Warren at the Battle of Bunker Hill*, for instance, is representative of this (Appendix – Fig. 6). It emphasizes the figure of the general, although he is not placed in the center of the representation. His presence is highlighted by the whiteness which surrounds him, in stark contrast to the redness of the enemy's uniforms. The general dies in the arms of his comrades, who desperately try to ward off the enemy. His death is intended to be seen as heroic. He was a martyr who had died for his country's cause. In *Antietam* William Frassanito comments on this aspect:

Americans of the mid-nineteenth century had grown up on a visual conception of war depicted mainly through crude woodcuts, lithographs and glamorous paintings.... In the antebellum United States war was depicted by the visual arts as a glorious adventure. Elaborate paintings showed colonial militiamen struggling heroically against the British at Bunker Hill, lithographs depicted equally gallant episodes from the War of 1812, and woodcuts that portrayed fearless American officers leading their men against enemy hordes during the Mexican War abounded. The dead and wounded were invariably present, but somehow they appeared intact – never mutilated, bloated or rotting in the sun – and the aura of martyrdom usually triumphed, blending well into the excitement of living forms struggling for victory. In 1861, as volunteers responded to their respective governmental calls to resolve the national crisis by force, untold numbers did so with visions of school text woodcuts in their heads. (27-28)

On the contrary, the majority of the photographic images do not show valiant generals giving orders in the midst of strife. Likewise, we hardly see undaunted soldiers fearlessly charging the enemy. Instead, the photographic records taken during the four years of this fratricidal war focused on the common tasks performed by the common soldier. Engineering works of greater magnitude (the building of bridges, railroads or the opening of canals, among others) or the construction of forts and disposition of artillery weapons were recorded by the photographic devices. Also, images were

captured of groups of soldiers performing simple tasks, such as preparing meals, filling water canteens or even resting after a hard day of labor. We scarcely see smiles on these men's faces, let alone laughter. Their faces show the concern and commitment of those deeply involved in a difficult enterprise. In this sense, we might state that Civil War photography contributed to the concept of the soldier as a common man who was simply endeavoring to carry out an assignment.

Mathew Brady's activity as entrepreneur turned out to be manifold. On the one hand, he produced and published thousands of war images. The first to record images of the Civil War, he concentrated on recording images of military units, with whom he was often seen (Appendix- Figure 7). Most of his pictures – or, the pictures taken under his command, since he was hardly ever, as stated above, the actual photographer – were devoted to the representation of individuals, groups and regiments. There are also others dedicated to bridges, fields, fortifications, artillery and views of the battlefields. Furthermore, he was the first to publish, in 1862, war images in numbered series of album cards, mounted prints and stereographs, under the titles of *Brady's Photographic Views of the War*, *Brady's Album Catalogue* and *Incidents of the War*.¹⁸

On the other hand, Mathew Brady purchased other photographers' negatives. He acquired thousands of these and, as property rights were not recognized at the time, the work of innumerable photographers remained in the shadow. When the war ended, however, Brady's bankruptcy hindered him from properly cataloging and preserving his collection. Forced to sell part of this to some of his creditors, the Anthony brothers, only a small portion remained in his hands. In 1874, and after a financial crisis that left Brady in poverty, his second set of negatives was sold at public auction, being purchased by the War Department. Nowadays, most of Brady's collection belongs to the Library of Congress and the National Archives. Robert Taft commented that “the credit which is due Brady is for his original idea as a photographic historian, his persistence in this idea, and for sufficient business acumen and management to carry it out” (59).

Other prominent photographers also played an essential role as publishers of war images. In 1863 Captain Andrew Russell published *Photographs Illustrative of*

¹⁸ Both album cards and mounted prints were cards (usually *cartes-de-visite*) mounted on albums.

Operations in Construction and Transportation.¹⁹ It consisted mainly of images of the railway systems, engineering accomplishments of various types as well as battlefields, camps and gunboats. Andrew Russell focused on buildings, construction sites, forts, bridges and ruins. His work was viewed as a military field manual, since it consisted of documentation of military engineering and made use of photography for instructional purposes.

Photography was also being used as a covert tool by the War Department. Maps and charts were recorded so that the officers could familiarize themselves with the terrain. Ultimately, photography would be used to trace enemy spies among the troops. Alexander Gardner would work for the Union's Secret Service as "Photographer, Army of the Potomac." This position would allow Gardner complete access to troops and encampments within the Army of the Potomac.²⁰

In 1866 Alexander Gardner issued a two-volume work entitled *Gardner's Photographic Sketchbook of the War*. This would be reprinted during the twentieth century under the title *Gardner's Photographic Sketchbook of the American Civil War 1861-1865*. It comprised one hundred images showing military units, encampments and buildings as well as scenes of devastation that scarred the American landscape. Another valuable publication of the same year was George Barnard's *Photographic Views of Sherman's Campaign*, which has also been reprinted. It included sixty one albumen prints covering General Sherman's campaign to Atlanta, in the state of Georgia.²¹ He recorded these images as official photographer of the Military Division of the Mississippi. The result was an album depicting bridges, fortifications, ruined cities and landscapes. The human presence is almost ignored.

On the whole, the years of the Civil War witnessed the production of tens of thousands of scenes from the theater of war. Several of the "omnipresent artists" played a leading role in this process, recording unique moments and, afterwards, making them available to a wider public. The recorded scenes from this theater of war would become

¹⁹ Captain Andrew Russell (1830-1902) was an official Army photographer during the Civil War.

²⁰ The Army of the Potomac, created in 1861, was the major Union Army in the Eastern Theater of the American Civil War.

²¹ Albumen prints were images printed on albumen paper, so called because egg white was used to make its coating adhere to the surface.

irrefutable evidence of the violence that had marred the American nation. The damage was not only physical. It lingered in the souls of Americans for years to come.

1.4. Staged photography: the case of the moved bodies at Gettysburg

In July 1863 the battle of Gettysburg was fought in the state of Pennsylvania. It lasted three long days (from the first to the third of July) and thirty thousand soldiers lost their lives. The public's craving for images of the dead hastened the "omnipresent artists" to record the aftermath of the conflict.

The Antietam battle, fought on September 17, 1862, in the state of Maryland, had been the bloodiest conflict ever to have taken place on American soil, causing the deaths of twenty-two thousand soldiers. It was the first time that photographers had managed to photograph actual dead on the fields of battle. Moreover, it was the first time in American history that images of unburied corpses were recorded (shortly after being killed) and displayed to the public. These images had been taken by Alexander Gardner and James Gibson on the morning following the Antietam battle.²² The records of the carnage were displayed in Brady's establishment in New York and aroused mixed feelings: from repulsion to curiosity. This will be dealt with in chapter two of this work.

Contrary to the Antietam battle, Gettysburg aroused interest from more photographers, thus producing a far larger number of images. Two hundred and thirty photographs are reported to have been taken on the days following the strife.²³ The first to arrive at Gettysburg were Alexander Gardner, Timothy O'Sullivan and James Gibson, who worked as a team. Gardner's particular interest lay in capturing images of

²² For exhaustive information on the work of the two photographers on the Antietam battlefield see Frassanito's *Antietam*.

²³ In *Gettysburg*, William Frassanito carries out a painstaking research on the procedures the photographers followed in capturing their images of the ordeal. The photographers' doings were enacted by the author, who managed to identify the exact places where each scene was captured.

unburied corpses, which was coined by Frassanito as “Gardner’s preoccupation with the dead” (*Gettysburg* 27). In order to achieve his objective, Gardner was aware that their arrival on the field should be prior to the burial of the corpses. On the whole, the team produced sixty negatives, depicting close-up views of death and destruction.

Notwithstanding this, a series of images captured by the Gardner team would be considered fakes. Among these I will examine two groups. The first group consists of two close-ups of the body of a young soldier. These were captioned, in Gardner’s *Sketchbook*, “A Sharpshooter’s Last Sleep” and “Home of a Rebel Sharpshooter” (Appendix – Figures 8 and 9). The second group comprises images of dead soldiers on the Gettysburg battlefield, “A Harvest of Death” and “Field where General Reynolds Fell” (Appendix – Figures 10 and 11), as captioned by Gardner in his *Sketchbook*. Gardner’s assertion was that the images of the lone soldier refer to different men. He also argued that the photographs of clumps of dead men scattered on the field depicted Confederate soldiers in the case of “A Harvest of Death,” and Union men in the case of “Field where General Reynolds Fell.”

Contrary to this belief, years of research has proved otherwise. According to William Frassanito in *Gettysburg: A Journey in Time* the images of the lone soldier belong to a series of five photographs which this author comments on as “one of the most unusual incidents in the story of photography at Gettysburg: the actual relocation of a dead body some forty yards for the purpose of composing a more effective scene” (187). William Frassanito examined all five photographs and concluded that they all represented the same young soldier. He proved that the photographers first captured the image of the dead young man lying on the ground (“A Sharpshooter’s Last Sleep”). To introduce a dramatic note to the scene, the body was then moved and placed beside a stone wall constructed by Southern soldiers and formerly used as a sharpshooter’s vantage point for the Confederates. To complete their composition, the cameramen propped a rifle up against the wall (“Home of a Rebel Sharpshooter”). In this series of five photographs analyzed by Frassanito, there is one where the young soldier is depicted lying on a blanket. Frassanito thus argues that the body was actually carried by the photographers themselves, who used the blanket as means of transportation. The second group of images representing a cluster of bodies belongs to a misidentification

on the part of Gardner. According to Frassanito, both photographs depict images of Union soldiers, thus contradicting Gardner's identification of the bodies.²⁴

There are several conclusions that should be drawn here. On the one hand, the posed scenes contradicted people's belief in photography as an exact reproduction of reality. Indeed, by moving corpses, these photographers aimed at forging a dramatic effect, thus generating meaning. In *Image-Music-Text* Roland Barthes expounds his theory of "the photographic paradox." According to this author, "the photographic paradox" derives from the fact that the primary concept of a photography as neutral, objective and, thus, denotative, is changed by the fact that "the photograph is an object that has been worked on, chosen, composed, constructed, treated according to professional, aesthetic or ideological norms which are so many factors of connotation" (19). Therefore, the concept of photography as *mimesis* acquires a "connotative" meaning. In *Regarding the Pain of Others* Susan Sontag comments on the duality of photography: "photographs [are] both objective record and personal testimony, both a faithful copy or transcription of an actual moment of reality and an interpretation of that reality" (26). In this sense, the "unreasoning machine" Lady Eastlake refers to acquires a reasoning capacity.

On the other hand, this dramatic effect was conceived with the aim of selling more views of the battle. In his chapter "Picture Manipulations" from *Photojournalism: An Ethical Approach* Paul Lester comments that "photographers and editors learned early in photography's history that economic and political gains can be made by photographic manipulations because of a naïve and trusting public" (par. 2). Alexander Gardner and his team were, apparently, well aware of the fact that, if not political, there were, at least, economic gains at stake. Somehow, they were the forerunners of an idea that remains current in today's photojournalism: the notion that "if it bleeds, it leads." Susan Sontag argues that this motto conforms to people's craving for sensational images of killing and human slaughter: "war was and still is the most irresistible – and picturesque – news" (*Regarding the Pain of Others* 49). Manipulation and drama go

²⁴ For a detailed explanation of these and other staged photographs, see Frassanito's "Part Three/The Photographs" in *Gettysburg*.

hand in hand with photography and, seemingly, these Civil War professionals were conscious of this phenomenon.

However, despite the staging or posing that occurred, the Gettysburg records were important because they displayed the carnage and horrors of a brutal war. Furthermore, these photographs drew Americans nearer to a reality which had been, up to then, perceived as distant.

CHAPTER TWO

Death, injury, African-Americans and destruction in Civil War photography

In chapter one we discussed beliefs and concepts underlying nineteenth century photography. Close attention was devoted to the social, economic and cultural context in which the new medium emerged in America. Also, the significant role performed by Civil War field photographers was dealt with. These photographers played a crucial role in recording the destruction and death on the fields of battle. Furthermore, controversial issues arising from staged photography were examined. On the whole, chapter one set the stage for the main objective of this work, which will be explored in the forthcoming pages.

My principal aim in this chapter is to uncover the ways in which Civil War photography depicting destruction (both of nature and cities), unburied dead, wounded army men and African American soldiers challenged preconceived notions regarding war itself, death, and the way Americans dealt with grief. In this chapter I will look into the gruesome and violent images of unburied soldiers lying dead on devastated battlefields. As this was the first time in history that such images were openly displayed to the public, they challenged antebellum practices and notions regarding the way dead should be cared for and disposed of. Moreover, I will examine photographs of black Union soldiers, whose role in the strife remained controversial and ambiguous, and reveal many of the contradictions underlying the participation of African Americans in the conflict. In addition, I will look into photographs of wounded soldiers whose bodies became mere instruments in the hands of science. The objectification of subjects, whose bodies were submitted to dissection, amputation and were finally cataloged in order to be shown to the public, is of major concern in this chapter. Both photographic records of African Americans and wounded soldiers raise issues concerning discrimination and subordination to a higher hierarchy, i.e. the appropriation of the body by the state. Photographs of wrecked landscapes and cities will also be discussed.

2.1. “Weird Copies of Carnage”

The American Civil War is considered to be the first modern war. The application of industrial technology along with the development of transports and communications irrevocably changed the way soldiers fought and died. New weapons such as rifled muskets and artillery, explosive shells, iron-clad vessels and naval mines were used for the first time. These weapons reached over greater distances and with greater accuracy than more conventional ones. Army men made use of railroads to move and supply troops in the field and the telegraph would be of vital importance in establishing effective communications systems. Bridges, fortifications and major works required specialized knowledge of engineering. This war was, therefore, a product of the industrialization and mass production that was changing America. As a consequence, there was destruction and anonymous killing on a previously unimagined scale. The Civil War dead exceeded the number of deaths in any other war on American soil. Two million men are estimated to have served in the Union army, while eight hundred thousand fought for the Confederacy. Over one million suffered casualties and at least six hundred thousand died.²⁵

When, in October 1862, images of dead corpses lying on the field of battle were displayed in Mathew Brady’s Photo Gallery in New York, the American public reacted with awe and astonishment. These images were taken by Alexander Gardner and James Gibson on the morning following the Antietam battle, fought on 17 September 1862 in the state of Maryland (Appendix – Figures 12, 13, 14, 15 and 16).²⁶ At that point, this was the bloodiest conflict to ever have taken place in America, and resulted in the deaths of twenty-two thousand soldiers. In the *New York Times* of 20 October 1862 an article entitled “Brady’s Photographs: Pictures of the Dead at Antietam” was published, commenting on the exhibition:

²⁵ For further information on American Civil War statistics see Keith Davis’s article “A Terrible Distinctness” and the chapter “Death during Wartime” in Gary Laderman’s *The Sacred Remains*.

²⁶ For exhaustive information on the work of the two photographers on the Antietam battlefield see Frassanito’s *Antietam*.

We recognize the battle-field as a reality, but it stands as a remote one. It is like a funeral next door.... But you only see the mourners in the last of the long line of carriages they ride very jollily and at their ease, smoking cigars in a furtive and discursive manner.... But it is very different when the hearse stops at your door, and the corpse is carried out over your own threshold

Mr Brady has done something to bring home to us the terrible reality and earnestness of war. If he has not brought bodies and laid them in our dooryards and along the streets, he has done something very like it. At the door of his gallery hangs a little placard, "The Dead of Antietam". Crowds of people are constantly going up the stairs; follow them, and you find them bending over photographic views of that fearful battle-field, taken immediately after the action.... But ... there is a terrible fascination about it that draws one near these pictures, and makes him loth to leave them. You will see hushed, reverend groups standing around those 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. (par. 2-3)

The indiscriminate character – the honesty, as it were - of the camera enabled people to see "the reality and earnestness of war" in all its gruesome aspects. The Antietam photographs provided first-hand evidence of mass slaughter. This was something Americans were not prepared for. *Cartes-de-visite* portraying both soldiers and officers alike as well as stereographs of views and scenes of the Civil War circulated freely among the public. They were inexpensive and were sold by the thousands, which led many citizens to purchase them in order to assemble collections of War episodes. Thus, Americans had grown used to images of Union soldiers, fortifications, artillery, encampments and all the paraphernalia connected with military life. These innocuous images displayed the scenes of the theater of war without casualties.

The image of a funeral where the body of the deceased is abruptly dropped at his relatives' home was a metaphor for the brutality of this fratricidal war. Perceived as a distant, remote reality at its onset, this war was being brought from the fields of Maryland to the city of New York. These photographs had the power to make the conflict *real*, since, until that moment, American citizens had not fully realized that thousands of the nations' husbands, brothers and sons were being relentlessly killed.

As we have seen in chapter one, Roland Barthes stresses the fact that photography is a “certificate of presence” which ratifies the object/referent. Thus, a photograph is proof that a thing has existed, that “[it] has been” (*Camera Lucida* 87). Furthermore, the nineteenth-century mind believed in photographic truth. Therefore, the public who viewed these images believed in their veracity and truthfulness. They were aware that these depictions of wreckage were *real* and that they accounted for something that had *actually* happened, that “[it] has been.” From this moment onwards, Americans’ perception of death on the battlefield would be based on concrete visualizations of the object/referent. With the new medium, abstract idealizations of glorious death in war, which had endured for centuries inside the frames of allegorical and romantic paintings, were losing their relevance. Imaginary and fanciful conceptions of war were being overtaken by the great reliability of photographic records.

As mentioned, Roland Barthes emphasizes the fact that photography corroborates the presence of something that has existed. At this point, this “something” is the dead body itself:

In Photography, the presence of the thing (at a certain past moment) is never metaphoric; and in the case of animated beings, their life as well, except in the case of photographing corpses; and even so: if the photograph then becomes horrible, it is because it certifies, so to speak, that the corpse is alive, as *corpse*: it is the living image of a dead thing. For the photograph’s immobility is somehow the result of a perverse confusion between two concepts: the Real and the Life: by attesting that the object has been real, the photograph surreptitiously induces belief that it is alive, because of that delusion which makes us attribute to Reality an absolutely superior, somehow eternal value; but by shifting this reality to the past (“this-has-been”), the photograph suggests that it is already dead. (*Camera Lucida* 78-9)

Thus, Roland Barthes suggests that a photograph does not prove the fact that the object still exists, that it is “alive.” It is only evidence that the object existed, “has been real.”

In “Doings of the Sunbeam,” published in the *Atlantic Monthly* of July 1863, Oliver Wendell Holmes comments on the photographs displayed at Mathew Brady’s Gallery:

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 ranged 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 sights. 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, strewn 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 represent. (11-2)

Holmes's reaction to the Antietam photographs was one of repulsion and disgust. The previous year the author had been on the site of the Antietam battle in search of his wounded son. For Holmes, the similarity between the photographic recording and the actual scene was too striking: "It was so nearly like visiting the battlefield to look over these views."

At this point, there are several aspects worth taking into account. The first aspect is that, as we have seen, it was the first time in American history that images of unburied corpses were recorded shortly after being killed, and displayed to the public. Frassanito comments that "the amount of time spent with this ... is perhaps indicative of Gardner's fascination and even excitement at being confronted for the first time in his career with the opportunity of recording human wreckage on a freshly scarred battlefield" (*Antietam* 126). In *Regarding the Pain of Others* Susan Sontag affirms that the photographers' duty to record death on the battlefield "clearly violated a taboo" (52), the taboo being the fact that, during the Crimean War and the other wars before the American Civil War, photographing the dead was strongly discouraged by the state.²⁷

²⁷ Roger Fenton (1819-1869) was a pioneering British photographer who went to the Crimean War, in 1855, to photograph the troops. He was advised by the English War Office not to photograph the dead, the wounded or the sick. See Mulligan and Wooters's *Photographs: George Eastman House*.

The second aspect I wish to draw attention to has to do with the disintegration of bodies. The Antietam pictures invariably depict images of distorted, bloated or even mutilated bodies, scattered on the ground in the most grotesque positions. With mouths agape and limbs crumpled in strange positions, these corpses did not conform to long-standing conventions as regards the way dead soldiers should be represented. Contrary to the depictions of dead army men in lithographs and romantic paintings, where corpses appeared intact, the decay of the body is visible in all its gruesome aspects: “wrecks of manhood thrown together in careless heaps,” as Holmes put it. These were ghastly images. But they were *real*. Or, better, they represented *actual* bodies of those who had lived, fought and died in the line of duty. Again, as Barthes implies, these were representations of *real* bodies that “[had] been”, had lived.

Moreover, many of these were stereographs. Stereographs enabled viewers to see three-dimensional images, creating a sense of depth and perspective which allowed for the illusion of proximity. This made the scene astoundingly present. On this technique, largely used on the field, Shirley Samuels comments that it consisted of “a three-dimensional effect that brought viewers, who had to balance viewing contraptions against their faces, into intimate relationship with bodies.” And further on she states that “these photographs, with their ‘weird copies of carnage’, instantiate the physicality of photographic representation – bodies are laid in dooryards” (74). It is similar to the sensation we have when watching a three-dimensional movie with the help of 3-D glasses: the scenes become so real we are afraid they will jump out of the TV screen into our own living rooms. Thus, the physicality of this means of representation contributed to the feeling of proximity between the audience and the object/referent. What Americans were observing, for the first time in their lives, was something physical, immediate and astonishingly real.

A fourth aspect is linked to the public’s perception of war. Photography helped bring about a marked shift in the perception of war. Instead of romantic representations of honorable, heroic sacrifice – as we have seen in relation to the painting *The Death of General Warren at the Battle of Bunker Hill* - , the viewer was now faced with the representation of mutilated bodies. These unburied corpses were abandoned on the fields of battle. There was no honor or glory, only annihilation and decomposition.

Oliver Wendel Holmes's words were particularly revealing: "let him who wishes to know what war is look at this series of illustrations." Records of battlefield dead did not only highlight the non-heroic aspect of death, they also emphasized the fact that army men were dying anonymously: "An officer may here and there be recognized; but for the rest ... they will be counted, and that is all." In his *Sketchbook of the American Civil War* Alexander Gardner included a text that explained his photograph "A Harvest of Death" (Appendix – Fig. 10). In this short text Gardner affirms:

A battle has been often the subject of elaborate description; but it can be described in one simple word, *devilish!* And the distorted dead recall the ancient legends of men torn in pieces by the savage wantonness of fiends. Swept down without preparation, the shattered bodies fall in all conceivable positions.... Such a picture conveys a useful moral: It shows the blank horror and reality of war, in opposition to its pageantry. Here are the dreadful details! Let them aid in preventing such another calamity falling upon the nation. (80)

Gardner thus implied that his photographs had a moral purpose in conveying the real consequences of such a "calamity:" "blank horror ... in opposition to its pageantry." Therefore, we might state that these photographs led to the end of the myth of the soldier's glorious death in battle. By making the war *real*, photography allowed for the change in the perception of war. Alan Trachtenberg synthesizes this idea: "We see the war not as heroic action in a grand style but as rotting corpses, shattered trees and rocks, weary soldiers in mud-covered uniforms or lying wounded in field hospitals – as boredom and pain" (*Reading American Photographs* 74).

A fifth aspect has to do with the public's voyeurism. Death had become an unedifying spectacle which was accessible to all. The private, homely funeral, where the body of the deceased was scrupulously cared for, was now being replaced by the public exhibition of anonymous, neglected and distorted corpses. Moreover, this unedifying spectacle attracted an audience craving for new, morbid sensations. These "weird copies of carnage" held a strange fascination for the audience. The "hushed, reverend groups" that visited Brady's Gallery "[bent] down to look in the pale faces of the dead, chained by the strange spell that dwells in dead men's eyes" as the *New York Times* article

stated. Susan Sontag highlights the fact that death has its own “voyeuristic lure” (*Regarding the Pain of Others* 99). In her book, Sontag argues that people who look at images of extreme suffering and pain and do not turn away are, in fact, voyeurs. Moreover, she stresses the fact that the immediacy of such images is unnecessary, since it is only “indecent information” (63).

Images of unburied soldiers were not, however, a prevailing trend among Civil War photographs. Gaining access to war zones was difficult and, in order to record the unburied remains, photographers would have to rush to the fields of battle shortly after the hostilities had ceased. Furthermore, many battles ended in a defeat for the Union and those lands remained in the enemy’s hands. As we have seen in chapter one, there were not many photographers operating in the South due to the shortage of supplies from the Northern blockade. Records of human wreckage by southern photographers are therefore scarce, if not non-existent. Also, the bulky equipment required by field photographers made it difficult to operate in hazardous situations. Only a few of these professionals were willing to risk their lives so that images of “carnage” could be taken.

In “‘A Terrible Distinctness’: Photography of the Civil War Era” Keith Davis remarks that “such powerful scenes were recorded on only half a dozen different occasions in the four years of conflict” (135). There are two other occasions when the notorious images of unburied battle casualties are worth mentioning. In the immediate aftermath of the Gettysburg Battle, fought in July 1863, Alexander Gardner, along with Timothy O’ Sullivan and James Gibson, concentrated on close-up views of the dead, as we have seen in chapter one (“Staged photography: the case of the moved bodies at Gettysburg”). These records of human dead focused on the distorted, bloated corpses. The bloating was the result of gas generated by decomposition. Among the Gettysburg series there are also records of dead animals, namely horses (Appendix – Figs 8, 9, 10, 11, 17, and 18). As Frassanito comments in *Gettysburg: A Journey in Time* Alexander Gardner’s “preoccupation with the dead” still remained with the photographer (27). Though still focused unblinkingly on the dead, the images captured by Thomas Roche on the morning after the final Union assault on Fort Mahone at Petersburg in April 1865, nevertheless marked a substantial shift in the way the unburied dead were

depicted. (Appendix – Figs. 19, 20, 21, 22 and 23).²⁸ Thomas Roche recorded twenty exposures of dead Confederate soldiers in the trenches of Fort Mahone. Roche's photographs converged invariably on the wounded, bloody faces of unburied soldiers. Contrary to the Antietam and Gettysburg images of dead, where there was a concern for providing a landscape that encompassed the corpses, in Roche's photographs the empty, dreary trenches are the only element surrounding the bodies. Thomas Roche's dead soldier is almost always isolated and his mutilated face is recognizable. His figure occupies most of the scene, thus obliterating landscape or any living human presence.

In the previously mentioned *Atlantic Monthly* article of July 1863, Oliver Wendel Holmes referred to the fact that the Union soldiers were dying away from home and their burial did not conform with the way the deceased were traditionally handled: "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!" (11). Holmes stressed a crucial point: photographs of unburied soldiers emphasized the drama and the trauma of relatives who had to mourn their soldiers in the absence of their corpses. The anonymous mass of unburied, decaying bodies was not in conformity with antebellum practices and expectations regarding the treatment and disposal of the dead.

In antebellum America there was a cherished tradition of taking care of the remains of the deceased.²⁹ Resurgent literature about *Ars Moriendi* helped those who wished to provide a "Good Death" for their deceased.³⁰ "Good Death" signified the valorization of the corpse, memorialisation of the dead and perception of death as an extension of life and part of the cycle of nature. The rituals called for the body to be prepared at home, which meant that it was beautified (washed, shaved, clothed) in the home, among family, friends, the local physician and the religious figure, particularly in

²⁸ Thomas Roche (1826-1895) worked for the Anthony brothers.

²⁹ For further information on antebellum practices regarding mourning and death see Gary Laderman's *The Sacred Remains: American Attitudes Toward Death, 1799-1883*, and Jay Ruby's *Secure the Shadow: Death and Photography in America*. See also the chapter "Dying: 'To Lay Down My Life'" in Drew Gilpin Faust's *This Republic of Suffering*.

³⁰ *Ars Moriendi* ("The Art of Dying") is the name of two Latin texts dating from about 1415 and 1450. These texts offered advice on the protocols and procedures of a good death and on how to die well. The texts implied that dying had a good side and was nothing to be afraid of as long as the deceased accepted Christ's will. The *Ars Moriendi* tradition that followed enabled both mourners and the dying person to learn how to prepare to die and what a good death meant, by supplying the protocols, rituals and consolations for the deathbed.

rural areas. Thus, someone's death was not only a family's concern, but also the affair of a whole community. In *The Sacred Remains* Gary Laderman stresses that these practices reinforced social cohesion by creating a strong communal bond. Along with the grooming of the corpse, there was an effort to conceal signs of physical decomposition, since the corpse's integrity was considered sacred. The mourners' intention was to make the body look as similar as possible to its living appearance, more lifelike.

Death was perceived as something natural and these practices were seen as appropriate and correct. Furthermore, they were expected. In the graveyard, mourners would often place epitaphs which provided a detailed recorded history of the deceased. The tomb itself would be adorned with death iconography, namely cherubs, hourglasses, willows and skulls. Sometimes there would be daguerreotypes of the deceased on the tombstones, which enabled those visiting the grave to recollect the image of the one who had passed away. After the burial, mourners would wear brooches, locketts or mourning rings reminding them of those who had died. Gary Laderman comments that "the rite of passage from life to death, deathbed to grave, allowed the survivors an opportunity to pay their last respects and to make certain that collective action repaired the rupture in the social fabric" (37).

Another ritual aimed at immortalizing the image of the deceased. Although death rates had slightly declined in the pre-civil war period, infant mortality remained high. With the purpose of eternalizing their child's "likeness," parents often asked for the services of a daguerreotypist. These daguerreotypes focused on the child's face. The dead child would usually be placed on a sofa or in bed so that it would seem to be asleep. It would be the child's "last sleep."³¹ Thus, postmortem photography intended to preserve the living appearance of those who had died. Jay Ruby stresses the fact that "photographs that memorialize a life or commemorate a death provide us with a means to remember so we can forget" (Ruby 174). That is, "mourners are always confronted

³¹ The association of sleep with death dates to the beginning of Western culture and was common in Greek and Roman mythology. This association remained powerful in the Christian era when death was seen as a prolonged sleep and resurrection as the final awakening. In the nineteenth century numerous grave monuments, particularly of women and children, show the deceased lying in bed or on a couch as if in a temporary sleep.

with two seemingly contradictory needs: to keep the memory of the deceased alive and at the same time, accept the reality of death and loss” (174). This implied that grief could only be appeased with the commemoration of the dead, which, in turn, demanded the integrity and dignity of the corpse (“Good Death”). All this would be carried out in the home, within the sphere of the private. Photographs of the dead as well as other mourning tokens and objects remained within the family.

By contrast, stereographs of dead soldiers became objects with a market value, mere commodities that were purchased by an anonymous public which, in turn, had no connection with the deceased whatsoever. Moreover, these commodities would be displayed in the living rooms of Americans. Death had become a spectacle viewed with the “voyeuristic lure” Susan Sontag refers to. Vicki Goldberg comments that “at a time when parlors displayed pictures of dead relatives posed as if napping, a harsher and more unmistakable death had come home” (*The Power of Photography* 25). Thus, this was the “first living-room war,” as Jan Zita Grover coined it.

The war challenged established concepts and patterns of thought and action concerning not only the way Americans traditionally died, but also the way they perceived death. The corruptibility of the dead body opposed antebellum practices and expectations in relation to death. Furthermore, the fact that many corpses remained unidentified and were buried hastily stood in stark contrast to the preparation of the corpse and identification on the grave in pre-war times. On the fields of battle soldiers had to deal with two issues: the death of their comrades and the possible imminence of their own death. A significant proportion of the army’s men made every effort to lessen the trauma that a sudden, unprepared-for death would mean for their relatives. These soldiers would write condolence letters to the family, explaining how their family member had died in peace and how he had prayed and accepted God’s will.³² According to Drew Gilpin Faust, “condolence letters constitute a genre that emerged from the combination of the assumptions of *ars moriendi* with the ‘peculiar conditions and necessities’ of the Civil War. These letters sought to make absent loved ones virtual witnesses to the dying moments they had been denied, to link home and battlefield, and

³² For further information on the means soldiers used to relieve pain and isolation on the battlefield see Drew Gilpin Faust’s chapter “Dying: ‘To Lay Down My Life’ in *This Republic of Suffering*.”

to mend the fissures war had introduced into the fabric of the Good Death” (15). Other soldiers, foreboding their own death, tried to make their *memento mori* less unattended and isolated. They would often be found with photographs of both themselves and their loved ones. They would also write letters to their families. These soldiers were trying to preserve the bond that provided a sense of unity with their families and, ultimately, with society itself. By avoiding an anonymous death, these soldiers were striving hard to repair the fissures that war had introduced into the social fabric. Photographs of relatives and letters were small tokens, used as surrogates for the love of their family and community. They allowed for a sense of belonging and, ultimately, enabled the identification of the corpse.

In spite of the efforts to make sudden death on a battlefield seem natural and prepared for, the astounding numbers of casualties hindered, most of the times, such practices. Mass death on a battlefield would often lead to mass burial.³³ Transporting the dead soldiers home was an insurmountable task. Instead, they would be buried hastily, especially during the warm season when the heat accelerated decomposition. In *John Brown's Body* Franny Nudelman stated that “at times, however, the corpse – contorted, dismembered, unrecognizable – could not be idealized; instead, the dead revealed that war, far from producing a sense of belonging, stripped away the conventions, beliefs, and certainties that allowed people to love their dead and, by extension, to love one another” (2-3).

On several occasions, civilians would rush to the battlefield in search of their beloved.³⁴ In the immediate aftermath of the Antietam battle Oliver Wendel Holmes set out on a journey to look for his wounded son. He published the recollections of his trip in “My Hunt after ‘The Captain’,” an article that would appear in the *Atlantic Monthly* of December 1862. In this long article the writer describes the wounded soldiers he met tramping along the roads out of the scene of battle, the conversations he struck up with them and the “pitiable sight” of the dead being committed to the earth (743). Holmes coined the term “the carnival of death” to refer to the brutality of the wreckage. Coming

³³ See Faust’s chapter “Burying: ‘New Lessons Caring for the Dead’” in *This Republic of Suffering* for further information on burial practices during War time.

³⁴ See Faust’s chapter “Naming: ‘The Significant Word UNKNOWN’” in *This Republic of Suffering* for further information on this topic.

across this “carnival of death” was a harrowing experience for the narrator of this arduous journey:

The opposing tides of battle must have blended their waves at this point, for portions of gray uniform were mingled with the “garments rolled in blood” torn from our own dead and wounded soldiers. I picked up a Rebel canteen, and one of our own, - but there was something repulsive about the trodden and stained relics of the stale battlefield. It was like the table of some hideous orgy left uncleared, and one turned away disgusted from its broken fragments and muddy heel-taps. (749)

These “trodden and stained relics of the stale battle” were a poignant image of the wreckage of a devastating war. The “hideous orgy” was as a metaphor for the dismemberment and annihilation that was occurring on the once beautiful fields of America, the remnants of such an orgy being thrown carelessly away. The author of this text could feel only repulsion and disgust towards such sights, for which there is no anodyne. One can only turn away.

Almost a century and a half has passed since the Civil War ended. Notwithstanding this, these photographic records still produce different interpretations and reactions. In *John Brown's Body*, for instance, Franny Nudelman argues that Thomas Roche's close-ups enabled the viewers to feel sympathy for the deceased and, therefore, to sense some kind of intimacy with the dead (Appendix – Figs. 19, 20, 21 and 22):

Trenches provide enclosures that, like the sharpshooter's home, shelter the dead. Many appear in the “last sleep” pose of post-mortem photographs... in some instances they are curled up in the fetal position and appear nearly childlike. Most importantly, these photographs dwell on the features of the corpse's face, making it easier for viewers to feel grief. By enabling the viewer to observe the corpse closely, and in nearly total isolation, these photographs individuate the battlefield dead. (128-9)

Nudelman's point is that, by excluding living subjects, and thus decontextualizing the dead, the photographer shows his emotion and sympathy for the deceased. According to this author, the individualization of the corpse stands in stark contrast to the images recorded at Antietam and Gettysburg, where unburied bodies were shown in piles.

In a similar vein, Nudelman affirms, in the same book, that the photograph by Alexander Gardner at Gettysburg ("Home of a Rebel Sharpshooter") resembles a postmortem photograph and is, therefore, in accordance with antebellum practices as regards the treatment and disposal of the dead (Appendix – Fig. 9):

With its youthful subject in a sleeping pose, and the accompanying text that describes the mother's undying hope for their reunion, "The Home of a Rebel Sharpshooter" closely resembles a post-mortem photograph. A stone wall between two large rocks encloses the sharpshooter's corpse, providing the "home" of the photograph's title. The dead soldier looks as if he is sleeping – he lies on his back. Stretched between rock walls, his head resting on a blanket or backpack, his face turned slightly toward the camera. While his disheveled clothing signifies the intense pain he suffered while dying, his facial expression is peaceful and his body composed. (122)

On the contrary, Susan Sontag comments on similar photographs taken during the Boer War (1899-1902) where corpses lie inert inside a trench. Sontag states that "what is particularly aggressive about the image is the absence of a landscape. The trench's receding jumble of bodies fills the whole picture space" (*Regarding the Pain of Others* 64). In addition, she argues that anonymous American casualties of the Second World War that had appeared shrouded or with their faces turned away implied "a dignity" on the part of the photographer. Thus, Sontag's view is in sharp disagreement with Nudelman's opinion. Furthermore, Sontag states that:

With our dead, there has always been a powerful interdiction against showing the naked face. The photographs taken by Gardner and O'Sullivan still shock because the Union and Confederate soldiers lie on their backs, with the faces of some clearly visible. American soldiers fallen on the battlefield were not shown again in a major publication for many years..." (*Regarding the Pain of Others* 70)

It is not my intention, on this point, to take sides. Nevertheless, it appears to me that both views reveal a certain amount of partiality. First, in the case of Nudelman's view in relation to Thomas Roche's photographs, it seems to me difficult to feel sympathy or grief for the image of a distorted, bloody face. Second, although these images clearly individuate the dead, the corpses remain isolated and uncared for. Their death is still brutal, regardless of the fact that they can be recognized by their relatives. It is obvious that these men died unexpectedly in the midst of the chaos of battle. At their *memento mori* they were unattended and unwitnessed by any comforting presence. Third, they lie in the mud, like some forlorn animal thrown into the muddy trenches, more reminiscent of a trap than a shelter. Finally, Nudelman seems to have either forgotten or simply undermined the fact that Roche took other photographs, where the corpses are undifferentiated (Appendix – Fig. 23).

As for the "Home of a Rebel Sharpshooter," Nudelman describes the young man as lying "in a sleeping pose" and encompassed by a stone wall which reminds Nudelman of "home," "his head ... resting on a blanket or backpack." As we have seen in chapter one ("Staged photography: the case of the moved bodies at Gettysburg"), this was only possible because the photographers themselves placed the young man in that position. This was a staged, composed photograph with the aim of conveying meaning. Furthermore, the sentimental rhetoric accompanying the photograph in Gardner's caption of the image provided the context for Nudelman's text:

The sharpshooter had evidently been wounded in the head by a fragment of a shell which had exploded over him, and had laid down upon his blanket to await death... Was he delirious with agony, or did death come slowly to his relief, while memories of home grew dearer as the field of carnage faded before him? What visions, of loved ones far away, may have hovered above his stony pillow! What familiar voices may he not have heard, like whispers beneath the roar of battle, as his eyes grew heavy in their long, last sleep! (Gardner 90)

Surely, the image of a dead young soldier resting on the ground and somehow sheltered by a stone wall is far more appealing and less aggressive than the images of so many unburied soldiers, depicted in the most grotesque positions. Contorted, bloated bodies

are never a pleasant sight. Alexander Gardner and his team composed the photograph of the “Rebel Sharpshooter” in order to convey the feelings of sympathy and grief Franny Nudelman refers to. On the whole, Nudelman’s argument in *John Brown’s Body* is that photographs of the battlefield dead did not allow their viewers to feel either grief or compassion. Ultimately, this author sets this argument within a broader logic which envisaged the process of the corpse’s decomposition resonant with organic imagery. Thus, representations of dead bodies came to be perceived, according to this author, as a source of fertility. The process of decomposition would renew the natural world and would, therefore, contribute to mobilize the living to the effort of war.

On the other hand, I cannot agree with Sontag’s view that Gardner’s and O’Sullivan’s photographs shock because they somehow convey “indecent information.” It was the first time in history that such records were made and, regardless of the ethical issues which arise, and which have already been dealt with, those photographs helped bring about a shift in the way humans perceived war and death. In this respect, these photographs were important and played a crucial role. Sontag’s view in *Regarding the Pain of Others* is that all war photography conveys indecent information and viewers are, basically voyeurs, witnessing other’s pain.

Had photography not emerged in the nineteenth century in time to record these dreadful images, soldiers would still have fallen amidst the chaos of battle. Mothers would still have mourned their sons in the absence of their corpses and pain, grief and despair would certainly have filled the hearts of many American citizens. The novelty photography introduced into this large-scale conflict was the fact that, instead of having to rely on abstract, idealized and imaginary conceptions of how soldiers died, Americans could now fully visualize battlefield death in all its concrete and gruesome aspects. Thus, by introducing an element of *reality* into the way such conflicts were depicted, photography enabled viewers to change pre-conceived and long-established concepts in relation to death and war itself. That historic shift, then, constitutes the enduring importance of these photographs.

2.2. Photographing African American Union soldiers: the great invisibility

The story of the participation of African Americans in the Union army during the American Civil War is one of contradictions and paradoxes. On the one hand, it was a story of significant progress towards the recognition of African Americans' aspirations to equality. Black males were conscious that their engagement in this fratricidal conflict could eventually lead to their recognition as equals fighting a common enemy. Moreover, they expected that this war would result in the subjugation of the southern states by Abraham Lincoln's Republican Government and the concomitant abolition of slavery. African Americans cherished this dream and, by crushing the South, they hoped to fulfill it. On the other hand, it was also a story of major setbacks which time and again prevented blacks from attaining their goal of equal citizenship. In fact, African Americans' involvement in the Civil War proved difficult. There were several factors that contributed to this situation. Among these factors, I will highlight three.

The first factor I wish to draw attention to is the fact that African Americans were prevented from joining the Union army due to a 1792 Federal law which would only be repealed in 1862. Black males' enthusiasm for enlisting and contributing to the enormous effort of the war was, therefore, curbed right from the beginning of the hostilities between North and South.

Second, Lincoln's administration stressed that the purpose of the Civil War was the restoration of the Union. Although Abraham Lincoln opposed the extension of slavery to other states, he did not wish, at first, to interfere with the institution of slavery in states where it already existed. Therefore, the slavery issue was not included among the causes of war against the Confederate states. This was plainly stated in Lincoln's First Inaugural Address, on March 4, 1861. The feeling that it was a white man's war circulated among the public and the press alike. A cartoon published in *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* on October 12, 1861, shows Abraham Lincoln pushing away an African American who had been clinging to him. The caption is suggestive: "I'm sorry to have to drop you, Sambo, but this concern won't carry us both" (Appendix – Fig. 24).

Lincoln's skepticism toward the participation of African Americans in the Union army took a more unexpected turn the following year. Indeed, the movement towards colonization favored the gradual expatriation of African Americans to Central America so that non-whites could start a new life in a new country. On August 4, 1862, while meeting with representatives of the African Americans' faction, President Lincoln affirmed:

Whether it is right or wrong I need not discuss, but this physical difference is a great disadvantage to us both, as I think your race suffer very greatly, many of them by living among us, while ours suffer from your presence....There is an unwillingness on the part of our people, harsh as it may be, for you free colored people to remain with us.... I do not propose to discuss this, but to propose it as a fact with which we have to deal...it is better for us both, therefore, to be separated. (qtd in McPherson 94)

Although Lincoln's words were not welcome among African Americans, the President still went ahead with his plans to send colonists to Central America. His colonization scheme, however, failed when, in 1863, nearly a hundred blacks died on the island of Isle à Vache.³⁵

The third factor which thwarted African American's enlistment had to do with the deep-rooted racism prevailing in the North. In *Democracy in America* Alexis de Tocqueville commented: "the prejudice of race appears to be stronger in the States which have abolished slavery than in those where it still exists; and nowhere is it so intolerant as in those States where servitude never has been known"(402).

Racism towards the "negro" was a widespread feeling and even anti-slavery factions acknowledged separatist theories. These theories were founded in the deeply felt notion of race inequality, which accepted the existence of two separate races: a superior and an inferior race. On the whole, this led to the belief that there were certain values appertaining to a superior, white race: higher intelligence, purity, chastity, goodness and nobler moral standards. By contrast, the inferior, black race was associated with intellectual mediocrity, immoral behavior and general incapacity to live

³⁵ For further information on the colonization measures see "The Colonization Issue" in James McPherson's *The Negro's Civil War*.

according to the precepts of civilization. Moreover, the utilitarian, positivist spirit of the nineteenth century allowed for phrenological studies to be conducted. Among other purposes, these studies aimed at the measurement of skulls in order to determine intellectual faculties, emotional traits or moral deficiencies. Physical traits were, therefore, evidence of racial difference.

Blacks were usually perceived to be rude, sexually depraved and lazy. Also, they were only considered capable of unskilled jobs. Furthermore, in Christian symbolism, black is the color of the prince of darkness, the Devil and, in the Middle Ages, it was associated with witchcraft, the “black art.” Jessie Daniels expounds on this theory: “the ‘almost religious’ white symbol stands for all that is good, while the essence of ‘blackness’ is associated with ‘everything bad, muddy, ugly, evil’” (74). In general, black also suggests mourning, negation and death. Indeed, African Americans were usually assigned tasks that required the exhumation and burial of bodies. A cartoon published in the *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine* in 1864, entitled “Jacob, the black grave digger” portrays an African American man with the tool of his office, a spade for digging up graves, and with the image of the Washington Monument behind him (Appendix – Fig. 25). Furthermore, the services of embalming dead bodies were advertised as follows: “Bodies Embalmed by Us NEVER TURN BLACK! But retain their color and appearance” (qtd in Faust 95).³⁶ Hence, death and blacks remained “united” in a simplistic, perverse interpretation.

The idea of the so-called inferiority of blacks was highlighted by the biting satire that pervaded the press and other means of communication alike. The exaggeration of physical traits was common practice. Indeed, some of the cartoons that were often published in *Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper* or *Harper’s Weekly* ridiculed the “negro.” A cartoon published in *Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper* on October 26,

³⁶ By the middle of the Civil War military authorities became increasingly sensitized to the problem of burying the enormous number of dead soldiers. Decomposition due to heat, among other causes, was a threat to the integrity of the corpse. Thus, in order to prevent deterioration of the corpses and in order to find a means whereby corpses could be transported home, the Army undertook the task of having bodies embalmed. For further information on these procedures see “Let the Dead Bury the Dead” in Gary Laderman’s *The Sacred Remains* and “Burying: ‘New Lessons Caring for the Dead’” in Drew Gilpin Faust’s *This Republic of Suffering*.

1861, portrays African American men with cannons on their backs at a Civil War battle scene. Their lips and chins are protruding and they resemble animals, since most of them are represented crawling on all fours. The caption is provocative: “Dark artillery, or How to make the contrabands useful” (Appendix – Fig. 26).³⁷

We therefore have no trouble concluding that African Americans had to surmount formidable obstacles in order to be accepted as common soldiers in the Union army. Yet, their efforts were not in vain. The reasons which led to the admission of African Americans, including many former slaves fleeing from the oppressive South, were also complex. First, African American intellectuals and orators, along with white abolitionists, played a key role in drawing attention to the slavery issue and to the need to enlist black men in the Union army. Meetings were held, petitions compiled and appeals made. Frederick Douglass was one of the leading orators who made every effort to turn slavery into the prime cause of the war.

Another, more compelling reason accounted for the shift in the Presidency’s opinion. The humiliating defeat at the Battle of Bull Run, on July 21, 1861, along with the unexpected setbacks experienced by the Union army during 1862 contributed to the gradual change of opinion concerning African American’s presence in the armed forces. Moreover, the initial burst of enthusiasm at the outset of hostilities was weakening, and recruitment of new members was becoming increasingly difficult. The heavy casualties suffered by the Unionists repelled new recruits. As a result, on July 17, 1862, Congress passed two laws providing for the enlistment of African Americans as soldiers.³⁸

Finally, on November 7, 1862, the first African American regiment was raised. Thomas Wentworth Higginson was appointed colonel of the first regiment of emancipated slaves, the First South Carolina Volunteers.³⁹ The following extract from *Army Life in a Black Regiment* is representative of the favorable opinion of the author towards the newly recruited members:

³⁷ “Contraband” was the name given to former slaves fleeing from the southern states.

³⁸ The first law was the Confiscation Act, which enabled the president to employ African Americans. The second was a militia act repealing the provisions of 1792 which had barred African Americans from joining the army.

³⁹ Thomas Wentworth Higginson (1823-1911) was an author, abolitionist and soldier. He wrote several essays for the *Atlantic Monthly*, covering the time he spent with his regiment. These essays would eventually make up a narrative which the author published in 1869 under the title *Army Life in a Black Regiment*. He is also remembered as a correspondent and literary mentor to Emily Dickinson.

It needs but a few days to show the absurdity of distrusting the military availability of these people. They have quite as much average comprehension as whites of the need of the thing, as much courage (I doubt not), as much previous knowledge of the gun, and, above all, a readiness of ear and of imitation, which, for purposes of drill, counterbalances any defect of mental training....As to camp-life, they have little to sacrifice; they are better fed, housed, and clothed than ever in their lives before, and they appear to have few inconvenient vices. They are simple, docile, and affectionate almost to the point of absurdity. (Higginson 8)

In the ensuing months, other “colored” regiments were raised and the prejudice towards African Americans began to wane. The Emancipation Proclamation, issued on January 1, 1863, declared that all people formerly held as slaves were henceforward free. This resulted in a mass exodus of freedmen to the North.⁴⁰ Five hundred thousand are estimated to have come across Union lines. Nearly two hundred thousand of these freedmen served in non-military activities, such as laborers, teamsters, cooks, carpenters and scouts in the Union army camps. On July 18, 1863, *Harper’s Weekly* published an article entitled “Action of the Colored People,” commenting on the enlistment of ex-slaves. These men were enlisting for the military life:

A number of the colored men of this city met at the Bethel Church... yesterday, with regard to their enlisting for the State defense.... Among those present were Fred Douglas and most of the colored clergymen of the city. The following were adopted: Resolved, that we deeply feel for, and sincerely sympathize with, those of our race who are flying from the chains of slavery of a rebellious horde, and, forced before the march of a conscript army of marauders, have sought a refuge in our midst; and that we hereby pledge to them the protection of our homes....It was proposed that the colored men present tender to the Government their services for three months or the emergency. (460)

The epic tone of this text reflects the mood that had been created. The “colored people” were enthusiastically welcomed by supporters of the Northern cause. Several

⁴⁰ “Freedman” was a former slave who had been emancipated.

lithographs and cartoons published in the press portrayed African Americans as brave soldiers fearlessly charging the enemy. Their heroic death was seen as a sacrifice for the nation, represented by Columbia, who, in return, praised these soldiers as heroes. In one lithograph, the caption “He died for me” emphasizes the sacrifice of the black soldier (Appendix – Fig. 27).

By the end of 1863, fifty-eight African American regiments had been raised. Furthermore, the soldiers’ performance in battle was recognized as valiant. The *New York Times* editorial on June 11, 1863, entitled “Negro Soldiers: The Question Settled and its Consequences,” commented on the fearlessness of the “colored” troops: “this official testimony settles the question that the negro race can fight.... It is no longer possible to doubt the bravery and steadiness of the colored race, when rightly led” (par. 8).

Despite all the progress that had been made, and the fact that there had been considerable change in the attitude of the public, the press and Lincoln’s administration towards African Americans, the bitter truth was that black soldiers continued to suffer significant discrimination. One of the forms of discrimination was the tasks they were entrusted with. They were often assigned a disproportionate amount of heavy labor and fatigue work. Black regiments were usually assigned to bury the dead. (Appendix – Fig. 28). Indeed, these menial, exhausting tasks contributed to the perpetuation of their status as soldiers of an inferior rank. Moreover, they were denied equal pay and could never aspire to promotion. They were punished more often than whites and were, at times, whipped. Although whipping would be outlawed by Congress, its striking similarity with the punishment of slaves is revealing. In *John Brown’s Body* Franny Nudelman argues that black regiments suffered blatant discrimination and “the possibility that military service most resembled enslavement and that the soldier who fought, and perhaps died, for his country did not exemplify heroic agency so much as effective subordination” (133).

In Andrew Black’s article “In the service of the United States: Comparative mortality among African-American and white troops in the Union Army” the author argues that African Americans suffered from disease at a considerably higher rate than did white soldiers. He also states that black troops were systematically stationed in

locations considered unhealthy.⁴¹ Consequently, countless black soldiers died of disease even before reaching the fields of battle. In *Army Life in a Black Regiment* Thomas Wentworth Higginson refers to this aspect:

In what respect were the colored troops a source of disappointment? To me in one respect only, - that of health. Their health improved, indeed, as they grew more familiar with military life; but I think that neither their physical nor moral temperament gave them that toughness, that obstinate purpose of living, which sustains the more materialistic Anglo-Saxon. They had not, to be sure, the same predominant diseases, suffering in the pulmonary, not in the digestive organs; but they suffered a good deal. They felt malaria less, but they were more easily chocked by dust and made ill by dampness.... They were injured throughout the army by an undue share of fatigue duty, which is not only exhausting but demoralizing to a soldier; by the unsuitableness of the rations, which gave them salt meat instead of rice and hominy; and by the lack of good medical attendance. Their childlike constitutions peculiarly needed prompt and efficient surgical care; but almost all the colored troops enlisted late in the war, when it is hard to get good surgeons for any regiments, and especially for these. (203)

This status of institutionalized discrimination and subordination would ultimately be reflected in the photographs portraying African American Union soldiers. Among the tens of thousands of scenes from the theater of war, only a tiny portion of photographic records was dedicated to representing the African American soldier. This is astonishing and somewhat paradoxical, taking into account the fact that more than a hundred thousand black males are reported to have fought in the Union regiments. Nonetheless, it must be noted that, although there were black photographers operating at the time of the Civil war, these were a minority and their field of action was limited to the city photo gallery. Consequently, images of African Americans were naturally recorded by white professionals, subject to these men's viewpoints and prejudices. In

⁴¹ Andrew Black gives detailed information regarding the types of diseases affecting African Americans and comparative statistics in relation to white troops. He mentions the fact that 68.15% of all "colored regiments" served in the Mississippi valley, considered to be the area most prone to infections and disease of various kinds.

“Reflections in Black” Vicki Goldberg argues that “being able to shape one’s own public (and private) image is the beginning of empowerment” (185). Therefore, had there been black photographers operating on the fields of the strife, African American soldiers would likely have been represented differently in the photographic records of the war.

Trying to find photographs of black soldiers is like searching for a needle in a haystack.⁴² Despite the fact that the American Civil War was the first armed conflict to be largely recorded through the lenses of photographic devices, and despite the astounding number of photographers working on the battle fields and the subsequent production of thousands of records of army life and battlefield alike, African Americans were hardly ever noticed by field photographers. Among the photographic material I came across in the Library of Congress Online Catalogue and the National Archives, a large proportion were cartoons or prints from the press and did not correspond to the material I was looking for. Another portion referred to photographs which could be split into two categories: Scenes depicting common African Americans, mostly “contrabands” which did not necessarily involve military activity, and scenes from army life. Most of the photographic production depicting African American soldiers was studio portraits. Soldiers and officers alike were fond of recording their “likenesses” before setting out to war. Uncertain of the outcome of this fratricidal conflict, they wished to provide their family and friends with a lasting *souvenir*, as we have seen in chapter one (Appendix – Fig. 29).

On the fields of battle the lenses of the photographers captured different scenes. One of the targets of these field photographers was the depiction of regiments and encampments (Appendix – Figs. 30, 31, 32 and 33). In these, groups of black soldiers are usually seen in the background, their faces hardly discernible. There is a certain amount of destitution and abandonment about these sights. It is also curious to note that, in several images depicting “colored” regiments, only the white officers are present.

⁴² My search for this photographic material focused on the following sources: The Library of Congress and the National Archives Online Catalogues, where the majority of prints and photographs from the Civil War time are stored; *In the Wake of Battle: The Civil War Images of Mathew Brady*, published in 2004 by George Sullivan; *Gardner’s Photographic Sketchbook of the American Civil War 1861-1865*; George Barnard’s *Photographic Views of Sherman’s Campaign of 1866*; and *Russell’s Civil War Photographs: 116 Historic Prints*.

African Americans were “banish[ed] to the margin of visibility,” as Alan Trachtenberg comments:

On the whole, just as Northern rhetoric emphasized the cause of “Union”, called the enemy “rebels” rather than slaveholders, and made the defeat of secession rather than slavery the most prominent war goal, the photographic record tends to banish blacks to the margin of visibility – their presence unacknowledged even when plainly there. (*Reading American Photographs* 110)

When the recorded scenes include whites, there is nearly always a difference between the posture of whites and blacks, which irretrievably separates one group from the other. African American soldiers usually occupy a more discreet position, often in the background and/or behind their white officers. The soldiers’ presence is so negligible, in fact, that it might remain unnoticed, were it not for the captions which direct the viewer’s eye. Whenever black soldiers occupy the foreground of the pictorial representation, their posture usually indicates submission and obedience. If they are photographed next to standing white officers, they are either squatting or sitting on the ground. And the reverse occurs: whenever the white officers are sitting, black soldiers are standing, usually behind their hierarchical superiors, as if expecting an order or request (Appendix – Figs. 34, 35, 36 and 37).

Other photographs are dedicated to the representation of individuals at work. These individuals are generally performing menial, time-consuming tasks and they are usually isolated (Appendix – Figs. 38 and 39). Nevertheless, there is a photograph that illustrates reward (Appendix – Fig. 40). This image portrays African American soldiers and sailors who were granted medals of honor.

Apart from the Library of Congress Online Catalogue and the National Archives, there is another source worth looking into.⁴³ In *Gardner’s Photographic*

⁴³ Except for *The Civil War Images of Mathew Brady*, which contains some photographs of African Americans, George Barnard’s publication makes no reference to these soldiers and *Russell’s Civil War Photographs* includes only two photographs of African American workers. *Gardner’s Photographic Sketchbook of the American Civil War 1861-1865* includes three photographs which will be referred to in the text.

Sketchbook of the American Civil War 1861-1865 there are three photographs depicting African Americans: plates 27, 76 and 94 (Appendix – Figs. 41, 42 and 43). Plate 27 is entitled “What do I want, John Henry?” and depicts a scene in which a black youth is standing beside a seated officer. The servile young man performs the role of the servant who is waiting on his master. Furthermore, the scene echoes the slave-owner relationship. The text accompanying this scene narrates the story of John Henry, how he had been admitted as a camp servant and how he had left the army:

Meanwhile, the Captain became a Colonel. Richmond was evacuated, and John Henry became a resident of the rebel capital. Here freedom burst upon him in a new light; he formed new associations – principally with the other sex – to raise whose spirits he would appropriate his employer’s. As his mind expanded, boots became monotonous, manual labor distasteful, and a dissolution of partnership inevitable. The Colonel went to another scene of duty. John Henry remained, whether owing to inducements offered by the provisional Government is not yet definitely known. (Gardner 62)

The implication that blacks tend to become lazy and careless when left on their own, is obvious. The text surreptitiously implies that, without the hard rule of white men, African Americans became ungovernable.

Plate 76, which Alexander Gardner captioned “A Fancy Group,” shows an episode in which two squatting black young men hold two cocks in their hands. An audience of several white men watches the performance and the accompanying text helps clarify the extraordinary scene:

Cock fighting, however, was quite unusual, and seldom permitted, except when some of the contrabands incited their captured Shanghais, or more ignoble fowls, to combat. Such displays were always ludicrous, and were generally exhibited for the amusement of the mess for whom the feathered bipeds were intended. (Gardner 162)

This scene is revealing. First, the author of the text suggests that cock fighting was illegal and was only allowed when the contrabands “incited their captured Shanghais.” Thus, he implies that black people (“contrabands”) habitually carried out illegal

activities. Second, cock fighting is usually perceived as something primitive, something done by uncivilized, uncultured peoples. This was not the entertainment appropriate for an educated American. It was imported by “contrabands.”

Plate 94 unfolds an even more bizarre scene: “A Burial Party,” in which African Americans are burying the remains of soldiers. These are not common remains. They are isolated skulls and bones left unburied and now a mere jumble of former men. Needless to say, the scene is repulsive. Moreover, by associating death with blacks, it creates a perverse, subliminal message. Furthermore, this was a recurrent association, as we have seen before. On this, Alan Trachtenberg comments:

The image resonates beyond text and frame, its grim ironies and bizarre revelations suddenly flashing before us the “remains” Holmes wished to bury: decomposing flesh and bleached bones of the dead attended by those very humans whose claim to full humanity represented an aim of the war repressed during the war itself. In a gesture so simple it eludes the author of the text, the two grand invisibilities of the war realize themselves here as one image: death as decomposition and dissolution; blacks laboring in once pastoral fields, reaping an even grimmer harvest than that envisaged in the biblical expression “Harvest of Death.” (111)

In this picture, death and blacks go hand in hand. Trachtenberg sees them as “the two grand invisibilities of the war:” unburied corpses, which no one had cared to bury, and blacks, whose claims to emancipation and autonomy would not be recognized through the experience of war.

On the whole, the scarcity of photographic records depicting African American army men accounts for the “invisibility” to which these men were relegated. Although black soldiers were eventually accepted within the Union army, they were never placed on an equal footing with whites. Their presence was needed, but that does not imply that it was welcome or desired. Moreover, there was some overlap between the role of the soldier and the role of the laborer. This ambiguity weakened the blacks’ efforts to become soldiers and served to perpetuate their status as unskilled, badly-paid laborers, belonging to the so-called inferior race. Furthermore, several photographs eternalize the stereotype of the servant-master relationship.

In *John Brown's Body*, Franny Nudelman comments on a triptych which portrays the transformation of the “slave-turned-soldier:”⁴⁴

These images do not tell a straightforward narrative of progress but show the career of the slave-turned-soldier as he moves forward, and back again. The posture of the recruit ...contributes to the forward motion of the series of images and the implied narrative of historical progress. The veteran faces back to the left, aborting the promised trajectory of the painting and, by analogy, standing as reminder of the unrealized hopes of black soldiers themselves. His gesture of allegiance, saluting as he applies for the government for money, mirrors the servile gesture of the “contraband” who doffs his hat to the recruiting officer. (156)

The trope of “the slave-turned-soldier” appeared often in the press, namely in cartoons and drawings. It told the story of the fugitive slave who was embraced by the Union army (Appendix – Fig. 44).

Military life and service might have been thought, at the time, to be paving the way toward emancipation of African-Americans. Indeed, one-hundred and seventy thousand black men are reported to have served in Union regiments and thirty-eight thousand lost their lives during the American Civil War. Yet, their presence would remain “invisible” in photographic records. When, by any chance, these men are “visible” in photographs, their representation bears an uncanny resemblance to the antebellum slave.

⁴⁴ The triptych consists of three panels entitled “The Contraband,” “The Recruit” and “The Veteran”. They show the same man in his transformation from a newly-emancipated slave to a proud soldier. In the third panel, he is a one-legged veteran, approaching the marshal’s office to draw his pension. These three paintings belong to the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

2.3. Photographing the wounded and the sick: catalogs of “notorious” Americans

As the Civil War dragged on and death tolls mounted, America suffered tremendous losses. The conflict scattered dead bodies all over the nation, leaving a trail of blood and annihilation. Oliver Wendell Holmes’s “carnival of death” seemed to have no end, his image of a “hideous orgy” lingering on. As we have seen, soldiers were either buried in mass graves or left to rot and decompose. Those who died on enemy land were buried away from home, if buried at all.⁴⁵ American families had to cope with the unnatural, violent death of their loved ones, mourning their soldiers in the absence of their corpses. Death not only destroyed family ties, it also disrupted social cohesion. Unprepared-for death on the battlefield challenged conventional, established attitudes towards the treatment and disposal of corpses. As a consequence, the individual’s respect for the deceased no longer applied during the war.

On November 19, 1863, Abraham Lincoln gave a short address at the dedication of the Gettysburg cemetery. His brief speech focused on the need to accomplish the mission which had been undertaken by Union men:

It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us – that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they here gave the last full measure of devotion – that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain; that this nation shall have a new birth of freedom; and that this government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth. (par. 3)

⁴⁵ In an effort to provide a dignified end to the remains of soldiers, the federal government took on the task of creating national cemeteries. For further information on the creation of cemeteries see the chapter “National Interests” in Laderman’s *The Sacred Remains* as well as the chapter “Accounting: ‘Our Obligations to the Dead’” in Faust’s *This Republic of Suffering*. What would become one of the most moving and emblematic of the national cemeteries, the Gettysburg National Cemetery, was created shortly after the Battle of Gettysburg. Union dead were moved from inadequate burial sites and re-interred at Gettysburg.

Abraham Lincoln urged the living to gather strength through the sacrifice of the dead. Thus, the emphasis was laid on the collective effort rather than on individual losses: “from these honored death we take increased devotion to that cause for which they here gave the last measure of devotion.” It can, therefore, be inferred that the salvation and redemption of the nation’s political body should be achieved out of the individual sacrifice of the nation’s young corporeal bodies.

In spite of the astounding number of casualties, a reality different from and harsher than death emerged: that of the wounded and sick army men. These wounded soldiers posed a new and difficult challenge, not only to American society in general, but to the federal authorities in particular. Indeed, thousands of army men remained alive in spite of the serious wounds inflicted on their bodies. Considering that sophisticated, new weaponry implied not only more deaths, but also more severe, permanent and crippling injuries, soldiers, who had escaped from premature death on the fields of battle, had to endure the long ordeal of medical treatment. This was sacrifice of another nature and one for which adequate, effective remedies had not yet been found. The irreversible, permanent damage done to the soldier’s body was observable in amputated limbs, gunshot wounds along with infections and diseases of various kinds. Before the war, the intact body of the soldier symbolized strength, integrity and manhood. Through the experience of war the soldier’s body became subjected to medicine’s experiments, which reduced its importance to a mere token of clinical inspection.

Understandably, the nation was not prepared to take care of the thousands of wounded army men. The unprecedented demand for medical services called for hospitals to be put up in barracks and tents outside the battlefields. Moreover, surgical techniques were extremely crude and surgeons scarce. As a consequence, field and city hospitals were packed with sick and wounded soldiers (Appendix – Figs. 45 and 46). Hordes of wagons brought vast numbers of the injured and sick into the nation’s capital, which was rapidly becoming a crowded depot of feverish young boys suffering from typhoid, smallpox, diarrhea along with amputations and nasty injuries. Drastic solutions had to be found in order to take in these men. One of the measures adopted was the accommodation of these army men in the Patent Office Building in Washington.

The Patent Office had originally been built with the purpose of housing unpatented models and samples of manufactures. The building, a massive construction designed in the Greek style, epitomized the entrepreneurial spirit of an industrialized America (Appendix – Fig. 47).⁴⁶ From 1861 to 1863, however, the top floor of the Patent Office served as a hospital. This floor was turned into a military barracks, hospital and morgue. The conditions were so difficult that wounded soldiers had to lie on cots among glass cases. Walt Whitman visited the building several times to tend the sick and injured. His dedication to these soldiers lasted for three years and was inspired in part by his brother's injury at the Battle of Fredericksburg, where the poet first met dead and wounded Union men. During those three years, Whitman visited multiple city hospitals to help care for the sick. He wrote these lines regarding the Patent Office:

A few weeks ago the vast area of the second story of that noblest of Washington buildings – the Patent Office – was crowded close with rows of the sick, badly wounded, and dying soldiers.... I went there several times. It was a strange, solemn, and – with all its features of suffering and death – a sort of fascinating sight.

Two of the immense apartments are filled with high and ponderous glass cases crowded with models in miniature of every kind of utensil, machine, or invention it ever entered into the mind of man to conceive, and with curiosities and foreign presents. Between these cases were lateral openings perhaps eight feet wide and quite deep, and in these were placed many of the sick; besides, a great long double row of them up and down through the middle of the hall. Many of them were very bad cases, wounds, and amputations.

It was indeed a curious scene at night when lit up. The glass cases, the beds, the sick, the gallery above, and the marble pavement under foot. (*Walt Whitman's Civil War* 87)

The “noblest of Washington buildings” aroused ambivalent feelings. On the one hand, the poet felt deeply for “the sick, badly wounded and dying soldiers.” His feelings were

⁴⁶ Construction of the Patent Office Building began in 1836 and was finished in 1868. At 333,000 square feet, it was the largest office building in Washington. On December 18, 1840, Patent Commissioner Henry Ellsworth wrote a letter to senator John Ruggles stressing the importance of an edifice that would shelter the “most beautiful specimens of the genius and industry of the nation” (Ellsworth *Letter to Senator John Ruggles* par. 3).

genuine, since he was accustomed to visiting hospitals and watching over the wounded. On the other hand, the juxtaposition of disparate elements created a “fascinating sight:” “the glass cases, the beds, the sick, the gallery above, and the marble pavement under foot.” At night, the place unfolded an extraordinary scene, exerting a hypnotic effect on the poet.

Apart from the poet’s interpretation of the place, the description revealed the appalling conditions these soldiers were in. The “rows of the sick, badly wounded, and dying soldiers” provided a striking parallel with the arrangement of the glass cases. Indeed, rows of human bodies were laid out in between rows of glass cases. Moreover, this sense of accumulation obliterated the understanding of the human body as an individual. The contiguity of human bodies with “the most beautiful specimens of the genius and industry,” in Henry Ellsworth’s words, emphasized the objectification these bodies underwent.⁴⁷ By displaying mutilated human bodies side by side with samples of scientific and industrial development, the state was reducing subjects to mere objects. Thus, these subjects’ bodies no longer represented individuals. In addition, it was particularly ironic that wounded soldiers should be placed among samples of American technological power which, in turn, was responsible for the severity of the soldiers’ wounds.

The creation of the Army Medical Museum provided another example of the objectification and abstraction to which the body of the soldier was subjected. Founded in 1862 by William Alexander Hammond, the Army Medical Museum aimed to collect exemplars of battlefield injuries, wounds, war-related illnesses and other causes of death.⁴⁸ The Museum’s ultimate purpose was the study, preservation and the exhibition of clinical samples to the general public. Thus, an array of smashed skulls, severed limbs, bone fragments and diseased tissue was collected along with projectiles and medical equipment (Appendix – Figs. 48, 49, 50, 51 and 52). Upon its foundation,

⁴⁷ See ⁴⁶.

⁴⁸ William Alexander Hammond (1828-1900), a neurologist and Surgeon General of the United States Army from April 1862 to August 1864, was responsible for founding the Army Medical Museum in Washington, D.C. in 1862. In 1868 the Museum was reinstalled in Ford’s Theater and opened to the public. See Laderman’s chapter “Looking Death in the Face” for further information on the Army Medical Museum. See also J.T. Connor and Michael Rhode’s article “Shooting Soldiers: Civil War Medical Images, Memory, and Identity in America.”

William Hammond stressed the importance of this archive: “Medical officers are directed diligently to collect, and to forward to the office of the Surgeon General, all specimens of morbid anatomy, surgical or medical, which may be regarded as valuable.... Each specimen in the collection will have appended the name of the medical officer by whom it was prepared” (qtd in Bengtson, Foreword iv). Curiously enough, the terminology used by both the Patent Office Commissioner and the founder of the Army Medical Museum overlapped. The term “specimens” was used indiscriminately to refer to both manufactured products and parts of the human body. Moreover, the way such “specimens” were displayed in both the Patent Office and the Army Medical Museum was identical. In “Making Capital: War, Labor, and Whitman in Washington, D.C.” Katherine Kinney refers to this similarity:

Opened in 1867 in an appropriately morbid and dramatic space – Ford’s Theater – the museum put on display the ‘pathological specimens’ which the War Department had ordered the medical corps to collect. According to illustrations in Mary Clemmer Ames’s *Ten Years in Washington* (1875), these specimens were displayed in glass cases very similar to those in the Patent Office, fulfilling the eerie sense of the wounded as part of the technological display hidden in Whitman’s description of the hospital. (182)

Again, body parts resembled machine parts and vice-versa.

John Brinton, first curator of the Museum, played a crucial role in the collection of medical and surgical “specimens” of the war.⁴⁹ Brinton not only asked doctors throughout the country to send their medical samples, he also took upon himself the task of collecting the “pathological specimens.” Therefore, dead soldiers were dismembered, objectified and studied. In his autobiography, Brinton commented on the means whereby he collected “human relics:” “Many and many a putrid heap of amputated limbs have I dug out of trenches where they had been buried, in the supposition of an everlasting rest, and ghoulish work have I done, amid surrounding gatherings of

⁴⁹ John Brinton (1832-1907), a Civil War surgeon, was the first curator of the Army Medical Museum. Brinton served in this capacity from 1862 to 1864, when he was replaced by George Otis, who then (1831- 1881) served for 17 years.

wondering surgeons, and scarcely less wondering doctors” (qtd in Laderman 146). John Brinton’s attitude complies with the nineteenth century positivist and utilitarian mindset, where empirical data outweighed theoretical research. Furthermore, by referring to the fact that amputated limbs were deliberately disinterred, John Brinton’s words recalled the unorthodox practices as regards the collection of corpses for dissection. Indeed, with the establishment of the first medical colleges and the advent of public courses and lectures in anatomy in antebellum America, the demand for corpses had increased dramatically. Not surprisingly, bodies of criminals and prisoners, African Americans and the poor were the most liable to being used for dissection. Thus, in the name of progress, science and the advancement of medical knowledge, anonymous corpses from these groups were often dissected inside the wards of America’s medical schools.⁵⁰

Nonetheless, when corpses could not be found, bodies would be snatched from graves. These practices strongly opposed the antebellum cult of the corpse and Brinton’s words show a darker side of his profession. By mentioning the “ghoul-like” aspect of his work and by referring to the fact that amputated limbs were robbed of an “everlasting rest,” John Brinton pushed the limits of science beyond ethics and the respect for the human corpse as representative of an identity and individuality. Nevertheless, Brinton’s practices were deemed acceptable within a broader logic of empirical knowledge, advancement of science and positivist belief in the irreversibility of human progress. The Army Medical Museum, thus, provided a notorious example of the nineteenth-century’s utilitarian obsession with scientific classification and cataloging.

Collections of flesh and bones, however, did not appeal to everyone in the nineteenth century. Congressman Potter of New York opposed the public display of “the relics and bones or wounds caused by the war at any place in our capital...” Instead, Potter wished these relics to be “buried and covered all over with green grass and hidden from sight forever” (qtd in Connor, par. 5). The burial of these human relics echoes Oliver Wendel Holmes’s words: “all the emotions excited by the actual sight of

⁵⁰ See “The Blood of Black Men: Rethinking Racial Science” in Nudelman’s *John Brown’s Body* for further information on dissection. See also “Morbid Obsessions” in Laderman’s *The Sacred Remains*.

the stained and sordid scene... came back to us, and we buried them in the recesses of our cabinet as we would have buried the mutilated remains they too vividly represent” (“Doings of the Sunbeam” 12).

A more sinister archive, however, would be built up from the 1860s onwards: a collection of medical photographs showing wounds of various kinds as well as depicting living soldiers who had undergone various surgical procedures, including amputations. Two professional photographers working for the Army Medical Museum, William Bell and Edward J. Ward, produced a significant amount of photography depicting mutilated soldiers. Photographs were also donated to the museum. As a consequence, the work of several years would be compiled in an eight-volume series entitled *Photographs of Surgical Cases and Specimens* or *Surgical Photographs*, which comprised four hundred photographs. This would be reprinted during the twentieth century under the title *Photographic Atlas of Civil War Injuries*. It included images recorded at the Army Medical Museum showing fractured bones, amputations, gunshot wounds, and the results of surgical operations, among other kinds of injuries. Photographs of these men were taken at close range and clearly resembled gallery portraits. The wounded were depicted either sitting or standing in a posture akin to standard gallery portraiture, their figures being carefully posed. However, contrary to the images recorded in photo galleries, these portraits did not aim at popularizing or empowering anyone. On the contrary, being of mutilated soldiers, these portraits accentuated the decay of the human body. In *Facing America* Shirley Samuels comments on the use of documentary photography to catalog the varieties of wounds and their treatments:

Previously much photography was memorial photography – corpses were a favorite subject both because they were able to retain the stillness that long exposures required and of course because the families who had cared for this now rapidly decaying flesh wanted a reminder of the time when the flesh was intact. Little trace of such affectionate remembrance remains in the photographs in the surgeon’s notebooks, nor, in spite of the labeled captions attached to the backs of their pages, do they serve as records of identity. They are here as representative specimens, as tokens of a mass

of flesh with a past, present, and future presented only in terms of medical history.
(70)

Shirley Samuels contrasts postmortem photography with these medical records. Whereas postmortem photography provided a link between the deceased and his family, as we have seen before (“Weird Copies of Carnage”), medical photographs aimed at cataloging clinical cases. Samuels stresses the utilitarian aspect of these records: “tokens of a mass of flesh with a past, present, and future presented only in terms of medical history.” In Susan Sontag’s words “photographs objectify: they turn an event or a person into something that can be possessed” (*Regarding the Pain of Others* 81). A similar view is expressed by Timothy Sweet in *Traces of War*, where the author comments on the appropriative nature of photographic technology: “Photographic representation became part of an efficient technique of control and appropriation of nature and persons” (105). Sweet argues that Civil War photography aimed at appropriating the soldiers’ bodies in order to construct an affirmative, nationalist, ideological interpretation of the war: “photographic representations of the war aided political discourse in the project of legitimating the violent conservation of the Union by reflecting on and participating in the transformation of wounds into ideology during and after the Civil War” (3). The attitude and process Sweet describes is reminiscent of Lincoln’s words in “The Gettysburg Address.” The loss of an individual was justified in terms of the preservation of political bodies.

At this level – of the appropriation of persons through an objectifying photography – the process was carried out by the state at the Army Medical Museum. This museum represented the state’s control over the soldier’s body. Thus, the soldier’s status as an individual was erased so that he could be perceived as an object of medical study.

In “The Body and the Archive,” Allan Sekula discusses the issue of the “paradoxical status of photography within bourgeois culture.” Sekula argues that photography’s use for both criminal and medical purposes challenged the conception of the portrait as an honorable representation of a human figure: “We are confronting, then, a double system: a system of representation capable of functioning both

honorifically and repressively” (345). In his essay, Sekula uses the term “repressive” to characterize photographs of criminals and prisoners. The author sets this paradox in the context of the nineteenth-century obsession for social regulation, classification and statistical compilation. One of the most peculiar examples given by the author is the study of physiognomy and phrenology. These two fields of science argued that the surface of the body, particularly the face and head, bore the signs of inner character.

The “Gallery of Illustrious Americans,” published in 1850 by Mathew Brady, typified the honorific archive. As we have seen in chapter one, this publication comprised daguerreotypes of twelve of the most eminent representatives of the American Republic. Indeed, these distinguished Americans included presidents, senators, generals, an artist, an historian, a minister and a poet. The portraits depicted busts of well-dressed, prominent citizens. The poses were formal and there was an air of solemnity and dignity. Except for the head, no part of these men’s bodies was shown, thus emphasizing the individual’s respectability, status and intellectual superiority.

The photographs which portray wounded soldiers are anything but illustrious (Appendix – Figs. 53, 54, 55, 56, 57 and 58). In these photographs attention is driven from the head to the naked or half-clad body. As wounded men undress to display their wounds, stumps and grotesque masses of flesh are unveiled. The viewer is confronted with fragments: wounds and parts of a once intact body are perceived in separation from their bodies, as objects in themselves. According to Alan Sekula’s terminology, this collection represents a repressive archive. The human body is shamelessly open to public scrutiny and the nudity fully exposes these men’s frailties.

Apart from documenting the results of surgical operations and other clinical interventions, these photographs also served other purposes. In some cases, these images would be used by the soldiers themselves in order to claim disability pensions. Others would be used as commodities for personal or institutional gain. After the amputation of both arms in 1864, Alfred Stratton had his photograph taken at the Army Medical Museum (Appendix – Fig. 54). He would sell *cartes-de-visite* of himself and put the process toward to his pension. Photographs of amputees were particularly appealing to both surgeons and employees at the Medical Museum. In short, they provided irrefutable evidence of the success of the surgical operations.

Furthermore, these images were not only displayed at the Army Medical Museum, they were also exhibited throughout the country. In the article “Shooting Soldiers: Civil War Medical Images, Memory, and Identity in America” the authors stress the fact that the medical photographs of the Civil War were not understood as private. Roland Barthes’ words are, once more, salient: the private was being consumed publicly.

Brady’s collection of illustrious busts was representative of the photographer’s effort to shape an American identity based on progress, improvement and political unity. Photographs of mutilated bodies, by contrast, mirrored the dismemberment and decay of postbellum America. The notorious images of wounded soldiers remain one of the most discomfiting and disturbing records of Civil War photography. Alan Trachtenberg comments:

Mutilated remains eventually found burial and a place in memory, but living mutilations remained in view. Amputees and shrapnel-filled veterans who returned from battle with less of a body than they brought to it presented another challenge.... Showing what was more difficult to see and acknowledge than the grisly remains of corpses soon transfigured into stone monuments, these are the most unforgettable of the albums of war. They disclose the most immediate and least comprehensible of war’s facts, that it is waged on tangible human flesh and inscribed in pain – the living wounded body as the final untellable legend. (*Reading American Photographs* 116-8)

When, in July 2007, I visited “Bodies...The Exhibition,” what I observed didn’t come as a shock.⁵¹ The exhibition displayed actual corpses along with organs and body parts. The human bodies were stripped of their skin and dissected so as to show their

⁵¹ “Bodies...The Exhibition” opened in New York City on November 19, 2005, and has since traveled through several American and European cities. A former exhibition, entitled “Body...Worlds” was first presented in Tokyo in 1995, featuring preserved human bodies and body parts that were prepared using a technique called plastination. This exhibition was developed and promoted by the German anatomist Gunther von Hagens. There has also been considerable controversy about this exhibit, especially in relation to the acquisition of the corpses. In 2003, the *British Medical Journal* reported that von Hagens was under investigation for allegedly using bodies without consent. After the controversy in Germany, von Hagens brought the exhibition overseas. Another similar show running in America, “Our Body... The Universe Within,” also displays actual human bodies and organs which have been preserved with plastination. This latter exhibit opened in San Francisco in 2005.

internal organs. Parts of the circulatory, digestive, or reproductive systems, just to name a few, were displayed in glass cases which filled the different rooms of the exhibition. Some of the corpses were arranged as if actually performing activities, such as playing basketball or conducting an orchestra.

Looking through that exhibit reminded me of the medical displays at the Army Medical Museum. Moreover, there was the fact that the “Bodies” exhibition had raised controversial issues. First, there was the issue of the origin of the corpses. In an article published in the *New York Times* of 18 November 2005, entitled “Cadaver Exhibition raises Questions beyond Taste,” Andrew Jacobs questioned the origin of the bodies, namely the fact that they might not have been obtained legally. Premier Exhibitions, Inc., the organizer of the show, claimed that the corpses were obtained in China from the poor, the unclaimed or the unidentified. Conversely, human rights activists argued that some of the corpses might have been obtained from executed prisoners. Another salient issue is the organization’s practice of referring to the body parts as “specimens.” On its official webpage, one can still read: “Through the sensitive presentation of actual whole-body *specimens* and individual organs.... A human *specimen* is first preserved.... The *specimen* is then dissected.... Once dissected, the *specimen* is immersed in acetone.... The *specimen* is then displayed...” (my emphasis). In addition, there was the issue of the exhibition of dead bodies for public consumption. Corpses became entertainment for the general public. Finally, the comparison between this show and a freak show is inescapable. In the previously mentioned *New York Times* article of November 2005, Andrew Jacobs quotes the Director for the Exhibition, Roy Glover: ““This is not a freak show,”” Dr Glover said, standing beside the musculature of a man who is holding hands with his own removed skeleton” (Jacobs par. 4).⁵² The irony of Dr Glover’s words is self-evident.

In “Shooting Soldiers,” J.T. Connor discusses subsequent shifts in perception and practice regarding the public/private divide in the realm of medical photography:

⁵² Freak shows were exhibitions of rarities, abnormalities such as unusually tall or short individuals, people with both male and female characteristics and those born with medical anomalies. These exhibitions, which included live performances, were aimed at shocking the audience. Freak shows were popular in the United States from around 1840 to 1940.

But as medical photography advanced, the social and aesthetic significance of this genre of visual culture receded. As we have shown, the medical photographs of the Civil War were not perceived as “private” so they enjoyed a long “public “life” that allowed them to be viewed, interpreted and reinterpreted. This contrasts with their twentieth- and twenty-first century analogs that remain sequestered in patient file folders due to strict institutional and legal regulations regarding patient privacy. (par. 26)

Yet while this shift has taken place with regard to photographs of sick and wounded, it has not occurred in the case of an individual’s corpse, as evidenced by the running of “Bodies...the Exhibition” and similar exhibits, despite the fact that the corpses are real. Thus, in the twenty-first century, bits of corpses are put together, Frankenstein-like, to entertain audiences. What I find more puzzling still is the fact that everything about these “Bodies” exhibitions recalls the nineteenth century’s practices as regards the collection and display of both human relics and medical photographs.

2.4. Photographing American’s ruins: Nature’s healing power over a war-torn nation

The American Civil War was not only responsible for thousands of casualties and wounded army men, it also disrupted the American countryside and devastated several of the nation’s cities. Some of the photographs depicting war’s destructive power can be seen in Andrew Russell, George Barnard and Alexander Gardner’s photographic books of the Civil War, namely *Russell’s Civil War Photographs*, *Photographic Views of Sherman’s Campaign*, and *Gardner’s Photographic Sketchbook of the American Civil War 1861-1865*, respectively. Although there are other sources where one can find images of destruction, namely the Library of Congress and the National Archives, I opted to limit my analysis to these three volumes. I have done this

with a purpose in mind: to detect imminent paradoxes in the making of these albums of war, namely in the way war photographers focused on subjects other than battlefield combat.

Despite the fact that these albums were supposed to document war, they display few images of wreckage. Instead, they concentrate mainly on the tranquility of army life, the unblemished buildings and institutions of America, which apparently managed to provide security and stability to the nation, and the peaceful, harmonious landscapes of an intact countryside. By emphasizing these aspects, I wish to draw attention to the contradictions underlying the making of these albums, namely those between texts and images.

The first volume I will look into, Andrew Russell's *Civil War Photographs*, comprises a hundred and sixteen pictures. Of these, only eight illustrate the ruins of Richmond. I have selected two of these eight images of Richmond with their open display of war's destructive power. (Appendix – Figs. 59 and 60). In the first, the ravaged city appears in the background while the foreground focuses on ammunitions and canons, as a reminder of the machine of war. The second image depicts the havoc wrought on the city. The bleak, shattered buildings, with their broken walls rising into the sky, convey a feeling of desolation; the bareness of the scene calls to mind the violence of the war. These images, nonetheless, remain an exception to the whole. Indeed, Russell's album focuses on camps, gunboats, bridges, fortifications and trenches, works of engineering and railroads, views of cities and monuments, groups of officers and boat crews. It shows men at work building pontoon bridges, repairing railroad tracks as well as fortifications and fortresses being put up, mortars and canons being placed in position, among others. The volume reflects the industrial supremacy of a modernized North. Moreover, it had been conceived as a military field manual since the photographic documentation of military engineering was used for instructional purposes.

George Barnard's *Photographic Views of Sherman's Campaign* includes sixty-one albumen prints covering General Sherman's campaign to Atlanta. The photographs are preceded by an introductory text (by the photographer), entitled "Sherman and his Generals," in which Barnard narrates the movement of the troops under Sherman's

command. On the whole, there is a paradox between the text on the one hand, which narrates in detail troop movements, battles and casualties, and the photographs themselves on the other. In the photographic records there is no evidence of active warfare, no trace of military occupation, no soldiers, no *matériel*. Indeed, when one browses through this album there are no scenes representing regiments, common soldiers, or corpses. Except for plate one, where Sherman is photographed with seven of his generals in a conventional pose, the photographs in this volume are devoid of a human presence. As for the representation of death, there is only the reproduction of the skull of an animal, possibly of a horse. The skull is placed amid the luxuriant scenery of a dense forest whose soil is covered by leaves and vegetation. This photograph, plate thirty-five in the volume, is entitled “Scene of Gen. McPherson’s Death.” Ironically, the only reminder of some conflict having taken place on this site is the skull. Furthermore, this photograph does not match Barnard’s detailed description of the general’s death:

In attempting to evade capture [Private George J. Reynolds] came to the spot where the late beloved and gallant commander of the army, Major-General McPherson, was lying mortally wounded. Forgetting all consideration of self Private Reynolds clung to his old commander, and amid the roar of battle and storm of bullets administered to the wants of his gallant chief, quenching his dying thirst, and affording him such comfort as lay in his power. (Barnard xvii)

While the text describes the painful death of an important general, the photograph, with its flourishing vegetation, bears no trace of violence whatsoever. On the contrary, the growing vegetation has recomposed the natural order and effaced the marks of conflict.

As for scenes of actual destruction, twelve plates in Barnard’s *Photographic Views* are concerned with destruction of nature, whereas eleven images depict wrecked buildings, train stations and cities. The empty streets in ruined Atlanta indicate the isolation and barrenness to which that city was reduced (Appendix – Fig. 63). Nonetheless, in these photographs the human presence is almost negligible. Furthermore, the fact that the disrupted natural environments are shown without the perpetrators of the destruction (no weapons, no remnants of human presence), reminds

one of a natural catastrophe rather than the consequences of a civil war (Appendix-Figs. 61 and 62).

Apart from the images depicting destruction of both countryside and buildings, there are eight photographs illustrating scenes of intact valleys, forests, rivers and lakes. These images reveal the careful arrangement of their constituent elements, on the part of Barnard himself, and recall the compositional structure of painting, rather than the instantaneous, spontaneous photographic record of a landscape. Indeed, these views are vertically framed by very tall trees or formations of rocks which demonstrates the photographer's careful choice of each element in the scene. Furthermore, the captions are suggestive of the photographer's attempt to convey the beautiful views of an unspoiled landscape: "Mission Ridge from Orchard Knob," "Orchard Knob from Mission Ridge," "The Crest of Mission Ridge," "Chattanooga Valley from Lookout Mountain, no 1," "Chattanooga Valley from Lookout Mountain, no 2," "Savannah River, near Savannah, Ga," "Buen-Ventura, Savannah, Ga." In his introductory text Barnard refers to these sites as important locations in Sherman's March to Sea. Barnard describes the attacks on Lookout Mountain and Mission Ridge, the battles of Mission Ridge and Chattanooga, and the occupation of Savannah. Nevertheless, the images recorded by the photographic devices do not bear traces of conflict. Rather, the wild country remains unblemished. Furthermore, these scenes have a bucolic air, and would thus seem to be invitations to peaceful contemplation. Indeed, the idyllic tranquility of the scenes reminds one of the pastoral representations, where the image of a peaceful and uncorrupted existence co-exists with the pre-Fall innocence of an Arcadian world. (Appendix – Figs. 64 and 65).

Gardner's Photographic Sketchbook of the American Civil War 1861-1865, the most complex of the three volumes examined for the variety of topics covered, comprises one-hundred photographs grouped into two volumes. The author provides a caption and text for each plate. Apart from the gruesome images of distorted, bloated bodies of soldiers scattered on the battlefields, which appear in only six of the hundred images, the album focuses on American life and landscape during the Civil War. As for images of wreckage, there are only eight plates among the hundred, which depict the ruins of bridges, railroads, etc. Among these, only three refer specifically to the

destruction of cities (Appendix- Figs. 66, 67 and 68). The bulk of the photographic records documents the sites of battles and commanding officers with their troops as well as the houses, the courthouses, the churches, the waterways, the boats, the bridges and the fields of America. These scenes make up nearly eighty percent of the whole and illustrate the tranquility of camp life along with the reliability of the Union's institutions and services. Furthermore, intact nature is present in most of these photographic records thus suggesting an atmosphere of tranquility and order. This *Sketchbook*, therefore, reminds one of the photographic documentation of American life rather than the pictorial representation of a country at war. Alan Trachtenberg comments on the title page of this *Sketchbook* (Appendix – Fig. 69):

The panoramic vista of the title page supposes an aesthetic unity in what follows...: camp life to the right, battle to the left, the draped flag framing the vista. And in the setting sun the vista glimpses at bottom center suggests that the war and the nation remain in the embrace of "nature" and its cycles – the healing process of time which transforms pain into sacred memory. Moreover, the images on the title page depict military hierarchy....In the figures lounging in the foreground, however, we catch a glimpse of another order of social relations among men: wilderness, campfire, male comrades swapping tales, the rifle cradled at rest. With its conventional icons the title page suggests a structure for the pictures which follow – a place for soldiers, officers, war and nature. (*Reading American Photographs* 96)

Thus, Trachtenberg suggests that nature itself becomes an element of union and healing. By referring to the cycles of nature, the author of this text reminds us that war and death are a part of life and that nature will restore peace and order.

In *Traces of War: Poetry, Photography, and the Crisis of the Union* Timothy Sweet comments on the ways that Alexander Gardner and George Barnard used photography to construct pastoral images that naturalized the massive violence and death of the Civil War. Sweet argues that both photographers made use of nature's primacy to restore the harmony and intactness of the American landscape:

Traces of violence could thus be transformed into signs legitimating the Union. In response to the challenges of the subject of death in war, American photographers adapted the antebellum conventions of funerary portraiture, the view, and the “genre” scene to provide an archive that in its very vastness signaled the completeness of the photographic record. The picturesque and pastoral aesthetics proved especially influential. Genre scenes were common. Landscape views were even more prevalent: a view of a battlefield, with or without corpses, must necessarily be represented as some sort of landscape. Beyond this precondition, however, Civil War photography appealed to the repository of naturalized ideological values contained in the American landscape aesthetic. These images predicted that the destiny of the Union was inscribed on the land itself. (85).

Therefore, Sweet implies that, in these albums of war, images of wreckage were mitigated by the inclusion of other more benign views of war. In this way, the idea underlying this argument is that war’s destruction and death produce meaning which compensates for individual losses. On the whole, Sweet addresses the issue of construction of meaning within an organic logic of the restoration of the natural order.

CHAPTER THREE

Abraham Lincoln and Walt Whitman

In chapter two, close attention was devoted to photography depicting death, injury and destruction as well as African-American soldiers. Photographs of unburied and wounded soldiers were carefully examined. Since many of these photographs were either sold or displayed at city galleries, they raised issues concerning the public/private divide in the realm of photography. Furthermore, photographic records of dead soldiers on the battlefield uncovered an inconvenient truth: the fact that, far from being heroic, the soldier's death on the battlefield came to be perceived as a catastrophe of staggering proportions.

My principal aim in chapter three is to provide a conclusive ending which brings together the issues developed in the previous chapters. In order to do so, I have chosen two figures: Abraham Lincoln and Walt Whitman. These two figures bear directly on the two main topics dealt with in this text: photography and the American Civil War. Abraham Lincoln, for one, was the most photographed political figure of the nineteenth century. He was photographed over and over again, both in his life and in his death. Not only did his portraits help create an aura around this charismatic personality, they provided an accurate means of representation which contributed to the empowerment of his political figure. In this chapter I will deal with the way in which Lincoln's image became an icon. In addition, I will look into the elegy "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd" which will lead us into the last section of this chapter. Indeed, this elegy provides a strong link between the President's death and Walt Whitman's view of both the presidency and the American Civil War. In the last section of this chapter I will refer to Walt Whitman's relation with photography and the ways in which the new medium influenced Whitman's creative power.

3.1. Photographing Lincoln: an icon in life and in death

Abraham Lincoln was one of the most widely photographed presidents of the nineteenth century. He sat for thirty-three photographers on sixty-one occasions, which resulted in one hundred and twenty-seven portraits.⁵³ Portraits of Lincoln became an effective tool in the shaping of his public image. Indeed, they generated widespread publicity which, in turn, led to political influence. As a consequence, Lincoln's image came to be perceived as a symbol of the Union's supremacy, embodying the spirit of the nation's cultural and political institutions. In this sense, Lincoln's image rose above its strictly representational status to become an icon.

In February 1860 Mathew Brady wrote a letter to Lincoln asking him to sit for his photo. The Republican candidate acquiesced, thus beginning a long-standing relationship with several photographers, in spite of his uncommon looks. Indeed, Lincoln's somewhat strange physical appearance did not favor him: he was six feet four, with a long neck and dark skin creased with heavy lines, and had long, bony limbs. Notwithstanding this, Brady managed to make a full-length portrait which enhanced his appearance (Appendix – Fig. 70). This image unveiled the dignity, composure and authority of a stately figure. His earnest, steady look revealed the character of a true statesman. On the same day this photograph was taken, Lincoln delivered a speech at the Cooper Institute which was hailed a success. It was reprinted in newspapers and the demand for Lincoln's photograph rose sharply. As a consequence, thousands of *cartes-de-visite* portraying Lincoln's "likeness" flooded the country. His portrait could be seen on brooches and pins, in tintype reproductions, on envelopes, in medals, and was reproduced in most of the country's publications as woodcut copies (Appendix – Fig. 71). It enabled voters, hundreds of miles away from Washington, to actually see the appearance of the candidate. On November 6, 1860, Lincoln was elected as the sixteenth President of the United States. The 1860 election thus marked the beginning of the usage of photography in the shaping and empowering of a political figure.

⁵³ For more information see Mark Katz's chapter "The Photographs of Abraham Lincoln, 1861-1865" in *Witness to an Era* and Vicki Goldberg's "Political Persuaders & Photographic Deceits" in *The Power of Photography*.

Photography not only played a crucial role in the empowerment of an individual; it also enabled its sitters to recognize their likenesses as true representations of themselves, as we have seen in chapter one. Contrary to painting, which allowed for an idealized, constructed identity, photographs acknowledged the actual, true-to-life appearance of an individual: “The picture tells no lie,” in Oliver Wendel Holmes’s words. Furthermore, photography allowed people to have the whole course of their lives recorded in photographs. Ed Folsom refers to photography’s quality of tracking one’s own process of aging:

[P]hotographs allowed people to track their aging, to watch themselves change step by step as they grew old. Photographs were, precisely, *moments* along life’s continuum, stuck *in* time, in fact the sticking *of* time (as opposed to painted portraiture, which was the transcendence of life’s continuum). (113)

Thus, and contrary to their ancestors, nineteenth-century individuals could actually witness themselves growing older. Whereas painting had enabled the enhancement of someone’s appearance and the preservation of a fanciful, idealized pictorial representation, the new medium, by contrast, insisted on truth, detail and absence of convention. Moreover, it fostered the acknowledgement of someone’s process of changing and growing old and, eventually, the deterioration of one’s body.

Although Lincoln’s photographs do not cover his entire life, they embrace the period of his presidential career. From the time of Lincoln’s first photograph in 1860 to his assassination, the photographic record uncovers the changes undergone by a war-weary president. Indeed, the President’s growing weariness and melancholy would stand out as one of the most unmistakable facts evidenced by the series of photographs taken over the course of his Presidency. These changes can not be attributed to the war alone. The death of the president’s young son, Willie Lincoln, greatly contributed to Lincoln’s inconsolable grief.

On March 4, 1864, as Lincoln proceeded to the Capitol to the ceremonies of the Second Inaugural, Walt Whitman wrote these lines:

I saw him on his return, at three o'clock, after the performance was over. He was in his plain two-horse barouche, and looked very much worn and tired; the lines, indeed, of vast responsibilities, intricate questions, and demands of life and death cut deeper than ever upon his dark brown face; yet all the goodness, tenderness, sadness and canny shrewdness underneath the furrows. (*Walt Whitman's Civil War* 259)

Whitman's deep and genuine admiration for the President had begun in the early days of Lincoln's presidency and would last until after Lincoln's death. Whitman would give his "Death of Abraham Lincoln" speech over and over again in the last years of his life. Also, Walt Whitman's elegy "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd" paid homage to his president, the "first great Martyr Chief," as referred to by Whitman in "Last Lecture."

As we have seen in chapter one, photography was thought to bring out the true character of its sitters. Indeed, nineteenth century believed in photographic truth and photographic images were understood to be faithful, unbiased records of reality. The general assumption that a photographic portrait uncovered the inner truth of its sitter pervaded society and culture. Hence, the poet's reference to the President's "dark brown face" assumes particular importance. In this sense, someone's face not only reflects his state of mind, it also incarnates his character, his inner being. Along with these assumptions, nineteenth century's mind had great faith in the studies undertaken by physiognomy and phrenology, which accepted that the surface of the body, particularly the face, bore the signs of inner character. In "Lincoln's Smile" Alan Trachtenberg comments on this aspect and draws attention to the fact that "faces are texts, something given to be read:"

If the face is itself a representation, an ensemble of signs signifying an invisible interior, then the photographed face, a representation of a representation, put you in the presence of the face's own referent, the interiority of the sitter. Understood as a picture with a tale to tell, the photographed face seemed a surety that persons were knowable in their visage, the image offering the surrogate for face-to-face sociality in an increasingly impersonal social order. (76)

Therefore, Trachtenberg highlights the importance of a photographed face as evidence of the sitter's true character. Interestingly enough, Trachtenberg's implication that portraits are "surrogate[s] for face-to-face sociality in an increasingly impersonal social order" reminds us of the age in which photography thrived: a rapidly changing age in which the spirit of an industrialized, increasingly consumption-oriented society was replacing the domestic values of an agrarian world.

The president's late photographs reveal "the interiority of the sitter," the signs of inner struggle, exhaustion and sadness. The 1865 photograph of Lincoln, by Alexander Gardner, shows a wrinkled, war-weary president and stands in stark contrast to the 1860 Brady photographic record. (Appendix – Fig. 72). Photography, therefore, allows us to witness, as it were, and track the marked transformation Lincoln endures through the five years of his presidency. Lincoln's photographed faces are signs charged with meaning. His face becomes the key to his inner soul.

In "Lincoln's Smile" Alan Trachtenberg comments on the way whereby Lincoln's portraits seemed to convey not only his states of mind, but also the historical moments witnessed by the President himself:

How can we look at Lincoln's photographed face without seeing the debates with Douglas, Fort Sumter, the Emancipation Proclamation, Gettysburg, the Second Inaugural Address, John Wilkes Booth? ... The most famous photographed face in American history may be the most overdetermined, the easiest, and at the same time, the most difficult to read as the expression of a person. The images are saturated with history, likeness transformed into a surfeit of meaning. (75-6)

In this sense, the portraits of the President come to be perceived as visual artifacts endowed with cultural and historical meaning. Photography, therefore, is understood not only as a means of representation, but as important cultural matter. Ultimately, Photographs are not only illustrations of an era, they are also important cultural, social and political material.

Lincoln's assassination, on Good Friday, April 14, 1865, was another key moment in raising Lincoln's figure to the status of a national icon. His death aroused a

spontaneous outpouring of sympathy and patriotic feeling which culminated in unprecedented celebration and the memorialization of a public figure. Thousands of people lined up to see the deceased in the White House and many others gathered in Baltimore, Philadelphia, New York, Buffalo, Cleveland, Columbus and Chicago as the funeral train passed these cities to its final destination of Springfield, Illinois.

The treatment and disposal of Lincoln's body, though, took a different turn. The corpse was separated from his family, namely his wife, and handed over to technical experts and surgeons.⁵⁴ The deceased's body underwent several rituals at the hands of surgeons and embalming experts from the Army Medical Museum. An autopsy was performed and his brain removed. Moreover, the president's blood was drained from the jugular vein and a chemical solution was injected through the femoral artery, the key steps in the embalming process. After several other steps, the embalming process was finally completed and the President's body ready for public scrutiny. It was then placed on a catafalque in the Eastern Room at the White House, where thousands of people queued to glimpse the face of the President and pay their last respects. Before setting out on his last train journey to Springfield, on April 21, the body was transported from the White House to the Capitol. The funeral train would afterwards carry the corpse to its final resting place making stops in several northern cities, where citizens could actually gaze upon the deceased's well-preserved body (Appendix – Fig. 73). Finally, on May 4, 1865, the body of the President was buried at Oak Ridge, a rural cemetery in Springfield.

At this point there are some aspects worth taking into account. The first aspect is that visual depictions of Lincoln's death differ substantially from photographs of dead combatants. As we have seen, images of dead corpses lying on the field of battle convey a sense of abandonment and obscenity, since these photographic records were openly displayed at photo parlors and were scrutinized with the "voyeuristic lure," as Susan Sontag put it, which attracted people to death. The fact that many corpses remained unidentified accentuates the objectification and indifferentiation of these bodies. On emphasizing the anonymity of battlefield death, these images dramatized the

⁵⁴ See the chapter "Lincoln's Hallowed, Hollowed Body" in Laderman's *The Sacred Remains* for more information on the embalming processes.

impossibility of family members to honor and commemorate their dead. Ultimately, this eliminated any possibility of an appropriate emotional response by both family and community alike.

A second aspect worth referring to has to do with the preparation of the President's body. Contrary to unburied battle casualties, whom were left to decompose and were denied a homely funeral, Lincoln's body was carefully preserved. The embalming process aimed to conceal signs of physical decomposition and to preserve the corpse's integrity. These procedures allowed the deceased to be honored in the accustomed antebellum ways.

Hence, the topic of Lincoln's death and funeral takes on two significant aspects. On the one hand, Lincoln's body became public property since it was separated from his wife and became visible and accessible to the nation. On the other hand, the fact that Americans had the opportunity to look upon the remains and commemorate the President's death contributed to the process of healing and helped reinforce social cohesion. Contrary to the unburied soldiers, Lincoln's mourners were provided with a means to remember so that they could forget. This process enabled them to establish an emotional relationship with the deceased and repair the rupture in the social fabric.

Lincoln's assassination and the subsequent display of national mourning reinforced the belief that death in war brought about a strong sense of national unity. Indeed, the president's body was used to reaffirm the integrity of the Union. In the last years of Whitman's life the poet would deliver lectures on Lincoln's death.⁵⁵ On April 16, 1865, the poet delivered the lecture "Death of President Lincoln." Whitman perceives Lincoln's death as the ultimate restorative power which gave meaning to the whole cause of the war:

The tragic splendor of his death, purging, illuminating all, throws round his form, his head, an aureole that will remain and will grow brighter through time, while history lives and love of the country lasts.... One falls and another falls. The soldier drops, sinks like a wave, but the ranks of the ocean eternally press on. Death does its work,

⁵⁵ For detailed information on Whitman's lectures on Lincoln see the last three chapters in Jerome Loving's *Walt Whitman: The Song of Himself*.

obliterates a hundred, a thousand – a president, general, captain, private – but the Nation is immortal. (*Walt Whitman's Civil War* 266)

The President's death assumed a key role in purifying American society. It is as if, with Lincoln's death, all the objectives and purposes of Lincoln's presidency were achieved and, more importantly, the Union restored. Moreover, by undermining the individual losses – that of the president, the general, the soldier – Whitman maintains that the preservation of the body politic should be placed above any concern for individual death. In this sense, Whitman's words remind one of Lincoln's "Gettysburg Address," where the President had urged all men to renew the effort of war in spite of the astounding number of individual losses at Gettysburg.

In the poet's last lecture on the Death of President Lincoln, delivered twenty-five years after the President's death, the poet reiterates the notion that, through the sacrifice of the "first Great Martyr Chief," Nationhood had been preserved:

Then there is a cement to the whole people, subtler, more underlying, than anything in written constitution or courts or armies – namely, the cement of a death identified thoroughly with that people, at its head and for its sake. Strange (is it not?) that battles, martyrs, agonies, blood, even assassination, should so condense – perhaps only really, lastingly condense – a Nationality. (*Walt Whitman's Civil War* 278)

The fact that Lincoln's body had been publicly displayed, thus enhancing his status of martyr and savior of the nation, further contributed to the perception of the man as a symbolic figure. His dead corpse, therefore, came to be perceived as an icon, as well. Laderman comments on the way that "the president's body had been safely purified and firmly located in the hearts, imagination, and memory of the American republic as a result of its public exhibition..." (161). Lincoln's body, both in life and in death, transcended its physical boundaries to symbolize the ideals of Nationality and Unity. Photographic records of the living and the dead president lingered in the minds of Americans and the commemoration of his figure endured in the memory of the nation, thus reinforcing its iconic quality. The emergence of this iconic figure would be

perceived by Walt Whitman, who would pay the president one of the most affectionate tributes ever in the elegy “When Lylacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom’d.”

3.2. “O western orb sailing the heaven”

Lincoln’s murder on April 14, 1865, affected Walt Whitman more deeply than any event in the war. The poet’s great elegy, though, would not be composed soon after Lincoln’s death. Only during the summer of 1865 did the poet manage to finalize “When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom’d.” This poem would later be included in *Leaves of Grass* under “Memories of President Lincoln.” The elegy remains an important piece of poetry. It stresses Lincoln’s deification in the collective imagination of the nation and highlights the fact that the memory of the president lived long after his funeral. By insisting on memory as a vehicle for bringing back the deceased, this elegy activates the iconic figure of the president, which lingered on for years to come.

This elegy bears a close similarity to the pastoral elegy. Indeed, some elements in “When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom’d” strongly resemble some of the devices used in the pastoral elegies. First, there is the announcement that the poet’s friend is dead and to be mourned. Second, the scene is pastoral in that the poet and the person he mourns are represented as elements of nature (the song of the hermit thrush and the western star, respectively). Third, nature is involved in mourning death. Not only does Whitman make use of nature’s symbols (lilac, bird, star, dark cloud), but he also describes the idyllic rural landscapes of America. Fourth, there is a procession of mourners, as the poet describes the journey of the coffin. Fifth, flowers are placed on the bier. Then, there is the eulogy of the dead man. Finally, at the end of the poem, the poet becomes reconciled with death and his grief subsides. There is a renewal of hope and joy with the idea that death is the beginning of life as nature is cyclically reborn with every spring.

“When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom’d” begins with a reference to the lilacs and the fact that the poet “shall mourn with ever-returning spring” (*Leaves of Grass* 255). Thus, as lilacs bloom every spring, so the poet will remember the president’s death over and over again. The lilacs, therefore, stand for the overpowering emotion of grief for the dead President as well as the eternal memory of the poet. Further on in the poem the image of the hermit thrush is introduced. Throughout the poem the images of the star, the lilac and the singing thrush interweave with reflections on death and the war. Moreover, the images of the lilac and the singing bird alternate as the poet moves from the nostalgic memory of the loved one to the soothing carol of the bird.

The image of the bird is introduced in stanza 4 where the thrush is singing “[d]eath’s outlet song of life” (256). Thus, by singing the pathos of death, the bird reassures the poet of the continuity of life. In the following stanzas there is a description of the countryside and the journey of the coffin: “Coffin that passes through lanes and streets, / Through day and night with the great cloud darkening the land, /... Here, coffin that slowly passes, / I give you my sprig of lilac” (256-7). The dark cloud symbolizes tragic death and was first referred to in stanza 2: “O harsh surrounding cloud that will not free my soul” (255). Crowds of mourners halt to pay homage to the President and the poet places his flower on the bier: “I give you my sprig of lilac.” After a reflection on the “western orb sailing the heaven,” the poet returns to the bird’s song which alternates with the lilac’s scent, in stanza 13: “Sing on, sing on you gray-brown bird, / ... You only I hear – yet the star holds me, (but will soon depart,) / Yet the lilac with mastering odor holds me” (259). The poet’s mood vacillates between joy at receiving the bird’s voice and grief over the President’s death. In order to hear the bird’s song the poet retreats into solitary communion with nature. Here, the bird sings “the carol of death,” a “*lovely and soothing death*” (260), signifying the acceptance of death and the subdued emotion. By stanza 15 the poet is fully reconciled and his grief assuaged: “To the tally of my soul, / Loud and strong kept up the gray-brown bird, / With pure deliberate notes spreading filling the night” (281). The last stanza of the poem, stanza 16 begins with the present participle of the verb, suggesting continuity and the ever-flowing cycle of nature. The use of the present participle evokes the dynamism

of a never-ending journey, the endless cycle of nature. "Passing" is also evocative of the journey of the coffin "pass[ing] through lanes and streets:"

Passing the visions, passing the night,
Passing, unloosing the hold of my comrades' hands,
Passing the song of the hermit bird and the tallying song of my
soul,
Victorious song, death's outlet song, yet varying ever-altering song,
As low and wailing, yet clear the notes, rising and falling, flooding
the night,
Sadly sinking and fainting, as warning and warning, and yet again
bursting with joy,
Covering the earth and filling the spread of the heaven,
As that powerful psalm in the night I heard from recesses,
Passing, I leave thee lilac with heart-shaped leaves,
I leave thee there in the door-yard, blooming, returning with
spring. (261-262)

The use of the present participle provides the verses with continuity, a fluidity of movement which was termed by Ezra Greenspan as a "kinetic vision." In the chapter "Some Remarks on the Poetics of 'Participle-loving Whitman'" Ezra Greenspan argues that this verb form pervades Whitman's poetry throughout all phases of his career and that it reminds one of an activity "closer to what we today think of as a motion picture camera than the activity of poetry" (96).⁵⁶ This fluidity of movement, conveyed by the use of the present participle, anticipates, in Whitman's verse, the motion picture of the following century. It is extremely innovative in that it goes beyond the influence of photography on the poet's verse. As we will see in the forthcoming section of this chapter, Whitman remained deeply influenced by the pictorial arts throughout his life. The sense of sight ruled over various aspects of his verse and took on different characteristics and traits. Whitman's intense, momentary and fragmentary snapshots of

⁵⁶ Ezra Greenspan took his title from an observation by Randall Jarrell during this poet's discussion of the most distinctive features in Whitman's verse.

reality reflect the instantaneousness and informal perception of a “photographic way of seeing.” His kinetic vision, on the other hand, is conveyed by the recurrence to the present participle, which endows his verse with a fluidity and continuity evocative of the passing of the times and the changing of the scenes. As if in a motion picture. Ultimately, his shadowy, dim poems in “Drum-Taps” remind one of the shadowy, dim aspect of the daguerreotype.

Whitman ends his poem by bringing the three symbols - lilac, star and bird – together: “Lilac and star and bird twined with the chant of my soul, / There in the fragrant pines and the cedars dusk and dim” (262). The symbol of the western star remains in the middle, thus reaffirming the President’s enduring achievement as unifier of the nation. Through memory, the image of the deceased President is revived. Thus, this elegy activates the iconic quality of Lincoln.

3.3. Walt Whitman’s poetry: from his “photographic way of seeing” to the shadowy poems in “Drum-Taps”

The new medium that swept America had a powerful impact on Walt Whitman. Indeed, the poet not only met several photographers, he also felt the need to cultivate a close friendship with some of them. Whitman had his photograph taken repeatedly. All editions of *Leaves of Grass* opened with a frontispiece portrait of the poet, which was contemporary with the edition of the book. The poet’s portrait in the first edition (1855) of *Leaves of Grass*, in itself, symbolizes Whitman’s love for the spontaneous, informal life. His full-body pose was contrary to the sitting position of the portraits in Brady’s *Gallery of Illustrious Americans*. Moreover, the fact that the photograph was taken out of the blue while Whitman was strolling along New York’s streets is closely akin to the truth, spontaneity and informality he aimed to convey in his poetry (Appendix – Fig.

74).⁵⁷ As we have seen in chapter one (“Notions underlying the concept of early photography”) photography was perceived to be an objective, precise and instantaneous means of recording both physical surroundings and human “likenesses.” It was precisely this quality of objectivity and faithfulness that attracted Whitman. Ed Folsom refers to the influence of the new medium upon American society and the poet himself:

It was, in fact, the emergence of a photographic way of seeing that allowed Whitman to view the “events of the Nineteenth century” as occurring with a radically new “rapidity of movement” in “fluctuations of light and shade”; the whole century seemed to have turned into a series of momentary images captured on light-sensitive plates. (Folsom 7)

Ed Folsom refers to this new “photographic way of seeing” as an intense, momentary and fragmentary means of recording reality.

Whitman’s repeated visits to New York’s daguerreotype galleries in the 1840s and the 1850s, therefore, had a profound influence on his writing. The first daguerreotype galleries were rooms in which the walls were literally covered with portraits of people. In these galleries no space was left empty, an effect termed by Ruth Bohan as a “cacophony of visual and intellectual stimuli” (21). Walt Whitman’s fascination with photography would ultimately be reflected in his own writing. The poet’s taste for accumulation and juxtaposition, therefore, provided a striking parallel with the accumulation of photographs in galleries.

Thus, the instantaneous, quick and informal perception of the new “photographic way of seeing,” as Ed Folsom coined it, was reflected in Walt Whitman’s poetry. In his verse, people, children, animals, objects or places accumulate in a “cacophony” of images and sensations. Nowhere else is this more obvious than in section 15 of “Song of Myself.” Here, Whitman provides the reader with a list of common people either performing their tasks or simply going about their lives:

⁵⁷ Walt Whitman’s portrait in the first edition of *Leaves of Grass* was taken by the photographer Gabriel Harrison. On a hot summer day in 1854 while Whitman was walking along Fulton Street in Brooklyn, returning home from his printer’s job, Gabriel Harrison saw him and asked him to enter his studio. For further information see Bohan’s “‘The Gathering of the Forces’: Walt Whitman and the Visual Arts in Brooklyn in the 1850s” in *Walt Whitman and the Visual Arts*.

The pure contralto sings in the organ loft,
The carpenter dresses his plank, the tongue of his foreplane whistles
 its wild ascending lisp,
The married and unmarried children ride home to their Thanks-
 giving dinner,
The pilot seizes the king-pin, he heaves down with a strong arm,
The mate stands braced in the whale-boat, lance and harpoon are
 ready,
The duck-shooter walks by silent and cautious stretches (*Leaves of Grass* 39)

Whitman goes on with his “juxtaposition,” putting side by side the “Yankee girl” and “the squaw,” “the machinist” and “the connoisseur,” the “patriarchs” and the “immigrants,” “the bride” and “the opium-eater,” “the prostitute” and “the President.” In this random juxtaposition there is no relationship of importance or hierarchy. On the contrary, everything is leveled. Moreover, Whitman’s simple, direct style reflects the immediacy, commonness and directness of photography. The instantaneousness of the scenes is also rendered by the simplicity of the syntax. Instead of the complexity of subordinate clauses and other complicated structures, the poet opts for the (over)simplicity of phrases separated by commas. The rare coordinative conjunction is the copulative “and,” stressing the idea of non-hierarchical addition. Also, the use of the present tense of the verb emphasizes the present, the ephemeral “momentary images” captured by the poet.

At other times, though, the poet withdrew from his “photographic way of seeing.” Indeed, the beginning of the Civil War greatly affected Walt Whitman. This is recognizable not only in the poet’s poetry, but also in his prose. Whitman embraced the cause of war with enthusiasm and patriotic fervor. The first poems in “Drum-Taps,” the so-called “recruiting poems,” reflect the exultant mood at the onset of the Civil War.⁵⁸ The “photographic way of seeing” ceases and gives way to a loud call to arms.

⁵⁸ Several authors refer to the first poems in “Drum-Taps” as “recruiting poems:” Gay Wilson Allen, Jerome Loving, David Reynolds, among others.

Whitman urges all men to take up arms and defend the values of democracy and liberty. This appeal is directed towards male comrades, since war is a masculine business: “Mannahatta a-march — and it’s O to sing it well! / It’s O for a manly life in the camp” (“First O Songs for a Prelude,” *Leaves of Grass* 221); “As I heard you shouting loud, your sonorous voice ringing across the continent, / Your masculine voice O year, as rising amid the great cities...” (“Eighteen Sixty-One,” *Leaves of Grass* 221). Thus, Whitman sets the tone for the first poems in “Drum-Taps:” a loud, powerful voice rises across the whole nation, mobilizing all men to the effort of war. In these poems, therefore, sound overcomes the sense of sight. In the most sonorous of these poems, “Beat! Beat! Drums!,” the martial tune is emphasized by the use of plosive sounds such as /b/, /t/ and /d/. The rhythm is highlighted by strongly accentuated syllables, particularly at the end of verses; the first verse is repeated as well. Moreover, the use of exclamation marks sets the frantic pace of these lines:

Beat! ´ beat! ´ drums! ´ — blow! ´ bugles! ´ blow! ´
 Through ´ the win´dows — through ´ doors´ — burst ´ like a ruth´ less
 force ´,
 Into ´ the sol´emn church´, and sca´tter the con´grega´tion,
 Into ´ the school ´ where the scho´lar is stu´dying;
 Leave´ not the bride´groom quiet´ — no hap´piness must ´ he have
 now´ with his bride´,
 Nor´ the peace´ful farmer any peace ´, plough´ing his field´ or ga´thering
 his grain´,
 So fierce´ you whirr´ and pound´ you drums´ — so shrill´ you bugles´
 blow´. (*Leaves of Grass* 222)

This commanding tone indicates Whitman’s commitment to this cause, which, according to him, would bring about unity among the states. Therefore, peace is no longer welcome, since a new order is about to be created.

In the chapter “‘My Book and the War are One’: The Washington Years,” in *Walt Whitman’s America: A Cultural Biography*, David Reynolds argues that

underlying Whitman's enthusiasm for the war was the poet's belief that this armed conflict would have a purging effect on the whole nation. Thus, according to Reynolds, war was perceived as a purifying force which would eliminate the corruption and capitalism that were undermining American political and cultural structures: "Since he thought the North needed cleansing just as much as the South, several of his poems pictured the war as cleansing the Augean stables of capitalism and urbanism" (418). Thus, war exerted a similar effect on Whitman similar to that which had previously been wrought by nature. This can clearly be seen in "Rise O Days from Your Fathomless Deeps:"

Thunder on! Stride on, Democracy! Strike with vengeful stroke!
And do you rise higher than ever yet O days, O cities!
Crash heavier, heavier yet O storms! You have done me good,
My soul prepared in the mountains absorbs you immortal strong
 nutriment,
Long had I walk'd my cities, my country roads through farms,
 only half satisfied,
.....
Hungering, hungering, hungering, for primal energies and Nature's
 dauntlessness,
.....
But now I no longer wait, I am fully satisfied, I am gluttoned,
I have witness'd the true lightning, I have witness'd my cities
 electric,
I have lived to behold man burst forth and warlike America rise,
Hence I will seek no more the food of the northern solitary winds,
No more the mountains roam or sail the stormy sea. (*Leaves of Grass* 229-30)

In the first poems published in the earlier editions of *Leaves of Grass* the poet had turned to nature in search of a primal source of life and vitality. At this stage, the war provided Whitman with a substitute for that primal source of energy which he had so

eagerly sought: “I have lived to behold man burst forth and warlike America rise, / Hence I will seek no more the food of the northern solitary winds....” Gathering strength from another cause, war, the poet believed this would link all Americans in a strong, common bond. In “Elusive Properties: The Rhetoric of Randall Jarrell’s War” Jeffrey Childs refers to Whitman’s rhetoric of “wholeness” as a means to celebrate unity:

The first distinct moment of the war poems is one of euphoria, in which the rhetoric of the war’s necessity is fully embraced and the war itself appears to hold out the promise of a reconciliation which would establish a previously unachieved degree of wholeness. In Whitman this attitude is in part the product of his familiarity with currents of nineteenth century philosophy, but it is also easy to recognize a similarity between this view and the propaganda needed to mobilize a substantial portion of the country for the war effort. (13)

Thus, it is implied that through the experience of war, “wholeness,” unity would be achieved. Eventually, this implied the political unity and the supremacy of the Union: “The idea of all, of the Western world one and inseparable, / And then the song of each member of these States.” (“From Paumanok Starting I Fly like a Bird” 222-3). As we have seen, this idea would take on a fundamental aspect with Lincoln’s assassination. The poet would envisage the President’s death, the “first great Martyr Chief,” as a great, unifying cause which gave meaning to the sacrifice of the war.

When, in December 1862, Walt Whitman set off to the site of the Battle of Fredericksburg in search of his wounded brother, captain George Washington Whitman, he came across the debris and devastation of a torn nation. The poet had never seen the actual wreckage of a battle at first hand. The astounding number of dead bodies struck Whitman as one of the most catastrophic effects of the conflict: “The dead, the dead, the dead, our dead – or South or North – ours all (all, all, all finally dear to me), or East or West, Atlantic Coast or Mississippi Valley ...” (*Walt Whitman’s Civil War* 6). These words suggest a significant change of tone in Whitman’s perception of the conflict. For three years Walt Whitman visited hospitals to nurse wounded soldiers. As we have seen in chapter two (“Photographing the wounded and the sick: catalogs of notorious

Americans”), the poet used to tend and nurse the sick and wounded soldiers. This would be considered by the poet himself as the most profound lesson of his life. The accounts of such visits would be recorded in countless notebooks and letters among dozens of other unpublished works:

From the first I kept little notebooks for impromptu jottings in pencil to refresh my memory of names and circumstances.... I have dozens of such little notebooks left, forming a special history of those years for myself alone, full of associations never to be possibly said or sung. I wish I could convey to the reader the associations that attach to these soiled and creased livraisons, each composed of a sheet or two of paper folded small enough to carry in the pocket and fastened with a pin.

I leave them just as I threw them by after the war, blotched here and there with more than one bloodstain....*Drum Taps* was all written in that manner – all of it put together by fits and starts, on the field, in the hospitals, as I worked with the soldier boys. Some days I was more emotional than others; then I would suffer all the extra horrors of my experience; I would try to write blind, blind with my own tears. (*Walt Whitman’s Civil War* 3-4)

In this extract Whitman refers to the way his war poems were composed. The fragmentary means whereby the poet put together his verses parallels the blurred vision with which he witnesses the horrors of war at close range. Indeed, most of the scenes in the second half of “Drum-Taps” take place at night and the poet’s vision captures but fragments of those scenes. Moreover, there is also another aspect worth bearing in mind. The “impromptu jottings” mentioned by the poet remind one of the intense, fragmentary records of reality of his earlier poems. Unable to provide full descriptions of these dramatic moments, Whitman gives us but momentary, incomplete images of the scenes he witnesses.

The second half of the poems in “Drum-Taps,” therefore, marks a substantial shift in the way war is represented. The sound of the loud martial tunes gives way to the strained silence of someone who has witnessed the wreckage strewn over America. Thus, the sense of sight replaces the loud call to arms of the first poems in “Drum-Taps.” The initial excitement dies down and the sound of the drum and fife are no

longer heard. Instead, the hushed voices of both the poet's and the wounded soldiers replace the euphoric tunes. Consequently, the visual experience takes precedence over the loud noise of the first recruiting poems. This change of tone is perceptible in the first two poems that mark this transition: in "Cavalry Crossing a Ford" the sense of sight is emphasized by the use of the verb "behold," whereas in "Bivouac on a Mountain Side" the introductory "I see" sets the tone for the descriptive passage. This visual experience, nonetheless, differs from the "photographic" experience of earlier poems in *Leaves of Grass*. The "photographic way of seeing" allowed for accurate, intense, momentary records of reality. Those "present-tense-captured glimpses," as Folsom coined Whitman's lines, provided clear images of actions taking place in the daylight.⁵⁹ By contrast, these pictorial poems in "Drum-Taps" dwell on the shadowy and vague scenes that take place under the moonlight. In addition, in these pictorial poems the syntax becomes more complex and the poet inverts the normal subject-predicate sequence of the language, beginning his verses with participles, prepositional or clausal expressions. Also, there is a change in punctuation and the exclamation marks are withdrawn. The pace returns to repose, control and these lines are characterized by a conciseness unmatched in Whitman's earlier poems.

In "A March in the Ranks Hard-Prest, and the Road Unknown" the scene takes place at night and the only light comes from a "dim-lighted building:"

A march in the ranks hard-prest, and the road unknown,
 A route through a heavy wood with muffled steps in the darkness,

 Till after midnight glimmer upon us the lights of a dim-lighted
 building,

 Shadows of the deepest, deepest black, just lit by moving candles and
 lamps,
 And by one great pitchy torch stationary with wild red flame and
 clouds of smoke,

⁵⁹ See Folsom's chapter "Whitman and Photography" in *Walt Whitman's Native Representations*.

By these, crowds, groups of forms vaguely I see on the floor (*Leaves of Grass* 239)

The poet sees but vague forms on the floor as the darkness of the night envelopes the whole scene, the poet's sight hindered by the "clouds of smoke" and shadows. Interestingly enough, this blurred vision, this dimness and darkness reminds one of the shadowy, dim images reproduced by the daguerreotype. The scenes witnessed by the poet somewhat parallel the blurred, dark and shadowy images reproduced by the daguerreotype.

The scenes are enshrouded in darkness in other poems, as well. At times, only the dim light of the moon is visible. In "Vigil Strange I Kept on the Field one Night" the poet narrates the period of time he stayed awake at night to watch over a dying soldier:

Vigil strange I kept on the field one night;
When you my son and my comrade dropt at my side that day,
One look I but gave which your dear eyes return'd with a look I
 shall never forget,
One touch of your hand to mine O boy, reach'd up as you lay on
 the ground,
.....
Passing sweet hours, immortal and mystic hours with you dearest
 comrade – not a tear, not a word (*Leaves of Grass* 238)

The tone of the poem is one of control and silence: "not a tear, not a word." On witnessing the silence of the dying soldier, the poet regains composure. The lunar night bathes this scene providing solace and subdued emotion. The lunar light pervades other poems, namely "A Sight in Camp in the Daybreak Gray and Dim" and "Dirge for Two Veterans." In this last poem the moon is omnipresent: "Lo, the moon ascending, /Up from the east the silvery round moon, / Beautiful over the house-tops, ghastly, phantom moon, / Immense and silent moon" (*Leaves of Grass* 246). It is as if the poet's encounter with the immense amount of suffering of the wounded and dying soldiers is somewhat softened by the lunar light. By not bringing out into the sunshine the scenes

he observes and, thus, concealing the unspeakable pain under the veil of a dim light,
Whitman pays homage and respect to the dying men.

CONCLUSION

In this dissertation I have tried to address the complex issues underlying the use of photography and its relationship to the American Civil War. In this sense, I argue that photographs, far from being mere means of pictorial representations, carry social, cultural and political implications. Hence, photographs are not sheer illustrations of history. Not only do they reflect the prevailing mood of an epoch, but they also challenge general conceptions and preconceived notions and, thus, introduce change into patterns of thought and action.

I have chosen the topic of American Civil War photography since this was the first armed conflict to be largely recorded through the lenses of photographic devices. This fact alone sparked considerable interest and curiosity on my part. Furthermore, I focused my research on images that do not belong to the bulk of the photographic production. Indeed, depictions of unburied soldiers on the fields of battle, wounded army men, African American Union soldiers and wrecked landscapes are uncommon within American Civil War photography. The majority of the photographic records of the Civil War refer to either gallery portraiture or field photographs depicting scenes of military life. By narrowing the object of my research and limiting it to the most unpleasant images of this war, I have tried to explore the more controversial and intricate issues about the ways in which this armed conflict was represented through photography.

Photography brought about a marked shift in the way war came to be depicted. Throughout centuries, mythical representations of glorious death in battle had endured within the frames of paintings and lithographs. These representations portrayed a conflict in which heroic death was understood as something noble. Depictions of the mutilated remains of soldiers were scarce and wounded men didn't appear in paintings or lithographs. Painting had highlighted the moments of action during battle. Therefore, depictions of soldiers struggling against their enemies and dying heroically on the fields of battle abounded in these representations. By moving from the moment of battle to its lingering aftereffects, photography focused on the dramatic consequences of a *real* war and uncovered the mundane, ugly and distressing moments of the aftermath. Thus, it

brought viewers nearer to the true and *real* outcome of any armed conflict: death, injury, wreckage and discrimination. Moreover, it forced viewers to reformulate long-established concepts and notions.

Images of the American Civil War convey the triviality, the mundaneness and the ugliness of an armed conflict. Owing to cumbersome equipment and complex, technical procedures, photographers were unable to record the action of battle. As we have seen, photographic records of the American Civil War focus on a battle's prelude and aftermath. Most Civil War's photographic production reflects the quotidian, mundane side of a less heroic undertaking. We see portraits of officers in their uniforms as well as depictions of soldiers at work building pontoon bridges, repairing railroad tracks as well as fortifications and fortresses being put up, mortars and canons being placed in position, among others. Photography, therefore, contradicted the aura of martyrdom and glory which abounded in both visual and written representations of war. Through photography, army men were seen as common men carrying out daily tasks. More importantly we see exhausted army men, wrecked cities and corpses scattered randomly over the fields of battle. Images of the aftermath, thus, reveal a harsher reality, mostly unknown to an American audience.

Louis Daguerre's invention, and all the others that followed, introduced far-reaching changes to the nineteenth-century society. It altered the way people perceived themselves and the way they perceived the world around them. First, by relying on mechanical devices rather than on the human hand, photography introduced exactness, precision and objectivity into the visual representational arts. Contrary to painting, where the interpretative hand of the painter had to deal with the conventions and tendencies of the time, the new medium provided impartial, accurate and precise records of reality. This was possible due to an "unreasoning machine." Photography rendered reality more quickly and more accurately than painting had ever managed to and it was, indeed, more faithful in its representation than any other means of pictorial representation. Whereas painting had called for selection and composition, photography catered to quickness and objectivity. In a world that was rapidly changing from a domestic economy to an industrial, market-centered society, photographic records of the Civil War became popular among an audience craving for novelty.

Second, the new medium enabled people to rely on concrete visualizations of the object/referent. Instead of having to imagine abstract idealizations of an unknown world, the photographic records supplied people with a means to experience the representation of the world in lifelike images. This allowed people not only to enlarge their field of vision, but also to recognize both themselves and others in pictorial representations. Moreover, it enabled viewers to actually see and recognize the appearance of a public figure. In this sense, photographic records of Abraham Lincoln, for instance, helped shape his political image. As we have seen, Lincoln's likeness was repeatedly reproduced in *cartes-de-visite*, envelopes, pins, among others. This contributed to the empowerment of his political figure.

Third, photographs were believed to be true. The new medium focused on the present moment and the real. Something that had been photographed was believed to be true, to "have been." Photographic truth, therefore, was accepted as something natural. As we have seen, photographs authenticate the object/referent; they are "certificates of presence." Although some professionals might have altered the events at the site of battle by staging and composing the scenes, as we have seen in chapter one ("Staged Photography: the case of the moved bodies at Gettysburg"), they could only change something that already *existed*. They could only have composed on something that "ha[d] been," had existed. Therefore, we may conclude that visual representations came to be perceived as visual information, visual facts that were relevant and undeniable. Furthermore, photography was believed to uncover the true character of its sitters. Photographed faces, therefore, assumed major importance, since they were thought to reveal the sitter's inner truth.

Fourth, the mechanical nature of this pictorial means of representation allowed for the absorption of reality in a non-hierarchical way. Whereas the interpretative hand of the painter had indulged selection, the mechanical devices recorded everything that was in view, regardless of appropriateness and decorum. The new medium was inclusive: it recorded the ugly and the beautiful, the mundane and the heroic, the trivial and the exquisite. This would take on its most disturbing aspect with the reproductions of images of bodies on the battlefield as well as of images of wounded and sick soldiers. These images show human wreckage, "wrecks of manhood," as Oliver Wendel

Holmes's put it. There was no effort, on the photographer's part, to conceal or hide the repulsive scenes. On the contrary, man's decay and frailty was fully exposed.

Lastly, by introducing the elements of objectivity and truthfulness, the photographic records favored the proximity between viewer and the object/referent. Not surprisingly enough, it is precisely the elements of truthfulness, accuracy and inclusiveness which would challenge people's perception of both themselves and of the world they lived in. By bringing the subject closer to its object/referent in an unprecedented new way, photography posed fundamental questions to American viewers. The Antietam photographs shocked, not only because they were unfamiliar, but also because they were astonishingly real. Many of those were stereographs, three-dimensional images which created a sense of depth and perspective and, thus, fostered the illusion of proximity between the viewer and the object.

Images of the aftermath were uncommon. Furthermore, they raise complex issues regarding the conceptions of war and death as well as the role played by the soldier in the strife, namely: the impact upon an American audience of photographs depicting unburied dead soldiers and the fact that they disregard pre-conceived notions and conventions concerning the way dead soldiers should be represented.; the objectification and abstraction undergone by wounded army men pictured in medical photography; the invisibility and the paradoxes underlying photographic records of African-American soldiers; the contradictions between images of intact landscapes and the devastation of a *real* war.

The first photographic records of unburied soldiers to be displayed at Mathew Brady's Gallery in New York provoked mixed reactions. On the one hand, they inspired feelings of repulsion and disgust and led Oliver Wendel Holmes to express his wish of burying them in some secret drawer and, thus minimizing their traumatic effect. On the other hand, they held a strange fascination for the audience who bent down to look in the faces of the dead, chained by the "strange spell that dwells in men's eyes." Also, stereographs of dead combatants were assembled and displayed in the living rooms of Americans. The "first living-room war" aroused the curiosity of an audience craving for new, morbid sensations.

Moreover, these images do not conform to long-standing practices as regards the way the dead should be cared for and disposed of. American viewers went through the harrowing experience of contemplating images of distorted, mutilated bodies scattered on the ground in the most grotesque positions. These images were *real* and presented innumerable challenges to the American minds.

First, pictures of the unburied dead highlighted the fact that the soldiers died anonymously and contradicted the concept of honorable, heroic death. Second, these images accentuated the decay, disintegration of the body. Whereas antebellum photography depicting dead bodies within familiar surroundings aimed to immortalize the image of the integrity and dignity of the corpse, stereographs of the unburied dead on a scarred battlefield emphasized the decay of the body. Furthermore, antebellum practices favored the grooming and preparation of the corpse in order to give it a more lifelike appearance and, thus, minimize the effects of loss. Death was, therefore, perceived as an extension of life and it was understood as part of the cycle of nature. By contrast, sudden and unprepared-for death on the battlefield disrupted the natural cycle as well as destroying family ties and disrupting social cohesion. Thus, these images highlighted the fact that those soldiers did not have a “Good Death.” Third, as it was impossible to transport the corpses home, families were prevented from mourning their dead. This excluded the possibility of an appropriate emotional response. Family members of the dead soldiers were not provided with a means to remember so that they could forget. Fourth, these images were aimed at public consumption. What had once remained within the private sphere of family and community was now handed over to the public. Stereographs of the unburied remains of army men circulated freely and were collected by the public at large. Eventually, they became objects with a market value, mere commodities that were purchased by an anonymous and stupefied audience. What had once been confined to the family and community was becoming a public matter. Hence, photography annihilated the private and helped give rise to new public domains.

Other photographic records of this conflict uncover a harsher reality. Images of the wounded and sick soldiers are among the most discomfiting of American Civil War photography. These images show fractured bones, amputations, gunshot wounds and the

results of surgical operations. They were used to catalog the varieties of wounds and their treatments at the Army Medical Museum. On the one hand, photographs of mutilated soldiers resemble studio portraits since the wounded were depicted either sitting or standing in a posture akin to standard gallery portraiture, their figures being carefully posed. On the other hand, portraits of wounded army men provide a sharp contrast to images recorded in photo galleries. In the medical records attention is driven from the head to the naked or half-clad body which was not understood as representing someone's identity and individuality. They clearly oppose the image of respectability and status conveyed by the well-dressed, influential figures in Mathew Brady's "Gallery of Illustrious Americans." Whereas portraits of illustrious Americans aimed at popularizing and empowering their sitters, the records of the sick and wounded soldiers linger on the obscure, notorious traits of clinical cases. The catalogs of medical photographs, therefore, represent "repressive archives" since they were compiled with the purpose of classification and statistical compilation only.

Furthermore, these medical catalogs raise issues of still another nature. Before the war, the intact body of the soldier symbolized strength, integrity and manhood. Through the experience of war the soldier's body became subjected to medical experiments, which reduced its importance to a mere token of clinical inspection, his status as an individual being erased so that he could be perceived as a "specimen." Thus, subjects, whose bodies were captured by the lenses of the photographic devices, became mere objects of scientific analysis. Moreover, the fact that these records were cataloged and aimed for not only medical, but also public consumption, accentuated the objectification and abstraction these bodies underwent. Again, photography had fostered the dissemination of the private. Lastly, photographs of the mutilated bodies mirror the dismemberment of postbellum America. Instead of portraits depicting intact figures, the viewer is confronted with fragments of a once intact body which are evocative of a broken, dismembered nation.

Images of African American Union soldiers represent one of the most unusual features of the American Civil War photographic production. These images bring up questions concerning the representational status of these men as well as the discrimination they were subjected to. They emphasize the contradictions underlying

the participation of these soldiers in the Union regiments. On the one hand, they were welcome within the Union army and hailed as heroes of the nation, especially after the setbacks suffered by the Union forces. On the other hand, their role in the strife remained ambiguous and controversial, many of these soldiers deemed unfit for military action. Indeed, African Americans were often assigned a disproportionate quantity of fatigue work, they were denied equal pay and could not aspire to promotion. The role of these men in the Union army, therefore, remained ambiguous and was widely unrecognized.

Photographs of African Americans reflect the controversies surrounding the participation of these soldiers in the strife. First, images of African American Union soldiers are almost nonexistent. Although one-hundred and seventy thousand black men are reported to have served in Union regiments, their presence in photographic records is negligible to a point that is disconcerting. Second, whenever black army men are portrayed in photographs, their presence is almost invisible, being relegated to the background of the pictorial representation. Third, African American soldiers were nearly always portrayed as unskilled, badly-paid laborers performing menial and time-consuming tasks. Far from being a means of empowerment and recognition, the images, therefore, perpetuate the status of institutionalized subordination and discrimination.

Photographic records of wrecked cities and destroyed landscapes in the albums of war reveal the paradoxes of a war-torn nation. George Barnard's *Photographic Views of Sherman's Campaign* and Alexander Gardner's *Photographic Sketchbook of the American Civil War* are contradictory in that they focus on the American landscape and daily life rather than on signs of destruction or conflict. Indeed, despite the fact that these albums were supposed to document war, they display few images of wreckage. Instead, the albums of war converge on the tranquility of army life, the buildings and institutions of America, and the harmonious landscapes of an intact countryside and remind one of the photographic documentation of American life rather than the pictorial representation of a country at war. These photographic records pose something of a paradox, considering the loss and destruction wrought by the Civil War: there is hardly any evidence of active warfare, military occupation or soldiers. Where one would have expected to view images depicting devastated cities and fields, one is confronted with

less hostile views. Thus, images of wreckage were mitigated by the inclusion of other more benign views of war. They were assembled with another purpose in mind: to help efface the effects of the conflict and to remind the viewers that life and death were part of the cycle of nature.

In the end of this dissertation we dealt with two powerful personalities: Abraham Lincoln and Walt Whitman. Both were connected with the two major topics of this text: nineteenth-century photography and the American Civil War. Abraham Lincoln and Walt Whitman developed, throughout their lives, a steady relationship with leading photographers of their time. Both personalities were photographed over and over again, and portraits of both cover, if not all, at least significant moments of their lives.

Abraham Lincoln and Walt Whitman's relation to the war revealed the ambivalences and complexities of troubled times. For Abraham Lincoln, the salvation and redemption of the nation's political body should be achieved out of the individual sacrifice of the nation's young corporeal bodies. His funeral, in itself, is representative of this. The public exhibition of the president's corpse along with the celebration and memorialization of his figure fitted well into the logic of the supremacy of the body politic. Moreover, death in war was believed to bring about a strong sense of national unity and the President's body was used to reaffirm the integrity of the Union. Through the sacrifice of the Great Martyr, peace and order would be restored. Walt Whitman's elegy "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd" explores this aspect: through memory, the presence and image of the deceased President is brought back and grief is dealt with.

Moreover, photography occupied a decisive role in Lincoln's rise to power. The fact that Abraham Lincoln was one of the most photographed presidents of the nineteenth-century contributed to his image being perceived as a symbol of the Union's supremacy, embodying the spirit of the nation's cultural and political institutions. Photography helped create an aura of intellectual and moral superiority around the sixteenth President of America. Also, depictions of his dead body helped reinforce the notion of the President as martyr and savior of the country. Thus, Lincoln's image rose

above its strictly representational status to epitomize the ideals and values of a whole nation. Lincoln's image became an icon.

Photography exerted a tremendous impact on Walt Whitman. His verses show the overwhelming influence of the new medium upon the poet's writing. As we have seen, the poet remained deeply influenced by the pictorial arts throughout all of his life. Although all five senses played an important role in his creative power, it was indeed the sense of sight which remained particularly prominent. His visual experience, though, underwent differences of tone. The first editions of *Leaves of Grass* clearly reflect Whitman's "photographic way of seeing." Some verses in "Song of Myself," particularly, resemble momentary snapshots of reality and parallel the instantaneousness, immediacy and intensity of the new medium. These "present-tense-captured-glimpses" provide clear images of scenes taking place in the sunshine. At other moments, though, Whitman's sense of sight goes further allowing him to record the movement and changing of scenes, as if the poet were recording a scene, and not merely "photographing" it. In these verses the poet uses the present participle, which provides the verses with continuity, a fluidity of movement which reminds one of an activity closer to that of a motion picture camera rather than that of a photographic record. Therefore, Walt Whitman anticipates, in his verse, the motion picture of the forthcoming century.

The American Civil War produced a major shift in the way Walt Whitman dealt with the topic of war. His experience with the wounded combatants contributed to the change of tone in his poetry. Some of the poems in "Drum-Taps" reflect the anguish of one who witnesses unbearable pain at close range. These poems dwell on the shadowy, vague scenes which occurred under the moonlight. There is an atmosphere of composure along with the darkness and obscurity of these scenes. The dim, shadowy atmosphere of these verses is evocative of the daguerreotype, where the contours are less clear and the contrast between light and darkness is, in itself, more obvious than in other photographic reproductions of the time.

In this dissertation I have examined photographs of a major event in American history – the 1861- 65 Civil War. I have tried to establish links between the photographs themselves and the social, cultural and political context of the time. Photographs bear

meaning. They transmit messages and whether direct, clear, contradictory or subliminal, these messages need reading. Hence, more than visual artifacts, photographs are “texts” to be read.

Reading through the photographs of the American Civil War has been a demanding task as well as a challenge and a satisfaction. Through these images one is confronted with the uncertainties of a war-torn nation, the empowerment and exposure of figures such as Abraham Lincoln and Walt Whitman, the decay and frailty of army men. These photographs have provided us with a means to better understand the prevailing mood, the paradoxes and the questions of a nineteenth-century America at odds with itself and involved in a fratricidal conflict of overwhelming proportions.

Overall, I hope to have contributed to a deeper understanding of American Civil War photography. Ideally, my work will help others chart new paths into the subject matter so that further investigation can be successfully implemented.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- BARNARD, George N. *Photographic Views of Sherman's Campaign*. 1866. Ed. Beaumont Newhall. New York: Dover Publications, 1977.
- BARTHES, Roland. *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*. 1980. Trans. Richard Howard. New York: Hill and Wang, 1982.
- — — . *Image-Music-Text*. 1977. Trans. Stephen Heath. New York: Hill and Wang, 1978.
- BENGTSON, Bradley P., and Julian E. Kuz, eds. *Photographic Atlas of Civil War Injuries*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Medical Staff Press, 1996. Rpt. of *Photographs of Surgical Cases and Specimens*. Ed. George A. Otis, 1871.
- BENJAMIN, Walter. "A Short History of Photography." *Classic Essays on Photography*. Ed. Alan Trachtenberg. New Haven: Leete's Island Books, 1980. 199-215. Rpt. of "A Short History of Photography". *Literarische Welt*. 1931.
- BERGER, John. "Understanding a Photograph." *Classic Essays on Photography*. Ed. Alan Trachtenberg. New Haven: Leete's Island Books, 1980. 291-4.
- BLACK, Andrew K. "In the Service of the Unites States: Comparative Mortality among African-American and White Troops in the Union Army." *The Journal of Negro History*. 79.4 (1994): 317- 324.
- BOHAN, Ruth. "'The Gathering of the Forces': Walt Whitman and the Visual Arts in Brooklyn in the 1850s." *Walt Whitman and the Visual Arts*. Eds. Geoffrey M. Sill and Roberta K. Tarbell. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1992. 1-27.
- CHILDS, Jeffrey Scott. "Elusive Properties: The Rhetoric of Randall Jarrell's War." Diss. Faculdade de Letras da Universidade de Lisboa, 1997.
- DANIELS, Jessie. "*White Lies*": *Race, Class, Gender and Sexuality in White Supremacist Discourse*. New York: Routledge, 1997.

- DAVIS, Keith F. "‘A Terrible Distinctness’: Photography of the Civil War Era."
Photography in Nineteenth-Century America. Ed. Martha A. Sandweiss.
 New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1991. 130-179.
- EASTLAKE, Lady Elizabeth. "Photography." *Classic Essays on Photography*. Ed.
 Alan Trachtenberg. New Haven: Leete’s Island Books, 1980. 39-68. Rpt.
 of "Photography." *Quarterly Review*. 1857.
- FAUST, Drew Gilpin. *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War*.
 New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2008.
- FOLSOM, Ed. *Walt Whitman’s Native Representations*. 1994. Cambridge: Cambridge
 University Press, 1997.
- FRASSANITO, William A. *Antietam: The Photographic Legacy of America’s
 Bloodiest Day*. Gettysburg: Thomas Publications, 1978.
- — — . *Gettysburg: A Journey in Time*. Gettysburg: Thomas Publications,
 1975.
- GARDNER, Alexander. *Gardner’s Photographic Sketchbook of the American Civil
 War 1861-1865*. Ed. Delano Greenidge. New York: Delano Greenidge
 Editions, 2001. Rpt. of *Gardner’s Photographic Sketchbook of the War*.
 Washington DC: Philip and Solomons, 1866.
- GILBERT, George. *Photography: The Early Years*. New York: Harper & Row
 Publishers, 1980.
- GOLDBERG, Vicki. *Light Matters: Writings on Photography*. 1979. New York:
 Aperture Foundation, 2005.
- — — . *The Power of Photography: How Photography Changed our Lives*.
 New York: Abbeville Press, 1991.
- GREENSPAN, Ezra. "Some Remarks on the Poetics of ‘Participle-Loving Whitman.’"
The Cambridge Companion to Walt Whitman. 1995. Ed. Ezra Greenspan.
 Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.
- GROVER, Jan Zita. "The First Living-Room War: The Civil War in the Illustrated
 Press." *Afterimage*. 11 (February 1984): 8-11.
- HAWTHORNE, Nathaniel. *The House of the Seven Gables*. New York: Dodd, Mead
 and Company, 1950.

- HIGGINSON, Thomas Wentworth. *Army Life in a Black Regiment and Other Writings*. 1870. Ed. Robert Madison. New York: Penguin Books, 1997.
- HORAN, James D. *Mathew Brady: Historian with a Camera*. New York: Crown Publishers, 1955.
- KATZ, D. Mark. *Witness to an Era: The Life and Photographs of Alexander Gardner*. Nashville: Rutledge Hill Press, 1991.
- KELBAUGH, Ross J. *Introduction to Civil War Photography*. Gettysburg: Thomas Publications, 1991.
- KINNEY, Katherine. "Making Capital: War, Labor, and Whitman in Washington, D.C." *Breaking Bounds: Whitman and American Cultural Studies*. Eds. Betsy Erkkila and Jay Grossman. New York: Oxford University Press, 1992. 174-189.
- KRAMER, Lawrence, ed. *Walt Whitman and Modern Music: War, Desire and the Trials of Nationhood*. New York: Garland Publishing, 2000.
- LADERMAN, Gary. *The Sacred Remains: American Attitudes toward Death, 1799-1883*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996.
- LOVING, Jerome. *Walt Whitman: The Song of Himself*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000.
- MCPHERSON, James M. *The Negro's Civil War*. 1965. New York: Vintage Books, 2003.
- MULLIGAN, Therese and David Wooters, eds. *Photographs: George Eastman House*. New York: Taschen, 1999.
- NEWHALL, Beaumont. *Photography: A Short Critical Study*. New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1938.
- NUDELMAN, Franny. *John Brown's Body: Slavery, Violence and the Culture of War*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2004.
- POE, Edgar Allan. "The Daguerreotype." 1840. *Classic Essays on Photography*. Ed. Alan Trachtenberg. New Haven: Leete's Island Books, 1980. 37-8.
- REYNOLDS, David. *Walt Whitman's America: a Cultural Biography*. Alfred A. Knopf: New York, 1996.

- REYNOLDS, Larry and Gordon Hutner, eds. *National Imaginaries, American Identities: The Cultural Work of American Iconography*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000.
- ROOT, Marcus Aurelius. "The Camera and the Pencil." 1864. *Photography in Print: Writings from 1816 to the Present*. 1981. Ed. Vicki Goldberg. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1990.148-151.
- RUBY, Jay. *Secure the Shadow: Death and Photography in America*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1995.
- RUSSELL, Andrew J. *Russell's Civil War Photographs: 116 Historic Prints*. Ed. Dover Publications. New York: Dover Publications, 1982. Rpt. of *United States Military Railroad Photographic Album*. Publisher and date unknown.
- SAMUELS, Shirley. *Facing America: Iconography and the Civil War*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2004.
- SEKULA, Allan. "The Body and the Archive." *The Contest of Meaning: Critical Histories of Photography*. Ed. Richard Bolton. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1990. 343-380.
- SONTAG, Susan. *On Photography*.1973. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1977.
- — — . *Regarding the Pain of Others*. New York: Picador, 2003.
- SULLIVAN, George, ed. *In the Wake of Battle: The Civil War Images of Mathew Brady*. Munich: Prestel Verlag, 2004.
- SWEET, Timothy. *Traces of War: Poetry, Photography, and the Crisis of the Union*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990.
- TAFT, Robert. *Photography and the American Scene: A Social History, 1839-1889*. 1938. New York: Dover Publications, 1964.
- TALBOT, William Henry Fox. *The Pencil of Nature*. Ed. Beaumont Newhall. New York: Da Capo Press, 1968. Rpt. of *The Pencil of Nature*. London: Longman, Brown, Guenn and Longmans, 1844-1846.
- TOCQUEVILLE, Alexis de. *Democracy in America*. Ed. Isaac Kramnick. Trans. Gerald Bevan. London: Penguin Books, 2003.

- TOWNSEND, George Alfred. "Interview with Mathew Brady." *Photography in Print: Writings from 1816 to the Present*. 1981. Ed. Vicki Goldberg. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1990. 199-206. Rpt. of "Still Making Pictures: Brady, the Grand Old Man of American Photography". *New York World* 1891.
- TRACHTENBERG, Alan. *Lincoln's Smile and Other Enigmas*. New York: Hill and Wang, 2008.
- — — . "Photography: The Emergence of a Keyword." *Photography in Nineteenth-Century America*. Ed. Martha A. Sandweiss. New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1991. 17-47
- — — . *Reading American Photographs: Images as History, Mathew Brady to Walker Evans*. 1989. New York: Hill and Wang, 1990.
- WELLS, Liz, ed. *Photography: A Critical Introduction*. New York: Routledge, 2004.
- WHITMAN, Walt. *Leaves of Grass*. Ed. Jerome Loving. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.
- — — . *Leaves of Grass: The First (1855) Edition*. 1959. Ed. Malcolm Cowley. New York: Penguin Classics, 1986.
- — — . *Walt Whitman's Civil War*. 1981. Ed. Walter Lowenfells. New York: Da Capo Press, 1989.

WEBLIOGRAPHY

- "Action of the Colored People" *Harper's Weekly* 18 July 1863: 460. 15 Dec 2006
 <<http://blackhistory.harpweek.com/3CivilWar/CivilWarLevelOne.htm>>
- "Bodies... The Exhibition." 30 July 2007
 <<http://www.bodiestheexhibition.com/bodies.html>>

“Brady’s Photographs: Pictures of the Dead at Antietam” *New York Times* 20 Oct 1862.

30 Nov 2006 <<http://query.nytimes.com/search/query?srchst=p>>

CONNOR, J.T.H., and Michael Rhode. “Shooting Soldiers: Civil War Medical Images, Memory, and Identity in America.” *Invisible Culture: An Electronic Journal for Visual Culture* 5 (2003): 28 pars. 8 Aug. 2007

<http://www.rochester.edu/in_visible_culture/>

ELLSWORTH, Henry. “Letter to Senator John Ruggles.” 18 Dec 1840. 30 July 2007

<<http://www.npg.si.edu/exhibit/pob/index/html>>

HOLMES, Oliver Wendel. “The Stereoscope and the Stereograph”. *Atlantic Monthly* 3. June 1859: 738-748. Cornell University Library. 6 Feb 2007

<http://moa.cit.cornell.edu/moa/moa_browse.html>

— — — . “Sun-Painting and Sun-Sculpture: With a Stereoscopic Trip across the Atlantic.”. *Atlantic Monthly* 8. July 1861: 13-29. Cornell University Library. 6 Feb 2007

<http://moa.cit.cornell.edu/moa/moa_browse.html>

— — — . “My Hunt after ‘The Captain’”. *Atlantic Monthly* 10.

December 1862: 738-764. Cornell University Library. 16 July 2007

<http://moa.cit.cornell.edu/moa/moa_browse.html>

— — — . “Doings of the Sunbeam”. *Atlantic Monthly* 12. July 1863:

1-15. Cornell University Library. 6 Feb 2007

<http://moa.cit.cornell.edu/moa/moa_browse.html>

JACOBS, Andrew. “Cadaver Exhibition Raises Questions Beyond Taste.” *New York Times* 18 November 2005. 13 July 2007

<<http://www.nytimes.com/2005/11/18/nyregion/18bodies.html>>

LESTER, Paul Martin. “Picture Manipulations”. *Photojournalism: An Ethical Approach*. 15 Dec 2006

<<http://commfaculty.fullerton.edu/lester/writings/chapter6.html>>

LINCOLN, Abraham. “First Inaugural Address” 4 March 1861. 15 Dec 2006

<http://etext.virginia.edu/toc/modeng/public/LinFirst.html>>

— — — . “The Gettysburg Address” 19 November 1863. 30 July 2007

<http://americancivilwar.com/north/lincoln.html>>

“Negro Soldiers: The Question settled and its Consequences” *New York Times* 11 June 1863. 15 Dec 2006

<http://query.nytimes.com/search/query?srchst=p>>

“Photography at the Seat of War”. *Scientific American* 7. 18 Oct 1862: 247. Cornell University Library. 15 Dec 2006

<http://cdl.library.cornell.edu/moa/browse.journals/scia.html>>

“Photographs of the War.” *New York Times* 17 August 1861. 30 Nov 2006

<http://query.nytimes.com/search/query?srchst=p>>

“Something about Pictures”. *Atlantic Monthly* 1. Feb 1858: 402-410. Cornell University Library. 15 Jan 2007

http://moa.cit.cornell.edu/moa/moa_browse.html>

APPENDIX



Fig. 1. Anthony's establishment in 1854. From wood engravings in the *Photographic Art Journal*, 1854. Reprinted from Robert Taft's *Photography and the American Scene*. 83.



Fig. 2. Soldier of the Union. Date and photographer unknown. Library of Congress.



Fig. 3. Confederate Lieutenant General, William J. Harder. Photographer and date unknown. Library of Congress.



Fig. 4. Mathew Brady after his return from the Battle of Bull Run. July 1861. Photographer unknown. Library of Congress.



Fig. 5. A photo wagon at Petersburg. These wagons were named as “Whatizzit” wagons by the army. 1864. Photographer unknown. Library of Congress.



Fig. 6. John Trumbull. *The Death of General Warren at the Battle of Bunker Hill.* (painted between 1815 and 1831). Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Trumbull



Fig. 7. Mathew Brady (wearing a straw hat) with General Ambrose E. Burnside (reading newspaper). Cold Harbor, 1864. Photographer unknown. Library of Congress.



Fig. 8. "A Sharpshooter's Last Sleep, Gettysburg." July 1863. Alexander Gardner, photographer. *Gardner's Photographic Sketchbook of the American Civil War 1861-1865*. Plate 40.



Fig. 9. “Home of a rebel Sharpshooter, Gettysburg.” July 1863. Alexander Gardner, photographer. *Gardner’s Photographic Sketchbook of the American Civil War 1861-1865*. Plate 41.



Fig. 10. “A Harvest of Death, Gettysburg, July 1863.” Negative by Timothy O’ Sullivan. Positive by Alexander Gardner. *Gardner’s Photographic Sketchbook of the American Civil War 1861-1865*. Plate 36.



Fig. 11. “Field where General Reynolds Fell, Gettysburg. July, 1863.” Negative by Timothy O’ Sullivan. Positive by Alexander Gardner. *Gardner’s Photographic Sketchbook of the American Civil War 1861-1865*. Plate 37.



Fig. 12. Bodies of Confederate dead gathered for burial. Antietam, Sept. 1862. Alexander Gardner, photographer. Library of Congress.



Fig. 13. Confederate soldiers as they fell near the Burnside bridge. Antietam, Sept. 1862. Alexander Gardner, photographer. Library of Congress.



Fig. 14. Dead by a fence on the Hagerstown road. Antietam, Sept. 1862. Alexander Gardner, photographer. Library of Congress.



Fig. 15. Bodies of Confederate dead in front of the Dunker Church. Antietam, Sept. 1862. Alexander Gardner, photographer. Library of Congress.



Fig. 16. Confederate dead. Antietam, Sept. 1862. Alexander Gardner, photographer. Library of Congress.



Fig. 17. Confederate dead at the Gettysburg battle. Photographer and date unknown. Library of Congress.



Fig. 18. “Trossel’s House, Battle-field of Gettysburg.” Negative by Timothy O’Sullivan. Positive by Alexander Gardner. *Gardner’s Photographic Sketchbook of the American Civil War 1861-1865*. Plate 42.



Fig. 19. Dead Confederate soldier in the trenches of Fort Mahone. Petersburg, Virginia. April 1865. Thomas Roche, photographer. Library of Congress.



Fig. 20. Dead Confederate soldier in the trenches of Fort Mahone. Petersburg, Virginia. April 1865. Thomas Roche, photographer. Library of Congress.



Fig. 21. Dead Confederate soldier in the trenches of Fort Mahone. Petersburg, Virginia. April 1865. Thomas Roche, photographer. Library of Congress.



Fig. 22. Dead Confederate soldier in the trenches of Fort Mahone. Petersburg, Virginia. April 1865. Thomas Roche, photographer. Library of Congress.



Fig. 23. Dead Confederate soldiers in the trenches of Fort Mahone. Petersburg, Virginia. April 1865. Thomas Roche, photographer. Library of Congress.

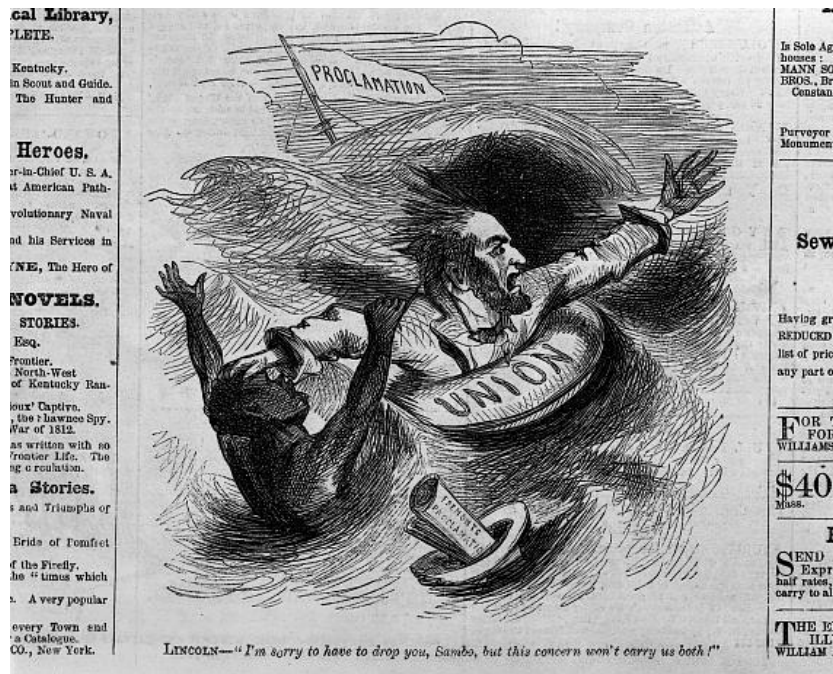


Fig. 24. "I'm sorry to have to drop you, Sambo, but this concern won't carry us both!" *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, October 12, 1861. Library of Congress.

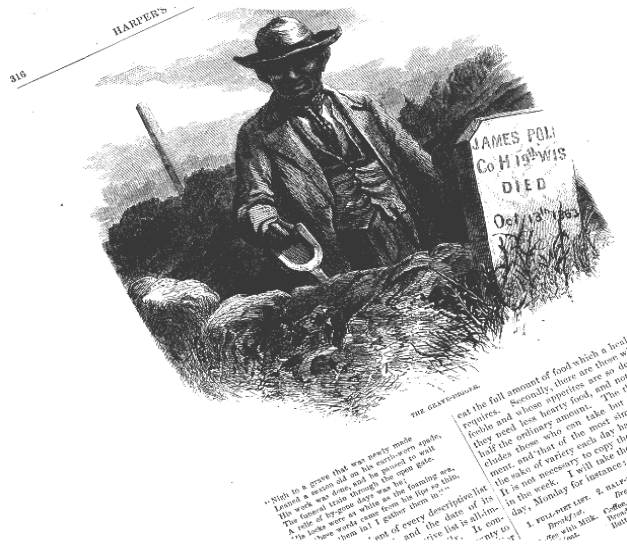


Fig. 25. “Jacob, the grave digger.”

Harper’s New Monthly Magazine, August 1864.

Cornell University Library.

http://moa.cit.cornell.edu/moa/moa_browse.html

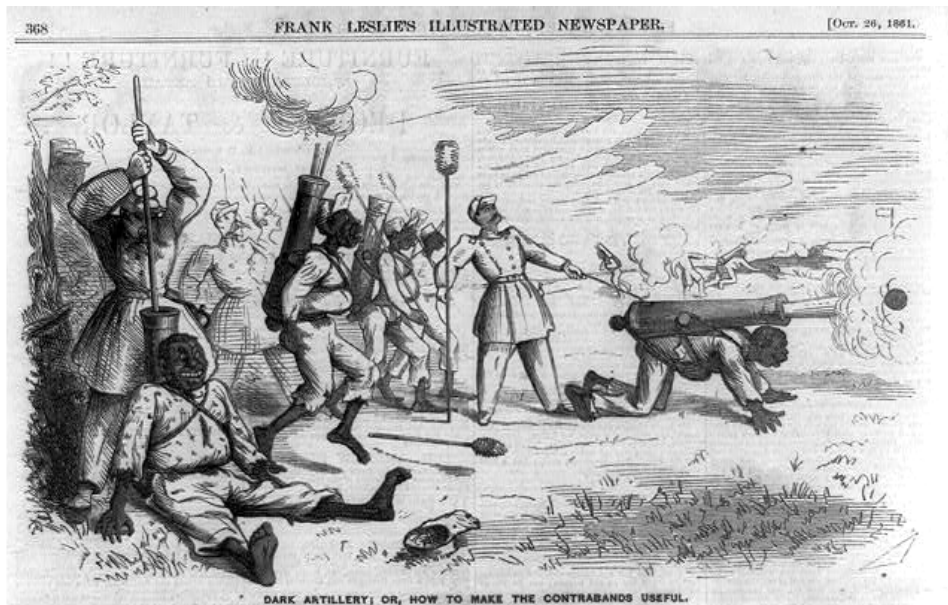


Fig. 26. “Dark artillery, or, How to make the contrabands useful.” *Frank*

Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper, October 26, 1861.

Library of Congress.



Fig. 27. "He died for me." 1863. Lithograph. Artist, Henry Louis Stephens. Library of Congress.



Fig. 28. Burying the dead at hospital in Fredericksburg, Virginia. Photographer and date unknown. Library of Congress.



Fig. 29. Unidentified African American soldier, full-length portrait, wearing uniform.
Photographer and date unknown.
Library of Congress.

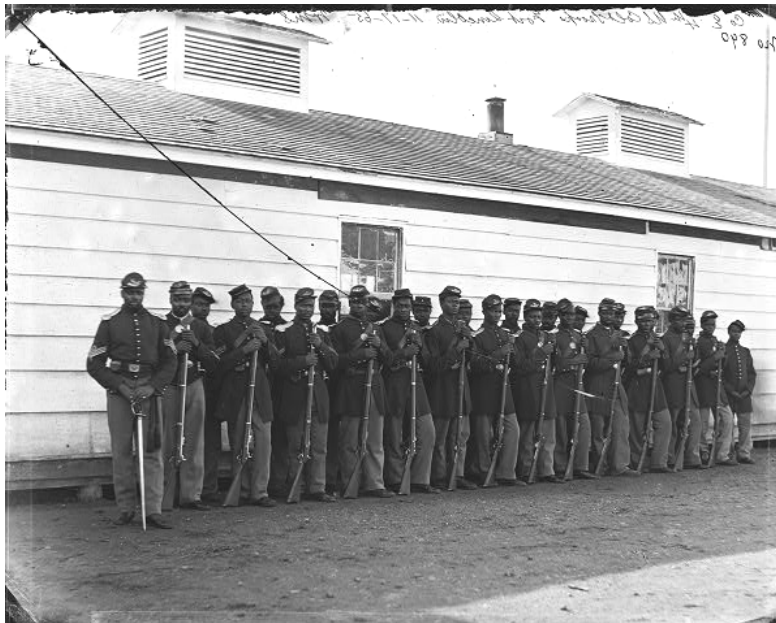


Fig. 30. 4th US Colored Infantry at Fort Lincoln.
Photographer and date unknown. Library of Congress.



Fig. 31. Camp of 27th US Colored Infantry.

Photographer and date unknown. Library of Congress.



Fig. 32. Camp of the 10th US Colored Infantry.

Photographer and date unknown. Library of Congress.



Fig. 33. Aiken's Landing, Virginia. African American soldiers resting near the Aiken house. 1864. Photographer unknown. Library of Congress.



Fig. 34. Field and staff of 39th US Colored Infantry in front of Petersburg, Virginia. 1864. Photographer unknown. Library of Congress.

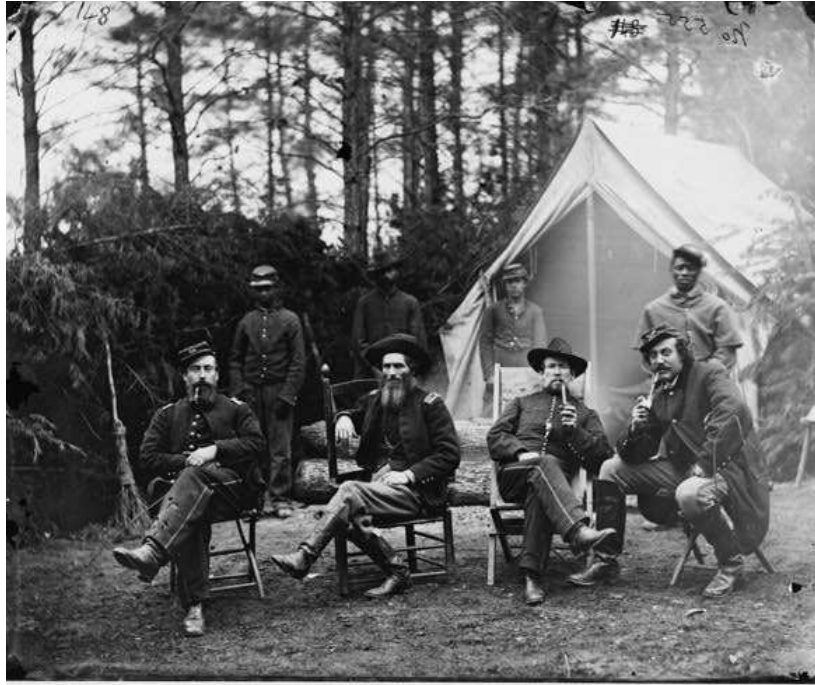


Fig. 35. Brandy Station, Virginia. James M Robertson and staff, 1st Brigade, Horse Artillery. February, 1864. Photographer unknown. Library of Congress.



Fig. 36. Officers of the 4th US Colored Infantry, Fort Slocum. April, 1865. Photographer unknown. Library of Congress.



Fig. 37. General Napoleon Bonaparte McLaughlen and staff near Washington, DC. July, 1865. Photographer unknown. Library of Congress.



Fig. 38. African American cook at work. City Point, Virginia. Photographer and date unknown. Library of Congress.



Fig. 39. African American soldier guarding 12-pound Napoleon. City Point, Virginia. 1865. Photographer unknown. Library of Congress.

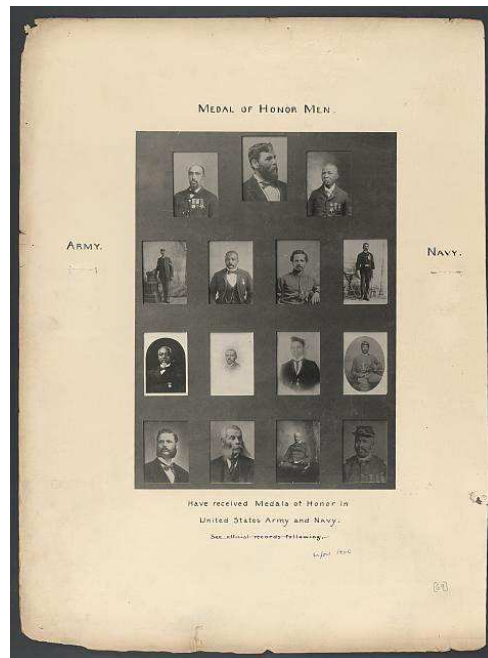


Fig. 40. Men that have received medals of honor in the United States Army and Navy. Photographer and date unknown. Library of Congress.



Fig. 41. “What do I want, John Henry?” Warrenton, Virginia. November, 1862.

Alexander Gardner, photographer. *Gardner’s Photographic Sketchbook of the American Civil War 1861-1865*. Plate 27.



Fig. 42. “A Fancy Group.” Front of Petersburg. August, 1864. Negative by

David Knox. Positive by Alexander Gardner. *Gardner’s Photographic Sketchbook of the American Civil War 1861-1865*. Plate 76.



Fig. 43. "A Burial Party." Cold Harbor, Virginia. April, 1865. Negative by John Reekie. Positive by Alexander Gardner. *Gardner's Photographic Sketchbook of the American Civil War 1861-1865*. Plate 94.

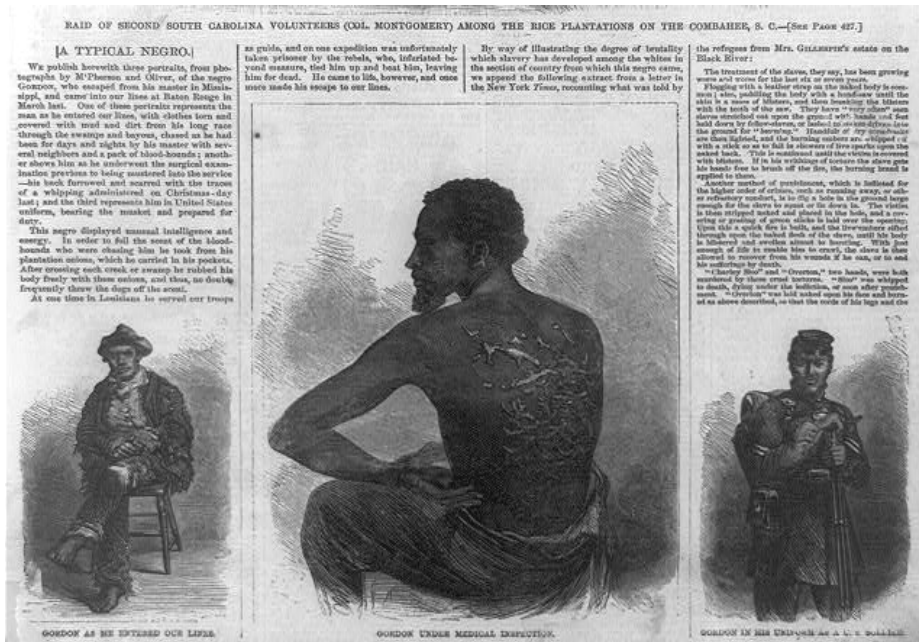


Fig. 44. "Gordon as he entered our lines. Gordon under medical inspection. Gordon in his uniform as U.S. soldier." *Harper's Weekly*, July 4, 1863. Library of Congress.



Fig. 45. Field hospital. Date and photographer unknown. National Archives.

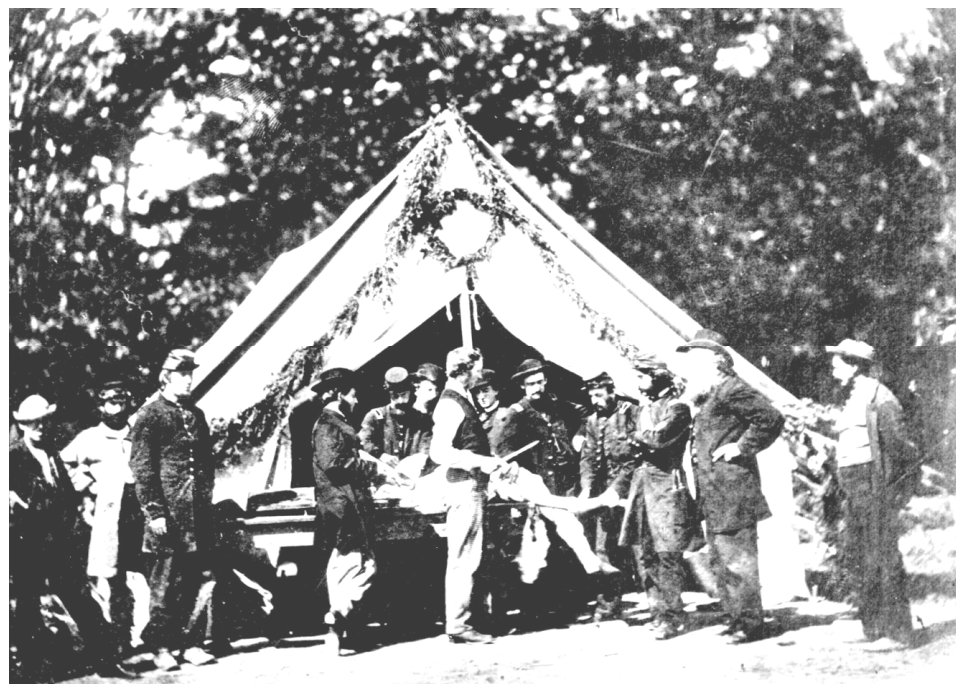


Fig. 46. Amputation in a field hospital. Date and photographer unknown.
National Archives.

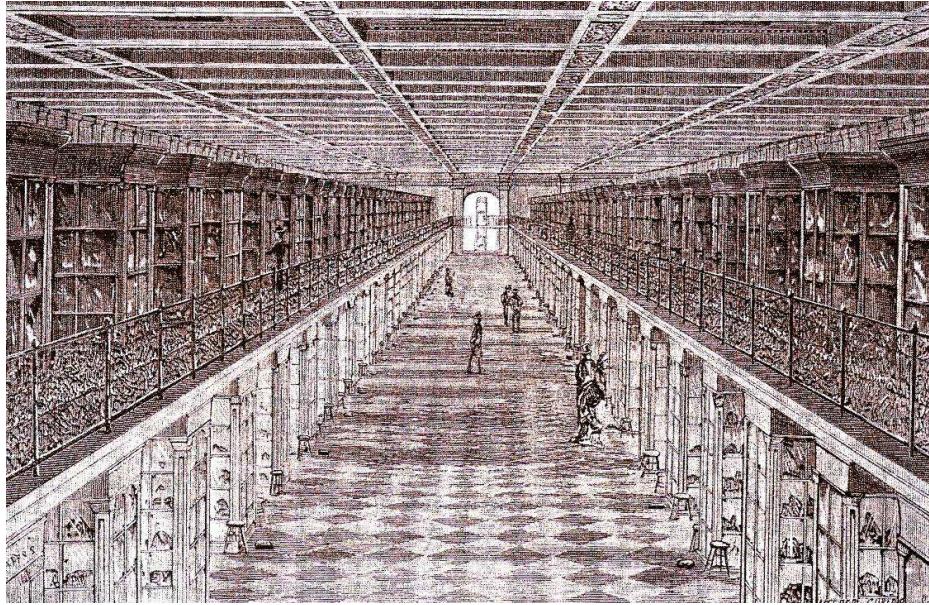


Fig. 47. The Model Room of the Patent Office. Mary Clemmer Ames, *Ten Years in Washington*. Reprinted from Katherine Kinney's "Making Capital: War, Labor, and Whitman in Washington, D.C." 179.

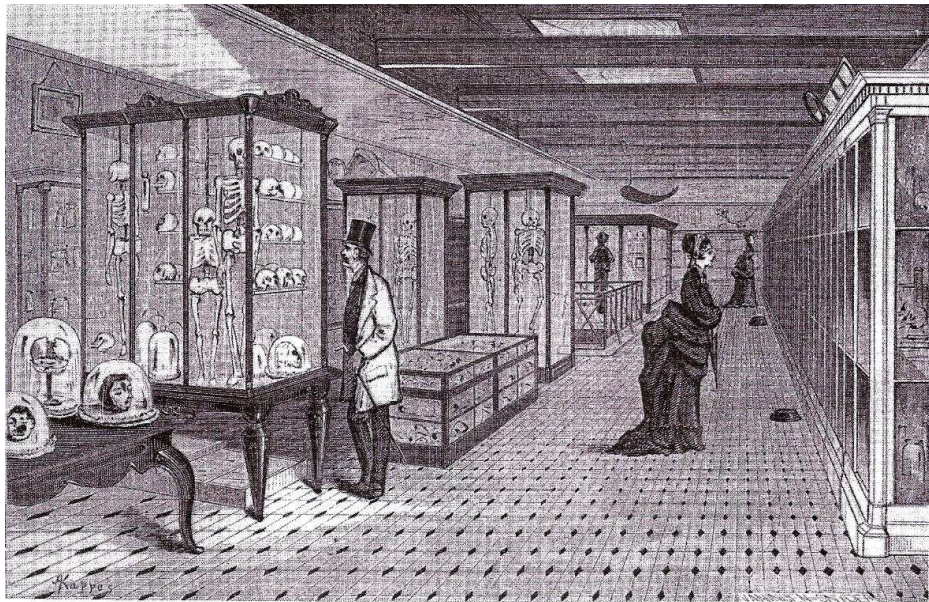


Fig. 48. The Main Hall of the Army Medical Museum. Mary Clemmer Ames, *Ten Years in Washington*. Reprinted from Katherine Kinney's "Making Capital: War, Labor, and Whitman in Washington, D.C." 183.

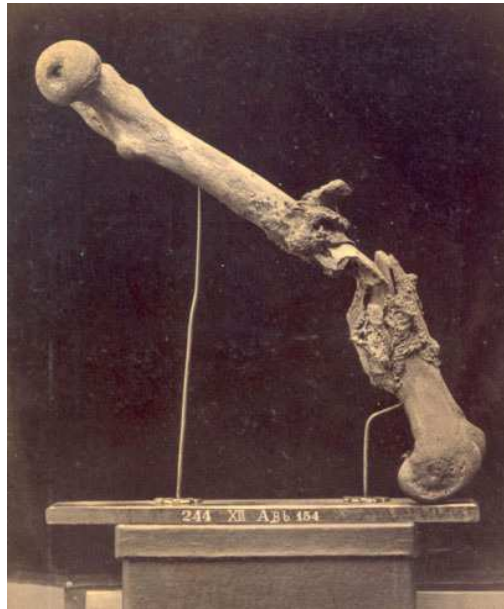


Fig. 49. Photograph of a bone specimen. “Necrosis and Exfoliation and Deposits of Spongy Callus after a Gunshot Fracture of the Left Femur.” 1870. George Otis, photographer. Photograph no. 244. *Photographic Atlas of Civil War Injuries.*

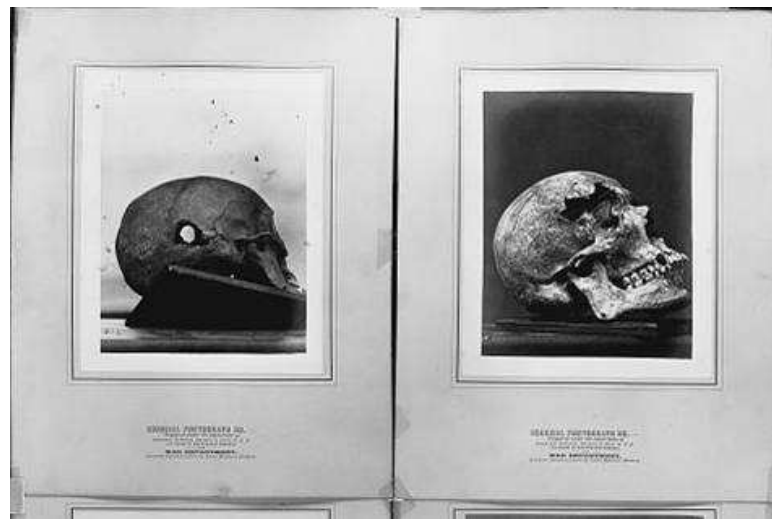


Fig. 50. Photographs of a skull. One image shows a bullet hole and the other image shows the shattered section of the face where the bullet exited. Photographer unknown. Taken between 1861 and 1865. Photograph prepared under the supervision of Surgeon General’s Office, Army Medical Museum. Library of Congress.

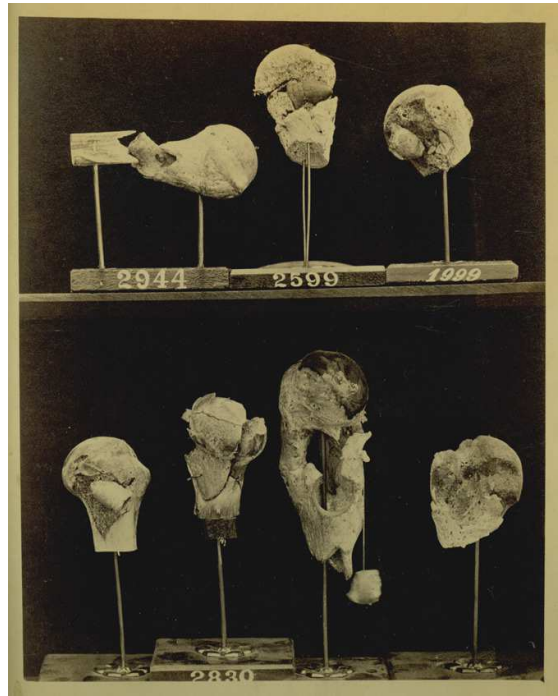


Fig. 51. “Seven heads of Humeri.” 1864. William Bell, photographer.
Surgeon General’s Office Collection at the Albin O. Kuhn Library.

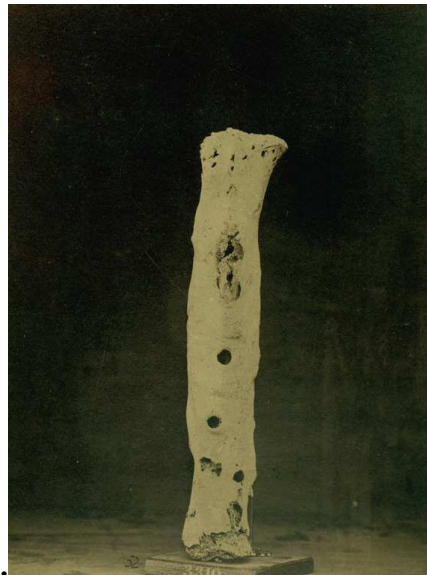


Fig. 52. “Right tibia.” 1864. William Bell, photographer. Surgeon General’s
Office Collection at the Albin O. Kuhn Library.

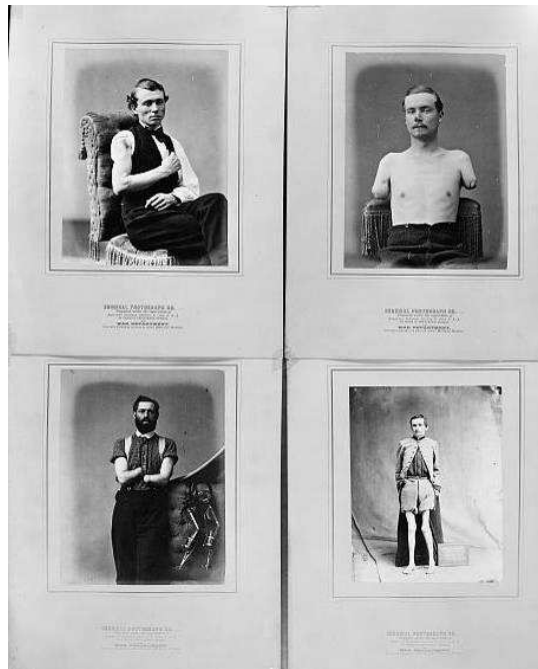


Fig. 53. Men displaying the wounds received during the Civil War. Photographer unknown. Taken between 1861 and 1865. Photograph prepared under the supervision of Surgeon General's Office, Army Medical Museum. Library of Congress.

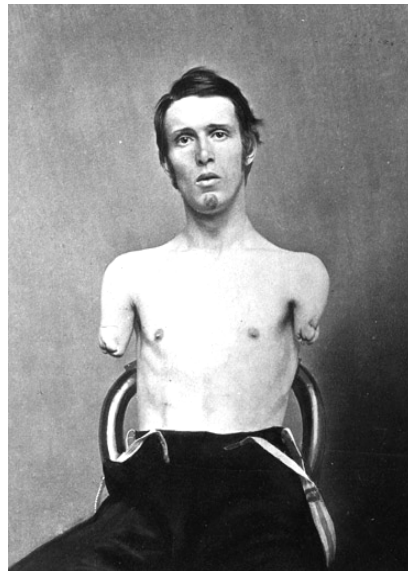


Fig. 54. Private Alfred Stratton, amputation of both arms. 1869. Photographer unknown. Photograph no. 262. *Photographic Atlas of Civil War Injuries*.



Fig. 55. Private Julius Fabry after his fifth operation. Note the removed diseased bone on the table at his left. 1870.

Photograph no. 276. *Photographic Atlas of Civil War Injuries.*

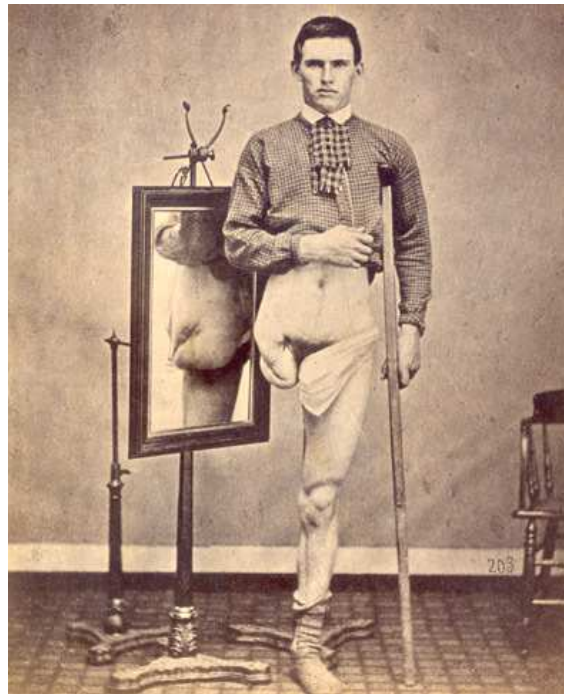


Fig. 56. Private Eben Smith. July 1867. Dr Breed, photographer.

Photograph no. 203. *Photographic Atlas of Civil War Injuries.*



Fig. 57. Private George Lemon. Amputation of left leg. No attempt was made to conceal his genitals. Connor's "Shooting Soldiers: Civil War Medical Images, Memory, and Identity in America."

Invisible Culture. http://www.rochester.edu/in_visible_culture/>



Fig. 58. The same photograph as above. Artificial fig leaves were appropriately placed for the 1876 Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia. Photograph no. 136. *Photographic Atlas of Civil War Injuries.*



Fig. 59. Ruins in Richmond. April 1865. Andrew Russell, photographer.
Russell's Civil War Photographs. Plate 53.



Fig. 60. Ruins in Richmond, corner of Carey and Governor Streets. May 1865.
Andrew Russell, photographer. *Russell's Civil War Photographs*.
Plate 66.



Fig. 61. “Battlefield of Atlanta, Ga., July 22, 1864, No. 2.” George Barnard, photographer. *Photographic Views of Sherman’s Campaign*. Plate 37.



Fig. 62. “Battleground of Rensselaer, Ga., No. 1.” George Barnard, photographer. *Photographic Views of Sherman’s Campaign*. Plate 19.



Fig. 63. "City of Atlanta, Ga., No. 2." George Barnard, photographer.
Photographic Views of Sherman's Campaign. Plate 46.



Fig. 64. "Chattanooga Valley from Lookout Mountain, No. 2." George Barnard, photographer. *Photographic Views of Sherman's Campaign.* Plate 14.



Fig. 65. “Savannah River, near Savannah, Ga.” George Barnard, photographer.

Photographic Views of Sherman’s Campaign. Plate 47.



Fig. 66. “Ruins of Norfolk, Navy Yard.” December, 1864. Negative by James Gardner.

Positive by Alexander Gardner. *Gardner’s Photographic Sketchbook of the American Civil War 1861-1865.* Plate 18.



Fig. 67. “Ruins of Richmond and Petersburg Railroad Bridge.” Alexander Gardner, photographer. *Gardner’s Photographic Sketchbook of the American Civil War 1861-1865*. Plate 88.



Fig. 68. “View of Canal, near Crenshaw’s Mill, Richmond, Va.” April 1865. Alexander Gardner, photographer. *Gardner’s Photographic Sketchbook of the American Civil War 1861-1865*. Plate 92.

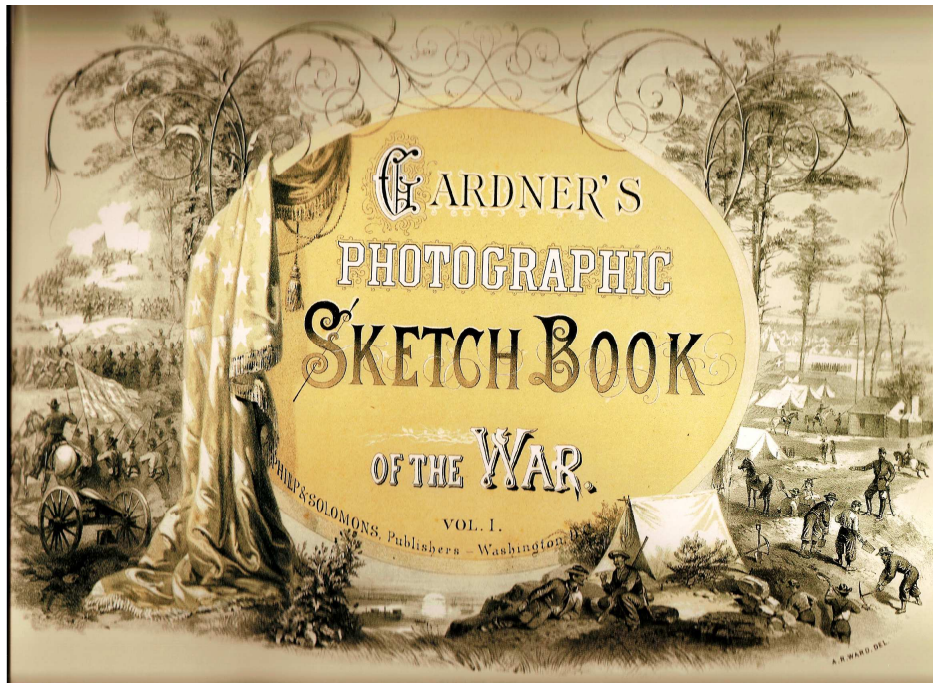


Fig. 69. Title page of Alexander Gardner's *Photographic Sketchbook of the War*.
Gardner, 9.

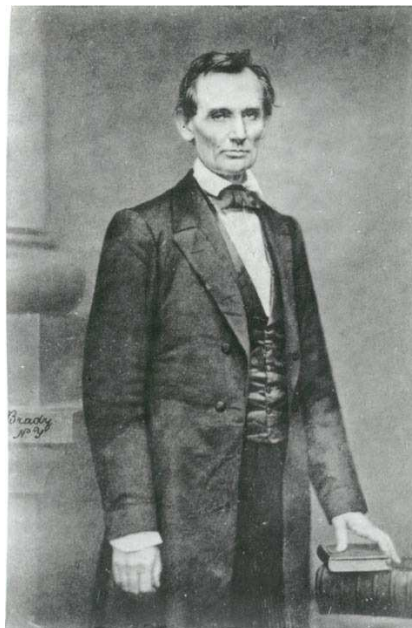


Fig. 70. Abraham Lincoln before the speech at Cooper Institute. 1860.
Mathew Brady, photographer. Library of Congress.

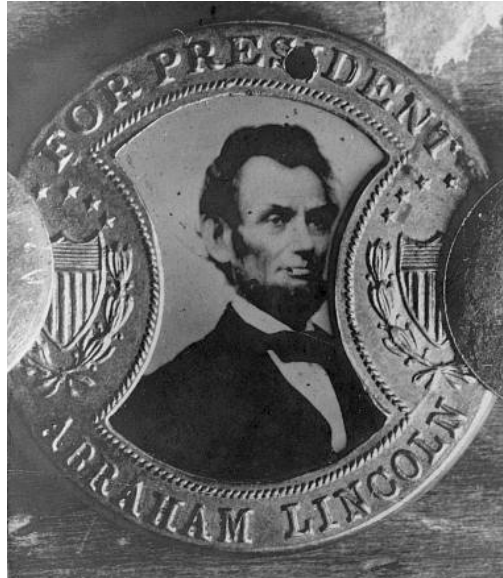


Fig. 71. Campaign button with portrait of Abraham Lincoln and inscription “For President Abraham Lincoln.” 1864. Library of Congress.

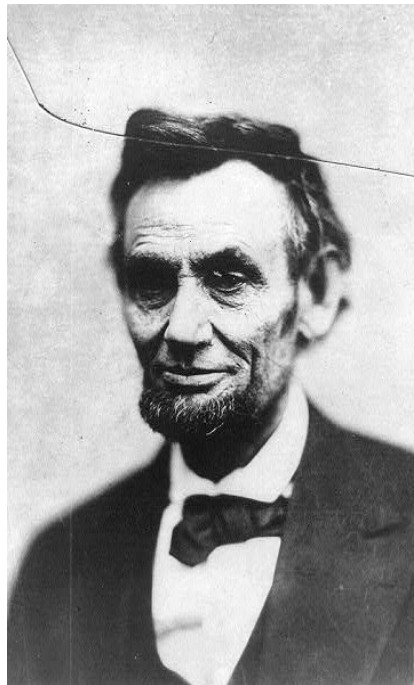


Fig. 72. Abraham Lincoln. 1865. Alexander Gardner, photographer. Library of Congress.

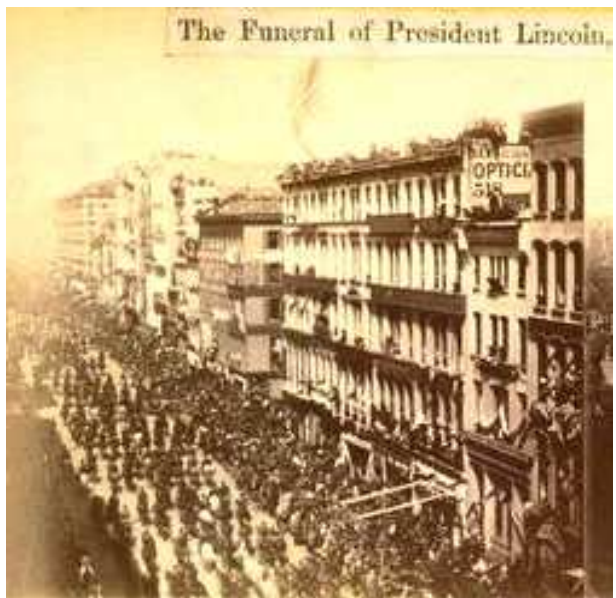


Fig. 73. The funeral of President Lincoln. New York, April 25, 1865.
Stereograph by E. & H.T. Anthony. Library of Congress.

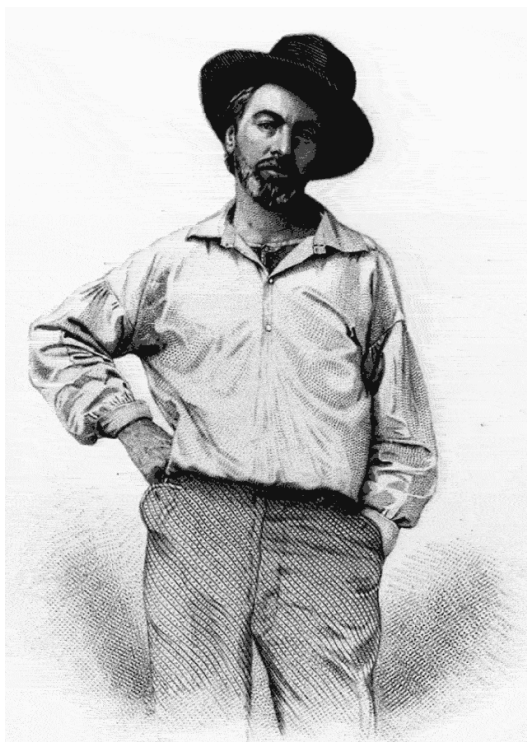


Fig. 74. Walt Whitman at age 37. July 1854.
Gabriel Harrison, photographer. Library of Congress.