

Note

Interpreting Photographic Evidence

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To those of us even marginally familiar with Photoshop, the photographs of the Slender Man are obviously faked. To those who follow the mythos and are part of that community, these images represent visual touchstones used to support a belief system. Being *real* is not the issue. The photographs of the Slender Man are created and revised and recirculate as part of a photographic catalogue that gives credence and support to the mythology. How does the medium of photography do this? How does it lend itself to fiction and still function as a document? When we examine the medium, its origins, and how it has functioned in the public mind for over 175 years, we discover that people inherently want to trust photographs regardless of the ever-increasing ease by which an image can be altered, corrupted, and even digitally fabricated from nothing.

In this essay I will briefly explore how the visual language of photography might explain the phenomenon of how photographs function as evidence for the unexplained or unexplainable. I come to this discussion as a photographic artist in order to draw greater attention to complementary interpretations of visual culture that may provide additional insights into the phenomena of shared interest that overlaps between folkloristics and my field of study.

The Magic Mirror

Photography was first presented to the eagerly awaiting public on August 6, 1839, as the *daguerreotype*, a fully formed technical process. The news spread like wildfire and the accessibility of the new process meant that photographic images were being made worldwide within mere months. People thought that they were ready to embrace a new medium that could record reality, easily, and accurately.

When the public first saw these photographs, some people were totally mystified. They could not understand how it was possible to

instantaneously render nature with so much detail and accuracy. The image must be reality captured in a *magic mirror*, as daguerreotypes were once labeled. They struggled to reconcile the accuracy of the “hand of God” with the man-made technology being used. In a photographic portrait, the exactitude of a person’s likeness was so uncanny that photographers were sometimes accused of capturing the *soul* of the sitter.

Nineteenth century viewers soon realized that photographs were more than simply precise facsimiles of real scenes. John Berger paraphrases Susan Sontag when he writes: “Unlike any other visual image, a photograph is not a rendering, an imitation or an interpretation of its subject, but actually a trace of it” (Berger 1991:54). It was clear that the image was formed without human intervention or translation so with the Victorian appreciation of all things mechanical, it was therefore perfect, true to life, trustworthy. Meanwhile artist-photographers were bending the medium to their will, creating a new *photographic art*. In 1858 Henry Peach Robinson created the famous narrative photograph *Fading Away* by using actors and combining five different negatives to create a composite print that portrayed a melodramatic deathbed scene of a young girl dying of consumption attended by her grief-stricken family who surround her. Some people assumed the veracity of the scene and were horrified that the photographer would invade this family’s privacy at such a terrible time. The romantic pictorial aesthetic was a separate genre from scientific or documentary photography. Unlike the constructions and impressions of artist-photographers like Robinson, topographic and documentary photographs were especially convincing to people as evidence. They trusted the integrity of an inherently technical process; one that used a machine to record reality as it presented itself at the instant the exposure was made and therefore could not be falsified or corrupted.

One of philosopher Roland Barthes’ central ideas seems to be inherited from this nineteenth century trust in the medium for being truthful. In *Camera Lucida* Barthes writes:

...in Photography I can never deny that *the thing has been there*. There is a superimposition here: of reality and of the past. And since this constraint exists only for Photography, we must consider it, by reduction, as the very essence, the *noeme* of Photography. ... The name of Photography’s *noeme* will therefore be: “That-has-been,” or again: the Intractable. (Barthes 1981:76-77)

This assumption about photography is why people in general continue to trust photographs as proof or truth, especially when they do not have

a theoretical or analytic insight into the unnatural act of recording a tiny slice of out-of-context reality onto a two-dimensional surface. We still trust photographs to tell us about the real world even though they are seen as replicas, miniaturizations of that three-dimensional reality (see Grundberg 2000:74).

The new consumers of early photography were very accepting of the image's fidelity to the view in front of the lens, so a charlatan could take advantage of that trust and create a fake image, no matter how crude, and convince many of its veracity simply by the fact that it was a *photograph*.

Photographic Hoaxes

Examples of faked images began to appear very soon after photography's invention. *Ghost* images have existed since rushed photographers made the first double-exposure mistakes. They were probably surprised by the wispy translucent figures when one exposure was superimposed onto the exposure of another scene. But competent photographers quickly understood what was happening and did everything they could to avoid making the same wasteful error again. The general public, however, to whom photography was still mysterious and esoteric, could be dumbfounded by these ghostly phantasmagorias. Without an explanation, it is easy to see how these blurs and even somewhat recognizable but semitransparent faces could be interpreted as spirituous gasses or wispy specters. Charlatans were quick to use this tricky photographic evidence of the spirit world for their own larcenous ends. Soon, clumsy composite images appeared on *cartes des visite* and cabinet card photographs as a memorial for the newly departed, and sometimes as fraudulent evidence used to convince the grieving that the photographer had a special ability to photograph the dead. People who desperately wanted to believe that a spiritualist could offer them contact with a loved one were even more convinced when actual photographic evidence was presented to them. Images with accompanying narratives circulated widely to give further credence to the photographs of the spirit world.

Well into the twentieth century, spirit photographs were made that purportedly show great lumpy clouds of so-called ectoplasm¹ escaping from a physical medium's mouth, ear, or other, more awkward orifice while in a trance state. Through our now extensive visual experience with movies showing amazing special effects, we easily recognize the awkwardness of these early deceptions so that these images seem totally ludicrous. It now seems obvious that the ectoplasm was just a white rag or cheesecloth hovering in space during an exposure. Some

were even re-photographed collages of magazine cutouts positioned on a photographic portrait of the medium.

In 1917 in Cottingley, England, cousins Elsie Wright (16) and Frances Griffiths (9) surprised the world with photographic proof of the existence of fairies.² With their father's camera, the girls made exposures of the fairies they claimed to have seen on multiple occasions while playing in the woods. In 1919 they and the Cottingley Fairies became celebrities when their photographs gained public attention and eventually the support of no less than Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. The girls had convinced not only a segment of the population who wanted to believe in fairies that the photographs were real, but also it seems, themselves. For over 60 years they steadfastly denied staging the photographs using drawn cutouts of winged fairies until they both finally admitted in 1983 to the magazine *The Unexplained* as to how the photographs were indeed made. Frances continued to maintain that the last one was genuine.

Other obvious local legends dependent on photographic evidence are supported by the ubiquitous reprinting of key images such as the silhouette of Nessie swimming in Loch Ness, and the grainy film clip of Bigfoot striding into the woods. Both photographic/movie film records have been debunked numerous times yet they still seem to hold enough power to be seen as an iconic symbol of what is for many a real entity.

UFO hunters, ghost hunters and cryptozoologists fill our televisions with programming and the internet with blogs and discussion groups that are in full pursuit of photographic or video evidence of the existence of their elusive prey (see, for example, Ellis 2000; 2003; 2004). The audience of believers seems to be growing, mainly because of this new *visual evidence*, as skills and technology improve to create it. Once a fake or deceptive photograph or video was exposed, it did not mean that trust in the photographic image per se was totally compromised. Soon other forms of adulterated photographic images or videos appeared to support the original and were again believed by a segment of the population. Yet a sharply focused, irrefutable photographic portrait as proof still evades them.

Many composite images or tableaux were created simply for entertainment rather than evidence. Nineteenth century stereo views³ and whimsical photo-postcards often used narrative sequences that portrayed devils, angels, spirits, and incredible tales or fables.

Tourists loved to send photo-postcards to family and friends back home with pictures of the strange wonders they came across when they were travelling.⁴ Photomontages that showed exaggerated scale shifts and ridiculous juxtapositions were very popular. They are funny when

you are in the know but could impress the gullible simply because the scene was supposed to be an actual *photographic record*. Most people, however, can recognize the humor of a single giant potato filling a railway flatcar, or a saddled chicken as tall as a horse, or a hunter holding up a dead grasshopper as tall as he was.

In the newspaper industry, *composographs*⁵ appeared in the *New York Evening Graphic* as early as 1924. Along with Broadway Brevities, these early tabloids introduced the use of photo manipulations and scene re-enactments. Retouched photo collages were created with the heads of celebrities pasted on body doubles acting out scenes that had not actually been photographed. This was the forerunner to the emergence of tabloid journalism like *The National Enquirer*, *The Globe* and the infamous *Weekly World News*, remembered for its sensationally faked headline photographic composites.

In cinematography, the pseudo-archival footage and photographs created for Woody Allen's 1983 mockumentary film *Zelig* are fine examples of how vintage film stock was tampered with to include the ubiquitous Leonard Zelig in real historical contexts such as behind Hitler at Nuremberg, and others. This same technique is used digitally in Robert Zemeckis' 1994 film *Forrest Gump*. As part of the movie-going audience, we are fully aware that the footage is faked, but we love to feel the transformed sense of reality wash over us as we watch these amazing movies. Taking this one step further, the 1984 mockumentary, *This Is Spinal Tap*, by Rob Reiner, has spawned a cult following who not only want to buy the parody band's music CDs but also to attend their live concerts, both brought into existence by the force of the insistence of fans that Spinal Tap, the band, *should* be real. In 2009, a new album, *Back from the Dead*, was released consisting of some re-recordings of songs from the original film's soundtrack, "as they would have sounded had they really existed and been recorded in a studio" (Petidis 2009:26).

There are those who want to believe something so badly that they are quite capable of using an image of something to will it into existence. Could this also apply to the Slender Man photographs and how they are used?

Willing something into existence certainly contributes to the proliferation of imitations. The idea of a brightly painted garden gnome supposedly escaping (or being liberated) from someone's back garden and travelling around the world began with an Australian news report of a missing garden gnome's goodbye note left behind in someone's garden in 1986. We are now bombarded with visual examples of the *travelling gnome* phenomenon in film, popular media, and even

commercials (see *BBC News* 2008). The liberated garden gnome meme was featured in movies in 1994, and became well known after Jean-Pierre Jeunet's very successful movie *Amélie* appeared in 2001, where the gnome's photographic selfies were sent home to Amélie's father as proof of its (his?) travels. This tradition continues. We are fully aware that these photographs represent a prank, but we conspire to accept them for entertainment value alone.

Propaganda and Image Re-Interpretations

Meanwhile, other more sinister faked photographs were created for political or propagandistic goals.

Political and ideological motives created a need for news photographs that are purported to show evidence in order to sway or control public opinion. Personages could be associated with each other by supposedly being captured together in a single photograph. Out-of-favor individuals could become non-persons by simply vanishing from the already existing photographic record. Power and charisma could be enhanced with a manipulated photograph.

The Second World War era was rife with faked photographs, from the removal of Joseph Goebbels from a group shot where he stood between Hitler and an attractive woman, to a dramatic shot of Mussolini on horseback where his horse handler was removed to make the rider look more independently powerful. We have seen Soviet-era group shots change, as certain errant party members suddenly and permanently become non-persons and cease to appear in even archival images.

The public is encouraged to believe propagandistic photographs as representing fact, as evidence. When the original version of an altered image is found it can be used to expose the deception. Once aware of the deception we can no longer trust the photographic evidence presented from that particular source. This only seems to apply to specifically debunked examples. When faced with a completely different image, the default is to accept it at face value, again because it is a photograph. We inherently want to believe photographs, especially from seemingly journalistic or official-looking sources.

Other subtle changes to a photograph can be used to sway public opinion or to underscore the stance or position that a publication is taking. A well-remembered example is the profound difference between two versions of the same mug shot of O. J. Simpson that appeared almost simultaneously on the covers of *Time* and *Newsweek* in June 1994 (Carmody 1994). The *Time* cover portrait had been darkened and made, in managing editor James Gaines' words, "into an

icon of tragedy,” but the implied racism and assumptive guilt in advance of a verdict resulted in an apology from *Time* (Gaines 1994).

But not all journalistic or news photographs that have been altered need be read as sinister or with propagandistic intent. With the increasing ease by which a photograph can be cleaned up or aestheticized, it is very tempting to remove a distraction or simplify the composition for clarity. The iconic Pulitzer prize-winning photograph by John Filo of the 1970 Kent State Massacre showing Mary Ann Vecchio kneeling by the body of a slain student contained a background pole vertically in line with her head. This had been airbrushed out and the alteration was only discovered after the image was re-published in major magazines in 1995. David Friend, then Director of Photography at *LIFE* Magazine, explained that they could only find a retouched version when they republished it and stated, “At no time would *LIFE*’s photo, art or production department intentionally alter a news photograph” (qtd. in Zhang 2012).

On March 31, 2003, the *Los Angeles Times* ran an image on the front page that violated the *Times* policy which forbade the altering of news photographs. The photographer, Brian Walski, had combined two sequential shots, one that caught the gesturing pose of a UK soldier on the left side of one shot, with a refugee holding a child on the right side of a second shot made fraction of a second later.⁶ The result was more expressive in that eye-to-eye contact seemed to have been made between the two figures, even though this may not have actually happened. The reaction was swift and severe. The photographer was fired and the paper was publicly criticized. There is no room for the alteration of an image for any reason, even if only aesthetic, when it is supposed to be journalistic evidence or news.

Even the cover of *National Geographic Magazine* is not immune to this criticism. A 1982 cover showing the position of pyramids at Giza adjusted laterally to improve the vertical composition was also strongly criticized, and again seriously affected the magazine’s credibility in some minds.⁷ Even though these episodes of alteration happened and may continue to happen, we are still, and maybe more so, conditioned to believe that news and journalistic standards apply to photography that is purported to be documentary or used as evidence. The severe reaction to these examples only strengthens our tendency to trust photographs that are held up as proof.

Comprehension

The medium of photography always had the potential of being seen in multiple ways. In the past, photography was easily perceived as documentary evidence of a specific reality. Its manipulability was

cruder and often obvious. Now, it is more accepted as potentially plastic and easily manipulated, even though we innately want to see it as a representation of reality.

The image forming light rays that are captured and focused on our retinas are not actually *seen* by our eyes, but are *processed* and therefore *seen* by our brains. The resulting comprehension is subjective, not objective.

Our brain deciphers the image of the world that we form on our retinas. Once we arrive at an intellectual interpretation or conclusion of what we are looking at, we want to accept this image as fact, as truth, and as representing actual reality. It is very hard, intellectually, to re-interpret a visually derived perception and switch to a new, or novel interpretation of what we are looking at when the visual evidence does not actually change.

A perfect example is the argument surrounding the digital image of a blue and black vs. a white and gold dress that went viral in the spring of 2015. Huge arguments were posted online about what was the true interpretation of the same digital image that everyone used to form their opinion. Photographers, who understood how under-exposure and the brightening of an image file actually worked, did not seem to get into this argument. However, the general public was quick to take sides and was loath to change its mind (McNeill 2015).

Our trust in vision as a representation of an objective truth may happen more easily with our visual and aural senses rather than other non-sensory evidence. When we are presented with an analogue of a view in a photograph or a sound in a recording, the same actual sensory organs re-live the experience in virtually the same way and activate the same parts of our brain as if we are seeing or hearing the original. This may not happen as readily for abstract concepts like religion, conspiracy, trust, reason, etc. where our belief and understanding must be coaxed, where we must be convinced to accept the information as being accurate and true without the apparent proof of vision or sound, no matter how inaccurate those particular senses can actually be. So a proposition accompanied with visual or aural backup is likely to be more readily trusted as accurate.

When clear evidence is lacking or details are missing, we want to fill in the details. We often unknowingly fabricate our version of the truth through innate gestalt processes whereby our mind fills in the gaps. Soon the whole has a reality of its own, independent of the parts that may contradict fact or reason. Ultimately we want it to be true, so it is. The more creative the mind, the more detailed and believable are the fictions created.⁸

Sometimes even the weakest photographic “evidence” is enough to strengthen this belief system. As with the iconic photographs of the Loch Ness monster, or the grainy film of Bigfoot trotting through the woods, some people keep referring to the original iconic images as the basis for all further evidence or proof even though they have been debunked numerous times. Some really want to believe, so they pile on layers of other vague evidence on top of these examples to strengthen and fortify their belief system.

Take this mindset into adolescent popular culture, where fiction and reality are constantly blurred by movies, television, websites, online-conversations and the mythologies surrounding anecdotal experience, and you have the basis of an almost uncontrollable feeding frenzy for visual documents that might give credence to this dark world. We see programming where ghost hunters record “paranormal anomalies,” where noise can be interpreted as vague disembodied voices, where temperature fluctuations are reasoned to be portals or passing spirits. It is no wonder that impressionable viewers are persuaded by the pseudoscience to believe in the strange, the otherworldly. A photograph that shows a shadowy shape in the woods can easily take on new evidentiary strength.

What this all may come down to is something similar to the human tendency for face *pareidolia*, the illusory perception of non-existent faces in the chaos of visual noise or random textures and patterns (Liu et al. 2014). This innate tendency seems to trump reason and skepticism in a population that is more prone to believing what they are told they see vs. what is logically or empirically real or provable. The gigantic face atop a pyramidal mountain on Mars “discovered” in the 1970s by the Viking orbiters is a prime example, even though subsequent satellite photographs from different angles have debunked it as a visual anomaly due to the low-resolution of the original images (Carlotto 1988).⁹ *Pareidolia* is also easily observed in the phenomenon of the apparition of a Holy face or figure (Jesus Christ; the Virgin Mary) in a scorched taco, a tortilla, a cheese sandwich, a cliff face, a wall of peeling paint or a water/oil stain. There are many who believe these are legitimate miraculous images, but there are many others who do not, and yet who can still see the image. Of course we all experience the effect when we see recognizable forms, figures and faces while we gaze at overhead cloud shapes. Once seen in its many contexts, it is very hard to un-see because of the phenomenon of *pareidolia*.

Image as Alternate Reality, Fiction, and Art

What has taken the place of awkward nineteenth and early twentieth century hoax photographs are the often dark, grainy, or even out-of-focus images that purport to represent ghostly faces or figures in hidden corners of random photographs; specters inserting themselves into someone's casual snapshot. These photobombs seem to be exploding in popularity as reality television shows about ghost hunters and haunted houses spark the imagination of a naïve population eager to embrace the idea of the spirit world. YouTube and blogs abound with examples, complete with circles and arrows that show humanoid shapes and faces in the indistinct corners and shadowy openings within myriads of seemingly ordinary snapshots. These phantoms are made more believable by accompanying them with captions, anecdotes and contexts, even though these narratives are likely fabricated after the fact. The speed by which on-line memes and images can circulate intensifies their legitimacy to an ever-growing population of believers.

The act of photography, and lens optics in general, has characteristics that are both self-referential of the technology and also part of the visual lexicon used by photographers: artists and technologists alike. Photographic characteristics that support the potential for visual fictions are many. Multiple exposures in a single image or frame are usually easily recognizable due to discontinuous connections between layers within the image or the transparency of solid objects or people. Motion blur due to longer shutter speeds can cause the distortion of a solid object or transform it into a streak or smear. Details become vague so if the actual subject is not clearly recognizable, it could be interpreted as something less solid than other parts of the image. Out-of-focus areas, circles of confusion, or *bokeh*, are all optical characteristics that can create soft patterns and textures that are insubstantial or abstract, with light and dark forms becoming translatable in various ways, depending on the viewer, context, or accompanying narrative. Lens optics can also introduce visual artifacts like lens flare, spatial, perspectival and scale distortions, and color shifts that complicate a literal view of a scene. Experienced photographers utilize or avoid these characteristics regularly and can usually recognize them in other photographs.

Conspiracy theorists and paranormalists who use photographs as evidence know these natural characteristics of the medium very well. Ambiguous photographs can be offered as evidence without actually having to be altered or even staged. Their audience is primed and willing to read meaning into indistinct photographic information, no matter how blurry, dark, or ambiguous it is, precisely because it is blurry, dark, and ambiguous. After all, if these phantoms were easy to

photograph, we would already have definitive photo-documents as proof, right?

These analogue characteristics also carry forward to the digital age but are minor compared to the potential of photo editing software when it comes to the deliberate photo manipulation, falsification, or fabrication of an image.

One might think that today's Photoshop generation can readily understand all photographic imagery to be always suspect, plastic, and open to creative reinterpretation. Manipulated photographic imagery is commonly used as raw material for humor, memes, or for expressing a point of view. Users support their concept with an image containing an expression, pose or scene ripped out of its own reality and inserted into theirs at the service of their commentary.

Even though we can critique an image and come to terms with its probable falseness, we often appreciate its sense of realism and suspend our disbelief with a sense of glee. We often like to be fooled in the same way we like to be frightened by a horror film, knowing full well it is only a movie. Many want to participate in this game further and create their own narratives. This enters the realm of playful co-creation where images are passed on, altered, imitated, reconstructed, recreated, and re-contextualized within a circuit of sharers who ostensibly all know the game and its rules. The narratives are used to heighten the veracity of an image and vice versa. However, when the "fictional" context or "storytelling" intent is not attached to a circulating image, it can be misinterpreted as a document of the truth or *something like the truth*. This process seems to especially describe the formation and spread of the Slender Man mythos but is not restricted to that. Visual artists have often used images and fictional narratives to create artwork that transports a viewer into a world where the borders between fiction and reality are blurred.

Vik Muniz is a visual artist known for his playful visual games using photography. One particular project, *Clayton Days* (2000), underscores the way that photographs are able to create an alternate reality that is almost impossible to dismiss, even when one knows the history and context of the work. Using Henry Clay Frick's family mansion as a setting, and working with antique cameras and techniques, Muniz photographed adults and children in period costume and in settings around the estate from a child's perspective in order to make images that are evocative of the childhood milieu of the Frick children in the late nineteenth century. The photographs are unnervingly convincing. Without knowing the details of Muniz' project, one would automatically think of the images in *Clayton Days* as a collection of family album snapshots from the period. Once you

examine them, their sophistication becomes apparent, and the implied narrative that Muniz creates becomes the main content of the work. Yet we look at the collection and are immediately transported to the period, the place, and the lives of these wealthy children and their family and servants. They remind one of *La Belle Époque* family photographs by Jacques Henry Lartigue, but with those we know the photographs document a real child's actual family life.

Image as Wish Fulfillment

We are pattern-seeking organisms who can rationalize our relationship to the world around us in extreme ways. Believers will ultimately find ways to justify their belief systems and skeptics will find ways to support theirs (see Hufford 1982). Michael Shermer examines this tendency in detail in *Why People Believe Weird Things*. I paraphrase his thesis as: people are motivated to believe weird things (1) because they want to because it feels good; (2) for attaining immediate answers or gratification; (3) for simple explanations of a complex world; (4) to find morality and meaning in life and a basis for ethics; and (5) for seeking greater levels of happiness and satisfaction through hope (Shermer 2002:273-78). By using photography to bolster a belief system, one uses the crutch of technology to support the belief and the ability to gain support through the shared acceptance of specific physical evidence. The photograph is both concrete and communal.

With reports of outrage over photographic alterations in the news and the demand for uncompromising journalistic ethics, we are thusly conditioned to believe that all journalistic imagery must be true and unadulterated because *those are the rules*. When a pseudo-journalistic publication uses a photographic image, we still expect it to be real. *Reality television* must be real as well, right? Most people must subconsciously know that reality television is scripted, but many watch it and still think of the actors as being themselves and behaving in real situations. They want it to be true, but only partly because they want to feel superior; more in control of their own lives than the poor sods who are displaying their dysfunction in public. They want their eyes to confirm this truth through the image accepted as evidence. This also applies to the photographic evidence published by the researchers who support pseudo-scientific exposés on everything from UFOs to Bigfoot, and now in the minds of its more youthful audience, Slender Man. Those who pass on these images must be aware of the rules of photographic evidence. Since the medium itself is supposed to capture reality, it must be true, especially when the accompanying narratives purportedly support the photographs' content. In 1931 Walter Benjamin prophetically wrote:

It will not always be possible to link [photography's] authenticity with reportage, whose clichés associate themselves only verbally in the viewer. The camera will become smaller and smaller, more and more prepared to grasp fleeting, secret images whose shock will bring the mechanism of association in the viewer to a complete halt. At this point captions must begin to function, captions which understand the photography which turns all the relations of life into literature, and without which all photographic construction must remain bound in coincidences. (Benjamin 1980 [1931]:215)

With Slender Man, the captions work with the photographs to provide the germ of a narrative whereby people begin storytelling using the framework of the photograph itself.

The allegory of Plato's cave describes the visible world as deceptive, and how we cannot trust the image of reality that we see. As in the cave, the shadowy figure in the woods is seen as more convincing than reality. Even though the creation and spread of the Slender Man mythos was part of a game where most participants are supposedly aware of its fictional base and fanciful imagery, one can still find that the photographic images of Slender Man, no matter how awkward, over-processed, or indeed, fanciful, are nevertheless believed and trumpeted as a visual touchstone for a mythology that is followed by a segment of society eager and willing to believe. Those who accept Slender Man are not prepared to deconstruct the medium that gives form and solidity to their icon. The photograph is utilized for that which it is best known for: evidence.

Notes

¹ For an historical and photographic overview of ectoplasm as a subject of photographic manipulation, see Harvey (2007). See also: <http://theghostdiaries.com/the-best-of-spirit-photography/>. Accessed 19 September 2015.

² See Smith (1997); see also http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cottingley_Fairies.

³ 3-D Stereo cards used in Holmes stereoscopes were very popular in the late nineteenth century. The mid-twentieth century equivalent was the Viewmaster®. These stereoscopes and viewers give a convincing three-dimensional solidity and depth to photographic scenes.

⁴ See, as examples, the images at The American Museum of Photography, "Did You Ever Have a Dream Like This?" <http://www.photographymuseum.com/talltale.html>. Accessed 17 September 2015.

⁵ The collaged and retouched combination of multiple photographic images into a new version of reality suitable for the early tabloid newspapers or magazines was labeled a composograph by the industry. See <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Composograph> for an example.

⁶ To see the images in question, go to: <http://www.alteredimagesbdc.org/walski/>. Accessed 19 September 2015. See also Brown (2011) and Lester (2009).

⁷ John Long (1999), past president and ethics co-chair of the National Press Photographers Association wrote a NPPA Special Report: *Ethics In The Age Of Digital Photography*, which discusses credibility, ethics, personal taste, visual lies, changes, and manipulation in photographs used by visual journalists.

⁸ Michael Shermer addresses this in “Why *Smart* People Believe Weird Things” (2002:279-313).

⁹ For a broader description, see also: http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Cydonia_%28region_of_Mars%29.

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