# Binding Lives: Southern Photobooks and the Great Depression in America

by

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# ABSTRACT

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In the 1930s and 1940s the University of North Carolina (UNC) Press published many photobooks on the American South that have since escaped serious scholarly attention. This study argues that a new type of photobook emerged within a regionally and culturally specific context. The UNC Press photobooks demonstrate a balance between being art objects and parts of a burgeoning mass media. They also represent attempts by academics to bring up economic and social issues, such as sharecropping during the Depression, to a mainstream public. Critically, most of the authors were Southerners themselves. This is important because the North had traditionally dominated the representation of the South, both visually and in writing. The Southern authors often employed the popular stereotypes of the South in order to engage a larger audience and ultimately reconstruct what were understood as Southern characteristics. The UNC photobooks represent a specific type of Southern photobook that includes colloquial speech and folklore, sociological data (literally or visually in the form of photographs), current issues, and a call for social reform. Their written and photographic acknowledgment of racial issues in the South was groundbreaking in comparison to the practices of the larger publishing profession. Under the influence of UNC sociologist Howard Odum and UNC Press director William Couch many photobooks utilized government photographs from the Farm Security Administration (FSA) and forged ties with certain government employees, such as Roy Stryker, director of the

FSA Historical Division. Both the UNC and the FSA were interested in the way photography could be embraced by the social sciences and their collaborations went beyond the production of photobooks into projects involving university exhibitions and even course offerings. As such, this material not only expands the history of photography in and about the South and the history of photobooks, but of the FSA as well.

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*…the camera is not merely a reporter. It can also be a commentator. It can communicate as it reports. It can interpret as it presents. It can picture the world as a seventeenth-century essayist or a twentieth-century columnist would picture it.*

*Life* 1937[1]

*Successful text-picture books are rare, depending as they do on the accidental harmony of two workers in different media, like the rare conjunction of composer and librettist which leads to great opera.*

James Korges[2]

*It is [the poet's and the writer's] privilege to help man endure by lifting his heart, by reminding him of the courage and honor and hope and pride and compassion and pity and sacrifice which have been the glory of his past. [His] voice need not merely be the record of man, it can be one of the props, the pillars to help him endure and prevail.*

William Faulkner[3]

# The Situation of the Photobook in, of, and about the South

"I have just now returned from a month's sojourn in 'Yankee country' and I am more than ever convinced that if there is any answer to the race problem in America it must come out of the South."[4] Sociologist Arthur Raper wrote this to William T. Couch, director of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Press (UNC) in 1940. One of the reasons Raper had visited "Yankee country" over the past year was to see Roy. E. Stryker, director of the Farm Security Administration (FSA) of the Historical Section in Washington, D.C.. Stryker headed and maintained the photography project of the FSA, which had a collection of images documenting

[1] "The Camera as Essayist," *Life* 2:27 (April 26, 1937), 60-61.

[2] James Korges, *Erskine Caldwell* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1969), 14.

[3] "William Faulkner's speech at the Nobel Banquet at the City Hall in Stockholm, December 10, 1950," *Nobel Lectures, Literature 1901-1967,* Edited by Horst Frenz (Amsterdam: Elsevier Publishing Company, 1969).

[4] Raper to Couch, February 28, 1940, #40073, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

America during the Depression, and Raper was selecting photographs for his book *Sharecroppers All*, a study about the economic struggles of Southern sharecroppers, no matter what color skin.[5] Raper was co-authoring the project with Ira de Augustine Reid, a fellow Southerner and sociologist and, importantly, an African American. UNC was publishing the study, and Rape, upon finding the imagery he sought, exclaimed that "if these pictures can be bled off a good size book page, I believe with their captions and comments the heart of our study will be graphically presented."[6] These few statements reveal much about the moment of the photobook in 1930s America as it relates to sociology, the South, and photography. There was a belief amongst Southern academics that the North was incapable of speaking about, or resolving, Southern issues. Both Raper and Reid had ties to the UNC Sociology Department, the first of its kind to legitimize Southern studies as an academic field of research, particularly under the direction of Howard Odum. Odum helped establish Regionalism and Folk Studies as legitimate areas of study and advanced African American racial studies and theories on a national level, while using the South as a means of evaluating and reassessing them.[7] The UNC Press was the first university press in the South and one of the first in the nation, and under Couch it published these works that dealt with radical issues and tried to include photographs in them as much as possible. After the establishment of the FSA in 1935, it became the main source for such images which, as Raper explained, could "graphically" present their sociological issues,

[5] Arthur F. Raper and Ira De. A. Reid, *Sharecroppers All* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1941).

[6] Raper to Couch, May 20, 1939, #40073, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

[7] The topic was ripe for discussion given the Great Migration the United States of African Americans from rural regions of the South to the Northeast, Midwest, and West; after all, by 1930 there were 1.3 million former Southerners living in other regions. For more on this and the changes and challenged that accompanied these geographic shifts of people and the accompanying cultural transformations, see James N. Gregory, *The Southern Diaspora: How the Great Migrations of Black and White Southerners Transformed America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005).

facts and findings. The UNC press and its authors were crucial in helping the FSA have access to and an understanding of the South and its people, as well as a consistent venue for its images.

This dissertation focuses on a series of photobooks, including *Sharecroppers All*, in order to evaluate and understand the American Southern photobook in the 1930s and 1940s. Critical to this study is how an expansion of the definition of a photobook allows for the inclusion of texts using photographs that have not been previously researched within the history of photography. When recognized as such, these photobooks help establish a history of Southern photobooks, as well as highlight the moment of the 1930s when disciplines, media, institutions and the government converge in new ways to create products of communication that discuss the topic of America. As it stands, there is no history of Southern photobooks. In fact, there is surprisingly little on the history of photography in the South. Katherine Henninger provides the closest to such a thing in her 2007 study on contemporary Southern women's writing and photography.[8] Regarding her topic, she states that "although there are several fine studies of American photography and literature, none employ region or gender as a primary frame of analysis."[9] The same could be applied to the photobook studies about the South (or for that matter, photobooks created by—or specifically about—African Americans or women).[10] There are so many

[8] See "A Short and Selected History of Photography in the South," in Katherine Henninger, *Ordering the Facade: Photography and Contemporary Southern Women's Writing* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007).

[9] Ibid, 8.

[10] For example, African American historian, author, journalist and founder of the Association for the Study of African American Life and History, Carter Godwin Woodson, published two critical studies, *The History of the Negro Church* and *The Rural Negro*, that both utilized photographs. Additional photobooks by or about African-Americans are *Sharecroppers All*, co-written by Reid, *12 Million Black Voices*, co-written by Richard Wright, and *The Sweet Flypaper of Life*, by Roy DeCarava with Langston Hughes. Also worth mentioning is Aaron Siskind's *Harlem Document*, which started in the 1930s as a project under the auspice of the Photo League at the suggestion of African American sociologist Michael Carter. Again, these are but of few of possible case studies. Carter Godwin

possibilities for explaining these fields and revealing the voices of these enclaves and the way they utilized the book form of photographs to communicate their messages and ideas. It is not that there is a lack of material, but that within the scholarship on photobooks produced between the turn of the century and mid-twentieth century the central focus tends to be on FSA photographers rather than on the books as such. Accordingly, publications outside of this area or at the borders of it are not discussed in any full or great length and remain almost entirely absent from the history of photography, aside from possibly being alluded to as part of the trend towards the collaborations of image and text in book form in the 1930s and 1940s.

The South does, indeed, have a tradition of photobooks. The tradition is characterized by tackling issues such as representation of the South by Southerners themselves (rather than Northerners) and by incorporating specific features of Southern literature and culture, such as storytelling. This last characteristic is vital to understanding how these photobooks operate, as the 1930s photobooks about the South that are studied are often gauged according to a fidelity to a documentary, non-fiction, social-reform commitment. By understanding them through that lens their "Southerness" is ignored and misunderstood. Moreover, when photobooks about the South are discussed, it is usually within a larger study about race and photography in the South; again,

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Woodson, *The History* of the *Negro Church* (Washington, D. C.: The Associated Publishers, 1921); Carter Godwin Woodson, *The Rural Negro* (Washington, D.C.: The Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, Inc., 1930), Richard Wright and Edwin Rosskam, *12 Million Black Voices: A Folk History of the Negro in the United States* (New York: Viking, 1941); Langston Hughes and Roy DeCarava, *The Sweet Flypaper of Life* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1955.); and Aaron Siskind, *Harlem Document*: *Photographs 1932-1940,* (Providence: Matrix Publications, 1981). As for women, any mention of photobooks usually is found within a study on a particular photographer and her work. Good starting points for such studies can be found in Andrea Fisher, *Let Us Now Praise Famous Women: Women Photographers for the U.S. Government, 1935 to 1944: Esther Bubley, Marjory Collins, Pauline Ehrlich, Dorothea Lange, Martha McMillan Roberts, Marion Post Wolcott, Ann Rosener, Louise Rosskam* (New York: Pandora Press, 1987), Judith Fryer Davidov, *Women's Camera Work: Self/Body/Other in American Visual Culture* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998) and Melissa A. McEuen, *Seeing America: Women Photographers Between the Wars* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2000).

as a specific subject they are neglected and are only used as examples for other topics. This is evident in one of the most recent studies on race and photography in the 1930s by Elizabeth Abel.[11] Abel seeks to "expose the silences (or invisibilities) that structured the processes of fact collection and narration" about Jim Crow and suggests photobooks as a source to do so.[12] She specifically mentions one of the book's of this dissertation's study, Herman Clarence Nixon's *Forty Acres and Steel Mules* which, like *Sharecroppers All*, is about tenant farmers and economic conditions of the South.[13] Abel explains that "Jim Crow signs make no appearance in the twelve photo books for which the FSA provided images, including those that made extensive use of the black file" and notes that Nixon's book is an exception, but qualifies that it is "misattributed and deceptively captioned."[14] She neither cites what she is referring to nor explains what she means. Still, this brings up issues surrounding the photobooks examined here, as it is a UNC press publication and, as previously mentioned, they were some of the few books even broaching the question of race at the time and including images of African Americans (and supporting African American authors, such as Reid).[15]

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[11] Elizabeth Abel, *Signs* of the *Times: The Visual Politics of Jim Crow* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010).

[12] Ibid, 109.

[13] Herman Clarence Nixon, *Forty Acres and Steel Mules* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1938).

[14] Abel, 110. The reference to there being twelve photobooks made using FSA photographs in the 1930s and 1940s is oft repeated and incorrect, and something this study hopes to elucidate. The Indiana Farm Security Administration Photographs Digital Collection webpage of Indiana University has a list of books using FSA photographs. Though it includes books up through the 1970s (which I will speak to and about in the conclusion of my dissertation), eighteen publications are listed from the 1930s and 1940s. See http://www.ulib.iupui.edu/IFSAP/resources.

[15] The scholarship on images of African Americans within the FSA tend to suggest that there is an intentional omission in displaying them either at all or in a way that reinforces the reality of the discrimination they endured. One of the most thorough discussions about race representation within FSA photography is in Nicholas Natanson. *The Black Image in the New Deal: The Politics of the FSA Photography* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1992). More recent studies include Sara Blair, *Harlem Crossroads*: *Black Writers and the Photograph in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: Princeton. University Press, 2007) and Nicole R. Fleetwood, *Troubling Vision*: *Performance, Visuality, and Blackness* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011).

In my approach, I follow the lead of Cara Finnegan, who is one of the first scholars to note that "strikingly little attention has been paid to the ways in which the [FSA] photographs circulated across a broad range of mediated contexts during the 1930s" and chose illustrated magazines as her context, considering their presence and role in the popular culture of that time.[16] Finnegan also states that a demand for FSA photographs by "picture book publishers and authors" increased, but says no more about it than that. Although she certainly paves the wave for contextual studies of 1930s photographs and photobooks, the material I am addressing goes beyond the FSA alone. Through primary research and a careful reading of contemporary book reviews, I argue that there are works that qualify as photobooks based upon how they were viewed during 1930s America. The historical reception and perception is vital to defining and understanding them within their original context. Moreover, in the UNC Press, the "picture book publishers and authors" Finnegan alludes to emerge as academics, a factor that could be part of the reason many photobooks have been overlooked. Due to the occupation of their authors they are understood as history or text books, in which photographs are viewed as illustrative material rather than a primary part of the efficacy of the books. As John Raeburn explains, the social scientists that made books containing FSA images (in which he cites Raper, Reid and Nixon as examples) had "small, national visibility," their names "carried no weight in artistic circles," and in being published by a university press, they lacked the benefits of greater advertising and

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[16] Cara A. Finnegan, *Picturing Poverty: Print Culture and FSA Photographs* (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 2003).

public exposure that the mainstream publishers offered.[17] These academics were, indeed, aware of the way using FSA images would, in fact, augment their chances for public exposure and reception. As Terry Smith explains, "Stryker's vigorous distribution of his section's output, in concert with the vast circulation of photomagazines [sic], was teaching millions to see themselves, and America, in new ways."[18] He adds that it is a "small wonder other departments sought to imitate the FSA's success, to use its images, or to request FSA photographers to cover material relevant to their briefs."[19] The scholars that authored the photobooks were aware of the ubiquity of the FSA images, something that could help their works be approachable and familiar and improve the chances of making serious issues appealing to a non-academic crowd. Moreover, by using them they were participating in the larger national dialogue about American issues through a visual approach, and this warrants their place within a history of 1930s and 1940s photography. The timing here is important, as it is a dynamic "multi-media" moment when sharp distinctions of audiences and authors were being broken down, exemplified in the tight, continuous relationship and effort between the UNC and the FSA. The specialized areas of study and the scholars behind them no longer resided solely within academic discourses and journals. Books with photographs that spoke about American topics were operating as a sort of public textbook, and social scientists were increasingly using imagery in their studies and publications. Thus, the tools of sociology were becoming more visual and photography was an essential component of the social sciences. Ultimately, these goals were borne out of the desire of creating an informed and empowered American public.

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[17] John Raeburn, *"A Staggering Revolution": A Cultural History of Thirties Photography* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006), 177.

[18] Terry Smith, *Making the Modern. Industry, Art and Design in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993). 339.

[19] Ibid.

Since this dissertation deals with a variety of fields, such as media studies, cultural studies, photography, and the social sciences, it is difficult to organize the material into any chronological or linear arrangement. To that end, the chapters are divided up thematically. Moreover, certain photobooks, such as those of Raper and Reid and Nixon, are discussed in every chapter and operate as threads that weave my discussions together.[20] My first chapter sets up a backdrop in which photobooks are considered a part of 1930s American culture in their media (using photographs, specifically with text) and in their subject matter of American life and issues. Following this is a chapter on photobooks and the South, in which I discuss photography in the South in general, and how stereotypes and Northern viewpoints have predominated within photographic representation. Also sketched out is the way Southern photobooks changed in the 1930s from being closely aligned with art photography practices like Pictorialism to asserting a more serious, documentary tone of Southern topics and issues. This sets the stage for the next chapter, which discusses the photobooks that specifically deal with the topic of the Depression, as well as the role of the FSA in Depression-era photobooks. The latter is not my central issue, but I do use them as a point of reference for the academic (UNC) photobooks, noting similarities and differences with regard to form and content. The final chapter starts with an analysis of the relationship between photography and sociology, reflecting upon the way they both share a history with regard to illuminating social topics and concerns. The importance of this discussion lies in the way photographs and photobooks operate as sociological tools, partaking in the development of visual systems for displaying information. As such, they participate in the

[20] As a note, I do briefly discuss other photobooks throughout that involve either the South or pictorial and popular histories. These include authors such as Lyle Saxon and Frederick Allen Lewis, and photographers such as Bayard Wootten and Doris Ulmann.

introspection of 1930s America culture examined in the first chapter. Following the establishment of the overlapping use of photography in various fields is a section on books with photographs that I argue help configure an expanded history of the photobook. The purpose here is to highlight the way the identification of these books as such things as pictorial histories, social studies or textbooks has distanced them from being defined as photobooks. Ultimately, these works represent moments of collaboration in the 1930s where publishers, universities and the government meet through a shared desire to find a visual means of expressing national concerns and issues and a physical means (the book) to promulgate them.

*The Farm Security Administration*

Under the New Deal of Franklin D. Roosevelt, the FSA was initiated to document the quality and breadth of American life in the wake of the Great Depression with the hope of eradicating the problems that had developed, such as unemployment and rural poverty. [21] Organized by Rexford Tugwell in 1935 (one of Roosevelt's "brains trust" members), and under the direction of Roy Stryker, the Resettlement Administration (later named the Farm Security Administration in 1937) hired photographers to travel across the country and capture American life on film. In an eight-year time span, these photographers produced more than 270,000 images that, since their creation, have been viewed in newspapers, magazines, posters, art history texts, history texts,

[21] In addition to the studies mentioned in this introduction, other important rudimentary studies on the FSA include *The Bitter Years: 1935-1941: Rural America as Seen by the Photographers of the Farm Security Administration*, Edited by Edward Steichen (New York, Museum of Modern Art; distributed by Doubleday, Garden City, N.Y., 1962); Sidney Baldwin, *Poverty and Politics*: *The Rise and Decline of the Farm Security Administration* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1968); James Guimond, *American Photography and the American Dream* (Chapel Hill: The University Press of North Carolina Press, 1991); Michael Lesy, *Long Time Coming: A Photographic Portrait of America, 1935-1943* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2002); Beaumont Newhall, "Documentary Approach to Photography," *Parnassus* (March 1938), 3-6; Arthur Rothstein, *Documentary Photography* (Boston: Focal Press, 1986); and Roy Emerson Stryker and Nancy Wood, *In This Proud Land: America 1935-1945 as Seen in the FSA Photographs* (Greenwich, CT: New York Graphic Society, 1973).

galleries and museums.[22] One of the earliest general accounts of the FSA is provided by Jack Hurley in 1972.[23] Hurley focuses mainly on Stryker and his role in organizing the project and around his energy and vision. As such, he provides information about his background as a land-loving boy in Colorado who becomes the head of a major governmental study seeking to illustrate America at a time when its sense of strength and self had been injured with the Great Depression and the Dust Bowl. He also focuses on the way Stryker directed the photographers to focus on rural life and sought mass distribution of the images in newspapers, pamphlets, exhibitions, classrooms, magazines and books. Hurley states that the picture book, although not a new idea in 1938, was one of the most successful notions of communication and was popular with commercial publishing houses. He goes on to explain how it was of particular interest to Stryker and lists those that utilize FSA photographs, but fails to discuss them any further. Following this is William Stott who, in 1973, wrote *Documentary Expression and Thirties America*.[24] Stott is concerned with the question of the documentary within 1930s America and provides an invaluable list of examples of the documentary mode, including literature, film, art, photography and life histories. His discussions of the FSA, therefore, are limited to their

[22] In 1940 *Survey Graphic* published an article about the FSA photographs, their value, and their venue, stating that "Farm Security Administration photographs aren't the sort of pictures a person forgets easily," and that "the story behind these photographs is not widely known, but it's a good story, and important to politicians, sociologists, economists, who can rind in the camera a highly useful tool." The photographs did end up extending out into a variety of publication and exhibition channels, and as Nicholas Natanson explains, "and so the story went in hundreds of locales across the country. Agency exhibits, either of photo-panels designed for wide circulation or displays designed for specific settings, appeared in schools, churches, and libraries, at fairs, expositions, and conferences, in department store windows" and even, from December 1941 through much of 1942, above the main lobby of New York Grand Central Station." He further claims that "by the end of the 1930s, it was clear that the Historical Section had become a veritable picture service for newspapers and magazines" because it was "a service diverse in resources, reasonably efficient (with some allowances made for the less-than-orderly condition of the Washington file), and, of prime importance for the media, free." See Hartley E. Howe, "You Have Seen Their Pictures," *Survey Graphic* (April 1, 1940) and Natanson. 213.

[23] Jack F. Hurley, *Portrait of a Decade: Roy Stryker and the Development of Documentary Photography in the Thirties* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1972).

[24] William Stott, *Documentary Expression and Thirties America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973).

participation in what he considers to be a historical moment invested in objective points of views; namely, that as a distinctive genre the 1930s documentary represents those authors and writers seeking a content that "is, or is assumed to be, actually true."[25] He does devotes an entire chapter to what he calls "The Documentary Book," and cites it as a "new art." In this way he is critical in laying out a foundation for photobook studies. His list of documentary books is vast, including the illustrated, non-illustrated, fictional and nonfictional, but he fails to go into any detail about them, except for sometimes stating the degree to which he thinks they stray from or reveal a genuine documentary character.[26]

One of the first serious art historical studies of the FSA is *Documenting America, 1935-1943*, discerns the photographs beyond the goal of the edited collection of the entire project and looks at them individually through a collection of essays.[27] One example is Alan Trachtenberg's essay that uses a single Walker Evans photograph to show the disjuncture between caption, image, and text. [28] Thus, the books Trachtenberg mentions are mere backdrops to the discussion, rather than issues in themselves. He follows this up a year later in 1989 with his own book that acknowledges "a rash of picture-and-word books appeared between 1938 and 1941," but

[25] Ibid, ix.

[26] Stott may provide a couple of sentences for certain books, but overall the descriptions and comments are brief. One crucial exception is William Agee and Walker Evans' *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*, a photobook he sees as one of the most groundbreaking and important in the era and, accordingly, has an entire separate part of his book devoted to it: Part Four.

[27] *Documenting America, 1935-1943*, Edited by Carl Fleischauer and Beverly W. Brannan (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988).

[28] Walker Evans worked for the FSA from 1935-1937. See Alan Trachtenberg, "From Image to Story: Reading the File," *Documenting America*, 43-73.

continues to use the FSA as a means to interpret the work of Walker Evans.[29] Around the same time Maren Stange writes about the FSA project as a whole, emphasizing the photographs as being emblematic of the operation of picture distribution that Stryker and Tugwell had an investment in. [30] Stange lists various books with FSA photographs in an extended footnote in order to exemplify their drive and views the project and its organizers more critically, suggesting it was overtly governmental and represented a type of New Deal propaganda. She does mention that by 1942 a large number of published books were illustrated with FSA photographs, but no individual discussion of them occurs. Finally, there is James Curtis, who questions the documentary objectivity Stott championed and suggests, instead, that the photographs are purposefully taken with the idea of arousing sympathy and therefore are highly constructed and stylized.[31] His chapters highlight issues surrounding individual photographers, so if he refers to a photobook s/he made, the discussion is not about analyzing it as such but instead to express his point about the artist.

Recent FSA studies tend to focus on using the images to argue a specific cause. For example, Michael Denning uses FSA photographs to discuss the way the laboring and working class of the 1930s reconstructed popular cultural around their social justice sympathies.[32] Denning sees this time in American history as one where art, culture and politics meet through the initiations of

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[29] Alan Trachtenberg, *Reading American Photographs: Images as History, Mathew Brady to Walker Evans* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1989).

[30] Maren Stange, *Symbols of Ideal Life: Social Documentary Photography in America, 1890-1950* (Cambridge & New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

[31] James Curtis, *Mind's Eye, Mind's Truth: FSA Photography Reconsidered* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989).

[32] Michael Denning, *The Cultural Front: The Laboring of American Culture in the Twentieth Century* (London: Verso, 1997).

intellectual and leftist thought. Colleen McDannell considers the way religious institutions, beliefs and practices can be ascertained through a careful reading of FSA photographs.[33] Jan Goggans examines the work of FSA photographer Dorothea Lange, suggesting that her images and projects helped make the economic disaster of California during the Depression a national topic.[34] Jeff Allred focuses on the way the FSA photographs were joined together with writing in a way that converged the practices of literary modernism and documentary, and claims they share a constructivist dimension with contemporaneous Soviet artists and German thinkers.[35]

More specific to this study are the works Cara Finnegan, as previously mentioned, and Stuart Kidd.[36] Kidd focuses on the way the South was a necessary subject for the FSA given the transformation it was enduring in both its agricultural systems and changing nature of rural living. He contends that very few representations of urbanity are presented within the images because of a national sentimentalism about the South and its traditional way of life. The result, therefore, is that the FSA photographs could not fully comprehend or display the complicated problems or culture of the South. This dissertations seeks to unfold and reveal some of those complications and show how Southerners, through the agency of the photobook, attempted to not only represent themselves, but do so in a way that ignited both national interest and support for change and betterment. My goal is also in line with the efforts of historian Lawrence Levine,

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[33] Colleen McDannell, *Picturing Faith: Photography and the Great Depression* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004).

[34] Jan Goggans, *California on the Breadlines: Dorothea Lange, Paul Taylor, and the Making of a New Deal Narrative* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010).

[35] Jeff Allred, *American Modernism and Depression Documentary* (New York: Oxford University Press, Inc, 2010).

[36] Stuart Kidd, *Farm Security Administration Photography, The Rural South, and the Dynamics of Image-Making, 1935-1943* (Lewiston, N.Y.: Edwin Mellen Press, 2004).

who has sought to reveal the experience of the ordinary person in Depression America by seeking to understand the way that person, as part of a collective audience, confronted the products of the popular culture s/he was immersed within.[37] For the present study, the experience is that of the Southerner and the confrontation is manifest in the making of photobooks about the South at a moment in American history where there is a complex relationship between photography, government projects, sociological studies, mass media publications and university outreach to the public.

Like the discussions about them, the types of Depression-era photobooks are vast in their intent and format. Nicholas Natanson has categorized them into the scholarly, the popular, the photo-dominant, the textually dominant, the passionate, and the utterly innocuous.[38] Natanson's categories overlap. For instance, the difference between the "scholarly" and the "textually dominant" is as an unclear as why the "passionate" doesn't extend itself, innately, into the other categories (that is, the very drive to create and publish these projects in themselves). I think the photobooks are better divided, roughly, into three distinct categories. The first includes those published by the photographers themselves (usually in collaboration with someone else writing the text) and has as examples: *You Have Seen Their Faces* (1937) by Erskine Caldwell and Margaret Bourke-White, *An American Exodus: A Record of Human Erosion* (1939) by Dorothea Lange and Paul S. Taylor, and *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* (1941) by James Agee and

[37] Lawrence W. Levine, *The Unpredictable Past: Explorations in American Cultural History* (New York: Oxford University Press, U.S.A., 1993).

[38] Natanson, 212.

Walker Evans.[39] These photographers were either successful photojournalists and/or worked for the FSA. The next category falls in line, more or less, with their recognition being due to their authors, who are noted and popular literary figures at the time. The two most prominent are Archibald MacLeish's *Land of the Free* (1938) and Richard Wright and Edwin Rosskam's *12 Million Black Voices: A Folk History of the Negro in the United* States (1941), followed by Sherwood Anderson's *Home Town* (1940).[40] Rather than represent the work of a single photographer, they include images from a variety of FSA photographers. It is the third category that I find most intriguing and that comprise a large part of my study. These photobooks are authored by academics and utilize FSA photographs. The two of central concern here are the UNC publications *Forty Acres and Steel Mules* (1938) by political science professor Herman Clarence Nixon and *Sharecroppers All* (1941) by sociologists Arthur Raper and Ira de Augustine Reid. The two former categories have, in the large percentage of the extant scholarship, amply and repeatedly been the sources for discussions about Depression-era identity, culture, expression and representation. I attempt to, instead, consider those remaining that have received less attention and analysis, as doing so opens up new insights about the motivations of photobooks from the 1930s and 1940s in general and those about the American South in particular.

[39] Margaret Bourke-White and Erskine Caldwell, *You Have Seen Their Faces* (New York: Viking, 1937); Dorothea Lange and Paul Taylor, *An American Exodus: A Record of Human Erosion* (New York: Reynal and Hitchcock, 1939); and James Agee and Walker Evans, *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men: Three Tenant Families* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1941).

[40] Sherwood Anderson, *Home Town* (New York: Viking, 1940) and Archibald MacLeish, *Land of the Free* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1938). These photobooks are discussed at greater length in later chapters.

*The UNC Press: A Southern Renaissance in Image and Word*

The UNC Press was a stronghold for Southern research and writing by Southern intellectuals. The inclusion of photographs in their books represents new trends in sociological practices, the popularity of communicating information through juxtapositions of photographs and text, and the interest of Southern institutions and intellectuals to utilize these trends in order to make clear the situation and needs of the South. The assertion that their photobooks are a part of sociological practices is due to their connection with the UNC at Chapel Hill's sociological department run by Howard Odum. In the 1930s there was a sort of cultural Southern Renaissance that blossomed in the 1940s before the war.[41] The thrust of this development came out of two distinct groups. One is associated with the Vanderbilt University faculty and affiliates known as the Southern Agrarians, who sought to find a way to confront industrial development and urbanism in the South while maintaining Southern traditions and culture in order to preserve its agrarian past.[42] The other, identified as Regionalists, was centered at UNC at Chapel Hill. Led by Odum, they were deemed much more liberal than the conservative Agrarians and embraced sociological studies and regional planning in order to achieve economic stability and progressive growth in the South, as well as achieve a dialogue with other regions of the United States.[43] In confronting issues of Southern history and culture, Odum believed it essential to establish the study of daily life and experience in the South, and did so by legitimizing Regionalism and Folklore as

[41] Though Southern Renaissance is often applied to Southern literary trends of the 1920s and 1930s that moved away from historical romanticizing of Southern issues and moved towards their contemporary realities, it has also been used by historians to suggest a larger cultural phenomenon. See "The Southern Renaissance and the Revolt against the New South Creed," in James Cobb, *Away Down South: A History of Southern Identity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 99-129.

[42] The manifesto of their beliefs is established in *I'll Take My Stand: The South and the Agrarian Tradition, by Twelve Southerners* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1930).

[43] The foundation of the Regionalist ideology is laid out in Howard W. Odum, *Southern Regions of the United States* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1936).

university disciplines.[44] He was concerned with the way the South had a history of being told from a Northern point of view. As William Cooper Jr. and Thomas Terrill explain, "Southern regionalism found institutional support in the 1920s and 1930s in several universities, especially [UNC], which was then moving quickly to become a leading American university."[45] They continue by explaining that after the early 1920s "numerous southern writers and journalists, scholars, intellectuals, and activists became heavily involved in southern regionalism," thus "never before had criticisms from within the South been so thorough and so sweeping."[46] By 1940, Raper and Reid had stated that "Southern people are beginning to talk about conditions as they are" and "have stepped ahead in analyzing and planning for the South," but they emphasized that "most promising of all the private agencies, it seems, are the current efforts of Howard W. Odum and his associates."[47] Indeed, it was at the "private agency" of the UNC Press where these authors would publish their own photobook, *Sharecroppers All*, a year after making this statement.

Like Odum and his endeavors in Southern studies, William Terry Couch, head of the UNC Press is important to my study. Couch, who was "alarmed at the extent to which the South had become a byword for social and economic backwardness and almost a symbol of the nation's economic problems," resultantly "began to use his position at the UNC Press to encourage and promote

[44] For more on this, see Howard W. Odum and Harry Estill Moore, *American Regionalism* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1938) and Howard W. Odum and Alvin Boskoff, "Structure, Function, and Folk Society," *American Sociological Review* 14 (1949): 749–58.

[45] William J. Cooper Jr. and Thomas E. Terrill, *The American South: A History* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc. 2009), 682.

[46] Ibid.

[47] Arthur Raper and Ira De Augustine Reid, "Old Conflicts in the New South," *The Virginia Quarterly Review* (Spring 1940).

books dealing with problems specific to the region."[48] Couch fervently and aggressively sought to not only produce publications that dealt specifically with the South, but that included photographs. He went beyond seeing them as illustrations and, instead, recognized them as sources of sociological data.[49] After the establishment of the FSA he mainly used its images and maintained a close and rich connection with Roy Stryker, arranging for mutual projects between the agency and the university. Such is not surprising, as Stryker, along with Tugwell, had an interest in expanding the practice of economics beyond a study of statistics and formulas alone and wanted the FSA photographs to be a part of studies about America.

Understanding publications such as *Forty Acres and Steel Mules* and *Sharecroppers All* as photobooks broadens an understanding of the way many of the FSA images were disseminated and how they were seen in a range of different contexts. When compared to other 1930s and 1940s photobooks that use FSA images, they have more similarities than differences.[50] *Forty Acres and Steel Mules* is a ninety-eight page long study of Southern agricultural and economical practices and problems. Some 160 black-and-white photographic images make up thirty-two separate pages of images alone, which are divided up under a main rubric listed at the bottom of the page that corresponds to the subject matter of the chapters they are within. The rubrics, as

[48] As described in Stephen Fender, "Poor Whites and the Federal Writers' Project: The Rhetoric of Eugenics in the Southern Life Histories," *Popular Eugenics: National Efficiency and American Mass Culture in the 1930s*, Edited by Susan Currell and Christina Cogdell (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2006), 143-4.

[49] Couch's belief in the way the camera can be used to portray social problems is detailed in Chapter Four, as well as his collaboration with Stryker and the FSA.

[50] As a point of reference, *You Have Seen Their Faces* is 190 pages and has seventy-five photographs grouped together as a part of each section of the book, usually following a body of text; *American Exodus* has 112 images within its 158 pages of text, integrating the two together; and *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* has thirty-two photographs that are presented in a completely separate section from the 472 pages of text. These numbers refer to the first printings of these photobooks, which are analyzed in greater depth later in my study.

well as the images, don't always face the pages of text that involves them, as such may be several pages before or after, though always within the given chapter. Also, some of these plates have only one large-scale image, while others may have up to as many as six. Listed under each photograph is "FSA," along with the last name of the photographer. *Sharecroppers All* also focuses on the South and its economy, with a particular interest in pointing out the economy constitutes both black and white sharecroppers. Interspersed within its 281 pages are thirty FSA photographs, one or two on a page, and each with a caption under them, as well as "FSA" and the last name of the photographer. Given that there is no set formula for Depression era photobooks regarding the number of photographs used, the size or format of the book, or the layout of images, the omission of *Forty Acres and Steel Mules* and *Sharecroppers All* from the history of photography and photobooks is inauspicious.

*The Photobook: Definitions*

My approach to understanding the photobook in the 1930s and 1940s is a historically rooted one, relying principally upon contemporary reception, criticism and statements made about them. That said, my discussion of the photobook does not claim to decipher what a photobook is in any universal or comprehensive way, but in a regional and culturally specific context. Moreover, to try to define the photobook in such a way would be counter-productive and, to say the least, difficult. This is evident in the varying attempts to merely define the photobook in itself as a genre. The lack of clarity and agreement upon a singular definition within scholarship is important to this study because it helps elucidate why, perhaps, some of the photobooks I discuss may have escaped serious scholarly attention. Their identification as a photobook, or lack of, is contingent upon how a photobook is defined. I aim to establish an understanding of the 1930s

and 1940s photobook borne out of the meaning and descriptions applied to it at that time. Beyond it being a time when the technological possibility of making photobooks in a more mass way was possible, I seek to consider why they were desirable to the public and as a communicative tool for the authors. Instead of revering these photobooks as art objects or as mere parts of a burgeoning mass media, they exist as a kind of balance between the two, which may be why they maintained popularity. The overarching description of and reaction to them in the 1930s and 1940s celebrates an idea that photographs and the written word function equally, and both are nearly routinely described in terms of how informative *and* beautiful they are. These photobooks engaged the senses and the mind, and there was an acute awareness of this at that time. Such qualities cannot be underestimated when America was experiencing the Depression and entering a World War. Ultimately, this study illustrates how photographs participated in relieving the needs of communication and expression at this moment in American history.

The evolution of photobooks is pointedly aligned with changes in the ability to reproduce photographs and the development of a mass media culture, something that is generally seen as reaching a pinnacle moment during the age of photo-mechanical reproduction in the 1920s. From the inception of photography, photographs that were in books were original prints that were pasted or faceted in. An example of this is William Henry Fox Talbot's *The Pencil of Nature* (1844), often considered to be the first photobook.[51] Other types of books at that time which used

[51] In 1843 Anna Atkins published *Photographs of British Algae: Cyanotype Impressions*, which consisted of what Talbot called "photogenic drawings"; that is, an image appears after an object is placed on light-sensitized paper which is exposed to the sun. The process is made without a camera and results in a negative shadow image of the object. To that end, it is often distinguished from actual photographs, which are understood as positive prints made from a camera. Still, the definition seems subjective and debatable (and maybe historically contingent) given current digital imagery. Anna Atkins, *Photographs of British Algae. Cyanotype Impressions* (Halstead Place, Sevenoaks: privately published, 1843-53). William Henry Fox Talbot, *The Pencil of Nature* (London: Longman, Brown, Green & Longmans, 1844-6). A seminal article about the "nature" and constituents of a photograph is Margaret Iversen,

actual photographs were scrapbooks or family albums, but such products represent vernacular efforts and were not meant for reproduction for public consumption.[52] It was not until the 1890s that advancements such as the refinement of the photogravure process and halftone printing allowed for low cost mass-reproduction in newspapers, magazines and books. In the 1920s, when rotogravure begins and mass-reproduction of photography was available, the largest and most frequent production of photobooks occurred. Advancements in hand-held 35mm cameras, flash-bulb lighting, new types of printing paper, greater expedience of film processing and print production allowed more things to be photographed and reproduced.

In the most recent publication about photobooks, *The Photobook: From Talbot to Ruscha and Beyond* (2012), the authors state that "histories of photography have not generally accorded the photobook a place of central importance, if they have paid any attention at all" and that "accounts have been organized more often around trajectories of technological developments, national histories, genres, iconic images, or the landmark bodies of work by individual photographers as auteurs."[53] This observation is in laying out a foundation for a cultural definition of the 1930s and 1940s photobook. Still, and as noted, a comprehensive and collectively agreed upon definition remains. Possible questions in defining a photobook could

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"What Is a Photograph?" *Art History* 17: 3 (September 1994), 450–64. Iverson mainly considers the issue through the writings of Barthes, Lacan, Benjamin and Freud.

[52] As a note, Atkins privately published her photograms, whereas Talbot desired commercial publication and wanted to introduce and stimulate a public interest in photography. This is evident in the notes that accompany the plates in *The Pencil of Nature,* which often explain the processes and benefits of using photography.

[53] *The Photobook: From Talbot to Ruscha and Beyond*, Edited by Patrizia Di Bello, Colette Wilson and Shamoon Zamir (London: I.B.Tauris & Co Ltd, 2012), 1. See also a helpful review of this text, along with recent commentary on photobook research in general, in Andres Mario Zervigon, "Review: The Latin American Photobook/The Photobook: From Talbot to Ruscha and Beyond/Japanese Photobooks of the 1960s and '70s," *CAA Reviews* (May 31, 2013), 1-5.

relate to the number of photographs included and whether or not there is a required number of images. Does the ratio of image to text matter? Also key is the presumed level through which the message of the book is photographically communicated. Furthermore, the assessment of photobooks depends upon the field they are being discussed within. In conservation, for example, a photobook is "a published book illustrated with real photographs."[54] Another potential ambiguity lies in the distinction between pictorial histories and photobooks, and whether or not the way the former operating as a kind of "textbook" for the public affects its status as a photobook. Also, is there a readership that affects the status as a photobook? Could a children's book that is comprised of photographs be a photobook, or what about an inexpensive mass produced photographically based book published by a popular press? Are these considered unimportant because of their accessibility or seeming lack of intellectual rigor? Certainly a major factor in either and all of these cases is the popularity, celebrity and academic acknowledgement of the artist/photographer involved.

A definition that attempts to provide clarity about the constituents of the photobook comes from Martin Parr and Gerry Badger in 2004, who claimed that the photobook is a book with or without text, where the work's primary message is carried by photographs.[55] They also state that the book needs to be authored by a photographer "or by someone editing and sequencing the work of a photographer, or even a number of photographers," which is a strange requirement as having

[54] Gustavo Lozano, "History and Conservation of Albums and Photographically Illustrated Books," *http://notesonphotographs.org/images/f/f4/History_and_conservation_of_albums_and_photographically_illustrated_books_for_web.pdf* (Rochester: Advanced Residency Program in Photograph Conservation at George Eastman House, 2007).

[55] Parr and Badger published a two volume series, the first of which follows along nineteenth century examples to roughly WWII, and the second continues from WWII to the present. See Martin Parr and Gerry Badger, *The Photobook: A History*, Vol. 1 & 2, (London; New York: Phaidon, 2004; 2006).

someone edit or sequence any images in a book is implicit.[56] Other requirements are that it has a specific character in which the photographs lose their particularity as things and become parts of a collective meaning that is more important than the individual thing. This definition is quite vague, and becomes particularly problematic when understanding a photobook with regard to other textual and image media. What Parr and Badger seem to emphasize is that the sequence of images overrides the singular impact of each image. This sequencing, though, could be applied to photo-essays, textbooks and guide books (sequenced according to subject), photographically illustrated novels and compendiums of an artist's oeuvre or books of collections. Moreover, there seems to be no way of determining that the reader will follow the sequence, no innate pledge to follow an order. The photobook can be opened to any page despite any progress of reading the text from beginning to end or any desired effect of the author's ordering, making the reader a type of editor in determining which images s/he chooses to focus on and when. Also, there is no guarantee that the images will be ingested as a group, for as Susan Sontag explains, "the reading time of a book is up to the reader," and this "allows one to linger over a single moment as long as one likes."[57] This isn't to say that the order wasn't conceived without logical and meaningful way; rather, it doesn't guarantee that the work will be ingested according to the hope and guideline of the sequencing. To that end, there is a problem in assessing a photobook with regard to a photograph losing any particular character in favor of being a part of a collective, and this has to do with the individual impact an image has on the viewer, which is unpredictable and unfixed. One may encounter something that strikes that person so deeply the other images or their contingency to each other fades away. Conversely, a forgettable image may weaken any

[56] Parr and Badger, 2004, 7.

[57] Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (New York: Anchor Books, 1990), 81.

continuum. For László Moholy-Nagy, writing in the mid 1930s, this uncertainty is actually part of the power of experiencing a series of images, for despite the fact that "the separate picture loses its identity as such and becomes a detail of assembly, an essential structural element of the whole which is the thing itself," the "concatenation of its separate but inseparable parts…inspired by a definite purpose [such as those chosen for a photobook] can become at once the most potent weapon and the tenderest lyric."[58] That is, experiencing a photobook has both the public opportunity of communicating a message and the private experience of reading and subjective interpretation. Reading practices were changing in the 1930s and 1940s, and the photobook is a poignant example of the way images, along with text, were being read and consumed.

The language used within the scholarship on 1930s American photobooks is another obstacle in ascertaining a singular definition of a photobook, as the photobook is identified under various names. Take, for example, *You Have Seen Their Faces* or *American Exodus*, both have been alternatively referred to as a "documentary book," a "photo-text" (including photo-textual or photo-textual documentary books), a "photographic essay," a "photographic book," a "picture and word book," a "text-and-picture book," or even a "picture book."[59] The link between all of

[58] László Moholy-Nagy, "A New Instrument of Vision," first published in *Telehor* (Brno, Czechoslovakia, 1936); *Moholy-Nagy*, Translated by F. D Klingender and P. Morton Shand, Edited by in Richard Kostelanetz (New York: Praeger, 1970), 54. Moholy-Nagy produced his own photobook *Painting, Photography, Film* in 1925. For an interesting discussion on it, see Pepper Stetler, "'The New Visual Literature': László Moholy-Nagy's *Painting, Photography, Film*," *Grey Room* 32 (Summer 2008), 88–113.

[59] There is the reference, generally, to their being "documentary books," something established by Alfred Kazin (and discussed in chapter one) who speaks of them as a new type of literature that is documentary, nationally introspective, and very much bound with the language and presence of photography. William Stott works with this concept and offers a greatly expanded upon list that includes several UNC Press publications. Recent studies by Colleen McDannell and Jeff Allred return back to the original, more limited pool. Regarding the photo-text, the term is associated, initially, with the works of author and photographer Wright Morris, whose images from the 1930s and 1940s have a striking resemblance to Walker Evans. His photo-texts look very much like photobooks (and arguably

these is the association of photography with writing, yet the lack of a common nomenclature can be confusing. Such makes the intentional vagueness found within the Parr and Badger definition understandable, as expansiveness allows for a greater variety of inclusion. I would like to add to their definition and suggest that a photobook is a book in which photographs play a prominent role in the book's composition, one that enhances or expands the problem, argument and message of the book's subject matter. The photographs do not have to be taken by an artist, nor the book written by someone working within art historical or photographic fields. There is no specific number of photographs that need to be used; rather, whatever the amount of photographs, they need to be presented in a way where they parallel the text in levity and information provided. They need to speak about the subject as much as the written words do.

This is perhaps the most important and telling feature of the 1930s and 1940s American photobooks; that is, the idea that there is an equality between text and image. Over and over again the distinguishing trait amongst these photobooks (according to their reviewers and readers) is that the images and texts are equal in effect and, thus, dependent upon each other in order to be successful. For example, in 1937 *You Have Seen Their Faces* was described as having "75 full-page photographs which play an equally important part with the text on

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are a type), but as Alan Trachtenberg explains, despite their resemblance to *You Have Seen* and *American Exodus* (for example, "they belong more properly under the heading of experimental fiction, formal experiments in the telling of stories, the construction of narratives." See Alan Trachtenberg, "Wright Morris's 'Photo-Texts'," *The Yale Journal of Criticism* 9:1 (1996), 109. Prior to this, one of the earlier applications of the term is found in John Rogers Puckett, *Five Photo-Textual Documentaries from the Great Depression* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1984). As for the photographic essay, something commonly understood as being a photojournalistic picture story, W.J.T. Mitchell takes his meaning of it from Agee's statement in the *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*, in which he declares that the photographs and the text are "coequal, mutually independent, and fully collaborative," as cited in W.J.T. Mitchell, "The Ethics of Form in the Photographic Essay," *Afterimage* (January 1989), 9. A prime example of the way all of these terms have been used in interchangeable ways is a press release from the International Center of Photography for their spring exhibition in 2003: *Bronzeville: Black Chicago in Pictures, 1941–1943.* Whereas the statement initially refers to Wright and Rosskam's *12 Million Black Voices* as a "documentary book," it ends by claiming it to be "one of the most admired photo-text books ever published." See museum.icp.org/museum/exhibitions/bronzeville/bronzeville.pdf.

conveying the story."[60] One year later *Land of the Free* is described as "a masterpiece of collaboration" between writer and photographer that "give[s] us a book of emotional intensity that neither [MacLeish's] words nor the photographs could have done for themselves.[61] In 1940, a *New York Times* journalist writes that "the text and photographs [of Anderson's *Hometown*] tell the same story in the same simple way" and again, writing the same year, another critic describes how the photographs in the UNC publication about American Indians, *As Long as the Grass Shall Grow*, "interpret the text and are interpreted by it."[62] In 1941 Agee declares that in his project with Evans the photographs and the text are "coequal, mutually independent, and fully collaborative."[63] Moreover, in 1942 art critic, educator and author Elizabeth McCausland defines the photographic book as a "book with words and photographs complementing each other."[64] Even for the *Pageant of America* series from the mid to late 1920s—arguably a precedent of the photobook and a part of its history—a critic points out that "it is refreshing to find that neither text nor pictures are permitted to predominate to the extent that one might obscure the other."[65] Indeed, the concept of gauging such an equality, if it doesn't involve a literal physical balance of text and images, is subjective. As W.J.T. Mitchell points out, "a 'coequality' of photography and

[60] N. B. Cousins, "The World Today in Books," *Current History* 47:3 (December 1937), 2.

[61] Peter Munro Jack, "Archibald MacLeish's Poem for Our Day," *New York Times* (May 8, 1938), 94.

[62] R.L. Duffus, "The Small Towns of America," *New York Times* (Oct. 27, 1940), 89; R.L. Duffus, "THE INDIAN IN AMERICAN LIFE: An Illuminating Account of His Immediate Past and His Present," *New York Times* (May 5, 1940), 97; and Oliver La Farge, *As Long as the Grass Shall Grow* (New York: Alliance Book Corporation, 1940). La Farge's photobook is discussed in Chapter Four.

[63] Agee and Evans, 8-9. It is important to remember here that the literal ratio between photographs and text in *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* is extremely disproportionate (32 photographs and 472 pages of text).

[64] Elizabeth McCausland, "Photographic Books" (1942), *Afterimage* (May 1985).

[65] The series was an encyclopedic set of volumes about the history of America. It is discussed at length in Chapter Four. *The Pageant of America: A Pictorial History of the United States*, 15 volumes, Edited by Ralph Henry Gabriel (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1925-9). Allen Sinclair Will, "American History in Pictorial Form," *New York Times* (May 9, 1926), BR11.

writing is easier to stipulate than it is to achieve, or even imagine."[66] Still, what is important is that at the moment of the production of American photobooks in the 1930s and the 1940s there seems to be a more or less accepted notion that photographs and writing combined in a way (in book form) that was both novel and appealing.

*The Photobook: Commodity*

The predicament of a lack of a cohesive definition for photobooks also has to do with the value of the books as collectibles, and the expectation that a photographer creates one. The value and rarity of the books have been a determinant of whether or not they become objects of academic focus. Thus, when considering how a photobook is defined, it is important to reflect upon whether or not it is desirable within the art market. The study of photobooks has been triggered by popular gallery showings and auctions sales of photobooks, and when collectors compile catalogues of their collections. The catalogues of a gallery or a collector are routinely included as legitimate sources for academic research, as they have remained some of the *only* sourced until recently. Chris Balaschak points out that in 2008, publishing houses that specialize in photography "have witnessed a blossoming market," that "auction houses have recently granted photography books a privileged position."[67] "More than ever before," he continues, "the photography book has become a 'calling card' for the aspiring professional photographer."[68] In the 2005 International Center of Photography's exhibit "The Open Book: A History of the

[66] Mitchell, 9.

[67] See Chris Balaschak, "MAY 2008 / DISCUSSION FORUM: Jason Fulford, Siri Kaur, Chris Balaschak," *Words without Pictures*, Edited by Alex Klein (New York: Aperture/Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 2010), 175 and Chris Balaschak *Unstable Ground: Photography Books and the Modern Landscape, 1938-1975* (PhD dissertation, University of California, Irvine, 2010), 12; 39 n41.

[68] Ibid.

Photographic Book from 1878 to the Present," the museum states that the show chronicles the "art" of the photographic book, and its accompanying catalogue calls photography books "a unique art form in their own right."[69] In this case, the photobook is seen as a fine art object and is displayed and assessed as such. This desire to validate and solidify the worth of a photobook as either a form of fine art or an investment is further evidenced in Andrew Roth's *The Book of 101 Books: Seminal Photographic Books of the Twentieth Century*.[70] Roth is a rare book dealer and owns his own photography galleries, and the book followed an exhibit of photographic books he had at one of them. The reviews of the book elucidate how it operates as some sort of amalgamation between a coffee table book (having very attractive spreads and covers of the books reproduced) and a catalog listing. For example, Eric Bryant stated that "the addition of the sumptuous reproductions from so many titles that are simply unavailable to most libraries make this an essential purchase for any serious photography collection."[71] This statement reveals two things: how some of the books fail to be accessible for research in a larger realm since they are both rare objects and kept that way in private collections, and that how these types of books are promoted towards collectors. The latter point further suggests their quality as desirable objects of ownership for their rarity over their existence as source material for academic research. Another reviewer points out how the descriptions accompanying each listing and image of each book, collaboratively written by *Village Voice* critic Vince Aletti and art critic and writer David Levi

[69] "The Open Book: A History of the Photographic Book From 1878 to the Present," International Center of Photography website, http://www.icp.org/museum/exhibitions/open-book-history-photographic-book-1878-present.

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[70] *The Book of 101 Books: Seminal Photographic Books of The Twentieth Century*, Edited by Andrew Roth (New York: PPP Editions in association with Ruth Horowitz, 2001).

[71] Eric Bryant, "Review: The Book of 101 Books," *Library Journal* 127:4 (March 1, 2002), 92.

Strauss, are neither "overly technical [nor] esoteric."[72] Again, the inference is that the literature is aimed more for the affluent layman than the scholarly, which leaves these "histories of the photobook" removed from an academic scope.

In the *New York Times Book Review*, art critic, curator, and educator Andy Grundberg stated that there was a "trend among commercial galleries to create books that promote photographs they are selling," calling them "near advertisements" and that the most "informative [photographic] book of the season" made "matters more ethically intricate" because [*The Book of 101 Books*] was "the handiwork of a dealer in rare books who also operates photography galleries in New York and Los Angeles."[73] Grundberg does not go on to explain in great detail what he means by "ethically intricate," but the ethics of the matter likely involve the studying or showcasing of a book because of its projected popularity in reception, as well as its ultimate commercial value. It could also involve the author's commercial interest in photobooks being boosted by an academic presentation of their history. This discussion is important because these catalogues comprise a part of the literature on photobooks and, in doing so, help formulate and reiterate which books are analyzed and acknowledged as legitimate photobooks. This, of course, is problematic because the scholar has a different investment in the designation and promotion of the material than the dealer or collector. For example, both Parr and Badger are photographers who have a number of works in private and public collections. Parr has his own collection of photobooks

[72] Tom Toth, "A Library of Classic Photography Books in a Single Volume," *Christian Science Monitor* 94:15 (December 13, 2001), 11.

[73] Andy Grundberg, "Photography," *New York Times Book Review* (December 2, 2001), 35. Other examples of publications on photobooks that center around personal collections include *Imagining Paradise: The Richard and Ronay Menschel Library at George Eastman House, Rochester* (Steidl, Göttingen, Germany and George Eastman House, Rochester, NY, 2008), which highlights over 250 rare photobooks from the GEH, and the self-published catalogue of photobooks from the private Auer collection, Michéle Auer and Michel Auer, *Photobook: 802 Photobooks from the M & M Auer Collection* (Hermance, 2007).

and, as Grundberg points out, the majority of those works included in his and Badger's volumes on the history of the photobook comprise that collection.[74]

*The Photobook: History*

What, then, of the photobook histories undertaken by scholars? In art history, early studies of photobooks are mainly of those made in the nineteenth century, and Carol Armstrong is one of the first, and most thorough, in providing such a detailed examination of these.[75] As Helen Groth explains, upon researching the "experimental fusions" of photographic and literary texts in the Victorian era, Armstrong argues that "a close reading of images alongside texts in their original publishing format [versus scrapbooks or albums]" is necessary to understand how they were received.[76] For Armstrong, this was a moment when the photographic image became assimilated to the printed page. It makes sense, as she notes that "historically, after all, the invention of photography derived more immediately from another paper art, itself deeply connected to the book, namely, that of the print."[77] Understanding these photobooks as representing a continuity with printmaking is useful to assess the UNC photobooks of the late 1930s, early 1940s, as they, too, speak of a time when the photobook was dynamic, engaging not just text and image, but new formats and materials meant for a mass audience, such as the inclusion of biography, scientific fact, and radical and risky subject matter.[78]

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[74] Andy Grundberg, "Reading Images," *Art in America* 95:3 (March, 2007), 43-45.

[75] Carol Armstrong, *Scenes in a Library: Reading the Photograph in the Book, 1843-1875* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1998).

[76] Helen Groth, *Victorian Photography and Literary Nostalgia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 53.

[77] Armstrong, 3-4.

[78] For example, when discussing Fox Talbot's *The Pencil of Nature* Armstrong stresses that she wishes "to understand it again as an experiment, but by no means a foregone conclusion, in the 'massification' of the

Aside from Armstrong, almost all of the studies on nineteenth-century photographic books operate, in many ways, like catalogs, with very brief discussions (if any) about the context of each book; rather, publishing and acquisition is provided.[79] This, in itself, exemplifies how photobooks were assessed in accordance with value or rarity, instead of as cultural artifacts. As such, these approaches evidence the photobook's confused place within academic discourse; that is, are photobooks located within a history of photography, of art, of book production, library studies, literature or of communication studies, etc., and how can they be understood and studied outside of a context of commercial value? Douglas Crimp discusses this dilemma by explaining the problem of categorizing photobooks within a library catalog.[80] As Crimp points out, in 1977 librarian Julia Van Haaften started to locate photographically illustrated books from the New York Public Library's collection which, as she found out, spanned the NYPL's subject headings, including "archaeology in the Holy Land and Central America, about ruined castles in England and Islamic ornament in Spain; illustrated newspapers of Paris and London; books of ethnography and geology; technical and medical manuals."[81] Few to any of the books were

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photograph and the photographically illustrated book, sewn with its authors gentlemanly ambivalence on that score, with the marks of his contrarian desire to preserve its privacy and its preindustrial nature, and with the unfamiliarity of another era besides our own whose values were other than ours," and that "no matter how self-explanatory the form and obvious the content of *The Pencil of Nature* might seem to us now, it is worth the labor to make it strange." Armstrong, 112.

[79] Examples of these include Stuart Bennet, "Photography as Book Illustration 1839-1900," *Collectible Books: Some New Paths* (New York: Bowker, 1979); Helmut Gernsheim, *Incunabula of British Photographic Literature: A Bibliography of British Photographic Literature, 1839-75* (London, Berkeley: Scolar Press in association with Derbyshire College of Higher Education, 1984); and Lucien Goldschmidt and Weston J. Naef's *The Truthful Lens: A Survey of the Photographically Illustrated Book 1844-1914 (*New York: Gollier Club, 1980).

[80] Douglas Crimp, "The Museum's Old/The Library's New Subject," *The Contest of Meaning: Critical Histories of Photography*, Edited by Richard Bolton. (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1989), 3-14.

[81] Julia Van Haaften, "Original Sun Pictures: A Checklist of the New York Public Library's Holdings of Early Works Illustrated with Photographs," *The Bulletin of the New York Public Library* 80:3 (Spring, 1977).

categorized under the rubric of photography. Moreover, when the photographs in these books were discovered to be by acknowledged luminaries within the history of photography, many of their filing statuses changed again, now according to their makers; English castles became Frederick Evans, the Holy Land became Francis Frith, the American Civil War became Alexander Gardner, urban poverty became Lewis Hine, and so on. As Crimp explains, "these materials are thus to be reclassified according to their newly acquired value, the value that is now attached to the 'artists' who made the photographs."[82]

What Crimp pointed out some thirty years ago—the problem of classifying photobooks, as well as the indeterminate value placed upon them due to the way they are classified—still has yet to be resolved. Alex Sweetman calls this "a very troubling famine," stating that there is "the utter failure of our major cultural institutions to adequately address the phenomenon [of photobooks], and to collect these works and make them available."[83] He further explains that since "our national library system…does not systematically collect contemporary photography books," it rests on the hands of individuals who form significant personal collections to "leave them to their preferred institutions for the sake of posterity."[84] Therefore, the lack of being able to define what a photobook is also involves its presence and accessibility in public arenas (or lack of), as well as the concept of circumventing the museum, gallery, and auction house determinations of what is considered a photobook. Those photobooks that are understood as history or sociology books would, if considered within the history of photography, exemplify the cross disciplinary (perhaps

[82] Crimp, 7.

[83] Alex Sweetman, "Review: The History of The Photobook Vol. I," *Photo-Eye*, (Holiday, 2004), 38-9.

[84] Ibid.

even cross-cultural) and linguistic role of the images within a larger cultural framework. This dissertation hopes to open up some of these avenues. Robert Darnton claims that "neither history nor literature nor economics nor sociology nor bibliography can do justice to all the aspects of the life of a book."[85] Perhaps the same can be said for the photobook and its research.

[85] Robert Darnton, "What is the History of Books?," *Daedalus* 111:3 (1982), 81.

*The documentary book…expressly encouraged middle-class readers to identify with the subjects represented in order to spur social change. If authors could make readers identify with the people they depicted, the thinking went, they might promote action to alleviate economic and social inequality.*
Jeanne Follansbee Quinn.[1]

*Another short cut for the American who is "too busy to read" is supplied by the picture magazines. A picture can show in five seconds what it might take as long as five minutes to read.* Leo Gurko[2]

# Chapter One: The Photobook and 1930s America

In Part One of *Sharecroppers All*, "Rich Man—Poor Land," Arthur Raper tells an anecdote about a sharecropping family in Georgia.[3] He explains how Seab and Kate Johnson always have a gold-framed picture hanging over their bed. Initially it hung in a tenant cabin which they had to leave because the loan company that owned the land failed to provide an advance for food, clothing, mules or fertilizer. Later, it was in a house formerly used by a plantation overseer, but the land had become barren due to the attempt to graze cattle instead of grow cotton. It now resides in an old decaying plantation house in which the Johnsons live in the kitchen and a small adjoining room. It may not be there long, as the absentee owner has grown anxious losing money in the old place and is thinking about selling it, which would force the Johnsons to find a new place to live. This picture is of a blue eyed, golden haired baby, and Kate Johnson does not look

[1] Jeanne Follansbee Quinn, "The Work of Art: Irony and Identification in *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*," *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction, The Turn-of-the-Century American Novel* 34:3 (Summer, 2001), 338-368.

[2] Leo Gurko, *Heroes, Highbrows, and the Popular Mind* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1953), 134.

[3] Arthur F. Raper and Ira De. A. Reid, *Sharecroppers All* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1941). As a note, I mainly refer to this photobook as being authored by Raper, simply because Reid seems to have contributed by providing research, and Raper was the one who chiefly wrote the text and, along with FSA photo-editor Edwin Rosskam, selected the images.

at it and think of what it intimately represents—successions of hardship, death, and pain. Rather, when she sees the photograph she thinks about trivial snippets of her life, people and places safely and indirectly related to these events. As Arthur Raper explains, "like Seab, she has learned to stay alive by shedding the dead part of her load."[4] The inclusion of this description in *Sharecroppers All* reveals Raper's sensitivity to the psychological and emotional impact a photograph can have on someone, as do the FSA photographs that are interspersed within this study of Southern life and economic conditions. The authors felt that the images would help accrue interest in the subject, maintain the reader's attention, and provide visual data that could bring the information to life (as well as substantiate its verity). This combination of the visual with the visually descriptive text is prevalent throughout the work. *Sharecroppers All* is a study involving history, economic, and cultural identity. It is also a photobook, yet it is not analyzed as one within art historical research. In many ways, this reflects the complexity of 1930s American photobooks, as there are many that challenge more traditional categorizations, such as being artistic, documentary or scholastic. They provide the public with specialized material normally confined to a particular academic pool—merging the social sciences with mass media—and they signify an awareness by publishers, universities, and the government that the visual was predominating as a language. In doing so, they actually represent the dynamic moment of the time when the lines of distinction between disciplines, audiences and information were blurred.

*The Photobook as a New Popular Art*

The UNC Press photobooks participated in 1930s American culture in both their format (as photobooks) and in their subject matter. Though they use FSA photographs, they fail to be

[4] Ibid, 13.

associated with a history of the FSA or the artistry of its photographers. Much of the negligence of acknowledgement is because they were not attempts for artists/photographers to show off their work for artistic purposes. True, Bourke-White, Lange and Evans all created their much studied photobooks for purposes of social change, but the photographs are offered in a way where they are individualized, highlighted and selected by each of these photographers. The UNC photobooks, instead, are neither authored by the artists themselves nor chosen by them.[5] Moreover, though any author using illustrations wants the highest possible print quality available, the specific fineness of each reproduction was a poignant issue for Bourke-White, as she had both a hard copy and paperback printed (which widened the buyer's market as well as offer a higher and lower printing quality) and for Lange, who insisted on printing the images from which the book plates would be made herself.[6] Despite the UNC photobooks' failure to be seen in terms of artistic objects or projects, they can be understood as types of art. They represent a type of art specific to 1930s America: a popular art.

How can a photobook be understood as popular art? According to Russel Nye "the growth of a large popular audience, increasingly accessible through the mass media" causes "a demand for

[5] As a note, I do not see whether or not the photographer made the selection as a criterion for a photobook. First off there is the complicated reality that images, plates and layouts are often the decisions of the book publisher, the printing press or even the photo-editor or curator of a particular collection. There may be constrictions on photograph selections at many levels before a selection is made. Secondly, in many of the works that have been considered photobooks by scholars for decades (such as Sherwood Anderson's *Home Town)* the images were not decided upon by the photographers themselves. Books with FSA photographs by more than one photographer are examples of this. Frequently the FSA images were chosen by Edwin Rosskam who, despite this fact, has not been allotted a place of distinction within the history of photobooks that he deserves. One exception would be *12 Million Black Voices*, in which he is credited on the cover and the title page as being responsible for the "photo-direction." Most others would note him in the acknowledgment, if at all. See Sherwood Anderson, *Home Town* (New York: Viking, 1940) and Richard Wright and Edwin Rosskam, *Twelve Million Black Voices: A Folk History of the Negro in the United States* (New York: Viking, 1941).

[6] See Stu Cohen, *The Likes of Us: America in the Eyes of the Farm Security Administration* (Jaffrey, N.H: David R. Godine, Publisher, 2009), xxi.

artists to satisfy its cultural needs," and such could certainly be applied to the climate of the 1930s.[7] He understands popular art as it is distinguished from the categories of elite art and folk art. The former is "produced by known artists within a consciously aesthetic context and by an accepted set of rules," while in the latter, the artist is more anonymous, less concerned with aesthetic contexts and purposes and has a distinct desire to satisfy his/her audience.[8] Nye claims the lines between folk and popular art are easily crossed, but the distinction deals with popular art being aimed at a wider audience. In doing so, it is more self-conscious to meet audience expectations, is aimed at the majority, confirms the expectations of the majority, and is "an unusually sensitive and accurate reflector of the attitudes and concerns of the society for which it is produced."[9] The goal to reach a wide audience, to speak about the concerns of society and the accessibility through mass media are all aspects of the 1930s photobook. Aside from the popular art attributes, Depression-era photobooks also have folk art elements in them. In some cases, there is a literal reference, evident in *Twelve Million Black Voices: A Folk History of the Negro in the United States*, which in its very title alludes to the idea of that particular history being told in a way that speaks to traditional ways of life. There also are instances of photobooks citing folk song lyrics or quoting "common folk" in their own manner of speaking, which is usually improper and broken English. This is evident in *American Exodus*, *You Have Seen Their Faces*, *Sharecroppers All* and *Forty Acres and Steel Mules.* Regarding the latter two, the "folk" presence is manifold, which do more than just refer to sharecroppers speaking in a "local" way,

[7] Russel Nye, "The Popular Arts and the Popular Audience," *The Popular Arts in America*, Edited by William Hammel (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1977), 9. Nye's entire definition of popular art does not completely apply to the photobook, and I am not trying to present it as such. Instead, the qualifications noted are useful in establishing the ways photobooks partake in popular culture.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Nye, 10.

as the authors themselves often open up chapters as if they are telling a story rather than providing facts. *Sharecroppers All* has a chapter entitled "Eat, Mule, Eat the Azaleas," and uses the phrase as the interlocutor for explaining the conditions of the cotton fields for those sharecroppers with only mules and no new tractoring equipment. As a result, azaleas grow wild in between cotton farms and the lack of productive fields leave the sharecropper left with nothing to do but rest in the shade, while his mule "snatches mouthfuls of azalea leaves."[10] The setting is one that Southern "common folk" would understand and identify with, as Raper notes that the cotton field and its environs are "the most typical scene in the South."[11]

A critical part of Nye's definition of a popular art that directly pertains to the UNC photobooks of the 1930s and 1940s is his argument that "because it is of lesser quality, aesthetically, than elite art, historians and critics have tended to neglect [popular arts] as a means of access to an era's—and a society's—values and ideas."[12] Their distinction from aesthetic objects and inclusion in artistic histories is further complicated by their use of FSA photographs. In *"A Staggering Revolution": A Cultural History of Thirties Photography*, John Raeburn has a chapter entitled "FSA Photography in the Aura of Art" in which he discusses the FSA's "ambivalent tacking between being an artistic undertaking and a public relations one, the special circumstances that government patronage imposed on the photographers, and its efforts to secure

[10] Raper and Reid, 146.

[11] Ibid, 145.

[12] Nye, 10. One other factor Nye applies to popular art is that, in speaking to a wide audience, it gives the audience "the verification of an experience already familiar," such as the plot, theme or stereotype of a western or detective novel. Thus, although the scenario Raper presented would be one a Southerner would know, it also would be one a non-Southerner would expect, as the stereotype of the sharecropper in the media—with his mule, his cotton field, and his resting on a hot day—would ring clear with those put forth in fiction by Erskine Caldwell, William Faulkner and John Steinbeck, and well as any subsequent film or theater based off of these authors. This subject matter is treated more thoroughly in Chapter Three: Depression Photobooks and the South.

the approbation of the art world." [13] Raeburn argues that the FSA did have identifications with artistry, and that it was established by a photobook: Archibald MacLeish's *Land of the Free* from 1938.[14] *Land of the Free* is a wry commentary about the crumbling ideology of America being "a land of the free and a home of the brave." Instead, the photobook consists of a long-running "sound track" (as MacLeish called it), and in the foreword he explains it is "the opposite of a book of poems illustrated by photographs" and, instead, "a book of photographs illustrated by a poem."[15] The format allows for both a display of the photograph as an aesthetic object and for the text as, literally, a stream of consciousness. It includes eighty-eight photographs by various FSA photographers, each set against a white background on the right page of a spread, while the left page contains lines of verse written by MacLeish. The photographs do not have a title or artist listed underneath them, which decontexualizes them from their original place and purpose and, instead, treats them as individual works of art. According to Raeburn, it was a breakthrough for the FSA and set new standards for photobooks with FSA images, showing the agency's "capabilities for aesthetic as well as documentary possibilities."[16] He further explains that one critic reacted by saying that the FSA photographers were "artists working for the Resettlement Administration."[17]

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[13] John Raeburn, *"A Staggering Revolution": A Cultural History of Thirties Photography* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006), xii.

[14] Archibald MacLeish, *Land of the Free* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1938).

[15] Ibid, unpaginated.

[16] Raeburn, 176-7.

[17] As cited in Raeburn, 176. The Resettlement Adminsitration (RA) was the New Deal agency established in 1935 to assist urban and rural families in need relocate to government planned communities. The RA was incorporated into the FSA in 1937.

Generally, though, the FSA photographs are not understood within a context that is purely aesthetic, as their project was about recording American life and its landscape and not about creating works of fine art, per se.[18] As suggested by Allan Sekula, "documentary is thought to be art when it transcends its reference to the world" and when "the work can be regarded, first and foremost, as an act of self-expression on the part of the artist."[19] This aspect of artistic expression could be seen as being curtailed by the FSA photographers, who were given shooting scripts by Stryker, detailing what he wanted them to shoot while out on assignment.[20] Moreover, if Stryker did not like the image, finding it to be unclear, unnecessary or repetitive, he would "kill" it by punching a hole in the negative. That said, one would think the freedom for artistic choices were limited regarding both subject matter and style. Most telling is what Roy Stryker, the actual photographers, and the contemporary critics and reviews had to say about the project and the photographs. When asked what the standards were for the FSA photographers and the images and whether or not there were "certain artistic effects that must be achieved" or "certain things that a photograph must say" Stryker stated that the photographers were intelligent people who "had taken the time to check certain facts or investigate, to understand why they were at that place, and what they were going to do."[21] He also goes on to explain that many of the photographers working for him were artists, listing Ben Shahn, Dorothea Lange, Walker Evans

[18] Often noted is Walker Evans as the stellar exception, who left the agency to pursue a career more intimately involved with photography as art, rather than as a type or reporting or photojournalism. There is ample material on this, but a solid foundation for these issues can be found in Alan Trachtenberg, *Reading American Photographs: Images as History, Mathew Brady to Walker Evans* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1989).

[19] See Allan Sekula, "Dismantling Modernism, Reinventing Documentary (Notes on the Politics of Representation)," *Photography: Current Perspectives*, Edited by Jerome Liebling (Rochestor, NY: Light Impressions Corporation, 1978), 236.

[20] Despite this, there is the idea that an element of subjectivity is always implicit in a photograph in some way, as the photographer chose the angle, distance and amount of subject matter within the frame of his/her viewfinder. This discussion is much bigger than the scope of this dissertation, and is not the point of it.

[21] Oral history interview with Roy Emerson Stryker, 1963-1965, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

and John Vachon as examples, and states that "most of our people were interested in art, had some art training, had desires to be artists, perhaps suddenly discovered photography offered them something" and that we picked people who had "curiosity, it was a desire to know, it was the eye to see the significance around them. Very much what a journalist or a good artist is what I looked for."[22] Stryker, in his own words, offers ambiguous comments about the artistic nature of the project. One telling statement comes from FSA photographer Arthur Rothstein who, when asked about what value the FSA project had, said it had many values, as "a historical record of the times," in contributing "a great deal to new ideas in expressing thoughts visually through photographs," and also in assisting in the "recognition of the photograph as an art form." [23] For Rothstein, "this particular project made it quite clear to everybody that photographs have the same value and the same artistic qualities as good drawings, as paintings, as pieces of sculpture."[24]

At the time of the FSA, some critics did refer to the images as a type of art. In 1937, Malcolm Cowley describes the kind of photographs Bourke-White has in her photobook *You Have Seen Their Faces* as belonging to "a new art, one that has to be judged by different standards from those applying to painting or sculpture."[25] Though she did not work for the FSA, she is part of the history of the socially conscious documentary projects of the 1930s and her photobook was,

[22] Ibid.

[23] "Arthur Rothstein Talks with Richard Doud," *Archives of American Art Journal*, 17:1 (1977), 23.

[24] Ibid.

[25] Malcolm Cowley, "Books in Review," *The New Republic* (November 24, 1937), 78.

according to contemporary response, the most influential one made during the Depression.[26] One of the most fascinating discussions about the FSA photographs and the question of their status as art, documentary, or both comes from a review of a show of theirs in 1941 by critic Robert Brown.[27] The venue was at the Museum of Science and Industry in New York City, which in itself speaks to them being viewed outside of an art context, yet, as Linda Gordon points out, they were also published in influential photography magazines such as *U.S. Camera* and exhibited in its annual salon, as well as in numerous exhibitions in "several big-city art museums" even being shown at "the prestigious College Art Association."[28] Brown starts off by explaining that "documentary photography is assuming an increasingly important role, and the current exhibit of Farm Security Administration photographs…is an outstanding example of documentation in the United States," the images are "a record of the times and the people" and one of "the first comprehensive photographic documentation made since Matthew Brady's report on the Civil War."[29] What ensues is a discussion that tends to define the end result (the image) in terms of its practice (the documentary approach), as Brown suggests that "the rapidity with which these [documentary] photographs must be made leaves little time for serious artistic work" and "although the photographer may be a true artist, the negative resulting from swift documentation is rarely artistic, and, if so, tends to achieve this quality more from accident than design."[30] Brown then turns what seems to be a relatively dim prospect about any aesthetic of

[26] Chapter Three details the importance of *You Have Seen Their Faces* and its influence on photobooks produced after it, which is, literally, almost undeniable.

[27] Robert W. Brown, "Rural Face of America," *New York Times* (Jun 29, 1941), XX15.

[28] See Linda Gordon, *Dorothea Lange: A Life Beyond Limits* (New York: W.W.Norton and Company, 2009), 200-203. Most of what she is referring to took place during the years the FSA was active.

[29] Brown.

[30] Ibid.

documentary practice into a possibility for it actually elevating art photography, which paradoxically further conflates the intent, methods and styles of documentary and art photography. He states that "if the average pictorialist with his command of print technique, would forget stylized subject-matter, if he would turn his attention to the vastness of America and its people, as Farm Security Administration photographers have done, the quality of American photography would soar overnight."[31] This quality involves not only "recording the world around us," but doing so in a visually attractive way.[32]

In the 1930s, the role of art in society had cause for contemplation. One of the most important inquiries was put forth by educational philosopher and reformer John Dewey. In 1934 Dewey wrote *Art as Experience*, in which he connected art with the experience of everyday life; or, rather, the way art needed to be acknowledged and experienced within everyday life so society could better itself.[33] Dewey believes that "art is the most effective mode of communication that exists," and that "a subtle, delicate, vivid and responsive art of communication must take possession of the physical machinery of transmission and circulation and breathe life into it."[34] He also states that "the arts which today have most vitality for the average person are the things he does not take to be arts."[35] Dewey's broad definition of art legitimizes an artistic experience through the photobook, which is transmitted and circulated through mass reproduction as a book,

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[31] Ibid.

[32] Ibid.

[33] John Dewey, *Art as Experience* (New York: Putnam, 1934), 6.

[34] Dewey 286. David Goodman, *Radio's Civic Ambition: American Broadcasting and Democracy in the 1930s* (New York: Oxford University Press. 2011), 185.

[35] Dewey, 6.

illustrations or not, and is not likely seen as art in the same way as a painting or sculpture is. Indeed, these issues concern the breakdown of high art concepts. High, of course, is rare, expensive, and physically distanced and controlled in a museum or gallery. For Dewey, it is not the individual object as a work of art but in the process of experiencing it, and what is aesthetic about an experience is the way it is a "manifestation, a record and celebration of the life of a civilization, a means for promoting its development."[36] To clarify, the point here is not so much to make distinctions about the type of "art" the photobook is, rather, Dewey's ideas represent how the climate of the 1930s, a highpoint in the development of modern mass media, fostered and beckoned discussion about art practices, functions and products within American culture, and photobooks extended and created a new type of art experience. After all, a photobook is a manifestation of the modern experience of mass technology, and the Depression-era photobooks certainly attempted to record American life with the hope of improving it. More specifically for the UNC photobooks is the way they represent local communities, Southerners speaking about their lives and experiences of the South, as well as the need for changes in Southern economy and ideologies. Thus, the experience became even more "everyday" as it spoke to the "everyday" or more and different kinds of people.

As David Goodman explains, for Dewey, local communities need to be revived, and through the communication of the arts they can be in touch with the larger world and be less remote, yet still maintain their own sense of being "local."[37] Arthur Raper was born on a farm in Davidson County, North Carolina. Ira De Augustine Reid was born in Clifton Forge, Virginia, and was the

[36] Dewey, 326.

[37] See Goodman, 185.

son of a Baptist minister. Herman Clarence Nixon was born in Merrellton, Alabama and his father was a landowner and country store proprietor. All three UNC photobook authors grew up experiencing and knowing the South, and all three studied and taught within the South at various points in their lives. It wasn't just a research topic to them, but a part of their lives, and they cared about people who lived and worked there.

Continuing into 1940s the discussion of art and culture expanded. American writer and literary critic Alfred Kazin wrote a collection of essays about prose writing from 1890 to 1940 and its impact on society. His work was compiled as *On Native Grounds: An Interpretation of Modern American Prose Literature* (1942), and in it he viewed the photobook as a work of literary art.[38] He describes a new type of literature that is documentary, nationally introspective, and very much bound to the language and presence of photography. He explains, "the two great associations of this literature of social description—the New Deal and the camera—help to illuminate its character in this respect," and he continues, "this new literature symbolized the effort of the inquiring mind, living in a period when the New Deal represented all the manifold adjustments of crisis government, to approach the problem of democratic survival."[39] Kazin emphasizes that this new genre provided "an example of a new social consciousness in America whose greatest distinction was the very fact of that consciousness in itself, the sense of a grim and steady awareness rather than of great comprehension." [40] In this respect none of the devices the documentary and travel reporters used is so significant as their reliance upon the camera. He

[38] Alfred Kazin, *On Native Grounds: An Interpretation of Modern American Prose Literature* (New York: Reynal & Hitchcock, 1942), 490-1.

[39] Ibid, 492.

[40] Ibid, 493.

further emphasizes that this is the case with photobooks, which he saw as examples of this new American documentary mode.

In his discussion, he lists the seminal publications by the celebrated photographers Margaret Bourke-White, Dorothea Lange and Walker Evans, noting that "the words and pictures were not only mutually indispensable, a kind of commentary upon each other, but curiously interchangeable."[41] This reinforces the contemporary way of defining photobooks, as by 1942, the time of Kazin's study, they are still understood with regard to an equal function of images and text. American photobooks of the 1930s could be understood, then, as being both a novel type of literature and experience for feeling connected to world issues. Since the photobooks that Kazin discusses are mainly those from the Depression and, as noted, those authored by well-known writers and photographers of the time, he excludes those photobooks that lack such celebrity. An amendment to this exclusion is apparent in the work of William Stott, who wrote one of the first comprehensive studies of documentary expression in 1930s America.[42] Stott believes that the primary expression of the time was "fiction's opposite" and devotes an entire chapter to what he calls "the documentary book."[43] The documentary book, he explains, involves using "words and photographs to describe social conditions," and these literally stand as his understanding of its defining characteristics: the use of photographs with text, bound as a book, to discuss a topic about society based upon historical facts and accounts.[44] Stott proves his claim that "human interest pictures were abundant in the books of the thirties," by providing an

[41] Ibid, 489.

[42] William Stott, *Documentary Expression and Thirties America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973).

[43] See Stott, Chapter 12, "The Documentary Book," 211-237.

[44] Stott, 211.

impressive and exhaustive list of examples.[45] To date, his study is one of the most remarkable and thorough examinations of 1930s American cultural products concerning non-fictional topics and research.[46] His discussion covers a variety of media while trying to define the concept of the documentary book during that time period, identifying its precedents in documentary film, early social reform projects and publications, and photo-essays of the popular pictorial magazines.[47] Stott expands Kazin's concept of photobooks as types of literary art and moves them into the arena of popular culture. In doing so, he not only recognizes the way there was a dynamic interaction amongst the various media during the Depression, influencing and working with each other, but he opens up possibilities for seeing the various types of photobooks that existed at this critical moment in its history. In addition to the same group of FSA photobooks that Kazin lists—which are still used as the main case studies for this genre in 1930s and 1940s America—several of the photobooks he mentions are confronted and discussed in the present study. For example, he cites the textbook *American Economic Life and the Means of its Improvement* (1925), the popular bestseller *American Procession: American Life since 1860 in Photographs* (1933), and some of the earlier UNC books about rural mountain life, Charles Morrow Wilson's *Backwoods America* (1934) and Murial Earley Sheppard's *Cabins in the Laurel* (1935).[48] One of the photobooks Stott discusses that Kazin omitted is *Forty Acres and Steel Mules*. He feels it

[45] Stott, 212-3.

[46] One of the most recent studies paralleling Stott's discussion about 1930s America and its different types of contemporaneous expression and commentary is Morris Dickstein, *Dancing in the Dark: A Cultural History of the Great Depression* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2009).

[47] Each of these topics is broached later in this chapter.

[48] Rexford G. Tugwell, Thomas Munro and Roy E. Stryker, *American Economic Life and the Means of its Improvement* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1925); *American Procession: American Life since 1860 in Photographs*, Assembled by Agnes Rogers, Commentary by Frederick Lewis Allen (New York: Harper, 1933); Charles Morrow Wilson, *Backwoods America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1934); and Murial Earley Sheppard, *Cabins in the Laurel*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1935).

deserves mention because it treats the subject of Southern agriculture "without emotionalism and oversimplification."[49] By including works that were prominent and known by the public, no matter the notoriety of the author or artist, he understands the photobook as a part of society, just as Dewey and Kazin had emphasized before him, and as a type of popular art that Nye would later define. Photobooks are, therefore, not just an offshoot of the history of art or photography, or a new genre of literature that is documentary based and includes photographs, or a means of investigating and understanding society and history. Rather, they are an amalgamation of these elements, a synergy of 1930s American culture.

*The Photobook and Visual Literacy*

It is important to consider the way photobooks would have been received by (and fit within) the visual literacy of 1930s America, when there was a multi-media framework of movie theaters, libraries, newsstands and classrooms (figs. 1, 2 & 3). It is difficult to assess the relationship between or domination of visual and written media at the time. For example, surveys in *Fortune* magazine in 1937 and 1938 "found radio to be the nation's most popular pastime, edging out movie going and far surpassing reading."[50] Yet, it seems ironic that such surveys operated through print bound products, and particularly at a time when pictorial magazines and pocketbooks were on the rise, newspapers were increasingly including images, and libraries were heavily visited, if not for the access to the news and information they provided, for their shelter and place of refuge. Moreover, regarding reading, there are several difficulties in determining their trends in the 1930s, as surveys done about it differed greatly. Helen Damon-Moore and Carl

[49] Stott, 223.

[50] David E. Kyvig, *Daily Life in the United States, 1920-1939: Decades of Promise and Pain*, Daily Life Through History Series (Wesport, CT:Greenwood Press, 2002), 75.

F. Kaestle explain that while local studies at the time "vary in quality and are limited by their necessarily small and diverse samples," national studies "are difficult to compare because the questions they pose about reading change continually." [51] They conclude that "surveys of reading habits sometimes suffer from the conscious or unconscious biases of the groups conducting the research," since "what people actually read is the result not only of their interests but also of the accessibility and readability of reading materials…studies of reading interests cannot be taken as evidence of actual reading."[52] While this fails to provide information about readership, it does illustrate the complexities of assessing Depression-era reading in general and elucidates that researchers approached their studies and surveys already understanding existing distinctions between local and national trends, group biases and the economic factors with regard to access to reading material.[53] What can be said is that Americans were participating in the consumption of all types of media and were interested in the variety of information accessible at the time. According to Rita Barnard, "the very term 'mass culture' dates from the thirties, emerging out of the decade's earnest discussions of the new electronic media and the rise of 'mass societies'."[54] The crash of the stock market, the physical devastation to the prairie lands and the Great Plains, the resultant homelessness, unemployment and (perhaps most damaging) the threatened spirits of the people demanded an investigation of society that explained not just the "hows" but the

[51] Helen Damon-Moore and Carl F. Kaestle, "Surveying American Readers," in Carl F. Kaestle, Helen Damon-Moore, Lawrence C. Stedman, Katherine Tinsley, and William Vance Trollinger Jr., *Literacy in the United States*: *Readers and Reading since 1880* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 180;182.

[52] Ibid.

[53] An example of how reading studies during this period usually focus on a specific group is evident in the work of Michael Denning, who focuses on the proletarian, left-leaning demographic. See Michael Denning, *The Cultural Front: The Laboring of American Culture in the Twentieth Century* (London: Verso, 1997).

[54] Rita Barnard, *The Great Depression and the Culture of Abundance: Kenneth Fearing, Nathanael West, and Mass Culture in the 1930s* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 5-6.

"whys" of what happened. The tools and venues for a social study of America were varied and seemingly vast. As Richard Pells clarifies, "the cultural climate of the 1930s was shifting inexorably from a dependence on words and sentences to a preference for catch phrases and visual metaphors," and that "the eyes and ears" of the public need to be engaged "as well as its mind."[55]

Indeed, the experience of mass media, its new products (such as the photobooks) and the shifts in quality and frequency of photographic images changed people's quality and expectations of life as well. Even in its early stages, mass culture interrupted the logic and regularity of a print culture, paralleling a moment of media change visible in the Depression-era. In his 1846 poem "Illustrated Books and Newspapers," William Wordsworth laments what he deems a decline in culture due to growing presence of visual information.[56] He writes that discourse and printing were evidence of success and progress, but that now there is a return to that which belongs to children or even early humans; namely, the "primitive" act of drawing. He warns the reader to "avaunt this vile abuse of pictured page" in order to "keep us from a lower stage."[57] This awareness of the ubiquity of images escalates with the advent of pictorial magazines that spring up in the 1930s. As Fred Allen explains, "everything is for the eye these days—'Life,' 'Look,' the pictures business [sic]," and echoing Wordsworth's skepticism, he continues, "the next generation will have eyeballs as big as cantaloupes and no brain at all."[58] Whether the public

[55] Richard H. Pells, *Radical Visions and American Dreams: Culture and Social Thought in the Depression Years* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 268.

[56] *The Complete Poetical Works of William Wordsworth*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1911), 246.

[57] Ibid.

[58] As quoted in John Crosby, *Out of the Blue* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1952), 33.

loved this new visual world or the critics lamented its mundanity, the impact of the change in communication was undeniable. This is evident in statement made by Bertolt Brecht in 1926 in which, when asked about the books from the previous year he found most impressive, he provided a list that favored photographic books.[59] Walter Benjamin echoed Brecht's awareness of the ubiquity of photographs alongside text and as communicators of new or current events in his essay "A Short History of Photography" from 1931.[60] After using a nineteenth century photograph to introduce and explain the novel experience of viewing one, he spends most of the essay referencing images from photobooks and periodicals. Though they have different subject matter (macroscopic studies, street scenes and portraits), they represent a change in seeing and experiencing images, as well as the prominence of such media at the time. His comments not only establish the way photographs were associated with being found in print matter, but that the photobook was already being referenced within the history of photography.

*The Photobook as a Beacon of Difference*

It is important to consider the way the photobook offered an alternative venue for current events and contemporary topics. Most of the dissemination of information in 1930s mass media was controlled by the newspapers, pictorial magazines and radio programs, which meant that most of the information ultimately came from a few sources that controlled some or all of these channels. According to Michael Stamm, "as American culture became increasingly a mass culture in the

[59] As explained and cited in Uecker, 469.

[60] Walter Benjamin, "A Short History of Photography," *Classic Essays in Photography*, Edited by Alan Trachtenberg (New Haven, CT: Leete's Island Books, 1980), 207. In addition to Brecht and Benjamin, the third seminal writer on mass culture is Siegfried Kracaur, who saw photography in magazines and newspapers, and bestselling books, as capitalist modes of production damaging to any actual meaning of the things depicted or information communicated. See *Siegfried Kracauer's American Writings: Essays on Film and Popular Culture***,** Edited by Johannes von Moltke and Kristy Rawson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012**).**

1930s through the press and radio, corporations developed what many saw as 'new empires' that used both media to produce, disseminate, and sell that culture."[61] Ronald Evans reiterates this, claiming the 1930s and 1940s was an era in which "the media was generally in bed with industrialists" and "the press had to watch what it printed."[62] The photographs used within the press, then, could further make any controlled views seem more real, believable, and valid. This troubled art critic Elizabeth McCausland who, in 1939, noted the problem of media control and, in explaining why photobooks were necessary to provide additional voices within mass media, stated that "the opportunities for publishing honest photographs of present-day life in magazines or newspapers are not many; a Hearst press is not the only censor of truth."[63] Indeed, William Randolph Hearst was one of the dominating voices in controlling what people learned about the world s/he lives in. At this time, most of the newspaper moguls purchased radio stations as well, limiting the variety of points of view available to the public. Thus, the venue of an academic press allowed for a type of freedom in discussing sensitive social topics.

Photobooks, therefore, could bring issues to light that would, perhaps, remain hidden. For example, in the late nineteenth century Hearst was "denigrating African-Americans in 'darky' cartoons and jokes."[64] Moreover, in his *San Francisco Examiner*, an article was published entitled "Let the South Alone in Handling the Negro Question" that, according to Ellen Gruber Garvey, "gives readers reason to assume that his paper will side with Southern lynch mobs and

[61] Michael Stamm**,** *Sound Business: Newspapers, Radio, and the Politics of New* Media (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 62.

[62] Ronald W. Evans, *This Happened in America: Harold Rugg and the Censure of the Social Studies* (Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing, 2007), 145.

[63] Elizabeth McCausland, "Documentary Photography," *Photo Notes* (January 1939).

[64] David Nasaw, *The Chief: The Life of William Randolph Hearst* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2000), 106.

disenfranchisers." [65] The UNC Press, on the contrary, was a major center of African American studies that, in 1933, published Arthur F. Raper's, *The Tragedy of Lynching* which, as Joel Williamson points out, was "the only close study of lynching that has been done in the last two generations."[66] In *Sharecroppers All*, Raper continues the discussion of lynching and throughout the photobook provides information about race relations in the South and the need to eradicate racism.[67] Moreover, there are numerous photographs of African Americans being depicted as workers and legitimate members of society worthy of equal wages and consideration.[68] In a chapter entitled "Negro Worker's Dilemma," there is a plate with a photograph of an African American man plowing the land (fig. 4). He is barefoot and stands behind a horse in a vast field of crops. We do not see his face, but get a sense of the physical intensity of his labor and force of his action as dirt clouds arise behind him. The caption under the image states "Lest we Southerners forget—how fresh dirt feels to bare feet." On the verso of the plate is a photograph of two white men inspecting a horse's teeth; they are central in the composition and occupy most of the pictorial plane (fig. 5). The caption under this image states "Lest we Southerners forget—how to tell a horse's age." By repeating the phrase, a connection is made between the two images, unifying all the men (despite the color of their skin) as Southerners with the same

[65] Ellen Gruber Garvey, *Writing with Scissors: American Scrapbooks from the Civil War to the Harlem Renaissance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 155.

[66] Joel Williamson, *The Crucible of Race: Black-White Relations in the. American South Since Emancipation*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), 490; Arthur F. Raper, *The Tragedy of Lynching* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1933).

[67] As previously noted, this photobook is co-authored by African American sociologist Ira de Augustine Reid, which in itself is meaningful, as the UNC Press not only allowed for representation of the South by Southerners, but minority groups by themselves.

[68] In this photobook, the FSA photographer's name is listed under each image. This study is not about analyzing the style or subject matter of each photographer, but rather looking at the composite images with relation to the text. Within FSA scholarship, there are discussions about which photographers focus on different ethnicities and how they depict them. A fine case study o this topic is Sally Stein, "Passing Likeness: Dorothea Lange's Migrant Mother and the Paradox of Iconicity," *Only Skin Deep: Changing Visions of the American Self*, Edited by Coco Fusco and Brian Wallis (New York: International Center of Photography, 2003), 533-544.

traditions and realities of Southern farm living. Moreover, though the photobook does not state this, the phrase "Lest we not forget" is actually a refrain repeated throughout Rudyard Kipling's poem "Recessional" (1897), which is about the abuses and inevitable downfall of British imperial power. Thus, an analogy is established between corrupt power structures of the past and the present, now set on a Southern stage.

The UNC photobooks operate as a meeting ground of the popular and the academic, the folk and the national, and of the technologies of photography and printing with the media trends of a photo essay style of repeating captions to connect a series of images. They also merge the public and the private, as they connect to their readers on a more intimate level. Although the "we" of the repeated phrase unites the men, there is also an implication that the reader is also involved, that the problem of race and economic issues is not, in fact, specific to a certain demographic alone but that it is one of national concern, action and involvement. The UNC photobooks go beyond bringing up or sensationalizing a topic to trying to provide a complete picture of the intellectual, psychological and cultural development of these issues about American life. By exposing topics censored by media moguls, they expand a system of relations and include political propositions about changing society, providing social science statistics with platforms for betterment. Nixon, upon reviewing the images for *Forty Acres and Steel Mules*, wrote to Couch, explaining that he is glad so many photographs will be used in the book, as he wanted to reach "every audience" when discussing Southern problems, conditions and trends.[69] Whether or not the photobooks were read by a mass audience, attempts were made to reach one. He then connects this to an anecdote about a speech he had just made at a high school "in an over-cut

[69] Nixon to Couch, March 3, 1938, #40073, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

region which no longer knew prosperity."[70] While speaking, Nixon "counted at least six barefoot boys"; it was the middle of February.[71] The photographs gave faces to the predicaments Nixon discussed and provided a more human element to the more academic discourse. To that end, these photobooks participate in the visual culture of the 1930s, so critical in establishing new outlets of information at a time where there were few. Even President Roosevelt was concerned about these strongholds and the fact that "newspapers were perhaps 'the only book' people read daily."[72] One way of fostering interest in alternative sources for reading about current events and issues is the inclusion of imagery.

*The Lure of the Image*

The photobook came out of a tradition of having images help provide information about current events and news. The occasion of encountering photographs alongside text became an increasingly normal part of the reading experience in the 1930s. This is evident in the newspapers, which, themselves, had grown significantly across the nation since the mid 1920s (due, for the most part, to the zeal of pioneers such as William Randolph Hearst, Joseph Pulitzer and E.W. Scripps).[73] The newspapers started including pictorial supplements as special features to the news. Hearst noted their popularity and the need for improved image quality early on in his career, stating that in his own papers "it is a positive insult to our readers to set before them

[70] Ibid.

[71] Ibid.

[72] For more on this, as well as the relationship between radio stations and newspapers, see Betty Houchin Winfield, *FDR and the News Media* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1990), 232.

[73] For more on this, see George H. Douglas, *The Golden Age of the Newspaper* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1999).

pictures of repulse deformity."[74] This "deformity" of reproduction quality was to change by the 1930s, as halftone printing had gradually shifted away from using the screen or letterset processes of the nineteenth century to the rotogravure printing of the twentieth century, which allowed for a high speed, quality reproduction on a variety of paper stock. Indeed, people enjoyed their 'pictures,' verified by a 1932 a Gallup *Survey of Reader Interest in Various Sections of Sunday Newspapers to Determine the Relative Value of Rotogravure as an Advertising Medium* which "found that rotogravures were the most widely read sections of the paper and that advertisements there were three times more likely to be seen by readers than in any other section."[75] Authors trying to engage readers, then, would improve their chances by including images.[76] Upon reviewing the text for *Forty Acres and Steel Mules,* Anne T. Paine, editor at the UNC Press, stated that "Nixon, like the cheese in the 'Farmer in the Dell,' can stand alone. I think, however, that pictures would add to its interest and sales."[77] Publishers, too, were aware of the appeal of imagery.

The newspaper phenomenon of incorporating special pictorial supplements was not that of America alone, stemming initially from Europe. European newspapers not only had a plethora of

[74] Nasaw, 55.

[75] "The Rotogravure Process and the Use of Pictorials in Newspapers," *The Library of Congress American Memory Home,* http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/collections/rotogravures/rotoprocess.html. The Gallup poll in itself reflects culture's self interest at the time; founded in 1935 by George Gallup under the auspice of the American Institute of Public Opinion, polls were regularly conducted to being to light the public's attitude on social, political and economic issues of the day. See *The Gallup Poll*: *Public Opinion, 1935-71,* Volume 1, *1935-1948,* Volume 2, *1949-58,* Volume 3, *1959-71,* Edited by George E. Gallup (New York: Random House, 1972).

[76] For a discussion about the way technological advancements fostered a new, well-received place for imagery within the modern world and its products, see Terry Smith, *Making the Modern. Industry, Art and Design in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993).

[77] Alice T. Paine, note to William T. Couch, January or February, 1938, #40073, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

supplements, but ones that eventually were sold on their own and would evolve into pictorial magazines.[78] One of the earliest and most popular of these was *Vu* (founded in 1928), a weekly publication that was bound and large-scale with rotogravure illustrations. It was a powerful model and catalyst for America's first large-scale photographically illustrated magazine, *Life*, which was purchased and revamped in 1936 by Henry Luce (it was originally founded in 1883).[79] *Vu* set out to be a "beautiful ongoing film" that would "provide its readers with the same kind of experience as the cinema newsreels watched by millions of people each week."[80] The newsreel was another popular form of media that familiarized the public with the "visual package" of both text and image, and Luce was interested in translating that into print form, much like *Vu. Life* helped shape American national identity, filled with photo-essays—and bold advertisements—it reflected American interests in news and entertainment, and helped promote and authorize photography as a contemporary language.[81] From its first issue on November 23, 1936, the magazine was an instant success and it sold more than five million copies every week. Aside from *Life*, Luce was also was responsible for the "March of Time" newsreels, which he

[78] In Europe, some of the newspapers that were regularly using photographs in the early 1920s included the *Berliner illustrirte Zeitung* (founded in 1891), the *Illustrated London News* (1842), and *L'Illustration* (1843). These led the way for a barrage of many others supplements and magazines in both Europe and America within a decade or so, such as the *Zürche illustrierte* (1925), *Match* (1926), *Vu* (1928), *Regards* (1931/32), *Weekly Illustrated* (1934), *Life* (1936), *Lilliput* (1937), *Look* (1937), and *Picture Post* (1938).

[79] Condé Nast photographer George Hoyningen-Huene recalled that "Henry Luce admitted that he was so impressed that he really started *Life* inspired by *Vu*, except that, of course, *Life* was printed on coated paper, had color and was a much higher-class magazine, more expensive than Vu." From an Interview with George Hoyningen-Huene, completed under the auspices of the Oral History Program, University of California, Los Angeles, 1967.

[80] Michel Frizot and Cédric de Veigy, *Vu: The Story of a Magazine that Made an Era* (Thames and Hudson, 2009).

[81] A good source for looking at a variety of aspects about the magazine, including essays about its popularity, political and social views, dealings with race and class, and its relationship with advertising, see *Looking at Life Magazine*, Edited by Erika Doss, (Washington, D.C. and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2001).

identified as "a new kind of pictorial journalism."[82] The wildly popular and extensively seen reels—being a take-off of the 1931 radio show of the same name (which itself was an extension of *Time*, the weekly news digest he co-founded in 1923)—are critical beyond their place in documentary cinema or film history in that they included title pages with blocks of text on them despite their not being part of the silent era. Thus, on the screen, images and text were parts of a whole project that had to do with communicating news-related or non-fictional information (fig. 6). In his prospectus for *Life* magazine, Luce explains that although pictures have become "a dynamic power" that people both demand and get, they are rarely "pictorially well-informed," so his predominantly image-based magazine will also have "text features" that will "touch on news events which the camera failed to cover, or covered poorly." [83] *Life* will "give its readers a sense of what pictures are all about, what they add up to, and how in various ways they have contributed to an understanding of the contemporary world."[84] Luce proposed that *Life* would be the biggest and most vividly coherent "picture show on earth" and, along with the newsreels, it was critical in forming a type of visual reading for the public, something that will greatly affect its reception of photobooks.

It is important to consider what Luce hit upon in his prospectus: the problem of text and images either operating succinctly or creating a greater sense of confusion. Indeed, there was an awareness at the time of this new format, as well as attempts at clarifying what it was. A handful of texts appeared from the late 1930s throughout (and shortly beyond) the 1940s that tried to

[82] For the most recent and comprehensive survey on Luce and his effect on photojournalism in general, see Alan Brinkley, *The Publisher: Henry Luce and His American Century* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010).

[83] Blake Wilson, "'The Show-Book of the World': Henry Luce's Life Magazine Prospectus," *The New York Times*, April 23, 2010.

[84] Ibid.

provide definitions and instructions for what were inconsistently and variably called "picture stories within textual stories," "a picture-text combo," "illustrated books," "true picture books," "photo-essays" or "a text and camera picture."[85] One of the earliest ones is Laura Vitray's *Pictorial Journalism* (1939), which explained how newspapers used to use "word pictures" and that photographs are no longer just "illustrative ornament," but "precise, economical, and effective *reporting* of human events."[86] Rather astutely, she continues, "it once took columns of skillful writing to describe the gaiety and elegance of a social occasion, the misery and suffering entailed by a foreign war, the swift beauty of a sport combat. Now a few inches of halftone on ordinary newsprint tell us the story."[87] This merger of writing and photography exemplified how the 1930s was, according to Morris Dickstein, "a period when journalism and art grew closely intertwined." [88] He additionally moreover credits Luce and his employees for creating "a new kind of journalism" and "a new genre of text-picture books."[89] Again, the photobook both participates and expands these textual and visual dynamics.

Films were another Depression-era media that were used in documentary projects and that contained both text and images. The concept of the documentary actually stems from John

[85] Examples of this include *LOOK* magazine's *The Technique of the Picture Story* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1945), which corresponded with one of the first course offerings for the genre, taking place at New York University, John R. Whiting, *Photography is a Language* (Chicago: Ziff-Davis Publishing Company, 1946), Stanley E. Kalish and Clifton C. Edom, *Picture Editing* (New York: Rinehart and Co., 1951) and Wilson Hicks, *Words and Pictures: An Introduction to Photojournalism* (New York, Harper & Brothers, 1952).

[86] Laura Vitray, John Mills Jr., and Roscoe Ellard, *Pictorial Journalism* (New York and London: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1939), 3.

[87] Ibid, 4. She further declares that news reporters and agencies need to utilize photographs, as the "modern mind" has a demand for the "instantaneous" made possible by the development of modern photographic and engraving processes.

[88] Dickstein, 95.

[89] Ibid.

Grierson, a sociologist and filmmaker who coined the term when describing Robert Flaherty's 1926 film *Moana,* which depicted Polynesian life in a factual way.[90] Stott notes that Grierson had come to America in 1924 to study the effect of mass media on public opinion.[91] This is important in understanding how the documentary goes beyond a style or methodology about factuality and objectivity or a topic concerning society, but could be viewed as participating in the way technologies both observe life and communicate with a given popular culture. In Depression-era America, documentary films did not tend to be shown to in mainstream cinemas to a wide audience and instead resided within the arenas of artistic experiments, independent projects, and/or left-wing agendas.[92] Despite this, it was a promising way of speaking to the public and, if the films could be enticing and get play time in movie theaters, films could help inform and educate Americans, just like the FSA photographs. Indeed, the government could use film to publicize and reaffirm their New Deal efforts, and it is through Pare Lorentz that this became manifest.[93]

Lorentz was a West Virginian who had come to film by way of being a film critic and columnist for various New York City papers and a supporter of FDR. In 1934 he made a photobook

[90] The topic of documentary and its relationship with early film practices, particularly those that are anthropologically informed, is a heavily trodden path of scholarship. This study is not ignoring the vastness of the topic, which is far too much to cover in full here (and is not the goal of this project). Rather, the reference to documentary films is crucial for recognizing the media network in which the photobook is a part of. For a reliable survey of, and introduction to, the history of documentary film, see Jack C. Ellis and Betsy A. McLane, *A New History of Documentary Film* (New York: Continuum, 2006).

[91] Stott, 9.

[92] For more on this, see Russell Campbell, "Radical Documentary in the United States," *Show Us Life: Toward a History and Aesthetics of the Committed Documentary*, Edited by Thomas Waugh (Metuschen, NJ: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1984) and Richard M. Barsam, *Non-Fiction Film: A Critical History* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1973).

[93] One of the first seminal studies on Lorentz is Robert L. Snyder, *Pare Lorentz and the Documentary Film* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press 1968).

celebrating the first year of the president: *The Roosevelt Year* (fig. 7).[94] As Lorentz explains, "I would collect news photographs and do a picture book in the form of a newsreel with large captions at the top and concise news paragraphs alongside the big pictures."[95] He initially wanted to make a movie about, as he put it, "the tragic events that were going on in our country, including the foreclosure on homes and dispossession of farms, the failure of banks, and the migrants from both industry and farms riding the freight trains," but he couldn't get proper funding for the project.[96] Lorentz's predicament of choosing a format for his vision, and the way it was translatable in word and image as a movie, newsreel and photobook illustrates the dynamism of 1930s mass media. Commenting on this time period in American history, Warren Susman explains that "there is a special sense in which the idea [of culture] became widespread" and "what had been discovered was the 'inescapable interrelatedness…of things'" [97] American culture was, then, understood though and exemplified in its media products, content, and access to a popular audience. Accordingly, he adds that "all the things that a group of people inhabiting a common geographical area do, the ways they do things and the ways they think and feel about things, their material tools and their values and symbols" refer back to a shared cultural moment.[98]

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[94] Pare Lorentz, *The Roosevelt Year* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls Compan , 1934).

[95] Pare Lorentz, *Pare Lorentz, FDR's Moviemaker: Memoirs and Scripts* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1992), 28-9.

[96] Ibid, 28.

[97] Susman here is making assertions based around the statements of sociologist Robert Lynd, who is mentioned within this dissertation with regard to both sociological studies of America and his relation with and influence on Roy Stryker, as detailed in Chapter Four. See Warren I. Susman, *Culture as History: The Transformation of American Society in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 153 and Robert S. Lynd, *Knowledge for What? The Place of the Social Sciences in American Culture* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1939; 1967), 16, 19.

[98] Ibid.

Lorentz's participation in Depression-era culture continued with his employment by the United States Government.[99] In 1935, the Resettlement Administration decided to produce films as a method of getting its message across. As Peter Rollins explains, Tugwell was "interested in using motion picture to bridge the gap between government and the public," so he met with Lorentz, who convinced him that films "good enough technically to bear comparison with commercial film" and "entertaining enough to draw an audience" should be made.[100] Tugwell himself recalls that it was through Flaherty, who was working for the Department of Agriculture at the time, which he was introduced to Lorentz. [101] According to Tugwell had met Flaherty to discuss "the idea of having a motion picture showing what had happened to the soil in the Dust Bowl" and that "the story about that was a very dramatic one. It was the extension of agriculture in a dry-land country where it never should have been extended to;" he further explains that "the Indians had always warned the white men that they shouldn't break the plains."[102] Lorentz undertook this project, which became *The Plow That Broke the Plains* (1936). The film had narration, a musical score, maps, and text set within the moving images of the dried out farmlands. Following this was another film meant to educate and inform the public about the need for soil conservation,

[99] For more on Lorentz and his New Deal projects, see Kevin Starr, *Endangered Dreams*: *The Great Depression in California* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).

[100] Peter Rollins, "Ideology and Film Rhetoric: Three Documentaries of the New Deal Era (1936-1941)," *Hollywood as Historian: American Film in a Cultural Context, Revised Edition*, Edited by Peter C. Rollins (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky,1998), 39. He quotes Lorentz from Snyder, 25.

[101] Oral history interview with Rexford Tugwell, 1965 Jan. 21, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. As a note, I am not entirely clear on the chronology here, as Flaherty was hired the Department of Agriculture to make a movie for the United States Agricultural Adjustment Agency called *The Land*. It eventually came out in 1942, which would make Tugwell's time-frame seem incorrect. Still, what is clear is that the correspondence of these figures speaks to the merger of the government, the arts and the social sciences. Tugwell comes from an academic background, which further expands this meeting ground.

[102] Ibid. This statement also reveals how the film got its title.

relief for sharecropping families in the South and regional planning called *The River* (1937). The film won the "best documentary" category at the 1938 Venice International Film Festival and one reviewer even stated that "Pare Lorenz has done for the United States what Hollywood has done for its glamour girls."[103] According to Peter Rollins "all of the major critics praised the film for its sensitive combination of pictures, words, and music to create an aesthetic 'rhythm which is irresistible, exciting, transparent'."[104] When responding to an accusation that the film was propaganda, Lorentz stated that "if Henry Luce could have his popular March of Time film series shown in theaters around the nation, the United States government deserves to have at least thirty minutes a month to explain in film the major problems which affect the whole country, Republicans and Democrats alike."[105] Again, the media are identifying themselves and their possibilities through references to each other, in this regard as types of image and text vehicles for 1930s expression. The connections, though, are more direct than that. For one thing, Lorentz had assistance from FSA photographers Dorothea Lange and Russell Lee in attaining some of the shots for his films. Secondly, *The River* was also presented as a photobook (fig. 8).[106] In a review of it in the photobook form (discussed alongside *Land of the Free*, which further suggests it was

[103] Rollins, 40.

[104] Ibid.

[105] Ibid.

[106] Pare Lorentz, *The River* (New York: Stackpole Sons, 1938). Aside from stills from the movie and stock photographs from the Ewing Galloway Agency, many of the photographs in the book were taken by Charles Krutch, the chief photographer for the Tennessee Valley Authority's (TVA) Information Division. Krutch was a Tennessee native who had his TVA photographs showcased in an exhibition about their projects at the Museum of Modern Art in May 1941. Moreover, he eventually coauthored his own photobook three years later: R. L. Duffus and Charles Krutch, *The Valley and its People: A Portrait of TVA* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1944). Krutch remains an almost entirely understudied photographer who, particularly as a Southerner, I plan to conduct research on in the future. The only expansive discourse on him is found in Patricia Bernard Ezzell, *TVA Photography: Thirty Years of Life in the Tennessee Valley* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2003). Kate Sampsell-Willmann does mention him in her study on Lewis Hine, as both photographed for the TVA. She claims that his style is more akin to that of Bourke-White, while Hine's correlated more with FSA aesthetics. See Kate Sampsell-Willmann, *Lewis Hine as Social Critic* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2009), 227-9.

seen as a thing in itself and not just as a different version of the movie), Kerker Quinn states that "a new experience is in store for the reader of these heart-stirring albums of America" and that "though originally stationed at opposite sides in the field of communication, poetry and photography have recently been slowly edging toward each other."[107] There was "the actual fusion of the arts" with reportage.[108]

In the preface to the photobook version of *The River*, Lorentz credited John Steinbeck as being one of his major influences; the others were Mark Twain and Lyle Saxon.[109] Steinbeck and Lorentz had actually planned to collaborate on a film based upon the former's novel *In Dubious Battle* (1936). Interestingly enough, the story was an influence for another photobook that never solidified. *The Grapes of Wrath* by John Steinbeck (1939), widely considered to be a masterpiece in American literature, was borne out of a project to create a photobook about migrant Oklahoma farmers in California's Central Valley during the Depression.[110] This project was conceived by photographer Horace Bristol in 1937. Steinbeck's *In Dubious Battle* fueled Bristol's fire and drive. So much so, he called Steinbeck and asked if he'd be interested in writing the text. Steinbeck agreed and the two spent about three months on the project, at which point Bristol said he had enough images (about two or three thousand), but by then Steinbeck decided to turn the

[107] Kerker Quinn, "Book Reviews," *Virginia Quarterly Review* (Summer 1938), 467-70.

[108] Ibid.

[109] Saxon did a photobook on the Mississippi River that is discussed in the next chapter, which is what Lorentz is referring to. See Pare Lorentz, "Preface to 'The River'," *American Anxieties: A Collective Portrait of the 1930s* (revised edition), Edited by Louis Filler (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1993).

[110] The full story of the evolution of the concept, the collaboration between the men and the ultimate breaking away from it by Steinbeck is detailed in Samantha Baskind, "The 'True' Story: LIFE Magazine, Horace Bristol, and John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*," *Steinbeck Studies* 15:2 (Fall 2004), 39-74 and David Roberts, "Travels with Steinbeck," *American Photographer* 22 (March, 1989), 45-51. Also, see John Steinbeck, *The Grapes of Wrath* (New York: Viking, 1939).

material into a novel.[111] This novel had an uncompromising role in informing the American public about the victims of the Depression and in establishing the stereotype and image of the sharecropper in popular culture, being an almost immediate national bestseller and an Academy Award winning film in 1940. The scholarship on *The Grapes of Wrath* infrequently or casually refers to Bristol's idea of producing a photobook. Again, the photobook never happened, but some of Bristol's images were featured in *Life* magazine, accompanied with articles by writers other than Steinbeck.[112] One in particular paralleled Bristol's photographs with film stills from John Ford's *Grapes of Wrath* movie, suggesting that the characters and scenes in the movie were based upon the images.[113] Bristol's other influences were his experience with the farmers themselves, as he and FSA photographer Dorothea Lange visited them together, and the photobook *You Have Seen Their Faces*. All of this highlights the way photobooks are not only of great significance to the understanding of 1930s visual culture, but are critical tools shaping an

[111] Photography was, indeed, an impetus (or at least a conduit) for his novel, as he had spent time in 1936 working on a commission for *The San Francisco News* to write about migrant workers and the agriculture industry in California. These articles turned into the pamphlet-like publication *Their Blood is Strong* that had Lange photographs on the book cover. Moreover, many Lange biographers (Gordon and Spirn) state that her images influenced Steinbeck and refer to the time in 1938 when he spent looking through FSA images prior to publishing *The Grapes of Wrath.* This was, though, when he was already working on his own photobook and had been traveling with Bristol since the winter of 1937. Moreover, they add that magazines asked for Lange photographs when reviewing the film version; heeding the fact that those, compared to Bristol's, were FSA and, thus, free. Lange, for her own photobook, asked Steinbeck to write an introduction and he declined. Whereas the actual photographer most influential on Steinbeck is unclear, what is clear is that Horace Bristol (not mentioned in any of the Lange biographies) has not been given the credit he deserves with regard to both his part in the development of the novel, as well as his role in Depression-era photography, likely due to his being a *Life* magazine photographer and not a member of the FSA. See John Steinbeck, "The Harvest Gypsies," *The San Francisco News* (October 5-12, 1936), John Steinbeck, *Their Blood is Strong* (San Francisco: Simon J. Lubin Society of California, 1938), Anne Whiston Spirn, *Daring to Look*: *Dorothea Lange's Photographs and Reports from the Field* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 75; 320 n.21, and Linda Gordon, *Dorothea Lange: A Life Beyond Limits* (New York: W.W.Norton and Company, 2009), 282; 492n.18.

[112] Neither this nor the following article is authored. See "'The Grapes of Wrath': John Steinbeck writes a major novel about Western migrants," *LIFE*, 6:23 (June 5, 1939), 10-11.

[113] "Speaking of Pictures...These by Life Prove Facts in 'Grapes of Wrath'," *LIFE* 8:8 (February 19, 1940), 66-7.

American national consciousness and affecting changes in other media, such as literature or film.[114]

*Photobook and Consumer Culture of the 1930s*

In a world of photojournalism, illustrated newspapers, newsreels, pictorial magazines and film, how can the photobook survive as a viable—*desirable*—option? When Cousins reviewed Bourke-White and Caldwell's photobook *You Have Seen Their Faces* he stated that "one may be indifferent to the sufferings of others when running across stray items or articles in the newspapers, but it is impossible not to be deeply moved by what is shown here."[115] He, therefore, touches upon an important quality of the photobook as it is differentiated from other visual media. He seems to suggest that the ownership of the images and their stories—as a bound, physical book—triggers a different connection to the owner/reader in being of this format. Newspapers and magazines are temporary, contain multiple kinds of information in them, from current events to entertainment to advertising and often, ultimately, are disposable. This 1935 cartoon from *The New Yorker* highlights the flippant condition of magazines, suggesting that they may not even be read by the owner and customer (fig. 9). As opposed to these forms of information, books are durable. Books concentrate on singular stories or themes (unless they are collections of articles or essays) and therefore have an immediacy when pulling the reader into the problem or topic. A book is a single unit (unless part of a series), is less prone to being tossed out after being read, and has a logical order of presenting information (in a

[114] Vivian C. Sobchack points out that the movie was even seen by some critics as having a documentary quality to it due to its visual simulation of Depression-era photography. See Vivian C. Sobchak, "The Grapes of Wrath (1940): Thematic Emphasis Through Visual Style," *American Quarterly* 31:5 (Winter, 1979), 598.

[115] Cousins, 2.

magazines or newspapers, advertising interrupts reports and stories). As William White explains, "magazines fill momentary needs and provide light entertainment while books become permanent friends."[116] Walter Benjamin also wrote about the poignant experience of books as very different types of media. "Ownership," he explains, "is the most intimate relationship that one can have to objects…Not that they come alive in him [the owner]; it is he who lives in them."[117] Moreover, Susan Sontag, albeit unsure of the efficacy of any particular display medium for emotional images, suggests that books may, indeed, be one of their most successful modes of representation. Sontag claims that "up to a point, the weight and seriousness" of the "most solemn or heart-rendering matter…survive better in a book, where one can look privately, linger over the pictures, without talking."[118]

The objectness of the photobook also allows for its mobility, which is essential to one's experience of the images. For Sontag, the environment in which the reader encounters and contemplates the images is crucial to his/her ingestion of them. She explains that, "in modern society, space reserved for being serious is hard to come by," thus a privately determined space can control mood, lighting, noise, and public access; in short, factors that can foster clarity, thoughtfulness and attention.[119] This is even more so the case for certain photographs she identifies as "emblems of suffering" that "demand the equivalent of a sacred or meditative space

[116] William White, *Library Journal*, Vol. 83 (December 15, 1958), 638.

[117] Walter Benjamin, "Unpacking my Library: A Talk about Book Collecting," *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, Edited by Hannah Arendt and Translated by Harry Zohn (London: Fontana, 1982), 59-60, 63, and 66-67.

[118] Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (New York: Picador, 2003), 121.

[119] Sontag, *Regarding*, 119.

in which to look at them." [120] Indeed, images of emaciated, tired, and hopeless sharecroppers qualify as those "emblems of suffering." Generally, the photographs used in Depression-era photobooks display difficult conditions and tired people, evident in *You Have Seen Their Faces* and *American Exodus*. A review on the latter ended by stating that "whether or not you have read 'The Grapes of Wrath' you will find it hard to forget this material of 'human erosion.'"[121] The author is not only suggesting that images, ultimately, have a more lasting effect than words, but that Lange's photographs of worn away people and land have a particular impact in being unforgettable. When Paine reported to Couch about the photographs for *Forty Acres and Steel Mules*, she exclaimed that she "never saw a group of pictures which contained so many interesting faces," and when glancing over the Nixon manuscript, "it seemed to [her] that it would be unfair to the text to have only pictures showing the depressing aspect of things, but many of the pictures, although they show things as they are, convey an impression of the vitality of the people."[122] By having a range of emotionally charged images, happy or sad, that UNC photobook offered a dynamic alternative to the more depressing and dire depiction of the sharecroppers. Thus, just as books can physically be brought out of a place of chaos into a place of solace, the photographs allow for an analogous experience—of suffering or joy—to psychologically take place within the reader as well.

There was, though, the predicament of buying or investing in anything at a time when the economy was stagnant. It is, therefore, difficult to assess the lure of purchasing actual books

[120] Ibid.

[121] "The New Migration to California," *New York Times* (Dec 24, 1939), 59.

[122] Alice T. Paine, note to William T. Couch, January or February, 1938, #40073, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

(with magazines and newspapers being more affordable). Yet, consumerism persisted despite these hard times. As Ronald Edsforth explains, "even in the depths of the Great Depression…most working people did not give up the dream of a new way of life" and, quoting Warren Susman, states that "many who might have chosen the socialist way went instead with the hopes of the culture of abundance."[123] Even though Carl F. Kaestle and Janice A. Radway suggest that "books were not clearly 'consumed' the way magazines and newspapers were," there was still a persistence in both book production and consumption throughout the Depression.[124] The publishing companies did what they could to keep this consumption alive. According to André Schriffin, "the experience of the 1930s, clearly helped by the general political impetus of society at the time, showed that a very large audience could be engaged with demanding books on political issues that often must have seemed very far from the daily cares of most readers."[125] He also states that "this was a time when many publishers clearly saw it as their mission to reach a large audience through serious work."[126] In a letter to Nixon about *Forty Acres and Steels* Couch reveals both the struggles of publishing companies at the time (particularly non-mainstream or academic ones) and the desire to produce important and engaging work. He also notes that the inclusion of images increases production costs. Couch lamented that "we [UNC Press] are taking a plunge and manufacturing 3,000 copies of your

[123] As quoted in Jean-Christophe Agnew, "Coming Up For Air: Consumer Culture in Historical Perspective," *Consumer Society in American History: A Reader*, Edited by Lawrence B. Glickman (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999), 388.

[124] Carl F. Kaestle and Janice A. Radway, "A Framework for the History of Publishing and Reading in the United States, 1880 - 1940," *A History of the Book in America Vol. 4: Print in Motion: The Expansion of Publishing and Reading in the United States, 1880-1940*, Edited by Janice A. Radway and Carl F. Kaestle (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 11-2.

[125] André Schiffrin, *The Business of Books: How the International Conglomerates Took Over Publishing and Changed the Way We Read* (London, New York: Verso, 2000), 6.

[126] Ibid.

book" and "if the book does not sell we shall be sunk, for "we have put a lot of time, effort, and money into getting it ready, and if the book doesn't make a market for itself we shall not only be surprised and disappointed, but we shall be broke."[127] Still, his hope in making the book known and appealing and his desire to bring its subject matter to the minds and hearts of the public prevails. He explains, "I can't conceive of a book as good as this one failing to sell less than 3,000 copies. I have to admit that I did not expect the book to bring about any revolutionary changes in Southern agriculture, but I think its effect will be better than that of many other volumes that have been published in recent years."[128] For Couch, this was due to both the fineness and presence of the photographs, as well as the academic rigor, yet approachable diction, of the text by Nixon.

A major initiative to get the public to purchase books may have had to do with the idea of reading in the service of democracy that carried over from the 1920s in America.[129] The Progressive era and John Dewey's promotion of education as life-long learning helped shape the public's interest in reading.[130] Since 1920, illiteracy had fallen, schooling improved, and public libraries had grown.[131] An awareness of this and an attempt to change it is visible in a 1922 poster by the National Association of Book Publishers to campaigning the promotion of

[127] Ibid.

[128] Ibid.

[129] For more on the heightened interest in the American dilemma and reading as a part of a civic cultural life, see Joan Shelley Rubin, "Making Meaning: Analysis and Affect in the Study and Practice of Reading," *A History of the Book in America*, 512.

[130] For more on this, see Robert B. Westbrook, *John Dewey and American Democracy* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1991).

[131] As David Kyvig explains, "the 1920 census reported only 2 percent of native whites, 13 percent of non-native whites and 23 percent of native whites to be illiterate," and that "illiteracy fell by nearly half over the next two decades," 197.

bookselling. [132] The poster distributed in February shows an adult male holding a book standing next to a young boy reading a book, looking down at what he is reading (fig. 10) Important is that they are both actively reading, as the man not only holds a book, but has his finger slipped in between the pages holding his place. The text above them states "America's Making Told in BOOKS," and is surrounded by images of important historical figures and events, such as Abraham Lincoln, Daniel Boone, skyscrapers and open land. The parallel of figures suggests that they all are a part of "America's making" since the man and the boy are also participating in history by reading books about America as Americans in order to understand their country and their past. Though the poster could be argued to be propaganda for publishers desperate to keep their businesses and occupations alive, the emphasis on self education is resilient and represents the prominence and responsibility of education at the time.[133]

The 1930s maintained that sense of responsibility to "cultivate" oneself, a sense that is most visible in the literate middle class of America, which would comprise the book buying public in general. As Stephen Recken explains, "to fit in and play a role Americans consulted such diverse forms of literature as guidebooks for living and magazine articles on how to make friends," and such is evident in the phenomenal success of Dale Carnegie's *How to Win Friends and Influence People* (1936).[134] Therefore a photobook, being one of the recent products of communication,

[132] "Progress on Bookselling Promotion," *The Publishers Weekly* (January 14, 1922), 67-8.

[133] Whereas the boy may be directed to read, it is assumed the man is doing so from his own free will, and given his reading practice the boy will be like that man some day.

[134] Stephen L. Recken, "Fitting-In: The Redefinition of Success in the 1930s," *Journal of Popular Culture* (Winter 1993, 27:3), 205-23. Carnegie's book was truly a phenomenon, selling over 750,000 copies in the first year of publication and eventually being the first paperback ever to sell a million copies; it has, as Richard Huber explains, "sold more copies in America, excluding the Bible, textbooks, and manuals, than any other non-fiction book in the twentieth century." See Richard M. Huber, *The American Idea of Success* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1971), 231. For more on the trend of self-help and success books in the thirties, see Irene Taviss Thomson, "From

would be an ideal mode of participating in American consciousness and awareness, particularly at a time of crisis, such as the Depression. The crisis itself, though, poses a problem, as purchasing anything beyond basic necessities in a time of financial upheaval seems decadent, and such makes the purchase of any book with photographic illustrations expensive and, thus, undesirable or unreachable. With that in mind, there were attempts to make photobooks more affordable, as *You Have Seen Their Faces* was featured as a Book-of-the-Month club selection (which would offer it at a lower cost to members), and despite not ultimately being chosen, another photobook, *Roll Jordan Roll* by Julia Peterkin and Doris Ulmann, was submitted to be a club selection.[135]

Indeed, the popularity of books was maintained through the evolution and success of book clubs. Both Book-of-the-Month Club (BOMC) and Literary Guild were established in the mid to late 1920s, but experienced their boom in the 1930s, with high membership lists, huge print runs, and easy accessibility via mail that even extended into those communities that had little literary outlets.[136] Gary Cross calls the clubs an "effort to popularize high culture," and states that "if adults were deficient in formal education, they could catch up by reading the class foundations of

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Conflict to Embedment: The Individual-Society Relationship, 1920-1991," *Sociological Forum* 12:4 (Dec., 1997), 631-658.

[135] Both books were published as large hardcovers and smaller, cheaper trade editions, revealing not just the cognizance of the unemployment and financial loss on the part of Americans, but an attempt to find a way to still have the photobooks reach hands. For more on Peterkin's photobook and the book club, see Susan Millar Williams, *A Devil and a Good Woman, Too: The Lives of Julia Peterkin* (Columbia, SC: Thomas Cooper Library, University of South Carolina Press, 1997), 220.

[136] For more on the book clubs of the 1930s, see Janice Radway, *A Feeling for Books: The Book-of-the-Month Club, Literary Taste, and Middle Class Desire* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), as well as Chapter 3, "Why Do You Disappoint Yourself?: The Early History of the Book-of-the-Month Club" in Joan Shelley Rubin, *The Making of Middle/Brow Culture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), 93-147.

learning at home."[137] This is evident in a poster made by the Work Projects Administration (WPA). The WPA was one of the first U.S. Government programs to support the arts and employ Americans to assist in this effort (and create jobs). Their posters were designed "to publicize exhibits, community activities, theatrical productions, and health and educational programs" in America.[138] This specific poster shows a group of people holding up a sign that says "be KIND TO BOOKS Club [sic]" under which it asks "Are you a member?" (fig.11).[139] Its goal is to encourage reading (and, perhaps, the literal, proper physical treatment of books), and it reveals both the popularity of book clubs and the desire for Americans to participate in cultural activities.

The poster also reveals another component in directing the American public on what to read: advertising. The clubs themselves were advertised with large glossy photographs in magazines such as *Collier's*, which in its very content was about the serialization and reading of novels. They also were present in *Life*, for, as Cross claims, Luce using photographs "to attract middle-class readers for advertising."[140] The BOMC even "selected direct-mailing recipients from college alumni lists," thereby linking itself with educational institutions and the concept of spreading important and valuable (and perhaps even sanctioned?) knowledge.[141] Hearst believed

[137] Gary Cross, *An All-Consuming Century: Why Commercialism Won in Modern America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 120.

[138] This information was provided by the Library of Congress website; see http://www.loc.gov/pictures/collection/wpapos/ and http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2011645392/.

[139] The poster was made somewhere between 1936 and 1940 by the Illinois W.P.A. Art Project.

[140] Ibid.

[141] David Welky, *Everything Was Better in America: Print Culture in the Great Depression* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2008), 152.

images lured all classes, and stated that illustrations do not simply "embellish a page, [they] attract the eye and stimulate the imagination of the lower classes and materially aid the comprehension of an accustomed reader."[142] To that end, photographs, whether as illustrations for a news story or as advertisements, had a familiar and enticing presence in the practice of reading that could engage all levels of society.[143] If the target buyers were the middle-class, then photobooks would conceivably be of interest to them, as they had the appeal of imagery and the content of social responsibility that this demographic wanted to be associated with. It is also no accident that the paperback book became part of the American scene in this decade of Depression. Both the Book-of-the-Month Club and the Literary Guild were established (and flourished) at this time, followed by numerous others, such as The People's Book Club and Doubleday Club. In 1946 John Hutchens wrote that "thanks to the book clubs, the first of which came onto the local scene twenty years ago this April, more Americans are reading more books than have ever read before."[144] Such would, indeed, affect the purchase of books in general, illustrated or not. That said, books with images, though more costly (and, as posited, targeting the middle and upper classes who could afford the purchase), seemed to be more desirable for attaining a more "complete" picture of the subject, in a way that had become commonplace and, perhaps, expected, during the Depression.

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[142] Nasaw, 74-5.

[143] An interesting example lies in another visual expression popular in the 1930s and 1940s in America: the comic book. Jean-Paul Gabilliet suggests that comic books attempted to resemble popular pictorial magazines in their format and, using romance as an example, states that "the publishers adopted the habit of using photographs on their covers instead of drawings in order to attract (or deceive) the buyers of romance pulps." See Jean-Paul Gabilliet, *Of Comics and Men: A Cultural History of American Comic Books*, Translated by Bart Beaty and Nick Nguyen (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2013), 33.

[144] John K. Hutchens, "For Better or Worse, The Book Clubs: Their Organization, Aims, Methods and the Mass Market they have Created," *New York Times* (March 31, 1946) 122.

Another impetus for reading and for buying books involved the fact that people wanted to read about the Depression as it was happening. Indeed, there was an awareness at the time of the role of reading in order to understand contemporary events. A handful of books were published that sought to understand how the Depression would, or did, affect the way information is communicated and received. In 1938, Douglas Waples published *People and Print: Social Aspects of Reading in the Depression*, which sought to identify a correlation between a book's popularity and its promise to alleviate the Depression.[145] The study itself represents the way that there was an effort on the part of the academic community to see and understand conditions about American society in a more hybrid way; just as the UNC books represent a mixture of sociology, documentary, economic and regional studies and, through their photobooks, extend this fusion by including photographs. Waples' reading studies were "thoroughly embedded within a particular historical moment [the American 1930s] that was informed by interdisciplinary impulses and especially influenced by communication studies."[146] Other examples of similar studies include *The Geography of Reading: A Study of the Distribution and Status of Libraries in the United States* (1938) by Louis Round Wilson, which focused on whether geographic locations affects print consumption, and *What Reading Does to People* (1940), by Waples, Bernard Beretson, and Franklyn R. Bradshaw, which sought to identify the desire behind what people read and the social effects of reading.[147] As Alex Baskin explains,

[145] Douglas Waples, *People and Print: Social Aspects of Reading in the Depression* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1938).

[146] As stated in Marta K. Albert and George Kamberelis, "Douglas Waples (1893-1978): Crafting the Well Read Public," *Shaping the Reading Field: The Impact of Early Pioneers, Scientific Research, and Progressive Idea*, Edited by Susan E. Isreal and E.Jennifer Monaghan (Newark, DE: International Reading Association, 2007), 247.

[147] Louis Round Wilson, *The Geography of Reading: A Study of the Distribution and Status of Libraries in the - United States* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1938) and Douglas Waples, Bernard Beretson, and Franklyn R. Bradshaw, *What Reading Does to People* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1940).

"diversion was essential if men were to preserve their sanity in those stressful years," and that although movies and radio offered some diversion from the strains of reality, "reading was, without question, one of the major outlets for one's time and energy."[148] David Kyvig also suggests that "Americans not only could read; they commonly did read in this era. Newspapers, magazines, and advertisements constituted a significant portion but scarcely all of what was being read. Five to nine thousand new books were published each year throughout [the 1920s to the 1940s]."[149] If books persisted as a form of information or entertainment, then photobooks would provide a venue that further spoke to the literacy of the day by adding a visual mode of communication.

*UNC Photobooks as Strategy*

Both *Sharecroppers All* and *Forty Acres and Steel Mules* used FSA photographs, but did so in a way that marked a difference from other Depression-era photobooks that used them. As William Stott notes, one of the critical reasons to consult *Forty Acres and Steel Mules* are the selection of FSA photographs which, "of this kind haven't been much reprinted, but as Nixon's book suggests, they are the backbone of the collection."[150] These are of the kind that, as Stott points out, Edward Steichen refers to as "tweedle dum documents"; those photographs that lack an immediacy of emotion or drama and, instead, show a degree of banality.[151] Stott calls these "non committal records" and uses as an example the fact that there are images of "how cotton was

[148] Douglas Waples, *People and Print: Social Aspects of Reading in the Depression*, Reprint (New York: Arno Press, Inc., 1972).

[149] David E. Kyvig, *Daily Life in the United States, 1920-1940: How Americans Lived Through the "Roaring Twenties" and the Great Depression* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2004), 197.

[150] Stott, 224.

[151] As cited in Stott, 223-4.

raised, hoed, picked, weighed, ginned, shipped."[152] Indeed, by using photographs that seem more unremarkable than remarkable, these photobooks provide exposure to images otherwise unseen, as well as topics unexplored. It also expands the kind of images the public were "reading." In that regard, they add a new dimension to the way FSA photographs are generally viewed and distributed. Aside from those that speak to a particular artistic style, such as the bold, heroic figures of Dorothea Lange or the austere formalism of Walker Evans, FSA imagery is seen as representing the 1930s documentary trend (often photojournalistic in style) of chronicling events in a candid, objective way that arouses public interest. Instead, these "non-committed records" and "tweedle dum documents" within the UNC publications operate as more complicated emblems of social realities, suggesting in their details and lackluster more quiet facts and considerations. They speak of the larger picture by showing that which is rarely illustrated as a part of it. For example, *Forty Acres and Steel Mules* has a chapter on merchants and markets in which there is a plate with six images, depicting seemingly abandoned small towns and people sitting idle within them (fig. 12). Half of these include visible signs on buildings that note whether or not a general store is owned by a plantation and/or lumber or grain companies. The main rubric under the whole selection of images states that "SEVENTY PERCENT OF THE SOUTHERN POPULATION LIVES IN THE COUNTRY OR IN SMALL VILLAGES." Indeed, the photographs seem to be of nothingness. Except for one showing a group of four men sitting on the front porch of a post office, all of them are taken from a distance and, as such, appear almost more as backdrops than anything; if this is a stage, then the actors are not performing, so to speak, and this is exactly the point. Nixon writes elsewhere in the chapter that "many of the country stores are cotton plantation stores and survive because the tenant-

[152] Ibid.

customers can trade nowhere else," that "village commerce was hit early and hard by the depression in one-crop areas, particularly in cotton country," and that "the unbalanced system of trade and agriculture points to a village system which lacks a well-rounded activity."[153] The whole plate, then, reiterates mass emptiness, and by repeating images of that, its impact is made stronger.[154]

The choice of images and their captions was a sensitive one for both Nixon and Raper, as they brought up topics that most publishers avoided. Issues about racism and Southern behavior were problematic to both the South, which reacted defensively and with insult, and to America at large, injured at having its failures and lack of brotherhood and democracy revealed. Raper wasn't concerned with criticism, he just wanted the project out there accessible to the public. In fact, he initially tried to publish the photobook with a commercial publisher but, as Louis Mazzari explains, the UNC Press "was the only press willing to take a chance on a book that was politically to the left of the most progressive of Roosevelt's policies" during a period when "a widespread southern conservative reaction was beginning to turn back many New Deal programs."[155] Raper's desire was not born out of a lack of interest in or reverence for a scholarly press, he just knew about the way the mass media avoided such topics. In a 1937 article he published for the *North American Review,* Raper states that "in press, magazine, radio, and book we find things which are out of harmony with what we've been taught;" thus, he wanted to

[153] Nixon 34; 37; 37.

[154] This layout is typical of this photobook alone and not necessarily representative of other UNC photobooks. One interesting part of the strategy is the way many photographs on a single page echo the multiple images one would see inside of *Life* or *Look*, making it both familiar and engaging to a popular audience.

[155] Mazzari, 178. For examples of the reactions to his thesis, pro and con, see Mazzari 177-185.

provide an alternative that spoke more directly to reality.[156] True, it was difficult to get critical issues published, particularly when moguls like Hearst "sought out Communist and left-leaning types," even eventually shifting the attack to a "focus on alleged radicalism in social studies textbooks."[157] In fact, the topic of the South was so sensitive that both Raper and Nixon were attacked as being Un-American and accused of Communist affiliation and activity due to their involvement with the Southern Conference for Human Welfare (SCHW), an organization formed in 1938 that aimed to create reforms in the South.[158] Moreover, as William Snider explains, the UNC Press was "dedicated to discovering manuscripts that would not otherwise see the light of day," which made it become "a target for those who charged the university with trying to overthrow the old economic order."[159] By revealing "the appalling poverty and ignorance of southern society and the need for uplift… critics hurled the epithet 'communist' at Chapel Hill."[160] The UNC photobooks truly felt an obligation to inform the public about important issues and did so regardless of backlash. In that way, their photobooks are symbols of democracy. They are Americans speaking about America on issues and in ways usually deemed risky and/ inappropriate.

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[156] Arthur Raper, "The South Strains Towards Decency," *North American Review* 243:1 (Spring 1937), 106-22.

[157] Ian Tyrrell, *Historians in Public: The Practice of American History, 1890–1970* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 132.

[158] The SCHW was formed in response to the National Emergency Council's (NEC) infamous report claiming that the South region was "the nation's number one economic problem" because of issues with low industry, income, and public services. For this report, as well as more on the SCHW, see *Confronting Southern Poverty in the Great Depression: "The Report on Economic Conditions of the South" with Related Documents*, Edited and with an introduction by David L. Carlton and Pater A. Coclanis (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's Press, 1996). For more on Raper and Nixon being attacked as Un-American, see Walter Gellhorn, "Report on a Report of the House Committee on Un-American Activities," *Harvard Law Review* 60:8 (Oct., 1947), 1193-1234.

[159] William D. Snider, *Light on the Hill: A History of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 180.

[160] Ibid.

By informing the public about studies and issues on the racial and economic inequities of the South, both Raper and Nixon's photobooks also operated as kinds of textbooks for the public at a time when the texts used by schools about American history and the South were being challenged. In attempting to educate the public, the language and format had to be intelligible. Regarding *Sharecroppers All*, Raper states "we have not neglected specialized studies," but "have often used an episode to convey the meaning of mass statistics" and he proclaims a similar sentiment about his later photobook *Tenants of the Almighty,* explaining that in addition to FSA photographs, he wants "some pictorial statistics and maps, a text on sixth or seventh grade level," something other than "a typical social scientist's study about a rural county for a university audience."[161] Given that Raper wanted to reach the public at large, yet still provide factual information and scientifically based statistics, he had to do so in a way that didn't overwhelm the reader, make the reader feel inadequate, or have the levity of the topic be too aversive. To that end, his strategy was to slowly draw the reader in before providing potentially alarming facts. For example, in the first section of the book, "Rich Land—Poor Man," Raper begins each of its four chapters with a story about a family. His protagonists are Seab and Kate Johnson, an elderly sharecropping couple whose history and daily life experience introduce the reader to larger issues of displacement, poor quality of living, hardship and despair. Interesting is the way he forms a continuum. The discussion of the plantation house they are living in (in only two rooms—the rest are unlivable) leads to a story about the previous owner (Colonel Smith) and his glory and success in the days of plantations, thus providing a background of the old South that serves as a foil to the present. The reference to their lifestyle of ancient tools and lack of proper food and clothing opens up a dialog about Southern production and consumption. The mention

[161] As cited in Mazzari 182; 240-1.

of their children and their families allows for a discussion about present and future generations of Southern poor. These specific stories and characters are then followed up by more generic statistics and realities about "American peasants" or landless families and it is in these sections that Raper "slips in" the sociological data about income, labor, population percentages, taxation, etc. He applies the same methodology to the second section of the book, which is about the plight of the Southern "Negro" and uses an African American man named A. D. to bring up issues about racial inequalities, rural discrimination, and city slums. Eventually, Raper spends the last two sections connecting with the reader, paralleling Southern issues with those that would involve, concern, or relate to the reader. Once again, the photographs attain their efficacy by having their descriptive nature complement the corresponding, "humanizing" narratives provided in the text.

Raper's photobook also has a complex method of presenting images—one that doesn't necessarily correlate with chapter subject immediately. Instead, the readers need to think about why they are where they are and, in doing so, realize the greater connectedness of the themes. The plates within the first chapter are of an old plantation house and a brick smokehouse with bars to keep slaves out, which is noted in the caption (figs. 13 & 14). The former gives a perspective that shows the largess of the structure, as the viewpoint is looking up at it and the porch and lower levels block out any complete view. The loss of the glory it once had is reiterated in the revealed bricks of the post and weathered condition of the stairs and columns, as well as in the analogy with the old massive tree aligned with it, still standing but now covered with moss. The caption notes that it was built more than a century ago. As for the image of the brick smokehouse, it is presented in the center of the frame, allowing for it to be seen in its

entirety: solid, whole, and impenetrable. Accordingly, the caption explains that it "outlasts all plantation buildings, including the owner's dwelling." Indeed, the comments and images speak beyond such literal facts and observations, as what endures is not just this physical structure, but the ideology associated with the brickhouse and its bars, emphasizing difference, exclusion and racism. These are the ghosts of the Old South even though its glory, as the plantation house shows, is gone. The chapter, entitled "Why Bother?" refers to the plantation house as being where Seab resides and the smokehouse being what he thinks about when he ponders about he and his wife's lives, as "slowly it dawns upon Seab that he is a victim of slavery, too [like the "black folk" that previously worked at the plantation], and that there is still an element of something not un-akin to slavery in the rich Delta plantations."[162] A photograph of a sharecropping couple could have been used to reiterate the text but, instead, the images chosen operate in a way that is both referential to the narration and symbolic of the larger visual realities of the South. These structures have come to stand for more than just their original functional purposes, and the selection of photographs help make that clear.

Similarly, in the second chapter, entitled "Cotton Tenancy—Fluid and Fixed," the first photographic plate has two images: one of a tenant house made of rough boards and the other of three feed and flour sacks (fig. 15). Both are rather forgettable, as the house is positioned centrally within a composition that shows neither people nor much of anything else within the small front yard. The three sacks, though made of a pretty decorative fabric, are lined up and occupy the entire composition. Yet, the captions below them point to more than the things themselves. For the house, it states "the galvanized iron roof epitomizes the South's place in the

[162] Raper and Reid, 16.

nation," suggesting a poorly built, unreliable foundation. As is stated in the chapter, "the vast majority of landless families have a very low plane of living [that] is shown by their houses," amongst other things such as their food and, important to the second photograph, their clothes.[163] The caption under the sacks explains that "feed and flour sacks have long been used for shirts and sheets, dresses and diapers by the poorer farm families." It further states that "some milling companies now boost sales by bagging their products in fast colors." Again, by pointing this out the authors are emphasizing the difference in seeing and understanding the function of these products. Whereas the reader may initially see the sacks as playful, quaint emblems of the country, a poor farmer sees them as a source for things beyond merely what is inside them. The avoidance of using aestheticized imagery in favor of the more descriptive is strategic.

The UNC photobooks were designed to speak to the interests of the public, to participate in the emerging visual culture of the 1930s and engage the reader in word and image. They aimed to provide information about the status of America with regards to the upkeep of its fundamental ideals (freedom, liberty and the right for all, equally, to have a quality of life) and to offer proposals for improvement. As Nixon states in *Forty Acres and Steel Mules*, "these suggestions are offered with a hope for constructive change under an enlightened leadership, a leadership devoted to applied democracy and economic democracy."[164] He concludes, "I believe in that leadership and believe it is possible."[165] The personal, political, historical and practical combine with an additional platform of a call to action, and the UNC photobooks can also be seen as

[163] Raper and Reid, 20.

[164] Nixon, vi.

[165] Ibid.

‘toolkits,’ as types of textbooks and forms of media that have challenged the more traditional role of photographs and lucid categories of books.

*We believe that the interests of the southern country demand a separate and independent government … The Union has redeemed a continent to the Christian world … It has developed a population with whom liberty is identical with law, and in training thirty-three States to manhood, has fitted them for the responsibility of independent national life … It has achieved its destiny. Let us achieve ours.*

William Henry Trescot, 1850[1]

*True, there is a regrettable tendency on the part of some Northerners to regard nearly all Southerners as unlettered and provincial persons--the males as addicted to chewing tobacco and profanity, and as acquainted only mildly with cultural matters, and the females as semi-literate and giving to petting.*

Virginius Dabney, 1942[2]

*"What else could you expect? He is a Southerner," came to be a common refrain. And then the South, with its usual sensitiveness, revived with a vengeance the term "North," charging that section with "trying to make the South over."*

Howard Odum, 1948[3]

## Chapter Two: Photobooks and the South

In a small wooden horse-led wagon sits a man next to a woman holding a baby, surrounded by three standing toddlers. The father stares at the camera with a kind, gentle smile, the children look out with curiosity, and the wife has a tired, but not unpleasant, look on her face as she holds her youngest in her arms, wearing a dress that is of the same floral material as the baby's bonnet (fig.1). Under the full page photograph the text reads in capital letters, like a newspaper headline, and states that this is a share-cropper [sic] family near Hazelhurst, Georgia. Between this and the photograph is a quote: "It is false

[1] Michael O'Brien, "The Minds of the South" *New York Times* (March 4, 2011).

[2]. V.D. *Below the Potomac* (New York: Appleton-Century, 1942) 14.

[3] Howard W. Odum, "Social Change in the South," *The Journal of Politics* 10:2 (May, 1948), 252.

to assume that share croppers [sic] and share tenants are humanly hopeless."[4] The family, critically identified as such, is looking at us, and we are being told that they represent hope, rather than defeat. Importantly, it is a hope that they, as fellow humans and family members, are looking to us for. This page opens Herman Clarence Nixon's *Forty Acres and Steel Mules* (1938), following the title page. It is a book about contemporary trends of the rural South written by a Southerner. It is a book about Southern history and the effects of the Depression on the South. It is a plea and a proposal for improvement within Southern living conditions and economy. It is, also, a photobook. *Forty Acres and Steel Mules* provides an opportunity to further investigate issues such as photography's relationship with and representation of the South, the South's role in using photography to communicate nationally about itself, and the way photobooks become a critical part of these investigations.[5]

*Picturing the South*

Before understanding the role of photography and photobooks in the dissemination (and, in many ways, the determination) of Southern identity, it is first necessary to understand the national identity of the South. From the Civil War up into the thirties, the South was

[4] Herman Clarence Nixon, *Forty Acres and Steel Mules* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1938.

[5] Though there is no book on the history of photography in the South per se (most histories are found peripherally within studies on other topics), the first chapter of Henninger's *Ordering the Façade* provides an excellent overview of photography's role in establishing both stereotypes of and identity within the South. See "A Short and Selected History of Photography in the South" in Katherine Henninger, *Ordering the Facade: Photography and Contemporary Southern Women's* Writing (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007).

understood mainly through clichés and stereotypes of slavery, plantations, the Ku Klux Klan, backwardness and uneducated "hillbillies."[6] As such, it had long been seen as a "different" part of America in the eyes of both Southerners and Northerners. Most of the negatives viewpoints infiltrated from the North.[7] An early example of this prejudice is evident in a letter from Henry Adams to his brother in 1861. Adams' father was a representative from Massachusetts, and writing from Washington, his son stated that "I do not want to fight them … They are mad, mere maniacs, and I want to lock them up till they become sane; not kill them. I want to educate, humanize, and refine them, not send fire and sword among them."[8] A year later, an article in *Harper's Weekly* reiterated this idea, describing the dual view of the South as both potentially good and immediately bad. It states, "their civilization is a mermaid—lovely and languid above, but ending in bestial deformity."[9] Whatever it was, the South was seen as something separate from the rest of the country.

In many ways, the South was, according to David Jansson, "the most prominent regional other" in the United States, long considered "the most 'distinctive' region in the

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[6] See Anthony Harkins, *Hillbilly: A Cultural History of an American Icon* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

[7] As historian Michael O'Brian explains, in the 19th century most Southerners saw themselves as "the best and the brightest of their time: they read and wrote political philosophy, they studied statistics, they took an interest in sociology, they traveled and kept up with the latest European trends and they were fastidious Biblical and classical scholars." See Michael O'Brien, "The Minds of the South" *New York Times* (March 4, 2011).

[8] As quoted in O'Brien.

[9] "Known by Their Fruits," *Harper's Weekly* (May 17 1862), 306.

country."[10] Part of this is because "the non-South has traditionally been considered the mainstream of America, while the South has been isolated for its distinctiveness."[11] Indeed, much of this distinctiveness had to do with the South being the part of the country that not only had a more tropical environment, but where the bulk of slaves resided. This "non-western" presence of Africans and Caribbeans only added to the idea of it having an element of the exotic the North failed to have. It has also been suggested that the consistency of this view of the South as being different from the rest of the nation had to do with "the reassurance felt by those outside the South during a difficult and uncertain time," for "nostalgic images of a simpler time in an agrarian culture provided refuge from economic disparity."[12] Myths and stories of mountain living, isolation from major industrial cities, cabins in the woods and frontier living were easier to digest than the realities of racism and lingering resentment of Civil War defeat. That said, the South was much more complicated than having any singular identity. According to James Carmichael, "even if one could agree on the geographic dimensions of the South, it would be difficult to agree on regional characteristics."[13] For example, parts of Tennessee and North Carolina had a distinct Republican political view than its neighboring states, the populations along the river ports of the Mississippi varied greatly, southern Florida

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[10] David R. Jansson, "American National Identity and the Progress of the New South in *National Geographic Magazine*" *Geographical Review* 93:3 (Jul., 2003), 352.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Susan Todd-Raque, "United States: Photography in the South," *Encyclopedia of Twentieth- Century Photography*, Edited by Lynne Warren. (New York: Routledge, 2006).

[13] James V. Carmichael Jr., "Southern Librarianship and the Culture of Resentment," *Libraries & Culture* 40:3 (Summer, 2005), 342; 328.

had a later history of development, and New Orleans and southern Louisiana had a Franco-Caribbean mix of people and culture that was unique in itself.[14]

Much of the national understanding of the South came from news of war, followed by images of these battles. As a result, conflict and disarray became synonymous with place. For example, the Mexican-American War (1846-8) was fought in Texas and resulted in the United States' acquisition of California and New Mexico. It was a war that coincided with the rise of American newspapers and is often considered to be the first war photographed as it happened.[15] The images available in newspapers were rough engravings made from daguerreotypes of officers and landscapes that showed no bias or even little sense of violence. To that end, there wasn't any reinforcement of visual stereotypes of Texans and the South as it was forming, but modern mass communication had been born.[16] Americans now expected daily reports of news and enjoyed accompanying images.

The South as an item of news escalated a little over a decade later with the Civil War (1861-5), as did the role of photography in current affairs reportage.[17] The Civil War was

[14] Carmichael supplies these distinctions.

[15] The most thorough source for illustrations, photographs and accounts of the conflict from both sides is *Echoes of the Mexican American War*, Edited by Krystyna Libura, Luis Morales, and Jesus Marquez, Translated by Mark Fried (Berkeley: Groundwood Books, 2004).

[16] Texas was associated with pro-slavery, and the depiction of slaves would predominate as mainstays in Southern imagery, but there don't seem to be any photographs from the war that suggests their stance.

[17] The most recent publication on photography and the Civil War is Jeff Rosenheim, *Photography and the American Civil War* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2013). For war imagery specific to the

the major catalyst to bring the South to the attention of the country as a whole, as well as setting up the national divisions and boundaries. The photographs of the war were first taken by civilians from the North who were professional photographers. The most renowned of those are Matthew Brady, Alexander Gardner and George Barnard, the latter two eventually published their images as photobooks. During the Civil War, not only did Union photographers outnumber Confederate ones, but photographic supplies were cut off from being shipped to the South. The South had little to no control over their visual representations during and after the war. Moreover, Lincoln had granted these men permission to take portraits of the Union army and of himself, and gave them access to some battle sites. It even employed some of them, such as Barnard, to document certain battles as they were about to or was already taking place. The images of the South that were made were mainly portraits, images of fallen soldiers, or views of devastated landscapes. Without a caption or the presence of a flag or some other insignia (or the appearance of a civic landmark), it is actually difficult to discern what soldiers one is looking at, dead or alive in groups and the location. Black and white images do little to help distinguish between blue and grey. The only reality that is observable is a dead body. Some scholars contend that a Union bias is evident, particularly in the photobooks. For example, Alan Trachtenberg claims that the books, though different in their formats and approaches of using captions and text, "resemble each other in their unqualified support of the Union and their undisguised hatred of slavery and Southern aristocracy,"

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South, see Mark E. Neely, Jr., Harold Holzer, and Gabor S. Boritt, *The Confederate Image*: *Prints of the Lost Cause* (Charlotte: University of North Carolina Press, 1987).

and uses an image by George Barnard as an example. He refers to the last photograph in the album, "Ruins of a Railroad Depot, Charleston, S.C.," and the very first image—a portrait of William T. Sherman and his generals—explaining that "the march of images creates the illusion of an unstoppable force overturning everything in its path," hence, there is an overall emphasis on Union drive and victory (fig. 2). [18] The image of the South was controlled mainly by the North, and this is an issue that will arise in the 1920s and 1930s. Publishers and authors, such as those at UNC will represent themselves, and use photography to do so.

An additional problem in the maintenance of such negative representations of the South had to do with the way many Southerners desired a different identity from the North. Emerging after the Civil War was the Lost Cause ethos, which, as James Cobb explains, "not only defended secession and glorified the society that white southerners had gone to war to preserve, but actually transformed their tragic military defeat into a tremendous moral triumph."[19] The Lost Cause mythology celebrated the values of the Old South, with its beauty and chivalry, but would butt heads with the twentieth century idea of the New South, which aimed to retain some of this sense of identity and honor while utilizing the industrial development to restore the South's economy. The attempt for Southerners to define and represent themselves beyond Northern clichés or Southern justifications

[18] See Alan Trachtenberg, *Reading American Photographs: Images as History, Mathew Brady to Walker Evans* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1989), 94; 99.

[19] James C. Cobb, *Away Down South: A History of Southern Identity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 62. For a thorough discussion on the Lost Cause, see *The Myth of the Lost Cause and Civil War History*, Edited by Gary W. Gallagher and Alan T. Nolan (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000).

would lie mainly in the hands of intellectuals in the decade preceding the Great Depression.

In the postbellum period up through the late nineteenth century the South was an area of great interest for tourism. People wanted to visit the location of Union triumph or purchase postcards or souvenirs if travel was not possible. Book publishers, producers of consumer goods and music publishers seized this opportunity on both sides, though the images projected of the South were quite different than those of the North. The South was interesting in creating memorabilia that reinforced their Confederate ideals, such as images of its generals and its flag. The North created products that, as Karen Cox explains, focused on the "ease of southern life" in which "tranquil plantation scenes and disarming racial stereotypes were employed to suggest a life of leisure, a docile servant population, and happy-go-lucky race relations."[20] She further notes that "this version of Dixie offered an idyllic counterpoint to modernity."[21] Typical imagery on stereoscopic cards, postcards and advertisements depicted African American children eating watermelon or placed next to swamps as "gator bait," African American "mammies and pappies," white "hill-folk" with multiple children in front of a shanty, massive plantation homes with endless columns, or exotic flora or fauna such as the massive mangrove trees of Florida, Louisiana and Texas (figs., 3 & 4). Synergistically, the images speak of the

[20] See Karen L. Cox, "Branding Dixie: The Selling of the American South, 1890-1930," *Dixie Emporium: Tourism, Foodways, and Consumer Culture in the American South,* Edited by Anthony Stanonis (Athens, University of Georgia Press, 2008), 51.

[21] Ibid, 51.

South as lacking any progress after the Civil War, failing to partake in modern industrial society or its ideologies (such as those regarding race and "civilized" lifestyles). These images scarred the South and created an occasion for identity to be questioned and defended in the early twentieth century.

The style in which Southern subjects were photographed proved to be another obstacle for their representation. One style in particular is Pictorialism, a movement in photography that started in the late nineteenth century.[22] It consisted of photographers who wanted to elevate and designate photography as an art and believed that rejecting that such could be achieve by creating images that have an almost painterly quality to them. As a result, they would often implore aesthetic effects such as soft focus, blurred edges, gradient tones, ambient light and often apply different chemical processes to the prints, such as gum bichromate printing, which involved hand-coating artist papers with homemade emulsions and pigments or platinum printing (fig. 5). Unlike the documentary photographers that would follow them, the Pictorialists did not embrace the way photography was a mechanically based medium that could provide exactitude of focus or be used to provide specific visual data about social or cultural phenomena in the world. Instead, their subjects tended to be genre scenes, landscapes, tableaux, nudes, or mythological or historical themes. Given the stereotypical overtones already applied to

[22] For a helpful survey and background of Pictorialism, see *Truth*/*Beauty*: *Pictorialism and the Photograph as Art*, *1845–1945*, Edited by Thomas Padon (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 2009) and Christian A. Peterson, *After the Photo-Secession: American Pictorial Photography*, *1910–1955* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1997).

the South and its people, this particular style of photography further romanticized or sentimentalized depictions of them.

During the Depression, the South was in a time of need and needed, instead, accurate representations of real problems.[23] Early practitioners and promoters of photography as a fine art in America were Alfred Stieglitz and Edward Steichen. Although they were both originally Pictorialists, they eventually championed modern styles of photography that utilized crisp lines and contemporary scenes and subjects. In their effort, they opened up galleries, established journals, and inspired schools all devoted to the craft. One of the photographers that felt this inspiration and founded a space where photographers could study was Clarence White. The Clarence H. White School of Photography opened in 1914 and shut down in 1942 during the World War. Important and interesting to this study is the fact that Doris Ulmann, Margaret Bourke-White and Dorothea Lange were all his students at one point went on to do projects involving photographing the South. Ulmann maintained Pictorialist sensibilities and in her photographs Southerners look as if they are stuck in time. Bourke-White and Lange moved away from their Pictorialist backgrounds and embraced the more modern, documentary approach of clear, exact images. Also significant is the way the school came out of the Progressive era spirit of education, and so a philosophy concerned with attentiveness to the betterment and

[23] For a review of changes in Southern imagery, see *Picturing the South: 1860 to the Present*, Edited by William P. Baldwin and Ellen Dugan (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1996).

observation of society may have helped shape the studies of these photographers and their interests in the South.[24]

*Speaking For the South*

The South needed to change before images of it could. At the beginning of the twentieth century, one of the most powerful voices in suggesting the South needed to cultivate its arts and culture and produce more writers, historians and academics was Henry Louis Mencken. Mencken was an editor, essayist and critic from Maryland who sparked nationwide criticism when he published his essay "The Sahara of the Bozart," in the *New York Evening Mail* in 1917. In it, Mencken claimed that the South was "almost as sterile, artistically, intellectually, culturally, as the Sahara Desert."[25] He went on to list what the South lacked, having "not a single picture gallery worth going into," no orchestras, no critics, musical composers, painters, sculptors, architects, historians, philosophers, theologians or scientists.[26] Despite the harshness of his comments, Mencken was actually trying to create a cultural resurgence in the South, one he felt was worthy of the South's original state of grandeur; as Richard King explains, Mencken's "reading of the region's

[24] Mary O'Connor and Catherine Tweedie suggest that White's works represent a type of "romantic socialism," given his commitment to aesthetic theories and his dedication to and method of teaching, something the authors ascribe, in part, to the influence of John Dewey. Mary O'Connor and Catherine Tweedie *Seduced by Modernity: The Photography of Margaret Watkins* (Montreal and Kingston, McGill-Queen's University Press, 2007), 52. See also Bonnie Yochelson, "Clarence H. White Reconsidered: An Alternative to the Modernist Aesthetic of Straight Photography," *Studies in Visual Communication* (Fall 1993), 24-45.

[25] H. L. Mencken, *Prejudices: A Selection*, Introduction by James T. Farrell (1917; reprint, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 2006), 70.

[26] Ibid, 71.

history told him that a golden age had existed in the South sometime prior to 1800" and that "he even bemoaned the decline of aristocratic influence in the post-Civil War South."[27]

Mencken is often credited with sparking the Southern Renaissance in the 1920s and 1930s, a time when Southern writers took on his challenge to explore issues and identities of Southern culture. For Southerners, much of the problem in defining Southern identity laid in the fact that the formation was being disseminated from the North and, thus, from a Northern bias. Within a decade of Mencken's call, there were reports in the media about the North shaping what constituted the South. A 1927 *New York Times* article entitled "A Publishers' Conspiracy?" addressed a recent pamphlet put out by Southerner William W. Brewster, who claimed that Southern writers were shunned by publishers, that "New York has hogged the book trade," and demanded that wealthy Southerners put their money into Southern publishing houses.[28] The author concurred and stated that "the publishing of Southern history is ignored and only that Southern fiction is encouraged which is contemptuous of Southern civilization."[29] A follow up article was printed some months later that debunked this idea, saying that "those Southerners who have failed to appear in magazine or book publication are Southerners who have written very badly."[30]

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[27] Richard H. King, *A Southern Renaissance: The Cultural Awakening of the American South, 1930-1955* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 14.

[28] "A Publishers' Conspiracy?," *New York Time* ( Nov 21, 1928), 22.

[29] Ibid.

[30] Lawrence Lee, "No 'Conspiracy' Found," *New York Times* (Nov 23, 1928), 16.

Thus, there was a drive on the part of some Southern institutions and publishers to start producing books that represented the South from within, and many of them were photobooks. One such example lies in the figure of Lyle Saxon. Saxon was a Louisiana born journalist and writer who wanted to create a book about the devastating 1927 Mississippi River flood. The result was *Father Mississippi: The Story of the Great Flood of 1927*, a photobook that is an important precursor to those published by UNC.[31] Though he was from the South, his backing was from the New York City based publishing company Century, which had requested a series of articles and books about the Mississippi flood. As such, they were catering to what was perceived as a shift in the public's interest towards nonfiction news events.[32] The Mississippi Flood devastated the lives of 700,000 people and was the greatest natural disaster in American history at that time, yet it also had to compete for national attention with such 1927 events as Charles Lindbergh's transatlantic flight, the controversial trial and execution of Italian immigrants Sacco and Vanzetti, the release of the *Jazz Singer*, and Amelia Earhart's flight (which occurred a year within the publication of *Father Mississippi*). Saxon didn't want the event to disappear from the public eye, and the book was compiled while the

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[31] Lyle Saxon, *Father Mississippi: The Story of the Great Flood of 1927* (New York City: Century Co., 1927).

[32] Chance Harvey cites Allen Churchill's argument that America's reading habits changed after 1925, craving the excitement of real dramas as opposed to contrived ones. Perhaps such had to do with the escalating media possibilities to know global and national events? Harvey even noted that Saxon, when stopping in Louisville on his way to the flood lands after receiving his commission, nearly had to sleep in the park because Charles Lindbergh was in town; hence, news events were achieving celebrity status. See Chance Harvey**,** *Life and Selected Letters of Lyle Saxon* (Gretna, Louisiana: Pelican Publishing Co., 2003), 133 and Allen Churchill, *The Literary Decade* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1971).

flooding was still going on. Saxon was eventually going to become the director of the Louisiana branch of the Federal Writers' Project, a New Deal program overseen by the WPA. Couch was also a part-time official of the Federal Writers' Project of the Works Progress Administration, as assistant and associate director for North Carolina, 1936-1937, and as director for the southern region, 1938-1939. Saxon, therefore, had connections with both the FSA and UNC, and proved a reliable conduit for both. Stryker would often have his photographers meet with Saxon when they went to Louisiana, and through him they not only gained access to Southern places and people not usually open to Northerners, but Saxon knew of areas and sites they wouldn't otherwise be aware of or to say the least, be able to photograph. Russell Lee, for example, told Stryker about Saxon's assistance and hospitality, noting that he was "a swell guy with a real appreciation for documentation." [33] This interest in documentary is evident in his book about Mississippi.

Saxon referred to *Father Mississippi* as a sort of "scrapbook" and apparently one critic even referred to it as being "like a club sandwich" where the "internal ingredients" varied greatly.[34] The material consisted of biographical anecdotes, historical facts, local storytelling, graphs and statistics, and firsthand accounts and photographs. The goal was not just to document and describe the floods, the land and the people, but it also served as

[33] As cited in Richard B. Megraw, *Confronting Modernity: Art and Society in Louisiana* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2008), 216.

[34] As cited and described in James W. Thomas, *Lyle Saxon: A Critical Biography* (Birmingham: Summa Publications, 1991), 96.

a plea for the rest of the country to become involved with mission of aid and reparation. Indeed, this interdisciplinary style is what the University of North Carolina authors were going to use a decade or so later. The dense 415 pages of text is divided up into twenty-nine chapters, each with around two to three full spreads of photographs that break up the text. Most plates consist of a single photograph with a source identification underneath. The inclusion of photographs is not surprising given Saxon's love of photography. As a boy he entered photography contests and as a writer he accompanied his own articles with images.

The photographs Saxon used came from a variety of sources, such as local photographers, the Red Cross, and the U.S. Engineers Corps, and were credited as such. Most of these images have a news reportage style to them, with a straightforward, anti-aesthetic approach, giving full informative views of landscapes or of people gathering around flood areas (fig. 6). They often have either literal titles—naming places or events—or more descriptive titles offering Saxon's point of view. They correspond in content to the subject matter of each chapter, and therefore act as both documentation of the event and further data of the material being discussed, making it seem more palpable and "real" to the reader. There are, though, three plates in particular that are very different in nature than the others in the photobook. These images are portraits of people and are photographed in a style that is different from the reportage images. They are more personal and almost decontextualized (focusing on the person rather than on specificity of location or activity). As a result, they precede the FSA style of photographs that

photographers such as Dorothea Lange or Margaret Bourke-White would produce, one that focuses on individual stories and lives of those people being photographed. Interestingly enough, two of these plates are positioned as both the first and last photographs the reader encounters, reiterating that, ultimately, the people are the subjects. After all, the flood was an important event in changing and challenging their lives

The first photographic plate is immediately after the title page of the book. It is a full page photograph of an old African-American man sitting down next to three trunks stacked upon each other (fig. 7). He is holding a pair of crutches, resting them against his shoulders as he sits down, and has a "grandfather type" of look to him, with a warm smile and a white beard. The caption states the following: "THIS OLD REFUGEE, HELPLESS AND ALONE, SEEMS A SYMBOLIC FIGURE TYPIFYING THE MISERY OF THOUSANDS WHO LIVE BEHIND THE LEVEES IN THE LOWER MISSISSIPPI VALLEY." Indeed, the figure becomes symbolic, as the reader is not given his identity, history or even the location or date the photograph was taken. As the first image, it can, perhaps, stand as the symbol of the project itself; namely, to help the flood victims because they are numerous, in need, and unseen. Whereas the first photograph seems to operate autonomously from the text, physically preceding it, the majority of the images in the book illustrate the written material. For example, Saxon begins his text by describing an old man walking a young boy down a tree-laden avenue and over, eventually, to the river. The first image in the chapter is, thus, a photograph of a tree-laden avenue. The chapter on the flood shows flood images, the chapter on relief shows government

intervention, and so on. It is only the last photograph that, like the first, speaks of something beyond the chapter contents alone.

The last image in the book illustrates four African American children standing in a row, occupying almost the entirety of the composition, making it difficult to identify where they are, aside from being outdoors (fig. 8).[35] Their clothes are tattered and they range in ages from a toddler to an adolescent. The youngest smiles (excited, perhaps, by the event itself of lining up and getting photographed) and fidgets with his hands as they rest on his stomach. The older two are at each end of the line, standing with their arms down and displaying more austere, almost cautiously dour, looks on their faces, likely already having both the experience of difficulties in life and an understanding of the dire nature of their situation. The rubric under the photograph states: "FOUR LITTLE REFUGEES, A LONG WAY FROM HOME." The text preceding the image describes, first, a "negro" funeral procession interrupted by a flood, then a scene Saxon sees while looking out of his window of a family that was successfully helped by the Red Cross. Following the image, Saxon's final words make a plea for sustained government aid. There is no exact mention of these "refugees" within the text. In many ways, they could be seen as a counterpart to the first image: the old man looking out, living as an itinerant with a few trunks, and the young children, in transit, with their lives ahead of them (if help persists

[35] The name of the photographer is listed here. He is Earl Norman, resident and local photographer of Natchez, Mississippi. His father, Henry Norman, was a successful portrait studio photographer who also took street and city photographs of the people and area, and Earl carried on his legacy. Apparently, together they produced approximately 75,000 prints and negatives which document Natchez from the time of Reconstruction through the first half of the twentieth century. For more, see Joan W. Gandy and Thomas H. Gandy, *Norman's Natchez* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1978) and Joan W. Gandy and Thomas H. Gandy, *Natchez: City Streets Revisited* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 1999).

and they can avoid the fate of the old man). It is interesting that Saxon chose images of African Americans as the symbols for the flood victims, as whites were, indeed, victims as well. He does include some photographs in the center of the book that show a mixed populace of those in need, but the only portrait-like, more intimate images are rather "race" specific. Even in the chapter on plantation life, entitled "Aunts and Uncles," he has a plate with four images labeled "Plantation Types," and shows more stereotypical images of Southern African Americans: an old woman in a field smoking a cob pipe, a "mammy" type with her big apron and handkerchief on her head, old men in overalls sitting on a front porch, and a young boy, unattended, sitting half-dressed with a puppy on his lap (fig. 9). Perhaps this exemplifies Saxon's understanding of how "negroes" usually appear in the media and his greater sensitivity to them as humans. In that regard, he displays them as both.[36]

Saxon walks a fine line between using the conventional stereotypes of Southerners, yet challenging them by focusing on their humanity. Aside from the three described portrait-like images, the photographs are of a documentary or reportage nature, versus any lingering Pictorialist style that was still popular at the time, a style that employed soft

[36] It is difficult to gauge Saxon's meaning when describing these people as "types." Rather than being purely ironic or stereotypical, it is possible Saxon is being a little of both. There is also an ambiguity in his chapter title, which alludes to stereotypes of "Aunt Jemimas" and "Uncle Toms," yet his narration in the chapter discusses African American men and women who function as aunts and uncles to a young white boy (either Saxon himself or a fictional surrogate). His own background is unclear, as he claimed to have been raised on a plantation and be familiar with its people and lifestyle, but there is no actual proof of this. Apparently Saxon took liberties in blending fiction and non-fiction; again, I argue that this is a reoccurring theme in Southern photobooks by Southerners. What does seem clear is that Saxon is fond of those people depicted as "plantation types" and speaks about them in a familial way. For more on Saxon's background and the issues surrounding it, see Thomson, 6-7.

focus, nostalgia and a high degree of drama or allegory. Therefore, Saxon's approach, along with his inclusion of biography (specifically *as* a Southerner), storytelling, statistics, graphs and historical facts positions his photobook as representing a genre that will come to predominate in the South. It seems that certain photobooks about the South in the 1920s and 1930s share these qualities of being hybrid in their approach, and differ in this way from preceding photobooks that aim to promote social reform, such as those of Jacob Riis. Moreover, regional and folklore studies were emerging quite specifically in the South at this time. Given the many different strategic elements used (almost desperately and all-encompassing, providing drama and entertainment as well as history, current events and a general plea for compassion and action), an argument may be made that there is a distinct subgenre of photobooks particular to the South. In 1938, Saxon edited the *New Orleans City Guide*, which was part of the WPA American Guide Series of books was produced between 1935 and 1943.[37] Operating as types of travel guides, they covered the forty-eight states and provided each state's history, geography, and culture, and included photographs, maps, and drawings.[38] These books, in themselves, further exemplify the way photographs were becoming accepted as visual evidence for studying or understanding people, places and events. As FSA photographer Dorothea

[37] For more on Saxon and his involvement with photography, see. Megraw, "Chapter Six: The Grandest Picture," in Richard B. Megraw, *Confronting Modernity: Art and Society in Louisiana* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2008), 198-242.

[38] Alaska and Hawaii were not originally included as they were not yet states.

Lange stated in 1940, "among the tools of social science—graphs, statistics, maps and text—documentation by photograph is now assuming place."[39]

*Pictorialism and Regional Studies*

Pictorialism was still popular in the1920s. Though it represents photography's attempt to justify itself as an art, it was often applied to subjects of a more documentary nature at this time. This is evident in the work of photographer Arnold Genthe, who was interested in preserving and documenting the people and architecture of New Orleans, particularly the French Quarter. In 1926 he published *Impressions of Old New Orleans: A Book of Pictures* (1926), and he specifically stated in his introduction that he hoped the photographs helped strengthen a feeling of responsibility towards the preservation and heritage of the city, "which ought to be a matter of pride and concern to every American."[40] Genthe had worked as a successful portrait and landscape photographer in San Francisco and New York City. He made two trips to New Orleans in order to document the "vanished beauty and charm of the old days" before modern industry would change its appearance.[41] He was working, though, as an artist rather than as a documentarian and his photobook presented the images as works of art, each with their own page. Genthe called it a "picture book". Critical to the nature of this photobook is the

[39] Cited in Anne Whiston Spirn, *Daring to Look: Dorothea Lange's Photographs and Reports From the Field* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 48.

[40] Arnold Genthe, *Impressions of Old New Orleans: A Book Of Pictures* (New York: George H. Doran, 1926).

[41] Arnold Genthe, *As I Remember* (New York: Reynal and Hitchcock, 1936), 213.

fact that Genthe worked in a Pictorialist style. His photographs have a quality of romance and nostalgia that complement the subject, what Genthe referred to as "all that remained of the early Spanish, French and American colonial flowering."[42] Despite the pointed aesthetic drive of Genthe, his projects did reveal an interest in documentary issues. His previous photobook was about San Francisco's Chinatown and although many of the images provide and reaffirm stereotypes of Chinese as an exotic "other," his inclination to photograph different people and places situates him within a type of social survey.[43] It is also important to note that Dorothea Lange, who eventually would publish her own photobook, worked for Genthe, and he likely helped shape or encourage her interest in people and their lives. In many ways, Genthe could be considered a forerunner to the 1930s trend towards an awakening sense of regionalism.[44]

The 101 plates of photogravures in *Impressions of New Orleans* mainly consist of architectural images, much in the same vein as Charles Marville or Eugene Atget. These photographers focused on areas that were undergoing change, and their documentation

[42] Genthe, *As I Remember*, 214.

[43] Arnold Genthe, *Pictures of Old Chinatown* (New York: Moffat, Yard and Co., 1908).

[44] In the 1930s America was studying and understanding itself. The Depression made it increasingly clear that the idea of a unified American identity was more ideological than actual. As a result, people became more interested in understanding the specific area they came from, its history, culture, traditions and individual characteristics. A helpful background on and study of these issues can be found in Robert Jackson, *Seeking The Region In American Literature And Culture: Modernity, Dissidence, Innovation* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana state University Press, 2005).

was a means of both celebration and preservation.[45] Genthe does include some images of people in his photobook, but just as he photographed the streets, the portraits he created were of street people. He failed to include any images of the upper or middle classes, probably because the lower classes were more vulnerable to not having control over their own visual persona, just as they lacked control in social mobility. In fact, Genthe gave no names of these people; rather, he treated them like types, both nominally and visually.[46] For example, in the introduction, Genthe describes the "negro" population in the French Quarter and lists the various types, such as creoles. Next to this he has a photograph of a young African American boy sitting on a step, laughing and eating what looks like a piece of bread. Genthe entitled the work "pickaninni," a derogatory term for and racial caricature of a black child. It also was a word that was very customarily used at the time. This label elucidates the dilemma of these photographers, in that they felt they were showing these populaces in a positive light, rather than the way they were traditionally visually depicted, as blackface mammies and pappies. Still, they described them in a way that suggests or insinuates a type of racism. As Katharine Henninger explains, "to the long southern memory of photographs past, we must add the myriad racist images that advertise everything from pancake flour to sheet music, as well as the more 'serious' photographs 'documenting' racist science and lynchings—these last were found in

[45] This was not only the case for his project about San Francisco's Chinatown, but Genthe photographed (and became known for) his images of the aftermath of the 1906 San Francisco earthquake (which had actually destroyed his studio).

[46] As a note, he lists the names of the illustrations in the back of his book—the photographs are presented on their own, each on a single, full page. The names are either allegorical, descriptive, or geographical.

newspapers and even sold as postcards."[47] Also, the language used to describe these people, words like pickaninny, negro, or darkie, were commonly used terms at the time. Though to our eyes many of the portraits of African Americans made by some of the photographers in this study may appear patronizing, they actually were early attempts at showing their humanity.

In his biography, Genthe stated that "the Negroes, young and old, as picturesque in speech as in type and costume, were always a camera delight."[48] He continues by describing an "old colored woman" who was "one of the noblest heads I have ever seen;" "a faithful servant in the same family for over fifty years" and "in her face was the strength and gentleness of one who had known life and surmounted suffering without bitterness".[49] Although Genthe praises the woman, there is a negligence in his reference to her faithfulness, as it is unclear whether this woman ever had a choice in the matter. The same applies to her surmounting of suffering; if the woman felt bitter or angry, it seems unlikely she would voice it to her "masters" given her low status in society, her color, and her heritage of slavery. Genthe actually has a photograph entitled "Faithful Servant" (fig. 10). The portrait is of an elderly African American woman, looking out into the distance with her hand awkwardly placed on her stomach. She wears a housedress and is entirely decontextualized, with the background of the photo being

[47] Henninger, 36.

[48] Genthe, *As I Remember*, 215.

[49] Genthe, *Impressions*, 13.

nothing more than a haze of grey. The lack of a specific location allows for her to exist as a type, timelessly playing the part of the kind, old servant. Genthe possibly had her place her hand on her stomach in order to show the wrinkles and age of her skin. As for her face, she seems caught in between a smile and a grimace, as she fails to confront being looked at and instead looks away. Indeed, this further disempowers her, constantly being vulnerable to objectification while not being able to confront the viewer.

Genthe stated in his introduction that "New Orleans has often been called the most picturesque city of America" and made it clear that his intent was to capture just that, in the streets, places and people. Although he lists locations of his architectural subjects, he fails to list names or personal information for his images of people. For example, women on the street are "morning gossip" or "end of the argument," referring to a narrative that may or may not be true; they become characters in his picture story of the city. Moreover, along the lines of the faithful servant, he provides an image of an old woman sitting alone on a front step with her arm resting on her knee and her hand holding up her head (fig. 11). He calls her "a philosopher of the vieux carre" and may be referencing her in his text while speaking of "the old woman who was idly sitting all day long in the doorway of her battered stucco-cottage," who "philosophically" remarked: "When it's nice an cool, Ah sets an thinks, and when it's hot, Ah jest sets." Her foil appears to be a man standing in a doorway, seemingly doing nothing (fig. 12). His hand is on his hip, and he stares out at an empty street. Genthe entitled this image "all in a day's work." Both of these suggest idleness and a lack of productivity, as well as acceptance of such a life style. After all,

there is nothing philosophically challenging about admitting to sitting around doing nothing. All of his "people" images are of African Americans, and his typology continues with a photograph of a young woman in a hat crossing the street. He calls her a "quadroon belle," referring to her as having one-quarter African ancestry. As with the others, she is understand in terms of classification, visually existing as a stereotype rather than an individual.

The foreword to *Impressions of New Orleans* was written by New Orleans writer and historian Grace King who, like Genthe, offers a narrative filled with a joy towards the city and its people and activities. The pairing of photographs of the South with work by literary figures escalates within a decade or so of Genthe's photobook, and it is possible that this juxtaposition of photographs (seen as fragments of reality) with fiction could further complicate any generalizations or stereotypes of the South. Such is evident in *Roll*, *Jordan*, *Roll,* a 1933 photobook with photographs by Doris Ulmann and text by Julia Peterkin, who was the first Southern novelist to win a Pulitzer Prize.[50] Ulmann, a New York native, studied at the Ethical Culture Fieldston School, a socially liberal organization that promoted Progressive era values of social equality and justice regardless of ethnicity or class, before attending the Clarence H. White School of Photography. Though Ulmann may have had instincts towards the documentary, taking

[50] Julia Peterkin, with photographs by Doris Ulmann, *Roll, Jordan, Roll* (New York: Robert O. Ballou, 1933). For more on this photobook, see Philip Walker Jacobs, *The Life and Photography of Doris Ulmann* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2001).

portraits of disempowered or marginalized people, she was from the last generation of Pictorialists in America and photographed in that style.

*Roll, Jordan, Roll* is 251 pages long, with twenty-one essays by Peterkin and seventy-two photographs by Ulmann on double-sided plates, including a frontispiece. The subjects of the photobook are the Gullah, a people who were descendents of enslaved Africans from various ethnic groups of west and central Africa. Once brought to America, the Gullahs were forced to work on the plantations of coastal South Carolina, Georgia, North Carolina and Florida. Julia Peterkin was a South Carolina native whose husband owned Lang Syne, a 2,000 acre cotton plantation where the majority of the field hands and servants were Gullah, and thus became the source material for the project. Peterkin and Ulmann's goal was similar to Genthe's in its aim to preserve the past. This is a theme that predominates and will potentially haunt Southern photobooks focused on social reform. The approach of Peterkin's writing includes her own first-hand experience with stories and some historical facts. She begins her text by stating that "some of the charm that made the life of the old South glamorous still lingers on a few plantations that have been so cut off from the outside world by rivers, wide swamps and lack of roads they are still undisturbed by the restless present."[51] She further contends that "wistfully holding to the past when they were part of a civilization never excelled in America, they keep their backs turned to the future and persistently ignore that strange thing called progress which

[51] Peterkin, 9.

so often means change without betterment."[52] Her statement suggests a blatant decision to avoid or dismiss modernity. This sort of romanticizing is problematic in realizing the injustices and prohibitions of economic social systems like plantations. Peterkin's narrative reveals no signs of stress or distress, rather, the "negroes" she speaks of are described as being happy and content. For example, she avoids any discussion about the harshness of slavery and almost qualifies it, explaining that "black men lately brought from Africa were taught to be carpenters, blacksmiths, brick-layers, coopers" and "slave women learned to spin, weave, sew, cook, and do everything necessary for the comfort of their owners."[53] Thus, in her interpretation, slavery was a process of education, not subjugation.

As expected, *Roll, Jordan, Roll* received some reproach for its soft version of history. One historian even referred to it as "a plantation eulogy cleverly presented as documentary."[54] In her own nostalgic words, Peterkin described the Gullahs as "undisturbed by the machine age, they live close to the earth which feeds them, free from the fear of starving in the midst of plenty."[55] Significantly, Couch stated in a review of the book that "to the average reader…the Negro will appear simply and solely as an actor in a quaint and curious comedy, which has its unfortunate and inevitably cruel aspects,"

[52] Ibid.

[53] Ibid.

[54] Elizabeth Robeson, "The Ambiguity of Julia Peterkin," *The Journal of Southern History*, 61:4 (Nov., 1995), 764.

[55] Peterkin, 12.

and that "nowhere in the volume is the aesthetic calm disturbed by the suggestion that millions of white southerners also play their parts in a quaint and curious comedy, remarkably similar to that of the Negro."[56] Couch is correct in referring to the "Negro" as an actor, and as Peterkin speaks vaguely about the various characters, rather than providing specifics about names, dates and places. The detailed listing of such facts emerges more regularly in the 1930s where photographs accompany news information and are regarded more as documents of the world. Moreover, the photographs representing the Gullahs fail to relate to the text directly. Instead, they show Gullahs, the text discusses Gullahs, and that is the connection. Even a *New York Times* review of it stated that "it is not always easy to determine the relation between the picture and the printed page, and perhaps in some cases no connection is intended to be implied, but the illustrations are always delightful."[57] Indeed, the photogravures were so vital to the book that a second printing was made within a year of its original publication date due to criticisms about the quality of the reproduced images.[58] This involved Ulmann's photographic style, which had such a high degree of soft focus and extreme highlights and shadows that some of the forms appear almost abstract or completely obfuscated. Ulmann used a glass-plate camera that required a tripod, unlike the photographic trends of the day that utilized hand-held cameras with fast film speeds. This method reveals her

[56] W. T. Couch, "American Peasants," *The Virginia Quarterly Review* (Autumn 1934), 636-40.

[57] Dorothy Scarborough, "Julia Peterkin's Gullahs Sit for Their Portraits: In *Roll, Jordan, Roll*," *New York Times* (Jan 7, 1934), BR3.

[58] For more on this see Jacobs, 127-130.

training as an art photographer and is part of the reason her figures are so motionless and seemingly posed.

Peterkin tells stories, and the photographs are supposed to illustrate characters. In fact, most of Peterkin's writings are divided up describing the different types of Gullahs. A section on the role of the plantation foreman has an image of an elderly Gullah man standing against what appears to be the siding of a house (fig. 13). It is difficult to tell exactly where he is since Ulmann has the majority of the composition filled with his portrait. The image stands alone. There is no name identifying it, and so one presumes he is the foreman Peterkin is writing about. He stands tall, looking out away from the camera, wearing a collared shirt buttoned all the way up with a type of suit coat over it. Ulmann depicts him as independent, since he is alone, and as authoritative, though he is a laborer working for a plantation owner and master. His apparel is important in defining his position as foreman, a job that constitutes the overseeing of field-hands, since he is not wearing field work clothes and is not "uncivilized" by being barefoot or barely dressed. His face is nearly expressionless, and as such lends itself to open interpretation of the man's character or disposition. More specifically, it operates as a blank slate in which Peterkin's description of the foreman can be applied. When Ulmann gives us images of workers, it is often in a way where the most striking visual aspect is her formal arrangement of the bodies bending over or the rhythm created between the round brims of their hats and the linear forms of arms reaching and legs standing. The arduous reality of their work is not apparent. Thus, despite the overall goal Peterkin and Ulmann may have

had in providing a history of these people and dignifying them as worthy subjects, any documentary impulse ultimately appears trumped by the former's storytelling and the latter's overtly artistic style.

*Mythology, Sociology or Documentary?*

Ulmann continued to photograph the traditions and lives of Southerners, focusing on the people of the Appalachian Mountains, from Virginia to northern Georgia and Alabama. She contributed 58 photographs to New York writer and curator Allen Eaton's massive 370 page book *Handicrafts of the Southern Highlands*, published in 1937 by the Russell Sage Foundation, one of America's oldest social science organizations.[59] It is noteworthy that this foundation hired Ulmann, who had already included work in the sociological journal *Survey Graphic.* Therefore, the correlation between sociology and photography was not just continuing in the 1930s, but flourishing.[60] Trained as a sociologist, Eaton was the Associate Director for the Department of Surveys and Exhibits with the Russell Sage Foundation, and *Handicrafts of the Southern Highlands* provided a survey of traditional craft practices in rural America that included historical and ethnographical data, as well as instructions for certain processes and photographs. Eaton specifically

[59] Allen Eaton, *Handicrafts of the Southern Highlands; With an Account of the Rural Handicraft Movement in the United States and Suggestions for the Wider Use of Handicrafts in Adult Education and in Recreation* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1937).

[60] These issues are discussed at length in the last chapter, including the photographers who participated in both arenas.

explains that his goal for the project was "bringing into closer relation the fields of art and of social work."[61]

As with her Gullah project, Ulmann produced images that were not just romanticized in style, but that tried to represent types of people removed from any traces of the modern world. It is difficult to ascertain the nature of these photographs with regard to being documents of life or predetermining how that "life" is depicted. Often, objects (the handicrafts in question) would be included in the frame, and Ulmann would have the subjects wear clothing and use methods and tools of the "olden days." Thus, the characterization and stereotyping of "mountain people" was intentional, celebrating pre-industrial lives. The problem is that the photographs represent a lack of progress within these Southern Highlands, even if the goal had more to do with representing tradition. Eaton, later in life, claimed he "didn't realize that [Ulmann] had made the most definitive of rural characters, certainly in the field of handicrafts, that's been done any place in the world."[62] Indeed, "characters" is a key word and a key problem for Southern identity in general, and in photography.

Unlike the Gullah series, Ulmann's photographs of the Appalachians include specific names and locations. Yet, often these identifications appear chapters later, leaving the photographs to operate on a level where the people in the images become fragmented,

[61] Eaton, 17.

[62] As cited in McEuen, 72.

part text and part visual. The image, then, becomes a symbol and a character in a story about his/her craft. For example, the first photograph encountered within the text is of an old woman sitting amongst handicraft products and tools. Underneath the image, it states: "A HOME OF HANDICRAFTS," and explains that Mrs. Zachariah Field is from Russellville, Tennessee, she is sitting on a mountain chair, is churning in a home-made piggin and that the stoneware jar covered with a hand-made linen towel is a local product, as is the coverlet Mrs. Field wove on the old family loom (fig. 14). Mrs. Field, herself, isn't mentioned until several chapters later, where she is introduced as representing the revival of handicrafts in the highlands as an expert in coverlets and looming. Nothing more is said about her. Her image is in the chapter on Log Cabins. Given the caption, her photograph becomes a means to represent homestead living, and her portrait serves to show what a woman in this dynamic looks like, rather than highlight Mrs. Field as an individual. Moreover, the photograph faces text that describes types of log cabins and refers to two specifically named women who are pictured in later chapters. Again, the lack of correspondence leaves one to believe that Mrs. Field is part of setting the stage for the stereotypical female highlander.

Mrs. Field sits hunched over, staring out ahead of her. One arm is holding the handle of a churner, while the other hand holds some sort of ladle on the side. The way she is holding these objects suggest that she is, in fact, not actually using them, but posing with them. In the background is a coverlet hanging on a loom, and in front of that is a pitcher with a cloth on it. Her figure dominates the composition, taking up about two-thirds of it. What

is most disconcerting is her expression, which actually appears to be sad, or tired, with a quietude about it. She appears alone amidst props. Per Ulmann's usual style, most of the image is slightly out of focus, with the only real areas of focal clarity being the pitcher and the piggin (the wooden churning bucket). The juxtaposition of products and a maker of products reinforces that in a "Home of Handicraft" the pioneer-type woman figure makes everything from scratch, including her floral house dress. She sits very still, almost immobile, but such may be due to the exposure demanded for Ulmann's large format camera rather than any rigidity of the woman; a woman the reader, ultimately, never comes to know much about. The photographs give characters to the stories, images of actual people that help the reader envision the world so described. They are both actual people and surrogates for a generic image of a mountain folk.

This brings light to the documentary "problem" about this project, since it is very much about understanding the people *through* their traditional production activities and the associated products. Though there are stories intermingled throughout the text, and many, many references to actual people (briefly listing their names, locations and craft skill), it is a study not so much about their actual lives and conditions but about the presumption of how they live. Appalachia has long had two particular stereotypes, whether somewhat based in truth or not. One is that of isolation from any type of modern world, and the other is that of mountain people and their "pure" and "simple" lifestyle becoming a vanishing breed. As W.K. McNeil explains, "isolation is relative, and at no time have these people been totally cut off from the outside world…they have thus been isolated

only in comparison with some more urban region."[63] Still, even early attempts at identifying these people worked within this framework. James Watt Raine, who was a professor at Berea College in Kentucky, wrote *The Land of the Saddle-Bags* in 1924, which was an attempt to counter negative stereotypes of the mountain inhabitants by providing first-hand accounts of their language, music, community practices and labor.[64] He states in his book that "while the rest of the nation has grown far from our revolutionary ancestors, the Mountain People have been marooned on an island of mountains, and have remained very much the same as they were at that time," and further explains that these people, with their "simple virtues of the pioneer" are "rapidly disappearing."[65]

Aside from the posing of figures and the setting of props, Ulmann also occasionally asked her sitters to dress as they would in previous generations.[66] Though doing so may

[63] W.K.McNeil, "Introduction," *Appalachian Images in Folk and Popular Culture,* Edited by W.K. McNeil (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1995), 2-3.

[64] Raine's book also includes fifteen photographs and several citations of "mountain speech" and song scores and lyrics, as well as first-person diction. In this manner, as an academic, he could be understood as a type of predecessor of the UNC Press in creating a dynamic study of the South made for the layperson (particularly one so cognizant of folk and regional cultural characteristics). James Watt Raine, *The Land of Saddle-Bags: A Study of the Mountain People of Appalachia* (New York: Council of Women for Home Mission and Missionary Movement of the United States and Canada, 1924).

[65] Ibid, x.

[66] As mentioned, this methodology involves nostalgia, and this is something that is not only applied to the FSA photographs, but to the study of them. For example, in 1994 Abigail Solomon-Godeau stated that "much of the graphic legacy of the F.S.A. is currently embalmed in a collective nostalgia about the 1930s, or enshrined as a humanist monument to the timeless struggle against adversity, or revered as a record of individual photographic achievement." See Abigail Solomon-Godeau, "Who Is Speaking Thus? Some Questions about Documentary Photography," *Photography at the Dock: Essays on Photographic History, Institutions, and Practices* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), 179.

illuminate how these craftsmakers and activities actually appeared when they originated, it projects an image to the reader that these people are, indeed, stuck in time. As Melissa McEuen explains, "in Ulmann's attempts to preserve what she believed was vanishing, she occasionally created idyllic scenes out of imagination and mountain lore" and "sought to portray the ideal world of pastoral rural experience."[67] An example of this can be found in Ulmann's images of the Creech family from Pine Mountain, Kentucky. There are two images of girls from the Creech family that are particularly striking because they are not only using traditional tools for milling corn and spinning wool, but they are barefoot and dressed in antiquated dresses with bonnets on their heads (figs. 15 & 16). As previously discussed, in many of Ulmann's photographs the figures stand alongside their tools, awkwardly holding them in a way that would prevent any actual utilization. The Creech girls, too, stare out into space, looking above and beyond where they are and failing to even pay attention to the task they are supposedly engaged in. The images are respectively titled "an old-fashioned highland corn mill" and "the high spinning wheel." One of the girls, Wilma, appears in both photographs, wearing the same bonnet but a dress in one and a blouse and skirt in the other. The photographs were likely taken in the same visit, so the switch of clothing truly operates like a costume change. In fact, at the time of the photograph, Wilma did not wear madden-dyed dresses or go without shoes, and fetched the clothing from an old trunk for Ulmann's photo shoot per her request.[68]

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[67] McEuen, 58.

[68] As cited and discussed in Philip Walker Jacobs, *The Life and Photography of Doris Ulmann* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2001), 287.

Another example of Ulmann intentionally trying to construct specific images that align with ideas of the mountain communities as still living and looking like pioneers is found in an anecdote told by a young male member of the Creech family. He describes a scenario in which Ulmann wanted to photograph him sitting amongst some homemade puppets the women in the family had made. Given that these were children's toys, she wanted them to be photographed with a child. He remarked that he had just been given a brand new pair of saddle shoes and, eager to show them off, he stuck one leg out in front of the camera so the shoes could be seen.[69] This upset Ulmann, but she took the photograph anyway. Needless to say, there is no such image in the photobook, the only image of a Creech family member with "poppets" is a portrait of an elder woman sitting, staring out, with the toy in her lap. John Jacob Niles, who was her companion on her travels, working on recording the music and its history in the region, as well as helping Ulmann as an assistant, clearly acknowledged that she would often ask the sitters to pose, but not look posed.[70]

Indeed, the role of construction in her photographs here calls to mind pictorialist Edward Curtis's project in documenting Native Americans, where he would often have them put on certain tribal costumes and headgear rarely worn anymore or only worn at special ceremonies. He created *The North American Indian*, published in 1907, and in the original introduction he stated that "the information that is to be gathered ... respecting

[69] Ron Pen, *I Wonder As I Wander: The Life of John Jacob Niles* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2010), 162-3.

[70] Ibid.

the mode of life of one of the great races of mankind, must be collected at once or the opportunity will be lost."[71] Curtis, too, thought through his photography he was preserving a "vanishing race."[72] In order for these goals to be successful, the subjects must not look familiar (except, perhaps, as expected stereotypes) and must appear as living in the past, necessarily disappearing as time continues. The beauty of idyllic and arcadian existences is their removal from the modern world; they are so desired because their characteristics of being rustic, peaceful, simple and pastoral don't complement the speed, industry, chaos, competition and anxiety of contemporary living that predominated in and defined the twentieth century. As Brooks Blevins suggests, "many Americans, separated from a rural past, yearned with foggy-eyed nostalgia for the bucolic countryside, the homestead of American lore."[73] The Agrarian Myth of the early American values of community, village, independence and closeness to the land deemed lost in modern America is manifest in these images.[74] Perhaps, in this regard, Ulmann's Pictorialism is successful, as its haziness and allusion evokes the past in/as the present in a way straight documentary may not be able to do. The South, then, is tied into larger fears about American ideals being lost amidst a modern world.

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[71] Edward Sheriff Curtis, *The North American Indian*. 20 vols., **(**Cambridge MA and Norwood CT: University Press and Plimpton Press, 1907-30).

[72] For more on this, see Christopher M. Lyman, *The Vanishing Race and Other Illusions: Photographs of Indians by Edward S. Curtis* (New York: Pantheon Books, in association with the Smithsonian Institution Press, 1982).

[73] Brooks Blevins**,** *Hill Folk: A History of Arkansas Ozarkers and Their Image* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 2.

[74] A useful overview of the Agrarian Myth and its history in America is found in Tom Brass, *Peasants, Populism and Postmodernism: The Return of the Agrarian Myth* (London: Frank Cass, 2000).

*Studying the South*

The interest in mountain living and lore was not just about it being a novelty, it was also a part of a trend in the 1930s involving community studies. On a larger scope, this was evident in the anthropological projects of figures such as Ruth Benedict, and on a more national level, the landmark study of small city American life by husband-and-wife sociologists Helen and Robert Lynd.[75] Interestingly, all of these used photographs as data for their research. Images were not just becoming a part of daily life in the 1930s, but a part of investigative language. As previously mentioned, UNC, with its folk and regional studies, provided the opportunity to study the South from an internal point of view and experience, as opposed to one from the North. After all, all of the books discussed thus far in this chapter either were co-authored by Northerners or published by agencies in the North. Southerners were responding to both a desire to control and produce their own histories and studies and, critically, to a moment in the 1930s when the Dust Bowl and the Depression brought the South to national attention. In general, it was a time when an interest in one's own region became a popular topic in America in general. This decade "witnessed a massive effort to identify and to record the voices of the folk," and had a particular focus on the lives of ordinary people.[76] The Depression raised issues of both

[75] Ruth Benedict, *Patterns of Culture,* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1934); Robert S. and Helen M. Lynd, *Middletown: A Study in Contemporary American Culture* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Company, 1929); Robert S. and Helen M. Lynd, *Middletown in Transition: A Study in Cultural Conflicts* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Company, 1937).

[76] Michael C. Steiner, "Regionalism in the Great Depression," *Geographical Review* 73:4 (October, 1983), 430-46.

identity and culture into question. During the Depression, the South was already the poorest part of the nation, never having fully recovered from the Civil War. Aside from economic instability, the Mississippi River flooded in 1927, destroying the livelihood of the farmers in its valley. There was also the collapse of the stock market two years later, which only exacerbated these hardships. Moreover, the windstorms that blew away millions of tons of topsoil, collectively known as the "Dust Bowl," destroyed agricultural productivity and possibility from Texas to North Dakota in the Great Plains. Many Southern governments responded by raising sales taxes and cutting spending on government programs, leading to even greater futility. These catastrophes led President Franklin D. Roosevelt to announce to the country in 1938 that the South was the nation's number one economic problem. He did so in the National Emergency Council's "Report on the Economic Conditions of the South," of which over a million copies were published and included in newspapers and textbooks.[77]

As Lewis Killian explains, "white southerners knew that many nonsoutherners took these serious [sic] but exaggerated vignettes of life among the white southerners literally. They resented those southerners who had contributed to a stereotype so unlike the romantic image of the glorious Ole South."[78] One of the aforementioned figures at UNC who had a critical role in engineering Southern studies was sociologist Howard Odum. Odum was

[77] For more on the importance of this proclamation, see Steve David, "The South as 'The Nation's No. 1 Economic Problem': the NEC Report of 1938," *The Georgia Historical Quarterly* 62:2 (Summer 1978), 119, 119-32.

[78] Lewis M. Killian, *White Southerners*. Revised Edition. (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1985) 32-3.

on the president's committee that, in 1933, published the report *Recent Social Trends*, which led to FDR's claim. The contributors to the report were predominantly social scientists who, according to Martin Bulmer, "dominated the work of the committee."[79] Thus, scientific studies of society were important to America at large. Odum was behind many of the texts that followed Mencken's call for a reevaluation of the South. He established the first sociology department in the South at UNC at Chapel Hill, which challenged the way sociology had previously functioned with regard to the South; namely, as a means to justify slavery. Precisely, the first books in America bearing the term sociology were George Fitzhugh's *Sociology for the South, or The Failure of Free Society* (1854) and Henry Hughes' *Treatise on Sociology, Theoretical and Practical* (1854), and both advocated slavery for poor whites and African Americans.[80] Such actually became the typical associations with Southern culture even after the Civil War, and these identifications were what Odum was trying to move away from. As Edward Shapiro explains, "the most prominent characteristic of Southern intellectual history during the 1920's and 1930's was the emphasis on regionalism by writers, economists, sociologists, historians and political scientists busy exploring and defining Southern identity."[81] This is evident in the founding of regional learned societies such as the

[79] Martin Bulmer, "The Decline of the Social Survey Movement and the Rise of American Empirical Sociology," *The Social Survey in Historical Perspective, 1880-1940*, 291.

[80] George Fitzhugh, *Sociology for the South, or, The Failure of Free Society* (Richmond, Va.: A. Morris, 1854) and Henry Hughes, *Treatise on Sociology, Theoretical and Practical* (Lippincott, Grambo, 1854). For an in-depth discussion, see Don Martindale, "American Sociology Before World War II," *Annual Review of Sociology*, 2 (1976), 121-143, 124.

[81] See Edward S. Shapiro, "The Southern Agrarians, H. L. Mencken, and the Quest for Southern Identity," *American Studies*, 13:2 (Fall 1972), 75.

Southern Political Association (1929), the Southern Economic Association (1929), the Southern Historical Association (1934) and the Southern Sociological Society (1934), as well as in the establishing of regional journals such as the *Southern Economic Journal* (1933), the *Journal of Southern History* (1935) and the *Journal of Politics* (1939).[82]

A fine example of Southerners discussing the South and its regional needs is South Carolina journalist W. J. Cash. Cash started a series of articles entitled "The Mind of the South" in 1929 in one of Mencken's journals, *American Mercury*, that tried to understand the South in its difference from the rest of the country (and was eventually going to find its end as a groundbreaking book).[83] The book is seen as crucial in defining the South in its difference from the North, and Odum was the person who helped Cash with these articles and in promoting their publishing.[84] Mencken had strong ties with both Odum and Cash, and published several of the latter's articles in the magazines and periodicals he managed. Mencken cited Odum as being the key figure to put the Southern Renaissance "in motion" and had a fertile and prolific correspondence with him.[85] He not only supported Odum's cause in their letters, but regularly promoted UNC's *Journal of Social Forces* in *The Evening Sun*, *The Chicago Tribune* and *American Mercury*, the

[82] As listed in Shapiro, 75.

[83] Wilbur J. Cash, *The Mind of the South* (New York: Knopf, 1941).

[84] Bruce Clayton**,** *W.J.Cash: A Life*, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Press, 1991), 92-93; 150-151.

[85] For more on this, see "Searching For Southern Identity," *A Companion To The Literature And Culture Of The American South*, Edited by Richard Gray and Owen Robinson (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2004).

magazine Mencken himself founded in order to feature the most important American writers of the time.[86] Cash's book, along with UNC sociologist Rupert Vance (who wrote *Human Geography of the South*: *A Study in Regional Resources and Human Adequac*y in 1932), was written to repudiate the rival group of Southern intellectuals known as the Agrarians. The Agrarians had published a collection of essays in 1930 entitled *I'll Take My Stand: The South and the Agrarian Tradition*, that confronted the effects of industry and urbanity in the American South.[87] The South was finally being looked at through its complexity: not as a single entity, but rather being comprised of many different regions.

The UNC Press was a driving force in trying to put out books that clarified and elaborated upon this, and the production of photobooks was a conscious effort to create texts that reached an audience beyond the academic world. Head of the Press, William T. Couch, encouraged both the use of photographs and a writing style that had an almost folkloric quality to it. As Charles Watkins explains, "he encouraged the publication of books for a general readership, especially directed toward the Northern, urban, middle-class, book-buying public" and, "consciously and personally began to intervene in the development of books by non-UNC scholars as well as by laymen."[88] Moreover, he saw the positive reception people had to photography, and stated that "it may be that our

[86] See Joseph L. Morrison, "Mencken and Odum: The Dutch Uncle and the South," *Virginia Quarterly Review* 42 (Autumn, 1966): 601-15, as well as Fred C. Hobson, *Serpent in Eden: H. L. Mencken and the South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1974), 90.

[87] *I'll Take My Stand: the South and the Agrarian Tradition* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1930).

[88] Charles Alan Watkins, "Merchandising the Mountaineer: Photography, the Great Depression, and "Cabins in the Laurel," *Appalachian Journal* 12:3 (Spring, 1985), 215-238, 216.

publication now will be determined by the attractiveness of the photographs you can secure."[89] Watkins further explains that the original founding of the Press was "not simply to publish deserving books but to aid deserving Southern authors as well."[90] As the Press's first director, Louis Round Wilson, put it, the goal was to avoid the difficulties of "submitting manuscripts to readers trained in universities of the Northeast who were un-familiar with the conditions."[91] Now that the authors and publishers represented the South in writing, the next step was to illustrate it by a Southerner.

An example of a Southern published photobook about a Southern region that was authored and illustrated by Southerners is *Backwoods America* (1934), a UNC book about the folk traditions and culture of the Ozarks in Missouri and Arkansas. [92] It was written by the Arkansas journalist Charles Morrow Wilson and illustrated with photographs by North Carolina native Bayard Wooten. Wooten was a professional photographer with a photographic style that merged Pictorialism with a more documentary approach, predating the FSA photography and corresponding to the photojournalistic trends of the 1930s. She had her own portrait studio and did commercial work, but wasn't a photojournalist, per se. In many ways, *Backwoods America* exists as a turning point for 1930s Southern photobooks, as it continues this idea of a romantic

[89] As quoted in Watkins, 216.

[90] Ibid.

[91] See Watkins, 216.

[92] Charles Morrow Wilson, with illustrations by Bayard Wootten, *Backwoods America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1934).

Appalachia and is written with a first person narrative that adds a testimonial quality to it, presumably legitimizing the information. Still, there are some marked changes. For one thing, Wooten's images are more "documentary" than the previous Pictorialist styles in the way that they not only have a clear, sharp focus, but include much more context than an isolated portrait. There is a move away from the photographs as "art" and a move towards authenticity even if they still appear somewhat stylized. In this case, such may have to do with its being published by an academic press, something that generally identifies itself with producing more objective material than a popular press. With *Backwoods America*, it also may have to do with the specific influence of Odum. That is, Odum often spoke of the South in terms of the different areas being regional laboratories, centers in themselves for research and study.[93] In the photobook, Wilson claims that the Ozarks provide "a splendid laboratory from which to study the true living ways and resources of the nation's peasant domain."[94] It is more than likely that such language was the result of the influence of the UNC sociological trends and studies. There was a change in the nature of these photobooks, shifting from illustrations towards cultural preservation to documentary works that provoked understanding and empathy in the name of social reform. As Lewis Killian explains, "Odum's term 'Southern Regional Laboratory' referred not only to a room of data, maps, and charts, but also the whole

[93] UNC sociologist Katharine Jocher, who worked closely with Odum in many of his research endeavors and in developing and administering the Institute for Research in Social Science, details the set-up and goals of the laboratory model in Katharine Jocher, "The Regional Laboratory for Social Research and Planning," *Social Forces*, special issue, "In Search of the Regional Balance of America," 23:3 (March, 1945), 285-290.

[94] *Backwoods America*, 2.

southern region."[95] The retention of some elements of "local color" in stories and dialect, along with the addition of sociological data, will come to define the photobooks produced by UNC during the Depression. *Backwoods America* was considered a sort of template for the UNC photobooks down the line concerning social reform in the South and using FSA photographs. For example, Alice Paine, UNC Press editor, thought that *Sharecroppers All* would be best to have the same "frequency" of images as *Backwoods America*, and Couch thought the photographs in *Forty Acres and Steel Mules* should be "handled in somewhat the same style as in *Backwoods America*." [96]

The goal and concept of *Backwoods America* is rather clearly laid out with the very first image, as well as, literally, the first lines of Wilson's text (fig. 17). The photograph appears after a page that lists only the title of the book. It is of a white family on a front porch, consisting of a man and a woman, three children and a dog. Closest to the camera lens is a young boy holding a long hoe, inquisitively looking out at the viewer. Next to him is his younger brother, who seems to stare out in the direction of his older sister who sits on a wooden chair butted up against the siding of the house and reads a newspaper. The father stands in the doorway, looking down at his family, while the mother sits down in front of him, her head tilted, hands folded, and a pleasant smile on her face. The

[95] Lewis M. Killian, *Black and White: Reflections of a White Southern Sociologist* (Dix Hills, NY: General Hall, 1994), 33.

[96] See Alice T. Paine, note to William T. Couch, January or February, 1938, #40073, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and William T. Couch to Andor Braun, June 12 1940, #40073, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

wooden house, and the land surrounding it, looks barren and dry. Still, the family looks clean, their clothes well kept, and they seem healthy. Under the image, it states: "The rarest of all modern luxuries, idle time without chronic unemployment." This is a backwoods American family, or at least, this is what is indicated to the reader. They are a unit, spending time together doing things that all families do, such as read the newspaper or spend time with their pet. They are a surrogate for the American family, just in a different environment from a living room or city stoop. After all, there is no listing of a name, date or location, and in that way they are a timeless symbol of an American family.

Most of *Backwoods America*, like the photobooks examined thus far, actually has a lack of congruence between photograph placement and the neighboring text. This layout, though, may not be the result of poor editorial decisions, and may be crucial in establishing a dynamic way of reading both text and image. In the chapter on folk beliefs, there is an image of a path leading up to a house (fig. 18). It is beautifully composed, with a diagonal meandering from the lower right corner up to the center of the pictorial plane, where it gets curtailed by a hill that divides the land and the sky into separate spaces. The diagonal of the path then shoots straight up, following the line of the chimney from a house nestled beyond view. In many ways, the image is inviting, literally offering the reader an entry point with the open path leading up to a homestead, acting as visual surrogate for such an experience or journey. The quote under the image states: "It ain't much to look at, but it's been home for a mighty long time." The photograph and its caption fail to have any direct reference to discussion of folk beliefs, herbal concoctions

or spells. Likewise, a chapter on "Fun-making" has, as its first illustration, a photograph of a white man walking down a mountain road (fig. 19). He is smiling and holds a chicken or a hen in his hand. Hanging off of his arms are a canteen and a basket. He wears overalls that seem tattered, with parts of material sporadically stitched together here and there. Nothing else competes with him for visual attention, as the remaining area of the composition is the curl of the path he just wound around coming down from his walk. His caption states: "Country trade rests basically on a sound commodity dollar—not a credit or a speculation dollar. It is based upon tangibles." The chapter describes party games and dances, but the image speaks of production and consumption. By being separated from the textual reference to the photograph (if any), the images act as interludes, pauses of material that provide alternative (but related) material, providing constant shifts to maintain the reader's attention.

The text in *Backwoods* America also continues the tradition of celebrating and/or pigeonholing Appalachian culture as something distinct within America. References abound within the photobook about "Ozarkadia," a term that nominally speaks of a harmonious place. Wilson also describes it as a "haven of peasantry," and one that he specifically claims to know. When he states that "I am speaking of my homeland," he is reiterating his legitimacy to discuss the issues, and reassuring the reader of the authenticity of his narrative. Being an Arkansas native, Wilson certainly did know about the back hills of Arkansas and Missouri, but the photographs provided a larger problem, as they were taken in the Appalachians between North Carolina and Tennessee. These

images came from Wooten's other project for the UNC Press, a photobook that came out a month after *Backwoods America*, although it was commissioned beforehand: *Cabins in the Laurel*. Couch made this decision because he felt that that these images better complemented the themes, and both the photographer and author agreed. In Charles Alan Watkins' opinion, this indicated "the extent to which financial exigencies had driven Couch from the scholarly purposes of the Press."[97] Rather than think of this decision as a type of failure, it is more beneficial to understand it as a part of the events in the history of the photobook in which either there is a transition in the role and/or expectation of the photographs, or a transition in the type of photographs used. Yes, Couch was worried about finances (and this is something that the FSA photographs will help quench with the Press' later photobooks), but he was also concerned about clearly communicating the beauty and functionality of the South in general, dispelling it as a place of backwardness and oddities. It is also important to remember that the Wooten/UNC photobooks were made before the quickly approaching moment of documentary fidelity and the FSA photographs, and thus represent when these types of books were still "finding" themselves.

In as many ways as *Backwoods America* illustrates problems regarding congruencies between text, imagery and even literal representation of the subject matter, *Cabins in the Laurel* shows changes and adjustments of such issues. Whereas, the former includes over

[97] Watkins, 218.

thirty of Wootten's photographs, the latter has 128 in its 287 pages.[98] The images usually are one to a page, with a caption underneath, and are interspersed throughout the text. Each chapter has several plates within it, and there is much more of a correspondence between text and image than with *Backwoods America*, as they are never far apart from each other, thematically or physically. The text was written by Muriel Earley Sheppard and details her move from upstate New York to the mountains of North Carolina in 1928, where she lived with her mining engineer husband. From this perspective, she attempts to provide a picture of early 20th-century Appalachian life. Couch widely promoted the photobook, showing copies of it in several of the largest bookstores in Richmond, Baltimore, Washington, Philadelphia, and New York, finding that people were very impressed by "the selling power of the pictures."[99] The photographs were taken in the actual regions of North Carolina that Sheppard, who accompanied Wootten, was writing about. Like Ulmann, though, the subjects were asked to wear antiquated clothing, show hand-thrown pots and generally represent bygone days. After the publication, Shepperd's neighbors voiced their disappointment, wishing they had been able to show off their store-bought pots and clothing, their community fairs as evidence of sophistication and cultivation of craft-development and animal breeding (instead of being nothing more than a jubilee of drink, dance and pies), and their innovations in mining practices.[100]

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[98] Muriel Earley Sheppard, with illustrations by Bayard Wootten, *Cabins in the Laurel* (Chapel Hill, The University of North Carolina Press, 1935).

[99] Watkins, 218.

[100] Ralph Lentz suggests that this is also because Sheppard was an "outsider," as she was originally from New York before she moved with her husband to the Toe River Valle, and claims that "they [Sheppard's neighbors] objected to an outsider's portrayal of them as backward, illiterate drunken hicks." See Ralph E.

*Cabins in the Laurel* opens with the chapter "Apalatcy," a heading that in itself refers to ancient language and the discovery of the land; again, this part of the South is celebrated for the way it stands in opposition to modernity, existing as a peaceful remnant of the American wilderness. Sheppard provides a lovely description of walking along mountains, up to rivers, passing ideal scenarios of mountain living (such as noticing homemade chairs on a front porch or a woman tending to flowers). She gives accounts of the history of certain knobs or hilltops, and offers stories and memories from actual people living there, complete with names of these people and places. The photographs complement Sheppard's words. Sometimes given a whole page, they all have captions, which may not be directly from the text but relate to the theme and content of the chapter. For example, the first two images of the Apalatcy chapter depict people living peacefully in the woods. The first shows two children standing in front of a massive water wheel (fig. 20). Their backs are to the viewer and they have sticks in their hands. The caption explains that the water wheel is still used to grind corn on the Toe River. Wootten's images are a balanced compromise between Pictorialism and the emerging documentary style. There is a tendency towards romanticizing, the sun glistens on the powerful thrust of water rushing down into a type of waterfall as the children stand in awe, but there is also a sense of context, one sees where the children are and what they are looking at. The

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Lentz and Willie Roby Trivett, *W. R. Trivett, Appalachian Pictureman: Photographs of a Bygone Time* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2001), 79. Reactions to the photobook by the inhabitants are described in more detail by John Ehle in the foreword to the 1991 reprint of the photobook. See Murial Earley Sheppard, *Cabins in the Laurel*, Photographs by Bayard Wootten, Foreword by John Ehle (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1991).

image is from enough of a distance to really get a sense of being a witness. The second image shows a log cabin nestled against a tree covered hills (fig. 21). The cabin is clean and well-kept in its appearance, despite the fact that it also looks very hand-built, which emphasizes its being an impressive feat, as the rocks that compromise the chimney are perfectly and acutely placed, and the beams that make up the porch roof are strong and evenly aligned. There is a family on the porch that looks out to the viewer, as if they are acknowledging their being both real and watched.

Overall, *Cabins in the Laurel* received rave reviews, spanning newspapers in New York City, Baltimore, Detroit and, in her home state, Charlotte and Raleigh.[101] The *New York Times* claimed it corrected the missing historical record of the region, for "every one [of the photographs is] an admirable shot and admirably brought out," and this makes it "a valuable collection in itself." [102] It continues by stating that Sheppard "has written a thoroughly likable, instructive and entertaining book." as well as "an extensive and intensive piece of research."[103] The topic was seen as quaint and charming, and the photographs added to the enjoyment of "visiting" the mountains and its people. Thus, *Cabins* exemplifies an early, successful attempt of the South discussing and representing

[101] Jerry Cotton provides extensive quotes and sources in his biography of Wootten. Specifically, see Jerry W. Cotton, *The Photography of Bayard Wootten: Light and Air* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 44-5; 95.

[102] Percy Hutchison, "The Toe River Americans of the Carolina Blue Ridge: *Cabins in the Laurels* by Muriel Earley" *New York Times* (April 7, 1935), BR4.

[103] Ibid.

itself, from subject to author to photographer to publisher. The UNC photobooks are a part of the South's history of changing both discussions and representation about itself.

*Mr. Nixon has no panacea to cure all of Dixie's ills, unless, indeed, you call an increase of general intelligence a panacea.*
New York Herald-Tribune, 1938[1]

*The people of the South do not have, and therefore do not use, the media of mass communication to the extent they are used by other citizens of the nation.*
Harry Estill Moore, 1951[2]

# Chapter Three: The Depression Era Photobook and the South

In a 1930 five-part series of articles for *Eugenics*: *A Journal of Race Betterment* Presbyterian minister Ira Caldwell did a study of an impoverished family in Georgia he called "the Bunglers."[3] Following eugenic trends of the times, he emphasized the need for mandatory population control, but he qualified this by explaining that this need could be avoided if families could have better environmental conditions, education, and more financial opportunities. In this way, he challenged traditional stereotypes of poor whites as being innately dumb, lazy, and useless. In 1932 Ira's son, Erskine, wrote the bestselling novel *Tobacco Road*, a story about a white sharecropping family in Georgia whose lives were filled with amorality, debasement, physical impairments, poverty,

[1] "Book Review," *New York Herald-Tribune* (August 7, 1938), 5.

[2] Harry Estill Moore, "Mass Communication in the South," *Social Forces* 29:4 (May, 1951), 375.

[3] Ira Sylvester Caldwell, "The Bunglers: A Narrative-Study in Five Parts," *Eugenics*: *A Journal of Race Betterment*, 3:6 (1930) 203-210; 3:7 (1930), 247-51; 3:8 (1930), 293-9; 3:9 (1930), 332-6; 3:10 (1930), 337-83.

unemployment and stupidity.[4] The family, the Lesters, seem to be direct results of the material his father had gathered in his research.[5] Five years later Erskine collaborated with photographer Margaret Bourke-White to create the most popular photobook of the decade, *You Have Seen Their Faces,* which was a documentary attempt at highlighting the problems and hardships of the rural American South (fig. 1).[6] Though the documentary aspect included interviews and photographs of actual people the two came across, and though the goal was to promote interest in and provide aid for the South during the Depression, the end result seemed to be the perpetuation of Southern stereotypes. It is interesting to note that some of these were of the very family that Caldwell's father had studied, oddly blending the real with the symbolic. Both of Caldwell's publications were critical in replacing the more traditional antebellum stereotypes of the South (such as those found in *Gone With the Wind)* with ones of the New South that were equally backwards: lavish plantations were now ruined homesteads, slavery seemed usurped by unemployed sharecroppers (black and white), and economical promise and stability was but a dream in the face of dried out land and financial despair. Shortly after, there was a spur of photobooks about the Southern victims of the Depression, mainly put out by FSA photographers who wanted to further the cause, and attempted to do so by providing more specific names, locations, and statements

[4] Erskine Caldwell, *Tobacco Road* (New York: Modern Library, 1932).

[5] For more on Erskine's experience as a young man in the Bible Belt, accompanying his missionary father on countless visits to the homes of the sick, elderly and poor, see Erskine Caldwell, *Deep South*: *Memory and Observation* (New York: Weybright and Talley, 1968).

[6] Margaret Bourke-White and Erskine Caldwell, *You Have Seen Their Faces* (New York: Modern Age Books, 1937).

accompanying the images. There also was a group of photobooks that were different in nature, being specifically written about and published by Southerners, such as Herman Clarence Nixon's *Forty Acres and Steel Mules* (1938), which was about the depressed southern agricultural economy.[7] These initiatives were critical not only in the aforementioned Southern presence in voice and authorship, but also because Nixon was a sociologist working with the University of North Carolina Press. Moreover, after the publication of *You Have Seen Their Faces*, the photographs in the photobooks put out by the UNC Press failed to typify the nostalgic and romanticized Pictorialist style of the previous decade, speaking instead to a more modern, popular documentary style of the 1930s. This chapter considers how, beyond documentary challenging fictitious representations of the South, the UNC Press exemplifies the efforts of the social sciences to use the photobook as a medium of social reform and information, while maintaining and speaking to Southern literary traditions.

*The Southern Type*

In the 1930s the interest in different groups of people in America spawned a particular interest in the South as a national topic. Ripe for discussion with the Great Depression, the media attention expanded beyond isolated studies into books of fiction and non-fiction, films, cartoons, magazine and newspaper spreads and mass governmental projects such as the WPA. Much of the mainstream entertainment about the South provided

[7] Herman Clarence Nixon, *Forty Acres and Steel Mules* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1938).

America with the myth of the South that predominated in the public imagination. As Morris Dickstein explains, "the romantic myth of the antebellum South, with its fatherly plantation economy, its loyal, loving slave population and chivalric gallantry out of Sir Walter Scott, was everyone's favorite escape reading," and "the whole nation was reading about Scarlett O'Hara and Rhett Butler—*Gone With the Wind* had been published just a few weeks earlier—just as it had thrilled to D. W. Griffith's *Birth of a Nation* twenty years before, with its racial stereotypes and sympathy for the white-hooded clan."[8] *Birth of a Nation* (1915) told the story of two families in the Civil War and Reconstruction–era America. Set in the South, it depicts African Americans as lazy, dumb and sexually aggressive and the Klu Klux Klan as noble and right heroes. The film held box office records for over two years. The next massive blockbuster dealing with the South was Margaret Mitchell's *Gone With the Wind*. First published in 1936 (and winning a Pulitzer in 1937), the book was a bestseller and was adapted into a film in 1939. The film received ten Academy Awards and was the highest grossing film of all time when it was released (actually replacing *Birth of a Nation* for that title). The story follows a plantation family during the Civil War and Reconstruction as the "Old South" crumbles. The slaves associated with the family are depicted as illiterate, childlike and unceasingly loyal, qualities that tend to underscore the realities of slavery and issues of human rights. Moreover, the two stars in the story represent the stereotypes of the Southern belle and the rogue Southern gentleman. The South, according to these films,

[8] Morris Dickstein, *Dancing in the Dark: A Cultural History of the Great Depression* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2009), 96.

was still known through its history of the Civil War and through the upkeep of the "characters" and issues associated with that time.

In 1941 another film was made about the South. *Tobacco Road* detailed the antics and tribulations of a family of once successful, now poverty-ridden, sharecroppers living in Georgia during the Depression. Though still viewed in terms of Southern stereotypes (in this case, hillbillies), the South was finally considered for its status as a current event, and not just as the past. The film is of great importance given the author of the book it was adapted from, as Erskine Caldwell would eventually co-write what would become the most popular photobook during the Depression. It is important to briefly consider his larger role in promulgating a certain portrayal of the South and its people, one that will affect the photobooks put out by the UNC Press, and almost all others in the 1930s. Caldwell grew up on the border of Georgia and South Carolina and became one of the most successful writers from and about the South in the 1930s. His characters were criticized as harsh and exaggerated representations of Southern people, but his background sheds a more complicated and divulging light on their constructions; one that showed an approach with a type of sociological understanding in mind, rather than mere fiction. His father, Ira, was a preacher with an interest in social science. He believed that people were the result of nurture over nature and was sensitive to the way one's living and economic conditions affects him/her.[9] Spending time with the more destitute and

[9] As explained in Paul A. Lombardo, "From Better Babies to the Bunglers: Eugenics on Tobacco Road," *A Century of Eugenics in America: From the Indiana Experiment to the Human Genome Era*, Edited by Paul A. Lombardo (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011), 45 and Betsy L. Nies, "Defending Jeeter: Conservative Arguments against Eugenics in the Depression Era South," *Popular Eugenics: National*

downtrodden members of his congregation, he wanted to share his findings about the type of people he saw, beyond stereotypes of "poor white trash."[10] As previously mentioned, he wrote a series of articles on a family he called the "Bunglers" and published it in 1930 in the science journal *Eugenics*, alongside photographs he had taken himself.

Ira Caldwell's project allows for a brief discussion about certain photographic practices that participated in cultivating a national stereotype of the South. The surfacing of photographs of Southerners as different "types" of people coincided with the turn of the century growth of newspapers and improvements in halftone processing. What was also critical was the impulse of the Progressive Era to promote social reform and government involvement in social issues such as child labor, women's suffrage, and public health. Reports on these (and sometimes images) were published in newspapers, magazines and journals. As a result of these efforts and studies, the South became associated with certain topics in the extreme, hookworm being one of them, and, thus, the idea of the sick, lazy Southerner was reinforced in the public's mind. Hookworm is transferred through the skin and was common in warm, moist climates (such as the South), and was the result of unsanitary environments. In the early 1900s hookworm disease erupted as being a national menace, but it specifically affected about forty percent of the South's population. The issue was so prominent that in 1909 The Rockefeller Sanitary Commission for the

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*Efficiency and American Mass Culture in the 1930s*¸ Edited by Susan Currell and Cristina Cogdell (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2006), 120-39.

[10] For a history about the negative images and characterizations of Southerners, see Charles C. Bolton, *Poor Whites of the Antebellum South: Tenants and Laborers in Central North. Carolina and Northeast Mississippi* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994).

Eradication of Hookworm Disease was organized, and in 1910 began campaigns in the Southern states of Virginia, North Carolina, Georgia, South Carolina, Tennessee, Arkansas, Mississippi, Alabama and Louisiana. Newspapers and journals ran articles alongside photographs of victims. Many of these images showed people who looked emaciated, thwarted in growth or just generally unhealthy. *McClure's Magazine* was an American illustrated monthly periodical popular at the turn of the twentieth century. It was associated with the muckraking work of figures such as Ida Tarbell and Lincoln Steffens. It is also where the then New York governor Theodore Roosevelt wrote about Jacob Riis.[11] Riis' research eventually turned into his groundbreaking photobook *How the Other Half Lives*.[12]

*How the Other Half Lives* offers further evidence of the fascination with seeing society as a composite of types so prevalent during the Progressive Era. Some of his chapters were divided into racial groups, such as "Chinatown" or "Jewtown," and his text is ridden with comments or observations that seem more subjective than informative. For example, in

[11] Theodore Roosevelt, "Reform through Social Work: Some Forces That Tell for Decent in New York City," *McClure's Magazine* 16 (March 1901): 448. Jacob Riis, *How the Other Half Lives: Studies Among the Tenements of New York* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1890).

[12] As a note, Riis' publication is an early example of a book printed in the majority with half-tone illustrations directly from photographs, as well as line engravings. Nonetheless, it is generally accepted as a photobook, and the first with the agenda of social reform. Martin Parr, somewhat obscurely, claims that it, in one sense, "is hardly a photobook at all; it is a socio-political polemic…and yet it is one of the most important photobooks ever published." He states that this is because of the extensive use of halftone photographic reproductions and the way it signifies, not a new photographic genre, but a photographic attitude involving social reform and images as witness. I believe it does signify a new genre, in the way Riis combines photographic imagery, personal testimony, statistics and a story-like narrative all in the service of social reform. This is a methodology that will be utilized by the UNC Press sociology photobooks. Martin Parr and Gerry Badger, *The Photobook: A History*, Volume 1 (London; New York: Phaidon, 2004), 40; 53.

the chapter "The Mixed Crowd," he states that "the one thing you shall vainly ask for in the chief city of America is a distinctively American community. There is none; certainly not among the tenements."[13] He further explains that "the once unwelcome Irishman has been followed in his turn by the Italian, the Russian Jew, and then Chinaman, and has himself taken a hand at opposition, quite as bitter and quite as ineffectual, against these later hordes."[14] Riis is speaking to a class that sees "Americanness" not as a cultural pluralism, but as deriving from a particular stock, and his listing of the order and hierarchies of peoples speaks to the reader's understanding of seeing them as somehow different from them. As Janet Pascal explains, "paradoxically, his unpleasant racial stereotyping, which is so alienating to the modern reader, may have helped increase the book's impact on the original audience," and this is possible because "by not challenging the prejudices that would have been held by most middle-class readers, Riis put his audience at ease, making it easier for them to hear what he had to say."[15] Riis' photobook rested, in many ways, on persistent racial, ethnic and classist stereotypes of the times, something that will remain troublesome in studies of urban and rural poverty; that is, how can the "others" be represented as distinct, yet fellow Americans, worthy of aid and consideration? [16]

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[13] Riis, 21-2.

[14] Ibid.

[15] Janet B. Pascal, *Jacob Riis: Reporter and Reformer* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 103.

[16] Though Riis has been, and continues to be, recognized as a critical figure in both social reform and the use of photography for that purpose, several historians have deconstructed his role and feel, instead that he represents classist views that reaffirm his own bourgeoisie position in society, as well as that of the readers. See Sally Stein, "Making Connections with the Camera*:* Photography and Social Mobility in the Career of Jacob Riis," *Afterimage* 10:10 (May 1983), 9-16; Maren Stange, "Jacob Riis and Urban Visual Culture,"

Much of the thrust of Riis drive towards social reform for the immigrants did manifest in the form of reminding the readers that a failure to provide sanitary housing for the lesser classes could eventually put them at risk, with the spread of disease throughout public areas of the city. In that regard, disease and filth, the unsanitary and the ill, tend to become associated with not just the poor, but the outsider of mainstream culture. Such is also found in the hookworm studies of the early twentieth century. In 1909 *McClure's* published an article on hookworm disease that included photographs (fig. 2).[17] Often the captions would read "a family of poor whites" or show children who are labeled "too weak to work", "dirt-eaters" or "idiots." Indeed, all are barefoot and appear dirty, and these likely contributed to the idea of Southerners as being, lazy, dumb or debased. Though the article, like Riis' book, was an attempt to make this problem visible and to conjure up interest and support from its middle-class readers, instead it may have helped cultivate the image of the backwards Southerner. As Natalie Ring explains, "such accounts of 'pure Anglo-Saxon stock' behaving in an unhygienic, animal-like manner usually attributed to nonwhite races shocked the American public and reinforced stereotypes that somehow the white race in the South was degenerating rapidly."[18]

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*Journal of Urban History* 15:3 (May 1989), 274–303; Keith Gandal, *The Virtues of the Vicious: Jacob Riis, Stephen Crane, and the Spectacle of the Slum* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

[17] See Marion Hamilton Carter, "The Vampire of the South," *McClure's Magazine* 33 (October 1909): 617-31.

[18] Natalie J. Ring, *The Problem South: Region, Empire, and the New Liberal State, 1880-1930* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2012), 67.

Another factor in photography aiding a typology of the Southerner was the Eugenics movement. Also around the turn of the century, the identifying of such poor regions and people started to become a subject beyond social studies or reform alone. A popular approach, eugenics believed that one could physically distinguish genetic superiority within a populace. In that regard, photography was an ideal tool for eugenicists, as it has a long history of objectifying humans into scientific subjects, whether they were slaves or criminals.[19] This trend of research is even evident in the way the children in the hookworm article are always facing either straight frontal or profile, like a mug shot, so as to be clearly analyzed as ethnographic objects or scientific specimens. These investigations ultimately took on the form of the very trendy "family studies," attempts at tracing the history and passage of "degenerate" genes. Many of these studies focused on clans, kin groups and Southern peoples, and herein lies Caldwell's study of the Bunglers. Meaningful is that many of these "family" studies may have really been about underlying issues of race and the threat of interracial genetic mixing, something particularly prominent in the South (not just because of the large presence of "non-whites," but because they exist within the same economic group as many of the "degraded" Anglo-Saxon stock—i.e. the poor whites). As Nathaniel Deutsch explains, "what they were really interested in was the contemporary threat of miscegenation [the mixing of different racial groups through marriage, cohabitation, sexual relations, and procreation] between

[19] Some helpful resources on this topic include *Photography, Anthropology and History: Expanding the Frame*, Edited by Christopher A. Morton and Elizabeth Edwards (Farnham: Ashgate Publishers Limited, 2009), Jonathan Finn, *Capturing the Criminal Image: From Mug Shot to Surveillance Society* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009) and Molly Rogers, *Delia's Tears: Race, Science, and Photography in Nineteenth-Century America* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010).

blacks and whites on a national scale."[20] Some examples of these studies from Virginia in 1926 include the "Mongrel Virginians," the Wins (Win being an acronym for white-indian-negro) and the Isshies (which comes from the slave term for "Free Issues"). Unlike some of these projects, Caldwell actually took a defense against the idea of genetics dispositions to "feeblemindedness," laziness, criminal or anti-social activity, etc. and instead tried to use the study to show that "dire poverty and its attendant social subordination constitute one of the fundamental problems of the social order."[21]

Ira Caldwell's photographs (or rather, photographic style), might attest to his alternative position within eugenic studies. He produced images that gave greater context, just as he asserted that health was quite dependent upon the quality of their lives and their environs.[22] For example, the first photograph in Caldwell's series shows Mrs. Bungler and her daughter standing on their front porch (fig. 3).[23] Caldwell provides a detailed

[20] Nathaniel Deutsch, *Inventing America's "Worst" Family: Eugenics, Islam, and the Fall and Rise of the Tribe of Ishmael* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 129.

[21] Ira Caldwell, 204.

[22] This position that people are the product of their environments and not their genetics is something that both Howard Odum and Arthur Raper applied to issues of race. The UNC at Chapel Hill was known for its radicalism in dealing with racial issues, particularly in the sociology department, where Odum and Raper incorporated classes on race relations within the sociology curriculum. Moreover, both men were involved with the Commission on Interracial Cooperation (Raper was its research director at one point), which was organized to educate Southerners about racial abuses, such as lynching peonage, segregation and mob violence. See Charles J. Holden, *The New Southern University: Academic Freedom and Liberalism at UNC* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2011) and Bruce Clayton and John Salmond. *Debating Southern History: Ideas and Action in the Twentieth Century* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1999).

[23] As a note, I have never come across any of Ira Caldwell's photographs anywhere outside of the actual journals they were published in. Though Caldwell's experiences with his father are widely noted, the photographs his father took and used in his articles are not. Insofar as I know this is the first time they are

insert of the two, allowing the reader to to see them close up. The complete photograph is taken from a distance, showing both the condition of their home and the surrounding land. Caldwell notes in his caption that it is a one room cottage the woman moved into with some of her younger children (she has fourteen total). The one present is seventeen and in the first grade. By mentioning that Mrs. Bungler is a widow and noting how the cottage has only one room and a "rickety porch," Caldwell is suggesting that these facts somehow affect their quality of life. As Anne Maxwell proposes, this type of photograph compliments the mug shot frontal and profile rendering of physical traits alone by supplying "visual proof of…degenerate living habits" and pinpointing "the distribution of the new social threat represented by America's rural poor."[24] It is also the result of new possibilities of photography (poses, action, inclusion of setting, etc.) with 35 mm cameras, as well as the influence of the photojournalistic kind of images that provide a maximum amount of visual information and stage-setting for a larger story. In any event, Maxwell's latter point is particularly critical for the South in the 1930s, the literal stage for the Depression, the Dust Bowl and the following generations of poor whites to be studied.

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being included in this context of photographic history. This is a project I intend to pursue, particularly with regard to Southern stereotypes and *You Have Seen Their Faces*.

[24] Anne Maxwell, *Picture Imperfect: Photography and Eugenics, 1870–1940* (Portland, OR: Sussex Academic Press, 2008), 124-5.

*Have You Seen the South?*

Erskine Caldwell was undoubtedly influenced by his father's studies. In his youth, he visited sawmills and brothels and heard stories that were frank and, at times, spoken in a language filled with obscenities. He toured Alabama, Mississippi and Georgia with his father to survey the conditions of the poor and took photographs of what he saw. This eventually led to a controversial series of articles he wrote for *The New York Post* about the subhuman conditions of the rural poor in the South.[25] What this also reveals is his interest in photography as a documentary tool, something that will eventually lead to his production of photobooks.[26] As mentioned, Caldwell's experience with poverty greatly influenced the characters he would write about in *Tobacco Road*, as well as the characterizing present in *You Have Seen Their Faces*, the documentary photobook he made with Margaret Bourke-White that portrays Southerners (in imagery and words) as characters from his novels. Caldwell admitted that his father "introduced me to the people he knew, who make up the characters of *Tobacco Road*."[27] Paul Lombardo further elaborates that "Jeeter and Dude Bungler found a new, fictional life as Jeeter and Dude Lester," and that "other characters from the eugenics journal reappeared in the novel with

[25] For more on this, as well as on Caldwell's history and career in general, see *Conversations with Erskine Caldwell*, Edited by Edwin T Arnold (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1988), Harvey L. Klevar, *Erskine Caldwell: A Biography* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1993), 156 and Wayne Mixon, *The People's Writer: Erskine Caldwell and the South* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1995).

[26] As a note, Caldwell collaborated with Bourke-White on two other photobooks: *North of the Danube* (1939), about life in Czechoslovakia prior to the Nazi occupation, and *Say, Is This The U.S.A.* (1941), about American industry. Like *You Have Seen Their Faces*, they were very well received (though, surprisingly, there is no substantial scholarship on them). See Erskine Caldwell and Margaret Bourke-White, *North of the Danube* (New York: Viking Press, 1939) and Erskine Caldwell and Margaret Bourke-White, *Say, Is This The U.S.A* (New York: Duell, Sloan, and Pearce, 1941).

[27] As quoted in Klevar, 20.

barely masked physical marks of defect and behaviors that mirrored the real people Ira Caldwell had described."[28] What, then, was so stifling about the family of the main character, Jeeter Lester? The members of the family have deformities such as a harelip, diseases such as pellagra (a vitamin deficiency that causes massive skin lesions), general emaciation, tattered clothing and speak crude English laced with expletives. While the physical disfiguring and impairments speak of the eugenic studies, their lack of education, or even shoes, reiterates a distance from modern living. As representations of the South, people tended to believe that they were "the blunt truth," as well as "legitimate, forceful and true."[29] Caldwell defended the legitimacy of his characters by referring to them as "a weakness in our civilization" that has been "swept under the rug."[30] Even the South seemed split about the work; while one reviewer claimed that "contrary to expectations, the South hasn't been sensitive about the play's tragic expose of sharecropping conditions" or to "its various sociological strictures," another viewed "the gentry South of the Mason-Dixon line [think of the play] as too daring an exposé of conditions they don't like to think about down there."[31]

It is difficult to underestimate the cultural impact *Tobacco Road* had on constructing a national image of the South, as it was not only a bestseller in 1932, but became an

[28] Lombardo, 55.

[29] Atkinson, Ibid.

[30] Erskine Caldwell, "Two Years on the Road," *New York Times* (December 1, 1935), X7.

[31] Lloyd Lewis, "Midlands' 'Tobacco Road'," *New York Times* (November 30, 1941), X3.

unprecedented hit on Broadway, being the longest running show in history at the time. Thus, in many ways, Caldwell's voice provided blueprints for media images and visual constructs of Southerners. One critic of his prowess, Robert McDonald, claims that because of Caldwell's great success his characters have become "icons of American popular culture," not for their "seriousness," but in their "reduced form as comic-strip figures" whose "scandalous" behavior has "made the phrase [tobacco road] synonymous with white-trash."[32] Indeed, the characters were so upsetting that it was banned in Detroit, Chicago, St. Paul and Tulsa, finding the stereotypes insulting to all Americans and generally immoral.[33] In a 1933 *New York Times* review, Brooks Atkinson wrote that "the theatre has never sheltered a fouler or more degenerate parcel of folks than the hardscrabble family of Lester."[34] Almost ten years later, the stir continued, and the thought about the show was that "although originally conceived as a socially conscious drama, its sponsors soon learned that people were flocking to the Forrest [Theater] less in a spirit of reform than because of their fascination for certain evidences of natural history as interpreted by such characters."[35] Two years later Atkinson further stated that "such people as Jeeter Lester exist today in the lower depths of America...their abominations

[32] As cited in Robert L. McDonald, *Reading Erskine Caldwell: New Essays*, with reference to John Shelton Reed's review of Dan Miller's "Erskine Caldwell: The Journey From Tobacco Road," *National Review* 47:7 (April 17, 1995), 62.

[33] Michael Brustein, *Reimagining American Theater* (New York: Macmillan, 1991), 255.

[34] "Henry Hull in 'Tobacco Road'," *New York Times* (December 5, 1933), 31.

[35] K.S., "*Tobacco Road* Again is a Hit; Back After 16-Month Absence," *New York Times* (September 7, 1942), 34.

are the sore our civilization does not heal," and added that "we are unwilling to believe the worst about our kind."[36]

Five years after the publication of *Tobacco Road,* Caldwell and his future wife, Margaret Bourke-White—one of the most successful photojournalists of the time—created *You Have Seen Their Faces*, the result of their travels in 1936 and their witnessing of the extreme poverty in the South. The photobook included seventy-five mostly full-page photographs (the book itself was 190 pages) with six short essays by Caldwell on the problems and threats of the sharecropping system.[37] The text and photographs are divided into sections of their own, giving equal weight to both. Under each photograph is a first-person caption that Caldwell and Bourke-White wrote together. They clarify in their preface that these were not the actual words of the subjects, but their "own conception of the sentiments of the individuals portrayed" and that "they do not pretend to reproduce the actual sentiments of these people," as the names and places have been changed to avoid criticism and "unnecessary individualization." What Caldwell and Bourke-White did was based upon, as they claimed, non-fiction; the stories and statements and people were real, they were just given fictional names and places of locale, and faces were matched with quotes per a desired impact rather than actual testimony. The authors made daily logs of their journey and experiences and took elaborate notes. Moreover, the last nine days of their project were spent in areas of Georgia where Caldwell grew up, in

[36] Brooks Atkinson, "To Talk of Decency: The Truth About the Human Race is Not Necessarily Noble," *New York Times* (September 8, 1935), X1.

[37] N. B. Cousins, "The World Today in Books," *Current History* 47:3 (December, 1937), 2.

some cases retracing some of the steps he made with his father. As Morris Dickstein explains with regard to their statement, "here we have two of the most ambiguous keystones of the documentary tradition of the 1930s: the need to center on individuals but without 'unnecessary individualization,' and a willingness to introduce elements of fiction without acknowledging how the results can be 'fictitious'."[38]

The final three plates in the photobook are photographs of the Bungler family that his father had previously researched and photographed, and that he himself fictionalized in *Tobacco Road*.[39] While the authors felt they were protecting their subjects' identities and respecting their privacy, these "adjustments" of truth are what the photobook will eventually be critiqued for. The last photograph, showing an actual Bungler from Georgia, illustrates a man in tattered overalls with big ears and leathery skin (fig. 4). He stares directly into the camera with his mouth slightly agape and his eyes peering out, glazed over. This resident of Locket, Georgia is paired with the statement: "It ain't hardly worth the trouble to go on living." In *Tobacco Road,* Jeeter Lester, fashioned after a Bungler, sits on his decaying front porch that rests on land no longer valuable, and laments his poverty and his hunger, for "without snuff and food, life seemed not worth living any longer."[40] Though these comparisons may not have direct correlations, the

[38] See Dickstein, 100.

[39] The information about their trip, and the Bunglers, is documented in Klevar, 177-80.

[40] Erskine Caldwell, *Three by Caldwell: Tobacco Road, Georgia Boy, The Sure Hand of God; Three Great Novels of the South* (Boston, Little, Brown and Company, 1960), 86.

caricatures complement the representations of the South many Americans had, by come to know through Caldwell and his influence on mass media.

Aside from the lack of literal correspondence between who or what was in the photograph and the accompanying quote, a further problem lied in the way the end result was the reinforcement of a bunch of stereotypical Southern characters. Part of the reason for such successful presentations of types is that most of Bourke-White's photographs are clear, close-up portraits, literally letting one see and examine the faces of the people. Bourke-White was not new to documenting people, telling stories or creating photobooks. In 1929, she was the first staff photographer for *Fortune* magazine, and in 1936 she joined *Life* magazine and provided the image for the cover of its first issue. Moreover, in 1930 she was the first photographer with official endorsement and invitation to document the Soviet Union during the beginning of its Five Year Plan. The result was, in addition to numerous photo-essays, *Eyes on Russia* (1931), a photobook that included both her images and firsthand narrative of her experience. At this point, she was still working in a somewhat romanticized Pictorialist style, but by the time of *You Have Seen Their Faces*, her practice as a photojournalist had moved her closer to the crisp, direct images the public encountered in daily newspapers and magazines, and perhaps this familiarity helped with the photobook's success.

As for the Southern stereotypes, many of them were in-line with the descriptions of characters found in Caldwell stories, particularly those in *Tobacco Road*. For example,

Jeeter's wife, Ada, is a frail, emaciated woman suffering from pellagra, a disease that causes weakness, depression, confused or delusional thinking and mucus membrane inflammation. She is described throughout the novel as constantly having a snuff stick shifting back and forth in her mouth. In a photograph depicting a woman from McDaniel, Georgia, a quote states that "snuff is an almighty help when your teeth ache" (fig. 5). The woman's age is difficult to determine, as she looks worn and thin, with puffy, chapped lips, deep crow's feet and dark circles under her squinting eyes. Her features are further highlighted by the juxtaposition of the young child she holds, though fails to look at. She appears somewhat cross-eyed as she stares out with a grimace suggesting pain or discomfort.

If Caldwell and Bourke-White further stereotype Southerners, they do it equally regardless of skin color. Caldwell's text is actually very sympathetic to the "negro" (the word used by Caldwell and most writers and intellectuals at the time, both black and white), and the images often are very ambiguous.[41] For example, under a photograph of

[41] Alain LeRoy Locke was an African American writer, philosopher, educator was coined the term "New Negro" in 1925 special edition of the sociological magazine *Survey Graphic*, devoted exclusively to the life of Harlem, which was later expanded into an anthology. In it, he proclaims that the New Negro is unlike the Old Negro, who was a culmination of myths, stereotypes (mainly formulated with his position in the South), "a stock figure perpetuated as an historical fiction partly in innocent sentimentalism, partly in deliberate reactionism." The New Negro represents opportunity, promise, and redefinition. The phrase became associated with the Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s and 1930s (also known as The New Negro Movement), which emphasized African Americans as having a distinct urban culture (no longer solely the rural of the South) that excelled in all branches of the arts and socio-political thought. To that end, the 1930s photobooks dealing with the South are critical in participating in or rejecting new or alternative images of African Americans at that time. See Alain LeRoy Locke, "Harlem: Mecca of the New Negro," *Survey Graphic* 6.6 (March 1, 1925), as well as Gerald Early, "The New Negro Era and the Great African American Transformation, *American Studies* 49:1/2 (Spring/Summer 2008): 9-19, 14.

an elderly African American woman, smiling and toothless, with her hair wrapped in a handkerchief, it states: AKON, TN. “I reckon I forgot to remember how old I is” (fig. 6). The juxtaposition of her smiling (which becomes a main focus, as the photograph is tightly cropped around her face) with the seriousness of the statement creates an uneasy, almost acceptance of both her naivety and inability to calculate her own age; or her statement could insinuate that, in her life, the passing of time and a calculation of her presence in the world are not pressing issues. Perhaps this is because she has the more pressing issue of just making it through each day, given the presumed difficulties and challenges of her life in the South? Her broken English and incorrect grammar further speak to a sort of comfortable ignorance. The unfortunate result is that “negroes” are both uneducated and happy to be so. The implication could be that they are unable to change in this regard, or that they have no opportunity for change.

Likewise, another plate features an African American man sleeping next to two piles of tobacco leaves, his head is propped up on a burlap sack and his hand is nestled under his chin (fig. 7). The caption reads: STATESBORO, GEORGIA. “The auction-boss talks so fast a colored man can’t hardly ever tell how much his tobacco crop sells for.” The point of view of the photograph is as if one walked in on him sleeping, his body facing away from the viewer, making the angle from both above and slightly over. This leaves him disempowered and objectified. The visual message is unclear. Is he tired from being overworked, or is he just lazy, sleeping on the job? The caption suggests he is unable to understand words quickly coming at him, as well as unable to manage or even know the

value of his crop. The conclusion is that he is being taken advantage of after all, whether it is due to the deviance of the auction boss or the fault of his intellectual limitations.

Whether certain messages or implications came through or not, *You Have Seen Their Faces* was extremely popular. As Morris Dickstein suggests, "at one time there must have been a copy of the cheap edition of *You Have Seen Their Faces* in every 'progressive' household in America, and in many other homes as well, if only as an act of piety toward the southern poor."[42] Indeed, it was culturally pervasive. Weeks after its original publication a second, popular-priced, mass-production edition was published. The photobook was chosen as a Book of the Month Club selection, and was read on its radio broadcast, along with Bourke-White adding commentary. In a review of the book, Malcolm Cowley explains that, while at The National Book Fair, he "did see one book that impressed [him] to the point of breaking all the rules of the exposition and reading it on the spot."[43] He continues by stating that the "quotations printed beneath the photographs are exactly right; the photographs themselves are almost beyond praise," and that they belong to a "new art" where "the important qualities are those which used to be conveyed in words rather than pictures…the pictures state the theme of the book, whereas the prose serves as illustrative material."[44] Not only was *You Have Seen Their Faces* the first and most popular photobook about the Great Depression, but it was crucial in

[42] Dickstein, 98.

[43] Malcolm Cowley, "Books in Review," *The New Republic* (November 24, 1937), 78.

[44] Ibid.

introducing the photobook format to the public in general, as Cowley's excitement reiterates. Ralph Thompson claims in 1938 that "this has been a banner year for books of and about pictures" and lists Walker Evans' *American Photographs* and Archibald MacLeish's *Land of the Free* as examples.[45] He discusses both of these photobooks as being part of a lineage that stems from the "memorable" *You Have Seen Their Faces*. The comparison was something he had also done some months earlier when he stated that "Archibald Macleish's latest book is a striking but not altogether successful stunt," for "like the recent 'You Have Seen Their Faces,' it is a combination of words and pictures, but this time the words are in blank verse rather than Erskine Caldwell's earnest prose, and the pictures from other cameras than Margaret Bourke-White's alone."[46] The insinuation, of course, is that is that *You Have Seen Their Faces* is better in both words and pictures. Along the same lines, N. B. Cousins' review calls it "an indication as to what the book of the future will be like," and that its most "distinguishing feature" is "75 full-page photographs which play an equally important part with the text on conveying the story."[47] He continues, "if all the talk of the share-cropper's plight is ever translated into action it will be largely because of the book. One may be different to the sufferings of others when running across stray items or articles in the newspapers, but it is impossible not to be deeply moved by what is shown here. What Miss Bourke-White's

[45] Ralph Thompson, "Books of the Times," *New York Times* (November 29, 1938), 21.

[46] Ralph Thompson, "Books of the Times," *New York Times* (March 31, 1938), 21.

[47] N. B. Cousins, "The World Today in Books," *Current History* 47:3 (December 1937), 2.

camera says in this book is beyond argument."[48] Again, there is a distinction made between photographs in/as a book and their placement in other sources, such as newspapers or magazines.

Despite the photobook's popularity, and novelty, at the time, it has historically come under attack for perpetuating myths about the Southerners, for Caldwell's narrative being too close to his storytelling, and for Bourke-White's images being so decontextualized that they fail to speak of the larger problems regarding how and where these people lived. James Guimond claims that Bourke-White "photographed every cliché that was popular in the newspapers, movies, and popular fiction" and that this produces an insensitivity which "could have been used to justify all kinds of middle-class prejudices."[49] Louis Mazzari describes the subjects of the photobook as coming across as "suffused in the light of mindless bathos, as though parading their afflictions."[50] Furthermore, Melissa McEuen explains that "an interesting point about the criticism levied on Caldwell and Bourke-White is that the most frequently used term to describe their portrayal of southern life has been "grotesques."[51]

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[48] Ibid.

[49] James Guimond, *American Photography and the American Dream* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 117-8.

[50] Louis Mazzari, *Southern Modernist: Arthur Raper from the New Deal to the Cold War* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2006), 246.

[51] McEuen, 324.

McEuen raises an important issue here, and one that involves both photography and Southern literature. Regarding photography, the grotesque tends to be discussed with reference to nineteenth century images of the mentally ill, general war imagery and, for the South, images of lynchings. Much of this makes sense given the way "grotesque" has come to be used as a general adjective for the strange, fantastic, ugly, or unpleasant. Joseph Entin suggests a more specific type of 1930s photographic subject with an aspect of the grotesque to it.[52] He claims that this historical moment celebrates and seeks out the sensational, an "aesthetics of astonishment," and that shock and social extremes merge with a modern self-consciousness. He briefly discusses Caldwell and Bourke-White's photobook, stating that it "asks middle-class readers to feel outrage at the economic conditions that have left these poor people so destitute, but it does so at times by stripping the people themselves of agency and resilience, casting them as passive and pathetic objects of grotesque fascination and sentimental pity."[53]

As for Southern literature, the grotesque is associated with a style of writing that has physically and /or spiritually flawed characters, settings that are vapid, dirty or decaying, and general themes of racism, poverty, or violence. Indeed, a correlation can be found in this concept with the visual arts as well. Flannery O'Connor, one of the more infamous writers of this genre, wrote about these issues, in particular with regard to their connections to Southern writers and environments. She explains that "if you are a

[52] Joseph B. Entin, *Sensational Modernism: Experimental Fiction and Photography in Thirties America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007),

[53] Entin, 24-5.

Southern writer…[you] are judged by the fidelity your fiction has to typical Southern life," and that "anything that comes out of the South is going to be called grotesque by the Northern reader, unless it is grotesque, in which case it is going to be called realistic."[54] Therefore, Southern writers are viewed as not only as *inseparable* from their Southernness, but one that celebrates its difference or quaintness from the rest of the country. Interesting is the way O'Connor clarifies that the concept of the grotesque further involves the revelation of "some experience which we are not accustomed to observe every day, or which the ordinary man may never experience in his ordinary life." To that end, the "we" of the Depression photographs are the viewers, not the subjects, as the latter's situation of poverty, suffering and homelessness are seen as the antithesis of American living and virtues; thus, their situation makes them novelties just as much as their Southernness.

If these ideas are applied to his photobook, then Caldwell's text and captions are gauged according to his status as one of the most successful and famous Southern writers (in heritage and subject) in the 1930s. What appears to be grotesque hyperbole about the Southern victims of the Depression may have as much to do with the stereotypes of Southern artists (literary and visual) as with their expected products. The attacks on *You Have Seen Their Faces* may have failed to consider whether or not the stereotypes or characterizations are not necessarily borne out of Caldwell and Bourke-White's

[54] Flannery O'Connor, **"**Some Aspects of the Grotesque in Southern Fiction" (1960), *Flannery O'Connor: Collected Works* (New York: Library of America, 1988), 814.

insensitivity and dehumanization of the Southern people, but, rather, out of the 1930s South's history as being a place of national spectacle (literally, the theater where the Dust Bowl took place), as well as the traditions and specifically Southern style and expectations of their artistic output. The question remains, how much does this affect those photobooks authored by social scientists, and do they bare suspect to the same "Southern" style of writing? Moreover, when actual photographs of Southerners are paired with captions, is there an expectation—even presumption—that there is and will be a fictive quality to them, despite the occupation of the photobook's author, be it artist, writer or sociologist? The combination of documentary research and images with anecdotal language (either as caption or in the body of the text) may, thus, be more than just a tool for creating a more popular, accessible kind of study, but may stand as being part of a tradition of Southern storytelling and literature that the country expects, whether or not the authors intend for that association to be the case.

*FSA America and the South*

Although a lack of strict documentary protocol has led to its eventual criticism, Alan Trachtenberg explains that "whether [*You Have Seen Their Faces*] is the best picture-text integration…may be arguable, but there is no doubt that it gives a vivid example of the social passion invested in aesthetic experimentation by engaged artists during the Depression decade."[55] Indeed, this is visible in the plethora of photobooks that followed

[55] Alan Trachetnberg, "Foreword," in Margaret Bourke-White and Erskine Caldwell, *You Have Seen Their Faces* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1995), vi.

*You Have Seen Their Faces* and used FSA photographs, and that unlike UNC, were published in the North. Most of these photobooks were triggered by the FSA photographs available, which were a strict departure from the Pictorialist tradition and were often considered pinnacle examples of the documentary style in photography.[56] As previously mentioned, there were several photobooks with FSA photographs that were made to celebrate the country despite the hardships it was enduring. An example of this is Archibald MacLeish's *Land of the Free* from 1938, which included poetic lines about America on a single page facing a mainly white page with one or two images, and which, he claimed, was "the opposite of a book of poems illustrated by photographs," but rather, "a book of photographs illustrated by a poem" (fig. 8).[57] MacLeish was a Pulitzer prize winning American poet and writer. No stranger to the world of books and publishing, he worked as editor of *Fortune* magazine from 1929 to 1938 and eventually became the Librarian of Congress. As such, he had the FSA photographs under his control, and that is where he claimed the inspiration for his photobook emerged. As he later explained, this was an attempt "to find words for the purgatory of the Depression, for the American hopes and expectations and what happened to them." [58] He further wrote that "the actors

[56] It is worth noting that the FSA photographs were, by many, seen within the framework of Bourke-White's images, as well as the fact that her photobook was considered the first to really visually introduce America to the Depression victims. This is evident in an article about the FSA photographs entitled "You Have Seen Their Pictures." Despite the fact that it was published in 1940, a time which, by then, had already seen a variety of photobooks, Bourke-White and Caldwell's was still the keystone by which the others were measured, or at least understood. See Hartley E. Howe, "You Have Seen Their Pictures" *Survey Graphic* 29:4 (April 1, 1940), 236.

[57] Archibald MacLeish, *Land of the Free* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1938).

[58] Archibald MacLeish, *Archibald MacLeish: Reflections*, Edited by Bernard A. Drabeck and Helen E. Ellis (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1986).

in the situation are, for the most part, the poor and the ignorant, and the language must be simple because otherwise it loses its meaning. It will turn into a sociological tract very easily and if it turns into a sociological tract, it's dead." His mention of actors is apt, as the people being photographed have become surrogates for "types" of people, and moreover in these photobooks the images are being used in so many different contexts that their identity is determined by the point of the narrative. Equally important is MacLeish's reference to the problem of being defined as sociological, suggesting that something of that nature will neither be popular nor heard. This is crucial for the UNC Press photobooks made during the Depression that are, indeed, sociological, but that are attempting to also be in a format that avoids cerebral dialog and instead tries to be accessible to a mass audience.

Within a year of the publication of *Land of the Free* there was an onslaught of photobooks that used the FSA photographs. Edwin Rosskam, who was the photo-editor for the FSA, worked on a series put out by Alliance Book Corporation entitled "The Face of America." These photobooks attempted to highlight certain aspects of American cities, authors and groups of people. In the first one, *Washington, Nerve Center*, Rosskam explains that the series' strategy involved providing "a clear cut definition of the role of two media—the word and the image."[59] In the preface, Rosskam clarifies that the layout of the images and text is critical and "becomes master," as "word and picture are intended

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[59] Edwin Rosskam, *Washington, Nerve Center (*New York: Alliance Book Corporation, 1939).

to supplement each other."[60] He also states that he intended to avoid "the flashy lay-out technique of magazines."[61] Despite this proclamation, the photobook very much looks like just that. Photographs and text are intertwined in the layout, and some pages have full photographs with no text, some may have three photographs and a paragraph of text, and some are full page text. There are no captions, though sometimes there will be an identification, such as the listing of a certain government building or space, like the Green Room of the White House or the Italian Embassy. Occasionally there is the name of the photographer, many of which are specifically from FSA photographer Arthur Rothstein, and Rosskam says that the information is provided if the name is known. What is important about his explanations is the cognizance of text and image interplay, as well as of the photobook as a deliberate product. This format is carried out throughout the series, so the publishers distinguish their photobooks from other presses. Photobooks with FSA photographs, however, fail to exist as models for the UNC photobooks. They vary in format and purpose, unlike the UNC photobooks, which maintain a strict format of diction, image layout and chapter separation that speaks for their press alone (and can comfort the reader by proving a familiar systematic way of having information be presented to her/him).

Another example of the "Face of America" series is *Washington: Nerve* Center, co-edited by journalist and Eleanor Roosevelt biographer Ruby A. Black. Roosevelt herself

[60] Ibid.

[61] Ibid.

provided the introduction. Many of the foreword or introduction authors in the series were notable American figures, reinforcing the theme of American cultural strength. For example, the introduction in the photobook on San Francisco is by William Saroyan, a California native who was a successful author and dramatist.[62] Aside from telling the stories of vital American cities, there was also an attempt to provide a story of "the" American city on a more personal, yet generic level. This is evident in the next series book, *Home Town*, with text by American novelist and short story writer Sherwood Anderson (fig. 9).[63] In this case, the photobook provides a story, rather than attempting some historical or documentary non-fiction. Anderson muses about the people and the life of small towns. The photographs may or may not have identifications or captions, but at the end there is a list of the FSA photographers and picture locations. The images are meant to portray and illustrate the stories Anderson tells. To that end, they were chosen for that capacity, and not because they are literally from or about his tales. This focus on more individual experiences continues with two more photobooks within the series, this time the concern is minority groups of America. *As Long as the Grass Shall Grow* was written by Santa Fe author and anthropologist Oscar La Farge and provides a short history of the American Indian up to the publication date of 1940.[64] Following this was Richard Wright's *Twelve Million Black Voices: A Folk History of the Negro in the United*

[62] Edwin Rosskam, *San Francisco: West Coast Metropolis* (New York: Alliance Book Corporation, 1939).

[63] Sherwood Anderson, *Home Town* (New York: Viking, 1940).

[64] Oliver La Farge, *As Long as the Grass Shall Grow* (New York: Alliance Book Corporation, 1940).

*States*, which attempts exactly what the title suggests.[65] The series had used FSA photographs to celebrate all aspects of America. Despite the dates of their publication, they are not about the Depression and are not attempts to cultivate interest in or concern for its victims. With the onset of World War II, the Depression was waning as a topic of concern, and such was a challenge for the authors of any photobooks regarding that matter.

In the spirit of Bourke-White and Caldwell, though not in the format, there were some photobooks made, in part, by actual FSA photographers who wanted to document the people and conditions they experienced through their initial photography assignments with the agency. *American Exodus: A Record of Human Erosion* was created by FSA photographer Dorothea Lange and her economic historian husband Paul S. Taylor.[66] The subject was what Lange and Taylor perceived as a contemporary exodus of people moving westward that sprung out of the 1929 collapse of industry and the occasion of the Depression. Like Rosskam's series, they elucidate the layout decisions and state that "this is neither a book of photographs nor an illustrated book," but rather it is "the result of our use of techniques in proportions and relations designed to convey understanding easily, clearly and vividly."[67] They also explain (and are likely responding to Bourke-White and

[65] Richard Wright with Photo Selection by Edwin Rosskam, *Twelve Million Black Voices: A Folk History of the Negro in the United States* (New York: Viking, 1941).

[66] Dorothea Lange and Paul Taylor, *An American Exodus: A Record of Human Erosion* (New York: Reynal and Hitchcock, 1939).

[67] Lange and Tayor, 5-6.

Caldwell's photobook) that any captions or quotations report "what the persons photographed said, not what we think might be their unspoken thoughts."[68] Moreover, they indicate their attempt to let those they met "speak to you face to face" insofar as possible. The format of their photobook is distinctive, dividing regions into five chapters (such as the "Old South" and the "Midcontinent"), beginning each one with a section of photographs that either have actual quotations from and identifications of the people in the images or excerpts from other writings.[69] Each chapter ends with an essay by Taylor. The format for the photography sections mainly consists of each page containing a single photograph with the caption underneath or on the facing page (fig. 10).

Given Taylor's position as an agricultural economics professor at University of California in Berkeley, the photobook represents those attempts at offering the data, research and point of view of social science in an accessible and popular way, which clearly relies on the presence of the photographs. The photobook was not published by an academic press, but still tries to provide scholarly information about what he and Lange "have seen and learned from many miles of countryside of the shocks which are unsettling them."[70] Regional material, such as lines from folk songs or conversations overheard at a local grocery store, are also included as data. Lange and Taylor did attempt to provide a greater context for the images, including dates and locations and, as

[68] Lange and Taylor, 15.

[69] Two of these writers are UNC Chapel Hill professors and one in particular, Arthur Raper, is the co-author of a UNC photobook about the South.

[70] Lange and Taylor, 15.

mentioned, actual names and statements if possible. Lange's photographs have a similar quality to Bourke-White's in that the people are seen as monumental, and her compositions have a rhythmic, formalist quality to them. It is interesting to note that, unlike almost every photobook discussed thus far, this one is housed, for example, in the New York Public Library's Photography Department, whereas the others reside in History Collection. To that end, although the authors sought to avoid its being understood as a type of art book, the library categorization has relegated it as such; and this is part of the dilemma in determining what a photobook is, as its later determination may differ from the actual intention of its production.

The attempt at amending such an issue is seen in the photobook by American author, journalist, poet, screenwriter and film critic James Agee and photographer Walker Evans, who had images and text separated into two sections. Though published in 1941, *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* was a project started in 1936 that sought to depict the daily life of Southern cotton tenant families during the Depression.[71] Evans had photographed for the FSA and was working with Agee for a series of articles for *Fortune* magazine. The series was rejected, likely because some of Agee's language was deemed vulgar, but eventually turned into the photobook. Similar to the dilemma facing Depression related publications in the early forties, the subject was considered more or less moot and this showed, as *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* originally sold fewer than 600 copies. Its

[71] James Agee and Walker Evans, *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men: Three Tenant Families* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1941).

format, as mentioned, was unique, as the photobook opens with uncaptioned full plate photographs followed by text written by Agee. As had now become the norm for photobooks, the authors offered a type of program in which the photographs and text were to be understood in relationship to each other. Agee explains that the goal of the book was to communicate, analyze, defend and record. The instruments used to do so are threefold: the camera, the pen, and human consciousness. He states that "the photographs are not meant to be illustrative," but that "they, along with the text, are co-equal, mutually independent, and fully collaborative."[72] Agee later explains that he sees the camera as "the central instrument of our time," which is why he feels "such rage at its misuse."[73] Agee is undoubtedly referring to Bourke-White, as the final section of his photobook includes an article about her that discusses her material goods and wealthy lifestyle, paralleling that to her sharecropping project.

How, then, could Agee's format speak of something more truthful? It is difficult to ascertain, as his photobook reads, in many ways, like a play; listing, before his text, the "characters" and places to be presented. I use characters in quotes because Evans's lack of captions and Agee's changing of the names of places and people was meant to protect the privacy of the families they pictured and discussed. In that way, he also turns them into types. Bourke-White and Caldwell also did such a thing, which actually aligns the two projects, despite Agee's desire of difference. The story Agee provides is a difficult

[72] Ibid, preface.

[73] Ibid.

one to get through, due mainly to his prose, which in flowery, obsessively detailed, and often self-referential. Agee speaks more like he is one of the characters rather than a narrator or objective journalist. Frankly, Agee's writing comes across with an arrogance and pretense that is off-putting, as he frequently tells the reader how to read the book, challenges the reader by questioning whether or not s/he is serious about understanding the material, and throws cultural references at the reader (Beethoven, Blake, Cézanne, Kafka) that appear to have little to do with understanding the life of a sharecropper and more to do with Agee patting his own ego on the back.[74]

As for the images, Evans' photographs unfold by first showing portraits of individuals and their families and then buildings and towns. It is almost of reinforcement of the "players" and of the "stage" of Agee's "drama." Agee actually lists "People and Places" before he starts his narrative, including character traits next to each name and descriptions of locations, making the reader as if s/he is about to read a script of a play. Evans' photographs do not have captions, and so their subjects generically can fulfill the cast list of farmer, wife, railroad depot or grocery store. Regarding an attempt at the authenticity Agee sought, he and Evans spent eight weeks interviewing and

[74] This is ironic considering that in an appendix of *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* Agee devotes an entire section to belittling Margaret Bourke-White for photographing sharecroppers while being famous and wealthy and, therefore, disingenuous. Frankly, Agee's rather petty jabs at Bourke-White are somewhat unfounded given that he had collaborated with Walker Evans, the first photographer to have a solo exhibition ("American Photographs," 1938) at New York's Museum of Modern Art, which certainly accredits some sort of status of fame and success, to say the least. Moreover, as James Mellow explains, although "it is part of the legend that grew up around their book that Evans like Agee had stayed with the [sharecropping] family [they wrote about and photographed]," the "likelihood is probably that the fastidious Evans may have had a few meals with the Burroughses but stayed at more restful vermin-free quarters in a nearby hotel." See James R. Mellow, *Walker Evans*, Introduction by Hilton Kramer (New York: Basic Books, 1999), 322.

photographing three families, which he understood at being more legitimate than previous photobooks borne out of travelling and interviewing people for either hours or days. Also key is the photographic style of Evans, who shoots his subjects with clear focus and a straightforward angle, thus suggesting a heightened degree of objectivity. In a way, this speaks to earlier nineteenth century typological studies of different groups of people, be they class, race or the mentally or physically impaired. Yet, Evans has a skill in composition, framing, and balance that produces an aesthetically pleasing result in which relationships between line and form almost emerge before content. Whereas, artistically, this is often praised as one of his strengths, it could be seen as a problem in Agee's plea to the reader not to think of the photobook as "Art." In short and, despite the goal of the format of the photobook, it is so dense in its sheer size—471 pages—that the reader, surely, need be an avid one, a fan of Agee or Evans, or a serious devotee to the cause and plight of the sharecropper. As with the other photobooks that include FSA photographs, *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*, along with *You Have Seen Their Faces*, is a contemporaneous example of a photobook about the South against which the UNC Press was contending.

*The UNC Southern Photobook during the Depression*

All photobooks discussed thus far in this chapter were published in the North. As for the FSA illustrated photobooks, only two, Lange's and Evans', were specifically about the South (and more specifically, about its struggles). In the late 1930s, the UNC Press changed this; the South was about to represent, speak for, and study itself with the hopes

of attaining attention, understanding and aid. In 1938, Couch, director of the Press, wrote a review of *You Have Seen Their Faces*.[75] In it, he acknowledges that Caldwell's "intention in this book seems to be that of arousing sympathy for Southern tenant farmers, black and white," but corrects Caldwell on race relations in the South, on the death of cotton production and agricultural productivity, as well as his lack of optimism about the alleviation of poverty.[76] Moreover, he makes a point to discuss the photographs, stating that although they "are as nearly perfect as any I have ever seen and they are excellently printed," they do not confirm "the South's despair. On the contrary, many of them show people who seem to be healthy and happy in spite of poverty."[77] How, then will the UNC press use photographs in its books, particularly as its director sees them as being valuable? Their strategy will be to include photographs that show both despair and vitality, as well as captions that point to such a dichotomy. This is apparent in Herman Clarence Nixon's *Forty Acres and Steel Mules* (1938) and Arthur Raper and Ira De A. Reid's *Sharecroppers All* (1941).[78]

The photobooks of Nixon and Raper, both of whom worked with Odum and his Institute, were a part of what Louis Mazzari identifies as a type of "documentary sociology." [79]

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[75] W.T. Couch, "Landlord and Tenant," *Virginia Quarterly Review* (Spring 1938), 309-312.

[76] Ibid.

[77] Ibid.

[78] Arthur F. Raper and Ira De. A. Reid, *Sharecroppers All* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1941).

[79] Mazzari, 397.

Couch himself noted that "so far as I know…this method of portraying the quality of life of a people, of revealing the real workings of institutions, customs, habits, has never before been used for the people of any region or country."[80] What Couch is referring to, perhaps, is the attempt to break through the stigma of academic research and language and create books that laypeople will consume. FSA photographs certainly would be recognizable to the public, and writing in a tone that reflects a sensitivity to regional and folk vernacular (avoiding cerebral diction) was another means of making connections.[81] As noted, the attempt to provide sociological insight and statistics, regional histories and traditions and photographs in the name of social reform has occurred in photobooks prior to this, yet none have actually come out of an author and a press that are both university affiliates and that represent an expansion of sociology beyond the campus or classroom. Rupert Vance, who was part of the UNC Sociology department, wrote about these new kinds of studies that mixed documentary projects, history and sociology, and stated in 1940 that "it is to be hoped that history as an art will secure the documents to infuse life" into new studies of the South's people, "which in their treatment at the hands of demographers and statisticians have seemed somewhat desiccated."[82] What is more appropriate to "infuse life" into those dried-up studies than actual images of people and

[80] As cited in Mazzari, 397.

[81] Aside from the bad timing of being published during World War II, and the daunting length of the book, this may be one area in which *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* failed to be popular, as Agee's diction if often pompous, highly erudite and excessively verbose.

[82] As cited in Mazzari, 397. Vance wrote a groundbreaking work that identified and classified different cultures of the South. Rupert Vance, *Human Geography of the South: a Study in Regional Resources and Human Adequacy* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1932).

places? Moreover, the use of quotes with the images adds a more personal voice which, again, brings their stories and situations to life.

Despite the current events at the turn of the decade that detracted from the victims of the Depression, the UNC Sociology Department and Press strove to keep the subject of the South alive. Such a desire may have something to do with the faculty members being Southerners and UNC being the oldest state university in the South, and the first university press in the South. For them, the South was not just a topic, but a part of their history, community, memory; moreover, it was home. Herman Clarence Nixon was an Alabama-borne historian and political scientist who taught at several universities in the South in states such as Alabama, Louisiana and Missouri. Originally, Nixon was associated with the Southern Agrarians, a group of twelve American writers, poets, essayists, and novelists that were "very much concerned with the erosion of the quality of individual life by the forces of industrialization and the uncritical worship of material progress as an end in itself."[83] In 1930 they published *I'll Take My Stand: The South and the Agrarian Tradition*, a collection of essays that cover their beliefs about topics such as Southern education, religion, and individualism. Nixon wrote the essay on Southern economy in which he states that he is not opposed to Southern industrialization but, rather, he thinks there is a distorted picture of industrial progress which threatens the agrarian history and fact of the South.[84] His concern about both the South and its

[83] Louis Decimus Rubin Jr., "Introduction," *I'll Take My Stand: the South and the Agrarian Tradition*, Reprint (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1977), xiv.

[84] Herman Clarence Nixon, "Whither Southern Economy," *I'll Take My Stand*, 176-200.

economy led to his personal interest in and devotion to the alleviation of rural poverty; a project that reflects this is his photobook, *Forty Acres and Steel Mules*.[85] The title comes from the saying "forty acres and a mule," which refers to a policy made in 1865 that black former slaves whose freedom was the result of the Union advancement into Confederate lands were to be provided with arable land. It was eventually revoked and the land returned to white owners; hence, the term is a reference to the failure of Reconstruction policies. Nixon suggests much more, as "steel mules" are tractors, so the letdown he speaks of is a modern, contemporary one.

In 1938 Nixon wrote *Forty Acres and Steel Mules* in order to highlight the conditions of the poverty-stricken rural American South, its cotton economy and its tenant farmers. It includes FSA photographs.[86] He begins the book by saying that it is "a hillbilly's view of the South."[87] His language, though non-academic, was seen as trite by some, though

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[85] He supported FDR's Subsistence Homesteads program and the Tennessee Valley Authority. In 1935 he lobbied Congress for the Bankhead-Jones Farm Tenancy bill. He was chairman of the Southern Policy Committee, coordinated hearings on the cotton tenancy programs of the New Deal's Agricultural Adjustment Administration. He was a member of the Social Science Research Council's Southern Regional Committee, and one of the organizers and first field agents of the Southern Conference for Human Welfare.

[86] In 1941 Nixon wrote another book about the rural South that included FSA photographs, as well as those from other sources, such as the Tennessee Valley Authority. *Possum Trot: Rural Community, South* details life in the Possum Trot area of Alabama where Nixon was born. Like *Sharecroppers All*, he merges together biography, sociology, economics, national and local affairs, politics and folk material. Again, this is a method (or rather, a strategy) particular to books by Southerners about the South in the 1930s and 1940s. One reviewer said it best when he described the book as "social history with a grass-roots flavor." Indeed, the same could be said for the UNC photobooks in general. See Edgar T. Thompson, "Possum Trot by Herman Clarence Nixon," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 222 (July, 1942), 191. Herman Clarence Nixon, *Possum Trot: Rural Community, South* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1941).

[87] Nixon, *Forty Acres*, 3.

radical in its way of speaking to a larger crowd that, for better or worse, relied on using the American South's popular dialect to communicate. Historian William Stott describes his prose as "invariably abstract, a mixture of social science and Southern orotundity."[88] Indeed, though, that is exactly what it is meant to be. The content is serious, yet the delivery is not only personal, but boldly and fully of a Southern disposition. As Nixon explains, the photobook is based "partly on research, partly on general reading, and largely on direct observation."[89] He adds that "more important than research carried on with teaching in four different Southern institutions of higher learning was my research among human beings on an Alabama upland plantation over a period of two decades."[90] Nixon is trying to go beyond speaking like a scholar and relate, instead, like an everyday person, another Southerner "born in a farm house by the side of a road."[91] One reviewer griped that Nixon's "hillbilly view" was inaccurate, and claimed that Nixon was far from it given his Agrarian involvement of the past, suggesting that his world is of institutions and empowered positions.[92] What this reviewer fails to understand, though, is that Nixon is identifying with a history and not a stereotype, thereby challenging and deconstructing the latter; he is breaking down the idea that a Southern "hillbilly" looks a certain way or is of a certain economic class or education and suggests, instead, that all Southerners

[88] William Stott, *Documentary Expression and Thirties America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), 224.

[89] Nixon, *Forty Acres*, 3.

[90] Ibid.

[91] Nixon, *Forty Acres*, 3.

[92] Gerald W. Johnson, "Two Reports on the South," *The Virginia Quarterly Review* (Autumn, 1938), 612-613.

share a common experience of growing up and living in the South, with all its particularities distinct from the North.

One thing that same reviewer did correctly identify is how the format of the photobook "invites, and probably was designed to invite, comparison" with *You Have Seen Their Faces*, yet he comments on how Bourke-White's photographs are better.[93] This reveals not just a consciousness of the notoriety of the Bourke-White and Caldwell collaboration, even within the academic world, but a desire to have the issues of contemporary Southern culture be told as, and in, a photobook. If the public was receptive to *You Have Seen Their Faces*, maybe they would also be receptive to something similar that moreover has actually sociological statistics and weight behind it? After all, the reviewer does note in the end that Nixon "writes admirably always and on occasion eloquently; but he is fundamentally the scientist." Nixon himself alludes to the popularity of *You Have Seen Their Faces* by titling one plate of images of sharecroppers as "HAVE YOU REALLY SEEN THEIR FACES?", not only aligning his book within it, but presuming the reader is familiar with it (fig. 11). Also critical is that the plate illustrates African Americans, suggesting that not only is the real story of the tenant farmer still in question and unknown, but that the "their" is not just white. It is hard to know how much interaction the public had with Nixon's photobook, beyond its presence within universities and libraries. Still, the use of photographs did seem to catch many academic eyes. As De Paul University professor Harvey Wish explained, it was a "timely discussion," and noted that

[93] Johnson, 612.

"the eternal morass of the one-crop system with its uneconomic merchant-landlord-tenant relationships, its exploitation of both human and natural resources, its wasteful methods of marketing, and, finally, the cultural blight evoked by the system are presented vividly and illustrated by a profuse collection of eloquent photographs."[94]

There may be a sociological or economical fact, an identification of place or subject, or a quotation. An interesting note about the captions is that Nixon was doing something Bourke-White and Caldwell admittedly did in their bestseller, by putting quotations under the images that did not necessarily stem from the subjects themselves. Perhaps Nixon realized that engaging, effective narrative to a mass audience may have relied more on literary tropes than scientific dialogue, as the identity of sharecroppers and "hillbillies" depicted in popular culture might ease a transition of familiarity and expectations of these people and their characteristics within the audience's mind. In order to further understand Nixon's photobook it is worth examining one of his plates (fig. 12). In Chapter II, "Plains, Hills and Farmers," there is a plate entitled "EXCESSIVE RURALISM HAS CAUSED AN UNUSUAL AMOUNT OF LABOR OF WOMEN AND CHILDREN" which consists of six photographs, all of Southern cotton hoers. Three of the images are credited to Dorothea Lange, two to Ben Shahn, and one is by Carl Mydans. According to the field notes, the captions under the images all record the exact data, minus the months and dates in which they were taken, which range from 1935 to 1937, yet three had

[94] Harvey Wish, "Review of Forty Acres and Steel Mules by Herman C. Nixon," *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 25:4 (March, 1939), 580-581.

information either omitted or added. For example, in the lower left corner there is a depiction of three children who have paused their work to have their image taken. Mydans tells us their ages, respectively ten, thirteen and eight, but this information is not included in the caption.[95] This lack of known facts helps turn the children into symbols, rather than start to put together their specific identities. Maybe Nixon thought the inclusion would detract from what he is trying to do; namely, communicate the more generalized point of child labor.

With such sensitive topics, Nixon also needed to choose whether or not the captions would appear moralizing or indicting. For example, there are two photographs within the plate that exemplify this issue. The first is the one on the lower right that identifies a man and a woman each holding a hoe. Although this is, visually and factually true, Nixon did not include what Lange had noted when the image was taken.[96] She wrote that they were cotton sharecroppers from Greene County, Georgia, but added "they produce little, sell little, buy little." By omitting this Nixon avoided any moralizing or indicting diction. They are presented more as data and less as a cause. Yet, in the photograph on the upper right, rather than listing what Shahn provided (that this young girl is picking cotton in Pulaski County, Arkansas), he writes a quote stating "The sight of the first cotton boll [sic] gave her a backache." This statement is not found anywhere in the text that refers to

[95] Mydans notes that these were "Children chopping cotton. Near Marked Tree, Arkansas. (Ages, left to right: ten years, thirteen years, eight years)." This is per the information provided by the Library of Congress: http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/fsa1998020201/PP/ .

[96] This is per the information provided by the Library of Congress: http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/fsa2000001358/PP/.

the images, and is presumably something Nixon himself made up, since he was not there when the photograph was taken and had no idea who this girl was. That said, it remains both didactic and empathetic; after all, Nixon was writing this in order to affect change.

Other issues raised within this plate are the image layout, with the photographs lacking a shared original context, as well as a linear or serial order of arrangement.[97] The images range from showing the three children smiling in the fields to a girl in the upper corner glaring at the camera, looking somewhat annoyed. These portraits are coupled with group images of workers going to work, actually in the field, either hoeing or resting. The end result is a multifaceted view of the labor he is discussing. The boy smiling is a child, and as such may not realize the injustice of him not being in school or of working at such a young age, something the older girl might already know. The groups of workers show labor out of necessity, and needed breaks from the hot sun. Nixon's photographs, together, make the subjects look neither worthy of pity, nor content, they are surviving, and they are human. Any reference to the topic of excessive ruralism that concerns this plate appears two pages later, and only states that "the unbalanced agriculture of the South has involved not only periods of forced idleness but also rush periods of cultivation or harvesting, with women and children meeting the labor deficit. In fact, excessive ruralism has caused an unusual amount of labor to fall to the lot of women in this region

[97] Alan Trachtenberg discusses how a photograph changes depending on context and narrative in Alan Trachtenberg, "From Image to Story: Reading the File," *Documenting America, 1935-1943*, Edited by Carl Fleischauer and Beverly W. Brannan (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 43-73.

of chivalry." [98] There is, thus, a correlation between images of women and children, and the condition of active work and needed pause. The photographs create a factual kind of narrative that corresponds to his actual descriptions of conditions and people; stories are told in words and images.

In a contemporary review, Albert B. Moore noted how the format of the photobook has a "physical appearance…like an elementary school geography" which provides room for the photographs that illustrate "poverty, squalor and quaint conditions."[99] Yet, he felt they were misleading, distorting perspective of the reality of the conditions, making them seem worse than they were. The reference to a textbook is important, as Nixon wanted to make the case of the Southern sharecropper clear, in words and images, despite levels of education. As for the nature of the photographs, like the variety of types within a single page, throughout the book there is a balance. Whereas, true, an image of a broken down shack is bleak, there is the plate consisting of a single photograph of four boys laughing and smiling, standing in the river in their overalls on a hot day, which states "there are health-giving elements in Southern rural life which even ignorance and poverty cannot nullify" (fig. 13). The young boys are African American and this is actually the only photograph within the text of the photobook that occupies a single plate entirely on its own. The prominence of the image and such healthy, happy representations challenged typical racial imagery or even the lack of them as a topic in general. For example, even

[98] Nixon, *Forty Acres*, 14.

[99] Albert B. Moore, "Review of Forty Acres and Steel Mules by Herman C. Nixon," *The Journal of Southern History* 5:4 (November, 1939), 568-570.

though the FSA did take photographs of African Americans, as Linda Gordon points out, their projects were segregated. She explains how press releases about aid to black farmers were only issued to black presses, or how "the first travelling exhibit [of FSA photographs] omitted all images of blacks, except for one Lange portrait sanitized of its context and caption."[100] In short, she claims that "such racism saturated New Deal agencies" and that "almost no government photography showed whites and black together."[101] *Forty Acres and Steel Mules* confronted such racism. Every chapter discusses and depicts both white and African Americans. Moreover, the photographic plate that precedes the four boys in the river (with, as noted before, text in between), has on its recto two photographs of sports and leisure: the top is of a baseball game and the bottom of two boys swimming (fig. 14). Both depict white Southerners. The latter has, as a caption, "one of the unalienable rights of boyhood, a swimming hole, is provided at the Dyess Colony in Arkansas." One of the boys is naked, and the other, like the African American boys, is wearing his overalls while in the water. A parallel is, thus, established in activity and spirit. Also, together, the captions speak of Southern rural life, youth and health. Arthur Raper noted the significance of the selection of the photographs in *Forty Acres and Steel Mules* and felt they were productive in providing images beyond struggle and injustice, calling the ones chosen "a very attractive feature of this book" and praising

[100] See Linda Gordon, *Dorothea Lange: A Life Beyond Limits* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2009), 196.

[101] Ibid.

some captions as "exceptionally good."[102] Raper, of course, was going to publish his *Sharecroppers All*, through the UNC press within a couple of years of this review.[103]

As noted, *Sharecroppers All* was Raper's and Reid's attempt to discuss problems within Southern economy and the need for change in the South, racially, socially and politically. Rosskam worked with Raper on the selection of the photographs, and Louis Mazzari suggests that he emphasized to Raper how "the best documentary conceived of its subjects organically, rather than as separate pieces of a puzzle."[104] This mindset complements both the interrelated and equal importance of the photographs with the text, as well as the kind of interdisciplinary sociology associated with Chapel Hill. Mazzari further explains that "Raper's approach to sociology, consistent with the goals of documentary, was to make his work accessible to the widest possible public, demonstrate general findings through particular examples and telling details."[105] The desire for

[102] Arthur Raper, "Review of Forty Acres and Steel Mules by H. Clarence Nixon," *The Journal of Politics* 1:1 (February, 1939), 106-108.

[103] Raper actually included photographs in several of his major publications, including one of his earliest, *Preface to Peasantry: A Tale of Two Black Belt Counties*, which involved a study about the effects of plantation life on two towns in Georgia, elucidating how the plantation system's decay became a "preface to American peasantry." Typical of many of the UNC books photobooks, it includes history, narrative, sociology, graphs and photographs. In 1943 Raper published *Tenants of the Almighty*, which was a sequel, in many ways, to *Preface*, detailing the way New Deal efforts had assisted the towns. Though not done here, I would like to conduct a future study on these photobooks, considering how they change in format and usage of photographs (as there is a decided change). The works are discussed by Louis Mazzari, but not as photobooks or in comparison to each other. See Louis Mazzari, *Southern Modernist: Arthur Raper from the New Deal to the Cold War* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2006), Arthur F. Raper, *Preface to Peasantry: A Tale of Two Black Belt Counties* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1936) and Arthur F. Raper, *Tenants of the Almighty* (New York: Macmillan, 1943).

[104] Louis Mazzari, *Southern* Modernist, 104.

[105] Louis Mazzari, "Arthur Raper and Documentary Realism in Greene County, Georgia," *The Georgia Historical Quarterly* 87:3/4 (Fall/Winter, 2003), 389-407, 395.

accessibility is evident, as with Nixon, in the language and format used, a photobook that tries to handle a heavy topic in a way where it becomes an easier and interesting read for a layperson.

Upon opening the photobook, the first thing the reader encounters is a photograph by Lange of a family walking down a highway with a single wheelbarrow of possessions, and a caption underneath that states: “With dust still in their throats, they trudge along the highway in search of a new beginning” (fig. 15). This image faces the title page and sets the subject and tone of the book, placing the reader on the road with family as they are off on their journey, just as the reader is about to journey through a story about to unfold. Moreover, the view of the family is from a vantage point of being ahead of them on the road; thus, the reader is leading them and, by reading the book, can be empowered to do so, to affect a change. The first lines of the text are also engaging, and familiar. The first chapter is entitled “Why Bother?” and the opening lines go on to describe an old plantation house, rundown and now home to poor sharecroppers living in rampant conditions in two of its rooms. Raper directs the problem to the reader, literally asking her/himself why s/he should care, and the description refers to both a rich past and a bleak present. Such a dichotomy was part of Raper and Reid's methodology, as in the introduction, it is stated that “nowadays the South is anything and everything. It is problem and opportunity, proud and pitiful—a land of unlimited possibility and of

relieved privation."[106] Thus, the reader is either put in the place of a Southerner or seen as one; in any event, s/he is necessarily included. Such reminds one of the way the UNC books were aimed at that larger plight of having Southern research speak to, and be written by Southerners. This was regionalism at its best. This tendency was even noted by Paul Taylor, who stated that "if written by northerners, *Sharecroppers All* probably would meet a pretty stiff reception in Dixie. It's a tribute to Southern Americans that they can give one another—and take—such searching self criticism."[107] Indeed, Mencken's call in the previous decades for the South to cultivate and question itself had been heard.

Another similarity the photobook shares with both Nixon and Bourke-White and Caldwell is the use of quotations under the photographs that seem to be used to invoke a personal thought or comment, but that fail to be directly from the mouth and mind of the subject. For example, the chapter entitled "Arid Aristocracy and the New Wealth," there is a Lange photograph of a young African-American boy working in a field, pausing in his work and leaning on his hoe, looking at the camera with a rather emotionless, yet contemplative expression. Underneath it it states: "The New Deal? Yas sir, it's done been by here" (fig. 16). This quote utilizes the type of slang speak found in a Caldwell novel, but also questions the success of the New Deal, as it is unlikely the boy or his family owns the land he is tilling. One reviewer was keen to this mixture of folk history, sociology, and use of documentary photography stating that "the generous use of case-

[106] Raper and Reid, *Sharecroppers All*, v.

[107] Paul S. Taylor, "Review of *Sharecroppers All* by A. F. Raper and I. De A. Reid," *The American Journal of Sociology* 47:4 (January, 1942), 642-643.

history, semi-anecdotal material throws current conditions into sharp relief. The well-selected and carefully captioned photographs contribute to this effect."[108] Moreover, in a review by Nixon, he emphatically notes the "several striking photographic illustrations," and uses his own colloquialisms in the academic review, stating that regarding the "picture...of economic sin" the authors provide, they are "agin it".[109]

*The Plight of the Southern Photobook*

In 1943, Raper published *Tenants of the Almighty*, a photobook that he worked on with FSA photographer Jack Delano about the economic system of sharecroppers and its laborers in Georgia. He decided to publish it through Macmillan, "which wanted to pick up on the notoriety that *Grapes of Wrath* and *You Have Seen Their Faces* had established for sharecropping."[110] When he explained his decision to Couch, he said he wanted "the point of view of the report is that of a story for Greene County from the inside, rather than a typical social scientist's study about a rural county for a university audience" and, as Mazzari suggests, "that point of view also pushed farther into the territory of documentary than Couch could afford to go—in its extensive use of photographs—and in the way Raper phrased in everyday language a quasi-populist anthropology."[111] Thus, it appears, the struggle ensued for sharecroppers to get national, mass-media attention, and

[108] Ellen Winston, "Review of *Sharecroppers All* by Arthur F. Raper and Ira De A. Reid," *American Sociological Review* 6:5 (October, 1941), 748.

[109] Herman Clarence Nixon, "Review of *Sharecroppers All* by Arthur F. Raper and Ira De A. Reid," *The American Historical Review* 47:2 (January, 1942), 393-394.

[110] Mazzari, *Southern Modernist*, 240.

[111] Ibid, 240-1.

for academics to find a way to do so. Academic presses couldn't pay for mass photographic illustrations, but academic authors perceived that that was what the public was receptive to.

Though these photobooks may not have reached the diverse and expansive audience they sought, their voices do appear to have been heard within the world of education. A 1939 article in *The High School Journal* entitled "We Should Study the South" tried to keep the topic alive and published a list of books about the South that need be read.[112] Among the list of books, many of which were authored by the UNC circle such as Couch, Odum, Vance and Raper (the journal itself was, after all, published by the University of North Carolina Press) was Nixon's *Forty Acres and Steel Mules*. Here, amongst weighty texts about Southern history and culture, was a photobook, accepted as an equal. Moreover, a year later the *Peabody Journal of Education* published its own list of books critical in studying the South and listed *You Have Seen Their Faces*, *Cabins in the Laurel*, and three of Lyle Saxon's photobooks on Mississippi and New Orleans.[113] Thus, whether or not the general public widely read and purchased these books, a generation of students would encounter them, and just as the UNC Press was a key figure in the history of American photobooks in the 1930s, maybe the classroom would be the key space for exposure to new ideas and new presentations of them.

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[112] A.K. King, "We Should Study the South," *The High School Journal* 22:2 (February, 1939), 68-70, 70.

[113] Susan B. Riley, "Knowing the South through Books" *Peabody Journal of Education* 18:1 (July, 1940), 444-451.

*Books should be about the people you know, that you love and hate, not about the people you study up about. If you write them truly they will have all the economic implications a book can hold.*

Ernest Hemingway[1]

*Photography, sharing its time frame with sociology, has accompanied modernity, serving as a tool for representing the world.*

Vicki Bell[2]

# Chapter Four: Sociology and the Photobook

"What is the role of sociology in the current social reconstruction? What are the sociological implications of the New Deal? What is the place of sociology in the federal government? What is the matter with sociologists?" These are the questions Howard Odum posed in a special issue of UNC's sociological journal *Social Forces* in 1934.[3] Odum was concerned, as he saw it, with sociology's failure to participate in society in a direct way, a way that went beyond statistics and cerebral studies and, instead, interacted with the public. Keenly aware of the power, authority and influence of modern media, Odum sought different ways to speak about and with Americans, particularly with regard to issues about the South. As a result, he utilized tools such as imagery and photographs in his studies and publications. Sociology has had a long history with photography, yet sociologists were slow to utilize it during the Depression, being wary that

[1] Ernest Hemingway, "Old Newsman Writes: A Letter from Cuba," *Esquire* (December 1934).

[2] Vicki Bell, "Photo-Image," *Inventive Methods: The Happening of the Social*, Edited by Celia Lury and Nina Wakeford (New York: Routledge, 2012).

[3] See Charles Camic, "On Edge: Sociology during the Great Depression and the New Deal," in *Sociology in America: A History*, Edited by Craig Calhoun (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 264.

photographs stood for a less valuable and legitimate type of data. In fact, sociology and photography are rather complementary. As Douglas Harper explains, "photographs can be used in empirical research in several ways," as "many sociological categories are based on observable phenomena, and indeed, many of these can be understood better if frozen in a photographic image than they can if written about in a field memo."[4] Beyond photography providing literal "evidence" of research data, it can offer things that, perhaps, can't necessarily be put into words, such as "nuances of interaction, presentations of self, and relations among people to their material environments."[5] As such, photography is a dynamic asset in understanding—and observing—the world, offering a mechanically produced objectivity (insofar as something was literally in front of the camera and recorded) and the possibility of a psychological or emotional connection within the viewer (i.e. that which science cannot always logically prove).

*The Interdisciplinary Nature of Photography*

In 1945 historian Clayton Ellsworth wrote an article promoting the use of photography in education and stated that "the camera has long aided the architect, the archeologist, the anthropologist, and the historian in their travels," and that "it has made possible permanent images, so that scientists and students could bring the fruits of field work to the laboratory and classroom for deliberate scrutiny and study."[6] Photography has been a valuable auxiliary for the builder, seeing the trials and errors of foundations, as well as their ornament; for the student of material objects and the student of human behavior; and for the scribe of all of these stories.

[4] Douglas Harper, "Visual Sociology: Expanding Sociological Vision," *The American Sociologist* (Spring 1988), 54-70, 61.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Clayton S. Ellsworth, "Clio and the Camera," *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, 31:4 (March, 1945), 579.

With manifold possibilities, photography, as a result, has been a part of many disciplines, but who is using it and why and how (in what format and as what type of informational thing)? For example, photography has had a critical role in the research methodologies of both sociology and anthropology, so much so as to necessitate the establishment of the offspring disciplines of visual sociology, visual ethnography and visual anthropology.[7] These visually oriented studies can have similarities with the practices and products of documentary photography, or, in some cases, a shared goal of social reflection and reform. As Douglas Harper explains, visual sociologists use photographs in both "the conventional sense of 'data-gathering'" as well as to "study photographs produced by the culture, for example, in advertising, newspapers or magazines, or family photo albums."[8] He further clarifies, "put simply, the distinction between these approaches is that some sociologists *take* photographs to study the social world, whereas others *analyze* photographs others have taken in institutionalized occupational settings or in their family lives."[9] Indeed, such could be said for the goals of documentary photography; using photographs to study the world, as well as reveal it. Harper notes this connection, and states that "visual sociology…gradually emerged from and retains a kinship with the documentary tradition in photography."[10] To that end, the relationship between photography and sociology is a crucial, if not ambiguous, one.[11]

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[7] For more on the relationship between sociology and photography, see Elizabeth Chaplin, *Sociology and Visual Representation* (London: Routledge, 1994) and J.H. Rieger, "Visual Sociology: A Practical Pedagogy," *Visual Sociology Review* 6:1 (1991), 38-43.

[8] Harper, 55.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Harper, 56.

[11] Clarice Stasz highlights this ideological overlap by pointing out that "a persistent problem in the development of visual sociology concerns the establishment of standards for taking and disseminating photographs that are more distinctly sociological than artistic or journalistic in function." See Clarice Stasz, "Texts, Images and Display Conventions in Sociology," *Qualitative Sociology* 2:1 (May 1979), 29.

The distinctions between fields and the actual work are, therefore, difficult to ascertain. As Howard Becker explains, "visual sociology, documentary photography, and photojournalism…are social constructions, pure and simple," for "in this they resemble all the other ways of reporting what we know, or think we have found out, about the societies we live in, such ways as ethnographic reports, statistical summaries, maps, and so on."[12] The sociologist and documentary photographer have skills and goals that correspond with the way an anthropologist uses photographs, namely, "to record the development of his research," to "focus insistently on human subjects" and "the way in which the subjects of his research related to their physical environment, to their 'natural' settings."[13] Christopher Morton points out that the efficacy of one anthropologist is ''his enormous capacity to construct visualizable representations of cultural phenomena—anthropological transparencies."[14] If photography is a part of anthropological and sociological research, how can their photobooks be assessed or recognized within art history?

Just as the methodologies and the goals of these various disciplines cross over into each other, so do some of the iconic figures found within each one's history. For example, Jacob Riis and Lewis Hine, who are generally credited as being the predecessors to the 1930s photobook in America, and who are seminal figures in the history of photography, are also included in

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[12] Howard S. Becker, "Visual Sociology, Documentary Photography, and Photojournalism: It's (Almost) All a Matter of Context," *Visual Sociology* 10:1-2 (1995), 5-14.

[13]See David William Foster, "Saudades Do Brasil: Claude Lévi-Strauss's Photographic Gaze of the City of São Paulo," *Chasqui: pecial Issue, Going Transatlantic: Toward an Ethics of Dialogue* 35:3 (2006), 98-109.

[14] As cited in Christopher Morton, "The Anthropologist as Photographer: Reading the Monograph and Reading the Archive," *Visual Anthropology*, 18: 4, (2005), 390.

histories of visual sociology.[15] The FSA photographic project not only participates in sociological and types of anthropological practice, as well as documentary photography and photobooks, but extends into economic studies, American history and visual education. Reflecting about the project, Roy Stryker, the director of the FSA photographers and photographic archive stated, "was it history? Of course, at least a slice of history" and "was it education? Very much so, and in more ways than one."[16] "If I had to sum it up," he continues, "we succeeded in doing exactly what Rex Tugwell said we should do: *We introduced Americans to America*" as "we developed the camera team, in contrast to the cameraman, and the full effect to this team's work was that it helped connect one generation's image of itself with the reality of its own time in history."[17] The establishment of the photographic files for the *Historical* Section of the Division of *Information* within the Resettlement Administration further reiterates their delegation as both history and information (both my italics). When the FSA photographs were included in published texts, their role as pedagogical tools, as well as documentary or scientific evidence, grew. The American public had access to these texts in books stores, classrooms and libraries, and in a way that surpassed the newspapers or journals that incorporated them; as books, they could be read and owned in a personal, authoritative way bound to the identity and interests of the owner. The need to clarify a photobook lies in the way breaking through such boundaries expands the field of photographic history beyond what has mainly been the visual

[15] Examples of this include: Peter Szto, "Documentary Photography in American Social Welfare History: 1897-1943," *Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare* 35;2 (June 2008); Franco Ferrarotti, "Culture and Photography: Reading Sociology Through a Lens," *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* 7;1 (Autumn 1993); and Charles S. Suchar, "The Sociological Imagination and Documentary Still Photography: The Interrogatory Stance," *Visual Sociology Review* 4 (1989 Supplement).

[16] Roy Emerson Stryker and Nancy Wood, "The FSA Collection of Photographs," *In This Proud Land*: *America 1935-1943 as Seen in the FSA Photographs* (Boston: New York Graphic Society, 1973), 7-9.

[17] Ibid.

arts alone; that is, those photographically illustrated books that are understood as history or economic or sociology books would, if considered within the history of photography, exemplify the cross disciplinary (perhaps even cross-cultural) linguistic role of the images themselves.

*Photographs as Sociological Tools*

Outside of photographs being used strictly in a scientific way for studies that will eventually be written and not illustrated, in sociology there are examples of actual photobooks. In fact, sociology has a long history of publishing photographs alongside text, particularly with regard to agendas of social reform.[18] The hallmark of such media in America is Jacob Riis' *How the Other Half Lives* (1890).[19] Riis was a journalist and investigative police reporter who took photographs of the slum and tenement conditions of New York City (mainly the lower east side). Often newspaper articles about these issues were accompanied by photographically based images, and he regularly gave lectures that utilized lantern slides; to that end, he was a progenitor of understanding the way photography can alter or affect the way social reform issues are ingested. In his photobook, there are fifteen half-tone images and forty-three drawings based on photographs. Along with layouts of tenement buildings and various statistics and charts, all of these are interspersed throughout the text and tend to directly correlate with it. (A discussion about "The Bend" would be accompanied with a photograph of it, and so on.) The format of

[18] There are art historical arguments that link photobooks with sociological studies, specifically citing Weimar Germany's interest in society, identity, typology and physiognomy as not only being the stimuli for the birth of the genre of photo-essay, but of the photobook itself, stemming from the illustrated presses filled with these essays that presented photographs in/as series rather than in isolation. See, for example, Matthias Uecker, "The Face of the Weimar Republic Photography, Physiognomy, and Propaganda in Weimar Germany," *Monatshefte*, 99:4 (Winter, 2007), 469-484, as well as Michael Jennings, "Agriculture, Industry, and the Birth of the Photo-Essay in the Late Weimar Republic," *October* 93 (Summer, 2000), 23-56.

[19] Jacob Riis, *How the Other Half Lives: Studies Among the Tenements of New York* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1890).

including a variety of data—visual, graphic and written—is one that will surface again in the 1930s and predominates in the UNC photobooks of that time. Riis become a photographer, as he put it, by proxy.[20] He claimed that if he could have provided drawings of the impoverished and dangerous conditions he witnessed in order to further inform and move the middle and upper classes he would have, but, he had no skill in drawing. He eventually found out about a new flash technique that allowed the darkest corners to be photographed, and so went on to first, have photographers with him and ultimately, do it himself.

Yet, there is a marked difference between Riis and the UNC projects. For example, the original title for Riis' photobook was "The Other Half: How *It* Lives and Dies in New York" (Riis' italics). As John Allen explains, "the use of the pronoun 'it' indicates the depersonalization of the poor as an object of study."[21] He further purports that in Riis' desire to reform society, there is "the conception of the slum as spectacle or entertainment," "a point of view which distanced the observer from the lower classes" and "increased discursive divisions between the upper and lower classes."[22] Much of this not only has to do with his tendency to use and reinforce racial stereotypes (as discussed in earlier chapters), but his diction of distinction. The UNC photobooks by Raper and Reid and Nixon operate with a different methodology. Rather than create an opposition between the reader, the subjects, and the authors themselves, the latter speak inclusively. In *Sharecroppers All*, some of the chapter titles speak directly to the reader, such as the first and last chapters of the book, entitled, respectively, "Why Bother?" and "Whither the

[20] Riis details how he came to take up photography see his autobiography: Jacob August Riis, *The Making of an American* (New York: Macmillan, 1901), 264-74.

[21] John Allen, *Homelessness in American Literature: Romanticism, Realism, and Testimony* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 65.

[22] Ibid, 65.

South?" By bookending such personal and direct language a type of dialogue is established that suggests, perhaps, that what exists in between the "lead in" and the "follow up" questions is a type of conversation. Moreover, Raper elsewhere and throughout the book uses the term "we," which further congeals the lack of separation between the author, reader, and subject. "We," he states, "have made powerful machines" and "must learn how to use them"; "can produce goods and services" and "must learn how to distribute them"; "we have asserted our divine right as individuals" and "now we must recognize our dependence upon each other—the divine right of the common good."[23] Some of the photographic captions follow along the same lines. In an image of a sharecropping family standing outside of a shanty on a clear day, it reads: "The children enjoy the sun, but what of the winter a few months ahead?" (fig. 1). The reader, thus, is provoked to consider the future of the children and there is an implication that his/her response to the question is important.

*Forty Acres and Steel Mules* also departs from the way Riis discusses "the other half."[24] In fact, much of the thrust of Nixon's narrative involves his proclamation of being a "hillbilly" himself, and throughout the text refers to his experience as such: growing up in plantation culture, working in the general store, etc.. His inclusion, therefore, goes beyond Raper's colloquial "we" and treats the study and the information in a more personal, biographical way. His selection of photographs also aims to illustrate shared conditions between white and African American sharecroppers, expanding the network of reader, author, and subject to one that even confronts racial distinctions. In a discussion about the way "the South does not lead the nation in the

[23] Arthur F. Raper and Ira De. A. Reid, *Sharecroppers All* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1941), 216-17.

[24] Herman Clarence Nixon, *Forty Acres and Steel Mules* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1938).

purchase and wearing of shoes," Nixon explains that "I have seen young men, white and colored, returning from church with shoes tied together and flung over a shoulder to save shoes for future church attendance," as well as "to save feet from a pressure to which they were not accustomed."[25] Moreover, on a photo layout with the caption of the same initial quote about the South and shoes, there are four images of barefoot Southerners; three include full images of people and one is a close up of feet standing on a wooden floor (fig. 2). The arrangement of these is dynamic in its assertion of balance (particularly in meaning). In the four square grid of the image layout, the top tier has, on the left, a young African American girl sitting on a front porch and, on the right, a young white girl standing in a field. The left caption reads "all God's chillum got shoes" and on the right states "white girls work in bare feet in cottonfields." Under the image of the white girl is an African American couple sitting (what seems) idly on a porch, and the image to the left of that is the close-up of the shoeless feet of two white people. Whether vertical or horizontal there is always an equal presentation of white and African-American Southern sharecroppers.

While Riis' photobook concerned social reform, it was not directly connected with any sociological organization.[26] In that regard, Lewis Hine is a critical figure not just in the history of documentary photography, but in forging a relationship between photography and sociology. Hine studied sociology at the University of Chicago, Columbia University and New York

[25] Ibid, 13.

[26] The photobook came out of his articles for *Scribner's Magazine*, but Riis did eventually have contacts and arrangements with a variety of crusades and charities. As James Lane explains, he "advised governmental officials, organized neighborhood clubs…built up a settlement house that later bore his name" and in the last fifteen years of his life "engaged in lecturing, writing, criticizing colleagues, prodding officials, stirring up the public, and sustaining several of his favorite charities." See James B. Lane, "Jacob A. Riis and Scientific Philanthropy during the Progressive Era," *Social Service Review* 47:1 (March, 1973), 32.

University. He taught at the Ethical Culture School in New York City and was encouraged to use the camera in his pedagogy. Hine felt that the camera was an indispensable part of sociological investigations, and at the 1909 Conference of Charities and Corrections, he stated, "the greatest advance in social work is to be made by the popularizing of camera work, so these records may be made by those who are in the thick of the battle."[27] Thus, like Raper, Reid and Nixon, the idea went beyond mere studying of conditions, to actually participating and sharing a direct history with them. Throughout his life, he worked for the National Consumers' League, the National Child Labor Committee, and the American Red Cross (amongst others). These groups in themselves represent the late nineteenth, early twentieth century Progressive era drive to create societies that study and aid the poor, broadly known as the "scientific charity" movement.[28] Moreover, with the "proliferation of photography and new media coinciding with the rise of social work, the underlying strategies used by these organizations was evolving," and "from the late 1880s to the late 1910s [many of these organizations] moved from purchasing photographs from various agencies to hiring individual photographers, such as Hine and Riis, for extended projects."[29] The photographs that were made under these auspices were "hung… alongside graphs, dioramas, and electro-mechanical displays in exhibitions," published "as part of proto-sociological surveys, informational pamphlets, and advertisements," and projected in lantern-slide shows."[30] Photographs were becoming such an important part of sociological discourse that

[27] Lewis Hine, "Social Photography: How the Camera May Help in the Social Uplift," 1909, *Classic Essays on Photography*, Edited by Alan Trachtenberg (New Haven, 1980), 111.

[28] For more on this, see Michael Gordon, "The Social Survey Movement and Sociology in the United States," *Social Problems* 21:2 (Autumn, 1973), 284-298.

[29] "Social Forces Visualized: Photography and Scientific Charity, 1900–1920," The Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Art Gallery and the Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University, http://www.columbia.edu/cu/wallach/exhibitions/Social-Forces.html.

[30] Ibid.

the *American Journal of Sociology* (the oldest academic journal of sociology in the United States, founded in 1895) "routinely ran photographs in connection with its muckraking reformist articles for at least the first fifteen years of its existence."[31] Hine's photographs were the backbone of many of these publications.

Aside from academic or professional sociological journals, there were periodicals that sought to reach a more popular crowd. One of these was *Charities and the Commons*, where journalist and social reformer Paul Kellogg worked as a writer, editor, and eventually business manager. Kellogg also co-founded the American Civil Liberties Union in 1920. He assigned Hine to work on the Pittsburgh Survey, a landmark sociological study of urban life in America. The Pittsburgh Survey was started in 1907 and used the city of Pittsburgh as a case study of describing and understanding urban conditions as part of the larger social reform movements coming out of the Progressive era. The survey was radical in the way it utilized data borne not only out of sociological and economical statistics and data, but included as well visual data from both artists and photographers. In many ways, it was a fundamental example for FDR's New Deal projects in its interdisciplinary practice.[32] Funded by the Russell Sage Foundation, one of the oldest foundations in America established to improve social and living conditions there, The Pittsburgh

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[31] As cited in Howard Becker, "Photography and Sociology," *Studies in the Anthropology of Visual Communication* 1 (1974), 3–26.

[32] For more, see Maurine W. Greenwald and Margo Anderson, *Pittsburgh Surveyed: Social Science and Social Reform in the Early Twentieth Century* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1996). Also, an interesting comparative project occurred in the 1950s, when photographer W. Eugene Smith spent a year documenting Pittsburgh, producing nearly 16,000 photographs. The project was commissioned by journalist and author Stefan Lorant, who had a career as an editor of some of Britain's most famous pictorial magazines, including *Picture Post*, which he co-founded in 1938. Smith had just finished working for *Life* when he started the Pittsburgh project. Given the backgrounds of these individuals, the sociological viewpoint of the documentation manifested itself as a massive photographic essay. See *Dream Street: W. Eugene Smith's Pittsburgh Project: 1955-1958*, Edited by Sam A. Stephenson, Essay by Alan Trachtenberg (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2003).

Survey used written reports, photographs by Hine and drawings by early modern American artist Joseph Stella. According to Daniel Huff, it "raised the prestige of the young social work profession dramatically" and became "a model for social work research."[33] Kellogg explained that some of the elements that made the survey a "distinctive enterprise" were experts that cooperated with local leaders, to have the study relate to the whole city and sense of democracy, to consider household conditions as well as human life in general, and, critically, to utilize graphic methods and portrayals, including "maps and charts and diagrams…photographs and enlargements, drawings, casts and three-dimension exhibits."[34] Kellogg was cognizant of the powerful impact the visual could have on people, and stated that "to visualize needs which are not so spectacular but are no less real, is the work of the survey."[35] Also critical is "to bring them to human terms, to put the operations of the government, of social institutions and of industrial establishments to the test of individual lives, to bring the knowledge and inventions of scientists and experts home to the common imagination" and "to gain for their proposals the dynamic backing of a convinced democracy." [36] His conviction about the visualization of social reform is evident in his establishment of the social cause magazine *The Survey* (1921-32) and its offshoot, *Survey Graphic*, in 1933.[37] These venues often included photographs by Hine, as well as FSA

[33] Daniel D. Huff, "Every Picture Tells a Story," *Social Work* 43:6 (1998), 581.

[34] Paul U. Kellogg, "The Spread of the Survey Idea," from the Proceedings of the Academy of Political Science in the City of New York, *Organization for Social Work* 2:4 (July, 1912), 1-17.

[35] Ibid, 17.

[36] Ibid.

[37] For more on the history of *Survey* and *Survey Graphic*, specifically within the history of American documentary photography and its dissemination, see Cara A. Finnegan, *Picturing Poverty: Print Culture and FSA Photographs* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Books, 2003) and Cara Finnegan, "Social Welfare and Visual Politics: The Story of *Survey Graphic*," *http://newdeal.feri.org/sg/essay.htm*.

photographs after it was established (fig. 3).[38] Sociological research was embracing the language of photography and the possibilities of pictorial journals and magazines to reach the "ordinary" man.

*Photobooks, Pictorial Histories, Social Studies, Public Textbooks*

All of these different publications involve themselves, necessarily or contingently, with a type of social history; that is, the studies and the photographs record people, places and events of everyday life in America (although it may not be *everybody's* life, it is, in fact, representing realities of American history). Moreover, America in the 1930s was rather introspective, trying to understand itself (particularly given the Depression), its identity, and its economic, ideological and cultural problems and possibilities. As such, there was often an overlap of disciplines and, thus, various photobooks or projects utilizing photography could almost alternatively fall into any or all of the categories of history, economics, sociology, anthropology, popular media and, of course, photographic history. There was an overall interest in comprehending both society and one's own self within the culture at large, at how s/he fit in, compared, belonged, or failed to. Photography's ability to complement, and augment, these studies is visible in popular pictorial histories of America, New Deal projects and the UNC publications that continue Riis and Hine's legacy of not just using photographs as a means of social reform and information, but of doing so as a photobook.

[38] Kellogg eventually assisted Dorothea Lange and Paul Taylor with their photobook, *An American Exodus: A Record of Human Erosion*. They visited him to get advice about finding a publisher and showed him a pasted-up dummy of the book. He was actually the one that gave them the title. See Anne Whiston Spirn, *Daring to Look: Dorothea Lange's Photographs and Reports from the Field* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 30.

In 1925 Yale University published the first several volumes of *The Pageant of America: A Pictorial History of the United States*, an encyclopedic set of fifteen volumes that cover the history of America from Columbus in 1492 up to the mid-twenties, and is one of the first major historical works to use photographic illustrations extensively (fig. 4).[39] The project involved several historians who wrote the various texts and selected the vast number of photographs, including reproductions of famous paintings, written and visual excerpts from popular journals and magazines, graphs and scholarly historical information. The photographs reproduced include nineteenth century daguerreotypes, albumen and platinum prints, cartes-de-visites, file prints from commercial photo, news agencies, government bureaus, and works by major photographers such as Alexander Gardner, Edward S. Curtis, and Man Ray; as such, the volumes collectively provide a veritable history of photography, albeit brief, incomplete or incidental. This further exemplifies how other disciplines can often offer or add to photographic history at large. Sociologist Daniel D. Huff explains the predicament of how many fields fail to recognize their overlap, and states that "the names of even the leading social photographers are far better known in photography than in social work," citing, then, the figures of Riis, Hine, Kellogg, Stryker and Lange as examples.[40] By considering the inclusion of photographers and the phenomenon of photography in studies outside of art history, the discipline can be expanded and give art historians a deeper understanding of the way photography is a critical part of a cultural dialogue on many levels beyond the more traditional categories of the discipline alone. This further clarifies the way non-art historical figures may be critical to the history of photography. For example, Ralph Henry Gabriel, the main editor for the Pageant series, "was one of the first

[39] *The Pageant of America: A Pictorial History of the United States*, 15 volumes, Edited by Ralph Henry Gabriel (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1925-9).

[40] Huff, 576.

academic historians to recognize and promote the research value of documentary pictorial materials" and "was especially sensitive to their role in interpreting history to an educated general audience.[41]" The series also helped to "helped legitimize non-textual documents as scholarly resources and interpretive tools."[42] Certainly his interest in and knowledge and selection of photographs makes him worth noting and "knowing," if one wishes to have a comprehensive grasp of photography in and as history.

With the Pageant series, the emphasis is on the way the visual operates as valid data, and this is something that its viewers were keen to pick up on. The other emphasis involves the way photographs, in being included in various historical publications, help a more general audience take an interest in, and learn about the topics. For example, in 1926 Allen Sinclair Will of the *New York Times* laments that "one of the chief abuses which have besmirched the repute of pictorial history is that pictures have often been an excuse to weaken the text, and the text has been an excuse to pass off hackneyed or deceptive pictures on the confiding reader."[43] He then explains that this series changes that by having photographs and valid research and, as such, "the Pageant also made scholarship accessible to a popular audience in an engaging, intelligent manner."[44] Later that same year, Augustus H. Shearer notes that "since the visualization of history has come to be considered important in its understanding, these volumes will greatly

[41] This information is provided by the New York Public Library's website about the series. The NYPL has digitized the approximately 8,000 photographs that comprise the "The Pageant of America" Photograph Archive. See http://digitalgallery.nypl.org/nypldigital/explore/dgexplore.cfm?col_id=187.

[42] Ibid.

[43] Allen Sinclair Will, "American History in Pictorial Form," *New York Times* (May 9, 1926), BR11.

[44] Ibid.

assist in that respect."[45] All of these observations reveal the awareness of connectivity between photographs, historical data (as it has been discerned and as is it changing, becoming more pictorial), attempts at public outreach with regard to these issues and the growing tendency to have the people, places and events of history visualized. As one reviewer explains, the series should be "in the library of every college, every high school, and every junior high school in America," as well as "Americans who can afford good books and who love our country's history."[46] Thus, the *Pageant of America* seems an important part of the history of photobooks, as it not only champions the power of photographs, but exemplifies the issues photobooks face with regard to expense, audience, ratio of text and images, and value as historical documents and tools.

In the 1926 article "American History in Pictorial Form," *New York Times* writer Allen Sinclair Will stated that "the sociologists are slowly accustoming the reading public to consider as history anything relative to the life of man."[47] Indeed, the interaction between scholarship and popular culture, and society not merely as a subject but as an experience, was growing. A year earlier (the same time *Pageant of America* began) a novel type of geography book was published that included almost 850 pages of maps, text, diagrams and photograph entitled *North America: Its People and the Resources, Development, and Prospects of the Continent as an Agricultural,*

[45] Augustus H. Shearer, "The Pageant of America, A Pictorial History of the United States by Clark Wissler; Constance Lindsay Skinner; William Wood; Ralph Henry Gabriel; Malcolm Keir; Stanley Thomas Williams; Talbot Faulkner Hamlin," *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 13:3 (December, 1926), 415.

[46] W. J. Cooper, untitled, *The School Review* 36:4 (Apr., 1928), 310.

[47] Will.

*Industrial, and Commercial Area* by J. Russell Smith.[48] Smith was an economic geographer at University of Pennsylvania and Columbia University. His study was described at the time as a "stimulating presentation of new facts, and of old facts in a new way" in which his "explanations are clear and direct" and "his illustrations, both textual and pictorial, are pertinent and distinctive."[49] His use of diverse sources, ranging from mass media to academic research, was seen as exciting and different. The journal *Geographical Review* pointed out that it includes a cartoon from *Life*, some lines from poet Carl Sandburg, references to *Literary Digest* as well as more commonplace newspapers, quotes from essayists to artists, and photographs that illustrate successive themes; unconventional, "the book is a continuous circus with all the side shows" that will "keep classes awake" and will even be read by "the trained geographer."[50] Furthermore, "Professor Smith has given us just the book that university geographical departments have needed for twenty years" because it is "a regional geography that describes and explains the real people of North America in a style that frequently displays the irresistible quality of genius."[51] The emphasis on the "real" reveals how the wide variety of material and sources provide something more than historical research, as the use of new and popular media—which is a part of everyday American life—aids to a clearer (and perhaps more interesting) assessment of cultural issues. *The Geographical Journal* called it "one of the most important contributions to human and regional geography that have appeared for some time" that "deserves

[48] J. Russell Smith, *North America: Its People and the Resources, Development, and Prospects of the Continent as an Agricultural, Industrial, and Commercial Area* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1925).

[49] W. Elmer Ekblaw, "Review of North America: Its People and the Resources, Development, and Prospects of the Continent as an Agricultural, Industrial, and Commercial Area by J. Russell Smith," *Economic Geography* 1:2 (July, 1925), 265.

[50] "Review of North America: Its People and the Resources, Development, and Prospects of the Continent as an Agricultural, Industrial, and Commercial Area by J. Russell Smith," *Geographical Review*, 15:2 (April 1925), 328.

[51] Ibid.

the careful attention of every one interested in either the topic or the method."[52] Thus, the power of this book is its participation with actual Americans, in what they read and have an interest in and how they, too, are considered potential readers.

Another notable photobook that crosses the boundaries of popular media trends (the utilization of visual arts in magazines and newspapers with written information, for example) and contemplations about American identity and history is *The American Procession: American Life Since 1860 in Photographs* (1933) by *Harper's* magazine editor Frederick Lewis Allen in collaboration with his wife Agnes Rogers (fig. 5).[53] Whereas the Pageant series had a blend of text and image at a close ratio (the images still had the higher percentage), *American Procession* is almost entirely images (they take up the majority of each page) with only, roughly, a couple sentences responding to each image. This visual emphasis by an editor of a successful pictorial magazine is not surprising, as Juliann Sivulka points out that in the 1920s and 1930s, "*Harper's* magazine covers and pages brought new modern styles to the attention of the mainstream," and "essential to modern graphic design was the use of new letterforms to complement the modern, machine-printed page design with photographic images, the essence of modern media."[54] Indeed, photographs were a powerful, more and more regular mode of communication that people enjoyed and looked to for both information and visual stimuli. This was only the first of many photobooks Allen and Rogers were to produce, including *Metropolis: An American City in Photographs* (1934) about a day in the life of New York City and *I Remember Distinctly: A*

[52] C. B. F., "Review of North America by J. Russell Smith," *The Geographical Journal* 67:1 (January, 1926), 78.

[53] *American Procession: American Life since 1860 in Photographs*, Assembled by Agnes Rogers, Commentary by Frederick Lewis Allen (New York: Harper, 1933).

[54] Juliann Sivulka, *Soap, Sex, and Cigarettes: A Cultural History of American Advertising* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1998), 142.

*Family Album of the American People, 1918-1941* (1947), which is a compilation of photographs covering pinnacle, as well as commonplace, events and experiences of America during the interwar period.[55] They share the same format as *American Procession*, with the focus being on the images. To that end, these photobooks further represent the moment of the photobook during the thirties; yet, like the UNC photobooks, they fail to be recognized as valid objects of research and study.[56]

*The American Procession* was enormously popular, but why has it not been considered a serious part of photographic history? Or even Allen and Rogers for that matter? Alan Trachtenberg explains that "for many years, since the invention of efficient halftone reproduction of photographic images in newspapers and books in the 1890s, editors and writers have combed picture archives for striking and colorful images, either to illustrate history texts, or, as in Frederick Lewis Allen's *American Procession* (1933), to construct a panorama of American life"[57] Although Trachtenberg doesn't mention or discuss it any further, his mention of it shows a recognition of how American life was seen and understood through such photographic publications. Allen was well-known at the time and the public were receptive to his works. Aside

[55] Frederick Lewis Allen and Agnes Roger, *Metropolis: An American City in Photographs* (New York: Harper, 1934) and Frederick Lewis Allen, and Agnes Roger, *I Remember Distinctly: A Family Album of the American People, 1918-1941* (New York: Harper, 1947).

[56] A *New York Times* review of *Metropolis* exclaimed that "moderns will enjoy wearing this book out with looking at it" and "the compilers should bring out a new one every five years or so to mark the changes the town has rung." These comments suggest it was desired within and seen as valuable for contemporary society. It further states that one thing it could never have too much of is "more pictures" and parallels it to a "good family album." This, along with the article's title, shows the public's interest in photographs and how they were construed as records of life. See C.G. Poore, *New York Times*, "A DAY IN THE LIFE OF NEW YORK: 'Metropolis' Is a Striking Record of Its Manifold Aspects," *New York Times* (November 11, 1934), BR1. As a note, I have not found any scholarly studies addressing these projects by Allen, though William Stott does list A*merican Procession* within his chapter on documentary books. See William Stott, *Documentary Expression and Thirties America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973), 213.

[57] Alan Trachtenberg, *Lincoln's Smile and Other Enigmas* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2007), 88.

from the photobooks he made with his wife, there were numerous others all about different facets of America, each with the goal of bringing history and introspection to a mass audience. His books were popular (often Book-of-the-Month Club selections), affordable and influential. A Pulitzer Prize winning author, Allen's *Only Yesterday: An Informal History of the 1920s* (1931) was an immediate bestseller and sold over half a million copies. As Roderick Nash purports, "it influenced historians and remained widely used as a college history text for more than half a century," as "no one has done more to shape the conception of the American 1920s than Frederick Lewis Allen."[58] The association between, or combination of, popular imagery and academic goals was a poignant one at the time and one that UNC tried to bank upon. In a letter to Nixon about *Forty Acres and Steel Mules*, Mrs. Alice T. Paine of the Press's staff (and apparently the person responsible for the photobook's selection and arrangement of images) points out that Mr. Gregory Paine "is planning to buy several copies to send to some friends and relatives" and that "since he is very much a layman, as far as your subject is considered, I hope that his interest means that the book will interest a good many others as well, and I believe that it will."[59] Moreover, Allan Sekula suggests that, in general, "mass culture and mass education lean heavily on photographic realism, mixing pedagogy and entertainment in an avalanche of images."[60] Indeed, this is evident in *American Procession*. One review of the photobook refers to the way that "the historian concedes the value of this 'experiment in the presentation of

[58] As cited in Edward J. Larson, *Summer for the Gods: The Scopes Trial and America's Continuing Debate over Science and Religion* (New York: Basic Books, 1997), 227. Larson further suggests that Allen was even responsible for shaping the American public's views about the South through his detailing of the Scopes trial in *Only Yesterday*, and set up distinctions accepted at the time of "'rural piety' versus urban sophistication and the South against the North." See Larson, 226.

[59] Nixon to Pain, April 28, 1938, #40073, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

[60] Allan Sekula, "Reading an Archive: Photography Between Labour and Capital," *The Photography Reader*, Edited by Liz Wells (London: Routledge, 2003), 447.

American social history' and only hopes that it will lead the public to a greater interest in the more substantial story that lies back of these enlightening photographs"; namely, "the changing culture of a rapidly developing America."[61] Another reviewer even described it as a type of "U.S. family album" that "should at least be widely 'read'," as "delighted picture-gazers may wonder why such a good idea was not materialized before, will hope that more such picture-books will follow."[62] And they did. By opening up the possibilities of identifying a photobook, whether alternatively considered a pictorial, popular or illustrated history, its crucial role in educating and intriguing the masses is elucidated beyond its more traditionally highlighted function as an art or documentary project.

As mentioned in previous chapters, one reason these photographically illustrated texts fail to be considered photobooks may have to do with their monetary value. Where, as of 2013, *You Have Seen Their Faces* and *An American Exodus* run for one or two thousand for a first edition (not including the ones that are signed, in which the price, at the very least, is doubled), *American Procession* and *Sharecroppers All* run for under fifty dollars (at the most) or less (ten dollars and under seem the norm). The negligence in being included in the corpus of art history may have to do with understanding the photobooks as products of popular culture that fail to reflect scholarly investigations or fine art aspirations, as the photographs are provided by various photo agencies, like the Pageant series, and the agencies are the ones cited in the credit line. By removing the photographer as contributor, neglecting to "celebrate" that photographer who may be known to be a part of photographic history, and by being alongside more press-like photographs the value

[61] A. C. C., *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 21: 2 (September, 1934), 287.

[62] "Books: U.S. Snapshots," *Time* 18 (October 30, 1933), 57.

of the photobook could be jeopardized. Also, art historical discourse rarely broaches the idea of photobooks as types of pictorial histories. Certainly, Lange's *American Exodus* could be considered a history of American agriculture and economic conditions between the wars just as much as Nixon's *Forty Acres and Steel Mules* provides a history of farm tenancy in the South. By including the photobooks within larger arenas of history, there is a change in understanding the role of the visual in explaining history. For example, pictorial histories seem to be written about as emerging at either the mid to late nineteenth century or the mid twentieth century. Regarding the former, Will Kaufman, professor of American literature and culture, explains that "pictorial histories were a new and exciting development" at a time when the public had a "thirst" for non-fictional material.[63] Interestingly, he goes on to list several Civil War publications (by photographers such as Alexander Gardner and George Barnard) that used or were based upon photographs, and that are understood within the history of photography as early examples of photobooks. Similarly, within the field of American studies, Gregory Pfitzer notes that at that time "new technologies of photographic duplication allowed for easier transfer of camera images to books and increased their capacity for eyewitness accounts of the present moment," and concedes that "for those who were inclined to think that traditional visual art had done little to aid in the historian's mission of recording the past 'as it had actually occurred,' photography seemed to promise immediacy and accuracy."[64] As for the latter, Harvey Teal suggests that "in the post-World War II period pictorial histories employing period photographs began to appear," while Carol Hoffecker not only concurs, stating that "not until the 1950s did

[63] Will Kaufman, "The American Civil War," *US Popular Print Culture 1860-1920*, Edited by Christine Bold (Oxford : Oxford University Press, 2011), 548.

[64] Gregory M. Pfitzer, *Popular History and the Literary Marketplace, 1840-1920* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2008), 270.

the introduction of the heavily illustrated *American Heritage* magazine combine with the desire of academic historians to widen the sources of evidence available to study the past, thus increasing the importance of pictures, and especially photographs, in historical publications," but adds that it wasn't until a decade or two later that "major academic publishing houses discovered the popularity of pictorial histories of big cities."[65] Furthermore, writing in the 1950s, Myles Platt claims that "recently several pictorial histories have been published which should be of interest to social studies teachers" and that "the pictorial histories demonstrate again that the mass media are producing things which should *carefully* be incorporated into the normal fields of study." [66]

Platt's statement is critical for a number of reasons. Just as the other scholars identify photobooks as valid pictorial histories, he uses as an example by anthropologist, historian and author Oliver La Farge, *As Long as the Grass Shall Grow: Indians Today*, which is about Indian tribal life in the twentieth century, was edited by Edwin Rosskam and included photographs by Helen M. Post. Post is a photographer who rarely appears in any history of photography, unlike her sister, FSA photographer Mary Post Wolcott. Post photographed Indian tribes throughout the West and Southwest from 1936 to 1941 and "gained the trust and friendship of her subjects and thereby gained access to traditionally closed societies." [67] The majority of her photographs were

[65] Certainly if one considers Rosskam's photobooks on New York and Washington D.C., Allen's metropolis study, Saxon's account of New Orleans or even the WPA's American Guide Series as histories the city as a topic emerged much earlier; and though academics were involved in these projects, the actual presses were still mainly government or popularly based. For the citations, see Harvey S. Teal, *Partners With the Sun South Carolina Photographers, 1840-1940* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2001), 2; Carol E. Hoffecker, "The Emergence of a Genre: The Urban Pictorial History," *The Public Historian*, 5:4 (Autumn, 1983), 36-48.

[66] Myles M. Platt, "Pictorial Histories," *The Clearing House* 32:1 (Sep., 1957), 58-59.

[67] Information provided by the Amon Carter Museum of American Art website, which holds the bulk of her prints and negatives. See http://www.cartermuseum.org/collection/highlights/photographs/about.

never published or exhibited. That said, learning about Post not only expands the corpus of the history of photography in general, but of photographers who have focused on Indian tribes, such as Edward Curtis, Adam Clark Vroman and Laura Gilpin, and in relation to how her images challenge or reinforce minority stereotypes. In addition to the aforementioned photobook, she also provided images for the 1944 publication *Brave Against the Enemy*: *T'oka Wan Itkok'ipOhitike Kin He* by Ann Clark about the journeys of life of a Sioux boy in America.[68] This book itself is fascinating, as it is written in English and Sioux dialect and made under the auspices of the United States Indian Service of the Department of the Interior. Thus, as a type of "rosetta stone," three variants of language work together to narrate a story: English, Sioux, and the documentary photograph.

*Brave Against the Enemy* is a children's book and was printed primarily for use in Federal Indian Schools (fig. 6). Thus, issues arise about whether or not an audience determines a product's value of study. Beyond distinctions of "high" and "low" art, mass media or rare object, entertainment or historical document, does the fact of a book being made for a juvenile audience lessen its value within the history of art or photography? Post's photographs occupy full pages and are equal in amount and weight to the text, making it a viable photobook according to the contemporary criteria of "equality" seen in the 1930s and 1940s. Furthermore, the cover of the book lists both Clark and Post's names under the title, failing to clarify who was responsible for the text or the illustrations, and this reinforces an equality of importance. Moreover, one would think that elementary level books are crucial in understanding generations of students and how

[68] Ann Clark and Helen Post, *Brave Against the Enemy***:** *T'oka Wan Itkok'ipOhitike Kin He: A Story of Three Generations—Of The Day Before Yesterday, Of Yesterday And Of Tomorrow* (Lawrence, Kansas: Haskell, Institute, 1944).

and what they learn and, thus, experience the world, such as those who grew up learning subjects by seeing photographs of them, versus those who viewed hand-drawn illustrations or had no visuals at all. In art history, children's books are studied due to the celebrity of their author (Arthur Rackham, Walter Crane, Richard Doyle, to name a few) or for their value as museum objects in departments of prints and drawings, educational studies interpret the scope of their methodology, and print culture and literary studies encompass assessments of their material value or technological make-up. Given the photobook's involvement with all of these issues—pedagogy, reproduction, artistry and historical documentation—serious evaluations and considerations of the genre itself are compelling.

The UNC Press also produced a photobook aimed at children that spoke to contemporary society and American experience, and that was created five years prior to Clark and Post's and, specific to the plight of UNC, was about the South. Just as *Brave Against the Enemy* was radical in its bilingual writing, the UNC photobook was one of the first of its kind to depict African Americans in a positive light, thus these projects are valuable to cultural and American studies in general.[69] In fact, *Tobe* (1939) by Stella Gentry Sharpe may be one of the first photobooks to do so, and is groundbreaking on many levels. It breaks molds of books about minorities (children's or otherwise). It is a type of documentary project using photography to challenge and change racial stereotypes and stereotypical thinking—and one that solely focuses on African American subjects. It was ahead of its time as a Southern publication published, written by and about not

[69] *Brave Against the Enemy* also is critical in the way, as Beatrice Medicine explains, it participates in the cultural revitalization of some Indian tribes in the 1930s, particularly during the New Deal era and under John Collier, the director of Indian affairs responsible for the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934 that emphasized cultural pluralism over assimilation or "Americanization." See Beatrice Medicine, *Learning to Be an Anthropologist and Remaining "Native": Selected Writings*, Edited with Sue-Ellen Jacobs (Champaign, University of Illinois Press, 2001), 42.

just the South but its racial realities (fig. 7).[70] Sharpe owned a farm and one of the sons of the African American tenant farmers that lived there asked why nobody in the books he read looked like him. This prompted her writing of a story about just a boy in the rural South. As Kathleen Ward explains, during the first few decades of the century not only were "few books…available for children of any race or group," but "when they did include African American children, they generally failed to get beyond images of 'little darkeys' and 'mischievous pickininnies'." [71] She further claims that it wasn't until the Civil Rights period of the 1960s that depictions became more positive in books when there was an increase in representing and understanding African American culture in general. Be that the case, *Tobe* is not just another example of how the UNC Press was radical in its publication material and use of photographs in them, but this work is a forerunner and major figure in the visual representations of that minority group.[72]

*Tobe* has over fifty full page photographs in its 128 pages and, according to Benjamin Filene, "one of the really complicated things is that this book is such a mix of documentary, fact, and fiction."[73] Indeed, as discussed in previous chapters, such was a specific hallmark of Southern UNC photobooks. The depiction of Southern farm life as told by an owner about the workers

[70] It predates Rosskam and Wright's collaboration by three years. Stella Sharpe, *Tobe* (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1939).

[71] Kathleen L. Ward, "Creating a Legacy: Black Women Writing for Children," *Images of the Child*, Edited by Harry Edwin Eiss (Bowling Green: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1994), 234.

[72] Again, given the failure of any scholarship about the photobook I do not know about its popularity or the breadth of its presence in schools, libraries or personal collections, but by 1945 it was in its fifth printing.

[73] Historian Benjamin Filene is currently working on a book about *Tobe*, which he accidently happened upon four years ago in the UNC Chapel Hill library; again, the book is little known and rarely discussed at length in any way, shape or form in scholarship, outside of a line or two noting commendable books about African American in a handful of bibliographies on the topic. See Deborah R. Meyer, "Unexpected Library Discovery Unearths Historical Tale," *The Chapel Hill News* (Oct. 23, 2012), http://www.chapelhillnews.com/2012/10/23/73498/unexpected-library-discovery-unearths.html.

blends fiction with nonfiction, and the photographs, if one didn't know who took them, could easily be mistaken for being part of the FSA's oeuvre. They were, in fact, taken by North Carolina photographer Charles Farrell (who worked for the *Greensboro Daily News* and had his own studio) and were a study of two actual African American families in Greensboro. The names were changed in the photobook, something not entirely unfamiliar, as Bourke-White and Caldwell freely fabricated names and places and Agee and Evans changed the names of the Alabama sharecropping families they studied for their photobook. Farrell apparently provided images for several UNC Press books about the Carolinas, their traditions and historical figures.[74] Couch was the director during their production and was well-known for utilizing photographs in his publications as well as taking on culturally sensitive topics, such as race in the South. This was also the case with Nixon and Raper and Reid.

As has been discussed, Raper was a tireless crusader for broaching and changing race relations and dynamics in the South, as well as across the entire United States. He was passionate about the South, about civil rights, about the need for providing solidly researched information to the masses and about the power of photography for that to happen. Not always the case for an author, Raper picked out the photographs himself for *Sharecroppers All*, suggested the captions and was insistent about the design of the dust jacket, which was to include photographs of sharecroppers walking down a long road, moving away from both factory and a vacant tenant cabin (fig. 8). He even provided his own sketches and explained that his point was to show how families have been pushed off of both "the rural and the urban plantations" and that, most importantly, they represent African Americans and whites. On the jacket, the factory, cabin and

[74] These include E. T. H. Shaffer's *Carolina Gardens*, 1939 edition; Bernice Kelly Harris's *Folk Plays of Eastern Carolina*, circa 1940; and Aubrey Lee Brook's *Walter Clark: Fighting Judge*, 1944.

road were to be sketched, but the images of the people were cut out from photographs. When Raper saw that there was initially a failure to have both groups represented he explained to Couch that "one Negro face should appear either along the road or somewhere in the picture, since the book takes in their problems as well as those of whites."[75] In turn, Couch told the printing agency that "Mr. Raper also says that the Negro should appear to be walking and should be 'comparative in photographic quality with the white figure'."[76] The press was having a hard time finding an image of a "negro" walking from the photographs chosen for the book, but Raper was so adamant about this that a debate ensued for four whole months which not only pushed the publication date back, but led to the press director lashing out at him, stating how "they [UNC authors] forget that everything takes time and skill; and while they will always stand up in public for better wages and living conditions for sharecroppers, it never occurs to them that people who make book jackets also somehow have to live."[77]

*Rereading the FSA: Sociology in University and Government Photobooks*

The earlier sociological journals with photographs by Hine, the Pageant series, *American Procession* and *North America* provide blueprints and points of inspiration for photobooks of the mid to late 1930s about America, particularly in the way they converge under the figure of Roy Emerson Stryker, as both a university and government employee. Stryker went to Columbia to study economics and it is there where he came into contact with figures and projects critically

[75] Raper to Couch, September 26, 1940, #40073, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

[76] Couch to Adolphe Braun, October 25, 1940, #40073, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

[77] Couch to Raper, October 25, 1940, #40073, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

important to the use and publishing of visuals (specifically, photographs) in the fields of economics, history and sociology. One of those was Professor Harry Carman, head of the Department of History, who, according to Stryker, "had a remarkable library of [the] Yale . . . [Pageant of America] Series," and "he gave me a key to his office and I lived in there." [78] Stryker saw them as "a wonderful set of books," so he "spent a lot of time on that, and that had a terrible effect on me."[79] Then there was Professor Coss, who suggested that to understand contemporary civilization one needed to physically see and endure it, not just read and formulate about it. As a student, then as a young teacher at Columbia, Stryker heeded this advice and took trips to places such as Wall Street and the Bowery in order to understand economic and social conditions, and he admitted that these practices affected the way he was to direct his photographers to have similar experiences.[80] It is worth noting that Coss was in contact with two other Columbia (and social history, for that matter) figures: John Dewey, who promoted progressive education, and radical sociologist Robert S. Lynd, who was to have a critical part of Stryker's embracing of the camera as in aid in the sociological investigations of the FSA. They met for lunch in 1936 and, as Stryker explains, "I had brought up a collection of Farm Security Administration photographs to show Mr. Lynd…as he looked at these pictures, he became quite enthusiastic about the camera as a tool for social documentation."[81] Stryker subsequently made an outline (a shooting script)

[78] "Roy Stryker on FSA, SONJ, J & L," An interview conducted by Robert J. Doherty, F. Jack Hurley, Jay M. Kloner and Carl G. Ryant in 1972, *Image*, 18:2 (December, 1975), 3.

[79] Ibid.

[80] "I took a newspaper clipping into class. And again I'm sure this was all part of my direction and my formation -- where I was headed. It wasn't long before I was so taken with Professor Coss' idea of taking me on a tour that I said, 'Hey, why don't you guys first go down on the lower East Side?' One wealthy kid said, 'You know, it's funny I've lived around here all my life and have never been down to the Bowery in my life.' So I found myself taking trips, taking these groups down." See Oral history interview with Roy Emerson Stryker, 1963-1965, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

[81] Roy Stryker, "Suggestions for a Documentary Photographic Study of the Small Town in America," Appendix A, in Arthur Rothstein, *Documentary Photography* (Boston: Focal Press, 1986), 163 – 168.

for his photographers of questions, topics and subjects they should consider that was based upon the notes he made from that conversation. Lynd's opinions come from his sociological study of Muncie, Indiana, *Middletown: A Study in American Culture* (1929) and a follow-up study, *Middletown in Transition* (1937).[82] The project sought to examine and observe trends in the life of a small American city. A Sarah Igo explains, "marketers, journalists, photographers, and social surveyors all joined the quest to determine and reaffirm the typical in the 1930s," and that "this desire to locate average America, its contours and its contents, was especially pronounced in the years of economic hardship and domestic instability that followed the release of the first Middletown study."[83] The Depression-era photobooks participate in these quests, as well as the representing the joining together of different methodologies from different disciplines and occupations.

Stryker met Rex Tugwell when the latter was teaching economics at Columbia University. When Tugwell became one of FDR's "brain trust" advisors of the New Deal and head of the FSA he hired Stryker to run its photography unit. Stryker claims that "Tugwell was basically and primarily a descriptive economist, as well as a very good theoretical economist," but "his introductory approach to economics was what you might call a descriptive approach…And I was a product of that."[84] He continues, "so, again, let me say that Tugwell, in giving me his instructions on what he thought I ought to do, did include and did recognize that photography

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[82] Robert S. Lynd and Helen M. Lynd, *Middletown: A Study in Contemporary American Culture* (New York: Harcourt. Brace and World, 1929) and Robert S. Lynd and Helen M. Lynd, *Middletown in Transition: A Study in Cultural Conflicts* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1937).

[83] Sarah E. Igo, *The Averaged American: Surveys, Citizens, and the Making of a Mass Public* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 88.

[84] Oral history interview with Roy Emerson Stryker, 1963-1965, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

was going to be a part of it."[85] At Columbia, Tugwell wanted to create a new kind of textbook that dealt with real life as it was taking place and avoid doing so in solely economic terms. He wanted to have illustrations in it and asked Stryker to be in charge of gathering them. Apparently Tugwell's methods were so radical in merging media and the arts with economics and American history that "his class at Columbia was sometimes called 'visual education' by his colleagues for lack of a better word."[86] It was a freshman year course entitled "Contemporary Civilization" that included, intertwined, and merged the fields of history, government, economics, and philosophy. In many ways, Tugwell represented the changing trends within his field during the interwar period, a time when, as Loïc Charles and Yann Giraud explain, there was a "production of a wide range of visual images (photographs, cartoons, statistical charts and pictographs), [which] brought together social scientists and philosophers, social workers and journalists, propagandists and photographers, draftsmen and public officials," for "starting in the 1920s as separate attempts to diffuse economic information to various audiences–most often untrained in economics–the movement toward visualization culminated after the 1932 election of Roosevelt."[87]

Along with Thomas Munro, a philosopher and historian of art and former student of Dewey, Tugwell and Stryker created *American Economic Life and Its Means of Improvement*.[88] Unlike

[85] Ibid.

[86] As stated in Loïc Charles and Yann Giraud, "Economics for the Masses: The Visual Display of Economic Knowledge in the United States (1921-1945)," *http://hes-conference2009.com/papers/SAT4D-Charles_Giraud.pdf*, 10.

[87] Charles and Giraud, 3.

[88] Rexford G. Tugwell, Thomas Munro and Roy E. Stryker, *American Economic Life and the Means of its Improvement* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1925).

the works mentioned earlier from the 1920s that were meant for a public audience, this was "published first as a textual aid to [Tugwell's] course."[89] It included tables, photographs, charts, maps and organizational diagrams (fig. 9). The usage of multiple sources of data is something that is also evident in the UNC Press photobooks. Tugwell, Munro and Stryker believed *American Economic Life* was the first economic text they knew of to include illustrations; this, indeed, could have been seen as both a blueprint and inspiration for using photographs in books that dealt with economic and social issues. The photographer behind most of the images was Lewis Hine. Stryker has cited sociological journals with Hine's photos, the Pageant series, *North America* (which Tugwell suggested be a model for their project) and other illustrated histories of America (such as *American Procession*) as influencing the FSA.[90] Helen Wool, Stryker's secretary while at the FSA, claimed that he used to give her and the rest of the staff (even the accountants!) reading "homework," and that "he may not realize that he was doing the history of the United States" but "he felt so strongly that it actually came out that way."[91] Wool's observation reinforces the way the photographically illustrated books in the 1920s and 1930s in America, whether under the rubric of economics, history, sociology or art/photography, all specifically partake in the telling, understanding, and revealing of American culture and society. *American Economic Life*, along with Stryker's later projects, had a great role in promoting the

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[89] Charles and Giraud, 11. One of the most recent discussions on this work is Kate Sampsell-Willmann, *Lewis Hine as Social Critic* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2009). Sampsell-Willman devotes an entire chapter, "Chapter Three: Lewis Hine and *American Economic Life*," highlighting the way Hine and the textbook represent new types of thinking about social welfare and social science practice. She notes that she is following the lead of Maren Stange, who she claims is the only author to have investigated Tugwell, Hine and *American Economic Life* in relation to each other. See Maren Stange, *Symbols of Ideal Life: Social Documentary Photography in America, 1890-1950* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

[90] Stryker specifically mentions *Survey Graphic* as an influence in using photographs for instructive purposes, as cited in Kate Sampsell-Willmann, 166.

[91] Oral history interview with Charlotte Aiken and Helen Wool, 1964 Apr. 17, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

use of photographs in studies of American society and all its facets, sociological, cultural and economical.

When Tugwell went to work in Washington D.C., he suggested Stryker come down and get a job with the Agricultural Adjustment Administration (AAA), which aimed to help farmers and restore agricultural prosperity. Stryker was responsible for creating exhibits for the AAA, and it got him wondering about how beneficial and interesting it would be to create a "picture book on American Agriculture."[92] He brought the idea up to Tugwell, who said, "well it isn't a pictorial history of agriculture; it would be a pictorial sourcebook."[93] Along with Tugwell and his old professor Carman they decided to create "The Pictorial Sourcebook of American Agricultural History." Due to funding, the book was never completed, but Stryker had collected some three thousand pictures and states that "it wasn't too long after that till the Farm Security was about to be born." Within the history of photography it should be noted that the concept of a photobook is, then, what started the massive endeavor of the FSA. Even by 1940 Hartley Howe listed the FSA as a successor to the social photography of Lewis Hine, to Yale University's *Pageant of America* and the way it "had emphasized to scholars the value of pictures as historical records," for "now the New Deal was opening the door to experiments in new educational techniques."[94] Indeed, this lineage is a mixture of photographers, politicians, economists, sociologists and, critically, the American audience, as viewers, readers and consumers.

[92] See the Oral history interview with Roy Emerson Stryker, 1963-1965, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

[93] Ibid.

[94] Hartley E. Howe, "You Have Seen Their Pictures," *Survey Graphic* (April 1, 1940).

Under the leadership of Stryker, the FSA photographers were trained in sociological practices and partook in what constitutes visual anthropology as well; namely, "the cultural activity where cinema, art, humanities and information technologies interact to receive and include in social practice visual information on ethnic [which, in this case, could be defined as the sizable group of Americans sharing a common and distinctive national, or cultural heritage] traditions to perform dialogue of cultures."[95] Even Stryker acknowledged the difficulty in labeling the project, saying that "it was more than a little bit sociology," and points out how photographer Ansel Adam once told him, "What you've got are not photographers. They're a bunch of sociologists with cameras."[96] Stuart Kidd suggests that the work of the FSA photographers was directly informed by "a discipline akin to visual anthropology" and that Stryker demanded they have "an extensive subject knowledge and contextual sensitivity; rigorous captioning practice; the production of extended and in-depth photographic series; and the ability to undertake collaborative assignments with academia."[97] The FSA photographs represent the social role of documentary photography in the 1930s. Elizabeth McCausland wrote about "documentary photography" as "an application of photography direct and realistic, dedicated to the profound and sober chronicling of the external world."[98] Moreover, she discusses these cameras as having

[95] This definition is provided by the Centre of Visual Anthropology, http://visant.etnos.ru/index_e.php.

[96] As cited in "The FSA Collection of Photographs," Forward to *In This Proud Land: America 1935-1943 as Seen in the FSA Photographs*, Edited by Roy Emerson Stryker and Nancy Wood (Greenwich, Connecticut: New York Graphic Society Ltd., 1973), 7-9. To clarify, this comment by Adams is often misunderstood and seen as him belittling documentary photography and the skill of FSA photographers. This wasn't the case, as Adams was extremely close with Dorothea Lange and occasionally developed and printed her FSA images. Moreover, when Lange was butting heads with Stryker over seeing her images before they would be sent to Washington to be printed and used, Adams was the one who established a compromise between the two and spoke to Stryker on Lange's behalf. See Mary Street Alinder, *Ansel Adams: A Biography* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1996), 228.

[97] Stuart Kidd, "Visualizing the Poor White," *A Companion To The Literature and Culture of The American South*, Edited by Richard Gray and Owen Robinson (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2004), 118, 110-129.

[98] Elizabeth McCausland, "Documentary Photography," *Photo Notes* (January 1939).

"scientific, uncompromising honesty" as they look at this world made of "facts of decay and change, of social retrogression and injustice…the world of human beings."[99] This description of documentary photography underlines the very goals of sociological studies, the study of the development, structure, and functioning of human society; the study of social problems. Again, there is the disciplinary overlap, as well an overlap in the photographs appearing simultaneously in a variety media, both mass and, as Stryker will attempt, within academic programs and studies.

Critical to the evolution of the FSA and the photobook is the fact that the 1930s had this synergy of government, university and sociology figures and projects. This is something only peripherally mentioned when documentary photography and Depression era photobooks are discussed, yet it is absolutely central. The connections between the Columbia academics and American politics, and the role of not just photography but publications utilizing it speak to the attempts to understand society at the time and to educate the masses about it. It was one of the first moments in American history in which scholars were employed under the President in the name of social knowledge and reform and visual imagery was a key part of the investigations and conclusions. It was, though, triggered by early socials reformers coming out of the Progressive era such as President Franklin Delano Roosevelt selecting Kellogg to serve as vice chairman of the President's Committee on Economic Security and later serving on the Federal Action Committee of the American Association of Social Workers. Again, the histories of America, social studies and photobooks (and photographs in journals and publications) intertwine. As Everett Edwards stated in 1942, during the 1930s "formal historical research was

[99] Ibid.

inaugurated" in various branches of the government (such as the Department of Agriculture, the Bureau of Agricultural Economics, the FSA and the Soil Conservation Service) and conferences were held on the possible contributions of the social sciences to the objectives of the different departments, "with representatives from the fields of agricultural history, cultural anthropology, philosophy, political science, rural sociology, and social psychology."[100] Moreover, referring to the bureaus as "vast social science research center[s]," Edwards asserts that "American agricultural history has resolved into practically the approximation of general American history" and that "if any one individual were trained for all of this work, he would have to be something of an anthropologist, archivist, bibliographer, economist, geographer, librarian, and sociologist as well as a historian."[101]

Stryker's relationship with the academics at UNC not only represents this moment, but is significant in the production of photobooks at the time. Howard Odum, who received his second doctorate, in sociology, at Columbia was an important conduit between the sociological studies taking place at UNC and the activities and agencies under the New Deal. In many ways, he helped lay out a foundation for the New Deal and its various sociologically related activities. He was a part of—and in 1930, president of—the American Sociological Society, which established the Social Science Research Council for the consideration of study and research in the various social sciences and which authorized President Hoover to appoint a committee to meet with representatives of the other social science associations. This led to him becoming the assistant director of Hoover's Research Committee on Social Trends from 1929 to 1933, which conducted

[100] Everett E. Edwards, "Agricultural History and the Department of Agriculture," *Agricultural History* 16:3 (July, 1942), 132-3.

[101] Ibid, 133.

the first national study in which sociologists and sociology played a major role. The Committee eventually published their reports in which President Hoover wrote the foreword, explaining that "in the autumn of 1929 I asked a group of eminent scientists to examine into the feasibility of a national survey of social trends in the United States" and this Committee "should serve to help all of us to see where social stresses are occurring and where major efforts should be undertaken to deal with them constructively."[102] With the help of Stryker, Odum attempted to have these efforts illustrated in UNC publications, as the two men were regularly in contact with each other and Stryker would ask about which studies need images or let Odum know that his photographers will be in the South and that he wants them to stop by UNC.[103] In general, the interwar period was a decisive time for the growth of both government and university presses, particularly with regard with their desire to have a larger audience than academics, specialists and students. The Association of American University Presses (AAUP) was established in 1937 but nearly ten years earlier the founders of the AAUP began attempts to have university presses join together and create cooperative projects, and "soon after, the group was placing cooperative ads with *The New York Times*, publishing sales catalogs, and producing the first *Educational Directory*, a specialized direct-mailing list of American academics and librarians."[104] From its inception, the UNC Press was involved and Odum was actively in correspondence with Donald

[102] *Recent Social Trends in the United States,* Foreword by Herbert Hoover (New York: McGraw Hill Book Company, 1933).

[103] Examples can be found within the personal papers of Roy Stryker, which are held by the University of Louisville Photographic Archives. Various correspondence and other files and papers are also available at the Library of Congress and the Smithsonian Archives of American Art. All of these have information provided on their websites.

[104] Brenna McLaughlin, "The Founding of AAUP," *http://www.aaupnet.org/about-aaup/aaup-history/687-founding-of-aaup*.

P. Bean, former director of the presses at Stanford and Chicago and founder of the AAUP.[105]

Both Stryker's and Odum's interest in using imagery within sociological projects and goals of government and educational research and publications was emblematic of moment of the late thirties, early forties (the time frame of photobooks made about the Depression era). As Nathaniel Stewart explains in 1942, "librarians will readily admit that the government has taken the first step in the humanization of documents," a key part of which involves the improvement of "illustrative material."[106] In the same year Douglas Scates echoes this effort to humanize the more sterile, scientific or official data and documents that are traditionally textually based with graphs, charts and tables being the most "visual" representations of statistics, findings and conclusions.[107] He states that "many reports have been made much more appealing, usually through the use of more photographic or other graphic material, and through the decrease of tables and routine records of departmental work," that older reports were "couched in technical or semitechnical terms and involved matters of far more concern to the persons in charge than to the common reader" and the present "the reports of activity and status rely "largely upon

[105] The 1928 catalog advertised University presses of California, Chicago, Clark, Columbia, Harvard, Yale, Princeton, Pennsylvania, Stanford, North Carolina, Duke, NYU and Oxford, On February 8, 1937, a constitution was adopted forming the Association of American University Presses. Twenty-two current members were officially admitted to the Association in its founding year: the University of California Press, the University of Chicago Press, Columbia University Press, Cornell University Press, Duke University Press, Harvard University Press, the University of Illinois Press, Johns Hopkins University Press, Louisiana State University Press, the University of Minnesota Press, the University of New Mexico Press, New York University Press, the University of North Carolina Press, the University of Oklahoma Press, the University of Pennsylvania Press, the University of Pittsburgh Press, Princeton University Press, Rutgers University Press, Stanford University Press, the University of Toronto Press, the University of Washington Press, and Yale University Press.

[106] Nathaniel Stewart, "The Study and Practice of Government Publications," *The Library Quarterly*, 12:2 (April, 1942), 270.

[107] Douglas E. Scates, "Reporting, Summarizing, and Implementing Educational Research," *Review of Educational Research*, 12:5, (December, 1942), 564.

photographs, because of their appeal and portrayal value."[108] Furthermore, he adds that this goal of "widespread appeal" in reports to the public spans "superintendents, business managers, municipal governors, and industrial corporations."[109] It is interesting to know that is that he refers to the two photobooks about America by Bourke-White and Caldwell as successful integrations of text and visual material; they are representations of "photographic and verbal reporting of American life."[110] Thus, photobooks are included as examples of projects seeking to use both the visual and the written as languages that speak to the common person, while stemming from specialized studies and projects; the apparatus of the moment.

*Pictorial Statistics: Isotypes to Photography*

The most radical shift in sociological studies becoming more visual came in the 1930s with Austrian philosopher of science, sociologist, and political economist, Otto Neurath. In Vienna in 1924, Neurath established the Social and Economic Museum, which was a teaching museum, instead of "a treasure chest of rare objects," the exhibits were charts made with Isotypes in order to "represent social facts pictorially," in a way of communicating with both young people and adults.[111] Isotypes (International System of Typographic Picture Education, first called the Vienna Method of Pictorial Statistics) were created by Neurath and were used to explain and illustrate social statistics and economic matters to ordinary people through pictorial means (fig.

[108] Ibid, 564-5.

[109] Ibid.

[110] Ibid, 566. He also quotes a publisher's blurb statement that "two creative artists have developed and mastered an original and brilliant pattern of book-making. The face of a nation has never before been recorded so richly as here."

[111]This information comes from the exhibition page from the Victoria & Albert Museum for the display "Isotype Revisited," a project made in collaboration with the University of Reading. See either www.vam.ac.uk or www.isotyperevisited.org.

10). In this way, they were an important conduit between the older diagrams, graphs and charts of sociology and the eventual use of documentary photographic images. Isotypes consist of repeatable pictograms and symbols (flat, solidly colored and simple in their form) that always represent a fixed value or a specific quantity of or other fact about the thing depicted within a certain chart. For example, bags of gold stand for wealth, a figure standing with a hat and hoe could stand for 100 farmers or an ear of corn could stand for a certain percentage of agricultural production. Also, if the farmer is hunched over with hoe at a diagonal one would know he is employed, versus if he is standing straight with the hoe upright next to him and is thus unemployed. Isotypes were profoundly influential first, in Europe and then in America.[112] In fact, by 1937 both *Survey Graphic* and the *New York Times* had featured articles about them, and the former (which had actually been using Isotypes since 1934, and in 1937 had an entire issue devoted to it) regularly used them on its cover, as well as accompanying various essays (fig. 11).[113]

Isotypes represent larger issues of using visual imagery to speak to a mass audience with the idea of educating them, or at the very least providing information about their lives to them in an intelligible way. As forerunners in the gradual shift of sociological information becoming more visual, they paved the way for the use of photographs within sociological studies and for the

[112] Isotypes were not only used in specialized journals and scholarship. For example in 1933 *The New York Times Magazine* discussed it: Waldemar Kaempffert, "Staccato Speech for Silent Statistics: The Pictograph, From Vienna, Gives New Meaning to the Facts of Everyday Life." *The New York Times Magazine* (January 22, 1933) 9, 16; as did *The New Yorker* five years later: Bruce Bliven, E. J. Kahn, Jr., and Russell Maloney, The Talk of the Town, "Modley''s Little Men," *The New Yorker* (February 19, 1938), 13.The first major publication on it in English is Otto Neurath, *International Picture Language/Internationale Bildsprach*,, Facsimile reprint of the English edition of 1936 (Department of Typography & Graphic Communication: University of Reading, 1980).

[113] See "A Language of Symbols," *New York Times* (Sunday Science section), (January 17, 1937), 18 and Otto Neurath, "Visual Education: A New Language," *Survey Graphic* 26:1, (January, 1937), 25-8.

photobook to stand as a crucial part of this process. Certainly both Odum and Stryker knew of these changes. The former and Neurath each gave lectures at the 31st Annual Meeting of the American Sociological Society in December of 1936 (Odum spoke about current sociological techniques and Neurath about the teaching uses of a sociological museum) and Odum regularly corresponded with Rudolf Modley, who was Assistant to the Director of the Social Museum in Vienna, became Curator of Social Sciences at the Museum of Science and Industry in Chicago, and worked as a consultant for many U.S. government agencies.[114] The network of figures overlapping in 1930s America is crucial for the establishment and promotion of visual education and further representative of the merger between public servants and university staff.[115] Modley was married to Helen Post who, as mentioned, was a photographer for many photobooks. She was the sister of Marion Post Wolcott, who was an FSA photographer working under Stryker. Moreover, Stryker would have known about Isotypes given that the WPA used them rather extensively in posters and pamphlets (fig. 12).

In 1938 Modley wrote about "pictographs today and tomorrow," and explained that "pictorial statistics are still fairly new to the United States."[116] He adds, that "while movable type, photography, and other forms of graphic expression originated as technical inventions," their

[114] Their letters to each other are available in the Howard Washington Odum Papers #3167, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. As a note, I have not read these myself, so I do not know the nature of their exchanges, but given that the majority of Modley's career was about promoting new sociological practices involving Isotypes it seems more than likely that these issues were discussed.

[115] Also interesting is that some scholars have discussed the connections between government and academic (and art) institutions and a visual education for the masses in terms of the Bauhaus influence as it established itself in Chicago in the 1930s. For more on this, see Raphael Sassower (with Louis Cicotello), *Political Blind Spots*: *Reading the Ideology of Images*, (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006) and Peder Anker, "Graphic Language: Herbert Bayer's Environmental Design," *Environmental History* 12 (April 2007), 254-78.

[116] Rudolf Motley, "Pictographs Today and Tomorrow," *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, 2:4 (October, 1938), 659-64.

"social significance… was not fully realized at the time" when "the need for a method to interpret social events."[117] Now, he continues, "trade associations, public relations counsel, and large corporations…present their story pictorially."[118] Though discussing pictographs when he states that "to make certain that the technique becomes thoroughly familiar to every American, a concentrated effort is being made to reach not only the adult city dweller, but also the young and the rural population," the same could be said for photography.[119] Stryker, Odum, Nixon, Raper and the figures listed thus far with regard to historical and economically minded photobooks had an understanding at the time of the social significance of photographs and the desire to reach all demographics of America for relaying social events. Moreover, there was an awareness of the new role of the visual in communication about culture, as an article published the same year as Modley's was entitled "Scientific Facts Now Are Presented in Picture Form." [120] Again, the role of photography in presenting such facts, like unemployment and displacement as well as labor and everyday life could be argued to have preceded this. Worth noting is how the article explains that Isotypes were born out of a war devastated Vienna "facing a tremendous educational task" in need of producing jobs, boosting the economy, rebuilding housing, clinics, and schools" and "the whole task needed the understanding and cooperation of the entire population"[121] It also poses the question of just how "a starving population [could] be interested in housing taxes, in budgeting, in infant mortality?" and claims that "pictorial statistics were the

[117] Ibid, 662.

[118] Ibid.

[119] Ibid.

[120] A pictorial system of displaying economic and social facts and statistics was not only popular, but complemented the burgeoning visual society America was becoming. "Scientific Facts Now Are Presented in Picture Form," *The Science News-Letter* 34:20 (November 12, 1938), 309.

[121] Ibid.

answer."[122] Indeed, a parallel could be made with 1930s America when, on the brink of economic disaster, millions were left jobless and even homeless and FDR promised in his New Deal the three "Rs" of Relief, Recovery and Reform. Like Vienna, America relied heavily on using visuals such as photographs (including the exhibits, pamphlets, magazines and books they were in) and pictographic symbols such as Isotypes to communicate the needs of the country, the means of improvement and the hopes of the future to the public at large. The FSA photographs are widely understood as providing visual evidence of the Depression, but why not also see them as examples of attempts of visual education during the Depression, one that employs a language intelligible to all classes? Moreover, the photobooks with Depression era photographs and subjects are an even more immediate attempt to connect with America, as they could be bought, owned, remain at home and be available for access at any moment.

Included in this network of Stryker, Odum and Modley, and more specific to the history of photobooks, is William T. Couch, the ambitious director and chief editor of the UNC Press from 1932-1945. Couch confronted the legacy, reality and problems of ante-bellum ideologies within a modern world. According to Melissa McEuen, he had "drawn national attention by accepting works on controversial topics that addressed race, lynching, and labor strikes."[123] As for the publications produced through the university, the "radicalness" of them was twofold, referring to both their subject matter and their style. As McEuen explains, "if Chapel Hill could claim the boldest social scientists in the region, it could also boast the most daring and innovative southern

[122] Ibid.

[123] Melissa A McEuen, *Seeing America: Women Photographers Between the Wars* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2000), 164-5.

publishing organization, the UNC Press."[124] Like his cohorts, Couch valued the power of visual imagery in and as research, and in 1938 wrote to Stryker about Nixon's *Forty Acres and Steel Mules*, stating "if the pictures come out as well as the copy they will be about as good as anything of this kind that has ever been done," adding that "I am much interested in what you are doing and wish to help in any way possible."[125] His comments suggest that adding photographs enhances the book, and as has been discussed, texts on Southern sharecropping and the economy failed to have images or have them prevail. Moreover, Couch wanted to collaborate with Stryker on other publications and projects. About a month later he reiterated this and, writing to him again, exclaimed how he hoped that "some time in the future we can publish a book in which we will use more of your pictures and get out of them all the pictorial qualities that they have."[126] What is, perhaps, even more interesting is his response to a request by Stryker that the UNC host some sort of course on photography and sociology. He states "I am much interested in your suggestion of a course on photography" and will "take up with Dean House the question of an illustrated lecture on the use of camera in the portrayal of social problems."[127] Couch continues by agreeing that "a lecture or a series of lectures on this subject would be most valuable, and I shall do everything I can go get a place for them in our schedule."[128] What Stryker had in mind was integrating a usual course in photography with the work in the social sciences. "In other

[124] Ibid.

[125] Couch to Stryker, June 10, 1938, #40073, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

[126] Couch to Stryker, July 14, 1938, #40073, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

[127] Ibid.

[128] Ibid.

words," he explains, "the problem of the camera as an important documenting device."[129] This material comes from their correspondence.[130] It is quite important to the ongoing dialogues about the FSA and documentary photography, its involvement with sociological practices and just how far the FSA extended itself beyond its mass media, film, exhibits, pamphlets, posters or books (popular or professional) and was a vital part of experimental visual education. Stryker passionately and fervently believed that photographs were essential to the social science and that universities and academics needed to embrace this, for he ends the letter by proclaiming that he is "thoroughly convinced the camera is to be recognized as a most useful tool for the social sciences" and that "if the universities are going to keep up they must learn to understand new tools that are developing so rapidly."[131]

It is unclear whether the courses occurred or not, but the next few years involved a strong correspondence and relationship between the UNC press and the FSA. An example can be found in the event of FSA photographer Marion Post Wolcott who, in October of 1939, carrying out an assignment about the South, was "required [by Stryker] to work closely with a cadre of [UNC] sociologists at the Institute for Research in Social Science."[132] Odum, "excited about the prospect of a comprehensive photographic survey of the area…cordially arranged extra help for her," and McEuen suggests that this is because he "held out as a return favor the promise of garnering support for the FSA in its attempts to produce a solid publication within the next

[129] Stryker to Couch, July 11, 1938, #40073, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

[130] I have yet to find it discussed in any book or article.

[131] Ibid.

[132] McEuen, 165.

year."[133] In 1940 there was a photography exhibition at UNC about North Carolina that Wolcott, along with FSA photographer Dorothea Lange, worked on. It was under the direction of the UNC sociologists Margaret Jaran Hagood and Harriett Herring. In 1937 Hagood visited 254 tenant houses in Georgia, Alabama, and the Carolina Piedmont, studying and following the lives of the white women in the tenant farms of the South during the Depression. She published one of the first definitive studies on the topic, *Mothers of the South: Portraiture of the White Tenant Farm Woman.* It initially was not illustrated with photographs, despite the fact that Post and Lange eventually went with her and took photographs.[134] Like Stryker's suggestion for a course, the UNC and the FSA were coordinating. According to Hagood, it was "an opportunity for us [sociologists] to demonstrate to ourselves and others some of the potentialities of Photography as a tool for social research."[135] Upon the arrival of the FSA photographers, Hagood wrote "Notes and Suggestions for Photographic Study of the 13 County Subregional Area," which was an outline prepared to help guide the "research through photography" the scientists were using in their work.[136] The photography exhibit was part of what Odum had determined to be a "regional laboratory" of social studies, consisting of three levels of research: "one is the South itself as the area from which materials are gathered and in which research is conducted;" "second is the subregional laboratory of thirteen counties proposed as the central focus for as many concrete projects as practicable;" and "third is the physical laboratory and workshop and its correlated

[133] She continues, "Stryker took notice and was generous with Post's time in North Carolina since photo publication kept the agency and its attempts at social welfare alive." Ibid.

[134] Later reprints of the text incorporated these photographs. Margaret Jarman Hagood, *Mothers of the South: Portraiture of the White Tenant Woman* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1939; reprint, with introduction by Anne Firor Scott (Charlottesville: University of Virginia, 1996).

[135] Ibid, x.

[136] For more on this, see Anne Whiston Spirn, 92.

activities in Alumni Hall at the University of North Carolina."[137] Thus, the broader collaboration of the FSA program and photographers and the UNC sociologists and press prove an important part of the history of documentary photography and photobooks in Depression-era America. The sociological practices and motives (and openness in experimentation of visual display of facts) in the South at this time expanded photographic products and practices.

It is also important to note that UNC not only collaborated with the FSA in a way that expanded sociological practices and educational uses of photography, but the FSA's connection to the university even enabled them to have images that went beyond Stryker's assignments. Recalling some of his most significant experiences with the FSA, photographer Jack Delano mentioned the time he spent with Raper in Georgia, which gave him "the opportunity…to be able to get an understanding of the Southern county which we couldn't have done otherwise." [138] He explains how Raper got him access to people, such as the county seat of Greensboro, or places, such as the Greene county jail, which he never would have had access to as a photographer; these images are now part of the FSA file. He also recalls how Raper "was known as a progressive Southerner" and that "didn't go very well with some of the people in the South," particularly since they knew he was writing a book, "and writing a book about a county in the South is always suspect because you don't quite know what they're going to say in that book."[139] For example, though they got into the county jail, Delano explains how "while we were there we had the feeling that we had better do this and do it fast because we didn't know whether they meant it

[137] This is detailed in Katharine Jocher, "The Regional Laboratory for Social Research and Planning," *Social Forces* 23:3 (March, 1945), 285-290.

[138] Oral history interview with Jack and Irene Delano, 1965 June 12, by Richard Doud, for the Archives of American Art.

[139] Ibid.

or not in the first place."[140] He also notes that Raper "had been indicted by the grand jury, as a matter of fact, for having been heard to address a Negro as 'Mister'" and "was reported to have been seen shaking hands with a Negro."[141] Delano's recollections are reminders about the struggle Southerners and Southern institutions endured in their attempts to publish studies about such sensitive topics and their passion to do so nonetheless. Raper was relentless in his pursuits to give Southern topics coverage and his belief in photography's assistance in that regard is clear in his insistence to have photographs be taken despite any resistance met in attaining. His photobooks are important to study beyond seeing them as products of both the histories of photography and sociology, as they bare testaments to the human spirit and its drive to establish a society that maintains principles of equality, justice, happiness, beauty and unity.

As noted, political and social scientists of the 1930s and 1940s, specifically those researching the South, were excited about the prospect of photography with regard to its further exposition of the problems they were trying to understand and communicate. They wanted to get people interested, and people certainly were immediately drawn to images, as opposed to the impact of words alone. The photobooks of Nixon and Raper continued this tradition and impulse by using FSA images in their studies, the latter of which was encouraged by Stryker to integrate words and pictures, and to do so carefully, as he warned, "this should not be a 'picture-book'…[but] should be dramatic and appealing, yet accurate."[142] In many ways, therein lies the value in how a photobook in general operates differently than the photo-essay of the time; namely, through its

[140] Ibid.

[141] Ibid.

[142] Louis Mazzari, *Southern Modernist: Arthur Raper from the New Deal to the Cold War* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2006), 240.

levity as a book concentrating on a specialized topic, backed by scientific research (and not merely for the entertainment of reading alone). The photographic projects made under the auspice of sociology, such as the UNC photobooks about the South, were considered effective and even essential tools by the sociologists themselves. If sociology was including photography within its practices, why wouldn't the history of photography embrace these photobooks made by sociologists as well? Doing so seems advantageous in understanding photography as a language. A consideration of these begs questions about how and why histories are differentiated or unified, about the way disciplines are inescapably interrelated at certain points in history, yet the way they have tended to remain distinct in their defining of field-related material, and, perhaps most importantly, how embracing these crossovers in studies could enhance an understanding of the history of both history itself and that of human behaviors and patterns—found, evidently, not just through studying the past, but in the choices and norms of present research as well. Thus, the venue of an academic press allowed for a type of freedom in discussing sensitive social topics. The sociologist's use of photographs in books was not just a part of the thirties culture of visual literacy, but direct examples of this vital moment where culture, photography, and sociology met with radical dynamism.

*O, what a burden and how helpless I am, how proud I am of my children, and how dark a future under this condition […]. O, surely there's a place for us in the world….*

Mrs. I. H., 1934[1]

*Hey, hey Woody Guthrie, I wrote you a song*
*'Bout a funny ol' world that's a-comin' along.*
*Seems sick an' it's hungry, it's tired an' it's torn,*
*It looks like it's a-dyin' an' it's hardly been born.*

Bob Dylan, 1962[2]

*We meet at a moment of great uncertainty for America. The economic crisis we face is the worst since the Great Depression. Markets across the globe have become increasingly unstable, and millions of Americans will open up their 401(k) statements this week and see that so much of their hard-earned savings have disappeared.*

Barack Obama, 2004[3]

## Photobooks as Time Capsules and Timeless

When discussing William Stott's ideas about documentary in Depression era culture, Michael Denning rightly notes that "the success and influence of Stott's documentary synthesis seems as much a product of the 1960s as of the 1930s."[4] True, Stott, himself points out the analogy:

> Today, in 1973, we know that the system and its victims are still with us. Though most have been displaced from tenant farming, they still are poor: some of them, as the McGovern committee found, still are hungry. The Census Bureau stopped counting "sharecroppers" in 1964 because of their declining number, but whatever one calls them there are still hundreds of thousands of sharecroppers in the South, most them casual farm laborers for a few months of each year and on relief the rest of the time. The shacks

[1] *Down and Out in the Great Depression: Letters from the Forgotten Man: Twenty-fifth Anniversary Edition*, Edited by Robert S. McElvain (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 57-58.

[2] Bob Dylan, "Song to Woody" *Bob Dylan* (Duchess Music Corporation, 1962).

[3] Barack Obama, Campaign speech given in Toledo, OH, October 13, 2008.

[4] Michael Denning, *The Cultural Front: The Laboring of American Culture in the Twentieth Century* (London: Verso, 1997), 119.

> in the Mississippi delta are still lived in and look little different now than they did thirty-five years ago. [5]

The 1960s and 1970s, indeed, endured cultural and environmental situations that echoed the 1930s in its radicalism and its moment of questioning American identity and unity. This is evident in massive social undertakings, such as the Civil Rights Movement and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee. Hydrogen bomb testing on Bikini Atoll, oil spills off of the coast of California and the pollution of the Great Lakes are just some of the events that spawned a large ecological movement and awareness. As Howard Brick explains, "in the political debates of the 1960s…we easily recognize analogies and epithets recalling the depression and war years: those defending the Vietnam War recalled 'lessons of Munich'; their opponents labeled war leaders 'fascists,'" and that "the ill repute of capitalism stemming from the 1930s had not entirely been wiped away by the conservative revival that followed World War II or by the fervent anticommunism embraced by all mainstream political factions with beginning of the Cold War."[6] The arts found interest in and expression through these topics of national concern, struggle, endurance and the everyday experiences of "common" men and women. To that end, renewed interest in Depression era photobooks makes sense. Many of those discussed in this study were reprinted in the 1960s and 1970s, such as *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* (1960), *American Exodus: A Record of Human Erosion* (1969), *12 Million Black Voices: A Folk History of the Negro in the United States* (1969), *You Have Seen Their Faces* (1975), *Home Town* (1975), and *Cabins in the Laurel* (1978).

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[5] William Stott, *Documentary Expression and Thirties America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), 312.

[6] Howard Brick, *Age of Contradiction: American Thought and Culture in the 1960s* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1998), xi.

Denning, speaking specifically about *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*, claims its revival "was part of the 1960s obsession with documentary and folk authenticity that produced the folk and blues purism of the "folk revival," as well as "the 'new journalism,' and cinéma vérité."[7] True, the "folk revival" was clearly manifest in music, visible in figures like Pete Seeger, Bob Dylan, and Joan Baez and festivals such as those in Newport and Woodstock.[8] Inspiration abound from 1930s artists such as Woodie Guthrie and Lead Belly, with their songs about labor, hardship and the human condition. "New Journalism" involved an author's subjective response to contemporary issues, often using unorthodox or fictional techniques with an investigative, humanistic, or reformist underpinning; Truman Capote, Hunter S. Thompson and Norman Mailer are but a few representatives of this writing style in the late 1960s.[9] Morris Dickstein points out that reissues of 1930s and 1940s authors such as Nathaneal West, Henry Roth and James Agee took place in the 1960s, when "readers were more prepared" for the writers' "intense and extreme vision."[10] Cinéma Vérité was a film style that embraced innovative practices like using handheld cameras to document events as they occurred and was known as Direct Cinema in America, the designation of which further refers to an immediate, candid and explicit experience in both film production and audience connection.[11] Certainly, the documentary impulse of Pare

[7] Denning, 119.

[8] See Ronald D. Cohen, *Rainbow Quest: The Folk Music Revival & American Society, 1940–1970* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2002.

[9] Michael Johnson, *The New Journalism: The Underground Press, the Artists of Nonfiction, and Changes in the Established Media* (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 1971).

[10] See "Reading Into the Great Depression: A Conversation with Morris Dickstein," *Humanities* 30:4 (July/August, 2009), http://www.neh.gov/humanities/2009/julyaugust/conversation/reading-the-great-depression.

[11] Dave Saunders, *Direct Cinema: Observational Documentary and the Politics of the Sixties* (London, Wallflower Press, 2007).

Lorenz provided an example of filming outside of the studio to bring issues about American life *to* life through actual depictions of real people and places. Overall, as in the time of the Depression, the 1960s and 1970s used various media to raise consciousness about the causes and conditions of critical issues in American history *as* they was unfolding and *as* they connected to the past.

Regarding photography and the photobook, *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* proves a valuable touchstone for connecting the 1930s with the 1960s. As American author and academic Robert Coles recalls, "I remember seeing *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* in the South during the civil rights movement in those 'Freedom Houses' in Mississippi, carried by students who went south in 1964 hoping to help register African-Americans to vote in the courthouses of the various counties in the Delta of Mississippi" and that "this book was there, a huge presence, and was being republished with a new life."[12] He continues to explain that it "was carried by people, white and black, in their knapsacks" as they walked with Martin Luther King Jr. from Selma to Montgomery, "not far from where Agee and Evans were twenty-five years earlier."[13] He then powerfully describes King's reaction to the people at the roadside who had come "not to praise famous men marching, but to heckle and scorn and use language of calumny and insult."[14] King then turned to Bob Moses, director of the Mississippi project, and said of the hecklers that "these are the 'famous men'—who would kill us!"[15] It is difficult to conceive of more poignant

[12] Robert Coles, *Handing One Another Along: Literature and Social Reflection*, Edited by Trevor Hall and Vicki Kennedy (New York: Random House Inc., 2010), 28.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Ibid.

[15] Ibid.

example of the way the photobook stood for the strength and inquiry of the 1930s, and the South was still the hotbed for racial activism. Furthermore, this anecdote reinforces many assertions of this dissertation, such as the power of the FSA photographs within a book, the importance of the mobility and portability of a photobook, and the way Southerners (in this case, Northerners and Southerners in the South) used photobooks as vehicles of inspiration and change. Pamela Gossin described *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* as "a bible of the civil rights movement" and Tina Rathborne stated in 1972 that "the Gideons [the Christian organization dedicated to distributing copies of the Bible in over 94 languages and 194 countries of the world] would be wise to leave off their crusade for Bibles in motel rooms, and replace them instead with copies of *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men.*"[16] While discussing how the 1960 edition of the photobook was "immensely popular," Bruce Jackson cites his friend, civil rights worker Charles Hainie, who said:

> We grew up in a world where it wasn't all right for men to be emotional about things. Women could, but we didn't know how. Agee taught us it was okay to feel. All those feelings of his about intruding in people's lives, it was important for us to know that it was okay to have those feelings. We went into people's houses when we did voter registration. That book taught us how to go into someone's house.[17]

Evans' and Agee's photobook ends with passages from the Bible, referring to the title of their project. It begins with "Let us now praise famous men, and our fathers that begat us," and goes on to discuss the good inheritance from these men, how their glory will endure and how "the

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[16] See Pamela Gossin, "James Rufus Agee," *Encyclopedia of Literature and Science*, Edited by Pamela Gossin, Greenwood Publishing Group Inc., 2002), 7 and Tina Rathborne, "James Agee Remembered," *The Advocate*105:4 (February 25, 1972), http://www.thecrimson.com/article/1972/2/25/james-agee-remembered-pthe-harvard-advocate/.

[17] Bruce Jackson, "The Deceptive Anarchy of 'Let Us Now Praise Famous Men'," *Antioch Review* 57:1 (Winter, 1999) 41.

people will tell of their wisdom and the congregation will shew forth their praise."[18] Indeed, this 1930s photobook endured. Its seeds grew in the 1960s and its wisdom was heeded after all.

Just as photography was a crucial tool of social reform in the 1930s and 1940s, so was it again some thirty years later, specifically through the inspiration of the FSA project. In the spirit of the FSA, large photographic projects concerned with American society and life were established, and in some cases were even led by photographers who had worked for the FSA and ultimately were bound as a book. One of the most striking of these is the Southern Documentary Project formed by the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) Photo Agency in the years 1962 to 1964. The SNCC was founded in 1960 by young people to support the civil rights movement and participate in sit-ins, marches, organizing peace demonstrations and rallying. In 1964, one of its members, Matt Herron, organized a team of photographers to document the civil rights activities in the South. Importantly, Dorothea Lange was their project advisor. As stated in the proposal for the Southern Documentary Project, "camera fieldwork and political fieldwork merged into one objective," there would be "a painstaking study of life as it exists," and "the classrooms will be the fields of Mississippi, Alabama, Louisiana and Georgia." [19] These words about the South as a classroom certainly is reminiscent of Howard Odum's insistence upon the South being a laboratory, and just as UNC sociologists like Arthur Raper went out into that classroom with FSA photographers to expose and discuss racial issues, the Southern Documentary Project aimed to "record the effects of segregation on both white and blacks of the

[18] Ecclesiasticus 44:1-15.

[19] As quoted in Iris Schmeisser "Camera at the Grassroots: The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee and the Politics of Visual Representation," *The Civil Rights Movement Revisited: Critical Perspectives on the Struggle for Racial Equality in the United States*, Edited by Patrick B. Miller, Therese Frey Steffen, and Elisabeth Schäfer-Wünsche (Münster/Hamburg: LIT Verlag Münster, 2001), 105-126; 112.

Deep south."[20] As Iris Schmeisser explains, the initiative was targeted at "all aspect of Southern life, foreseeing photo essays on African American family life in the South, on lower income white families, on labor condition in the South and on African Americans migrating to the urban North."[21] Like the FSA, pamphlets, posters, and museum exhibitions were a part of their goal.[22]

Another project in the footsteps of the FSA is Documerica. Formed in 1972 by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA; itself only recently created), Documerica was a documentary photography project that recorded changes in the American environment such as urban decay, the effects of air and water pollution, and represented the new environmental consciousness and movement of America. FSA photographer Arthur Rothstein was a consultant for the project and helped the EPA choose its photographers. As C. Jerry Simmons explains, "using a clear set of guidelines and mission points inspired by Rex Tugwell's and Roy Stryker's Farm Security Administration (FSA) project of the 1930s, [project director] Hampshire and his handpicked photographers systematically recorded the ills of the 1970s American landscape."[23] At the time of its inception, the correlation between the FSA's recording of the American landscape as it was wounded during the Dust Bowl and the current continuation of the devastation of American land was apparent. One author reinforced this by stating, in 1972, that

[20] Ibid.

[21] Ibid.

[22] Leigh Raiford proposes an interesting idea that their poster layout, which had "a single magnified photograph accompanied by pithy text…wedded the documentary impulse for social change handed down from the photographers of the Farm Securities Administration (FSA) of Depression-era America, with the emerging sensibilities of fashion design and graphic design of the 1950s to produce politically charged and visually hip invitations to social action." See Leigh Raiford, "'Come Let Us Build a New World Together': SNCC and Photography of the Civil Rights Movement," *American Quarterly* 59:4 (December, 2007), 1138.

[23] C. Jerry Simmons, "DOCUMERICA: Snapshots of Crisis and Cure in the 1970s," *Prologue Magazine* 41:1 (Spring 2009), http://www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/2009/spring/documerica.html.

"Project Documerica is a contemporary application of photo-journalistic principles established in the 1930's when profound changes were occurring in American life," and "those phenomena were documented under the USDA's Farm Security Administration program."[24] Surprisingly, like the Southern Documentary Project, Documerica, there seems to very little research done on it. Furthermore, neither is included in standard history of photography textbooks.[25] The Southern Documentary Project has attained more attention due to its connections with Lange and the Civil Rights Movement. Documerica has been strangely void of study and recognition, until this year. The National Archives in Washington D.C. currently have an exhibition about it, entitled "Searching for the Seventies: The DOCUMERICA Photography Project."[26] The accompanying catalogue now stands as the seminal source about the topic.[27] Thus, the form of the photobook brings Documerica into libraries, offices and bookstores and, thus, provides the opportunity for a larger historical dialogue about it to occur.

Like the 1960s and 1970s, there has been a resurgence of interest in Depression-era issues within the past ten years, a time in which the United States experienced the greatest recession since the Great Depression. Although the National Bureau of Economic Research acknowledged this, it refused to use the term "depression."[28] Still, the comparisons prevail and are most telling in the

[24] **"**People and Places," *BioScience* 22:2 (February, 1972), 110-111.

[25] Examples of this include Robert Hirsch, *Seizing the Light: A Social History of Photography*, Second Edition (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2009) and Mary Warner Marien, *Photography: A Cultural History*, Third edition (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson, 2011). Both do mention the SNCC, but only in reference to the life and work of photographer Danny Lyon. As such, it is more of a peripheral topic. See Hirsch, 332 and Marien, 367.

[26] The exhibition runs from March 8, 2013 to September 8, 2013.

[27] Bruce I. Bustard**,** *Searching for the Seventies: The Documerica Photography Project* (London: Published by the Foundation for the National Archives, Washington D.C., in association with D Giles Ltd., 2013).

[28] See "The New Depression," http://economyincrisis.org/the-new-depression.

usage of FSA and 1930s documentary photograph as the language to communicate this. This is not surprising, as they have become symbols for America's struggle and endurance. On the television, commercials for insurance companies feature FSA images as backdrops. Their presence in pictorial magazines continues the legacy established by Henry Luce. For example, the October 13, 2008 cover of TIME magazine featured a 1933 photograph of a soup line in Chicago, and the headline reads: "The New Hard Times. No, This Isn't Depression 2.0. How History Can Help Us Avoid It (fig. 1)." On November 24th of that same year, TIME's cover actually depicted President Barack Obama as the new FDR (fig. 2), using a photoshopped image that fuses the two men, literally placing Obama in a documentary photograph from the 1930s. Superimposed on this image it states "The New New Deal: What Barack Obama Can Learn From F.D.R.—And What the Democrats Need to Do." What apparently has been learned is that Depression era imagery has become part of the historical "picturing" of America in crisis and of the government responding.

Southern issues, though, have not been lost to these larger concerns of America as a whole. The UNC Press is still committed to the topics of the South, as well as to their own legacy of books and photobooks. Starting around 2009, it established its Enduring Editions program, which uses "the latest in digital technology to make available again books from our distinguished backlist that were previously out of print."[29] As the UNC Press website clarifies, "these editions are published unaltered from the original, and are presented in affordable paperback formats, bringing readers both historical and cultural value."[30] Two of the photobooks discussed within

[29] See "UNC Press - UNC Press Enduring Editions," uncpress.unc.edu/browse/page/574.

[30] Ibid.

this study, *Sharecroppers All* and *Tobe*, are now available through this program. When asked about why these works were chosen and not, say, *Forty Acres and Steel Mules* or *Backwoods America*, Dino A. Battista, Assistant Director of the Press, explained that:

> Our Enduring Editions program has been going on for about 4 years now – and we've brought roughly 1,000 previously out-of-print titles back into print. We have just about that many still out there. The process is a long, labor intensive one – we need to find a book, send it out to be digitally scanned, then converted to a printer-ready file and submitted to several printer vendors.
>
> The titles you mention are on the list to be included – they just need to wait their turn in the queue. My guess is that these should also be back into print sometime in the next 12-24 months.
>
> Our hope is to bring all UNC Press OP titles back into availability.[31]

As in the 1930s and 1940s, the UNC Press is still resolved to use the latest mode of communication as a means of continuing studies about the South and finding a way to engage with a mass audience which, through the internet, is now a global one. No longer necessary to go to a bookstore or library, texts and images can be downloaded and information received immediately. Figures such as Howard Odum, William Couch and Arthur Raper would be pleased to see how the UNC Press continued their efforts for social reform, awareness and engagement. The Press utilizes technological advancements to extend beyond the academic world by offering hundreds of e-books that are available through partnerships with mainstream booksellers, such as Amazon and Barnes and Noble. It also has continued its tradition of celebrating Southern authors and studies by having a special division called Southern Gateways that specifically concerns the South. Raper, likely, would have one gripe. Despite feeling pride, and hope, at having his photobooks reissued, he would have been sorely disappointed with their covers (fig. 3). His four

[31] Dino A. Battista, personal communication, March 22, 2013.

month long compulsion about *Sharecroppers All* having both white and African American Southerners on the cover would seem to have been in vain, though it most definitely was not, as this study—made almost seventy-five years later—attests.

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