exposure

Daile Kaplan on **Lewis Hine's Photo Stories**

Grant Kester on **Documentary in the Great Society Era**

Laura Wexler on ***The Burden of Representation***

Judith Fryer on ***Reading American Photographs***

$4.00/£2.50

Volume 27 Number 2

Society for Photographic Education

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exposure (ISSN 0098-8863) is published by the Society for Photographic Education, Campus Box 318, University of Colorado, Boulder, CO 80309. ***exposure*** is a benefit of SPE membership. The journal reflects the Society's concerns, but opinions expressed herein are not necessarily endorsed by the SPE.

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Application to mail at second-class postage rates is pending at Albuquerque. POSTMASTER: send address changes to: ***exposure***, Campus Box 318, University of Colorado, Boulder, CO 80309.

Submissions and Review Books:

Address to ***exposure***, Society for Photographic Education, Campus Box 318, University of Colorado, Boulder, CO 80309. Please enclose three copies of each submission and a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

exposure Advertising:

SPE *Advertising Manager* Campus Box 318, University of Colorado, Boulder, CO 80309.

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exposure is distributed by Ingram Periodicals, Nashville, TN; Total Circulation Services, Hackensack, NJ; L-S Distributors, San Francisco, CA; Art In Form, Seattle, WA.

Institutional Subscriptions:

$25 for four issues ($30 outside the USA); Society for Photographic Education, Campus Box 318, University of Colorado, Boulder, CO 80309.

Change of Address:

Send notification of change of address to Society for Photographic Education, Campus Box 318, University of Colorado, Boulder, CO 80309. ***exposure*** is mailed third class and will not be forwarded by the Post Office.

exposure is supported in part by grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, corporate support from Eastman Kodak Company, Ilford Photo Corporation, and the membership of SPE.

Distribution and Business Matters:

Contact Janet Pritchard,
exposure Managing Editor
Campus Box 318
University of Colorado
Boulder, CO 80309.

This issue of ***exposure*** was produced on a Macintosh SE/30 computer and an Apple Laserwriter NTX using *PageMaker 3.02* software. Output was generated on a Linotronic L300.
Printing: Land O'Sun Printers
Scottsdale, AZ.
Electronic Page Production:
Janet Pritchard
Boulder, CO.
Production Assistant:
J. Patterson Waltz III

Cover Photograph: J. Bruce Bauman courtesey of Black Star Photography.

exposure

1989 Volume 27 Number 2

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Introduction

Maren Stange

I do not want [photography] explained to me in terms of formulas, learned, but so hopelessly unsatisfying. I do not want my butterfly stuck on a pin and put in a glass case. I want to see the sunlight on its wings as it floats from flower to flower, and I don't care a rap what its Latin name may be. Anyway, it is not its name. The sun and flower and the butterfly know that. The man who sticks a pin in it does not, and never will, for he knows not its language. Only the poet does among men.

Jacob Riis, in his autobiography,
The Making of an American, 1901

It is undeniable that the documentary method, as opposed to the abstract desire to produce Fine Art, has resulted in significant photographic art.

Beaumont Newhall, in
Parnassus (March, 1938)

[Photography is] a mind and an eye, but not an art. To me, images are images. I don't care whether they're made with pen, pencil, brush, they're images, and they can be moving or not.

Ben Shahn, to interviewer, 1968

Documentary deserved to be sacked. But demolition should lead to reconstruction, with the former challengers drawing up the new plans.

Martha Rosler, in
Afterimage (Summer, 1983)

As anyone with even the most casual interest knows, the field of photographic history has not only expanded but also been radically revised in recent years. Revision, renaming the field itself, has also redefined its constituent areas of study and practice. Rather than dividing up a monolithic and essentialized "photography" into picture-making, history, and criticism, each with its own domain and hierarchical status, the new nomenclature proposes theory, criticism, and picture-making to be interchangeable, even overlapping practices, all of which rightfully belong to an expanded field of "representation" in general. Increasingly, both study and picture-making practice acknowledge, and often in-

tervene in, the communicative work of photographic representation occurring in many social locations and enacting many social functions. As but one of numerous and overlapping representational practices, photography is seen to participate in the establishment (or subversion) of key cultural and social discourses. To study the purposes, practices and meanings of such representations and the discourses they are part of is the mandate of the emerging interdisciplinary field of cultural studies.

The new terms suggest both the range of historical and critical knowledge and theory that has been brought to bear on photography in recent years, and the seriousness and ambition to be found in "photographic" enterprises. An additional crucial revisionist component has been insistence on the political responsibilities of work in a field which engages history, culture and ideologies so completely, in which "a vigilant stance toward the cultural politics of representation" must be a "critical necessity," as Laura Wexler writes in her review essay in this issue.

Ever since it was first articulated in the 1930's, the documentary tradition in photography has tended to detach itself from debates over the status of photography as art and has emphasized instead the presumed unique immediacy and transparency of the medium. These qualities of medium and style have sometimes been taken to guarantee personal authenticity and an unflinchingly altruistic engagement with unpleasant realities on the part of documentarians themselves. Although documentary has, to an extent, evaded recent efforts by some art historians to demystify the privileged status of art and the cultural constructs of genius and originality on which that status rests, documentary is not without its "demolition and reconstruction" processes. Much recent attention to the documentary tradition has focused on the "FSA era" of the 1930s, creating, according to one critic, a "minor industry" of revisionist studies of 1930s photography This work has sought to include "formerly obscure practitioners" in the documentary canon alongside its "masters." Inevitably, in redrawing canonical boundaries, such revisionist scrutiny questions not only the esthetic strategies of individual photographers but also the cultural ideologies that assign value and significance to them. It is interesting to consider the extent to which such constructs have worked in the past to associate and identify documentary photography with positive values assigned to the New Deal itself. In 1962, for example, when Edward Steichen mounted his retrospective FSA exhibition, *The Bitter Years*, at the Museum of Modern Art, his catalogue essay made the link between documentary image and populist humanitarianism seen implicit and automatic: his mission was, Steichen wrote, to reveal to a new generation "the endurance and fortitude that made the emergence from the Great Depression one of America's finest hours."

I am pleased that all of the essays published here contribute in a variety of ways, both explicit and assumed, to the revisionist dialogue. The two essays by Daile Kaplan and Grant Kester, "'The Fetish of Having a Unified Thread': Lewis W Hine's Reaction to the Use of the Photo Story in *Life* Magazine," and "Riots and Rent Strikes: Documentary During the Great Society Era," were originally presented in a session at the Spring, 1989 meeting of the SPE, "Documentary Fetishes and Narrative Truths." The session (which included as well my paper on film and photography sponsored by the Standard Oil Company of New Jersey's documentary project of 1943-1950), examined American social documentary in photography, film, and video at three moments when specific changes in media technology and in sponsorship, as well as ideological shifts among both practitioners and audiences, created new, unforeseen possibilities and criteria for potentially successful documentary practice. The contrasts in practices that are evident in these moments bring into question any presumption of unity within the documentary mode and reveal its self-contradictions. In presenting a "tradition" that appears fragmented rather than unitary, we argued that documentary forms and subject matter are meanings produced on behalf of technological, esthetic and ideological interests, rather than objective records or the spontaneous responses of "concerned" individuals.

Kaplan, returning to the moment in the 1930s which saw the emergence of mass circulation picture magazines, considers Louis Hine's less well known but highly successful editorial and advertising work of the period in contrast to early photo-

essays from *Life* and *Look*, whose editors Hine castigated for "the fetish of having a unified thread." As Kaplan suggests, even at that moment of its critical articulation, documentary existed as not one but various discourses. It was not only Hine's insistence on controlling both the content and presentational style of his images, but also the emphasis then current within the social welfare movement on the proper stylistic representation of modernity and professionalism in photography that complicated Hine's later career.

Kester's work in Part I of his essay, on the Kerner Commission report of 1968, part of Lyndon Johnson's "Great Society" welfare programs in the 1960s, discusses the narrative of ghetto rebellion constructed by the report's use of documentary photographs. His analysis suggests that the conventions of documentary style, such as uncontrolled lighting and black and white prints, were used in the report to portray "the 'Negro' [as] an object of study, fear, and condescension," rather than to break down race and class divisions. However, as Kester shows in Part II, "Great Society" programs also enabled a significant alternative documentary practice; in the documentary videos made by Urban Planning Aid, he finds evidence of a shift in "representational power in favor of the urban working class."

Laura Wexler's and Judith Fryer's review essays in this issue are no less informed by, and contributory to, the effort to practice a responsible, and responsive, critical and historical interdisciplinarity Like the books under review, John Tagg's *The Burden of Representation. Essays on Photographies and Histories*, and Alan Trachtenberg's *Reading American Photographs. Images as History, Mathew Brady to Walker Evans*, Wexler's and Fryer's essays do not hesitate to scrutinize old questions and categories which may have come to obscure more than they clarify about photography as social practice in the United States and to propose new ones. My sincere thanks and deep appreciation is extended to all contributors, and to *exposure* editor Patricia Johnston and director of publications Janet Pritchard. I hope your reading of this issue of *exposure* will be as engaging and enlightening as my guest editorship of it has been.

"The Fetish of Having a Unified Thread": Lewis W. Hine's Reaction to the Use of the Photo Story in *Life* Magazine

Daile Kaplan

Today a reader can look at a picture and see what's in it; he no longer needs a caption to point everything out.

Joseph Kastner,
Former writer and copy editor at *Life* magazine

On November 23, 1936, *Life* magazine, the first successful American pictorial weekly featuring news items told in photo stories, was launched. The emergence of *Life* and, with it, the efflorescence of the photo story, traditionally have been associated with the birth of photojournalism in the United States. While *Life* (and its rival publication *Look*) followed many popular and prestigious illustrated journals, historically, the appearance of these two publications has been attributed to graphic innovations in the European picture press.[1] Nevertheless, each has indigenous roots in American vernacular, "gentlemen's" and, in particular, social welfare publications of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Thirty years before prototypes of *Life* and *Look* were on the design tables, Lewis W Hine experimented with grouping photographs and text in materials published by the National Child Labor Committee (NCLC) (Figure 1).[2] In his career as a photographer and writer, Hine joined pictures and words into a new graphic language. The novelty of Hine's work is demonstrated by the fact that, creating his own photographic lexicon to describe these formulations, he coined such phrases as "human document," "interpretative photography," "work portrait," "picture-serial," and "time exposure." In 1914, nearly eight years after he first conceived of the form, Hine used the term "photo-story" to describe his sequencing of photographs and captions.

As a pioneer photojournalist on assignment for magazines and social agencies, Hine devised a multiplicity of formats to control the dissemination of his work. He designed photo stories, children's stories and books, photographic exhibitions, and agitprop posters. The overwhelming preponderance of printed matter and photographs altered for reproduction suggests that conventional interpretations of his *oeuvre* vis-à-vis artistic photography do not fully describe his contributions as a photographer. Often overlooked, Hine's collaborative and independent design work are indispensable in formulating the rise of an American picture press.

In 1907, Hine published two leaflets about child laborers in picture-essay format for the NCLC, which employed him as an investigator, photographer, and, in 1914, as its exhibition designer. Two years later, a series of portraits of immigrants titled "As They Come to Ellis Island," complete with captions and a byline, was reproduced in photo-story format in a fledgling social welfare journal called *Charities and the Commons*.[3] Soon after, Hine and

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Figure 1 "Night Scenes in the City of Brotherly Love" was the first leaflet that featured Hine's picture-text panels for the National Child Labor Committee.

the young managing editor of that magazine, Paul Kellogg, developed a revelatory graphic language for the Pittsburgh Survey—a landmark investigation of economic and social conditions in an urban center—undertaken by, and published in, the journal. Its distinction lay in its combination of the techniques of social research with the graphic methods of journalism. Its success resulted in a heightened use of photographic reproductions in subsequent issues of *Charities and the Commons*. The journal was renamed *The Survey*, and Kellogg hired its first staff photographer, Lewis W Hine. Years later, Kellogg would cite Thomas A. Edison's "flash of insight that the optic nerve is the shortest route to intelligence" as a reason for his early interest in employing photographs.[4] During the next three decades, working alone as well as collaboratively with Kellogg, Hine continued to disassemble the social photograph into syntactical units of picture and text. By arranging a group of images in multipage graphic designs, he recognized the latent power of the iconological image (along with authoritative text) as an effective and compelling communications tool.[5]

Hine's development as a photojournalist reflected and influenced the development of the photo story Hine's work—his autonomous, linear and nonlinear photo stories—contrasts sharply with the rigid, gridlike form that *Life*'s editors employed. The differences in intent between these two enterprises may be detailed by comparing Hine's artistic and journalistic program aimed at combining pictures and words into a new form of journalism with the ambiguous campaign waged by the editors of *Life* and *Look*, who promulgated photography as a universal language but ultimately subordinated picture to text. Hine denounced *Life's* formulaic arrangement of multiple photographs as "the fetish of having a unified thread."[6]

• • •

Lewis Hine began his career as a photographer in 1905. He was then teaching nature study and geography at the Ethical Culture School in New York, whose student body consisted of first-generation eastern European immigrants. At the suggestion of Frank Manny, the school's principal (and the person responsible for discovering Hine when he was a sweeper in an Oshkosh bank, bringing him to New York and hiring him as a teacher), Hine began his exploration of photography by documenting school activities. Later on, he and Manny set out to Ellis Island.

Hine's experiences at the Ethical Culture School from 1901 to 1908 cannot be overestimated in their effect on his personal and professional development. The school was conceived as a nonvocational institution "designed to give special fitness to those who will be artists later on."[7] Hine, whose youthful aspirations had included becoming a wood sculptor, apparently also took advantage of its strong commitment to printing and graphic arts. While teaching, he began designing printed matter for the NCLC under the pseudonyms "The Kodak," and, later, "Small Kodak." His later work for the NCLC was probably the result of being privy to the social welfare network at the school: Felix Adler, co-chair and founder of the NCLC, had also founded the Ethical Culture School.

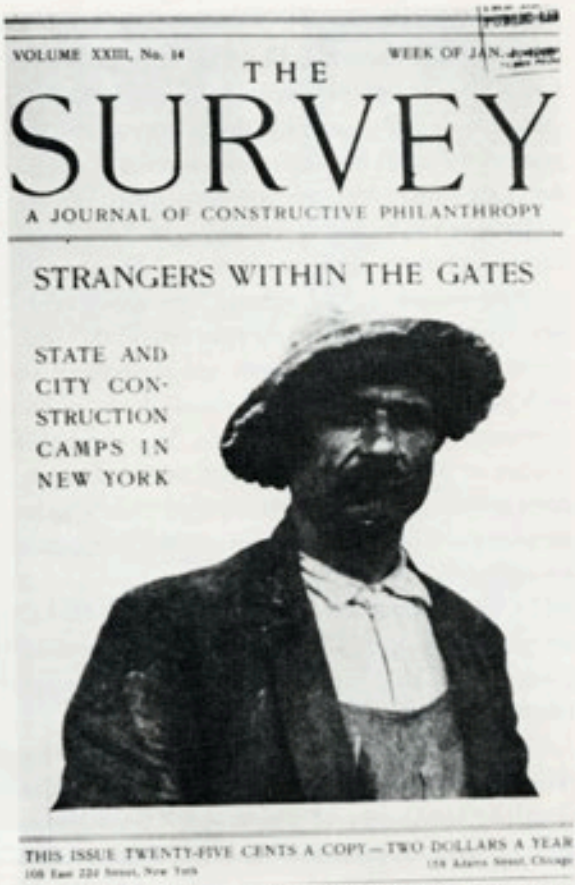
At this same time Hine attended the Columbia School of Social Work, where he met Arthur Kellogg. Kellogg introduced Hine to his younger brother Paul and other members of the social welfare

community While Arthur, too, guided Hine's pursuit of a career as a sociological photographer—a codified term that meant those photographing child workers—Hine primarily worked with the younger Kellogg on selecting and producing investigative assignments.

From 1907 to 1939 the two operated as an editor-photographer team on several influential photojournalistic projects. These included the Pittsburgh Survey, the first comprehensive examination of social conditions in an American city; "Construction Camps of the People," a lengthy photo insert about the living and working conditions immigrants endured while constructing the Ashokan Dam, part of New York City's water-supply system; a series of postwar photo stories about reconstruction programs in Europe, which featured Hine's photographs for the American Red Cross and the first published images of war-torn Europe after the armistice was declared; and, from 1920 to 1937, picture essays celebrating industrial workers.

As Frank Manny had guided Hine to new and broader horizons, so did Paul Kellogg. Together they explored the potential of progressive journalism and the capabilities of the photograph to convey news of social welfare issues. Their efforts prefigure the central role of editor-photographer teamwork highlighted in popular magazines of the 1930s. Hine made photographs, wrote comprehensive captions, and, working collaboratively with Kellogg, edited, arranged, and combined the photographs and text. Kellogg's vision of social work as inextricably linked to "individual health and happiness" would find structure in Hine's belief that "the individual is the big thing after all."[8]

A splendid example of the photojournalistic program that they pioneered appears in *The Survey*'s January 1910 issue, whose lead story was "Strangers Within the Gates, State and City Construction Camps in New York." On the the cover is a portrait of a mustachioed immigrant laborer in overalls and straw hat (Figure 2). The issue highlighted two stories about the plight of immigrant workers employed by municipal and state construction camps throughout upstate New York. A comparison of the two articles clarifies the ways in which Hine's mode of reportage


VOLUME XXIII, No. 14 WEEK OF JAN.

THE SURVEY

A JOURNAL OF CONSTRUCTIVE PHILANTHROPY

STRANGERS WITHIN THE GATES

STATE AND CITY CONSTRUCTION CAMPS IN NEW YORK

THIS ISSUE TWENTY-FIVE CENTS A COPY—TWO DOLLARS A YEAR

Figure 2. Hine's 16–page photo story about the state construction camps, entitled "Stranger Within the Gates," broke journalistic ground.

continued to explore the new graphic language he and Kellogg pioneered.

One, a lengthy piece of investigative journalism by two prominent social workers, Lillian D. Wald and Frances A. Kellor, included photographs by Hine. The drama of their reportage is conveyed in a subheading that indicates their automobile expedition took fourteen days and covered 1,286 miles "against odds of mud, rain and distance." The article describes the appalling living and working conditions at the camps, which were operated under the aegis of the state and city According to Hine, Kellor and Wald directed his camera. That is, they showed him which images they wanted as illustrations. The layout was basically conventional: individual photographs were interspersed throughout the text.

The other piece is a pictorial one, featuring a sixteen-page photo insert by Hine titled "The Construction Camps of the People."[9] Visually, the spread casts a wide net: it opens with the portrait that appears on the cover and segues into a series of candid, action-oriented, medium and long shots of men working manually and operating gigantic machines. Later photographs show the interiors of overcrowded sleeping quarters and the minimal recreational facilities. There is a linearity to the photo story· two horizontal or vertical photographs are reproduced on each page, and informative captions of one to two sentences appear beneath each title. This panoramic display of photo reportage, which included an unprecedented twenty-three photographs, was a milestone in the history of photojournalism.[10] Just as the alternative forms of journalism Hine developed in NCLC publications conveyed conditions child laborers endured, so did this lesser-known item expose the government's scandalous mistreatment of foreign laborers.

While the autonomous photo story had been Hine's trademark since the Pittsburgh Survey, "The Construction Camps of the People" presented a greatly expanded version of the form. That so much space was allotted to the story underscores Hine's and Kellogg's belief in the value of photo reportage. In other ways, the subtheme of the photographs foreshadows concerns that would grip the American imagination after the World War I, including representation of men and machines.

• • •

An element of lost innocence can be read into Hine's early photo stories about immigrants, child laborers, and war refugees that in some ways reflects his background as a rural midwesterner transplanted to the big city In 1920, after leaving the American Red Cross, Hine decided to modify his photographic approach. Although the subtext of his prewar work had been conflict, he decided to jettison this point of view in order to focus on what he considered more "positive" documentation, that is, depicting "industry from a human angle."[11] The name he gave to this body of images was "work portraits," a term suggested by Paul Kellogg's older brother, Arthur.

Although Hine was still associated with the journal called the *Survey Graphic* after the war, he essentially carried out his project independently A letter to Paul Kellogg in the summer of 1921, in which Hine thanked him for his "first income in nearly a year,"[12] is the first of many such notes and appeals, but Hine was confident of the currency of the work portrait motif and viewed his financial struggle as temporary, attributable to the national economic slump. His major concern was "whether there will be plenty of progressive industry ready to pay the freight."[13]

With characteristic alacrity Hine pursued this new industrial direction. While he continued to publish in the *Survey Graphic*, within four years his work was recognized by the prestigious Art Directors Club of New York, which awarded him a medal for several of his work portraits because they had been used in advertising. Although Hine was quintessentially a progressive photographer whose empathetic images are infused with the spirit of an earlier era, he helped the unbridled materialism of "big business" to take on a new, squeaky-clean image after the war. Hine envisioned his portraits of laborers as "kind of publicity and morale stuff" for industry,[14] but many of the work portraits lack the visceral, gritty humanism that was integral to the success of his earlier images. Ironically, they serve as mawkish tributes to human labor rather than testimonies to its beauty Hine's new approach thus can be seen to represent a disengagement from the then–popular fascination with, and idealization of, machine technology

With the ascendence of the machine age arrived a concomitant popularization of the camera, and, as Kodak's promotional language would have it, "Kodakery" or picture–making became a communicative medium. As photography enjoyed a boom, new photographic strategies abounded. Rather than focusing on the human angle of industrial labor, modernist photography emphasized machines (often in abstract designs) and a heroic human figure, frequently utilizing unusual (nonfrontal) camera angles.

Hine's studied, self-conscious photo stories published in the 1920s about the post office, disease

Figure 3. From "Cast of Characters in The New Drama of the Power Makers," *Survey Graphic*, March 1 1924.

control, craftspeople, and the Girl Scouts lack the authority of his prewar images. Their underlying themes have an unctuous quality that did not conform to fashionable ideas of modernity [15] Hine depended on freelance assignments from the *Survey Graphic* for income, and the magazine was also undergoing changes. Florence Loeb Kellogg, the journal's new art director, wanted the magazine to reflect new pictorial trends. She viewed Hine's work as "old-fashioned."[16] Nevertheless, Paul Kellogg defended Hine's camera as "cunning"[17] and continued to design classic photo stories with him, notably the "Cast of Characters in the New Drama of the Power Makers" (Figure 3). While Hine focused on the "nobodies of the world,"[18] pictures that alluded to the dynamism of the workplace predominated in the media. Indeed, by the mid-1930s, photography's expanded subject matter would find new venues in popular picture magazines, increasingly characterized by slick production values.

General-interest, popular periodicals such as *Life* and *Look* were praised increasingly as demonstrations that "the world of communications is One World [which has] but one unifying purpose: to break down the barriers of prejudice and ignorance that have so long kept us from living in peace with our fellow men throughout the world."[19] In the halcyon days before television, editors spoke of the new photojournalistic program as one intended "to glorify pictures, to make them dominate the magazine page, to have them tell a story, using explanatory text in a subordinate position."[20]

The man behind much of this rhetoric was, of course, Henry Luce, publisher of *Time*, *Fortune*, and *Life*, whose ideas reflected, in one critic's words, "the transcendence of Christianity and American culture."[21] Wilson Hicks, *Life*'s executive editor until 1950, helped to develop the pictorial agenda for Luce's messianic vision with such theories as the idea that "photojournalism makes space do the work

of time."[22] Hicks credited *Time*, first published on March 3, 1929, as a pioneer of the photo story, explaining: "In 1934 and 1935 *Time* published several one page and two page picture stories *Time*'s philosophy and techniques provided the intellectual milieu essential to *Life*'s materialization and the birth of the true photojournalism form."[23]

Although it may be difficult to perceive *Life* as embodying any intellectual tradition, Hicks's idea is not as far-fetched as it may initially seem. Historically, the "intellectual" preference for artistic renderings over photographs underwent a transformation, compliments of *Life*. While people of culture had traditionally eschewed the boldness of photographs, Luce's use of photographs in *Time*—a "high-brow" journal—in tandem with the glowing terms *Life*'s editors used in speaking about photography, elevated the medium to a culturally acceptable journalistic form. When photographs were imbued with a modernist, sleek look, readers who had reviled photographs for more than half a century suddenly found them palatable!

It was incumbent upon *Life*'s editors to present beautiful, humanistic, and powerful photographs that reinforced the ideology they so forcefully and incessantly put forth. However, the ideological uses of photography were far more complex than editors would have their readers believe—or than the editors themselves believed. By adopting a rhetoric that promoted a so-called "new language for mass readers,"[24] that is, by using photographs and photo spreads to present a positive, upbeat view of America, the magazines were conveniently promoting a view of the world that upheld and enforced U.S. hegemony Indeed, in his speeches and in his three magazines, Luce proclaimed that "no [other] nation in history, except ancient Israel, was so obviously designed for some special phase of God's eternal purpose."[25]

The editors of *Life* extolled the virtues of photography and, like Kurt Korff, editor-in-chief of *Die Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung*, replaced artistic renderings with photographs to "draw people into" a page.[26] Nonetheless, the rhetoric supporting the use of photography was a smokescreen. Magazine work was a tightly organized hierarchy consisting of publisher, editor, art director, designer, writer, and photographer. Although photographers were canonized on the journal's pages, in fact, they operated at the lowest end of the production scale.

"The weight of [photographer's and writer's] craft traditions,"[27] to use one prominent editor's phrase, was tipped in favor of writers. A photographer made images that corresponded to a prearranged script and then surrendered the images first to an art director or designer who cropped, sized, and manipulated them, and then to a writer, whose captions might not represent the photographer's point of view Thus, under the guise of creating a "new world language of pictures," editors seemed to promote the transcendence of photography while in fact assuring the superiority of writing. For most photographers, however, the loss of control was equitably recompensed: their status was elevated to that of photographer, artist, and hero all in one.[28]

In 1936, Lewis Hine was struggling at the age of sixty-two to parlay his work-portrait methodology into gainful employment. His battles with the *Graphic*'s art director had reached crisis proportions. Increasingly frustrated after the completion of his masterful Empire State Building assignment in 1930, Hine characterized his professional conflict with Florence Kellogg as "bloodshed."[29] A day before the publication of *Life's* first issue on November 22, 1936, a weary Hine confided to Paul Kellogg: "It is about time, anyhow, to turn it all over to the new generation with their modern efficiency "[30]

Kellogg, however, continued to mediate the conflict with Florence, and he persisted in helping Hine find new sources of work. He wrote letters of introduction to David Weintraub, director of the Works Progress Administration's National Research Project, and Hine was hired as its chief photographer. But, as his photographs were being prepared for reproduction in the *Survey Graphic*, Hine and Kellogg clashed bitterly when the editor insisted that Hine's layout for the May 1937 issue be revised significantly An irate Hine wrote: "I am not a bit satisified to sacrifice pictorial content to the fetish of having a unified thread running through the series. (The weekly newsmagazines do that so beautifully.)"[31] Ultimately, Hine prevailed, and even Florence Kel-

Figure 4. This story about "Brazil's Coffee Economy" better exemplifies *Fortune*'s reportage. All photos by John Phillips, except upper right by Margaret Bourke-White.

logg wrote to say she was "glad my agony to do your spread as you wanted it produced the desired results."[32]

The publication of the premiere issue of *Life*, which featured a now well-known cover story by Margaret Bourke-White on the Fort Peck Dam in Montana, may explain Hine's stinging remark. According to *Life*'s own accounting, four hundred thousand issues were printed, but six hundred thousand readers stormed the stands demanding more copies.[33] Many letters that appeared in subsequent issues hailed the magazine as "magnificent," "great," and "excellent for the doctor's waiting room."[34] Nevertheless, in a letter to the editor that appeared in Life's December 21, 1936 issue, Erling Voldol, principal of the schools in New Deal, Montana, had several observations about Bourke-White's six-page picture essay, which included a two-page spread titled "10,000 Montana Relief Workers Make Whoopee on Saturday Night." Echoing Hine's observation that "photographs may not lie, [but] liars may photograph,"[35] he wrote:

I could sell *LIFE* to my first grade pupils although some of them might demand a better job of editing. Specifically I am referring to the way you muffed a golden opportunity to get some real human interest and newspictures of life in the shanty towns surrounding the Ft. Peck Dam Pictures don't lie but I can assure you that night life does not play nearly that big a part in the life of a vast majority of our inhabitants. [36]

Voldol went on to castigate the journal for putting a picture of a forlorn child on the cover, saying that "her looks belie that she is a neglected child. It was a jolt to discover that the dignified editors of *Life* would exploit a child in order to make interesting copy "[37]

The design of the Fort Peck story contains a distinctive, diagonal graphic device: a photograph of townspeople and a child seated at a bar was laid out dynamically to evoke the actual shape and horizontal

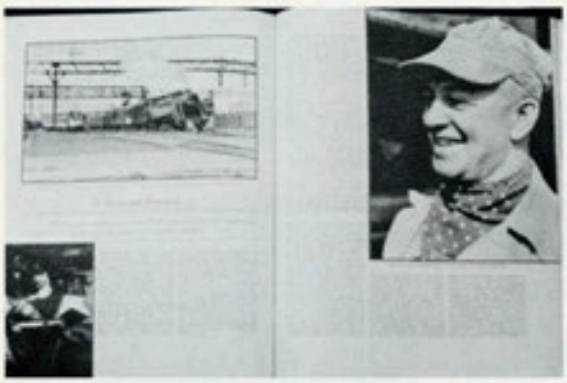


Figure 5. Lewis W. Hine for *Fortune* magazine, June 1939.

Figure 6. Lewis W. Hine for *Fortune* magazine, June 1939.

thrust of a bar This was one of many graphic techniques *Life*'s editors experimented with in early issues.[38] Such novel uses of photography, however, were short-lived. A pictorially-oriented news magazine proved problematic in relation to advertising revenues. One editor explained: "The word has become more important. Advertisers found readers were flipping the pages of pictures too fast, so the change was primarily related to the business of selling advertising in magazines."[39]

When Wilson Hicks assumed the editorial helm in March 1937, he engineered a new look for *Life*. The picture story was increasingly used as illustration, to dress up an article. Principles of orderly arrangements and continuous flow—rectilinearity—dictated Hicks's technique of laying out photographs. Layouts often consisted of uniformly sized images organized along a grid axis. While *Life*'s earliest photo stories emphasized the pictorial element, its post-1937 issues better reflected the demands of advertisers and Hicks's vision of the photograph as decoration.

There are basic differences in approach and execution between Lewis Hine's photo stories and those featured in the picture press. Hine's standard use of the picture-text combination was in an autonomous, one- to four-page spread. Typically, such a spread did not ornament an article but was a cohesive and separate entity Elizabeth McCausland, an art critic and educator, characterized it as its own "single expressive statement."[40] The editors at *Life*, however, employed photographs as illustrations—despite the preponderance of rhetoric suggesting otherwise. One editor's explanation was:

> **Reader tests show that the connected picture story used as illustration often gets twice the readership given to the text it accompanies. Yet the tests also reveal that the text benefits from the photo story, often getting twice the reader time it would receive if it were presented alone.[41]**

Nevertheless, Kellogg encouraged Hine to solicit *Life* for work; Kellogg perceived a relationship between the "modern hieroglyphics currently spreading like wildfire"[42] and the photo-story format that he had pioneered with Hine. *Life* eventually published Hine's "Ellis Island Madonna" in its June 5, 1939, issue (after an unrelenting, three-year correspondence). That same year, Hine undertook an assignment for *Fortune*, Luce's business magazine.

The resulting story, "A Railroad Fireman," differed from the conventional *Fortune* feature, and from Hine's standard, autonomous combination of photographs and text.[43] Subtitled "The Life and Circumstances of Lewis Davies Isaacs, who has fired Lackawana locomotives for 28 years and hopes to be an engineer someday," it was published in June 1939. The photo story represents one of Hine's best efforts at merging the wholesome and the heroic in his typology of laborers. At odds with anything faddish or slick, Hine produced a classic work-portrait series in a magazine renowned for its profiles of powerful

corporate executives and government figures (Figure 4).

Like other photographers featured in the pages of *Fortune*, such as Margaret Bourke-White and Walker Evans, Hine was offered an opportunity to promote his work portraits nationally and in an opulent presentation (Figure 5). The magazine's corporate orientation was not only reflected in its table of contents but also in its format: space was disproportionately devoted to advertising pages, some in color. Also, in a reversal from the policy of picture magazines with less-ambitious budgets, the articles appeared on enameled paper stock, and the more lustrous, coated paper stock was reserved for the premium reproduction of advertisements.

Under the art direction of Francis A. Brennan, the overall effect of the Isaacs story is handsome. Seventeen of Hine's photographs were reproduced; he also received a byline. Isaacs and his workplace are introduced on the first two pages of the spread. The next two pages depict him at home, at a church choral group, and at the dinner table with his smiling wife standing at the stove (Figure 6). The reader is also introduced to Isaacs' son and to his prized possession, his automobile.

In the latter section of the spread, Isaacs is featured in totemic blocks of three images, alone and with his co-workers (Figure 7). In some images he is working, in others he is socializing (or catnapping) (Figure 8). The photographs highlight a human angle: Isaacs appears confident, competent, and sociable. Although it is unclear what, if any, control Hine had over the actual design of the story, the individual images reflect his desire to study "human values in photography beyond mere illustration."[44]

In contrast with a social-realist style that typed laborers as beefy heroes (often posturing in various stages of undress or athletically engaged in superhuman feats), Hine's work-portrait model was ideally suited for a corporate magazine such as *Fortune*. He presents an engaging laborer who, not coincidentally, loves his work and identifies with his job.[45]

Although this was not an autonomous photo story, Hine's photographs do not function as ancillary elements of the spread. Rather, the captions and

Figure 7 Lewis W. Hine for *Fortune* magazine, June 1939.

the photographs are unified and complementary; photographs do not merely decorate the article. While the writer of the article is unidentified, his or her point of view has the distinctive ring of Hine's own voice:

> **The locomotive, like most machines, is an instrument of mass production. But while many such instruments show a deplorable tendency to subdue and dehumanize the men hired to run them, the locomotive allows, even compels, its operators to behave like human beings of a comparatively high type.[46]**

Hine secured an important victory with this piece, a triumph that took several forms. After years of approaching Luce's publications, he was given a top assignment. And, in a journal renowned for its corporate profiles, Hine was able to display his photographs in a way that conformed to his own work-portrait standards. Finally, Hine was vindicated by

Figure 8. Lewis W. Hine for *Fortune* magazine, June 1939.

the publication of "A Railroad Fireman." While some colleagues in the social welfare community had written off his work as old fashioned, the *Fortune* feature proved that his commitment to portraying "industry from a human angle" was viable. This, in fact, may have been the ultimate victory, for, in a note to Paul Kellogg—and obviously to Florence, too—he writes a bit smugly that the story "is not at all streamlined and not so very modern but I am a bit pleased with the result and others are, too."[47]

• • •

Study of Lewis W Hine's photo stories, produced as early as 1907, suggests that received wisdom has perpetrated several misconceptions about photojournalism: first, that it was made possible by the manufacture of small, hand-held, 35-mm cameras; second, that it first appeared in the United States with the publication of *Life* and *Look* magazines in 1936 and 1937 respectively; and third, that the rise of the human-interest photo story, which is the heart of the picture magazine as we know it today, was modeled on European prototypes. Although German, French, and English pictorial journals have had undeniable influence, Hine worked with the photo-story format thirty years before the appearance of *Life*. He used cumbersome 4x5 and 5x7 cameras, called Graflexes, to make his pictures, and he set important precedents in controlling the publication of his work. Nevertheless, Hine's contributions to the rise of photojournalism in the United States have yet to be fully explored and integrated into the history of photography

By the time he left for Europe to document American Red Cross relief programs in 1918, Hine was the leading social photographer in the United States. He had successfully developed a unique, "human-interest" style that was infused with the spirit of the Progressive era. Part of the reason Hine was not recognized for his photojournalistic work is that his early photo stories appeared in National Child Labor Committee publications under a pseudonym, and in a small progressive magazine *The Survey*. Later, Hine's photographs were featured in national publications, and in the 1930s opportunities became available to employ the photo story format. However, Hine's unwillingness to take on any project except those which met his work portraits standards, coupled with his insistence on controlling the dissemination of his work by supplying both photographs and text, did not make him an ideal candidate for photo assignments. As a result, during the heyday of the American picture press, Hine's photographs were virtually invisible to the general public, and the ways in which he developed the photo story format were unacknowledged by picture editors. By tracking Hine's development of the photo story, as this essay has done, we can redress this omission and give Hine his due as a true pioneer of American photojournalism.

Figures 4–8 by courtesy of Fortune *magazine © 1939 Time, Inc. All rights reserved.*

Endnotes

[1] See Karin B. Ohrn and Hanno Hardt, "Camera Reporters at Work: The Rise of the Photo Essay in Weimar Germany and the United States." Paper presented at the 8th Biennial Convention of the American Studies Association, Memphis, October 1981, Mark Roskill, "New Horizons: The Early Life and Times of Photojournalism," *Views: The Journal of Photography in New England* 8, no. 2: 6–11, Carol Squiers, "Looking at *Life*," in *Picture Magazines Before* Life, (New York: Catskill Center of Photography, 1982); Robert Sidney Kahan, "The Antecedents of American Photojournalism" (Ph.D. diss. University of Wisconsin, 1969); and Wilson Hicks, *Words and Pictures: An Introduction to Photojournalism* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1952).

[2] The Kodak, "Night Scenes in the City of Brotherly Love." Leaflet No. 11 (NCLC, New York, 1907); Small Kodak, "The Burden Bearers." Leaflet No. 12. (NCLC, New York, 1907). This was the first material to feature photographic illustrations published by the NCLC.

[3] *Charities and the Commons* 20 (September 5, 1908): 645–647

[4] Paul Kellogg, editorial in the Silver Anniversary issue of Survey Associates, *Survey Graphic* 27 no. 1 (January 1938): 19.

[5] For an elaboration of this idea, see Daile Kaplan, *Lewis Hine in Europe, The "Lost" Photographs* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1988), which contextualizes Hine's American and European photo stories.

[6] Letter from Lewis Hine to Paul Kellogg dated March 2, 1937 Papers of Paul Kellogg, Social Welfare History Archives, University of Minnesota (hereafter cited as Kellogg Papers).

[7] Howard B. Radest, *Toward Common Ground: The Story of the Ethical Societies in the United States* (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1969).

[8] Folder 656. Kellogg Papers.

[9] Lewis W Hine, "The Construction Camps of the People," *The Survey* 23 (January 1, 1910): 448ff.

[10] John Whiting, *Photography Is a Language* (New York: Ziff-Davis, 1946), p. 18.

[11] Elizabeth McCausland, "Portrait of a Photographer," *Survey Graphic* (October 1938): 503.

[12] Letter from Lewis Hine to Paul Kellogg dated August 6, 1921. Kellogg Papers.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Ibid. In addition, from 1923 to 1927 Hine worked intermittently for two corporate magazines, *Western Electric News* and *Vacuum Oil News*, where he produced one- and two-page work portrait photo stories. He also produced a portfolio of images for Shelton Looms.

[15] For a selection of Hine's photo stories see the following issues of the *Survey Graphic*: "Hands, Work Portraits by Lewis W Hine," 49, no. 9: 559–565; "Postal Service in the Big City," 48, no. 11. 455–462; "The New Truckmen," 48, no. 15: 669–676; "Guardians of City Health," 55, no. 3: 129–133; and "Domesday for Diptheria," 56, no. 1. 15–17

[16] Letter from Lewis Hine to Paul Kellogg dated January 5, 1932, which reads, in part, "I know some of them, including Florence K., think my stuff is not modern enough. I do find, however, that my old fashioned studies go on being used and appreciated years after the fads die out." Also, a letter dated October 10, 1935, from Hine to Florence, refers to his "old fashioned Hineography, which you have not had much use for lately." Kellogg Papers. By this time, Florence Kellogg had also been writing to Roy Stryker, director of the Farm Security Administration, about using FSA images in *Survey Graphic*. Kellogg Papers, Correspondence with Roy Stryker.

[17] Letter from Paul Kellogg to Lewis W Hine dated October 3, 1922, which reads: "Your camera has certainly not lost its cunning in these hatters' pictures." Kellogg Papers.

[18] Paul Kellogg, "Lewis W Hine Obituary," *Survey Graphic* 29, no. 12 (December 1940): 622.

[19] Daniel D. Mich and Edwin Eberman, *The Technique of the Picture Story* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1945), pp. 5–6. A notable contrast to this rhetoric is a racist photograph that appears in the "dummy" or rehearsal issue of *Life*, published on September 24, 1936. Titled "Cotton Pickin," the photograph (p. 16) shows the interior of a rural shack, the walls of the room covered with newspaper. The caption reads: "The style of wallpaper enables Big Daughter Erlee to read while dressing for church."

[20] Ibid., p. 12.

[21] Squiers, "Looking at *Life*," p.2.

[22] R. Smith Schuneman, ed., *Photographic Communication. Principles, Problems and Challenges of Photojournalism* (New York: Hastings House, 1972), p. 23. This volume contains the proceedings of a conference held at the University of Miami to commemorate Wilson Hicks's contributions to the field. The university is custodian of Hicks's papers.

[23] Ibid., p. 52. Elaborating on the intellectual tradition, Hicks went on to say, "*Fortune* proved that photographs can have characteristics which distinguish them from other photographs in much the same manner as the text matter of one publicaton can be distinguished from that of others" (p. 53).

[24] Mich and Eberman, *Technique*, p. 12.

[25] John Kobler, *Luce: His Time, Life and Fortune* (New York: Doubleday, 1968), p. 57

[26] Schuneman, *Photographic Communication*, p. 46.

[27] Hicks, *Words and Pictures*, p. 100.

[28] Eliot Elisofon, one of *Life*'s staff photographers, remarked, "I'd not be particularly happy if I felt I couldn't be considered an artist as well as a photographer." Hicks, *Words and Pictures*, p. 100. Note that *Life* highlighted images by master photographers such as Dorothea Lange, Paul Strand, Berenice Abbott, Edward Weston, and Harold Edgerton in its prewar issues.

[29] Letter from Lewis W Hine to Paul Kellogg [May or June 1935]. The letter reads in part: "I hope the results will justify all the bloodshed " A letter from Hine to Florence Kellogg dated May 12, 1937 also refers to "bloodshed." Kellogg Papers.

[30] Kellogg Papers.

[31] Letter from Lewis Hine to Paul Kellogg dated March 2, 1937 Kellogg Papers.

[32] Letter from Florence Loeb Kellogg to Lewis Hine dated May 14, 1937 Kellogg Papers.

[33] By the 1950s, *Life* claimed a subscription base of 7 million and a readership of 56 million. See Whiting, *Photography Is a Language*, p. 33.

[34] Letter from Lewis Hine to Elizabeth McCausland, 1938. The sentence reads: "All along I had to be double sure that my photo-data was 100% pure—no retouching or fakery of any kind." Elizabeth McCausland Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC (hereafter cited as McCausland Papers).

[35] Alan Trachtenberg, ed., *Classic Essays on Photography* (New Haven, CT· Leete's Island Books, 1980), p. 111. An untitled [slide] lecture, which Hine presented at an NCLC annual conference, is reproduced. The sentence reads: "Of course, you and I know that this unbounded faith in the integrity of the photograph is often rudely shaken, for, while photographs may not lie, liars may photograph."

[36] "Speaking of Pictures," *Life*, December 21, 1936, p. 4.

[37] Ibid.

[38] Compare the photograph by Edward Steichen, of Rachmanioff, juxtaposed to a page where sheet music and a piano are superimposed, in the December 7 1936, issue; or the collage of photographs showing an animated Eleanor Roosevelt (on pp. 18–19) to a later, "orderly" spread on the rise of fascism in *Life*, April 18, 1938, issue, pp. 54–55.

[39] Quoted in Schuneman, *Photographic Communication*, p. 307

[40] Ibid., p. 20.

[41] Quoted in Mich and Eberman, *Technique*, p. 15. Wilson Hicks wrote that *Life* also inherited its picture tradition from *Fortune*, which was recognized for the "beauty" and "revelatory power" of its photographs. Hicks, *Words and Pictures*, p. 40.

[42] Paul Kellogg, *Survey Graphic* 27 no. 1 (January 1938):19.

[43] Lewis W Hine, "A Railroad Fireman," *Fortune* 19, June 1939, pp. 78–84.

[44] Letter from Lewis W Hine to Elizabeth McCausland. McCausland Papers.

[45] While the pictorial elements of the work-portait methodology were in place, Hine surely took umbrage at Isaacs's admission that: "As chairman of the grievance committee I came in contact with some of the radical leftists. If I had been an extreme socialist before I met them," he says laconically, "I probably wouldn't be now." *Fortune* 19, June 1939, p. 9.

[46] Ibid., p. 91.

[47] Letter from Lewis W Hine to Paul Kellogg dated May 31, 1939. Kellogg Papers.

Riots and Rent Strikes: Documentary During the Great Society Era

Grant Kester

The passage of the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 signaled the beginning of Lyndon B. Johnson's "Great Society"—the most extensive program of government-sponsored reform in America since the New Deal.[1] The Great Society comprised a vast bureaucratic network of agencies and programs dispensing federal money to advance a "War on Poverty" on several fronts simultaneously: housing; health care; job training; education; and welfare support. It represented a broad legislative and ideological response to the crisis—and perceived threat—of an immiserated black working class confined in America's deteriorating inner cities. While the Great Society formally ended with Johnson's defeat in the 1968 presidential election, its cultural and political ramifications extended well into the 1970s. Only with President Nixon's "New Federalism" policy initiatives in 1974 was its philosophical influence decisively reversed.[2] The last vestiges of the "War on Poverty" social programs were defunded in the early 1980s, at the same time that the reformist ideology that had underwritten the Great Society came under attack from newly ascendent conservative policy analysts. Commentators such as Roger Freeman and Allen Matusow saw LBJ's Great Society programs not as the efflorescence of late twentieth-century liberalism, but as the symbolic turning point in America's postwar drift into moral decay and economic decline.[3]

Documentary flourished during the Great Society era, as it has in past periods of social disorder, such as the Progressive era and the New Deal, because it could provide verifiable "proof" of both crisis conditions and the success of reform policies designed to alleviate those conditions. Documentary images of the urban poor and the inner city were used widely in government reports, riot commissions, surveys, news programs, and activist work, to buttress policy debates, illustrate living and working conditions, and organize tenants. One of the most significant instances of state-sponsored documentary during the Great Society was the report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders (also known as the Kerner Commission), the official government study of the 1967 riots.[4] Composed of insurance executives, bankers, and congressmen, the Kerner Commission spoke with the authoritative voice of political and economic elites. It combined exhaustive riot descriptions with interviews, statistics, tables, charts, and a special section of photographs documenting the riots' progress in several major cities.

The reformist dynamic of the 1960s also provided the impetus for a more radical documentary practice, operating on the fringes of the Great Society Through the auspices of the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) a number of community-based activist groups received federal funding under the mandate of the "Maximum Feasible Participation" policy, which argued that poor and working-class communities should have some say in the distribution of federal funds.[5] Boston's Urban Planning Aid (UPA), one such group, produced over one hundred video documentaries between 1968 and 1980.[6]

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Figure 1

Figure 2.

Where the Kerner report was premised on the statistical objectification, and management, of the ghetto population, UPA's activists used newly available Porta-pak video equipment to help the poor and working class confront landlords and housing bureaucrats and advance their claims for entitlement.

Although the documentary work we normally associate with this period is the "art" documentary of photographers such as Bruce Davidson or Mary Ellen Mark, the Kerner report and UPA more accurately reflect the fundamental condition of documentary practice. While Davidson's *East 100th Street*—to pick an obvious example—may nominally share the same "subject matter" as the Kerner report (poor, inner-city blacks and Hispanics), his relationship to his subjects is essentially personal and aesthetic.[7] The Kerner report and UPA's work, on the other hand, are grounded in specific reformist institutions, policies, and ideologies. As with the documentary work produced for the Tenement House Exhibition of 1900, the Pittsburgh Survey, the National Child Labor Committee, and the Farm Securities Administration, the poor and working class are less a subject than a *constituency*, to be represented in struggles over public policy formation.[8] The Kerner report and UPA are caught up in the characteristic double movement between "social uplift" and social control, between progressive change and co-optation, that links the history of social documentary with the history of liberal reform.

The Kerner Commission and the Boulevards of the Inner City

The riots that erupted in America's largely black inner cities during the "long, hot summers" of 1965 through 1968 provided one of the central ideological templates of the decade. These riots, beginning in Watts in 1965 and running through the widespread violence following the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., in 1968, were given wide and dramatic coverage in the media. They became the most visible manifestation of an "urban crisis" characterized by rising crime rates, growing unemployment and deteriorating housing in the nation's inner-city ghettos. This crisis served as a focal point for a broad range of Great Society–era legislation affecting welfare, unemployment, and job-training programs, public housing, education, and law enforcement.

Property owners, state and local governments, corporations with investments in downtown areas, and city residents all had a stake in the policy debates surrounding the inner city, and in the ways in which its condition was described, explained, and evaluated. Photographic images were an important component of the debate. Scenes of cramped ghetto apartments and schoolrooms, looters, burned-out "riot corridors," and patrolling troops anchored vari-

ous descriptions and interpretations of the urban crisis with the immediacy and veracity of the photographic document. These images, circulated widely through newspaper and magazine stories, national and local news programs, government reports, and popular books, formed a visual vocabulary of the inner city that would mold public perceptions of the "urban crisis" for the next twenty years.

The 1965 publication of *Burn, Baby Burn! The Watts Riot*, by *Los Angeles Times* writers Jerry S. Cohen and William S. Murphy, marks the advent of a genre of popular paperback books about the riots that combined "authoritative documentation" with "stark drama."[9] Usually written by journalists, they contained vivid narrative accounts of riot activities, and they frequently featured lurid, red covers showing helmeted soldiers standing guard before flaming storefronts. These oddly sensational "documents" found their opposites in the conspicuously scientific reports of government-appointed riot commissions, such as the McCone Commission (following Watts), the Walker Commission (following the Chicago police riot at the 1968 Democratic Convention), and the Kerner Commission—appointed by Lyndon Johnson in the wake of the 1967 riots. Reports by these commissions contain extensive tables and charts, photographs, riot chronologies, interviews, and historical analyses, all woven into an elaborate ensemble whose closest parallel is the massive, Progressive-era Pittsburgh Survey documentary project.[10]

The Kerner report was the most significant and publicized riot commission document of the 1960s. Although considered dangerously "liberal" by some at the time,[11] its convincing evocation of the black working class trapped in the inner city, and its recommendations for ghetto "dispersal," helped lay the groundwork for the eventual gentrification of the inner city The report was completed about seven months after the 1967 riots, in March 1968 (shortly before King's assassination triggered another round of urban disorder). Leaked to the *Washington Post* just prior to its official release date, it received wide attention in the national press including television, magazines, and newspapers. Both the *Washington Post* and the *New York Times* gave it front-page coverage.[12]

Figure 3.

By far the largest audience for the report came through a special paperback edition printed by Bantam Books, which was published only a few days after President Johnson officially released it to the public (the Government Printing Office's [GPO] version was not available for several more weeks). The Bantam edition sold out its first run of thirty thousand copies in three days and by April 1972, had sold over 1,900,000 copies.[13] A publisher's statement on the cover page suggests the urgency that was attached to it at the time:

> **This vital, comprehensive report will be distributed immediately throughout the world, in order that it reach the largest number of people in the shortest possible time. It will thus be available also to legislators, police officials, religious leaders, civic groups, school officials, government and private poverty workers and others intimately involved and affected."[14]**

The Kerner report is divided into three sections, roughly paralleling President Johnson's original mandate to the commission to discover: "What happened?" "Why did it happen?" and "What can be done to prevent it from happening again?"[15] The first section includes detailed descriptions of the

Figure 4.

Figure 5.

riots, based on interviews with rioters, police, and journalists, a demographic profile of a "composite" rioter, and a statistical table in which the riots are categorized based on perceived "levels of intensity." The second section includes a controversial historical analysis of American racism, comparing the experience of European immigrants and blacks and an overview of the migration of southern blacks to the Northeast and Midwest. The third section makes general recommendations concerning police conduct during riots, examines the impact of television and newspaper coverage, offers a long list of federal funding goals in education, job training, housing, and welfare (which were never met), and includes a policy outline by commission adviser Anthony Downs subtitled "The Future of the Cities."[16]

While the Kerner report appears to be based on extensive field research and data collection, the commission's staff was able to conduct relatively little original research. A combination of budgetary and time constraints forced them to rely heavily on news reports and "loose and hurried" interviews with public officials and ghetto residents.[17] According to political scientists Michael Lipsky and David Olson in their extensive study of the report, *Commission Politics. The Processing of Racial Crisis in America*, the overwhelming need to offer a convincing and systematic explanation for the riots led the staff to "the gradual adaptation and molding of initial analyses based on admittedly shaky data into increasingly harder analyses."[18] This "incremental concretization" resulted in "the impression that the riots [had] a linear simplicity which [could] be captured in a narrative description even when the data suggested that no central tendency among disorders existed."[19] In fact, Lipsky and Olson argue, the report's function was less to provide an accurate picture of the riots than it was to "reassure various publics," particularly the "white, middle-class, suburban" audience whom commission staffers saw as their primary audience.[20]

Both the GPO version and the Bantam edition of the report were illustrated with photographs of ghetto living conditions, the riots, and their aftermath. These were selected from newspaper reports, and from the files of various picture agencies, particularly UPI, Black Star, and Worldwide. The photographs ground the commission's policy recommendations in the clear evidence of an urban crisis characterized by what would soon become stock images of burned-out buildings, patrolling soldiers, and looters. In the Bantam edition the photographs are combined in a special section titled "Eyewitness to Crisis."[21]

Despite the publisher's assertion that the "Eyewitness to Crisis" section is designed to document "eloquently the urgency of [the] report,"[22] these photographs are clearly not meant to document the riots—or a particular riot—as an event per se. Although they are captioned, their captions seldom

specify time, place, or even the identity of their subjects. They have been taken from different riots, at different times, and arranged into a narrative chain specifically to complement the commission's own description of the riots with photographic proof of their "linear simplicity." In the GPO edition the same photographs are scattered throughout the text. Without the narrative anchor of the "Eyewitness" arrangement they appear simply as random images.

The "Eyewitness" section is dominated by high-impact, two-page horizontal images, with full bleed on three sides and a small, white, caption strip underneath. These are interspersed with smaller arrangements of photographs. The section begins with a two-page image of a crowded, black neighborhood in Bedford-Stuyvesant, Brooklyn (the site of potential disorder) that immediately establishes the report's dominant visual rhetoric (Figure 1). Taken with a telephoto lens looking down a long row of brownstones, the image compresses houses and people, emphasizing the congestion of the ghetto, distancing the viewer, and symbolically sacrificing the context and specificity of the urban black experience in order to emphasize the disinterested observations of the commission. Although there are at least ten figures in clear view, none of them actually faces the camera.

The next series of images represents the oppressive circumstances under which urban blacks live, and their frustrated demands for redress. A two-page image captioned "firehoses aimed at demonstrating Negroes" is particularly poetic, with a group of figures ranged across a tree-lined street in a glowing haze of lights and darks (Figure 2). On the right side, a Pietà-like figure slumps against a companion, and on the left two men escort a dazed-looking young woman away from the melee. Again, the telephoto lens compresses and abstracts human forms, turning a violent confrontation into an artfully composed figure study. Although the caption identifies neither time nor place, the shade trees, hazy summer light, and one young man's overalls seem to suggest the civil rights struggles of the South. Following this are single-page images of an overcrowded "ghetto apartment" (two youngsters sleeping on a cot jammed into a kitchen) and an equally overcrowded schoolroom,

Figure 6.

in an unidentified "urban ghetto," in which one young man dozes at his desk. Significantly, both of these images are taken through doorways, and in neither case is the photographer's presence acknowledged by the subject.

After a two-page spread of a crowd of black people retreating down a rubble-strewn street, a tightly cropped photograph shows a rank of Michigan National Guardsmen, bayonets thrust forward, advancing against a backdrop of burning storefronts (Figure 3). Although the images were not taken at the same time, the formal juxtaposition of "fleeing Negroes" and "advancing Guardsmen" effectively demonstrates to the report's readers the immediate and overwhelming show of force used to stem the rioting.[23] In the following set of pictures we see order restored: Newark policemen (with a prominently featured black officer) are subduing looters, and paratroopers with rifles and combat gear are "watching and waiting" for the outbreak of renewed violence (Figures 4, 5, 6). The soldiers are each shown with black civilians; one is sharing a doorway with a young man in a suit, and the other is waiting for the curfew with a boy. Another image shows a wounded black woman, face down on the pavement, being attended by two Newark policemen while a black reporter thrusts a microphone in her face. These images work to reinforce the impression that the guardsmen and police were a benign and necessary

Looters carry as much as they can during the Detroit riot.

Figure 7

Figure 8.

force, protecting the more sensible members of the ghetto community from an extreme and violent minority In fact, the majority of riot violence was directed not against other ghetto residents but against white-owned businesses and the police.[24]

The black looter, emerging from a smashed storefront and loaded down with stolen merchandise ("carry[ing] as much as they can," in Figure 7), became a central icon in both riot reports and newspaper and television coverage. In the Kerner report's riot profiles, looters are frequently described as "cheerful." They cavort like children, momentarily freed from the restrictions of bourgeois society One observer describes rioters as "dancing in the flames."[25] The image of the looter coalesces an interrelated set of black stereotypes: The looter is primitive and brutal, yet at the same time amoral and childlike. A number of images in the "Eyewitness" section reinforce this childlike impression. In one photograph, several young black men are so caught up in the riot that they continue to loot even as they are photographed in the act. Another shows Detroit citizens being marched to jail, holding each other's shirttails like grade-school children (Figure 8). In a third, young black looters being booked at an unidentified police station bow their heads and hide from the photographer; no longer overwhelmed by the ecstasy of consumption, they now display the proper shame before the camera (Figure 9). Throughout the "Eyewitness" section, the reader of the Kerner report observes the black looter with the stern, paternalistic gaze of the commission's white, upper-class bankers, businessmen, and politicians.

One of the final images portrays the "tragic aftermath" of the riots with a two-page picture of three black women and a child crouching in a burned-out city lot (once again blacks are shown as the victims of rioting). The caption—"Negroes among the charred ruins of their home"—exemplifies the absurdly anthropological overtones of the report as a whole in treating the experience of the urban black population (Figure 10). Like the earlier photograph of "fire hoses aimed at demonstrating Negroes," this image is deliberately composed. The three women gaze off in different directions; their expressions and postures convey grief and resignation. In their protective grouping around the child, the women enact the conventional, nurturing, maternal role. The presence of the frightened young boy evokes the missing father: Is he rioting? Dead? In jail? Will the young boy also grow up to riot, as violence begets violence?

It seems unlikely that the conspicuous placement of this image near the conclusion of the "Eyewitness" section was accidental. The "Negro Family" during the late 1960s was caught up in a complex sociological argument first introduced in Daniel Patrick Moynihan's notorious 1965 report, "The Negro Family· The Case for National Ac-

tion."[26] Moynihan set out to prove that the worsening plight of American blacks was less a product of economic forces or discrimination than of what he called their "matrifocal" family life, "in which the male is a transient who provides neither a regular income, consistent discipline and direction, nor an example to his sons of what they might hope to become as adults."[27] Moynihan's report came under attack from civil rights leaders who saw it as an attempt to place the blame for black poverty on the moral character of blacks themselves and to "explain away the Negro Revolution as the hysterical outburst of a mentally unbalanced subculture."[28]

In the concluding "Eyewitness" image, several black children speak with a white police officer (a surrogate father figure?) in a "Neighborhood Center for Community Relations" (Figure 11). According to the Kerner report, the deciding factor in the riots was racism, not poverty; thus, future riots could be prevented by improving communication between the ghetto residents, especially children (tomorrow's rioters) and police (the only white people they regularly encounter). Although neighborhood community relations centers were part of the commission's recommendations, much of the federal money subsequently allocated to police departments was spent on stockpiles of weapons, helicopters, and armored cars.[29]

Throughout the "Eyewitness" section, "Negroes" are pictured, or observed, at the mercy of forces beyond their control. Living in overcrowded ghettos, they are pushed this way and that by repressive authorities, until finally they surrender to their violent and primitive impulses. The reader identifies with the point of view of the Kerner Commission bureaucrat for whom the "Negro" is an object of study, fear, and condescension. The frequent selection of telephoto shots, which seldom allow the subject to acknowledge the presence of the camera, reinforces the objectification of the poor and working-class black population that is at the heart of the report. Their experience is stereotyped (typically, black women and children are shown as passive victims and the men, looting and burning, are portrayed as aggressive and violent), and they are simultaneously objectified by the plethora of statistical tables

Teen-agers are booked at police station for alleged looting.

Figure 9.

charting their migration, work patterns, infant mortality rates, and so on.[30]

Implicit in the Kerner Commission's report, and its documentary rhetoric, is an instrumentalized, planning-oriented outlook geared toward the management of inner-city blacks. Countless graphs and charts portray the widescale migration of southern blacks displaced by the mechanization of agriculture during the 1920s and 1930s, and their "dangerous" containment in the segregated ghettos of the Northeast and Midwest. The threat represented by this containment is clear in a commission statement on the "young, Negro population":

> **This group has the highest unemployment rate in the nation, commits a relatively high proportion of all crimes, and plays the most significant role in civil disorders. By the same token, it is a great reservoir of underused human resources which are vital to the nation.[31]**

As Lipsky and Olson have commented, the possibility that the riots had any positive results or represented a demonstration of political consciousness and power on the part of ghetto residents was discounted in early commission research.[32] Nevertheless, the political implications of the riots were not lost on the Kerner Commission's staff, particularly

Figure 10.

Figure 11

on adviser Anthony Downs, who went on to become an influential urban-renewal theorist. According to Downs:

> **Future jobs are being created primarily in the suburbs, but the chronically unemployed population is increasingly concentrated in the ghetto. If these residents began to find housing outside the central cities, they would be exposed to more knowledge of job opportunities.[33]**

The "Future" section advocates the dispersal of inner-city blacks. The political and social threat of the urban black population will be overcome by moving them to selected sites in the suburbs, a process that has the added benefit of making potentially valuable inner-city land available for future reinvestment. The secret of this strategy, which came to be known as "spatial deconcentration," was revealed in Downs's subsequent writings, *Urban Problems and Prospects* (1970) and *Opening Up the Suburbs* (1973).[34] Once blacks are moved out of the ghettos, they cannot be allowed to resettle in large numbers; instead, they should be scattered in small, isolated clusters, in order to prevent the formation of any political blocs and to preserve what Downs euphemistically termed the "middle-class dominance" of the suburbs.[35]

Urban Planning Aid and the Bureaucracy of Surveillance

In a speech to the Greek Orthodox Youth of America in July 1968, then–Maryland Governor Spiro Agnew issued a dire warning concerning the recent upsurge of urban rioting. The "footings of America are rotting," the governor announced, and "in excusing individual responsibility we condone lawlessness and encourage cynical leaders to exploit the madness of the mob." He went on to caution that "civil disobedience leads inevitably to riots, and riots condoned lead inevitably to revolution."[36] Agnew recognized, perhaps unconsciously, a political truth revealed some sixty years earlier by Georges Sorel in *Reflections on Violence*. Speaking of the French Socialist party during the Third Republic, Sorel observed that "that party will possess the future which can most skillfully manipulate the spectre of revolution."[37] It was the specter, and perhaps also the spectacle, of a revolutionary black proletariat massing in the ghettos that provided the pretext for the greatly expanded forms of social management and control in which the Kerner report, and its documentary rhetoric, are clearly implicated.[38]

Yet the urban crisis also offered the opportunity for progressive social change. Even as special army teams were "fanning out across the United

States" to compile "thick folders of information" on riot-prone American cities, including street maps and aerial photographs, a very different kind of urban network was being formed.[39] A number of grassroots activist organizations were able to make use of funding through the Office of Economic Opportunity to represent the political and economic claims of city residents. One of the largest and best-organized of these groups, Boston's UPA, made extensive use of documentary videos. Whereas the oppressive, state-sponsored documentary of the Kerner report objectifies inner-city blacks, UPA's documentaries shift the balance of representational power in favor of the urban working class and turn the camera back on property owners, public-housing bureaucrats, and welfare officials.

UPA's work was made possible by a unique conjunction of technological and political forces. The introduction of compact, easy to use Porta-pak video equipment in the mid-1960s made previously capital-intensive video technology widely available. At the same time, the Democratic party, losing votes in the South, hoped to capture the northern, urban black vote with a heavily publicized aid program. City governments were defined as "obstacles" in the distribution of federal funding to inner-city residents. According to urban economists Frances Fox Piven and Richard A. Cloward:

> **The problem [of bypassing city political machines] was solved by diverting a large portion of the new funds to a host of intermediaries other than local government, including private social agencies, universities, and new ghetto agencies created for the purpose."[40]**

These new agencies combined to form a broad network of neighborhood-based activist organizations that could dispense funding and technical assistance directly to city residents. Individual community groups were in turn linked to national organizations such as the National Welfare Rights Organization.[41] Thus, local debates over urban renewal, public housing, and displacement were recognized as part of a national set of social and economic problems.

UPA was established in 1968, to give what was called "technical assistance" to Boston residents who were organizing around urban-planning issues. It soon grew to a collective of semi-independent groups working at various organizational sites with various constituencies, on issues including transportation, health, employment, welfare, housing, and prisoner's rights. UPA's media group included a "print section" that was responsible for the operation of Community Press Features, a news and graphics service for alternative and community-based newspapers. It also had a "nonprint" section, operated by activist media workers with a supply of video Portapaks, cameras, and decks. The nonprint media section worked with the other issue groups to produce or assist in producing video tapes. The housing group, because of its affiliation with well-organized tenants unions in the Boston area (the Cambridge Tenants Union Committee, Somerville Tenants Union, and Tenants First, among others), was frequently the focus of UPA's videotapes.

UPA's documentaries were the product of collaboration and consultation between UPA's video workers and particular public-housing projects, tenants unions, and activist groups. UPA member Bob Matorin, who ran the nonprint media section from 1974 through 1979, points out the crux of this relationship: "If you want to use it [video] as an organizing tool there has to be a group that's poised to use it as an organizational tool, or it will sit on the shelf."[42] UPA's tapes were designed to challenge the dehumanizing perspective of the Kerner Commission by representing the political voice of inner-city residents themselves. They were rooted in the oppositional rhetoric of the urban working class, for whom federal aid programs were at best symbolic and ineffectual, and at worst complicit with the same private economic interests that were driving them out of their homes. Matorin's position on the political implications of the Great Society was shared by many 1960s-era activists:

> **OEO had a purpose, but it wasn't empowerment; it was as a safety valve. People operating at the local level around OEO, such as UPA, wanted to use it as an ad-**

vocacy for a certain point of view, mainly because the deck was pretty well stacked against that point of view. The feeling was that we were doing what OEO should have been doing. That somebody out there had to be an advocate for people without, and the best advocate for people without was the people themselves. If we can assist them in telling their stories, as the media group did, we were doing something the OEO should have been doing in the first place.[43]

During its more than ten years of existence, UPA's media section produced more than one hundred documentary tapes covering issues including violence against women, public-housing policy, workfare legislation, and gentrification. In addition, UPA's media workers had a keen sense of the strategic value of the video camera in specific public situations. For example, the presence of cameras was effectively employed in conjunction with eviction blockings. Bob Matorin recalls the use of video in an eviction blocking at Boston's Brandywine Housing Project in 1975. Although the camera ostensibly was there only to give "technical assistance" to the tenants by recording the demonstration for a documentary, Matorin found that its mere presence provided a valuable intimidation factor and ultimately led the movers to call off the eviction. UPA also brought video cameras to public hearings. Matorin comments, concerning a rent-board meeting in Somerville:

The fact that the tenants came in with a video camera on their side was a threat to the established bureaucracy. The tenants came in not only with demands, which could be turned away by the officials, but with the means of documenting how they were being treated there. The rent-control board really took that as a personal insult.[43]

In some instances, public officials physically accosted camera people, attempted to cover the lens, and demanded that taping be stopped.

The psychological threat of the video camera is clear in one of UPA's rent-control organizing tapes from the mid-1970s. The tape features a set of on-camera interviews with several Massachusetts state representatives, including a particularly revealing segment with Representative Fiero. The camera, placed at a right angle to the interviewer, forces Fiero constantly to shift his attention from one to the other. He begins the interview seated comfortably back in his chair, behind a large desk. His initial responses are a study in political doubletalk: "You need a good rent control bill that will allow the landlord to get his increase and still protect the tenant " Although clearly hostile to the interests of the tenant-activists who are interviewing him, he manages to remain composed until the end of the interview, when, raising himself up on his desk, he lashes out at the Somerville Tenants Association: "Somerville Tenants Association keeps trying to drag a red herring across my path. They picketed my house—I didn't like that idea." He concludes by threatening the Tenants Association with legislative retaliation:

If they continue to put pressure on me where they don't have to, then I would have to seriously consider looking the other way one of these days [when rent-control legislation comes to a vote]. Believe me, I'm very upset about this.

Clearly, Representative Fiero knew who his audience was. The interview provides a curious spectacle as his political "neutrality" and evenhandedness gradually dissolves before the camera.[44]

In addition to the media group's production of tapes as an adjunct to organizing, they also worked to transfer their technical skills to tenant-activists and organizers. In Matorin's words, "Signing out a Portapak in a lot of ways was more important than doing the work ourselves. Because then someone else who is in the group and who knows the situation has the skills." Members of UPA's media section even worked with tenant groups to produce their own "fictionalized" stories based on daily life in the projects. *A Day in the Life of Bromley-Heath*, written by Bill

Battiste and produced by the tenants of Bromley-Heath, a Boston public-housing project, presents a rough narrative involving the tribulations of the project's resident manager (purse snatchings, irate tenants, etc.).[45] In some cases, a UPA worker produced a tape in conjunction with a tenants' organizing committee. The organizers would then go from house to house or building to building in a public-housing project and, using a tenant's apartment as a center, simply hook a Porta-pak up to a television set and play the tape back to open the organizing meeting. Matorin again stresses the legitimizing function of video:

> **It's really effective bringing [video] right into their living room, everything being on television seems more "real," even though it is the same source as someone standing in front of the group giving the same ideas, the very fact that it's on the tube elevates it to a higher level of credibility.**

UPA produced documentaries for more general audiences as well. As late as 1980, Irwin Hipsman and UPA's media group produced *It's not a House It's a Home*, a penetrating documentary analysis of Boston's so-called urban renaissance that was shown in schools throughout the Boston area. Hipsman's tape examines the various ways in which developers—in alliance with the city government—have gone about reclaiming profitable downtown property, including arson, condo conversions, institutional expansion by hospitals and universities, and highway construction. The tape collages interviews, newspaper articles, footage of citizen meetings, and voice-over narration to demonstrate that displacement in Boston, far from being an "accident," is "the [deliberate] urban policy of government and financial institutions."[46] The tape ends with examples of successful resistance to forced displacement in the Fenway and Chinatown neighborhoods of Boston.

Another tape, *Rent Control = Less Rent and More Control*, includes some remarkable street interviews with public-housing residents.[47] In one section, a young couple describes the problems of rising

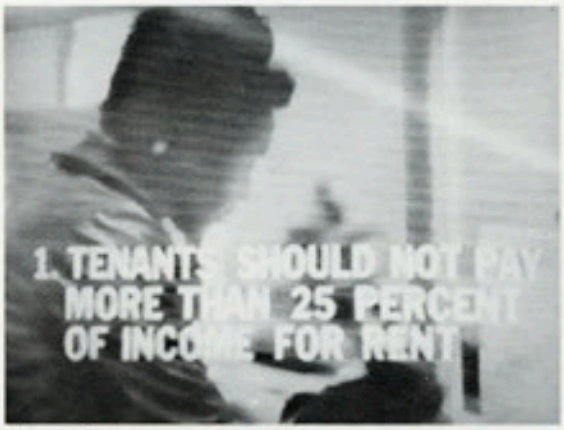


Figure 12.

Figure 13.

rents, abusive landlords, and deteriorating apartments:

> **I'd show you the roach-infested apartment we live in, but when you're all gone with your cameras and your microphones, that's when we're going to get hell. I'm worried about my kids; I don't want to sleep on the street.**

In addition to pointing out the difficult position occupied by activists who come from outside a community to organize tenants, this comment suggests the very real threat that UPA tapes held for the city's powerful real estate interests. One indication of this threat is a defunding battle waged in 1975 and

Figure 14.

1976. UPA's advocacy of rent control, and specifically their organizational work with the Tenants First group, attracted the attention of Boston developer Max Kargman, whose First Realty company owned a number of Section 8 (public) housing developments. Kargman, along with the Cambridge Chamber of Commerce, initiated a defunding campaign against UPA and brought suit against them for "conspiracy to deprive the owners of First Realty of their private property," in reaction to rent strikes by the Tenants First at Kargman's properties.[48] While UPA was eventually able to defend itself against defunding, the battle took over two years.

It comes as no surprise that tenants groups challenged property owners over such issues as rent control, yet they also found themselves combating the very public agencies that were ostensibly established to assist them with rent subsidies and other forms of support. The organizational tape *Your Rent and the Brooke Amendment* (1971) gives considerable insight into the oppressive institutional role of public welfare agencies during the 1960s and 1970s.[49] The tape was designed to explain to Massachusetts tenants groups the provisions of a recently enacted amendment affecting rents (Figures12, 13). It begins with a step-by-step explanation of the impact of the Brooke amendment on their rent (the Brooke amendment put an upper limit on the rent that public-housing residents had to pay, based on a percentage of their income). The next segment consists of a lengthy but fascinating strategy meeting between a rent-strike organizer from the Providence Fair Welfare group in Rhode Island and public-housing residents in Boston (almost all of whom are young, black women) who are considering a rent strike in order to get their Brooke benefits from recalcitrant Massachusetts public-housing officials (Figure 14).

During the meeting, a number of the women refer to the hostility of officials, who deliberately withheld information on the Brooke legislation from residents and refused to cooperate in processing applications for retroactive refunds and rent reductions. One of the women comments: "The people in power know just how far they can push a tenant and they like to keep it right below that line." Public-housing officials were shocked to discover that tenants could actually read and understand the complex Brooke amendment regulations and application procedures. Their "literacy" in the bureaucratic language of welfare administration was seen as a danger. One young woman describes the reaction she received when requesting Brooke application forms from the Housing Authority office: "How dare you come ask me for this form—how did you find out about it? Where did you get this information from? Who among you can read?" The tape concludes with an early organizational meeting of public-housing representatives from Boston-area projects and a voice-over encouraging viewers interested in forming tenants councils to contact the Massachusetts Union of Public Housing Tenants.

Welfare agencies found public scrutiny by tenant-activists alarming. In the Brooke tape, one nervous housing official warns a tenant-activist that "too much is being made public." Yet, public-housing tenants and welfare recipients were themselves surrounded by a web of surveillance. Their "suitability" for public assistance, according to Cloward and Elman, had to be

> **proved—repeatedly—and even then the evidence of home visits, interviews, forms and affidavits is not to be trusted. Elaborate patterns of illegal surveillance multiply. It is not thought that clients require information about the system;**

rather the system must know about them.[50]

The notorious "midnight visits" of welfare investigators to determine if a recipient of Aid to Families with Dependent Children had a man in the house were not unlike the Progressive-era attempts to gauge the moral character of aid recipients in order to prevent the deleterious effect of "indiscriminate almsgiving."[51] In an extreme case, welfare investigators even surreptitiously photographed and filmed welfare rights activists at public demonstrations, for later retribution such as purging them from the roles.[52] The obsessively private nature of public welfare, the resistance to the videotaping of housing authority meetings and evictions, the jealously guarded forms and regulations, suggest that welfare and public-housing officials saw the poor not as a constituency to be served but as a threat to be managed and controlled.

Piven and Cloward describe the oppressive psychological dynamic of welfare in their study, *Regulating the Poor: The Functions of Public Welfare*:

> **Market values and market incentives are weakest at the bottom of the social order To buttress weak market controls and ensure the availability of marginal labor, an outcast class—the dependent poor—is created by the relief system. This class, whose members are of no productive use, is not treated with indifference, but with contempt. Its degradation at the hands of relief officials serves to celebrate the virtue of all work, and deters actual or potential workers from seeking aid.[53]**

Welfare, far from providing a humanitarian cushion against the more extreme social costs associated with capitalism, actually works to regulate the labor market in relation to economic expansions and contractions.

According to Piven and Cloward, welfare spending—whether in the form of unemployment payments, housing subsidies, or direct aid—has seldom corresponded to levels of poverty or joblessness. Instead, welfare services have expanded in response to periods of disorder and rebellion among the working class when it has been particularly "dislodged from the occupational order by rapid economic change."[54] After such a disorder has subsided, welfare support has been reduced or withdrawn altogether, in order to keep wage levels down and to insure a willing pool of surplus labor With the riots of the 1960s safely in the past, public-housing residents during the 1970s faced the contraction of services, a process that would be completed by the Reagan administration during the early 1980s.

Documentaries record and preserve the intersection between the public body of the poor and working class and the social policies and institutions that take that body as their subject. By empowering the poor and working class with video cameras, UPA posed a direct challenge to welfare and public-housing bureaucracies and turned the tables of representational power, if only briefly UPA's documentaries reject the narrative simplicity of the Kerner report and reveal the contradictory nature of Great Society–era reform policy They invert the conventional "objectification" of social documentary, in which the poor and working class are the mute "subjects" of either the audience's sympathetic gaze and philanthropic intentions or the more hostile scrutiny of the welfare investigator. Instead, the poor and working class were able to use UPA's videos to represent themselves, to advance their own claims for entitlement, to organize, to confront landlords and housing bureaucrats, and even to chronicle their own lives.

Figures 3 4 & 9 reproduced by permission of the Bettmann Archive (UPI), Figure 10 by permission of Wide World Photos, Inc., Figures 5–8 & 11 courtesy of Black Star Photography.

Endnotes

[1] Johnson coined the term Great Society in an address at the 1964 University of Michigan commencement exercises in Ann Arbor. For the full text of the speech see Marvin E. Gettleman and David Mermelstein, eds., *The Great Society Reader: The Failure of American Liberalism* (New York: Vintage, 1967), pp. 15–19. For contemporary views on the Economic Opportunity Act see Robert A. Levine, *The Poor Ye Need Not Have With You. Lessons from the War on Poverty* (Cambridge, MA. MIT Press, 1970); and Sar A. Levitan, *The Great Society's Poor Law: A New Approach to Poverty* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1969).

[2] The central component of "New Federalism" policy was the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974, which shifted authority over the allocation of urban renewal funding from the federal to the municipal level. At the same time the amount of federal money available for urban renewal was drastically cut, and such Great Society programs as Model Cities were replaced with Community Development Block Grants (CDBGs) and Urban Development Action Grants (UDAGs), which made federal funding responsive to local, private sector investment. See Susan S. and Norman I. Fainstein, "Economic Change, National Policy, and the System of Cities," in *Restructuring the City: The Political Economy of Urban Redevelopment*, ed. Susan S. and Norman I. Fainstein, et al. (New York: Longman Press, rev. ed., 1986), p. 18; and R. Allen Hays, *The Federal Government and Urban Housing. Ideology and Change in Public Policy* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1985).

[3] Welfare programs established during the Great Society era have been attacked for simultaneously betraying the Protestant work ethic and sapping the defense budget. According to conservative historian Freeman, "America's military strength fell from unquestioned superiority a quarter-century ago to a condition of weakness, because the defense budget was cut to pay for welfare." See his *The Wayward Welfare State* (Stanford, CA. Hoover Institution Press, Stanford University, 1981), p. 5. Freeman singles out Aid to Families with Dependent Children programs for punishing "effort and success" and rewarding "indolence and failure." The rising entitlements of the welfare state, according to the conservative argument, inflamed the appetites of the "underclass" and filled them with the unrealistic and dangerous belief that they were in some way owed a marginal level of subsistence. This argument sanctioned President Reagan's successful dismemberment of the remnants of the Great Society era social programs during the early 1980s and continues to underwrite conservative positions on welfare policy today. See Allen J. Matusow, *The Unravelling of America: A History of Liberalism in the 1960s* (New York: Harper and Row, 1984); and Charles A. Murray, *Losing Ground: American Social Policy 1950–1980* (New York: Basic Books, 1984). Although it generated a great controversy, the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964—the legislative centerpiece of the War on Poverty—was relatively limited in scope. Funding for the OEO at its height (in fiscal year 1967) was only about $1.5 billion, while the cost of the Vietnam War during the same period was $10.3 billion. See Gettleman and Mermelstein, *Great Society Reader* p. 173.

[4] *Report of The National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders* (Washington, DC: Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, 1968). The original GPO edition is out of print; the Bantam Books edition of the same title (Bantam #QZ4273) is also out of print, although used copies are widely available.

[5] For a conservative view of MFP policy see Daniel Patrick Moynihan, *Maximum Feasible Misunderstanding. Community Action in the War on Poverty* (New York: Free Press, 1969).

[6] Many of UPAs tapes and printed materials were produced as part of issue-based organizing activities and were not archived in any way. After serving their immediate function, tapes were often erased or discarded. I was able to view about twenty-five UPA tapes, including those discussed here, in the winter of 1989. Many of the original reel-to-reel videotapes that do remain have already begun to deteriorate. I would like to thank SCAT's director Gerry Field, as well as Bob Matorin, Irwin Hipsman, Claire Beach, Abigail Norman, and Cindy Bargar, for their generous help in researching UPA's work. SCAT's address is: Somerville Community Access Television, 90 Union Square, Somerville, MA 02143.

[7] In the introduction to the book, Davidson comments, "I entered a life-style, and like the people who live on the block, I love and hate it and I keep going back." Bruce Davidson, *East 100th Street* (Cambridge, MA. Harvard University Press, 1970), p. 1. While Davidson is often lauded for the humanitarian, nonexploitative relationship he maintained with the impoverished residents of Harlem, he always had the option of leaving at the end of the day to take the subway back downtown.

[8] For an excellent treatment of the relationship between documentary photographers such as Jacob Riis, Lewis Hine, Arthur Rothstein, and others, to specific reform agencies and movements see Maren Stange, *Symbols of Ideal Life: Social Documentary Photography in America 1890–1950* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

[9] This heroic description of a young deputy sheriff exemplifies the melodramatic tone of Cohen and Murphy's book: "Ronald

Ernest Ludlow was the kind of young man of whom a police chief sheriff, or even an FBI Bureau Head was likely to say, at one time or another: 'Damn, if only I had a few more like him. At 26, Ronald Ludlow had the physical equipment, the intelligence, and the ambition for the job he chose, deputy sheriff." Jerry S. Cohen and William S. Murphy, *Burn, Baby, Burn! The Watts Riot* (New York: Avon Books, 1966), p. 123. Also see Robert Conot, *Rivers of Blood, Years of Darkness* (New York: Bantam, 1967) on the Watts riot; and Ben W Gilbert *Ten Blocks from the White House: Anatomy of the Washington Riots of 1968* (New York: Praeger and *The Washington Post*, 1968).

[10] The report of the 1969 National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence, also known as the Eisenhower Commission, was published in paperback as *Violence in America: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives* (New York: Signet/The New American Library, 1969). The Walker Commission report was published as *Rights in Conflict: The Chicago Police Riot* (New York: Signet, 1968). Also see Paul Jacobs's commentary on the McCone Commission in *Prelude to Riot: A View of Urban America from the Bottom* (New York: Vintage, 1966), pp. 237–283. Only five years after the release of the Kerner report, New York Mayor John V Lindsay and Senator Fred R. Harris (an original Kerner Commission member) released their "State of the Cities" report, announcing that conditions in America's inner-city areas had actually worsened, and just last year Fred Harris co-edited a book that argues that urban conditions are worse now than they were in 1967 See Fred R. Harris and John V Lindsay, eds., *The State of the Cities: Report of the Commission on the Cities in the 70's* (New York: Praeger/National Urban League, 1972); Fred R. Harris and Roger W Wilkens, eds., *Quiet Riots. Race and Poverty in the United States 20 Years after the Kerner Report* (New York: Pantheon, 1988). For information on the Pittsburgh Survey see Stange, "The Pittsburgh Survey: Lewis Hine and the Establishment of Documentary Style," in *Symbols of Ideal Life*.

[11] See Frank S. Meyer, "Liberalism Run Riot," in the *National Review*, March 26, 1968. Meyer describes the Kerner report as "one of the most preposterous ebullitions of the liberal spirit ever seriously submitted to the public. It puts the blame [for the riots] everywhere but where it belongs upon the rioters and upon the liberals who, with their abstract ideology, prepared the way for the riots by their contempt for social order and their utopian egalitarian enticements and incitements" (pp. 283–287).

[12] See *The Washington Post* and *The New York Times*, March 1 and 2, 1968. *Life* magazine featured the report in a story by Donald Jackson, "Racism, not Poverty or Cynicism, Caused the Riots," March 8, 1968, pp. 97–99.

[13] Michael Lipsky and David J. Olson, *Commission Politics: The Processing of Racial Crisis in America* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books, 1977), pp. 134–135. For more on the use of paperback books in disseminating government reports and documents to a mass audience, see Kenneth C. Davis, *Two-bit Culture: The Paperbacking of America* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1984), pp. 346–348.

[14] *Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders*, Bantam edition, frontispiece (hereafter cited as *Report*).

[15] "Remarks of the President upon issuing an Executive Order establishing a National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, July 29, 1967 " in *Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders*, GPO edition, Appendix B, p. 296.

[16] *Report*, pp. 389–408.

[17] Lipsky and Olson, *Commission Politics*, comment that charts and graphs in the Kerner report "[were] not a result of research, but were developed from news reports as an aid in determining which cities should be studied in the first place. This 'symbolic' research seems intended not so much to convey information as to create the impression that valid data had been collected and sophisticated analysis conducted (p. 177).

[18] Ibid., p. 178.

[19] Ibid., p. 179.

[20] Ibid., p. 171. In a *Life* magazine article on the report from March 8, 1968, an unidentified commission staff member comments, "This report isn't for black Americans. They know how it is. It's for white Americans, who don't know."

[21] *Report*, unpaginated (between pp. 318 and 319).

[22] Ibid., frontispiece.

[23] The "massive show of force" policy, used during the 1968 riots under the code name "Garden Plot," was designed to avoid the kind of indiscriminate killing that characterized the Newark and Detroit riots in 1967 by imposing curfews and flooding riot-prone areas with vast numbers of troops. Writer and journalist Robert L. Allen argues that one of the primary reasons for the restraint exercised in riot control "was the belief of the policy-makers that alienated blacks could be won back to the American system, and that this course would be less disruptive to the society at large than a policy of severe repression." See Allen, *Black Awakening in Capitalist*

America: An Analytic History (Garden City, NY: Doubleday/Anchor, 1970), pp. 207–210.

[24] See "Migration and the Rise of Disorders in the Cities," in Frances Fox Piven and Richard A. Cloward, *Regulating the Poor: The Function of Public Welfare*, (New York: Vintage, 1971), pp. 236–238.

[25] *Report*, p. 91. The image of the violent yet childlike black has long dominated the popular imagination of white culture. During the early nineteenth century, blacks were widely considered to be "more feminine and tenderminded" due to their history of servitude, yet they were also thought to be capable of extreme brutality, "the madness which a sudden freedom from restraint begets—the overpowering burst of a long buried passion, the wild frenzy of revenge, and the savage lust for blood, all unite to give the warfare of liberated slaves, traits of cruelty and crime which nothing earthly can equal." See George M. Frederickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny 1817–1914* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1971), pp. 55, 114.

[26] Lee Rainwater and William L. Yancey, *The Moynihan Report and the Politics of Controversy* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1967).

[27] Christopher Jencks, "The Moynihan Report," in ibid., p. 443.

[28] James Farmer, " The Controversial Moynihan Report," in ibid., p. 411.

[29] A *New York Times* article from March 2, 1968, describes a $35,000, twenty-ton, armored personnel carrier being considered for purchase by the Los Angeles police department: "The tank-like vehicle can carry 20 men in bulletproof safety. It can be equipped with a .30 caliber machine gun, tear-gas launchers, a smoke-screen device, chemical fire extinguishers and a siren that can disable rioters with its sound." That same year the Justice Department gave almost $4 million in federal grants to selected American cities for programs to "prevent and detect riots" (*New York Times*, September 4, 1968).

[30] The report includes surveys measuring such things as "Hostility towards Middle-class Negroes in Newark" (p. 177), charts detailing population changes within major American metropolitan areas ("Negroes as a Percentage of Total Population by Location, Inside and Outside Metropolitan Areas, and by Size of Metropolitan Area," p. 250), and even graphs that rate comparative "levels of violence" in twenty-five different cities ("Charts" section).

[31] *Report*, p. 392.

[32] Lipsky and Olson, *Commission Politics*, pp. 185, 195.

[33] *Report*, p. 406.

[34] Yolanda Ward, a housing activist who did extensive research in Housing and Urban Development files during the 1970s, learned of a little-known "Regional Housing Mobility Program" developed by HUD that offered a set of practical guidelines for removing poor, black, inner-city residents and turning the vacant land over to development corporations. See "The Spatial Deconcentration Report," in *World War III Illustrated* 6 (1986): 18–29. Also see "The Regional Housing Mobility Program: The Government's 'Solution' to the Urban Crisis," a pamphlet by Arlene Zarembka and Legal Services of Eastern Missouri, 607 North Grand Boulevard, St. Louis, MO 63103; Anthony Downs, *Opening Up the Suburbs: An Urban Strategy for America* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1973) and *Urban Problems and Prospects* (Chicago: Markham, 1970).

[35] Downs, *Opening Up the Suburbs*, p. 123.

[36] "Governor's Warning: Civil Disorder Leads to Riots and Revolution," in *U.S. News and World Report*, August 12, 1968, p. 14. Agnew's rhetoric sounds surprisingly current: "The disease of our times is an artificial and masochistic sophistication—the vague uneasiness that our values are false, that there is something wrong with being patriotic, honest, moral, or hardworking."

[37] Georges Sorel, "Class War and Violence," in *Reflections on Violence*, T. E. Hulme (London: Collier Books, 1970), p. 68.

[38] White hysteria in the face of the perceived menace of armed and militant black cadres reached absurd proportions, as seen in an article in the November 23, 1967 *New York Times*. The article features excerpts from a dialog between senators on the Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations and Frederick H. Brooks, a twenty-one–year old "Negro militant" from Nashville, Tennessee. After testifying that the recent urban riots were a "minute example of what will happen if blacks don't get their rights," Brooks was asked by Senator John McClellan of Arkansas if he would "shoot Ladybird." Brooks replied, "If she was my enemy. She is the wife of Lyndon Johnson and I consider him my enemy." Richard Nixon was able to play successfully on middle-class fears and insecurities in the 1968 presidential campaign. A *New York Times* article from September 18, 1968, cites complaints by the Fair Campaign Practices Committee about the "racial implications" of Nixon's campaign "code words" such as "crime in the streets" and "law and order."

[39] *New York Times*, November 23, 1968. Another *Times* article, March 2, 1968, cites an AP survey showing that police

departments across the United States were "stockpiling armored vehicles, helicopters and high-powered rifles, recruiting civilians as ready reserves and sending undercover agents into slum areas."

[40] Frances Fox Piven and Richard A. Cloward, "Great Society Programs: Federal Intervention," in *Regulating the Poor* p. 262.

[41] For information on the National Welfare Rights Organization, see Frances Fox Piven and Richard A. Cloward, *Poor People's Movements: Why They Succeed, How They Fail* (New York: Vintage, 1979), pp. 264–363. For information on 1960s tenant activism, see Peter Dreier, "The Tenant's Movement," in *Marxism and the Metropolis: New Perspectives in Urban Political Economy*, 2d ed., ed. William K. Tabb and Larry Sawers (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), pp. 174–199.

[42] This and subsequent quotes are from an interview with Bob Matorin on February 11, 1989, in Somerville, MA.

[43] This particular meeting was taped by the Somerville Media Action Project, a parallel group that included a number of UPA members. SMAP was instrumental in introducing cable access television to Somerville in the mid-1970s. The informal UPA "archive" (see n. 6) contains several unlabeled tapes of rent-control and housing authority meetings that were recorded by UPA cameras.

[44] The interview was part of a "Rent Control" tape made by the Channel 3 Producers Group, which included a number of UPA members. The tape is stored at the UPA archive in 1/2-inch open-reel format.

[45] *A Day in the Life of Bromley-Heath* is stored at the UPA archives in 1/2-inch open-reel format.

[46] *It's Not a House, It's a Home* is stored at the UPA archives in 1/2-inch open-reel format. Hipsman also worked to expand the distribution of UPA tapes through the Video Distribution Resources Project, which involved the publication of a catalog of UPA tapes. Because VCRs—at the time—were not widely available, and cable TV in Boston was relatively rare, it met with only limited success. Probably the most widely distributed of UPA's tapes was Mary Tiseo's *We Will Not Be Beaten* (1977), which was produced as an organizing tool in conjunction with Boston's Transition House, one of the first shelters for battered women in the United States.

[47] *Rent Control=Less Rent and More Control* is not dated but appears to have been made in the mid–1970s. It is stored at the UPA archives in 1/2-inch open-reel format.

[48] This information was obtained from copies of UPA documents on file at Somerville Community Access Television.

[49] *Your Rent and the Brooke Amendment* is stored at the UPA archives in 1/2-inch open-reel format.

[50] Richard A. Cloward and Richard M. Elman, "Poverty, Injustice and the Welfare State," in *The Politics of Turmoil: Poverty, Race and The Urban Crisis*, eds. Richard A. Cloward and Frances Fox Piven (New York: Vintage, 1975), pp. 37–38.

[51] See Stange, *Symbols of Ideal Life*, p. 44; and Roy Lubove, "From Friendly Visiting to Social Diagnosis," in *The Professional Altruist: The Emergence of Social Work as a Career* (New York: Atheneum, 1983), pp. 22–54.

[52] Cloward and Piven, "Birth of a Movement," in *Politics of Turmoil*, p. 130.

[53] Ibid., p. 165.

[54] Piven and Cloward, *Regulating the Poor* p. 7

Photographies and Histories/Coming into Being: John Tagg's *The Burden of Representation: Essays on Photographies and Histories*

Laura Wexler

The past two decades of work in photography—art, history, and criticism—could well be characterized by the sustained effort to reevaluate the social and material dimensions of representation; in particular, documentary representation. The emerging critique of documentary realism has been instructive on multiple fronts. It has taught us to be less pious toward the turn-of-the-century originators of social reform photography, less accepting of a uniformly radical frame for the New Deal archives, and less passive in the face of increasingly hostile media manipulation of the consumer It has also made us less patient with the claims to neutrality of any mediating agency, be it a state or federal authority, an editorial pyramid, an exhibition space, or the internalized voices of our own critical training and practical instincts.

Reappraisal encourages and prioritizes as a critical necessity, a vigilant stance toward the cultural politics of representation. But, occasionally—and unfortunately—it has also been seen as a sign of the personal animosity thought to be cherished by some members of a younger generation of critics and photographers against a previous cohort whose difficult task it was to clear at least some ground for the practice of a constantly endangered photographic humanism. Witness, for instance, the degree of vituperation sometimes directed at the efforts of women and/or minority group photographers to assert distinct priorities in conference programming such as that sponsored by the women's caucus of the Society for Photographic Education; clearly, these issues ought to be located beyond the scale of the personal. Witness, for another instance, the extremely small hold that minority and/or women photographers still have on the higher levels of professional employment, as documented by *exposure's* recent surveys of several hundred departments of photography Such figures raise a major question about the grounds of representation itself, not about individual image-makers.

The collapse of a sense of fundamental collectivity is not unique to photography A similar vertigo has afflicted almost every field of the arts and sciences over the past twenty years, spearheaded by feminist, semiotic, deconstructive, psychoanalytic, structuralist, post-structuralist, and postmodernist critiques. Philosopher of science Sandra Harding describes how in science

> **in each area we have come to understand that what we took to be humanly inclusive problematics, concepts, theories, objective methodologies, and transcendental truths are in fact far less than that. Western culture's favored beliefs mirror in sometimes clear and sometimes distorting ways not the world as it is or as we might want it to be, but the social projects of their historically identifiable creators.[1]**

One might argue, concerning parallel developments in the field of literature, that the present degree of struggle over the inclusion or exclusion of individual books on undergraduate syllabi cannot be purely

about the books. Instead, it points to the underlying meaning of the entire debate on representation: that it is a contest for the material, as well as the symbolic, representation of previously excluded groups. In photography as in science and literature (and any number of other fields) alternative symbolic materials and broader-based alliances are needed precisely *because* this struggle for material representation has been so vituperative, *because* it has been so difficult to find a way of admitting the extent of human differences. This crucial effort to "open up the canon" and to "restructure the academy" should not be portrayed as a special-interest issue in any limited sense. On the contrary, it entails the profoundest possible redefinition of the "we" and "they" of social life according to an understanding of the intersecting determinants of race, class, and gender that cut across all previous group formations, including those of genders, genres, and generations.

The critique of documentary expression, however, also cautions us that no photographic practice has yet existed that did not in part obstruct democratization, and that no oppositional effort has been entirely free from implication in the systems of representation that it opposes. Who can say, then, with certainty that s/he really knows how to rise to the present challenge of heterogeneity? The personal circumspection and self-questioning that are demanded at such a moment should keep us from participating in photographic production—by which I mean to include the production of schools of history, criticism, technique, and theory as well as bodies of images—as if particular results of the positions we take are a foregone conclusion, an essential and invariable given. For one thing, language itself, our very terminology, has been shown to be complicit in creating and sustaining the social ordering that needs to be corrected. We speak and are spoken by histories that do not have us in mind. As filmmaker Trinh Minh-ha recently observed in *Woman, Native Other: Writing Postcoloniality and Feminism*, It is often an instructive impediment to the woman of color that she

> **finds herself at odds with language, which partakes in the white-male-is-norm ideology and is used predominantly as a vehicle to circulate established power relations. This is further intensified by her finding herself also at odds with her relation to writing, which when carried out uncritically often proves to be one of domination: as holder of speech, she usually writes from a position of power, creating as an "author," situating herself above her work and existing before it, rarely simultaneously with it.[2]**

Such a writer must titrate her self-assurance over a variety of partial solutions.

But, in this statement of the problem Trinh Minh-ha also offers a method, one that all those who seek to facilitate social change through photographic practice might do well to adopt if photography is to be unglued from the structures of domination and exclusion in which, historically, it was conceived and nurtured. Verbal and conceptual command over images may easily be complicit with social relations that we do not intend. We cannot be sure that we mean what is designated by the categories of our thought. We must learn therefore, like Trinh Minh-ha's postcolonial woman writer, to prefer to come into voice as photographic artists, critics, and historians "simultaneously *with*" a new reading of photography and photographs, discerning the mandate of our authority as we discern the web of photography's relationship to us, rather than situating ourselves as experts *above* and *before* it, in predetermined ways. Any less rigorous attitude toward the complicated grounds of the coming-into-being of photographs will only reproduce the hierarchies and reactivate the histories we are struggling to leave behind.

For this reason, it seems to me that John Tagg's passionately argued position in *The Burden of Representation. Essays on Photographies and Histories* is crucial. Tagg, associate professor of art history at the State University of New York, Binghamton, attacks the coherence of the very term photography itself. His idea is that there is no such thing as "photography"; that the "precarious generalization Photography"[3] cannot hold up under historical investigation. Instead, there is not one thing that is photog-

Jack Delano, "Union Point, Georgia," 1941

raphy, but many As he puts it, "the history of photography stands to the history of Art as a history of writing would to the history of Literature,"[4] or, to put it slightly differently, photography—like writing—is a much bigger enterprise than we have so far seen, said, or studied. This insight is central because when we do let go of the singular term photography, we are simultaneously freed from clinging to, and arguing over, a shrunken and deceptively unified, preestablished, and previously dominated field. In its place enters a shifting ground of variable practice, some parts of it being recognizable as "photography" and some not. And, in its place, the space opens up for us to investigate just what, when, and where in the enormous variety of the world's photographic behavior there is activity and ontology that seems adequate to our present crisis in the representation and legitimation of social difference. Following this line of reasoning, Tagg writes that the so-called medium

> **has no existence outside its historical specifications. What alone unites the diversity of sites in which photography operates is the social formation itself; the specific historical spaces for representation and practice which it constitutes. Photography as such has no identity. Its status as a technology varies with the power relations which invest it. Its nature as a practice depends on the institutions and agents which define it and set it to work. Its function as a mode of cultural production is tied to definite conditions of existence and its products are legible and meaningful only within the particular currencies they have. Its history has no unity. It is a flickering across a field of institutional spaces. It is this field we must study, not photography as such.[5]**

By cultivating such an understanding of photography as cultural production, we can be delivered into a realm of social criticism that exists not *before*, or *after*, or *in consequence* of photographs, but—something like what Trinh Minh-ha envisioned —*along with* them. That is, as these various fields of meaning take shape before us, so does a social conception of "photography" materialize, and not otherwise. This also implies that if we cannot learn to discern the invisible, material, political context underlying their appearance and the representational networks that they uphold, we will also have failed miserably to perceive the photographs themselves.

> **We must not allow ourselves the expedient of imagining something existing "before" representation by which we may conveniently explain the representation away. Where we must start is with concrete material activity and what it produces. We must begin to analyse the real representational practices that go on in a society and the concrete institutions and apparatuses within which they take place. We must plot the network of material, political and ideological constraints which bear on these institutions and**

constitute their conditions of existence and operation. We must describe the function of "specific" individuals within them and the material, social and symbolic contexts in which they are sited, in which they operate and in which they intervene.[6]

Here, the old dichotomies between society and art have not been overcome, they have simply been dissolved in a more intimate synthesis.

As one might predict given such an orientation, *The Burden of Representation* is a strongly sociologically nuanced work. Tagg critiques a variety of moments in the history of Anglo-American documentary, such as the development of photography as a means of legal and medical surveillance by the state and the use of photographic documents in legal arguments for slum clearance in Quarry Hill, Leeds, both in the late nineteenth century; the status of photography as property in law; and the appeal to "realism" in the New Deal photographs. This critique is embodied in essays, fragments of essays, and notes that address theoretical problems in interpreting photographic meanings. Many of the essays have appeared before in British journals such as *Screen Education*, in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Taken together, they do not so much construct a closely defended treatise as offer a repeated exemplification of the thesis that photography is anything but a unified field. Nevertheless along with a new, highly theoretical, introductory essay and Tagg's excellent new historical work on the Leeds Sanitary Commission reported in the chapter titled "God's Sanitary Law· Slum Clearance and Photography," perhaps his best work to date, the collection provides an extremely useful single source for this influential and still developing, perspective on the history/ies of photography

John Tagg's thinking about "photographies" has been strongly influenced by the work of French historian Michel Foucault, whose penetrating and iconoclastic analysis of the "technologies" of power supports Tagg's desire for a better delineation of the powers of photographic technologies. Tagg quotes with approbation Foucault's discussion of the

Russell Lee, "Hidalgo County, Texas," 1939.

"capillary form" of relations of power, in which "'power returns into the very grain of individuals, touches their bodies, and comes to insert itself into their gestures and attitudes, their discourses, apprenticeships and daily lives.'"[7] This formulation proves useful to Tagg in conceptualizing the broad overview of the politics of pictures as well as what is going on in single images at the level of iconic representation, where the bodies and gestures of the individuals depicted mirror their social relations. Occasionally, Tagg actually carries out such an individual iconic analysis, as he does brilliantly in a detailed comparison, in Chapter 6, of Jack Delano's photograph of a middle-class couple seated on a sofa under a tapestry of a Moorish dance, entitled "Union Point, Georgia," and Russell Lee's photograph of recipients of government aid from the Farm Security Administration, seated under a tapestry of an eighteenth-century chamber concert, titled "Hidalgo County, Texas." There Tagg argues that

what we experience as viewers of the photographs is a double movement which typifies ideological discourse: On the one hand, the ideological construction put on the objects and events concretises a general mythical scheme by incorporating it in the reality of these specific historical moments. At the same time, however, the very conjuncture of

> **the objects and events and the mythical schema dehistoricises the same objects and events by displacing the ideological connection to the archetypal level of the *natural and universal* in order to conceal its specifically *ideological* nature. What the mythic schema gains in concreteness is paid for by a loss of historical specificity on the part of the objects and events.[8]**

He concludes, convincingly, that "we cannot be innocent of the values which inhere in the 'realism' of these photographs."[9]

However, Tagg hopes, above all, to stress how "the absolute continuity of the photographs' ideological existence with their existence as material objects whose 'currency' and 'value' arise in certain distinct and historically specific social practices. [is] ultimately a function of the state."[10] Accordingly, he expends far less effort in describing the appearance of individual images than he does in describing their "regime of truth"—the social, material, and ideological horizons against which they appear and function. Situating his analysis at this institutional, almost macroeconomic, level of social interaction enables Tagg to describe with great clarity the growth of photographic practice as a tool of surveillance and record-keeping by nineteenth-century social science and government agencies. It gives *The Burden of Representation* an edge, I believe, on many other histories of the field of modern photography that remain enmeshed in the extrapolated image, with only a rudimentary concept of what Tagg calls its "currency " But, in a certain way, the broad political overview is a drawback as well as an advantage, for it moves very quickly out from the iconic to the social in a way that privileges analysis of the system as a whole above the partial reinscriptions of that system in the lives of raced and gendered, as well as classed, individuals, where—after all—that system finds its end points of control. This is also, I might add, a complaint that one could make about Foucault. There is a curious lack of passion for the individual instance.

I believe our knowledge about the roles and responsibilities of photography in the technologies of social control would be strengthened and enriched by reading particular images in much greater detail than Tagg generally chooses to do, and by tracing the history of their making more thoroughly down into the lives and actions of the individual photographers who made them. For some reason, after he sets up his enormously productive interpretive framework, Tagg largely bypasses the study of the authorship of single images, as if to trace their currency in an individual's career would take away from the sense of their currency as social exchange in the functioning of the state, or as if studying the details of the making of images would be a project different from studying their politics of intelligibility Why so? Instead, would not reviewing the actions of individual photographers only reveal more about the possible relations of their work to "historically specific social practices"? For instance, which camera operators worked for the police departments? What was their mode of working? What did they think about what they were doing? Did they identify themselves as a group, and how? What opinions did they express about "photography"? How were these opinions different from those expressed by other sectors of the photographic work force? How did these opinions influence what happened to the photographs? How did what happened to the police photographs impinge upon what happened to other kinds of images? These are questions that Tagg's own analysis opens and makes insistent. The relative absence of comparative, case-by-case reporting on the photographs is thus a real weakness of the book. Because the level of generalization necessary to reveal the new social prospect is not supported by enough individuated readings, it can seem, at times, that Tagg is merely substituting one totalizing metaphor—the dispersal and disconnectedness of "photographies"—for another, its imaginary unity

As he goes about his project, Tagg reveals himself to be quite well informed about historical issues and interested in doing research into a variety of archives. Although he remarks that "my historical researches seem always to be fragmentary, and incomplete; not just like a series of sketches of a landscape, but like a series of sittings, authenticated re-

ports, rumours, glimpses, prolonged observations, and second-hand accounts,"[11] this disclaimer is best understood as the generic dissatisfaction of a researcher for whom, "all through this process, the concepts and theories with which the records and accounts are to be articulated are themselves refined, adjusted or replaced."[12] It is both instructive and reassuring that he is speaking here from a position of critical simultaneity virtually identical to that which Trinh Minh-ha defined. This kind of new photographic social history requires a new kind of photographic viewer, who comes into seeing along with the evidence that comes into being, and that viewer must write from a consciously decentered position. Tagg thus exemplifies, as well as calls for, this kind of approach.

And, as this new kind of photographic writer, Tagg has certainly done and supervised a good deal of interesting research. I found even his asides about the "class content" of Lewis Hine's "frontal, symmetrically posed picture[s],"[13] or his brief remarks about the various regions of social effectivity of the Museum of Modern Art from the 1930s to the 1950s, stimulating and useful, even though otherwise Tagg barely addresses Hine, and his history of MOMA is articulated only in a casual and fragmentary way in scattered locations throughout the text (there is not, unfortunately, a chapter devoted to that subject). Tagg is especially canny about the uses to which social agencies put documentary photographs. His description of the argument against preserving the Quarry Hill area's working-class housing that Doctor James Spottiswoode Cameron, the medical officer of health, managed to mount from photographic evidence, and of how well the indeterminate aspects of the medium served his purposes, is unforgettable. I would have loved to see Tagg deal at length with MOMA.

John Tagg is author of a previous book: *Art History and Cultural Theory*. He cocurated the exhibition that was the basis for Andrea Fischer's *Let Us Now Praise Famous Women. Women Photographers of the FSA/OWI 1934–1943. The Burden of Representation* belongs with a broad group of recent works such as Maren Stange's *Symbols of Ideal Life*, or Alan Trachtenberg's *Reading American Photographs*, or Allan Sekula's *Photography Against the Grain*, among others that are leading the general movement in the United States to rethink the material and ideological history of documentary expression. While it is not possible to call this critical movement a school, it is characterized overall by a more careful attention to social process than most photography critics have previously evinced. However, Tagg is still to be sharply distinguished from many of the American documentary revisionists both by the terminological complexity of his aesthetic vocabulary and by the intense engagement in British and Continental theoretical debate that he openly sustains alongside his historical exegesis. Tagg's is not a book for the kind of photography people who dislike words, footnotes, or the accumulation of intertextual reference. It might even be said—and this follows from my earlier criticism—that it is the theoretical engagement that interests him above all, rather than the lived instances of ideological alignment that the other writers demonstrate. This will make the book difficult for some readers to credit.

This characteristic may also hinder somewhat the entry of *The Burden of Representation* into a truly wide range of critical discussion, for its passionate and creative denunciation of the shortcomings of Althusserianism, for instance, is not front and center of the American photographic community's concerns; and that community has tended both to be suspicious of such a high intensity of ideological debate and to remain unread in basic Marxist texts. Nevertheless, for all those interested in articulating the reappraisal of documentary photography with powerful British and Continental theoretical approaches, and for those who are working on founding a visual studies component of the interdisciplinary field of American cultural studies, *The Burden of Representation* is clearly a very important contribution. Here, for instance, can be found elegant examples of how "rejecting the [Althusserian] architectural model of floors or levels" does not mean

> **asserting that cultural institutions, practices and formations are either autonomous or inconsequential. Nor is it to deny that cultural practices and relations**

can be changed, challenged or reformed through institutional interventions, political practices or state actions, or that such interventions will have effects on wider social relations. It is rather to insist that these effects are not given in advance and that change in one cultural institution will not set off an inexorable chain of echoing repercussions in all the others. It is also to acknowledge that the complex conditions of cultural institutions cannot be specified in a general concept, nor their mode of operation and consequences predicted by a general model.[14]

And here, also, Tagg debates with other important critics of the image such as Roland Barthes, Laura Mulvey and John Berger. Explicitly and implicitly *The Burden of Representation* is a vigorous demonstration of the existence of whole realms of photographic production that have been inadequately theorized.

In addition, for the less-specialized photographic critic or student, *The Burden of Representation* could well prove to be a powerfully liberating text, not because of theory but because of the fresh approach to the image-using community that it articulates. John Tagg's resonant insistence that "photography" as such does not exist, and that its effects "are not given in advance," provides the theoretical basis of a necessary, new form of practical alliances, grounded not in imaginary and fantastical unities and divisions, but in thoughtful and specific approaches to shared, pragmatic goals that are coming into being.

In a future issue of exposure *I will continue this discussion of the reappraisal of the documentary tradition by considering the perspectives taken in* Photography/Politics: Two, *by Patricia Holland, Jo Spence, and Simon Watney, and* Images of History: Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century Latin American Photographs as Documents, *by Robert M. Levine.*

Endnotes

1 Sandra Harding, *The Science Question in Feminism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1986), p. 15.

2 Trinh Minh-ha, *Woman, Native, Other: Writing Postcoloniality and Feminism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989), p. 6.

3 John Tagg, *The Burden of Representation. Essays on Photographies and Histories* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988), p. 15.

4 Ibid., p. 15.

5 Ibid., p. 118.

6 Ibid., p. 211

7 Ibid., p. 165.

8 Ibid., pp. 159-160.

9 Ibid., p. 182.

10 Ibid., p. 165.

11 Ibid., p. 197

12 Ibid., p. 197

13 Ibid., p. 193.

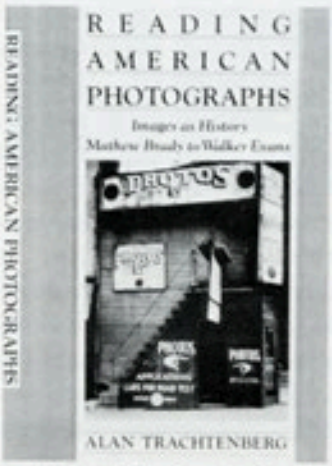
14 Ibid., p. 25.

THE TRAFFIC IN REPRESENTATIVE MEN: READING ALAN TRACHTENBERG'S *READING AMERICAN PHOTOGRAPHS*

Judith Fryer

On the cover of Alan Trachtenberg's new book, *Reading American Photographs*, is a photograph by Walker Evans of a place where photographs are made (Figure 1). But the viewer's attention is captured first by the many things to be read: the title itself, "License-Photo Studio," with its ironic reference to "studio"; various signs, including the hand-scrawled "Come up and see me some time" and "Tootsie love Fina"; the logo of the pointing fingers—"making the picture an unmistakable exercise in *reading*, a mixture of linguistic and visual notations." By reading, we make meaning: we can say here that this is a photograph about the making of photographs, or of photographic history It is also the opening image in Evans's *American Photographs*, a statement, Trachtenberg argues, that this book (first an exhibit at the Museum of Modern Art in New York in 1938) is not for the instrumental purposes of photo-license pictures or for assigning equivalences, but "for seeing as *reading*" (264). And by reading photographs—not as illustrations of the past, but to learn the point of view of "the photograph, itself"—we learn something about interpretations of America. What Trachtenberg proposes is not so simple as it sounds: if photographs can be *read*, then they are open-ended, have no fixed meanings, however much they might be images of actual persons, places, and events in the past; if the connection between photographs and history is interpretation, in *making* interpretations, we *construct* (our own versions of) history, partly by the way we assign categories of meaning to what we read (art, document, etc.), partly by our way of ordering the photographs in sequences of other photographs and of words.

Clearly, the Evans image appears on the cover just beneath Trachtenberg's title not as jacket illustration, but as an image to be read, to point to the riddle both image and title pose. "The literariness of [Evans's] *American Photographs* begins in its title," Trachtenberg writes in his chapter on Evans. "Apparently plain and unequivocal, the words pose a riddle: What *is* an American photograph? Photographs made in and of America, or expressive of America? And if both, what does this doubleness imply about each word, 'American' and 'photographs'? Is the title generic or thematic? In the first instance, 'American photographs' would denote a classification, like an entry in an archive or file. In the second, the title would pose a problem of interpretation. A similar ambiguity is presented by the pictures themselves: do they depict self-evident facts or are there meanings which have to be pursued, imagined?" (240). Trachtenberg's definition of "American photographs" for his own book as those which take America as their subject—photographs, that is,



Walker Evans, "License Photo Studio, New York, 1934"

whose political motives lie close to the surface" (xv)—does not exactly explain away all but the word "Reading" in his title. "I have chosen works," he writes, "of sufficient intelligence, insight, subtlety, and beauty to reward our treating them as important American art"—meaning not "fine art," which belongs to the institutional superstructure of presentation, but rather, following John Dewey's *Art and Experience*, that which, "by its character as a formalization of emotion and idea in relation to physical objects, translates history into experience" (176, 287). Trachtenberg, then, sets himself the task his subtitle, "Images as History—Mathew Brady to Walker Evans," points to: reading photographs as art *and* as history, which is to say, as cultural documents. And, as William Carlos Williams wrote of Walker Evans's *American Photographs*, under Trachtenberg's masterful eye and pen, "The pictures talk to us. And they say plenty" (240-41).

The riddle Trachtenberg poses has partly to do with the paradox of the transitory nature of the photograph itself—its representation of a stopped moment in time—that captures, permanently, a piece of history, or as Barthes put it, the fact that "what the Photograph reproduces to infinity has occurred only once: the Photograph mechanically repeats what could never be repeated existentially " [1] It has partly to do with Trachtenberg's insistence that the photographs he presents for reading be read as both politics and art. And it has to do with the paradox of attributing points of view and political motives to photographs themselves (rather than to photographers), to his argument that photographs "construct their [own] meanings" (xvi)—which must mean that reading is itself a political act, as is the case with Trachtenberg's *Reading American Photographs*, where his own political motives lie not so far from the surface.

Trachtenberg, a cultural historian who is also a photographer, regards documents as things which must be made intelligible, must be given an order and meaning that does not crush their autonomy as facts. In other words—and it is the great beauty of *Reading American Photographs* that Trachtenberg does this so well—the photographer's task is the same as the historian's: to make the fragmentary details of everyday existence meaningful without loss of the details themselves. Both photographer and historian seek a balance between passive surrender to the facts and reshaping them into a coherent picture or story The viewfinder, aptly named, is a tool for *making* a past; ordering facts into meaning, data into history—by using the viewfinder to make sense of what is in front of the lens, ordering photographs, arranging them into sequences, composing them in certain ways, sometimes writing accompanying texts—is a political act, just as the analogous constructing of history, as Trachtenberg fully knows, is a matter of judgment and choice about the present and future. The photographs in *Reading American Photographs*, then, are not just illustrations for Trachtenberg's text, and not just texts for reading, though they are both of these things, but the pieces with which he constructs a century of American history

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On one level, this book can be read as a history of American photography· the chapters begin with daguerreotypes made soon after the appearance of photography in 1839, move chronologically through Civil War albums, survey photographs of the western landscape, turn-of-the century pictorialism and social documentary, views of the New York cityscape, and conclude with Evans's *American Photographs* exhibit in 1938. Much is left out of this history· Trachtenberg tells us in the preface that he has not attempted a comprehensive survey, preferring a tightly focused body of photographs in order to test a way· of reading. Thus he has made certain choices in his selection and arrangement of images, and these choices shape the interpretations at which he arrives—and if his written text that is the result tells us anything, it is that we ought to pay attention to the ordering of the photographs themselves. Doing so is the clue to the other way of reading the book, as cultural history

What do we see, then, if we look first at the photographs Trachtenberg has assembled for his history of America circa 1839-1948? A gallery (literally so announced) of "illustrious Americans"; images of war: as historical and geographical event, as a mutilation of bodies, especially as a representation of the

work of war; landscapes: representations of the work of surveying the land; work and the city· Stieglitz shots, however hazy, of work sublimated to pictorialism, Hine's children working, Stieglitz's and Hine's New York City; Evans's modernist sequences of people and places. Limiting ourselves to Trachtenberg's framework, notable omissions are daguerreotypes of "illustrious" women (except for one image of a woman in mourning, women are represented as slaves and prisoners); heroes—military and political statesmen—of war; Stieglitz's portraits of Georgia O'Keeffe, his "Equivalents"—Symbolist representations of internal states. Clearly, Trachtenberg's selections reveal an overriding interest in work, or rather in *working*—in photographs that seem not static but in process, enabling us to understand not only the work represented in these photographs, but also the work of making photographs, and the work of making interpretations, including our own participation in reading these cultural documents. We are made to work by his dialectical presentation of images: art and science; inventors, journalists, statesmen—slaves and prisoners; ruined public monuments and mutilated bodies; the vastness of the western landscape and miners at work underground; Stieglitz's *Camera Work* and Hine's social work; Evans's modernist montage.

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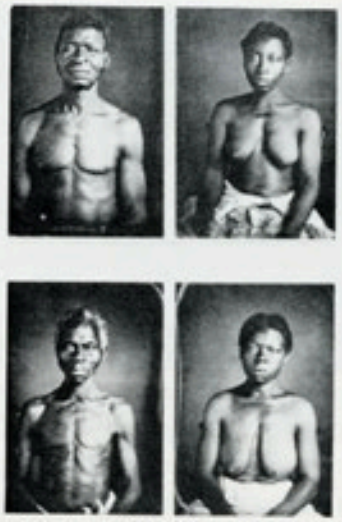
Trachtenberg opens not with a photograph, but with a painting—Charles Willson Peale's *The Artist in His Museum* of 1822—in order to establish the conceptual world of art into which photography would appear seventeen years later. The museum is really the artist's workshop, as Trachtenberg points out, where "the disorganized world of experience [is] transfigured and clarified by art, the combined arts and crafts of taxidermy, archaeology, and painting." The artist *in* his museum acts as mediator of the world's truth, both in creating a copy of things, "a world in miniature," and in revealing the true order hidden within things, an invisible order he brings to view (9). And in so doing, artist-scientist-entrepreneur Peale sets the stage for the photographer who would make not works of art, but exact objective copies.

The value or meaning of a photograph, because it was made without the intervention of human desire or will, was initially believed to reside in the image itself—a notion which abstracts what Marx called "use value" (the labor embodied in its production and the cultural values represented by its material referents) from the image and makes it over into an object, like money, of universal exchange. In a brilliant stroke, Trachtenberg offers as the supreme example of this conception of photography a current project called EROS—which has nothing to do with what Alfred Stieglitz meant when he said that when he makes photographs he makes love—but refers to the Earth Resources Observations Systems Data Center, which maintains an archive of millions of images, growing at the rate of 20,000 per month. EROS, with its instantaneous reproduction of the world, its unerring mechanical eye replacing the ancient god of love, represents photography triumphant, Trachtenberg suggests, and it is one of his purposes to submit the myth of the unerring, objective camera to the test of historical analysis (19-20).



Daguerreotypes by J. T Zealy, Columbia, SC, March 1850.

His first test is Mathew Brady's *Gallery of Illustrious Americans*—Presidents, senators, generals, an artist, an historian, a minister, and a poet—plus daguerreotypes of Cyrus Field, promotor of the first transatlantic cable, and Horace Greeley, editor and publisher. With the exception of Greeley, all are head-and-shoulders shots, the men in formal dress,

their gazes averted in abstraction and indifference to spectators. This gallery is juxtaposed to J. T Zealy's daguerreotypes of slaves—men and women stripped naked in the interest of science—who stare directly into the camera in full consciousness of the spectators' claim upon their space (Figure 2). Both sets of images, Trachtenberg argues, call for the viewer's response: in the first case, to a presentation of the conventions of portraiture which the works of commercial studios shaped, an emulation of and reverence for values and symbols of nationhood; in the second, to images trapped within a system of representation as firmly as the sitters are trapped within a system of chattel slavery, a powerful suggestion of our own entrapment precisely because the eyes of men and women stripped of the right to cover their genitalia, in speaking so directly to ours, undercut the very conventions they represent.

How are these two sets of interpretations of the Republic to be resolved? The chapter concludes with Walt Whitman's self-presentation, the daguerreotype on the frontispiece of the 1855 edition of *Leaves of Grass*, which Trachtenberg sees as an integral part of the volume. The poem, we are promised in the preface, will address "those in all parts of these states who could easier realize the true American character but do not," who accept themselves as represented by "the swarm of cringers, suckers, doughfaces, lice of politics, planners of sly involutions for their own preferment to city offices or state legislatures or the judiciary or congress or the presidency " Whitman's gallery, unlike Brady's, makes a space in which we can imagine black men and women standing freely among others, Trachtenberg argues. His words suggest that he grasped what the Zealy portraits compel us to see, that the portrait conventions of American republicanism were equivalents to actual social barriers that segmented the Republic and mocked its declared ideals. And his 1855 portrait rests on the same perception, replacing emulation with ecstatic encounter, an act of transgression and affirmation.

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Like Peale in his museum, Civil War photographers frequently resorted to stagecraft, Trachtenberg shows in his chapter "Albums of War," arranging scenes of daily life in camp to convey a *look* of informality, posing groups of soldiers on picket duty, moving corpses for more dramatic closeups of battlegrounds. Trachtenberg's focus here is on the problem with representing war, with bringing together the physical and mental, the political and moral event. Thus he is less concerned with the literal content than with the "truth" that these photographs projected, less with the staging of scenes than with the photographer's intention and desire to satisfy a need for order. As with Brady's and Zealy's galleries, he reads these photographs—true to their original presentation—as "albums," encompassing structures which endow the images with what Foucault calls "enunciability " [2] Thus organized into sequences, "single images can be viewed as part of a pattern, an order, a historical totality" (88).

As we have seen, Trachtenberg's especial interest is in the work these photographs present, including the work of black laborers, and here he sees the Civil War photographs as visualizing "steps in certain procedures—the industrial skills and transportation-communication infrastructure by which the North eventually wore down the less industrialized enemy"—and the accompanying text as reflecting "the mentality of calculation and measurement which would turn after the war to improvements in industrial production, especially of a national railroad system, and to the disciplining of the work force" (109). The work he does in reading leads him to see these photographs as evidence of the economic forces unleashed by the war, which, ironically, would destroy the vision of the good society each side fought to defend.

Among the most moving of Trachtenberg's analyses is that of medical photographs of wounded bodies. Like the daguerreotypes of slaves, "the men appear as sullen objects of scientific attention, as if detached from their bodies, witnesses rather than possessors of their wounds and scars, their memory and knowledge of pain." Like the slaves, they watch themselves being watched, portrayed "in an elemental relation of dependence on the state for which they sacrificed bone or flesh or organ: a name, a number, a clinical legend." These photographs disclose what Elaine Scarry has also described as the most immedi-

ate and least comprehensible of war's facts, "that it is waged on tangible human flesh and inscribed in pain—the living wounded body as the final untellable legend" (116-17).[3]

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"Like sands in an hourglass," Trachtenberg writes in his chapter on landscape photography, "the windswept dunes suggest the passage of time, the wagon tracks and footsteps trace temporal human actions, and the photograph itself results from the opening and closing of a shutter, an irrecoverable past moment—a juxtaposition of the immensity of time measured by geologists and the immediacy of this recorded instant. The photograph depicts depiction itself—not 'nature' as a pure essence, something that can be measured and mapped with godlike objectivity, but a scene already altered by those very acts. As in many photographs, a residue of information reminds us of the picture-making situation itself" (158-60). Offering a radical re-vision of these photographs of westward expansion, traditionally linked to Romantic landscape paintings,[4] Trachtenberg guides our reading of the images away from "landscape"—a concept which detracts attention from the nature of the project by calling attention to expressions of individual styles within a conventional form—toward an understanding of "survey" (according to the Oxford English Dictionary, to view, examine, inspect in detail, especially for an official report). He directs our eyes, particularly in the photographs of Timothy O'Sullivan, to the marks of survey teams at work—cameras and other equipment—which like the brushes and taxidermist's tools in Peale's studio, suggest that the scene before our eyes is the place where the picture was made, that is, not a "real place," but a *picture* of a place seen by the photographer who was there, made its image, named it, and then filed it along with charts and written reports as part of a U.S. government archive. "Photographs showing surveyors absorbed in their work of checking instruments, taking notes, sampling materials, call attention to the special character of the photographer's work," Trachtenberg writes: "its instantaneous transformation of raw perception into a picture, a two-dimensional illusion of three-dimensional space in which something worth seeing can be seen" (131).

Frontispiece of James D. Hague's "Mining Industry." Lithograph from a photograph by T H. O'Sullivan.

Seeing O'Sullivan's photographs as part of a survey project leads to the discovery that representations of the West are not limited to images of sublime stillness; reading through the archive forces us to come to terms with a landscape of power—the industrial power represented by factories, smokestacks, smelting works, mining shafts, and miners at work underground, what Trachtenberg describes as "the epicenter of the survey's project and task" (144) (Figure 3). Here are photographs of miners with shovel, pick, hammer, and wheelbarrow, cramped in underground caves, vulnerable to dismemberment and death. Here are landscapes—nature—worked over by "culture," not as an abstract category, "but as the product of a specific history, something made by human labor, as much a technological act as the reduction of ore to silver bullion" (153).

O'Sullivan's photographs cannot be taken simply as illustrations of facts or ideas, Trachtenberg insists; their subject is really the representational activities of the survey itself. Deliberately framing a view, even views devoid of human signs, the photographs of the survey project represent human inscription upon the blankness of nature: the photographs say "that there are no views without names—no nature except what can be seen through the lenses of culture" (162).

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It should come as no surprise, given Trachtenberg's distinction between "art" and "rec-

ord," given his empathy with the vulnerable human subjects of mining and medical photographs and of daguerreotypes of African slaves, and especially given his attention to working, that in his chapter on the simultaneous occurrence of art and documentary photography at the turn-of-the-century, he should question the nature of "art" and of "document," and that he should focus on the work of "Camera Work" and the social—or human, communicative—quality of "Social Work." Underlining the way in which Alfred Stieglitz built the first major institutions of art photography in the United States, the gallery 291 and the journal *Camera Work*, Trachtenberg finds that the idea of seriousness in photography and its implementation—small gallery exhibition and fine-art publication—provided the conception and the strategy (winning access to metropolitan museum collections and exhibition spaces, for example) upon which the expanding photographic community in the 1930s drew, and which had excluded Lewis Hine. The very differences of the conditions under which Hine worked—unlike photographers associated with 291 and with the art world in general, his institutional framework was Progressive reform, with its organized networks of association, publications, systematic methods of investigation and communication—lead us to the basic distinction between Hine's social work and Stieglitz's camera work. The issues between them concern "the notion of a photographic subject, the relation of the medium to American realities, and the effect of photographs upon their audiences" (166). Stieglitz stood at the center of a movement—openly critical of the aggressive commercialism and imitative convention dominating the cultural scene—which sought to produce a new American art and culture. Hine saw himself not as an individual genius, but as a working photographer, performing a certain kind of cultural (and political) labor; his focus was not the photograph in exhibition, but the published image, not the single photograph as a fine print, but the reproduction within a context of images and words. Rather than seeing these approaches as "art" and "documentary," Trachtenberg suggests, what distinguishes Stieglitz's camera work from Hine's social work "are competing ideas of art itself, and of the cultural work of the camera in early twentieth-century America" (168).

To what extent can Stieglitz's photographs be considered documents? Certainly Stieglitz did not position himself historically· ignoring Brady's daguerreotypes, Civil War views, western survey photographs, commercial city scenes—all documents which would have linked him to a photographic history—he saw himself as standing at the beginning of American art photography Early pictorialist photographs like *The Terminal*, *Winter—Fifth Avenue*, *Spring Showers* (all images of work) were "picturesque bits," "metropolitan scenes," as he wrote in 1899, "homely in themselves" but "presented in such a way as to impart to them a permanent value because of the poetic conception of the subject displayed in their rendering."[5] Stieglitz's words lead us directly to the difference between "camera work" and "social work"· since what mattered to pictorialists was the final print, the individual image mounted, framed, and exhibited, the subject counted less than the treatment; the art photograph represented "the feeling and inspiration of the artist" rather than the subject. For Hine, as we will see, the subject *is* the photograph; this is the meaning of *social* work. Unlike the understanding between Hine and his subjects that Trachtenberg painstakingly and lovingly develops, Stieglitz's view of "the lower classes" was a pastoral conception of "low" subjects as more natural, real, honest, and sympathetic than "artificial" commercial society "Nothing charms me so much as walking among the lower classes, studying them carefully and making mental notes," Stieglitz told a *Photographic Times* reporter in 1896. "They are interesting from every point of view I dislike the superficial and artificial, and I find less of it among the lower classes."[6] And to Dorothy Norman: "Wherever I looked there was a picture that moved me—the derelicts, the secondhand clothing shops, the rag pickers, the tattered and the torn. All found a warm spot in my heart. I felt that the people nearby, in spite of their poverty, were better off than I was. Why? There was a reality about them lacking in the artificial world in which I found myself and that went against my grain."[7]

In articles published between 1906 and 1908 Hine explored the uses and values of photogra-

phy and came to conclusions very different from those of Stieglitz. Following John Dewey's argument "that education must rest upon experience, upon contact with and participation in the realities of life," Hine proposed that photography could teach by appealing to the visual sense, demonstrating the value of working together for "mutual benefit," and providing an appreciation of art in its relation to common experience. Hine continued to think of himself as a teacher throughout his career, but once he plunged into social work, he adopted another concept: art in the sense of social purpose and focus. The survey, in other words, came to represent for Hine what pictorialism represented for Stieglitz. Survey, in the field of social work taking form in these years, meant "a panorama of social facts gathered by trained investigators and presented to the public in word and image" (195). The *Pittsburgh Survey*, for which Hine worked, sought to replace fictions and prejudices with documented facts—hard figures and clear images of the work force, its living and working conditions, the variety of trades and industries in the city, the state of its neighborhoods, schools, political system, and economic order. Its basis was a notion of *system*, a complex structure comprised of "workshop" and "community "

The word "social," Trachtenberg argues in what for me is the high point of the book, meant more for Hine that factual content and social data. The power of his photographs derives not from their subjects alone (as the common notion of "documentary" holds) nor from factors like composition and lighting, but from Hine's understanding of "social" as participatory making and viewing. We might think first of the medium of presentation itself—a kind of "picture-text marriage" (photo-story, photo-montage) in which each communication was a transaction with an audience: "graphic presentations offered in exchange for a response—a heightened sympathetic awareness of the lives of others" (199). Then there is the context of which each photograph was a part, "a macro-structure of social meaning" in which "each image belonged to a larger picture and, understood that way, by its social identification, could thus evoke the whole for which it stood" (200). Most importantly, social meant for Hine not only "telling

Lewis Hine, "Engineer " 1929.

the story as a social act," but "seeking a voice in the viewer's imagination," a dialogue with his subject, an enlargement of the reformist idea of social survey to embrace the process of communication itself. The theoretical basis of Hine's social photography, then, lies less in the Progressive idea of society than in the notion of "sociality"· the product of social interaction. The exchange between Hine and the individuals who are the subjects of his photographs which enables them to present their distinct identities is only part of this notion of sociality; the other half of the transaction is that Hine attempts to foster an exchange as well between subject and *viewer* of his pictures, and between himself and them. That is, if he could enter not only into the internal experience of his subjects, but of his audience as well, he could awaken an imaginative response which would acknowledge the imagined voices of his pictured workers as part of one's essential social world. And this, Trachtenberg argues, is what keeps Hine's pictures alive, even when viewed outside their original contexts: "their continuing demand upon us for empathic response" (205).

The chapter concludes with a comparison of Stieglitz's and Hine's New York city photographs, the one a presentation of the outside look of places and things, "spectacles of ambiguity for the detached eye of the viewer," a "history of increasing isolation from the street" (210, 217), the other a conception of the city as products of labor, of the meaning of the

worker's task, and—when the viewer, drawn into the picture, looks from the photographer's place—of the toil of the photographer (Figure 4).

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Walker Evans's city pictures, the subject of the concluding chapter of the book, are like neither of these, but rather, Trachtenberg argues, evoke the "Brady tradition" of the anonymous craftsman picturing the wooden houses and churches and signs in the American landscape, while at the same time elucidating a modern conception of the art of photography—thus in a way reaching all the way back to Peale's notion of the marriage of science and representational art in the enterprise of human self-definition. The "indigenous" quality of Evans's work can be seen in the context of the 1930s, when, as Warren Susman has argued, there was a self-conscious attempt "to seek and define America as a culture"[8]—and Evans himself declared his intention of representing a "consistent" attitude and historical point of view The modernist quality is Evans's discovery that the literal point of view of the camera "can be so treated in an extended sequence or discourse as to become an intentional vehicle or embodiment of a cumulative point of view" (250).

Unlike Hine's marriage of picture and text, Evans's *American Photographs* makes do without captions, and no text explains the order; but as noted, words *within* the photographs play a role—offer clues—in the sequences. By excluding words, and by denying the reader unities of time and place, Evans rejected the mode of photo-journalism in new publications like *Life*; in fact, to separate his work firmly from the genre of journalistic record, he removed his pictures entirely from the normal context of chronological and spatial order. This does not mean, however, that Evans's intentions were solely artistic. The antithetical conception of these two versions of photography, as art, as social document, was exactly the gap Evans wanted to bridge. As his collaborator (in *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*) James Agee explained, Evans's work is "a new kind of photographic show in which photographs are organized and juxtaposed into an organic meaning and whole: a sort of static movie."[9] And this is the way Trachtenberg would have us read Evans's *American Photographs*: as a static movie in which images are juxtaposed "to produce an unarticulated but felt idea or emotion" (259)—in other words, a conception of photography that (like film, and also like modern poetry, fiction, painting, and music) demands the viewer's participation.

Reading Evans's book in this way (as a montage of images, as a modernist poem), the great theme that emerges is "anonymity as the true character of the American," created, Trachtenberg suggests, by adopting the manner of the naive and straightforward camera eye, thus returning "photographs" to "American" by evoking the nameless craftsmen of the past, and by making their craft his own. "The book's America is not a fixed and final form," he writes, "but a series of acts and gestures toward the making of a place"; coherence and completeness are achieved "only in the reader's experience of making sense of the discontinuous but tightly knit flow of images" (283-84).

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If Trachtenberg is right that Evans's *American Photographs* take their force from the story they collectively tell—a narrative about how photographs can be seen and experienced as American, perceived as one's own story—then, turning to the collection of images presented in *Reading American Photographs*, we must also ask what kind of story is it that they invite us to participate in making? "My own goal has been to explore the conditions of culture and politics in which the separate projects which comprise American photographs came into being," Trachtenberg writes in his conclusion. "According to my point of reference, the history represented in American photographs belongs to a continuing dialogue and struggle over the future of America. It is a history of participation by photographers in the making of America, the illumination of its cultural patterns, the articulation of its social and political contradictions" (287, 290).

The history Trachtenberg offers, I would suggest—eloquent, forceful, impassioned, and studded with brilliant readings as it is—falls within the good old American Studies tradition of telling the story of American history through the examples of Representative Men: Brady, O'Sullivan, Stieglitz,

Hine, Evans, linked together to spell America. Walker Evans, who has been placed in "the Brady tradition," "is like Emerson and Whitman [and] also like Henry James [and] Hart Crane [and] similar to William Carlos Williams," we read (234, 284). And what is the Brady tradition? A gallery of "illustrious Americans" including Oliver Wendell Holmes, Horace Greeley, John Calhoun, John J. Audubon, and other representative men posed as Roman heroes, American icons, as Trachtenberg points out, whose juxtaposition with "low-brow" daguerreotypes of slaves and prisoners in this chapter is mediated, in a tradition begun by Van Wyck Brooks, by the truly representative man, Walt Whitman. Representative, some viewers might ask, of whom? Trachtenberg's point of reference—his view finder—which guides his choice of photographers and photographs and shapes his reading, given his insistence on the viewer's co-creation of the meaning of the images, limits the ways in which great numbers of viewers can enter the version of history he creates. His decision not to survey American photographic history, but to read selected documents thickly, as he masterfully does, so that his book might be "tightly focused," cannot be faulted. But his named (and unnamed) exclusions—" Francis [sic!] Benjamin Johnston, Edward Weston, Paul Strand, Berenice Abbott, Dorothea Lange" (xvi)—do suggest other patterns, other stories, other histories.

My pointing to the limits of Trachtenberg's view of history, this highlighting of the political act that his reading is, is motivated not by an intention to polarize the world of images, or of storytelling, into binary oppositions, but rather to open up the nature of history making to a fuller participation than the one Trachtenberg envisages, to suggest that his tremendous sensitivity to class issues might be extended to those of race (in a more complete way than he does: Blacks are not only victims in American history) and to gender. Even his work on Hine, the centerpiece of his book, might be used to break open the whole notion of gender difference by defining Hine not against a masculine American tradition, in which telling has had to do with notions of power—the photographer's control of frame and distance, of the way in which the subject is represented—but rather, with his insistence upon the participation of the subject in the making of the picture, as belonging to a radically different tradition that is specifically non-masculine.[10]

For all of these reasons, the importance of *Reading American Photographs* as a masterful demonstration of a way of reading images as cultural documents cannot be underestimated; in fact, it will be a kind of touchstone for work in American Studies generally, in part by what it does, and in part by what it teaches us is yet to be done.

Endnotes

1 *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981), p. 4.

2 Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Harper and Row). See especially "The enunciative function" in part III. "The Statement and the Archive," pp. 88-105.

3 *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985).

4 On this point, see the earlier work of Rosalind Krauss, "Photography's Discursive Spaces," in *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths* (Cambridge, MA., MIT, 1985).

5 "Pictorial Photography," *Scribner's Magazine* 26 (Nov. 1899) 528-37 cited in Trachtenberg, p. 180.

6 "Alfred Stieglitz and His Latest Work," *Photographic Times* (April 1896) : 161, cited in Trachtenberg, p. 184.

7 Quoted in Norman, *Alfred Stieglitz: An American Seer* (New York: Random House, 1973), p. 39, cited in Trachtenberg, p. 189.

8 *Culture as History: The Transformation of American Society in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Pantheon, 1984), p. 157, cited in Trachtenberg, p. 247

9 Robert Fitzgerald, ed., *The Collected Shorter Prose of James Agee* (Boston, 1968), pp. 131-48, cited in Trachtenberg, pp. 257-58.

10 Maren Stange's *Symbols of Ideal Life: Social Documentary Photography in America, 1890-1950* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989) is an example of such a reading.

Contributors

Maren Stange is an Assistant Professor of Communications and American Studies at Clark University She was a curator of the exhibition *Official Images. New Deal Photography* at the Smithsonian Institution and has published widely on photography and cultural history

Daile Kaplan is an artist who writes about photography She is the author of *Lewis Hine in Europe The "Lost Photographs"* (Abbeville: New York, 1988).

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Laura Wexler teaches in the American Studies and Women's Studies Programs at Yale University She writes on the history and critical theory of photography Her book *Pregnant Pictures Women in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, coauthored with Sandra Matthews, is forthcoming. Her current project is on photography and race.

Judith Fryer directs the new graduate program in American Studies in the English Department at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. She is at work on a book called *Women's Camera Work* which covers the same time period as Alan Trachtenberg's work.

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