Still Lives in Changing Times:
Documentary and the American Carceral State, 1964-1980

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Declaration:

I, Kimberly Schreiber, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

Abstract:

This thesis analyses the relationship between American documentary and the reorganisation of the carceral apparatus in the United States from 1964 to 1980. Centring on the work of Danny Lyon, Bruce Jackson, and Leonard Freed, this project examines how these photographers used their cameras, as well as the magazine page and the photobook, to investigate the shifting terrain of prisons and policing alongside the civil rights movement and after. Beginning with Bruce Jackson's first foray into the South's prison farms as a young folklorist and ending with the publication of Magnum photographer Leonard Freed's photobook *Police Work*, this dissertation historicises documentary and its work, probing the ways in which these photographers negotiated the unstable intersection of the museum, the archive, and mass culture that characterised the 1960s and 1970s. By considering the practice and circulation of documentary historically, *Still Lives* recasts the static categories that are normally employed to write out official histories of photography as dynamic and fluid, challenging prevailing conceptions of documentary as an insufficiently critical mode of photography. Instead, this project argues, these photographers ask us to consider documentary not simply as an act of capturing reality, but rather as a process of mediation—one that compels a reckoning with the American carceral state as always existing within visual representation.

This project not only embarks on a reexamination of documentary and its histories, but also undertakes a major reevaluation of American photography and its racial politics. By shifting our focus away from photographs of protest, *Still Lives* complicates the dominant idea of "civil rights photography" and challenges the discursive boundaries that constitute it. In contrast with more well-known, iconic images of the civil rights movement—ones which figure this era as a moment of rupture with America's racial caste system—these photographers, I argue, reframe these decades as a moment of transition between modes of subjection. Rather than easily assimilate into a narrative of national progress, in which the civil rights era is positioned as a juncture in which America's history of racial domination is overcome, these photographs make visible the ways in which, even during the 1960s and after, the circumscribed humanity of the slave was remapped and reinscribed. Moreover, by foregrounding apparatuses of racialisation, as opposed to racialised bodies, this project expands the ways in which race has been examined photographically. In doing so, *Still Lives* suggests that, in order to understand the ongoing and incomplete project of emancipation that persists in our own moment, the networks of capture and control that constitute the American carceral state must be placed at the very centre of our histories of photography.

Impact Statement:

This thesis constitutes the first critical, historical evaluation of the relationship between the American documentary and the US carceral system during the 1960s and 1970s. It not only offers insight into many previously unacknowledged documentary projects, but also brings formerly repressed elements of photographic archives, such as Bruce Jackson's heretofore unpublished colour photographs of American prison farms, into public discourse for the first time. This thesis, therefore, begins the important work of attending to a body of documentary work that has been previously marginalised within dominant histories of photography. It also expands understandings of the entanglements between photography and processes of racialisation. In doing so, I hope that this thesis serves as a catalyst for additional research into carceral photography, contributing to efforts to broaden the study of documentary and its histories in the US context.

Throughout my PhD, I have developed this research through engagement with a wider audience; I hope to continue these efforts after my doctoral degree. I have participated in a number of conferences, both in the United Kingdom and abroad, in turn developing a network of fellow scholars who work on issues of race and photography. I have also begun to publish parts of my dissertation, including in peer-review journals such as *Object* and *Photography and Culture*. My research also informs my teaching and my approach to pedagogy. I have had many opportunities to develop coursework within the History of Art and Anthropology departments at UCL, and additionally at the Slade School of Fine Art. These experiences have helped me to broaden the impact of my work and to disseminate it to a wider audience—this is a process that I hope to continue both within Higher Education and beyond.

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To my parents, "thank you" seems insufficient. You've not just given me a room of my own, but given me room to be my own person, encouraging me to take up room with my ideas and words since the very beginning. Your support and belief has been invaluable. Thank you to Mallie, my best friend and the reason I get up in the morning. Finally, this thesis is dedicated to my favourite person, Craig, my partner and co-author.

Introduction:

The Civil Rights Movement, Otherwise

This thesis examines the relationship between American documentary and the reconfiguration of the carceral state in the United States during the civil rights movement and after. Centring on the work of Danny Lyon, Bruce Jackson, and Leonard Freed, this project considers the ways in which their photographs of American prisons and police reframe the upheaval of 1960s and 1970s through the punitive system. *Still Lives* considers documentary and its work historically, investigating how these photographers utilised their cameras, as well as the magazine page and the photobook, to investigate emergent forms of carceral space-time: intersecting disciplinary axes that were both an expression and an enforcer of the restructuring political-economic model that, while still inchoate in the 1960s and 1970s, would come to be understood as "neoliberalism."[1] By situating documentary within a long history of photography, as well as alongside a flourishing, contemporaneous visual discourse of crime and punishment, this dissertation argues that, in this context, documentary cannot be reduced to simple, one-way process by which the camera is harnessed to reveal the supposedly hidden brutality and violence of the carceral system. Rather, this dissertation probes how, in negotiating the unstable intersection of the museum, the archive, and mass culture, documentary functions as a strategy of mediation—one that is invariably entangled with the broader discursive systems in which photographs

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[1] "Neoliberalism" is certainly a vexed and contested term. Especially since the 2008 financial crash, the word has gained increasing popularity within both academic and popular discourse. It is typically used to describe a myriad, political, economic, and cultural forces that have come to govern at least the last forty years of social life, particularly in industrialised nations in the Global North. Some scholars have recently questioned the usefulness of this term since its growing ubiquity, arguing that, if it can be used in any context, the word "neoliberalism" has essentially lost its analytic value. While this project recognises the dangers inherent in mobilising such a broad term, it nevertheless remains a useful descriptor for the stage of capitalism that emerged from the period of crisis with which this project is concerned. Especially significant for this study is a central contradiction that motivates neoliberal governmentally: that is, on the one hand, massive state intervention in support of the US military, corporations, and the carceral state, and yet, on the other, the withdrawal of the welfare state from public life. The literature on neoliberalism, its histories and historiographies, is vast, but a few key texts that have informed this study include: Wendy Brown, *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution* (New York: Zone Books, 2015); David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); William Davies, *The Limits of Neoliberalism: Authority, Sovereignty and the Logic of Competition* (London: SAGE Publications, 2014); William Davies, 'The New Neoliberalism,' *New Left Review 101* (September-October 2016), 121-134; Gary Gerstle, "The Rise and Fall(?) Of America's Neoliberal Order," in *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society Vol 28* (2018), 241-264.

take on their rhetorical codes and ideological meanings.[2] In this way, *Still Lives* compels a reckoning with the reorganisation of the American carceral state as always existing within visual representation.

This project not only embarks on a reexamination of documentary and its histories, but also undertakes a major reevaluation of American photography and its racial politics. By shifting our focus away from photographs of political protests or civil unrest, *Still Lives* complicates the dominant idea of "civil rights photography" and challenges the discursive boundaries that constitute it. The photographs featured in this project sharply diverge with more well-known, now iconic images of the civil rights movement. These endlessly circulated photographs often figure this era as a moment of rupture with America's racial apartheid system, framing "the Sixties" as a tumultuous decade in which racial subjection is overcome. The photographs discussed here upend this prevailing view. Instead, photographs taken by Lyon, Jackson, and Freed, I argue, reframe these decades as what Saidiya Hartman describes as a moment of transition between modes of subjection.[3] These photographs refuse easy assimilation into a narrative of national progress; instead, they make visible and anticipate the ways in which, during the 1960s and after, the circumscribed humanity of the slave was remapped and reinscribed. This project also expands the ways in which race has been examined photographically, querying how documentary mediates apparatuses of racialisation, as opposed to racialised bodies. In doing so, *Still Lives* suggests that, in order to understand the ongoing and incomplete project of emancipation that persists in our own moment, the networks of capture and control that constitute the American carceral state must be placed at the very centre of our histories of photography.

This study unfolds across three chapters, all of which explore the ways in which documentary can mediate the intersecting axes of carceral space and time that would come to characterise the neoliberal penal state and to deepen its relevance to the shifting terrain of American capitalism. Rather

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[2] The notion of the photographic code is drawn from Roland Barthes his structuralist analysis of photographic visual languages. My understanding of the photographic code is elaborated upon in chapter two of this project. See: Roland Barthes, "The Photographic Message," *A Barthes Reader* ed. Susan Sontag (New York: Hill and Wang, 1975), 194-210.

[3] Saidiya Hartman develops this critical framework in *Scenes of Subjection*: *Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

than employ a singular, overarching theoretical framework, *Still Lives* begins with the visual material, harnessing each set of images by Lyon, Jackson, and Freed, respectively, to ask much broader questions about photography and its histories, slavery and its afterlives, the carceral state and its spatialities. The first two chapters focus on the prison farm—a uniquely American penal institution that, typically built on the site of former slave plantations, employs manual, agrarian labour to discipline incarcerated subjects. While Chapter One examines Danny Lyon's 1971 photobook *Conversations with the Dead*, Chapter Two explores Bruce Jackson's colour photographs that, taken between 1968 and 1979, feature prison farms across both Texas and Arkansas. These chapters suggest that, although these bodies of work offer somewhat contrasting views of the prison farm and its disjunctive temporalities, they both place pressure on existing histories of photography, their constitutive elisions and foreclosures. In a departure from the rural South, Chapter Three investigates Leonard Freed's 1980 photobook *Police Work*, which chronicles the activities of the New York Police Department against the backdrop of the city's immanent financial collapse. By bringing together these disparate photographic spaces, one urban and another rural, *Still Lives* suggests that the carceral landscape is not simply a series of discrete sites of confinement, but rather a continuum of social relations and power structures—ones that, at this historical moment, were being put to work for an ascendant mode of racial capitalism.

Documentary and its Histories

This dissertation begins in 1964, with Bruce Jackson's first trip to a collection of East Texas prison farms as a Junior Fellow at Harvard University, and culminates in 1980, with the publication of Leonard Freed's *Police Work*. It tracks a particularly fraught and dynamic moment in American photography and visual culture, coinciding with, on the one hand, massive shifts in the consumption and dissemination of televisual news and, on the other, the writing out of a new history of photography by and through the fine art museum. Despite the fluidity and instability of documentary during this period,

widespread criticism of concerned photography would, in the decades that followed, render its commitment to representing reality highly suspect, foreclosing scholarship that might adequately attend to the complexities of these practices, their publics and politics.[4] Nurtured by post-structuralist theories of language and their translation into the Anglo-American context throughout the late 1970s and 1980s, advocates of postmodernism, such as Rosalind Krauss and Abigail Solomon-Godeau, have argued that, since representation occurs within an infinitely flexible and unstable system of signification, it is utterly futile to locate photographic meaning in a world outside the frame.[5] If, as these theories suggest, meaning is produced exclusively within the image and on its surface, then documentary and its referential claims are at best, naive illusions and, at worst, unwitting collaborators with the unequal power relations this mode of photography often aimed to critique.[6]

In his 1988 book *The Burden of Representation*, John Tagg takes this line of thinking to its logical extreme, drawing on a particular interpretation of the work of Michel Foucault to elucidate the ways in which photography has historically been put to use by a consolidating state apparatus. Unlike Allan Sekula, for whom photography's simultaneous collusion with and subversion of discursive systems entails a productive contradiction, for Tagg, the medium's repressive function is both the beginning and the end of photography and its history.[7] According to Tagg, the supposed "indexicality" of the photographic image is in fact a reality effect—one that does not exist *a priori* to systems of social regulation, but rather is always already produced by and made operative within these disciplinary

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[4] The term "concerned photography" is borrowed from Cornell Capa, who coined the phrase in his 1969 exhibition of the same name. This mode of photography has become heavily maligned as an expression of a liberal humanist ethos—one that, many theorists of photography suggest, results in an insufficiently critical or even dangerous way of engaging and representing the world. Cornell Capa, ed. *The Concerned Photographer* (New York: Grossman Books, 1972).

[5] These positions are taken up by many writers and theorists throughout the 1980s and 1990s. See, for example: Rosalind Krauss, "Photography's Discursive Space: Landscape/View," *Art Journal* Vol 42 No 4, (Winter 1982), 311-319; Abigail Solomon-Godeau, *Photography at the Dock: Essays on Photographic History, Institutions, and Practices* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994); Douglas Crimp, "The Photographic Activity of Postmodernism," *October* Vol 15 (Winter 1980), 91-101.

[6] For an early and incisive critique of postmodern theories of photography, see: Steve Edwards, "Snapshooters of History: Passages on the Postmodern Argument," *Ten.8* Vol 32 (1989). Also see: Julian Sallabrass, "Sebastiao Salgado and Fine Art Photojournalism," *New Left Review 223* (May/June 1997).

[7] Particularly relevant to this study is Allan Sekula's essay "The Body and the Archive," *October* Vol 39 (Winter 1986), 3-64.

apparatuses. Tagg explains: "The indexical nature of the photograph - the causative link between the pre-photographic referent and the sign - is therefore highly complex, irreversible, and can guarantee nothing at the level of meaning. What makes the link is a discriminatory technical, cultural and historical process by which particular optical and chemical devices are set to work to organise experience and desire and produce a new reality - the paper image which, through yet further processes, may become meaningful in all sorts of ways."[8] The consequences of these arguments for the study of documentary and its histories have been profound. In suggesting that documentary is an insufficiently reflexive mode of visual representation that inevitably reifies systems of power, these criticisms, despite their preoccupation with questions of discourse, have ultimately functioned as a form of discursive closure, severely limiting how photography can be thought and which photographs should be read.

In a related, contemporaneous critique, Martha Rosler, in her 1981 essay "In Around and Afterthoughts, (On Documentary Photography)," excoriated what she termed "victim photography" and the liberal, humanist politics that undergirded it. Danny Lyon is among the many photographers she admonishes, ranking alongside a wide range of practitioners, from Dorothea Lange and Walker Evans to Larry Burrows and Don McCullin, whose work, she claims, functioned to obscure, rather than to clarify the structural dynamics that actively produced the many marginalised subjects they documented. "In liberal documentary" Rosler explains, "poverty and oppression are almost invariably equated with misfortunes caused by natural disasters: causality is vague, blame is not assigned, fate cannot be overcome."[9] Rosler's text can be understood as an extended meditation on the documentary strategies she employed in her 1974-75 phototextual series *The Bowery in two inadequate descriptive systems*. The work not only investigates the deprived neighbourhood and the drunken New Yorkers who occupy it, but also functions as a critique of dominant social documentary tropes—ones that were honed a century earlier by Jacob Riis and Lewis Hine on those same city streets. But although Rosler's interventions may have

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[8] John Tagg, T*he Burden of Representation. Essays on Photographies and Histories* (Basingstoke: MacMillan Education, 1988), 3.

[9] Martha Rosler, "In, Around, and Afterthoughts (On Documentary Photography)," in *The Contest of Meaning. Critical Histories of Photography*, ed. Richard Bolton (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989).

primed the fine art museum to embrace a certain kind of lens-based documentary art, the acceptance of this work, especially since the early 2000s, has been contingent upon its rejection of "traditional" documentary forms and, in particular, its eschewing of figural representation.[10] In this way, these criticisms, while they may offer a route towards the "reinvention" or "rebirth" of documentary, are ultimately compatible with official histories of photography and neglect to challenge the theoretical premises that underpin these dominant narratives.[11]

In direct contradistinction with this trend, this thesis centres on photography that, in many ways, exemplifies the documentary practices maligned by this group of scholars. Nearly every photograph encodes a profound power imbalance between photographer and subject: Lyon, Jackson, and Freed—all white men born to working-class Jewish families in Brooklyn—turn their lenses on subjects who have, in lock step with a developing political-economic crisis, been made superfluous to the wage-labour system and, as a result, are intensely vulnerable to state violence. These theories of documentary would suggest that, if these images are worthy of being read at all, they can only be read in one way: that is, in rendering their subjects mute and passive before the camera's shutter, these photographs ultimately exploit their conditions of extreme powerlessness and fail to bring deeper mechanisms of structural oppression into view. Widespread acceptance of these criticisms has come to overdetermine how photographs of marginalised subjects are read, precluding scholarship on more concerned photographic practices. This has resulted in an uneven history of photography that is constituted by the

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[10] The most notable practitioners of this global contemporary art trend include: Hito Steyerl, Alfredo Jaar, Adam Broomberg and Oliver Chanarin, and Walid Ra'ad, among many others. Connections have been drawn between Rosler's work and this more recent wave of documentary practices, most notably in the recent side-by-side 2018-19 display of Rosler and Steyerl's work at the Kuntsmuseum Basel exhibition "War Games." For more on contemporary documentary and its rebirth, see: Okwui Enwezor, *Archive Fever: Uses of the Document in Contemporary Art* (London: Steidl, 2008); Julian Stallabrass, *Documentary* (Cambridge, M.A.: MIT Press, 2013); Hito Steyerl, *Duty Free Art: Art in the Age of Planetary Civil War* (London: Verso, 2017).

[11] Rather than challenge the tenets of post-structuralism, Hito Steyerl, for instance, strives to de-stigmatise documentary uncertainty. Instead, she poses truthlessness as a productive problematic: "Poststructuralism has taught us how 'reality,' 'truth,' and other basic notions on which possible definitions of documentary rest are at best as solid as the fleeting reflections on a troubled surface of water. But before drowning in the uncertainty and ambiguity that these paradigms prescribe, let us perform one very old-fashioned Cartesian move. Because, amidst all this ambivalence, our confusion is the one thing which remains certain and even reliable. And it will invariably, if unconsciously, represent our reaction to documentary materials as such. The perpetual doubt, the nagging insecurity –whether what we see is 'true,' 'real,' 'factual' and so on– accompanies contemporary documentary reception like a shadow. Let me suggest that this uncertainty is not some shameful lack, which has to be hidden, but instead constitutes the core quality of contemporary documentary modes as such." Hito Steyerl, "Documentary Uncertainty," *Revisiones One* (2011).

erasure of documentary. In light of this dissertation's focus on the American carceral state, the irony of this narrative is palpable. Foucault's excavation of the historical relationship between the penitentiary and modernity, articulated in his seminal 1975 book *Discipline and Punish*, would ultimately be used, a decade later, to marginalise the very photographic practices that could visually elaborate upon his conclusion that, far from an isolated aberration from a gradually more just society, the prison is in fact central to the production of modern subjects and the realisation of a "free" society.[12]

Given the way in which the penitentiary has simultaneously been put to work and hidden from view by recent criticisms of photography, this thesis suggests that, in order to place critical pressure on these theories, we must see and think the carceral state through photographic images. This is not to deny the very real power imbalance between photographer and subject, but rather to contend that these asymmetries are structural and not simply products of representation.[13] What is at stake here is not simply the wrestling of Foucault away from his reduction by postmodern thinkers of photography, but the shifting of photography discourse such that documentary can be made readable and state violence can be made legible. This necessarily involves a reckoning with the fact that, at the very moment in which the carceral state began to penetrate more deeply and insidiously into the lives of poor, racialised Americans, photography criticism made it very difficult to directly confront these apparatuses of state power and, as a result, unwittingly collaborated with the neoliberal politics it claimed to scorn. *Still Lives* contends that, in order to examine this web of disciplinary practices, we must be made to see them. This is not to argue that the solution to the enduring reality of the carceral state is the mere unveiling of the prison and its normally hidden internal scenery or the simple capturing of the police at the moment in

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[12] John Tagg, for instance, puts Foucault's discussion of the panopticon to work in service of his theorisation of photography as a repressive apparatus. Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (London: Penguin Books, 1975).

[13] This argument echoes that of Allan Sekula, who has critiqued the way in which Foucault and his theorisation of the panopticon was mobilised by John Tagg. He writes: "While I am in frequent agreement with his argument, I disagree with his claim that the 'cumbersome architecture' of the Panopticon became redundant with the development of photography...This seems to accord too much power to photography, and to imply that domination operates entirely by the force of visual representation. To suggest that cameras replaced prisons is more than a little hyperbolic." See: Allan Sekula, "The Body and the Archive," 9.

which they exercise brutal force.[14] Rather, it is to suggest that these photographs have the capacity to transform the ways in which we have been made to see this moment and, in doing so, offer the possibility of writing its history, and the history of our present, differently.

While this thesis takes issue with the way in which Foucault has been mobilised by postmodern thinkers of photography, this is not because his life and work bare no relevance upon this project or the documentary practices with which it is concerned. The French thinker not only appears in this project as a relevant and meaningful historical actor, but also as important figure in the theorisation of the modern carceral state. In 1972, spurred by a nascent interest in the prison, Foucault travelled from his home in France to upstate New York. He visited the Attica State Correctional Facility where there had been an uprising less than a year earlier—a rebellion that resulted in the retaking of the prison by New York State Troopers and the murder of over thirty men, including both many prisoners who led the uprising and several guards whom they had taken hostage. During his visit, Foucault developed a lifelong friendship with Bruce Jackson, who, at the time, was a Professor of English and Comparative Literature at the State University of New York at Buffalo.[15] Foucault became intensely familiar with Jackson's research on prison culture, labour, and oral traditions, as well as his photographs of the South's prison farms—a body of work that is the subject of the second chapter of this dissertation. The fact that Foucault himself developed a conception of the modern prison through a close engagement with Jackson's documentary attests to the way in which visual representation was not simply the reflection of a changing carceral reality, but rather the ground upon which the reorganisation of the carceral state was being waged and the means through which its transformation of social life was being understood.

In its preoccupation with the ways in which documentary can represent the reorganisation of the carceral state and, in doing so, shift the terms of photography discourse, *Still Lives* is shaped by much of

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[14] In fact, history shows that photographs displaying police brutality, especially towards black subjects, do very little to upend the legitimacy of the police and their monopoly over public forms of violence. These questions are especially germane today, as calls for the police to wear recording devices and body cameras as a possible solution to their rampant killings of black Americans have grown louder in the last half decade.

[15] Michel Foucault and John K. Simon, "Michel Foucault on Attica: An Interview," *Social Justice Vol 18 No 3* (Fall 1991), 26-34.

Foucault's thinking. At the same time, however, this project recognises with the contradictions of returning to Foucault who, as Alexander Weheliye has rightly argued, does not simply neglect the ways in which the carceral state functions as a mechanism of racialisation, but also, in his assumption of a unified object of state violence that precedes racial difference, ultimately reinscribes the exclusionary logic of Enlightenment humanism.[16] Despite these limitations, *Still Lives* is invariably marked by Foucault's work in two significant ways: first, it inherits much of his conception of the relationship between the carceral state and modernity and, second, it affirms Foucault's view of history writing as both an urgent political and discursive project. By framing the reconfiguration of American racial capitalism through the carceral state, *Still Lives* aligns with Foucault's desire to work against the perceptual remoteness of the prison, instead situating these relations of discipline at the very locus of how social life is constituted. By centring these processes of control, Foucault rightly demonstrates that, far from an occasional aberration from the law-abiding citizen, the deviant criminal is a flexible, necessary category through which the bourgeois subject gains his legibility and coherence. Inheriting this line of thinking, this dissertation argues that, by highlighting the spatial and temporal dynamics of carcerality, the work of these photographers allows for a reframing of the carceral as a series of highly malleable, unequal power relations—ones that must be placed at the centre of modernity's making and remaking.

While *Still Lives* inherits Foucault's important framing of the carceral state as constitutive of the modern project, at the same time, it also is informed by his work on discourse and its disciplinary function. If, as Allan Sekula has written following Foucault, "the notion of discourse is a notion of limits…one that establishes a bounded arena of shared expectations as to meaning," then this project

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[16] In his important critique of both Foucault and Agamben, Weheliye writes: "Bare life and biopolitics discourse not only misconstrues how profoundly race and racism shape the modern idea of the human, it also overlooks or perfunctorily writes off theorizations of race, subjection, and humanity found in black and ethnic studies, allowing bare life and biopolitics discourse to imagine an indivisible biological substance anterior to racialization." Weheliye draws on the work of Hortense Spillers and Sylvia Wynter to forge an alternative critique of modernity and Enlightenment humanism—one that centres processes of racialisation as constitutive to the production of the category of Man. See: Alexander G. Weheliye, *Habeus Viscus: Racialising Assemblages, Biopolitics, and Black Feminist Theories of the Human* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2014).

attempts to position itself in a meta-critical relationship to the existing discourse, interrogating the ways in which the history of photography has been written so as to render a certain type of documentary "bad" and therefore unthinkable as a critical, social practice.[17] In contrast with this prevailing view, *Still Lives* suggests that these images and, in particular, the spatial and temporal dynamics they mediate, can and must be read in order to fully bring the carceral state and its function within American racial capitalism into view. This project demonstrates that, in order to take seriously Foucault's conception of the carceral and to grapple more adequately with its racialising function, documentary cannot be reduced to the systems in which it circulates. Rather, it must be thought historically and as an integral part of the public, visual culture in which it participated. This is precisely how this project strives to read these photographs and, in doing so, to rewrite the history of photography.

The Civil Rights Movement and After

Danny Lyon, Bruce Jackson, and Leonard Freed certainly share a common preoccupation with the carceral state—one that can be grounded in their shared formative periods coinciding and intertwining with what is often viewed as the pinnacle of the civil rights era. All three photographers cut their professional teeth during the height of the movement. Danny Lyon served as a photographer for the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee until 1964, creating poignant images of black protest that helped the organisation gain financial support, particularly among white liberals in the urban North. Close friends with the radical, left-wing lawyer William Kunstler, Bruce Jackson traversed activist circles and began his research into the South's prison farms in 1964, alongside the blossoming of the massive, coordinated endeavour made by university students to register newly enfranchised black voters—an effort that would come to be known as "Mississippi Freedom Summer." Leonard Freed came to prominence after the publishing of his 1968 photobook *Black in White America*: a highly subjective visual

[17] Allan Sekula, "On the Invention of Photographic Meaning," *Artforum*, Volume 13 No 5 (January 1975), 36.

diary that chronicles the black Americans' daily acts of refusal and resistance under both *de jure* and *de facto* segregation. In highlighting these photographers' shared involvement in the civil rights movement, the aim is not to foreground the shared backgrounds of these individuals or to suggest that their politics are neatly aligned. Rather, it is to shore up the claim that their carceral photography must be considered against and through the backdrop of the civil rights movement, illustrating how, by shifting emphasis onto their late or later documentary work, this historical moment and its photographic register can be thought otherwise.

Often viewed as the beginning of the end of what Bayard Rustin in 1965 termed the "classical" phase of the civil rights movement, 1964 marked a decade since the Supreme Court declared racial segregation unconstitutional in *Brown v Board of Education*, as well as witnessed the passage of the Civil Rights Act—a major victory in securing legal equality for black Americans.[18] The Voting Rights Act was passed just one year later, bookending the years of civil rights struggles that would become calcified in the collective American imaginary as a halcyon decade of public, nonviolent protest. According to this much distorted master narrative, the movement was motivated by a desire for political, as opposed to economic equality, working to fulfil, rather than to challenge the fundamental, liberal values of the American project. Then, as Jacquelyn Dowd Hall has written, came the decline.[19] Political assassinations, urban rebellions, the Vietnam War, and a looming economic recession plunged the nation into a profound state of instability—a moment of crisis that could only be resolved through a radical renovation of existing social relations, power structures, and political institutions; one of which, many scholars have argued, was the carceral state. The April 1968 murder of Martin Luther King Jr. is the

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[18] Rustin writes, "The term 'classical' appears especially apt for this phase of the civil rights movement." Bayard Rustin, "From Protest to Politics: The Future of the Civil Rights Movement," reprinted in *Down the Line: The Collected writings of Bayard Rustin* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), 111.

[19] While many have challenged the ways in which the civil rights movement has been assimilated into the American consciousness, this is perhaps the best summation of its instrumentalisation, particularly throughout the 1990s and 2000s: Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, "The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past," *The Journal of American History Vol 91 No 4*.

fulcrum around which this story turns, supposedly souring the formerly pious civil rights movement and fomenting its descent into manic chaos.

Visual representation and, in particular, the continual circulation of certain iconic photographs of the civil rights era, has served to further ossify this reductive narrative in the American consciousness, constructing "the sixties" not as a decade with a concrete beginning and end, but rather as a collective idea—one that is publicly mediated through images.[20] While the first half of the decade has been embalmed through the endlessly reproduced photographs of macho, white police officers brutalising passive, black protestors, the latter part of the era has been framed, in contradistinction, through images of civil unrest and looting, extending the well-worn conflation of blackness with criminality.[21] Photography scholars have rigorously attended to the ways in which mainstream images have collaborated with the calcification of a popular, linear narrative of the movement. As Martin Berger and Leigh Raiford have argued, images of white violence and black resistance, such as Charles Moore's photographs of the 1963 Birmingham protests, function to conceal the remarkable breadth and strategic labour of the civil rights movement. In this way, these photographs tend to limit the ways in which the past might speak to the racial injustices of our own time.[22] Responding to Moore's photographs, ones that were nationally circulated in a now iconic *LIFE Magazine* spread, Raiford argues: "The photographs also imprison—frame and 'iconize'—images of legitimate leadership, appropriate forms of political action, and the proper place of African Americans within the national imaginary."[23]

While there has been significant scholarly effort directed towards challenging this mainstream narrative and its mediations, overemphasis on the 1960s as the defining moment of rupture in the

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[20] On iconic photography and its relationship to liberal democracy, see: Robert Hariman and John Lucaites, *No Caption Needed: Iconic Photographs, Public Culture and Liberal Democracy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007).

[21] This strategic elision is historically central to the making of the American city and its racialisation. See: Khalil Gibran Muhammed, *The Condemnation of Blackness: Race, Crime, and the Making of Modern Urban America* (Cambridge, M.A.: Harvard University Press, 2010).

[22] Martin Berger, *Seeing Through Race: A Reinterpretation of Civil Rights Photography* (Berkeley, C.A.: University of California Press, 2011); Leigh Raiford, *Imprisoned in a Luminous Glare* (Durham, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 2011).

[23] Raiford, 3.

American social and political landscape continues. This characterisation of the period functions not only to elide the complex dynamics of continuity and change that animated these years, but also to reify "the sixties" as the overdetermining period in American history—one that is perceived to be the source of, as Bruce Schulman has written, "everything good or everything evil in contemporary life."[24] *Still Lives* challenges and expands the ways in which these years and their complex racial dynamics have been made legible through visual representation. If these decades are typically framed as a moment in which racial apartheid is upended, this dissertation demonstrates that, in order to fully grapple with the contradictions of both this historical period, as well as their imprint on our own time, these years must be thought and seen alongside the simultaneous entrenchment of systems of racial domination. Far from reifying received wisdom that frames the 1980s as an era of conservative backlash against the modest civil rights victories of the 1960s, *Still Lives* problematises this linear narrative of progress and retrenchment. In this way, this dissertation follows from the work of scholars such as Elizabeth Hinton, Naomi Murakawa, and Loïc Wacquant who have cast doubt upon the prevailing view that the expansion of the carceral state was an exclusively conservative political project that began in the 1980s under the Reagan Administration.[25] In contrast, this dissertation extends their conclusions that this archipelago of disciplinary institutions in fact emerged out of the intertwined development and ideological compatibility of the welfare and penal states during the 1960s and after.

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[24] Indeed, many of the events covered in this dissertation actually take place in the 1970s, even though they may register as "the sixties." Bruce Schulman speaks to the slipperiness of periodising these decades, as well as the significance of "the seventies" in his seminal book *The Seventies: The Great Shift in American Culture, Society, and Politics* (New York : The Free Press, 2001), 3.

[25] This is one of the major fault lines that divides scholarship on mass incarceration in the American context. More mainstream accounts suggest that the phenomenon began in the 1980s and reached its fullest articulation in the 1990s, rooting the prison to the pursuit of the "War on Drugs" and leaving in tact the 1960s as a period of progressive transformation. These narratives view the prison as emerging from a series of legal choices, as opposed to a political-economic crisis. The best example of this is Michelle Alexander's hugely popular book: *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colourblindness* (New York: The New Press, 2010). However, this dissertation is more consistent with the work of Elizabeth Hinton, Naomi Murakawa, and Loïc Wacquant. See: Elizabeth Hinton, *From The War on Poverty to the War on Crime: The Making of Mass Incarceration in America* (Cambridge, M.A. : Harvard University Press, 2016); Naomi Murakawa, *The First Civil Right: How Liberals Built Prison America* (New York : Oxford University Press, 2014); Loïc Wacquant, *Punishing the Poor: The Neoliberal Government of Social Insecurity* (Durham, N.C. : Duke University Press, 2009).

By reframing this moment through photographs of the carceral state, *Still Lives* suggests that, in order to apprehend the complexities of this historical juncture, we must critically examine how it has been reproduced at the level of representation. In their focus on the perceptually anachronistic space-time of the southern prison farm, the first two chapters of this dissertation cast into relief the limited ways in the history of photography has attended to the visual dynamics of racial injustice during the civil rights movement and after. While existing histories have been attuned to photographic treatments of more graphic, explosive forms of racial oppression, these narratives have occluded the arguably more insidious, less spectacular forms of violence that are investigated by Danny Lyon and Bruce Jackson's documentary. Whether this punitive institution is viewed as form of racial violence commensurable with the civil rights era, *Still Lives* argues, is predicated on how it is mediated; it depends, in other words, on representation. The final chapter expands these arguments, focusing on the ways in which photography and its role in mass culture worked to resolve the crisis of policing that erupted in the late 1960s, facilitating the intensification of policing throughout the 1970s and the extension of the carceral pipeline through urban space. By considering the reorganisation of carceral geographies by and through visual representation, this dissertation demonstrates that, in order to reckon with America's long history of racial violence, we must rewrite the history of photography.

Making the Carceral State Visible

Although the carceral state has been largely absented from official histories of photography, these apparatuses of state power are far from invisible within more mainstream American visual culture. In fact, with regards to the popular, cultural imaginary, the opposite is the case: still and moving images of urban crime, the police, prisons, and jails have ensured that the carceral state remains a continual fixture within public consciousness. Especially, but not exclusively, since the 1960s, narrative films, popular magazines, documentary cinema, and nightly television news programs have continually

capitalised on the public's seemingly insatiable appetite for images of deviance, creating a racialised spectacle of crime and punishment that reifies the draconian carceral state as an inevitable, even desirable fact of social life. As Jean and John Comaroff have written, the hyper-visibility of the carceral state within the public, cultural imaginary suggests that, in the age of late-capitalism, criminality has become "*the* constitutive fact of contemporary life, *the* vernacular in terms of which politics is conducted, moral panics are voiced, and populations are ruled."[26] However, if this theatre of crime and punishment has come to define the collective American consciousness, this is not simply because criminality is more rampant and insidious than ever before. Rather than simply reflect an uncontested reality, these images actively produce public knowledge, strategically shaping commonly accepted, yet wildly distorted truths about social disorder that have little to do with the actual reality of crime rates.[27]

In this contradictory visual landscape, wherein a dramatic spectacle of crime and punishment serves to obfuscate the repressive function of the carceral state within the American political-economy, a more concerned mode of documentary could never be a neutral or transparent act of testimony—one that could easily debunk these popular myths and simply expose the harsh reality of the carceral state. Rather than frame carceral photography as a one-way act of revelation, *Still Lives* considers these photographs and their coded meanings historically. To examine documentary historically, *Still Lives* argues, is to contextualise its visual language within an actually existing and invariably public visual imaginary. To this end, *Still Lives* traverses divergent spheres of representation, placing the work of these three photographers in conversation with mainstream Hollywood films, popular picture magazines, and tabloid newspapers. While often excluded from conventional histories of photography, these media are central to the way in which the carceral state has been figured and, more importantly, disfigured in the American cultural imaginary. At stake, I argue, in the work of carceral photography and the writing out

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[26] Jean and John Comaroff, *The Truth About Crime: Sovereignty, Knowledge, Social Order* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016), xiii.

[27] Contrary to popular belief, crime rates have in fact declined over the past forty years, despite the sharp rise in incarceration rate and widespread public feeling that crime is on the rise. Jean and John Comaroff, "Chapter 1.3: Forensic Fantasy and the Political Economy of Representation, Scenes from the Brave Noir World," in *The Truth About Crime: Sovereignty, Knowledge, Social Order*, 71-98.

of its histories is not simply the relative authenticity of its testimony or the illumination of normally hidden social facts. Instead, I show the ways in which documentary both collides and colludes with other forms of mediation, sometimes offering the possibility of excavating the social relations and historical forces that legitimate the carceral order as a valid system of social discipline.

In attending to the relationship between documentary and the carceral state, *Still Lives* differs from existing scholarship on the relationship between visual representation and the American penal system, much of which tends to focus on mass incarceration and its deleterious effects on incarcerated subjects. Recent scholarly accounts and exhibitions provide insight into how, against the isolation and brutality of confinement, incarcerated men and women produce artworks in order to assert their humanity and give visual expression to the psychic toll inflicted by the punitive system.[28] As Nicole Fleetwood has demonstrated, portrait photographs are one medium through which prisoners create networks of intimacy and belonging, particularly as these images are trafficked between incarcerated individuals and their loved ones on the outside.[29] In these images, inmates pose against studio backdrops that erase the evidence of their incarceration, constructing aspirational scenes that evoke those created by James Van Der Zee in the first half of the twentieth century. Fleetwood attends not only to the contradictions of self-fashioning for the camera while under the supervision of prison guards, but also to the alternative practices of emotional labour that are performed through the circulation of these images across the porous boundary of the penitentiary. By investigating the vibrant visual culture of the prison and focusing on those images made by inmates themselves, these endeavours examine how representation can make visible the lived experience of confinement and the ways in which mass incarceration has shaped the lives and kinship structures of poor, racialised Americans.

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[28] See the 2012 exhibition of prison studio portraits held at Clocktower Gallery in New York City, for instance. Also: Pete Brooke, 'Prison Yard to Paris Photo LA: How an Art Market Hustle Put a $45K Price Tag on Prison Polaroids,' *Prison Photography* (blog), (2 May 2013); Alyse Emdur, *Prison Landscapes* (London: Four Corners Books, 2012); Nicole Fleetwood, *Marking Time: Art in the Age of Mass Incarceration* (Cambridge, M.A. : Harvard University Press, 2020).

[29] Nicole Fleetwood, "Posing in Prison: Family Photographs, Emotional Labor, and Carceral Intimacy," *Public Culture* Vol 27 No 3 (2015), 487-511.

Although these studies are undoubtably important in their attempts to think through the various ways in which visual representation can convey the felt impact of confinement on incarcerated individuals and mobilised to contest their dehumanisation, they ask a very different set of questions than the ones posed here. Rather than seek the inclusion of documentary or the prison within the history of photography, *Still Lives* argues that, in order to fully see the carceral state, these histories must be rewritten. In order to begin this endeavour, *Still Lives* situates the prison within a more expanded view of the carceral state—one that includes the vast network of institutions that enable the surveillance, capture, and control of disposable populations and make possible the smooth functioning of racial capitalism. More specifically, *Still Lives* examines the ways in which the photography of Lyon, Jackson, and Freed mediate a key feature of this emerging carceral state: that is, its strategic management and regulation of space and time as a crucial mechanism of social control. A singularly American penal institution that was forged in the mould of the antebellum plantation, the prison farm is at once an extreme and symbolic example of what is meant by the term carceral space-time and its relationship to free society. While these axes are, on the one hand, used to differentiate the experience of incarceration from that in the outside world, they are, on the other, fundamentally constitutive to the remaking of the spatial and temporal dynamics of everyday life, as well as the renewal of the American capitalist project more broadly.

A great deal has been written about the reconfiguration of American racial capitalism at this historical juncture and, in particular, the ways in which these transformations were registered and reproduced at the level of space and time. While David Harvey and Rosalyn Deutsche have drawn our attention to spatial dimensions of neoliberalism, especially in the urban context, Fredric Jameson and Perry Anderson have considered how these political-economic changes have transmuted temporality

itself, figuring linear, historical time as a "continuous present."[30] Although certainly varied in their approaches and arguments, these scholars are united by their conclusion that, far from a wholesale remaking of American society, this period was characterised by both continuity and change. It was a key moment, in other words, in which the transformation of space and time was constituted by and constitutive of a simultaneous intensification of existing power structures and social relations. David Harvey aptly sums up this contradiction, describing neoliberalisation not as an entirely new phenomenon, but rather as a political "restoration" project that "seeks to *re*establish the conditions for capital accumulation and to *re*store the power of economic elites."[31] The synchronic reorganisation of the carceral state did not just passively reflect this broader pattern of both intensification and rupture, but rather actively facilitated this dramatic restructuring of the American political-economy. As both Ruth Wilson Gilmore and Loïc Wacquant have observed, prisons are not simply reactions to ineluctable cycles of criminal behaviour, but rather strategic, temporary solutions to much deeper, structural crises.

Both Wilson Gilmore and Wacquant identify 1968 as a critical moment in the development the neoliberal carceral state. This year witnessed global revolts that sought to challenge the dominant racial order and envision alternatives, while at the same time undergoing the stagnation of unprecedented economic growth since World War II. For many, this year signalled the end of what Eric Hobsbawm has termed the "Golden Age" of American capitalism and the stalling of its imperial hegemony, triggering the onset of massive efforts to restructure the economy for the benefit of an increasingly small segment of the population, as well as to limit the modest gains of the civil rights era. Alongside these crises, existing prisons were modernised and expanded, while new facilities were erected at an unprecedented rate. The

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[30] The literature on the emergence of neoliberalism and postmodernism (its cultural expression) is vast and a full summary of this scholarship is beyond the scope of this dissertation. However, the work drawn on here includes: David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); "Neoliberalism as Creative Destruction," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* Vol 610 No 1 (March 2007), 21-44; "Neoliberalism and the City," *Studies in Social Justice* Vol 1 No 1 (March 2007), 2-13; Rosalyn Deutsche, *Evictions: Art and Spatial Politics* (Cambridge, M.A. : MIT Press, 1996); "The Fine Art of Gentrification," *October* Vol 31 (December 1984), 91-111; Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham, N.C. : Duke University Press, 1991); "The Antinomies of Postmodernity," in *The Seeds of Time* (New York : Columbia University Press, 1994), 50-72. Perry Anderson, *The Origins of Postmodernity* (London : Verso, 1998).

[31] Emphasis added. David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism,* 16.

penitentiary was transformed into a warehouse for a massive swathe of dispossessed, deproletarianised citizens from urban centres—mostly young black men who had suddenly become irrelevant to the wage-labour market and disposable to this ascendent political-economic regime.[32] A key feature of this punitive apparatus was the establishment of an urban to rural prison pipeline—a spatial continuum that mobilised the police to funnel superfluous individuals from major cities into geographically isolated, state penitentiaries. Wilson Gilmore has rightly asked us to read this carceral landscape as a window onto the geography of political-economic crises: "The government-organised and -funded dispersal of marginalised people from urban to rural locations" Gilmore explains, "suggests both that problems stretch across space in a connected way."[33]

So although during the 1970s the prison became increasingly inextricable from the remaking of the American political-economy and gradually more embedded in the everyday lives of poor, racialised Americans through the work of the police, the institution's geographical distance from the centres of American financial capitalism served to belie these disturbing realities and conceal them from view. Wilson Gilmore aptly sums up this conflicting phenomenon, writing that the "apparent remoteness" of the prison is a "trick of perspective, because, as every geographer knows, edges are also interfaces."[34] This dissertation takes seriously Wilson Gilmore's claim that the illusion of remoteness so often associated with the prison is a result of how we have been made to see it: this perceptual distance is, in other words, a distinctly visual problem—one that must be understood through representation. In this spirit, *Still Lives* attends to the documentary of Lyon, Jackson, and Freed in order to ask broader questions about how we might reframe the carceral landscape, not as a distant place of immiseration and confinement, but rather as at the very centre of how new geographical landscapes and spatial regimes are

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[32] Loïc Wacquant, "From Slavery to Mass Incarceration: Rethinking the 'Race Question' in the US," *New Left Review* 13 (Jan/Feb 2002), 41-60.

[33] Ruth Wilson Gilmore, *Golden Gulag: Prison, Surplus, Crisis, and Opposition in Globalising California* (Berkeley, C.A. : University of California Press, 2007), 11. Also: Ruth Wilson Gilmore, "Fatal Couplings of Power and Difference: Notes on Racism and Geography," *The Professional Geographer* Vol 54 No 1, 15-24.

[34] Wilson Gilmore, *Golden Gulag,* 11.

constituted in the free world. This project not only involves the restaging of carceral space as an interconnected web of social relations that stretch across disparate geographies, but also demands the rewriting of our histories of photography—ones that have implicitly reaffirmed the perceived remoteness of the punitive apparatus from the dynamics of everyday late-capitalism.

The perceptual distance of the prison from quotidian American life, however, is not simply the product of its spatial organisation and close entanglement with the rural landscape. While space is certainly key feature of both its material and figurative isolation, time is another crucial mode through which the isolation of the prison is heightened—it is another mark of differentiation that often obscures the way in which the prison materially and symbolically constitutes the free world from which it is strategically separated. As many criminologists and prison sociologists have pointed out, including Bruce Jackson himself, time is the "basic structuring dimension of prison life."[35] Far from a limitless resource prisoners can easily appropriate for their own purposes, time is strategically harnessed in order to disempower incarcerated subjects and delineate their experience of unfreedom. As Damien M. Sojoyner has written, "time is an instrument utilized to levy punitive force" upon the unfree.[36] While the legal system manages the length of prisoners' sentences, guards and officials within the penitentiary enforce daily routines, work schedules, and rare moments of connection with the outside world. In this way, time is made to pass, but also to stand still: the ways in which linear time is often denoted, such as through the experience of technological change, do not apply in the context of the prison, where a sense of stilled timelessness is often registered by those incarcerated.[37]

The space-time of the emerging neoliberal carceral state and its constitutive function within new forms of everyday American life is a concern that, while approached in different ways, connects these three separate chapters. In Chapter One and Chapter Two, *Still Lives* examines how Lyon and Jackson

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[35] Sparks, R., A.E. Bottoms, and W. Hay, *Prisons and the Problem of Order* (Oxford : Clarendon Press, 1996, 350.

[36] Damien M. Sojoyner, "Chapter Three: Dissonance in Time: (Un)Making and (Re)Mapping of Blackness" in *Futures of Black Radicalism,* ed. Gaye Theresa Johnson and Alex Lubin (London: Verso Books, 2017), 58.

[37] Azrini Wahidin, "Time and the Prison Experience," *Sociological Research Online Vol 11 No 1* (March 2006).

harness their photography to negotiate the hermitic space-time of the southern prison farm, unpacking the ways in which these two photographers differently mediate its perceptual anachronism both within and against the changing dynamics of everyday late-capitalism. In some respects, the prison farm is an extreme example of the way in which the penitentiary manages both space and time as intersecting disciplinary tools—ones that strategically differentiate the prison from the world outside and mark its captive subjects as fungible and exploitable. However, when considered alongside Leonard Freed's *Police Work*, the spatial function of the carceral state and its uneven management of time can be viewed, not as a unique feature of what Bruce Jackson has called the "prison plantation," but rather as a fundamental necessity in the development of the neoliberal carceral state and its management of disposable lives. Chapter Three extends this discussion of carceral space-time in the context of New York City, exploring the way in which Freed's photographs of the NYPD both document and legitimate the construction of the urban to rural prison pipeline. In figuring the police as a natural, inevitable fixture of poor, racialised communities, these images provide license for the broken windows theory of policing—a style of urban management that, while it purported to scientifically predict patterns of criminal behaviour, served to counterintuitively produce crime as an inexorable future reality. By bringing together these disparate photographic practices, *Still Lives* reframes the prison as at the very centre of how the American project was being reconfigured at this historical juncture.

A Note on Race, or Racialisation

Just as *Still Lives* reveals the inadequacy of existing histories of photography to fully grapple with the reality of the neoliberal carceral state, so too does this dissertation place pressure on the ossified theoretical binaries that have animated discussions of race and incarceration in the American context. In the case of the former, perhaps the most fundamentally opposing dichotomy is between, on the one hand, those who harness racial capitalism as a framework to understand how incarceration is put to use

within a shifting political-economy and, on the other, those who use an Afro-pessimistic lens to foreground anti-black racism as the defining feature of the American punitive system.[38] What is at stake in these debates is whether the expansion of the carceral state can be reduced to the rational logic of the profit motive or, alternatively, whether it is driven by the craven fever of anti-black racism. *Still Lives* contends that both of these analytics are necessary in order to attend to the specificities of the carceral state under neoliberal capitalism and the gratuitous violence that both fuels and is fuelled by the criminalisation of poor, racialised Americans. This dissertation suggests that the carceral state, in other words, is not just the superstructural aftereffect of a tectonic political-economic base, but rather a foundational element of capitalism whose emphasis on anti-black racism must be thought alongside and in conjunction with the emergence of neoliberalism.

In an explicit challenge to Marxist frameworks and their overemphasis on the political-economic necessity of racism, Frank Wilderson argues that, in order to attend to the specifics of slavery and black suffering in the American context, the slave must be decoupled from the worker. Racial terror, Wilderson contends, cannot be explained by the rational imperative of the profit motive. Rather than suffer vulnerability and exploitation, the slave, Wilderson argues, is defined by his fungibility and disposability:

> The absence of black subjectivity from the crux of Marxist discourse is symptomatic of the discourse's inability to cope with the possibility that the generative subject of capitalism, the black body of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and the generative subject that resolves late-capital's over-accumulation crisis, the black (incarcerated) body of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, do not reify the basic categories which structure Marxist conflict: the categories of work, production, exploitation, historical self-awareness, and above all, hegemony.[39]

For Wilderson, enslavement is not an historically-situated social relation; rather, it is an immaterial, irrevocable state—one that renders a Marxist analysis utterly incoherent. By placing

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[38] The scholars whose work tends to fall into the former category include: Frank Wilderson and Jared Sexton. The latter framework extends from Cedric Robinson and includes Adolph Reed, Jr. Michael C. Dawson, among many others. In reframing the civil rights era as a moment in which modes of racial subjection were remapped and reinscribed, this thesis is also deeply indebted to the work of Saidiya Hartman. Hartman's work is often wrongly conscripted in service of the Afro-Pessimist camp.

[39] Frank B. Wilderson III, "Gramsci's Black Marx: Whither the Slave in Civil Society," *Social Identities* Vol 9 No 2, (2003), 238.

"incarcerated" in parenthesis, Wilderson suggests that, in recent centuries, prisons and jails have functioned to further extend the condition of social death that characterises the enslaved. According to these arguments, the carceral state does not proceed from political-economic necessity, but inherits and acts upon the received knowledge that the "the black body" is always already replaceable and killable. In arguing that enslavement is a fundamental, existential condition, Wilderson charts a narrative of radical continuity, centring anti-black racism as the unchanging, unequivocal "base" from which American capitalism materialises.

But for all its distinctly polemical and ostensibly radical tone, Wilderson's ontological turn can be historicised. By asking us to divorce anti-blackness from the historical conditions that produce it, Wilderson's claims disclose a disturbing fact about how race has been put to work within neoliberal capitalism. Writing throughout the last few decades, Wilderson has witnessed the explosion of incarceration rates from the 1980s onward, as well as the ubiquitous acceptance of "tough on crime" rhetoric across the political spectrum. Hugely popular criminological theories, such as the now widely discredited "super-predator myth," consolidated the image of the unrepentant black criminal in the public imagination, slipping anti-black racism into thinly veiled concern over violent crime and social deviance.[40] These theories were used to justify the surveillance and control of poor, black Americans who, no longer useful within the conventional wage-labour market, were incarcerated at unprecedented rates. This resulted in the endless circulation of particularly young, black men between urban ghettoes and rural prisons, only a small fraction of which are actually run for profit. This context clarifies that what Wilderson mistakes as the timelessness of enslavement is, in fact, a spectre produced by historical circumstances. Indeed, as Loïc Wacquant has argued, far from produce entirely new racial dynamics, neoliberalism has entailed a resurrection of much older forms of racism, including "Lombroso-style

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[40] The super-predator myth was first articulated by criminologist John J. Dilulio, whose theories predicted a tsunami of youth crime who committed horrendous acts of violence with no remorse. His ideas gained a foothold in wider political discourse during the mid to late 1990s. The term was popularised during Bill Clinton's presidency and was used to justify the draconian approach to crime adopted across the political spectrum. The term came under scrutiny during Hillary Clinton's 2016 presidential run. See: John Dilulio, "The Coming of the Super-Predator," *The Washington Examiner* (27 November 1995).

mythologies about criminal atavism" and the production of huge swatches of disposable, surplus subjects.[41] The unprecedented confinement of poor, black Americans, therefore, should not be read as evidence of the ontological status of enslavement, but rather as an index of the profound extent to which the carceral state has, especially since the 1980s, revivified the psychic and material conditions of enslavement, thereby naturalising anti-blackness as a seemingly inevitable fact of social life.[42]

Nevertheless, Wilderson rightly asks us to account for the specificity of anti-blackness and to grapple with the elements of carceral violence that exceed the ostensibly "rational" explanations provided by the profit motive. Indeed, as this dissertation demonstrates, it is nearly impossible to discern where racism ends and political-economic logic begins; both are entangled in an endless feedback loop that is constitutive of the American capitalism and its continual reinventions. Race is not simply an ideological effect of political-economy or an illusory form of false consciousness: it is, as Stuart Hall wrote in the 1970s, "the modality in which class is lived and the medium in which class relations are experienced." Following Hall, race can be understood not only as a malleable relation, as opposed to a static thing, but also as a process of mediation—one in which identities and experiences are actively produced. Hall's reframing allows us to see how, far from simply a reflection of existing social relations, representation is the means through which which race and its meanings are constructed and contested. To this end, this project does not conceive of race as a category that is already known or overdetermined, but rather as something that must be thought historically and considered through visual representation. In doing so, *Still Lives* shifts existing studies of photography and race, foregrounding not how photography represents racialised identities, but rather the role that photography plays in mediating technologies of racialisation.

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[41] Wacquant, "Deadly Symbiosis: When Ghetto and Prison Meet and Mesh," *Punishment & Society Vol 3 No 1,* 113.

[42] Another major shortcoming of Afro-Pessimist discourse is its curious silence on questions of American imperialism and histories of colonialism. Many critics of Afro-Pessimism argue that, by divorcing the African American experience of slavery from colonialism and its legacies, its entire framework extends from a misreading and misconstruing of the work of anti-imperialist thinker Franz Fanon. As I argue in the second chapter of this dissertation by way of Bruce Jackson's colour photography, the neoliberal prison *must* be thought by way of this nation-building project that was unfolding both at home and abroad. This is a critique developed by thinkers and scholars of black radicalism, such as Cedric Robinson.

Chapter Summaries

Before a more sustained description of each chapter can be undertaken, it is important to note that *Still Lives* is not arranged chronologically. Technically, Danny Lyon's work and, indeed, his ability to enter the geographically isolated world of the southern prison farm was predicated on the working relationship Bruce Jackson had already developed with the officials who oversaw the Texas State Department of Corrections. The exhibition and publishing of both Lyon and Jackson's photographs, in galleries, catalogues and books, is staggered throughout the decade and beyond. Moreover, there is significant overlap in the years Jackson spent making colour photographs of the penitentiary and those Leonard Freed devoted to documenting the New York Police Department. If *Still Lives* seeks to examine how documentary can portray the temporality of the emerging carceral state, what is essential to this endeavour is not the establishment of a linear chronology, but rather the unravelling of the ways in which these documentary practices differently mediate carceral time. The chosen organisation of these chapters seeks to make visible these varying strategies. Whereas *Conversations with the Dead* frames the prison farm through the past, Jackson's colour photographs emphatically code the prison as contemporaneous with the prevailing visual landscape of the 1960s and 1970s. Leonard Freed, in contrast, hints at the anticipatory capacity of both photography and the carceral state, not only demonstrating how increased policing and surveillance counterintuitively worked to produce crime in the future tense, but also evidencing the ways in which visual representation manufactures the seemingly unavoidable necessity of the police.

Chapter One, "Mediating Carceral Temporalities: Danny Lyon's *Conversations with the Dead*," looks closely at Lyon's 1971 photobook and its documentation of the daily lives and labour of incarcerated men at six East Texas penitentiaries. Comprised of prisoners' drawings and letters, mug shots, police reports, as well as Lyon's black-and-white photographs, *Conversations with the Dead*, this chapter argues, produces an alternative way of representing both the civil rights era and the American prison. I demonstrate how,

by drawing on the documentary vernacular of agricultural labour that was constructed in the 1930s, *Conversations with the Dead* harnesses anachronism in order to historicise the prison as an institution of racial and class domination. First, this chapter sets up the photographic work Lyon did for Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee as a foil to *Conversations with the Dead*. Often considered an exemplification of "civil rights photography," Lyon's work for the organisation supplied a narrative of the movement—one that foregrounded black Americans as fiercely moral agents of historical transformation in their own right. Next, I examine the portions of the photobook that can be understood to enact a humanistic or humanitarian model of prison photography. I demonstrate how, despite their promise to render the subjectivity of the incarcerated transparent, these strategies are equally mediated. By offering close readings of page spreads and layouts, I suggest that this model of representation is inextricably bound up with the visual codes through which humanity (and criminality) are dialectically made legible.

Finally, this chapter turns to the additional model of prison photography that is constructed throughout *Conversations with the Dead*. By situating the photobook within the resurgent interest in 1930s documentary that characterised the 1960s, I argue that *Conversations with the Dead* reproduces a visual language of agricultural labour that was developed on the sharecropping farm by Farm Security Administration photographers. Lyon's remakes, I claim, are neither a gesture of postmodern pastiche nor a signifier of late-capitalist nostalgia. Rather, these repetitions allow us to see the structures of racial subjection that undergird the superficial transition from antebellum plantation to sharecropping farm to modern prison. By placing Lyon's photobook in dialogue with Richard Wright and Edwin Rosskam's 1941 *12 Million Black Voices*, I show that Lyon does not simply inherit the formal language of Thirties documentary, but extends an argument over the ongoing temporality of slavery that was being developed during the Great Depression by and through photography. Through a close reading of *12 Million Black Voices*, I highlight the temporal displacements that characterise the photographic archive of slavery. In doing so, I suggest that, if the enslaved figure is always anachronistic, then it can never fully be past. Ultimately, this chapter shows how *Conversations with the Dead* produces a photographic record of slavery

from within the civil rights era, unmasking this historical moment as another blurred boundary between modes of racial subjection.

Chapter Two is entitled "Kodachrome Plantation: Bruce Jackson's Colour Prison Photographs." It was borne out of the unexpected discovery that, despite its widespread circulation in black-and-white, Jackson's vast archive of prison photographs includes hundreds of colour images that have yet to be published or exhibited. Although, to some extent, the preference for black-and-white photographs of the prison farm can be attributed to technological and fiscal constraints of the 1960s and 1907s, this chapter contends that the absence of Jackson's colour photographs from the history of documentary must be understood as ideologically inflected. This chapter argues that this strategic elision constitutes an act of censorship—one that seeks to make sense of the prison farm and its perceptual anachronism by displacing the institution onto a remote past. I historicise this repression against the transformations in the rhetorical meaning of chromatic difference that transpired throughout the 1960s and after, paying close attention to the institutionalisation of monochrome and polychrome photography throughout these decades. As the widespread dissemination of the Farm Security Administration file imbued black-and-white documentary with a sense of temporal distance from everyday life, the popularisation of colour television and photojournalism meant that the here-and-now of late-capitalism was conveyed in living colour. In this context, the decision to disseminate Jackson photographs exclusively in black-and-white could capitalise on the newly intertextual meaning of black-and-white documentary, positioning the prison farm within a remote, agrarian past and suturing it into a linear narrative of American progress.

Drawing on the work of Sally Stein, this chapter contends that Jackson's photographs remediate the 1930s in colour and, in doing so, insist upon the contemporaneity of forced, manual work with the emergence of a "New South," commonly referred to as the "Sunbelt." Characterised by a swift transition to post-industrial patterns of labour and leisure, the Sunbelt became closely associated with the photography of William Eggleston and was often perceived as a threat to the region's more authentic,

agrarian past. By situating the prison squarely within this historical transition to late-capitalism, Jackson's photographs make visible not only the ongoing temporality of the prison farm, but also its compatibility with an ascendent spatial regime—one that, replete with low-density suburban housing and commercial parks, became quickly bound up with a polychromatic photographic vernacular. This chapter argues that these colour photographs and, in particular, their framing of the prison as internal to the reconfiguration of American capitalism, raise broader questions about how to fully grapple with uneven carceral geographies. Jackson's remapping of the 1970s American landscape, this chapter claims, reaffirms the theorisation of the prison developed by black radical thinkers in the 1960s and 1970s—a framework that views the prison as a domestic, internal colony naturally in alliance with anti-imperial struggles around the world. This chapter suggests that, in order to fully understand the neoliberal prison, the institution must be thought and seen as at the very centre of an emerging nation-building project that was both local and global in scale.

The third and final chapter of this dissertation, "Drop Dead, New York: Leonard Freed's *Police Work* and the Visual Politics of Broken Windows," centres around Freed's 1980 photobook *Police Work*, which emerged from his documentation of the activities of the New York City Police Department from 1973-1979. The chapter considers Freed's photobook against the backdrop of New York City's fiscal crisis and the subsequent withdrawal of the welfare state from public life, attending to the decade's liminal positioning between the robustness of the industrial city and the gentrified, post-Fordist urban milieu that would consolidate throughout the 1980s. This chapter argues that *Police Work* visually resolves the crisis of policing that emerged out of urban cops' handling of recent urban rebellions, justifying the expansion of the police amidst the rise of austerity politics. In addition to the production of a visual repertoire of police work as community care, the photobook, I argue, remakes and recodes already familiar photographic genres. First, I show how *Police Work* remakes the unflattering photographic record of policing that was generated during the classical phase of the civil rights movement—an archive of police violence to which Freed actively contributed during the 1960s. By placing *Police Work* in dialogue

with Freed's civil rights photobook *Black in White America* (1968), I unpack the means through *Police Work* recodes photographic evidence of state warfare as proof of state welfare.

Then, I examine the relationship between *Police Work* and the remaking of New York City by and through the extension of the police through urban space. I closely examine two photographic codes that are put to work in *Police Work*, analysing their meanings within the mass cultural fascination with crime and punishment. While family photography, I show, is harnessed to shore up the moral legitimacy of the police, displaying their coherence with bourgeois, propertied domesticity, the tabloid is used to undermine the right of urban undesirables to a domestic, private life, suggesting that they are "out of place" and therefore in need of removal by the police. This uneven photographic treatment of the private sphere, I argue, not only unmasks the ostensibly universal right to privacy as an entitlement for some, but also allows gentrification to masquerade as a quest to protect the nuclear family and the home. I close by examining the rise and rhetoric of the broken windows theory of policing—a criminological theory that gained legitimacy throughout the 1980s and 1990s. I argue that *Police Work* anticipates the theory's shift from deviant bodies to derelict space, sublimating anxieties about racial difference into hysteria over private property. Ultimately, I argue, while Danny Lyon and Bruce Jackson allow us to query the temporality of slavery, Freed asks us to interrogate the spatiality of the plantation, demanding a reframing of the civil rights era as segregation's transformation, as opposed to its end.

By bringing together the photography of Lyon, Jackson, and Freed, this dissertation demonstrates that, in direct contradistinction with its resounding absence from the history of photography, the carceral state was a key subject of photographic work during the civil rights movement and after. The recurring presence of prisons and police throughout these three photographers' oeuvres is neither the result of their shared biographical facts nor the product of their kindred political leanings. Instead, this is because prisons and police were, throughout the 1960s and 1970s, not only resounding fixtures of the broader visual discourse in which documentary participated, but also a temporary solution to a crisis within the American political-economy and its production of surplus subjects. In order for the

history of photography to fully grapple with the complexities and contradictions of this period—a moment in which the intersecting processes of deproletarianisation and racialisation were being remapped and rearticulated—then the carceral state and its place within visual representation must be brought into view. In this way, by examining the relationship between photography and the carceral state, this dissertation aims to open up the history of photography to alternative modes of thinking and reading—ones that have been suppressed by reflexive anxiety over the indexical claims of documentary and the repressive function of the camera and its gaze. Rather than acquiesce to the prevailing view that documentary is an insufficiently critical or reflexive form of visual representation, this project demonstrates that these images can and must be read in order to fully attend to the terrible longevity of the carceral state and to confront its enduring function in our own time.

Chapter One:

Mediating Carceral Temporalities: Danny Lyon's *Conversations with the Dead*

In his 1968 photograph "Cotton Pickers," Danny Lyon produces a familiar tableau of agrarian work (fig 1.1).[43] He captures several dozen men stooped within a large agricultural field, as they bow their heads and search among the spiny brambles for precious tufts of cotton. The figures have large sacks strapped across their chests that, partially filled with the coveted crop, drag behind their bodies and extend horizontally across the flat field. By employing a contra jour effect, in which the subjects are photographed directly against a source of light, the camera darkly silhouettes the individuals' faces, redacting any distinguishable features or expressions from the visual record. This technique, magnified through the repetition of figures and forms, illustrates how manual work choreographs the movements and gestures of the body, sublimating individual figures into overdetermined, functional types. Despite their widespread popularity in the postwar era, cotton picking machines are completely absent from the photograph. These rotating metal behemoths rendered manual work virtually obsolete, recasting the physical labour captured in Lyon's photograph as deeply anachronistic and out of place in time. This exclusion, coupled with the absence of modern commodities, quotidian fashions, or commercial signage, serves to situate the photograph within a distant past, strongly evoking visual representations of antebellum slave plantations or pre-war sharecropping farms. By opening up a disjunctive chasm between the photographed scene and the timestamp of the documentary photograph, Lyon's image frames physical work not only as a process of racialisation and deindividuation, but also as mode of temporal differentiation.

Lyon's photograph depicts a penal institution known as a "prison farm." A type of state penitentiary almost unique to the American South, the prison farm employs manual, agricultural labour

[43] Throughout this thesis, the titles of individual photographs will be placed in scare quotes, while the titles of photobooks will be designated in italics.

both to sustain the prison and to discipline inmates. The image was taken at the Ferguson Unit in East Texas, a prison farm that, during the 1960s and 1970s, predominantly housed young, first offenders between the ages of seventeen to twenty-one.[44] In its focus on manual labour, the photograph rhymes with the many images of agricultural work that were taken during the 1930s and 1940s for the Farm Security Administration.[45] Ben Shahn's 1935 photograph, for instance, known as "Cotton Picking, Pulaski County, Arkansas," records a remarkably similar scene: three black women, their faces hidden from view, strip tiny plumes of cotton from barbed branches and drag white sacks across the rural landscape (fig 1.2). The camera's angled perspective allows the horizon to barely come into view, accentuating the expansiveness of the flat field and bringing into focus the immense, unending toil that stretches ahead of these workers. The photograph captures the nearly ubiquitous practice of sharecropping that spread across the cotton-growing regions of the American South around the turn of the twentieth century. Although sharecropping certainly gave newly freed slaves a modicum of control over their own labour and private lives, this transition was, in many ways, a pyrrhic victory. Designed to reassert control over a newly emancipated labour force, sharecropping deliberately trapped black men and women in permanent cycles of debt, ensuring that most black Americans remained without property and politically powerless.[46]

Just as Lyon's photograph encodes a temporal contradiction, so too does Shahn's picture produce a similar disjuncture. Emphatically reminiscent of the visual register of the antebellum South, Shahn's photograph gives concrete expression to the messy boundary between slavery and freedom, attesting to striking the material continuity between pre and post-emancipation life. In his seminal reexamination of

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[44] Bob Johnson, "Record Proves Kyle's Success Warden of Youth Prison," *Houston Post*, (2 May 1965), Section 2, 12.

[45] The Farm Security Administration was a federal agency created as part of the New Deal that aimed to combat rural poverty in the United States. As a part of its Information Division, photographers were put to work documenting the effects of the Great Depression and the Dust Bowl on poor Americans. They compiled an enormous archive of Depression-era American life that is often seen to exemplify the form and function of "documentary" in American visual culture. The literature on the FSA is vast, but a good place to start is: James Curtis, *Mind's Eye, Mind's Truth: FSA Photography* Reconsidered (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989); Cara Finnegan, *Picturing Poverty: Print Culture and FSA Photographs* (Washington D.C. : Smithsonian Institution Press, 2003).

[46] On the rise of sharecropping in the Cotton Belt see: Sven Beckert, *Empire of Cotton: A Global History* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2014).

the postbellum era *Black Reconstruction*, W.E.B. Du Bois eloquently described this blurred divide: "The slave went free; stood a brief moment in the sun; then moved back again toward slavery."[47] While, from our current position, the photograph seems to cohere with how the Great Depression has been constructed by and through photographic images, the manual labour it depicts would have seemed, at least in the 1930s, as unusually out of place in time. In fact, when Ben Shahn took this photograph in 1935, sharecropping was hardly interpreted as a modern solution to the South's chronic deficit of free labour in the wake of emancipation; rather, it was viewed much like the region as a whole, as a backwards and underdeveloped atavism—one that continually and pathologically lagged behind the industrialised, urban North. Three years later in 1938, President Franklin D. Roosevelt gave voice to this uneven development, identifying the South as the nation's "number one economic problem."[48] In this context, Shahn's photograph would have appeared at an extreme remove from the modern patterns of labour and consumption that characterised white, middle-class life in the urban North.

Taken three decades later, Danny Lyon's photograph of incarcerated cotton pickers in East Texas constructs a similarly anachronistic view of the late 1960s—one that seems incommensurable with mainstream representations of the era and, in particular, the scenes of civil unrest and racial upheaval that have come to stand in for this historical moment more broadly. These more well-known images, widely disseminated through mainstream newspapers and popular picture magazines, routinely frame this juncture as an almost unprecedented moment of crisis, as a time in which the nation's enduring system of racial apartheid was fiercely challenged and even, as some narratives suggest, overcome. An infamous year that has ossified in the collective American imaginary as the apotheosis of the decade's dramatic racial turmoil, 1968 is often figured as the fulcrum around which the movement turns.

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[47] W.E.B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co, 1935), 30. Du Bois also wrote about the use of convict labour in Georgia and its disturbing continuity with slavery: "The sentences inflicted are cruel and excessive. Twenty-five per cent of the convicts are condemned for life and sixty per cent for ten years or more…the fortunes of many a prominent white Georgia family are red with the blood of black men justly and unjustly held to labor in Georgia prison camps." W.E.B. Du Bois, "Some Notes on Negro Crime, Particularly in Georgia," (Atlanta: Atlanta University Press, 1906.)

[48] Franklin D. Roosevelt, "Message to the Conference on Economic Conditions of the South," 4 July 1938.

According to this popular narrative, the movement and, in particular, its black American protagonists, suddenly turned from "good," nonviolent, and integrationist to "bad," dangerous, and anti-American. Although the phrase "black power" had been gaining traction as early as 1966 and urban riots had already exploded in 1964, it wasn't until 1968, the story goes, that black men and women were suddenly posing a more fundamental challenge to global systems of violence and exploitation. When set against the ways in which this moment has been assimilated into the collective American imaginary by and through photographic images, "Cotton Pickers" appears anachronistic, failing to cohere with the visual conventions of 1968 and how the year has calcified in public memory.

This reductive tale of the civil rights movement largely hinges on the brutal assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. and its hugely important and yet, in many ways, ritually sanitised symbolic meaning. As Jacquelyn Dowd Hall has written, this narrative is predicated on an erasure of "the King who opposed the Vietnam War and linked racism at home to militarism and imperialism abroad. Gone is King the democratic socialist who advocated unionization, planned the Poor People's Campaign, and was assassinated in 1968 while supporting a sanitation workers' strike."[49] For many, 4th April 1968—the date King was shot and killed while standing on the balcony of the Lorraine Motel in Memphis—marks the withering of a utopian, interracial project and the rise of a more militant style of radical activism, a project that is often conflated with black criminality and social deviance.[50] This narrative foregrounds the explosion of civil unrest that shook dozens of American cities in the wake of the assassination, during which store windows were shattered, police cars were overturned and set ablaze, and black students occupied university buildings. This supposedly "new" phase of the civil rights struggle foregrounded black autonomy and self-determination, mobilising the language and ideology of black power to reject interracial cohesion as the ultimate goal of the black freedom struggle. Inclusion within the American

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[49] Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, "The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past," 1234.

[50] For an overview of the historical events of 1968 and their place within American popular memory, see: Mark Kurlansky, *1968: The Year That Rocked the World* (New York: Random House, 2005); Richard Vinen, *The Long '68: Radical Protest and its Enemies (*New York: Penguin Books, 2018).

nation-building project was seen as insufficient; rather, the nation itself, its economic and political hegemony both at home and abroad, had to be radically upended.

It was this emphasis on black agency and liberation that, three years later, inspired hundreds of politically-minded, highly organised prisoners to seize control of the Attica Correctional Facility in upstate New York. Prisoners fiercely advocated for improvements to their living and working conditions until their rebellion was ruthlessly quelled by New York state troopers only a few days later. Before twenty-nine prisoners and ten hostages were killed by the barrage of gun fire, the prisoners, typically excised from the public, visual sphere, made national headlines. Acutely aware of the power of representation and, in particular, the capacity for television news to frame their cause, prisoners demanded within hours of gaining control of the facility that the media be allowed inside the prison walls to take photographs and interview inmates. As Heather Ann Thompson argues in her groundbreaking retelling of the Attica uprising, the documentation and dissemination of the events by television camera crews and press photographers allowed Americans to bear witness to a prison rebellion for the first time. Suddenly, free citizens were able to listen directly to the grievances of incarcerated men and, for a few crucial moments, the strategically isolated world of the prison penetrated the living rooms and the consciousness of middle-class Americans.[51] It was these images, Thompson notes, that cemented the uprising into public memory, functioning to assimilate the Attica rebellion into the annals of American history.

Many of these now iconic Attica photographs were featured in a widely circulated report published by the McKay Commission—an independent investigative body that was convened to analyse the root causes of the prison rebellion, the bloody retaking, and its contentious aftermath.[52] Several of

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[51] Heather Ann Thompson, *Blood in the Water: The Attica Uprising of 1971 and its Legacy* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2014), 47.

[52] Magnum photographer Cornell Capa documented the conditions at the Attica facility in 1972, one year after the notorious prison rebellion and its subsequent retaking by state troopers. Capa reported his findings and shared his photographs in the McKay Commission Hearings. Although it led to little substantive change at Attica, the McKay Commission condemned the prison's abhorrent conditions, arguing that the repressive atmosphere at Attica had made an uprising almost inevitable. According to the report, prisoners were subject to "daily degradation and humiliation" and the "'promise of rehabilitation was a cruel joke." Robert McKay, *Attica: The Official Report of the New York State Special Commission on Attica* (New York: Bantam Books Inc., 1971).

these now famous photographs capture prisoners raising their fists in the black power salute, an unmistakable symbol of the more militant factions of the freedom struggle. In these shots, the figures are pressed closely together in the prison's D-yard and gesture expressively, bursting out of the rigorous confinement to which their bodies are typically subjected and testing the formal limits of the photographic frame (fig 1.3). By capturing these men who, like so many of their contemporaries, proudly raised their fists in protest, these photographs both reflect and reproduce the prison rebellion's strategic fracturing of everyday carceral life and, in particular, its regimented temporality. These images synchronise the Attica insurrection with the photographic landscape of protest that suffused this era, conceptually linking the prisoners' act of resistance to, for example, the black power salute given by black athletes Tommy Smith and John Carlos at the 1968 Olympics—an act that has been enshrined in arguably one of the year's most iconic images (fig 1.4).[53] Through the visual rhyming of these disparate images, Attica and the free world were momentarily united along the same temporal horizon.

In contrast with these iconic Attica photographs, Lyon's "Cotton pickers" resonates more strongly with Depression-era photography and the visual register of agrarian labour it constructed than it does with mainstream representations of racial conflict from the late 1960s and early 1970s. In this way, rather than posit this year as a moment of rupture, this photograph restages and rewrites the history of 1968 through the past. "Cotton Pickers" was published, alongside many other photographs of agricultural work, in Lyon's 1971 *Conversations with the Dead*—a photobook that documents the daily lives and labour of incarcerated men across an archipelago of East Texas penitentiaries. A collaboration with prisoner Billy McCune, the book combines prisoners' drawings and letters, mug shots, and police reports with Lyon's black-and-white photographs to weave an argument against the prison as an inevitable

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[53] On the relationship between photography and protest in the 1960s, see: Antigoni Memou, *Photography and Social Movements: From the Globalization of the Movement to the Movement Against Globalization* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013); T.N. Phu, 'Shooting the Movement: Black Panther Party Photography and African American Protest Traditions, *Canadian Review of American Studies* Vol 38 No 1 (Spring 2008), 165-189; Christine Eyene, *Resist! The 1960s Protests, Photography and Visual Legacy* (Brussels: BOZAR Centre for Fine Arts, 2018).

outgrowth of social organisation.[54] This chapter takes *Conversations with the Dead* seriously as a work of civil rights photography. In doing so, it seeks to unsettle the exclusionary paradigms that constitute this discursive field and, in turn, to examine the politics and narratives these foreclosures serve. This chapter argues that, rather than reify the ways in which we have been made to see the 1960s through images of the protest or the street, *Conversations with the Dead* harnesses documentary to construct another photographic language of the civil rights movement—one that accounts for the ongoing temporality of slavery and its afterlives.

First, this chapter sets up its examination of *Conversations with the Dead* by considering the ways in which the photobook poses a quagmire to both conventional understandings of civil rights photography and dominant models of representing the American prison system. I explore the photographic work Lyon did for the Student Nonviolence Coordinating Committee, a youth-led civil rights organisation that challenged white supremacy in the South through direct action and civil disobedience. Just as Attica prisoners recognised the capacity for televisual media to convey their message more directly to the American public, so too did SNCC embrace photographic representation to intervene in the dominant narratives perpetuated by the mainstream media. The organisation developed its own Photo Agency between 1962 and 1964; and ultimately produced a photobook in which Lyon's photographs were put to work. Complete with text by Lorraine Hansberry and published in 1964, *The Movement: Documentary of a Struggle for Equality* aimed to drum up support for the organisation, rendering the goals and tactics of SNCC intelligible to white liberals in the urban North. This chapter sets up *The Movement* as a foil to *Conversations with the Dead,* which, I contend, circumvents the oppositional frames supplied by these mainstream and alternative media apparatuses. Rather than argue for or against challenges posed by black Americans to the status quo, *Conversations with the Dead* queries the extent to which the 1960s can be understood as a moment of upheaval in the American racial order. Instead, the

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[54] Danny Lyon, *Conversations with the Dead: Photographs of Prison Life with the Letters and Drawings of Billy McCune #122054* (New York: Henry and Holt Company, 1971). A second edition of the book was published in 2015 by Phaidon Books.

photobook reframes the Sixties through the past, constructing visual repetitions in order to foreground the sharecropping farm and, through it, the plantation as an extant structure of American capitalism.

Then, I turn to Lyon's 1971 photobook *Conversations with the Dead*, focusing first on the humanistic model of representation that is constructed on and through its pages. This model is evidenced not only in many of the photobook's page spreads, but also through the use of collaboration, in which Lyon turns the means of representation over to his incarcerated subjects. These endeavours crystallise in Lyon's transformation of one prisoner, Billy McCune, from a subject of to a participant in the creation of the photobook and its work. This collaboration, I argue, is harnessed by Lyon in order to counterbalance the repressive system of representation typically used by the state to fix and to order the criminal body. By attempting to render present the humanity and subjectivity of his incarcerated subjects, Lyon seeks to neutralise the objectifying logic of mug shots and police reports, which work to actively produce the hardened criminal as a social type. Ultimately, this chapter goes on to query the limitations of Lyon's offer of intimacy and, in particular, its reliance on a theory of documentary immediacy and proximity. Through close readings of these pages, I complicate this promise of reciprocity. Instead, this chapter unveils Lyon's humanism as an equally mediated and ultimately conditional model of representation—one that dialectically participates in the construction of the exclusionary category of the human.

This chapter then examines the additional photographic language of the prison that is supplied by *Conversations with the Dead*. By situating the photobook within the resurgent interest in 1930s documentary that characterised the 1960s, I show how Lyon invokes an existing visual vernacular of agricultural work that was gaining increased visibility within American public culture. *Conversations with the Dead*, I argue, draws on the Depression-era vernacular of agricultural labour in order to produce anachronism as a critical strategy. In conflict with the specificity of the documentary timestamp, these photographs construct an indeterminate slippage between modern prison farm, sharecropping farm, and antebellum plantation. To see the prison anachronistically, the book suggests, is to contend with the

continuities that undergird more familiar narratives of rupture. In order to make visible these repetitions, this chapter places *Conversations with the Dead* in dialogue with Richard Wright and Edwin Rosskam's *12 Million Black Voices*, a 1941 photobook that makes use of photographs from the Farm Security Administration file. I argue that Lyon inherits and extends an argument central to Wright and Rosskam's photobook. Both photobooks, I show, contest the linear movement from slavery to freedom, amplifying the disjunctures and recursions that charcterise the long aftermath of slavery and its photographic record. In this way, *Conversations with the Dead* produces an alternative story of the civil rights movement, recasting the era, not as a moment in which the racial caste system is upended, but rather as a juncture in which the encumbered humanity of the slave is remapped and reinscribed.

"The Movement" Reframed

In 1967, four years before the publication of *Conversations with the Dead*, Danny Lyon travelled to East Texas to begin documenting the region's prison farms and the lives of the men incarcerated on the inside. This was the second time in five years that Lyon would journey to the American South with his camera in hand. Five years earlier, in July 1962, Lyon began his stint as a photographer for the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee—a grassroots civil rights organisation that, comprised of mostly black students from the southern states, sought to dismantle Jim Crow segregation through the strategic use of direct action and civil protest. As Leigh Raiford has shown in her work on SNCC and its Photo Agency, the organisation developed a "formidable independent media structure" that shaped dominant perceptions of the civil rights movement and influenced its outcome.[55] Lyon played a significant role in the early development of SNCC's Photo Agency. He created photographs that would feature on its easily reproduced and widely distributed posters, which were sold to the public between 1963 and 1965.[56]

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[55] Leigh Raiford, "'Come Let Us Build a New World Together:' SNCC and the Photography of the Civil Rights Movement," *American Quarterly* Vol 59 No 4 (2007), 1133.

[56] Lyon's photographs would ultimately comprise five out of six posters that were produced by the SNCC. Raiford, 1137.

Rather than shore up the photographic language of the popular press, SNCC posters offered a different photographic language of the civil rights movement, giving vivid expression to the organisation's values, goals, and beliefs. By emphasising the robust agency and fierce morality of SNCC and its young members, these posters countered the prevailing view of black protestors as either passive victims of police violence or acquiescent followers of charismatic leaders such as Martin Luther King Jr. Instead, SNCC sought to reframe its members as active agents in the construction of a more just and fully integrated national future.

One particular poster, for instance, reproduces a Lyon photograph from the 1963 March on Washington, enlarging the image to fill the entirety of the fourteen by twenty-two-inch sheet of paper (fig 1.5). The photograph directs our attention away from the more familiar faces that might surround the speakers' podium, closely framing two young, black men in the crowd. While the figure on the left is arrested mid-clap, the man on the right is framed lifting his right arm in the air with his fingers pinched together in a snap. Taken from below, the photograph foregrounds the intense verticality of the figure, creating a visual parallel between his erect body and classical monumental forms. The man seems to stand in for the Washington Monument; a towering obelisk that often serves to ground the photographic record of this iconic march in what Lauren Berlant has called the archive of the "National Symbolic."[57] Here, however, there are no recognisable leaders addressing the masses or comforting symbols of national permanence. Rather, the photograph envisions ordinary black youth as agents of transformation in their own right, fully capable of remaking the nation and enacting a more egalitarian future. The text accompanying the image functions as a powerful mode of address, highlighting the urgent need for

[57] Lauren Berlant, *The Queen of America Goes to Washington City* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997), 103.

action "now." Far from simply serve as a one-way pedagogical tool, the poster functions as a direct call to action, serving as an open invitation for viewers to join SNCC in its struggle for racial equality.[58]

Although Lyon formally left SNCC in 1963, his photographs remained central to the organisation's publicity operations, which sought to transform passive, white spectators from the urban North into active participants in the movement. These efforts were expressed in a 1964 photobook entitled *The Movement: Documentary of a Struggle for Equality* (fig 1.6).[59] Completed with text by playwright Lorraine Hansberry, *The Movement* makes use of Lyon's photographs, along with images by Roy DeCarava and Robert Frank among others, to weave a cohesive story of the civil rights movement and its vision of racial integration. In order to render "The Movement" intelligible, the photobook sketches a linear narrative of the organisation that, while certainly situated within a broader struggle for justice and equality, is nevertheless structured by a clear beginning, middle, and end. The photobook's story departs from the classical narrative of the civil rights movement, which typically locates its origins in the 1954 *Brown v Board of Education* Supreme Court decision to desegregate US public schools. Instead, *The Movement* articulates its beginnings in the 1960 Greensboro sit-ins that were led and organised by SNCC: "On February 1, 1960," the text explains, "four Negro students sat down at the 'white only' lunch counter of the Woolworth store in Greensboro, North Carolina. What followed is changing the entire nation."[60] The photobook then displays more conventional photographs of the movement, figuring the street as the terrain on which antagonisms between black protestors and white police, peaceful demonstrators and white backlash play out (fig 1.7).

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[58] Importantly, SNCC was also inspired by the work of the FSA, illustrating how the meaning and lessons contained within the FSA file were open to interpretation. SNCC supported the establishment of the Southern Documentary Project, which covered the organisation's activities in the South during the summer of 1964. The project was spearheaded by Matt Herron and advised by Dorothea Lange. See: Matt Herron, "The Civil Rights Movement and the Southern Documentary Project," in *Witness in Our Time: Working Lives of Documentary Photographers,* ed. Ken Light (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2000), 62-71; For more on Lyon's involvement in the civil rights movement, see: Danny Lyon, *Memories of the Southern Civil Rights Movement* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992).

[59] The book was priced at only $2.95 and was meant to be easily accessible to the public. Lorraine Hansberry, *The Movement: Documentary of a Struggle for Equality* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1964).

[60] Hansberry, *The Movement*, 36.

Finally, *The Movement* articulates a hopeful vision for the future, imagining a horizon of racial integration and equality in which the material conditions of black Americans and, particularly, black children have been entirely transformed. The ultimate pages make a powerful appeal, inviting the reader to become an ally in SNCC's struggle to fulfil the fundamental promises of American freedom and democracy. The text even addresses the reader directly, calling out in second-person narration for hesitant white Americans to join protestors in song: "you," the book reads, "I mean you, my countrymen, reading this."[61] While in the final photograph, a young boy returns the camera's and, through it, the reader's look with a direct, penetrating gaze, the accompanying text serves as a poignant, unifying call to action: "They are young, they are beautiful, they are determined. It is for us to create, now, an America that deserves them." (Fig 1.8)[62] These pages provide crucial insight into the ways in which SNCC harnessed photography to shape public perception of the organisation and to galvanise support for its tactics. Rather than simply upend popular representations of the civil rights movement or replace negative stories with positive ones, SNCC engaged in a more ambiguous process by which mainstream narratives and, in particular, their positioning of white spectators, were renegotiated. By at once cohering with and departing from classical narratives of the civil rights movement, *The Movement* evidences the openness and malleability of "civil rights photography" as a discursive category—one that could be actively shifted and mobilised to communicate the organisation's origins, goals, and beliefs.

But although *The Movement* certainly pushes the discursive boundaries and rhetorical meaning of civil rights photography, it also reaffirms the protest or the street as the visual-symbolic register of the 1960s. Photographs of marchers with placards and police armed with snarling dogs cohere with the prevailing view of the decade as a moment of dramatic upheaval in the racial order, as a break with historical modes of racial subjection. In stark contrast with the 1964 photobook, which is often considered an exemplification of Lyon's "civil rights photography," *Conversations with the Dead* is typically

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[61] Ibid., 104.

[62] Ibid., 122.

relegated to a position outside this discursive category. This divergence cannot be explained solely by the "late" publication date of *Conversations with the Dead* in 1971. Just as *The Movement* challenges the origin story of the civil rights movement, so too have many scholars of the period vociferously contested the reduction of the civil rights era to the halcyon decade Bayard Rustin once termed the "classical phase" of the movement. In its place, many have argued for a longer periodisation of the movement—one that takes into account its roots in the left-wing radicalism of the 1930s and its extension well into the 1970s and after.[63] Despite these interventions, the exclusionary boundary that constitutes the discursive field of "civil rights photography" remains largely in tact, reducing the story of the 1960s to disruptive acts of civil unrest and, as a result, framing the decade as solely an unprecedented wave of change.

Taken in the late 1960s, Lyon's photographs of cotton picking, flat-weeding, and other forms of agricultural labour, supply a divergent visual language of the civil rights movement that seems utterly out of place in time. In this 1968 photograph (fig. 1.9), for instance, taken in Huntsville, Texas, Lyon frames a scene of agrarian work, tightly cropping a line of working men as they hoe a mound of earth. While, in the immediate foreground, a single prisoner kneels on the grass with a hoe sharpener, in the distant background, a prison boss sits on horseback, closely monitoring the prisoners and their work. The photograph's intensely symmetrical composition speaks volumes of the rigidity and discipline inflicted by forced labour. Here, the prisoners' are arrested with their backs towards the lens, allowing the fungibility of their labouring bodies to come sharply into view. Without any industrial machines, the manual labour appears at a distant remove from timestamp of the documentary image. Like in many of Lyon's photographs of agricultural work, the camera is placed near the ground and tilted up towards its subjects so as to dramatise the uneven relations between the prisoners and the guard who surveils them. The photograph is not just literally taken from below; it also asks us to write history from below, constructing a position from which the viewer can imaginatively occupy the perspective of the

[63] The idea of the "long civil rights movement" was first proposed by Jacquelyn Dowd Hall in her now canonical essay "The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past." It was recently taken up as an historiographical intervention into studies of the carceral state by Jordan T. Camp in his book *Incarcerating the Crisis: Freedom Struggles and the Rise of the Neoliberal State* (Oakland, C.A.: University of California Press, 2016).

incarcerated through the rückenfigur in the foreground. From this position, the photograph suggests, another history of the 1960s can be written—one that contends with the long aftermath of slavery within the civil rights movement and after.

Vexed Humanisms

As I have suggested above, *Conversations with the Dead* offers an alternative to dominant mediations of the civil rights movement, placing their limited models of historical temporality on display. At the same time, *Conversations with the Dead* also reveals the inadequacy of humanistic models of representation to account for the structural dimensions of the American prison system—ones that, I will argue, are vividly rendered in Lyon's photographs of agricultural labour. Despite the myriad models of representation that are engaged throughout the photobook, Lyon, in his 2015 reframing of the project, cleaves to a humanistic interpretation of his work: "From the beginning" he writes, "it was an effort to somehow emotionally convey the spirit of imprisonment shared by 250,000 men in the United States. The resulting work is not meant to be seen as a study of the Texas Department of Corrections."[64] As I will show, while this interpretation goes some way towards explaining certain elements of *Conversations with the Dead,* it leaves unexamined a crucial aspect of the photobook and its work; that is, its invocation and repetition of an established documentary repertoire of agrarian labour. Before I turn to the photobook's engagement with Thirties documentary and its histories, I will examine the humanistic claims of *Conversations with the Dead;* its effort to, as Lyon has explained, "make a picture of imprisonment as distressing as I knew it to be in reality."[65]

Lyon's humanistic impulse aims to render the suffering of his subjects intelligible to distant readers who are assumed to have little contact with or knowledge of the geographically-isolated prison

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[64] Lyon, *Conversations with the Dead* 2nd ed. (London: Phaidon Books, 2015), 8.

[65] Ibid., 13.

farm. In order to express the latent humanity of his incarcerated subjects, Lyon produces a sympathetic model of representation—one that strives to counterbalance the state-sanctioned documents, such as mug shots, prisoner identification photographs, and police reports, through which the criminal body is codified and ordered. Lyon's efforts are underpinned by a belief in documentary immediacy; the idea, in other words, that the camera functions to render its subjects and their subjectivities radically present. "You put a camera in my hand, I want to get close to people." Lyon has said: "Not just physically close, emotionally close, all of it. It's part of the process."[66] By juxtaposing various types of photographic and archival material, *Conversations with the Dead* creates page spreads through which the promises offered by a documentary model of immediacy and presence can be critically examined. *Conversations with the Dead* clarifies how the visual repertoire of the human is an equally constrained and coded form of representation that is dialectically entangled with the construction of the criminal type.

One particular page spread, for instance, is devoted to various representations of Aaron Jones—a prisoner who, after committing multiple offences, was designated an "habitual criminal" and sentenced to life in prison (fig 1.10). The page layout allows for a consideration of the contrasting systems of representation through which his criminality can be at once constructed and contested. On the left-hand side, a prisoner identification photograph is paired with a clinical description of Jones, which includes his name, date of birth, offence, and prisoner number. The image coheres with the conventions of a typical identification photograph: Jones is pictured against a blank backdrop, with his number and the year pinned across his uniform. His neat appearance and neutral expression exemplify Bruce Jackson's contention that, unlike in a mug shot, in these identification photographs "all possibility is foreclosed."[67] Three police reports are also included, offering descriptions of the various crimes that have resulted in his life sentence. By coupling the frontal image with state records of Jones' offences, the page spread evidences the way in which the identification photograph is put to use within what Allan Sekula has

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[66] Randy Kennedy, "Stubbornly Practicing His Principles of Photography," *The New York Times* (24 April, 2009), accessed 24 September 2020. https://www.nytimes.com/2009/04/26/arts/design/26kenn.html

[67] Bruce Jackson, *Pictures from a Drawer*, (Philadelphia : Temple University Press, 2009), 11.

described as the "filing cabinet" of the repressive state apparatus.[68] Lyon's page spread illustrates how the camera is integrated within a larger "bureaucratic-clerical-statistical system" in order to fix the criminal as a seemingly inevitable social fact.[69]

As the police reports demonstrate, the construction of the criminal body is hardly an objective exercise; rather, it entails a process of narrativisation—one that depends upon moral judgements with regards to Jones' employment, marital status, and sexual proclivities. "Marital failure with no children involved." The report surmises: "Stability is poor due to an overly protective mother. Admits performing act of CUNNILINGUS since age 19 years. Admits use of BENZEDRINE beginning at age 19 years." These descriptions are doing important work in the framing of Jones' criminality. Jones' perceived failure to cohere with bourgeois family values or expected sexual mores is not only weaponised to evidence his criminality, but also used to explain his recidivism. By tracing his supposed deviance to his non-normative childhood, these descriptions pathologise his relatively minor transgressions, such as violations of property relations through burglary or theft, as failures of character—ones that, rooted in his upbringing, are supposedly immutable, irrevocable parts of his nature. If Jones has committed multiple offences, the story goes, this is not because of the failure of society to adequately address his material needs or the inability of the prison system to function as a genuine process of rehabilitation, but rather because Jones' character is fixed and incapable of transformation. It is Jones himself who is blameworthy for his own punishment and, since he is beyond reform, his life sentence is framed as logical and justified.

The right-hand side of Lyon's double-page spread seeks to unsettle the system of representation upon which these conclusions depend. Lyon juxtaposes six of Jones' identification photographs against his own picture of the subject, standing in the entrance to his prison cell. The identification photographs include three pairs of frontal and side-on images, captured on each

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[68] Allan Sekula, "The Body and the Archive," 16.

[69] Ibid., 16.

occasion Jones was incarcerated. In each image, Jones, dressed in an unobtrusive, white collared shirt, is staged against a blank backdrop with his identification numbers, allowing for close comparison of his facial features from different angles and moments in time. Taken across a nearly ten year period, the shots display substantial differences in Jones' appearance. In the first set of photographs, his hair is thick and wavy, while in the last set it is short and coarse; even his most fundamental bone structure seems changed. Close scrutiny seems to foreground, as opposed to smooth over these differences, throwing into doubt whether the photographs in fact depict the same person. These disparities testify to the inevitable contingency of the photographic image and, in particular, the way in which the evidentiary capacity of the camera is constrained by the "circumstantial character of all that is photographable."[70] Rather than simply record evidence of criminality, these photographs make legible the passage of time and the way in which it is imprinted on the body. Without bureaucratic editorialisation, this grid of mug shots does very little to subordinate the messiness of photography to a repressive system of representation, suggesting that the production of the criminal involves more than simply the optical mechanics of the camera.

Next to this collection of identification photos, Lyon offers a rebuke to this clinical model of photography. He includes his own, black-and-white photograph of Jones who, dressed in his loose, cotton uniform, is pictured leaning against the open doorway of his prison cell. In contrast with the identification photograph, which renders Jones from a close range and fixes his body square to the picture plane, Lyon's image depicts the subject from a greater distance, allowing his languid, slouching pose to come into view. Rather than return the camera's look, Jones casts his eyes downward, towards the floor outside his cell, imbuing him with the psychic depth and quiet interiority that the identification photograph insistently denies. Jones is figured in a moment of contemplation—he seems unaware of the camera and, as a result, appears caught in a natural state of introspection, offering the viewer presumed intimate access to his subjectivity and interiority. So

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[70] Ibid., 17.

although evidence of Jones' incarceration remains apparent, primarily through the inclusion of his labelled uniform and numbered cell block within the frame, the photograph constructs Jones as a coherent individual, offering a promise of intimacy between viewer and subject. It seems to offer a strategic rebuke to the physiognomic principles of the identification photograph or the mug shot, suggesting that, far from an exclusively repressive, regulatory construct, photography can represent the humanity of its subjects. This juxtaposition, produced in the book and on the page, illustrates that these two forms must be understood together. They function, as Allan Sekula has written, "both *honorifically* and *repressively*" in a dialectical system of representation.[71]

However, rather than provides a neat foil to the identification photograph—one that might redress the absence of humanity that is constituted by and through his construction as criminal—Lyon's portrait is equally mediated. In order to render Jones' humanity intelligible, Lyon's photograph traffics in the conventions of bourgeois portraiture—visual codes which turn upon the production of a self-possessed, coherent individual. The pose is especially central to the construction of Jones' individuality. By suggesting that, unlike in the identification shot, Jones is able to pose freely or, indeed, not at all, the portrait belies its reliance on established conventions, such as the downcast gaze, that are equally overdetermined. The naturalism of his pose, therefore, should not be seen as an index of his authentic self-expression, but rather read as a simulated form of agency—one that, if it is to cohere with the photographic register of the autonomous individual and solicit intimacy, is just as conditional as the identification photograph. The equation of the free subject with property ownership is similarly imitated: Jones is staged within an entryway, mimicking the threshold between the public and private realm. However, rather than cordon off his private space, this boundary delineates the entrance to yet another site of continued dispossession and surveillance: Jones' prison cell. The extension of these photographic codes to a prisoner, therefore, quickly reaches its limits: these efforts to render legible Jones' humanity

[71] Ibid., 6.

invariably highlight his exclusion from bourgeois norms. This contradiction precisely visualises the limitations of extending subjectivity to those who are excluded from the category of the human.

Perhaps the most overt way in which Lyon harnesses documentary as a mechanism through which to testify to the presence and subjectivity of the incarcerated is through the use of collaboration. Lyon elevates the men from passive subjects to active participants in the creation and production of his work, affording them the opportunity to evidence their humanity through self-expression and creative work. These participatory strategies were at first relatively ambitious: Lyon hoped not only to incorporate inmates' photographs and artwork into the final book, but also to print the work from inside the penitentiary. The original version of *Conversations with the Dead* took the form of a small portfolio entitled "Born to Lose," which was published in a print room located inside "The Walls."[72] Led by Jimmy Ray "Smiley" Renton, a crew of inmates printed off a limited number of pamphlets in a single night so as to avoid censorship by the prison director. Lyon remembers smuggling the materials out of the prison the following day so as to avoid the scrutiny of prison officials. By casting the production of the portfolio as a hurried and clandestine operation, the work is imbued with a quality of immediacy and its mediated status is suppressed. This anecdote exemplifies the way in which collaboration, while it may aim to collapse the perceptual distance between Lyon's incarcerated subjects and his readers on the outside, ultimately obscures the discursive conditions upon which its modes of identification depend.

Although Lyon did not ultimately fulfil his aim "to print the entire book inside the prison," his penchant for collaboration culminated in the inclusion of artwork and writing by Billy McCune, a mentally ill prisoner who was convicted of rape in the mid-1950s and spent nearly a decade in solitary confinement before his release into the general prison population.[73] The final section of the book is given

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[72] Danny Lyon, "A Note of Thanks to Some Contributors," *Conversations with the Dead*, unpaginated.

[73] Lyon relates this anecdote in an addendum to the second edition of the book. He claims that this idea stemmed from his reading of James Agee's text in *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*. Lyon writes: "Somewhere deep inside James Agee's text of 'Let Us Now Praise Famous Men," I had read that Agee wanted his book printed by the United States and issued as a 'government report.' I took this seriously and got it into my head. that I could print the entire book inside the prison." See: Danny Lyon, "Neither a Slave nor a Master," *Conversations with the Dead*, 2nd Edition (London: Phaidon, 2015), 201-202.

over to McCune: it comprises not only his mug shots and police reports, but also a series of drawings and letters which were sent to Lyon over the course of several years. Just as the Jones page-spread creates productive conflicts between varying forms of representation, so too do these pages encourage a critical comparison of these various mediations. The selection opens with a view of McCune that has been constructed by the state: his frontal and side-on mug shots are paired with descriptions of his height, date of birth, residence, marital status, and other forms of identification (fig 1.11). While police reports narrate his various criminal offences, as well as relate his categorisation as "feeble-minded," an excerpt of another letter shows that his execution by lethal injection has been ordered by a judge. These archival documents not only serve to fix McCune as a criminal, but also function to displace him into an official "timeless time," as Bruce Jackson and Diane Christian have described it, between his sentencing and execution.[74]

These representations are sharply contrasted against McCune's own drawings and letters, which feature on the remaining pages of the photobook. His personal artwork and essayistic texts are diametrically opposed to the clinical, black-and-white mugshots and rigid, square typography employed by the state apparatus. The contrast between Lyon's own photographs and McCune's contributions is similarly dramatised. These distinctions are amplified by the cover of the photobook and its side-by-side juxtaposition of one of Lyon's stark, black-and-white photographs against a colourful drawing by McCune. In McCune's illustrations, vibrant patches of colour bleed between and among figural forms, which are roughly sketched by expressive, free-flowing lines. One of McCune's drawings can be read as a kind of abstracted self-portrait: it depicts a hand in the process of writing or drawing against a gridded gate—a recurring motif that functions as a visual metonym for his confinement (fig 1.12). These overlapping rectangles are positioned within an abstract pattern of yellow diamonds and are flanked by several roses, floating against the dark blue backdrop. The work

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[74] Bruce Jackson and Diane Christian, *In This Timeless Time: Living and Dying on Death Row in America* (Durham, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 2012).

is a meditation on the struggle for McCune's creativity to survive amidst such profound material and sensory deprivation. The roses are suspended in mid-air and cut off from any sources of nourishment. They stand in as potent symbols of McCune's enduring capacity for self-expression, which, the drawing suggests, remains dynamic and fertile in spite of his circumstances. In this way, the picture transfigures evidence of the brutal conditions of captivity into a celebration of human endurance and proof of the captive's latent sentience.

McCune's illustrations and letters are framed in opposition not just to the visual and archival record of his interactions with the state, but to Lyon's photographic portraits of McCune, one of which is slotted into the final pages of the book. What is at stake in these varying modes of representation is the extent to which they are understood to bring the experience of incarceration close. *Conversations with the Dead* takes this desire to construct an intimate encounter with the incarcerated to its logical extreme, calling upon a prisoner not only to relay his experience of confinement from the inside, but also to evidence the enormous psychic toll of incarceration. The labour of proving the captive's humanity is thus shifted onto the very subject who has been excluded from the realm of the human. While McCune's chosen media—drawing and writing—are in some ways natural byproducts of his incarceration, their privileged status is plagued by an internal contradiction: in order to consider these mimetic tools as uniquely capable of expressing humanity, their discursive work must be repressed. Far from unmediated, however, the perceived authenticity of these participatory strategies rely on a limited paradigm of documentary, yoking identification and empathy to the normative codes through which subjectivity is made intelligible.

Beginning with the cover of *Conversations with the Dead*, the dichotomy between photography and drawing serves as one of the work's central framing devices (fig 1.13). While McCune's expressive, colourful sketches promise immediacy and intimacy, Lyon's monochrome views are presented in contradistinction, offering instead the cool, restrained views of a distant observer. The photographer and through him, the viewer, are condemned to be always on the outside; in other

words, they must experience the prison farm through mediation. In the face of this supposed deficiency, McCune's drawings are designed to compensate for what Lyon's photographs lack: that is, immediate access to the interior, psychic space of the "other"—a realm that is, on the one hand, inaccessible to the camera's lens and yet, on the other, necessary in order to prove that the criminal is capable of human subjectivity. Thus, while the act of ceding creative control to McCune seeks to overcome the perceived limitations and ethical quagmires of photographic representation, this participatory gesture ultimately reaffirms the binaries between inside and outside, subject and object that this participatory gesture seeks to resolve. Thus, the value of McCune's contributions not only depends on a repression of their discursive work, but also on the framing of documentary as insufficiently close. Privileged as at once a conduit for authentic lived experience and as testimony of creative endurance, Lyon's collaboration with McCune is caught in an inescapable paradox in which drawing and writing are seen as equally expressive and transparent; subjective and unmediated.

Despite its naturalisation as a mode of identification, the privileging of the hand, rather than the camera, as an expression of human interiority has a robust and lengthy history. Influenced by the emergence of psychoanalysis, Surrealist experiments with "autonomist" techniques aimed to give free expression to the unconscious mind, unimpeded by rational intervention. For modernist painters such as Paul Klee and Wassily Kandinsky, the abstract drawings of children, uninhibited by normative aesthetic conventions, served as a source of perceptual renewal in the aftermath of the First World War.[75] While a complete overview of the discursive meaning of drawing is beyond the scope of this chapter, these examples clarify the ways in which the medium is inextricably bound up with notions of immediacy and subjectivity. By capitalising on these coded meanings, McCune's drawings and writings appear to communicate a hidden or unacknowledged interiority, testifying to the dormant subjectivity of the incarcerated. However, far from directly manifesting the suffering of the oppressed

[75] For an introduction to the role of drawing in surfacing the unconscious, see: David Lomas, "Becoming Machine: Surrealist Automatism and Some Contemporary Instances: Involuntary Drawing," in Tate Papers, no.18, Autumn 2012, https://www.tate.org.uk/research/publications/tate-papers/18/becoming-machine-surrealist-automatism-and-some-contemporary-instances, accessed 24 September 2020.

or surfacing a substrate of repressed humanity, these tactics firmly reinscribe the normative ways in which interiority is mediated and rendered legible. These reinscriptions offer a critical window onto the mediated conditions and rhetorical codes through which viewers can be "brought close" to captive subjects.

In examining the contradictions that afflict Lyon's humanistic approach, my aim is not to critique Lyon's personal politics or to highlight the invariable insufficiency of representation as a mode of redress. Rather, the goal is to critically interrogate how representations of the human, and the terms of innocence, individuality, and agency upon which they rely, work on and through coded meanings. When historicised, these codes are revealed as implicated in and and dialectically enmeshed with the construction of the criminal type. In fact, Lyon's humanistic model of representation chimes with coeval attempts to reform the prison system—ones that aimed to make the experience of captivity more humane. Especially in the American South, the involvement of federal courts in prisoners' rights litigation meant that prisons were legally obliged to transform themselves: states began gradually updating carceral facilities and promoting rehabilitative services, such as educational and work training programs, housing placement assistance, and psychological care. The rationalisation of the prison system illustrates how, rather than serve as an antidote to the deindividuation of incarceration, the extension of humanity to the incarcerated can serve to further justify confinement. However, as I will show, *Conversations with the Dead* suggests that this model of representation alone is insufficient to grasp the dynamics of the American prison system. By drawing on an existing visual repertoire of agricultural labour, the photobook constructs another way of seeing the prison—one that, through its repetition of Thirties documentary, historicises the institution as a mode of racial control.

The Resurgent Thirties

In 1967, just before Lyon travelled to East Texas to begin making *Conversations with the Dead*, the photographer made a pilgrimage to the boyhood home of American writer James Agee. Perhaps best known for his 1941 photo-textual collaboration with Walker Evans *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*, Agee grew up in Knoxville, Tennessee in the first few decades of the twentieth-century. Upon arriving in Agee's hometown, however, Lyon discovered that, just like the decaying buildings he had photographed in Lower Manhattan earlier that year, Agee's home had been razed to make way for an anodyne apartment complex. Despite the lack of any material evidence that might signify the location's deeper meaning, Lyon persisted, constructing the symbolic resonance of James Agee and Walker Evans with a pair of sandy-haired boys. After stumbling across the two teenagers as they were attempting to jumpstart their 1953 Ford convertible—an icon of the, by then, stalling post-war American boom—Lyon took several photos of the duo to evoke the missing Agee and Evans. His photographic journey, therefore, remakes the Thirties twice over, first through Lyon's pilgrimage to Tennessee and then his reproduction of his absent idols. Two decades later in 1989, Lyon added a mournful inscription to a reprint of the photograph (fig 1.14), explaining that the two boys are meant to stand in for the duo: "For Walker Evans and James Agee," the text reads, "two gallant men, together in life, now united immortal in death."[76]

And yet, while Lyon may have personally longed for the 1930s and the robust public culture of documentary with which it is often associated, *Conversations with the Dead* cannot be reduced to a project of recovery in which the prison is mined for the more authentic, agrarian past that had been constructed by the FSA. While *Conversations with the Dead* was realised during what David Harvey has described as the "arrival of postmodernity," the book unsettles the reflexive reduction of stylistic appropriation to a

[76] For an detailed description of Lyon's 1967 trip to Tennessee, see: Alexander Nemerov's essay "Crushing and Personal Images: Danny Lyon in Knoxville, 1967," in *Danny Lyon: Message to the Future* ed. Elizabeth Sussman (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), 43-53.

symptom of late-capitalist ennui.[77] Lyon's reinvigoration of an existing model of documentary is neither an act of postmodern pastiche, in which historical strategies are appropriated in order to comment on the limits of representation, nor a nostalgic attempt to locate the perceived purity of Depression-era rural life amidst the hermetically-sealed space-time of the prison.[78] Rather, by figuring the modern prison within a long history of photography, *Conversations with the Dead* writes an alternative history of "the Thirties"—one that critically interrogates how, at the same juncture, the FSA file was being put to use in order to fossilise the Great Depression into a national, collective past. What is at stake in these two tales of the Thirties, Lyon suggests, is not only the ongoing relevance of documentary and its politics amidst the retreat of liberal institutions from the management of public life, but also the legibility and temporality of the Great Depression and, through it, the antebellum period, within the 1960s and after.

Lyon's interest in the documentary vernacular of the 1930s was hardly unique; rather, it reflected a broader, resurgent interest in the FSA archive alongside the recirculation of the file within the public, visual landscape of the 1960s and 1970s. Throughout these decades, relatively unknown photographs from the FSA file were transformed into "iconic" images—ones that have come to stand in for the experience of the Great Depression as a whole.[79] Dorothea Lange's images of destitute migrant workers and Carl Mydan's photographs of degraded southern landscapes, for instance, helped to construct a public archive of 1930s life that bore little resemblance to the patterns of labour and leisure that had emerged decades later during the post-war economic boom. The "Thirties" was not simply a decade with a concrete beginning and end, but rather a vague temporal idea that was produced and reproduced photographically. While Lyon's photographs of Texas prison farms suggest that, particularly for black Americans who remained disproportionately un- and under-employed, the "Thirties" never really ended,

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[77] David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1989).

[78] Fredric Jameson, "Postmodernism and Consumer Society," in *Postmodern Culture* ed. Hal Foster (London: Pluto Press, 1985); "Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism," *New Left Review 146* (July 1984).

[79] Recently, scholars have revisited the photographic icons of the Thirties and, in particular, Dorothea Lange's "Migrant Mother." See: Sarah Hermanson Meister, *Dorothea Lange: Migrant Mother* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2021); Sally Stein, *Migrant Mother, Migrant Gender* (London : MACK Books, 2021).

the widespread circulation FSA photography throughout the 1960s was used to widened the gulf between past and present. The 1930s were an era from which to draw lessons to confront a new moment of national crisis. These linear histories—ones in which photography was often instrumentalised—served to bolster the foundational claim of American progress: that there is a rupture between then and now.[80]

Mainstream fine art institutions were major vehicles through which the FSA file was reintroduced to the public as a humanist portrait of national overcoming. The hugely popular 1962 exhibition "The Bitter Years" at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, for instance, was overseen by Edward Steichen, the Director Emeritus of the Department of Photography at the Museum of Modern Art. It marked the final show before his retirement (fig 1.15).[81] Featuring 208 photographs from the FSA archive, The Bitter Years categorised the images into fifteen thematic clusters, such as "Erosion," "Jobless," and "Sharecropping." Manual agrarian labour was undoubtably a focal point of the show. In fact, two walls of the exhibition, totalling fourteen photographs, were devoted exclusively to images of cotton cultivation in the southern states (fig 1.16). Pictures by Marion Post Walcott, Dorothea Lange, and Jack Delano, among others documented the way in which cotton conditioned and regimented life for mainly black and poor southerners during the Great Depression. The compression of these disparate photographs onto a single gallery wall served to highlight the continual repetition of bodies and forms that, bent towards the earth like Lyon's incarcerated subjects, calcified stoop labour an abstract symbol of the "Thirties." This figural form could not seem more distant from the modes of work and consumption that characterised life in post-war New York City.

So although this kind of manual labour remained a central part of the southern prison farm during the 1960s and after, the visual register of agricultural work became steadily fossilised into an

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[80] Saidiya Hartmann, "The Time of Slavery," *South Atlantic Quarterly Vol 101 No 4* (Fall 2002), 757-777.

[81] For an overview of the exhibition and its origins, as well as for information about its recent reinstallation in a disused Luxembourg water tower, see: Francoise Poos, ed. *The Bitter Years: The Farm Security Administration Photographs through the Eyes of Edward Steichen* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2012).

artefact from another time: cotton picking simply could not be seen or thought alongside the upheaval of the 1960s. In the accompanying exhibition catalogue, Steichen illustrates the way in which the museum mediated the Thirties as a collective past, neatly transfiguring the era into a repository of moral fables from a bygone time: "I believe it is good at this time to be reminded of those 'Bitter Years' and to bring them into the consciousness of a new generation which has problems of its own, but is largely unaware of the endurance and fortitude that made the emergence from the Great Depression one of America's victorious hours."[82] Unlike Lyon, who frames the 1930s as an ongoing social reality, Steichen constructs the 1930s as a remote era replete with lessons for a new age. In this way, Steichen performs what Michel Foucault identified in his 1986 essay "Of Other Spaces" as the primary temporal function of the museum. "Museums" Foucault wrote, "have become heterotopias in which time never stops building up and topping its own summit...the project of organizing in this way a sort of perpetual and indefinite accumulation of time in an immobile place, this whole idea belongs to our modernity."[83] If the space of the museum serves to lend coherence to an inverted reflection, then the production of the photographic register of the past by the museum was invariably bound up with the construction of a present—one that marched irretrievably forward outside of the institution's walls.

Beyond the assimilation of the FSA file into the fine art museum, just as significant was the 1960 republication of James Agee and Walker Evans' *Let us Now Praise Famous Men*.[84] The book found an eager audience in idealistic young whites from the North who, like Lyon, were negotiating their place and purpose in the early stages of the civil rights movement.[85] The book and, in particular, Agee's self-reflexive text spoke to the power asymmetries and ethical quagmires with which they were immediately confronted. While *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* was reprinted in paperback four times between 1966 and

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[82] Edward Steichen, *The Bitter Years: 1935-1941: Rural America as Seen by the Photographers of the Farm Security Administration*, (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1962).

[83] Michel Foucault and Jay Miskowiec, "Of Other Spaces," *Diacritics* Vol 16 No 1 (Spring 1986), 26.

[84] James Agee and Walker Evans, *Let us Now Praise Famous Men* 2nd Ed(Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1941 [1960].

[85] Jeanne Follansbee Quinn, "The Work of Art: Irony and Identification in 'Let Us Now Praise Famous Men,'" *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction* Vol 34 No 3 (Summer 2001), 338-368.

1973, William Stott cemented Walker Evans as the premier chronicler of the 1930s in his seminal 1973 book *Documentary Expression and Thirties America.* For Stott, Evans was unparalleled in his contribution to public perception of the Great Depression. "Evans always had admirers" Stott explained, "but until 1960, his reputation was limited, esoteric...[*Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*] has introduced Evans' photographs to a new generation and trained them to see the thirties, and America, through his eyes."[86] Even though Evans was still working as the Special Photographic Editor at *Fortune Magazine* well into the 1960s, at a post that was especially designed for him in 1948, it was his black-and-white images from the 1930s that served not only to fix his status within the history of documentary, but also, at the same time, to inextricably anchor his work to a receding past.[87]

Conversations with the Dead, I will show, produces a history in direct contradistinction with these official narratives of "the Thirties." Rather than displace agricultural work onto the past, Lyon harnesses the conventions of Depression-era documentary in order to actively struggle with the ongoing reality and resonant meaning of the sharecropping farm and, through it, the plantation in 1960s and 1970s American life. By reproducing a documentary model that was forged during the Great Depression, Lyon frames the modern prison through the past, strategically highlighting the repetitions and recursions that underpin narratives of progressive change. However, Lyon's photobook does not simply inherit the formal language or visual conventions of Depression-era photography. *Conversations with the Dead* also extends an argument over the temporality of enslavement that was, in the 1930s and 40s, being put forth by and through the use of photographic books. In the following section, I will make a detour through the Thirties, exploring the ways in which the FSA file was put to work in order to produce a photographic vernacular of the antebellum plantation decades after emancipation. By developing a close reading of Edwin Rosskam and Richard Wright's 1941 *12 Million Black Voices*, I will bring into focus the displacements that characterise the photographic archive of slavery—ones that originate in the 1930s

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[86] William Stott, *Documentary Expression and Thirties America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), 284.

[87] Stephanie Schwartz, "Late Work: Walker Evans and Fortune," *Oxford Art Journal* Vol 38 No 1 (March 2015), 117-148.

and are taken up by Lyon in the 1960s. These deferrals, I argue, challenge the dominant framing of slavery as a question over how the nation's past is best remembered; instead, they query the time of slavery and the finality of its supposed "end."

The Plantation Displaced

Just as, in the 1960s, there was a struggle over the ongoing temporality of the Great Depression, so too, in the 1930s, was there a debate over the resonant meaning of the antebellum period within a new period of social and economic upheaval. These recurring conflicts foreground the disjunctures that animate the photographic archive of the "Old" South, highlighting the repetitions that constitute the long aftermath of slavery and its visual register. As Krista Thompson has noted in her work on slavery and memory in the British West Indies, although photographic technologies developed in lock step with the twilight of chattel slavery, the photographic record of plantation labour is remarkably thin. Instead, historical accounts of slavery are often replete with photographs of labouring black bodies that, although they were taken decades after emancipation, have come to stand in for and to signify the image of the slave.[88] These temporal displacements, Thompson argues, "might precisely visualize the continuities between the period of slavery and post-emancipation, the ghostly and all too real reappearance of forms of unfreedom past."[89] The photographic register of slavery in the American context is characterised by a similar contradiction: photographs of black sharecroppers, especially those taken during the Great Depression, have come to construct the photographic vernacular of the antebellum plantation—a visual register to which Lyon then refers in his photographs of the 1960s prison farm. This continual displacement of the enslaved body throughout the history of photography suggests that, if these images of the plantation are always "late," then they can never really be past.

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[88] Krista Thompson, "The Evidence of Things Not Photographed: Slavery and Historical Memory in the British West Indies," *Representations* Vol 113 No 1 (February 2011), 39-71.

[89] Ibid., 40.

Although the aftermath of clashes between Union and Confederate soldiers were famously captured through the use of early photographic technologies, the antebellum plantation is overwhelmingly represented in paintings or engravings, that, borne out of a tradition of British landscape art, are highly romanticised representations of a regional aristocracy.[90] Rather than idealise the forced, manual labour that undergirded the plantation, these paintings erase any evidence of slave labour, eliding the work and brutality upon which the flourishing of the southern aristocracy was predicated. Instead, these artworks focus on the region's lavish homes and verdant estates, celebrating plantation owners' supremacy over the world of both men and nature. By expunging any evidence of the manual work that buttressed the plantation economy, these "documents of denial," as John Michael Vlach has argued, legitimise the supremacy of the planter class, obscuring the forced labour and ecological devastation upon which their economic domination depended.[91] These visual representations of the southern plantation not only wed white supremacy to property ownership, but also naturalised the seemingly endless fecundity of the landscape, recasting the productive potential of the South as an intrinsic byproduct of its edenic ecology, as opposed to the calculated outcome of extraction and exploitation.

But although, during the antebellum period, slavery was erased from the visual record of plantation life, decades later, questions over how best to assimilate the institution of chattel slavery into popular American memory dramatically crescendoed. Beginning in the 1920s and 1930s, against the backdrop of increasing ecological degradation and the looming threat of industrialisation, apologist narratives of the Lost Cause gained traction. As the viability of the agrarian economy was thrown into question, many southerners expressed a deep longing for a more pastoral way of life and, in doing so, disfigured slavery into a benevolent institution of kindly masters and grateful slaves. In their 1930

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[90] On the role of the plantation in American visual culture, see: Angela D. Mack and Stephen G. Hofius, *Landscapes of Slavery: The Plantation in American Art* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2008)

[91] John Michael Vlach, *The Planter's Prospect: Privilege and Slavery in Plantation Paintings* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002).

"Southern Manifesto," for instance, the Southern Agrarians rigorously defended their region's agricultural economy, expressing scorn for the alienation and exploitation that undergirded industrial capitalism.[92] In insisting upon the authenticity of the South's agrarian past, these men peddled a nostalgic vision of the region, arguing for a return to the romanticised Old South and the plantation economy upon which it depended. For these writers and thinkers, the Civil War-era antagonism between North and South could not be disimbricated from the more pressing opposition between urban and rural, industry and agriculture—a conflict that no longer neatly mapped onto historical, regional divides. In expressing a longing for the antebellum plantation, the Southern Agrarians drew what Steven Knepper has called a "pastoral veil" over the countryside, obscuring both the exploitative reality of the agrarian economy and its inextricability from the burgeoning industrial modernity they scorned.[93] As regional divides became more opaque, the Southern Agrarians rewrote the history of the antebellum era into a tale of unity and cohesion, erasing the racial and class antagonisms that had always been a part of the region's past and continued to define its present.

Perhaps the most well-known, wildly idealised account of the Old South was popularised by Margaret Mitchell's story *Gone with the Wind*. Published as a bestselling novel in 1936 and adapted into a major motion picture in 1939, the tale has profoundly shaped the way in which the period has been enshrined in the collective American consciousness.[94] An epic historical romance, *Gone with the Wind* chronicles one southern heroine's struggle to survive the upheaval of the Civil War and to adapt to the new social and economic order of the postbellum era. At the beginning of the film, the plantation is depicted as an idyllic and simple place, governed by the civilised laws of the southern aristocracy and isolated from the changing tides of industrial life (fig 1.17). While the slaves are loyal and naïve, the

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[92] Twelve Southerners, *I'll Take My Stand: The South and the Agrarian Tradition* (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 2006 [1930]). For more on the Southern Agrarians, see: Paul Murphy, *The Rebuke of History: The Southern Agrarians and American Conservative Thought* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001).

[93] Steven Knepper, "Seeing the Countryside: Behind the Pastoral and Progressive Veils," *Telos 162* (Spring 2013), 131-149.

[94] Margaret Mitchell, *Gone with the Wind* (New York: MacMillan Publishers, 1936); Dir. Victor Fleming, *Gone with the Wind* (1941).

masters are generous and mannered. When conflict with the North threatens the viability of this bucolic, abundant wonderland and the uniquely southern lifestyle it nourishes, the Civil War is reconfigured from a political-economic battle over the future of chattel slavery into a clash between two disparate civilisations and their cultural values. The labour on which southern life is predicated only becomes visible after most of the slaves flee the O'Hara family's plantation during the war, forcing the plantation owners' daughters to toil where their captives once stood. While picking cotton in the dusty fields, the O'Hara sisters complain of their blistered hands and aching backs (fig 1.18). And yet, despite their best efforts, the land refuses to bequeath them its former bounty: the soil becomes dry and brittle, the fruits turn rotten and poisonous. The film discloses what antebellum depictions of the plantation had vigorously denied: the fertility of the plantation had always depended upon the slaves that tilled its soil. However, rather than reckon with the brutal conditions of chattel slavery and their necessity to the supremacy of the planter class, this disclosure is further repressed: the plantation is reframed as a nostalgic emblem of a purer, more authentic way of life.

So although, in the antebellum period, the pastoral image of the southern plantation was constituted by an elision of slave labour from the visual record, in the 1930s, an idealised depiction of the grateful slave became invariably folded into the imagining of a pre-war paradise. The slave no longer betrayed the idyllic fantasy of the antebellum plantation, but rather was a site of anti-modern longing in its own right. In his seminal text *The Dispossessed Garden*, Lewis Simpson similarly identifies this development in the postbellum southern literary tradition, explaining that, while initially there was resistance among writers and thinkers to identify with slavery, Simpson claims that, by the 1930s, "the master-slave relationship is ultimately accepted as the proper symbol of the Southern pastoral."[95] This pastoral impulse habitually assimilates the region's recurring experience of change into a narrative of loss, suggesting that the South had wholly severed the connection to its past alongside the triumph of a harsher, more alienated existence. What is at stake in these representations of the antebellum period,

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[95] Lewis Simpson, *The Dispossessed Garden: Pastoral and History in Southern Literature,* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1975), 39.

therefore, is not simply a debate over the humanity or agency of the enslaved, but rather, a judgement over the temporality of slavery and the legibility of the continuities between pre and post-emancipation life. For these southerners, the plantation was not an extant economic reality or ongoing lived experience, but an extinct, uniquely southern spatial form that had long since been destroyed by the Civil War.

But while the Southern Agrarians and Margaret Mitchell were busy mourning the region's supposedly languishing agricultural economy, photographers like Ben Shahn and Dorothea Lange, on assignment for the Farm Security Administration several years later, began photographing the remarkable resilience of this type of manual work in the rural South, strategically highlighting its racialised dimensions and continuity with the plantation. For these photographers, it was not necessary to engage in a struggle over the survival of the "Old South" or even to participate in a debate over its symbolic place in American cultural memory. These photographers suggest that the South had not lost its connection to a more rural way of life as some had believed, but remained a region defined by exploitative labour practices and environmentally degrading overproduction. Moreover, they observed that former slaves were still alive and struggling to survive in conditions not too dissimilar from those they experienced under slavery. In the summer of 1937, for instance, Dorothea Lange traveled to Greene County, Georgia where she took a series of images that captured the lives and labour of a group of former slaves. She took several photographs of a pair of former slaves, framing their bodies against a rotting plantation house. One photograph, taken from a distance, juxtaposes the couple against the building's decaying façade, constructing a resonance between their fatigued, ageing figures and the crumbling structure (fig 1.19). The photograph powerfully evidences how, despite the imprint and passage of time, the couple remain tethered to the plantation; their lives virtually unchanged since emancipation.

Echoing Lange's interest in documenting the lives of former slaves and the crumbling architecture of antebellum manor houses, the Works Progress Administration sent unemployed writers

to collect interviews with ex-slaves across over a dozen southern states. The project was executed between 1936 and 1938, culminating in over two thousand first-hand accounts of antebellum life and labour. Supported by John Lomax, father of folklorist Alan Lomax and the National Advisor on Folklore and Folkways, the endeavour coalesced into seventeen volumes of interviews that bore the title *Slave Narratives: A Folk History of Slavery in the United States from Interviews with Former Slaves.*[96] Despite the collection's numerous and well-documented limitations in faithfully transmitting the experience of enslavement and freedom, the project nevertheless engendered a contradictory sense that, although the opportunities to capture first-hand accounts of slavery were quickly fading, not much had changed in the decades since emancipation. In fact, historians like Stephanie Shaw contend that these interviews, punctuated with memory lapses and mired in an inexorable power imbalances between white interviewers and black respondents, reveal just as much about lives of black, poor Americans in the 1930s as they do about the antebellum era.[97] When asked whether or not he preferred slavery or freedom, for instance, Mississippi resident Henri Necaise answered: "It ain't none o' my business 'bout whether the Niggers is better off free than slaves. I don't know 'cept 'bout me, I was better off then."[98] This longing for the security of enslavement suggests that life in the Great Depression offered little in the way of material improvement. As historian Charles Joyner has written, these "aged and penniless" ex-slaves likely "looked back too fondly upon a time when it was the master's responsibility to provide for those too old to work."[99] These slippages between pre and post-emancipation point to the invariable entanglements between life in the antebellum period and after, refuting the widely accepted idea that emancipation constituted a clean break with modes of racial subjection.

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[96] For more on these volumes, see: Spencer R. Crew, Lonnie G. Bunch III, and Clement A. Price, *Memories of the Enslaved: Voices from the Slave Narratives* (Santa Barbara: Praeger, 2015).

[97] Stephanie J. Shaw, "Using the WPA Ex-Slave Narratives to Study the Impact of the Great Depression," *The Journal of Southern History* Vol 69 No 3 (August 2003).

[98] Henri Necaise, interview in *Slave Narratives: A Folk History of Slavery in the United States from Interviews with Former Slaves (Mississippi Narratives VII*), (Library of Congress: Washington, D.C., 1941), 124.

[99] Charles Joyner, *Down by the Riverside: A South Carolina Slave Community* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1984), xv.

Official narratives of emancipation were also fiercely contested in the era's many photobooks, which often made use of photographs from the FSA file to weave compelling narratives of Depression-era American life. Richard Wright and Edwin Rosskam's 1941 *12 Million Black Voic*es: *A Folk History of the Negro in America* deserves an especially extended analysis—the photobook employs photographs from the FSA archive to complicate official histories of the linear, progressive movement from slavery to freedom (fig 1.20).[100] Instead, the book recasts the history of slavery as anachronistic and nonlinear, instead clarifying the overlaps between rural and urban, pre and post-emancipation life. Like many other photobooks that were published at the time, *12 Million Black Voices* harnessed photographs from the FSA file to produce and disseminate public knowledge of the Great Depression. However, the book also strove to counterbalance the Historical Section's overemphasis on the rural South. In order to create a more richly textured portrait of black American life, *12 Million Black Voices* mobilised photographs from an additional shooting assignment—one that was commissioned specifically for the project. Russell Lee's photographs of Chicago's lively streets and decaying kitchenettes not only add to the depth and breadth of the project, but also set the work apart from other, contemporaneous works that often overlooked the dynamics and specificities of black urban life. By combining Wright's prose, narrated in the first-person plural, with a heterogeneous collection of black-and-white photographs, *12 Million Black Voices* weaves a story that, while it gradually moves from the shores of the African content to the inner cities of the northern states, is marked by the slippages and continuities that punctuate the long history of slavery.

The photobook employs an ostensibly progressive, linear structure. Divided into four discrete chapters, "Our Strange Birth," "Inheritors of Slavery," "Death on the City Pavements," and "Men in the Making," *12 Million Black Voices* has often been understood as a faithful reproduction of a crude Marxist teleology, narrating the steady incorporation of black Americans into the formal labour market. These readings rely heavily on Wright's personal politics to evidence their claims, reducing the work to an uncomplicated expression of his early communist leanings and obscuring the photobook's collaborative

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[100] Richard Wright and Edwin Rosskam, *12 Million Black Voices: A Folk History of the Negro in America* (New York: Viking Press, 1941).

elements.[101] Even Wright himself, during a 1941 radio interview, simplified the photobook into "an outline for a series of historical novels telescoping Negro history in terms of the urbanization of a feudal folk."[102] But although the broad architecture of the photobook might bend towards linearity, suggesting the gradual, uncomplicated proletarianisation of a formerly enslaved people, *12 Million Black Voices* is punctuated by the anachronisms and disjunctures that animate lives lived in the aftermath of chattel slavery. By attending to the convergences and contradictions that afflict stories of progressive change, *12 Millions Black Voices* brings into view the ways in which, even during the Great Depression and after, the plantation was being reborn as the sharecropping farm and reinscribed within enclaves of urban poverty.

These temporal conflicts are immediately apparent in the first chapter of *12 Million Black Voices*. Entitled "Our Strange Birth," the chapter may appear devoted to the historical beginnings of chattel slavery, but it also hints at the much wider spatial and temporal connotations of black Americans' "Great Migration" (fig 1.21).[103] Decidedly in past tense, the book narrates the abduction of men and women from the African continent:

> The lean, tall blond men of England, Holland, and Denmark, the dark, short, nervous men of France, Spain, and Portugal, men whose blue and gray and brown eyes glinted with the light of the future, denied our human personalities, tore us from our native soil, weighted our legs with chains, stacked us like cord-wood in the four holes of clipper ships, dragged us across thousands of miles of ocean, and hurled us into another land, strange and hostile, were for a second time we felt the slow, painful process of a new birth amid conditions harsh and raw.[104]

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[101] The literature on Richard Wright and Edwin Rosskam's *12 Million Black Voices* is overwhelmingly critical of its so-called "homogenisation" of black American life and skeptical of its Marxist undertones, despite the fact that, by the time it was published, Wright had already left and become highly critical of the Communist Party. See, for instance: Jeff Allred, "From Eye to We: Richard Wright's *12 Million Black Voices,* Documentary, and Pedagogy," *American Literature* Vol 78 No 3 (2006), 549-584; Mehdi Ghasemi, "An Equation of Collectivity: We + You in Richard Wright's *12 Million Black Voices*," *Mosaic: A Journal for the Comparative Study of Literature Vol 51 No 1* (March 2018), 71-86; Nicholas Natanson, *The Black Image in the New Deal: The Politics of FSA Photography* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1992).

[102] "Readers and Writers," Richard Wright interview with Edwin Seaver, 1941 in Kenneth Kinnamon and Michel Fabre, *Conversations with Richard Wright* (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 1993), 43-44.

[103] While he does not address *12 Million Black Voices* too extensively, Paul Gilroy has written about Richard Wright and the way in which his transnational idea of the "Black Atlantic" figures in Wright's later work. See: Chapter Five: "'Without the Consolation of Tears": Richard Wright, France, and the Ambivalence of Community, in Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (London: Verso, 1993), 146-186.

[104] Wright and Rosskam, *12 Million Black Voices,* 12.

But although this repetitive cadence emphasises these events' pastness, the prose is interspersed with photographs from the FSA file that, situated within the text without any captions or dates, seem to illustrate the broader narrative. A slightly different version of Ben Shahn's photograph of Arkansas cotton pickers, for instance, is featured in the centre of one page, neatly sandwiched between two blocks of text (fig 1.22). In this particular iteration of the image, the horizon line is excluded from the frame, foregrounding the stooped, labouring bodies of the black sharecroppers who stand in for enslaved subjects. Directly beneath the photograph, the text reads: "So our bent backs continued to give design to the fertile plantations. Stately governmental structures and vast palatial homes were reared by our black hands to reflect the genteel glory of a new age."[105] While the photobook's text may narrate the lived experience of antebellum slaves and describe their material conditions before the Civil War, the accompanying photograph, one that seems to illustrate these vivid descriptions of chattel slavery, was taken decades after emancipation. This juxtaposition of plantation and farm produces a temporal dissonance that not only attests to the slippage between slavery and sharecropping, but also exemplifies the continual displacement at work in the photographic archive of slavery. Danny Lyon's many photographs of prison labourers, taken four decades after *12 Million Black Voices* was published and over a century after the Civil War, could similarly be selected to illustrate this text. This suggests that these images' documentary function rests not in their capacity to index a particular spatial and temporal coordinates, but rather in their ability to reframe slavery as an ongoing social relation, as opposed to an historical event.

These fractious temporalities grow even more overt in the second chapter, piercing through the photobook's narrative material. In this chapter, termed "Inheritors of Slavery," the text overtly addresses how, for black Americans, historical experience is nonlinear and recursive. The pages highlight the plight of rural sharecroppers, rendering in vivid detail the lived reality of, as the book explains, the "one-half of

[105] Ibid., 24.

us black folk" who remain "tillers of the soil."[106] Rather than frame sharecropping as an inevitable, progressive step en route to more industrialised mode of production, the photobook insists upon the enduring contemporaneity of agricultural work that, despite the diffusion of black Americans into industrial cities, continues to structure and foreclose black life. The text oscillates between past and present tense, emphasising the centrality of cotton to overdetermining rural black Americans' past, present, and future. The prose emphasises this blank, homogenous time, recasting emancipation as, following Saidiya Hartmann, "the absence of a consummate breach through which freedom might unambivalently announce itself."[107] The book explains: "So our years pass within the web of a system we cannot beat…these are the years that do with us what they will, that form our past, shape our present, and loom ahead as the outline of our future." For black sharecroppers working in the rural South, time was not something over which they maintained agency, but rather an omniscient, disempowering tool of their subjection.

Although *12 Million Black Voices* is certainly preoccupied with the painstaking toil that underpins the southern agrarian economy, several pages are devoted to poetic descriptions of the region's natural landscape, describing its seasonal patterns and rich agricultural potential. 'The land we till is beautiful' the text describes, "Our southern springs are filled with quiet noises and scenes of growth. Apple buds laugh into blossom. Honeysuckles creep up the sides of houses...In summer the magnolia trees fill the countryside with sweet scene for long miles. Days are slumberous, and the skies are high and thronged with clouds that ride fast."[108] Here, the land is not passively cultivated through human intervention; rather, it is an active agent in its own right, taking on a nearly anthropomorphic quality. These lyrical expositions are juxtaposed against a photograph taken by Marion Post Walcott in rural Georgia (fig 1.23). The picture frames a man centrally in the image who leads a horse and plow along rows of cotton

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[106] Ibid., 31.

[107] Saidiya Hartmann, *Scenes of Subjection*, 12.

[108] Wright and Rosskam, *12 Million Black Voices*, 32.

plants. The composition is symmetrical and balanced, suffusing the photograph with a sense of quiet stillness that is enhanced by the halcyon sky. When divorced from the broader work and, more specifically, its critical stance on the ongoing plundering of black Americans' land and labour, these pages affirm, rather than challenge the romantic mythologies of southern life that were being popularised by writers and thinkers in the 1930s.

In the next few pages, however, these pastoral tropes are quickly subverted, insisting that the agrarian South remains a site of physical and psychic violence for black sharecroppers. For although seasonal changes may make legible the passage of time, the book contends that, for black workers, the repetition and monotony of manual labour renders linear time recursive and homogenous. "But whether in spring or summer or autumn or winter, time slips past us remorselessly, and it is hard to tell of the iron that lies beneath the surface of our quiet, dull days."[109] So while the book may toy with the idyllic mystique that surrounds the South's rural landscape, this regional allure is immediately undermined at every turn. *12 Million Black Voices* demonstrates the ways in which text can be harnessed to ground images and their slippery meanings: the labour Walcott captures is not an escape from the more insidious, industrial economy of the urban North, but it is, like the plantation model it extends, a modern system of economic production in its own right. The text suggests that, although this rural work may appear out of place in time, as if it lags behind the more modern, industrial models of labour that characterised black life in northern cities, this perceptual anachronism is a product of representation. It is, in other words, a result of how the rural South has been mediated and romanticised in popular culture. The book actively confronts these mythologized depictions of black life and labour:

> To paint the picture of how we live...is to compare with mighty artists: the movies, the radio, the newspapers, the magazines, and even the church. They have painted one picture: charming, idyllic, romantic; but we live in another: full of the fear of the Lords of the Land, bowing and grinning when we meet white faces, toiling from sun to sun, living in unpainted wooden shacks that sit casually and insecurely upon the red clay.[110]

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[109] Ibid., 34.

[110] Ibid., 35.

The prose suggests that visual representation is the very ground upon which the battle to think and to see racial domination in all its guises is waged. In this way, *12 Million Black Voices* strives to produce an alternative story of the black American experience, rewriting a tale of the Great Migration that accounts not only for the vast journey from the shores of the African continent to the urban North, but also for the blurred boundary between slavery and freedom. This emphasis on the continued relevance of cotton in structuring black sharecroppers' experience of time and temporality suggests that the plantation remains an extant reality—one that continues to circumscribe and render contingent black life. This is best exemplified by a series of six photographs that, featured on individual pages and paired with extracts from the text, insist upon the way in which cotton continues to dominate the literal and figurative horizons of black life (fig 1.24). The photographs, taken by Dorothea Lange, Ben Shahn, Arthur Rothstein, and Walker Evans are juxtaposed with captions that read: "Our lives are walled with cotton / We plow and plant cotton / We chop cotton / We pick cotton / When Queen Cotton dies...how many of us will die with her?" Wright's clipped language, coupled with the repetitive formal arrangement of image and text on each page, bears a striking resemblance to the composition of Danny Lyon's *Conversations with the Dead*. For Wright and Rosskam, cotton is not just bound up with the past and present, but is, particularly as a commodity that is bought and sold on the free market, designed to constrain future possibilities. Cotton, the photobook contends, forces workers to labour "always toward a dark, mercurial goal."[111]

So although, in the antebellum period, the enslaved, labouring figure was suppressed from the visual landscape, by the 1930s, it had reemerged as a site of intense contestation and debate four decades after emancipation. While for some, the plantation was an extinct social form that no longer contained any continuities with the South's rapidly industrialising economy, for photographers from the Farm Security Administration, as well as for Richard Wright and Edwin Rosskam, the burdens of slavery

[111] Ibid., 49.

remained profound, especially for the many sharecroppers who continued to pick cotton by hand across the southern states. These photographers suggest that, in order to understand the material deprivation and existential despair of Depression-era life, the period had to be seen and thought by way of the antebellum plantation. For those who wished to complicate the linear movement from Old to New South, the slave remained a crucial strategic symbol—one that, especially in its perceptual anachronism, could be mobilised to upend the displacement of the plantation onto a distant past. If, in the 1930s, the agrarian South was already made to appear out of time, as if it operated at an enormous temporal remove from everyday life in the urban North, then this is only because of how the plantation had been represented in the popular American imaginary. As Wright and Rosskam's alternative history of the Great Depression clearly demonstrates, the recurring antagonism between Old and New Souths that undergirded popular regional narratives served to obscure, rather than to clarify the striking continuities between slavery and freedom.

Repetitions and Refrains

Published in 1971, precisely three decades after Edwin Rosskam and Richard Wright's *12 Million Black Voices*, *Conversations with the Dead* extends their conclusion that, far from entombed within a national past, slavery was an ongoing, extant feature of American life. *Conversations with the Dead*, however, makes this argument from within the civil rights era, during an historical moment conventionally understood as a period of profound upheaval and permanent transformation in the American racial order. If, in the antebellum period, the plantation was pictured as entirely absent of the unending labour and gratuitous punishment upon which it depended, then, over a century later, Lyon places these relations at the very centre of the visual record of the carceral state and its methods of punishment. From the position of the 1960s and after, *Conversations with the Dead* places vividly on display what the actual archive of antebellum plantation life carefully elided: the forced, manual labour upon which the cultivation of the southern

landscape depends. In this way, *Conversations with the Dead* opens up the disjunctures that characterise the photographic archive of slavery, extending the recursive temporalities that are foregrounded in *12 Million Black Voices*. By reproducing a documentary vernacular of agricultural labour, Lyon not only historicises the prison within slavery's long aftermath, but also evidences how, a century after emancipation, the plantation remained a reality, even as entrenched systems of racial domination were being challenged both within the prison and on the outside.

Unlike Lyon's humanistic portraits of the incarcerated or McCune's expressive drawings, which are often juxtaposed on the page with other, competing documents, Lyon's black-and-white photographs of agrarian work stand alone. Each time the reader encounters this type of photograph, the formal elements of the page spread remain the same. On the left-hand side, a blank page is stamped with a short caption, such as "prisoner and boss" or "hoe squad," which confers minimal, general context on the photographed scene. Specific prisoners' names are absent. On the right-hand side of the spread, each photograph is enlarged to generously fill the page. Photographs are framed with the black outline of the photographic enlarger, indicating that the image has been left uncropped.[112] The reuse of this layout throws into relief these photographs as a coherent collection or genre of prison photographs in their own right—one that sits both apart from and within the broader photobook. These photographs work through repetition: just as the formal page layout repeats, so too does the content and composition of the photographs themselves. Photographs are replete with prisoners hoeing fields, picking cotton, enduring strip searches, and cutting timber. These repetitions reveal the unceasing choreography through which the prison farm enacts and reenacts its punitive methods. *Conversations with the Dead* shows us that punishment is not a singular event, but rather a process that must be sustained over time.

One visual motif that recurs throughout Lyon's photographs is the juxtaposition of incarcerated workers and the prison guards who surveil them. Emphatically reminiscent of representations of slaves

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[112] Lyon's insistence on leaving the black outline of the photographic enlarger is likely a nod to Henri Cartier-Bresson, who believed that the line evidenced the unity between the photographer's eye and camera—one that was necessary to producing a "decisive moment." See: Henri Cartier-Bresson, *The Decisive Moment* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1952). For more on Cartier-Bresson, see: Clément Chéroux, *Henri Cartier-Bresson* (Paris: Centre Pompidou, 2013).

and overseers, these photographs offer a corrective to the strategic elisions of the antebellum archive, dramatising the power asymmetry between prisoner and boss through strategic vantage points and camera angles. In one photograph, for instance, Lyon situates the hurried digging of one prison worker alongside the erect figure of a prison boss on horseback (fig 1.25). The camera is situated almost on the surface of the earth and tilted upwards, straining to capture the scene from a low angle. This tilted view gives concrete expression to the imbalance between the prisoner and boss, accentuating the way in which the boss surveils the prisoner who cannot return his look. While the boss is crisply rendered, his stillness easily arrested by the camera's shutter, the prisoner and, in particular, his arms and hands, are watery and blurred, visualising his labouring motions. Rather than naturalise the fecundity of the southern landscape, the photograph foregrounds the physical rigour on which the transformation of the earth is predicated. These juxtapositions between prisoner and guard evidence what the antebellum archive actively suppressed: the relations of domination through which the plantation was constituted. By folding together the visual register of the plantation and prison, *Conversations with the Dead* situates readers in what Christina Sharpe has described as "the wake" of chattel slavery. To be in the wake, Sharpe explains, is to recognise the ways in which the afterlives of enslavement permeate the present.[113]

Many of Lyon's photographs also work on and through the pictorial conventions of landscape, offering a rebuke to antebellum representations of the South and the erasures that constitute them. Taken from a distant vantage point, these photographs often capture dozens of prisoners at work in expansive, agrarian fields. Rather than encourage an affective identification with incarcerated subjects, these photographs at once draw on and subvert the visual forms that have been harnessed to construct the southern landscape as region bereft of antagonism. Many of Lyon's photographs offer dramatic vistas, creating viewpoints that rhyme with what Charmaine Nelson has described as the "touristic gaze"—a position that, employed in the nineteenth-century picturesque, strategically removes the viewer from the landscape and selectively edits out the horrors of plantation life. While, Nelson argues, these

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[113] Christina Sharpe, *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016).

visual articulations of power may have conferred order upon the expansive unruliness of nature, they simultaneously depicted the land as naturally and endlessly productive, belying the processes through which its resources were culled, as well as the limitations of these extractive projects.[114] In contrast, Lyon harnesses the photographic frame to attune viewers to the boundaries and peripheries of carceral spaces. In doing so, these photographs fiercely contest the universalist recasting of landscape as nature, instead revealing how landscape is, in actuality, a product of captivity and control. In one photograph, Lyon frames dozens of faceless prisoners as they hoe the soil in work gangs and are surveilled by multiple prison guards on horseback (fig 1.26). The view, while excised from the details of their labour, is framed through a barbed wire fence, which extends diagonally across the composition and into the background of the image. The photograph thematises the contradiction that was historically elided from visual representations of landscape: it demonstrates how the perceptual expansiveness of the landscape is constituted by the forced enclosure of both nature and people.

Rather than operate through a visual language of immediacy, Lyon's photographs of agrarian work often appear highly stylised and dramatically staged. Characterised by strong, contrasting black-and-white hues and carefully angled compositions, these photographs throw into relief the theatrical nature of this agricultural work, pointing to the way in which this form of punishment, like its antebellum equivalent, is inextricable from its visual display. Although the widespread proliferation of industrial cotton-picking technology in the post-war era made manual work virtually obsolete, the prison farm eschewed these more efficient techniques. This suggests that the institution's use of manual labour serves an additional, punitive function. Lyon's photographs point to this work's symbolic purpose: that is, to discipline incarcerated subjects and to situate them outside of linear time as a method of gratuitous punishment. The prison farm exemplifies Frank Wilderson's characterisation of late-capitalism as "imposing a renaissance of this original desire, the direct relation of force, the despotism of the unwaged

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[114] Charmaine Nelson, *Slavery, Geography, and Empire in Nineteenth-Century Marine Landscapes of Montreal and Jamaica* (London: Routledge Publishing, 2016), 22.

relation. This renaissance of slavery, i.e., the reconfiguration of the prison-industrial complex has, once again, as its structuring metaphor and primary target the Black body."[115] Wilderson helps us to understand that, far from inventing new social relations, the dawn of neoliberalism and, in particular, the processes of deproletarianisation it accelerated, entailed a persistence of historical modes of violence—ones that were required to discipline those populations who have been made superfluous to the formal labour market. By making visible the revivification of the plantation, Lyon demonstrates the way in which the prison farm traffics in visual knowledge, mediating incarcerated men as slaves in order to produce racial subjection.

Lyon illustrates how these performances of coerced subservience are not just required in the fields, but also in the daily rituals of prison life—ones that are strategically choreographed so as to exaggerate the powerlessness of the inmates. Lyon's photographs of "shakedowns," for instance, evidence the processes through which prisoners are made to strip naked and submit to searches by prison guards after a days work. These images suggest that, far from terminating after their return from the fields, the labour of the prisoner is continually necessary in the ritual production of their own subjection. One shakedown photograph, taken inside a prison corridor, frames two contrasting rows of men: on one side, prisoners parade naked in a single file line, holding their clothes and shoes in their hands, while, on the other, a group of prison guards stand, fully clothed in matching uniforms, casually leaning against cell doors and observing the steady march of nude inmates (fig 1.27). The photograph is taken from an unusually high vantage point, rhyming with the top-down view offered by surveillance cameras. Despite its omniscient viewpoint, the photograph does not simply reify the gaze of the institution; instead, the image offers critical commentary on the relations and displays of power through which the prisoner's subjection is constituted. While the camera's angle conceals the prisoner's faces, it brings into view the expressions of the prison guards who, caught in a candid, unposed moment, appear to enjoy the punitive spectacle. Lyon's photograph reveals how incarceration not only entails spatial confinement, but also

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[115] Frank Wilderson III, "Gramsci's Black Marx, Wither the Slave in Civil Society?", 12.

depends upon staged displays of mastery—ones which unsettle the prison's claims to rehabilitate the unacknowledged humanity of its captives.

Conversations with the Dead offers a lesson in repetition. It shows us that, in order to represent structures, repetition is required. By reproducing Thirties documentary, *Conversations with the Dead* supplies a visual language of the prison that exceeds and problematises a humanist approach, particularly its assumptions of presence and immediacy. The form of the photobook allows us to read these conflicting models on and through the page. The photobook's title "Conversations with the Dead" thematises the multiple models of representation that unfold across its pages. If a "conversation" is a reciprocal dialogue that continually unfolds across and gives shape to time, then the word "dead" signifies its opposite. A permanent and solitary state, death is a condition, not unlike enslavement or incarceration, in which the passage of time cannot occur because there is no distinction between past and present, then and now. "Conversations with the Dead" not only figures the project as a collaborative, dialogical form—one that can bridge the gulf that separates the free from the incarcerated—but also hints at the insufficiency of these humanistic models within the context of the prison. Put simply, one cannot converse with the dead. The prison demands more representation, more repetition. By visualising the ongoing aftermath of slavery, *Conversations with the Dead* stages a confrontation with the magnitude of these structures, thereby throwing into relief the insufficiency of humanism as a transparent mechanism for reciprocity. As Saidiya Hartmann argues, "the event of captivity and enslavement engenders the necessity of redress, the inevitability of its failure, and the constancy of repetition yielded by this failure."[116] Both a necessary and necessarily insufficient form of representation, *Conversations with the Dead* allows us to read this paradox both within the book and on the page.

These contradictions are often staged within Lyon's individual photographs. These images at once solicit and thwart identification, mediating both distance and proximity. One particular photograph, entitled "Watering a boss," offers a site through which to examine these tensions. The image frames a

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[116] Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection*, 77.

prisoner raising a metal jug to a guard who, dressed in a khaki uniform and cowboy hat, sits on horseback and sips water from a ladle (fig 1.28). By tightly cropping this moment of coerced subservience, the photograph reveals how, in the context of the prison farm, relations of domination are inextricable from their performance as visual display. Taken from horseback, the photograph draws attention to the difference in height between the two subjects—a difference that, as Bruce Jackson has pointed out in his studies of the prison farm, serves to further enshrine their power asymmetry. The photograph is also a study in contrasting gazes. While the prison guard wears sunglasses, shielding his eyes from the sun and the lens, the prisoner appears to return the camera's look, squinting in the harsh light to meet its gaze. This exchange of looks—one which seems to take place without the knowledge of the prison guard—coheres with received ways of photographically engendering reciprocity and identification. In sharp contrast with the prison guard, whose eyes are obscured, the prisoners' exhausted expression seems open to the camera, suggesting that his interiority is accessible to the viewer. In this way, the photograph offers a perceived moment of rupture in the prisoner's ritual of subjection, creating a fugitive, clandestine exchange that seems to escape the boss' surveillance.

However, while the photograph certainly encourages the viewer's identification with the prisoner, at the same time, the image frustrates the reciprocity of this exchange, constructing distance through its production of anachronism. By allowing the visual registers of the prison and plantation to fold into one another, the photograph creates a slippage between the roles of prisoner and slave, guard and boss, offering critical commentary on the prison and its ritualised processes of subjection. The prisoner, unnamed and anonymous, is arrested in a moment of exaggerated servitude; he is identified only by the action he performs. The photograph thus ushers us away from the specificity of the scene: it is not about one, discrete prisoner; rather, the photograph is about the rehearsal of social relations and their repetitions over time. By situating the prison's choreography of subjection within the long aftermath of slavery, the photograph casts into sharp relief the insufficiency of the very reciprocity it stages. Although, through the exchange of looks, the image brings the viewer close, its anachronism

raises an immediate obstacle to this same closeness. Both closeness and separation, the photograph suggests, must be understood as equally produced through mediation. In this way, "Watering a boss" encapsulates how *Conversations with the Dead* simultaneously encourages identification and sharpens its limitations, producing a paradox that further evidences the ongoing burdens of slavery alongside the civil rights movement and after.

Lyon's 1968 photograph "Hoe squad" (fig 1.29) stages a similar contradiction—one that allows for a critical reflection on the way in which, in the context of the prison farm, performance and punishment overlap, rendering meaning indeterminate. The photograph was taken at the Ramsey Unit: a carceral facility that, like many of the other prison farms in the American South, was constructed on the grounds of a former plantation. It closely frames a group of approximately a dozen incarcerated men, as they walk towards the camera with upright hoes grasped in their hands. The figures appear to openly perform for the photographic moment. While some smile and laugh, others dance in anticipation of the camera's shutter. In sharp contrast with Lyon's more composed photographs of manual labour, which foreground the way in which work transforms individual bodies into fungible units, this image is candid and unposed, foregrounding the figures' expressive features and spontaneous gestures. As a result, the photograph's immediacy is heightened, appearing as if snatched out of a world in motion. Approaching the camera and acknowledging its presence, the subjects' emotions seem transparent and legible, compounding the photograph's sense of spontaneity and authenticity. By wedding the contingency introduced by the camera's shutter to a liminal moment ostensibly outside of their formal labour, the photograph appears to offer a moment of rupture in the daily monotony of prison life—one in which the regulatory structures of incarceration have been briefly suspended.

However, just as "Watering a boss" collapses the distance between viewer and subject only to sharpen the limitations of this identification, so too does "Hoe squad" raise significant questions about the possibility of photographic immediacy in the context of the prison farm. "Hoe squad" also draws on the visual register of the plantation, constructing a view of jubilation amidst captivity that strongly

resonates with what Saidiya Hartman has described as the "simulated jollity and coerced festivity of the slave trade."[117] These simulations of enjoyment, such as the performance of the slave coffle, effaced the horrors of slavery, making it appear, in Hartman's words, "not only that the slave was indifferent to his wretched condition, but also that he had nonetheless achieved a measure of satisfaction with that condition."[118] By drawing on the historical iterations of these spectacles, "Hoe squad" problematises the visual register of presence and immediacy it constructs. These resonances illustrate the impossibility of discerning where the labour of slavery begins and ends, clarifying the ways in which performance and festivity are inextricable from subjection. And so, far from presenting a liminal moment outside of the prison's mechanisms of control, the photograph offers a site through which to examine the indeterminacy of agency, as well as to reflect on the visual codes through which it is mediated as present or transparent.

In contrast with the SNCC's 1964 *The Movement*, which sought to offer an alternative to mainstream narratives of the civil rights movement, *Conversations with the Dead* upends the dominant framing of this period as a moment of transformation and upheaval in the American racial order. The photobook suggests that another story of the civil rights movement can and must be told—one that accounts for the points of convergence between modes of subjection. By correcting the absences and elision of the antebellum visual record from the late 1960s, *Conversations with the Dead* makes visible the imbrications between segregation and integration, slavery and freedom. What is at stake in the mediations produced by popular civil rights photography, *The Movement*, and *Conversations with the Dead* is not the relative accuracy or authenticity of their documentary evidence; rather, it is the contrasting ways in which the history of the 1960s has been written by and through representation. By placing on display the labouring figure who is broadly absent from the antebellum archive, *Conversations with the Dead* offers an alternative story of the civil rights era, figuring this historical juncture not as a clean break with

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[117] Harman, *Scenes of Subjection*, 23.

[118] Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection*, 25.

historical modes of racial domination, but rather as a moment in which enslavement was being reconfigured by and through the carceral state.

Conclusion

This chapter began by setting out the prevailing models through which the civil rights era and the modern prison have been mediated and made legible through representation. Photographs of public protests and civil disobedience, such as those produced by Danny Lyon's for SNCC, have come to stand in for the era as a whole. While SNCC certainly positioned itself in opposition to the mainstream media, producing narratives that upended its characterisation of black protestors as passive victims of police violence, it nevertheless reproduced a visual language of transformative change in order to sustain support for the organisation's cause. The chapter then turned towards the humanistic elements of the photobook, which have come to overdetermine Lyon's own reinterpretation of *Conversations with the Dead*, as well as dominant interpretations of prison photography and its possibilities more generally. Following the work of Allan Sekula, I argued that the book's offer of intimacy, particularly through the use of collaboration, must be understood as a highly attenuated form of mediation in its own right. Far from neatly counterbalance the state-sanctioned documents, such as mug shots and police reports, that serve to legitimate the carceral system, Lyon's portrait photographs and McCune's drawings are equally entangled with the exclusionary category of the human. The purpose of this section is not to create a foil of "bad" images against which a "good" set can be recovered. Rather, it is to attend to the dominant codes through which the prison has been represented, as well as to stake out their foreclosures.

Finally, this chapter focused on the photographs of agricultural labour that comprise a significant portion of *Conversations with the Dead*. I argued that these photographs must be understood as a genre of prison photography in their own right—one that works by and through repetition. By drawing on the photographic language of documentary that was produced during the Great Depression, *Conversations*

with the Dead historicises the prison as an institution of racial domination, producing an alternative story of the civil rights movement that travels through the antebellum plantation, by way of the sharecropping farm. In this way, *Conversations with the Dead* queries the temporality of slavery and, in doings so, unsettles the legitimacy of contemporaneous efforts to reform the prison system in the American South—ones that, while they strove to make incarceration more efficient, rational, and humane, ultimately contributed to the unprecedented ballooning of the prison system alongside the emergence of the neoliberal order. I also turned to Richard Wright and Edwin Rosskam's 1941 *12 Million Black Voices* in an attempt to trace the displacements that characterise the unruly photographic archive of slavery. This chapter has therefore endeavoured to implicate official histories of photography in the obfuscation of slavery's wake and, in response, to sketch an alternative narrative that attends more adequately to its afterlives. The arguments of this chapter, therefore, are central to the claim of this dissertation as a whole, which is that, in order to grapple with the points of convergence between the pre and post civil rights era, carceral institutions must be relocated from the margins to the centre of our histories of photography.

Chapter Two

Kodachrome Plantation: Bruce Jackson's Colour Prison Photography

In his untitled 1978 photograph, taken at a prison farm in East Texas, Bruce Jackson frames a rural, agrarian landscape from a distant vantage point (fig 2.1). The image is bifurcated by a small stream. On one side of the water, a group of incarcerated men walk towards the camera, wearing matching uniforms and dragging empty sacks that will soon be filled with bolls of cotton. On the other, a prison guard sits on horseback. He surveys the prisoners from behind dark sunglasses and appears to herd them across the landscape. Structured by an unwavering horizon line, the photograph depicts the land as open and accessible, cohering with received ways of representing the inchoate productivity of the American landscape. By staging a familiar relationship between the land and the labour that undergirds it, the photograph produces a legible tableau of agrarian work that recalls the visual register of the antebellum South. Just as Danny Lyon's monochrome photographs of agrarian work appear out of place in time, so too does Jackson's photograph seem out of step with the visual record of the late 1970s. The photograph typifies the temporal disjunctures that resound throughout Jackson's archive—ones that have led writer and critic Brian Wallis, among many other commentators, to describe his photographs as "astonishing, in part, because they seem so alien and anachronistic."[119] This comment and, especially, its emphasis on the temporal and spatial distance evoked by Jackson's photographs suggests that these scenes of agricultural labour are incommensurable with 1970s American life; or, at least, at odds with how the decade has been mediated by and through photographic images.[120]

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[119] Brian Wallis, "Bruce Jackson: On the Inside," *Prison Nation*, Aperture 230 (Spring 2018), 37.

[120] The idea that, in the 1970s, the United States had entered the dawn of a new, "post-industrial" society was perhaps most clearly articulated by Daniel Bell and other neoconservative economists. The term was used to describe a phase of capitalism that, rather than traffic primarily in the production of goods, dealt primarily in services. This chapter demonstrates that the southern prison farm places pressure on the idea that the American economy witnessed wholesale transition towards this political-economic model. For an early theorisation of the "post-industrial," see Daniel Bell, *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society: A Venture in Social Forecasting* (New York: Basic Books, 1976).

During his numerous visits to the Texas and Arkansas State Penitentiaries between 1964 and 1979, Jackson captured thousands of images of prison life and labour. Richly heterogeneous in its pictorial approach and technological range, Jackson's oeuvre often defies easy categorisation. While some photographs, such as those taken with a Widelux swing-lens panoramic camera, construct vast, horizontal landscapes, others, such as his Polaroid snapshots, are more intimate and direct, operating within the conventions of photographic portraiture.[121] Jackson's photographs were initially meant to serve as functional field notes or "*aides-memoire*" that could assist and illustrate his scholarly research into Afro-American work songs. In these early days, his images were put to work: they functioned as utilitarian records of the encounter between ethnographer and subject, ameliorating the inevitable temporal lag between Jackson's immersive research and the production of his sustained, academic analysis of prison culture. Jackson's photographs, in other words, were sublimated into more officially sanctioned discourses, labouring beneath his written words. It wasn't until his 1972 trip to the Arkansas State Penitentiary, Jackson recalls, that he noticed the capacity of his photographs to produce their own history of America's carceral system—one that traveled by way of the antebellum plantation. Rather than serve as the means through which Jackson sustained and recorded his field work, these photographs, he later discovered, became ends in their own right.[122]

At once forensic documents of agricultural labour and deeply felt pictures of human immiseration, Jackson's photographs not only document the degraded social conditions of incarceration and the monotony of forced labour, but also evidence the myriad ways in which the heightened isolation of confinement can simultaneously give birth to a unique, often dissident set of cultural formations. Work songs, tattoos, paintings, family photographs, graffiti, and books are all faithfully catalogued

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[121] Jackson's interest in portraiture is further explored in his book *Pictures from a Drawer: Prison and the Art of Portraiture* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2009). The book was born out of a collection of ID photographs that Jackson found in a desk drawer while visiting Arkansas' Cummins Unit in 1975. For more on Jackson's fascinating Widelux photographs, see: Bruce Jackson, *Cummins Wide: Photographs from the Arkansas Prison* (Durham: Center for Documentary Studies, 2008).

[122] These are the terms often used by Jackson to describe his early attitude towards photography. See, for example: Bruce Jackson, "Texas Death Row and the Cummins Prison Farm in Arkansas," *Southern Cultures Vol 13 No 2* (Summer 2007); Bruce Jackson, *Fieldwork* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1987), 118.

throughout Jackson's documentary oeuvre of photographs, films, and publications, foregrounding the creative ways in which prisoners attempted to make meaning out of the mundane and dehumanising experience of captivity. In contrast with Danny Lyon's more composed, stylised photographs of East Texas prisons, which often employ unusual angles to dramatise the power dynamics of prison life, Jackson's photographs are typically more candid and direct. Almost always taken from Jackson's eye level, his photographs are more straightforward and human in scale. Often capturing fleeting glances between photographer and subject, Jackson's photographs allow the photographer's indelible presence within the scene to reveal itself. In this way, these images cohere with Jackson's broad conception of documentary—a practice that Jackson has described as "an engagement with a community, a process, a social issue, and an audience; you are engaging that thing and you are a part of it."[123] Photography, therefore, is just one medium through which Jackson pursues this broader endeavour of "documentary."

The photograph with which this chapter opened has, along with many of Jackson's other images, been widely published and exhibited, featuring most recently in Jackson's 2013 book of photographs entitled *Inside the Wire: Photographs from Texas and Arkansas Prisons*.[124] However, like all of Jackson's pictures that have circulated in the public sphere, the reproduction of this photograph has been contingent on one significant caveat: the original Kodachrome transparency had to be drained of colour (fig 2.2). Despite the seemingly ubiquitous monochromatism of his prison farm photographs, approximately one-tenth of Jackson's archive is comprised of colour transparencies. He began taking colour photographs in 1968, using primarily Kodachrome and Ektachrome film. Rather than exchange his black-and-white film for colour, the photographer would carry multiple cameras loaded with either monochrome or

[123] Brian Wallis, 40.

[124] Jackson's photographs are often selected to illustrate articles and publications that, while not about his photography per se, address broader issues of mass incarceration in the American context. In this way, these black-and-white images have come to stand in for the anachronism of the American prison system in general, rather than represent a particular carceral institution at a specific historical juncture. See, for example, the cover of journalist Shane Bauer's recent book: *American Prison: A Reporter's Undercover Journey into the Business of Punishment* (New York: Penguin Random House, 2018).

polychrome film, allowing him to quickly alternate between the two modes.[125] While the black-and-white Kodak Tri-X film used by Jackson was well-suited for the windowless corridors of the prison, the comparatively slow colour film was almost always employed outdoors, in the prison farm's vast agricultural fields. When contextualised within his broader body of prison photographs, these colour pictures cannot be easily dismissed as an exception to or aberration from a largely monochrome practice. Jackson took hundreds of polychrome images that, although some have been published or exhibited in black-and-white, have laid dormant in Jackson's home for many decades.[126]

To a certain extent, the preference for black-and-white photographs of the southern prison farm can be attributed to the technological and fiscal constraints of the era. In the 1960s and 1970s, developing colour photographs was, according to Jackson himself, "a pain in the ass."[127] It was an expensive and tedious process that was certainly prohibitive for a young academic, particularly one who initially considered photography only a supplement to his academic research. "Doing colour at home was very difficult in the '70s." Jackson has explained, "I looked for a few grants; nobody cared."[128] Moreover, the colour reversal film used by Jackson was significantly less forgiving than black-and-white, demanding near perfect exposure times that, until the more recent development of digital technologies, could not be easily balanced or corrected after the film was exposed. This is one reason why Jackson's first book of photographs, published in 1977 and entitled *Killing Time: Life in the Arkansas Penitentiary*, featured exclusively black-and-white images, whereas his more recent 2013 collection *Inside the Wire* included colour photographs that Jackson had digitally converted to black-and-white.[129] But although a sense of

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[125] Author interview with Bruce Jackson (November 2018). Jackson recalls carrying up to three cameras during his visits to the South's prison farms: one with a wide-angle lens, one with a long zoom, and one camera loaded with colour film. Email from Bruce Jackson to Author (November 2020).

[126] Ibid.

[127] Email from Bruce Jackson to Author (26 November 2018).

[128] Geoff Kelly, "An Interview with Bruce Jackson: American Prisoners, Death Row and Walker Evans," *American Suburb X,* 19 June 2015, accessed 24 April 2019. https://www.americansuburbx.com/2015/06/interview-interview-with-bruce-jackson.html

[129] Author interview with Bruce Jackson at his home in Buffalo, New York (November 2018). Also see: Bruce Jackson, *Killing Time: Life in the Arkansas Penitentiary* (Ithaca : Cornell University Press, 1977); Bruce Jackson, *Inside the Wire: Photographs from Texas and Arkansas Prisons* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2013).

pragmatism certainly motivated the decision to disseminate Jackson's prison photographs in black-and-white, the continued preference for monochrome images in our contemporary moment, a time in which digital technologies have virtually rendered obsolete the practical distinctions between colour and black-and-white, suggests that the elision of colour is ideologically inflected.

These ideological concerns can be glimpsed in the Spring 2018 issue of *Aperture Magazine*, entitled "Prison Nation." The issue featured an article on Jackson's photography, accompanied with text by Brian Wallis. While certainly not unique in their depiction of the somber brutality of prison life, it is Jackson's photographs, unlike those featured in the magazine's other stories, that are continually framed as capturing a puzzling relic from another time (fig 2.3). "When a folklorist set out to document life in American prisons" the article claims, "he found the enduring segregation of the Old South."[130] Although Jackson sent a wide selection of both monochrome and polychrome images for publication, the editors at *Aperture* selected exclusively black-and-white images both to feature in the magazine, as well as in the related exhibition.[131] The photographs they chose are representative of Jackson's roving eye, reflecting his singular privilege to freely roam around both inside and outside the penitentiary. In the same issue, however, *Aperture* published many other colour photographs of American penitentiaries and their captive subjects, such as Jack Leuders-Booth's portrait series "Women Prisoners, Massachusetts Correctional Institution at Framingham," undertaken from 1978 to 1985 (fig 2.4). This side-by-side publishing of colour and black-and-white photographs suggests that any material limitations that once dictated the ubiquitous monochromatism of Jackson's published work have now, in our digital age, mostly fallen away.[132] In this context, the publication of black-and-white images crystallises as an active choice,

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[130] Brian Wallis, 37.

[131] This anecdote was initially related to me by Bruce Jackson in an August 2018 email and then expanded upon during an interview at the photographer's home in Buffalo, New York in November 2018.

[132] Bruce Jackson's photographs have recently been published, also entirely in black-and-white, on various online platforms including *The Marshall Project*, *Mother Jones*, *AmericanSuburbX*, *The New Yorker*, and *The New York Times*. See, for example: Maurice Chammah, "Prison Plantations: One Man's Archive of a Vanished Culture," *The Marshall Project* (01 May 2015), accessed 5 March 2020, https://www.themarshallproject.org/2015/05/01/prison-plantations

bringing into view the ideological contours that have always, even when twinned with pragmatic limitations, overdetermined what can be thought and seen in colour.

This chapter harnesses Jackson's colour photography and its repression from the public, visual sphere in order to expand existing scholarship on colour and black-and-white within the history of photography. It understands colour photography not simply as a technological process, but rather, following the work of Roland Barthes, as a rhetorical code.[133] This project is informed by Sally Stein's seminal analysis of what she termed "colourful" and "colourless" photography during the interwar period, reaffirming her central claim that "the modern opposition between colour and black-and-white photography constituted a coding choice at the first level of meaning."[134] For Stein, neither black-and-white nor colour photography offers a purely analogic window onto the world; rather, both are coded forms of mediation in their own right. To this end, this chapter is primarily concerned with the meaning of photographic colour in rendering the prison as a technology of racialisation, as opposed to skin colour a signifier of racial identity.[135] By ushering us away from skin as a metonym for race, I am not only following the prompt offered by Hazel Carby to consider race as a verb and not a noun, but also seeking to account for the specificity of the prison as a mechanism of both class discipline and racial control.[136] If Jackson's photographs appear to depict an "Old South," as Brian Wallis has suggested, then this is not just because of the skin tones they depict. Rather, it is the product of long, accumulated histories of representation that have come to construct a visual language of the plantation, as I showed in the previous chapter.

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[133] Roland Barthes, "The Photographic Message," *A Barthes Reader* ed. Susan Sontag (New York: Hill and Wang, 1975), 194-210.

[134] Sally Stein, "The Rhetoric of the Colorful and the Colorless: American Photography and Material Culture Between the Wars (Volumes I and II)," *PhD Dissertation*, Yale University, 1991.

[135] There has been extensive research done on the relationship on colour photographic technologies and their incapacity to render black and brown skin tones. While certainly important in contextualising the difficulty Jackson had in working with the technology, these concerns are beyond the scope of this chapter. For more on colour photography and skin, see:

[136] This is a through-line that runs throughout Carby's work, but it has most recently been elaborated upon in her book *Imperial Intimacies: A Tale of Two Islands* (London : Verso Books, 2019).

The aim of this chapter is to historicise the obvious: namely, how and why, when applied in this context, polychrome photography has come to appear so utterly surreal and even inappropriate. In this photograph (fig 2.5), for example, a group of inmates are captured at work, thinning newly planted cotton seedlings while monitored by a prison guard on horseback. The soft, cloying hues of the Kodachrome film evoke the Technicolor scenes of *Gone with the Wind*—ones that bathed the plantation in an ethereal glow and papered over the brutality of slavery. Jackson's use of colour, therefore, allows us to see the way in which photographic colour transgresses the conventions through which documentary and the visual language of agricultural work have been made to appear legible. To render the prison in these painterly, amplified colours is to violate the codes through which agrarian labour has been depicted photographically. If, I will argue, there appears to be a conflict between the brutal conditions depicted in the photograph and the pastoral hues in which they are depicted, then this is only because of the way in which the history of photography has been written. This chapter historicises this apparent contradiction, investigating how and why the absence of colour has been naturalised, while its presence has come to appear unnatural or otherworldly. A focus on skin colour obscures these histories, eliding the broader mechanisms through which representations of the prison farm have both come to the surface and been repressed.

The first part of this chapter will explore why we have been made to see the prison farm in black-and-white. It will examine how, during the 1960s and 1970s, the institutionalisation of both mono and polychrome documentary in the fine art museum constrained the chromatic language of Jackson's archive. As black-and-white documentary became synonymous with an "Old South," constructed by the Farm Security Administration and their photographs of Depression-era rural life, colour became twinned with the photographic register of an emerging "New South," exemplified by the work of native southerner William Eggleston. For Jackson, the mapping of black-and-white and colour onto the photographic languages of New and Old, respectively, had profound consequences. Replete with photographs of manual cotton picking, flat-weeding, and timber cutting, Jackson's visual language

strongly resonates with that produced by the FSA and, as a result, could not be rendered in polychrome. The recoding of Jackson's richly heterogeneous archive of prison photographs as entirely black-and-white, I argue, constitutes an act of censorship—one that attempts to make sense of the prison farm and its perceptual anachronism by displacing it onto a remote past. By draining Jackson's photographs of colour, the penitentiary could be conveniently anchored to a receding history, neutralising its capacity to interrupt the linear, progressive histories of photography that were being written out at this juncture. The geographic chasm that segregated the free from the incarcerated could thus be translated into equally distinct temporal categories. Their histories, in other words, could be written separately.

While the first part of this chapter asks why we have been made to see the prison farm in black-and-white, the second asks what might be gained if we are made to see Jackson's pictures in colour. The aim of this chapter is not simply to recover the photographic material that has been repressed from existing histories of photography, but rather, following Jackson's cue, to denaturalise the codes through which these histories have been written. While Danny Lyon's photographs amplify the anachronism of the prison farm to unearth its continuities with the plantation, Jackson's colour images, I argue, recast the prison farm as present. In this way, Jackson reframes the prison as both temporally coeval with and geographically internal to the American project and its remaking. Following Ruth Wilson Gilmore's provocation that the carceral landscape can be "read" as a temporary solution to a much deeper, structural crisis in American capitalism, I read Jackson's photographs alongside the explosion of colour in the televisual news media that occurred throughout these decades.[137] I show how Jackson's colour photographs produce an alternative map of the nation at this historical moment—one that resonates with the analysis of American capitalism and imperialism that was being concurrently developed by

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[137] Ruth Wilson Gilmore's intersecting interests in social geography and the neoliberal prison provide an important framework for thinking about the carceral landscape as both a symptom of and solution to political-economic crises. She rightly asks us to take seriously the spatial dimensions of the rural-urban prison pipeline, reading the landscape as a geographic solutions to much deeper, structural problems. This chapter asks how visual representations of the prison can make us see the spatial dynamics of what Gilmore has described as "anti-state state-building"— a project in which the punitive power of the state is dramatically expanded in lock step with its withdrawal from public life and the expansion of militarism abroad. See: Ruth Wilson Gilmore and Craig Gilmore, "Restating the Obvious," in *Indefensible Space: The Architecture of the National Insecurity State* ed. Michael Sorkin (New York: Routledge Press, 2008).

black radical thinkers and activists. Jackson's colour photographs allow us to see how, far from operating as an isolated site of unfreedom, the prison must be understood as at the very centre of the nation.

The Time of Folklore

Between 1964 and 1979, Bruce Jackson made numerous trips to an archipelago of state penitentiaries that stretched across Texas and Arkansas. He sought to document the myriad Afro-American oral traditions, such as folklore, toasts, and work songs, that had been nurtured by the intense confinement of the southern prison farm and its longstanding tradition of forced agrarian work. Aided by the relative open-mindedness of Dr. George Beto, the Director of the Texas State Department of Corrections, Jackson gained unusual freedom to roam the grounds of these isolated penitentiaries without interference from prison officials or guards. Influenced by folklorists such as John Lomax and Herbert Halpert who had brought America's singular oral traditions to national attention during the Great Depression, Jackson wondered what became of the work songs and other folk music that had been rigorously archived decades earlier.[138] As his peers from colleges and universities in the North flocked to the southern states to register black voters during what would become known as "Mississippi Freedom Summer," Jackson went digging in the archives of the Library of Congress to prepare for his first research trip. By parsing these archival materials alongside the upheaval of the civil rights movement, Jackson began to think his own moment of racial unrest through the past, returning to the antebellum period by way of a detour through the Great Depression.

Committed to a detailed and focused study of only a few carceral facilities, Jackson's early documentary endeavours, including field recordings, still photographs, and documentary films, were

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[138] Bruce Jackson, ed. *Wake Up Dead Man: Hard Labor and the Southern Blues,* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1999), xxi. Although his work has become closely associated with the Great Depression, Alan Lomax continued to collect field recordings from across the country well into the 1960s. His famed "southern journey," which took place from 1959-1960, included visits to Parchman Farm, the notorious maximum security prison farm in Mississippi. Lomax's photographs and field recordings from his visits to Parchman Farm were recently published together for the first time. The book includes an essay by Bruce Jackson. See: *Parchman Farm: Photographs and Field Recordings, 1947-1959* (Atlanta: Dust-to-Digital, 2012).

primarily borne out of his investigation into Afro-American oral traditions. This mutable, living folklore could be traced to the creative strategies of survival and storytelling that were incubated on the antebellum plantation. For Jackson, it was the enforced anachronism of the prison farm and its use of outmoded agricultural work that served to artificially sustain these otherwise extinct traditions. "The only place in this country where a viable work song tradition exists" Jackson explains, "is the southern prison, and that is because the southern prison maintained a social institution long dead outside its fences: the culture of the nineteenth-century plantation."[139] Jackson's research culminated in several seminal works of scholarship, including *A Thief's Primer* (1969), *In the Life: Versions of the Criminal Experience* (1972), and *Wake Up Dead Man: Afro-American Worksongs from Texas Prisons* (1972). This research often involved taking photographs as utilitarian records of his field work. If they feature at all in his finished books, Jackson's photographs are harnessed merely as illustrative tools—ones that served to visually elaborate upon and underscore his written arguments.[140] In these early stages, Jackson's images were simply another mechanism for recording the daily lives and labour of incarcerated men that, only when combined with additional material, could convey a more wholistic portrait of this highly particular mode of punishment and the oral traditions it sustained.

Although it was several decades since the songs Jackson admired had been collected from across the South by likeminded folklorists, Jackson recalls that he was "amazed at the richness of the traditions still there."[141] While Jackson's myriad documentary interventions are a testament to the hugely diverse range of work songs and other oral traditions still employed by prisoners well into the 1960s and after, these endeavours are united by the way in which they not only interrogate the shifting temporality of the prison farm, but also amplify the inextricability of time from its mediation as cultural representation. For

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[139] Ibid., 29.

[140] Bruce Jackson, *A Thief's Primer,* (New York: MacMillan, 1969); *In the Life: Versions of the Criminal Experience* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1972); *Wake Up Dead Man: Afro-American Worksongs from Texas Prisons* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972).

[141] Jackson, *Wake Up Dead Man: Afro-American Worksongs from Texas Prisons*, xxii.

Jackson, time is not a neutral mechanism harnessed to rationally measure the lived experience of incarcerated subjects; rather, it is a tool through which the prison farm's dynamics of power, punishment, and survival are actively constructed and contested. This is especially true, Jackson demonstrates, in the context of the prison's agricultural operations and its use of forced manual labour. In his book *Wake Up Dead Man*, for instance, Jackson illustrates how prisoners deploy work songs in order to struggle with and against the repetition and monotony of their daily labour. Each tune is selected by a song leader based upon its degree of complexity and the regularity of its tempo. While simple, individuated tasks such as cotton picking allowed for the use of more intricate melodies, collective endeavours like flat-weeding or cross-cutting demanded more ascetic, metered rhythms. In these songs, all other aesthetic concerns were secondary: "What matters to the singers" Jackson writes, "is keeping time."[142]

While careful not to romanticise or idealise these performances as heroic acts of resistance or evidence of the prisoners' latent agency, Jackson investigates how the mediation of time by and through the work song functioned to attenuate both the physical and psychic strain of forced labour—the songs were simply used, Jackson claims, to "make it" amidst conditions of such extreme powerlessness.[143] Work songs ensured that prisoners could, on the one hand, construct a unifying rhythm that protected older and less able-bodied men from gratuitous punishment, and yet, on the other, maintain a pace of work that would avoid drawing the ire of prison guards. Additionally, Jackson observes, prisoners used the songs as covert vehicles for their repressed frustrations and quiet longings, often singing that which they were forbidden to say. "It is as if" Jackson writes, "sung words were not real." In this small, yet significant way, Jackson argues, prisoners were able to appropriate and to shape the temporality of their daily work: "What happens is, given a situation in which one is required to do the work, one co-opts it

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[142] Ibid., 33.

[143] Ibid., xv.

partially and finds the urge to be as good as one can."[144] Jackson tentatively puts forth his hypothesis, writing that "the songs change the nature of the work by putting the work into the worker's framework rather than the guards'. By incorporating the work with their song, by, in effect, co-opting something they are forced to do anyway, they make it *theirs* in a way it otherwise is not."[145]

But although Jackson argues that prison work songs are representations of time—ones that parcel the unending monotony of prison work into intelligible units and meaningful patterns—he implies that these traditions can also be understood as indexes of the prison farm's historical mutability. "But one indication of the change in the system" Jackson writes in his field notes, "is that the old river songs are not sung very much any more. The reason, Johnny Jackson told me, is that the men are now allowed to work at their own pace and they don't need the extra drive and pacing the old songs gave them."[146] By suggesting that prison work songs are a mediated text from which to write out the history of the prison farm and to chart its transformations over time, Jackson not only foregrounds inextricability of temporality from mediation, but also demonstrates how, in order to understand the ongoing relevance of the prison farm to the American project, its elements of continuity and change must be held in contradiction. While work songs certainly give powerful expression to the points of convergence between prison and plantation, these traditions and, in particular, their flexibility and adaptability, simultaneously illustrate the plasticity of subjection. Far from essentialising work songs as authentic Africanisms, Jackson attends to the ruptures and breaks that constitute remembering in slavery's afterlife. Rather than simply evidence historical continuities, work songs, Jackson suggests, perform what Saidiya Hartman has described as "the differential invocation of the past"—a refrain or

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[144] Ibid., 35.

[145] Ibid., 30.

[146] Ibid., 40.

remake that registers the rupture posed by the Middle Passage and, in this way, is "redolent with the history of captivity and enslavement."[147]

Jackson interrogates these tensions in one of his early documentaries, a short black-and-white film that was completed in 1966 with the help of Pete and Toshi Seeger. Throughout the film, Jackson uses his camera to raise broader questions about the way in which the time of the prison farm is inseparable from its construction within aural and visual representation.[148] The film surveys a range of songs harnessed by black prisoners to, as Jackson states in the voice-over, "make time" out of the gruelling experience of forced labour. Rather than emphasise the purity and authenticity of the work songs and, in doing so, operate in a mode of recovery, the documentary frames these cultural forms as continually in flux. Throughout the film, several prisoners relate the changes they have witnessed throughout the course of their sentences: "They don't use work the fields now like they used to work 'em." A gravelly, male voice explains, "They have tractors now to do the work that we did with hoes...everybody was gettin' together and harmonising to make the work seem easy even when it was hard." This testimony is given visual expression in one particular sequence, which follows a work gang as they turn over a patch of dry soil to the metered rhythm of a work song. The camera dramatises the conflict between their vocal harmonies and the sound of a tractor engine that whirrs just outside the frame. The film cuts between the archaic display of prisoners at work and the industrial machine, amplifying the conflicting aural registers of manual and automated labour and encoding broader transformations in the carceral state that were occurring at this historical juncture (fig 2.6).

Throughout the documentary, Jackson offers a sample of the wide variety of work songs that are employed by prisoners, depicting work gangs as they hoe cotton fields or chop timber with metal axes. The camera lingers on each scene, gently zooming in to either render the labouring parts of the prisoners' bodies in rich detail or magnify the expressions of the lead vocalist (fig 2.7). However, these

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[147] Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection*, 73.

[148] *Afro-American Work Songs in a Texas Prison,* directed by Toshi Seeger, Pete Seeger, Bruce Jackson (Folklore Research Films, 1966), 16mm film, accessed 3 March 2020, https://www.folkstreams.net/film-detail.php?id=122

sequences are also marked by discontinuities—ones that, produced through cuts or transitions such as fades in and out, make apparent the invariable impingement of the camera onto the scene. Rather than seamlessly reproduce the prisoners' performances and their varying ways of rendering intelligible carceral time, the documentary introduces disjunctures between these two overlapping forms of mediation. These open up the possibility for a critical reflection on the ways in which the time of the prison farm is inextricable from how it is represented both aurally and visually. If, as Jackson has argued, work songs are crucial strategies through which the prisoners remake or, in other words, mediate the homogenous temporality of the prison, transforming it into comprehensible units of lived experience, then the film loops these representations, layering cinematic time onto the rhythm and tempo of the work song. As opposed to naturalising its perceptual anachronism and compounding its seeming remoteness from the dynamics of everyday late-capitalism, Jackson's remediation of these performances helps us to see how the temporality of the prison farm must be understood, to echo Stuart Hall, as always existing within representation.[149] Time, Jackson shows us, is always made.

Jackson's understanding of documentary as a tool through which to mediate time chimes with his conception of folklore as a differential process of repetition and return. For Jackson, folklore does not involve the recovery of an authentic past, but rather an open-ended reworking of existing cultural representations. The legibility of folklore in the present, Jackson argues, is predicated on its rhyming with the past: "Folk poetry depends on fulfilled expectations: the characters will be who they are supposed to be, the words will mean what they are supposed to mean…Folk poetry must use a prefabricated language, and the knowledge it contains must be preknown."[150] By framing the pliability of folklore as essential to its survival as a shared, public language, Jackson's work resonates with the shifts in folklore theory that were occurring throughout the 1960s and 1970s. In his 1969 essay "The Devolutionary Premise in Folklore Theory," for instance, folklorist Alan Dundes critiques the

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[149] Stuart Hall, "Old and New Identities, Old and New Ethnicities," *Culture, Globalization, and the World-System: Contemporary Conditions for the Representation of Identity* ed. Anthony D. King (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 41-68.

[150] Jackson, *Wake Up Dead Man*, 30.

foundational premises upon which the discipline was founded and, in particular, its misguided search for an authentic past. "A critical correlative of the devolutionary premise" Dundes claims, "is the assumption that the oldest, original version of an item of folklore was the best, fullest or most complete one. A change of any kind automatically moved the item from perfection toward imperfection. Partly for this reason, one finds a deep resentment of change and an equally deep-seated resistance to the study of change in folklore."[151]

Jackson resists the nostalgia that Dundes viewed as endemic to folklorist practice, refusing either to mourn the gradual extinction of work songs or long for a purer moment in the history of prison folklore. Jackson's work cannot be reduced to a project of recovery, in which the prison is simply figured as a site in which to salvage the relics of an otherwise lost past. Rather, alongside considering the continuities and imbrications between prison and plantation, Jackson compels a confrontation with their points of departure, foregrounding the pliability of its symbolic and functional utility within American life. Jackson inquires: "What does the process of change (or for that matter, the concept of consistency) mean and how does it occur in a genre that is extraordinarily plastic? Where does change occur?"[152] Registering a deep ambivalence towards these songs and their gradual extinction, Jackson reflects on the ways in which widespread efforts to modernise the prison farm rendered obsolete and unfashionable these oral traditions. "Work songs" Jackson explains, "are related to a cultural nexus almost totally nonexistent in this country; only in artificially maintained anachronisms does it still exist; prison is one of these, and prison is changing."[153] As the prison's agrarian labour became increasingly mechanised and exclusively black work gangs were slowly integrated, the material foundations that had buttressed these singular folksongs began to crumble. Younger prisoners tended to reject these traditions, Jackson notes, seeking to distance themselves from the lingering stigma of chattel slavery. However, while these

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[151] Alan Dundes, "The Devolutionary Premise in Folklore Theory," *Journal of the Folklore Institute* Vol 6 No 1 (June 1969), 8.

[152] Jackson, *Wake Up Dead Man.*, xvii-xviii.

[153] Ibid., 4.

transformation often aimed to improve prison conditions, these efforts ultimately facilitated the unprecedented growth of the prison population. Jackson explains:

> One of the dreadful ironies here is that the prison commitments increased specifically because the prison became so much less horrible than it had been: as soon as judges around the state thought the prisons were no longer torture chambers, they became willing to sentence to prison terms men and women they would earlier have placed on probation.[154]

By highlighting the ways in which the extension of humanity to the incarcerated served to further legitimise incarceration, Jackson reveals how the "differential invocation of the past" is not simply a tactic of resistance to the long afterlife of slavery, but also the means through which repressive institutions remake themselves along new lines. Jackson's colour photographs offer a visual record of this contradiction, charting the expansion of the prison as a mechanism of social segregation, even as prison work gangs were racially integrated. Indeed, most of Jackson's photographic archive was compiled in the wake of this desegregation. In this way, Jackson suggests that, in order to understand the ongoing relevance of the prison farm to the American project, the institution and its folklore must be seen as an ongoing process of remakes and returns—one which is defined as much by slippages and disjunctures, as it is by continuities and repetitions. If Jackson sought to wrestle with the temporal contradictions that characterised the prison farm at this historical moment, as well as to foreground the relationship between time and its mediations, then it is his colour photographs that, by recoding the agrarian landscapes constructed by FSA and recoding "the Thirties" in polychrome, are most consistent with these aims.

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[154] Jackson explains in his first book of photographs *Killing Time:* In 1969 the Arkansas State Penitentiary was declared unconstitutional, first in *Holt versus Sarver I* and then again in the following year in *Holt versus Sarver II*. The courts ruled that the state had violated the prisoners' constitutional rights by failing to meat prisoners' basic needs. The prison should ensure, the judges wrote, that prisoners could "fall asleep at night without having their throats cut before morning." This led to a rapid transformation in the basic conditions of the prison, including an influx of professional armed guards, and, at least on the surface, an "improvement" in prison life. However, as Jackson observed at the time, this ultimately led to an explosion in the prison population, as the institution was seen as being more "humane" and therefore as offering the potential for genuine rehabilitation. "The additional inmate population' Jackson wrote, "more than offset the increase in room and bed space." Bruce Jackson, *Killing Time*, 23.

Making the South "Old"

If Jackson's photographs of the southern prison farm have been ubiquitously circulated in black-and-white, then this because they invoke a tradition of photographically representing agricultural work that was cemented in the 1930s and 1940s by the Farm Security Administration and assimilated into the popular American imaginary in the 1960s and 1970s. These two critical periods in the history of American documentary—ones that are often seen to mark its "invention" and "reinvention" respectively—were constitutively shaped by transformations in the rhetorical meanings of mono and polychrome.[155] Following what has been described as her "shocking" discovery of 700 colour FSA photographs in the late 1980s, Sally Stein developed a seminal analysis of chromatic difference, historicising the bifurcation of black-and-white and colour photography within the visual and material culture of the Great Depression. Despite its obvious lack of analogical purity, black-and-white, she argues, counterintuitively became the chromatic register of photographic "realism." Monochrome gained a perceived authenticity in stark contrast to the commercial success of colour photography and its associations with consumer culture and mass media.[156] In this context, Stein explains, the FSA's attempt to make colour photographs was "destined to fail." The affective power of its documentary model hinged upon the construction of a degraded, impoverished world—one that appeared to operate at a distant remove from modern patterns of consumption and was, therefore, deserving of federal relief through the New Deal.[157]

By the 1960s and 1970s, however, black-and-white FSA photography came to signify more than just material deprivation and ecological scarcity. The archive, as I have shown in the previous chapter, began to represent a collective, American past from which the nation had, after the economic prosperity

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[155] These arguments about the relationship between the 1930s and the 1970s are most clearly articulated by Jorge Ribalta, who takes the interventions of Allan Sekula as a starting point for these arguments. See: Jorge Ribalta, *Not Yet: On the Reinvention of Documentary and the Critique of Modernism, Essays and Documents (1972-1991)*, (Madrid: Museo Reina Sofia, 2015).

[156] Sally Eauclaire, *The New Color Photography* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1981); Sally Stein, "The Rhetoric of the Colorful and the Color less."

[157] Stein, xviii.

of the post-war age, decidedly moved on. For Jackson and others who were immersed in the revival of Depression-era documentary that had taken hold throughout American visual culture since the early 1960s, "The Thirties" was not simply a decade with a concrete beginning and end, but a collective idea that was inseparable from its mediation by and through documentary. The Museum of Modern Art in New York City was a major vehicle through which these photographs were brought back into public visibility: Edward Steichen reintroduced the FSA file in his final exhibition "The Bitter Years" in 1962; Walker Evans' *American Photographs* was reissued; and the institution held a retrospective of Dorothea Lange's oeuvre in 1966. A few years later, Roy Stryker, the former head of the FSA, offered his own reevaluation of the endeavour in his 1973 book *In This Proud Land*, and that same year William Stott published his seminal examination of 1930s photographic culture entitled *Documentary Expression and Thirties America.*[158] With the exception of Stryker, those who reacquainted the public with the FSA file believed that the archive contained exclusively black-and-white images. As a result, the Great Depression was re-presented exclusively in monochrome. As the construction of "the Thirties" became inextricably bound up with a monochromatic vernacular, black-and-white documentary was solidified as the chromatic register of a collective, national past, encapsulated by photographs of the rural, southern landscape and the manual, agricultural work that sustained it.

The centrality of the FSA file to the fossilisation of black-and-white as the chromatic register of the past is thematised in a June 1960 issue of *Esquire Magazine*, which was dedicated to remembering the Thirties. Adumbrating the resurgent interest in the period that would take hold throughout the decade, the editor's letter read: "It might be of interest to point out that on the timetable of nostalgia, we are leaving the era of the Twenties and plunging into that of the Thirties. It's So Long Sucker, and Hail to the Okies."[159] The preamble continued: "Our first illustrated feature this month is a fusion of some of the

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[158] Edward Steichen, ed. *The Bitter Years, 1935-1941: Rural America as seen by the photographers of the Farm Security Administration* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1962); Walker Evans, *American Photographs*, 2nd ed. (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1962); Dorothea Lange with George P. Elliott, *Dorothea Lange* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1966); Roy Stryker and Nancy Wood, *In This Proud Land: America, 1935-1943, as seen in the FSA photographs* (New York: Graphic Society Ltd., 1973); William Stott, *Documentary Expression and Thirties America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973).

[159] "Publisher's Page: Through Backstage and Beyond," *Esquire Magazine* (June 1960), 6.

distinguished talents of the Thirties in writing and photography which has as its goal an attempt to define and illuminate some of the main currents of the time."[160] For those writing out the history of the Thirties from the position of the Sixties, the Depression was a neatly bookended historical moment from which to draw "lessons both bitter and rewarding" for a new age.[161] The issue featured an essay by John Steinbeck entitled "A Primer on the '30s" in which the preeminent chronicler of the Great Depression offers a highly personal account of the "terrible, troubling, triumphant, surging Thirties" (fig 2.8).[162] A tale of resilience and overcoming, Steinbeck relates his experience of this "warm and friendly time" with a cautious nostalgia. While the author certainly does not yearn for the material deprivation of the Great Depression, there persists throughout the piece a quiet longing for the individual resourcefulness and social cohesion that had supposedly defined the era.

Steinbeck reflects on the way in which the decade has been mediated and archived, particularly through photographic images: "There are whole libraries of books about the Thirties—millions of feet of films, still and moving. It is a completely recorded and documented period. But to those of us who lived through the period and perhaps were formed by it the Thirties are a library of personal memories."[163] This jockeying of the personal and collective, the subjective account and the archival record, is fully borne out in Steinbeck's use of black-and-white photographs from the FSA file, that, explicated only by the author's own captions, serve both to illustrate his personal essay and to evoke the atmosphere of the decade as a whole. Photographs are uncredited and lack dates or original captions, an editorial decision that is explained in the introductory note: "We selected the works of four of those photographers—Dorothea Lange, Walker Evans, Russell Lee, and Arthur Rothstein—to illustrate the spirit, if not the

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[160] Ibid., 6-7.

[161] Ibid., 6.

[162] John Steinbeck, "A Primer on the '30s," *Esquire Magazine* (June 1960), 85-93. The essay has also been reprinted, without the accompanying photographs, in John Steinbeck, *America and Americans and Selected Nonfiction* (New York: Penguin Books, 2002).

[163] Ibid., 86.

specifics of Steinbeck's essay. The author has made them integral to it by his captioning of them."[164] When the issue lays flat, the colourful pages of the *Esquire* advertisements and its other feature stories peek out from the sides of Steinbeck's spread, throwing into stark relief the monochrome photographic language that served to signify "the Thirties." These chromatic juxtapositions point to the way in which, in the 1960s, the FSA file became synonymous with a monochrome photographic vernacular and, in turn, coded black-and-white documentary as the register of a fading, collective past (fig 2.9).[165]

One of the featured photographs is Dorothea Lange's 1938 photograph entitled "The Road West / Highway to the West, U.S. 54 in Southern New Mexico" (fig 2.10).[166] The photograph frames an empty stretch of road that, flanked on both sides by flat, rural land, recedes steadily into the distance and joins the horizon line at the focal point of the image. A well-worn pictorial symbol that is often harnessed to picture the expansiveness of the American frontier, Lange's open road, when reconfigured by Steinbeck's caption, becomes a site of empty promises: "A road should ought to go some place better'n where you are. That's the reason for a road. There's hope in a road. Right?"[167] Steinbeck's caption speaks as much to the truncated hopes of the Great Depression as it does to the simmering anxieties about the limits of the American project that would resurface throughout the 1960s. While the horizon became

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[164] "Editor's Letter," *Esquire Magazine* (June 1960), 4.

[165] This point is also well illustrated by the federally-supported photography program *DOCUMERICA*—a national photography endeavour that, inaugurated in 1971 by the newly-formed Environmental Protection Agency, aimed to resuscitate the supposedly unifying vision of the Farm Security Administration project within a wildly different political-economic context. A fascinating project that speaks volumes about the relationship between these two periods, DOCUMERICA was executed overwhelmingly in colour. The photographers (one of whom was Danny Lyon) were provided with Kodachrome film by Gifford Hampshire, the project's coordinator and a former editor at *National Geographic*. The only photographer who resisted this mandate was Ken Heyman. His nostalgic, black-and-white photographs of a small town in the midwest were inspired by Robert Lynd's 1929 study of Middletown. The correspondence between Heyman and Hampshire is revealing, illustrating in how Heyman believed, largely as a result of the FSA precedent, that DOCUMERICA's mandate to construct a sentimental portrait of American life in the garish hues of Kodachrome was fundamentally contradictory. For more on DOCUMERICA and a glimpse into its chromatic rhetoric, see: Barbara Lynn Shubinski, "From FSA to EPA: Project Documerica, The Dust Bowl Legacy, and the Quest to Photograph 1970s America," *PhD Dissertation* University of Iowa (2010); Bruce Bustard, *Searching for the Seventies: The DOCUMERICA Photography Project* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institute, 2013).

[166] Although New Mexico was not expropriated by the United States until many decades after the close of the Civil War and only inaugurated as a state in 1912, it is commonly considered part of the geographical region known as the "Sunbelt." Just like the "South," the "Sunbelt" not so much a concrete, geographical entity and more of an ideological, cultural construct—one that has changed substantially over time.

[167] Steinbeck, "A Primer on the '30s," 90.

heavily segmented through suburban sprawl, the post-war boom that had facilitated this expansion would severely stagnate, laying the groundwork for the yet another wave of economic and ecological crises. And yet, despite the rhyming of these two historical moments, a resurgence and return to which Steinbeck gestures in the final passages of his essay, the colloquial tone of Steinbeck's caption and, especially, its use of a vernacular conjunction, seems to ventriloquise the Dust Bowl migrants so often photographed by Lange. By placing the image squarely in the past, the caption further cements monochrome documentary as the photographic language of the Great Depression and, therefore, reaffirms the ideological value of black-and-white as "past."

In addition to the recirculation of the FSA file in public life, just as personally significant for Jackson was the republication of Walker Evans and James Agee's landmark 1941 photobook *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*. A second edition was reissued in 1960 to great acclaim, finding an eager audience in idealistic young whites from the North who were finding their place within the early stage of the civil rights movement and challenging the conventions of journalistic reportage.[168] At first, Jackson writes, he was bewildered by the photobook's "disorganised" structure and Agee's "confrontational language." He remembers putting the text down after just a few pages. A few years later, however, Jackson returned to *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* and was "transfixed," claiming to finish it in a single night.[169] Jackson insists that his own experience encountering this canonical text was far from unique; rather, it reflected a broader, resurgent interest in the Great Depression and the documentary culture that had flourished alongside it. Twelve years out of print and nearly impossible to find, Jackson recalls: "It was a book that existed in rumor, in legend...people spoke of the book as if it were the grail: brilliant, redemptive, perfectly inaccessible."[170] If, in the 1940s, *Let us Now Praise Famous Men* remained relatively obscure, then, by the 1960s, the book had become a cultural phenomenon, serving as a revelatory guide for a new

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[168] Jeanne Follansbee Quinn, "The Work of Art: Irony and Identification in 'Let Us Now Praise Famous Men,'" 360.

[169] Bruce Jackson, postface in James Agee and Walker Evans, *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* (Paris: Collection Terre Humaine, 2002), unpaginated.

[170] Ibid, unpaginated.

generation of photographers and journalists, such as Danny Lyon, Joan Didion, and Tom Wolfe, who rejected the pretence of neutrality in favour of a more sustained, immersive engagement with their subjects.[171]

Although, as Sally Stein has demonstrated, the 1930s witnessed the emergence of a colourful media landscape and commodity culture, as well as the introduction of mass-produced colour technologies such as Kodachrome, the circulation and recirculation of the FSA file, first in the 1930s and then again in the 1960s, recast the era entirely in black-and-white. The assumption that the entire pictorial record of the Great Depression existed in black-and-white became so entrenched in American thinking that, in a 1975 *Artforum* article on emerging colour practices, Max Kozloff inquired rhetorically: "Is there even one photograph of the Depression in colour?"[172] While colour technology was certainly not new in the 1970s, the repression of polychrome documentary from official histories of photography meant that, when colour ultimately became assimilated into the museum, the arrival of "New Color Photography" could be convincingly hailed. Considering this context, in which the "new" colour photography of the 1970s began to gain its legibility and perceived novelty in contradistinction with the "old" black-and-white documentary of the 1930s, the decision to drain Jackson's prison photographs of colour could never be a neutral or exclusively pragmatic formal choice. As black-and-white came to signify a rural, agrarian past, monochrome documentary could to capitalise on this newly intertextual mode of representation, accruing a vague, historical authenticity. As a result, the prison farm and the agricultural labour that sustained it could be made to appear out of sync with the face-paced temporality and casual decadences of late-capitalist American life.

While, in the 1930s, FSA photographs may have constructed faraway scenes that appeared at a dramatic remove from middle-class life in Northern cities, it was not until the 1960s and 1970s when

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[171] Lyon and Jackson's travels in and out of Texas prison farms overlapped substantially in 1967 and 1968. Lyon was able to enter the prison as a direct consequence of Jackson's endorsement. It is unlikely *Conversations with the Dead* would have materialised without Jackson's interventions.

[172] Max Kozloff, "Photography: The Coming to the Age of Colour," *Artforum* 13, no. 5 (January 1975), 34.

these images and, in particular, their ubiquitous monochromatism became inextricably bound up with a public archive of the Great Depression.[173] In this way, black-and-white pictures of the rural South became imbued not only with a sense of authenticity and realism, but also a quality of pastness that was, at the same time, thrown into relief by the normalisation of colour as the chromatic language of the present. By the late 1970s, when Jackson began publishing his photographs of southern prison farms in Texas and Arkansas, his monochrome photographs could not avoid referencing the documentary vernacular that had come to define a collective, American past. Black-and-white thus appears commensurable with the perceptual anachronism of prison farm photographs, cohering with their exclusion of commodities, advertisements, as well as their foregrounding of manual, agrarian labour. By framing the prison as out of step with late-capitalist American life, the institution could be more seamlessly integrated within a narrative of American progress. The dissonance between these anachronistic scenes of the "Old South" and the wildly colourful photographic register of what would become known as the emerging "Sunbelt" could be visually resolved.

Colouring the South "New"

As black-and-white came to signify a southern landscape that no longer seemed in keeping with the built environment of the American South, colour was quickly institutionalised as the photographic order of a new "New South." Unlike the predominantly rural conception of the "Old South," this ascendent spatial construct was defined by undulating, asphalt freeways and low-density, suburban housing. This collection of man-made forms seemed utterly incompatible with the more "natural,"

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[173] More specifically, Sally Stein has argued that black-and-white helped FSA photographers to frame their subjects as isolated from the modes of labour and leisure that characterised modern America life. In this way, they were able to fashion a kind of colourless "realism" that was well-suited to depicting the gravity and authenticity of rural poverty. She writes: "Documentary photographers were equally drawn to such untrammelled sites. They recognised their historical significance, sought them out, and framed their views to emphasise the quality of isolation and removal in the underdeveloped regions they visited. Even more importantly, black and white photographs could achieve a similar effect in locales that were far less removed than Odum. And when they were displayed in urban venues or in magazines sporting garish covers, feature stores and ads, the monochromatic photographs appeared simultaneously powerfully real and other-worldly." Sally Stein, "The Rhetoric of the Colorful and the Colorless," 334.

agrarian region that was being crystallised within the American popular imaginary by the FSA. As the 1970s ushered in a profound, yet nevertheless uneven shift in the region's political-economic model, a constellation of ascendent colour photographic practices were harnessed in order to give visual expression to this rupture, recoding the South as a region roughly in sync with the dynamics of late-capitalism.[174] The ossification of this dichotomy, in which monochrome and polychrome photography were mapped onto these new and old Souths, respectively, meant that Jackson's colour photographs of southern prison farms could only ever appear disjunctive. While, on the one hand, his photographs indexed the colourful photographic register of American excess, on the other, they depicted the impoverished subjects and open landscapes of Depression-era documentary.

In his 1969 book *The Emerging Republican Majority*, conservative political strategist Kevin Phillips coined the term "Sunbelt" to describe the emerging built environment that developed alongside the region's quickly changing patterns of production and consumption.[175] Actively marketed to business interests as a sunny, racially harmonious utopia, the Sunbelt offered an influx of migrants from the urban North steady, white collar jobs and spacious, air-conditioned homes, creating a stable political constituency for the nation's burgeoning conservative regime. Characterised by enormous population growth, infusions of capital from defence and technology sectors, and metastasising suburban networks, the Sunbelt contained few continuities with either the more familiar rural landscapes of the South or the existing, highly centralised urban spaces of the North. While these shifts were certainly uneven, the growth of cities like Atlanta and Dallas, Los Angeles and New Orleans inaugurated a new type of cityscape—one that resembled a patchwork quilt of highways and diffuse suburban housing. Although it was accompanied by the intensification and expansion of the prison, the Sunbelt appeared visually incommensurable with the wide, open fields photographed by Jackson and the perceptually archaic

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[174] Bruce J. Schulman *The Seventies: The Great Shift in American Culture, Society, and Politics* (New York: The Free Press, 2001); for more on the 1970s, see: Thomas Borstelmann, *The 1970s: A New Global History from Civil Rights to Economic Inequality* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011).

[175] Kevin Phillips, *The Emerging Republican Majority* (New York: Arlington House, 1969).

manual labour that sustained them. Booming white collar industries, industrial parks, shopping malls, and sprawling tracts of cookie-cutter housing were quickly encroaching upon more traditional agrarian spaces and, therefore, appeared in temporal disjuncture with the supposedly more "remote" landscapes that had been constructed by the FSA during the Great Depression.[176]

These transformations to the South's political-economic order became quickly bound up with a different photographic register—one that is perhaps best embodied by the work of William Eggleston and encapsulated its assimilation into official histories of photography by and through the fine art museum. Rather than subvert existing wisdom that had resigned colour photography to the world of commerce and advertising, Eggleston's practice embraced the everyday rhetoric of colour, using it to examine the models of consumption and automotive transportation that had been facilitated by the Sunbelt's quickly homogenising built environment.[177] As a result, Eggleston's photographs often framed the South as a region that contained significant continuities with the material excesses that came to define the American experience. For Eggleston, the South was not a place in which a more authentic, agrarian form life could be salvaged or a site of ongoing dispossession and exploitation, but rather a region that was roughly in sync with the country as a whole. His photographs suggest that, if the South was haunted by a dark past, this was only through the spectre of its symbolic register, evoked through a kind of empty pastiche. Eggleston's well-known photograph of a neon confederate flag against a night sky, for example, hints at a new kind of southern identity that, while it may not have been completely severed from its history, only can invoke the past through floating signifiers. In this photograph, the South's formerly potent cultural symbols are reduced to kitschy memorabilia of a bygone era (fig 2.11).

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[176] For more on the uneven and combined growth of the Sunbelt South, see: Michelle Nickerson, *Sunbelt Rising: The Politics of Space, Place, and Region* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011); Sean P. Cuningham, *American Politics in the Postwar Sunbelt: Conservative Growth in a Battleground Region* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

[177] Sally Eauclaire is perhaps most widely known for bringing these colour photographic practices to the attention of the art world. Her landmark survey of colour photographic practices entitled "New Color Photography" appeared in 1987. She has curated many other exhibitions of colour photography and written many accompanying texts. See: Sally Eauclaire, *New Color/New Work* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1984); *The New Color Photography* (New York, Abbeville Press, 1981); *American Independents: Eighteen Color Photographers* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1987).

The past may be present, but only in a highly attenuated form—one that is reproduced and consumed through representation.

For Jackson, on the other hand, the past was an extent reality, an "artificially maintained anachronism" that was continually being reconstructed and renewed in the context of the prison farm. By differentially invoking the past, Jackson's colour photographs illustrate how the remaking of the racially-divided, economically "backwards" American South of the 1960s into an amicable, thriving economic zone during the 1970s was a vexed, inequitable process. Bruce Schulman underscores this fragmentation, describing the Sunbelt as "the *importation* of a new regional economy"—one that didn't replace, but rather sat on top of an existing political-economic regime.[178] Jackson's photographs of incarcerated agricultural workers suggest that, despite its tenuous material necessity, agrarian labour remained central to the management of a dispossessed surplus population—one that was disproportionately comprised of black, young men from urban centres.[179] Jackson's work suggests that, spurred by a new phase of uneven and combined development, the South was once again experiencing a heightened moment of contradiction between its "old" and "new" political-economic regimes, each of which became mapped onto distinct photographic and chromatic registers. By insisting on the inextricability of these disparate, yet compatible modes of production from their mediation, Jackson's photographs, following Fredric Jameson, "dispel the banal and apolitical conception of a service economy" that has come to define photographic histories of 1970s America.[180] Instead, these photographs reveal that the South's supposedly linear transition from Cotton Belt to Sunbelt is a product of the way in which the region has been mediated and its history has been written.

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[178] Emphasis added. Bruce J. Schulman, *From Cotton Belt to Sunbelt: Federal Policy, Economic Development, and the Transformation of the South, 1938-1980* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991), 169.

[179] See Gilmore's seminal study of the function of mass incarceration in California: *Golden Gulag: Prisons, Surplus, Crisis, and Opposition in Globalizing California* (Berkeley: UC California Press, 2007).

[180] Jameson's words are worth reproducing in full: "To insist on the mediation of the labor process is thus to dispel the banal and apolitical conception of a service economy but also to insist on the epistemological and cultural consequences of this shift, consequences insufficiently foregrounded by the current language of some opposition between 'Fordism' and a newly 'flexible' capitalism." Fredric Jameson, "The End of Temporality," *Critical Inquiry*, Vol 29 No 4 (Summer 2003), 702.

The fact that, in the 1970s, it was William Eggleston's work that would come to signify a radical break with existing representations of the American South and, therefore, contribute to the illegibility of Jackson's colour photographs of the prison farm, is especially telling in light of Eggleston's particular upbringing. Born in Memphis, Tennessee, Eggleston spent much of his childhood in Tallahatchie County, Mississippi and, more specifically, on the cotton plantation that had belonged to his family for generations. According to William Ferris, a friend of both Bruce Jackson and William Eggleston, as well as a longtime chronicler of southern folk culture in his own right, the Eggleston family plantation shared a border with Parchman Farm, a notorious antebellum plantation turned maximum-security penitentiary that remains in operation today. Like the Arkansas and Texas penitentiaries photographed by Jackson between 1964 and 1979, the eighteen-thousand acre prison farm heavily relied on forced agricultural labour not only to supply the prison with food and textiles, but also to discipline and surveil the booming incarcerated population. Similarly, the neglected facility underwent enormous cosmetic changes in the 1960s and 1970s, transforming Parchman Farm into a more modern, rationalised regime of punishment.[181] While Jackson never photographed the Mississippi prison farm, it is this particular institution and the work songs sung inside its walls that Alan Lomax, following in the footsteps of his father John, would photograph and record on his famed "Southern Journey" in 1959 and 1960.

In the early 1960s, before Eggleston and his colour photographs came to the attention of mainstream fine art institutions, he took a number of pictures of Parchman Farm and its prisoners. In contrast with his signature chromatic language, Eggleston chose to execute these images in black-and-white.[182] It seems that, even when geographically adjacent in the Mississippi Delta, when a position from which to apprehend the entanglements between these "Old" and "New" Souths was perhaps uniquely available, the prison simply could not be seen as contemporaneous with Eggleston’s milieu. In the last

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[181] For a history of Parchman Farm, see: David M. Oshinsky, *Worse than Slavery: Parchman Farm and the Ordeal of Jim Crow Justice* (New York: Free Press, 1996).

[182] Ferris describes these photographs as "important black-and-white images of Parchman Penitentiary inmates and bluesman Mississippi Fred McDowell" in his book *The South in Colour: A Visual Journal* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2016) , 4.

decade, the photographer's black-and-white pictures have been widely exhibited and published in accompanying catalogues.[183] However, rather than complicate the association of Eggleston with the sudden explosion of colour practices in the 1970s, these books reify the progressive movement from mono to polychrome. One of these books, entitled *Before Color*, not only hints in its very title at a linear development of Eggleston's aesthetic, but also gestures towards the way in which Eggleston's work has been seen to divide the history of photography, and even the world itself, into a time before and after colour. Eggleston's black-and-white Parchman Farm photographs appear neither in the exhibitions themselves nor in the publications that emerged in their wake. Rather, the selected black-and-white photographs mirror those Eggleston would go on to make in colour: one particular picture, for instance, depicts a gaudy chandelier that, captured at a canted angle and protruding from a flat ceiling, seems to anticipate his well-known, acutely angled photograph of a single lightbulb in a garish, red room. It seems that, in order to write a coherent, linear narrative of Eggleston's transition to colour, Parchman Farm simply could not be seen as internal to the world he would render in his later Kodachromes.

By shifting to colour in the mid-1960s, Eggleston sought to distance his photography from the visual register of the FSA, which Eggleston perceived as a dated caricature. As Grace Elizabeth Hale has written, while for the FSA the South was "clear and crisp, black and white, geographically open before the camera and yet lost in time," for Eggleston the region was "not the folksy land beloved by music fans and folklorists for its authentic way of life and rustic charm." Rather, it was just like the rest of the country, a place of "eroticism, bodily pleasures, desire and decadence."[184] Eggleston's confrontation with the regional identity manufactured by the FSA is clearly evident in his early work that, exhibited at the Museum of Modern Art in 1976, was published in an accompanying monograph entitled *William*

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[183] See: William Eggleston, *Before Color,* ed. Chris Burnside et al, (Göttingen: Steidl, 2010); William Eggleston; *From Black-and-White to Color* (Göttingen: Steidl, 2014).

[184] Grace Elizabeth Hale, "Eggleston's South: Always in Colour," *Southern Spaces* (June 27, 2013), accessed 17 November 2020. https://southernspaces.org/2013/egglestons-south-always-color, accessed 7 March 2019.

Eggleston's Guide.[185] The book features forty-eight colour plates that, taken in the first half of the decade, primarily capture scenes from Memphis, Tennessee, where the photographer lived, and Tallahatchie County, Mississippi, where Eggleston was born in 1939 and spent much of his childhood. While the title may seem to promise a privileged tour through quintessentially "southern" locales, what it offers is mostly at odds with the existing photographic register of the "Old South." Instead, Eggleston presents tilted views of mostly middle-class residents and suburban spaces, producing images that *New York Times* critic Hilton Kramer would later pan as "dismal figures inhabiting a commonplace world of little visual interest."[186]

Reflecting on his desire to depart from received ways of constructing the South, Eggleston suggests that his denial of the FSA's photographic conventions was part of a deliberate, strategic attempt to reframe the region in the collective American consciousness: "You know what the chickens on the front porch look like" Eggleston commented in 1989, "you don't have to see another picture of them. Although good pictures can still be made of them. But those kinds of pictures don't show much of how the South is today—which is increasingly the same as the rest of the country, with suburbs and shopping malls and all the rest of it."[187] Fast-food stands, roadside detritus, women's fashion and hairstyles, car interiors, and plushly carpeted living rooms are all given pride of place, imbued with the rich and naturalistic tonal range of Eggleston's Kodachrome film. A technology typically associated with commercial photography, Kodachrome imparts an exceptional sharpness and level of detail to these typically overlooked timestamps that, just as the "Peaches!" sign exclaims in one of Eggleston's images from the 1976 MoMA exhibition, emphatically declare their banal and ephemeral nature (fig 2.12). Whereas black-and-white was one of the primary mechanisms through which many FSA photographers

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[185] William Eggleston and John Szarkowski, *William Eggleston's Guide,* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1976).

[186] Hilton Kramer, "Art: Focus on Photo Shows," *The New York TImes*, 28 May 1976, Section C, 18.

[187] In this same interview, Eggleston doubled down on this point: "I've seen many pictures that are about the southernness of the South — the sense that it's a separate culture with its own history, its own ethos. And I'd rather not be associated with those kinds of images…for me there's no surprise in photographs of that sort." See: Charles Hagan, "An Interview with William Eggleston," *Aperture 115* "New Southern Photography: Between Myth and Reality (Summer 1989).

were able to paper over the visual effects of modern consumerism, Kodachrome serves to emphasise the Coca-Cola signs, garish fabrics, and roadside detritus that populate Eggleston's early work. During the Great Depression, colourlessness helped to present an image of the rural South as untouched by the patterns of consumption that had taken hold in the urban North. The region's ostensible segregation from consumer culture was often elided with its moral purity, depicting the South as somehow isolated from the corruption and lasciviousness that had infiltrated other spheres of American culture. Sally Stein explains:

> To the extent that commercial forms of display were increasingly dependent upon the use of colour, the monochrome rendering of everyday life produced a leveling effect, creating a greater sense of parity between disparate phenomenon. The products of commercial culture that figured in such photograph were less conspicuous in shades of grey...it could be said that the thirties black and white photography tended to muffle the din of commerce by nullifying the impact of colour. The strain of desire for pleasure and change was virtually (and virtuously) eliminated from documentary's field of vision.[188]

By suggesting that the agrarian South was somehow untouched by the temptations of commodity culture, these photographs implied that their subjects were not blameworthy for their own impoverishment; rather, they were victims who deserved the relief provided by Roosevelt's New Deal programs. In contrast, Eggleston's photographs highlight the excesses and decadences of middle-class southern life. While dinner tables are staged with buttery biscuits and hunks of sinewy meat, figures are framed in languid positions of exaggerated leisure, their pearly-white bodies draped across neatly cropped lawns (figs 2.13, 2.14). Labouring bodies, on the other hand, are scantly featured. Even when they do appear, for instance, in this 1971 photograph of Eggleston's well-dressed uncle shadowed by his driver Jasper, this service work, while obviously racialised, seems a world apart from the manual toil catalogued by Jackson (fig 2.15). Perhaps this focus on the extravagance, as opposed to the scarcity of southern life, is why, in his introduction to the 1976 *Guide*, John Szarkowski wrote that "these are subjects capable not only of the familiar modern vices (self-loathing, adaptability, dissembling,

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[188] Stein, "The Rhetoric of the Colorful and the Colorless," 191-192.

sanctimony, and license), but of the ancient ones (pride, parochial stubbornness, irrationality, selfishness, and lust)."[189] In other words, Eggleston's South was no longer populated by the honest, weather-beaten workers depicted by the FSA, but rather defined by the region's deadened aristocracy, its material trappings, and intensely privatised spaces.

A closer look at Eggleston's photographs reveals how these images do not simply produce a break with historical modes of representation in their content, but also inscribe these transformations to the region's built environment into the pictorial form of the photographic images themselves. Unlike Jackson's photographs of labouring black prisoners, which harness the dramatic horizon line to invoke the expansive potentiality of the southern landscape, Eggleston's images offer a highly constrained, continually impeded visual field. Replete with canted angles and bevelled corners, Eggleston's photographs feature stuffy living rooms, heavy red ceilings, and claustrophobic car interiors. The horizon line is always just beyond the photograph's frame or barely visible outside a smudgy window. This photograph, for example, captures a young girl, standing on the porch of a miniature play house (fig 2.16). Flanked by two columns, she faces the camera and leans against the doorway, marking the boundary between private and public, inside and outside. Eggleston's composition highlights the fences and boundaries that further parcel the land beyond: the play house is nested inside a back garden, which is nested within a broader suburban community. Eggleston's photograph allows us to see the way in which, during the 1970s, the capacity to picture the horizon line as an uninterrupted expanse seemed increasingly constrained by the proliferation of a new kind of built environment—one that was incompatible with the South's more agrarian past.

Even when the conventions of southern landscape appear throughout Eggleston's early photographs, small details are used to quickly subvert any sense of spatial or temporal remove from the Sunbelt. Colour often operates to bring these particular features to the fore. A black woman in a striking, lime green dress or a pile of discarded, plastic litter interrupt these ostensibly rural landscapes, drawing

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[189] Eggleston and Szarkowski, *Eggleston's Guide* 6.

the eye away from the horizon line and the land beyond (fig 2.17). In Eggleston's photographs, the land is not a site of timeless, agrarian simplicity or productive possibility. Rather, it is an interstitial, transitory place that, merely sitting between private homes or shopping centres, is no longer fundamentally necessary to the visual discourse or material reality of southern life. If, in the 1930s, the empty, open road remained a distinct, photographic possibility, in the 1970s, Eggleston suggests that this kind of iconography could no longer be located in the face of increasing regional development. Many of Eggleston's views of the road are shot from below, impeded by looming tricycles or car hoods; others are punctuated with the homogenous artefacts of post-industrial Southern life like commercial signs and car parks. This photograph, for instance, may feature the familiar visual trope of the receding road; and yet, in lieu of empty, rural land, the asphalt is bounded by split-level homes, pert mailboxes, and a parked car. The photograph suggests that the photographic vernacular of the rural, Old South was no longer open and accessible to Eggleston's camera (fig 2.18).

For curators like Szarkowski and many other critics who were writing about photography in the 1970s, Eggleston's embrace of colour, coupled with his rejection of conventional documentary subject matter, pointed to a rupture with historical modes of photographic representation. In turn, black-and-white was considered passé—it represented a "belief in visual truths" and an "assumption of compulsory engagement with the world" that many believed had lost relevancy in a post-sixties landscape.[190] Unlike the concerned, committed politics with which black-and-white had been associated, Eggleston's colour work "flaunted a sense of apathy toward social life," casting into relief the perceived earnestness of earlier documentary.[191] Writing in *Artforum* in 1978, Carol Squires insisted that, for colour photographers working in the seventies, the "idea of social commentary has been absorbed, digested and reduced to pure formalism."[192] Similarly, Colin Westerbeck Jr. echoed Szarkowski's claim that all photography had

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[190] Kevin Moore, *Starburst: Color Photography in America 1970-1980* (Berlin: Hatje Cantz, 2010), 9-10.

[191] Ibid., 10.

[192] Carol Squires, "Colour Photography: The Walker Evans Legacy and the Commercial Tradition," *Artforum* (October 1978), 67.

become a private, personal affair: "All [photographers] are now coming to think of themselves as artists. This is what happens in our age when a medium loses its social utility, when it is no longer needed to convey information."[193] For many, colour photography came to uniquely represent the here-and-now of postmodern life: "Colour photography," Janet Malcolm declared in *The New Yorker,* "which up to now had been associated with photography's most retrograde applications....suddenly became the medium's most advanced form of all."[194]

In order to write this transformative rupture into this history of photography, black-and-white had to become coded as past. When juxtaposed against the vibrancy of polychrome, black-and-white was made to appear anachronistic and out of time. Max Kozloff succinctly expresses this sentiment, writing in the mid-seventies that "viewed from the perspective of all the other full-blooded camera media, serious still photography in black-and-white offers a very archaic spectacle."[195] In this formulation, colour was the medium of the living, whereas black-and-white was relegated to the realm of the dead. However, it was Bill Jordan, commenting in *Afterimage* in 1977, who perhaps most aptly summed up the transition to colour during the decade and, in particular, its inextricability from contrasting representations of the Great Depression: "I felt like I was watching that marvellous transition in *The Wizard of Oz* when Dorothy, after being swirled through a colossal tornado, wakes up in a Technicolour land that is definitely not dust-bowl Kansas."[196] Jordan's comment not only reveals how colour and black-and-white are always rhetorically co-constitutive, but also demonstrates the way in which colour was reconfigured, in contradistinction, as the chromatic register of the present. Unlike in *The Wizard of Oz*, in which colour served to signify Dorothy's extreme distance from her mundane, everyday life in the monochrome world of Depression-era Kansas, in the 1970s, colour indicated a sense of temporal and

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[193] Colin L. Westerbeck Jr., "Photography Now," *Artforum* (January 1979), 23.

[194] Janet Malcolm, "Photography: Colour," *The New Yorker* (1977).

[195] Kozloff, "Photography: The Coming to the Age of Colour," 34.

[196] Bill Jordan, quoted in Katherine Bussard, "Full Spectrum: Expanding the History of Colour Photography in America," in Katherine Bussard and Lisa Hostetler, *Colour Rush: American Colour Photography from Stieglitz to Sherman* (New York: Aperture, 2013), 11.

spatial proximity to the everyday. By asserting the novelty of colour, these narratives recast the entire history of photography in black-and-white and, in doing so, reified the perceived pastness of monochrome.

And yet, not everyone welcomed this new polychromatic vision of the southern landscape and the fading regional identity it seemed to register. In a reference to the work of James Agee, southern writer David Madden lambasted colour photography in his 1984 essay "The Cruel Radiance of What Is." These new photographs, he lamented, lacked any continuity with the three phases of black-and-white photography with which the South had become associated: the Civil War, the Great Depression, and the Civil Rights Era. Unlike these earlier traditions that, according to Madden, offered a singularly coherent regional identity, the most recent phase in Southern literary and visual culture foregrounded the "experience of displacement" as the central feature of the region's character from the 1970s onward. "From rural, southern to an urban, national present," Madden wrote, "The South itself, of course, is becoming, especially in its shopping mall/suburban culture, more like the rest of the country."[197] Although internal migration to the South and, in particular to sprawling Sunbelt cities was certainly a defining factor in these shifting spatialities, Madden's emphasis on dislocation as the defining experience of southern life cannot help but seem ironic when juxtaposed against the extreme isolation and immobility captured by Jackson's photographs. This kind of confinement, Jackson shows, is at once spatial and temporal in nature.[198] Madden goes on to lampoon Eggleston and his photographs of the "plastic South," writing that "colour may be the death of the southern photograph. Its effects are too similar to pictures of other regions."[199]

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[197] David Madden, "The Cruel Radiance of What Is," *Southern Quarterly* (Winter 1984), 29.

[198] Domestic migration from the "Snowbelt" to the "Sunbelt" during the 1970s was a key feature of the region's development, resulting in one of the most dramatic demographic reversals in the nation's history. These patterns have been well-documented throughout the decades. See, for example: Richard D. Alba and Katherine Trent, "Population Loss and Change in the North: An Examination of New York's Migration to the Sunbelt," *Social Science Quarterly Vol 67 No 4* (December 1986), 690-707.

[199] Madden, 32.

In mourning the loss of more recognisable forms of southern life, Madden's arguments do little to challenge the way in which Eggleston's photographs were being put to work. Instead, Madden accepts the dominant wisdom that suggested colour both registered and reproduced an unprecedented break with both photographic history and southern identity. In much of the writing of the period, there is a continual elision between representation and reality, between what is contrived within the photographic frame and what is actually occurring at the level of political-economy. This conflation serves to occlude the enduring, more recognisable forms of southern life Madden misguidedly wished to salvage. If the agrarian labour captured by the FSA during the Great Depression was no longer being photographed, the story goes, then it was no longer a functioning part of the emerging Southern economy. In order to maintain the coherence of this linear transition from Old to New South, photographs like those produced by Jackson in the 1970s had to be either repressed from public discourse or recoded in black-and-white. In this way, the prison farm could be displaced into a kind of immobile time—one that was incommensurable with the upbeat tempo and political apathy of late-capitalist consumer culture. By ostensibly censoring Jackson's colour photographs from the history of photography, the prison farm could be effectively sutured into this linear history, obfuscating its key role in consolidating the emerging neoliberal political and economic order.

If a crucial feature of modernity was, as Terry Smith has argued, "the division of the world into those who live in modern times and those who, while physically present, were regarded as non-contemporaneous beings," then, upon the dawn of a perceptually distinct, "postmodern" age, it seems that this uneven temporal dynamic simply intensified. Rather than shatter into a kaleidoscopic array of fragmented and particular temporalities, the vast chasm that separated the premodern from the

postmodern subject dramatically widened.[200] At this historical juncture, the bifurcation of black-and-white and colour photography further reinscribed the perceptual distance between the prison farm and the suburban Sunbelt. While it is certainly the case that, as Ben Child has argued, Eggleston's colour work thematises the emergence of what scholars of southern literature have called the "post-southern," overemphasis on the 1970s as a period of unprecedented rupture both in the chromatic history of photography and the political-economy of the American South more broadly has done little to clarify the remarkable resilience of supposedly outmoded disciplinary practices.[201] By thinking and seeing colour photography and the 1970s through Jackson's images of prison life and labour, the internal contradictions of the Sunbelt and its development can be brought into view, allowing us to write a history of photography that frustrates the linear transition from modernity to postmodernity, Old to New South.

Differential Invocations of the Past

As black-and-white and colour photography became mapped onto the visual orders of the Old and New Souths, respectively, the capacity to think and to see the prison farm in polychrome became increasingly constrained. Nevertheless, Jackson continued to produced hundreds of colour photographs

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[200] Smith argues that this kind of temporal division dissolved alongside the withering of modernity and the rise of a more fragmented, postmodern milieu. Jackson's colour photographs of the prison farm pose a quagmire to this conception of postmodernity. Terry Smith, "Introduction," *Antinomies of Art and Culture* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 5. Similar arguments have been made by scholars of post-colonialism. See: Achille Mbembe, *On the Postcolony* (Berkeley: UC California Press, 2001), 14. Also, Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000); Harry Harootunian, "Some Thoughts on Comparability and the Space-Time Problem," *Boundary Vol 2 No 32.2* (2005), 23-52.

[201] For Ben Child, Eggleston's photographs "offer a compelling visual manifestation of the 'post-southern,'" and, in this way, seek to "deconstruct ideas about the exclusivity of southern spaces and identities." These sentiments are echoed by John Szarkowski's reading of Eggleston's work. In 1976, Szarkowski wrote: "...it would be convenient if one could claim, or suggest, that this book of photographs answers, or contributes to the answer of, some large social or cultural question, such as, Whither the South? or Whither America? depending on one's viewing distance. The fact is that Eggleston's pictures do not seem concerned with large questions of this sort. They seem concerned simply with describing life." See: Ben Child, "Mapping the Democratic Forest: The Post-Southern Spaces of William Eggleston," *Southern Cultures Vol 17 No 2* (Summer 2011), 37-54. For more on the "post-southern" as a literary phenomenon, see: Michael Kreyling, *Inventing Southern Literature* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1998); Martyn Bone, *The Postsouthern Sense of Place in Contemporary Fiction* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2005).

of the prison farm, most of which have sat dormant in his home for many decades. The discursive context of the 1960s and 1970s clarifies why Jackson's colour photographs were not just repressed, but have, in our current context, come to appear otherworldly, surreal, or disjunctive. They refuse the chromatic codes through which the region's disparate spatial geographies were being made over into divergent temporal registers. However, as I will argue, Jackson's photographs are more than acts of refusal or negation. Rather, they are productive of histories in their own right. Just as the folklore and work songs Jackson recorded were constituted by a process of diverging returns, so too do Jackson's photographs differentially invoke the past. They work on and over representations of the sharecropping farm and, through it, the antebellum plantation, allowing us to see how structures are remade. In addition to their production of alternative histories, these colour photographs open up the possibility of mapping nation and its shifting geographies. Following the prompt offered by Ruth Wilson Gilmore, I read the photographic frame as an interface—one that can bring into focus the relations that structure American hegemony both at home and abroad.

In contrast with much of Jackson's archive, one photograph, taken at the Ellis Unit, stands out for its rare exclusion of both prisoners and guards. Turning the camera away from the figures that typically populate his other photographs, Jackson closely frames a pair of leather work boots (fig 2.19). The boots are situated within a pile of abandoned clothing, suggesting that the shoes have just been cast aside by a prisoner after a day of field work. While many of Jackson's photographs depict prisoners at work in vast agricultural fields, this photograph attends to the daily rituals to which incarcerated men were subjected upon their return to the main carceral facility. The men were required to strip off dusty work clothes, endure degrading searches by prison guards, and enter the shower facilities to wash off the day's accumulated sweat and grime. Although wrapped within a language of prison security, these rigorously choreographed routines served to manufacture the intense powerlessness of the inmate, capitalising on the profound vulnerability of the incarcerated and reproducing their subjection through visual spectacle. The photograph is unusual not just for the absence of figural forms, but also for its clear

resonance with another, more well-known photograph: Walker Evans' 1936 photograph of Alabama sharecropper Floyd Burrough's leather work boots. Featured in both in the 1941 and 1960 editions of *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men,* Evans' photograph throws Jackson's into relief as an overt remake (fig 2.20).

Jackson's composition is strongly suggestive of Evans' earlier photograph. In the 1936 image, the work boots are tightly framed against an indistinct patch of earth. While the tongue of one shoe gapes open, the material slouches towards the ground, suggesting that the boots have seen extensive and recent use. Devoid of any other details, Evans' photograph stages the boots as a metonym for their owners' body. Intensely worn from physical labour, the work boots evidence the ways in which the endless rhythms of daily toil are etched onto articles of clothing and, through it, the implied, yet absent figure of Floyd Burroughs. But although Jackson's remake is constituted by certain visual echoes, it is, at the same time, marked by significant departures from Evans' picture. In Jackson's photograph, the boots are captured from a slightly different angle and a single foot peeks into the frame. The bare toes, coupled with the discarded uniform and belt, indicate that the wearer of the work boots is being subjected to a strip search by prison guards. The image suggests that, in contrast to the sharecropper for whom the removal of certain clothing delineates a tenuous boundary between labour and leisure, for the prisoner, the work of incarceration is never finished. By turning his lens onto the daily routine of the penitentiary, Jackson expands the frame of what constitutes prison labour. He allows us to see that prison work entails, not simply the production of commodities for the free market, but rather the reproduction and reinscription of subjection.

Perhaps the most significant deviation from Evans' 1936 photograph, however, is Jackson's decision to recreate Evan's photograph in colour. In departing from Evans' chromatic register, Jackson illustrates how acts of documentary renewal are defined as much by difference as by continuity. Originally a 35mm Kodachrome slide, Jackson's image recodes Evans' black-and-white photograph in a range of warm, earthy hues, bringing the material details of the prisoner's boots into focus. By remediating Evan's photograph in colour, however, Jackson does not simply sharpen our encounter with

the surfaces and materials of prison labour; rather, he fundamentally and constitutively alters its temporal meaning. Colour recodes the anachronistic visual register of the sharecropping farm as present and ongoing, pointing to the way in which the sharecropping farm was made over into modern prison. In this way, Jackson's photograph reframes the Old South not as a neat temporal epoch with a concrete beginning and end, but rather as an iterative social relation—one that can be reconfigured over time. Through this recoding, Jackson enacts an alternative model of history, excavating the ways in which the uneven social relations that encumbered the life of Floyd Burroughs continue to circumscribe the humanity of incarcerated men in the present. Jackson's remake allows us to see how structures are remade.

Just as *Conversations with the Dead* places pressure on the reduction of the photographic remake to a symptom of late-capitalist nostalgia, so too do Jackson's photographs complicate the postmodern theories of return that have defined ways of understanding visual recurrence. For instance, in his seminal book *Postmodernism, or The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, Fredric Jameson turns to images of shoes in order to unpack the inter-textual tendencies of postmodern visual representation. Jameson's argument centres around Andy Warhol's 1980 series of prints *Diamond Dust Shoes*, which render an array of women's footwear in neon hues against a black backdrop (fig 2.21).[202] Jameson compares Warhol's prints to Van Gogh's 1886 painting of weathered boots, a work that, Jameson argues, exemplifies the expressive visual language of high modernism. In contrast to Van Gogh's painting, Jameson claims, Warhol's print employs the "deathly quality" of the photographic negative, pointing, in other words, only to the depthlessness and superficiality of its own representative capacities.[203] Rather than gesture to meaning that lies beyond or outside the frame, Warhol's redeployment of both Van Gogh and Evans' subject matter, Jameson suggests, nihilistically confronts the limits of what can be encountered through

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[202] Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991). Warhol's print is featured on the cover of Jameson's text, suggesting that the work not only essential to the argument of the book as a whole, but also can be seen to encapsulate Jameson's conception of postmodernism as a cultural dominant.

[203] Ibid., 9.

representation. Images, Warhol seems to say, are inextricable from and overdetermined by a visual language of consumption and commodification.[204] For Warhol, there is no outside.

At stake in these postmodern visual returns, Jameson suggests, is not simply the vexed relationship between signifier and signified, but also the gradual emptying out of images' historical meaning. If the postmodern remake operates through parody or pastiche, as Jameson argues, then history is flattened into a repertoire of visual styles, evacuated of its capacity to interrupt or to speak in the present. "In faithful conformity to poststructuralist linguistic theory," Jameson explains, "the past finds itself gradually bracketed, and then effaced altogether, leaving us with nothing but texts."[205] For Jameson, photography is thoroughly implicated in this "weakening of historicity." He explains: "the remarkable current intensification of an addiction to the photographic image is itself a tangible symptom of an omnipresent, omnivorous, and well-nigh libidinal historicism."[206] Jackson, however, forges a path for the photographic remake beyond this endless play of representation. By modelling the processes through which relations of domination are remade and reinscribed, Jackson's remediation of Evans' photograph poses a quagmire to postmodern conceptions of appropriation. Rather than invoke images of the past so as to deaden the impact of history on the present, Jackson's use of colour constitutes a refusal to sideline or to silence history. For Jackson, polychrome is not a more analogically pure mode of representation; rather, it is the means through which to challenge how the prison farm has been written into history and made to appear past.

While Jackson's homage to Walker Evans is perhaps his most overt reference to the photographic register of the Great Depression, the resonances between Jackson's prison photography and the work of the FSA recur throughout his archive. Jackson's work shares a deep kinship with the documentary work

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[204] These arguments are fleshed out in the first chapter of Jameson's book entitled "The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism." They can also be found in: Fredric Jameson, "Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism," *New Left Review 146* (July-August), 59-92.

[205] Ibid., 18.

[206] Ibid., 18.

of Dorothea Lange—a photographer whose pictures of Depression-era life and labour have often come to stand in for the Great Depression in its entirety.[207] These repetitions are foregrounded in Jackson's many photographs of stooped labourers, hunched over in the vast cotton fields beneath the blistering southern sun. Just as Lange endlessly played with the juxtaposition of worker and field, so too does Jackson find innumerable ways to render these vistas into photographic compositions, constructing a myriad tableaux of agrarian work from an array of angles, distances and heights. On several occasions, Jackson chose to photograph from horseback for a single day, capturing the incarcerated workers, abstracted and u-shaped, as they appeared from the domineering height of the prison guards.[208] In one 1968 photograph, taken at close range, Jackson closely frames three men at work amidst a tangle of thorny cotton plants (fig 2.22). Rather than produce these figures as individual subjects, Jackson harnesses photography's capacity to generalise and type, transforming the bent bodies into abstract symbols of unending labour. Taken just beneath eye level, Jackson's photograph evidences the way in which agricultural labour inscribes itself on the body and overdetermines its visual form.

Many of Jackson's photographs strategically position incarcerated workers next to the prison guards who surveil them, giving visual expression to the dramatic power asymmetry between prisoner and boss through strategic vantage points and camera angles. In one photograph, a single prisoner is photographed in conversation with a guard, who leans against his saddled horse with one hand placed on his hip (fig 2.23). The picture is taken from a significant distance, heightening the two figures' isolation within a large, empty field and, in this way, emphasising the prisoner's intense vulnerability. Another photograph frames a group of prisoners from behind, their bodies uniformly stooped over thorny cotton plants. A prison guard on horseback is arrested by the camera with his legs slightly askew

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[207] There has been a resurgent interest in the work of Dorothea Lange in recent years. These returns are united by a desire to rethink her archive and its relationship to her now iconic photograph "Migrant Mother." See: Sally Stein, *Migrant Mother, Migrant Gender* (London: MACK Books, 2020); Sam Contis, *Day Sleeper* (MACK Books, 2020); Sarah Meister, *Dorothea Lange: Migrant Mother* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 2021).

[208] Jackson reflects on this experience, writing that "from atop the horse, I found myself looking down on the cottonpickers, looking directly *at* the other people on horses. There is no way to chat casually with someone when you are on a horse and he is on the ground; those two or three feet of height make all the difference in the world...The guards experience this; the convicts sense this. They sense it all the time. That is a major part of what prison is about." Jackson, *Wake Up Dead Man*, 44.

and arms in the air, suggesting that he has just thrown something across the field in the direction of his look (fig 2.24). His spontaneous motion, candid and unposed before the camera, sharply contrasts with the rigid, bent figures of the prisoners, whose bodies are disciplined and constrained by the labour they perform. These juxtapositions recall Lange's 1936 photograph of what Lange terms a "plantation overseer" who, flanked by five sharecroppers, is pictured outside a corner store (fig 2.25). While the fleshy overseer stands erect, poised with a foot on his car bumper so as to signify his status, the field hands sit behind, covertly returning the camera's look. Emphatically reminiscent of the way in which relationship between slave and overseer has been represented, both Jackson and Lange's photographs place vividly on display what the antebellum archive actively suppressed: the relations of domination through which enslavement was constituted.

In addition to his preoccupation with labouring bodies, Jackson provides an intensely granular mapping of the means through which the earth is transformed into landscape—a process that is fully illuminated by the use of colour. His detailed photographs of work strongly evoke what Linda Gordon has described as Lange's "sociological" approach to documenting agricultural labor.[209] The muddy earth is disciplined into lush green rows, which ultimately produce enormous piles of white cotton. In one photograph, Jackson frames a figure with a spade raised above his head, as if he about to strike the soil. Prisoners stand on either side of his body and stretch into the distance, tilling the mound of earth in preparation for a new row of cotton plants (fig 2.26). The photograph's colourful hues foreground the labour through which the empty land is reordered into a productive field: from left to right, the rows of earth fade from green to brown, from already tilled to not yet sowed, hinting at the unending work that undergirds the production of a fertile landscape. Another picture, awash with soft, painterly hues, frames a half dozen prisoners as they squat towards the soil to thin newly planted cotton seedlings (fig 2.27). The photograph evidences the exacting precision with which the prisoners must delicately grasp the tiny,

[209] Linda Gordon, "Dorothea Lange: The Photographer as Agricultural Sociologist," *Journal of American History* Vol 93 No 3, (December 2006), 698-727.

green shoots, as they crouch towards the earth to gingerly pluck individual plants with pinched fingers. Jackson rigorously attends to the entirety of a days work: he documents the prisoners from when they exit the gated penitentiary in the morning to when they are stripped searched in the evening upon their return from the fields. He offers slipping glimpses of rest and solidarity, recording prisoners as they exchange a lighter or pass a steel cup filled with water.

Jackson produces repetitions with a difference. He recodes Lange's sharecropping farm in colour, modelling the way in which the relations that characterised the Depression and, through it, the plantation made over into the modern prison. His photographs refute the disavowal of the plantation from the visual discourse of the South, reframing slavery as a social relation, rather than a temporally-bounded historical event. In order to produce a visual history of the plantation, Jackson suggests, remakes are required. These pictures reaffirm Hazel Carby's conception of racialisation as a mediated process through which identities are actively and relationally produced. These racialised identities, Carby explains, are not only constituted in relation to others, but also, following Stuart Hall, invariably exist within representation.[210] Highlighting the unfolding temporality of racialisation, Carby rightly draws attention to the potential for narrative to engage what she describes as "the composite nature of the creation of the subject."[211] By remediating the plantation by way of a detour through the Thirties, Jackson's photographs have a similarly narrational capacity, expanding the documentary timestamp beyond the unique or decisive moment that is spliced by the camera. Jackson's images actively reveal what the singularity of the photographic moment can often belie: long histories and ongoing temporalities. In this way, Jackson offers the possibility of reading the prison farm as an open-ended process of mediation—one that actively reconstructs enslavement as a symbolic form of punishment.

By framing racialisation as a process of mediation, Jackson's photographs caution against the reduction of racial difference to skin colour. Indeed, many of his photographs feature white or white-

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[210] Hazel Carby, "Becoming Modern Racialized Subjects," *Cultural Studies* Vol 23, No 4 (2009), 624-657. Here, Carby is quoting Stuart Hall and his essay "Old and New Identities, Old and New Ethnicities."

[211] Ibid., 627.

passing subjects, toiling in the prison farm's vast, agricultural fields. In recording the intermingling of differently coloured bodies, Jackson's archive tracks, on the one hand, the gradual desegregation of prison work gangs throughout these decades and, on the other, the almost unprecedented explosion of the prison population as a temporary solution to widespread deindustrialisation. In this way, these photographs usher us away from considering race exclusively through the lens of chromatism. Instead, they ask us to take seriously Stuart Hall's contention that race is the modality through which class is lived and "worked through."[212] In this context, race is best understood as a process and not a thing. Always shifting and indeterminate, race is constituted not by the stigmatisation of particular skin tones, but rather, following Ruth Wilson Gilmore, the "production and exploitation of group-differentiated vulnerability to premature death."[213] Perhaps this is why, in her essay "Abolition Geography and the Problem of Innocence," Gilmore writes: "If as Stuart Hall argued back in the late 1970s, race is the modality through which class is lived, then mass incarceration is *class* war."[214] Jackson's photographs remind us of this fact and, in doing so, throw into relief the points of departure between prison farm and antebellum plantation.

In recasting the past as present, Jackson's use of colour unites the prison with the temporal horizon of 1960s and 1970s American life, much of which was being conveyed to the public for the first time in colour. Across the 1965 to 1966 television season, for instance, over half of prime time television programmes switched from black-and-white to colour and, as a result, Americans began buying over ten thousand colour television sets per day. In 1966, the *TV Buyers' Guide* devoted its entire issue to the topic, boldly announcing that "black, white, and gray are out of the living room. Red, green, blue, yellow, vermillion, fuchsia, and magenta, and company are in—very, very in." (fig 2.28)[215] Since the 1930s, so-

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[212] Stuart Hall et al., *Policing the Crisis: Mugging, the State, and Law and Order* (London: Macmillan, 1978), 394.

[213] Ruth Wilson Gilmore, *Golden Gulag*, 28.

[214] Emphasis in the original. Ruth Wilson Gilmore, "Abolition Geographies and the Problem of Innocence," *Futures of Black Radicalism*, ed. Gaye Theresa Johnson and Alex Lubin (London: Verso, 2017, 230).

[215] David Lachenbruch, "Everything's Coming Up Color," *TV Buyers Guide* (1966), http://www.bretl.com/tvarticles/documents/TVGuide1966BuyersGuide.pdf

called "current" affairs were overwhelmingly seen in monochrome. While narrative fiction films and commercial advertisements began gradually embracing colour, documentary newsreels and other, more "realistic" genres such as war films remained in black-and-white so as to capitalise on and perpetuate the perceived authenticity and realism of monochrome. So although popular magazines began printing news stories in colour as early as 1941, black-and-white photography remained the default well into the 1950s: colour was reserved for the fantastical worlds constructed in Hollywood films and the manufactured desire of publicity images. A decade later, however, this once ossified dichotomy had dramatically blurred. Colour no longer embodied purely commercial connotations; instead, it was mobilised to imbue photojournalism and nightly news with a sense of excitement and urgency.[216] By 1965, almost all network television programming and popular picture magazines were in colour; in turn, black-and-white reportage was, as Richard Misek has written, "quickly becoming a broadcast anachronism."[217]

By recoding the time of agricultural labour, Jackson's photographs invite an alternative, critical understanding of America's shifting geographies—one that can be read across the interfaces of this newly colour visual culture. Brought directly into American homes through both nightly television news and popular picture magazines, the Vietnam War, particularly after 1965, unfolded, not in the faded black-and-white tones of the archaic documentary newsreel, but in colour. Although, after the conflict was termed the nation's first "living room war" in 1969, there has been significant debate over the scale, content, and influence of television on public opinion towards the war, there is little doubt that the escalation of the Vietnam War developed in lock-step with the expansion the half-hour television news program. These entanglements between the war and its mediatisation resulted in what Kathleen McClancy has called a "synergistic relationship between the war and the news in which each promoted

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[216] Kim Timby, "Look at those Lollipops! Integrating Color into News Pictures," in *Getting the Picture: The Visual Culture of News*, ed. Jason Hill and Vanessa Schwartz (London: Bloomsbury, 2015).

[217] Richard Misek, *Chromatic Cinema: A History of Screen Color* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 84.

and popularised the other."[218] Between 1965 and 1975, Vietnam dominated evening news programs like no other event—it was transformed into a serialised, televisual drama whose unprecedented sense of immediacy and intensity could be revisited night after night. The one-day turnover of colour film allowed for a rapid dissemination of visual and aural information that, while it may not have conclusively led to the public turning against the war, certainly shaped the perceived tempo and temporality of warfare, as well as the demands of news itself: the war made colour television into, as Perry Anderson has described, "the most powerful medium of all in the postmodern period itself."[219] [220]

If, in this shifting context, black-and-white became tied to a receding past before the social upheaval of the 1960s, then colour became bound up with the opposite temporal mode. By rendering the prison farm in colour, Jackson pictures the prison, not as a latent relic from a remote past, but as an active and inextricable part of America and its shifting geographies. While the Vietnam War certainly suffused television news cycles during the 1960s and 1970s, still images published in major picture magazines like *Time* and *Newsweek* were just as contested terrain upon which the battle for public opinion was waged.[221] As war correspondent Robert Elegent asserted in 1981, the period marked "the first time in modern history that the outcome of a war was determined not on the battlefield, but on the printed page."[222] Some of the war's most iconic images, such as those taken by Ron Haeberle of the 1968 My Lai massacre, were not only first introduced to the public in newspapers and picture magazines, but also

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[218] Kathleen McClancy, "The Iconography of Violence: Television, Vietnam and the Soldier Hero," *Film & History* Vol 43, No 2 (Fall 2013)."

[219] Michael Anderegg, *Inventing Vietnam: The War in Film and Television* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991).

[220] Anderson also writes that, for postmodernism, the "true moment of its ascendancy did not come until the arrival of color television." Perry Anderson, *The Origins of Postmodernism* (London: Verso Books, 1998), 87-89, 122.

[221] Photography played a critical role in framing the war within the American imagination not only because the technology was still more nimble than early television equipment, but also because photographs were well-suited to giving structure and narrative to a diffuse and formless conflict. See: Oscar Patterson III, "Television's Living Room War in Print," *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly* Vol 61 No 1 (March 1984), 35-136.

[222] Elegant, a correspondent who covered the Vietnam War for the Los Angeles Times, made this comment in a 1981 essay. Quotes in William M. Hammond, *Reporting Vietnam: Media and Military at War* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1998).

widely published and disseminated in colour (fig 2.29).[223] Larry Burrows, a British photojournalist who executed many Vietnam spreads for *LIFE Magazine* before his death in 1971, pioneered the use of colour in war reporting, honing his chromatic language while undertaking earlier assignments photographing paintings across Europe and creating exoticised travel stories in Asia and the Middle East.[224] His first spread for *LIFE*, published in January 1963, was a fourteen page photoessay that included twelve colour photographs. The story was featured on the cover with the title "In Color: The Vicious Fighting in Vietnam." At the time, Burrows' use of colour to enhance the physical and psychic drama of the war and, in particular, the seemingly impenetrable, tangled green landscape against which it unfolded, was so attractive that it merited mentioning on the magazine's cover (figs 2.30, 2.31).

When seen in colour, Jackson's photographs open up the possibility of reading these internal sites of social control alongside a massive nation-building project that was being undertaken across the 1960s and 1970s—one that was unfolding on both foreign and domestic soil. By seeing these disparate photographic spaces as rooted in the same temporal coordinates, the inextricable link between and shared purpose of, on the one hand, the disciplinary strategies of the carceral state and, on the other, the repressive function of the American imperial project can be brought into view. The notion that the expansion of domestic punitive structures should be thought in conjunction with the nation's ever-expanding military adventures abroad was hardly exceptional, especially in the 1960s and 1970s. In fact, Jackson's way of picturing the prison farm as folded into a much broader, nation-building project strongly resonates with some of the main provocations posed by black radical thinkers and activists at

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[223] Like Bruce Jackson, Ron Haeberle also traveled with three cameras: while his two personal cameras were loaded with colour film, the camera given to him by the American military was loaded with black-and-white. Haeberle chose to document the search-and-destroy mission at My Lai with both the army's camera, in black-and-white, and with his own, in colour. The army clearly aimed to censor some of the material, as many of the black-and-white photographs remained undeveloped until the internal investigation was underway. As Amy Schlegel has argued, the difference in content between the rolls of colour and black-and-white film offer profound insight into how photojournalists pandered to a state-sanctioned image of Vietnam, focusing on American troops in action, rather than civilian casualties. Haeberle's photographs were first published in his local newspaper, *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, in black-and-white on 20 November 1969, and then later came to mainstream attention when they were published in colour by *Life Magazine* on 5 December 1969. See: Amy Schlegel, "My Lai: We Lie, They Die," *Third Text Vol 9 No 31* (1995), 47-66.

[224] Liam Kennedy, "'A Compassionate Vision': Larry Burrows' Vietnam War Photography," *Photography and Culture Vol 4 No 2,* 2011, 179-194; also see: Liam Kennedy, *Afterimages: Photography and U.S. Foreign Policy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016), 13-51.

this historical juncture. This framework was perhaps most clearly articulated by members of the Black Panther Party who viewed black communities as internal colonies within the American nation-state and, therefore, naturally in alliance with colonised people around the globe—communities who were, at the same time, struggling to cast off the yoke of imperial domination.[225] In commenting on the trials that unfolded in the wake of the Attica uprising, Jackson himself drew upon this analogy between domestic and foreign struggles, saying of the official witnesses: "Some may, frankly, have buried what happened, as people do in a war."[226]

The idea that the prison was not a hermetically-sealed space of punishment, but rather intimately connected to broader, global systems of imperial domination also came to animate the countless prison rebellions that were staged throughout these decades. The continual circulation of "difficult" prisoners by the state, the establishment of an urban-to-rural prison pipeline, and the widespread dissemination of radical media and ideas resulted in a wave of prison rebellions—ones that, especially through their dramatisation in the news media, brought to the fore the intimate connections both between carceral facilities and the prison and world outside. Alongside and in the wake of the gains made in the early civil rights era, these prisoners advanced a much more fundamental critique of racial capitalism, speaking, as Dan Berger has argued, "a shared language of humanity and socialism rooted in an antiracist critique of colonialism."[227] These prisoners did not simply advocate for more civil rights or better living and working conditions, but rather posed a "critique of rights-based frameworks," challenging "the very idea of 'America' itself."[228] Prisoners not only made use of black radical thought, but also themselves became

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[225] Joshua Bloom and Waldo E. Martin Jr., *Black Against Empire: The History and Politics of the Black Panther Party,* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2015).

[226] Jackson was, as one *New York Times* article describes, a "fixture" at the Attica trials across the early 1990s. See: William Glaberson, "At Attica Trial, a Clash of 20-Year-Old Memories," *New York Times* (24 December 1991); Andrew Yarrow, "Reporter's Notebook: After 17 Years, the Attica Trial Lives," *New York Times* (11 January 1992).

[227] Dan Berger, *Captive Nation: Black Prison Organising in the Civil Rights Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014), 3; also see: Lisa M. Corrigan, *Prison Power: How Prison Influenced the Movement for Black Liberation* (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 2016).

[228] Berger, *Captive Nation*, 3.

strategic symbols for a generation of activists—ones who considered prisons as a crucial pressure point with a global system of racial domination. Upon entering a new age of ostensible legal equality, the blossoming carceral state revealed the ways in which racial inequality remained constitutive to the remapping of the American project, attuning radical activists and thinkers to the fact that the realisation of a genuinely post-racial society would involve a much deeper struggle against capitalism and imperialism.[229]

By recoding the Old South in the chromatic register of the New South, Jackson's documentary queries the coherence of these categories and the histories of photography they buttress. These colour photographs complicate the photographic archive of the 1970s American South—one that suggests the region and its expanses of rural land were made over into tracts of suburban homes and strip malls. In contrast, through his photographic remakes, Jackson allows us to see how the sharecropping farm and, through it, the antebellum plantation was remade, even as the Sunbelt flourished alongside. But Jackson's persistent use of colour, despite the physical difficulty and technical limitations, is more than just as stubborn act of refusal. These photographs are productive of histories in their own right. While Danny Lyon often exaggerated the visual anachronism of the prison farm in order to offer a history of radical continuity, Jackson differentially invokes the past, recoding the prison as in time. This provocation allows us to read the prison farm within a broader visual landscape—one in which colour was put to work both in the fine art museum and mass culture to give vibrant expression to the here-and-now of American life. Jackson opens up the possibility of mapping the nation at this historical moment and grappling with the place of the prison farm within it.

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[229] The relevancy of these critiques to the American prison system, coupled with Jackson's framing of the prison farm as at the very centre of a new kind of expanded and transformed carceral landscape, demonstrates the limitations of Afro-pessimistic theories to fully grapple with the historical malleability of the carceral state and its relationship to American imperialism. Afro-pessimism, as it is articulated by Frank Wilderson III, not only refuses the analogical frameworks that were developed by the Black Panthers and anti-colonial thinkers at this juncture, but also fails to attend to the historical malleability of the prison, pivoting instead around the ontology of slavery and anti-blackness. See: Frank Wilderson III, *Afropessimism* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2020). For critiques of Wilderson's framework, see: Vinson Cunningham, "The Argument of Afropessimism," *The New Yorker (*20 July 2020), accessed 17 November 2020. https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2020/07/20/the-argument-of-afropessimism; Iyko Day, "Being or Nothingness: Indigeneity, Antiblackness, and Settler Colonial Critique," *Critical Ethnic Studies* Vol 1 No 2 (Fall 2015), 102-121.

Conclusion

This chapter has endeavoured to situate the repression of Jackson's colour photographs within the shifting rhetorical meanings of mono and polychrome photography that characterised 1960s and 1970s visual culture. These meanings are especially pertinent in the context of the South, where the institutionalisation of documentary rewrote the region's uneven political-economic reality into two, distinct visual registers. While the Old South became tied to the black-and-white, agrarian landscapes constructed in the 1930s by the FSA, the New South was bound up with colourful photographs of suburban excess, exemplified by the work of William Eggleston. The consequences of this history of photography for Jackson's colour photographs, I argue, were profound. Replete with depictions of rural landscapes and manual work, Jackson's archive became unthinkable in polychrome and therefore had to be drained of colour. Despite the explosion of New Color Photography in the fine art museum, Jackson's photographs could only be seen in black-and-white. The prison farm could thus be sutured into a linear narrative of American progress, whereby the transition from Cotton Belt to Sunbelt could be made to appear seamless and unencumbered. Far from solely a technical or pragmatic choice, the decision to disseminate Jackson's photographs exclusively monochrome, I argue, must be understood as overdetermined by the ideological meanings of chromatic difference—ones that fundamentally constitute the writing out of official histories of photography.

This chapter has also analysed the meanings that are produced through the recoding of the prison farm in colour. If, in the 1960s and 1970s, Jackson's photographs were unthinkable in colour, then, in our current moment of ongoing and transforming carceral practices, they still pose a challenge to the ways in which the prison farm and, in particular, its disjunctive temporalities have been visually resolved by way of recourse to monochrome. Rather than simply unveil the internal scenery of the prison and, in this way, unmask its banal cruelties to an innocent public, Jackson's colour photographs fully implicate representation in the maintenance and legitimation of the carceral state. These photographs ask us to

critically examine why and how the prison farm has been made to appear past, as well as to interrogate the narratives and American histories these sanctioned forms of representation serve. Through their unsettling of dominant ways of picturing the prison farm, Jackson's photographs foreground the temporal recursions and spatial assembles that constitute the remaking of American racial capitalism during this historical juncture. In this way, Jackson's documentary practice illustrates how doing the work of photography is inseparable from writing and rewriting its history. By amplifying the elisions and repressions that constitute official histories of photography, the remakes and returns that constitute the American project and its network of carceral apparatuses can be brought sharply into focus.

Chapter Three:

Drop Dead, New York: Leonard Freed's *Police Work* and the Visual Politics of Broken Windows Policing

Towards the end of Leonard Freed's 1980 photobook *Police Work* (fig 3.1), after many sobering images of police officers making arrests and inspecting gruesome crime scenes, there appears a strikingly benign and innocent photograph.[230] The image, which bleeds across the spine of the book and takes up nearly the full page-spread, depicts two police officers playing in the street with a gaggle of neighbourhood kids (fig 3.2). The children sit on the pavement in a circle, smiling and laughing, while the two officers run around them, apparently in a game of "duck-duck-goose." While one officer's back is turned towards the camera, the other is captured in a moment of joyful candour—her genuine, expressive smile is easily accessible to the camera's lens and, through it, the reader. The scene is at once tender and playful, framing the officers not as agents of discipline or control, but rather as stewards of a healthy and robust community life. By capitalising on the perceived harmlessness of white femininity, the photograph constructs a sentimental view of the institution as protective and maternal, suggesting that the role of the police is to protect a neighbourhood's youngest, most vulnerable residents and to ensure that same community's vitality into an unknown future. While a small group of adults gather in a distant corner of the photograph, any figures that might be responsible for the children are excluded from the frame. The police officer seems to stand in for this parental absence: she momentarily completes the image of the nuclear family, belying the way in which the police make absent the actual kinship structures of urban communities.

This photograph exemplifies the sympathetic portrait of the NYPD that unfolds across the pages of *Police Work*. It allows us to see how the photobook's remaking of the police into a positive force within city life is invariably entangled with both the visual politics of the family and questions of urban space.

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[230] Leonard Freed, *Police Work* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1980).

In contrast with the many photographers who have sought to conquer and render intelligible the monumental verticality of New York City, Freed's photograph is human and intimate in scale. Although the sidewalk and building façades are visible at the top of the frame, it is the figures who dominate the composition, as well as street on which they play. The street is not just a backdrop against which the scene unfolds; rather, it serves as the photograph's structuring principle, lending the image pictorial clarity and stability. Far from a highly contested space, the street is figured as a harmonious site onto which the syncopated rhythms of the urban sidewalk have spilled. This is not the street as classical civil rights photography has framed it. Rather than the ground in which social antagonisms are waged, the street is constructed as a sanctuary of childhood innocence, an extension of the familial home. The photograph seamlessly weaves the police into a horizontal tableaux of urban life, framing their infiltration into poor communities not as a regulatory strategy of social control, but as a harmless, even positive intervention into everyday life.

Police Work was borne out of Freed's almost decade-long journey following police officers as they patrolled the city streets, liaised with community members, made arrests, investigated crime scenes, and went about the many mundane, quotidian activities that comprised everyday work within the institution. The photobook frames the police as at once ordinary and extraordinary workers—the police have a tough and often thankless, but urgently necessary job, the book seems to say. Unlike the many individuals they put in handcuffs, the city's police officers are depicted as well-rounded, complex human beings. Although individual officers are often unnamed in captions and seldom appear more than once throughout the book, the police are shown taking on a range of responsibilities in a wide variety of settings. They are captured, on the one hand, examining dead bodies in darkened stairwells and, on the other, patiently listening to the concerns of elderly New Yorkers. In some ways, the book suggests, police work is just like any other job. It involves a degree of repetition and routine and, certainly, a sublimation of the self into a highly generalised and overdetermined role. According to the photobook, however, police work is also exceptional—it is suffused with an ambient sense of quiet profundity, as well as

singularly demanding of individual struggle and sacrifice. It is this intense selflessness that has, after all, earned these police officers the title of "New York's Finest."

In some ways, *Police Work* appears to sit at odds with the photographic register of the 1960s and 1970s that was produced by Danny Lyon and Bruce Jackson. If this dissertation aims to analyse the ways in which documentary asks us to think the civil rights era other than or apart from rupture, then it is clear how Lyon and Jackson, in their focus on the temporality of the southern prison farm, fit into this project. Lyon and Jackson's photographs attune us to how the antebellum plantation was made over into the modern prison and, in doing so, they contest the reduction of civil rights photography to the protest or the street. Both photographers work on and through representations of the southern landscape; their visual remakes point to how structures are remade. In sharp contrast with Lyon and Jackson, Freed offers a photographic register of the cityscape that appears profoundly removed from the plantation and squarely in place in time. And yet, by bringing *Police Work* in dialogue with photographs of agricultural labour, my aim is to disinter the ways in which the plantation is being remade here too, although perhaps not through a visual register we might immediately recognise. The movement in this dissertation from rural to urban, prison to police is justified not just because, as many historians have pointed out, the slave patrol was made over into the police force, but also because of their shared spatial dynamics—ones that, as Saidiya Hartman has shown, conceptually link the plantation and the city as zones of racial enclosure.[231]

To this end, this chapter situates the photobook against the backdrop of 1970s New York, an especially fraught juncture in the city's history. Freed's many photographs of enormous litter piles, burned-out tenement buildings, and drunk and homeless New Yorkers, speak volumes about the way in which the collapse of urban infrastructure afflicted poor and racialised residents. Following the racial tensions of the late 1960s, the mass exodus of white, middle-class Americans to the suburbs, and the

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[231] For more on the history of policing and its roots in eighteenth-century slave patrols see: Alex Vitale, *The End of Policing*, and Sally Hadden, Slave Patrols: Law and Violence in Virginia and the Carolinas (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001); Saidiya Hartman elaborates upon this conceptual link in her book *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments* (London: Serpent's Tail, 2019).

city budgets' imminent financial collapse, it seemed that, if urban life was going to continue to be a part of the American project, it had to take the form of the more diffuse, centre-less cities of the Sunbelt—ones that, like Atlanta and Dallas, were suddenly surpassing more traditional cities in the Snow and Rustbelt. Unlike highly centralised cities that relied on public amenities and services, Sunbelt cities were, as Bruce Schulman has described, "without downtowns—vast sprawls where no one walked the streets and suburban malls served as the principal public meeting spaces."[232] If street life signified a sense of continuity with typical aspects of urban community, Sunbelt cities seemed to suggest that these interfaces between public and private were no longer a functioning part of American life. Freed's conflicting desire to both rescue idyllic forms of street life and illuminate the more dystopian aspects of the city street hints at broader anxiety over the fate of what Jane Jacobs hailed in her 1966 manifesto *The Death and Life of the Great American City*, as Greenwich Village's urban "sidewalk ballet."[233]

As wealthy white residents and the Fortune 500 companies that employed them relocated to the surrounding suburbs, immigrant and minority communities ballooned, resulting in a conflation between the "inner city" and the racialised poor. The financially-strapped city could not support a permanent underclass and, on the verge of bankruptcy, Mayor Abraham Beame's administration oversaw massive cuts to municipal programs that devastated New York's most vulnerable residents after President Gerald Ford famously told the city to "drop dead." After firefighters were laid off, the South Bronx lost sixteen percent of its housing to arson.[234] Aerial footage of the burning neighbourhood were featured on national television during the 1977 World Series at Yankee Stadium and photographs of President Carter touring the neighbourhood that same year thrust the community into the public spotlight. Carter's visit made national headlines and was featured, with accompanying photographs, on the cover of the *New York Times* and the *New York Daily News*, and was included in *Time Magazine* and *Newsweek,* among many other

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[232] Bruce Schulman, *The Seventies: The Great Shift in American Culture, Society and Politics*, 108.

[233] Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (New York: Vintage Books, 1961), 50.

[234] Kim Phillips-Fein, *Fear City: New York's Fiscal Crisis and the Rise of Austerity Politics* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2017).

publications. In its reporting, the *New York Times* highlighted the disintegration of the area's built environment: "all buildings on both sides had been demolished and the bricks had been bulldozed into heaps that in some places were eight feet high.""Blocks of rubble" the article continued, "looked like the result of wartime bombing."[235] These descriptions are just as applicable to many of the photographed buildings featured throughout *Police Work*.

Throughout the *New York Times* article, photographs are embedded within the text and framed so as to confirm these dire assessments. In these images, reproduced across multiple mainstream publications, Carter and his advisors are photographed from varying distances and juxtaposed against a row of windowless tenement buildings (fig 3.3). Layers of litter and debris render the boundary between street and sidewalk visually indistinguishable. Any actual South Bronx residents or evidence of the community's daily struggle to live among the ruin is expunged from view, divorcing the built environment from the fabric of everyday life and effacing the possibility of its reclamation. The buildings stand rigidly alone—there are no pedestrians or traffic to enliven them or to ground them in the complicating realities of human use. Devoid of any human activity, the buildings, their windows shattered and emptied of glass, serve to stand in for the community as a whole, symbolising the steady degradation of its social fabric. These images' black-and-white hues foreground the harsh, angular shadows cast by the façades that, without any trees or plants to soften the sharp lines of the built environment or to hint at the possibility for regrowth, offer little indication as to how people might flourish, let alone survive in such a hostile place. By recalling pictures of the early twentieth-century deserted boomtowns, these photographs suggest that the South Bronx was no longer a viable part of the rapidly changing, post-industrial political-economy.

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[235] Lee Dembart, "Carter Takes 'Sobering' Trip to the South Bronx," *The New York Times* (6 October 1977), accessed 12 June 2020. https://www.nytimes.com/1977/10/06/archives/carter-takes-sobering-trip-to-south-bronx-carter-finds-hope-amid.html?

Firefighters were not the only public service workers afflicted by austerity.[236] In 1975, the city's police force became another target of cutbacks: over 5,000 officers were laid off, causing the NYPD to launch its infamous "Fear City" campaign.[237] Institutionally unified into the "Council for Public Safety," the police and fire unions distributed pamphlets at the city's major transportation hubs—LaGuardia Airport, Grand Central Station, and Port Authority, among others—to stir up panic over New York's supposedly spiralling crime rates. "Welcome to Fear City" the cover read, "A Survival Guide for Visitors to the City of New York." The hollow face of the grim reaper stared back menacingly at readers (fig 3.4). Largely targeted at tourists who knew little about the realities of urban life, the campaign capitalised on the spatial chasm that separated those who actually experienced the rhythms of the city and those who consumed it from a safe distance as spectacle, encapsulating the way in which the visual discourse of urban decay mediated a vast divide between disparate social realities. The Fear City pamphlets drummed up anxiety about crime not only by targeting the Beame Administration and its dramatic cuts to public services, but also by eliding the distinction between violent and property crime. While the campaign only briefly touched upon the former, the latter was a fixture of the unions' guidelines for visitors to the city: "Protect your property." The guidelines urged, "Safeguard your handbag...Even a moment's inattention can result in a serious loss."

While crime and vice were certainly prevalent throughout the city, crime rates had, in fact, accelerated more quickly in the immediate postwar period than they did in the 1970s.[238] Nevertheless, nearly unprecedented alarm over urban decay pervaded the American cultural and political imaginary. This disconnect suggests that the televisual landscape played a key role in amplifying fears of city life. Popular discourse of all media—from mass-produced pulp fiction such as Mickey Spillane's Mike

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[236] Sanitation workers were similarly affected by the emergence of austerity politics. In 1975, a city-wide strike left 58,000 tons of garbage on the streets and, as a result, photographs of litter-filled sidewalks became common signifiers of the city's apocalyptic future horizon. George Lankevich, *New York City: A Short History* (New York : New York University Press, 2002), 218.

[237] Fred Ferretti, "The City Layoffs Raise Questions," *New York Times* (11 July 1975), accessed 29 August 2019. https://www.nytimes.com/1975/07/11/archives/the-city-layoffs-raise-questions-were-the-cuts-real-or-for.html

[238] Barry Latzes, *The Rise and Fall of Violent Crime in America* (New York: Encounter Books, 2017).

Hammer novellas to Hollywood films such as *Midnight Cowboy* (1969) and *Taxi Driver* (1976)—capitalised on and perpetuated the sense that crime and disorder were endemic to New York City. This cultural climate typifies what has been termed a "phenomenology of fear," in which the perception of one's vulnerability to crime is overwhelmingly disproportionate to risk.[239] Many of these mass-mediated cultural representations suggested that, in light of the diminished efficacy and masculinity of the police, "lone-wolf" vigilantes who acted outside of the law were the only way to stave off these inexorable forces of barbarism. At the same time, however, the police faced widespread criticism over how it had dealt with the challenges of the civil rights era—iconic photographs of police officers brutalising black protesters, such as those taken by Charles Moore in Birmingham and reproduced by *LIFE Magazine* (fig 3.5), had been seared into the collective American consciousness. Stripped of resources and personnel, the NYPD was trapped in what seemed to be a political and rhetorical double bind: the institution was facing demands to, on the one hand, sufficiently respond to collective hysteria over urban crime and yet, on the other, adapt to a more inclusive and diverse post-sixties climate.[240]

By framing the police as both friendly, responsible local cops and stalwart crime fighters, *Police Work* helps to visually resolve the conflicting demands that weighed upon the police throughout the 1970s. This chapter explores the ways in which *Police Work* remakes the more familiar visual language of civil rights era policing, producing a repertoire of police activity that legitimates, rather than undermines the necessity of the NYPD against the encroachment of austerity politics. I show how, rather than produce a wholly new photographic language of policing, *Police Work* engages in a complex process through which existing, often familiar photographic genres are given new meanings through the juxtaposition of text and the sequencing of images. First, I demonstrate how the book remakes the

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[239] Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff, *The Truth About Crime: Sovereignty, Knowledge, Social Order* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016), xiii-xii; also relevant is Barry Glassner's idea of the "culture of fear": *The Culture of Fear: Why Americans Are Afraid of the Wrong Things* (New York, Basic Books, 1999).

[240] For more on how the NYPD responded to criticism over its handling of the 1960s urban rebellions and its reckoning with demands for increased "diversity," see: Andrew Darien, "The Alter Ego of the Patrolman? Policewomen and the Discourse of Difference in the NYPD," *Women's Studies 31:5,* 561-608 (2002); Andrew Darien, *Becoming New York's Finest: Race, Gender and the Integration of the NYPD* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

unflattering photographic record of policing that was generated during the classical phase of the civil rights movement—an archive of police violence to which Freed actively contributed during the 1960s. By placing *Police Work* in dialogue with Freed's more well-known civil rights photobook *Black in White America* (1968), I unpack the means through *Police Work* recodes photographic evidence of state warfare as proof of state welfare. I show how, far from simply creating a new photographic record of policing as community care, *Police Work* engages in a more delicate negotiation in which an already conventional photographic language of police brutality is recoded and reread.

Then, I analyse Freed's use of two conflicting photographic codes within the context of New York City's shifting spatial dynamics. I situate the meanings of these codes against the hyper-visibility of the city within mainstream visual culture. While family photography, I show, is harnessed to shore up the moral legitimacy of the police, displaying their coherence with bourgeois, propertied domesticity, the tabloid is used to undermine the right of urban undesirables' to a domestic, private life. By comparing family and tabloid photography, we can see how the question of who is in and out of place must be considered through through mediation. Freed's uneven photographic treatment of the private sphere, I argue, not only unmasks the ostensibly universal right to privacy as an entitlement for some, but also allows gentrification to masquerade as a quest to protect the nuclear family and the home. Finally, I consider the ways in which the photobook anticipates the rise of broken windows policing—a criminological theory that was first articulated in 1982 and became a common-sense approach to policing during the 1990s and after. By remaking a photographic repertoire of urban neglect into proof of crime, *Police Work* shows how morally coding the treatment of property helped the police to regain legitimacy in the wake of the civil rights movement. Ultimately, I argue, while Danny Lyon and Bruce Jackson allow us to query the temporality of slavery, Freed asks us to interrogate the spatiality of the plantation, demanding a reframing of the civil rights era as segregation's transformation, as opposed to its end.

From State Warfare to State Welfare

In 1968, four years before Freed would begin taking photographs of the NYPD, the photographer published *Black in White America*, a photobook that chronicles the daily lives of black Americans under both *de jure* segregation in the South and its *de facto* equivalent in the North (fig 3.6).[241] Often described as "the signature work of his career," *Black in White America* is typically understood as a classical "civil rights photo-essay."[242] Reflecting the rise of New Journalism, Freed repudiates the conventions of journalistic neutrality, offering a meandering meditation on nation's contentious racial milieu. The book is a diaristic collage of photographs and text, presenting both a deeply personal glimpse into Freed's own shifting political consciousness and an urgent call for social change. Just as Danny Lyon's photographs were put to work in order to contest the dominant narratives of the civil rights movement produced by the popular press, so too does Freed's photobook seek to broaden prevailing understandings of the period. While *Black in White America* certainly reaffirms the dominant register of civil rights photography, such as in photographs of segregation signage or protest marches, it also expands the acceptable frames through which both racial discrimination and the freedom struggle can be read and understood. By turning his lens on the quotidian rhythms of black schools, churches, and neighbourhoods, Freed reveals how injustice and resistance operate not just through the exceptional, highly mediatised event, but through the ordinary or the everyday.

While the book is occasionally punctured by more familiar faces and scenes, such as Martin Luther King Jr. or the March on Washington, *Black in White America* often departs from more well-known coverage of the civil rights movement. Instead, through the use of both photographs and text, *Black in White America* illustrates how racial tensions permeate daily life. This is particularly true, the book

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[241] Leonard Freed, *Black in White America* (Grossman Books: 1968); Leonard Freed with a foreword by Brett Abbott, *Black in White America* 2nd Edition (Los Angeles: Getty Museum, 2010).

[242] Brett Abbott, *Engaged Observers: Documentary Since the Sixties* (Los Angeles: Getty Museum, 2010), 38.

suggests, in the public square or on the street, where white anxieties over proximity to black people are at their most heightened. In many of his photographs, Freed cannily juxtaposes white and black figures to encapsulate the fraught, unequal relations that characterised the era as a whole. His compositions often mobilise the photographic frame to highlight whites' anger and discomfort at even the mildest forms of interracial mixing. In one photograph, for instance, a group of black workers is captured on a lunch break (fig 3.7). They sit on the ground with their backs to the camera, eating and conversing amongst themselves. Above the men, a trolley car is positioned diagonally across the composition, dominating the photographed scene. The white, well-dressed figures in the trolley windows are rendered sharply in focus; they are pictured literally peering down their noses at the men below. A pithy encapsulation of white attitudes towards black workers, the photograph illustrates how, despite their momentary spatial proximity, these figures occupy profoundly disparate social realities—ones that are overdetermined by intersecting class and racial hierarchies.

But although the book mobilises the mixing of different skin tones as a metonym for interracialisation, *Black in White America* also suggests that true desegregation would involve a much more fundamental reconfiguration of the American spatial order. This is particularly expressed in Freed's photographs of northern cities, which were governed by a system of *de facto* as opposed to *de jure* segregation. As Matthew Lassiter has argued, the binary between these two systems of racial segregation is a false one, serving to isolate national problems as regional aberrations.[243] In sharp contrast to the conventional photographic vernacular of racial segregation, which focuses on the proliferation of Jim Crow signage throughout the American South, *Black in White America* offers a more expansive understanding of racial apartheid, leaving northern states on the hook. Photographs of black life in the urban North, for instance, undo the myth that racial segregation was a uniquely southern phenomenon. In doing so, these photographs upend comforting narratives of regional exceptionalism. Far from absolve

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[243] Matthew D. Lassiter, "De Jure/De Facto Segregation: The Long Shadow of a National Myth," in *The Myth of Southern Exceptionalism* ed. Matthew D. Lassiter and Joseph Crespino (London: Oxford University Press, 2010), 25-42.

the South of its racial violence, however, *Black in White America* implicates the country as a whole, unmasking the issue of racism and racial segregation as a national problem that is fundamentally entangled with issues of space. By suggesting that, for black Americans, life was not significantly better in the North, the photobook implies that the simple removal of Jim Crow signs in the South would be insufficient: a much deeper confrontation with American racism and the way in which it was mapped onto spatial terrain was necessary.

In one photograph, for example, a black man is framed standing on a crowded New York City sidewalk; he holds a Muslim newspaper towards the camera, as if attempting to bring the viewer into the fold of his political cause (fig 3.8).[244] The headline reads: "We must have justice! Regardless of the Price!" His newspaper competes with the large, billboard advertisements that dominate the top half of the photograph, jostling for attention within the highly contested public sphere. While he gazes back at the lens, another figure, an older white man, surveils him from behind. His hostile stare suggests that the presence of a politicised black man within the flow of urban life is entirely unwelcome. The photograph rhymes with the previously discussed image, calcifying prevailing racial attitudes through the arrangement of competing stares. By presenting these conflicting looks, Freed's photograph demonstrates how, even in supposedly unsegregated areas in the urban North, ostensibly "public" urban spaces were understood as the terrain of white consumers only and, therefore, was implicitly hostile to black subjects who sought to interfere with the workings of publicity images. Rather than portray the North as a foil to the segregated South, this photograph highlights their points of convergence. At stake in laying out these overlaps is not simply the transformation of a regional struggle into a national one, but the recasting of desegregation as a dismantling of the dominant spatial order—one that could not be captured exclusively through photographs of Jim Crow signage in the South.

The photobook's unmasking of segregation as an issue of both racial difference *and* spatial ordering is further explored in its depiction of the carceral state as a mechanism of segregation. By

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[244] Freed, *Black in White America*, 129.

placing these images alongside photographs of funerals, concerts, and play, the photobook suggests that prisons and police are best understood as routine instruments of racial control, rather than as exceptional or extreme. *Black in White America* begins its portrait of the segregated South with a photograph of a Louisiana State Penitentiary cellblock (fig 3.9). Shadowy and blurred from a lack of available light, the picture frames a windowless corridor, flanked by steel cells. Dozens of hands stretch out from behind the bars and towards Freed's lens, appealing to the photographer and, through him, the viewer. The accompanying text registers the competing voices of guards, prisoners, and Freed himself: "Calling to me as I passed along the cell blocks: '…no one knows where I am.' '…tell my family where I am.' '…you, I am innocent.' Out of the shadows a voice said to me, '…I can not live here.'"[245] Occupying a full, double-page spread, the photograph immediately follows Freed's opening image of a black American soldier guarding the Berlin Wall—one that, the apocryphal legend goes, inspired Freed's return to his home country and catalysed his investigation of racial inequality in the American context.[246] This sequencing suggests that, despite its geographic isolation and logic of confinement, the prison is inextricably part, or even symbolic of a much broader system of racial segregation—one that was always articulated by and through space.

Freed's concern with incarceration is more fully borne out in his photographs of the New Orleans City Prison. In his photographs, uniformed figures pose expressively in a doorway, gesturing towards the camera and making visible Freed's indelible presence within the scene. In one particular image, a smiling woman points upwards, directing the viewer's gaze to the words stamped above the door frame (fig 3.10). The text reads "white female" in all capital letters, exemplifying the recognisable vernacular of Jim Crow signage and illustrating how the semantics of racial segregation extend into the already confined spaces of the prison. In the accompanying text, Freed comments on the absurd redoubling of these systems of segregation: "In the prison, itself the ultimate form of segregation, the

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[245] Freed, *Black in White America*, 9.

[246] Abott, *Engaged Observers*, 38.

prisoner is still directed and regulated by the local rationale existing outside its walls. 'White Female' over the prison door indicates for White Prisoners Only."[247] When paired with his editorialising commentary, the photograph allows us to see the way in which these systems of difference—white versus coloured, free versus incarcerated, male versus female—overlap with, reinforce, and trouble one another, allowing for an ever more granular mapping of racial and civic hierarchies onto the South's spatial and geographical terrain. By posing a relationship between the label and the body it seems to address, the image raises questions about the production of difference, suggesting that it is a ritualised product of language and space, rather than a result of biological fact.[248]

While the photobook certainly departs from mainstream representations of the civil rights movement, *Black in White America* also contains many photographs of police officers enforcing and defending the dominant racial order, which rhyme more familiar photographs from the era. One double-page spread, devoted to photographs of a demonstration, includes an image of a police officer grabbing a demonstrator by the throat (fig 3.11). One photograph rhymes with the Danny Lyon photograph that graces the cover of SNCC's *The Movement,* casting the police officer and his brutal repression of peaceful protestors in a similarly critical light. The composition allows us to see the anguished expression of the demonstrator, who, like Lyon's subject, is captured reaching for the officer's hand in an attempt to free himself from the chokehold. The text that explicates the string of protest photographs is featured on the next page: "Civil rights demonstrations in the North and South for jobs, equality, housing schools and civil rights." The text reads, "The law says demonstrators obstructing traffic will be jailed." Although the text does not overtly acknowledge or address the brutal tactics used to suppress protestors, it subtlety throws into relief the utterly disproportionate use of violence in both the North and the South to suppress any challenges to the dominant racial order. In doing so, the photobook undermines the

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[247] Ibid., 34.

[248] Elizabeth Abel draws a similar conclusion in her work on Jim Crow signage, see: Elizabeth Abel, *Signs of the Times: The Visual Politics of Jim Crow* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010).

legitimacy not just of law enforcement, but of the law itself, which, the text suggests, serves to uphold the rights of automobile drivers to move through urban space above those of nonviolent protestors.

So while *Black in White America* clearly broadens dominant narratives of the civil rights movement, dwelling in the daily moments of injustice and resistance that characterise black American life, photographs of prisons and police recur. These portions of the photobook and, in particular, their critical framing of the carceral state, echo mainstream televisual coverage of the civil rights protests, which similarly made racial antagonisms legible through images of police violence and crowded jails. As Martin Berger has demonstrated in his analysis of mainstream civil rights photography, liberal media outlets in the northern states continually published photographs that "reduced the complex social dynamics of the civil rights movement to easily digestible narratives, prominent among them white-on-black violence."[249] The police were continually at the centre of these stories, allowing broader reactionary backlash and structural mechanisms of white supremacy to condense into a legible figural form. By interweaving images of the carceral state with photographs of everyday life, *Black in White America* demonstrates that prisons and police are not at the margins, but rather at the very centre of how racial segregation and inequality are reproduced. These resonances between *Black in White America* and mainstream civil rights photography should not be understood as a failure to adequately contest the dominant narratives of the movement. Rather, these echoes suggest that, if a full confrontation with America's dominant racial order was to be staged photographically, then images of prisons and police were both necessary and unavoidable.

Black in White America, therefore, can be understood as a fundamental indictment of American racial apartheid and a critical analysis of the role of the carceral state plays in constituting it. When read in this way, it is perhaps surprising that, just four years after its publication, Freed approached the police officers at his local West Village precinct with the aim of documenting their lives and work for the

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[249] Martin A. Berger, *Seeing Through Race: A Reinterpretation of Civil Rights Photography*, 4.

London-based paper, *The Sunday Times Magazine*.[250] In the short, but striking "Author's Note" that opens the pages of *Police Work*, Freed offers his own interpretation of the photobook, explaining his motivations for undertaking the project. He was interested in "who they really are—not just 'cops' or 'pigs,' law enforcement,' or 'boys in blue'…I was fascinated and challenged by how little people knew about the police, despite the fact that we see them all day in reality and in a fictionalised version at night on TV." Freed identifies a contradiction in the popular discourse of policing, arguing that the hyper-visibility of the police within American visual culture has paradoxically blinded the public to the complex realities of their day-to-day lives. *Police Work*, Freed suggests, seeks to offer a corrective to this phenomenon, presenting insight into the daily labour of policing that is otherwise obscured through well-worn clichés and visual types. *Police Work* certainly departs from the dominant visual register of policing; however, it does so in a way that, I will argue, remakes evidence of state warfare into an index of state welfare. As I will show, this process involves not just the replacement of negative images of the police with positive ones, but also the remaking of conventional civil rights iconography through the juxtaposition of text and image.

Undertaken in the decade before the widespread expansion of the police and their deployment within an emerging post-industrial cityscape, *Police Work*, much like the decade it depicts, negotiated a moment of uncertainty and instability in both the visual register and popular rhetoric of policing. If, in *Police Work*, Freed sought to construct the meaning of policing anew, then it seemed that a direct confrontation with this existing photographic imaginary of crime and punishment was needed. Far from shore up the validity of the police, mainstream photographs of the civil rights movement profoundly undermined the legitimacy of the institution in the eyes of the American public. Through his more classical civil rights photography and its placement within *Black in White America*, Freed actively contributed to this cultural reckoning. Like many other photographers at the time, Freed produced

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[250] Author conversation with Susanna Freed, 4 November 2019. Freed often turned to European magazines to sell and to circulate his photographic work. This can be explained not only by the many years Freed spent living and working in Europe, but also by the withering of popular picture magazines, such as *LIFE* and *Look* in the American context.

photographs that shed light on the police's violent tactics, engendering doubt over the scale and the purpose of the police within the collective, American consciousness. However, Freed's desire, in 1972, to begin placing the prevailing visual culture policing under critical scrutiny suggests that the police occupied a much wider place within American discourse—one that was not just produced in photobooks aimed at a predominantly liberal, sympathetic audience. Indeed, the police had become a fixture within popular visual culture, gracing the pages of popular picture magazines and the silver screens of Hollywood films.

The media coverage of the 1965 march from Selma to Montgomery, for instance, drew national attention to wanton repression by heavily armed state troopers. The events were featured on the cover of *LIFE Magazine* one week later, under the headline "The Savage Season Begins: Civil Rights Face-Off at Selma" (fig 3.12). Inside, photographs by Charles Moore, Flip Schulke, and Frank Dandridge constructed the almost unachievable ideal of the commendable black victim: religious, impeccably dressed, and entirely passive in the face of physical violence (fig 3.13). Numerous images emphasised the interracial cohesion of the march, serving to assure middle-class readers in the North that the integrationist aims of the movement were not overtly hostile to white people or property. Meanwhile, the accompanying texts underscored the animalistic brutality of the state troopers: "Moments after the first face-off just outside Selma, Ala., troopers attack Negro marchers. At top left, a trooper phalanx slams into the front ranks...Dazed and wounded Negroes helplessly await aid." These sentences emphasise the agency of the state troopers who, alongside their clear savagery and moral turpitude, remained in control of the civil rights agenda and the extent to which it could upset the dominant social order. In direct contradistinction with the police, black protestors' virtuousness became intimately tied to their passivity,

thereby restricting the ways in which black Americans could be seen to legitimately challenge the status quo.[251]

Throughout the decade, the news media continually reaffirmed the heavy-handedness of the police and, in particular, their physical brutalisation of civil rights protestors.[252] In 1971, New York State Troopers' violent suppression of the uprising at the Attica Correctional Facility and its dissemination through television news seemed to further evince the excessively cruel way in which the police dealt with any form of collective grievance. As the McKay Commission hearings would confirm, the forty-three casualties, ten of whom were correctional officers, could never have been killed by the unarmed prisoners who, for the first time in history, were able to voice their demands on camera and speak directly to the public. Covered by a myriad television news reporters and journalists, the events at Attica were central to shaping prevailing cultural attitudes towards the police. Just one year later, in the 1972 Hollywood film *Dog Day Afternoon*, the bank-robbing, hostage-taking anti-hero, played by Al Pacino, was depicted leading crowds of onlookers in repeated chants of "Attica" so as to gain their sympathy and forestall police intervention (fig 3.14).[253] *Police Work* works against these popular conceptions of the NYPD, framing the police not as lawless, rogue cops who use violence with impunity, but rather as workers with circumscribed agency in their own right. Freed explains: "I chose this title [*Police Work]*, because the police are workers, they are not in command, they are not the mayor, they are not the lawyers. They are ordinary working people."

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[251] Beyond the many still images proliferated in popular picture magazines and newspapers, the events in Selma were covered extensively by the major television networks. ABC, for instance, interrupted its evening broadcast to air scenes from the conflict as soon as the footage reached New York. For more on the widespread circulation of the civil rights movement through the burgeoning television news see: Sasha Torres, *Black, White, and in Color: Television and Black Civil Rights* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), as well as her edited volume *Living Color: Race and Television in the United States* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998).

[252] While, during the classical phase of the civil rights movement, the black body emerged as the primary target of police violence, in the 1970s, space emerged as the focus of police discipline. This shift allowed the police to continue regulating and ordering itinerant black and poor urban residents, while simultaneously suggesting that there had been a transformation in police tactics and increased accountability.

[253] Dir. Sidney Lumet, *Dog Day Afternoon* (1975).

It is in the many uplifting and positive images of the police in which *Police Work*'s response to and remaking of an earlier visual register of policing is at its most transparent. This approach tracks a broader rhetorical shift to community policing, which often masqueraded as a more mild, less brutal form of police intervention. One influential study, known as the "Safe and Clean Neighborhoods Program", tested these "friendlier" tactics in and around Newark in the mid-1970s. The study was used to argue that, in order to embed themselves further into the communities they policed, officers should patrol on foot, as opposed to from within motorised vehicles.[254] The image of the neighbourhood police officer was not simply a useful public relations strategy after years of endemic corruption and violence, but a materially consequential surveillance tactic—one that sought to coercively maintain a genial, sanitised atmosphere of security and compliance.[255] Residents who interacted with their neighbourhood officers, these studies argued, *felt* that they were being kept safe, even if crime rates remained unchanged. It is through the photobook's construction of the "friendly local police officer" that this approach to policing finds its mascot. Many of Freed's photographs participate in the production of this image of the NYPD as a locally-embedded institution, lending a personal, human face to this vast bureaucratic network that stretched across Manhattan and its outer boroughs. Excepting the cover photograph, which depicts the inside of a police car, of Freed's images all depict police officers on foot, walking the sidewalks of New York and interacting with local residents.

In one photograph, for instance, featured in the beginning of *Police Work*, a white, male officer stands on the sidewalk in front of an apartment building (fig 3.15). A black woman poses beside him, linking her hand through the officer's crossed arms. They both grin for the camera, looking directly into Freed's lens and anticipating the photographic moment. The caption offers a quote: "'Isn't he cute?' She

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[254] The 143-page report, sponsored by the National Institute of Justice, was published in 1981. The study concluded that "overall, foot patrols improved citizens feelings of safety under the most difficult urban circumstances." It also advocated for an overall increase in police officers' integration into neighbourhood activities and community life. See: Police Foundation, United States of America, "Newark Foot Patrol Experiment," 1981.

[255] Public concern over corruption in the NYPD reached its apotheosis in 1971, when the Knapp Commission was appointed to investigate the revelations of police misconduct proffered by officer Frank Serpico. The full report was published in 1973. See: *The Knapp Commission Report on Police Corruption* (New York: George Braziller, 1973).

said." This juxtaposition between text and image serves to attribute the quote to the centrally framed female figure, constructing a playful response to the camera's shutter that belies the power asymmetry between the police and the policed. Meanwhile, slightly off-centre, an older couple is pictured in a furtive discussion with another officer, suggesting that the police can serve as honest mediators in relatively innocent neighbourhood disputes. In another image, two police officers stand behind a "do not cross" sign, listening to the grievances of a man who waves a Puerto Rican flag (fig 3.16). The officers wear jackets stamped with the words "Community Affairs NYPD"—one of which bears the text translated into Spanish. In this way, the photograph frames the police not as in conflict with, but rather as directly shaped and informed by specific communities and their particular needs. Meanwhile, the accompanying caption serves to ventriloquize the institution, giving it the positive public persona it so desperately needed at this historical juncture: "Once, alien communities learned to speak the language of the police." It states, "Today good community relations dictate that the police speak the language of the community."

Rather than simply absented from *Police Work*, photographs of demonstrations and, in particular, encounters between protestors and the police, are transformed into evidence of harmony between the NYPD and the public. One photograph captures police officers as they remove a protestor from the street (fig 3.17). Three policemen carry the woman by her rigidly straight arms and legs, lifting her body in unison from the pavement. Taken from above, the photograph draws attention to the protestor's sanguine expression. She appears neither to struggle against the officers' grasp nor to register any sense of vulnerability while in their hands. Instead, she seems to find humour in the interaction. Depicted with her arms and legs thrust straight into the air, the photographed figure appears to voluntarily cede her corporeal agency over to the police who, in turn, treat her body with care. Here, passivity is constructed as an active choice with little consequence. In sharp contrast with the photographs from Selma, in which police and protestors are figured as active and passive, respectively, this image reframes these relations as entirely cooperative, remaking this fractious antagonism into a mutually beneficial symbiosis. The accompanying caption aids in this refashioning of the photographic meaning of protest: "Over the years,

the police and demonstrators have worked out a compromise. A bit of pushing and bruising is permitted, but not too much." Just as in the previous examples, so too does this pairing of photograph and text work in conjunction, making over the police into a benign, positive institution and foreclosing alternative readings.

While in the previous example, photograph and text work together to remake the photographic language of civil protest, in some cases, the photobook's words must work much harder in order to transform evidence of police violence into proof of institutional care. In one of the book's most disturbing images, for instance, two police officers are captured forcefully pinning a man down on what appears to be the hood of a car (fig 3.18). One officer, who seems to have lost his cap in the struggle, has his forearm clamped down across the man's neck in a chokehold. The splayed figure is turned towards the camera, giving Freed and, through him, the reader, a full view of his strained expression. His eyes are closed, rendering his aliveness indeterminate and unstable. Given its visual rhyming with iconic photographs from the civil rights movement, the scene and its seemingly overt documentation of police brutality appears instantly legible. And yet, the text, affixed to the left-hand side of the page spread, quickly seeks to resolve any discomfort the image might produce through its resonance with an existing photographic vernacular of police violence: "A family argument. When the man went for the woman, the police jumped him." The text not only suggests that the man is blameworthy for his own punishment, but also hints that the police acted to protect another, more vulnerable victim—a woman whose body and voice are conveniently absented from the scene.

Here, the "friendly local police officer" is stretched to its limits. The supposed dysfunction of a family unit is harnessed to justify the intervention of the police into domestic life. The assimilation of this overt display of police aggression within the pages of *Police Work* exemplifies the way in which, even when violence seems at its most legible, the photobook's text attempts to close down interpretations that might make it readable. By invoking the family to neutralise any concern over police brutality, the text remakes the visual language of state warfare into evidence of state welfare. So although the

photograph with which this chapter opened may be as benign as this image is violent, both harness the perceived instability of the racialised nuclear family in order to recode the NYPD into agent of community safety and concern. When violence is made over into compassion it becomes very difficult to see and, therefore, to challenge that same violence. Perhaps this is why, in his author's note, Freed is able to reflect: "When asked if I saw brutality and corruption I have to answer, of course not. But of course there is corruption and brutality, cruelty and callousness. If there were not, then everyone would see the police as angels of mercy and order. What I saw were average people doing a sometimes boring, sometimes corrupting, sometimes dangerous and ugly and unhealthy job." If Freed failed to see brutality and corruption, this is not because he failed to document it; rather, it is because brutality and corruption are documented in *Police Work* as congeniality, cooperation, and care.

Police Work's construction of the "friendly neighbourhood police officer" resonates with the shifting rhetorical meanings of the New York Police Department during these years.[256] The 1973 film *Serpico*, for instance, is a glossy retelling of whistleblower Frank Serpico's attempts to root out corruption in the NYPD and hold its ethically dubious officers to account. The titular character, played by Al Pacino, refuses to take bribes from local businesses, drawing the intense suspicion of his colleagues and superiors, all of whom happily turn a blind eye to the city's sticky cauldrons of crime and vice in exchange for fat envelopes of cash. Serpico, a fiercely ethical and talented cop, becomes an essential witness in an investigation into police corruption that, spearheaded by the Knapp Commission, aimed to reform the police in the wake of his revelations. Serpico's failure to gain acceptance by his peers in the NYPD stems from his idealistic belief in public service and genuine commitment to honest work—a dedication that the film succinctly communicates when, in one of the first sequences, Serpico is shown protecting a young black woman from sexual assault, despite the protestations of his lazy colleague.[257]

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[256] Sidney Lumet, dir. *Serpico*, 1973.

[257] This narrative resonates with one particular photograph from *Police Work*, which features two cops speaking with a rape victim in front of a block of tenement houses. These scenes testify to the way in which black women are trafficked as a form of moral currency, justifying the increases in policing that ultimately result in the expansion of police powers and extension of surveillance into domestic space.

These conflicting sets of values, however, are given concrete expression through Serpico's divergent lifestyle choices—ones that are steadily exaggerated as Serpico becomes increasingly alienated from his fellow officers. Throughout the course of the film, Serpico grows out his facial hair, wears bell bottoms, and self-fashions with outrageous accessories, taking the sartorial code of the burned-out "hippie" to its logical extreme (figs 3.19; 3.20). An intense and unforgiving loner, he stays unmarried and lives by himself in a dingy basement apartment.

But although he may give the opposite appearance to a clean-cut, upstanding cop, Serpico rigorously maintains his absolutist moral code throughout the course of the film, in spite of the obvious threat to his material security and physical safety. If Serpico becomes the catalyst for a wholesale reform of the unscrupulous NYPD, the film suggests, this is not in spite of his freewheeling lifestyle, but rather because of it. Serpico becomes isolated not only from his fellow officers, but also from his hippie friends who, pictured at fancy loft parties as enablers of gentrification, are revealed to be just as ideologically empty as the cops to whom they profess opposition. The film suggests that the real moral commitments of the sixties—to individuality, authenticity, and truth—have become meaningless signifiers of nonconformism that, if they are to produce any meaningful change, must become integrated within the state apparatus they formerly defied. Just as *Police Work* remakes the existing visual register of the police, so too does *Serpico* offer a way out of ossified appearance of the conventional officer and its associations with state violence. The film suggests that, in order to transform itself, the police must co-opt this once radically oppositional image, assimilating within its ranks that which it previously tried to repress. Indeed, the NYPD pursued this strategy throughout the 1970s, diversifying its ranks so as to reflect the demographics of the neighbourhoods they policed and encouraging officers to wear plain clothes so as to better integrate within local communities. In this way, *Serpico* not only remade the NYPD officer in the collective American imaginary in the 1970s, but also gave cinematic expression to the precise institutional transformations that were taking place at this historical juncture.

In the same way that *Serpico* articulates a discursive departure from the 1960s, so too does *Police Work* offer a way out of the visual register of policing that Freed himself helped to develop less than a decade earlier. While *Police Work* certainly replaces more damning photographs of violence and brutality with flattering images of care and concern, it also engages in a more ambiguous process through which more familiar photographs of state violence are reframed and reread. The photobook not only softens the image of the police, but also recodes overt displays of brutality as necessary and legitimate. In this way, *Police Work* resolves the seemingly contradictory demands that weighed on the NYPD at this juncture, picturing officers as both benevolent community liaisons and unapologetic crime-fighters. By reading *Police Work* through *Black in White America*, the indeterminacy of photographic meaning can be thrown sharply into relief. Although the competing visions of the police offered by these two photobooks appear contradictory, the marriage between advocacy for the civil rights movement and support for police expansion was far from unique to Freed. Rather, it tracked a much broader shift in the discourse around civil rights and its limits that characterised the period. How and why this shift was registered and reproduced photographically will be addressed in the following section.

All in the Family

Towards the end of *Police Work*, a collection of seven photographs display police officers with their nuclear families, broadening the visual register of the NYPD to include photographs of their time spent off the clock. In contrast with the many other photographs of the NYPD that feature throughout *Police Work*, these images depict officers in everyday street clothes. They are shown enjoying moments of leisure, posing with wives and children in backyard pools or celebrating exceptional times of family cohesion, such wedding ceremonies or Christmas holidays. These photographs are meant to deliver on the promise offered in Freed's "Author's Note": they present insight into the rhythms of officers' daily lives, supposedly allowing readers to see what happens when police officers take off their uniforms. The

inclusion of these photographs within *Police Work,* therefore, is an attempt to forestall any reduction of police officers to the labour they perform. By providing evidence of lives lived outside of work, these photographs seem to offer proof of the humanity and morality of officers who, as Freed claims, are often flattened into one-dimensional stereotypes in popular American culture. But although the usefulness of these photographs hinges upon their capacity to bring private life into public visibility, these images are far from sensational or voyeuristic glimpses into the intimate lives of NYPD officers. Rather, they traffic in the generic codes of the family album—their coherence with recognisable visual conventions is mobilised as testimony of officers' adherence to social norms.

One page spread, for instance, features two photographs of policemen at home with their families during Christmas (fig 3.21). The photograph on the left depicts a police officer with his wife and children in front of a Christmas tree. The family coordinates their poses for the photographic moment: all five figures lie on their stomachs and prop their elbows up on the carpet to lift their smiling faces for the camera. Their matching poses serve to emphasise the cohesion of the family unit, making the strength of their kinship ties visually accessible to the camera. On the right-hand side of the spread, another Christmas photograph is displayed, tightly framing a police officer with his wife in front of their elaborately decorated tree. The couple place their arms around one another and smile for the camera; the officer's wedding ring, an outward sign of enduring commitment to the monogamous couple form, can be seen in the foreground. The composition is dominated by a staggering number of Christmas presents. A cornucopia of wrapped boxes surround the couple, tumbling out from under the tree, across their laps, and out of the photographic frame. The photograph constructs the police officer's private life as plentiful and satisfying, displaying both his contentment with the nuclear family structure and his participation in the modes of consumption that have become synonymous with American Christmastime rituals.

In their focus on heightened moments of familial cohesion, these pictures exemplify the photographic codes that have come to characterise conventional family albums. In depicting exclusively happy times and moments of leisure, these photographs create carefully edited fantasies of family life

that obscure its reality as site of domestic labour and emotional turmoil. These elisions, many critics note, are particularly consequential for women, who disproportionately endure physical and emotional exploitation within the home.[258] In these photographs, just as in the home, wives are put to work. They function, along with their children, to soften the image of the overly masculine police officer, mitigating the public association of the police with physical brutality. Police officers' private lives are mediated so as to justify and to endorse their public roles. Rather than upend photographic conventions, Freed's photographs make use of the genre and its intelligibility, creating an avenue of identification between viewers and subjects in which the home serves as a shared site of affective investment and reassurance. Freed's journey from the street and into the home does not produce the salacious revelations that are often secured by the movement of the camera from public to private. Instead, these photographs harness the ideal and idealising conventions of bourgeois family photography in order to offer further evidence of police officers' exemplary ordinariness. In other words, there's nothing to see here.

While Freed's photographs certainly emphasise the cohesion of the family unit, they also make visible the way in which, especially during the 1970s, the nuclear family became inextricably bound up with questions of privacy and property. By juxtaposing figures against suburban homes, outdoor pools, and motor boats, these family photos yolk the stability of the nuclear family to pride in property ownership. In Freed's photographs, these two ways of attaining and sustaining the good life are reflected back at one another, producing the correct, good forms of citizenship that these officers supposedly embody. Property value becomes family values and vice versa. In one photograph, for instance, a family of four is staged on top of a fishing boat, which sits attached to their car in the driveway of their home (fig 3.22). The wife and daughter smile, while the father stands assertively with his elbow resting on the boat's awning. He wears a traditional skipper cap, signalling his status as captain of both the family and the boat. The photograph shows how the role of the patriarch is constituted not just by his dominant

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[258] For more on the ideological function of family photography and feminist criticism of its conventions see: Jo Spence, *Beyond the Family Album* (Virago: London, 1986); Jo Spence and Patricia Hollands, eds. *Family Snaps: The Meanings of Domestic Photography* (Virago: London, 1991).

place within the nuclear family structure, but also through his ownership of property. The family photo blurs the boundary between the commanding father figure and the responsible property owner: to be a good dad is to be a good homeowner; to attend to property is to tend to children.

By eliding the distinction between family and property, the coded meanings deployed by Freed's family photos both register and reproduce broader shifts in the public conversation that were occurring during the 1960s and 1970s. This discourse manufactured an inverse, but complimentary slippage: the idea, in other words, that the violation of property and the negation of traditional, patriarchal kinship structures were pathologically and inextricably linked forms of deviance. This thinking is reflected in the career trajectory and political writings of Daniel Patrick Moynihan, a Democratic Senator from New York who later served as an advisor to Republican President Richard Nixon.[259] In his 1965 report *The Negro Family: The Case for National Action*, Moynihan attributed the persistence of racial inequality to the supposedly inherent dysfunction of black families and their incapacity to cohere with traditional family structures.[260] The report sited high rates of single-parent households as a source of deviance, reinforcing racial stereotypes about absent black fathers and promiscuous black mothers. Its focus on the supposed fragility of the black nuclear family slipped easily into conservative arguments that insisted poverty was a cultural pathology—one that demanded a punitive, rather than benevolent response from the state. As historian Daniel Geary has argued, the Moynihan Report was easily used to fuel an assault on Great Society programs that disproportionately benefited black families, as well as to justify the racialised practices of policing and mass incarceration that developed in tandem.[261] If black Americans could not

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[259] Moynihan's political development and, in particular, his oscillation between Democratic and Republican administrations exemplifies the ideological compatibility of the two parties at this juncture. It also speaks volumes about the way in which liberal "concern" over social cohesion is commensurable with the conservative, law and order approach to social control.

[260] Daniel Moynihan, "The Negro Family: The Case for National Action," Office of Policy Planning and Research, United States Department of Labor (March 1965).

[261] Daniel Geary, *Beyond Civil Rights: The Moynihan Report and its Legacy* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015). For more on Moynihan and the family see: Susan D. Greenbaum, *Blaming the Poor: The Long Shadow of the Moynihan Report on Cruel Images about Poverty* (Rutgers: Rutgers University Press, 2015); Melinda Cooper, *Family Values: Between Neoliberalism and the New Social Conservatism* (New York: Zone Books, 2017).

become upstanding middle-class citizens even after being given full legal equality and access to the male breadwinner wage, then, the argument goes, they must be to blame for their own failings.

But although, in the 1960s, Moynihan married his conservative logic with a paternalistic defence of liberal programs, reflecting the close ties between social justice and social control that characterised the postwar context, in the 1970s, Moynihan and his theories on racial difference evolved in lockstep with a dramatic rightward lurch in the American political landscape. In a series of memos to President Nixon at the turn of the decade, Moynihan applied his theories to issues of urban space, arguing that cultural deviance was to blame for the erosion of traditional city centres. "Much of what is now termed 'the crisis of the cities'" Moynihan explained, "is more a moral and cultural crisis than a material one."[262] For Moynihan, poor, black residents were themselves responsible for urban decay, particularly the widespread fires that spread across the South Bronx throughout the 1970s.[263] In light of this supposed apathy towards property, Moynihan advocated a policy of "benign neglect," arguing that it was time for the government to retreat from the public conversation on racial inequality and withdraw from its active role in attempting to ameliorate urban decline.[264] Moynihan's shifting rhetoric and policy proposals, although ostensibly "colour-blind," sublimated concerns over persistent racial inequality into a discourse around the management of urban space. Degraded property was understood an index of moral decline, as opposed to evidence of class inequality.

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[262] These arguments were laid out in two memos send by Moynihan to Nixon, the first in 1969 and the second in 1970. The latter was meant for internal use only, however a leaked copy was published on the front page of the *New York Times* only days after its release, thrusting Moynihan's arguments into the public spotlight. See: Peter Kihss, "'Benign Neglect' on Race Is Proposed by Moynihan," *The New York Times* (1 March 1970), accessed 12 February 2019. https://www.nytimes.com/1970/03/01/archives/benign-neglect-on-race-is-proposed-by-moynihan-moynihan-urges.html

[263] In 1978, Moynihan, then a US Senator, opposed federal housing construction efforts in the South Bronx, arguing that "people in the South Bronx don't want housing or they wouldn't burn it down. It's fairly clear that housing is not the problem in the South Bronx." Deborah Wallace and Rodrick Wallace, *A Plague on Your Houses: How New York was Burned Down and National Public Health Crumbled* (London: Verso Books, 2002), 22.

[264] In fact, local landlords profited enormously from the destruction of the South Bronx. Recent research into the fire epidemic has shown that landlords often paid neighbourhood children to set blazes in tenement buildings so that they could collect money from insurance companies. See the PBS documentary: dir. Vivian Vázquez Izarry, Gretchen Hildebran, and Julia Steele Allen, *Decade of Fire*, 2019.

As anxiety over the viability of northern cities crescendoed, the idea that property and, through it, the family required defending from the morally bankrupt urban poor was perpetuated by the mainstream media. Popular reporting of the July 1977 blackout—an infamous episode that plunged New York City into darkness for just over twenty-four hours—exemplifies the way in which the popular press figured the racialised poor as criminal agents who had subverted the rightful spatial order of the city.[265] Rather than harness the blackout to question either the viability of the casual suburban decadences, such as air conditioning and television, or the ailing infrastructure that had fuelled the power outage, the media directed public attention towards the inexorable forces of barbarism that had supposedly been unleashed by this momentary lapse in the city's regulatory infrastructure. More so than any form of violent crime, looting was the primary fixation of the news media and became emblematic of urban disorder. The violation of property relations and the breach of consumption cycles were figured as an existential threat to the respectable, professionalised urban citizens for whom the city was being remade. If the blackout temporarily suspended the networks of surveillance that typically conferred order onto the cityscape, then the supposed outburst of deviant behaviour seemed to confirm for many Americans the necessity of these systems of control.

A clear rupture into the rhythms of everyday life, the blackout was easily assimilated into the fast-paced media cycle, becoming a key fixture of both television and print news for the days and weeks after the lights came back on. The 25th July 1977 cover of *Time Magazine* neatly encapsulates the way in which this power failure was framed in public discourse, as well as the event's rhetorical inextricability from the previous power outage that had occurred twelve years earlier (fig 3.23).[266] The cover features a darkened silhouette of the New York skyline extending horizontally across the white *Time* logo. Juxtaposed against these shadowy structures, a colour photograph depicts a densely packed crowd of mostly black New Yorkers with their backs turned towards the camera. The central figures' legs are

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[265] My argument here draws on the work of David Nye and, in particular, his social history of blackouts in the US context: David E. Nye, *When the Lights Went Out: A History of Blackouts in America* (Cambridge, M.A.: MIT Press, 2010).

[266] "Blackout '77: Once More, with Looting," *Time Magazine*, 25 July 1977.

braced against the pavement, hinting at the highly physical jostling of bodies and evoking a sense of manic chaos. Taken from street level, the photograph affords the viewer little distance from the scene, collapsing the space between the disordered streetscape and those who may have consumed these images from afar. Litter is strewn on the pavement and one man is struggling to carry a large load of various objects that, blurred from his motion, are impossible to discern from the image. The headline anchors the photograph's meaning, clarifying the crowd's otherwise illegible actions: "Blackout '77" it reads, "Once more, with looting." A clear reference to the 1965 blackout, the text serves not only to ground the transgressive nature of the clearly racialised crowd, but also to initiate a comparison with the mid-1960s, hinting at how much had changed in urban life since the previous outage, and not for the better.

The idea that white, middle-class New Yorkers had the most to fear from urban decay was taken to its extreme in a 1971 *LIFE Magazine* article, featured on the cover against the title "The Cities Lock Up."[267] A report on urban crime, the article profiled the residents of one Upper East Side apartment building and detailed their quest to defend themselves against the supposed rampant proliferation of criminal activity (fig 3.24). A how-to guide for *LIFE* readers who feared rising burglary rates, the article related the measures taken by residents to secure their property from unwanted intruders. While some tenants put bars on their windows and affixed multiple locks to their front doors, others chained bicycles to heavy refrigerators and arm themselves with hand guns. Despite these increasingly drastic efforts to stave off the threat posed by an increasingly professionalised criminal class, the article claims, the burglaries continued. The two sides are locked in a seemingly endless cycle of prevention and circumvention: "The man in 4A, himself burglarized once, ran to a neighbor's aid with a steel bar, and on another occasion chased away lock pickers with a butcher knife. Once he had a German shepherd for protection. Someone stole it."[268] One photograph of a dark apartment interior, laid out over a full page,

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[267] Karen Thorsen, "Fortress on 78th Street," *LIFE Magazine*, 19 November 1971.

[268] Ibid., 38

closely frames a round table illuminated by a low-hanging pendant lamp (fig 3.25). While a telephone, ashtray, and collection of papers are all strewn across the surface, a hand gun is positioned in the foreground, closest to the viewer. Although there are two windows opposite, they offer neither an indication as to what lies outside nor an opportunity for light to penetrate the shadowy room. The somber, monochrome image draws on the tropes of Hollywood detective dramas, manufacturing the vague sense of a past or future criminal act, despite the absence of crime itself from the photograph.

The article goes even further in its framing of criminal activity as an unbridled constant of city life, suggesting that the residents are, as a result, confined to and trapped within the reenforced walls of the apartment building. While these upstanding, predominantly white citizens are wrongfully forced into imprisonment, the article claims, criminals freely stalk the city streets before gradually moving into private property through fire escapes, roofs, and unprotected windows. The article begins: "Street crime moves indoors——shoving into hallways, up fire escapes, over rooftops, chiseling away at doors and windows. In every large American city and in the suburbs as well, burglars and robbers wage their guerrilla warfare against homes and apartments." According to one resident, "You can't walk down the street anymore."[269] This framing suggests that a reversal has occurred in the supposedly natural ordering of urban space: it is violent criminals who enjoy freedom of movement and access to public space, while middle-class urbanites are confined to the private, domestic spaces they yearn to protect. Accompanying photographs offer tightly framed shots of apartment interiors and coveted property, such as bicycles and televisions, giving visual expression to residents' paranoid feelings of claustrophobia and confinement. Apartment windows are photographed with metal grates affixed for protection, suggesting that it is these urban citizens who are wrongly imprisoned within their own homes as a result of rampant urban crime.

One particular image, featured next to the headline, is taken as if through a spy hole—the small, round opening in a front door through which one can surveil the terrain just outside a property

[269] Ibid., 32.

boundary. Aligned with the perspective of the property owner, the reader can glimpse, through the blurred vignette of the glass, an anonymous man standing in the doorway (fig 3.26). The image portrays how the residents' imprisonment has been inflicted at the level of perception: everyday New Yorkers are forced into "scopic vigilance" behind closed doors, while criminals gradually transgress the sacred boundary between public and private.[270] This narrative suggests that, in order to reassert the rights of white, middle-class citizens to the urban environment and restore their visual mastery over the cityscape, the rightful spatial order of the city and the social hierarchy it preserved must be restored. The perpetuation of these mythologies—–stories in which crime is utterly diffuse and has no anchor in spatial or material reality—–serves as a mandate for the police to correct this supposed spatial inversion, providing legitimising cover for their protection and extension of bourgeois property relations. Finally, the article culminates in an "invitation" from the magazine for readers to participate in a mail-in survey, a questionnaire that seeks to measure the public's fear of crime. What is lost in this seamless transition from the dissemination of information to its collection, however, is the way in which the magazine works to amplify the very fears it hopes to quantitatively measure. The article exemplifies the ideological feedback loop that animates mainstream coverage of crime in the American context—one that, following Stuart Hall, functions as a "'deep structure' whose function as a selective device is un-transparent even to those who professionally most know how to operate it."[271]

The photographic codes deployed throughout *Police Work* must be contextualised within this topsy-turvy world in which the bourgeois home, a sentimental combination of family and property, was considered under threat and, as a result, had to be protected at all costs. In one caption, the use of this anxiety around the private sphere to rationalise the public roles of the police is neatly encapsulated: "An officer once said to me that he always worried about his family at home. Who, he wondered, protected

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[270] The term "scopic vigilance" is borrowed from Jean and John Comaroff, but has its roots in the work of Allen Feldman and his examination of state violence in Northern Ireland. See: Allen Feldman, *Formations of Violence: The Body and Political Terror in Northern Ireland* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).

[271] Stuart Hall, "The determinations of news photographs," in ed. Stanley Cohen, *The Manufacture of News: A Reader* (Beverly Hills, C.A.: Sage Publications, 1973), 234-235.

them while he worked nights? It made him diligent." The caption is paired with a photograph of a police officer inside a tenement building, pointing his gun at a figure whose body is obscured from the camera's lens (fig 2.27). Freed's photographs of NYPD families do not just harness the ideological meanings of the family album as an antidote to a more familiar register of police violence. These photographic codes actively confer legitimacy upon the particular spatial order with which the family is entangled, sanctioning a specific way of relating to space as natural, moral, and correct. In an inverse, yet complimentary move, *Police Work* often invokes the failure of the hetero-nuclear family or the incapacity to look after property as justification for police intervention. As demonstrated in a previous photograph, seemingly familiar images of police brutality are recoded as police care through the invocation of domestic disputes. In another caption, paired with a gruesome photograph of a crime scene, a similar connection is made: "Homicide on the living room floor. It was a family affair."

But although family photographs certainly comprise a meaningful portion of *Police Work*, a significant body of Freed's photographs make use of another photographic genre to negotiate the city's shifting spatialities: the tabloid. As I will show, the tabloid is not circumscribed by the magazine or the newspaper in which it circulates. Rather, the tabloid is best understood as a photographic code—one that draws on an established mode of photographic visibility and is undergirded by specific spatial dynamics. Like Freed's family photographs, the allure of the tabloid pivots around the movement from public to private: it capitalises on the penetration of the camera into spaces that are normally hidden from view. However, in sharp contrast with his conventional images of familial bliss which suture the hetero-nuclear family to property ownership, Freed's tabloid photos make use of their visual language to code undesirable urban residents as illegitimate or "out of place." Despite their obviously diverging aesthetics, these photographic codes, I argue, work together to disguise police brutality as the protection of the home, thereby justifying their necessity in the face of austerity. While Freed's photographs may certainly document the violent extension of the police through poor, racialised communities, when re-

signified through the tabloid these actions are recoded as an essential correction to the perceived upheaval in the city's rightful spatial order.

In fact, the origins of *Police Work* are bound up with tabloid visual culture. Freed's photographs were initially commissioned by and published in a March 1973 issue of *The Sunday Times Magazine*, a notorious British tabloid. Freed's photographs are featured inside the magazine, as well as on the cover under the dramatic headline "Thugs, Mugs, Drugs: City in Terror" (fig 3.28).[272] The photograph is divided in two: on the left-hand side of the image, a cop faces the camera and returns its look, while, on the right, beyond an open doorway, a man is splayed, silent and unmoving, under a dirty sheet in a tiny, darkened room. The use of the flash bulb dramatises the revelatory capacity of the camera, emphasising its ability to transform New York City's shadowy recesses of urban crime and vice into a source of public knowledge. Animated by an abrasive interplay of light and shadow, the photograph brings the details of the inert body and his squalid surroundings sharply into view. The headline frames the image as evidence of a city in precipitous moral decline. Creating a slippage between poverty and lawlessness, the caption further recodes the photograph as a testament to the patterns of deviance and death that had supposedly become endemic to the city as a whole. "Violence in New York is routine. How has it happened? Is the city really falling apart?" The tabloid pivots around a central contradiction: while, on the one hand, the paper recodes everyday poverty as violent crime, it suggests that, on the other, disorder is a banal and irrevocable fact of quotidian urban life. Crime is figured as both a dramatic rupture and an everyday affair.

Freed's photograph makes use of the visual language that has come to be associated with tabloid photography since its origins in the first few decades of the twentieth century. As Ryan Linkof has observed, the history of the tabloid is marked more by continuity than rupture—its enduring appeal pivots around the suppression of its technics and tactics of mediation.[273] While its sensational acts of

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[272] "Thugs, Mugs, Drugs: City in Terror," *London Sunday Times Magazine,* 4 March 1973.

[273] Ryan Linkof, *Public Images: Celebrity, Photojournalism, and the Making of the Tabloid Press* (London: Bloomsbury Press, 2018), 3.

revelation are invariably photographic and often generic, the tabloid produces its value as a photojournalistic document from its perceived honesty and authenticity. The tabloid can be understood in sharp contrast with the contrived staginess of the family photograph. While, in the family photo, the camera is invited into and choreographed around the home, the tabloid violates these terms of consent, offering, we are told, an uncensored glimpse into situations, both ordinary and not, that are normally hidden from public view. In this way, the tabloid shows us the very thing it claims we are being denied, trading off the veiled mysteries of the private realm, while simultaneously placing them on display. Whether a snapshot of an unsuspecting celebrity or a photograph of a lurid crime scene, the tabloid offers the promise of proximity through mediation, foreshortening both the spatial and temporal chasm that separates the photograph's taking from its viewing. It is a visual language that, through its coded meanings, appears viscerally real and powerfully unmediated.

The working methods of the infamous mid-century news photographer Usher "Weegee" Fellig offer an indication of the significance of instantaneity to the perceived value and authenticity of the tabloid photograph. Unlike Freed who became embedded within the NYPD and depended on the institution for access to New York's seedy underbelly, Weegee circumvented these informational relays, equipping his car with his own police-band radio. Armed with a Speed Graphic camera known for its lightening shutter speeds, Weegee often arrived at the scene of the crime before the police, snapping his photographs before the cops could say "we have a situation here." As Jason Hill has argued in his writing on Weegee and his work for *PM*, the photographer and his daring methods became a focal point of news stories themselves, granting an "unmistakable authorial visibility to photography's mediating activity."[274] This recursivity worked with, rather than against the grain of *PM*'s tabloid reportage. In other words, far from unsettling the notions of quickness and instantaneity that confer a sense of authenticity upon the tabloid image, Weegee's placement at the centre of the news story functioned to enhance these ideological values. The photographer's methods gave credence to the idea that tabloid photographs

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[274] Jason Hill, *Artist as Reporter: Weegee, Ad Reinhardt, and the PM News Picture*, 163.

offered stolen snapshots, taken in the privileged moments before a subject or an event could be composed and, the logic goes, distorted for the photographic moment.

The appeal of the tabloid, however, does not just turn upon notions of speed and spontaneity. It also stems from its violation of spatial norms, namely the division between public and private. This transgression is the source of the tabloid's supposed salaciousness and voyeurism—it allows us to see what normally happens behind closed doors, when the regulatory strictures of public life and its rigid social mores are supposedly suspended. Throughout the history of photography, these dynamics of visibility have often been exaggerated through the use of the flash bulb, which has allowed the camera to penetrate urban spaces, such as crowded tenements and windowless factories, that were typically shrouded in darkness and unavailable to the camera's lens. Blake Stimson has identified these dynamics at work in the foundational social documentary of Jacob Riis who, Stimson argues, conceived of *How the Other Half Lives* in spatial terms. Riss' work, Stimson claims, "was drawn from two communities conceived as one – from Riis' half looking on from the comforts of its salons and from the other half in its dark, airless taverns, shelters, and tenement bedrooms."[275] Riis dramatised these acts of spatial revelation through the use of early technologies of illumination, often startling tenement residents with the use of fast-burning flash powder. He would cast the substance into their faces and surroundings without invitation or consent, bringing the hidden details of their dirty tenements into visibility and denying his subjects any opportunity to orient themselves for the camera (fig 2.29).[276]

The photograph featured on the cover of *The Sunday Times Magazine* mobilises the visual language of the tabloid, dramatising the penetration of the camera into spaces that are normally hidden from public view. The photograph bundles multiple layers of revelation into a single image, capitalising many times over on the exciting possibilities afforded by photographic visibility. The photograph is not just the product of the camera's transgression of the border between street and tenement. It goes even further,

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[275] Blake Stimson, *The Pivot of the World: Photography and its Nation,* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006), 54.

[276] Ibid., page 200.

choreographing the violation of an even deeper boundary between the semi-public hallway and private room for the camera. In the photograph, a policeman is pictured standing to one side of the open doorway. He faces the camera and tilts his flashlight to the floor, facilitating the lens' unimpeded access to the sordid scene that lies beyond the threshold. On the other side of the doorway, a figure is splayed, silent and unmoving, under a dirty sheet. His dilapidated surroundings and unkempt possessions can be discerned in the background; they are brought into view by the use of the camera's flash bulb, which simultaneously casts the police officer's face in a garish glow. The flash not only ensures that the darkest recesses of the tenement are available for public viewing, but also heightens the sensationalism of their display, trading off the visual language that was developed by Riis and Weegee to collide the disparate spatial realities of viewers and subjects.

In order to further collapse the geographic chasm that separated New York City's apparent decline from readers in the United Kingdom, *The Sunday Times Magazine* issue is carefully rendered in the aesthetic mould of *The New York Daily News*, another tabloid that was instrumental in amplifying fears of city life in the American context. "*Daily News: New York's Picture Newspaper*" is stamped across the top of the paper, displacing the usual *Sunday Times* logo, which is instead wrapped, red and ribbon-like across Freed's photograph. The typeface and formatting are exact replicas of those used by the *Daily News* and even the correct price, listed in American cents, is accurately fixed in the top-right corner. But although the *Sunday Times* may appear to reproduce an already existing cover, this is, in fact, a copy without an original. There is no *New York Daily News* cover; there never was.[277] Instead, the British tabloid performs a calculated and knowing mimetic gesture—an act of replication that belies its manufactured, counterfeit status. This facsimile serves an important function; that is, to thrust British readers into closer proximity with the spectacle of New York City's decline, allowing readers to dabble in a faraway urban dramaturgy without confronting it directly. The article inside further blurs this boundary between foreign and

[277] This can be discovered through a routine search into the *Daily News* archives. It was also confirmed to me by Jason Hill, who has also done extensive research into Freed's police photography.

domestic, arguing that, if New York is slated for inevitable collapse, "the outlook is grim indeed for big cities around the world." As Stuart Hall has written, the article employs the "parallel prophecy" that animates media coverage of the American context in Great Britain; the idea, in other words, that Britain "generally follows the United States but later, more slowly."[278]

While *Police Work* includes many of the photographs Freed produced for *The Sunday Times Magazine*, the photobook both departs and coheres with the conventions of the tabloid. It develops an alternative to the fast-paced temporality of the tabloid, rejecting the ephemeral materiality of the newspaper or magazine. Unlike the tabloid, *Police Work* is made to endure—its textual elements suggest a degree of self-consciousness in its capacity to both reflect and produce an historical record. This is indicated by the inclusion of a foreword by the popular American historian Studs Terkel. Most well-known for his writing on the Great Depression and the New Deal, Terkel confers historical significance onto the photobook, linking Freed's work to the Thirties documentary that was, by the late 1970s and early 1980s, iconic.[279] But although *Police Work* may unsettle the temporality of the tabloid, the photobook nevertheless reinscribes and remediates its spatial dynamics, suggesting that tabloid visibility is produced through more than just the magazine or newspaper page. Throughout *Police Work*, the form of the photobook is mobilised to reinforce the rhythms of infiltration and revelation that animate tabloid codes of photographic visibility. Indeed, the sequencing of the photographs throughout the book offers a gradual journey into the city's seedy underbelly: the book begins on the street, before steadily taking the viewers into the claustrophobic jails, basement crime scenes, and filthy tenements that are normally hidden from public view.

In its sequencing, *Police Work* tracks the progression of law enforcement from the public arena into private space, pointing to the ways in which the correction of spatial disorder on behalf of a

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[278] Stuart Hall et al. *Policing the Crisis: Mugging, The State, and Law and Order,* 27-28.

[279] Studs Terkel was an important popular historian, author, and radio broadcaster whose career emerged from the public programs supported by Roosevelt's New Deal during the Great Depression. Terkel is best known for his histories of the Great Depression and for making the practice of oral history part of the mainstream archival record. See: Studs Terkel, *Hard Times: An Oral History of the Great Depression* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1970).

professionalised, urban class began with the sanitisation of the city streets. *Police Work* includes many photographs of NYPD officers removing the city's drunk and homeless from concrete sidewalks, demonstrating how, during the 1970s, the street became a highly contested site of social discipline and aesthetic concern (fig 3.30). These photographs depict the NYPD filling the vacuum left behind by the steady withdrawal of the state from public life, attending to the many city residents who, incapacitated by drugs and alcohol, have no access to private space or social services. By recoding these acts of state discipline as evidence of state concern, these photographs smooth over the process through which, as Elizabeth Hinton has argued, the War on Poverty was transfigured into the War on Crime.[280] In each shot, a cop bends towards the concrete and, grasping an arm or hand, attempts to pull the figure up from the pavement. While some officers provide water to sidewalk dwellers, others check the pulses of unconscious city residents. Of all the different types of police work that are represented throughout Freed's photobook, these images comprise the largest share, suggesting that, far from predominantly responding to instances of violent crime, the overwhelming role of the police was to dictate the appropriate types of behaviour that could play out in public space.

Taking the viewer further into the private domain, Freed's photographs of a "shooting gallery" raid exemplify the way in which the spatial dynamics of the tabloid are reinscribed through the form of the photobook. In this sequence of nine photographs, laid out across eight double-page spreads, the police are shown forcing their way into a burned-out tenement that has been appropriated by drug dealers and addicts. Aping the dramatic language of tabloid journalism, Freed's sensationalised caption explains that the decaying building is a place where "drug addicts go to buy dreams or die." The structure of the photobook sublimates these disparate photographs into a unified, narrative structure, anchoring their meaning within a coherent story—one that is driven by a binary antagonism between police and criminals and unfolds in a linear arc. The photographs are mobilised to tell the story of a routine drug

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[280] Elizabeth Hinton, *From The War on Poverty to the War on Crime: The Making of Mass Incarceration in America* (Cambridge, M.A. : Harvard University Press, 2016).

bust, framing the police as agentful protagonists in the management and making over of the degraded cityscape. The sequence allows the viewer, first, to enter the shattered, ground floor window of a neglected tenement building, then, to climb the rickety staircase and move into an apartment, and, finally, to infiltrate a closet, where a drug addict is discovered in the process of injecting heroin into his veins. The spatial progression of these photographs is exaggerated by the structure of the photobook, which maps the gradual penetration of urban space by the police onto the linear narrative of the drug bust. The dramatic unveiling of this murky corner of crime and vice is thus doubly sensationalised, taking the tabloid's theatre of visibility to its extreme.

The sequence's individual photographs similarly draw on the genre of the tabloid photograph, producing a powerful sense of immediacy through their use of an ostensibly spontaneous visual language. Replete with sharp angles and compressed pictorial space, these haphazard compositions appear candid and unposed, offering seemingly unmediated access to urban spaces normally concealed from public view. In one photograph, for example, the police are shown charging up a staircase where they encounter a man who appears to be fleeing the crime scene (fig 3.31). The photograph reproduces the conflicting logic of the street photograph within this interstitial space between the public realm and the private apartment. The camera is, on the one hand, foist into intense proximity to the struggle, and yet, on the other, appears only to observe the actions of others. It presents the promise of immediacy, but only through mediation. Just as Jacob Riis made use of flash powder, Freed also harnesses the flash bulb into order to illuminate the gritty details of the tenement that would otherwise escape the camera and, through it, the viewer's gaze. Freed's flash brings the materiality of urban decay into sharp focus, attuning the viewer to peeling wallpaper, dirty needles, and unwashed sinks that signal the property's derelict status. Unlike Freed's family photographs, which shore up the relationship between family and property, these images produce the inverse, yet complimentary connection between degraded property and the compromised morality of those who occupy it.

The use of the camera to unveil spaces that are normally hidden from view reaches its apotheosis in the sequence's final photographs, which capture police officers extracting a drug addict from the inside of a closet (figs 3.32; 3.33; 3.34). He is photographed with a needle still stuck in one arm. In a series of three images, one particular police officer is pictured opening the door, reaching inside, and yanking the man out by his hair. In the final photograph, the officer thrusts the man in front of the camera's lens, as if to offer him up as evidence of a crime. This sequence fulfils the visual mandate coevally produced by the mainstream media: it allows readers to experience the correction of a perceived upheaval in the rightful spatial order of the city, but only through the comfort of mediation. The tabloid therefore corrects the scopic reversal produced by the earlier *LIFE Magazine* spread, in which middle-class city residents are supposedly trapped within their own homes and prevented from accessing public space. Through this mediated "ride-along" with the police, readers are given an opportunity to regain scopic autonomy and visual dominance over the cityscape, repossessing their perceptual freedom, while the urban underclass is disciplined and displaced. This uneven photographic treatment of residents' relationship to property suggests that access to privacy is not a right afforded to all, but rather a limited good that is distributed unevenly along the lines of race and class.

However, while *Police Work* may reinscribe the spatial dynamics of the tabloid, the photobook simultaneously illustrates the way in which alternative readings can nevertheless emerge in the shift from the magazine page to the photographic book. Although the flash bulb certainly dramatises the camera's revelatory capacity, it simultaneously highlights the drug addict's sickly pallor and unkempt hair, reaffirming Freed's description of the man as "crouched and terrified." These details unsettle the attempt to recast the addict as criminal, calling into question the usefulness of the police and their brutal tactics in this context. *Police Work* also casts doubt upon the broader function of these drug busts, interrogating the efficacy of the police in dealing with these types of offences. In one caption, Freed offers a quote from one police officer who questions the usefulness of their operations: "All we do is inconvenience them, destroy some drugs. Nothing changes." Confirming this assessment, Freed

observes: "Through the window I could see the pushers watching and waiting for the police to leave." Freed suggests that, if it fails to intervene in any broader cycles of drug production and consumption, the police raid cannot be viewed as a success. So although *Police Work* certainly stops short of any critique of the police or warnings against their institutional expansion, the book open ups the possibility of grasping what is lost when the withdrawal of state welfare is accounted for through the expansion of state warfare.

Throughout *Police Work*, the movement of the camera from public to private is made legible through two disparate photographic codes. On the one hand, Freed harnesses the visual language of family photography to display police officers' coherence with bourgeois norms, suturing proper forms of domesticity to property ownership. In this context, police officers' private morality are made to justify their public brutality. On the other, *Police Work* makes use of tabloid visuality, sensationalising the expository capacity of the camera and its flashbulb in the context of the crumbling urban environment. In contrast with family photography, these images invalidate the relationship between poor, racialised city residents and the spaces they occupy, in turn legitimating their displacement and dispossession by the NYPD. When set against the backdrop of the broader visual landscape of urban decay, these photographs and the sequences in which they are embedded recode increased police intervention as a legitimate restoration project—one that required police to dictate the appropriate ways in which both public and private spaces could be used and by whom. Despite their diverging visual language, these codes work together not simply to recast the police as necessary and good, but to disguise the remaking of the city as the defence of the home. In this way, the redrawing of urban space along increasingly segregated class and racial hierarchies could be justified. As I will show, *Police Work* anticipates new forms of policing that, by shifting to questions of space and property, were compatible with a modest, liberal civil rights agenda. Perhaps best encapsulated by the broken windows theory of policing, these new strategies of control, I will argue, can and must be understood through photography.

The Visual Politics of Broken Windows

While *Police Work* certainly registers an existing discourse around urban space—one that is perhaps best exemplified by the writing and thinking of Daniel Patrick Moynihan—the photobook also anticipates another significant intervention that would place issues of space and property at the centre of policing in the US: the broken windows theory of policing. In their 1982 *Atlantic Monthly* article, "Broken Windows: The Police and Neighbourhood Safety," sociologists George Kelling and James Wilson first articulated the relatively simple criminological theory, arguing that mostly benign signs of urban "disorder," such as graffiti, litter, and homelessness, invariably led to and actively encouraged much more serious and potentially violent crimes. In order to forestall these highly damaging offences, the theory stated, police must target low-level crimes and non-criminal disorderly conduct, in turn creating a new moral order and maintaining a general atmosphere of compliance. "At the community level," Kelling and Wilson explained, "disorder and crime are usually inextricably linked, in a kind of developmental sequence." Ultimately, broken windows policing adhered to a fundamentally conservative view of human nature, perpetuating the Hobbesian notion that the job of the state was to regulate the masses' natural propensity for deviance. The police, Kelling and Wilson argued, must act as arbiters of what constitutes appropriate public behaviour and, as their central metaphor reveals, respect for private property is among the most telling metrics of civility: "A stable neighborhood of families who care for their homes, mind each other's children, and confidently frown on unwanted intruders can change, in a few years or even a few months, to an inhospitable and frightening jungle. A piece of property is abandoned, weeds grow up, a window is smashed."[281]

Although Kelling and Wilson did not harness photography to conduct their studies of urban space, broken windows deploys a visual theory of the built environment that harkens back to early photographic studies of criminality. Broken windows chimes with the logic that undergirded the mug

[281] George Kelling and James Wilson, "Broken Windows: The Police and Neighborhood Safety," *The Atlantic Monthly* (1 March 1982).

shot and other forms of identification photography, which were developed throughout the nineteenth century by Cesare Lombroso and Alphonse Bertillon among others. The first to apply phrenological and physiognomic methodologies to the study of crime, Cesare Lombroso believed that criminality could be easily abstracted from vague corporeal forms. According to his theories, an individual's likelihood to commit crime hinged on the extent to which they deviated from standardised physical "norms"—tattoos, craniofacial anomalies, and other distinguishing marks were all causes for alarm. Lombroso harnessed photographic technologies to visualise these supposedly "predictive" typologies. The camera was not a tool of mediation or representation, but, as Jonathan Finn has written, "an inscription device" that "facilitated the production of new forms of disciplinary knowledge."[282] Foreshadowing the views of Kelling and Wilson, Lombroso cleaved to a similarly troubling view of human nature. He insisted that visibly deviant bodies were born criminals and, therefore, incapable of reform or change. Just as Lombroso reduced criminal behaviour to a positivist correlation between visual "signs" and criminal disposition, so too did Kelling and Wilson simplify crime into a causal formula between visible, urban decay and the likelihood for criminal activity.

Their emphasis on the relationship between visual "signs" of the street and criminal behaviour points to the ways in which, as Loïc Wacquant has observed, the intermeshing of city and prison during the neoliberal turn developed in lock step with a revivification of "Lombroso-style mythologies about criminal atavism."[283] For Kelling and Wilson, the street was not simply a site of contestation between good and evil, but a diagnostic tool, providing immediate cues as to the precise stage of a neighbourhood's moral degradation. This kind of interpretive framework is not too different from what Martha Rosler has called the "physiognomic fallacy" that buttresses identification with ethnographic photography: the idea, in other words, that virtue or vice is legibly written on a person's skin and

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[282] Jonathan Finn, "Picturing the Criminal: Photography and Criminality in the Nineteenth Century," in *Capturing the Criminal Image: From Mug Shot to Surveillance Society* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), 29.

[283] Wacquant, "Deadly Symbiosis: When Ghetto and Prison Meet and Mesh," 113.

therefore easily accessible to the camera's lens.[284] Visible damage to property, the argument goes, is the first step in this inevitable descent into chaos and disorder: "Consider a building with a few broken windows. If the windows are not repaired, the tendency is for vandals to break a few more windows. Eventually, they may even break into the building, and if it is unoccupied, perhaps become squatters or light fires inside."[285] The street, according to the broken windows theory, is a permeable membrane through which the contagions of public deviance and disorder can seep, infecting the sanctity of bourgeois private space and, in turn, becoming much more difficult to eradicate. As Alex Vitale and Brian Jordan have commented, broken windows policing sought to manage "problem epidemiologies"; it strove to target the immediately visible, superficial signs of social deviance, rather than to resolve the political-economic dynamics that gave rise to urban decay in the first place.[286]

At stake in the broken windows theory of policing, therefore, is not simply a debate over how or why crime occurs; rather, it is an argument over the built environment and the ways in which it can be read. Through Kelling and Wilson's framework, broken windows are made to signify neither as an index of economic inequality nor as, following Saidiya Hartman, "the language of the riot."[287] Instead, broken windows are overdetermined as the certainty of future crimes. *Police Work* instructs us in how these meanings can be fixed photographically, offering crucial insight into the processes through which New York City and its crumbling built environment came to signify deviance and criminality, as opposed to poverty and neglect. The photobook allows us to see how the production of these meanings involved both the erasure of the structural conditions that resulted in decaying property, as well as the suturing of this same property to criminal behaviour. By recoding photographs of burned-out tenements, giant litter piles, and dirty apartments as the natural and legitimate terrain of policing, *Police Work* actively

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[284] Martha Rosler, "Post-Documentary, Post-Photography?," in *Decoys and Disruptions: Selected Writings, 1975–2001* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2004), p. 221.

[285] Kelling and Wilson, "Broken Windows: Police and Neighborhood Safety," unpaginated.

[286] Vitale and Jefferson, "The Emergence of Command and Control Policing in Neoliberal New York," unpaginated.

[287] Hartman writes that "broken windows and shattered glass are the language of the riot." Saidiya Hartman, *Wayward Lives*, 381.

contributed to a visual landscape that primed the public for the widespread acceptance of broken windows during the 1980s and 1990s. In this way, the remaking of the city along increasingly exclusionary boundaries of race and class could masquerade as an effort to stave off criminal violations of the home, obscuring the ways in which, even though unmarked by the legacies of official Jim Crow signage, segregation was being remade in the urban North.

The transformation of evidence of poverty into proof of crime was not inevitable. Russell Lee's images of Depression-era Chicago kitchenettes, commissioned for and featured in Richard Wright and Edwin Rosskam's *12 Million Black Voices*, may rhyme with Freed's photographs of 1970s New York, but they dramatically depart from these later photographs in their rhetorical meaning. *12 Million Black Voices* harnesses Lee's photographs to excavate, rather than efface, the functional and symbolic links between varying forms of racial enclosure. In the chapter "Death on the City Pavements," Wright insists that, rather than constitute a clean break with modes of racial subjection, the movement from South to North, rural to urban, reinscribed familiar forms of spatial discipline. Wright's text explains: "The kitchenette is our prison, our death sentence without a trial, the new form of mob violence that assaults not only the lone individual, but all of us, in its ceaseless attacks."[288] The sentence is paired with a photograph of a dingy, broken toilet, surrounded by peeling walls and scattered detritus (fig 3.35). This dismal portrait of life in crowded, urban kitchenettes not only queries the promise of class advancement supposedly available to black Americans in the North, but also reiterates the way in which, in northern cities, uneven access to property and mobility essentially functioned as a form of incarceration.

But although, in *12 Million Black Voices*, photographs of degraded property are made to signify as the afterlife of slavery, in *Police Work* very similar photographs are made to speak as criminality and failure. Throughout the book, photographs of decrepit walls, shattered glass, and dirty sinks are juxtaposed with pictures of dead, drunk, and decaying bodies, many of which harness the flashbulb to bring the surfaces of urban decay into immediate visibility. Just as the photobook remakes evidence of

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[288] Wright and Rosskam, *12 Million Black Voices,* 106.

police violence into proof of police benevolence, so too does *Police Work* recode a visual repertoire of urban neglect into evidence of moral turpitude, expanding the photographic record of crime to include images of homelessness, drunkenenss, and neglected property. Kelling and Wilson, in their 1982 *Atlantic* article on the broken windows theory of policing, give this flawed logic brutal, clarifying expression: "The citizen who fears the ill-smelling drunk, the rowdy teenager, or the importuning beggar is not merely expressing his distaste for unseemly behavior; he is also giving voice to a bit of folk wisdom that happens to be a correct generalization—namely, that serious street crime flourishes in areas in which disorderly behavior goes unchecked."[289] Far from produce a new visual repertoire of urban policing, *Police Work* functions through already existing visual conventions, instructing us in the indeterminacy of photographic codes and their capacity to always be made to speak differently.

Conclusion

This chapter has excavated the coded meanings that animate Leonard Freed's 1980 photobook *Police Work* and participate in its remaking of the public, visual record of the NYPD against the backdrop of the city's financial collapse. The photobook's remaking of the visual repertoire of policing, I demonstrate, does not simply involve the production of wholly new photographs of the NYPD—ones that evidence the police force as a positive, healthy intervention into urban life. Rather, I argue that this involves a much more complex process in which both established photographic conventions are reread and disparate photographic genres are combined to engender new meanings. *Police Work* reveals that well-worn or even iconic visual languages of police violence, such as those produced and disseminated alongside the classical phase of the civil rights movement, are not immune to dramatic reversals in rhetorical meaning. This requires not only subtle shifts in photographic compositions, but also juxtapositions between words and images both on the page and in the book as a whole. In sharp contrast

[289] Kelling and Wilson, "Broken Windows: The Police and Neighbourhood Safety," unpaginated.

with classical civil rights photographs that, despite their well-documented limitations, undermined the legitimacy of the police in the collective American consciousness, *Police Work* resolves the publicity crisis faced by the NYPD at this juncture, framing the police force as at once friendly local cops and crime fighters wholly justified in their use of brutal force.

I have also traced how the family and the home recur as mechanisms through which *Police Work* remakes state violence into state care. While dysfunctional families are often cited as justification for the extension of the police into the domestic sphere of poor, racialised urban residents, the family units of police officers are idealised as paragons of hetero-nuclear domesticity. Far from simply reflect the relative virtuousness of these spaces, divergent photographic codes, I argue, constitutively shape whether families are understood as illegitimate or not, out of place or not. Inextricably bound up with the representation of the family are the related issues of property and privacy. By juxtaposing the visual languages of family and tabloid photography, I show how photographic genres differently treat the porous boundary between public and private. Despite these differences, I argue that, in the context of *Police Work*, these genres work together to mask the extension of the police through urban space as the defence of the home. The book is best understood, therefore, as working with the grain of an already upside down visual culture, in which a perceived inversion in the rightful spatial order of the city is mediated as in desperate need of correction by the police. By participating in a coeval public discourse that sublimated anxieties over racial difference into questions of urban neglect, *Police Work*, I argue, anticipates the emergence of the broken windows theory of policing, obscuring the ways in which, even in those places perceived most distant from the Old South, the spatial logic of the plantation was in the process of being remade.

Conclusion

An adaptation of James Baldwin's 1974 novel of the same name, the 2018 film *If Beale Street Could Talk* is an impressionistic portrait of two characters' enduring romance as they confront the intimate violences of the American carceral state.[290] The story is told from the perspective of Tish—a young, pregnant black woman whose childhood sweetheart Fonny is wrongly accused of raping a Puerto Rican woman named Victoria. Fonny is indefinitely incarcerated as he awaits trial. Mirroring the structure of Baldwin's text, the film oscillates between past and present, cutting back and forth from Tish and her family's attempts to acquit Fonny to the poetic story of their burgeoning relationship.[291] The real reason for Fonny's imprisonment is quickly revealed: it is revenge for an earlier incident in which a racist, white police officer was publicly humiliated by the couple. The film shows how, while searching for apartments on the Lower East Side, Fonny defends Tish, punching a man after he sexually harasses her in a corner shop. Although the passing police officer attempts to use the altercation in order to justify Fonny's arrest, an Italian grocery store owner comes to their defense, corroborating Tish's story and thereby emasculating the overzealous cop. Months later, after Victoria is raped, the same officer picks up Fonny off the street and takes him into custody. By ensuring that he is the only black man in the police line up, the officer guarantees that Fonny is selected as the culprit, successfully framing Fonny for a crime that he did not commit.

Shot with a 65mm large-format camera, *If Beale Street Could Talk* constructs an immersive, atmospheric world, awash in warm, painterly hues. The saturated colour palette, coupled with the shallow depth of field, isolates the two main characters from the prickly freneticism of urban life, cocooning the viewer within their rose-tinted romance, even as it is besieged by forces beyond their control. Tish and Fonny's love is figured as a bulwark against the thorny realities of the outside world

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[290] *If Beale Street Could Talk*, dir. Barry Jenkins (2018).

[291] James Baldwin, *If Beale Street Could Talk* (New York: Dial Press, 1974).

not only through the deployment of a sensuous visual language, but also through the use of a soaring orchestral score. Sometimes viewed as a departure from the more barbed tone of Baldwin's novel, the manifold aesthetic pleasures of the film have been a source of both delight and anxiety for its audiences and critics. In a review for *The New Yorker*, for instance, Doreen St. Félix charges that the film's portrait of 1970s Harlem is "deliberately idealized, manicured, and light-dappled. Even the ugliness that is included has been polished to a sheen."[292] Perhaps in anticipation of such accusations, the luscious cinematography is counter-balanced through the use of black-and-white photographs that, taken throughout the 1960s and 1970s by Danny Lyon, Leonard Freed, and Bruce Davidson among others, include several of those featured in this project. At three disparate junctures throughout the film, the story suddenly cuts to a montage of various photographs, all of which place the racist violence of the American carceral system vividly on display. Tish's voice can be heard over the flickering images, taking on a cold staccato that sharply contrasts with the melodic tone that animates the bulk of her narration.

Throughout the first montage, graphic photographs of police brutalising black men, taken from Freed's *Police Work*, are shown alongside Lyon's images of men behind cell bars. Divorced from the book or the page, the images rapidly flash in succession, flattening into general signifiers of the historical backdrop against which the fictional narrative unfolds. After describing Fonny's impassioned intention to become an artist, Tish's disembodied voiceover explains:

> But Fonny had decided on a whole new view. You see, he had found something that he wanted to do. And this saved him from the death that awaited the children of our age. And though it took many forms, the death itself was very simple. The cause was simple too. The kids have been told that they weren't worth shit. And everything they saw around them, proved it.

By shifting both visual and aural registers, the sequence sets up a dichotomy between black-and-white documentary and colour cinematography that recurs throughout the film. In contrast to the dynamic, otherworldly sequences that comprise the narrative portions of *If Beale Street Could Talk*, the still

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[292] Doreen St. Félix, "Can We Trust the Beauty of Barry Jenkins' 'If Beale Street Could Talk'?" *The New Yorker* (21 December 2018).

photographs bring the fluidity and dynamism of the plot to a halt, grounding the film in the gritty reality of 1970s American life. *If Beale Street Could Talk* trades on the coded meanings of black-and-white documentary in order to anchor the film in its historical moment, imbuing Tish and Fonny's idealised world with counter-veiling sense of realism and immediacy. Often harshly lit through the use of the camera's flash bulb, Freed's tilted, street-side snapshots, for instance, thrust the viewer into close proximity with overt displays of white brutality and black vulnerability—scenes that are only obliquely gestured towards in the film's other sequences. This language of documentary authenticity is further amplified through the use of a somber, monochrome vernacular that, harnessed as an antidote to the film's otherwise rich hues, reaffirms the rhetorical value of black-and-white as the chromatic register of the historical record. The use of these ideological meanings is taken to its extreme in the second montage sequence, where a still, black-and-white photograph of Fonny handcuffed in a police car is seamlessly inserted within the parade of genuine archival images.

The use of black-and-white documentary serves not only to offset any visual pleasure that might be gained through the aestheticised treatment of black urban life, but also to counterbalance the viewer's almost complete immersion within the sensuousness and specificity of Fonny and Tish's romance. Throughout *If Beale Street Could Talk*, the film absorbs the viewer into its cinematic space, positioning them firmly within the subjective universe of the characters. For instance, rather than employ the conventions of shot-reverse-shot in order to render the reciprocity of the characters' gazes and dialogue legible, Fonny and Tish are often closely framed returning the look of the camera, as if to address the viewer. However, far from constituting a rupture in the fourth wall, in which the seams of the cinematic apparatus are made abruptly visible, these extended close-ups gently slip the viewer into the position of each character, allowing them to bask in the warm intimacy of the lovers' gazes and to return their intimate looks. Tightly framed from below, these lingering shots lionise Fonny and Tish as singular individuals, humanising them through the use of a kind of time-based portraiture. However, by interrupting their lush, private world with stark, archival photographs, the film also situates the

specificity of their relationship within broader patterns of historical experience, mobilising documentary in order to reorient the viewer towards the general and the public. In Tish's final voice-over, she situates Fonny's story within the many more untold narratives of those incarcerated within America's prisons and jails. Just as, in the first sequence, "Fonny" exemplifies "the kids," in this final sequence, "Fonny" stands in for "these men":

> There aren't enough hours in the day or judges on the bench to try all the cases brought against these men. The game has been rigged and the courts see it through. The trial is their right, but to bury you beneath the prison for forcin' the judge and the DA to do their jobs is the court's right to. And so, like many of these poor men, Fonny took a plea.

Here, documentary is mobilised not simply to impart an historical aura to the film, but additionally to open up Tish and Tonny's private relationship to a public world—one that is depicted as deeply hostile to black domesticity. Rather than allow the viewer to dwell in the specificity of Tish and Fonny's world and, in this way, take comfort in the singularity of their suffering, these documentary interventions suggest that, rather than represent a unique experience, *If Beale Street Could Talk* offers a story that typifies a general condition of vulnerability to state violence and premature death—one that is produced and reproduced by the US carceral system.

If Beale Street Could Talk both reflects and refracts the way in which, since the mid-2010s, questions over the legitimacy of the US carceral state have once again been pushed to the forefront of American political conversation. By remediating many of the images with which this project is concerned, the film instructs us in how, rather than overdetermined, the meaning of documentary is open and malleable, labouring to a wide variety of discursive ends. Photographs once used to satiate the public's appetite for police brutality and to justify the increased intervention of the police into the lives of black and poor New Yorkers, such as those taken by Leonard Freed in the 1970s of NYPD officers, are transformed into evidence of state terror. Photographs of the southern prison farm, taken by Danny Lyon in the late 1960s, are mobilised as additional evidence of the ongoing burdens of slavery and its

afterlives, even as they depict white or white-passing subjects. *If Beale Street Could Talk* testifies to the ways in which, despite postmodern suspicion towards photography and its supposedly naive claims to represent reality, documentary remains a key form of visual representation through which a collective past is made and understood. And yet, while these mediations are intimately intertwined with production of an historical record, they are also inextricably bound up with the construction of a shared present.

At once a study and an act of record-making, *Still Lives* both coheres with and departs from the histories that are written by and through documentary in *If Beale Street Could Talk*. By exploring the historical work, coded meanings, and ideological function of documentary, as well as the broader discursive networks in which photography circulates and takes on its rhetorical value, this dissertation has endeavoured to complicate the well-worn association of documentary with immediacy and realism—one that is put to work and, therefore, reified by this recent film. Instead, this thesis reframes documentary, not necessarily as an attempt to snatch a still image from a world in motion, but rather as a mode of visual representation that must be thought and seen historically. In doing so, *Still Lives* demonstrates how, rather than an inevitable outgrowth of shifting material circumstances, the supposed "decline" of documentary long foreshadowed by postmodern thinkers of photography is in fact a strategic repression; an elision that has functioned to legitimate and lend coherence to official histories of photography. By attending to the material specificities of documentary, this thesis has sought to reveal the 1960s and 1970s as a critical moment of contingency in the history of photography. It was a period, in other words, between the collapse of the meagre welfare state and the solidity of the neoliberal consensus in which not only photographic work became unstable and uncertain, but also the oppositions between mass media and fine art, printed page and gallery wall were in flux.

This project demonstrates how, through their progressive linearity, as well as their inability to account for documentary, existing histories of photography have been thoroughly implicated in the sidelining of questions of race and racialisation. These official histories have had dire consequences for

our capacity to see and to think racial capitalism fully and in all its guises. By shoring up prevailing conceptions of the 1960s and 1970s as a radical rupture both with American racial apartheid and in photographic representation, the history of photography has elided the points of convergence that underpin these narratives of change. Rather than view race relations and photography as steadily improving or gradually perfectible, respectively, this dissertation has endeavoured to complicate the view that these decades witnessed a clean break with historical modes of subjection or "incorrect" modes of representation. The history of race and racism in the American context, this project argues, cannot be understood without attending to the material continuities that, although they may take on a different valence, emphatically endure. By reframing the history of photography through documentary, a practice normally marginalised by dominant histories, the blurred boundaries between the pre and post-civil rights era can be brought more sharply into view.

This project, therefore, does not simply seek a place for documentary or the inclusion of race within official histories of photography. Instead, *Still Lives* suggests that, in order to critically examine the relationship between processes of racialisation and visual representation, these histories and, in particular, the categories and hierarchies upon which they depend, must be radically rewritten. At issue is the capacity to account for race, not just as a static identity or skin colour, but as a process through which, to echo Ruth Wilson Gilmore, large swathes of disposable individuals are situated in proximity to state violence and premature death. By foregrounding apparatuses of racialisation, as opposed to racialised bodies, this thesis has endeavoured to shift the terms through which race can be seen and thought photographically. In doing so, *Still Lives* affirms the wisdom of Stuart Hall who demonstrates that "race" cannot be considered a separate, atomised topic—one that can be grafted onto existing forms of analysis. Rather, race and racism must be understood as foundational to the organisation of photography and its histories. "It is one of the most important keys" Hall reminds us, "not to the margins

of society," but provides insight "right into its dynamic centre."[293] By attending to this dynamic centre and the documents of its barbarisms, *Still Lives* argues, the constitutive function of the carceral state within American life can be more fully confronted.

[293] Stuart Hall, "Teaching Race," in *Selected Writings on Race and Difference*, eds. Paul Gilroy and Ruth Wilson Gilmore (Durham: Duke University Press, 2021), 123.

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