

PHOTOGRAPHS FROM THE ROAD: INGE MORATH, SOPHIE CALLE, SALLY MANN
AND FEMINIST ROAD TRIP VISION

BY

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DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation analyzes the visual and narrative uncertainty pervasive throughout the American road trip photography, film, and writing of artists Inge Morath, Sophie Calle, and Sally Mann. I argue that road travel is central to the content and style of their photographic projects. I reframe these as projects done by traveling women, moving purposefully through space and performing American rituals that engage with a whole history of photography's encounters with race and gender on and off the road. The obfuscating and fragmentary nature of these projects sustain tensions between seeing and not seeing and knowing and not knowing from the peculiar space and history of the road.

Chapter one argues that Morath's photographs from her 1960 trip with Henri Cartier Bresson challenge the tourist's view of history by refusing to visualize the celebratory tropes associated with this white, middle-class, patriarchal experience. Instead, Morath pictures stifling interiors, visually confusing reflections, and diminutive landscapes to show the disorienting qualities of history that are suppressed in touristic experiences of the road. Chapter two analyzes Calle and Greg Shephard's grainy, shaky, 1992 documentary road film as a way to understand Calle's artistic filmic and photographic relationship to truth and autobiography. The third chapter considers Mann's 1998 *Deep South* landscape photographs, shot over the course of three drives to Mississippi, as relics collected on an American-style pilgrimage to places of traumatic racial violence, including sites related to the 1955 murder of Emmett Till.

I term the strategies at work in the case studies as feminist road trip vision. I argue that this type of vision, inspired by embodied experiences on the road, thrives upon documentation, partiality, situated knowledge, and sharing. Feminist road trip vision is valuable in its very incompleteness and stays true to the partial and strange experiences of the road.

To my dad, Jim, who took me on my first road trip.

And to my son, Theo, who I hope to take on many more.

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**INTRODUCTION:
“PICTURE AHEAD!”: GENDER, RACE, AND THE AMERICAN ROAD TRIP**

The American road trip has long been synonymous with photographic seeing. We have been prodded to “Kodak as you go” for over a century. In a 1921 Kodak advertisement (Figure 1) the man in the driver’s seat points forward and three female passengers all actively gaze ahead, alerted by a sign that reads “Picture Ahead! Kodak as you go.” Embodying the sign’s sentiment, one of the women in the backseat is shown in the process of standing upright, with her camera in hand, ready to get the shot and turn the moment into a memory. Despite the obvious excitement of the car’s passengers, the viewers of the advertisement are not privy to the scene that has caused such an activated response. The partial vision the viewers are provided with is meant to let us know that whatever they see must be good, and that they need both a car and a camera to fully experience it.

This advertisement makes apparent the ways that vision is always partial. On road trips this is especially true: we look through rear-view windows and side mirrors, camera lenses and playback screens, foggy windshields and tired eyes. This dissertation analyzes the visual and narrative uncertainty pervasive throughout photographic and filmic projects done by artists Inge Morath, Sophie Calle, and Sally Mann. I argue that driving and road travel are central to the content and style of their work. The artists’ simultaneous use of documentation and obfuscation reveals, on the one hand, a desire to experiment with photography’s truth claims, and, on the other, with the fluctuating vantage points and embodiment inherent to road travel.

Male photographers such as Robert Frank have received ample exhibitions and scholarly attention for their road trip photography.¹ However, this dissertation formulates the first comprehensive studies of Morath's *Road to Reno* (1960) Calle and Greg Shephard's *Double Blind (No Sex Last Night)* (1992) and Mann's *Deep South* (1998). Morath has been narrowly discussed as one of the first women members of Magnum Photos, but her American road trip photographs have not received sustained attention.² Discussion of Calle and Shephard's film has been limited to short reviews and interviews. And, although Mann's landscape photography has been well received in gallery and museum exhibitions, the role that travel played in getting to these sites has not been discussed.³

What unifies the aesthetic strategies at work in the three case studies is what I call feminist road trip vision. I argue that this type of vision is inspired by experiences on the road and thrives upon documentation, partiality, situated knowledges, and sharing. Feminist road trip vision does not describe an essentialist view that women see like this, but that road trips can promote this form of seeing. The photographic strategies Morath, Calle, and Mann employ to create visually restrictive, yet still informative images align with the kind of ways of seeing and knowing proposed by feminist scholars such as Donna Haraway. In her 1988 article, "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective," Haraway rejects objectivity in science and visualization technologies: "Only partial perspective promises objective vision...feminist objectivity is about limited location and situated knowledge,

¹ See, for example, Sarah Greenough, *Robert Frank: Moving Out* (Washington, D.C.: The National Gallery of Art, 1994) and David Company, *The Open Road: Photography and the American Road Trip* (New York: Aperture, 2014).

² Exceptions to this would be John Jacob and Lucy Raven, *Road to Reno* (Göttingen: Steidl, 2006) and John Jacob and Mary Panzer, *Inge Morath: First Color* (Göttingen: Steidl, 2010). However, *Road to Reno* is largely an image-based publication and only contains two short essays.

³ Most recently, the exhibition, *Sally Mann: A Thousand Crossings*, organized by the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. and the Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, Massachusetts, ran from March 2018-December 2019 and traveled to six venues in the United States and Europe.

not about transcendence and splitting of subject and object.”⁴ Road travel reflects this state of situatedness amid flux: the artists’ cameras are constantly moving, located somewhere specific, but only for a time. Feminist road trip vision is an embodied one that is valuable in its very acknowledged incompleteness. The visual works the artists produce from the road stay true to the partial, strange, and limited visual and bodily experiences of the road.

Contemporary photography scholars such as Kate Palmer Albers and Shawn Michelle Smith, among others, have discussed the value of such uncertainty in the medium of photography. They show how images at the very limits of our vision, that are blurry, cropped, and strangely narrated, or as Smith calls it, “at the edge of sight” can be a valuable starting point for seeing the familiar anew.⁵ Albers suggests, “doubt, uncertainty, and inaccessibility are not dead ends,” but rather, “these apparent impasses to knowledge can generate a space for a productive uncertainty that is as culturally valuable as clarity.”⁶ That the artists traveled so far and so long to show us, seemingly, so little is a thread throughout this dissertation. Following Haraway, Smith and Albers, I analyze what is shown in instances of partial perspective. This partial perspective allows viewers to reconsider the ways gender and race have been constructed alongside of idealized versions of American road travel.

THE CAR, THE CAMERA, AND WOMEN

Women have always traveled despite the cultural barriers of doing so. In premodernity, as Sidonie Smith discusses, women traveled in various ways, both chosen and forced, as

⁴ Donna Haraway, “Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective,” *Feminist Studies* 14.3 (Fall 1988): 583.

⁵ Shawn Michelle Smith, *At the Edge of Sight: Photography and the Unseen* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013).

⁶ Kate Palmer Albers, *Uncertain Histories: Accumulation, Inaccessibility, and Doubt in Contemporary Photography* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2015), 7.

medieval pilgrims, servants and enslaved people, naturalists, and on The Grand Tour of Europe: “In these narratives women grapple with what it means to be undomesticated, if only temporarily...the meanings women make of travel are inflected with the protocols of gender out of which, through which, and against which they negotiate their movement from sessility to mobility.”⁷ The duration and mode of mobility was key to the transformative part of these journeys. In the modern era, many fashionable bourgeois women, deemed “lady” travelers, turned to travel “for an empowerment that derived from the negotiation of cultural displacement.”⁸ Sometimes, that empowerment was through the exploitation of others, as in “adventures” in colonial empires, while other times, they took to the road. Early women drivers included upper-class and independent middle-class women. In 1909 Alice Huyler Ramsey became the first woman to take an automobile trip across the United States, from Manhattan to San Francisco in fifty-nine days, followed by Blanche Stuary Scott in 1910 and Anita King in 1915; suffragists drove to reach voters and conduct organizing efforts; and privileged single women drove wounded soldiers during World War I and organized the family road trips taken after World War II.⁹

Mid-twentieth century American road travel is bound to American myths of masculinity and post-war ideals of freedom. But by leaving home, travelling women, as Smith has observed, occupied “an unbecoming subject position” and they would often minimize their sense of agency in travel accounts by omitting first-person pronouns and any details of their erotic encounters.¹⁰ In contrast, Morath, Calle, and Mann’s projects are resolutely autobiographical, un-homely, and

⁷ Sidonie Smith, *Moving Lives: 20th-Century Women’s Travel Writing* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), 11.

⁸ Smith, *Moving Lives*, 17.

⁹ Smith, *Moving Lives*, 172.

¹⁰ Smith, *Moving Lives*, 18.

sometimes erotic, and their images offer a particular way of seeing that illuminate the strange encounters often presented to travelers who stop and look. Morath, Calle, and Mann have all been couched in gendered archetypes despite facing varying degrees of experiences as women artists – Morath as the consummate asexual professional, Calle as the self-centered, loose, bourgeois artist, and Mann as the mother, the wacky matron. The artists both engage with and challenge such mythologies throughout their careers, including with their work on the road.

In *Magnum Accountants* (Figure 2), a photograph taken five years after her road trip, Morath alludes to the gendered politics at Magnum. She juxtaposes two fashionable, made-up, bee-hived, female accountants going over some papers together in the office with a poster on the wall behind them. The poster reads, “Images of War/Robert Capa,” a stand-in for the agency’s virile male leader, who died photographing at war. Early on, Morath herself had been given lighter topical assignments such as debutantes in London (*Mayfair and Soho*, 1953), dog shows (*Cruft’s Dog Show*, 1954), as well as features on women such as *Duchess of Marlborough at Blenheim Palace* (1954), a profile of Pablo Picasso’s sister, *Lola de Vilato* (1955), and *American Girls in Paris* (1954).¹¹ Whether these types of assignments were due to her freshman status at the agency - she didn’t become a full member until 1955- or were assumed to be topics more suited to her gender – they were probably both - Morath’s *Magnum Accountants* shows us that she is cognizant of, and perhaps oscillated between, the office politics at Magnum.

Morath tried to downplay the significance of gender in order to focus more on the equalizing power of the work itself. In a 1981 text, Morath recalls the early days at Magnum:

Since few of us were married, we had much time to spend together. We talked a lot, but rarely about photography. Our discussions were more often about politics or philosophy

¹¹ Inge Morath Foundation. “Inge Morath: 101 Fashion & Celebrity Photos.” IngeMorath.org/?p=3816. Last accessed 6 March, 2016.

or racehorses, pretty girls, and money. We constantly looked at each other's work, and criticism could be tough if the work did not measure up to the expected standard.¹²

This casual one-off about “pretty girls” is striking: were Morath and Eve Arnold, the other early, female, Magnum member, simply regarded as one of the guys? It does not seem to be that simple. There were still places and topics that the women did not cover, such as warzones. On the other hand, was this chatter about “pretty girls” with Morath and Arnold around meant as a gesture of exclusiveness, a distancing of two straight women from the other heterosexual men, or, perhaps an attempt at inclusiveness, a gesture that, however intended, denied their own femininity and/or sexuality? Morath's statement shows that she saw Magnum members as united in their marital status as single and in their professions as photographers, rather than as men or women. Yet, her image of the accountants complicates things. Is her photograph poking fun at the women for their excessive hair and makeup, two things Morath was not known for indulging in much herself? Or, is there a sense of identification with the two women in regard to their labor, pouring over papers in the office, constantly aware of both their work and the perception others had of them? Morath had to do the extra work of navigating how to perform or suppress, defend or blame, praise or disdain their gender in such an environment. She likely understood that attenuating any qualities that might be perceived of as feminine was desirable to maintaining her professional credibility.

In contrast, Sophie Calle's exhibitions have been labeled, at least by one critic, as spectacles of “narcissistic horror.”¹³ In 2008, critic Chris Townsend termed Calle's propensity for elaborate exhibitions of her autobiographical work in this way. Calle's work is certainly centered around herself (or the character of herself plays) but his use of the term “narcissism” is

¹² Inge Morath, “Meeting Magnum,” in *Magnum Paris – Photographs 1935-1981* (New York: Aperture Books, 1981), 7

¹³ Chris Townsend, “Knowledge as Spectacle,” *Art Monthly* 322 (December 2008 - January 2009): 13.

telling. According to the American Psychiatric Association's *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders Fifth Edition*, "Narcissistic personality disorder is a pattern of grandiosity, need for admiration, and lack of empathy."¹⁴ While Calle's projects and their exhibition periodically face criticism for some of the same qualities found in the diagnostic criteria, such as having "a sense of entitlement" or being "interpersonally exploitative,"¹⁵ the "narcissistic horror" expressed by Townsend's comments are gendered and predictable. Townsend falls into the problematic trap of associating women's autobiographical artistic projects with selfishness, self-centeredness, and/or casual diagnoses of narcissism. However, Calle is not even a good case study. Throughout her work, it is consistently difficult to discern if what she presents is autobiographical or fiction. Calle frequently subverts patriarchal claims to humanistic fullness of the true self or any kind of essential feminine interiority with deflective strategies of narrative confusion, repetition, and obfuscation.

Sally Mann, on the other hand, has been berated in the press for being a bad mother after the publication of her *Immediate Family* (1992) series of photographs. Of the sixty photographs in the book, thirteen of them showed her children nude or semi-nude. In a 1992 *New York Times Magazine* article by Richard B. Woodward, he wrote, "If it is her solemn responsibility, as she says to 'protect my children from all harm,' has she knowingly put them at risk by releasing these pictures into a world where pedophilia exists?"¹⁶ The photographs of her children, Emmett, Jessie, and Virginia, which she had been making for a decade, coincided with the culture wars of the 1990s, a time of politicization of figurative photography capitalized upon by the religious

¹⁴ American Psychiatric Association. *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders. Fifth Edition* (Washington, D.C.: American Psychiatric Publishing, 2013), 645.

¹⁵ American Psychiatric Association, *DSM-5*, 669-70.

¹⁶ Richard Woodward, "The Disturbing Photography of Sally Mann," *New York Times Magazine*, September 27, 1992. <https://www.nytimes.com/1992/09/27/magazine/the-disturbing-photography-of-sally-mann.html>. Last accessed May 4, 2020.

right in a battle for votes through a moral majority. At first, Mann denied the possibility that anyone could see these as morally wrong or, worse, pornographic. She claimed to be “blindsided by the controversy” and explained that her children often ran around and swam nude at the family’s isolated farm.¹⁷ Plus, she argued, the children had a role in composing and editing the photographs for inclusion in the publication. Later, Mann moved to the defense, of not just the content of the photographs, but of herself as a mother.

I walked them to school every morning and walked back to pick them up at 3. I never forgot to sign the innumerable permission slips and attended all their piano/flute/oboe/ballet recitals and soccer games. (O.K., so strictly speaking, that’s not true, Virginia says. She jokingly reminds me that I missed the All Regional band performance in Covington when she gave her oboe solo. And I bet there were some soccer games, too, but let’s just say I did the best I could.) With my husband, Larry, holding the flashlight, I picked pinworms from itchy butts with the rounded ends of bobby pins, changed wet sheets in the middle of the night, combed out head-lice and mopped up vomit. I baked bread, hand-ground peanuts into butter, grew and froze vegetables and every morning packed lunches so healthful that they had no takers in the grand swap-fest of the lunchroom.¹⁸

Mann comes across as desperately trying to prove herself as a good mother. Her examples of how she showed love and support to her children are ones that are physically challenging and visceral. In such efforts to defend herself, the family pictures get pigeonholed into such debates about content and biography rather than their formal and artistic qualities. For Mann, a photographer that is obsessed with the surface quality of her prints, this must have been untenably frustrating, even if she was more cognizant about the controversial climate she released her photographs in than she has admitted. While I do not discuss the *Immediate Family* photographs, I do address how such aggressive casting of Mann as a bad mother prompts her to leave home, where she typically photographs, and take to the road for new content. Yet, I also

¹⁷ Sally Mann, “Sally Mann’s Exposure,” *New York Times Magazine*, April 16, 2015. <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/04/19/magazine/the-cost-of-sally-manns-exposure.html>. Last accessed May 4, 2020.

¹⁸ Mann, “Sally Mann’s Exposure,” *New York Times Magazine*

show how her technique on the road, that of the wet-plate collodion process, popular with nineteenth-century “lady amateur” photographers, who were all mothers, and her content, sites related to Emmett Till, whose story was made famous due to his mother’s choice to have a photograph of him published after his horrific murder by two white men, bring that part of her identity full-circle.

In addition to the unifying thread of feminist road trip vision there are some fascinating surprises that come from pairing these seemingly unrelated artists together. Writing is an important component in all three trips in addition to the women being visual artists. Both Morath and Mann kept detailed notes and/or diaries of their experiences and Calle later-rewrote her account, adding depth and contradiction to their visual counterparts. Both Calle and Morath’s trips end in marriages, one during the road trip and one after. Although both are photographers, their road trip projects are also deeply related to and intertwined with film, one, an independent film, and the other, a Hollywood production, *The Misfits*. Film has been an extremely popular medium through which to depict the temporality, speed, and embodiment of road trips, from off-kilter family road films like *Little Miss Sunshine* (2006), to horror films like *Joy Ride* (2001), comedies like *Dumb and Dumber* (1994), feminist anthems like *Thelma and Louise* (1991), counterculture bikers films like *Easy Rider* (1969) and classic Hollywood like *Sullivan’s Travels* (1941), *Stagecoach* (1939) and *It Happened One Night* (1934). French writer Simone de Beauvoir plays a role in Morath and Calle’s chapters, too, the three European united by a desire to take to the American road.

And yet, violent black death also emerges as a constant reality and presence that the artists engage with both indirectly and directly. The space of the road in the United States has

historically not been a friendly one to African Americans. It is not an accident, as I show next, that all of the artists and their companions addressed in this dissertation are white.

THE AMERICAN ROAD TRIP AND WHITENESS

Opened in 1926, U.S. Highway 66 was neither the longest nor the first long-distance highway, but it uniquely came to represent, as Peter Dedek has described it, the “power and freedom of the private automobile.”¹⁹ After World War II, historian Susan Session Rugh points out, “the family vacation became democratized by the road trip.”²⁰ By 1954, half of Americans had at least a week-long summer vacation planned. Growing prosperity, standardized two-week vacations, rising rates of car ownership, and cheap gasoline all contributed to the road trip boom. With the Interstate Highway Act of 1956, five new interstates were built and Route 66’s prominence and use gradually declined.²¹ By 1960, when Morath and Cartier-Bresson traveled, they took the new Interstate 40 most of the way, and by the 1990s, when Calle and Mann traveled, Route 66 was no longer one, unified route. Despite this, Route 66 established the standard version of how mid-century Americans understood ideal highway travel: as a touristic experience in which they could express their hard-earned independence and an opportunity to view iconic sites to bolster their sense of civic pride from within or just outside of their cars.

Route 66 allowed motorists to stop at will at the many trading posts, historical sites, natural wonders, and kitschy, attention-grabbing roadside businesses from Chicago to Los Angeles without veering too far from the safety and promise of the road. A National Highway Association promotional postcard from the 1950s demonstrates this well: the front of the

¹⁹ Peter Dedek, *Hip to the Trip: A Cultural History of Route 66* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 2007), 2-3.

²⁰ Susan Sessions Rugh, *Family Vacation* (Salt Lake City, UT: Gibbs Smith, 2009), 7.

²¹ Dedek, *Hip to the Trip*, 64, 66.

postcard (Figure 3) shows a clean, curved, thick, black line indicating the ease with which one could travel across the country. The vast geographical differences of the regions are reduced to simplified graphics like skyscrapers, wheat, mountains, and palm trees. The bust of a Native American woman is depicted, located ambiguously between a few states. Her dark hair, eyes, lips, and turquoise headpiece are emphasized, meant to signal the exotic encounter a traveler might imagine having on the road even though her place on the postcard, and in the country, is geographically and symbolically undefined. The cowboy, by contrast, is shown from head-to-toe, a full human being. He stands tall and strong, in and beyond the borders of Texas, expressing American individualism and expansionism. In the bottom right-hand corner, four cars buzz by a US 66 road sign. Such imagery presented road travel as a safe and exciting spectacle to visually behold from the comfort of one's own car, with the ease of the route emphasized by the black line. However, this comfort was limited, and marketed, to white travelers.

A wide variety of sources promoted road travel during the 1950s and 60s to white Americans. American companies used the lens of the road trip to advertise their wholesome, family-friendly offerings. Full-color magazine advertisements encouraged people to take their new, reliable, family-friendly machines like a roomy Chevrolet across the country to see natural wonders and inspire civic pride (Figure 4). Coca-Cola advertised their drink as the "Host of the highways" in *LIFE* in the 1950s (Figure 5). In the advertisement, the bust of a happy, white child floats in the sky, smiling widely out at the viewer, evidently pleased by the gigantic bottle of Coca-Cola next to him. On the roads below him, cars, buses, and trucks drive through a picturesque landscape. Such ads sold the ideas of mass consumerism alongside individualism and civic pride to attract generations of buyers. The road trip was, for many, a way Americans

felt engaged with a blossoming sense of post-war national identity founded on wealth and choice.

Standard Oil heavily encouraged road travel and their own economic interests through massive photographic projects, short film productions, and publications of landscape photographs by well-known photographers, such as *The Glory of Our West*, discussed in Chapter 1. Standard Oil of Illinois produced a short promotional film entitled, *American Travelogue: Midwest Holiday* (1952). One of the early scenes of the short, fictional, film shows the main character, a white, middle-aged reporter named Dale, stopping to get gas at Standard Oil. In the frame, the name-brand, “STANDARD” can be seen from the perspective of the driver as he pulls up to get gas. The shot is taken looking out of the windshield from the interior of the car, positioning the viewer in the place of a customer (Figure 6). The man and his fellow travelers discuss the freedom and patriotism associated with American travel and the industries that allowed for it: one of the travelers declares, “Once upon a time these rivers were our only highways. Today we have highways all over the country. We drive our own cars, we get on a train, a plane, go from one end of the country to another, and nobody says we can’t.”²² The character equates cars with freedom and makes it seem like a patriotic mandate to visit places where citizens can witness American history, achievements, and natural wonders.

This filmic advertisement, and nearly every single advertisement in the popular press for cars, maps, routes, accommodations, and restaurants during the 1950s and 60s were geared toward white audiences. Dianne Harris’ book, *Little White Houses* examines the construction of white identities in terms of post-war housing design. Home ownership was often not afforded to African Americans and other minorities who faced discriminatory housing laws, red-lining, and

²²*Automobile Travelogue: Midwest Holiday*. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9dVcriKB5Yg>. Standard Oil of Illinois. 1952. Wilding Picture Productions Incorporated.

hostile homeowners' associations. I argue that whiteness was also constructed in terms of the family car and automobile travel. Harris argues, "postwar domestic environments became poignant ciphers for whiteness, affluence, belonging, and a sense of permanent stability,"²³ and I congruently assert that the car is one of those domestic environments. The postwar road-trip can be understood as a romantic, mobile iteration of the home to explore and express similar notions of belonging across the American landscape. Sara Ahmed has described how whiteness "is as a category of experience that disappears as a category through experience," where whiteness is not an "ontological given, but as that which has been received, or become given, over time...an orientation that puts certain things within reach...capacities, aspirations, techniques, and habits"²⁴ She continues that whiteness "orientates bodies in specific directions, affecting how they 'take up' space."²⁵ Both homes and cars acted as spaces where white Americans could and did take up space, comfortably. The experiences gained from looking at and/or making photographs and film of historical roadside stops and natural wonders on road trips solidified a white, middle-class, American identity. The ability to take time off of work to travel, following the prompting advertisements, indicated a privileged economic situation which many whites were afforded once they achieved the dream of homeownership. Middle-class whites understood it as their right and even duty to travel to any place they chose in their home-on-wheels.

Such a view of a right to accessibility stands in stark contrast to the reality of the kind of threatened mobility of African Americans and other non-whites on the road. Varying degrees of Jim Crow Laws, segregation, and sun-down towns, especially before, but also after, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 were serious hazards to people of color while traveling. Black travelers did

²³ Dianne Harris, *Little White Houses: How the Postwar Home Constructed Race in America* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013), 1.

²⁴ Sara Ahmed, "A Phenomenology of Whiteness," *Feminist Theory* 8 (2007): 150, 154.

²⁵ Ahmed, "A Phenomenology of Whiteness," 150.

participate in the post-war car, travel, and leisure boom, but they had to consider many other factors before departing in order to try to avoid the real violence they could face. The popular *Green Book*, published from 1936-54 and *Travelguide*, published from 1947-57, listed and described accommodations for sleeping, eating, using the restroom, shopping and any other needs black travelers might have while away from home. The 1952 cover of *Travelguide* (Figure 7), a slim publication, meant for the pocket or purse, shows a smiling black woman in a dress, gloves, and a hat, standing next to her car, confidently posing with her purse, suitcase, and golf clubs. However, the scene is disrupted by the guide's slogan, "Vacation and Recreation Without Humiliation." Such a slogan is both alarming and comforting, stressing the real need for such guides, without which, one may easily and quickly face humiliation on the road. While white travelers often gravitated toward the popular *Rand McNally* maps and guides (Figure 8), the *Green Book* and *Travelguides* were not just for geographical information and pleasure, but for survival.

Some of the images in this dissertation engage with poignant and dangerous situations of inequality within America at the mid- and late- century, both on and off the road, especially for black men, even though most the images included here are taken by white women. For example, the way in which Sally Mann conceptualizes her photographs in Mississippi at sites related to Emmett Till's murder as visual reparations will be discussed, as will the videotape of the Rodney King beating which played on a loop at the same Whitney Biennial as Calle and Shephard's film. As Thulani Davis reminds us, "Even if this is not news, it is still obvious by our continued reluctance to look at the role of race in the entire visual field that most Americans have never learned to discern the dominant presence of imagery constructed to address white audiences from

imagery that realistically reflects the complexity of African-Americans.”²⁶ Only the *Green Book, Travelguide*, and other publications specifically for black audiences engaged the complexity of how the road trip presented opportunities for both leisure and terror.

Sidonie Smith notes that all of the women’s travel narratives she discusses in her book on twentieth century women’s travel writing are also, as in this dissertation, white women. She suggests that this is because the travelling white women “assume their ability to move...without the constraints of visibility politics as they elaborate a politics of technological mobility. In fact, for many of them, their relationship to the technologies of modernity is precisely the signifier of their privileged whiteness.”²⁷ Because white women did not have to invest the extra time, emotional energy, and costs of planning a safe trip for their families, they had that time, energy, and financial ability to recount their narratives on their road trips. Their whiteness also afforded them, following Ahmed, “a form of public comfort.” Ahmed conceptualizes whiteness as shaping places through habitual bodily actions, as creating a sense of comfort, or well-being and ease, “by allowing bodies to extend into spaces that have already taken their shape,” a kind of social impression upon a proverbial chair.²⁸ Historically, white American women could approach road trips with a generally positive and confident attitude, especially when accompanied by white men.

Following Harris, I do not think that white Americans were completely naïve to such racialized realities, but that they “tended not to see, think about, or acknowledge their unearned privileges”²⁹ in part because visual culture eliminated such complexity and because, as Ahmed

²⁶ Thulani Davis, “Foreword” in *Martin Berger, For All The World to See: Visual Culture and the Struggle for Civil Rights* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), xii.

²⁷ Smith, *Moving Lives*, xv.

²⁸ Ahmed, “A Phenomenology of Whiteness,” 158.

²⁹ Harris, *Little White Houses*, 13.

argues, “whiteness gets reproduced by being seen as a form of positive residence.”³⁰ Morath and Cartier-Bresson and Calle and Shephard had the advantages of looking like typical, heterosexual, white, American couples traveling the country –not unlike the couples in the mid-century advertisements. Morath and Cartier-Bresson, two Europeans who had experienced World War II, also carried with them a resolute suspicion of all things nationalistic and were quite curious and cynical then mindless and accepting of certain racial privileges and nationalistic overtones they observed. Mann, as I argue in Chapter 3, centers her road trip around a kind of racial reckoning as a white, southern woman, but the fact that she can do so alone and safely can largely be attributed to her whiteness. All of the travelers and their companions in this dissertation enjoyed the privileges and ease of travel that came with not having to face or consider their whiteness, during or after their American road trips.

MORATH, CALLE, AND MANN

Chapter One, ““I cannot penetrate the spirit’: Inge Morath’s *Road to Reno*” argues that Morath’s photographs from her 1960 trip from Manhattan to Reno with Henri Cartier Bresson challenge the tourist’s view of history with strange photographs at historically important roadside stops. I analyze how Morath’s images refuse to visualize the celebratory tropes associated with this white, middle-class experience. Instead, Morath pictures stifling interiors, visually confusing reflections, and diminutive landscapes to show the disorienting qualities of history that are suppressed in touristic experiences of the road.

Chapter Two, ““It happened’’: *Double Blind (No Sex Last Night)*: Sophie Calle and Greg Shephard’s Road Trip Film” argues that Calle and Greg Shephard’s grainy, shaky, 1992

³⁰ Ahmed, “A Phenomenology of Whiteness,” 154.

documentary road film, *No Sex Last Night (Double Blind)* is a way to understand Calle's conception of truth and autobiography in her art. However, the road trip experience later gets re-imagined by Calle, in new, solo, photo-textual project, *True Stories* (1994) to ultimately achieve her goals. The moving image does not satisfy Calle, and she turns back to the still image with re-written text to fulfill her desire for total control of vision and off the road.

Chapter Three, “‘Everybody knows about Mississippi’: *Deep South*: Sally Mann's Southern Photographs as American Pilgrimage,” considers Sally Mann's 1998 *Deep South* landscape photographs shot over the course of three drives from Virginia to Mississippi. This chapter suggests that the *Deep South* images are relics collected on an American-style pilgrimage to places of traumatic racial violence, especially sites related to the 1955 murder of Emmett Till. Such an analysis opens up the prints, marked up by mistakes due to Mann's use of a nineteenth century process, to lines of communication with the history of photography, travel, and race in America.

A central question guiding my study is why Morath, Calle, and Mann travel so far to photograph sites of the American landscape only to make these sites difficult to see? I argue that the artists are not just blocking visual access to these sites, which are often deeply personal, political, or historical places, but, rather, through their feminist road trip vision, their imagery visualizes the complex, contradictory, and embodied experience of the famed American road trip.

CHAPTER 1:
“I CANNOT PENETRATE THE SPIRIT”: *INGE MORATH’S ROAD TO RENO*

In Inge Morath’s image of a tour group, *Oconaluftee Village, North Carolina* (Figure 9), she photographs a group of tourists, looking, rather than the subject of the tour. Four men stand behind a line of four women and a school-aged boy. Woven baskets of various sizes displayed on a bench in the foreground in front of them separate the tourists from the action they observe, likely some kind of demonstration of the creation of the baskets. Even the tourists themselves are not depicted in full, as two of them have their faces blocked or partially blocked by a hanging basket, and a third tourist’s body is almost completely cut-off at the right edge of the photograph. Viewers of the photograph seem to be witnessing the spectacle of tourism in a small, but representative moment where tourism itself, and the acts of gazing it entails, is the subject. As viewers, we have access to the people in the photograph, but not exactly to what they gaze upon. We are confronted by an image that seems to value the act of looking but simultaneously denies full visual access.

Photographs like *Oconaluftee Village*, from Inge Morath’s 1960 series, *Road to Reno*, relish in such gazes and aversions, surfaces and reflections, and histories and peoples that are encountered and looked at, but never fully seen. The images, taken during Morath’s eighteen-day road trip from New York to Nevada, feature a number of roadside tourist attractions. They show families visiting historical sites, urban window displays, colorful billboards, the Grand Canyon, and Hoover Dam. Some photographs are in color, others in black and white. And yet the more one looks at these images, the less they seem to show. Her images rarely present a full view, nor what was thought to be notable about these places.

In this chapter, I show how Morath’s *Road to Reno* photographs draw upon the

familiarities of mid-century road travel, but ultimately refuse to visualize the celebratory tropes associated with this white, middle-class experience. Instead, her images are of stifling interiors, visually confusing reflections, diminutive landscapes, and unexpected uses of color. Her consistent obfuscation of clear views of what she encounters on her cross-country trip, is, I argue, a strategy to trouble photography's overly easy associations with documentary, history, and truth and, instead, takes into account how vision is uniquely influenced by the experiences drawn from the road. Morath foregrounds uncertainty in her photographs to draw viewers in and to get us to look closer. However, what she shows is often a lack of full access

Uncertainty as a productive starting point to a photograph comes from, among other places, scholar Kate Palmer Albers's 2015 book, *Uncertain Histories*. Here, Albers argues that when photographic projects "foreground what we *don't* know about the images in question, and use the medium less as a springboard to knowledge than as a site for uncertainty," then the uncertainty "leads back around to a new kind of knowledge production" where "the uncertainty is not a dead end, but a generative space for the viewer's own productive engagement with the construction of history."³¹ When viewers are not sure what they are looking at, Albers claims, they begin to examine how meaning is constructed. Like the photographers Albers analyzes in her text, Morath, too, presents photography as "a fundamentally ambiguous medium that can be at once deeply evocative of the historical past while at the same time deeply limited in the stories it conveys."³² Relatedly, Hito Steyerl has also described the "uncertainty principle of modern documentarism."³³ This principle, that "the closer to reality we get, the less intelligible it becomes," in some ways translates to Morath's road trip photographs in which she travels far to

³¹ Kate Palmer Albers, *Uncertain Histories: Accumulation, Inaccessibility, and Doubt in Contemporary Photography* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2015), 4.

³² Albers, *Uncertain Histories*, 3.

³³ Hito Steyerl, "Documentary Uncertainty," *A Prior* 15 (2007): 303.

get close to people and sites, only to show us very little about them. For Morath this is cognizant, but Steyerl gives examples, such as low-resolution international cell phone broadcasting from the early 2000s, that show a strange disregard for the contrast between the clear desire to document and the inadequacies to do so. Steyerl concludes that, the only certain thing documentary can give us is confusion, a frustrating sense of “nagging insecurity” or uncertainty.³⁴

The quotation from Morath’s diary that serves as the title for this chapter, “I cannot penetrate the spirit,” is telling. After spending several days in the South, driving through Knoxville, Nashville, Memphis, and Little Rock, Morath, perplexed by contradictions such as great displays of wealth and poverty, friendliness and racism, strange recreations and natural beauty, frustratedly writes, “I cannot penetrate the spirit. It is not for outsiders.”³⁵ To try to show things clearly would not be true to the physically draining experiences of road travel (“I am terribly tired. My eyes are red from driving”³⁶); neither would it be true to her encounters with American life and history.

When Morath and fellow Magnum member, mentor, and friend Henri Cartier-Bresson, planned their road-trip from Manhattan to Reno in 1960, they chose the Southern route, a drive nearly six-hundred miles longer than the one they could have taken through the Midwest, decidedly hotter in the July summer, and more crowded with tourists (Figure 10). The two photographers planned their American road-trip on their way to photograph the set and production of a Hollywood film written by Arthur Miller and directed by John Huston, *The Misfits*. The film, starring Marilyn Monroe, Clark Gable, Eli Wallach, and Clift Montgomery, is a western about social misfits: divorcees with nothing to lose and cowboys with everything to

³⁴ Steyerl, “Documentary Uncertainty,” 305.

³⁵ Inge Morath Photographs and Papers, “Road to Reno Diary,” July 9th entry. General Collection, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut.

³⁶ Inge Morath Photographs and Papers, “Road to Reno Diary,” July 8th entry.

lose, both determined to live “free” amidst changing times. Magnum had obtained exclusive rights over the production of the film’s images, sending teams of two photographers every fifteen days to shoot on location in Nevada.³⁷

Magnum Photos, a photography collective founded in 1947 by Robert Capa, George Rodger, Henri Cartier-Bresson, William Vandivert, and David Seymour, marked a new approach to photography after World War II. The photographers themselves, instead of newspapers, magazines, and other clients, would own the negatives and copyrights to their images. Members were elected and became shareholders of the organization, not employees. Magnum furnished popular magazines with photographic essays of the lives of everyday people, celebrities, and other personalities. As Nadya Bair notes, “not all of their coverage was exceptional or memorable,” but “many of their photographs became icons of the postwar world when they appeared in...photo books and touring exhibitions.”³⁸ Such is the case with Morath’s *Road to Reno*: while she was traveling to photograph on assignment for Magnum, she decided to drive to get there and take photographs for her own, personal potential project. Thus, the photographs taken by Morath and Cartier-Bresson on their eighteen-day road trip to Reno were not part of Magnum’s assignment, but for themselves.³⁹

Morath and Cartier-Bresson were the first two to arrive on set, followed by Ernst Haas, Eve Arnold, Cornell Capa, Bruce Davidson, Elliott Erwitt, Eric Hartmann, and Dennis Stock. This was not Morath’s first time photographing on a John Hutson movie set, nor traveling with Cartier-Bresson, nor making her own personal project alongside of a Magnum assignment. Morath first worked with Hutson in 1953 on his *Moulin Rouge* set in London which led to a

³⁷ George Kouvaros. “The Misfits: What Happened Around the Camera” *Film Quarterly* 55.4 (Summer 2002): 29.

³⁸ Nadya Bair, *The Decisive Network: Magnum Photos and the Postwar Image Market* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press 2020), 2.

³⁹ Inge Morath, *The Road to Reno* (Gottingen, Germany: Steidl, 2006), 10.

lifelong friendship.⁴⁰ Between 1953 and 1955, Morath primarily worked at Magnum as a researcher and assistant to Cartier-Bresson, editing his contact sheets and accompanying him on reportage trips where he concentrated on black and white images while she often took the color photographs. She frequently shot in color, and often does so on their road trip to Reno.

Morath, a full member of Magnum since 1955, was no longer the mentee when the two drove to Nevada, but an active and respected member of the cooperative. Moreover, she had traveled extensively throughout the 1950s, often alone, and had already worked in New York City in 1956, and on various film sets on assignment for Magnum in Europe and the United States. Importantly, although Cartier-Bresson and Morath traveled together, the images they produced on this trip were individual endeavors. Her photographs and diary were published posthumously in the photobook *Road to Reno* and in an exhibition of the same name; by contrast, Cartier-Bresson's photographs from this trip were never published as a series or set, and he does not seem to have conceived of them as forming a cohesive project. In fact, at the time, neither of them saw a place for these photographs in their larger bodies of work, though they both saved negative and prints from the trip - enough in, Morath's case, for a publication. The *Road to Reno* photobook was the first publication of the Inge Morath Foundation, an organization established after her death. The publication follows her sequential, narrative process, using the markings on her contact sheets, her journal entries and caption notes, as well as the images themselves.⁴¹

I suggest that Morath and Cartier-Bresson chose to drive to Nevada through the South because they wanted to see places where America's post-war ideals about freedom and equality

⁴⁰ Kurt Kaindl, "A Photographer's Biography," in *Inge Morath: Her Life, Her Photography*, ed. Marco Minuz. (Milan: Silvana Editoriale, 2019), 29.

⁴¹ See Morath, *The Road to Reno*

were distorted and unfulfilled. Inequalities present in everyday life became exasperated on the road, evidenced by the need for travel guides to keep African Americans safe while traveling, such as the *Green Book* and *Travelguide*, discussed in the introduction. The crux of my argument hinges on an analysis of how Morath's *Road to Reno* photographs engage with period tropes surrounding road travel and related types of gazes, but present viewers with something that either obfuscates the site or denies full visual access to it. For example, in Morath's color photograph, *Hoover Dam, Boulder City, Nevada* (Figure 11) the angle from which she took the photograph makes this incredible feat of engineering look diminutive, or, at least, make it look like it fits in with the rest of the landscape, which it does not do when experienced in person. Hoover Dam, or Boulder Dam, is loud, crowded, and man-made. Rather, it is the road, in the foreground of the image, with a white car contrasting strongly with the black top, that draws the viewer in. It is the route to the site rather than the sight of the site that she homes in on. Here, and elsewhere, Morath insistently shows viewers how their visual and physical access to such sites are already mediated rather than re-creating an image of the site herself.

THE STOPS

With an exciting movie-set assignment from Magnum ahead of her, a Southern route, and an experienced driving partner,⁴² Morath was set to hit the road with her camera. For as much as the road trip evokes connotations of freedom in the popular imagination, Morath and Cartier-Bresson had planned a tightly regimented trip. On a scrap piece of paper (Figure 12), Morath

⁴² In 1947, Henri Cartier-Bresson went on a seventy-seven-day American road trip with American writer John Malcolm Brinnin, from Washington, D.C. to San Francisco and then back east to New York, the goal being a book, which was never published. Some of Cartier-Bresson's road trip photographs were published in *America in Passing* (1991), a survey his American photographs from the 1930s-1970s. Brinnin wrote about the experience in his memoir, *Sextet* (1981), particularly, how he felt used by Cartier-Bresson. For more on their trip, see Agnes Sire, *Henri Cartier-Bresson and Walker Evans: Photographing America 1929-47* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 2009).

carefully planned out days eight through eighteen. She noted the cities and towns they would stop at, the number of hours it would take to get from one destination to the next, and how many nights they could stay in each place in order to arrive in Reno on time to start their assignment. Despite the constraints of time and planning, photographs and diary entries make it clear that the pair stopped at some additional towns and sites, probably to eat and drink and rest, or, out of curiosity. Although a chronological accounting of Morath's photographs from her trip would provide a more accurate sense of direction and visual pacing of their trip, the scrap of paper, the known driving route mentioned earlier, and the published *Road to Reno* book already do this. Therefore, my analysis considers her work through what I have identified as the types of places photographed: historical landmarks and national achievements; natural wonders and landscapes; and famous cities and towns. These categories are not fixed, and some of the images overlap into and through the other themes, but analyzing the photographs in this way illuminates what, exactly, Morath was interested in photographing and how and why she photographed the way she did.

Sabine Folie has coined Morath "a visual historiographer" because she conceives of how "photography is, like history, a means of 'alienation' with the effect and opportunity of making recognition possible from a distance. This aspect is...decisive when considering Inge Morath's pictures, in particular her studies from her travels."⁴³ Indeed, recognition is one quality that unites Morath's diverse photographs, for they are almost all of recognizable sites or experiences. Even if there is not a full view of the site in the photograph, because of captions, signage within the photograph, and the popularity of the places she traveled to, the sites are clearly recognized. Morath does, however, visually distance her viewers through reflections, surprising uses of color,

⁴³ Sabine Folie. "A Visual Historiographer," in Folie Sabine, Olivia-Lahs-Gonzales, Gerald Matt and Rolf Sachsse, *Inge Morath. Life as a Photographer*, 27-45 (Munich: Gina Kehayoff Verlag, 1999), 28.

unexpected angles, and blocked views. The distance invoked after that initial moment of historical and cultural recognition is precisely the purposeful visual uncertainty I have already identified as the guiding theme in her *Road to Reno* photographs. I will show what those obfuscations are, how they are employed, and why they are utilized in particular images.

Importantly, I do not think the theme of uncertainty is because Morath did not understand the American cultural context. After fleeing Berlin for Austria during World War II, Morath, who spoke German, French, and some English, applied to work for the United States Information Services in Austria in 1945, where she got a job translating American press agency texts for the Austrian press. Kurt Kaindl notes how this position, “working for the American occupation forces in post-war Austria...offer[ed] her the chance to get to become familiar with the reporting style of *Life*.”⁴⁴ At the Information Services, she became familiar with both the content and style of popular American reportage. Her next position, as an editor at *Heute*, a bi-monthly magazine, large at 10-1/2 x 14 inches, and running around thirty pages or so per issue, was crammed with captioned photographs and a relatively small amount of text, in the style of *LIFE* magazine but without the plentiful and colorful advertising. She was recruited from *Heute* to join Paris Magnum as a writer, researcher, and editor in 1949. Since the mid-1950s, Morath had traveled on assignment throughout the world for Magnum. Although she could “not penetrate the spirit” of American culture, Morath, the polyglot photographer, could clearly penetrate the surface.

The route and the partner

Their 1960 drive to Reno puts the pair, Morath, who was Austrian, and Cartier-Bresson, who was French, within a long lineage of European writers, photographers, and intellectuals

⁴⁴ Kaindl, “A photographer’s biography,” 22.

travelling the American road, either solo, or in pairs. Many European men took famed American road trips in the lineage of Alexis de Tocqueville, from German E.O. Hoppé's trip in the 1920s, to Russians Ilya Ilf and Eugeny Petrov in the 1930s, to, the most well-known, Swiss-born Robert Frank's *The Americans* from 1955-1957. At the time of its production, Frank's now iconic photo-book was controversial for its shoot-from-the-hip, candid style and often irreverent depictions of American life. In *Men's room, railway station – Memphis Tennessee*, (Figure 13), Frank depicts a man getting his shoes shined, his face turned from the camera, looking at a map. However, the shoeshine set up is inside of a restroom. Urinals line the walls, brooms are sitting out, and bright, white lights dot the ceiling. With his direct look at the sordid side of life, Frank's photographs have been largely analyzed for their stylistic affinities with other mid-century, post-war expressions of masculine personal vision and individualism: Beat literature, experimental jazz, and abstract expressionist painting. Frank's *The Americans* has largely come to serve as the exemplar par excellence of mid-century American road trip photography. Frank has been likened to photographer Walker Evans and writer James Agee's *Let us now Praise Famous Men* from 1941." In 1954, Evans advised Frank to apply for a Guggenheim grant, and in 1955, Frank went on his road-trip with over 700 roles of film in 14 months and a handheld 35mm Leica, going to "symbolically fertile places while employing visible film grain, blur, and an unorthodox sense of composition."⁴⁵ Frank's absentee road trip partner, who was there in spirit (and wrote the introduction to *The Americans*) was Jack Kerouac. As Phil Patton has put it:

If Evans had his equivalent in cataloging the roadside in Agee, Frank's literary counterpart was the adjectival hysteria, the stream of fevered consciousness that took its rhythm from the road, of Jack Kerouac... While Evans and Agee went on the road to look for things particularly American – and if often transcendent, then still transcendent in the American mode – Frank and Kerouac were concerned with a personal sort of discovery and composition on the road. They are drunk on space, high on speed, racing back and

⁴⁵ Joshua Chuang, "When the Messenger is the Medium: The Making of Walker Evans's 'American Photographs' and Robert Frank's 'The Americans,'" *Yale University Art Gallery Bulletin* (2006):109-123.

forth cross-country not for the sake of something to be found but for the sake of looking itself. ‘That’s not writing, it’s typing,’ was Truman Capote’s famous putdown of Kerouac, and for both Frank and Kerouac the point was not getting somewhere, it was riding.⁴⁶

Morath is indebted to Frank in terms of the ways in which she gravitates toward the unidealized parts of American life and culture. But her images are distinctly different. Frank gets up close to people – at parties, political conventions, funerals and rodeos. You can see food on their mouth and wrinkles under their fading makeup, and despair and loneliness in their eyes. Morath, however, keeps her distance. Where Frank’s images often seem loud, fast, and punctuated, Morath’s are quiet and thoughtful. Frank also never stops at recognizably famous sites or landmarks on his travels. In contrast, Morath seems drawn to these sites for their sense of kitsch. Morath seems to want to see exactly what these roadside tourist attractions are all about. She wants to see the whole(some) experience, even if she does not choose to picture it as such. Morath’s images are not gritty, tough, or fast: they are pensive, thoughtful, and playful.

Historical Monuments and Landmarks

Morath’s road-trip photographs are often taken at sites from American history where she can simultaneously draw the viewer’s attention to the construction of vision and history. At an early stop in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, Morath captures a family of three, framed by a glass panel on a door, entering the Hall of Presidents, with President Washington gesturing toward an open book (Figure 14). Opened in 1957 as a roadside attraction and closed in 2016, the Hall of Presidents consisted of a display of wax figures with fully articulating wooden arms who talked about their own presidency when a visitor pushed a button and a light shone upon them.

⁴⁶ Phil Patton, “The Mobile Eye: The Camera on the Road,” in *Open Road: Celebration of the American Highway* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1986), 258-59.

Presidents Washington through Eisenhower's voices were recorded by actors, while President Kennedy onward spouted audio clips from their inaugural addresses. Mute first ladies, at about one-third life sized, stood in an adjacent room in their inaugural gowns.⁴⁷ Gettysburg, the furthest north the Confederate army ever got during the American Civil War, is the site of the three-day, horrifically bloody, 1863 July battle, which was a victory for the North and a major turning point in the war. Now inside the confines of a historical museum, Washington awaits, coiffed and posed, ready to speak of the Revolutionary War to the well-dressed family about to open the door and enter the hall. Further inside, President Lincoln sat at a desk and said, "A house divided against itself will not stand," and went on to discuss his role in the Civil War.

Official American history is here espoused by automated versions of old, white, dead men, clustered indoors. The figures are situated in dramatic spotlighting that creates severe shadows. Morath described these figures in her diary as "hollow-looking,"⁴⁸ but it is they who, in a dark shadowy environment, direct visitors' vision and other senses. Yet Morath's Gettysburg photograph contradicts, or at least calls into the question, the clear-cut and heroic history presented by the cast of all-male victors – save for their wives diminished in size, and unable to speak for themselves in a room next door. The photograph helps to visualize the display's obvious stiffness and the ultimate strangeness inherent in these kinds of abbreviated presentations of history at roadside stops.

Morath, as the photographer, is positioned inside of the space the family is about to enter, and the angle at which she photographs makes Washington look over-sized and authoritarian compared to the scale of the family. The flesh of the family contrasts starkly with the rigidity of

⁴⁷ The Hall of Presidents closed in November 2016 and the wax figures were auctioned off. Chris Kaltenbach, "Gettysburg Hall of Presidents museum closes, wax figures to be auctioned," *The Baltimore Sun* (Baltimore, MD), December 5, 2016.

⁴⁸ Inge Morath Photographs and Papers, "Road to Reno Diary," July 2nd entry.

the historical figures. The glass window both separates Morath from the family and makes them visible. In the confines of this quieted, still photography, viewers can only partially experience the Hall of President's performance of American history. The movement, sound, and light effects associated with the automated former presidents can only be anticipated. In this way, Morath questions the validity of historical presentations as outside of or separate from the current realities. She creates a sense of skepticism about the truth value of the historical narrative about to be presented by picturing the automatons and the family in the same shot. Reverence is abated and replaced by a quiet skepticism for how American history is constructed and received within roadside settings.

Car advertisements from the 1950s directly connected the family road trip with historical sites like those Morath pictures. By doing so, they could idealize and sell the patriotic connotations of the family road trip and their own products simultaneously. The family car was depicted as the home away from home, connecting the ideals of family life and domesticity with auto-travel. By doing so, middle-class values associated with home ownership could be symbolically extended onto and into the car and its destinations. As Sandy Isenstadt points out, 1950s automakers cleverly depicted their latest models alongside a happy home, as in this Lincoln magazine advertisement from 1952 (Figure 15).⁴⁹ Though designed to sell a car, the actual image of the advertised object – the car – is quite small relative to the scene and visible only through the picture window of a middle-class couple's home. The text in the ad describes the car as having “the most dramatic fabrics and fittings on wheels.” Further, the text notes the “amazing view” provided by the wrap-around windshield, an important feature that directly links clear vision with the freedom to see. Isenstadt notes, for instance, how, “‘See for yourself’ was

⁴⁹ Sandy Isenstadt, “Four views, three of them through glass,” in *Sites Unseen: Landscape and Vision*, ed. Dianne Harris and D. Fairchild Ruggles, 213-240 (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2007), 236.

the advertising theme of General Motors new ‘panoramic windshield’ in the 1950s, praised for its delivery of views.”⁵⁰ Most of the views of the landscape on a road trip would have been seen through a car windshield, an extension, I suggest, of the domestic picture window so central and crucial to the advertisement, working on both a practical and metaphorical level.

Additionally, a Mercedes-Benz advertisement from *Holiday Magazine*, a publication to which Morath contributed frequently in the beginning of her Magnum career, shows a nuclear family riding in a large, white car (Figure 16). Next to them march imagined Revolutionary War soldiers. Road signs for Bunker Hill, Valley Forge, Dixie City, and the Grand Canyon float in the landscape. Below the image, a text reads, “America’s schoolhouse on wheels.” Viewers see the entire family through a large, clear windshield, while the mother is able to both look outside at the sites while keeping an eye on her children in the backseat through the rearview mirror. The little girl looks out the rolled down, side window, and the little boy glances out the back window. Clarity of views through windows, from within the comforts of the full-sized car, is linked not only to the freedom of the road, but to being a good mother: by promoting learning, especially of American history, as experienced through car travel, the parents and the children can feel good about their educational stops at places like Gettysburg. Morath draws upon the expectations of the familial experiences on the typical American road trip, but her photographs show the limitation embedded within such stops.

In West Virginia, Morath took two photographs at historical sites related to Harpers Ferry, another popular stop in travel maps and guides. These photographs show views of what is in a glass case, and views of the surroundings, reflected off of the glass. The first, *A photograph of John Brown as it is exhibited in display outside the Harper’s Ferry Museum, Harper’s Ferry*,

⁵⁰ Isenstadt, “Four views,” 235.

West Virginia (Figure 17), is a formal portrait of the white abolitionist, John Brown, who led an ultimately unsuccessful slave uprising there in 1859, wearing a long black coat. The second, *Harper's Ferry, West Virginia* (Figure 18) is a photograph of a display case, with the text *Harpers Ferry National Monument*. Next to the text, weapons, shackles, and other period objects are mounted for viewing. In both images, present-day landscape is reflected on to the display glass, thus placing it on the same plane as the image of John Brown and the display sign. The effect is an overlap or fusion of present time with historical memory into a singular, though distorted, image. In the photograph of Brown, the reflection on the protective glass allows viewers to see not only a stoic image of a bearded Brown but also a view of a river, telephone pole, roads, and, on the far left, a car, all symbols of communication and mobility. In the case, the historical weapons, including a gun, and perhaps knives, are angled so that they actually go right through the bodies of the four contemporary visitors whose reflections are visible in the glass.

Morath has angled her own body and camera to ensure that she is not also reflected upon the glass cases, something that would not be difficult for her to do but would require a conscious effort. As with the separation of the door in the Gettysburg photograph, Morath again positions herself in a physical and visual distance away from other tourists. She situates herself in the tourist sites, but not as a tourist – even if she was. Unlike Sophie Calle and Sally Mann, Morath does not try to bring in autobiographical moments or details in her photographs. Even though her *Road to Reno* images were not for Magnum, were not on assignment, her sense of slightly distanced professionalism is still there. Morath convolutes land, history, and violence – but not herself - into shallow layers, forcing their interaction upon one another.

In other words, Morath's photographs weave the weight of historical racial violence, in

the case of the John Brown uprising, with present landscapes through the use of the reflection, complicating any kind of resolved, national unity or achieved, ideal freedom. The way in which she forces the past and present to exist on the same plane is a way to compare two times within one space, a gesture of equivalence, alluding to the continued segregation, inequality, and violence that occurs in the United States; she does not see the historical site as merely historical, but as reflective of the present day. The weight of history presses on the present-day with a visible layer of the present upon the past. By using the reflective qualities of the glass to her advantage, she denies a clear view of either the historical displays or the contemporary landscape, obfuscating both in order to force us to see them as necessarily reflecting and acting upon each other. She thus imagines American history as a tangled web, not something to visit and understand through didactic presentations of reductive narratives, but something that is unfolding all around us.

Natural Wonders and Landscapes

In “The Sublime and the Banal in Postwar Photography of the American West,” Cecile Whiting chronicles the differences between the European romantic sublime in landscape and the moral sublime in American landscapes. The former, she argues, emphasizes a pleasurable physiological response of the subject, dramatic and disquieting, while the latter, as in Ansel Adams’ landscape photographs of the American West, center around a painless subjection to nature’s forces and are majestic and inspiring.⁵¹ This kind of “exalted vision of nature” that Adams achieved in his landscape photographs was adapted by American companies who used such alluring photographs in advertising campaigns. Such examples of visual culture are crucial to look at in order to understand what Americans had been trained to see when they traveled.

⁵¹ Cecile Whiting, “The Sublime and the Banal in Postwar Photography of the American West,” *American Art* 27.2 (Summer 2013): 44-67.

Then, how and why Morath's images stray away from that sublime vision of the American landscape becomes clear.

Like Morath, Ansel Adams also did commercial work for large corporations. Standard Oil of California produced popular color photographs designed to encourage travel to the American West using many of Adams' landscape photographs. The company published a book compilation of those photographs entitled, *The Glory of Our West: See the West in Natural Color with Famous Authors and Photographers*. Released in 1952, the spiral-bound, soft cover book features fifty color photographs with accompanying texts that highlight popular American roadside stops such as national parks, historical landmarks, places of leisure, and American industry. The images make a direct connection between car travel, tourism, and color photography. Magnum, including Morath, excelled at bringing the human-interest aesthetic of the popular photographic essay to new markets.⁵² *The Glory of Our West* used well-known photographers to bring a cosmopolitan and cultured edge to a large American corporation. Magnum helped to pioneer that strategy. Between the 1940s and 1960s, Nadiya Bair asserts, Magnum "helped transform corporate annual reports into captivating illustrated publications about their global operations. Even life insurance ads started to look like photographic news. Magnum was at the forefront of these shifts, working systematically to make newsy pictures popular and ubiquitous."⁵³

In his introduction to *The Glory of Our West*, literary critic Joseph Henry Jackson explains: "...the Standard Oil Company of California thought it would be a good idea to help

⁵² In 1960, Morath did an ad campaign for Bankers Trust in New York City, who wanted to promote themselves to New York residents. The campaign was a huge success. Bankers Trust used her photographs in its 1961 annual report and published them as part of a New York City guidebook. Morath has said that she did the lucrative work to pay her a new apartment and stopped once she had enough funds. The project gave the company prestige and Morath a well-paying client. See Kaindl, page 40 and Bair, page 181.

⁵³ Bair, *The Decisive Network*, 4.

these touring millions in their quest by issuing pictures of the West in series – the finest available color-prints of what this great region had to show the visitor.”⁵⁴ Although the book was distributed by Doubleday in 1952, the color photographs and accompanying text were originally created and given away to customers in 1947 – the same year Magnum was founded in New York. Thirty-three million picture folders were distributed at gas stations and then took on a life of their own. The images were used by teachers in schools for assignments and sparked a trading market for those eager to collect all the photographs.⁵⁵ At the end of his introduction, Jackson advises the reader to use the color photographs as inspiration to take to the road again: “And if you have thought that perhaps this summer you might take to the highway and see, on your own, what lies behind the ranges, what the West is really like, then – well, the book will go along with you.”⁵⁶ Standard Oil hoped to offer their potential customers an aesthetic vision to inspire them to plan a family road trip and to use more gasoline, too.

Following the introduction, the book presents fifty of the most popular color photographs, such as Ansel Adams’ *Half Dome in Yosemite National Park* with an accompanying text (Figure 19). A short section entitled, “Photographic Data,” follows the photographs, and describes the camera, lens, filter, film, shutter speed, and aperture size used for every photograph. The amateur photographer could learn, and possibly re-create, these images on their own road trips. The book thus draws the viewer in and entices them to travel with the color photographs, and then provides them practical information to re-create the image on their own trip. All they need, the book would have them believe, is a car, the right camera equipment, a little curiosity, and they could be off to the West. Although the color photographs were made in color with the purpose of

⁵⁴ Joseph Henry Jackson, introduction to *The Glory of Our West* (New York: Doubleday), 7.

⁵⁵ Jackson, “Introduction,” 7.

⁵⁶ Jackson, “Introduction,” 7.

enhancing their sense of realism (note the subtitle: *See the West in Natural Color*), they don't satisfy. They are not high-quality or crisp. They merely whet the appetite. And thus, they are a tease to get people on the road. These kind of wide-open views of beautiful, untouched American landscapes were the kind of images that inspired Americans to take road trips, the kind of painless subjection to nature's majestic forces that Whiting identified as distinctly American above.

Morath and Cartier-Bresson travelled to places that could be seen as embodying an American "moral sublime" – natural wonders like Natural Bridge, Virginia, sprawling, mountainous, colorful New Mexican landscapes, and the deserts and canyons of Arizona. But Morath also plays with the "banal modernity" that would soon characterize the New Topographics of the following decade. Photographers such as Robert Adams and Stephen Shore shunned conventional beauty in their landscape photographs, instead embracing a self-consciously art-less style to depict the contractedness of the modern, man-made landscape of tract houses and suburban neighborhoods. However, Morath did something different than mere banality: her photographs serve as stop-gaps between what we want to see – clear, open, majestic and inspiring views – and what we do see – cars, historical narrative, and tourist traps - banality. Her photographs bring us right up to the edge of the sublime, but halt, refuse it, and, instead, capture a different view, one towards contemplative encounters with the American landscape.

One such place is *Natural Bridge, near Lexington, Virginia* (Figure 20), which depicts a huge parking lot full of cars. The vehicles closest to the camera are seen from directly behind, one a bright red and the other a mint green color, with sleek chrome finishes and white tops. The cars (and camera) face a tightly-packed parking lot with only a few figures visible amongst the mass of metal. A large sign in the parking lot reads: "Entrance: Natural Bridge: One of the Seven

Natural Wonders of the World.” The bridge to which this sign refers is the Natural Bridge of Virginia, a giant rock formation in the shape of a lowercase “n,” open on the bottom with a bridge-like top. The bridge has long been a major tourist attraction and in fact has a long and illustrious history in American folklore: first mapped out by George Washington when he was a surveyor, the Natural Bridge was then purchased by Thomas Jefferson in 1774. Close to the site, Jefferson built a log cabin with a room for visitors, which was eventually replaced by the Natural Bridge Hotel designed to cater to tourists on U.S. 11.⁵⁷ The large sign in the center of the photograph also advertises a “Drama of Creation nightly,” a performance which began in 1939 and continues to today,⁵⁸ consisting of symphonic music and singing, along with colored lights. During the performance, a voice from high above tells the Biblical story of creation.⁵⁹

At Natural Bridge, Morath chose to depict a landscape of cars, the consumerism of travel, and spectacle. Not pictured here, or anywhere else in the published *Road to Reno* photobook, is the attraction itself. There is just a suggestion of the picturesque environmental surroundings in the background, with a hint of bluish mountains, although those too are mostly blocked by the large entrance sign. Morath’s photograph focuses on the power of a tourist attraction, “some kind of touristic Lourdes,” she writes in her diary, referring to a French pilgrimage site related to a vision of the Virgin Mary. The thrill is getting there – the rest is banal: finding a parking spot, the obedient following of directive signs, and the need to find food and nourishment to sustain all of this. Seeing the site itself is often only a short part of the experience, and, at that, mediated by the photographic or filmic image made by the beholder. *Natural Bridge* demonstrates

⁵⁷ Tim Hollis, *Dixie Before Disney: 100 Years of Roadside Fun* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi), 1999.136.

⁵⁸ Natural Bridge Historic Hotel and Conference Center, “Attractions: Fun Things to do in Natural Bridge, Virginia,” <http://naturalbridgeva.com/attractions.html>. Last accessed May 1, 2020.

⁵⁹ Hollis, *Dixie before Disney*, 136-137.

particularly well how Morath draws upon the road trip experience without ever really fulfilling it visually: she evokes the trouble all of us go through to see the site for ourselves, and then photographs everything but it. But it is these parts – the parking, the eating, the mindless following - that we often dismantle from our memories, stories, and photographs of the American road trip. In contrast, Morath situates viewers within these spaces, making them look at them more closely, to see how they, rather than the site itself, reveal the values and desires sold about the American road trip experience.

Further West, in Morath's *Indian cemetery near Albuquerque, New Mexico* (Figure 21) the color photograph is shot from a high point and depicts the edge of a mountain-range. A large, white cloud cover seems to press down upon it, and a smaller hill, in the foreground, covers the mountain's base, causing the mountains to appear relatively short. It is not the seemingly majestic mountains, but the huge sky and the sprawling cemetery in the foreground that are the most prominent spaces, together, taking up nearly all of the image. It is unclear if the purpose of this image is celebratory beauty or a kind of nostalgia for Native Americans, often depicted in the history of photography as a "vanishing race."⁶⁰ bell hooks has described imperialist nostalgia as one that "expresses itself as yearning on the part of the colonizer for the ways of life they have destroyed or altered," which she argues largely informs contemporary thinking about Native Americans in the United States.⁶¹ The muted purples, whites, yellows, and greens of the sprawling cemetery image contrasts with the bright pinks, yellows, and oranges of another photograph from the area, *Highway entertainment at an 'Indian Trading Post,' before arriving at Albuquerque, New Mexico* (Figure 22). It shows three Native Americans dressed in colorful

⁶⁰ See, for example, Shannon Egan, "'Yet in a Primitive Condition: ' Edward S. Curtis's The North American Indian *American Art* 20.3 (2006): 58-83.

⁶¹ bell hooks, *Black Looks: Race and Representation* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 189.

headdresses and moccasins, wearing jewelry and other adornments, and one holding a drum. Morath has positioned herself behind the stage they stand on; it looks makeshift, with crudely painted designs of Native Americans on horses around the bottom. Next to them is what looks like a re-constructed cowboy town, with a sign for a saloon – all explicitly designed for tourists, who are visible in front of the stage. In another version of this photograph, a sign above the stage reads, “Indian Dances. Every hour, on the hour.” Philip Deloria writes how “primitivism, technological incompetence, physical distance and cultural distance – these have been the ways many Americans have imagined Indians.”⁶² The construction of “Indianness” as commodity to be sold to white travelers is on full display in this photograph. The performers enact a physical and cultural difference through the raised stage and their clothing where, like the Wild West performers, Deloria says, “illusion came to matter more than authenticity.”⁶³ With the cemetery image, it is unclear if Morath alludes to indigenous genocide or an idea of Native people dropping out of American history entirely. Yet, with the performance photographs, it seems more as if she conceives of them as embracing modernity and taking as much monetary advantage as they could of the tourist’s sense of their belatedness to American life and consumerism.

As in the South, in the West, Morath photographed popular sites in a way that formally highlights the ambiguous, violent, and difficult histories that are often suppressed or simplified in touristic experiences of the road. She thus imagines the American landscape under a larger theme of violence and official forgetfulness, whether that is Native Americans forced off lands or African Americans living under the legacy of slavery and Jim Crow. Her photographs, to various degrees, visualize the idea of the South as the site/sight of breakdown of equality within that democracy, and the West and the site/sight of merely mythical freedoms.

⁶² Philip Deloria, *Indians in Unexpected Places* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2004), 4.

⁶³ Deloria, *Indians in Unexpected Places*, 108

Both *Natural Bridge*, *Indian cemetery*, and *Highway entertainment* are color photographs, a factor worth mentioning, as it may be surprising for many familiar with Morath's work and that of her Magnum colleagues in general. As Mary Panzer notes, William Eggleston's May 1976 exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York City is often touted as the major turning point in an institutional embrace of color photography.⁶⁴ In the text for *William Eggleston's Guide*, a fully illustrated monograph, MoMA's Director of the Department of Photography, John Szarkowski cites "modern painting, color movies and television, drugstore postcards, and the heterogeneous flood of imagery that has come from the modern magazine" as source material for color photography, but totally excludes any sort of history of color photography, largely because of color photography's associations with advertising.⁶⁵ By obliterating a much longer history of color photography, Szarkowski seeks to emphasize Eggleston's modernist formalism and genius. Szarkowski deems Eggleston's photographs "irreducible surrogates for the experiences they pretend to record, visual analogues for the quality of one life...with clarity, fullness, and elegance."⁶⁶ Lisa Hostetler questions why, even in black and white photography, "people were willing to overlook photography's chromatic deficiency when they assumed its fundamental truthfulness."⁶⁷ Szarkowski praised qualities associated with truthfulness and clarity. This is, in part, because one of the issues people critical of color photography had was, as Wilson Hicks, picture editor of *LIFE* magazine explained in 1952, color photographs "make an apple, a flower, or a girl's face look more beautiful than it is

⁶⁴ However, it was not the first. Ernst Haas, Morath's early colleague from *Heute* who was recruited with her to Magnum, had a solo show, *Ernst Haas – Color Photography* at MoMA in August, 1962, over thirteen years before Eggleston's. See the Museum of Modern Art, press release announcing the exhibition *Ernst Haas – Color Photography*. New York: Tuesday, August 21, 1962 and Mary Panzer, Introduction to *Inge Morath: First Color*, ed. John P. Jacob, 7-16 (Göttingen, Germany: Steidl, 2011), 10.

⁶⁵ John Szarkowski, *William Eggleston's Guide* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1976), 9.

⁶⁶ Szarkowski, *William Eggleston's Guide*, 14.

⁶⁷ Lisa Hostetler, "Real Color," in Katherine A. Bussard and Lisa Hostetler, *Color Rush: American Color Photography from Stieglitz to Sherman*, 16-26 (Milwaukee: Milwaukee Art Museum, 2013).18

[...] That is falsity; idealization is not an interpretation sought in photojournalism.”⁶⁸ A more recent proliferation of color photography exhibitions⁶⁹ speak to the fact that color photography, even non-commercial color photography, had been around and appreciated (at various degrees) for over one-hundred years by the time of Eggleston’s show.

Since magazines like *National Geographic*, *Life* and *Holiday* heavily integrated color photography into their reportage (and their advertising) color photography was more readily associated with commercial ventures than with serious art photography. However, Morath was certainly not alone in her interest and use of color photography. In the exhibition catalogue for *Color Rush: American Color Photography from Stieglitz to Sherman*, Katherine Bussard works “to rectify the problematic if prevailing notion that color photography prior to the 1970s was either amateur or commercial and recognized only as such,” and, instead, taking “a contextualized history of color photography would therefore demonstrate that conversations surrounding American color photography were never simple, never definitive.”⁷⁰ Bussard provides many examples of color photography that include amateur, commercial and “art” projects, including: nineteenth century methods of applying color by hand; the 1907 autochrome from the Lumière brothers; Stieglitz’s and Steichen’s autochrome show at Gallery 291 in September, 1907 and published in April, 1908 of *Camera Work*; Conde Nast’s photographers Anton Bruehl and Fernand Bourges’ inclusion in Beaumont Newhall’s 1937 MoMA exhibition, *Photography 1839-1937*, the first survey on the history of photography; the Eastman Kodak

⁶⁸ Panzer, Introduction, 10.

⁶⁹ See John Rohrbach, *Color: American Photography Transformed* (University of Texas Press: Amon Carter Museum of American Art, 2013); Eric Sandweiss, *The Day in its Color: Charles Cushman’s Photographic Journey Through a Vanishing America* (New York: Oxford University Press 2012); Sally Stein, “Toward a Full-color Turn in the Optics of Modern History” *American Art* 29.1 (Spring 2015): 15-21; Cynthia Young, *Capa in Color* (New York: the International Center of Photography and DelMonico Books, 2014).

⁷⁰ Katherine A. Bussard, “A Full Spectrum: Expanding the History of American Color Photography,” in Katherine A. Bussard and Lisa Hostetler, *Color Rush: American Color Photography from Stieglitz to Sherman*, 1-15 (Milwaukee: Milwaukee Art Museum, 2013).

building's Great Hall of Color at the 1939 New York World's Fair; MoMA's 1950 Color Photography show; Kodak's Colorama in NY's Grand Central Station in 1950; and the 1965 MoMA exhibition, *The Photo Essay*, among many, many other examples.⁷¹

Morath, like many of her colleagues did not just see a crude parallel between advertising and color photography, even if the sentiment was in the air. Morath had used color and black and white film since the beginning of her career in the 1950s.⁷² There are practical reasons why Morath did not publish many of her color photographs in her own lifetime although she continued to take them. Former director of the Inge Morath Foundation John P. Jacob explains:

In both Morath's and Magnum's archives, black and white and color work were separately housed and differently catalogued...The integrity of a photographer's black and white stories was maintained through this cataloging system, and by housing together a photographer's negatives, contact sheets, and captions...Color transparencies, by contrast, are cut down to individual images after processing and then enclosed in cardboard casings, which obscure the numerical markings on the film. Deprived of film's inherent numerical sequencing, color images were catalogued by Magnum by subject rather than by story, and stored separately from a photographer's black and white work...it was not at all unusual for color images to become irrevocably separated from their original stores...in general, Magnum's system of maintaining the integrity of black and white stories was required in order to support a photographer's artistic career through print sales, books, and exhibitions, while the relegation of color to stock supported the agency, through licensing...Over the span of her career, an estimated 15,000 of Morath's transparencies – nearly one third of the color work known to exist – were separated from their stories and lost in this manner.⁷³

Morath herself followed this same cataloging system within her own personal archive, making it nearly impossible to retain the original order in which she had shot her color images. Since the best of her color photographs were the ones that had gone missing, "in her late career revisions and her retrospective catalogs Morath wisely preferred to showcase her best black and white

⁷¹ Bussard, "A full spectrum," 2-10

⁷² Panzer, *Inge Morath*, 1.2

⁷³ John P. Jacob, *Inge Morath: First Color* (Gottingen, Germany: Steidl, 2011), 195-196

work, rather than merge it with the second-tier color images that she had retained in her archive.”⁷⁴ In turn, this created an un-representational archive.

Still, the presence of color photography in her personal archive and in the Magnum Photos database is huge, including at least 55,000 (mostly Kodachrome) with an estimated 5,000 – 8,000 additional slides in storage.⁷⁵ Morath limited the number of color photographs she included in her archives, Panzer surmises, and as was discussed previously, because serious photographers like her “were willing to conform to the prejudices of the museum and publishing communities in order to establish themselves and their work as proper subjects.”⁷⁶ Still Morath’s *Road to Reno* would ultimately survive as a collection of both black-and-white and color photographs published over four decades after the initial trip, engaging with mass visual culture, and alluding to popular tropes, but subverting them, never quite showing us exactly what we expect, or thought we wanted to see at the many stops along the way.

So, when Morath does use color, and has kept images that are useable for a publication, it is notable, not just that she took them, but rather that they survived the institutional, social, and archival pressures to the present day. She tends to use color for particular subjects such as cars and signs, alluding to the popular sources of color photography but in a playful way, showing us color’s use and consumption within the cultural imagination. One of Morath’s landscapes in color is *Arizona. The strange landscape of the Petrified Forest* (Figure 23). She describes the Petrified Forest as “tragic beauty of grief and suffering,” and contrasts it with *The Painted Desert, Arizona* (Figure 24) which she describes as “a many hued smile,” and which she does not

⁷⁴ Jacob, *Inge Morath*, 197.

⁷⁵ Jacob, *Inge Morath* 192. At the time of publication, not all of the photographs in Inge Morath’s storage had been documented.

⁷⁶ Panzer, *Inge Morath*, 194- 195.

shoot in color.⁷⁷ If any subject were to call for color, one might assume it would be *The Painted Desert*, a place known for layers of rocks in red, orange, and pink. Instead of the plethora of colors of *The Painted Desert*, Morath photographs the browns and grays of the Petrified Forest in color. In both, she features a single car driving down the road amidst these vast landscapes, the car and road it drives upon are the only signs of human life.

In *Petrified Forest*, she photographs the car at a diagonal from herself, so that the long view of the road ahead of the car is blocked by the large hill on the right and a large formation coming up on the left. In *The Painted Desert*, she photographs the car from a side-angle, showing very little road behind or ahead of the car. In both images, the cars seem boxed in, part of a tableau that focuses on the oppressiveness of the hot, desert landscape in the summer and the way in which it confines both those travelling through it and the views that one could see when trapped within it. Morath denies viewers the satisfaction of color in *The Painted Desert* but also her own positionality – she seems to be photographing precariously from a hill of loose rocks. She has climbed up to get a view, but without being able to see much more from below. And, she has waited for this car to come by (or, is it theirs?) but, when it does, there is less a sense of freedom, mobility, and wonder amidst the landscape than fixity, finiteness, and a reduced sense of scale. By not showing the cars from a long view with the open road in sight, the part of the highway which the car is on is severed from the rest of the experience but in both cases the road goes off the edge, implying further terrain, and the view is stunted and the sense of freedom, truncated. By obfuscating the context, the color, and the scale in the two photographs, Morath alludes to these road-trip expectations of personal and national awe but cuts them short, visually.

Similarly, Morath's *The Grand Canyon, Arizona* (Figure 25) does not satisfy viewers

⁷⁷ Inge Morath Photographs and Papers, "Road to Reno Diary," July 13th entry.

with sweeping, wide-open views of the canyon's natural wonder of the title, but instead, shows us the backs and sides of a couple looking out into it, their faces obscured from view by their posture, the shade and a tree. There is too a perhaps an ironic nod to the myth of the wide-open West we cannot see in the lone, young boy in a cowboy hat, sitting on the ledge, off to the side and looking away from the attraction. In a personal photograph from the trip, not permitted to be reproduced, Morath is shown standing atop of ledge of what looks like the Grand Canyon, in a sleeveless shirt, shorts, sneakers, and a headscarf, holding her camera at her waist, and gazing out at the landscape.⁷⁸

Morath's *Oconaluftee Village, North Carolina*, discussed at the beginning of this chapter, makes for an excellent point of comparison to *The Grand Canyon*. Whereas in *The Grand Canyon* Morath photographs the backs of the couple looking out, she too, is facing the site, and simultaneously sees it as she sees the couple, even if she cuts off a clear view of the canyon for the viewer of her photograph. But, in *Oconaluftee Village* she faces the tourists, standing right aside of the demonstration itself, aligning herself neither with the Cherokee artisans, nor the white, American tourists, but in a third position. In contrast, at the Grand Canyon, in order to take the picture, she must, at least from a three-quarters view, re-enact the older couple's vision. We know from the photograph Cartier-Bresson took of her described above, that she was taken in enough by the site to have her own photograph made. However, when she photographs other Americans engaged in what could be seen as a kind of patriotic reverence, she rejects a clear view or sense of awe in favor of cut-off views that deny the conflation of the opportunity to travel and to see as patriotic. The landscapes Morath chooses to represent are banal, desolate,

⁷⁸ Reproductions of Morath's personal photographs are not permitted. Box 525. Folder 4 of 5: 1960-15/1960-16. Road to Reno photographs. Inge Morath Photographs and Papers. General Collection, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut.

diminutive compared to their actual scale, or just, not pictured at all. Instead of showing Americans what to see, she shows them how to see their seeing.

Famous Cities and Towns

In Memphis, Morath photographs shop windows to get a view of the city. In *Beale Street, Memphis, Tennessee* (Figure 26) she depicts two African American boys reflected in a shop window. At least five instruments, knickknacks, and a cowboy outfit are behind the display window, crowded together on a single plane along with a reflected downtown scene and the two boys walking by. By contrast, in *Memphis, Tennessee* (Figure 27), a similar type of photograph, Morath depicts three, white, female mannequins behind a shop window wearing cinched skirts and button-up shirts, graced by long, blonde hair. The traffic lines on the pavement outside of the shop are reflected onto the window, giving the illusion that they are going right through, or below, the mannequins' skinny waists, creating a sense of dynamism, like they belong on the street outside. The surreal, life-like figures are at an angle, and seemingly move diagonally toward the viewers, as if they are pressing up against the surface of the picture, looking as if they may actually be walking down the street, a street which they, as well-dressed, white women, can traverse openly and freely. Olivia Lahs-Gonzales has identified, what, precisely, makes Morath's photographs have the surreal quality to which I am alluding, that is, they are "richly choreographed, each line in the architecture or the gesture of a figure creates a tension that makes the moment palpable, but at the same time signals its qualities as a representation. The carefully considered formal elements make it obvious that the image is constructed, and this play against the 'reality' of the moment is what creates the element of the surreal."⁷⁹ Viewers are reminded of the constructed-ness to which Lahs-Gonzales alludes, from the painted street lines

⁷⁹ Olivia Lahs-Gonzales, "To Unseal the Deeper Nature" in Folie Sabine, Olivia-Laht-Gonzales, Gerald Matt and Rolf Sachsse. *Inge Morath. Life as a Photographer*, 61-69 (Munich: Gina Kehayoff Verlag, 1999), 65.

that seem to mimic their diagonal motion to the complimentary pattern in the ceiling above them, to the marquees on the street reflected in the glass. Part of a banner is depicted in the image, also running diagonally. Although some of the printed text on it is cut-off, we can read ‘July 4,th’ – that is, Independence Day – a day intended to celebrate the freedom of all Americans.

The white mannequins’ freedom of mobility, sense of belonging, and purchasing power is stressed while the boys’ exclusion, as living children, is highlighted. By depicting the African American boys only through their reflection, unable to get inside the shop except through Morath’s optical tricks, and, conversely, depicting the white mannequins as life-like, Morath’s photographs gives visibility to whiteness’ “privileged invisibility.”⁸⁰ But, Morath’s intervention is merely optical. Shawn Michelle Smith’s concept of photography “at the edge of sight,” is useful here, that is, her re-tooling of Walter Benjamin’s concept of the optical unconscious in order to re-consider how photography makes us aware of our own ordinary blindness.⁸¹ Smith is interested in questions of intelligibility and its relationship to what can be known, asking “What resides at the literal and metaphorical edge of the photograph? What remains just outside the frame? What cannot be seen because cultural discourses and habits of thought obscure it?”⁸² Morath shows us, through photography, what viewers may know, but not stop to look at, to really see, in everyday life. Morath does not allow viewers to actually see the boys or their lives, does not allow certain things to register on the lens, such as the segregation of the city. Instead, her photographs lead us to more questions about American culture, politics, and society, through visual obfuscation.

The window itself and its prosperities are rich in visual culture. In *The Virtual Window*:

⁸⁰ Shawn Michelle Smith, *At the Edge of Sight: Photography and the Unseen* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013), 14.

⁸¹ Smith, *At the edge of sight*, 14.

⁸² Smith, *At the edge of sight*, 8.

From Alberti to Microsoft, Anne Friedberg summarizes how the window has long served as a key player in the West's understanding of vision and ways of seeing: "An opening in architectural space, the window supplies a common metaphor for the various frames that form its virtual analogs – the frame of the painting and the photograph, the screens of movie, television, and computers."⁸³ Morath, as I have shown, often employs windows or glass as framing devices that shape not only the driver's and passenger's vision of the road and its sites, but also the viewer of her photographs. In *Hitch Hikers on the road from Albuquerque to Gallup, New Mexico* (Figure 28), two young men in t-shirts and jeans, arms out and thumbs pointing up, indicate they need a ride for the long, flat, stretch of road ahead. They are photographed from inside of the car, through the windshield, evidenced by the frame of the car on the right. It is unclear if they will remain merely roadside curiosities or get picked up.

Morath takes two more photographs from inside of the car once she arrives in Reno, her destination. In an image simply titled *Reno, Nevada* (Figure 29), a woman in a car is viewed through Morath's driver's side window, the woman's silhouette contrasting with the light outside. She drives a bubble-gum pink car with a cream-colored top, but the view of her is limited, mediated through frames of several car windows. Her hand hangs over the large steering wheel, temporarily at rest, but alluding to the motion that will soon completely sever her from the view of the photographer. And, in the black and white image, *Heads of slot machines looking over a truck in Reno, Nevada* (Figure 30), Morath depicts two cowboy themed slot machines viewed through what looks like a rear car window. Realistic, grinning, cowboy heads in hats atop the slot machines welcome visitors to the Palace Club behind them.

Such an abundance of windows and windshields allude to the kind of cinematic,

⁸³ Anne Friedberg, *The Virtual Window: From Alberti to Microsoft* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006), 5.

televisual ways of seeing, that Friedberg has identified as replacing Alberti's architectural window that we see into. The visual paradigm of the twentieth century, she argues, is cinematic, wherein seeing relies on "the immobility of its spectators and the aperture of a fixed frame. This newly wrought combination of mobile and virtual visualities provided a virtual mobility for immobile spectators who witnessed movement confined to a frame."⁸⁴ When Morath's photographs are shot from inside of a car, her own immobility, that is, sitting in the car, is stressed as compared with the potential of mobility outside of the car. But in *Reno, Nevada* and *Heads of Slot Machines*, both the photographer and the subjects are immobile – the woman, sitting at what is presumably a stoplight and the cowboys, forever stuck to their slot bases. And lest we forget – Morath was on her way to photograph a film, that is, to take stills for a motion picture, stills that would be seen in magazines. Such images would be filtered through several types of screens and frames to reach their final destination in pages jettisoned by domestic ads and stilled scenes, of the type analyzed above.

THE DESTINATION

The whole of America is a box of surprises, but Reno is one of the biggest. Associating its name with that of Hollywood, I imagined it as some luxurious Monte Carlo peopled with film stars. And here I was in a primitive village of the Far West...To enter you push your way through doors whose wings are cut at knee height doors I had seen so often in Western films, and suddenly you are at the heart of a huge fair..round green tablecloths, at the bar and in the gangways, a crowd is milling, so picturesque that at first you might take them for extras in a film; yet even a film director with genius could not have invented them: in the odour of whisky and gin, the big dirty hats and the filthy chequered shirts look too authentic.... the lone men and fallen women, the shimmering lights and noise with which the squalor here is surrounded, were such violent contrasts that I was left speechless...Proudly and in just the same way that other newspapers announce honors lists, marriages, births, and anniversaries, Reno newspapers enumerate every

⁸⁴ Friedberg, *Virtual Window*, 5.

morning the divorces granted the previous day.⁸⁵

So wrote Simone de Beauvoir regarding Reno, Nevada, a stop on her four-month American road trip which she later wrote about in a memoir, *America: Day by Day* and addressed in detail in the next chapter. Hollywood, cowboys, busy bars and dirty hats, lost souls and divorce, Beauvoir's description in 1947 could have been written about John Huston's *The Misfits*, the film shot by Morath, Cartier-Bresson, and several Magnum photographers throughout the summer of 1960. Deemed by David Company as "the most celebrated case of independent photographers working on set,"⁸⁶ the extensive operation between *The Misfits* and Magnum also became an infamous one: it was both Clark Gable and Marilyn Monroe's last completed film; Clark Gable suffered a heart attack the day after shooting was complete and died of a second attack less than two weeks later; and, Monroe died almost two years later in August of 1962, while filming *Something's Got to Give*.⁸⁷

This was certainly not Magnum's, nor Morath's, first time covering the making of a film, but *The Misfits* was the first time Magnum had obtained exclusive rights and dealt with such huge stars as Monroe and Gable.⁸⁸ Typically, Magnum, who constantly defended the copyright of the photographer, clashed with a studio's publicity department, which sought all the photographic material from a set photographer in order to make their own publicity decisions. But in the case of *The Misfits*, Magnum was chosen because producers knew they had the connections and relationships with major magazines.⁸⁹ For *The Misfits*, the actors maintained contractual rights over the final choice of publicity photographs before their sale to magazines

⁸⁵ Simone de Beauvoir, *America: Day by Day*. Translated by Patrick Dudley (London: Gerald Duckworth and Co., 1952), 116-119.

⁸⁶ David Company, *Photography and Cinema* (London: Reaktion Books, 2008), 124.

⁸⁷ Serge Toubiana and Arthur Miller, *The Misfits: Story of a Shoot* (London: Phaidon, 2000), 96.

⁸⁸ Toubiana and Miller, *The Misfits*, 67.

⁸⁹ Toubiana and Miller, *This Misfits*, 68.

and newspapers⁹⁰ – perhaps the one concession Magnum made in its otherwise widespread freedom of rights and choices on set. Magnum founder Robert Capa had worked with Huston on *Beat the Devil* (1954) in Italy and Morath had worked with him on the set of *Moulin Rouge* (1952) and *The Unforgiven* (1960) and so Huston was generally friendly with, and used to, Magnum photographers on his sets.

Morath's photos on and around the filming of *The Misfits* allude to how the very place that represented the myths of the West, and its main player, the cowboys, were themselves unable to carry any longer the burden of representation of idealistic American values. In *Heads of slot machines*, Morath's Reno cowboys, as previously mentioned, are viewed from inside a vehicle, seen as immobile heads positioned in front of an entertainment club rather than out doing hard labor. There is an easy connection between the Western cowboy and Hollywood Western alluded to here – the former practically made in the image of the latter.

From the very beginning of *The Misfits*, the West, the automobile, and a view – of the land, or women - are privileged sites: text advertising 'Jack's Reno Garage' on the back of a mechanic's truck is the first image to appear across the screen of the film. A mechanic is on his way to fix Roslyn's (Monroe's) car and arrives just as she is getting ready to leave to court for her Reno divorce, which, smitten, he drives her to, a scene Morath photographed (Figure 31). Her photograph shows a confident Monroe, in a black dress and heels, with a svelte up-do standing outside of the courthouse, watched by flocking, curious fans. After her divorce case is finalized, Roslyn and her new friend, Isabelle (Thelma Ritter) get a celebratory drink in Harrah's club, surrounded by disorienting mirrors and discussing the uncertainty of their futures (Figure 32) when they see the mechanic again. This time, the mechanic, named Guido (Eli Wallach) is

⁹⁰ Toubiana and Miller, *The Misfits*, 68.

with his friend, Gay (Clark Gable). The two women take the men up on their spontaneous offer to take them to see “real country,” as the men called it, at Guido’s unfinished house. Once they arrive, Roslyn immediately dashes to the picture window to admire the view. But, as it is dirty and streaky, she runs outside to look instead, and dreamily declares, “Gee it goes on forever.”⁹¹ Deborah Bright has argued that “appreciating the scene was itself an homage, a ritualized expression of what it meant to be an American citizen,”⁹² and by doing so in this scene, Roslyn self-initiates into her imagined new life as an unattached, Western woman. Her rejection of viewing the landscape through the picture window in favor of going outside is also representative of her rejection of traditional domesticity and the domestic values of her former life. In many of Morath’s production photographs, she stresses Marilyn’s motion through her body and hair – she is constantly dancing, jumping about, and running in the film, often in flowing sheets and robes (Figure 33). This freedom from conventional behavior and a sense bodily freedom is a marked contrast to Gable’s rooted and grounded poses, indicating, perhaps, it is Marilyn’s character, divorced, jobless, an emotional roller-coaster, who is actually more free than her staunch, drunken, and dis-illusioned cowboy counterpart, who is desperately clinging to his own sense of freedom.

At the climax of the film, when the men go out to catch mustangs, Roslyn becomes hysterically upset upon realizing the horses will subsequently be killed for dog food. Gay defends himself by arguing that he is doing the same thing he always has, and it is the world that has changed: “All I know is everything else is wages. I hunt these horses to keep myself free.”⁹³ In the end, Gay catches the horses in a long, drawn-out scene of a struggle of man versus animal,

⁹¹ *The Misfits*, directed by John Huston (1961; Santa Monica, CA: MGM Home Entertainment, 2001), DVD.

⁹² Deborah Bright, “Victory Gardens: The Public Landscape of Postwar America,” *VIEWS* (Winter-Spring 1990): 2-3.

⁹³ *The Misfits*, DVD.

only to let them go again, just to prove to himself that he still could. The film ends with a shot, through a car windshield (Figure 34), of a temporarily reconciled Roslyn and Gay embracing and driving off in the car, which, rather than the land, is the only real site of agency depicted for the film's cast of misfit Western characters.

The Golden Age of Hollywood and its greatest stars were crumbling, too. The American mythic notion of the cowboy-as-hero and the West-as-freedom is obviously disputed in the film. *The Misfits* not only negotiates notions of freedom in the Western landscape during changing times, but also for its own participants and circumstances of production. The director, John Huston, was often drunk on set, the film went way over budget, Miller and Monroe often fought, and it did not do as well as planned in the box office. Soon after shooting, Monroe divorced Miller and Gable passed away. *The Misfits'* entire circumstances of production were atypical: unlike the traditional studio system in which initiative came from the producer, Miller, the screenwriter, pushed the project through. Filming took place not in Hollywood but on location in Reno and the Nevada desert, where Miller had gotten the idea, while meeting Reno residency requirements at a ranch for his divorce from his first wife in March of 1956.⁹⁴ Although unusual, the film was still considered to be a sure-fire commercial because of the star power of Monroe and Gable. However, with Monroe's illness constantly interrupting shooting, a dragging storyline, long, overly wrought, dramatic scenes, and inconsistent pacing resulted in only minor success at the box office- and would have probably worked better in the theatre. However, these factors did not stop Morath from doing the job nor from having fun. Her photographs reveal an easy and intimate access to the stars, and even a fun-loving relationship with some of them. A note she kept in her belongings from Montgomery Clift reads, "I adore you" in attempted French

⁹⁴ Toubiana and Miller, *The Misfits*, 111.

(one of the languages she spoke), written as “me toi adore” and signed “M. Le Nez,” perhaps referring to a joke about his nose.⁹⁵

She even got close to Monroe and Miller. In *Marilyn Monroe and Arthur Miller in their suite in Reno’s Mapes Hotel after a day’s shooting* (Figure 35) Miller stands at the edge of the frame, cigarette dangling from his mouth, hands in pocket, gazing at Monroe who wears a low-back dress and looks out the window, her signature platinum blonde hair making her immediately recognizable. Monroe, the star, and Miller, the writer, are separated by a huge lamp, her in the light, him in the shadow, him looking at her, her looking outside at others, the two never quite able to come together. Morath recalls how everyone had been trying to get photographs of Monroe and Miller, but as they were barely speaking, this photograph of them, together in their hotel room, was nearly one-of-a-kind.⁹⁶ Once again, Morath photographs the act of looking, him at her, her out of a window, that symbol for two-dimensional vision that is, as Friedberg describes, “a membrane where surface meets depth, where transparency meets its barriers... at once a surface and a frame – a reflective plane onto which an image is cast and a frame that limits its view.”⁹⁷ This sense that the window gives direct, unmediated vision is at work here, symbolically. Friedberg’s comparison of the window to a screen is also apt in terms of Monroe’s work as a film actress. There is a sense of documentary or truth-value that the window bestows upon the photograph because of these factors, which is furthered by the subject of the image, a disillusioned couple in the semi-private space of a temporary bedroom, meant to keep something inside and something outside. Morath, finally out of the stuffy car, out from behind the car windshield, having left the tourist traps and nationalistic tropes, is still watching

⁹⁵ Inge Morath Photographs and Papers. Box 590. General Collection, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut.

⁹⁶ Morath as quoted in Toubiana and Miller, *The Misfits*, 81.

⁹⁷ Friedberg, *Virtual Window*, 1.

others look, but does not seem so skeptical anymore. She still obfuscates – we cannot see a full view of the coveted faces of the stars - but seems to have suspended her judgements when faced with individuals whom she got to know.

Morath’s photograph of the crumbling couple in the intimate space of their hotel room, would, only two years later, be replaced by a photograph of herself next to Miller, marking their 1962 wedding, an image not allowed to be reproduced. In the personal photograph, labeled “Inge and Arthur, Wedding Day, February 1962 Roxbury,” it seems to have been a small gathering: she wore a two-piece white suit topped with a long, animal print coat, and him, a suit.⁹⁸ Morath would settle with Miller at their Roxbury property, working out of a grain silo, using a large, wooden, Spanish table to lay out her prints.⁹⁹ Her and Miller were married for forty years, working collaboratively on photobooks based off of their travels all over the world, with his text and her photographs, until Morath’s death, in 2002.

Although aspects of her personal life end nicely for her at the conclusion of her American road trip, her images from the trip push back against any sense of closure. Morath’s photographs offer a new story for American mid-century auto travel, problematizing and making complex, through visual strategies, the kind of experience some Americans had on and off the road during the post-war years. Morath’s *Road to Reno* photographs work to disable the fixity of the histories and sites she encounters, visualizing her own story of the transiency inherent in travel and vision.

⁹⁸ Inge Morath Photographs and Papers. “Inge and Arthur, Wedding Day, February 1962 Roxbury,” Folder 3. Box 528. General Collection, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut.

⁹⁹ Matthew Mason (archivist) in discussion with the author, April 15th, 2015.

CHAPTER 2:
“IT HAPPENED”: *DOUBLE BLIND (NO SEX LAST NIGHT)*: SOPHIE CALLE AND GREG SHEPHARD’S ROAD TRIP FILM

“It’s become a matter of which truth to tell,” Greg Shephard says at the end of his road trip film with Sophie Calle. “At least now, I’m giving myself a chance to, for the first time, do what I’ve always wanted to do: to try to tell an honest story.” Sophie Calle and Greg Shephard left New York early in the morning on January 3, 1992 on a road trip that led to the production of the 76 minute film, *Double Blind (No Sex Last Night)* (1992).¹⁰⁰ From New York, they drove south, shakily filming themselves and each other as they figured out how to work their brand-new, handheld video-cameras. The beginning of Calle and Shephard’s film consists of still images and recorded narration over diegetic, ambient sounds. For the most part, when Calle and Shephard sit in the moving car, the cameras roll, but when they move in and out of the car, the screen is populated with stills, creating a paradox: when they are stationary, the images move and when they move the images are still. As they drive, they speak into their own cameras more than they do to each other. Calle reveals her frustrations with Shephard’s silence, lack of sexual desire, and his obsession with his old Cadillac, which is in constant need of costly repairs. Each morning, Calle dejectedly pronounces, “no sex last night,” while a grainy still of an empty, messy, unmade, motel room bed occupies the screen (Figure 36). Meanwhile, Shephard narrates into his camera his feelings of depression, entrapment, and annoyance with Calle’s dismissive, and what he calls, ironic, attitude.

Shephard ends the film with his contradictory sentiments stated above: that he tried to figure out “which truth to tell” and “to tell an honest story,” implying there are several truths and

¹⁰⁰ *Double Blind (No Sex Last Night)*. Directed by Sophie Calle and Gregory Shephard. 76:00 min, color, sound, English and French with English subtitles, 1992.

that honesty may not be equivalent with truth. Such phrasing is particularly striking because Calle herself regularly faces questions about how true the stories are in her autobiographical, photo-textual works. The documentary-style photographs included in her exhibitions, books, and films are based on herself and/or her relationships with others. In general, Calle's artwork features imagery that is banal, showing a person or object merely as proof that something happened to her; the text is precise and formal; and the gallery or museum presentation, elaborate. The stories themselves are outlandish, overly serendipitous, or so deeply intimate that they prompt critics, curators, and the public alike to ask, "Is it really true?" Did Calle, in her collaborative project with Jean Baudrillard, *Please Follow Me* (1988) really follow and then stalk an acquaintance from Paris while he vacationed in Venice until he confronted her and ended it (Figure 37)?¹⁰¹ Did she really work as a stripper in a Paris club until getting knocked in the face with a shoe by a colleague (Figure 38)?¹⁰² I am less interested in searching for where Calle's life stops and her art starts and am more intrigued by how Calle mobilizes truth as an element in her work. This text analyzes how and why Calle has, on more than one occasion, used the example of *No Sex Last Night* as a way to explain her approach to truth in her art. This chapter presses on why Calle turns to the road trip film specifically, the only road trip project and the first film she ever made,¹⁰³ as a way to illustrate her artistic relationship to autobiography and fact and fiction.

¹⁰¹ See Sophie Calle and Jean Baudrillard, *Suite vénitienne (Please follow me)* (Seattle: Bay Press, 1988).

¹⁰² See Sophie Calle, *True Stories* (Arles: Actes Sud, 2016).

¹⁰³ The other two films are: *Unfinished*, about her failure to make a film, Sophie Calle and Fabio Balducci, *Unfinished*, 30:14 min, color, sound, English and French with English subtitles, 2005; and her efforts to film her mother's last breath on her deathbed in Sophie Calle, *Couldn't Capture Death*, 12 min, color, sound, 2007.

WHAT HAPPENED?

In the film, multiple story lines intersect as the pair drives. It is clear from the beginning that they have trouble connecting and retreat to telling stories about themselves, the kind you might share on a long drive, but to their cameras instead of to each other. Calle and Shephard's individual memories are narrated as voice-overs, current thoughts are spoken into their respective cameras in private, and, occasionally, conversations occur between Calle and Shephard. For most of the film, no singular storyline emerges, only half-stories and partial memories. After all, the film's primary title, *Double Blind*, refers to a type of experiment where neither the participants nor the researchers know which group is the test and which the control until after the experiment is complete. Is Shephard the test group? And Calle the control? What about the viewers? What storyline should we follow? Likewise, viewers do not know who is telling the truth, or if the film is meant to be documentary or fiction or a combination of the two.

The film's narrative confusion mirrors its disorienting sense of place. A map showing Calle and Shephard's drive from Shephard's home in New York to Calle's spring semester job at Mills College in Oakland, California reveals a straightforward route (Figure 39).¹⁰⁴ However, for the casual, first-time viewer of the film, this path would be nearly impossible to imagine. Viewers can piece together that Calle and Shephard drive south and west from New York, but otherwise can only surmise the full route after multiple, close viewings of the film. A typical, single screening creates a sense of geographic un-knowability that works in tandem with the filmic style of blurry shots, stilled images, and narrative uncertainty. Occasionally they mention small towns like Fair Hope, Chromo, and New Iberia. But the vast majority of their shots are of typical American hotels, motels, diners, and mechanic shops, making them hard to place. For

¹⁰⁴ This map was created by the author with Google Maps. I show this map not because the film clearly illustrates or values location – it does not - but rather, to give a general sense of the drive.

example, in a still of a motel room where they stay one night (Figure 40), the white telephone, brass lamp, laminate table, and floral bedspread all resemble furniture items from any motel room anywhere in the country. In this shot, the camera faces the wall, not a window, emphasizing the closed-in nature of the space rather than any exterior views that might situate the viewer. A still from a diner where they eat (Figure 41) shows the remnants of a typical American roadside burger joint meal: a droopy tomato has been taken off the burger, a few leftover onion rings have been left behind as well as some cola in a plastic cup, mostly crushed ice anyway. The film stresses the repetition and sameness of the landscape no matter where they are, a kind of metaphor for their failing communication and intimacy during the daily, banal moments of their road trip. Calle and Shephard also complete a lot of their driving at night, sometimes through snow, adding to the disorientation. Once Calle and Shephard start driving west, the date stamps disappear from the screen completely, replaced by time stamps: viewers may know it is 2:56 a.m., but where or on what day remains elusive. Even Shephard says to Calle at one point, “Is it still Saturday?” The specific place does not matter. The film is about their relationship (or lack thereof) and so places where their close contact is foregrounded – where they sleep, eat, and wait together - are the images we see rather than the places they visit.

For much of the film, nothing extraordinary occurs. They fight about Greg’s calls to another woman (that Calle pays for), stop to see a few friends on the way, and encounter some local characters. But there are also several, costly automobile breakdowns and repairs, and they spend a lot of time stuck, waiting, or, as Calle describes in a voiceover, “garage, restaurant, garage, restaurant, garage, restaurant, garage.” Despite the lack of sex, or any emotional or physical intimacy between the Calle and Shephard, the climax of the film occurs in Las Vegas when the couple decides to marry at a 24-hour, drive-thru, wedding chapel on South Las Vegas

Boulevard. This may surprise viewers considering the film's depiction of their curt relationship - and even Calle is shocked that Shephard agrees to the event. As Calle reveals in interviews following the film's release, and as discussed later in this chapter, marrying Shephard was her ultimate goal for the trip and she was thrilled to convince him to do it. The wedding in Las Vegas is the longest and most well-documented scene: Calle and Shephard are shown filling out legal paperwork for the marriage license, eating the meal they have before the wedding, paying for the ceremony, and the actual ceremony, performed at a drive-thru window by a minister. The couple exchanges vows, until, finally, the kiss, about six minutes into the scene (Figure 42). During the ceremony, the camera sits on the back of the convertible, directly behind the couple, creating a view comparable to waiting in a drive thru, fast-food line, where one can view the car in front of them while waiting for their turn. Cutting through loud road noise from the Las Vegas strip, viewers can hear an "I pledge" or a "with this ring, I thee wed," but the scene largely relies on the visual over aural to tell the narrative.

Immediately following the vow scene, viewers learn, through a voiceover, that a palm reader predicts the ultimate failure of the marriage by telling Shephard that he is in love with someone else. That night, they leave Las Vegas but cannot find a hotel, so they sleep in the car. Even on their first night together as a married couple they sleep on separate car seats, and still, no sex. Calle's voiceover at this part speaks to a doomed future: "It [sleeping separately] won't change much anyhow." The day after their marriage, they reach Los Angeles, and are forced to abandon Shephard's Cadillac as it finally broke down beyond repair. They finish the last leg of the trip, from Los Angeles to Oakland, in a rental car. But one more major plot point occurs before the end of the film, on the morning of January 20: the customary shot of an unmade hotel room bed, always accompanied by a verbal "No" from Calle is finally accompanied by a simple,

“Yes”– indicating sex was had last night. Later that day, they reach their destination, Mills College and are shown, in a stilled image, entering a home together.

A text panel reading “Three months later” flashes across the screen and viewers get an update on the couple’s lives through two, separately narrated endings. As they provide their own, individual voiceovers, music plays and the background fades into black, just as the film started. Calle discusses her initial marital bliss and life in Oakland followed by intense jealousy after finding several letters in the car written by Shephard to another woman. In Shephard’s closing narration, he notes the efforts he took to make the relationship work while, admittedly, still lying to Calle about another woman, ultimately causing their relationship to fail. A divorce is hinted at but not directly stated. That information is revealed by Calle in future project, her photo-textual work, *True Stories*, discussed later on in the chapter.

IT HAPPENED

In an interview with Jill Magid from 2008, Calle uses *No Sex Last Night* to illustrate how she conceptualizes “truth” in her work. When Magid asks what role fiction plays in her autobiographical projects, Calle responds:

It’s complicated what fiction is, because everything is fiction, in a way. Take the example of the movie *No Sex Last Night* (1992), because that’s the easiest one. The trip lasted three weeks, the man I stayed with one year, the movie is one hour. We could have done one hundred, two hundred, three hundred absolutely different movies, all being through editing the moment you choose. In a way, I don’t have the capacity of invention. If I could invent, why not? Except, I don’t.¹⁰⁵

Calle’s comment that she does not possess “the capacity of invention” contradicts her very identity as an artist while perpetuating ideas that artful things just happen to her without her altering them in anyway. The film might be the “easiest” example to give in response to Magid’s

¹⁰⁵ Sophie Calle quoted in Jill Magid, “Sophie Calle,” in *Sophie Calle: The Reader*, ed. Andrea Tarsia (London: Whitechapel Gallery, 2009), 143-44.

question, due to the nature of the film editing process, but it is not the most convenient as it has had a limited audience: *No Sex Last Night* has been shown infrequently in galleries and museums, and, while it can be requested through academic libraries, limited copies are available, a common problem for artist films.

Calle again cited the film when asked by Louise Neri in *Interview* in 2009 about her artistic responsibility to truth-telling:

Take the movie *No Sex Last Night* [1996]¹⁰⁶ that I made with my then-husband Greg Shephard: We lived together for one year; we filmed 60 hours; of those 60 hours we chose just 90 minutes... We chose to put the emphasis on me and my solitude and him and his car, whereas we could have chosen to speak only about food, or only about traveling cross-country, or only about the disgust we had for each other, or only about the beautiful moments we shared. So any one version is never 'true,' it just works better than another. But I can say that it did happen. *True? No. It happened.*¹⁰⁷

I argue that, for Calle, the “it happened,” she references above are the performed rituals of the trip – stopping at a garage, eating at a restaurant, sleeping at a motel, no sex, car silence, the wedding – the content. Truth is the totality of the embodied experience of the American road trip, that is, body parts going numb after sitting long distances, straining to see through mirrors and windows, desperately waiting to stop pee, zoning out while driving in long stretches, getting frustrated with your driving partner, etc. Using these definitions, the truth does not require correct narrative or geographic chronology. She uses the rituals to show what happened, and a filmic style permeated by gaps, lapses, ambiguity, uncertainty, situatedness, partiality and self-imaging to show how it really was, embracing a feminist road trip vision.

Post-production filming of *No Sex Last Night* that indicate that additional scenes “happened” after the initial drive is important to acknowledge in order to emphasize the

¹⁰⁶ 1996 is sometimes cited as the release date of the film, even though it was completed in 1992 and premiered in 1993 at the Whitney Biennial.

¹⁰⁷ Emphasis is my own. Sophie Calle quoted in Louise Neri, “Sophie Calle” *Interview* (March 2009) <http://www.interviewmagazine.com/art/sophie-calle#>. Last Accessed August 30, 2019.

difference between what happened and truth for Calle. Curator Lawrence Rinder notes in an exhibition catalogue that, “parts of *Double Blind* were created after the fact. I know because I was with them, cruising around San Francisco in the back seat of Shephard’s enormous Cadillac as they struggled to write the dialogue in various scenes. To this day, I don’t know exactly what parts of Calle’s life and art are fiction and what parts are fact. Perhaps she has lost track too, or perhaps it just does not matter.¹⁰⁸ While it not unusual for filmmakers to re-shoot scenes during the editing process, and that Calle and Shephard did so is not a criticism, such a candid memory of post-trip filming and dialogue construction serves to remind viewers that even though the amateur style, confessional voiceovers and autobiographical construction make the film seem like a documentary, it is very much a constructed story of what “happened” on a road trip.

In the two interviews cited above, Calle openly rejects the idea that truth has any sort of monopoly over her creative process. Thus, on the one hand, through straight-forward language and documentary-style photography and film, Calle intonates that her films are “true.” But on the other hand, as Rinder explains, Calle also “cultivates doubt. Her art is like a Petri dish growing doubts in ever more complicated and colorful designs.”¹⁰⁹ This chapter addresses *why* Calle illustrates this distinction between something “happening” and something being “true,” and what it is about the road trip film in particular that she finds illustrative to her approach to truth. Of all her work, what is it specifically about film, collaboration, and the road trip that make her point about things “happening”?

Simone de Beauvoir’s work is instructive here, especially *America: Day by Day* (1953) which chronicles her 1948, four-month road trip across the United States. In the preface,

¹⁰⁸ Shephard got his Cadillac back once they got to Oakland, after it was initially towed. Lawrence Rinder, “Sophie Calle and the Practice of Doubt,” in *Sophie Calle: Proofs* (Hanover, NH: Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth College, 1993), 16.

¹⁰⁹ Rinder, “Sophie Calle,” 12.

Beauvoir explains that she adapted a diaristic mode for the memoir because she did not want to eliminate the crucial factors of her subjectivity, specific vision, and personal preference.

Beauvoir writes, in what feels like Calle-esque prose: “Although it was retrospectively written, this journal, reconstructed with the help of some notes, letters and still-fresh memories, is scrupulously exact... There was no process of selection involved in the development of this story. *It is the story of what happened to me*, neither more nor less. This is what I saw and how I saw it; I have not tried to say more.”¹¹⁰ She continues, “Words, images, knowledge, effort would serve no purpose; to say they were true or untrue [would be] meaningless; they existed in another way here.”¹¹¹ Beauvoir contends that she is both “scrupulously exact” and suggests calling the events true or untrue is “meaningless.” Calle’s “it happened” and Beauvoir’s “what happened” serve simultaneously as each author’s truth defense in regard to their content, the “what happened,” and as subjective creative responses to the American road trip, what was true about the embodied experience of it. Beauvoir’s use of “what happened” is a defense of her written diaristic mode that takes into account things seen and felt. In this way, these terms or claims – the “it happened” and the “what happened” – also anchor the conceptual frame that this dissertation operationalizes: feminist road trip vision.

A feminist road trip vision, as I have proposed, is one that accepts and thrives upon documentation, partial vision, situated knowledge, and sharing with the self and others. Calle and Beauvoir’s “it happened” / “what happened” might be thought, then, as the outward expressions of this conceptual framework. In their own ways, they report back about what happened on their trips with an acknowledgement that these events are not the full truth of their experiences.

¹¹⁰ Emphasis is my own. Simone de Beauvoir, *America: Day by Day*, trans. Patrick Dudley (New York: Grove Press, 1953), ix.

¹¹¹ Beauvoir, *America*, 12.

Looking deeper into what organizes this framework, it becomes clear that the Calle in *No Sex Last Night* and Beauvoir in *America: Day by Day*, address ambiguity, situatedness, and self-imaging. In other words, *No Sex Last Night* – purposefully banal, boring, amateur, and lacking impressive vistas, with pervasive visual and narrative uncertainty, can, I argue - be interpreted through an undercurrent of Beauvoirian approaches. While the “what happened” is a bridge from Beauvoir to Calle, it is also a question – what happened? Beauvoir’s work in *America Day By Day* as well as *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, and *The Second Sex* are drawn upon to help answer that question in regard to the truth of Calle and Shephard’s film and its relationship to their “it happened.”

AMBIGUITY

No Sex Last Night begins with a dedication in white text against a black background: “We dedicate this story to the writer Hervé Guibert who died of AIDS in Paris the afternoon of December 27th, 1991, seven days before the trip began.” A close friend of Calle’s, Guibert was a French writer and photographer who publicly battled with AIDS and died just after his thirty-sixth birthday while Calle was on the plane to the United States to meet Shephard in New York. The first few images of *No Sex Last Night* are all stills. They show Sophie’s forlorn face as she and Shephard drive to a beach in Delaware where she symbolically buries Guibert in the ocean, coordinated to be at the same time as his official burial by his friends on the island of Elba. Sophie, wearing a long, dark coat, is shown walking alone onto a large wooden dock while she narrates memories of Guibert over stills. She has a photograph of St. Sarah and some flowers and throws them into the sea, “burying” him, and saying goodbye. The scene ends with her getting back into the car, alone, and shutting the door (Figure 43). Again, all of these early images are

stills with voice overs. They offer a strange, blurry, and stilted start of to the film that which only mentions Guibert one more time, briefly, in one of Calle's narrations.

Still, the dedication and inclusion of scenes related to Guibert speak to the larger themes of the film. As a writer, Guibert, like Calle, experimented with the relationship between autobiography and fact and fiction. Ralph Sarkonak writes how Guibert "loved to work in the tricky zone where life and fiction meet...his works provide us with a kind of fictional *veritas* that in the end may well turn out to be more true than supposedly nonfictional truth."¹¹² In his autofictions, or fictionalized bibliographies, such as *A l'ami qui ne m'a pas sauvé la vie* (*To the Friend Who did Not Save My Life*) as well as his photographic self-portraits, and his AIDS video-diary *La Pudeur ou l'impudeur*, Alex Hughes suggests that Guibert "oscillates between a deconstructive desire to problematize the possibility of narrative referentiality...to believe and operate in an autobiographical mode grounded in transparent self-revelation; and a mischievous will to turn the autobiographical, 'truth-telling' enterprise against itself by playing with deceit, fakery, and disguise."¹¹³ Guibert was also an accomplished photographer, and he published *L'Image fantôme* (*Ghost Image*), a response to Roland Barthes' *Camera Lucida*, a series of essays on photography and film without including any photographs. In the text, Guibert transmits "truth" about his autobiography through an image-less, photographic life-writing. Devoid of photographs, *L'Image fantôme* problematizes the image's role in autobiography. Similarly ambiguous, Calle never claims that her film is autobiographical, but her work is presented from the point of view of the artist "Sophie Calle," all of the shots are point of view shots, and, as far as viewers know, Calle and Shephard are the only people filming. The Guibert content in the first

¹¹² Ralph Sarkonak, "Traces and Shadows: Fragments of Hervé Guibert," *Yale French Studies* 90 (1996):183.

¹¹³ Alex Hughes, "Hervé Guibert's Photographic Autobiography: Self-Portraiture in *L'Image fantôme*," in *Phototextualities: Intersections of Photography and Narrative*, ed. Alex Hughes and Andrea Noble (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2003), 168.

few minutes of *No Sex Last Night* introduces viewers to what will follow in the remainder of the film: narrative confusion, including ambiguous intentions; visual uncertainty; and an overarching sense of doubt. Such a visually faulty start is both a faithful tribute to Guibert and an introduction to the film.

The dedication to Guibert at the beginning of the film is paired with a dedication at the very end of the credits to the filmmaker Chris Marker. Text across the screen reads, “Final dedication to Chris Marker for his film ‘*La Jetée*.’” *La Jetée* (1963), is a film made of still photographs and clearly inspired Calle’s film.¹¹⁴ While *La Jetée* is a love story happening amidst futuristic time travel, Calle’s is an almost-love story happening amidst road travel. The first full-frontal image of the lead female character in *La Jetée* is one where she looks directly at the viewer, slightly smiling, from inside of a car (Figure 44). Bruce Kawin has noted how the narration over the shots of the woman’s face is “moments to remember are just like other moments...” He goes on to argue that, “all time is presented, has to be presented, in the same manner; any instant is capable of being remembered, or of being presented as a memory...Any instant is a frame.”¹¹⁵ Film is always like that though. It does not ever actually move, but is always, Kawin continues, “a sequence of stills whose relation to movement is entirely potential and fantastic. It can present any instant, regardless of whether that instant is ‘earlier’ or ‘later’ than the ‘narrative present,’ because it makes any instant be the narrative present.”¹¹⁶ One can see how this potential is entirely attractive to Calle, who is a master of making any moment that has “happened” into a “narrative present.” David Company writes how Marker’s use of stills “is the best form suited to express the tension between stasis and momentum, between the weight of

¹¹⁴ *La Jetée*. Directed by Chris Marker. 27 min, black and white, sound, French. 1963.

¹¹⁵ Bruce Kawin, “Time and Stasis in ‘*La Jetée*,’” *Film Quarterly* 36.1 (Autumn, 1982): 17.

¹¹⁶ Kawin, “Time and Stasis,” 17.

memory and the possibility of a future.”¹¹⁷ Sandwiched between the two dedications is Calle’s video itself, full of visual and narrative uncertainty, false starts, and blurred imagery. Thus, the jolted, stilled images in the film effectively serve as an homage to Guibert and Marker while situating Calle’s within this particular legacy of visual ambiguity.

The stills that accompany the Guibert scenes and open the film were initially practical. According to Calle and Shephard, the stilled images were an attempt to salvage footage from their first few days of filming. After three days, Calle and Shephard re-played what they had on a television in one of their motel rooms, where it quickly became clear they could not use anything because the images were too shaky.¹¹⁸ In an interview with Lynne Cooke about the video, Calle and Shephard explain their inexperience with video the cameras, which they had just purchased before their departure. Calle admits:

Our approach to imaging grew out of a mistake. Neither of us had ever touched a camera before. We learned in the car how it works. We read the instructions in the car. When we watched the results of the first few days of recording, we were desperate, because in the car we were sitting. Everything that was shot in the street, in the hotel, in the motel was impossible to use so we thought the movie was finished. Then we realized that, if we froze the images, we were saved. So, every time we were in the car, we used moving images; every time we stepped out of the car, it is still shots.¹¹⁹

Largely, the stilled images came out of necessity, but they also have the effect of opening up ambiguity, uncertainty, and truth claims as crucial formal components of the road trip film rather than as a trick or distraction. Luc Sante has suggested that : “If one were to hear or read a description of Calle’s work and try to reconstruct it on that basis without actually seeing it, it is possible one might imagine its theme to be the poverty of language or of image, the insufficiency of secondhand experience. Instead, her work continually stresses the beauty of imprecision, the

¹¹⁷ David Company, *Photography and Cinema* (London: Reaktion Books, 2008), 100-101

¹¹⁸ Sophie Calle and Greg Shephard quoted in Hans Ulrich-Obrist, “Portrait of Sophie Calle,” in *Sophie Calle: The Reader*, ed. Andrea Tarsia (London: Whitechapel Gallery, 2009), 134-35.

¹¹⁹ Lynne Cooke, “Double Blind: An Interview with Sophie Calle and Greg Shephard” *Art Monthly* 163 (February 1993): 409.

poetry of gaps and lapses.”¹²⁰ While Sante’s discussion of “the insufficiency of secondhand experience” is clearly a theme in the film, his focus on beauty seems trite and does not ring true. Ambiguity is the point, speaking to the very condition of photography rather than being merely a blockade to a clearer vision that might not actually tell us more. *No Sex Last Night* zeros in on this: Calle’s refusal to say the film is true speaks to photographic instability. In the film’s case, photography is the mediator between presenting what happened and the truth of the experience of making the film.

Rather, imperfection might be a better approach. Filmmaker and theorist Hito Steyerl, expounding upon Juan García Espinosa’s 1969 Third Wave Cinema manifesto, *For an Imperfect Cinema*, argues for the urgency of imperfect cinema, that is, one which “merges art with life and science, blurring the distinction between consumer and producer, audience and author. It insists upon its own imperfection, is popular but not consumerist...diminishes the distinctions between author and audience and merges life and art. Most of all, its visuality is resolutely compromised: blurred, amateurish, and full of artifacts.”¹²¹ An imperfect cinema is an economy of poor images, of popular images, which “express all the contradictions of the contemporary crowd: its opportunism, narcissism, desire for autonomy and creation, its inability to focus or make up its mind, its constant readiness for transgression and simultaneous submission.”¹²² To make an entire of film of imperfect images, such as *No Sex Last Night*, with its low-resolution, mass-produced, hand-held camera video footage and populated with stilled images, is a distinct choice to embrace the messiness – and potential – of imperfect images. For example, in a shot taken from inside of the car (Figure 45), Calle shows the road as mediated through the windshield in

¹²⁰ Luc Sante, “Sophie Calle’s Uncertainty Principle,” *Parkett* 36 (1993): 73.

¹²¹ Hito Steyerl, “In defense of the poor image,” *eflux* 10 (November 2009): NP, <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/1061362/in-defense-of-the-poor-image/> Last accessed August 30, 2019.

¹²² Steyerl, “In defense,” NP.

front of her. The scene she captures is indistinct— the oncoming car headlights, the road signs, and the type of car in front of her are all familiar, popular imagery in the popular imagination but here are hard to see. This is purposeful: it is not as important to make out what is seen on the road trip as it is to hear the omniscient narrator, Calle. The indistinct imagery also reflects the nature of Calle and Shephard's relationship, their inability to understand themselves or each other, and a general lack of vision for their future.

At The Whitney

No Sex Last Night premiered at the prominent and controversial 1993 Whitney Biennial, but it did not stand out in the press amidst the large number of political and also filmic exhibitions – thirty of them that year.¹²³ Art critic Laura Cottingham summed up much of the critical response to the 1993 Whitney Biennial: “the negative chorus goes something like this: ‘There’s no beauty!, There’s no pleasure!, Where’s the painting?’”¹²⁴ *No Sex Last Night* played on the museum’s fourth floor, on a loop, from March 4-14, April 14-18, and May 19-23, 1993 taking turns with four other videotapes played on that floor throughout the run of the Biennial.¹²⁵ Typically, the Whitney’s second floor film gallery sufficed for Biennial viewing, but in 1993, third and fourth floor viewing galleries were added to accommodate the influx of filmic exhibits.¹²⁶ However, Calle and Shephard’s film received almost no attention in the press. Cottingham’s review praises the video and film selections as “generally exceptional.” But in

¹²³ Films were screened in the second-floor Film Gallery while single-channel videotapes (as *No Sex Last Night* was characterized) played on the third and fourth floors. In the February 1993 press release, the Whitney announced that so many works of film and video were part of the 1993 Biennial to affirm “the potency of media imagery in current art and culture.” Whitney Museum of American Art. “Film and Video Artists Represented in 1993 Biennial Exhibition at Whitney Museum.” Press Release. February 1993. Frances Mulhall Achilles Library, Archives. Whitney Museum of American Art, NY. NP

¹²⁴ Laura Cottingham, “The Pleasure Principle: Thoughts on the 1993 Whitney Biennial” *Frieze* 10 (May 1993): 11.

¹²⁵ Whitney, “Film and Video Artists,” NP.

¹²⁶ Art critic Laura Cottingham notes that one would have to visit the Biennial twenty times in order to view all 35 of the rotating media works. Cottingham, “Pleasure Principle,” 13.

regard to *No Sex Last Night* specifically, she only mentions the film premiered at the Biennial without offering critique.¹²⁷

The uncertainty of what the stilled and moving image can do extended well beyond Calle and Shephard's video and applied to others in the exhibition. Such ambiguity, or perceived ambiguity, had drastic effects on both real people and the popular imagination in the early 1990s. The most frequently mentioned inclusion at the 1993 Whitney Biennial, and what critics deemed, "the most 'political' piece,"¹²⁸ and the "most notorious feature"¹²⁹ that "brought the issue of racism to every American living room"¹³⁰ was not created by an artist, but was shot on a Sony Handycam by George Holliday. Holliday was the Lake View Terrace bystander who filmed officers from the Los Angeles Police Department viciously beating Rodney King on March 3, 1991. Visitors would have been familiar with the brutal clips from the video, which gained national attention through repetitious play across the news media. In the Biennial, the entire King film played in its entirety on a continuous loop.

Responses were mixed. While art critic Christopher Knight was left "slack-jawed" by "the further institutional exploitation of King and his gruesome ordeal,"¹³¹ Cottingham suggests that such "real life documents, although executed in the same media used by artists are not meant to be offered as 'art.' Rather, they are meant to suggest that the social realities of racism and

¹²⁷ Cottingham, "Pleasure Principle," 12.

¹²⁸ Cottingham, "Pleasure Principle," 14

¹²⁹ Christopher Knight, "A flatly false claim by new Whitney Museum about my 1993 review," *Los Angeles Times*, April 29, 2015. <https://www.latimes.com/entertainment/arts/culture/la-et-cm-shabby-walltext-marks-whitney-debut-20150428-column.html>. Last accessed March 30, 2020.

¹³⁰ Roberta Smith, "At the Whitney, A Biennial with a Social Conscience," *The New York Times*, March 5, 1993. <https://nytimes.com/1993/03/05/arts/at-the-whitney-a-biennial-with-a-social-conscience.html>. Last accessed March 30, 2020.

¹³¹ Knight argues that if the Whitney really believed the film to be "artistically crucial rather than merely sensationalistic," they would have acquired a copy of the video for their collection, which they did by the time of Knight's 2015 article. Knight, "A flatly false claim"

sexism not only define art and cultural production, but are in turn defined by it.”¹³² Whitney curator of film and video John G. Hanhardt, who selected the King video for inclusion, stated that the tape represents “a new way of seeing what is around us,” a new trend in media art to “engage in a public discourse...paradigmatic of the new relationship media has to its community, and to television itself.”¹³³ Holliday was not presented as an artist nor his video as an artwork. It showed the America from which art was being made and the possibility for the means of such production, that is, on video and of real life. The medium of video, so popular in the 1993 Biennial, was not just an exciting prospect for artists to see the world, but, was, or at least would certainly become, a matter of justice and even of life-or-death.

Americanist Paula Rabinowitz noted that “with the easy availability of cam-orders and VCRs, a new era of video *vérité* is upon us, as America makes its own home videos.”¹³⁴ However, she questions the idea of “wholeness” that had long been purported as necessary for ethnographic and documentary films: “film-makers...challenge this equation of wholeness with reality as an ideological construct that accords with neither actual perception nor cinematic representation.”¹³⁵ It is that very idea of wholeness and the desire to look at the “entire video” as the Prosecutor implored the jury to do in the King case, *California v. Powell, Wind, Briseno and Koons*, that ultimately undercut the seemingly fool-proof Holliday video evidence: the first few, crucial seconds of the film are blurry. Even more critical, stills from the film were dissected and manipulated by the defense to make it look like King rose to challenge officers, and aggressively

¹³² Cottingham, “Pleasure Principle,” 15.

¹³³ John G. Hanhardt quoted in Suzanne Muchnic, “King Beating Footage Comes to the Art World: George Holliday’s tape represents ‘a new way of seeing what is around us,’ says the Whitney Curator who Chose it for the Museum’s Biennial,” *Los Angeles Times*, March 10, 1993. <http://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1993-03-10-ca-1355-story.html>. Last accessed April 1, 2020.

¹³⁴ Paula Rabinowitz. *They Must Be Represented: The Politics of Documentary* (New York: Verso, 1994): 205.

¹³⁵ Rabinowitz, *They Must Be Represented*, 208.

‘cocked’ his leg or ‘triggered’ his arm to provoke the officers’ ‘strokes.’¹³⁶ Acquitted on April 29, 1992 (save for Powell who was convicted on a charge of excessive force), the defense attorneys for the police officers took what was so obviously a video of a deplorable beating of an unarmed man and transformed it into what Toby Miller has called “a highly directive verbal commentary.’ Miller recalls how Michael Stone, counsel for the defendant Officer Laurence Powell, “explained that the plan was for the jury to interpret and identify ‘not through the eye of the camera but through the eyes of the police officers’”¹³⁷ The defense achieved this through the very kind of close-reading that scholars of lens-based media do: repetition, reversal, freeze-framing, and slow motion were manipulated, along with sequencing and verbal commentary, to make King look dangerous and in control instead of the police officers.¹³⁸ “Because law is often about interpreting doctrinal materials,” Miller argues, “systems of reading are also important in explaining miscarriages of justice.”¹³⁹

I do not want to belabor a comparison between the King video and Calle and Shephard’s film as the stakes in these two videotapes are so vastly different. However, they shared the same exhibition space in 1993 which brought them into physical proximity to each other, if only briefly. They do have the same setting, the road, the same handheld video recording device, and stills are a crucial part of their formation and/or reception. One of the general observations Cottingham makes about the Whitney Biennial are true for both the Holliday video and *No Sex Last Night* : “Very few selections in this exhibition are constructed according to the conventional aesthetic dictum...that art should present the viewer with a unified, full frontal, visual-centered

¹³⁶ Rabinowtiz, *They Must Be Represented*, 211.

¹³⁷ Toby Miller, *Technologies of Truth: Cultural Citizenship and the Popular Media* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 188.

¹³⁸ Miller, *Technologies of Truth*, 191.

¹³⁹ Miller, *Technologies of Truth*, 191.

experience...[they] refuse the purist's demands for an exclusively visual experience."¹⁴⁰ The way in which the stills from the King video could be made to look ambiguous enough to a jury to acquit the officers should, at the very least, give viewers of any stilled images pause to reflect upon the context and presentation of such materials and their power to be used and manipulated at will.

Ambiguity and Freedom

A pivot towards Simone de Beauvoir's texts offer a philosophical undergirding for the generative and not just destructive possibilities of uncertainty and partial perspective. Beauvoir's existentialist concept of freedom brings nuance to the sense of freedom evoked by American road trip. Road travel made movement synonymous with freedom and also, photography, as discussed in the introduction. As David Company writes in his book on American road photography, *Open Road*, "the thrill of mobility was new and led to a heightened awareness of the motion of driving and the stillness of photography."¹⁴¹ The dissonance between the stillness of photography and the motion of road travel seems to be if not a welcome visual challenge, a physically thrilling experience.

The contemporary American landscape, cultural geographer and landscape historian John Brinkerhoff Jackson]writes, is "roads, streets, highways: arteries which dominate and nourish and hold a landscape together and provide it with instant accessibility."¹⁴² Following Jackson, freedom, in the context of the American road trip, can be defined as accessibility. I am not saying that freedom is accessible to everyone on the American road, which it is not, but that the infrastructure of the American highway system, as mentioned previously, is designed to look,

¹⁴⁰ Cottingham, "Pleasure Principle," 15.

¹⁴¹ David Company, *The Open Road: Photography and the American Road Trip* (New York: Aperture, 2014), 27.

¹⁴² John Brinkerhoff Jackson, *A Sense of Place, A Sense of Time* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), viii.

feel, and be experienced as freely facilitating easy movement. It does not always achieve that, and certainly not for every person, but nevertheless, it is evoked.

Alongside of Jackson's definition of freedom on the road as accessibility, I want to pursue Beauvoir's concept of freedom, which, in her existentialist conception of it, is a mutually dependent, consciousness-raising, ambiguous pursuit. Beauvoir's particular bent on existentialism, that is, her focus on the free person's responsibility and ethical relationships with others, adds depth to Calle's sometimes flat-seeming project and also aligns it with the kind of relationship Calle and Shephard attempt to forge on the road – individually free but responsible (even if it is begrudgingly) to each other, at least until the completion of the film. Beauvoir's *Ethics of Ambiguity* clarifies that an ethics of ambiguity is central to, not absent from, existentialism. Whereas some criticized existentialism for having no ethics – because, as critics argued, in the absence of God, everything was now permitted - Beauvoir wrote the book to show how existentialism does have ethics – that in the absence of God, we are now fully responsible for our actions. An ethics of ambiguity is about mutual recognition of each other's freedom and intentionality. We use our consciousness to express freedom and find meaning; then we use that freedom to become authors of meaning in the world. However, absolute meaning itself is ambiguous. Instead of looking for a wholeness of meaning, Beauvoir argues, one should search for activities in the world that acknowledge our limitations while still remaining hopeful for the potential of the future. This does not allow us to evade responsibility for the present but means that we are fully responsible for our actions as we are also all bound to each other. Only this can insure mutual freedom, key to her ethical model.¹⁴³

Contemporaries criticized Beauvoir's position, and even her title was attacked as too

¹⁴³ See Simone de Beauvoir, *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, trans. Bernard Frechtman (New York: Open Road, 2018).

ambiguous. Samuel L. Hart argued in 1950 that, “The title of the book is somehow confusing. Ambiguity refers to an expression capable of being understood in different meanings. Since it is for us to employ or avoid such vague terms, ‘ethics of ambiguity’ does not make sense.”¹⁴⁴ However, a more favorable contemporary, Gwendolyn Bays suggested that, “by an ethics of ambiguity Mme. de Beauvoir does not mean one of confusion or one which has no meaning, but an ethics in which the meaning is never fixed and which recognizes that every situation is different.”¹⁴⁵ Beauvoir espoused that free beings will encounter conflicts but must struggle to maintain a co-existence with other free beings, no matter the situation.

Sonia Kruks expands upon Beauvoir’s ideas on ambiguity: “we are each at once consciousness and bodily existent; constrained by our situation and free to decide how we act within its constraints. We are also at once radically separate and interdependent: for we are each the inventor of the meanings of our world and yet require others to give our actions meaning.”¹⁴⁶ Beauvoir implores individuals to actively “attend to nuance and complexity – to ambiguity.”¹⁴⁷ To acknowledge the presence of ambiguity is to be true to the everyday relational aspects of being with others. One’s ability to negotiate their own freedom with that of others is of utmost importance to the ethical existentialist.

Movement, too, is essential to freedom, especially, as Beauvoir argues in *Second Sex*, a woman’s freedom:

Those who are condemned to stagnation are often pronounced happy on the pretext that happiness consists in being at rest. This notion we reject, for our perspective is that of existentialist ethics. Every subject plays his part as such specifically through exploits or projects that serve as a mode of transcendence; he achieves liberty only through a

¹⁴⁴ Samuel L. Hart, “Reviewed Work: *The Ethics of Ambiguity* by Simone de Beauvoir and Bernard Frechtman,” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 10.3 (March 1950): 445.

¹⁴⁵ Gwendolyn Bays, “Simone de Beauvoir: Ethics and Art,” *Yale French Studies* 1 (1948): 107.

¹⁴⁶ Sonia Kruks, “Ambiguity and Certitude in Simone de Beauvoir’s Politics,” *PMLA* 124.1 (January 2009): 215.

¹⁴⁷ Kruks “Ambiguity and Certitude,” 220.

continual reaching out toward other liberties.¹⁴⁸

The stilled images that dominate the first part of *No Sex Last Night* correspond with a stagnated romance between Calle and Shephard: viewers cannot picture them moving, and, due to their lack of experience with video, they literally cannot picture themselves moving at first. They cannot be visually or physically accessible for themselves or for each other.

Elizabeth Bohls, writing on women travel writers in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, notes a relationship between creative production and travel that is valuable for the twentieth: “rather than dismissing inconsistency and disunity as mere aesthetic flaws, evidence of poor skill or limited vision, I have learned to value their negotiation of cultural conflict. Ambivalence need imply neither vagueness nor deficiency; it can speak both richly and precisely.”¹⁴⁹ The visual ambiguity that stilled images present for viewers in terms of linearity, narrative, and meaning in *No Sex Last Night* requires an attentiveness that can shed light on the relationship Calle and Shephard enact in the film, that is, they both try to be free and to let the other be free within the constraints of their bodies and situations in, and just outside of, a car.

SITUATED KNOWLEDGES

In her 1988 article, “Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective,” Donna Haraway rejects the idea that any sort of pure objectivity exists in science and visualization technologies: “Only partial perspective promises objective vision,” she wrote, “...feminist objectivity is about limited location and situated knowledge, not

¹⁴⁸ The translator has used “he” in lieu of “one” or “she.” Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans. H.M. Parshley (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1957), xxvii.

¹⁴⁹ Elizabeth A. Bohls, *Women Travel Writers and the Language of Aesthetics, 1716-1818* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 21.

about transcendence and splitting of subject and object.”¹⁵⁰ She argues for this view of partiality from an always and already complex and contradictory body located somewhere, but not nowhere nor everywhere.¹⁵¹ Partiality of vision (or as I am theorizing here, ambiguity or uncertainty) is evident in various ways throughout *No Sex Last Night*, and so is situatedness. Situated knowledge is the central concept of feminist epistemology and refers to how knowledge is socially situated. It reflects the lived experiences and perspectives – including gender and other factors of marginalization – of each person. I posit that in *No Sex Last Night*, the power relations from within the car reflect the lived experiences of gender roles as understood by Calle and Shephard and can also be understood as influencing the production of knowledge created by the technology of the cameras. The world outside of the car is depicted merely as passing scenery, not engaged with by the pair in any meaningful way because their “visualization technology” – their cameras - are so focused on the space of the car, themselves, and each other. Shephard says in a voiceover, twenty minutes into the film, “I feel safe in the car. I want to stop only when we have to. I think she agrees with me.” Partial visual perspective dominates Calle and Shephard’s experience from the car and viewer’s experience with them: they only see America through its restaurants, garages and motels; viewers see only limited landscapes, often in the dark, through a windshield through a video camera. In many instances, viewers only see the landscape, Calle, and Shephard as mediated through a windshield, mirror, or lens.¹⁵²

The marriage scene is a good example how the knowledge produced from within the car, with cameras, offers a partial perspective. Viewers do not know why Calle wants to marry Shephard, only that she has a strong desire to be married. The video makes it very clear that they

¹⁵⁰ Donna Haraway, “Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective,” *Feminist Studies* 14.3 (Fall 1988): 583.

¹⁵¹ Haraway, “Situated Knowledges,” 589.

¹⁵² See figures 2.10, 2.12, 2.13, and 2.14.

do get married, but it is only a “footprint of truth” – it is unclear if this is merely an artistic stunt. However, all of the scenes showing state paperwork and official documentation, Greg, for instance, spelling out his full name for the marriage license, makes it seem like the event did happen. Even though the cameras roll during the marriage scene, they get married in a parked car. They literally are not going anywhere. Marriage is their way of trying to legally solidify an ambiguous relationship; it is a legal form of truth that does not necessarily reflect the truth of an intimate relationship. The legality of the wedding is a way to fix a shaky relationship with too many moving parts. And, we learn later, through narration, that when they stop moving (stop traveling and stop making the film), their relationship ends. The marriage scene is one of the few in the film that is substantial in length, visually clear, and show both Calle and Shephard together on screen, at the same time (Figure 46).

Even so, uncertainty is not totally banished from the marriage scene: it is this moment that is one of the most aurally confusing of the film as viewers have to rely on the bad audio from the hand-held cameras, which do not deliver clear dialogue, as they are married outside, near a busy road. The soundscape created here, which R. Murray Schafer defines as an “acoustic field of study”¹⁵³ is extremely important. Even though we cannot hear the marriage vows clearly, we can still hear other things – such as the dull sound of car traffic on the main drag of Vegas and the sound of the drive-thru minister’s voice cutting in and out. In a voiceover, Greg acknowledges he cannot hear the minister, but reminds himself to smile and nod. Schafer suggests that “we can isolate an acoustic environment as a field of study just as we can study the characteristics of a given landscape” by studying the main themes of a soundscape: the keynotes, or ubiquitous, pervasive sounds (in *No Sex Last Night*, the dull, background traffic); the signals,

¹⁵³ R. Murray Schafer, “The Soundscape,” in *The Sound Studies Reader*, ed. Jonathan Sterne, 95-103 (London: Routledge, 2012), 99.

or consciously heard foreground (like car horns); and soundmarks, or sounds unique to a particular community or landmark (“You may now kiss the bride”).¹⁵⁴ The soundscape that is created in this scene is one that is full of sound, for sure, but without the clarity of a typical, indoor or microphoned wedding. Viewers witness the exchange of vows, but the difficulty of hearing the words in favor for keynote sounds makes the scene lack the kind of strong witnessing power it might otherwise have. This negotiation between truth and fact, between visual clarity and optical uncertainty, between Calle and Shephard is not meant to trick us: Yve-Alain Bois writes that Calle “has no faith in our faith; she knows we are suspicious.”¹⁵⁵ Ambiguity and situated knowledges are visual and narrative strategies to bring viewers closer to the actual filming, physical experiences, narrating and editing of the video itself.

Haraway and de Beauvoir share an unexpected philosophical kinship, too. Sonia Kruks points out how Haraway, while likely not seeing her work within the phenomenological tradition, resonates with Beauvoir in her “Situated Knowledges” text. Like Beauvoir, Haraway “stresses the connection between the existence of embodied selves and the possibility of an objective (or sharable knowledge). Calling for a ‘doctrine of embodied objectivity,’ she observes that ‘objectivity turns out to be about particular and specific embodiment and definitely not about false vision promising transcendence of all limits and responsibilities.’”¹⁵⁶ Kruks continues: “In her account of women as subjects ‘in situation,’ Beauvoir can both acknowledge the weight of social construction, including gender, in the formation of the self and yet refuse to reduce the self to an ‘effect.’ She can grant a degree of autonomy to the self...while also acknowledging the real

¹⁵⁴ Schafer, “The Soundscape,” 99.

¹⁵⁵ Yve-Alain Bois, “Paper Tigress,” *October* 116 (Spring 2006): 35.

¹⁵⁶ Sonia Kruks, “Gender and Subjectivity: Simone de Beauvoir and Contemporary Feminism,” *Signs* 18.1 (Autumn 1992): 106, note #30.

constraints on autonomous subjectivity produced by oppressive situations...¹⁵⁷ When Beauvoir speaks to the situation of French women in the late 1940s, her metaphor for freedom using imagery of roads and roadblocks is relevant:

Now, what peculiarly signalizes the situation of woman is that she – a free and autonomous being like all human creatures – nevertheless finds herself living in a world where men compel her to assume the status of the Other...How can a human being in woman's situation attain fulfillment? What roads are open to her? Which are blocked? How can independence be recovered in a state of dependency? What circumstances limit woman's liberty and how can they be overcome? These are the fundamental questions on which I would fain throw some light. This means that I am interested in the fortunes of the individual as defined not in terms of happiness but in terms of liberty.¹⁵⁸

Situatedness, partiality, and transience, following Haraway and Beauvoir, is not a limiting feature, but rather overcomes the downsides of both totalization and relativism. Haraway argues that “both deny the stakes in location, embodiment, and partial perspective; both make it impossible to see well.”¹⁵⁹ Instead, Haraway embraces partiality as both a feminist standpoint and a knowledge-producing one: “Feminist embodiment resists fixation and is insatiably curious about the webs of different positioning...not partiality for its own sake, but, rather, for the sake of the connections and unexpected openings situated knowledges make possible.”¹⁶⁰ This feminist objectivity embraces not only partiality and situatedness, but ambiguity and uncertainty, too, making “room for,” Harway writes, “surprises and ironies at the heart of all knowledge production.”¹⁶¹ While Calle might claim that the film “happened” but is not “true,” I argue that when we analyze the film through the lens of feminist road trip vision, through an embodied approach to road travel that considers ambiguity, uncertainty, situated knowledges, sharing and self-imaging, it is true, true in the sense that it embraces not just the events of the trip, but the

¹⁵⁷ Kruks, “Gender and Subjectivity,” 92.

¹⁵⁸ Beauvoir, *Second Sex*, xxix.

¹⁵⁹ Haraway, “Situated Knowledges,” 584.

¹⁶⁰ Haraway, “Situated Knowledges,” 590.

¹⁶¹ Haraway, “Situated Knowledges,” 594.

strangeness of how it felt, looked, and sounded, too.

Haraway's theory of situated knowledge also addresses how knowledge production is, in part, created by striking up "non-innocent conversations by means of our prosthetic devices, including our visualization technologies"¹⁶² In Calle and Shephard's case, the visualization technologies at hand for situated, partial, knowledge production are the car and the camera - "non-innocent" choices. Calle and Shephard's mobilities are determined, in part, by their vehicle - the large size and shape and failing mechanics of the 1968 Cadillac DeVille convertible (Figure 46), with its huge windshield, top-down option, and large autobody shape influences the kind of vision and experiences possible from within it. The car is like a third main character more than a mere object. Sidonie Smith emphasizes the influence of "modes of mobility and narrative practice."¹⁶³ She analyzes how travel narratives are inextricably bound to their chosen means of transportation:

The social relations of travel and travel narrating in the twentieth century are mediated by th[e] technologies of motions... Vehicles of motion are vehicles of perception and meaning, precisely because they affect the temporal, spatial and interrelational dynamics of travel... Modes of motion organize the entire sensorium differently and thus affect the conditions, the focalizing range, and the position of the perceiving subject, differently connecting and disconnecting her to and from the terrain of travel, differentially organizing her ways of negotiating unfamiliar territory and differentially affecting systems of behavior.¹⁶⁴

The vintage Cadillac convertible car they drive in *No Sex Last Night* is all surface and no substance. Constantly breaking down, the Cadillac's mechanical failures cause their trip to start and stop, dragging on much longer than anticipated, as they spend hours and hours waiting for mechanics to make repairs. Nevertheless, its roomy interior and large windshield and windows

¹⁶² Haraway, "Situated Knowledges," 594.

¹⁶³ Sidonie Smith, *Moving Lives: 20th-Century Women's Travel Writing* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), xiv.

¹⁶⁴ Smith, *Moving Lives*, 22-23.

affect the physical and visual experience – as do its looks. For example, they meet several strangers because the car is a talking point, they can rather comfortably sleep in the car, and their drive-through marriage could be easily shot by putting the top down and the cameras on the rear of the car.

Smith also argues that early women motorists symbolized a “radical displacement from the home,” were interpreted as flagrantly available, displayed spending power, and willfully neglected domesticity, using “automobiles as vehicles of resistance to conventional gender roles and the strictures of a normative femininity.”¹⁶⁵ Calle’s desire for marriage, and the fact that the marriage is the climax of the film, may seem like an embrace of conventional gender roles. However, Calle also mentions the lack of intimacy with Shephard every day of the trip, displaying how she is flagrantly [un]available. Additionally, Calle controlled all of the money for the trip, which becomes clear as she pays for everything, demonstrating her spending power; Greg is so broke, he pockets a few bucks at every gas fill-up. And, even though she does get married, they do so from inside of a car in Las Vegas, “sin city,” willfully neglecting domesticity.

In Beauvoir, Kruks writes, freedom between two subjects is needed “so that we can take up each other’s projects and give them future meaning.”¹⁶⁶ Calle needed a collaborator to take up her project of getting married in Vegas. Shephard’s car, and desire to make a film, helped Calle to make facilitate the opportunity to marry. His project, as depicted in the film, seems more about his love for the car – and keeping in touch with other women - than love for Calle. Neither fully takes up the other’s project, but their desires to fulfill their own allows for the other person’s to happen.

¹⁶⁵ Smith, *Moving Lives* 173, 175.

¹⁶⁶ Kruks, “Gender and Subjectivity,” 99.

Yet, Greg consistently comes across as the weaker vessel in the film. Smith discusses how early inventors, engineers, and manufacturers of the automobile “were identified as doggedly masculine types – inveterate tinkerers, daring dynamos of speed, gritty visionaries...The drivers were imagined as men of wealth and daring...Owning an auto, especially one of the expensive models, made the man as the privileged subject of modernity”¹⁶⁷ The film depicts Shephard as in love with the car and pleased by the attention other men pay to it. They go over to the home of a stranger who exclaims, “God, this car is beautiful! You two have to stop by my house.” He refers to his car as “honey”: “Come on Honey,” to which Calle says into her camera “That was nice. Only it is to his car.” At another point, Calle turns around to look at Greg’s camera and says despondently, “I thought he was filming me, not the car (Figure 47). Shephard also defends the car from criticism, blaming the rain, for example, on its breakdown, rather than his own lack of preparation in taking care of car repairs and its age. Shephard, otherwise depicted as a fragile person with poor communication skills, unstable relationships and low self-esteem, locates his masculinity in the vehicle, whose stops, stutters, and needs for repairs needs as attention as much as he does.

In an interview with Hans-Ulrich Obrist, Calle explains that the film cost 7,000 Euros to make. But, as she saw it:

It was [the] trip that I was paying for, not a film... Greg’s dream was to make a film, and my dream was that he would become my husband, so I asked myself what bait I could use to lure him into following me. The bait was the film. I suggested making a movie... But when he wanted to leave. I said to myself, if we edit the film, then he’ll stay, and we could gain time. I really didn’t want to make a film, just to win some time...I only realised I was making a film as we were editing.”¹⁶⁸

In a public talk from 2016, Calle admitted she just wanted to be with Shephard, and described the agreement to make a film as a “carrot” to lure him into taking the trip – the bait she describes

¹⁶⁷ Smith, *Moving Lives*, 171.

¹⁶⁸ Obrist, “Sophie Calle,” 134.

above.¹⁶⁹ In a way, Calle paid for a husband and, in her efforts to extend the amount of time she could have with him through the filming and editing process, got a film, too. In *No Sex Last Night*, the car is a microcosm wherein viewers gain partial knowledge about Shephard and Calle and their relationship often in the form of passive-aggressive power struggles between the two protagonists situated within the car; the Cadillac is the one constant, even though it is continually moving. Knowledge, in the film, is situated, but not stagnant.

SELF-IMAGING

In 2008, critic Chris Townsend termed Calle's propensity for elaborate exhibitions of her autobiographical work as "narcissistic horror."¹⁷⁰ Calle's work is certainly centered around herself (or the character she plays of herself) but his use of the term "narcissism" is horribly dated, gendered and predictable. Townsend associates a woman's autobiographical artistic projects with selfishness, self-centeredness, and/or narcissism rather than the male gendered equivalent - genius. Calle's case is not even a good example of this, as it is difficult to discern if what she presents is really autobiographical or things that "happened" to her, or fiction. In this section, I focus on the constructed auto-biographical nature and frequent self-imaging in Calle's road trip project, particularly in light of the repressive history of women voicing their personal and intimate experiences in travel narratives.

In an interview about the film, Calle does forefront the autobiographical: "For me, I was never concerned by the structure. I always thought in terms of my autobiographical story. Greg is always thinking in terms of progression, I never do."¹⁷¹ For Calle, denaturalizing the narrative

¹⁶⁹ Sophie Calle stated this during the question and answer portion of Calle's talk through the Visiting Artist Program offered by The School of the Art Institute of Chicago at The Art Institute of Chicago. April 27, 2016.

¹⁷⁰ Chris Townsend, "Knowledge as Spectacle," *Art Monthly* 322 (December 2008 - January 2009): 13.

¹⁷¹ Calle quoted in Cooke, "Double Blind," 64.

and self-portraiture go hand-in-hand; it is not progression, or structure that matters, it is ultimately constructing it into an autobiographical story that does. Travel itself constantly requires locating the self in time and place and is often a necessarily self-involved endeavor. During the twentieth century in America, as Sidonie Smith has shown, traveling women were perceived as occupying “an unbecoming subject position” because they were away from home; they tried to make up for it in their texts by *not* indulging “in the autobiographical consciousness of men’s travel narratives, often mask[ing] their agency by omitting ‘I,’ [not] talk[ing] about erotic encounters, [and] apologiz[ing] for repeating men’s” narratives.¹⁷² In contrast, Calle’s road film is titled after her own unfulfilled sexual desire. While intimacy might be her ultimate goal, sex is her declared one, and something she obsesses about the entire film, much to Shephard’s chagrin. There are shots of her hanging around the hotel room naked, asking about Greg’s sexual dream life, to which he only gives vague answers. She not only talks about her (lack) of erotic encounters on the trip, proclaiming over a dozen times in the film that no sex was had, but she also outrightly describes sexual fantasies she has to Shephard as if to egg him on. In the scene right before they get to Las Vegas, Shephard drives and Calle casually eats chocolate while discussing penis sizes. Greg gives unsure, brief responses. The scene starts with a declaration:

SOPHIE : I never know if it’s big or small.

GREG : No.

SOPHIE : No. I mean, I know if somebody asked me to tell them and I would go and look and maybe I would measure and I don’t know I would figure out I guess but I forget to think about it.

GREG : You do ?

SOPHIE : So since I forget all the time I can’ t compare.

¹⁷² Smith, *Moving Lives*, 18.

GREG : Yeah, yeah... that would be hard to compare.

SOPHIE : Some people who have memory and who would have looked, they can compare. Me to compare, I would have to have two penises side by side which I have never asked to men. I could one day. You know, when I think sexual life is over, that I think about something else, I should try to get all the men I had once inside me, ask them to undress and for the first time look at their penis, with a way to compare, just realize who was, which was the big one, the nice one, to make a conclusion, since I am a sexual *obsédée*.

GREG : I like the way you eat chocolate as soon as you start talking about sex.

SOPHIE : I would like to remind you that I had a chocolate half an hour ago and we were not talking about sex.

GREG : No, that's exactly what I mean, there was a synchronistic moment that you picked up sex and bit down on a piece of chocolate as you were talking about the penis.

SOPHIE : Well I have to. How do you say, bit down?

GREG : You bit down.

SOPHIE : I have to bit down on something.

GREG : Exactly.¹⁷³

The body, Shawn Michelle Smith writes, following Judith Butler and Mary Ann Doane, is “an object of knowledge produced at the locus of gender performances, gendered discourses, and discourses of gender.”¹⁷⁴ Calle’s self-representation, or, performance, in the film is dynamic. On the one hand, she desires the seemingly traditional notions of marriage and domesticity; right after the marriage she declares, “I will never again be an old maid,” and, after they married and been living together for a few weeks, “I was happy. He had stayed with me and said now and then ‘My wife Sophie.’” She imitates gender tropes that do not serve her well, as they get her neither much sex nor a lasting marriage. Calle ultimately has to marry Greg for him to have sex

¹⁷³ (*Double Blind*) *No Sex Last Night*, directed by Sophie Calle and Gregory Shephard.

¹⁷⁴ Shawn Michelle Smith, *American Archives: Gender, Race, and Class in Visual Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 101.

with her even though he does not want to get married. In the film, he says to himself, “She wouldn’t let me go to a hotel till I gave her an answer. Why does she want so much to marry me?” The self-portrait Calle creates defies binaries often placed on female bodies, identities, and desire.

The female travel narrator is constantly self-imaging and self-locating. Sidonie Smith discusses the female travel narrator as one who “locates the world, the space, and the time through which she has moved or is moving...she also locates herself as a subject in motion through that world. Thus, the narrator is always engaged in the process of self-locating.”¹⁷⁵ In Calle’s case, the self-locating is more often internal than external. Further, Bohls writes how, in women’s travel narratives, “women’s conventional status as spectacle furthermore conflated the aesthetic with the erotic.”¹⁷⁶ Calle heavily draws upon herself as a spectacle through the recurring theme of sexual rejection to create her aesthetic product, the film. Kathleen Merrill stresses how important such desires are in *No Sex Last Night*: “it is through their personal comments that their characters are revealed. The viewer is placed in the privileged position of knowing both of their thoughts and views about the trip and each other...The viewer becomes the spy, witnessing Shephard’s and Calle’s most intimate thoughts and moments.”¹⁷⁷

The self-portrait or *auto-portrait* genre offers another context for the self-imaging in *No Sex Last Night*. In French cinema, Jean-Luc Godard and Agnes Varda are most well-known for this type of filmmaking. A self-portrait film is not just an autobiographical film. “Unlike an autobiography,” Agnès Calatayud explains, “the self-portrait is not a continuous narrative: its main form is that of discontinuity, of anachronistic juxtaposition, of fragmented elements

¹⁷⁵ Smith, *Moving Lives*, 27.

¹⁷⁶ Bohls, *Women Travel Writers*, 10.

¹⁷⁷ Kathleen Merrill, “Proofs: The Work of Sophie Calle,” in *Sophie Calle: Proofs* (Hanover, NH: Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth College, 1993), 11.

brought together”¹⁷⁸ Sounding a lot like the ambiguous, partial qualities of situated knowledge, the self-portrait film genre serves as a fitting platform for telling disjointed visual and aural stories from the road. A self-portrait, according to Godard, is “ ‘to show oneself to others’ ” but also, Calatayud clarifies, “to slip in front of the camera under one’s own identity...by playing hide-and-seek with their reflection, their shadow, their silhouette, which they track in multiple mirrors, windows, screens, magnifying glasses, even rearview mirrors...The ‘I’ desperately seeks its place in the world around it, but the image that the mirror reflects...is never clear; its surroundings interfere with it, it is partial, deceptive, and disturbing.”¹⁷⁹ In *No Sex Last Night*, for example, viewers often see Calle pictured from the point of view of Greg’s camera (Figure 48). She looks back at him, holding her own camera, seeing her filming him. According to Calatayud, a self-portrait is “an echo to one’s own work...this film-mirror is an additional image to add to one’s gallery of personal portraits.”¹⁸⁰ In other scenes, we see Calle’s image mediated through the reflection of mirrors and windows, for example, a shot of Calle’s face, wearing black sunglasses and pursing her lips, reflected in the rearview mirror (Figure 49). Viewers are constantly reminded of her presence through a mediated lens.

As Shephard does not have a body of work of his own, it is safe to assume that *No Sex Last Night* was created firmly within the themes, style, and manner of Calle’s oeuvre, her “gallery of personal portraits.” While Shephard obviously did participate by filming, editing and being in the film, his ultimate disappearance from the art world following the film’s release, their divorce and Calle’s re-presentation of the project in her typical photo-textual form (discussed in

¹⁷⁸ Agnès Calatayud, “The Self-Portrait in French Cinema: Reflections on Theory and on Agnès Varda’s *Les Glaneurs et La Glaneuse*,” in *Textual and Visual Selves: Photography, Film, and Comic Art in French Autobiography*, ed. Natalie Edwards, Amy L. Hubbell, and Ann Miller (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2011), 212.

¹⁷⁹ Calatayud, “The Self-Portrait,” 213.

¹⁸⁰ Calatayud, “The Self-Portrait,” 215.

the next section), results in the film seeming like her project, even though it was originally a collaboration. Beauvoir gives examples from history of famous male and female collaborations where the woman was dominant, such as Mable Dodge Luhan with D.H. Lawrence and Georgette Leblanc with Maurice Maeterlinck and notes that “we have to do here not with ambitious women using men for their own ends, but with women animated by a subjective desire for *importance*, which has no objective end, and intent on stealing the transcendence of another...only in love can woman harmoniously reconcile her eroticism and her narcissism.”¹⁸¹

TRUE STORIES

The film does not mark the end for the course of the road trip. In 1994, two years after Calle and Shephard completed their film, Calle published the first version of her photo-textual book *True Stories*,¹⁸² a collection of images paired with text from Calle’s “real life,” available in French and English, in both print and exhibition formats. Every edition, the sixth and most recent released in 2018, has a different title and gets progressively longer. Recent stories are added to each new edition; older stories are not edited, but in a few cases are removed.

Every single edition includes the section with content related to *No Sex Last Night*, entitled *The Husband*. This section is always made up of ten short stories with ten corresponding images, what scholar Johnnie Gratton calls “photobiographical units.”¹⁸³ They are presented in the book format in one of two ways. The first is with a photograph, full bleed on the left page

¹⁸¹ Beauvoir, *Second Sex*, 637, 648.

¹⁸² The series has also been exhibited and published as *Des histoires vraies*, *The Autobiographies*, and *Les autobiographies*.

¹⁸³ Johnnie Gratton, “Sophie Calle’s *Des histoires vraies*: Irony and Beyond,” in *Phototextualities: Intersections of Photography and Narrative*, ed. Alex Hughes and Andrea Noble (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2003), 183.

and a short text on the right page (seven of the stories), as in *The Husband VI: The Rival* (Figure 50). The image shows a letter written by Shephard but edited by Calle and a text on the right that chronicles when Calle found a pile of letters written to another woman, mentioned in the film in Calle's final voiceover. The second format accommodates horizontal photographs, with a photograph in the top two thirds of the page and a short text underneath (three of the stories). For example, *The Husband III: The Argument* (Figure 51) shows their wedding day photograph in front of the Las Vegas Chapel where they married; the text tells story of a post-road trip fight, also mentioned in the Calle's final voiceover. Although *No Sex Last Night* is not named at all in *True Stories*, the ten stories in this section are directly related to the events that occur before, during, and after filming. The stories address how the couple met in a bar in *The Husband I: The Resolution* (Figure 52), their road trip wedding in Las Vegas in *The Husband V: The Erection* (Figure 53), the divorce in *The Husband IX: The Divorce* (Figure 54), and Calle's emotional recovery from the demise of the relationship in *The Husband X: The Other* (Figure 55), the last of the ten stories and the only in which she mentions Greg by his first name.

In some cases, new information, not found in the film, is provided, while in others, images and/or text derive directly from the film itself. However, Calle does not re-use the still images from *No Sex Last Night* in *True Stories*. Rather, she largely takes new photographs, and in once instance, borrows a photograph from a different project,¹⁸⁴ to retell the story of her relationship, trip, and its aftermath. Additionally, all of the photographs in *The Husband* are black and white, while the film is in color. The ambiguous back and forth between still and moving images in the film is again reflected in Calle's artistic output after the film, where still

¹⁸⁴ The photograph included used for *The Erection* is not from *No Sex Last Night* nor is it a new photograph taken for *True Stories*. It comes from an earlier project, *The Hotel* (1981) in which Calle worked as a chambermaid in a Venetian hotel, taking photographs of the personal belongings people left in their rooms.

photographs based on moving images are re-created or recycled in the pages of *True Stories* and on museum walls in various exhibitions.

Calle's refusal to be precious regarding medium specificity – that is, her ease of moving from film to a photo-textual format – reflects the ease with which she moves between “truth” and “happening” that continues from *No Sex Last Night* into *True Stories*. Her transitions among stills, film, photographs and voiceovers, subtitles, and text are medium choices that also reflect her nebulous relationship to truth and fiction. Photography and movement have long been discussed together despite the disparities of still and moving images. Company points out several examples: “the ‘decisive moment,’ the pregnant moment, the constructed tableau, flash photography and the long exposure” as well as its forms, including “the album, the archive, the diary, the photo-novel, the photo essay, sequences, juxtapositions, montage, collage, the slideshow” and other modes.¹⁸⁵ Patricia Hayes and Gary Minkley write how photography is the “medium medium,” that is, “a medium that mediates between other mediums.”¹⁸⁶ This “endless plasticity and capacity to become unfixed” points to “the basic problem between the promise and the effect of the photograph, between its ostensible truth claims and its unstable outcomes.”¹⁸⁷

In the introduction to their edited volume *Still Moving: Between Cinema and Photography*, Karen Beckman and Jean Ma admit they, too, lack a clear theoretical paradigm to discuss cinema and photography together and, instead, their “work begins from the premise that as photographic and moving image media mutate, recombine, and migrate across disparate contexts.”¹⁸⁸ They try “to mobilize the tension inherent in the idea of “still moving” to create a

¹⁸⁵ Company, *Photography and Cinema*, 18

¹⁸⁶ Patricia Hayes and Gary Minkley, “Introduction: Africa and the Ambivalence of Seeing,” in *Ambivalent: Photography and Visibility in African History*, eds. Patricia Hayes and Gary Minkley, 1-32 (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2019), 2.

¹⁸⁷ Hayes and Minkley, “Introduction,” 2.

¹⁸⁸ Karen Beckman and Jean Ma “Introduction,” in *Still Moving: Between Cinema and Photography*, ed. Karen Beckman and Jean Ma (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2009), 2, 4.

pause for thought about these suspended moments of aesthetic transition” and actively seek to “celebrat[e] recursive thinking, the act of being able to go over and over the same problem without moving forward.”¹⁸⁹ While the film stills in *No Sex Last Night* create literal pauses in the visual pace of the film, the pauses by a reader going through *True Stories*, in edition after edition after edition mimic this idea of “being able to go over and over the same problem without moving forward.” Following Doane, such doubling or copying is a feminist strategy, a performative act of agency subverting patriarchal truth claims to a singular self.¹⁹⁰ Shawn Michelle Smith argues that photographic strategies of “double mimesis reveals mimesis, and even gender itself, to be fabrications, and allows a subject to claim her right to copy those constructions, to represent what is already represented. Finally, then, by claiming the right to copy through double mimesis, the subject usurps ownership.”¹⁹¹ While each viewing of the film offers the same content, in *True Stories*, a format that offers the possibility for change in new editions, Calle does not do so. Even as she keeps publishing new editions of the same story, producing images related to the trip over and over again, the content of *The Husband* always remains the same.

Floriane Place-Verghnes has written how the photobiographic act, at least in the Francophone sphere, is most well-known through the work of Roland Barthes (*Roland Barthes* by Roland Barthes), Anny Duperey (*The Black Veil*), and *No Sex Last Night*’s own dedicatee, Herve Guibert (*Suzanne and Louise*). This trend, Place-Verghnes further argues, has continued to grow since the 2000s.¹⁹² In such works, the grand narratives of modernism are replaced by

¹⁸⁹ Beckman and Ma, “Introduction,” 8, 10.

¹⁹⁰ Mary Ann Doane. *The Desire to Desire: The Woman’s Film of the 1940s* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), 182-83.

¹⁹¹ Smith, *American Archives*, 105.

¹⁹² Floriane Place-Verghnes, “The Photobiographical Today: Signs of an Identity Crisis?” in *Textual and Visual Selves: Photography, Film, and Comic Art in French Autobiography*, ed. Natalie Edwards, Amy L. Hubbell, and Ann Miller (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2011), 100.

questioning all types of totalizing knowledge, often resulting in destabilizing presentation of the subject and truth.¹⁹³ In Calle's case, the author's fragmented self is found among film, photography, text, and oral stories that are themselves fragmented, repeated, partial, and ambiguous. Her self-presentation refuses a genre and intactness. Her desire is always scattered across media and versions.

Véronique Montémont writes how the photo-textual form that Calle takes up in *True Stories*, "turns out to be an excellent way of making autobiographical text tip over into auto fiction, which Philippe Gasparini defines as 'all narratives which are designed for a double reading, simultaneously fictional and autobiographical.'"¹⁹⁴ Montémont points out that in the work of artists such as Calle and Christian Boltanski, both the photograph and the text are presented as truly autobiographical, taken from places of lived experience, yet the two do not match up: "they no longer meet in a relationship of referentiality...but rather hint at gaps, tension, or even conflict between the two media."¹⁹⁵ Such gaps and ambiguities echo the style and content of the original film as I have analyzed it, but in the context of a new artistic object of double mimesis. Upon first glance, the content of *True Stories* appears simply as a pairing of proof or evidence (the photograph) with the scenario (text). However, even just a brief consideration of the title, *True Stories*, indicates to the viewer/reader from the start, that this is a questionable enterprise. Tom Gunning writes how "the truth claim [in photography] is always a claim and lurking behind it is a suspicion of fakery, even if the default mode is belief."¹⁹⁶

Gunning's insight shows how feminist road trip vision from *No Sex Last Night* maps itself onto

¹⁹³ Place-Verghnes, "The Photobiographical," 102.

¹⁹⁴ Véronique Montémont, "Beyond Autobiography," in *Textual and Visual Selves: Photography, Film, and Comic Art in French Autobiography*, ed. Natalie Edwards, Amy L. Hubbell, and Ann Miller (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2011), 39.

¹⁹⁵ Montémont, "Beyond Autobiography," 39.

¹⁹⁶ Tom Gunning, "What's the Point of an Index? Or, Faking Photographs," in *Still Moving: Between Cinema and Photography*, ed. Karen Beckman and Jean Ma (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), 28.

still images, too. The photographic book demonstrates the allure of still photography: simultaneously real and fake, its contents are able to be endlessly reproduced in editions and exhibitions, the photobook, with its still images, clear, controlled text, increased audience accessibility, and long-gone collaborator, fulfills Calle's desire for total control of vision and off the road. Her "it happened" is now still, tangible, and forever her version(s) of the truth – and still full of gaps.

Lexical irony and visual manipulation play into fragmentation and uncertainty of *True Stories*. In the 1994 French edition, the book's cover (Figure 56) features an image re-used from *The Husband X: The Other* (Figure 55) where a circular photograph of a closed eye punctuates an otherwise black background. Gratton suggests this is "a wink of complicity encouraging healthy skepticism about the capacity of either photographic or autobiographical representation to pin down anything as definitive as 'the' truth or even 'a' truth."¹⁹⁷ The 2013 English edition (Figure 57) features a photograph of a close-up of the face of a statue who brings a finger to her lips as if slyly communicating to the reader a kind of "shhhh," as one might do to indicate there is a secret to keep – even though a statue cannot talk. The 2018 English edition (Figure 58) pictures what looks like a taxidermized, mounted ram, except the animal's horns are wrapped around its eyes in a spiral, covering them and rendering his sight useless. In all three of these examples, sight and/or sound is cut off, not fully available, contributing to the idea of partial truths in this work of self-fictionalization – all despite the declarative title.

In *The Husband*, Calle includes *The Husband VII: The Fake Marriage*, a staged, wedding photograph taken on the steps of a church in Paris, showing the couple surrounded by family and friends, taken several months after their Vegas wedding (Figure 59). In *True Stories*, the

¹⁹⁷ Gratton, "Irony and Beyond," 184.

photograph is positioned so that the center binding of the book creates a literal dividing line between Shephard on the left and Calle on the right, visually predicting their future split. In *No Sex Last Night*, the same photograph flashes briefly at the end of the film when Calle recites her final voiceover and discusses their trip together to France. *The Fake Marriage* photograph is a prime example of a Calle-esque “it happened” moment - real but not true. The text tells us that it was a “a *mock* civil ceremony performed by a *real* mayor.” In *The Fake Marriage* photograph, the idea of enacting a full-blown wedding, embodied in the post-ceremony photograph was more important to Calle than having an actual event in the original time and place. In her section entitled “The Married Woman” in *Second Sex*, Beauvoir notes that “marriages are not generally founded upon love. As Freud put it: ‘The husband is, so to speak, never more than a substitute for the beloved man, not that man himself.’”¹⁹⁸ Calle even had a chance to display this wedding photo next to Freud’s own wedding photograph (Figure 60) in her project *Appointment* (1998) when she was invited to install an exhibition within the Freud Museum in London. Calle chose to exhibit *True Stories* throughout the house and published a small book of the same name as well.¹⁹⁹ Notably, she chose a table on a landing to exhibit the two photographs together – a transitional space in the home. In fact, four of the ten *The Husband* stories were exhibited on landings.²⁰⁰

The Husband III: The Argument (Figure 51) is the second wedding photograph featured in *The Husband*. The black and white photograph shows Calle and Shephard looking at the camera. They are sitting in the Cadillac, top-down, directly in front of their wedding venue, the Little White Chapel. The car faces the sign that mentions celebrities who have been married

¹⁹⁸ Beauvoir, *Second Sex*, 434.

¹⁹⁹ See Sophie Calle, *Appointment with Sigmund Freud* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 2005).

²⁰⁰ In addition to *The Fake Marriage*, *The Resolution*, *The Hostage* and *The Breakup* were exhibited on landings.

there (Michael Jordan and Joan Collins) and announces the chapel's other features: 24 hours and drive-up. This is the wedding photograph that "happened" on their road trip but was insufficient in fulfilling Calle's desire to wear a wedding dress and be photographed, as described in *The Fake Marriage*. Like *The Fake Marriage*, it also takes the form of a two-page spread, horizontal photograph with text underneath. Also like the *Fake Marriage*, *The Argument* uses the natural vertical divide in the book's binding to visually separate herself and Shephard onto different pages, Shephard nearly invisible in the fold. However, in this one, the text makes clear that their split is imminent: she describes how she used this, their "real" Vegas wedding photograph, to cover up a hole on the wall caused by Greg throwing a phone during a fight.

In his book, *Picture Theory*, W.J.T. Mitchell uses the example of the photograph of a bride and groom to elucidate Roland Barthes' idea of the photographic paradox:

The simplest snapshot of a bride and groom at a wedding is an inextricably woven network of denotation and connotation: we cannot divide it into 'levels' which distinguish it as a 'pure' reference to John and Mary, or a man and a woman, as opposed to its 'connotations' or festivity. Connotation goes all the way down to the roots of the photograph, to the motives for its production, to the selection of its subject matter, to the choice of angles and lighting. Similarly, 'pure denotation' reaches all the way up to the most textually 'readable' features of the photograph: the photograph is 'read' *as if it were* the trace of an event, a 'relic' of an occasion as laden with aura and mystery as the bride's garter or her fading bouquet. The distinction between connotation and denotation does not resolve the paradox of photography; it only allows us to restate it more fully.²⁰¹

Calle's *Fake Marriage* and *The Argument* photographs in *True Stories* connotes *No Sex Last Night*, but unbeknownst to most of its readers. It also connotes, in Mitchell's words, her motives, "way down to the roots of the photograph, to the motives for its production." The photo-textual unit pulls viewers into her game; it asks us to realize that she's faking it – really. Gunning continues, "The practice of faking or counterfeiting can only exist when the true coin of

²⁰¹ W.J.T Mitchell, *Picture Theory: Essays on Verbal and Visual Representation* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1994), 284-85.

the realm exists as well. Rather than denying photography's truth claim, the practice of faking photographs depends upon and demonstrates it.²⁰²

"Her past exists only through its proof," writes Yve-Alain Bois of Calle, "and this proof is always induced by the author."²⁰³ Gratton adds, of Calle: "She takes photos in the same way that she takes notes: as evidence."²⁰⁴ The collaborative *No Sex Last Night* ultimately fails at fully realizing Calle's "it happened," evidenced by the many editions of *True Stories* she published after the fact. For her "it happened" to be represented best, she had to reproduce it in a different format, and multiple times. The "truest" version of the story of the road trip and the marriage that Calle wants to share with the world-at-large ultimately requires still photography, re-photographed and re-written by Calle in addition to the original film. Her feminist road trip vision needed to be represented across media and multiplied over time in order to stay true to the embodied experience of boredom, love, heartbreak and filmmaking that she had on the road.

Rinder, the curator that took the post-road trip ride-along with Calle and Shephard in the Cadillac, offered an additional observation to bring us around full circle, to the issue of truth as examined through *No Sex Last Night* and its aftermath, *The Husband*: "Calle does not bring, like other artists of our century have claimed to do, a fragment of truth with which to rebuild a foundation of certainty. Rather she makes us question the purpose of knowledge itself. Her beliefs are not so much held as floated, like trial balloons that pop as soon as they are examined too closely. The world she points to is fraught with uncertainties, but it is not an unhopeful, nor by any means an uninteresting place."²⁰⁵ Ambiguity, instead of blocking access to truth, can be a form of situated truth-telling.

²⁰² Gunning, "What's the Point of an Index," 29.

²⁰³ Bois, "Paper Tigress," 37.

²⁰⁴ Johnnie Gratton, "Sophie Calle's True Stories: More of the Same?" *Paragraph* 26.3 (November 2003): 108.

²⁰⁵ Rinder, "Sophie Calle," 16.

The Husband is Calle's final, solo stop in the story of this road trip. Affordable, available, small and portable, the version of Shephard re-created by Calle in *The Husband* is the much more widely distributed and known one. If *No Sex Last Night* seemed to viewers to be true/truly documentary, the tongue-in-cheek title of *True Stories* will make them question many of the anecdotes from the film they see re-written, re-photographed, and re-conceptualized in the book and exhibition forms. The road trip film provided the first level of proof of Calle's achievement of marriage in its many minutes of wedding footage, and her orchestration of the whole trip, but the photograph and text combination are even more alluring to Calle. It was Shephard's idea to make a movie, and Calle's idea to take the trip and get married. What an ironic turn then, for Calle to re-use the stills from the movie and, add new photographs, and extend her specific vision of the trip in edition after edition of photographs and text in *True Stories*. Calle's "it happened" elucidates her artistic approach toward visuality, textuality, and truth. Something that happened can be re-worked to present *a* truth of an embodied experience, but no one form presents any singular truth. Clearly, it is not the exact re-production or representation of events in time and space as they originally occurred that matters for Calle, but, as I have shown, through the lens of a feminist road trip vision, Calle's various projects get closer to truer experiences on the road than visually and narrative clarity would have been able to portray.

CHAPTER 3:
**“EVERYBODY KNOWS ABOUT MISSISSIPPI”: *DEEP SOUTH*: SALLY MANN’S
SOUTHERN PHOTOGRAPHS AS AMERICAN PILGRIMAGE**

Alabama's gotten me so upset
Tennessee made me lose my rest
And everybody knows about Mississippi goddam

Can't you see it
Can't you feel it
It's all in the air
I can't stand the pressure much longer
Somebody say a prayer
- Nina Simone, "Mississippi Goddam," 1964

In 1998, American photographer Sally Mann took three road trips to Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana. The resulting black and white landscape photographs were published in her 2005 photobook, *Deep South*, and subsequently shown in gallery and museum exhibitions. While some responses to the project reference Mann's road travel as necessary to get to her destinations, discussion of travel and movement stops there. Responses gloss over the central role of her car, travel writing, and the intense nature of the drives—three road trips, ranging from nine to eleven days in a six-month period. Mann took many photographs on her *Deep South* trips, but this chapter focuses on three photographs, all taken in Mississippi on her third and final drive. The untitled images are of sites related to the 1955 murder of Emmett Till, an African American boy killed by at least two, white, Mississippian men. This essay suggests that an analysis of Mann's travels is central to understanding the *Deep South* images as relics collected on an American-style pilgrimage to sites of traumatic racial violence. Such an analysis opens up the photographs to lines of communication with the history of photography, travel, race, and gender in America.

Mann is a Southerner and her photographs, texts, and interviews frequently allude to her Southern credentials: her birth in Virginia in the former brick home of Confederate general

Stonewall Jackson,²⁰⁶ “her obsession with the land” and with “dosages of romance that would be fatal to most contemporary artists.”²⁰⁷ Mann might be Southern, but these road trips to the Deep South, that is, the most southern and eastern parts of the United States, nonetheless demarcate a physical and temporal dislocation for her and her camera. Mann travels to places with traces of familiarity, but also far enough away from her own home to be both strange and familiar. By going to the Deep South for this project, a region known historically for some of the worst and also ongoing racial violence and discrimination, Mann potentially removes her own culpability by positioning herself as an outside observer and traveller seeking something she cannot find at home in Virginia.

The exhibition, *Sally Mann: A Thousand Crossings*, which opened March 4th, 2018 at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. and traveled through January 2020,²⁰⁸ examined Mann’s complex relationship with the American South in terms of memory, death, and race. It initiated a number of engaged responses for this work, which previously had not received much critical attention. In the press, the portrait that emerged of the exhibition was threefold; critics commented on how the photographs are rife with her “obsession with death,” a “depth of feeling,” and an “infatuation with narrative.”²⁰⁹ In the catalog’s preface, curators Sarah Greenough and Sarah Kennel emphasize that “The South” in Mann’s images functions as “a

²⁰⁶ Sally Mann, *Hold Still* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2015), 7.

²⁰⁷ Sally Mann, *Deep South* (New York: Bulfinch Press, 2005), 53.

²⁰⁸ *Sally Mann: A Thousand Crossings* was on view at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. from 4 March – 28 May 2018. The exhibit traveled to the Peabody Essex Museum in Salem, Massachusetts (30 June – 23 September 2018), the J. Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles, California (20 November 2018 – 10 February 2019), The Museum of Fine Arts Houston, Texas (3 March – 27 May 2019) the Jeu de Paume, Paris (17 June – 22 September 2019) and the High Museum of Art, Atlanta, Georgia (19 October – 2019 – 12 January 2020).

²⁰⁹ See Vicki Goldberg, “Sally Mann’s Haunted South,” *New York Times*, March 29 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/29/arts/design/sally-mann-a-thousand-crossings-review-national-gallery.html> ; James Gibbons, “Family, Landscape, and Race in Sally Mann’s Photographs” *Hyperallergic*, March 10 2018, <https://hyperallergic.com/430901/sally-mann-a-thousand-crossings-national-gallery-of-art-washington-dc/> ; and Sebastian Smee, “Sally Mann: A great artist who loves tumbling into trouble” *Washington Post*, February 28 2018, https://www.washingtonpost.com/entertainment/museums/sally-mann-a-great-artist-who-loves-tumbling-into-trouble/2018/02/28/c3a752c0-1b04-11e8-b2d9-08e748f892e0_story.html?utm_term=.fe434b9dc618

point of personal origin, a lost paradise, and a place that has borne witness to extreme violence and historical trauma.”²¹⁰ Yet they are also careful to point out that the issues that arise in the photographs, including racial violence, are not relegated to the past, but remain in our present and future: “The events of the last few years - the deaths of unarmed black men at the hands of law enforcement officers, the desecration of black churches, and the rise of white supremacist movements - make reflecting on the legacies of slavery and racism more urgent and timely than ever.”²¹¹ This chapter contends that, not only are race, gender, and death central to Mann’s *Deep South* project, but that the photographs can be reckoned with more fully when considered as travel, and specifically, road trip photographs, something not addressed in the exhibition, catalogue essays, or reviews. Even though Mann is an insider in the South, this chapter asks why Mann leaves her home, travels to the *deep* South and analyzes how and why she photographed what she saw there.

In Mann’s *Deep South* series, three images center around the memory of Emmett Till. They stand out for their central place in Mann’s narrative and ultimate visualization of the road trip, and for how they resurface violence, fear, and public shame. The photographs are taken at what I have conceived of as the final destination of Mann’s travels, the endpoint. I suggest these three photographs function as a kind of triptych dedicated to Emmett Till, put together as such following what I call Mann’s pilgrimage. The three photographs are: *Deep South, Untitled (Bridge on Tallahatchie)* (1998) (Figure 61) which depicts a bridge where two, white half-brothers, Roy Bryant and J.W. Milam threw Till’s body after they kidnapped, beat, and murdered him; *Deep South, Untitled (Emmett Till River Bank)* (1998) (Figure 62) showing a steep

²¹⁰ Sarah Greenough and Sarah Kennel, “Preface,” in *Sally Mann: A Thousand Crossings* (Washington, D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 2018), 14.

²¹¹ Greenough and Kennel, “Preface,” 15.

riverbank, where it is believed Till's body was pulled up by police; and *Deep South, Untitled (Concrete Grave)* (1998) (Figure 63) an image of an above-ground grave under a tree in a field, spotted by Mann on her drives around the Till sites.

To think of the *Deep South* images as road trip photographs is to reframe Mann as a travelling woman: she leaves home, moves purposefully through a particular geographical space, performs an American travel ritual, and looks for something – in this case, a photograph of something unsightly– to bring back home. I argue the ritual Mann performs on her travels in *Deep South* is an unheimlich road trip pilgrimage to Emmett Till where she makes photographic relics drawing upon the obfuscating style, gendered history, and laborious techniques of the nineteenth century, wet-plate collodion method.

AN AMERICAN PILGIMAGE: WRITING AND PHOTOGRAPHING THE ROAD TRIP

Road trips have many similar qualities to pilgrimages: repetition of movement, a search for authenticity, and a central image to behold at the destination. According to travel writing scholar Carl Thompson, pilgrimage has been a “form of travel which frequently enabled women to travel independently of men, either individually or in female-only groups.”²¹² Although mobility has been widely understood as a masculine privilege, anthropologists have noted the predominance of women pilgrims to both Christian and Islamic sites in Europe, especially those which centered around visions experienced by a woman or a child.²¹³ Women's historical attraction to certain saints, especially Mary, can be located in their power and ability to serve as an active agent. Female pilgrims were often empowered by the feminized experience but also

²¹² Carl Thompson, *Travel Writing* (London: Routledge, 2011), 169.

²¹³ Willy Jansen, “Old Routes, New Journeys: Reshaping Gender, Nation, and Religion in European Pilgrimage,” in *Gender, Nation and Religious European Pilgrimage*, ed. Willy Jansen and Catrien Notermans (London: Ashgate: 2012), 8.

through the spiritual access they could attain through Mother Mary and other female saints.

Mann's travels, too, are to sites related to a child, who became, for many, a martyr-like figure in the Civil Rights Movement.

The theme of authenticity plays a large role in pilgrimage and in Mann's trips. As historian Dan MacCannell argues, the "authentication of experience or the accomplishment of touristic certainty"²¹⁴ is of utmost importance to the pilgrim. Otherwise, why travel so far to see it? And travelling far is key, too. Anthropologist Lawrence Taylor has noted that pilgrimages have largely been to "a wild place away, sometimes very far away, from the center....Drawing directly from the Old and New Testament depictions of prophetic encounters with deity in the desert, pilgrims follow such footsteps to the wind-battered islands, caves or mountaintops at the edge of the world."²¹⁵ Mann isn't going to any islands or mountaintops, but she does bushwhack her way through private property to get to the Till riverbank, to see, up close and personal, what she traveled far to see.

According to Thompson, while it is "very common...for male travelers to invoke the tradition and ethos of the quest," drawing on narrative paradigms deriving from chivalric medieval traditions, the other mode of travel meant to "bring about significant reinvention or renewal of the self"²¹⁶ is pilgrimage. Mann's travel writing embraces some of the tropes of the quest, especially the way in which she emphasizes her own, largely imagined, danger. In her 2015 memoir, *Hold Still*, Mann frames the trip as potentially life-threatening. She recounts how,

²¹⁴ Dean MacCannell, *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 135

²¹⁵ Lawrence Taylor, "Pilgrimage, Moral Geography and Contemporary Religion in the West," in *Gender, Nation and Religious European Pilgrimage*, ed. Willy Jansen and Catrien Notermans (London: Ashgate: 2012), 214.

²¹⁶ Thompson, *Travel Writing*, 174, 115.

in just the first few hours on the road, a dangerous problem arose due to ether, a chemical she uses in her photographic process and had stored in the back of her vehicle:

Because it was a chilly early spring day when I started out, I drove with the windows rolled up. By the time I'd been on the road for a few hours I realized that I was drunker than if I'd been knocking back shots of moonshine. Quickly rolling down the windows, I was spared a traffic stop in which I would most certainly have been arrested for driving, shit-faced drunk, what was effectively a rolling bomb.²¹⁷

In recollections shared with the author, there was also a near-death encounter with a tornado on the first drive and near-injurious experience with lightning on the third.²¹⁸ Mann emphasizes her commitment to getting to her destination—by car—through anecdotes like these. Even though Mann is not participating in the constantly arduous, physically difficult movement that is often associated with historical, religious pilgrims, her writing highlights the challenges of road travel in ways that invoke the physical hardships of pilgrimage. Indeed, pilgrimage serves as an apt term to characterize Mann's travels, especially her third trip, which has distinctly meaningful movement to a specific, final destination.

As Thompson further points out, "a common yardstick for demonstrating and asserting masculinity in travel has been the degree of danger and discomfort involved in the journey...the misadventures and hardships endured by the protagonist are usually construed as a key means by which strength of character and virtue are both formed and tested."²¹⁹ Mann emphasizes her commitment to this pilgrimage through anecdotes like these. Even though she is not engaging in the kind of long, difficult walking that we may imagine most pilgrims doing, she is sure to still bring up the hardships and challenges of road travel. She narrates an even more dangerous backstory to the ether saga:

²¹⁷ Mann, *Hold Still*, 225.

²¹⁸ Sally Man, email to author, September 14, 2018.

²¹⁹ Thompson, *Travel Writing*, 176.

So explosive is ether, I was once told by an alarmed pharmaceutical rep, that even flicking on a faulty light switch could cause a canister to blast apart. I had called her to inquire casually about the twenty-liter tank of ether that UPS had dropped, I feared literally, at the house while I was out shopping. When I found it plunked down in the driveway, bare naked like some pudgy unexplored nuke, I had rolled it onto a handcart and hauled it into the shop where the wood furnace that heats our entire compound was burning away. The pharma rep so terrified me about the volatility of the ether bomb next to the woodstove that I hung up, ran down to the shop, and rolled it back out the to the driveway. Grasping it around the midsection, I placed it gently in the front seat of the car, buckled it in tighter than if it were Baby Jesus, and drove like a little old lady to the VMI [Virginia Military Institute], whose chemistry department I had alerted to our arrival. Creeping along the parade ground, I was met by cadets dressed in what looked like Tyvek. Stopping traffic, they unloaded my own little Fat Boy and put it in their freezer room for me to draw down into smaller containers. I took a number of those smaller bottles, swaddled in bubble-wrap, for the trip south, praying that my rolling darkroom *cum* bomb didn't get rear-ended by some meth-head who'd unknowingly met his chemical match. Once I got to the warmer temperatures, I kept the windows down and, sober, made Mississippi by nightfall. That's when the ecstatic time began, and it had nothing to do with ether.²²⁰

Even in this kind of preamble to the trip, Mann foregrounds the danger of her travel preparations and all that she went through in getting ready for the actual travel. One can imagine the snickering conversations, eyerolls, and, certainly, genuine concern that swept across the chemistry department upon Mann's arrival. As a well-known artist and life-long resident of the area, she had access to the chemistry department in a way that others may not have and did not face any kind of legal issues due to this privilege. She details her frantic actions to get the chemicals to the safety of an established institution where help can be found, but she was ultimately successful in her quest to get these chemicals for the trip without adversity. She never doubts her capabilities to continue forward with the plan despite this initial, frightening mishap.

However, the real danger Mann is after is not danger to her physical body but is an examination of violence that has occurred to others in the land. Mann's goals clearly included photographing places of violent black death. Even if she did not know that this would culminate

²²⁰ Mann, *Hold Still*, 225-26.

at the Till sites at the beginning of her travels, it was certainly clear by the time she arrived at the riverbank where he was found. From the beginning, she imagined herself looking for the dead, of death, and the light that may illuminate it from the beginning: as she describes it, “I was looking for images of the dead as they are revealed in the land and in its adamant, essential renewal.”²²¹

Mann left for her first Southern road trip in April of 1998, with her daughter Virginia, and a family friend from Mississippi.²²² A second trip in May and a third in October followed. The second two Mann took by herself—save for the companionship of a cell phone and a pistol. Mann made deliberate moves to see the sites related to Till’s murder on that third trip. First, she stopped in Money, Mississippi, the place where the infamous encounter occurred at Bryant’s Grocery on August 25, 1955 between Till and Carolyn Bryant, a white woman. Bryant’s account of what was said that day in the store between her and Till has dramatically changed over time. Regardless, her testimony of a physical exchange between them (which she has recently admitted was falsified²²³) had horrific, irreversible effects: a few days after her husband found out about the interaction, Till was kidnapped, tortured, and murdered by Bryant’s husband, his half-brother, and at least one other, unidentified person—all of whom were acquitted by a white jury. From the now dilapidated grocery store in Money, Mann drove to Sumner to meet Maude Clay, a photographer and friend. Clay led her to the spot where Till’s body had been recovered (or left—it is unclear). “She helped me carry my camera, bushwhacking a path alongside the cotton fields to the water’s edge, and I was glad for her company, feeling unusually vulnerable and alone.”²²⁴ Upon arrival, Mann’s initial reaction to the site was disappointment: “I was disappointed by the

²²¹ Mann, *Hold Still*, 235 – 236.

²²² Sally Mann, email to author, September 14, 2018.

²²³ Carolyn Bryant Donham admitted to historian Timothy Tyson in a rare interview that “that part is not true” in regard to the previous allegations she had made that Till tried to crudely and sexually grab and assault her. See Timothy Tyson, *The Blood of Emmett Till* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2017), 6.

²²⁴ Mann, *Hold Still*, 236

humdrum, backwashy scene before me. How could a place so weighted with historical pain appear to be so *ordinary*?”²²⁵ The intense desire to see something more here may in part explain her stylization of the photographs. It is unclear if the spots she ultimately photographs are the Till sites or if these photographs are merely a romanticization of her ideas of the deep South. In the introductory text of the *Deep South* book, Mann directs readers to look at the Emmett Till riverbank photograph “on page 77,”²²⁶ her sole reference to a specific photograph. After Mann’s third trip, when she travelled to the Till sites, she stopped taking her southern road trips: she had reached the final images to be held and ended her pilgrimage.

In *Hold Still*, Mann conflates these trips into one narrative and what seems like one trip (Figure 64). It was only through conversations and emails with the artist that it became clear that the singular trip presented in the memoir was actually three separate ones, the third one being the trip she took solo to Mississippi (Figure 65). According to Mann, who has since gone through her negatives, maps, and notes, she acknowledges a genuine confusion about the details of the trips at the time of writing the memoir, and claimed that she lacked the time to parse through and reconstruct them individually before publication.²²⁷ However, faded and muddled memories are a typical part of the post-travel experience, especially when trying to re-create linear narratives of multi-sensory memories.

Remembering trauma is very often a non-linear experience, too. As Maria Tumarkin writes in her study of traumatic places, “When looking back to their traumatic past, theirs is not a memory lane but, rather, a memory loop or at best a memory zigzag.”²²⁸ Although Mann did not

²²⁵ Mann, *Hold Still*, 236

²²⁶ Mann, *Deep South*, 50

²²⁷ Sally Man, email to author, September 14, 2018.

²²⁸ Maria Tumarkin, *Traumascapes: The Power and Fate of Places Transformed by Tragedy* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Publishing, 2005), 11.

experience trauma in Mississippi, the Till sites she photographs can be defined as traumascapes, places “transformed physically and psychically by suffering ... At these places, neither the past nor the present is disposable or infinitely malleable.”²²⁹ Mann’s simultaneous desire to use photography to document historical sites and obfuscate historical pain visually reveals, on the one hand, a desire to experiment with photography’s historical expectation to inform, and, on the other, with the fluctuating vantage points of travel.

One of the many reasons Till’s death shook the nation was because he was a child. In the summer of 1955, Emmett’s mother, Mamie Till-Mobley, reluctantly let him travel to the South to visit family; as a boy brought up in the urban north, he was not accustomed to the particularities, expectations, and brutal violence of the Jim Crow South. After his death, his mother played a prominent role in his legacy by insisting his body travel back north to Chicago. After she saw her son’s brutalized body for herself, Till-Mobley facilitated the wide circulation of photographs of her son, as well as an open casket funeral in Chicago. She harnessed the power of photography and monopolized its reproducibility to make visible what happened to her son. Mann, and others, know about Till’s story because of Till-Mobley’s decision to make her son’s death visible. Mann’s trip to photograph the sites related to him are also, then, an acknowledgement of the vision of a woman for her son. Mann’s southern road trips are secular trips taken as a pilgrimage to the Till sites that haunt the racial conscience of Americans.

PROCESS AS CONTENT: WET-PLATE COLLODION AND GENDER

At the point of setting off to photograph *Deep South* in her Suburban, Mann’s technique took a major turn. She shifted to the wet-plate collodion method, a difficult, laborious process

²²⁹ Tumarkin, *Traumascapes*, 13-15.

that requires an on-site dark room, a plethora of chemicals, and even for the experienced, frequently results in damaged glass plates, including fading, staining, opaque spots, horse-shoe shaped markings, and other defects. In this section, I introduce Mann's wet-plate collodion predecessors, the gendered history of the process, and its relationship to travel. I argue that Mann's choice to use this particular nineteenth-century process should be analyzed as content because of the way it figuratively and literally frames the shape of her travel and photographs. As Shawn Michelle Smith argues of Mann's photographs at the civil war site of Antietam, her nineteenth-century techniques at sites of historical violence underscore how "the temporal disruption of the photograph [exposes] the unfinished work of racial justice in the United States."²³⁰ The process leaks into and on top of her subjects - obfuscating views, blurring edges, and leaving stains – traces of materiality and history - on the surface of the images themselves. The collodion's markings on the photographs also echo the stains on the land – stained from blood, violence, and hatred– something Mann actively seeks to find in her deep South travels.

For example, the streaks and wave-like effects on many of the *Deep South* images result in part from the oppressive heat and humidity of the place itself, a metaphor for other types of oppression. Images of trees in the American South recall, for many, a history of white Americans lynching African-Americans.²³¹ Photography itself played a central role in documenting and circulating not only the horrific, violent lynched victims, but also their proudly posing murderers, often situated around the trees from which the bodies hung.²³² In *Deep South*, there is a

²³⁰ Shawn Michelle Smith, *Photographic Returns: Racial Justice and the Time of Photography* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2020), 1.

²³¹ In a gallery talk for the exhibition, *Sally Mann: A Thousand Crossings* at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., invited speaker Dr. Maurice Wallace noted the abundance of trees as subjects in Mann's work, and their role as both "friend and foe" for African-Americans throughout American history, noting specifically that they provided a place to hide, and shelter, but also could serve as an actor in lynching. April 13, 2018.

²³² See Dora Apel and Shawn Michelle Smith, *Lynching Photographs* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2008).

preponderance of trees – marked up and made strange by the wet-collodion process – making their presence especially evocative of violent black death. In *Concrete Grave*, a fresh, above-ground grave is depicted directly under a tree in dark, ominous grass; the image itself looks slashed at the top, the effect of a collodion streak. Mann mobilizes the mistakes of the wet-plate collodion process to act as players in her otherwise body-less scenes, introducing a theme of her presence, what Smith calls, an announcement of “her presence as mediator of photographic past,” that is evident throughout the project.²³³ Drips, blurs, and streaks help her to uproot and visualize the ghosts of traumatic racial violence from the land. These antique-looking markings create a beautiful, almost romantic timelessness alongside painful subjects in a problematic way that will be addressed later in the chapter. But, the uncanniness of this duality of violence and beauty in the Southern landscape is, in the context of Mann - a well-off, white, Southern woman - what Anthony Vidler calls “the quintessential bourgeois kind of fear: one carefully bounded by the limits of real material security and the pleasure principles afforded by a terror that was, artistically at least, kept well under control.”²³⁴

Invented in 1851, the wet-plate collodion process involves coating a glass plate with a collodion solution, made from dissolving gun cotton in ether and alcohol, immersing the plate in a light-sensitizing solution, placing the plate into a holder, and then, still wet, exposing the plate in the camera. The glass plate must be immediately developed and fixed before it dries. There are many opportunities for errors: depending on the weather, the collodion might not stick to the plate, and hair, dirt, and dust can get stuck on the coating, while uneven pouring of the collodion can cause uneven ripples, streaks, and blurred edges. The process forces the photographer to

²³³ Smith, *Photographic Returns*, 59.

²³⁴ Anthony Vidler, *The Architectural Uncanny: Essays in the Modern Unhomely* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1992), 4.

prepare the chemicals, take the photograph, and develop the negative all in one go. Wet-plate collodion largely replaced the Daguerreotype as the most popular commercial process, but only until 1871, when it would be eclipsed by the introduction of the gelatin dry plate negative, which did not require preparing negatives on the spot nor setting up darkrooms in the field, was less toxic and required less exposure time than wet-plate.²³⁵

Mann learned the process from experts Mark Osterman, a photographic process historian, and France Scully Osterman, an artist and educator. The Ostermans helped her retool an 8x10 inch camera specifically for wet plate with custom film holders for the glass plates. She then converted her Suburban into a travelling darkroom and purchased the multitude of chemicals. In her memoir, Mann describes packing up her car for her solo trips. There were: “coolers of film, smaller coolers with food and booze, nearly identical cylinders of sleeping, film-changing, and tent bags, the lunchbox-sized primitive cell phone that Larry insisted I take, folders with heavily annotated maps, and in the far back, the darkroom with stacks of frame-quality glass, silver-blackened trays, and explosive, burping bottles of ether-based chemicals.”²³⁶ Because of her choice to use the wet-plate collodion process, the trunk of her car had to serve as a travelling darkroom, filled with the necessary chemicals, glass plates, and trays (Figure 66). The car acts as a prerequisite for the photographs on the road, and both limits and opens up spaces for her to photograph. In Mann’s case, a large Suburban successfully accomplishes her desire to travel and photograph in the Deep South, with supplies in tow.

²³⁵ Sarah Kennel, *In the Darkroom: An Illustrated Guide to Photographic Processes before the Digital Age* (Washington, D.C.: The National Gallery of Art, 2009): 25, 45.

²³⁶ Mann, *Hold Still*, 225.

Collodion for men: Michael Miley's negatives

There is a strong historical connection among wet-plate collodion, travel, and photography. During the American Civil War, Mathew Brady's team of men traversed campsites and battlefields with cumbersome glass plates and dangerous chemicals to capture the figureheads and carnage of war with the travelling darkroom, the "Whatsitwagon" (Figure 67). Timothy O'Sullivan travelled with American military and geological groups to conduct survey photography on the plants, animals, and people in the western United States. Such photographers and their staff transported heavy and delicate equipment across tumultuous, often dangerous terrain, and through all sorts of weather. One nineteenth-century photographer, Valentine Blanchard, wrote of wet collodion: "The whole of the work had to be done in the field ... woe to the careless photographer who omitted the 'roll call' of apparatus before starting!"²³⁷ The wet-plate technique has thus long been associated with brave, travelling men moving through and photographing landscapes and making clear, pristine images.

The *Deep South* photographs were not Mann's first encounter with the wet-plate collodion process and travelling men. In her twenties, while looking for equipment in an attic at her job as a photographer at Washington and Lee University, she found hundreds of nineteenth century, 8x10 glass plate negatives by Lexington photographer, Michael Miley.²³⁸ Miley is most known for photographing Confederate General Robert E. Lee, who retired in Lexington, following defeat. Lee moved to Lexington in September 1865 where he received a warm and generous welcome by the town and his new place of employment – Washington College, now, Washington and Lee University. Although it is not clear why Miley, a young Confederate

²³⁷ Valentine Blanchard, "Afield with the Wet Plate (1891)," in *Photography in Print: Writings from 1816 to the Present*, ed. Vicki Goldberg (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1988), 207-08

²³⁸ Mann, *Hold Still*, 96-97.

soldier, decided to become a photographer after the war, he had Matthew Brady photographs in his files and was influenced by his work. Miley traveled to Staunton, Virginia to learn the wet-plate collodion method, which was popular at the time, but the news that Lee moved to Lexington specifically drew Miley back there, where he opened a studio at the end of November 1866 with James L. McCown. They invited Lee to sit for a portrait in 1867 and Lee came back many times, with family and guests such as Jefferson Davis. Miley's best-known photograph is one made in 1868 at the request of Lee – on his beloved horse, Traveler, and the only time he requested his picture be taken in his Confederate uniform (Figure 68).²³⁹ Miley's friendship and working relationship with Lee largely explains the record we still have of his photographs, as a 1907 fire in his studio destroyed much of his early work.²⁴⁰

Mann, however, paid the most attention to Miley's 8x10 wet-plate glass negatives of landscapes, which, she wrote, "completely changed the direction of my work for the next fifteen years."²⁴¹ In addition to his studio and commercial work, Miley also photographed local landscapes, some of which were familiar to Mann, including sites on her own family's land (Figure 69). Miley did have a darkroom on wheels, and he could hitch it up to his horse to go out to travel around when he had the time away from his portraits, but he rarely left his locale, much like Mann herself – until her road trips.

Mann's specific interest in Miley's landscapes were his "mess-ups" – plates with streaks and blurs that he never printed. Mann, after finding them, printed some, images that looked

²³⁹Marshall Fishwick, *General Lee's Photographer: The Life and Work of Michael Miley* (The University of North Carolina Press, 1954), 8. Miley also photographed Lee's funeral procession down Main Street in Lexington and his office as he had left it after he died.

²⁴⁰ However, the large share of Miley's modest income was through his college contacts, and he did the yearbook photographs for both Washington College and the Virginia Military Institute, comprising thousands of negatives. Fishwick, *General Lee's Photographer*, 13-18.

²⁴¹ Mann, *Hold Still*, 215.

“unlike anything I’d ever seen,”²⁴² with subtle solarization, white-flared edges and fogging, taken at specific places very familiar to her. For example, Mann includes a Miley negative from the 1890s that she found in 1973, in *Hold Still* (Figure 70). The edge of a brick building frames the right-hand side of the photograph, while a fence pierces through the middle ground and a tree anchors the left-hand side. The location appears to be a back or side-yard, but the fence ends abruptly, not serving any practical purpose. The tree droops with heavy, weighty branches. Mann was particularly drawn to the “mess-up” plates with strange lighting: at different points along the fence, light is very dark and then very bright, filtered in one area and glaring in another, and a distinct streak runs across it. For Miley, printing such a negative would reveal his own errors and failures in the process, but for Mann, cleaning, preserving, and printing the plate opens up an understanding the photographer’s own difficulty with the process in the field and his own conceptualization of failure and success. This, Mann’s first experience with the wet-plate collodion process, involved not actually taking the photographs herself, but revolved around a fascination with the past, the land, and recovering that which was damaged – all themes that influence her *Deep South* photographs. As demonstrated most acutely in the Emmett Till sites she would later photograph in Mississippi, Mann is drawn to beautiful places marked by both a history of photography and a history of violence.

After finding the Miley photographs, Mann published two books of landscape photographs, *Lewis Law Portfolio* in 1977 and *Second Sight* in 1983.²⁴³ As she began to raise her family, Mann then turned to largely photographing children: *At Twelve* in the early 1980s and,

²⁴² Mann, *Hold Still*, 217.

²⁴³ As Ayelet Carmi points out, neither Mann, nor those who write on her, mention these projects much. It is she who encouraged the narrative of a distinctive segue from family photographs to the land because her kids were growing up. See Ayelet Carmi, “Sally Mann’s American vision of the land,” *Journal of Art Historiography* 17 (December 2017): 6.

notoriously, *Immediate Family* in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Unlike *At Twelve*, which took about ten years to sell out of its small press run, *Immediate Family* sold out of its first printing of 10,000 within three months, and received substantial press. When *Immediate Family* debuted as a photo book and exhibition, it coincided with the culture wars of the 1990s, a time of politicization of figurative photography capitalized upon by the religious right in a battle for votes through a moral majority. Mann first reacted in oblivious denial to the possibility of a controversy about naked kids playing outside on her rural family land in the heat of the summer, but after mounting newspaper and magazine articles and hundreds of letters sent to her home, she quickly moved to an adamant, and public, defense of herself as a good, caring, devoted mother.²⁴⁴

In a way, for Mann to turn back to the land after the *Immediate Family* ordeal is also a way to say that it was always about the land. To turn back to Miley's nineteenth-century process she encountered years ago and to experiment with it on land hundreds of miles from the controversy at home, was even better. Mann said in 1992 to Woodward, "Even though I take pictures of my children, they're still about here [the family land]. It exerts a hold on me that I can't define."²⁴⁵ Mann is always vacillating between the family and the land, always working on the one as it is in conversation with the other. In an untitled photograph from *Hold Still*, Mann shows three distant figures in the center of a black and white photograph. In the foreground is what seems like relatively bare earth save for crisscrossed logs (Figure 71). Along the edges appear a few more distant figures, but only the most general shapes of their bodies are visible.

²⁴⁴ See Sally Mann, "Sally Mann's Exposure," in *New York Times Magazine*, April 16, 2015. <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/04/19/magazine/the-cost-of-sally-manns-exposure.html>.

²⁴⁵ Sally Mann quoted in Richard Woodward, "The Disturbing Photography of Sally Mann," *New York Times Magazine*, September 27, 1992. <https://www.nytimes.com/1992/09/27/magazine/the-disturbing-photography-of-sally-mann.html>.

The edges are darkened, creating a vignette effect with two long branches piercing in from the right side. Mann has described this as a transitional image from a focus on her children to a renewed interest in the land: “as the landscapes overtook my family pictures, their figures began to recede from my gaze...This gradual move from the family pictures to the landscapes was a shift from what I thought of as our private, individual memories to the more public, emotional memories, those that the past discloses through traces inscribed on our surroundings.”²⁴⁶ Of importance here is how she mobilized travel, both actual travel and a romantic ideal of road travel, in conjunction with a switch to the wet-plate collodion process, to transition out of the family pictures to landscapes. But before leaving the homestead for *Deep South*, I want to stay on the idea of the Mann-the-mother a little longer and analyze its specific relationship to the wet-plate collodion process.

Collodion for ladies: “Lady amateurs” and the maternal stain

The wet-plate collodion process has another, parallel history, coded as female and domestic which, I suggest, is an equally fruitful historical precedent to consider for Mann’s road trip images. “Lady amateurs,” as they were called by their contemporaries, were a group of nineteenth-century women photographers who were also mothers and largely worked at home with the wet-plate collodion processes. Notably, photographers working in this medium embraced the romantic Pictorialist style and the streaks, drips and blurs typical of the difficult process - the kind of “mistakes” that established male “professionals” like Brady, O’Sullivan, and Miley did not. Pictorialists aligned photography with painting and literature by actively showing the marks of the individual artists, the printing process, or special darkroom effects on

²⁴⁶ Mann, *Hold Still*, 209-210.

their final prints in order to counter the idea of the photographer as merely a machine operator without imagination or art.²⁴⁷ Some of the “lady amateurs,” photographers like Julia Margaret Cameron and Clementina Hawarden, were deemed “hobbyists” because of the domestic content of their photographs, their late start at their careers, and, particularly, their style of illegibility even though they were making distinct stylistic choices.²⁴⁸ Women could show themselves as creative individuals by embracing markings that revealed their unique process and thus for some, the Pictorialist style was a particularly effective way to express themselves as artists.

In his 1895 handbook for amateurs, *An Introduction to the Practice of Wet-Collodion Photography*, Charles Gamble explains how defects may occur. For example, black markings may form at the bottom edges of the plate for all of the following reasons: if the plate is drained upon common blotting-paper, if the corners are not properly varnished, and/or from uneven flow of the collodion while coating the plate. Fog on the plate may occur if: the lens is not perfectly cleaned, if the exposure is prolonged, if the weather is too warm and parts of the plate dry, and/or if the bath has become too alcoholic because of prolonged use. Additionally, lines may occur on the plate if: the solution stops in its flow over the plate, the solution is too alcoholic, there is an excess of developer, too little acetic acid, impure acetic acid, the plate is under-exposed or over-exposed.²⁴⁹

It is noteworthy that, in the nineteenth century, it was the optical precision of the wet-collodion method that was particularly innovative and yet, Cameron, and later Mann, insisted on using this new technology to embrace chance, glitches, and chemical mistakes. Scholars have

²⁴⁷ Such concerns were expressed by Charles Baudelaire in his article “The Salon of 1859” (1859) and defended by Oscar C. Rejlander in his article “An Apology for Art-Photography” (1863). Both in *Photography in Print: Writings from 1816 to the Present*. Edited by Vicki Goldberg (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press. 1988).

²⁴⁸ Carol Armstrong, “From Clementina to Käsebier: The Photographic Attainment of the ‘Lady Amateur,’” *October* 91 (Winter, 2000): 101-139.

²⁴⁹ Charles W. Gamble. *An Introduction to the Practice of Wet-Collodion Photography [Amateur Photographer’s Library, No. 9]* (London: Hazell, Watson, and Viney, 1895), 57-59.

compared Mann and Cameron but such discussion has been limited to their subject matter, that is photographs of children, rather than their method, the wet-plate collodion, which Mann started using *after* she completed *Immediate Family*.²⁵⁰ Mann shares Cameron’s tendency to work at home, to use her children and family as models, to create her own self-mythology through life-writing,²⁵¹ and, as Robin Kelsey has written of Cameron and as I have emphasized, to show “scant concern for the forms of technical mastery that almost all professional photographers deemed essential to their craft.”²⁵²

Mann accounts for the process mistakes on her plate as that of “an angel of uncertainty,”²⁵³ a concept that aligns closely with Cameron’s idea of a “fluke.”²⁵⁴ In Cameron’s *Cupid’s Pencil of Light* (1870) (Figure 72) she visualizes this metaphor: the nude child Cupid serves as a light writer (and model) to a mother light (and photographer) that shines down with inspiration and light from above. The squiggly “mother” light that illuminates the image mimics the child’s curly air, suggesting a spiritual, genetic, and metaphorical similarity. Along with artistry, metaphorical and otherwise, chemical errors account for some of the markings – and meanings – on the print – from the sticky collodion covering too much of the glass plate negative or from dust and dirt stuck on the plate and transferred to the print. Carol Armstrong argues these marks reveal the hystericization of the mother, the unkempt and wild household Cameron herself ran, marks of “the maternal Real, the uncanny, the ‘genetic trait...features of photography that

²⁵⁰ See James Christen Steward, “The Camera of Sally Mann and the Spaces of Childhood,” *Michigan Quarterly Review* 39.2 (Spring 2000), and Shannah Ehrhart, “Sally Mann’s Looking-Glass House,” in *Tracing Cultures: Art History, Criticism, Critical Fiction* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1994): 52-69.

²⁵¹ Julia Margaret Cameron, “Annals of My Glass House,” in *Annals of my glass house: photographs by Julia Margaret Cameron*, 11-16 (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1996).

²⁵² Robin Kelsey, *Photography and the Art of Chance* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University, 2015).

²⁵³ Mann quoted in Camilla Brown, “The Family and the Land: Sally Mann,” in *Sally Mann: The Family and the Land*. London: The Photographer’s Gallery, 2010. NP.

²⁵⁴ Kelsey, *Photography and the art of chance*, 73.

are embraced and pronounced.”²⁵⁵ Both Cameron and Mann perform an unconventional motherhood in photographs of their children and texts that they circulated about themselves: for Mann, this is in her memoir and interviews, while for Cameron, this is in her unwieldy, autobiographical text, *Annals of my glass house* (1874). Following Armstrong, the stains in Mann’s landscapes might similarly be seen as representing a maternal source, acting upon the land in multiple roles: as caretaker, as memorializer, as director.

Early women photographers embraced wet-plate collodion for the creative potential that could be drawn from its very preponderance for stains and markings. According to Barbara Baert, “one of the stain’s most salient characteristics is its relationship with a primal source. The stain does not simply appear out of the ether (in this case, literally) but originates in an external prototype...the stain becomes the paradigm of a transference in the tangible world by means of a prototype, by means of its source.”²⁵⁶ The wet-plate collodion method is a visual way in which Mann actively transitions from a domestic source of the family photographs to an unheimlich road trip to the deep South, as I discuss later, whose flora and fauna, beauty and terror, are familiar and yet made strange in the hands of Mann and her methods. Stains and markings in the landscape photographs are a link to the mythology of Mann the mother that was so present in the popular press in the 1990s while also aligning her with the expressive freedom of Pictorialism and the unconventional “lady amateurs” from the history of photography. Further, Kelsey argues that Cameron’s stains or “glitches” were a mode of cultural critique in a rigid Victorian society and male photographic establishment: “By using the glitch as a sign of superior discrimination, she indicted the stifling criteria of the male-dominated professional photography establishment and suggested that a woman’s amateur efforts might have a stronger claim to art...represent[ing]

²⁵⁵ Armstrong, “From Celemtina to Kasebier,” 107.

²⁵⁶ Barbara Baert, *About Stains or the Image as Residue* (Leuven, Belgium: Peeters, 2017), 7.

her photography as more akin to the innovative tinkering of a gentlemen amateur scientist than the edifying amusement of a lady amateur artist, [evading] the gendered constraints.”²⁵⁷ Mann’s turn to the land, land deep within the South, is similarly a mode of cultural critique in a conservative climate and acts as a way to respond to her critics. Embracing stains on her landscape photographs plays with the idea of expressive creativity outside of the domestic and the body of the child, all the while travelling away from her family to do so.

If, as Baert asserts, “a stain is the evidence of something that was. It’s a trace”²⁵⁸ then Mann found in wet-plate collodion the medium in which she could create a photographic relic, evoking the body of a child, Till, whose legacy centers on photographs permitted by his mother. Mann capitalizes on literal and figurative traces of sources and motherhood, of death and ruins for her deep South landscapes. In Mann’s photographs, Mamie Till-Mobley, Emmett’s mother, becomes an absent but powerful saint-like figure whose actions directly impacted the legacy of her son. She used her power of sight to authenticate and make visible what had happened to her son at the sites Mann visits and knows through the power and strength of his mother to make his story so public. We know about Till’s story because Till-Mobley insisted on the wide circulation and publicity of photographs of his brutalized body, as well as an open casket funeral in Chicago. Till’s mother was an active agent with direct impact on the power of the memory of her son’s life and death for the Civil Rights Movement and she used the power of photography to make real, through photography, what had happened to her son when he travelled for those who could not travel to his funeral.

Shawn Michelle Smith has argued that even though critics of Pictorialism see it as a “imitative, trite, and somewhat embarrassing” phase in the history of photography, because of its

²⁵⁷ Kelsey, *Photography and the art of chance*, 79-80.

²⁵⁸ Baert, *About stains*, 9.

unbridled romanticism, by making their images “thick” with atmosphere, the Pictorialists unsettled the transparency of photographic evidence.”²⁵⁹ Mann embraces these kinds of obfuscating techniques, making her landscapes humid, heavy, and sometimes, difficult to see. Both *Bridge on Tallahatchie* and *Concrete Grave* are remarkably dark images, requiring titles to locate them and denying full visual access. Such strategies of opacity have the effect, Smith has argued, of failing “to document much of anything, except perhaps the impossibility of comprehending the past...[and] keep one focused on photography and its limits, showing one the impossibility of historical reclamation.”²⁶⁰ Mann ejects the clarity of vision from her family photographs in lieu of visual uncertainty in her Southern ones. Instead, there is an invitation to visual and pictorial ambiguity, which is fitting as her relationship with the *Deep South* images is ambiguous: she is from the South, but not the deep South and she is a white, educated, Virginian woman, attempting to visualize and memorialize traumatic racial violence in her home/not home region.

Adopting lady amateur Pictorialist techniques allows Mann to reframe the trope of the travelling male photographer for herself, as a travelling, mother-photographer. While on the road, Mann embraces the *style* of the domestic, mothering lady amateurs, the *mobility* of the travelling men, and an obsession with land in the “messed up” Miley plates. I foreground the motherhood aspect of Mann’s identity not because of a romanticized sense of essentialism associated with the wet plate collodion method, but because of such intersections with the history of photography, Pictorialism, landscape, Mann’s own self-mythology, and travel.

²⁵⁹ Shawn Michelle Smith, *At the Edge of Sight: Photography and the Unseen* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2013), 45.

²⁶⁰ Smith, *Photographic Returns*, 38, 44.

THE DESTINATION: EMMETT TILL AND PHOTOGRAPHY'S PAST AND PRESENT

In the *Deep South* photographs, Mann turns back to the body of the child, to Emmett Till. In this section, I analyze Till's image within the history of photography, and its reception in the popular press, museums, and the art world. Mann's attempts at racial atonement pilgrimage revolves around locating the site of that body and her photographs work to evoke it, but not depict the sight of it. As introduced earlier, there are three specific photographs that do this work. However, the fragility of memory fails Mann in her travel writing. As mentioned previously, in the *Deep South* photobook text, Mann writes that the "image on page 77," that is, *Emmett Till Riverbank* represents where Till was "heaved into" the Tallahatchie River. In the exhibition, the wall text asserts that it was the *Bridge on Tallahatchie* location, not the river bank, "where some believe Till's naked, mutilated body was thrown into the river" and, instead, the riverbank where it was discovered.²⁶¹ This is a strange error especially as Mann was so intent on describing her experience of trekking out to "the exact site"²⁶² in her memoir. Upon closer reading though, it is not clear if the "exact site" is where Till's body was left by his murderers or found by his acquitters. In the exhibition, *Sally Mann: A Thousand Crossings*, the three images were displayed together, and took up an entire wall, from left to right, *Concrete Grave*, *Bridge on Tallahatchie*, and *Emmett Till River Bank*, forming what, I previously called in an exhibition review, "a triptych representing violent black death in the American South"²⁶³ (Figure 73).

The way in which Mann both writes and photographs such historically painful sites is not always in a way that is as progressive as she may perceive herself to be. *Washington Post* art

²⁶¹ Mann, *Deep South*, 50. On this same page in the photobook, there is also a clear factual error: Mann writes that the murder of Till, was in 1954. It was in 1955. Mann also mis-states Till's age upon death as thirteen instead of fourteen in a deleted scene in the documentary *What Remains: The Life and Work of Sally Mann*. DVD. Directed by Steven Cantor. Zeitgeist Films. 2006

²⁶² Mann, *Hold Still*, 236

²⁶³ Laura Elizabeth Shea. "Sally Mann: A Thousand Crossings" *ASAP Journal*. 3 May 2018
<http://asapjournal.com/sally-mann-a-thousand-crossings-laura-elizabeth-shea/>

critic Sebastian Smee wrote how Mann is “drawn repeatedly to fraught subjects” and that it sometimes appears that “Mann seems eager to make a spectacle of her private moral reckonings.”²⁶⁴ Mann aided heavily in the exhibition process for *Sally Mann: A Thousand Crossings* and perhaps the information in the wall text for the National Gallery exhibition corrects her former accounts. Either way, this kind of error speaks to how Mann’s *Deep South* images foreground her physical experience of the road trip rather than exact documentation – even at the most crucial sites.

What are we supposed to see in the three Till photographs that Mann travelled so far to take and yet made so hard to see with wet-collodion? And how, exactly, has Mann’s style, process, and trip influenced their meaning? A close visual analysis helps to answer these questions. In *Bridge on Tallahatchie*, the bridge of the title is barely visible. What looks like an old, defunct, truss bridge is just visible in the background of the black and white photograph, partially obfuscated by lush trees and a thick, dark, border edge, prominent on the right side of the photograph. Light is reflected upon the water in the center, under the bridge, a gorgeous, silvery slice. On the bottom, left-hand side, a small vertical line is visible under a horizontal tree branch hanging above it. It is a stain, a chemical streak in the emulsion that is positioned just so, as if the branch were shedding a tear into the river, for Emmett, ostensibly, whose body, it is thought, was thrown from this bridge by his killers. Although a “mistake,” Mann kept its serendipitous positioning instead of opting for another, clearer shot. This drip is the kind of thing Mann means by the “angel of uncertainty” striking at just the right time, in just the right place. A fundamental contradiction in this series is the way in which Mann embraces and celebrates that

²⁶⁴ Smee, “Sally Mann.”

angel on her glass plates, but, is still meticulous in her printing process, resulting in lush, beautiful prints.

In *Emmett Till River Bank*, there is a crack in the land where Till's body might have been found. The earth slopes downward into the eerily-still water that softly reflects the brush above it. The image is strange: the composition leaves room for the body that is no longer there. This land was once stained by blood, by frantic human footprints. Now, the photograph is marred and darkened with blurry edges that act as a soft frame, a quality of both Pictorialism and of the light and humidity of the South, which, as Mann describes it, "appears to have been breathed onto the negative."²⁶⁵ Like a relic, it gives us part of something, in this case, part of the terrible scene from that hot summer day back in 1955.

Following the idea of the stain from Baert, we can think of Mann's purposeful efforts to travel to, create, and bring home an "authentic" image as a way to call forth the truth-connotation of the relic, and its relationship to a highly symbolic body: "A stain is a history, a trace, and so it also evokes the *place* where it originated. That relationship between time, memory and place is not peculiar to the stain; it's also characteristic of the relic. A relic is a physical remainder of a body or a thing believed to be sanctified by contact with the dead individual...The relic contains the powers of the deceased but is only fragmentally related to them."²⁶⁶ Thinking of Mann's riverbank photograph as a relic helps to explain why she travelled so far to see it for herself, and why she felt the impulse to make an image there that she could bring home. The photograph invokes Till's body back into the image without falling into a trap, especially for white artists, of trying to artistically represent the boy's highly iconic and contested body.²⁶⁷

²⁶⁵ Mann, *Hold Still*, 213.

²⁶⁶ Baert, *About Stains*, 19.

²⁶⁷ I do not want to perpetuate more fetishizing scholarship about violent black death, which often happens when white art historians try to discuss images of enslaved people, of lynched individuals, and of victims of Jim Crow and

The photographs in the book are untitled.²⁶⁸ But in the case of the Till photograph, as mentioned previously, she provides the exact page number where the reader can find this photograph.²⁶⁹ Mann wants us to see that spot. She does not want us to miss it. She wants us to see the dirt, the cracked earth, the dead grass as it is framed by wrecked and smudged edges. Mann shows us this devastating sight, beautifully. As Susan Sontag has argued, in photographs of atrocity, “people want the weight of witnessing without the taint of artistry, which is equated with insincerity or mere contrivance.”²⁷⁰ But I would argue that Mann uses strategies of obfuscation – stains, blurs, lack of focus – in order to offer up an absence of the body and a distress of how and where to mourn. Amidst the absence of the sight Till himself we are offered a site, haunted by the presence of violence, pain, and sorrow. Mann’s technical and visual techniques in the three Till photographs offer a vision that is as uncertain as memory, as unsettling as travel, as precious as relics.

Till’s mother, Mamie Till-Mobley insisted on sight, too, insisted that the public see her son’s death, but for much different reasons. Myisha Priest points out that Sheriff Strider’s explicit testimony about the corpse in court “employed such gruesome detail to refute Mamie Till’s ‘tender’ testimony and to reify the legal meanings of the body in the face of her unauthorized bodily knowledge. Seeking to dismantle the authority of her voice and deny the bodily knowledge that grew out of the shattered remains of her son, the sheriff’s final

police shootings. I therefore do not include or analyze the well-known, close-up photographs of the mutilated face of Emmett Till that were circulated in *Jet* in 1955 for an African-American audience. Mamie Till approved of those photographs being published in that particular time and place and the images are accessible should the reader not be familiar with them.

²⁶⁸ Throughout this chapter I use the titles from the National Gallery of Art’s *Sally Mann: A Thousand Crossings* exhibition catalogue which are more descriptive than those in Mann’s original 2005 photobook, *Deep South*.

²⁶⁹ Mann, *Deep South*, 50.

²⁷⁰ Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2003)

contentions was that the body was damaged beyond ‘recognition.’”²⁷¹ However, the black press and the black community listened to Mamie Till’s “tender” testimony and showed up in the thousands at Till’s Chicago funeral, which had to be lengthened due to the crowds. Such acts of witnessing are in marked contrast to other widely published photographs of black death – lynching photographs. Priest argues that while “lynching purportedly had no black witnesses...the pictures covering the [Till] funeral show the large, unregulated crowd of black witnesses gathered in front of the church, crossing and filling the street, a mirror of the shaping and reshaping of black political subjectivity which would occur in the wake of Till’s death.” When Mamie Till insisted, legally, publically, emotionally that her sight of her son was valid, Priest argues, “she swathed his injured body within the terms and signs of belonging, creating a bodily discourse outside the discourse of rights and legalities, one privileging remembrance.”²⁷² In a case like Till’s, accurate remembrance is of utmost importance legally but emotional and “tender” memories inherently exist in tandem.

However, of the many strange and disturbing twists that happened in the Till trial is one that has to do precisely with a refusal to recognize the mother’s sight as valid: the Sunflower County Sheriff, H.C. Strider, who had initially confirmed the body from the river as Till, reversed his position a few days later and in the courtroom, claiming that, for various reasons, the body was white and thus not Tills’ and that the whole thing was made up by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)– despite not continuing to look for Till’s “real” body.²⁷³ There was never a search for the Emmett that – according to Strider -

²⁷¹ Myisha Priest, “Flesh that needs to be loved: Langston Hughes writing the body of Emmett Till,” in *Emmett Till in Literary Memory and Imagination*, 53-74, ed. Harriet Pollack and Christopher Metress (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 2008), 57.

²⁷² Priest, “Flesh that needs to be loved,” 61.

²⁷³ Devery S. Anderson, *Emmett Till: The Murder that Shocked the World and Propelled the Civil Rights Movement* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2015), 57.

was not dead but missing. This was all after a positive identification from Till's uncle and Till's mother. Undeterred, his mother went ahead with the highly publicized funeral and the photographs. Till-Mobley arranged for an open casket funeral and permitted photographs of her son's body to be reproduced in the African-American published *Jet* magazine: to "let the people see what they did to my boy."²⁷⁴ *Jet's* September 15th issue, which included images of a happy, posed Till before his death juxtaposed with his brutalized face, sold out of its 400,000 print run.²⁷⁵ The mother knew. And she wanted everyone to witness what hate had done to her boy. Till's Chicago homecoming and resulting photographic legacy in *Jet* showed what the black community already knew to be true, even though some white Americans were comfortable with, and have the privilege of, forgetting such horrors.

When Mann visits and photographs the Emmett Till site in the way she does, she is re-affirming the sight of Till's body, re-affirming the sight of the mother and the physical site of the recovery of his remains, the worst kind of vision of violent racism. She urges us to find the photograph and to look at it, to, perhaps, visualize the body, limp and broken, being pulled up onto the shore. She has visually left room for it, right there in the center. In one way, Mann sees in that empty spot her own, Emmett, her son. Mann's photograph of her young Emmett, *The Ditch* (1987) (Figure 74) is a remarkably similar composition to her Emmett Till photograph. Although *The Ditch*, a photograph from her *Immediate Family* is crisp and clear, taken before she turned to wet collodion, it still has a central opening in the land, right in the center of the photograph that opens up down to a river behind it. *The Ditch* though, has several figures. Emmett Mann is in the center of the image wearing a swimsuit, and has squeezed himself right in that crack, knees facing the camera, his feet bent back under him, his bare stomach faces the sky,

²⁷⁴ Anderson, *Emmett Till*, 56.

²⁷⁵ Anderson, *Emmett Till*, 56.

as five kids stand around him, on the bank, and another is in the river. Mann has created a similar, though not as noticeable vignette effect, creating slightly darkened corners, but not as strongly contrasting as the Emmett Till photograph. In a devastating turn, Mann would also lose her Emmett. Emmett Mann, who struggled with schizophrenia in adulthood, committed suicide in 2016, at the age of thirty-six.²⁷⁶ It is hard to say if or how this detail is needed to analyze her Southern photographs of Emmett Till, and the two deaths are certainly not equivalents in any way. But, it seems important to acknowledge that both mothers lost their sons, sons whose images are known to the public *because of* photography and the Southern land – for one deadly, for the other, play - they traversed upon in their youth.

In another way, this conjuring up of a body that is not there, especially in the context of nineteenth century techniques, is perhaps reminiscent of spirit photography, wherein photographers would have clients sit for a portrait photograph, and, through a variety of methods including double-exposure, have them pay for the image which included not only themselves, but a conjured ‘spirit’ that had joined them during the sessions. As Smith notes “no photographic genre better manifests a desire to see beyond the limits of natural human sight than spirit photography.”²⁷⁷ The way in which Till is discussed elsewhere also elicits this idea of a spirit or a presence haunting the present. For example, in the introduction to a volume of Till in literary imagination, Harriet Pollack and Christopher Metress start with this type of language (italicized for emphasis): “through its multiple tellings and retellings over the past fifty years, the story of Emmett Till *haunts* American memory and imagination. That *haunting surfaces* in the narratives we tell and the realities we live...what happened to Emmett Till is a *presence* that shapes the

²⁷⁶ Hillarie M. Sheets, “After her son’s death, Sally Mann stages a haunting show” *The New York Times*, September 6, 2016. <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/09/07/arts/design/sally-mann-cy-twombly-remembered-light.html>

²⁷⁷ Smith, *At the Edge of Site*, 8.

way we view and talk about race in America, sometimes wounding us, sometimes urging us to heal.”²⁷⁸ Mann’s expressed desire to specifically travel to places to make “images of the dead as they are revealed in the land and in its adamant, essential renewal”²⁷⁹ in her *Deep South* series is another one of these hauntings, these resurfacings as is the haunting language recounted previously to describe her own photographs. To see Mann’s Till photographs as a portrait without a body, would be, perhaps, to see it in the same vein as spirit photography, created and manipulated by the photographer to create a memorial and a relic from the land.

In a similar vein, one of the few art historians who has written about Mann’s Till photographs, Ayelet Carmi, suggests that the Till photographs function “as a metaphor for remembrance...the photograph portrays remembrance as a capricious, blurry, hazy and fragmentary process that elicits strong spatial connotations and vivid imagery of emotional experiences.”²⁸⁰ Carmi goes on to suggest that *Emmett Till River Bank* reminds viewers that the American landscape is never a neutral space in the history of art, but an emotionally and politically constructed one. I want to suggest that it is specifically Mann’s solo, exhausting, exhilarating, and strange experiences of road trip pilgrimages to the *Deep South* that influence the style, techniques, equipment, and final print of this photograph. It is the act of pilgrimage that influences her vision of the landscape.

While I agree with Carmi that the gendered reading of Mann’s southern photographs, a “draws on the common stereotype of the earth as mother and on deep-seated gender biases in art criticism,”²⁸¹ if we can think of her photographs outside of the heavily masculine category of

²⁷⁸ Harriet Pollack and Christopher Metress, “The Emmett Till Case and Narrative[s],” in *Emmett Till in Literary Memory and Imagination*, ed Harriet Pollack and Christopher Metress (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 2008), 1.

²⁷⁹ Mann, *Hold Still*, 235-36.

²⁸⁰ Carmi. “Sally Mann’s American vision of the land”, 25.

²⁸¹ Carmi, “Sally Mann’s American vision of the land,” 6.

landscape, then we can propose another. Carmi actively situates Mann in that tradition by comparing her work to Ansel Adams, the New Topographics and Alexander Gardner. She uses the tools of traditional art history to show how Mann is responding to photographic history in order to open her work up to theoretical-historical interpretation rather than a biased biographical one. But I want to press on the travelling woman part. Mann herself has contributed largely to biographical interpretations of her work through her extensive writing and interviews. I don't intend to perpetuate a gendered rhetoric around Mann that continues to reduce women's artistic practices as "merely" emotional, biographical, unstable (visually or otherwise) or limited but decidedly so. Whereas Carmi attempts to reunite Mann with what she sees as her deserved place in a long line of lauded (male) landscape photographers, at the same time, I do not have a problem with embracing the blurred focus, locality, close-up, and strange photographs Mann takes of the land from the road. These are places she chose to stop and to memorialize in ways that are of course influenced by her role as mother, white-guilt-filled Southerner as well as (other) actors in the history of photography – the lady amateurs and Miley, for example. These are not dirty words even if they are inherently political, they are a part of who she is as a photographer. Viewing her *Deep South* photographs as pilgrimage allows for an experience that accounts for humanity, emotion and rationality, precision and mistakes – it embraces strategies of obfuscation to assert that the spaces visited from the American road trip are difficult, emotional, twisted, places and not simple historical facts.

Mann is certainly not the first nor the last white artist to work out what the Till murder means to her, however privileged and removed from time and space that may be. American painter Dana Schutz's artwork, *Open Casket*, is an abstracted, thickly painted, close-up of Emmett Till's upper body and disfigured face, laying in rest at the open-casket funeral. It was

called to be removed from the 2017 Whitney Biennial and destroyed by artist Hannah Black, among others. In a widely-published open letter to the Biennial curators, Black asks for the removal and destruction of the painting because “it is not acceptable for a white person to transmute Black suffering into profit and fun.” Black further argued that “the subject matter is not Schutz’s; white free speech and white creative freedom have been founded on the constraint of others and are not natural rights.”²⁸² Schutz responded that the painting was not and had never been for sale and issued a statement that said: “I don’t know what it is like to be black in America but I do know what it is like to be a mother. Emmett was Mamie Till’s only son. The thought of anything happening to your child is beyond comprehension...My engagement with this image was through empathy with his mother.”²⁸³ Directly responding to Black’s call of identity as a precursor to depict a subject, Schutz relied on her role as a mother.

Both Schutz and Mann are white artists who use strategies of obfuscation to render Till, but, perhaps surprisingly considering their media, Mann has not received the pushback that Schutz has, even though Mann’s photographs have seen wide-spread exhibition and are for sale. As I noted in my review of the exhibition *Sally Mann: A Thousand Crossings*, “Perhaps this is because the body is not there. The land serves as a stand-in for the body, itself cracked, marked, acted upon. Yet, this is conflating photographic processes with a real, mutilated body, a discussion of form and content that can ignore real fear, pain, and death.”²⁸⁴

In an article in *The Village Voice*, Siddartha Mitter notes how Till was missing from the Schutz controversy. Although the original issues at stake were “black pain under violent white

²⁸² Hannah Black quoted in Lorena Muñoz-Alonso, “Dana Schutz’s Painting of Emmett Till at Whitney Biennial Sparks Protest,” *Art Net*, March 21, 2017. <https://news.artnet.com/art-world/dana-schutz-painting-emmett-till-whitney-biennial-protest-897929>

²⁸³ Dana Schutz quoted in Randy Kennedy, “White Artist’s Painting of Emmett Till at Whitney Biennial Draws Protests” *The New York Times*, March 21, 2017. <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/21/arts/design/painting-of-emmett-till-at-whitney-biennial-draws-protests.html>

²⁸⁴ Shea, “Sally Mann.”

supremacy, how artists and museums addressed it, and how viewers experienced this material,” the debate quickly shifted to how white artists can or should deal with black subjects, the ethics of destroying artwork, who can make what and who can censor it.²⁸⁵ And it is here where Mitter realized that Till was no longer there: “His actual casket, and the method of its display in the Washington museum, did not come up at all (aside from a single passing mention by Roberta Smith in the *New York Times*). It was a striking collective omission, as if the cultural arbiters saw no link between the two viewing experiences.”²⁸⁶ Till was missing from the debate. Yet, at the core of this controversy over painting was photographs of him.

One scholar, Christina Sharpe criticized Schutz for making violent white supremacy, as depicted in photography, abstract: “It seems to me that what Dana Schutz has done is to take that unobscured violence [in the photographs] and make it abstract. Mamie Till wanted to make violence real. And that thing- white supremacy, violent abduction, murder – that Mamie Till wanted to make absolutely clear is abstracted in Schutz’s work, and in her defense of the work.”²⁸⁷ In Sharpe’s view, one of the problems with Schutz’s work is its abstraction of real and violent black death, which, she continues, is an intimacy issue amongst those who have suffered violence. Criticizing the painting is part of what she terms “wake work,” that is “work that we Black people do in the face of our ongoing death, and the ways we insist life into the present.”²⁸⁸ While Schutz, and perhaps Mann, would claim an intimacy with the subject of Till based on their

²⁸⁵ Siddhartha Mitter, “After ‘Open Casket’: What Emmett Till Teaches Us Today” *The Village Voice*, March 12, 2018. https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/style/painful-but-crucial-why-youll-see-emmett-tills-casket-at-the-african-american-museum/2016/08/18/66d1dc2e-484b-11e6-acbc4d4870a079da_story.html?utm_term=.12004d73fa15

²⁸⁶ Mitter, “After ‘Open Casket.’”

²⁸⁷ Christina Sharpe in an interview with Siddhartha Mitter. “‘What does it mean to be black and look at this?’ A scholar reflects on the Dana Schutz Controversy” *Hyperallergic*, March 24, 2017. <https://hyperallergic.com/368012/what-does-it-mean-to-be-black-and-look-at-this-a-scholar-reflects-on-the-dana-schutz-controversy/>

²⁸⁸ Sharpe in Mitter, “‘What does it mean to be black and look at this?’”

motherhood, Sharpe argues that the Till subject is a matter of intimacy amongst Black people. As she points out, Mamie Till wanted the photographs published in African American publications for an African American audience.

That is not to say that Mann's evocation of the body is unproblematic: her photographs are full of empathy for Till, yes. But the photographs also deny her own positionality in the Till history and she ultimately does what many well-meaning white artists do, which is, as Angela Pelster-Wiebe writes, align themselves with the victim instead of "center[ing] themselves within the violence of their own whiteness...[or] place[ing] themselves in the position of the aggressor instead of the victim, and then asked themselves what it means to inherit the violent history of being born white."²⁸⁹ Till's body has always been rife with significance and many artists, writers, poets, and musicians have tried to mourn his death, with greater or lesser public praise. Mann's attempt at racial atonement pilgrimage revolves around locating the site of that body and her photographs work to evoke it, but not explicitly depict it.

Aside from the Schutz controversy, a better comparison to Mann's black and white photograph may be by Jason Lazarus, a white male, 2005 color photograph, *Standing at the Grave of Emmett Till, Day of Exhumation, June 1st, 2006 (Aslip, Illinois)* (Figure 75). Like the Mann photograph, the Lazarus photograph emanates an emptiness despite the important space – and day - which is identified in the title. The exhumation was done for legal and identification reasons in the re-opened FBI case. Shawn Michelle Smith argues that "photographs that depend so entirely on titles for their effect are generally not so compelling," but that in Lazarus' case, "instead of closing it down, [the title] ruptures the image, opening it up in all its messy

²⁸⁹ Angela Pelster-Wiebe, "White Artists Need to Start Addressing White Supremacy In Their Work: Those Who Benefit from Racism Should be on the front lines fighting it" August 29, 2018, *Lit Hub*. <https://lithub.com/white-artists-need-to-start-addressing-white-supremacy-in-their-work/>

ambiguity.”²⁹⁰ Smith notes how the image’s very emptiness would “seem to refer to trauma per se...A cycle of denial and repression and revelation [that] continues to call forth Emmett Till – his body, his ghost, his photographs.”²⁹¹ Where the Mann image is largely taken up by the riverbank and water, the Lazarus one is by sky. They both allow natural aspects to substitute for the overwhelming and contradictory presence and absence of the photographed body. They are both sparse, both dependent upon text. Mann’s writing, singling out the Till photograph is a kind of caption while the photograph’s blurred edges, lack of focus, and its central crack down the ground, acts as a rupture of repression and denial, of doing nothing and trying to see, something in these sacred spaces.

LEAVING HOME: *DEEP SOUTH AS UNHEIMLICH*

To close, I posit that Mann’s choice to travel and leave her home for the project can be further analyzed by mobilizing Sigmund Freud’s discussion of the *unheimlich*. By doing so, the themes already introduced – wet collodion and its stains, the mother’s sight, and the road trip pilgrimage, - coalesce. The photographs Mann took are *unheimlich*, as they are both familiar and strange, visually appealing and psychically hard to look at, and a private endeavor at a site of public memory. The photographs reflect one particular definition of the *unheimlich*: the sense of something once obscured, welling back up into public and private memory again and again.

The ambiguous translation of the German word *unheimlich* into the English word uncanny is discussed by Freud in his essay, “The Uncanny.”²⁹² Though not a scientific linguistic

²⁹⁰ Shawn Michelle Smith, “The Afterimages of Emmett Till,” *American Art* 29.1 (Spring 2015): 22.

²⁹¹ Smith, “The Afterimages of Emmett Till,” 26.

²⁹² Sigmund Freud, “The Uncanny” in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XVII (1917-1919): An Infantile Neurosis and Other Works* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1955), 217-256.

analysis, in his essay, Freud offers here several definitions of the German *heimlich*: belonging to the house, the familiar, intimate, and the tame, and arousing a sense of agreeable restfulness and security as in one within the four walls of his house.²⁹³ However, in its lesser-used form, the word can also refer to that which is concealed, kept from sight, and meant to be kept secret but is inadvertently revealed; it can also mean to steal away.²⁹⁴ Freud's thesis is that the *heimlich* – the known, familiar, homey, and, in lesser usage, secret – overlaps in meaning with its opposite, the *unheimlich* – the unknown, unfamiliar, and, in lesser usage, revealed - making the uncanny the return of the repressed. As already stressed, Mann made the choice to purposefully make herself unfamiliar, *unheimlich*, by travelling away from home, the *heimlich*. But she is never an “outsider” in the Deep South. She is always already familiar, privileged, and safe; she is still in her beloved, humid, rural landscapes, still safe, just a bit deeper within it all, just a bit strange. Although she is not quite at home, she is still in control.

As Anna Kisiel has noted, “Freud claims that uncanniness is not about fear in itself; it concerns the return of something that should have been left in the state of being unremembered: a repressed experience that used to be familiar...experiences that cause anxiety twice – before repression and as a result of it.”²⁹⁵ In *Concrete Grave*, for example, Mann depicts an above-ground, unmarked grave, an oblong, white shape emerging from a dark ground. The grave marker here is just a tree, standing tall and straight in front of a strange, swirling, sky marked by dots on the negative. The image alludes to Till's very public casket and body because of its proximity to the site of Till's murder but also because, as an exhibition wall text from *Sally Mann: A Thousand Crossings* notes, the “sealed, unmarked grave both recalls and contrasts with

²⁹³ Freud, “The Uncanny,” 222.

²⁹⁴ Freud, “The Uncanny,” 223.

²⁹⁵ Anna Kisiel, “Spectral-fragile-(un)homely: The haunting presence of Francesca Woodman in the House and Space2 Series” *Avant* 3.2 (2017): 145-156.

Till's own open coffin, which laid bare the depravity of the crime committed against him."²⁹⁶

Time and place here are uncertain. Mann's photograph, though, is not actually of Till's coffin, which now resides at the National Museum of African American History and Culture in Washington, D.C. Rather, her image prompts viewers to consider how racial violence in America can never really be repressed, but keeps re-emerging into the American consciousness.

The tragic history of Till's death is full of misinformation, half-truths, cover-ups and ambiguous motives, and so any attempt to depict it truthfully could very well result in an uncertain rendering. There is also a messiness in the concept of the uncanny itself. Scholars such as Alexandra Kokoli have noted that the uncanny is a "slippery concept" and Freud's essay itself "awkwardly structured," "too pivotal, too pervasive, too blurred and too commonplace, alluding as it does, to both the beginning and termination of life," it is the essay's connection to both repressed memories and leaving home that it is deployed to discuss Mann's Till photographs.²⁹⁷ The ambiguous linguistic use of the uncanny is also reflected in the visual and written uncertainty in the *Deep South* project as a whole. Kate Palmer Albers has written how the ambiguity of photography and the theme of uncertainty can be an access point to knowledge rather than a barrier. The power of Mann's work, following Albers, "depends on the affective and evidentiary role of photographs, and yet the barrier to producing meaning from the image is the central point."²⁹⁸

There is a similar kind of ambiguity in the genre of travel writing, too. The genre is a conglomeration of memoirs, guides, fiction, autobiography, and various other sub-genres, and, as

²⁹⁶Object label, *Sally Mann: A Thousand Crossings*, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. 4 March–28 May 2018.

²⁹⁷Alexandra M. Kokoli. *The Feminist Uncanny in Theory and Art Practice* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), 6, 18, 20.

²⁹⁸ Kate Palmer Albers. *Uncertain Histories: Accumulation, Inaccessibility, and Doubt in Contemporary Photography* (Oakland: CA: University of California Press, 2015), 3.

Thompson writes, “an epistemological anxiety about the validity of the knowledge provided by travelogues has always haunted travel writing.”²⁹⁹ Mann’s memoir, which includes about fifteen pages explicitly about her travels to the South, sometimes contradicts the information included in the *Deep South* photobook, and neither text represents a truly accurate picture of her travels.

Although the basic facts of Till’s story may be familiar, travelling to the sites, over forty years later, and depicting them photographically, offered many opportunities for Mann to make them look and feel unfamiliar, even if they were vaguely known to her. It is unclear if the spots she photographs are the spots and/or if these photographs are merely a romanticizing of her deep South, ideas that she had pre-determined before she even arrived to a place where she, a white, Southern woman, was never really vulnerable. But something about these sites made her feel as though she was: she even carried a gun with her. The images of Till in the casket, in the press, that Mann would have remembered contradict the sense of everydayness, or, we could say, familiarity of the landscape that Mann now photographs. Vidler adds that “For Freud, ‘unhomeliness’ was more than a simple sense of not belonging: it was the fundamental propensity of the familiar to turn on its owners, suddenly to become defamiliarized, derealized, as if in a dream.”³⁰⁰ Once at the riverbank, Mann probably realized, consciously or not, that she never knew what that place looked like. She may have remembered the casket photographs, or the images of the church where the massively-attended funeral and procession took place, or even the courtroom photographs taken by a huge press presence – but not the land upon which the murder occurred.

The photographs in the press represented interior spaces – Mamie Till arriving at the train station, mourners inside of a church. The return of the repressed in Mann’s landscape

²⁹⁹ Thompson, *Travel Writing*, 88.

³⁰⁰ Vidler, *The Architectural Uncanny*, 9.

photographs was a return of photographic images and memories that were not related to the land. As Mary Bergstein writes, “In psychoanalytic terms, visual images – as a species of memories....- would never simply disappear, even if they were consciously suppressed or unconsciously repressed. As Freud maintained, and later theorists have emphasized, the unconscious mind was a fertile storage place for representations of any kind.”³⁰¹ Bergstein continues, “Freud’s psychic location for memory is a place within the mind, but some of his ideas suggest that this mental picture also worked like a slideshow, with the projection of images from outside enlarged on a psycho-spatial screen.”³⁰² Mann’s trio of Till photographs present a kind of slideshow that re-familiarizes his death, but, uncannily, and, for lack of a better word, through art photography, viewed in an art exhibition, her website, or in her beautiful, large photo books, even though the original photographs would have been viewed in newspaper and magazines, and later history books and documentaries.

In Mann’s photographic representation of the sites related to Till’s death, she draws upon a tension of pleasure and pain. Mann’s Till photographs particularly embodies one usage of the uncanny: when one “steals away...to look on with Heimlich pleasure at someone’s discomfiture.”³⁰³ She literally leaves her home, she “steals away” to look at the Till sites and presents them with visual pleasure, which also makes them uncomfortable. Such traumatic sites, described as “unbearable to look at”³⁰⁴ are painful to look at, in part, because Mann has worked meticulously to achieve wistful romantic effects through the wet-plate collodion process. In *Bridge on Tallahatchie*, for example, Mann frames the site skillfully: trees anchor the left and

³⁰¹ Mary Bergstein, *Mirrors of Memory: Freud, Photography, and the History of Art* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2010), 9.

³⁰² Bergstein, *Mirrors of Memory*, 19.

³⁰³ Freud, “The Uncanny,” 222.

³⁰⁴ Als writes: “Mann’s view is that the South can be unbearable to look at. And yet, she makes it bearable enough to make a photograph from it.” Hilton Als, “The Color of Humanity in Sally Mann’s South.” *The New Yorker*. February 28, 2018. <https://www.newyorker.com/culture/photo-booth/the-color-of-humanity-in-sally-manns-south>

right sides of the composition, with full, leafy branches that reach out across the image, the two sides almost touching. The light reflected upon the water reveals the rippling clouds in the skies that look at home in the water. And the bridge itself is small, old, and sparse, visible only slightly in the background bounded on the top and bottom by sky and water. Darkened corners, spots and drips, and out-of-focus leaves are all results of Mann's liberal work with wet-collodion, marks which she has accepted and included on final prints. With such markings reminiscent of the nineteenth century, and in black and white, the images are also difficult to place in time. The insistence with which critics describe her images as haunted and eerie also attest to the *unheimlich* world she creates and the muted, strange, light and heavy, humid, sometimes swirling atmosphere contribute to this.³⁰⁵ Death is abundant and is uncannily portrayed, in part, by the wet-collodion, which gives contemporary subjects a dated feel, what one critic has described as having the effect of "collaps[ing] time,"³⁰⁶ an effect that can feel contrived when Till's murder is part of a much larger and continuing history of ongoing violence against black Americans for merely existing.

The use value of photographic images of pain and suffering has long been debated by photographic historians. As Sontag writes in *Regarding the Pain of Others*, "pictures of hellish events seem more authentic when they don't have the look that comes from being 'properly' lighted and composed."³⁰⁷ In a strange turn, Mann's attempts to embrace the process artifacts that often come with the wet plate collodion process become decidedly romantic, beautiful, "properly" made prints. But of course, and this is key, Mann is not actually photographing the

³⁰⁵ Gibbons writes that the landscapes have "a ghostly, human presence which haunts the depicted places"; Als writes how Mann "doesn't turn away from the death"; Smee writes that her "pictures are haunted by trauma" and that "the concept that Mann appears most intent on illustrating is simply death."

³⁰⁶ Gibbons, "Family, Landscape, and Race."

³⁰⁷ Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*

atrocities. She is photographing the land that witnessed it. In this way, as Smith has argued, “photography, rather than place, bears the weight of the past.”³⁰⁸ We do not have photographs of Till being kidnapped, beaten, shot, or drowned although we do have photographs of the aftermath of all of that horrific violence. Mann’s return to a site of repression, her return to the sites related to his murder and her depiction of them is uncanny, in part, because the body is not there, and really, no signs of it are. As Sontag points out, “ever since cameras were invented in 1839, photography has kept company with death. Because an image produced with a camera is, literally, a trace of something brought before the lens, photographs were superior to any painting as a memento of the vanished past and the dear departed.”³⁰⁹ Mann “steals away,” she travels far to present a memento, beautiful, but not really a re-presentation, nor information. She presents it with uncertain certainty, with expected surprises, a limited view, as an outsider insider.

Mann does not go on a full-fledged, purposeful, personal, introspective exploration of her experience with race as a white, Southern, woman until the 2000s with her *Men, Dismal Swamp*, and church series, but *Deep South* is the very start of this.³¹⁰ It takes leaving her home, it takes travel, in order to start this process of revealing her own delayed racial consciousness in *unheimlich* atmospheres. As Freud notes, the *heimlich* “is not unambiguous...on the one hand it means what is familiar and agreeable, and on the other, what is concealed and kept out of sight.”³¹¹

³⁰⁸ Smith, *Photographic Returns*, 13.

³⁰⁹ Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*

³¹⁰ In *Men*, she photographed African-American men in her studio, for the *Great Dismal Swamp* she pictured places enslaved people sought refuge, and her churches are small photographs of historical African-American churches.

³¹¹ Freud, “The Uncanny,” 223-224.

CLOSING

Even if we cannot quite see Till, the memory and symbol of him remains strong as young black men in America keep getting killed. An example of this is evident at the Till site itself. In 2007 the Emmett Till Interpretive Center put up a sign to memorialize where Till's body was found. Within a year, it was torn down, replaced, shot up with hundreds of bullets, replaced again, and shot up again (Figure 76). Historian Megan Kate Nelson writes: "Sites of collective trauma are problematic; they create tensions regarding memorialization ... Landscapes that symbolize positive virtues are revered and preserved, while events that are particularly shameful are destroyed or effaced."³¹² Photographing traumatic landscapes is problematic too: how to remember but acknowledge the pain? Mann photographs the Till sites in ways to render the images somewhat effaced, because of her travels and her process, but also because of the difficulty of showing something so terrible, clearly. Her images make familiar again the shame of racial violence some white Americans would rather have, like the uncanny, "left in the state of being unremembered."

Mann's interrogation of the *Deep South* in these photographs ends up being a situation of continually shifting time and place, subjectivities and responsibilities, race and gender, always at the edge of sight and of geography: river's edges, region's edges, blurred edges. Mann's travels to photograph landscapes allowed her to make such landscapes historically and conceptually mobile, undoing their stasis while attempting to memorialize and make relics of places that simply cannot go out of sight. When Mann visits and photographs the Emmett Till sites in the way she does, as a pilgrim, she is re-affirming the sight of Till's body—which is both present and absent—and re-affirms the sight of the saintly mother who insisted upon the authenticity of

³¹² Megan Kate Nelson, *Ruin Nation: Destruction and the American Civil War* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2012), 235.

her son's body to show violent racism's effects. Mann urges viewers to find the photograph and to look at it, to imagine the body in the water under the bridge, on the shore, or in the coffin. She has visually left room for Till in the riverbank photograph, right there in the center, for us to see it ourselves.

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APPENDIX A: IMAGES



Figure 1. William Shewell Ellis, Kodak advertisement, c. 1921.



Figure 2. Inge Morath, *Magnum Accountants*, 1965.

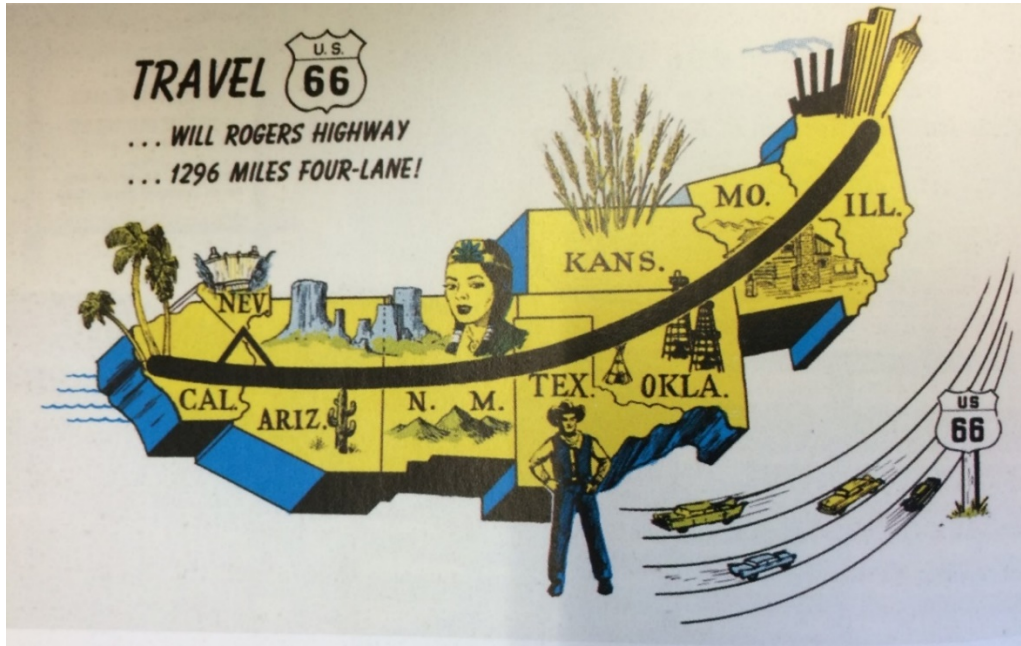


Figure 3. U.S. 66 National Highway Association Postcard, 1950s.



Tour Zion National Park with wonderful ease, comfort and economy. This big, beautiful new Chevrolet is the lowest-priced car in America to offer you the safety and convenience of an automatic transmission.

The Strylane De Luxe 4-Door Sedan
 (Continuation of standard equipment and trim illustrated is dependent on availability of material.)

Get to these parks the easiest way . . . go **POWERglide***

Slip behind the wheel, start the engine and slide the Pilot Control Lever over to "Drive" position. Then just press the accelerator to go and press the brake to stop! No clutch pedal. No gear shifting. No need to take a hand off the wheel in all normal driving. Only Powerglide in the low-price field brings you such silken smoothness . . .

without the *slightest* power step or surge between speed ranges as Chevrolet's great 105-h.p. Valve-in-Head engine responds instantly and quietly to your command! Powerglide is the first and the simplest automatic transmission in the low-price field — the *only one* time-proven in performance by so many owners. Try Powerglide at your Chevrolet dealer's. Chevrolet Division of General Motors, Detroit 2, Michigan.



Chances are you'll see more Chevrolets than any other make at Florida's lovely Cypress Gardens. For, year after year, more people buy Chevrolets than any other car. More value—that's the reason why!



*Combination of Powerglide automatic transmission and 105-h.p. engine optional on De Luxe models at extra cost.



Figure 4. Chevrolet advertisement, 1951

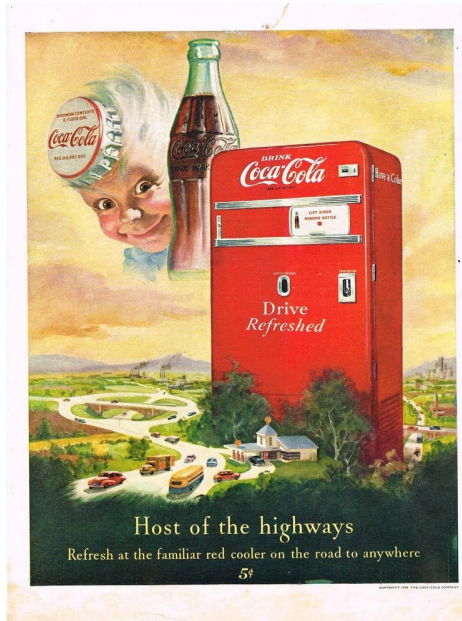


Figure 5. Coca-Cola advertisement, *LIFE*, April 1950.



Figure 6. Still from Standard Oil of Illinois's film advertisement, *American Travelogue: Midwest Holiday*, 1952.



Figure 7. *Travelguide* cover, 1952.



Figure 8. Rand McNally Trip-planning map of the United States, 1950.



Figure 9. Inge Morath. *Oconaluftee Village, North Carolina, 1960.*

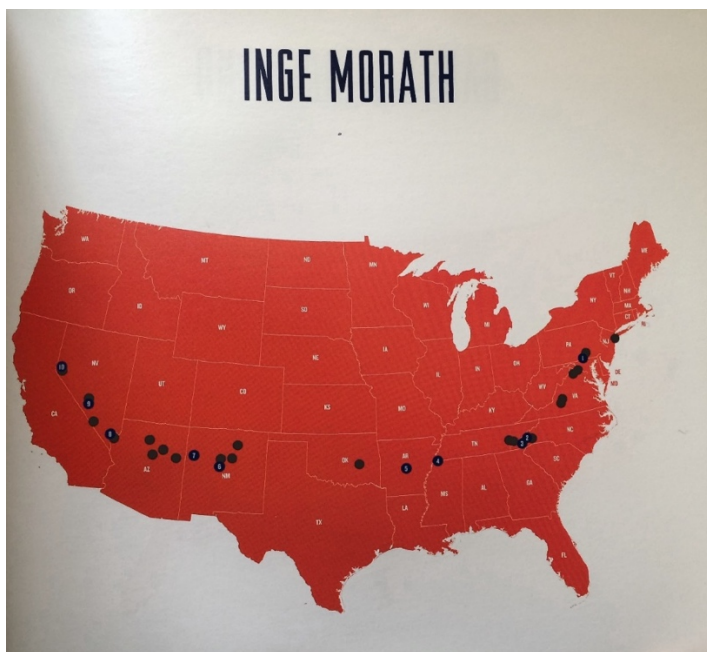


Figure 10. Inge Morath and Henri Cartier-Bresson's driving route, the dots indicating places where Morath took photographs. Created by David Company.



Figure 11. Morath, Hoover Dam, Boulder City, Nevada, 1960

Memphis	86	1.30	}	8	via paper
Little Rock	146	3H.			
Fort Smith	155	4H.	}	9.	
Oklahoma	192	5			
Amarillo	257	6	}	10	
Albuquerque	290	7			
Taos Santa Fe	2 day				3H to Santa Fe 5H Taos 11. 12.
Albuquerque Holbrook	234	6H		1 day	13
Grand Canon	123	5H		1 day	14
Kingman	129	3H	}	15	
Las Vegas via Needles	134	5H			
Tonopah	229	5H	}	17	
Reno	236	6H			

Figure 12. Morath, Half of trip plan written on scrap of paper. Inge Morath Photographs and Papers. General Collection, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.



Figure 13. Robert Frank, *Men's room, railway station – Memphis, Tennessee*, 1955-56.

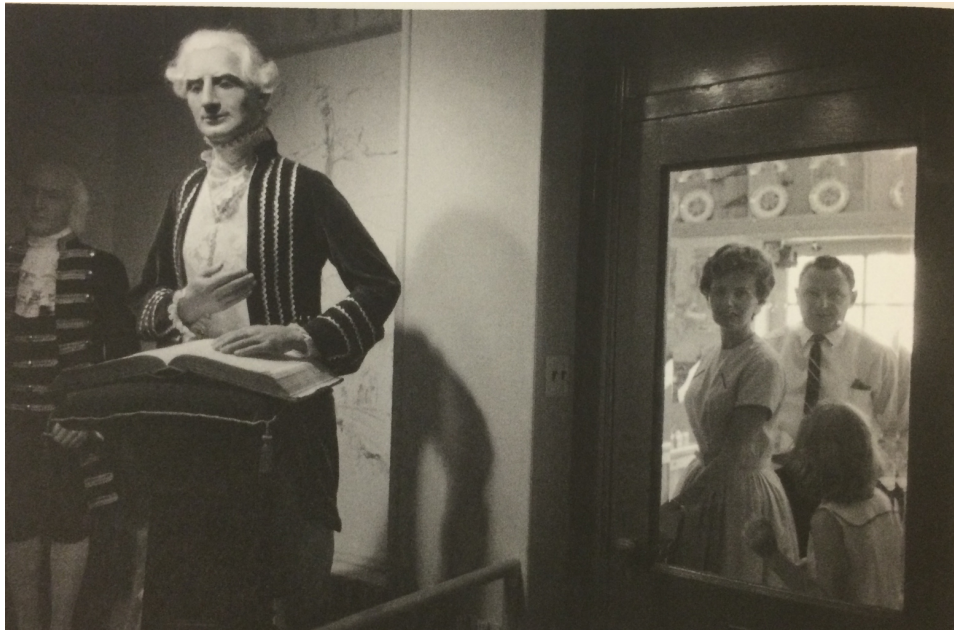


Figure 14. Morath, *George Washington, Hall of Presidents, Gettysburg Pennsylvania*, 1960.



Figure 15. Lincoln advertisement in *House and Garden*, August-September 1952.



Figure 16. Mercedes-Benz advertisement in *Holiday*, July 1959.



Figure 17. Morath, *A photograph of John Brown as it is exhibited in display outside the Harper's Ferry Museum, Harper's Ferry, West Virginia, 1960.*



Figure 18. Morath, *Harper's Ferry, West Virginia, 1960.*

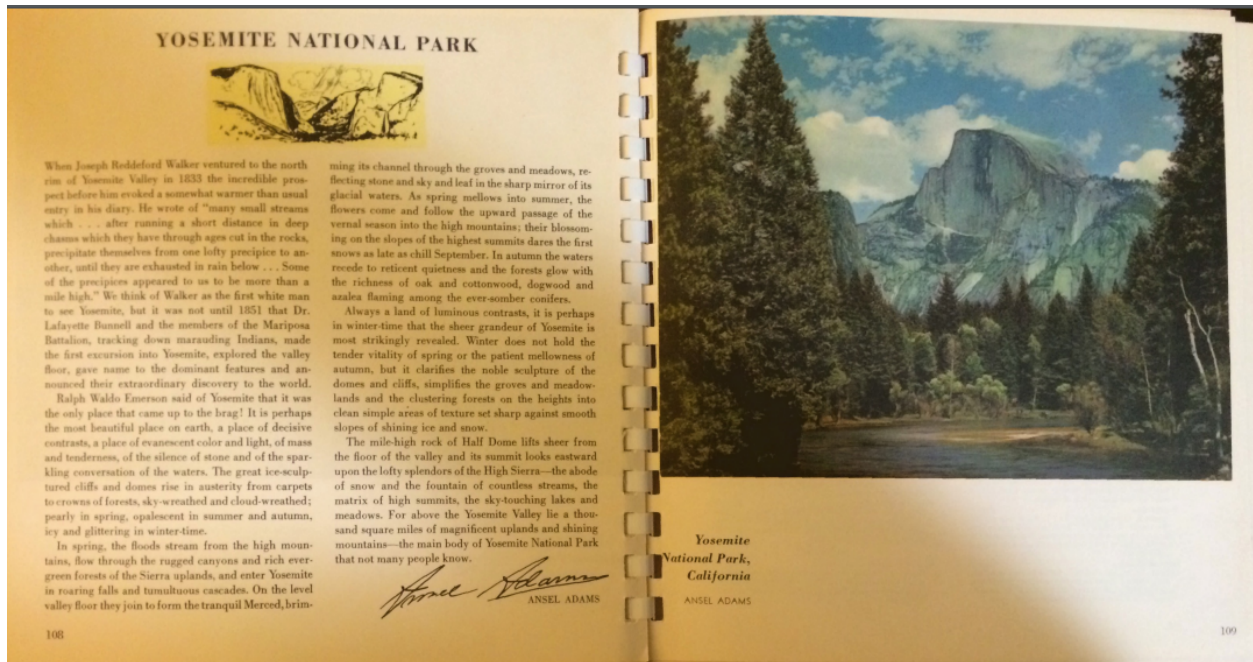


Figure 19. Ansel Adams, *Half Dome in Yosemite National Park* from *The Glory of Our West: See the West in Natural Color*, 1952.



Figure 20. Morath, *Natural Bridge, near Lexington, Virginia*, 1960.



Figure 21. Morath, *Indian cemetery near Albuquerque, New Mexico, 1960.*



Figure 22. Morath, Highway entertainment at an 'Indian Trading Post,' before arriving at Albuquerque, New Mexico, 1960.



Figure 23. Morath, *Arizona. The strange landscape of the Petrified Forest*, 1960.

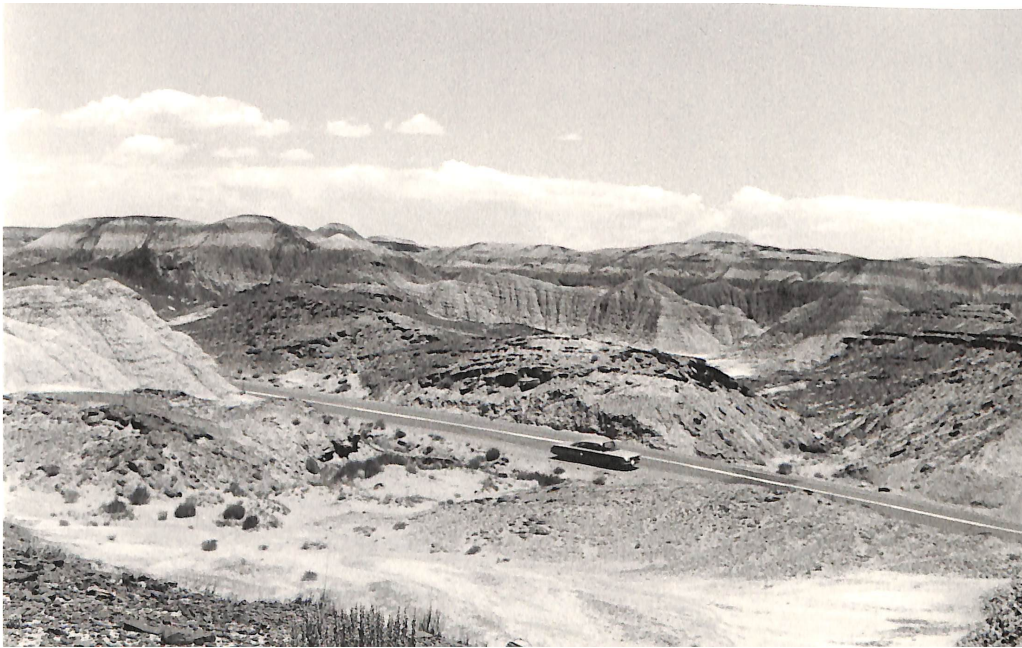


Figure 24. Morath, *The Painted Desert, Arizona*, 1960.



Figure 25. Morath, *The Grand Canyon, Arizona*. 1960.



Figure 26. Morath, *Beale Street, Memphis, Tennessee*, 1960



Figure 27. Morath, *Memphis, Tennessee*, 1960.



Figure 28. Morath, *Hitch Hikers on the road from Albuquerque to Gallup, New Mexico*, 1960.



Figure 29. Morath, *Reno, Nevada*, 1960.



Figure 30. Morath, *Heads of slot machines looking over a truck in a Reno, Nevada*, 1960.



Figure 31. Morath, *Marilyn Monroe with script and fans, outside the Reno courthouse, 1960.*



Figure 32. Morath, *Marilyn Monore and Thelma Ritter during the scene in the bar of Harrah's club in Reno, 1960.*



Figure 33. Morath, *Production photograph of Clark Gable and Marilyn Monroe*, 1960.



Figure 34. Film still of closing scene, *The Misfits*, 1961



Figure 35. Morath, *Marilyn Monroe and Arthur Miller in their suite in Reno's Mapes Hotel after a day's shooting, 1960*



Figure 36. Still of a motel room bed. Sophie Calle and Shephard, still from *No Sex Last Night (Double Blind)*, 1992, 35mm film in French and English with English subtitles, 76:00 minutes.



Figure 37. Sophie Calle and Jean Baudrillard, *Suite vénitienne (Please follow me)*, 1988.



Figure 38. Sophie Calle, *True Stories*, 2016.



Figure 39. Sophie Calle and Greg Shephard's 1992 road trip route as reconstructed by the author with Google Maps. Lettered dots indicate known stops based on the film.



Figure 40. Still from a motel room interior. Sophie Calle and Shephard, still from *No Sex Last Night (Double Blind)*, 1992, 35mm film in French and English with English subtitles, 76:00 minutes.



Figure 41. Still from a diner. Sophie Calle and Shephard, still from *No Sex Last Night (Double Blind)*, 1992, 35mm film in French and English with English subtitles, 76:00 minutes.



Figure 42. Calle and Shephard, still from *No Sex Last Night (Double Blind)*, 1992, 35mm film in French and English with English subtitles, 76:00 minutes.



Figure 43. After “burying” Guibert in the ocean. Calle and Shephard, still from *No Sex Last Night (Double Blind)*, 1992, 35mm film in French and English with English subtitles, 76:00 minutes.



Figure 44. Chris Marker, Still from *La Jetée*, 1963. 28:02 minutes.



Figure 45. Calle and Shephard, still from *No Sex Last Night (Double Blind)*, 1992, 35 mm film in French and English with English subtitles, 76:00 minutes.



Figure 46. Calle and Shephard standing in front of the 1968 Cadillac DeVille Convertible that they drove to California.

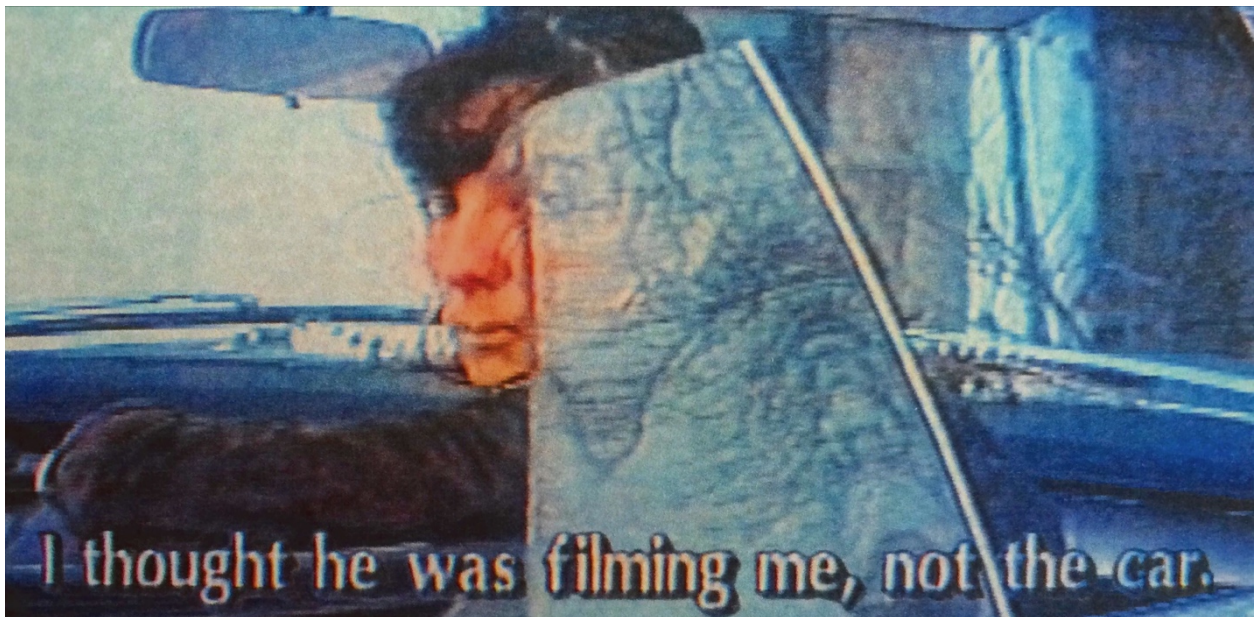


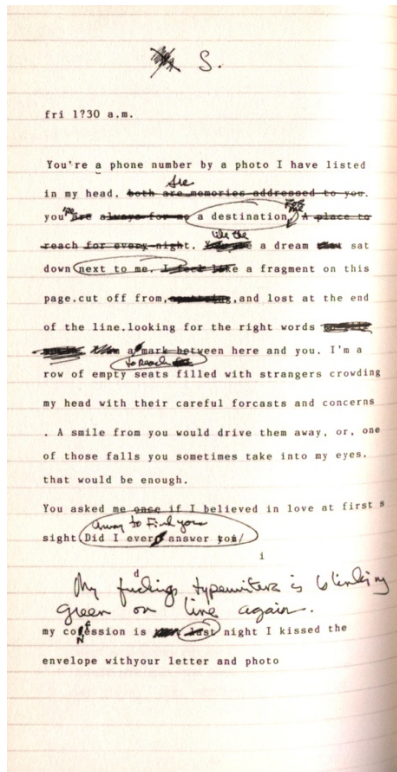
Figure 47. Calle and Shephard, still from *No Sex Last Night (Double Blind)*, 1992, 35mm film in French and English with English subtitles, 76:00 minutes.



Figure 48. Calle and Shephard, still from *No Sex Last Night (Double Blind)*, 1992, 35mm film in French and English with English subtitles, 76:00 minutes.



Figure 49. Calle and Shephard, still from *No Sex Last Night (Double Blind)*, 1992, 35mm film in French and English with English subtitles, 76:00 minutes.



VI

The Rival

I wanted a love letter, but he would not write one to me. One day, I saw the word "Sophie" written at the top of a piece of stationery. This gave me hope. Two months after our wedding, I noticed the edge of a piece of paper sticking out from under his typewriter. I pulled it toward me. The last line of the letter appeared: "My confession is that, last night I kissed the envelope with your letter and photo." I continued to read, in reverse: "You asked me once if I believed in love at first sight. Did I ever answer you?" At the top of the page I noticed these words were not addressed to me but to a letter "H." I crossed out the "H" and replaced it with an "S." This became the letter I had never received.

Figure 50. Calle, *The Husband VI: The Rival* in *True Stories*, 2016.

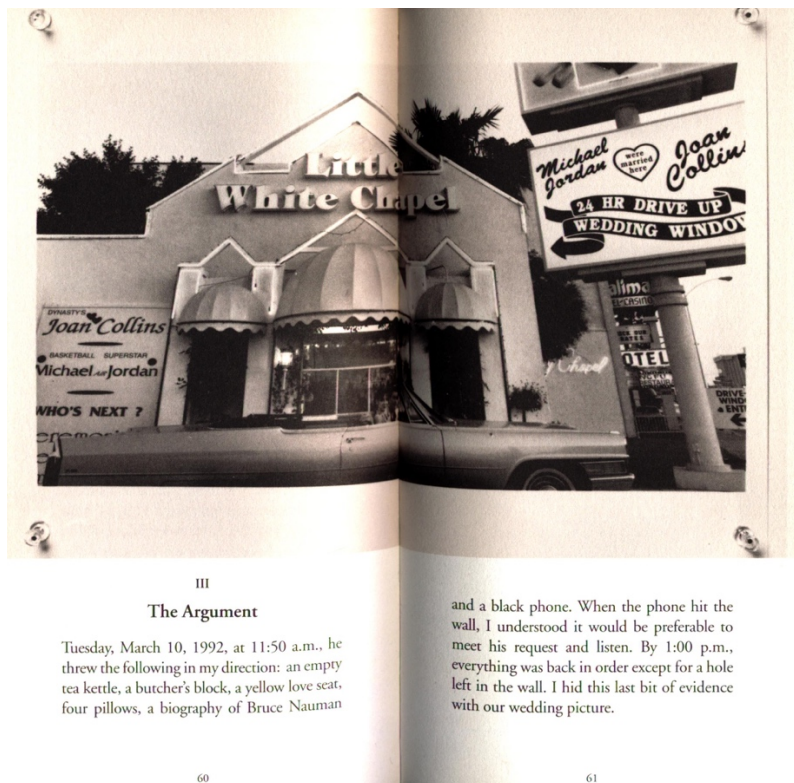


Figure 51. Calle, *The Husband III: The Argument* in *True Stories*, 2016.

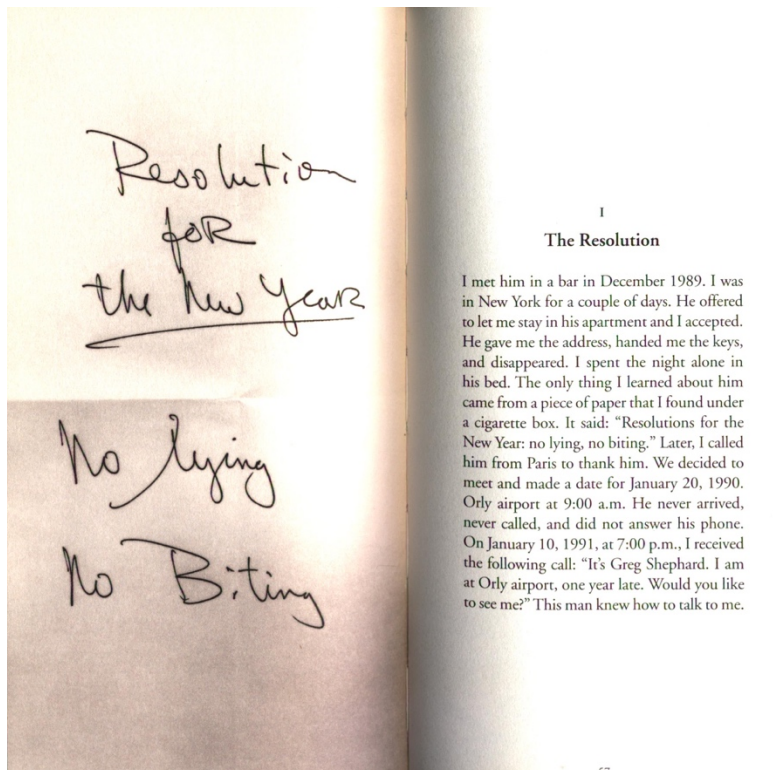


Figure 52. Calle, *The Husband I: The Resolution* from *True Stories*, 2016.

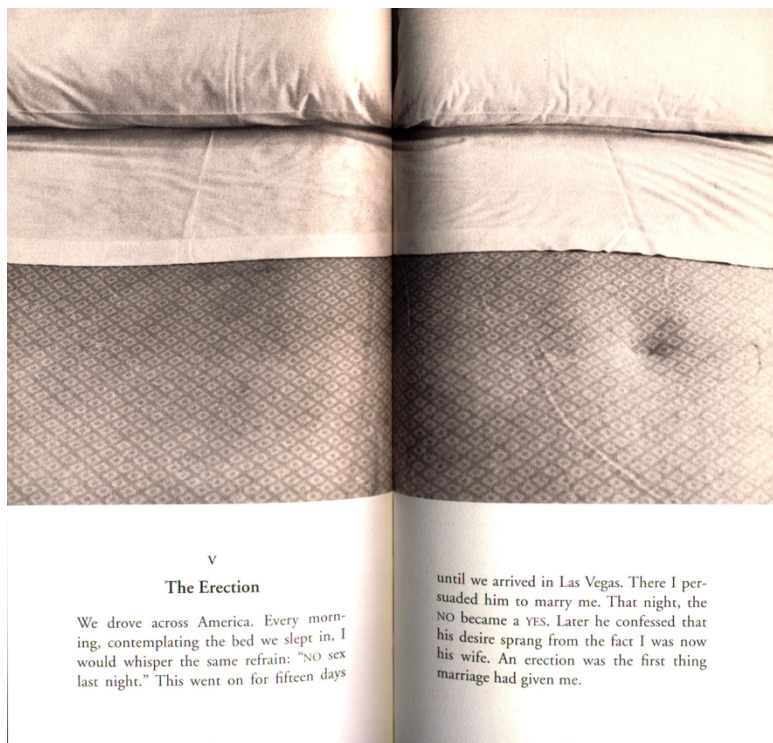


Figure 53. Calle, *The Husband V: The Erection*, from *True Stories*, 2016.



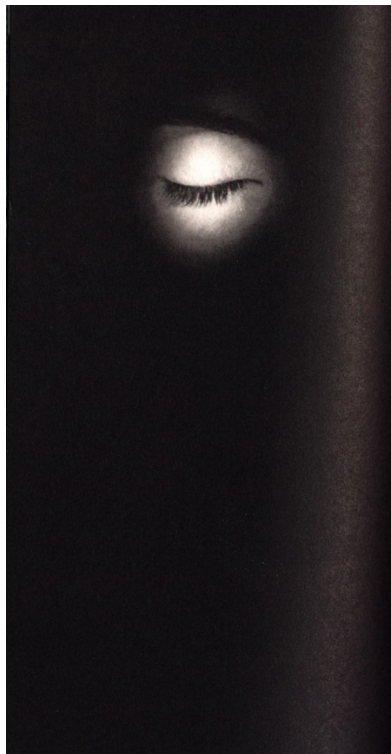
IX

The Divorce

In my fantasies, I am a man. Greg was quick to notice this. Perhaps that's why he invited me one day to piss for him. It became a ritual: I would come up behind him, blindly undo his pants, take out his penis, and do my best to aim well. Then, after the customary shake, I would nonchalantly put it back and close his fly. Shortly after our separation, I asked Greg for a photo-souvenir of this ritual. He accepted. So, in a Brooklyn studio, I had him pee into a plastic bucket in front of a camera. This photograph was an excuse to put my hand on his sex one last time. That evening, I agreed to the divorce.

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Figure 54. Calle, *The Husband IX: The Divorce* in *True Stories*, 2016.



X

The Other

There was a man I liked, but the first time we made love I was afraid to look at him. I thought I was still in love with Greg, and feared being overwhelmed by the idea that the man in my bed wasn't the right one. So, I chose to close my eyes: In the dark, at least the uncertainty remained. One day I made the mistake of telling him why I kept my eyes closed in bed. He said nothing. Several months later, finally free of the ghost of Greg, and my doubts, I opened my eyes, now certain that he was the one I wanted to see. I didn't know that it would be our last night together. He was about to leave me. "What happens is always so far ahead of us, that we can never catch up to it and know its true appearance."

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Figure 55. *The Husband, X: The Other*, in *True Stories*, 2016.

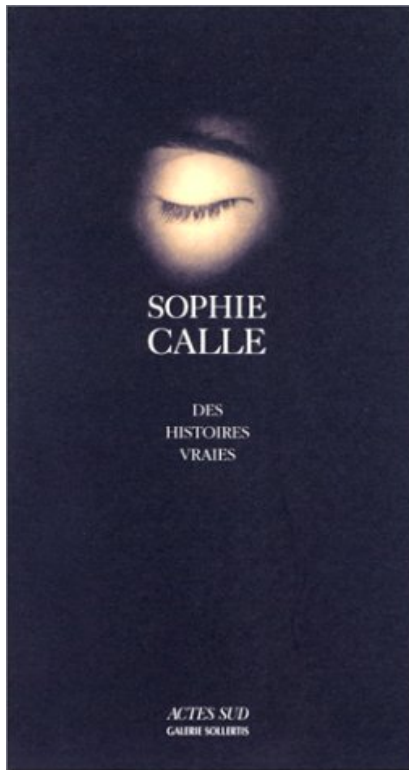


Figure 56. Calle, Cover of *Des histoires vraies* (*True Stories*), 1994.

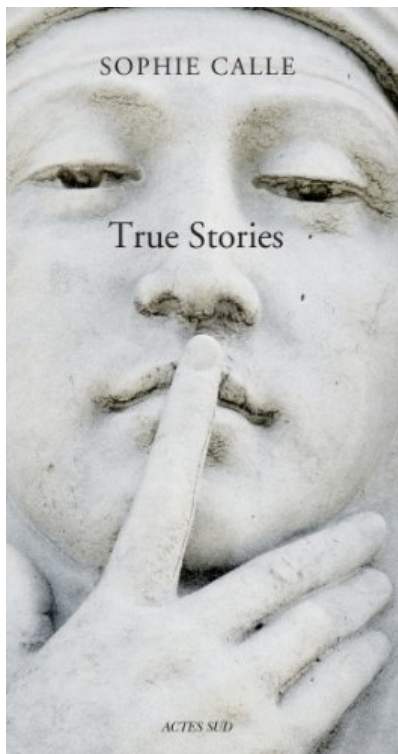


Figure 57. Calle, Cover of *True Stories*, 2013.

SOPHIE CALLE

True Stories



ACTES SUD

Figure 58. Calle, cover of *True Stories*, 2018.



VII
The Fake Marriage

Our improvised roadside marriage in Las Vegas didn't allow me the chance to fulfill the secret dream that I share with so many women: to one day wear a wedding dress. So, on Saturday, June 20, 1992, I decided to bring

68

family and friends together on the steps of a church in Paris for a formal wedding picture. The photograph was followed by a mock civil ceremony performed by a real mayor and then a reception. The rice, the wedding cake, the white veil—nothing was missing. I crowned, with a fake marriage, the truest story of my life.

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Figure 59. Calle, *The Husband VII: The Fake Marriage*, from *True Stories*, 2016.



The wedding photograph with Greg next to Freud's wedding photograph

Our improvised roadside marriage in Las Vegas didn't allow me the chance to fulfill the secret dream that I share with so many women: to one day wear a wedding dress. So, on Saturday, June 20, 1992, I decided to bring family and friends together on the steps of a church in Paris for a formal wedding picture. The photograph was followed by a mock civil ceremony performed by a real mayor and then a reception. The confetti, the white veil, the gloves—nothing was missing. I crowned, with a fake marriage, the truest story of my life.

Figure 60. Calle, *The Fake Marriage*, from *The Appointment*, 2005.



Figure 61. Sally Mann, *Deep South, Untitled (Bridge on Tallahatchie)*, 1998.



Figure 62. Mann, *Deep South, Untitled (Emmett Till River Bank)*, 1998.



Figure 63. Mann, *Deep South, Untitled (Concrete Grave)*, 1998.

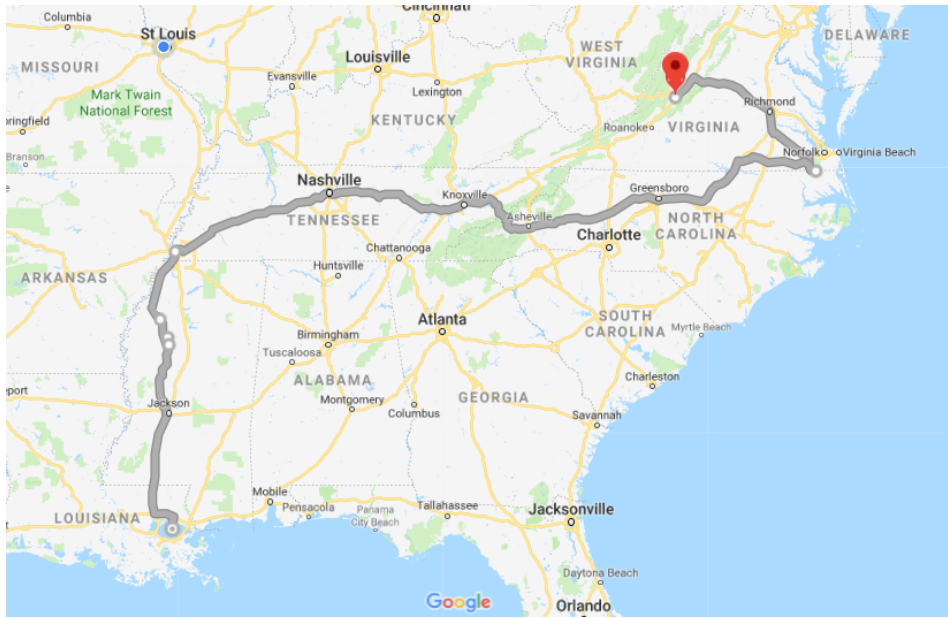


Figure 64. Mann’s route based on stops mentioned in her memoir, *Hold Still*. This trip never actually occurred – it is three trips conflated into one. Made by author on Google Maps.

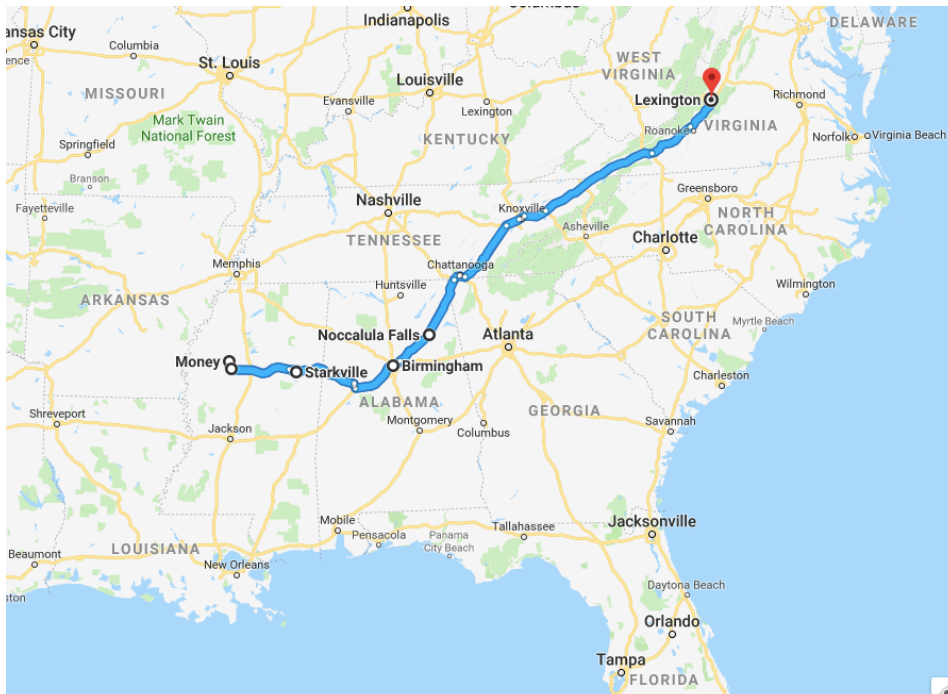


Figure 65. Mann’s route for her third trip, including stops at Till-related stops, based on correspondence with the author. This is her solo, October, 1998 trip. Made by author on Google Maps.



Figure 66. Sally Mann working in her travelling Suburban darkroom, 1998. From Mann's 2015 memoir, *Hold Still*.



Figure 67. Mathew Brady's converted buggy darkroom, dubbed the 'Whatisit Wagon' by Civil War soldiers, 1865.

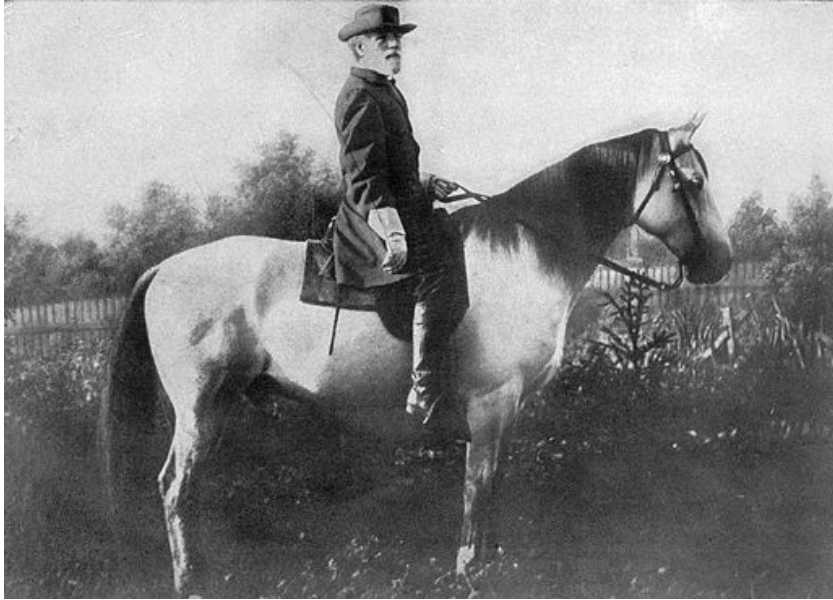


Figure 68. Michael Miley, *General R. E. Lee and Traveler*, 1868.



Figure 69. Michael Miley negatives found by Mann in 1973 while working at Washington and Lee. She includes these in *Hold Still*, with the caption: “Several of the pictures I recognized as my own farm, the exact river scenes I had known since childhood” (page 218).



Figure 70. Michael Miley negative circa 1890s, found by Mann in 1973 while working at Washington and Lee and included in *Hold Still* (page 217).

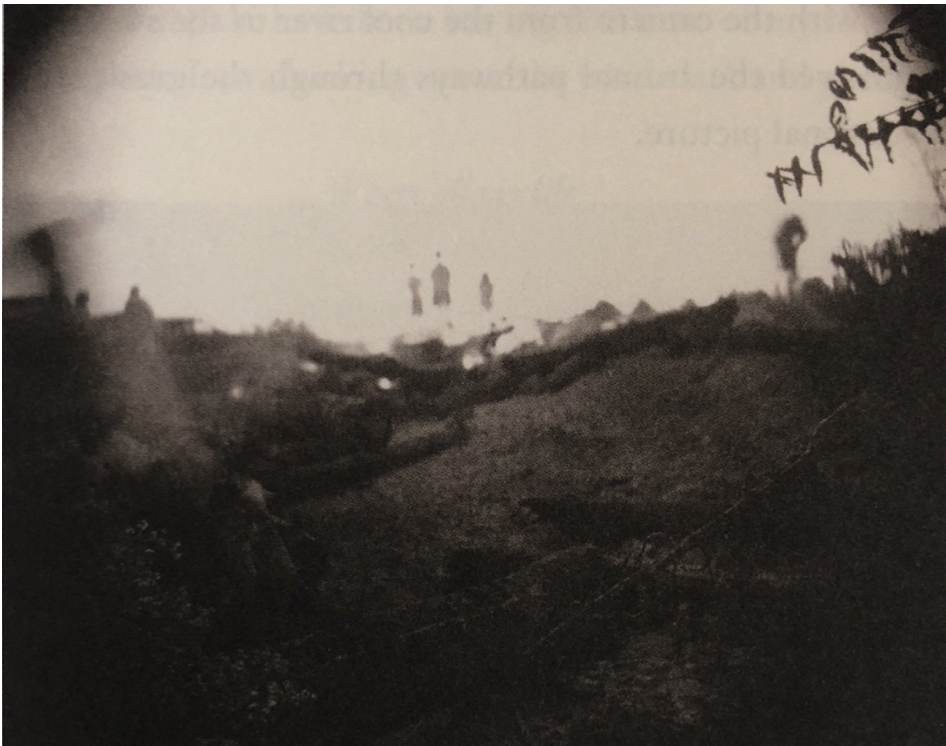


Figure 71. Mann, *Untitled*, circa 1992, from *Hold Still* (page 210).

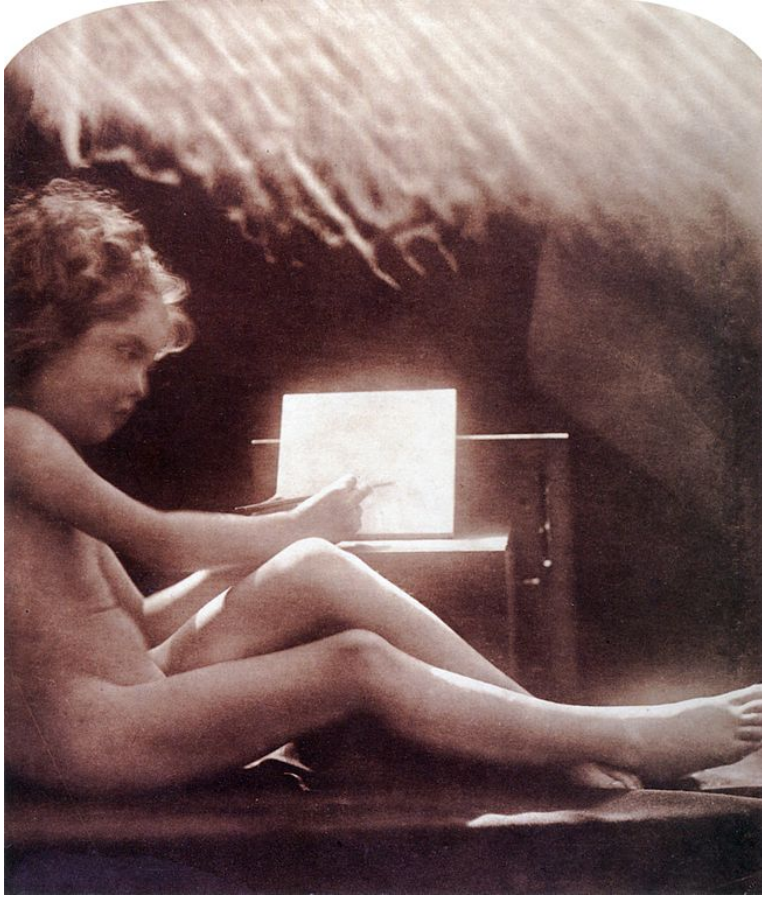


Figure 72. Julia Margaret Cameron, *Cupid's Pencil of Light*, 1870.



Figure 73. Installation shot, *Sally Mann: A Thousand Crossings*, Gallery 2, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., April, 2018.



Figure 74. Mann, *The Ditch*, 1987.



Figure 75. Jason Lazarus, *Standing at the Grave of Emmett Till, Day of Exhumation, June 1st, 2005 (Aslip, Illinois)*, 2005.



Figure 76. A new sign marking where Emmett's mutilated corpse was found, unveiled in June after the first one had been shot-up. Within thirty-five days, it was vandalized again. This shows the sign as of August 6th, 2018.