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Southern Cultures, Volume 17, Number 2, Summer 2011, pp. 3-23 (Article)

Published by The University of North Carolina Press

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/scu.2011.0031>



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The Cruel Radiance of the Obvious

by Tom Rankin



Photography in its finest and most decisive moments is about those tired or ignored or unseen parts of our lives, the mundane and worn paths that sit before us so firmly that we cease to notice. Tenant farmer, Alabama, 1936, photographed by Dorothea Lange, courtesy of the Collections of the Library of Congress.

I am at war with the obvious,” wrote William Eggleston as he reflected on his own photography in a brief afterword to his book *The Democratic Forest*.¹ Like other seemingly simple, terse dictums, one could initially find Eggleston’s words clever but all too evasive. I increasingly come back to his words, however—or, rather, the words come back to me—and see them as a concise and profound summation of the stance of the visionary photographer, as a definition of the role of the truest of artists. Photography in its finest and most decisive moments is about those tired or ignored or unseen parts of our lives, the mundane and worn paths that sit before us so firmly that we cease to notice. It is, we might say, about rebuilding our sight in the face of blindness, of recovering our collective vision. And yet, the photographer is also in a perpetual battle to see beyond and around what he or she has *already* seen, to bring to their own work a “sovereign vision,” to borrow Walker Percy’s words, that is not obvious or redundant or derivative. This is particularly true in the American South where many forms of art—fiction, Hollywood movies, painting, popular music, to mention just some—have so defined and fixed our image of the region. The photographer must do battle with the mundane, as Eggleston so aptly characterizes it. And as war never ends, neither does the task to confront the “obvious” and make it new, make it sing, move it from ordinary and invisible to astonishingly beautiful and fully seen.

William Eggleston has both defined the American South within photography and refused to be limited by his home region or by being labeled a southern photographer. He moves amidst our oversized and dominant regional symbols, dodging the tendency of many of his fellow southerners to over-romanticize the South, often expressing cynicism toward his critics and others who see him as too defined by place. However widely he has photographed—and he’s produced work from all quarters of the world—Eggleston will always be best known for his debut book, *William Eggleston’s Guide*, which accompanied the very first solo exhibition of color photography at the Museum of Modern Art, and for the powerful imagery that he has produced in Mississippi, around Memphis, and throughout the South. He has stayed home geographically, but from his Memphis base he continues to expand his, and our, vision.

Critics and fellow artists derided Eggleston’s early color work as introducing mere “snapshots” into the refined world of art. Ansel Adams, in a letter to Museum of Modern Art curator John Szarkowski, called Eggleston “a put on.” “I find little ‘substance,’” Adams wrote. “For me, [Eggleston’s photographs] appear as ‘observations,’ floating on the sea of consciousness . . . For me, most draw a blank.” Szarkowski’s proclamation that Eggleston’s pictures were “perfect” provoked *New York Times* art critic Hilton Kramer to respond, “Perfect? Perfectly banal, perhaps.” Eggleston’s work gets much of its energy and brilliance—both in terms of color and its revelatory nature—from his sense of dynamism, of mov-



The photographer is also in a perpetual battle to see beyond and around what he or she has already seen, to bring to their own work a “sovereign vision,” to borrow Walker Percy’s words, that is not obvious or redundant or derivative. Magnolia Cemetery, Mobile, Alabama, 2010, photographed by Carol M. Highsmith, courtesy of the Collections of the Library of Congress.

ing from one minute to the next, one place to another, as well as his pictorial aesthetic that uses color and composition to render motion: “To tell the truth, these are composed in an instant,” he said to Michael Almercyda, maker of the documentary *William Eggleston and the Real World*. “The way I feel, if one waits to take the picture, it’s too late.”²

This idea resonates with fellow Mississippian Eudora Welty’s comments about her own work and the snapshot, an aesthetic she also saw as connected to motion and to passing time: “A good snapshot stops a moment from running away,” she wrote in *One Writer’s Beginnings*. “Photography taught me that to be able to capture transience . . . was the greatest need I had.” “It’s now or never,” she told one interviewer about making a picture.³

Michael Almercyda talks with Eggleston about time and his photographs late one night in Tops Bar-B-Q in Memphis. Eggleston seems reluctant to explain his work; Almercyda pushes on with his line of inquiry:

Almercyda: Do you think of your pictures lasting?

Eggleston: No, I never thought about it.

Almercyda: So you never think about the idea that a picture is in some ways a ghost of a real thing? No?

Eggleston: It never entered my mind.



William Eggleston has both defined the American South within photography and refused to be limited by his home region or by being labeled as only a southern photographer. He moves amidst our oversized and dominant regional symbols, dodging the tendency of many of his fellow southerners to over-romanticize the South, often expressing cynicism toward his critics and others who see him as too defined by place. William Eggleston at home, Memphis, 1997, photographed by Tom Rankin.

Almeryda: Well, it's a vestige. It's a fragment.

Eggleston: I don't know what that means.

Almeryda: It's a reflection of something that has moved on.

Eggleston: The trouble is whatever it is about pictures, photographs, it's just about impossible to follow up with words. They don't have anything to do with each other.

Almeryda: So when a photograph speaks to you, it speaks to you beyond words. It's something that you take in.

Eggleston: Well, at least I think you could say that it has nothing to do with words.

These things that have nothing to do with words, these images that live beyond what we can say or write, always bring us back to an attempt to explain, to declare in words what we see, how photographs engage with time, place, and our imaginations. When Almeryda asks Eggleston just what it is about his love of music he responds with precision: "I like to *do* it . . . What is there to talk about? Art, or what we call that, you can love it and appreciate it, but you can't really talk about it. Doesn't make any sense."⁴



William Eggleston's early color work was derided by critics and fellow artists. Ansel Adams, who clearly operated under a wholly different aesthetic from Eggleston, wrote a letter to Museum of Modern Art curator John Szarkowski, calling Eggleston "a put on." "I find little 'substance,'" Adams wrote, terming Eggleston's photographs "observations, floating on the sea of consciousness. For me," he added, "most draw a blank." Tom Kobayashi, Manzanar Relocation Center, 1943, photographed by Ansel Adams, courtesy of the Collections of the Library of Congress.

A meat counter in a store I often visited in Mississippi had a handwritten sign over the cash register: "When all is said and done more will have been said than done." Photographers—and photographs—are about doing, about engaging, more than merely just *saying*. For all a photograph can tell it exists because someone went somewhere, saw something, and used their camera to *do* something about it.

Since his first pictures were exhibited and published at the Museum of Modern Art, William Eggleston has always embraced the doing, the going, and the idea, as his first book suggests, that he will "guide" us to places and vistas we need to see. "He photographs what's there, what no one else would even think to look at," wrote Richard B. Woodward in a 1991 profile in *Vanity Fair*. "And better than anyone else, he makes something out of almost nothing." Making something out of

nothing, to find a good photograph where no one has ever dared to look, to imagine words and ways to see that are completely new—this is the heart of making art, using photography to do rather than merely say.⁵

This pursuit is fundamental to any photographer and, like all serious artists, is the only way to render the daily—even mundane—movements of life. Flannery O'Connor speaks of “the lines of spiritual motion as they can be perceived on the surface of life and followed deeper into some point where revelation can take place.” This, she explains, “is simply an attempt to track down the Holy Ghost through a tangle of human suffering and aspiration and idiocy.”⁶

Tracking down the holy in the ordinary is at the core of photography. Yet we know there's only so much that a mere image can hold, only so much that can be revealed in the rectangular frame of a two-dimensional picture. Alabama songwriter and country-music sensation Jamey Johnson responded to the limits of photographic representation in his 2009 hit “In Color.” Penned with Nashville-based songwriters Lee Thomas Miller and James Otto, “In Color” tells the story of a grandson looking at a series of black-and-white photographs with his grandfather.

I said, Grandpa what this picture here
It's all black and white it ain't real clear
Is that you there? He said, Yeah I was eleven
Times were tough back in '35
That's me and Uncle Joe just trying to survive
A cotton farm in the Great Depression

And then the refrain, explaining to the young boy the limits of what the photograph can show, how even the nuances of the familiar are only partially rendered:

If it looks like we were scared to death
Like a couple of kids just trying to save each other
You should've seen it in color⁷

In Johnson's song, life in black and white may look bleaker than remembered, darker than it was to the boy's grandfather. These aren't “scared” victims of an earlier time in the Depression. To be sure, those times were hard, but the song suggests that with the addition of color the boy would see and feel a more complex reality, more texture than the black, white, and grays provide. In his essay “The Color of Memory,” Paul Hendrickson writes about the Farm Security Administration (FSA) color photographs. Contrasting the FSA's color photographs from the South with the more familiar black and white images, he writes, “Because the image is in color, I am able to feel something in a deeper way . . .” Whether the color photograph in Johnson's song would look more “real” or more ominous, the subtleties communicated through color about the Depression do change what we

notice and what we feel, at times making the harshness of life even more evident or the beauty of a modest day more luminous.⁸

Eggleston and William Christenberry seem to have always worked beyond black and white. They both have painting backgrounds and acknowledge the influence each has had on the other. Eggleston, who photographed in black and white in his early years, once said, “I assumed I could do in color what I could do in black and white.” Relatively new to Memphis from the Mississippi Delta, he took color film, loaded it in his camera, and went to “the big supermarket on Madison Avenue in Memphis. It seemed a good place to try things out.” He recalls success that very day: “The first frame, I remember, was a guy pushing grocery carts. Some kind of pimply, freckled face guy in the late sunlight. Pretty fine picture actually.”⁹

The choice of color is perhaps the most obvious shift in Eggleston’s work on that day, but it’s also important to note his going to a grocery store to photograph. The modern supermarket is certainly a part of the more mundane cultural landscape, nearly opposite the aesthetic of the rural country stores of Walker Evans’s American South. Another southern photographer, Paul Kwilecki, also found relevance in the stores of the modern South. Exploring both the obvious and the invisible in his Decatur County, Georgia, home, Kwilecki made an extraordinary series of grocery store pictures in the late 1970s and early 1980s—a series he called “Shoppers”—that bear witness to his most basic commitment to photograph the ordinary spaces and near-universal moments in Bainbridge, Georgia. By the 1970s, “stores in Bainbridge became the same as stores all over the country,” he notes, affirming in his writing that he was not only interested in the exceptional or the romantic. “They looked alike, carried the advertised brands, and treated customers with self-service indifference that bordered on contempt,” writes Kwilecki. “Shoppers went from aisle to aisle like robots pushing buggies, looking anxious, and scanning shelves with the intensity of a bird dog on point.”¹⁰

Kwilecki photographed his home place obsessively for over forty years. He often would say that his hometown was “a place that some say has no meaning.” But like William Faulkner, who stayed home to create his remarkable body of literature, Kwilecki had a different vision. “The task is complicated,” he said at a lecture at Duke University in 2001. “I am one man, one mind, one pair of eyes trying to distinguish what is significant in an entire community.” He went about this work with a deep honesty, following his own instincts, his own point of view. “I rearrange the sacred furniture,” he said. “Because my brain, not my camera, is my instrument, beauty isn’t enough.”¹¹

Kwilecki initially aspired to be a writer, having studied literature in college. Always a student of art, an inveterate reader of books and watcher of movies, he was equipped with a mind that seemed more drawn to the poetry of life than to the practical details of the day-to-day. In various writings he would date his Decatur



"If one waits to take the picture, it's too late," said Eggleston. This idea resonates with fellow Mississippian Endora Welty's comments about her own work and the snapshot, an aesthetic she also saw as connected to motion, to passing time: "A good snapshot stops a moment from running away." Left: Tuskegee Airmen attend a briefing in Italy, 1945. Above right: Paul Robeson (center) and José Ferrer (right) watch a softball game in Central Park, 1943. Below right: Rosalyn Carter waves to husband Jimmy, whose helicopter prepares for takeoff from the White House lawn, 1977. Photographs courtesy of the Collections of the Library of Congress.





*Photographers—and photographs—
are about doing, about engaging, about
action more than merely saying.
For all a photograph can tell it exists
because someone went somewhere, saw
something, and used their camera to do
something about it. FSA photographer
Marion Post (Wolcott) with Rolleiflex
and Speed Graphic in hand, Maryland,
1940, courtesy of the Collections of the
Library of Congress.*

County work as beginning in 1960, though there are a number of fine prints that were made earlier. He once wrote that it was “an old but dormant interest in photography” beginning to flower again that brought him to his serious pursuit of a “project” about his home county.¹²

He worked hard to locate his subject matter, point of view, and technique. All along the way he would write about his task, about his efforts to photograph the trivial as well as the exotic of his county in a way that transformed the familiar into something powerful, reverent, and far-reaching. “Day to day most people experience a good many important feelings and if one had the power to put them down in a literary way,” he observed in a journal entry, “so that the gut feelings came through and the anxieties were recalled with some real candor and vividness, something really strong and worthwhile might be compiled over the years.” In the next paragraph he is more definitive: “In a way, this is what I *am* doing photographically.”¹³

When he wrote that it had been over ten years since he started work on his Decatur County project, he was beginning to see the power of his constant gaze on his home territory. However, as much as he questions the merits of his photographic work he also saw and truly believed in what it might all add up to if pursued over time. “Until recently,” Kwilecki observed, perhaps more to himself than anyone else in a 1971 journal entry, “I have been more or less unsure just what

it was I really wanted from photography. About four years ago I began to sense an interest in documentary work, but it was weak and non-specific and little more than an idea.” As he deepened his explorations of his own county, he discovered more and more what interested him.¹⁴

Relatively early in his project, in 1967, Kwilecki took a photograph that he eventually titled “Mrs. Tomlinson in the House of Tomatoes.” Like all of his images from Decatur County, it was made at a familiar place in a typical moment. But the success of the photograph comes from the juxtaposition of Mrs. Tomlinson leaning back in her upholstered chair toward the tomato boxes, which tilt so drastically that they seem ready to fall at any moment. Finally, it’s the *National Enquirer* that claims our attention, announcing FLYING SAUCERS OVER MIAMI. The photograph is at once the product of a unique and passing moment and a document of the everyday: a simple work break that includes time for reading the paper. Kwilecki believed his town and county had all he needed to make a body of work that was passionately particular to place but also profoundly and unquestionably evocative of the human condition anywhere.

Michael Carlebach’s witty images in “American Studies,” featuring similarly ironic juxtapositions from the moments of everyday life that perpetually surround us but we hardly attend to, elevate the “insignificant” to a place of beauty and wonder. He calls this his “sideways look at America,” providing viewers with a direct and poignant window into who we really are, where we *actually* live. A beach preacher attempts to convert the sun worshippers, a cigar store Indian looks directly at us while a woman — who is she? — looks away, a well-dressed man sets his table for some kind of party in a cemetery. We know these things actually happen, and seeing Carlebach’s photographs makes us remember scenes and places we’ve long forgotten. We believe what we see and are urged to pay closer attention to the sidelines, the bleacher seats of everyday existence, with the recognition that what often goes unnoticed in fact deserves our full attention.

Ben Childs’s wonderful essay, “Mapping *The Democratic Forest*,” explores ideas of the “post-rural” South through a selection of photographs from William Eggleston’s book of the same name. Tracing and interpreting Eggleston’s imagery and its relation to ideas — real and imagined — of the American South, we are reminded of Lucy Lippard’s notion of “a multi-centered sense of place.” Eggleston’s view of the South is, like all views, constructed and ever-changing, not bound by rural or urban, old or new, but made full by what interests him, what attracts his eye. “In landscapes, cityscapes, street scenes, roadside scenes, at every sort of public converging-point,” writes Eudora Welty of Eggleston’s vision, “in dreaming long view and arresting close-up, through hours of dark and light, he sets forth what makes up our ordinary world.” For Eggleston, the “ordinary” exists in many places and is marked by both present and passed time.¹⁵

Lynn Marshall-Linnemeier has immersed herself in the people, history, and



Flannery O'Connor speaks of "the lines of spiritual motion as they can be perceived on the surface of life and followed deeper into some point where revelation can take place." This, she explains, "is simply an attempt to track down the Holy Ghost through a tangle of human suffering and aspiration and idiocy." Left: Pittsboro, North Carolina, 1939. Right: near Chapel Hill, North Carolina, 1939. Photographs by Dorothea Lange, courtesy of the Collections of the Library of Congress.





Paul Kwilecki explored both the obvious and the invisible and made an extraordinary series of images of shoppers in Bainbridge, Georgia. His grocery store pictures from the late 1970s and early 1980s—a series he called “Shoppers”—bear witness to his most basic commitment to photograph the ordinary spaces and near universal moments in Bainbridge. Photographs courtesy of Paul Kwilecki Photographs and Papers, Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library, Duke University.





“I rearrange the sacred furniture,” Paul Kwilecki said. Like all of his images from Decatur County, this one from 1967 was made at a familiar place in a typical moment. But the success of the photograph comes from the juxtaposition of Mrs. Tomlinson sitting in her upholstered chair, leaning back toward the tomato boxes, which tilt so drastically that they seem ready to fall at any moment. Finally, it’s the National Enquirer that claims our attention. “Mrs. Tomlinson in the House of Tomatoes,” Paul Kwilecki Photographs and Papers, Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library, Duke University.

culture of Mound Bayou, Mississippi, throughout the last twenty years. She was friend, collaborator, and apprentice to the indefatigable Milburn Crowe—the quintessential self-taught local historian, the keeper of his community’s past—learning from him his wise, respectful story of the Mound Bayou community. She worked with his splendid archive of images, letters, journals, and other documents that tell the story, for those willing to listen, of this remarkable place. Her deep understanding of Mound Bayou history, coupled with her desire to confront the twisted, negative past revealed in stereographic imagery of African Americans, led Marshall-Linnemeier essentially to “remake” the visual history of a people in her project “Stereo Propaganda.”

Using all the tools of the documentary artist—oral history, photography, and documentation of family albums—she directs her singular point of view as an artist to retrieve the stories of individuals that others tried to hide and erase. “I Know Who,” her title for a complete transformation of the ugly racism of an original stereoscopic image, demonstrates her ability to make beautiful and meaningful the previous repulsive stereotype, as she takes up her own battle with the intended obviousness of the image. Rather than discard these distorted images, she

confronts them and proceeds to remake and reclaim history. We always have the freedom to question the veracity of an image, to deconstruct the ways in which a photograph is or is not true. Marshall-Linnemeier starts with this process, doubting full well what the original stereographs attempt to make us believe: that this is the way it was. She wrestles the mythic past to the ground and proceeds to recreate her own rich narratives.

We always want to control how we are represented in self-portraiture or autobiography, and Marshall-Linnemeier's work shares kinship with other acts of self-presentation. "Autobiography is itself an exertion of control over self-image," argues Linda Haverty Rugg in *Picturing Ourselves*, "for in writing an account of one's own life, one authorizes the life, claiming a kind of privilege for one's own account." Likewise, in reshaping and reclaiming these images—and the power within—Marshall-Linnemeier puts her own artistic stamp on history.¹⁶

William Christenberry, interviewed here by William Ferris, began his photographic work around his home in West Central Alabama, on some of the same roads, fields, and graveyards where Walker Evans had photographed for *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*. Like so many photographers, Christenberry began with a consumer-grade camera, the near ubiquitous Brownie box camera. He wandered his home area, always with color film, initially making pictures that were references for his paintings. He acknowledges the fundamental influence of southern writers and the storytelling tradition, believing that influence greater "on my work than the work of other visual artists."

Christenberry's interest in the familiar, in returning over and over to his home turf to chart how it is changing and how his point of view as an artist changes, has had a profound influence on several generations of artists. He takes the long view, locating a space or building that captures him and watching its gradual evolution, not in judgment or fueled by nostalgia, but rather with the considered attentive pace and meter of the storyteller. He understands what Flannery O'Connor meant when she said, "[T]here is no more humble occupation than to be a storyteller. And though we invest it with theory and give it the platform for its occasion it remains all the same the primitive thing that it is: an attempt to make someone who doesn't want to listen, listen and who doesn't want to see, see."¹⁷

Dolores Flamiano takes us to Hell Hole Swamp and Pineville, both in South Carolina, to revisit two historic *Life* magazine pieces on black midwifery and nursing in this issue's "Heroes of Hell Hole Swamp." Retracing the work of Hansel Mieth and W. Eugene Smith, we see the complexities of two very different photographers attempting to communicate their visions through the medium of the photo-essay. Nearly forgotten by photographic historians, Hansel Mieth was the consummate crosser of boundaries. A German immigrant, she was one of the few women photographers at *Life* in 1940. Yet, after heading south to Hell Hole Swamp in South Carolina, she ultimately felt "like a sister" to Pat Clark, the Afri-



“Women Working,” Susan Harbage Page’s portraits and voices of women from a textile recycling plant in Charlotte, reveals the transcendent beauty in work spaces that often deliver more dusty monotony than the gorgeous glows of Page’s portraits. Page’s work delivers to us the details and emotion of complex lives of factory women, personalizing industrial space. Sharon Yvonne Mclean Sanders, photographed by Susan Harbage Page.

can American nurse she photographed with such compassion. While unsuccessful in working with the male-dominated editorial staff at *Life*, she tried hard to tell the story on her own terms.

Smith’s 1951 “Nurse Midwife” essay has very much entered the canon of photographic and journalistic history. Maude Callen, whom Smith followed for over two months through her “long, exhausting days,” recalled watching Smith as he worked as a photographer: “. . . it made you look, look, look at things that you’d think wouldn’t make anything.” In this slight recollection we see how the engagement of the photographer with the most apparent details—the most truly obvious—can shift the vision of others. Smith worked from a committed stance of near obsession, believing deeply that his work could create change. “I am always torn,” he once said, “between the attitudes of the journalist who is a recorder of facts and the artist who is necessarily at odds with the facts. My principal concern is for honesty, above all, honesty with myself.”¹⁸

Susan Harbage Page’s portraits and voices of women from a textile recycling plant in Charlotte, North Carolina, “Women Working,” reveal the transcendent beauty in workspaces that often deliver more dusty monotony than the gorgeous glows of Page’s portraits. The resilient poetry of the women’s lives—“I wonder why women have so much pain,” Dorothy Fleming asks—enlarges the reach of Page’s portraits, leading us into these particular lives where simple enduring is not enough. Page’s work delivers to us the details and emotion of the complex lives



In “The Day Is Past and Gone,” Scott Matthews’s exploration into his family photographs grows out of the most natural—is it universal?—impulse to explore the ephemera of family history. Turning to a shoebox of pictures during visits to his great-aunt’s house, he would revisit photographs of every vintage and form, finding as much mystery as history, as many untold moments as family stories.

of factory women, personalizing industrial space. The repetition of factory work, banal to the core, is transformed and animated through Susan Page’s direct, radiant images.

“The Day Is Past and Gone,” Scott Matthews’s exploration into his family photographs, grows out of the most natural—is it universal?—impulse to explore the ephemera of family history. Turning to a shoebox of pictures during visits to his great-aunt’s house, he would revisit photographs of every vintage and form, finding as much mystery as history, as many untold moments as family stories. We all return to such boxes over and over, hoping, I think, to reclaim some of what has slipped away, to find answers to questions we’d never be able to fully articulate, and because, in those boxes, there’s the freedom to weave the story in our own way, to fit it to our own necessary needs. My late friend Barry Hannah once wrote that he “never needed photographs to remind me of what a good time I had or was, and I’m amazed by people who do.” It’s not the photographs of ourselves we crave, but like those in Matthews’s selection in this issue, it is that we want to know things that the pictures seem to know.¹⁹

Which is better, we get to ask, the picture of the bear on a chain or Matthews’s great-aunt’s story about the bear on the chain? They are inseparable, as one would not exist, it seems, without the other, in that the photograph prompted the story.



In Let Us Now Praise Famous Men, James Agee wrote that “the aspect of a street in sunlight can roar in the heart of itself as a symphony, perhaps as no symphony can: and all of consciousness is shifted from the imagined, the revisive, to the effort to perceive simply the cruel radiance of what is.” Mt. Pleasant, 1935, photographed by Walker Evans, courtesy of the Collections of the Library of Congress.

It’s the story that takes us deep into the photograph, into the back rooms of memory and imagination that photography can never reach. Yet we needed that well-made front door—the photograph—to begin the story. We need an entry point. We need to know things, says Hannah, “things true, solid, the inside skinny.” With the inside skinny we can move on.²⁰

To see the lines and shapes of the “inside,” the obvious through photography requires us to slow down and take stock of the mundane, the detritus, the forgotten, the taken for granted. James Agee argued this in *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* when he wrote, “For in the immediate world, everything is to be discerned, for him who can discern it, and centrally and simply . . .” Advancing a vision that leaves nothing unseen, everything accounted for that we can possibly perceive, he laid claim to the point of view that this work would not lead to “either dissection into science, or digestion into art, but with the whole of consciousness, seeking to perceive as it stands: so that the aspect of a street in sunlight can roar in the heart

of itself as a symphony, perhaps as no symphony can: and all of consciousness is shifted from the imagined, the revisive, to the effort to perceive simply the cruel radiance of what is.”²¹

NOTES

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17. Flannery O’Connor, Lecture at the University of Notre Dame, 1963.
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19. Barry Hannah, “Your Own Beautiful Lie,” in *A World Unsuspected: Portraits of Southern Childhood*, ed. Alex Harris (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1987), 163.
20. Hannah, “Your Own Beautiful Lie,” 173.
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