



Let Us Now Praise Famous Men: An Annotated Edition of the James Agee–Walker Evans Classic, with Supplementary Manuscripts (Collected Works of James Agee)

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In the summer of 1936, writer James Agee and photographer Walker Evans, on assignment for Fortune magazine, went to central Alabama to document the lives of three white sharecropper families. Agee's editors killed the article, and after a torturous five-year struggle to do artistic justice to the material, the author finally published it in book form as *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*, only to see it sink with barely a ripple. The posthumous revival of Agee's literary fortunes led to the work's reissue in 1960, its adoption as an unofficial bible by civil rights workers, and its enshrinement as an American classic. It has remained in print ever since. In this, the third volume in The Works of James Agee series, editor Hugh Davis not only offers a thoroughly annotated edition of the Agee-Evans masterpiece, featuring invaluable ex-planatory notes as well as notes comparing the published work to extant copies of the original manuscript, but also supplements that text with a wealth of additional material: an insightful critical essay, variant versions of key sections, unused chapters, correspondence between Agee and others involved in the book's publication (notably Houghton Mifflin editor Robert Linscott), generous selections from the author's notebooks, and much more. This volume opens with the original gallery of Evans's thirty-one photographs from the 1941 edition and also includes, as part of the supplementary material, the expanded gallery of sixty-two photos that appeared in the 1960 edition. Here as well is the text of the rejected Fortune article, "Cotton Tenants," fully annotated for the first time. Informed by Agee's love of his subjects, his acute observational skills, and his poetic, pas-sionate, raging voice-not to mention the stark artistry of Evan's black and white photography- *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* is a book that to this day defies easy classification. This volume recaptures the aesthetic impact of the original, corrects errors from earlier editions, and, most important, illuminates the difficult process that spawned its creation.



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