

the photographer in the beat-hipster idiom

robert frank's *the americans*

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Few analysts have captured the sadness, tensions, ironies and possibilities of 1950s American culture and society with the depth and insight of Robert Frank. Frank's accomplishment is rendered all the more impressive since it was done without words in his volume of photographs, *The Americans* (1959).¹ The tremendous power of Frank's pictorial imagery bore deep affinities to the existential Beat-Hipster idiom perfected in Jack Kerouac's *On the Road* (1957) and Norman Mailer's "The White Negro" (1957).² While Frank did, as Susan Sontag suggests, represent America as "the grave of the Occident," marked by desolation, violence and death, his images were more phoenix-like.³ *The Americans* offers, as I will demonstrate, a sustained critique of the barrenness of American culture, but along with his Beat and Hipster comrades, Frank possessed a vision of renewal and rebirth. He believed that the counter vision and lifestyle of America's black population offered a viable alternative for white America. Frank's presentation of black America, however, was not a naive celebration; it recognized the problematic nature of racial realities and the loneliness and alienation that afflicted all Americans.

At first glance, Frank's *The Americans* might seem yet another document in the long tradition of foreign travelers' accounts of American society and culture. Frank arrived in New York from Switzerland in 1947, but over the

next five years he traveled abroad often. Before beginning work on *The Americans*, Frank was a highly successful commercial photographer; his work appeared in *Fortune*, *Life*, *Look*, *Harper's Bazaar* and *McCall's*.⁴ Frank's auto-tour of 1955-1956 represented not only his break with previous photographic compositions but also his initial discovery of America. Frank did not record America passively; he approached it with cultural baggage, assumptions, a set of questions, a medley of expectations and definite, strongly formed visual preferences. Frank's personality, described by Joyce Johnson as a blend of "European dourness and pessimistic wit," certainly helped to focus his photographic vision.⁵

Some of the themes and subjects commonly associated with *The Americans* well predate that compendium. The imagery of alienation, loneliness, mass culture forms, violence and death as well as the metaphors of the highway and automobile are readily found in the photographs that Frank took in Brazil, England and Spain between 1947 and 1952.⁶ In essence, Frank was concerned with themes and subjects not peculiar to America; he sought in part to document the dilemma of modern man. Frank brought his talent, vision and angst to America.

Frank's vision was not singular nor especially European; he shared assumptions, predilections and styles in common with the American Hipster and Beat artists of the 1950s. Although there were real differences between the violent Hipster and the generally uproarious yet pacifistic Beat, both reflected a common set of assumptions.⁷ Thus in this paper, the Beat and Hipster, sometimes with "existential" as an adjective, will be considered synonymous terms. For both of them life was always in an unsteady state; change, movement and speed were of the essence. To remain stationary was to court death. Kerouac's *On the Road* perfectly captured the kinetic qualities of modern existence in the character of Dean Moriarty who thrived on fast automobiles, amphetamines and open highways. The Beat or Hipster was open to experimentation and lived, or sought to live, for the intrinsic fullness of each moment. He was involved in a constant search for an authentic self, a valid voice. As Robert J. Lifton phrased it, the existential Hipster craved "experiential transcendence," a state in which the present moment is lived "with such intensity that time and death are, in effect, eliminated." Danger and drugs often prompted such experiences. The expression of such vivid experiential possibilities was developed by the Beat and Hipster through the espousal of new cultural heroes, individuals outside the society either through personal rebellion or by social and racial circumstance: the jazz musician, hobo, black, criminal, insane person or dope addict. To be alienated, apart from social conventions and expectations, was to be set free, free to take to the road or to become part of the urban nether-world.⁸

Prominently displayed within the Beat-Hipster vocabulary was a scathing critique of American society and culture. Though their exclamations and analyses were gutteral and left unfootnoted, they did recognize many of the trends being examined by sociologists such as David Riesman

and William Whyte. The “other-directed” personality and the corporate man were, to the Beat-Hipster poets, spiritually dead.

Though subversive and challenging to the established order, the Beat or Hipster was not a political radical. He was the self-contained, existential man, the American loner, constantly attuned to new experiences. While alien to the values of dominant society, his protests were designed to evoke the absurdity of life through artistic expression and personal statement tinged with irony and mockery.⁹

Frank’s connection to the Beat-Hipster mentality is made obvious by his close collaboration with Jack Kerouac. Kerouac wrote the introduction for *The Americans*. Surprisingly, many analysts of *The Americans*, such as Janet Malcolm, William Stott and Tod Papageorge, while they may at times display a quotation from Kerouac in their texts, all but ignore the Frank-Kerouac nexus in their concern to place Frank’s work inside or outside of the photographic canon.¹⁰ Frank first met Kerouac in late 1957 or early 1958; he was already friends with Allen Ginsberg. All shared a similar set of values and frustrations. Kerouac’s *On the Road*, after years of difficulties in finding a publisher, had just been released. Similarly, Frank’s volume of photographs had been rejected by publishers because of its depressing, “un-American” hues. Kerouac, however, was enthusiastic about the photographs; he said to Frank, “You got eyes.” Kerouac quickly agreed to write the introduction to the American edition of *The Americans*. Their collaboration and friendship would continue through a photo-essay on a road trip the two took to Florida and to the more successful film, “Pull My Daisy” (1959-1960), a “Spontaneous Documentary” about the Beats with narration by Kerouac.¹¹

Frank’s photographic as well as personal vision was in perfect affinity with the Beat ideal as celebrated by Kerouac. Frank was, moreover, the existential photographer *par excellence*. He said that he had always had a “feeling of being outside.” Photography allowed him to remain outside; his art required no communication or connections with others: “I wouldn’t have to talk with anyone. . . . You’re just an observer.” Frank was the photographer on the move, seizing the moment through an “instantaneous reaction to oneself.”¹² His vision was self-professedly personal and emphasized feeling rather than ratiocination. Like the Beats, Frank was not rooted to any one place, just as he was not connected to any of his subjects; he was embarked upon a frenetic, nationwide quest for self and subject. Kerouac maintained that this in-motion attitude and style had made Frank shadow-like and at times invisible to his photographic subjects.

In his photographic style, Frank was a kindred spirit to the Beats. The occasionally tilted horizon lines of his photographs and the hazy quality of his prints—quite against the *Life* magazine defined boundaries of photographic practice—actually served to increase the sense of movement; they helped to construct an aura of the moment. Frank’s use of a lightweight 35mm Leica camera meant that he was able to move and shoot rapidly, “from the hip,” without the encumbrances that, for example, had weighed

down Walker Evans.¹³ Nor would Frank wait days for the proper lighting situation as had Evans. In a sense, Baudelaire's description of the *Flâneur*, as later explained and interpreted by Walter Benjamin and Susan Sontag, perfectly captures Frank's existential, modernist style. As Sontag puts it, generally the photographer appears as "the solitary walker reconnoitering, stalking, cruising the urban [for Frank add here, and rural] inferno," impelled onward by the "seamy corners" of the city.¹⁴ Frank's existentialist imperative as a photographer, then, was to be beholden to no one, to explore unrepresented, subterranean subjects and to place his personal imprimatur on all he encountered.

If Frank was the Beat photographer in style, then as Jack Kerouac well understood, his images reflected and codified the Beat-Hipster ideal. In the under-punctuated, rambling stream-of-consciousness introduction to *The Americans*, Kerouac in his opening sentence places Frank's artistic vision squarely within the mainstream of the Beat:

THAT CRAZY FEELING IN AMERICA when the sun is hot on the streets and music comes out of the jukebox or from a nearby funeral, that's what Robert Frank has captured in these tremendous photographs taken as he traveled on the road around practically forty-eight states in an old used car (on Guggenheim Fellowship) and with the agility, mystery, genius, sadness and strange secrecy of a shadow photographed scenes that have never been seen before on film.¹⁵

Certain Beat-Hipster words and phrases abound: "CRAZY FEELING . . . music . . . jukebox . . . funeral . . . traveled on the road . . . old used car . . . agility, mystery, genius, sadness and strange secrecy." Here, as Kerouac noted, are the essentials of the Beat imagination, its iconographic roadmap. All appear prominently in *The Americans*. The open road photographs, with the white dividing lines reaching endlessly into the abyss, the jukeboxes with their wide and lonely repertoire, the funeral scenes where death is related to the omnipresent car culture: these are the images that Frank offered his readers and that caught Kerouac's eye and emotions. As subject matter and interpretation, Frank's photographs were the data of the Beats, monuments to the Hipster vision.

Nowhere is this better expressed than in the series of five adjacent photographs nestled in the middle of *The Americans*.¹⁶ Within the confines of these five images, the volume's intermingling of life and death was captured in miniature. The logic of these photographs replicated the larger poetic vision of the entire volume. In "U.S. 91, leaving Blackfoot, Idaho," Frank's shot of the interior of a car captures two intent, grimly serious young men beginning their auto journey. This shot is followed by "St. Petersburg, Florida" (Fig. 1), an evocative study of the elderly—sad and dying—sitting on two benches whose posts seem to resemble the marker lines of a highway. In the background of this image, placed against the rootedness of those involved in the waiting game of death, is a streaking car—perhaps one carrying the Idaho youth—off to new horizons and



FIGURE ONE: "St. Petersburg, Florida"



FIGURE TWO: "Covered Car—Long Beach, California"

possibilities. But the next image arrests our attention on the possible and serves as a sustained coda to the waiting of the old and the frenetic movement of the young. This is the famous “Covered Car—Long Beach, California” (Fig. 2), where in the shadow of two palm trees and in front of what might well be described as a Bauhaus funeral crypt, is a tarp shrouded car—immobile, dead. The expectation that the tarp might be lifted and the car re-born is dashed in less than subtle fashion when in the next photograph Frank presents the powerful image of a covered body, the victim of a roadside accident along the road of dreams and song, Route 66. The final photo in this montage returns us to the road and thus opens up, once again, a set of possibilities. “U.S. 285, New Mexico,” is an ode to the Beat juxtaposition of life and death. It, like so many of Frank’s photographs, serves as a testament to Roland Barthes’ observation that photographic images invoke death with tremendous vigor.¹⁷ In Frank’s photograph the road stretches forever into the night skies; the passing lanes of the highway suggest escape and speed, but evoke danger, for one can glimpse the outline of an on-coming car, headlights faint, in the passing lane.

As a metaphorical foray into the pictorial representation of the Beat idiom, these photographs capture much. They suggest freedom but always link it with death. We are only alive to the endless possibilities of life when we are in the passing lane, traveling fast, faster, faster. And yet, as we seek to avoid the rootedness of old age and inertia, the time of nondiscovery, we must always beware of that other car, the car of death, immobility, old age, coming toward us as we speed into the passing lane.

Kerouac’s introduction did not ignore, in fact it celebrated, the pervasive sense of sadness evoked by Frank’s photographs. Frank had, Kerouac observed, “sucked a sad poem right out of America onto film.”¹⁸ The pathos of *The Americans* was emphasized by contemporary reviewers who generally found it a token of Frank’s personal, pessimistic vision of life; one, they were certain, which did not adequately express the essence and diversity of America. Later students of Frank’s work have acknowledged the obvious depths of sadness in *The Americans* and contrasted it, usually unfavorably, with the relatively good humored, respectful treatment of the poor demonstrated in Walker Evans’ photographs from the 1930s. This comparison juxtaposes the hopes and expectations for change in Depression-era America against the malaise and hopelessness of post-war, atomic-age America.¹⁹ To be sure, one cannot understate the tremendous, almost numbing sadness that informs all of Frank’s photographs. Out of a total of about sixty photographs depicting faces in *The Americans*, only a handful capture a smile or indicate any sense of happiness or adjustment. And even then the smiling person is often situated next to a dour individual or the smile is patently plastic, as in the image of the young television performer whose false grin is reproduced, and further rendered problematic and false, by Frank’s wonderful shot of her simultaneously appearing on the television monitor next to the stage set.

Frank’s somber vision is only part of the predominantly critical



FIGURE THREE: "Bar—Las Vegas, Nevada"

characterization of American society and culture that marks *The Americans*. Frank remembers being terribly troubled by McCarthyism at the time. His photographs of the American political landscape express this feeling.²⁰ *The Americans* is dotted with self-important, petty politicians captured suppressing a yawn or surrounded by tattered flags and campaign signs. A pervasive undercurrent of violence is also present in Frank's pictures, represented by taut and tight cowboys wound up and ready for a fight. When depicting workers, Frank shows them as sad and alienated, situated in all-night diners, elevators, buses and bathrooms. They are gloomy and anonymous. In a photograph of a Detroit factory, the workers' faces are indistinct, blurred, wonderful analogues for the speeding assembly line which enslaves the workers and turns them into machines.

The deep spiritual malaise of Americans is heightened by the contrasting liveliness of the material artifacts which surround them. "Bar—Las Vegas, Nevada" (Fig. 3), captures the naked loneliness of American life by showing a young man stepping up to a jukebox; he appears languid, deadened to the world surrounding him. The jukebox is alive; one imagines it revving up to reverberate with the strains of the jazz beat. The man, not the jukebox, is the material object, the dead machine.²¹

White Americans, for Frank, are the walking dead. This is apparent in his photograph, "Charity Ball—New York City" (Fig. 4). A woman

socialite, gaudy in jewels, in lifeless fashion and without a smile—indeed her face evidences only the grimace of severe ennui—accepts on her cheek the kiss of a man whose long fingers wrap around her cold shoulders in a Dracula-like embrace. Even when America's upper crust are smiling, as in "Cocktail Party—New York City," they seem to be courting death: their wealth does not free them but only seems to further weigh them down. From Frank's photographs, then, one might surmise that the blood of America had been sucked out by a materialistic, alienating, absurd culture: exactly the type of critique that the Beat and Hipster existentialist writers had begun to develop in the 1950s and that would receive fuller explication in the counter-cultural movement of the 1960s.²²

Robert Frank would have been untrue to the Beat-Hipster vision had his images been only condemnatory, simple descriptions of the alienated "lonely crowd." He had to give his readers more than merely a diseased facade, to offer if not hope, at least some chance of expectation or positive alternative imagery. Black Americans became for Frank the representatives of authenticity and possibility, of freedom; they appeared apart from society but not alienated from themselves, occupying a space that allowed them strong expression of emotions, feelings and spontaneity. Yet Frank also proved to be an astute political observer of black life in America. He did not seek to mythologize blacks, to remove them from the complexity of history; he was careful to present their human dimensions and to provide visual clues to their historical situation. Rather than presenting a simplistic celebration of black existence, a call for primitivism, Frank was careful to document the ambivalence, irony and pathos of the black experience.

In his fascination with blacks, Frank was once again within the mainstream of Beat-Hipster ideas. Beat writings pulsate with the liveliness of jazz; blacks are walking expressions of uninhibited sexuality, of disdain for social convention. They are open to the possibilities of freedom in an age of domination and the bomb. The fullest expression of the celebration of the black was, of course, Norman Mailer's "The White Negro." The Negro, as Mailer pointed out, was "Hip" because "he has been living on the margin between totalitarianism and democracy for two centuries." This special place had allowed blacks to develop a different consciousness which arose out of a sense of the existential dangers and predicament of modern living; at any moment they might forfeit their lives in repressive America.²³ The psychopathology of the Negro—like that of the homosexual, criminal or drug addict—offered him a freedom above society and a chance to develop a distinctive voice, style and language. For white intellectuals of the 1950s and earlier, certain that they had as a class lost their "vitality," the black underclass, as Philip Rieff has explained it more generally, seemed possessed of a dynamism that would help the intellectuals to escape the boredom and loneliness of their existence.²⁴

Blacks alone in *The Americans* show emotion, demonstrate deep feelings, appear free. The simple dichotomy of black emotions/white unfeeling or black freedom/white slavery is communicated most clearly in the structure that Frank uses to organize his photographs. In "San Francisco," Frank

disturbed the peace and quiet of a black couple who were sitting on a hillside enjoying a beautiful view of the city. The woman and man react to Frank's intrusion with disdain and obvious anger: he has violated their rights. The next photograph, "Belle Isle—Detroit," shows some white people who, while in a setting as idyllic as the previous shot of San Francisco, seem oblivious to Frank's presence and equally unaware of the beauty of their surroundings. In another photograph, again entitled "Belle Isle—Detroit," Frank depicts a moving convertible car populated by young black boys enjoying cooling breezes against their bare tops, and

FIGURE FOUR: "Charity Ball—New York City"





FIGURE FIVE: "New York City"

anticipating the joys of the beach. Their freedom and their organic and natural relationship to nature are compared with the subject of the following photograph, "Detroit," where an elderly couple sit in an enclosed, hardtop automobile; no movement is suggested or anticipated; they seem less angry than numbed by the wait in heavy traffic. Blacks throughout *The Americans* enjoy life in a way alien to whites. I have already discussed the photograph of the white man as machine next to the living jukebox. In another jukebox photo, Frank depicts a black baby next to the machine. Here there is no doubt that the kinetic, joyful baby is alive. Even



FIGURE SIX: "Trolley—New Orleans"

when a black is pictured as most alone, as in one shot of a large black woman seated on a chair in an open field, hand jaunty against her hip, her smile positively illuminates the surrounding landscape.

The existential Beat or Hipster was always aware of the proximity of death; indeed this knowledge helped to ensure his freedom. Scenes of death abound in Frank's photographs but the way in which his blacks approach it seems existential. Consider "Funeral—St. Helena, South Carolina," where a group of young black males are shown leaning up against their freshly-shined automobiles. There is no sense of grief in this shot, only one of intense boredom, an unwillingness on their parts to let death interfere with their enjoyment of life. Another photo of the same funeral captures the cold stiffness of the corpse in his coffin, but those who surround the deceased are free, free from grief and alive because their bodies are in motion.

Frank also shows blacks as sexually vital. In general, whites in the book are depicted without sexual passion or suggestiveness. When whites embrace, the grips are hard, suggestive of a death struggle, of conjugal necessity. Frank offers the contrast of black sexual freedom and an accompanying lack of sexual repression and inhibition. His marvelous image "New York City" (Fig. 5), shows three black or Puerto Rican women (probably transvestites). They are aware of Frank's presence—this is no candid shot. The women do not retreat from the camera or strike a



FIGURE SEVEN: "Charleston, South Carolina"

demure pose; instead they perform in sexual fashion, one stroking her face, another extending her hips. The one woman in the background who covers her face does not do it out of a desire to hide or to seek anonymity or to show modesty; she does it in a mocking and tantalizing fashion as she spreads the fingers of her hand wide open against her face.

Black sexuality and feeling are joined to an ability to experience deep religious ecstasy. Frank avoids the pat shots of black spirituals and instead focuses on a white-robed black priest clutching a cross as he prays by the shores of the Mississippi River. The significance of this ritual is unclear but the man's intense emotion is etched on his face. The next photograph indicates the literal hardening and deadening of religious zeal when it is translated into traditional symbolism. In his photograph of St. Francis, Frank once again depicts a priest carrying a cross, but now the religious leader is made of stone, situated on a pedestal above the ground, preaching dead words to the cold modern world of gas stations and government office buildings.²⁵

Black freedom, Frank rightly notes, is limited. Frank is traveling the terrain, albeit soon to begin crumbling, of Jim Crow, racist America. The cover photograph for the Aperture edition of *The Americans* (Fig. 6) perfectly captures realities of black life: we see faces of a number of people through the open windows of a New Orleans trolley. The pain and despair in the face of one black man immediately draw our attention. He is

framed, as if in a prison, by the windows of the vehicle and is thus chained to the social realities of the segregation era. Likewise, he and the other black passenger pictured are exiled to the back of the trolley. The most poignant and ambivalent expression of racial realities in *The Americans* is the photograph "Charleston, South Carolina" (Fig. 7). A richly black nurse, clothed in regulation white against a background of blurred white streets and institutional white walls, holds a very pale white baby. The baby is immobile; it stares straight ahead; the infant seems to be peering off into the future. It has a sagacious look well beyond its years, as though it realizes that its close relationship to this black woman, this surrogate mother, is foreclosed by the pressing realities of socially-regulated duration; the process of distancing may already be occurring. The attitude and look of the black nurse are uncertain. Though she holds the baby close, her look is not directed at the child, whose reality seems alien to her. The black woman seems lost in thought as well; perhaps she too is contemplating her separateness from the child.

In sum, Frank's depiction of black America is meant as an object lesson and a warning. While certainly holding out black feelings and emotions as positive goods, Frank does not suggest that they can be easily emulated by white Americans: they are the outgrowth of the dialectic of slavery and repression discussed by Mailer. Black authenticity, however, is not without a price. Blacks live in constant jeopardy, and their social position is clearly second class. Frank's whites are enslaved as well, prisoners of the staleness of modern, consumer America. He documents this in his photographs in graphic fashion. He does not imply simply that whites should be more like blacks; rather he seems to suggest through his photographs that all Americans need to escape from the prison of modern society. Blacks must be freed from the shackles of segregation, and whites must be liberated from conformity and spiritual alienation so that they may live freely and authentically.

Robert Frank's *The Americans* is a photographic tour de force and also an important document of 1950s America. His work is well situated and only properly understood within the context of the undercurrents of Beat and Hipster thought. Frank is the existential photographer capturing the absurd and alienating world of white Americans. Critique and commentary, *The Americans* retains its distinguishing mark as a piece of literature that departs from the consumer-oriented, standardizing trends of 1950s culture. *The Americans* presents the machine—the idol of the era—as livelier than its builders and consumers. *The Americans* also breaks from mainstream culture through its paradoxical interpretation of black America: oppressed blacks are emotionally freer than their white superiors. The volume must be read and understood as a significant commentary on American race relations in the 1950s. Finally, in style, imagery, interpretation and content, Robert Frank's *The Americans* must be seen as a photographic analogue to the Beat-Hipster vision of America.

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notes

The author would never have contemplated or completed this project without the insight and support of Marta Peluso. He also wishes to thank Robert Frank and Aperture for permission to reproduce photographs from *The Americans*.

1. All references to *The Americans* are from the Aperture edition (New York, 1969).
2. Kerouac, *On the Road* (1957 rpt. New York, 1979); Mailer, "The White Negro: Superficial Reflections on the Hipster," *Dissent*, 4 (1957), 276-93.
3. Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (New York, 1978), 48. Interpretations which emphasize Frank's bleak vision are: William Stott, "Walker Evans, Robert Frank, and the Landscape of Dissociation," *Artscanada*, 31 (December, 1974), 83-89; Janet Malcolm, *Diana & Nikon: Essays on the Aesthetic of Photography* (Boston, 1981), 139-62. More favorable interpretations are: Tod Papageorge, *Walker Evans and Robert Frank: An Essay on Influence* (New Haven, 1981); Jonathan Green, *American Photography: A Critical History, 1945 to the Present* (New York, 1984), 31-94. Green connects Frank with the Beats but continues to emphasize the somber nature of the images: vitality is found in the subject matter.
4. For biographical information on Frank, see Robert Frank, *The Lines of My Hand* (Los Angeles, 1972); Dennis Wheeler, "Robert Frank Interviewed," *Criteria*, 3 (June, 1977), 4-7; "Dialogue Between Robert Frank, Walker Evans and Students," *Still/3* (New Haven, 1973), 2-6; Frank, "Comments at Wellesley," in Eugenia Parry Janis and Wendy MacNeil, eds., *Photography within the Humanities* (Danbury, New Hampshire, 1977), 52-65; Weston J. Neuf, *Counterparts: Form and Emotion in Photographs* (New York, 1983), 154-55.
5. Joyce Johnson, *Minor Characters* (New York, 1984), 254.
6. Frank, *The Lines of My Hand*, n.p.
7. This was an especially problematic comparison for Jack Kerouac. For more on this, see Gerald Nicosia, *Memory Babe: A Critical Biography of Jack Kerouac* (New York, 1983), 206. The Beat-Hipster vision was a cultural commonplace which cropped up also in the music of John Cage, and in the plastic arts, first in abstract expressionism and ultimately in the mockery of Pop Art. See Calvin Tompkins, *The Bride and the Bachelors: Five Masters of the Avant-Garde* (exp. ed., New York, 1983).
8. Robert J. Lifton, "Protean Man," in Leo Hamalian and Frederick R. Karl, eds., *The Radical Vision: Essays for the Seventies* (New York, 1970), 53. On the Beats, see John Tytell, *Naked Angels: The Lives and Literature of the Beat Generation* (New York, 1976).
9. A good, concise summary of these points is in Richard H. Pells, "From Community to Conformity: Social Criticism in the Postwar Years," *The Philosophical Forum*, 10 (Fall, 1978), 26.
10. Cf. note 3.
11. Johnson, 254; Nicosia, 559-572; Kerouac, "Introduction" to *The Americans*, vi. Frank discusses his background and influences in Wheeler, 4-7.
12. Wheeler, 6; Frank, "Comments at Wellesley," 53; Frank, "A Statement," in Nathan Lyons, ed., *Photographers on Photography* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1966), 66-67.
13. Papageorge, 3-4, is useful on Frank's style; criticism of this style is offered in Stott, 84.
14. Sontag, 55-56.
15. Kerouac, "Introduction," i.
16. Frank has only rarely offered any interpretive or organizational information for *The Americans*. He has opined that "each section starts with an American flag, and each section began with no people and then came to people." Frank's recollection is faulty. *The Americans* opens with a flag scene (people are included in the image), yet the next photograph is of people, not objects. Frank in "Dialogue," 3. Frank always preferred to let his images speak for themselves: "The best would be no writing at all," Frank, *The Lines of My Hands*, n.p.
17. Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, trans. Richard Howard (New York, 1981), 30-32.
18. Kerouac, "Introduction," vi.
19. For a contemporary criticism of Frank's vision, see William Hogan, "Photo Coverage of the Ugly American," *San Francisco Chronicle*, (January 27, 1960), 25. For the Evans-Frank relationship see the essays by Stott, Papageorge, Malcolm and Green, note 3.
20. Frank, "Comments at Wellesley," 54.
21. Frank has admitted that he found the jukebox an American cultural symbol he could not resist. He did state that its appeal to him was largely due to the element of sound it gave to his photographs. This may also explain the power and appeal of his well-known photography, "Political Rally—Chicago." Frank, "Comments at Wellesley," 55. See the analysis of "Political Rally—Chicago" in Gene Markowski, *The Art of Photography: Image and Illusion* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1984), 38-39.
22. Frank implicitly recognized the connection between *The Americans* and the counter-culture of the 1960s. The young students, Frank recalled, were most moved by his images. "They recognized and understood my language. They listened to the voices that had no part in the 'System.' Aware of Hypocrisy around them, dissatisfied with slogans from preachers and patriots, they began to question everything," Frank, *The Lines of My Hands*, n.p.
23. Mailer, 278.

24. Philip Rieff, *The Triumph of the Therapeutic: Uses of Faith After Freud* (1966; New York, 1968), 11.

25. Jonathan Green offers a similar interpretation of the black priest and accompanying photographs in his *American Photography*, 87-88.