



James Agee: Selected Journalism

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Poet, film critic, screenwriter, and novelist James Agee is best known for his autobiographical Pulitzer Prize–winning novel, *A Death in the Family*. Yet the journalistic writings of this Knoxville, Tennessee, native established him as an equal of writers such as Ernest Hemingway and Stephen Crane. *James Agee: Selected Journalism* is a collection of his articles published from 1933 to 1947 by *Time* and *Fortune*, two of the era’s most influential magazines. This edition of the book includes two new articles from Agee’s school years and a new introduction by editor Paul Ashdown that places Agee’s journalistic work in the context of his entire career. Agee’s readers have often felt that his preoccupation with journalism prevented him from achieving a reputation as a great modern writer. However, Agee valued his articles highly, and so did many influential critics. His magazine work led to *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*, a challenge to the journalism profession. The selections in this volume offer grounds for a fuller reinterpretation of Agee’s career. The articles reproduced here chronicle life at home and abroad during the Depression and the war-torn 1940s. The range of topics is vast—from cockfighting and the racing season at Saratoga, to the devastation of postwar France and the passing of the Roman aristocracy, to the corporatization of a small orchid nursery and the way in which a variety of Americans experienced the death of President Roosevelt. In his journalistic pieces Agee shows a remarkable prescience. For example, he was early to realize the tremendous significance of the atom bomb and the effect of the Tennessee Valley Authority on the mountain regions. In the nineteen essays in this volume, Agee demonstrates his characteristic sensitivity and awareness and provides a keen insight into the culture of this turbulent era.

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