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Southern Community, Commerce, and Representation in the Global Age

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Southern Community, Commerce, and Representation in the Global Age

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An abstract of a dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the
James T. Laney School of Graduate Studies of Emory University
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Doctor of Philosophy
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Southern Community, Commerce, Representation in the Global Age is a multi-model dissertation in two parts, consisting of text and film, which explores representations of the rural- and working-class South. The first part examines representations of rural- and working-class white Southerners in photographs and film from 1908 and 1974. The second part, a case study of cotton deindustrialization in the rural South Carolina piedmont town of Chester, combines a written micro-history of the decline of cotton conglomerate Spring Industries with four short observational films which capture particular aspects of that decline's aftermath.

The dissertation focuses on mill photographs of Springs's presence in Chester in 1908, rural horror and hixploitation films, Southern history, and documentaries. In doing so, it draws on primary sources of photographer Lewis Hine, filmmakers Roger Corman, Monte Hellman, and Tobe Hooper, archival documents of Springs Industries, and original production of observational documentaries.

Since the founding of the American colonies, rural-and working class Southerners are portrayed in particular, if not negative, ways as backwards, lazy, and violent. These characterizations persist in the American imagination and are reinforced by visual images. As a consequence, the voices of those portrayed in visual culture are lost in the din of broader representations. *Southern Community, Commerce and Representation in the Global Age* looks at particular examples of these stereotypes in films and photographs, seeking to recover some of those voices.

The child photographs of Lewis Hine's work have been appropriated as propaganda for and against labor reformation laws during his time, and, in contemporary terms, by academics who argue about the merits of Hine's work. Both pay little attention to the subjects in the photos. Likewise, rural horror and hixploitation films showcase the most violent aspects of rural- and working- class Southerners, forgoing nuanced explorations of the custom and culture of rural- and working-class life in the South.

This dissertation seeks to reinstate some of those voices though the methods of photo-elicitation, historical readings of rural horror and exploitation films, and documentary prodcution. Such methods recover local history in the case of the photographs and explore the historical motivations of rural characters in film, allowing for a more nuanced lived history of Southern culture and custom.

The second part of the dissertation extends these interventions by using the case study of Chester, South Carolina as a departure point the ways in which documentary film and historical text can combine to provide nuanced, particular portraits of the South which stand in counterbalance to the broader portrayals in Part One.

Combining archival primary documents and original documentaries, the written history of Springs's post-World War II business culture, which resulted in the closing of Chester's mills, provides the context in which to view the documentaries. This text does not seek to explain the documentaries, but allows a pathway of entry for the viewer. Likewise, the documentaries seek to capture the daily aspects of life in Chester, allowing the subjects a voice not found in broader portrayals of the American South.

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I must begin with a heartfelt thanks to those who laid the intellectual groundwork for this project. The American Studies department at the University of Alabama taught me the nature of interdisciplinary work. As my mentor, Stacy Morgan gave me the confidence going forward; Edward Tang provided stern tests which toughened my resolve; Lynne Adrian kept me grounded and focused; and James Salem provided lessons and advice I will always follow. I was lucky to have them as mentors, but I am even more fortunate to call them friends.

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Others were just as vital in helping me bring this venture to fruition. Fellow UA alumnus Zeb Baker brought me into the Emory fold and helped me get my "sea legs" through our weekly luncheons. Zeb's love of college football and sports is nonpareil; a small fact that kept me balanced during my Emory years. His friendship and counsel remains valuable. Jennifer Sarrett was my consigliore in the latter stages, helping me making important decisions. Cora MacBeth provided support and reassurance. Mael Vizcarra and Stuart Cardwell kept me laughing. Walter Ward, having seen it all, was a calming presence who answered the phone at all hours. Dominique Tremblay and Sandra Navarro listened patiently to my worries, hopes, and fears. Laura Hunt provided much needed solidarity during both the dissertation process and in my professional life. Coworkers Ruby Buggs and Inna Strizhevsky stood by my side during times of transition in the ILA office. Lillien Waller was a great editor and came to my rescue, boosting my confidence and, in the process, deepening our friendship. And Melissa Gilstrap, bless her heart, did all of the above. For all of this and more, I will always be grateful.

My student colleagues in the ILA define solidarity. I am proud to be associated with this particular group of students. We all have been through a lot, and we all stuck together. There were no divisions amongst us as we were all in service to one another.

Jean Paul-Cauvin and Manuel Montoya are not only my fellow cohort members who I began this journey with, they are my brothers. They are always there, personally and professionally, teaching me how to be not only a better scholar, but a better human. I experienced tremendous growth during my time at Emory in no small part by just being around them on a consistent basis. Finer gentlemen are nowhere to be found.

Speaking of brothers, outside of Emory, Todd Baker, Uri Camens, and Eric Sribnick are the type of friends who make this world a better place. Ready to accompany me on any adventure, they provide the type of unquestioning friendship that is hard to come by.

A debt of thanks also goes to all the people who agreed to participate in this project, most of which are thanked in the films. Ann Evans at the White Homestead was generous in opening the vaults and giving me free reign of the archives. JEB Wilson and family and the employees at Cotton Hills Farm took a chance for me to film on their property. Larry Hyatt and Myra Mobley were forthcoming in welcoming

me into their home. Doug Marion was a treasure of information. Alex Oliphant and Carlisle Roddey were generous with their time. The employees of the Good Samaritan Clinic and the volunteers of Christ Central Ministries allowed me in to the fold without hesitation. Although not in this immediate project, Ernest Allen, Ethel Robinson, Tina Rollins, and various Springs employees provided me with oral narratives that point towards future directions.

However, none of this was possible without the unyielding support of my family. My extended clan was behind me every step of the way, professing their pride in my accomplishments. Kate, my sister, set a standard of drive and determination which was (and is) an ideal which I admire and, in turn, drove me. My parents, Rick and Becky, instilled in me my love of reading, history, and films. My mother, who is my biggest champion, started me early by reading to me every night in our blue rocking chair and was keen on the history of any subject. My father and I would see and discuss films together. He was always game to see what I was recommending, for better and worse. Although I didn't always comprehend it when I was younger, I am grateful every day for the work ethic and the love of inquiry they instilled in me. They supported (and continue to support) me in all my endeavors financially, emotionally, and spiritually, with boundless and unconditional love.

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For my Parents and Trish

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Introduction

Early in the morning of June 6, 2006, fire ripped through the Republic Mill #3 in Chester County, South Carolina. Located in the eastern part of the county, the once thriving mill town of Great Falls became a collective bystander to a piece of the past being destroyed during the course of several days. Unable to extinguish the fire, Governor Mark Sanford declared a state of emergency as 1,300 of the town's 2,200 residents were forced to evacuate their homes; environmentally hazardous smoke containing hydrochloric acid from burning plastic filled the streets. "This is the product of a changing textile industry, the condition of the old mill and things like oil from the old machines," surmised Eddie Murphy, head of Chester's emergency management at the time.[1] Not long ago, the Republic #3 was home to the mighty whir of cotton looms and backbreaking mill labor. Following the closure of Mills #1 and #2, J.P. Stevens Company shut down the rest of their operation in 1985. Mill #3 was reduced to housing a plastic recycling business, and, fittingly, an antiques shop.

With the Air National Guard dumping water from helicopters, the fire was finally brought under control at 5:40 p.m. nearly a week to the day since it had mysteriously began. The aftermath brought about an inquiry from South Carolina's Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC) concerning the fire's impact on the Catawba River that snaked through the area and was the birthplace of the area's first aqua-turbine powered mill that now found the thick billowing smoke damaging the environment around it. Finally, the cash-strapped town, with a meager general budget of $904,017, was forced to seek the county's help in paying for the cost of the damaged fire equipment and fuel. The trouble did not end there.

In two separate class-action lawsuits, a hundred of the town's residents sued John and Melanie Tibbs, owners of the building, and the plastics company, CBCL, housed within. The county had initially suspended CBCL in 2004 due to "various safety violations and unsafe conditions that were likely to result

[1] Denyse C. Middleton. "Mill No. 3 Smolders: Residents Kept Out of Town as Building Starts to Collapse," June 8, 2006, *The Herald*, p. 1A, Final edition.

in a fire."[2] In a third and separate suit, fifty more residents claimed the county was negligent in its handling of the matter and that CBCL did not have a proper sprinkler system. John Clark, former head of Chester County emergency management, thundered that the county looked the other way for economic reasons related to keeping jobs in the area and that he "told Gene Klugh [Clark's successor], 'It's a disaster waiting to happen,'….Had they (CBCL) been required to meet safety requirements, it's unlikely the building would be sitting on the ground today."[3]

It later surfaced that CBCL was guilty of 14 OSHA violations, including not telling employees about hazardous substances in building. Finding themselves in the environmental crosshairs, Tibbs, and CBCL owner Ping Lee, who rented his company space from Tibbs, contended that the county had no right to close the structure as the sprinkler system was "grandfathered" in when the building was purchased in 1998. The threat of a lawsuit followed and the county later settled for $40,000 out of court in order to dismiss Tibbs's grievance. John Jervey, head of the South Carolina Properties and Liabilities Trust stated, "We did not feel the county acted improperly. We made the decision thinking we would be better served to not go before a jury because we would pay as much to go to court."[4] The residential complaint against Tibbs was dismissed in November of 2006 due to lack of evidence, and Ping settled the class-action lawsuit out of court during the spring of 2008.

The handling of the matter caused Chester County Council chairman Gene Cudd to resign after the county was sued for allowing CBCL to reopen after just ten days. Cudd cited that he had "too big a heart to be a politician," and "about 90 percent of the people in Chester don't have a clue how hard council members work."[5] The underlying cause of Cudd's decision, Vice Chairman Tommy Martin

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[2] Nichole Monroe Bell "Great Falls, S.C., Residents Sue Mill After Fire," *Charlotte Observer*, June 22, 2006, http://search.ebscohost.com.proxy.library.emory.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nfh&AN=2W62W6877392953&site=ehost-live (accessed August 10th, 2009).

[3]Denyse C. Middleton, "Mill Fire Sparks Second Lawsuit: Chester County Allowed Plastics Recycler to Operate with Faulty Sprinkler System Suit Alleges," *The Herald*, June 23 2006, p. 1A, Final edition.

[4] Denyse C. Middleton,"Settlement By County in 05 Not an Admission of Guilt, Official Says," *The Herald*, June 24, 2006, p. 1A, Final edition.

[5]Denyse C. Middleton, "Chester County Council Chairman Cudd Steps Down," July 1, 2006, *The Herald*, p. 1A, Final edition.

believed, hinged on the fact that Chester was reverting back to the county supervisor form of administration and "That some people will have a hard time with a new form of government in January and coming out of a leadership role."[6] Amid all the political posturing a year after the conflagration, fire chief Jon Jones was having trouble breathing; much less doing the job he loved. The cause: "chemical induced asthma."[7]

Politics aside, the fire symbolized a larger problem of accelerated mill closures in Chester County, one that had worsened since the 1980s. After years of fighting unions and claims of byssinosis, commonly known as "brown lung disease," J.P. Stevens had quit Great Falls for good during the Reagan era, leaving empty shells of mills that were not only a physical blight on the landscape, but symptomatic of a gaping maw in the town's pride and consciousness. The story would repeat itself, as local cotton and textile giant Springs Industries[8] started to close plants in Chester during the same decade, and eventually ceased to exist in an area that was the birthplace of its manufacturing empire and the 14,000 jobs it had created.

Costing the county upwards of 700 jobs in the last few months of the "phase-out," Springs's Katherine plant, the last of its kind in Chester, closed its doors for good in 2007. Built in 1968, and subject to a multi-million dollar upgrade in 2002, the Katherine, which transformed raw cotton into unfinished sheeting and cloth, was the largest and most modern of Springs's manufacturing sites in Chester. Continuing a trend that began almost three decades earlier, three other major Springs plants in my hometown—the Gayle, the Springstein, and the Eureka—preceded Ketherine's closure. Except for a couple of distribution sites left in the county, the Katherine was the end of the line for any kind of meaningful work presence Springs brought to the county for more than 100 years.

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[6] Ibid.
[7] Charles D. Perry, "Fire Chief Says Mill Blaze Led to Ongoing Breathing Problems," The Herald, June 10, 2007, p.1B, Final edition.
[8] Springs has gone through name changes throughout the years to reflect growth. What once started as Spings Mills evolved to Springs Industries, and now, reflecting the tenor of the times, Springs Global.

A merger had precipitated the final blow as Springs and Brazilian cotton magnate Coteminas became Springs Global in 2005. Two years later, CEO Crandall Close Bowles, great-great granddaughter of founder Elliot White Springs, and her fellow descendants sold all of their privately held stock to Coteminas and got out of textiles. "In the current stock offering, my family will sell a significant portion of our Springs Global holdings," Close offered, "I will continue to serve on the board of Springs Global. I will leave knowing that our company has survived radical change and emerged with solid market value. I have great confidence in my co-CEO and successor, Josue Gomes, and the rest of the management team."[9]

The story of the fire at Republic Mill #3 is indicative of an all too familiar scenario in Chester County. The story stands at the crossroads of deindustrialization, outsourcing, internal strife, and physical blight which scars Chester's landscape. Once a proud mill town, Chester is now, despite the intentions of some of its citizens, in the throes of cultural and economic crisis. After the fire at Republic Mill #3, Chester County received a devastating blow to employment when Springs closed and became an unwilling participant in, and witness to, the ongoing death of the Southern institution of cotton mills and the small-town struggles that were amplified and created in their departure. Chester already had an unemployment rate of 13.5 percent; this figure would skyrocket another 4 percent from November to December as the national recession surfaced in the fall 2008. As it stands now, Chester holds the third highest unemployment rate in the state, a slight improvement over their first-place ranking at 21.8 percent in August of 2009.

Emblematic of the end of an era in Chester, the demise of Republic Mill #3 raises some interesting questions. Are the story's images of devastation and wreckage consistent with the longer history of Southern representations that this dissertation explores? Or are they an anomaly that stands in counter distinction with particular images of the rural South? How are fractures, like those evident in the

[9]"Close Family to Sell Majority of Springs Holdings," *Charlotte Business Journal*, July 23rd, 2007, http://charlotte.bizjournals.com/charlotte/stories/2007/07/23/daily32.html (accessed August 10th, 2009).

story, reflected through other images of the region? How do particular ways of looking at those images reveal their meaning? Are these meanings consistent with such devastation and wreckage or do they reveal different narratives?

Small Southern towns have begun to bear witness to a new chapter in cotton's dubious history. Providing jobs, and having a heavy hand in local affairs, Chester's dilemma offers a case study of a larger problem facing regional manufacturing. Subject to the new global economy, the South and its small towns have felt the flame of commerce and employment shift away, finding a home overseas. Rural and working-class Southerners have borne the brunt of this change. This particular type of rural deindustrialization has affected the culture of the rural South with the resulting historical shift serving to complicate the American imaginary about the South.

Background

Growing up in Chester, South Carolina, I was always aware of the mills in the county, but never had much interaction with them. I knew that my paternal grandfather and namesake, James Langston Hughes, was the mill doctor for the ubiquitous Springs Industries in the early seventies until he suffered from heart problems. I also had a vague notion of Springs's involvement in constructing the Olympic size swimming pool in which I swam competitively during my youth. It wasn't until I got older and moved away that I gained a sense of historical perspective on the place I still called home.

After my father retired from the Chester County emergency room following more than 24 years of service, he took a position in the medical department of Springs similar to the one my grandfather had held thirty years earlier, but with one important difference. Whereas my grandfather operated regionally, my father operated globally, a fact that spoke to the changing nature of the modern economic world.

With their reliance on Springs as the long-time economic and cultural backbone of the county, outsourcing hit Chester hard. This, coupled with rumors in 2006 that Springs would be leaving Chester for cheaper manufacturing alternatives in Brazil, led me to think about the mills in my hometown in a

different way. If Springs was to shutter its last remaining viable presence in the county, the recently upgraded Katherine Plant, what physical, spiritual, and economic impact would it have on the area?

These circumstances also affected my father who was ever vigilant, keeping an ear attuned for the latest rumblings of his imminent job loss. But the circumstances would also affect 700-plus other employees who would lose their jobs, setting off an economic tsunami that would break throughout the county. What would be their fate? My father had a medical degree. What about workers whose whole lives were spent in the mills honing specific skills? This state of county affairs led me to think about how decisions are made behind closed doors that affect communities and the people who live in them.

When the closing of Springs was quickly becoming a concrete reality, I was in the formative stages of constructing my dissertation centered around images of the rural South in film. At the beginning of the project, I was keen to explore questions of stereotypical depictions of white rural- and working-class Southerners found in cinema. Part of this project, which I envisioned as multi-modal, entailed making ethnographic films about the South in an observational style which would provide a counterpoint to what I saw as broader stereotypes found in films about the South.

Given the unfolding mill situation in Chester, it seemed natural to merge my concerns about my hometown with my interest in visual depictions, cultural concerns, class, and history that involved rural- and working-class Southerners. After all, Chester is a rural town and the mill's workers were rural- and working-class Southerners. Given this fact, coupled with the access provided by my father's privileged position, I began to gather footage as a way to explore Chester.

Amassing this footage quickly morphed into a broader focus of comprehensive notions of class, culture, and history that took into account Chester County in the context of the county's long-time reliance on the mills and the contemporary situation surrounding their closure. This wider palette was generated by my interactions with Chester's citizens around the topic of the mills in informal conversations which inform the whole of this dissertation. These conversations snowballed and

suggestions flowed from many different directions. I quickly realized the project was becoming quite massive and unwieldy for the scope of the dissertation. Because of this, I explored certain areas of Chester's customs and culture that I found important to rural- and working-class culture in the context of both the South's long history with mill culture and the ways in which rural- and working- class citizens associated with that culture were portrayed in a broader American imaginary.

Additionally, in keeping with my original idea of discovering such portrayals found in film, I combined my explorations of Chester's community with the broader portrayals of citizens from rural tableaus like Chester's community in visual depictions. At the heart of this exploration is the dichotomy of broader, institutional narratives of rural- and working class Southerners with particular, contemporary realities of those Southerners.

Central to this shift from a personal investment in Chester to looking at the region's issues analytically is a question of ethics for the researcher. My family and hometown were obviously impacted by these events. To deny their personal effect on me would be both academically dishonest and ethically suspect. It is, therefore, the ethical obligation of the filmmaker to let the materials speak to readers for themselves, rather than shoehorn them into any type of preexisting theory.

For example, my father's help with finding contacts in the community can be one area of concern. Do people agree to participate because of my father? Do they act differently with me than they otherwise would? While these questions cannot be answered in the affirmative or the negative with any certainty, I believe my father's standing in the community and former employment with Springs has allowed me access and dispensations that otherwise might remain elusive. That is, as sociologist John Kenneth Moreland surmised sixty years ago writing about the region, my status as a "quasi-insider" most likely has gotten people to reveal more, than someone who arrived in Chester County "cold." In addition, people turned down my advances for participation, even when my father made initial contact. To help counteract such concerns, I chose to call attention to my relationship with the town and my status within it, and

explore my relationship with my family through one of the films. I also remain mindful that the medium of film exposes its subjects in a more public manner than does writing.

Aims, Methods and Materials

The current national climate of red and blue states posits that such "redneck," "cracker," "white trash," rural males are racist, gun-toting "Bubbas" who vote against their own economic interests in order to pursue a cultural agenda. Such an agenda supposedly entails restricting a women's right to choose, invectives against civil unions and gay marriage, a preference for subservient women, violent militias, and supremacy of the gun. American visual culture does little to dissuade such ideas as associated with rural Southern white males. For instance, images of "NASCAR dads," identify an updated moniker for Reagan democrats (a catch all term for rural- and working-class males used in the 2004 national elections), was used as a quick signifier of Southern red-state men ("red-staters") and all that they supposedly stood for.[10] In short, to like watching stock car races meant you held all the views listed above.

This pigeonholing of rural- and working-class Southern males is nothing new, however. The image of the rural South and its inhabitants was first defined by wealthy Virginia planter William Byrd and itinerant minister Charles Woodmason, both of whom held their backwoods brothers as biologically and culturally inferior. As Anthony Harkins has shown, such a way of looking at rural- and working-class Southern males has shifted culturally throughout history. Such traits as slothfulness, violence, stupidity, and sickness, among others, however have remained as constant signifiers, suggesting that such males are inferior in the basic ways Woodmason and Byrd put forth more than 300 years ago.

Such a broad narrative misses the particular experiences of rural- and working-class Southern men. Singular experiences can confirm stereotypes, but the reality much more complex and varied. Searching for these complexities can reveal a nuanced portrait of culture, custom, and community that is

[10] http://politic365.com/2011/11/21/nascar-dads-hate-michelle-obama/;
http://sports.espn.go.com/rpm/news/story?id=1735251

lost within the larger, dominant narrative. Instead, nuanced portraits challenge the images of the South and its male inhabitants that are fixed in the American imagination. These types of orthodox beliefs about white working- and rural-class males have found a powerful medium in both institutional histories and images. In order to challenge these orthodoxies, I place these institutional histories and images into conversation with contemporary realities and images.

Southern Community, Commerce and Representation in the Global Age, a dissertation in two parts, examines institutional and universal narratives of Southern white working- and rural-class males by comparing them with particular representations grounded in lived Southern history. In doing so, I locate institutional histories, narratives, and images found in fiction films, mill culture, and photographs. I then contrast these institutional histories, narratives, and images with contemporary realities, narratives, and images of rural white males and their particular experiences. Specifically, I use Southern rural- and working- class history linked to the changing culture and custom of industrial communities, to explore visual depictions of white rural Southerners.

My research is built on broader concerns that complicate dominant institutional narratives in three main ways. First, in what ways are Southern stereotypes and contemporary realities different? Second, in what ways are the current social and economic culture and customs in the South continuous with its past as a textile-based, rural industrial community? Finally, in what ways does the visual culture of the South construct and challenge dominant narratives?

Drawing on the disciplines of Southern labor and local history, film studies, and visual anthropology, this dissertation seeks to reframe these institutional narratives and images in the American imaginary. It strives to do so by engaging in original fieldwork, historical readings of films and photographs, and original ethnographic documentary production. In what ways, particularly, do these methods reveal both a culture in decline and a more nuanced portrait of the working class and rural Southern masculinity in contemporary settings? In what ways does Southern rural- and working- class

history, linked to the changing culture and custom of deindustrialization of rural communities, obfuscate visual depictions of white rural Southerners?

Given the different fields of scholarship and range of materials with which I work, my methods are varied. The interdisciplinary nature of my training and research is reflected in the methods I use with respect to these resources. My research consists of three primary methods and approaches. Each method originates from a different scholarly field.

The first method is primary archival research woven into larger narratives of Southern history. Utilizing the Springs-Close Family archive at the White Homestead, I have examined and gathered primary documents to construct a historical framework. The Homestead archives provide business memos, detailed executive papers, and personal papers of the inner workings of Springs management, specifically the papers of William “Bill” Close, who was the de-facto leader of the company under various titles from 1959-1983. I used the Close papers to identify a narrative of business decisions in the changing global context and to construct a history in which to contextualize the original documentaries that compose Chapter Five.

The second method is fieldwork based on visual ethnography, in particular original documentary film production focused around Chester. Using my local contacts, I selected a broad cross-section of Chester’s community (city councilmen, farmers, preachers, health clinic employees and unemployed citizens), and utilized observational filmmaking methods on location (bread line, local free clinic, tours with councilmen, and local farmers) to examine Chester in its current state while reflecting on Chester’s past, present, and future.

My third primary method consists of analysis and deconstruction of Southern fiction films based on close readings of particular films, guided by existing theory and analyzed through the lens of Southern history. In surveying many regional films, I noticed two broader trends. First, such films manifest Southern stereotypes based on a cleaving of the rural and the town. And, second, almost all contained

violence, sometimes in horrific fashion. In particular, rural horror and "hixploitation" films characterize their rural- and working-class characters in two principal ways: as literal monsters or as second-class citizens. In the process, such films forgo deeper examination of social and institutional issues of structural inequalities, class-conscious motivation, and wider context of the South's social and cultural history.

Structure and Content

Part One, consisting of three chapters, and explores visual depiction of the working and rural class South in the twentieth century. Looking at both photographs and film I explore the ways Southern types are represented in both. I then present alternative ways for visual depictions of the South can be read in order to challenge, or at least gain an understanding of, the types depicted therein.

Serving as a bookend to Part Two of the dissertation, which is a case study of a visual and historical synthesis of Chester, **Chapter One** looks at the child labor photographs of famed photographer Lewis Hine. In particular, I examine a series of photographs Hine took in 1908 of children who worked for Springs in Chester. Placing these photographs in historical context (Hine took them for the specific purpose of heightening awareness on child labor issues in the South) provides an entryway to look at rural- and working-class visual representations of the South.

Allison Griffiths has demonstrated the importance of photographs as evidence used to classify types at the beginning of the twentieth century. Lewis Hine's work during that time was indicative of the idea of images as scientific evidence that proved facts. With this in mind Hine traveled the South to photograph children working in the mills for the National Child Labor Committee (NCLC). Hine's intent was to provide visual evidence of the deleterious effects of child labor on its young workers. To further contextualize his photos, Hine's wife, Sarah, took notes on the children's ages, occupations within the mill, and wages. Such captions indicate Hine's intent that the photos be read specifically with an eye toward abolishing child labor.

Hine faced a contemporary opponent in mill apologist George Dawley, who pointed to the photos as evidence of improved living conditions for children who came to the mill from the farm. Dawley's line of reasoning, one that mill owners typically employed, justified mill work as superior to life on the farm in every conceivable way. This, however, was the way competing versions of reading the photos developed during the early twentieth century. After speculating about the ways the photos could have been read by Chester County citizens, both mill workers and mill owners, during this time period, I turn to contemporary readings of the photos. In particular, how do Hine's photos resonate with current Chester citizens? How could these photos be read now? Has Hine's work become part of visual stereotypes of the Southern rural and working class?

A photo-elicitation interview using Hine's Chester photographs with Chester native Dr. Doug Marion attempts to address these questions.[11] Photo elicitation is a simple research technique in which visual evidence, in this case photographs, is used in an interview to elicit responses. Doug's interview and recollections recall a lived communal and personal history of Chester. Photo-elicitation, something that Douglas Harper has pointed out has existed on the margins of academia, is explored here as a third way, in addition to the claims of Trachtenberg and Dimock, in which to glean knowledge about local culture and history.[12] As such, it opens up avenues of exploration through what anthropologist Sarah Pink calls

[11] My initial conversation with Doug took place in summer 2009 at a social function. I had known Doug as far back as I can remember: he was my optometrist when I was younger. His family (brother Bill is a local attorney, and his mother, Anne, still resides in Chester) is keen both on history and photography, two mediums which attracted him to Hine's work.

At the end of our conversation Doug suggested I stop by and see the photos. In the next few days, I proceeded in a sweltering heat to his office, next to the hospital heading south east on Route 97. He explained briefly how he had been going about his research. He then offered me his large three-ring binder which contained print-outs of the photos and various newspaper clippings, notes, and genealogical research he had done. Almost a year later, I met him one morning in the living room of his house on York Street, one of the main thoroughfares in town. Excerpts from our conversation are selected for the photo-elicitation part of this chapter. I selected these excerpts because they were the part of the conversation that dealt exclusively with the photos that elicited the strongest reactions from Dr. Marion. There were no set questions which guided this discussion. It was a conversation centered on and around the photos. I listened to Doug and then responded with clarifications, memories, and other questions. I wanted Doug to tell me in his voice, as much as possible what these photos meant to him, to give him more of a voice than Hine's subjects had.

[12] Douglas Harper, "Talking About Pictures: A Case for Photo Elicitation," *Visual Studies*, Vol. 17, No. 1, 2002, 15.

"intersubjectivities."[13] In this case, since I am from Chester, my role as researcher becomes one of adding to the conversation by commenting on Dr. Marion's responses based on my own history.

In this photo-elicitation process, the photos serve as catalysts which open up a lived history apart from the competing narratives of Hine and Dawley. When this lived history is put in conversation with current commentary from George Dimock and Alan Trachtenberg—in which Trachtenberg argues that Hine transcends historicity and Dimock suggests Hine's visual images confirm stereotypes—Hine's work demonstrates how photo-elicitation's subjective experience, as Douglas Harper contends, adds value to our understandings of contemporary events and history. In addition, I pay close attention to how this type of reading challenges or supports historian David Perlmutter's idea that historians consider the ways in which historical photos are "used and viewed by subsequent publics."[14]

"Sister" Chapters Two and Three begin with the wider premise that orthodox representations of the South have found a modern home in fiction film. As Carol Clover and Allison Graham point out, rural- and working-class Southerners are portrayed filmically in certain ways. Although their theories differ in degree, they do not differ in kind. Both Clover and Graham hold that rural and working class Southerners are portrayed as extremely violent. Although most American films are, arguably, violent, I focus on what writer Jim Goad believes is portrayed as violence being bred into Southern men. Clover posits this violence as revenge against the city, which is engaged in what she calls "urbanoia." In addition, Graham believes that all the South's racially motivated social problems are blamed on rednecks in terms of film narratives.

With these issues in mind I explore filmic representations of the South in both the genre of rural horror and the sub-genre of hixploitation. While not the golden age of 1970s hixploitation, the sub-genre is alive and well today. Films such as *Poor White Trash* (2000), *2001 Maniacs* (2005), and popular television shows, *Swamp People*, *Billy the Exterminator*, *Rattlesnake Republic*, *Hillbilly Handfishing*, and

[13] Sarah Pink, *Doing Visual Ethnography :Images, Media, and Representation in Research (SAGE. 2006)*, 18.
[14] Perlmutter, David D. "Visual Historical Methods." *Historical Methods* 27, no. 4 (Fall 94 1994): 167. *Academic Search Complete*, EBSCO*host* (accessed March 9, 2013).

Duck Dynasty all showcase working class "hicks" whose ratings are driven as much by the rural- and working-class subject matter as the "redneck" personalities involved.

Although not the focus of this dissertation, recent popular Hollywood films driven by exploitative aspects of the South have also fared well. *Slingblade* (1996) plays on the popular character of the village idiot, except in this case, instead of Boo Radley's heart of gold, the audience gets Carl's (Billy Bob Thornton) conflicted heart of violence. Southerner Craig Brewer's *Black Snake Moan* (2006) is indicative of the standard tropes of the violent boyfriend and the Southern nymphet. Sam Raimi's *The Gift* (2000) showcases a wife beater (Giovanni Ribisi), while Robert Duvall's *The Apostle* (1997), echoing *The Night of the Hunter* (1955), is about a fervent preacher who is on the lam for murdering his son's coach with a baseball bat. Finally, while Phil Morrison's *Junebug* (2005) appears to break the mold of stock southern "type," the film still falls back on the tried and true tropes of Southern male rural- and working-class violence in the character of Johnny (Ben McKenzie), whose coiled rage is constantly lurking in the film's background.

Southern history, however, can be drawn upon to test these popular narratives. As Michelle Brattain has suggested, the study of labor history in the South "has much to gain by enlarging its approach to labor issues. Thinking about class in an expansive way may allow southern historians not only to understand the private and public lives of workers more thoroughly but also to bridge some of the artificial boundaries among other fields and southern and American history." [15] Brattain's suggestion is indicative of the kind of approach this dissertation engages in. In terms of film, Southern histories can provide new perspectives on rural- and working-class Southerners that can be lost in stereotypes. Building on this, and the concepts put forth by Clover and Graham, I suggest that certain films can be read through Southern histories that allow for motivational context for the characters involved.

[15] Michelle Brattain, "The Pursuits of Post-exceptionalism: Race, Gender, Class, and Politics in the New Southern Labor History," in Glenn T. Eskew, ed.. *Labor in the Modern South* (University of Georgia Press, 2001), 31.

In particular, what I find in my reading through the case studies of rural horror with *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (1974), and hixploitation with *Cockfighter* (1974), are rural- and working-class Southerners who rely on the older customs of the South. Basing their actions on rituals of the post-Antebellum and Old Souths, the characters in these films are anachronisms in the New South.[16] This holds especially true for those unemployed in the New South, as both the Sawyer family in *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* and Frank Mansfield in *Cockfighter* are. By reading the films this way, we can start to tease out the lived narratives of these characters and place them against the institutional narratives of dominant stereotypical images found in films about the region. In terms of this dissertation I pay particular attention to the rural Southern concept of masculinity and work in the readings of these films. Because of this, some broader concepts of Southern masculinity and work are worth noting here.

A Note on Masculinity

In his seminal study, *Manhood in America*, Michael Kimmel identifies important points about masculinity worth considering in the context of rural- and working-class Southern men. Specifically, Kimmel points out that, "The central characteristic of being self-made was that the proving ground was the public sphere, specifically the work place."[17] This, he argues, was the "essence of *producerism* [italics Kimmel], an ideology that claimed that virtue came from the hard work of those who produced the world's wealth."[18]

Masculinity then, since the beginning of the republic, was situated around one's labor. The erosion of masculinity began with "new forms of labor control," and, among those, Southern industry offers a prime example for two reasons. First, it divorced the labor from the public sphere. The farmers and artisans who came from the land were visible in their trades as they toiled in fields and shops. In the

[16] There have been many "New Souths" in Southern history. The term was originally coined by Atlanta booster Henry Grady who used it to describe the post-antebellum South. The term is also used in the post World War II era when Southern states experienced an economic boom. What both periods hold in common is a boosterish pride in the value of business as transformative. For the purposes of this dissertation, I am referring to the latter period.
[17] Michael Kimmel, *Manhood in America* (Free Press, 1996), 26.
[18] Ibid., 29.

mills they were literally invisible to the public, witnessed only by their laboring peers. Thus, the Southern worker's sense of manhood based on his skill and labor was not on display to the full republic.[19]

Second, these men were divorced from their independence. Kimmel suggests that this was key as men simply did not work for themselves, they worked for those with capital, the captains of industry.[20] In the context of the Southern trades, industrialists tried to remake rural- and working-class masculinity.[21]

Once encapsulated within the mill world, white male workers sought to remake some of the world of traditional "manhood" in the terms that Kimmel outlines. One way of doing that was through the idea of "whiteness," which cast manliness in terms of skin color.[22] If work circumstances prevented one from manly exploits, as Andrea Tone suggests, one could properly be a man (read: white) on purely biological and physiological terms. What then was a rural- and working-class Southerner to do then when the world and sense of self they knew was suddenly gone? Reading the *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* and *Cockfighter* through this wider lens, suggests that the responses were couched in social anxieties that manifested themselves in a return to the ways of Southern tradition.

In **Part Two** the dissertation switches methods and scope. Whereas Part One relied on existing historical, photography, and film scholarship as frameworks to analyze existing films and photographs, Part Two utilizes primary archives and original ethnographic fieldwork. Using Chester as a case study, I explore the county's contemporary situation of the mill's closure, aiming to do two things. First, I put into practice my theory of contextualizing the viewing of fiction films through history. To do this, I construct a historical narrative (Chapter Four) as a context for the contemporary realities found in original

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[19] I explore the grisly underbelly of public ritual in the context of a dying way of life in the South in Chapter 4.
[20] Michael Kimmel, *Manhood in America*, 31, 81.
[21] Andrea Tone, *The Business of Benevolence* :*Industrial Paternalism in Progressive America* (Cornell University Press, 1997), 167-172. This masculinity was ensconced in Chester's dependence on Springs as the town's dominant employer, which was common in many such Southern cotton mill towns. Rural- and working-class Southerners' masculinity then was defined by the paternalistic activities provided by the mills. In the case of Springs this included places such as Springmaid Beach, Springmaid Mountain, and the Leroy Springs aquatic complex that provided the twin function of physical activity and the outward manifestation of financial security through the ability to afford a vacation.
[22] Michelle Brattain explores this fully in *The Politics of Whiteness: Race, Workers, and Culture in the Modern South*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).

ethnographic production (Chapter Five). Instead of analyzing my own works in terms of that history, however, I provide the reader with the historical context and the filmic materials with which to engage in constructing their own ideas about the region. Second, I hope to provide a counterpoint to the violent and class-based depictions, which are problematic ways to view the South. Although found in fiction films, such portrayals lacks the subtle distinctions ethnographic documentary does because, as fiction films tend to sacrifice those distinctions, they do so at the expense of social and class-based issues, such as rural deindustrialization, for instance, in the case of Chester.

Chapter Four provides an introduction to mill history in the South and that history's place in Chester before examining the business narrative of official histories in a case study of Springs Industries. Located in the Carolina Piedmont below the Blue Ridge Mountains fall line and forty miles south of the banking hub of Charlotte, North Carolina, Springs found a home in Chester. Chester's location was conducive to cotton gins, as the local merchant class responded to northern manufacturing regimes after the Civil War with their promise of low-wage labor and the necessary natural resources. A rural area, Chester's agricultural past shifted rapidly to industrial technologies in the post-Civil War era with Springs as the driving force.

To illustrate Chester's relationship to the Southern cotton economy, I construct a three-part narrative of the town's involvement with Springs. First, I discuss the conditions in the South that facilitated the mill's migration from the North after the Civil War. Second, I look at Springs's arrival in Chester in the context of these general conditions, including a brief history of Springs's beginnings in the County. This dual context then supports the main narrative of Bill Close's decisions to navigate Springs through the complex and emerging global business environment. Finally, I end with a brief snapshot of the closing of Springs in Chester supported by documentation from Crandall Close Bowles. This history serves as the framework and context to Chapter 5, further discussed below, which is a visual chapter comprising four original ethnographic films of Chester County.

I chose Chester because of the ways deindustrialization has affected rural– and working-class citizens. The main pool of labor for Chester's manufacturing workforce was rural and white male Southerners whose lived history matches closely with the broader class-based imaginary about them found in mainstream visual depictions. Chester is a compelling case for study because it represents the spirit of the times, one exemplified by a variety of issues. As such, Chester is indicative of many small, rural Southern towns whose culture and customs, indeed their very livelihood, revolved around the mills.

Yet, Springs Industries has no comprehensive history. Instead, authors have concentrated on Colonel Elliot White Springs, the mill's colorful owner who started his reign during the Depression, and the corporate history told from the company point of view. Burke Davis's biography, *Warbirds* recounts "The Colonel" and his colorful life, while Louise Pettus's *The Springs Story: Our First Hundred Years*, is mainly a pictorial history with little information about its Chester concerns. Col. Springs, third-generation leader of Springs, penned *Clothes Make the Man*, which is an odd mixture of early history of the company his grandfather founded and fictional short stories.

With the tight control of company narrative and little else to draw on, I decided to concentrate on the personal files of Elliot White Springs's son-in-law, William "Bill" Close, who charted the course for the company from 1959 until his death in 1983. I was particularly interested in the period after World War II when the modern global economy, which would eventually weave my sleepy hometown into its web, began to take shape.

Close's personal papers and files provided the raw materials with which to craft an original narrative and provided access to the inner workings of Springs during those years. They also revealed a sharp mind thinking constantly about globalization. I look at Close's decisions as he navigated regional, national, and international waters in charting Springs course. I pay special attention to the 1970s, which

was one of the "critical transition" decades "for firms in the United-States textile-mill Complex."[23] Whether he was looking to build plants and partnerships in Japan, dealing with South Carolina's governors, or responding to family considerations to get out of the manufacturing business altogether, Close's thoughts never strayed far from global ramifications.

Close was eventually succeeded by his daughter, Crandall Close Bowles, who was CEO of Springs when the Katherine Plant, the last of the Chester plants, closed. Although Bowles's papers are inaccessible, her role as revealed in her father's private papers, and augmented with public quotes made by Bowles on the verge of Springs's closing, highlight a progression in the company's dealings from one of social concerns to strictly monetary ones in an increasingly competitive global market.

In my films, which comprise **Chapter Five**, I begin by briefly giving secondary source context at the intersection of the ethnographic practice of filmmaking and the rural South where my films exist. In keeping with the larger historical theme of the dissertation, which I sketch out for Chester in Chapter Four, and to some extent Chapter One, I decided to capture the rural way of life that existed before the coming of the mills. To do this, I contacted Jeb Wilson of Cotton Hills Farm in Chester whose family had been farming in Lowry's in the County since 1882. I explained my project to Jeb and he allowed me full access to the work being done on the farm. The film that emerged was *Cotton Hills Farm*: *Enduring the Seasons in a Globalizing County*, the first of what I conceived as a series of films that corresponded to the seasons of the Wilson's work. The film included here is the Summer season which follows the daily activities on the Wilson's farm.I followed suit by exploring the larger ramifications of Springs's closure through the impact it had on its citizens in particular ways and institutions.

My second film, *Alex and Carlisle: Exploring Masculinity and Politics among the Ruins*, follows longtime Chester County commissioner, Carlisle Roddey, during his daily activities. Along the way, Carlisle makes a stop through Chester's rural community and provides his take on his legacy in Chester. I

[23]Cynthia D. Anderson, *Social Consequences of Economic Restructuring in the Textile Industry: Change in a Southern Mill Village*, 1st ed. (Routledge, 2000) , 47.

interweave Carlisle's activities with that of fellow councilmember Alex Oliphant as he guides me on a tour of the blight of former Springs mills on Chester's landscape while discussing events pertaining to the shuttering of the mills. The film pays particular attention to why the empty mills were left in a state of disrepair for so long.

Through relationships I had already built by proxy through my family, I chose to make my third film, *Good Samaritan Clinic: Administrating Health in Chester County*, about a free health clinic that my father worked for after his position in Springs was cut. While not its main concern, the film also deals tangentially with rural health care in America.

My fourth and final film, *Loaves and Fishes: Observations from the Bread Line at Christ Central Ministries*, was arranged through the Christ Central ministries, which runs a food bank in downtown Chester. The food bank provides sustenance for a fraction of the need of Chester County's rural- and working-class unemployed, some of whom came from the mills and rely on the provisions provided by Christ Central. While the film's main thrust is an ethnographic portrait of the food bank, it also tangentially involves a particular portrait of stewardship in rural Christianity, which stands in counter distinction to portrayals of a violent, or backwards, Christianity portrayed in contemporary cinema.

These four films in essence are a continuation of the written narrative in Chapter Four. As such, they serve two main purposes. First, they represent the aftermath, a continuation of the Springs story, if you will, told in visual form. Each captures a different aspect of the county through daily nuances interactions all of which are meant to be viewed in context of the mill closures. And, because they are films, they illustrate an alternative visual narrative of the rural and working class South, predicated on systematic deindustrialization, which is sorely lacking in more popular cinematic depictions.

Conclusion

This dissertation is interdisciplinary in content and multi-modal in form. Standing at the intersection of history, film studies and anthropology, it offers a timely and original study of the transformation of a particular regional culture that has national implications for small communities. It does this through an innovative synthesis of visual and textual materials as modes of inquiry that reveal distinctive insight through popular representations of a culture and contemporary examination of that culture.

Working to reposition voices lost in the abstract rhetoric of economic discourse and grounded in citizen recollections, actions, and interpretations, this project attempts to give expression to the experiences and understandings of the people of Chester who stand at the center of a rapidly changing South. It is my hope that this research will illuminate the misunderstanding and stigmatization of the South in general and Southern white working- and rural-class males in particular. The lack of nuance in popular representations simultaneously minimizes the reality of the region's disappearing culture and the national and local consequences of its economic decline. Instead, American imaginaries substitute such concerns for quickly recognizable narratives and images predicated on orthodox representations. Ironically, the South becomes narrowly defined through broad depictions.

In addition, it is my hope that this work helps Southerners understand their culture a little better. Because of my personal involvement with this project, I have come to see the South in a new light. Once I could not wait to leave my hometown—I, too, saw through a stereotypical lens that made me feel insecure about my culture. Engaging in this project, however, has allowed me to come to terms with my past, present, and future. Now, I cannot wait to go home.

Chapter One
History, Method, and Representation: Photo-Elicitation and Lewis Hine's Photographs of Child Labor in Chester County, South Carolina



Figure 1: Photo 369, Lewis Hine, Chester County, South Carolina, November 1908

> "Whatever violence may be done to the letter of their collective experience, the spirit of that experience remains intact and true. It is their notion of themselves, their understanding of who they are."
>
> --Harry Crews, *Childhood: A Biography of a Place*

I. Introduction

On assignment for the National Child Labor Committee—which sought to enact stronger federal, local, and state laws restricting child labor—American photographer Lewis Hine visited Chester County on November 28-29, 1908. During his stay in the rural South Carolina town, Hine took photographs of the rural and working class children who were laboring in the local mills in order to provide photographic evidence of the deleterious effect that mill work was having on young children. Hine chose Chester as a

surrogate for the many rural towns because it was indicative of many rural towns dependent on mills economically and culturally which dotted the Piedmont region of South Carolina. Illustrating the connection between worker and environment, Hine's photos provide a visual representation of rural-and working- class Southerners in the early twentieth century on the one hand, and a specific portrait of Chester on the other.

This chapter explores Hine's photographs through aesthetic analysis, historical context, and photo-elicitation, which is a visual method of research.[1] Specifically, I want to engage the following questions: what do Hine's images offer in terms of historical understanding of Chester in the early twentieth century? To what extent are these images consistent with or a challenge to existing understandings of Chester and its rural- and working-class inhabitants then and now? Finally, how do Hine's images function in reading visual depictions of the South within the broader American imagination?

My inquiry begins with a review of general debates raised by image-based scholarship. In particular, I focus on ways such historians as George Dimock, David Perlmutter, and Alan Trachtenberg, and anthropologists, including Sarah Pink, Malcolm and John Collier, and Douglas Harper, have engaged the problems and possibilities posed by such images.

Informing these debates are methods grounded in anthropologist Marcus Banks's theory of image-based work. The first method is based on the "internal narrative," which Banks defines as, "the story, if you will, that the image communicates."[2] This particular way of viewing the photo also encompasses technical elements of photography, including composition, framing, and technique,—all of which help the viewer deduce information from the photographs.

The second method centers on the "external narrative" or "the social context that produced the image."[3] In regard to Hine's images of the rural- and working-class mill hands, his photos prove particularly interesting in the ways they engage orthodox representations of the South and Chester in particular, and, specifically, in terms of how reactions to the images shape the image of the South. Does

[1] Douglas Harper, "Talking About Pictures: A Case for Photo Elicitation," *Visual Studies* 17, no. 1 (2002), 13.
[2] Marcus Banks, *Visual Methods in Social Research* (Sage Publications, 2001), 11.
[3] Ibid.

the external narrative influence these representations over time as the photos are positioned in the contemporary context of the South?

After providing a brief background of Hine's photographic work during this time, I examine carefully selected images from the twenty-eight photographs he took in Chester. This provides context for a subsequent section that places Hine's images in the setting of child labor debates in the early twentieth century with a particular emphasis on the South's stance in those debates. To what extent are Hine's photographs of Chester consistent with, or challenge, these discussions and other interpretations?

Finally, I will discuss how these images continue to play a role in the contemporary sense of Chester's history using photo-elicitation based on a fieldwork testimony with Chester resident, Dr. Doug Marion. This conversation with Dr. Marion explores contemporary readings of the photos through present-day discourse. This set of conversations is part of Banks's external narrative, which encompasses "the social relations within which the image is embedded at any moment of viewing."[4] In particular, the conversations help to shape the meaning of representation based on Chester's contemporary citizens and how that narrative stands in contrast to historical context.

In conclusion, by revisiting different interpretations of Hine's work by Trachtenberg and Dimock, I look at the ways those interpretations make the case for reading Hine's work as stereotypical (or not). Second, I explore the ways historical photo-elicitation opens up lived histories, both contemporary and historical, as a third way of reading Hine's photographs.

II.) Photographs in Anthropology and History

As the durable camera gained popularity in the mid-nineteenth century, the natural and social sciences were quick to exploit the camera's documentary and scientific potential for connoting so-called facts. The resulting work was used to differentiate between the dominant American group (white, Anglo-Saxon, protestant) and minorities. Difference included, but was not limited to, class, race, and physical

[4] Ibid.

types. Photographs were often used as justification, as proof manifested in corporeal form, for eugenics and other scientific and social endeavors that benefitted the dominant group.

Elizabeth Edwards suggests that during the 1860s and 1870s, "The 'type' was one of the most important elements in nineteenth century anthropological analysis."[5] Using photographs to catalog physical differences, according to Allison Griffiths, the early researchers developed "a modern fascination with images of the Other at the end of the nineteenth century, photographs of natives peoples circulated freely in both public and private spheres, offering Americans their first glimpse of exotic peoples; taking the form of book illustrations, slides, postcards, *cartes-de-visites*, stereographs, cabinet cards, newspaper and magazine illustrations, ethnographic photographs were mass produced by a range of different manufacturers and easily found their way in the house and hands of a wide range of Americans."[6] Such a diverse array of visual objects presented "essentialized specimens of objectified and radically monolithic categories."[7] that suggested "scientific connotations of the specimens as a way of classifying cultural or ethnic groups."[8]

Although such distinctions usually portrayed a difference in skin color or foreign nationality, certain photographs contributed to defining categories *within* white society. For example, Matt Wray explains that photos played a large part in typing "poor whites" that may have had hookworm disease.[9] Such popular depictions were found in magazines among other types of media. This led to a bias based on "oddly colored skin and the disturbing distinctions of the body."[10] Wray continues, "The dominant image of the poor rural white as hookworm sufferer established in popular journalism and scientific and medical research was frequently cited by historians and sociologists of the South who reiterated the image—quite uncritically and authoritatively—in scores of articles and monographs."[11] These negative images of "poor whites" remain in the popular imagination via film, and other visual forms. Photographs, however, can also dislodge such "fixed" representations.

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[5] Elizabeth Edwards, "Photographic "Types": The Pursuit of Method," *Visual Anthropology*, no. 2 (1990): 240.
[6] Alison Griffiths, *Wondrous Difference* (Columbia University Press, 2001), 86.
[7] Ibid, 111.
[8] Ibid, 113.
[9] Matt Wray, *Not Quite White: White Trash and the Boundaries of Whiteness* (Duke University Press, 2006), 96-132.
[10] Ibid, 121.
[11] Ibid, 114.

Sociologists John and Malcolm Collier suggest that "photographs can be communication bridges between strangers that can become pathways into unfamiliar, unforeseen environments and subjects. The informational character of photographic information makes this possible."[12] The Collier's claim is based on their pioneering study of using photographs in research on Acadians in the Canadian Maritimes. After taking photographs of his subjects and their physical surroundings, John Collier began using his work in interviews. He found that a simple image would open up memories and avenues of inquiry. He writes, "the focus is what is in the *photographs*. Such examinations can be like a personally conducted tour through the culture depicted in the *photographs*."[13] The photographs thus opened revealed new insights, fresh perspectives, historical information and, establishment of a rapport between researcher and subject, a different relationship than one based on "types" which help to loosen certain identities established through defining categories through visual culture.

Additionally, anthropologist Sarah Pink believes "ethnographic photography can potentially construct continuities between the visual culture of an academic discipline and that of the subject or collaborators in the research. Thus ethnographies can hope to create photographic representations that refer to 'local' visual cultures and simultaneously respond to the interest of academic disciplines."[14] Like Collier, Pink believes photographic work can be used in academic and public circles, bridging the gap between the two and strengthening both scholarship and public knowledge in the process.

However, Pink questions Collier's analysis that photo-elicitation is "based on the assumption that the 'facts are in the pictures.'"[15] Besides harkening towards nineteenth century principles of an observable, scientific and absolute framework, Pink's critique of Collier questions the idea of objectivity. Such objectivity is contrary to her belief that photos are "aspects" of culture not conducive to "fixed meaning."[16] Instead, she argues that "Photographs are not simply visual records of reality but are representations that are interpreted in terms of different understandings of reality….In a photographic

[12] John Collier, *Visual Anthropology: Photography as a Research Method*, (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 1986), 99.
[13] Ibid, 124, Italics Collier's.
[14] Sarah Pink, *Doing Visual Ethnography: Images, Media, and Representation in Research* (London ;Thousand Oaks; Calif.: Sage, 2001), 50.
[15] Ibid, 68.
[16] Ibid, 58.

interview, therefore, ethnographer and informant will be able to discuss their different understandings of images, thus collaborating to define each other's views."[17] To support this post-modern take on photographs used in research, Pink turns to Douglas Harper's idea of a "new ethnography," suggesting an alternative to Collier.

Harper states that photo-elicitation simply involves using photos in interviews.[18] Immediately, Harper dismisses the idea of an objective, observable reality.[19] He suggests three main tenets of a "new ethnography." First, echoing Pink, the object "which represents culture is partial or incomplete, because culture itself is not precisely boundaried and continually evolves."[20] Second, "Ethnographic knowledge traditionally derives from the interaction between 'subject' and 'researcher'"[21] Finally, ethnography is based on the experience of the researcher.[22] In concert with Harper's claim, Pink suggests, "The key to successful photographic research is an understanding of the social relations and subjective agendas through which they are produced and the discourses through which they are made meaningful. "[23] Photos are not static, fixed objects. Viewed in this way, they could veer toward stereotype. Instead, photo elicitation allows for nuanced interpretations in both contemporary and historical readings through subjects grounded in specific, localized contexts.

In his essay "Visual Historical Methods," David Perlmutter identifies the problems that historians encounter when working with images. In a logocentric tradition, Permlutter suggests, historians ought to be very careful when working with visual materials because they "are encouraged to trust the veridicality and verisimilitude of the images world, not to analyze its components closely."[24] Perlmutter gives many variable, contextual, and practical meanings, questions, and concerns the historian should follow (some of which I utilize below).

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[17] Ibid, 68.
[18] Douglas Harper, "Talking About Pictures: A Case for Photo Elicitation," 13.
[19] Sarah Pink does the same in her book *Doing Visual Ethnography*, see pages 17-21.
[20] Douglas Harper, "An Argument for Visual Sociology," in Jon Prosser ed., *Ìmage-Based Research: A Sourcebook for Qualitative Researchers* (Routledge, 1998), 30.
[21] Ibid, 31.
[22] Ibid
[23] Pink, *Doing Visual Ethnography*, 76.
[24] David D. Perlmutter, "Visual Historical Methods." Historical Methods 27, no. 4 (Fall94 1994): 167. Academic Search Complete, EBSCOhost (accessed March 9, 2013)

Particularly, I am concerned with one of Perlmutter's main tenants for ways historians use photographs. He writes, "Finally, the paradox of the image is that although it can only show narrow particulars in time and space, it can also fix the mind's attention and suggest or be taken as encapsulating a generalized condition."[25] In other words, photographs always include the risk of becoming representative of the whole, of becoming superficial.

In terms of historical work, Alan Trachtenberg and George Dimock provide two different historical evaluations of Lewis Hine's early work that recognize the ambiguity of images and highlight some of the challenges of historical work with photographs. Alan Trachtenberg suggests that Hine's undertaking of his first public photographic project on Ellis Island was marred by racial thinking based on stereotypes.[26] Hine would eventually overcome this and the resulting work would be "an implicit counterstatement to the Progressive reformist ideology he embraced—a subtle but nonetheless distinct resistance to the tendency of reformers to make objects of their underclass 'cases.'"[27] Trachetenberg bases his analysis in historical context, but he suggests that the photos demonstrate "an empathetic response to inner humanity."[28] They are transcendent, a moment of what Roland Barthes's calls *punctum,* which eschews historical context for a fixed internal narrative of the human spirit.

Conversely, George Dimock suggests that the photographs were interpreted by Hine's contemporary, mill booster George Dawley, in opposition to Hine's intent to promote changes in child labor laws. Dawley argued that mills provided for the betterment of the children, and that if southern mill tycoons were "guilty" of anything it was being hamstrung by Yankee financiers who lay at the origin of any perceived moral transgression.[29] Dawley based his conclusions on a reading of Hine's photos as proof that the rural conditions Southerners found themselves in was the cause of *their* physical appearance, not work in the mills of which Hookworm disease was one of the many culprits as a physical marker of inferiority. Dawley addressed the photos out of context (the *Bulletins*, *The Survey*, and Hine's captions),

[25] Ibid.
[26] Lewis Hine et al., *America and Lewis Hine: Photographs, 1904-1940* (Aperture, 1997), 122-123.
[27] Trachtenberg, *Reading American Photographs*, 206.
[28] Ibid., 205-206.
[29] Sallee, *The Whiteness of Child Labor Reform in the New South*, 12-13. Dawley's stance is a mixture of Trattner's critique in regards to Yankee intrusion and a reaction to McKelway.

which provided his revisionist reading. Here, he argued, were children who could be better off in a mill village.

Furthermore, Dimock believes that Hine's subjects lack agency, suggesting that "The paradigm of Hine as political and artistic dissident undermining the mainstream codes of representation simply doesn't work. It cannot and should not be used to enlist his photographs' unproblematic ally on the side of an alternative, working-class history of child labor. Hine's child-labor photographs must be read carefully and cautiously 'against the grain' given their complicity in the construction of the working-class 'other.'"[30] Dimock's critique is accurate in light of the history of photography used as a marker of difference. Hine's subjects could easily be interpreted as "cracker," "hillbilly," or "redneck," stereotypes; based on the inference that worth follows from occupation and class. Dimock suggests that the photos could be read in certain ways to reinforce Southern types both then and now.

III. Lewis Hine in the South

A. Child Labor in the South

The South was resistant to labor change for three reasons, according to Walter Trattner. First, it was a matter of social custom for the state not to intrude upon familial matters.[31] Second, there was an economic need based on a trumpeting of industrial progress in the post-Civil War era.[32] Finally, this resistance rested on public feeling against Northern interference in leading the battle for "reform," which sought to "reduce the advantages of southern mills, ruin southern competition, and retard southern production."[33] Such thinking was reflected in the growth in southern cotton manufacturing from 5 percent of the national

[30] George Dimock, "Children of the Mills: Re-Reading Lewis Hine's Child-Labour Photographs," *Oxford Art Journal* 16, no. 2 (1993): 43,45,48. It is interesting to note that McKelway, in interest of white solidarity, suggested in response to J. Borden Harriman, who believed poor whites were illiterate rubes, that "This was a serious indictment of a whole people…So far as my own memory and experience recall we were all 'poor whites' after the war." [Quoted in Hindman, 155]. Thus, McKelway positions himself in solidarity with whiteness that transcended class boundaries to evoke a common racial heritage that could assist in reform. Similar tactics were employed by politicians of the age to guard against white and black solidification of class interests, and, consequently, voting power.

[31] Trattner, *Crusade for the Children*, 38.

[32] Ibid., 36-37.

[33] Ibid., 40.

total in 1880 to 40 percent in 1915,[34] a surge attributed to tight, paternalistic control of production, lack of unions, and lower wages than those found in the North. [35]

In the early twentieth century, South Carolina labor laws for children required an age limit of twelve in a "factory, mine, or textile establishment."[36] In addition, night work was prohibited from 8pm-6am for those under sixteen, except to make up for lost time.[37] Ten hours a day, with no more than eleven hours with a sixty hour work week maximum was standard.[38] Although restrictions had been put in place, Hine reported, probably referring to his interactions with Mr. Smith, an overseer who appears in one of his Chester photographs

> In Chester, South Carolina, an overseer told me frankly that manufacturers all over the south evaded the child labor law by letting youngsters who are under age help older brothers and sisters. The names of the younger ones do not appear on the company books and the pay goes to the older child who is above twelve.[39]

Angered by such lax enforcement by the states, and spurred on by the practices of those such as Mr. Smith, the NCLC responded in its Child Labor Bulletin. It called for an answer to "find in almost every state small appropriations, small salaries, lack of public and local support, and corrupting policies," and that " men qualified neither by nature, experience, or education, become inspectors, their appointment and terms of office depending rather on 'pull' and politics than on any merit."[40] In response the NCLC called for a more stringent Uniform Child Labor Law, banning children under the age of fourteen from working in any mill.[41]

The issue was addressed by the conference of Governors, Manufacturers, Labor Organizations, and Women's Clubs held in New Orleans on March 30–April 1, 1909. During the conference, chairmen Solomon Wolff thundered that "it was not sufficient that a statute be placed on the books. You must provide also for the thorough enforcement of every provision contained in that statute; for a statute not

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[34] Ibid., 37.
[35]One can make an argument that this was not a circumstance confined to the era. After WWII, the rise of automated industry in the South underwent the same type of control exhibited with a staunch effort to restrict union activity.
[36] National Child Labor Committee (U.S.), *Child Labor Laws in All States* (New York: National Child Labor Committee, 1912), 62.
[37] Ibid., 63.
[38] Ibid., 62.
[39] Quoted in Hugh D. Hindman, *Child Labor: an American History* (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 2002), 165.
[40] National Child Labor Committee (U.S.), *Child Labor Laws in All States*, 110.
[41] Ibid., 80.

enforced is worse."[42] He then suggested that affidavits are not sufficient proof of a child's actual age.[43] Although a Southern conference, South Carolina did not send a delegate to hear Wolff's proclamations.

Herbert Doherty has written about the NCLC: "Until 1914 the only federal legislation which the committee advocated was the establishment of a Children's Bureau, which was finally created in 1912."[44] The NCLC's efforts involving southern manufacturing decreased after 1915.[45] However, the organization "had succeeded in mobilizing significant public sentiment against the child labor system."[46] Finally, the Keating-Owens Act, passed a year later, allowed for stronger federal oversight of child labor.[47] Attempts at constitutional ratification of the Federal Child Labor Amendment in 1924 and 1934, were opposed by the southern coalition of the National Manufactures Association with Kentucky, Arkansas, and West Virginia, which were the only Southern states to ratify the amendment. Change was slow in coming. According to a 1940 report[48], the NCLC placed the actual number of children working between 750,000 and 900,000 with an increase in agriculture and labor during the thirties.[49] This potentially could be attributed to the depression where necessity trumped law. However, the trend also progressed during the twenties, which saw a 24 percent increase in children's agricultural work in South Carolina as well.[50]

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[42] Conference of Governors, Manufacturers, Labor Organizations and Social Clubs, *Conference Held for the Purpose of Recommending to the Legislatures of the Various Southern States a Uniform Child Labor Law and Other Action Looking to the Betterment of the Condition of Woman and Child Labor About the South* ([New Orleans, 1909), 3-4.

[43] Ibid., 4.

[44] Herbert J. Doherty, "Alexander J. McKelway: Preacher to Progressive," *The Journal of Southern History* 24, no. 2 (May 1958): 181-82.

[45] Hindman, *Child labor*, 183.

[46] Ibid.

[47] Ibid., 181-82.

[48] Accompanying this barrage of statistics in the 1940 NCLC report were photos to evoke emotions in the viewer. In one section, "Stories of Child Laborers," the statistics accompanied a photo of a young boy lying in a hospital bed. With a smiling face, both the boy's arms are missing, replaced by gauzy stumps. Entitled "A Bleak Future," we read that the boy lost his arms in a New Jersey bakery. A quote informs the readers (and his parents): "Don't worry, I've got brains." But, the NCLC asks, what is he going to do when he finishes school?

In another example, a picture of a little girl stands behind two barrels of hops. Her hair is disheveled, as she looks straight into the camera. The caption informs us that "This six-year-old often picks hops for 4 hours a day." A paragraph that follows tells of the Easton family, including four boys and one girl, who lived in an Arkansas barn making 6$ a day as a family, lacking schooling. Still possessing the ability to "shock" today, such photos were presaged by Lewis Hine's labor work in the early twentieth century, and were still thought to be effective three decades later. Sadly, Hine was broke in 1940, and soon died penniless that same year.

[49] Gertrude Folks Zimand, *Child labor facts* (New York: National Child Labor Committee, 1940), 8.

[50] Ibid.

The racial superiority of whiteness was one point of agreement for progressive reformers and mill men. In service of the betterment of their race, and echoing Matt Wray's critique, mill men couched their hiring of children in racial and class terms, as a type of charity. "No longer able to dismiss workers as undeserving 'crackers' or as poor whites who were better off in the mills than in the fields," Shelley Sallee writes, "mill men created a more positive public image by arguing that employing poor whites would enable them to pull themselves up by their bootstraps."[51] Children became involved for two reasons: as a proposed way to start personal betterment at an earlier age and because employing a white male farmer entailed hiring his whole family.

Education was given slight acknowledgment, but no significant effort was made on the part of early mill owners to attempt much more than half-hearted change. Likewise, progressive reformers sought to frame their side of the debate using the betterment of the white race, casting mill workers as paradigms of untainted Anglo-Saxon virtue.[52] Alexander McKelway, no stranger to white supremacy, embodied such racial readings of the labor problem. Doherty summarizes McKelway's position, reporting that, "Physically, morally, and intellectually, [McKelway] claimed, the 'pure' racial strain was degenerating in the southern mills, while more often than not little black children were going to school or engaging in 'wholesome' farm labor."[53] Such comments were indicative of race relations in South Carolina where fear of any perceived advantage bestowed upon African-Americans struck fear into the heart of the white populace. McKelway, a savvy politician, took full advantage of this cultural fact when making his case.

. . .

This history helps the viewer understand Hine's photos by placing them in a historical context of contestation of child labor laws. Specifically, South Carolina didn't send a delegate to the 1909 conference; examining this fact can help clarify the subjects in the photos a bit better. Did Hine's subjects even know about the conference? What were their thoughts on child labor and factory work versus farm

[51] Shelley Sallee, *The Whiteness of Child Labor Reform in the New South* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2004), 4, 11.
[52] Ibid., 92-113.
[53] Doherty, "Alexander J. McKelway," 188.

work? We can assume that South Carolina as a whole had no interest in hearing the opposing side of the child labor argument. Why would they? Their region has been economically saved during Reconstruction by the promise of cheap labor to Northern manufacturers. The presence of Hine, a northerner, making a case for southern social change, is additional evidence that those in the South, if they didn't have the inclination, also may not have had the tools, techniques, and access to technological production to make their case.[54]

B. Hine at Work in Chester

Following the Progressive spirit of reform, Lewis Hine began learning photography under mentor Frank Manny of the Ethical Cultural School in New York, where, upon Manny's request, he began to photograph children's school work. In 1908, Hine was hired by the National Child Labor Committee (NCLC) to shoot "documentary" photos of children at work in the United States. Formed under Felix Adler, the NCLC was a coalition of reformers which included assistant secretary Alexander J. McKelway, a former preacher turned reformer and lobbyist, who oversaw the Southern region.[55] McKelway put Hine on assignment to travel throughout the South photographing children at work in canneries, glass factories, coal mines, and cotton mills.

On Saturday and Sunday November 28 and 29, 1908, Hine's travels brought him to Chester County during work on an NCLC pamphlet titled "Child Labor in the Carolinas: Account of Investigations Made in the Cotton Mills of North and South Carolina." Hine took twenty-five photographs of mill workers in Chester County. Most of these consisted of children who were employed in the mills. Hine believed strongly in child labor reform and that "the forces that will educate [mill owners] to the necessity for [reform], will be those of radical and efficient legislation and inspection, demanded by vigorous public opinion." [56]

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[54] It would not be until 1941 when native Southerner James Agee would, with Walker Evans, publish *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men.*

[55] Walter I. Trattner, *Crusade for the Children: A History of the National Child Labor Committee and Child Labor Reform in America,* (Quadrangle Books, 1970), 57-58.

[56] L. W Hine, "Child Labor in Gulf Coast Canneries: Photo-Graphic Investigation Made February, 1911," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* (1911): 122.

This period of Hine's work falls between his Pittsburgh series, where he took pictures of working class life, culture, and custom of steel workers, and his later work in New York. Although not as popular as his iconic photographs of the Empire State Building's construction, Hine's early NCLC work shows an artist coming into his own, combining social concern with craft. No doubt influenced by the working class portraits of Pittsburgh, Hine continued his work throughout the South, including the Carolinas, and would eventually use it during his subsequent work for the Red Cross

Hine was accompanied by his wife, Sarah, who served as a type of visual notary on many of the typed captions that were mounted along with Hine's gelatin silver prints. Having his wife as a witness added an air of factuality, verification, and truth as she provided an extra voice, an "independent" verification, to confirm her husband's claims during the era of visual certainty. Most of Hine's work from Chester encompasses portraits of children from the Springstein, Wylie and Eureka mills. Because he was denied access to the interior mills in most cases, he had to operate under false pretenses and often posed as a journalist.

Once word got out about his project, Hine found it increasingly difficult to get photos, although he managed to get shots inside the mills in nearby Newberry and Lancaster, South Carolina, on the same trip. (The stop after Chester, Clinton, on December 2nd, however, indicated in one of Hine's captions, noted that the overseer would not allow him in the mill.) As a result, all of the twenty-eight pictures Hine took in Chester were outside of the mills, including portraits in yards and on front porches and mill grounds. Two of his pictures are unusual in that one is of a mill overseer surrounded by children on the front steps of a large house and the other is a wide focus shot of the Springstein mill village that reminds one of a Steiglitz composition.

Hine's pre-Pittsburg article, "The School Camera" conveyed his vision of photography. "In the art work it is of great assistance in the appreciation of beauty, and is especially valuable in gaining a realization of composition," he wrote. "The recognition of what is good composition in art never becomes so vital as when one is able to select from the infinite variety of objects about him some bit that is pleasing to the eye, and then transfers to the photograph the lines and groups in the form of his idea of

composition."[57] Many critics, reflecting a key argument in the early years of photography, have suggested that Hine and his contemporary, Alfred Stieglitz, were diametrical opposites, with Hine less concerned about art and more interested in the "objective" truth the camera could capture for social ends.[58] While it is certainly true that Stieglitz held Nietsczehian ideals about the artist's contribution to society and man, it is apparent that, from the beginning, Hine believed in technique, form, and composition in his work in order to effectively transmit his beliefs.[59] Hine's personal philosophy, combined with his subject and text, provided the power of his photographs, but one must also include the technical aspects of Hine's work..

The resulting NCLC photos would be published by *The Survey*, a leading progressive journal with a title that reflected the social method that inspired it. Maren Stange writes about the method, "The survey was intended to connect the reformist purpose with the newest methods of scientific inquiry, enlisting and coordinating a variety of methodologies and academic disciplines in the quest for the totality of the social fact. Its objective representation of industrial workers would, the surveyors hoped, substantially contribute to organizing and stabilizing the reform coalitions' influence on corporate and government policy making."[60]

This spirit of Taylorism, the scientific management principle of workflows in the early 20th century, contributed to the methodical way in which Hine attacked his assignment. Like many of his time, Hine believed that the sheer voluminous force of accumulated data would produce the intended twin result of labor and law reform. Kate Sampsell-Willman attributes the principle's corresponding efficacy to Hine's NCLC photographs: "Hine advocated; he agitated; he indicted. But because his medium contained a high degree of verisimilitude and his methodology looked 'objective' as a social science survey, his

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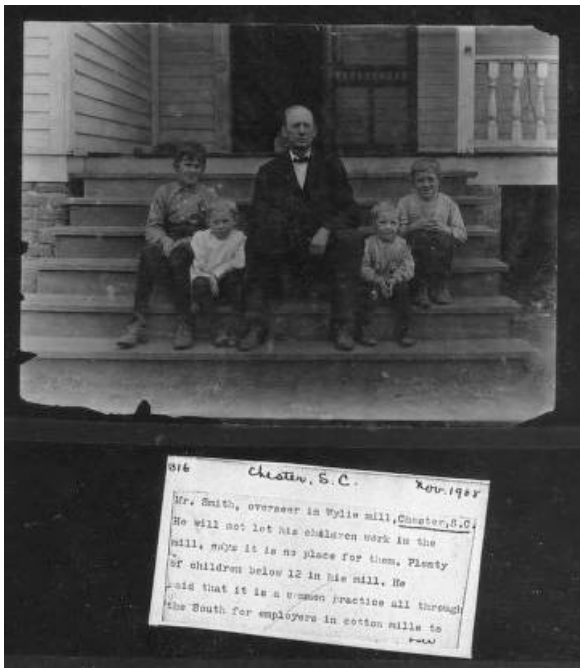
[57] L. W Hine, "The School Camera," *The Elementary School Teacher* 6, no. 7 (1906): 346.
[58]Susan Sontag, "America, Seen Through Photographs, Darkly," in Vicki Goldberg ed., *Photography in Print: Writings from 1816 to the Present* (University of New Mexico Press, 1988), 508; Estelle Jussim, "Icons or Ideology: Stieglitz and Hine," *The Massachusetts Review* 19, no. 4 (1978): 680–692. Also see the chapter "Camera Work, Social Work" in Trachtenberg, *Reading American Photographs.*
[59] Jussim, "Icons or Ideology."
[60] Maren Stange, *Symbols of Ideal Life: Social Documentary Photography in America, 950* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 49; Alan Trachtenberg, *Reading American Photographs: Images as History, Mathew Brady to Evans* (New York: Noonday Press, 1990), 195.

visual product was more effective than words."[61] He thought photos could shape the community outcry needed to enact change. But Hine encountered a culture that resisted the change he sought.

. . .

The analysis of Hine and Chester County begins with a close reading of selected images of the group Hine took of Chester's workers. I have chosen these photos for three reasons. The photos contain images of people who were positively identified in photo-elicitation, and thus provoked the most nuanced responses. Further, all are typical examples of Hine's photography during this time. Finally, all of the subject's photographs were workers for Springs Mills. Taken as a whole, these photos capture a moment in Chester when the cotton mill industry started to gain a strong foothold in the Carolina Piedmont in general, and Chester specifically.

Photo 316 (Figure 2)



Hine's Caption: "Mr. Smith, overseer in Wylie Mill, Chester, S.C. He will not let his children work in the mill, says it is no place for them. Plenty of children below 12 in the mill. He said that

[61] Kate Sampsell-Willmann, *Lewis Hine as Social Critic* (University Press of Mississippi, 2009), 77. Sampsell Williams is making her statement in the context of the Progressive era. Such objective truths, taken for granted in the early twentieth century photograph have, as contemporary commentators have shown, been challenged and replaced with a more subjective and post-modern worldview. However, the comment helps to shed light on the context of Hine's work for the NCLC.

> it is a common practice all through the south for employees in cotton mills to evade the child labor law by allowing young children to help their older sisters and brothers. The name of the small child is not on the books. That is the way we manage it."

Modeled after a family portrait common to the early twentieth century, photograph 316 (**Figure 2**) is centered on a stern and professional looking man. Balding, with sharp features, he is dressed in a dark suit and bowtie. A bowler cap rests on his knee. Four small boys wearing black pants and leather shoes sit with him on the front steps of a house. The composition of the picture is carefully structured with the children arranged symmetrically by height, flanking Mr. Smith in the middle. The ambiguity of the photograph is striking. Are these Mr. Smith's children? Or, are these mill children subjected to the labor he refuses his family? The worn look on their shoes leads one to believe they are workers, but the answer is unclear.

The overseer states, with ironic overtones, "He will not let his children work in the mill, says it is no place for them." Hine counterposes this with the fact, attributed to the overseer that "it is a common practice all through the south for employees in cotton mills to evade the child labor law by allowing young children to help their older sisters and brothers. The name of the small child is not on the books. That is the way we manage it."

This irony points to class conflicts throughout Chester County. Following in the eugenic line of thinking present in the early twnthieth century, Hine suggets the overseer is a man who sees rural- and working- class mill-hands as biologically, and thus fundamentally, different from the managerial class to which he belongs.[62] For the era, this juxtaposition would constitute an image of factual scientific certainty.[63] To show the overseer's boys, who aren't accustomed to the back-breaking mill work in comparison with the "other" children, would evoke a sympathetic response in the campaign to reform child labor laws.

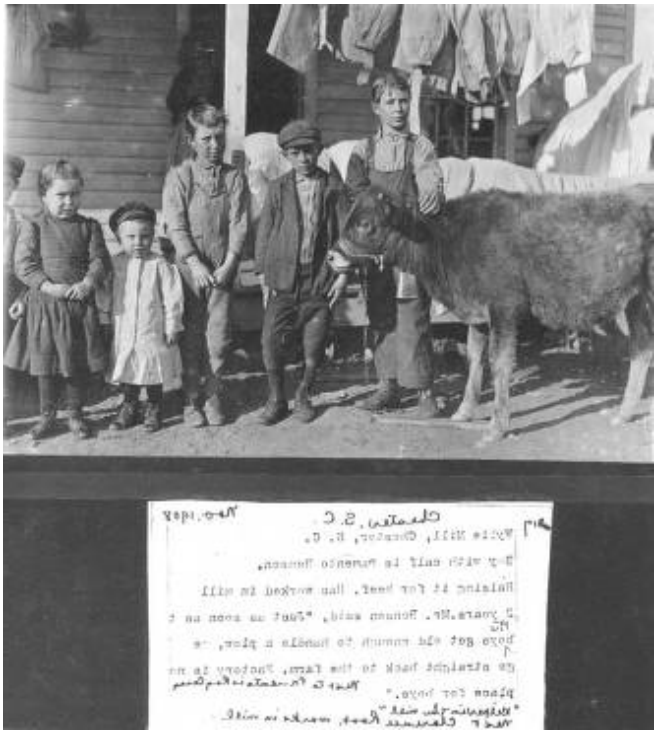
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[62] This is predicated on the idea that Mr. Smith cared about his thoughts and views being made public. In fact, the opposite may have been the case. He could have been standing his ground, challenging the prevailing winds of change, like George Dawley, believing that the mill workers were better off in the village than leading an agrarian existence on the land.

[63] See Elizabeth Edwards above.

For a Southern mill worker of the era, Photo 316 would signal class status in regard to the boss and his children. The photo could evoke anger and contempt. The manner of dress, the size of the porch, and the position of Mr. Smith front and center, which mimics his position in the community, would indicate a certain amount of prestige around the mill village. Conversely, captains of industry could see the photograph as proof of beneficial capitalism. A proper whiteness, from the vantage point of the upper class, is bestowed. In a county cleaved by the merchant class, African-Americans, and mill workers, orthodox representations served to disadvantage rural and working class Southerners. As such the physical characteristics of those in the photo serve as a stark reminder to the rural and working classes of Chester and of their place in the social structure of the community.

Photo 317 (Figure 3)



Hine's Caption: "Wylie Mill, Chester S.C. Boy with calf is Pimento Benson. Raising it for beef. Has worked in mill 2 years. Mr. Benson said, "Just as soon as the boys get old enough to handle a plow, we go straight back to the farm. Factory is no place for boys." Next to Pimento is Ray Benson. Helper in the mill. Next, Clarence Rust, works in the mill."

In photo 317 (**Figure 3**) the subjects are five children. To the left of the frame stands an emaciated calf with drooping udders. With his hand on the animal's neck, a boy dressed in overalls has his head cocked slightly toward the camera, his face partially obscured by shadow. To his left is a shorter, bowlegged boy wearing a cap, whose face is also partially obscured. Next in line is yet another boy, taller than the last, holding his hands and feet together, a posture that suggests nervousness. This boy wears overalls and a light colored shirt and stands next to a young child in a white linen smock, a stevedore's hat on his/her head, arms by the side. On the end is a cherubic girl, her hands and feet clasped together. With her hair pulled back tightly, a striking contrast is achieved between her black dress and the smock. Finally there is a partially obscured boy who is half cut off in the picture. Acting as a frame within a frame is the dirt front yard in which they stand. A clapboard house stands behind with a raised porch and two full clotheslines. A woman appears out of focus in the background on the front porch whose bearing and posture visually indicate a sense of protection over the children.

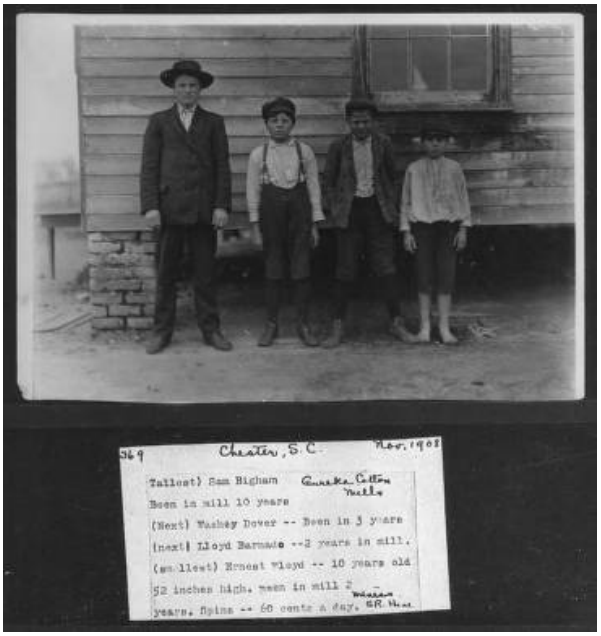
The image bears the physical markers of rural poverty associated with class. The photo contains all the physical hallmarks of millworkers in poverty.[64] The overalls, a common marker of the hillbilly, adorn the child. The dirt that makes up the front yard suggests hookworm, a common trait associated with rural Southerners. The multiple children are indicative of overbreeding, also associated with the poor. The emaciated calf suggests economic strife in its biblical counterpart of the "fatted calf." Such an image invoked a feast to celebration the prodigal son's return. In contrast to the mill home, here is one of strife and foreboding as shown through the calf. This poverty is a class example of a popular representation and belief of mill workers that were lodged in the American imaginary.

The caption, echoing the overseer in Photo 316, relays that the father of two of the boys, Mr. Benson, states a desire to return to the farm as soon as the boys are physically able because "Factory is no place for boys." This suggests a type of romantic rural nostalgia when uttered in present day contexts, but, more likely, Mr. Benson meant it to express a desire that the children be free from the mill system." Farm life

[64] I use "possibly" here to underscore the stereotypes that can be associated with the photos. Historical records would point to the fact that, indeed, the subjects in these photos were impoverished. However, stereotypes of a lazy, shiftless, and genetically deficient class usually follow from such a designation. While acknowledging these stereotypes exist, is the type of thinking that I am trying to engage and contend.

may not have been any easier, and the terms not any better, in the sharecropping system, but for some it did provide a modicum of self-determination. Once one became a part of the mill system, the avenues to leave were few.

Photo369 (Figure 4)



Hine's Caption: "(Tallest) Sam Bigham, Eureka Cotton Mills. Been in mill 10 years. (Next) Washey Dover--Been in 3 years. (Next) Lloyd Barnado--2 years in mill. (Smallest) Ernst Floyd--10 years old, 52 inches high. Been in mill 2 years. Spins--60 cents a day. Witness S.R. Hine. Location: Chester, South Carolina."

The composition of photo 369 (**Figure 4**) resembles photo 317. There are four male children facing the camera and lined up from tallest to shortest, left to right. The tallest child is dressed in a black suit and hat. Next to him stands a child in suspenders and knickers. The child's shirt sleeves are too short and his broad face with tired eyes is adorned by a cap. To his left , a boy in similar attire also wears a jacket. His hands are jutted in his pockets, his face tilted slightly downward, his brow furrowed—all of which gives him a savage demeanor. Finally, there is the shortest boy, whose clothing contrasts starkly with his counterpart on the opposite end. His knickers fit, but he has no shoes and socks to cover his feet in the November chill. His expression is peaceful. The children pose in front of a clapboard house, beaten and

browned by weather and time. Raised on brick columns, the house suggests a typical mill dwelling of the era. There is no grass, only dirt in the yard.

Hine's work during this era is intent on stating the age and height of the children in the photos, showcasing a borderline compulsive need to document data which reflects Hine's yearning to convince the public through the preferred method of the time. The caption in Photo 369 is an example of such intent and states that: Ernest Floyd is "52 inches high. Been in mill 2 years." This type of shorthand, a way of "recording" the children, as with specimens in a lab, is repeated throughout the photographs of this period, suggests that Hine was trying to establish a connection between the small stature of the children who worked in mills and the type of work that required repetitive strength. Such work takes a crushing toll on anyone who performs it, and Hine's captions point to such hardship by stating the ages of the young workers.

Hine's insistence on stating the age of his subjects, which he does throughout the series of photographs,—makes it a typical feature of his work. Indicating the children's ages in the photo serves as a kind of scientific documentation, on one hand, and on the other, the practice bestows additional intimacy between the viewer and the subject.

Hine's captions also state the rate of pay for the children. Ernest Floyd made 60 cents a day in Photo 369, which suggests that the rate of pay for such work was quite low. One criticism of the child labor movement was that child labor provided cheap "off the record labor" that wasn't based on a pay scale, the type of practice the overseer in Photo 316 confirms. This proved especially true in the South where anti-union sentiment ran high.

V. Imaging History

Taken together these photos represent Hine's typical style during his time working for *The Survey* and are a reflection of his method. Hine would arrive in a mill town, stay for a few days, and capture photos of child workers before moving on. The Chester photos are interesting because Hine chose to pose his subjects. In other cases, such as his photos on the same trip from adjacent Lancaster County, child

workers were photographed candidly in the mill performing tasks (Fig 4). All of the Chester photos are taken in the mill villages, which were owned by the mill, but still outside the purview of work. Hine's reputation preceded his arrival in Chester, so it is possible that his intentions were already exposed and limited his access to the inner mills.

All of this suggests that Hine's relationship with the subjects was fleeting. After gathering a few comments for the caption, which his wife, Sarah, recorded, Hine photographed his Chester subjects. The captions, however, are signifigant to how Hine related to his subjects.

When read collectively these captions provide a historical frame that emphasizes the humanity of its subjects. Hine's determination to eradicate child labor becomes apparent when his captions are viewed with the photos. Serving his anti-child labor agenda, Hine's captions establish a narrative of a callous mill overseer who oversaw child labor that he wouldn't even let his own children perform. This, coupled with the "facts" of age, size, and labor, were all part of a larger narrative in which these children worked in substandard conditions, performed physical labor out of proportion to their size, and worked for less than standard wage.

The captions are key when applied to Hine's work in this way. Without his notes accompanying the photo, the picture may be viewed in terms of composition, style and subject matter. Because of this information and what we know of Hine's context and agenda while shooting these photos, one can presume that they have a social justice component. The captions hold fast to Hine's intent. Without the caption, the photo, while aesthetically pleasing, is unmoored from *actual* intent, able to lapse easily into critique and become caricature.[65] As such the photograph can lose its subject to history.[66] What *is* lost is a larger context that can start to be recovered by historical context, which beings to illuminate Hine's work in concrete ways.

[65] I draw on George Dimock's ideas here, which I explore more fully in the conclusion.
[66] Here, I draw on Alan Trachtenberg's claim which I also explore more fully in the conclusion, placing it in conversation with Dimock.

Hine's captions leave no doubt of his politics.[67] One doesn't have to know that he worked for the NCLC to read intent into his photos which, coupled with captions, provide a story of poverty and child labor abuses were indicative of the story he was trying to tell. This was not lost on the photographers (Dorethea Lange, Walker Evans, Gordon Parks) financed from the Farm Security Administration during the Depression era that followed. Captions were meant to interpret photos for the viewer and, at the same time, provide insight into the photographer's agenda.

Without the captions, however, Hine's photos confirm orthodox representations of Southern rural- and working-class culture. In terms of Chester County, these photos speak to the coming of the mill that changed the once agrarian town, typical of many towns in the Carolina upcountry and Piedmont region, into a hotbed for mill activity with an abundance of cheap labor, lax unions, and a plentiful work force. Without the captions, these photographs have the potential to be severed from Hine's intended meaning and exist in ways he never intended.

For example, the present ideas of rural- and working-class Southerners lodged in the national imaginary have the potential to condemn Hine's images to orthodox representations. Utterances such as "That's the way it was," point to a type of nostalgia that settles over the work. The photos exist during a time when outwardly manifested labor was important, when craft mattered to define masculinity for the working- and rural-class worker. The obscurity of the labor and toil, the politics and paternalism, and child labor become lost. When the photos are quarantined to the past, future generations forget what crushing tasks mill labor work entailed. The images, without captions, can have the potential to obscure such histories. Without captions, the photos fall prey to nostalgia, which serves to obscure the nature of work and the character of life the subjects in the photos endured. Instead, the photos become aesthetic objects that reinforce, rather than challenge, orthodox representations of poor white Southern mill workers.

[67] It is interesting that the Smithsonian Archives don not include Hine's original captions. This, too, attributes a timeless quality to the photos that possesses the ability to strip the work of its intended purpose—a type of whitewashing of labor history perhaps?

Using the three photos above as examples, the answer to Banks's second question, "who took it or made it, when and why?" is answered by the context of history. Lewis Hine used the social sciences to address what he believed to be pressing social problems. Referring to Hine's work, Peter Seixas comments that the photos should be examined not only as intrinsic objects, but also in context.[68] Using history, one can look to the era in which Hine produced his child labor photos. The Progressive Era provides the cultural, political, and artistic context within which Hine worked. Contemporary commentators, such as Hine and Dawley, as explained above, each had differing opinions of what the photos as visual objects transmitted into message. History helps to untangle these competing interpretations.

This historical context, then, raises interesting questions about the subjects in the Chester photos. One aspect the photos highlight is, namely, what little information we have from the subjects themselves. Yes, we have the captions in which Hine quotes facts about the children's employment (i.e. "I've been in the factory since xxxx." "I am x number of years old."), but we have none of their feelings politically, socially, or otherwise about their situation. In the early twenty-first century, with the subjects long deceased, these photos provoke responses in Chester's current citizens as a way of understanding the past and the present.

In Barthian terms, this history can encompass the *studium* for current Chester citizens. Hine, the time frame, the social project, as well as the composition and form, account for the interesting nature of this photograph in a subjective sense. It holds intrinsic value which follows from an understanding of Hine, the attending history, form and circumstance, and their impact on *spectators* who participate "culturally"[69] But in the strict realm of studium, it is difficult to achieve an extra- emotional connection with the work at this stage of analysis.

Barthes doesn't fully explore the fact that the *punctum* can follow from the studium. Taking a closer look at the photographs addresses this phenomenon. Emotion may not be apparent until more

[68] Peter Seixas, "Lewis Hine: From Social to Interpretive Photographer," *American Quarterly* 39, no. 3 (1987): 381.
[69] Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 26.

details reveal themselves, allowing what Barthes calls "a power of expansion."[70] Although the subject matter for the photos comprises the intersection of a specific place (Chester) with a specific time (November, 1908), the photographs hold affecting weight because of connections to the subjects in the photos.

The punctum can be achieved by the shifting context of the photograph. When the external narrative is framed around the photo 369, achieves the level of punctum. This is because the boy in the photo, Wash Dover, is the father of Ethel Robinson, a contemporary citizen in Chester County, and was the beginning of one family's legacy of mill work. This background information enriches the photos at the level of studium and elicits punctum. This historic background information, drives us to sympathy by "a relation to spectacle… the return of the dead," which Barthes holds is one of the powers of photography.[71]

We find these photos haunting for two reasons. First is the relation to place. An indexical bond is formed between place and self that is weighted with past knowledge and current study of the town's mill history, and this "haunting" produces a lineage stretching from the dawn of the southern mills and the culture instilled by their captains of industry. The physical beings in the photo are dead, but the class and the culture they were a part of still exists.

Second, contemporary research, stories, and knowledge bear that history. Given context, the photos become more than the work of a famous photographer or relics of the past. They become portals to lives that serve a biographical purpose and carry emotion that a phenomenological reading produces. Hines's subjects evolve from signifiers or stereotypes. Conceptualized in genealogy and oral history, the photo represents a *life identified*.

There are other lives and a community involved in Hine's photos. Each has a story to tell. Photo-elicitation acts as a conduit to transmit these stories. The photos are rich in ethnographic detail and history and contain at least two streams of information: that which Hine provides and that of the subject in the

[70] Ibid., 45.
[71] Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 9.

photo. The subjects of the photos passed away years ago, but their lives are still transmitted in the stories told on their behalf.

VI. Photo-Elicitation of Hine's Work

What follows are subjective transmissions of stories in a place and time, rooted in history and memory that clarifies and enriches the photos through a contemporary external narrative. Using photo-elicitation, we can look at the current ways the work is interpreted. While the historical is general in terms of the South during Hine's NCLC period, the contemporary context can be *subjectively specific* in terms of place. The site of the original photos, Chester County, is explored through photo-elicitation with key citizens who are significant for their place in the community, or for their work in the modern mills.

Dr. Douglas Marion, a local optometrist, Chester native, and genealogical enthusiast, first recommended that I look at photos of Chester's mill culture taken in 1908.[72] Through birth records, newspaper obituaries, and conversations with others, Dr. Marion had pieced together information on the children in the photos. I was immediately intrigued when he mentioned that Lewis Hine took the photographs in November of that year. Dr. Marion explained:

> I was shocked. I didn't have any idea he [Hine] came through here. What are the odds that he would have chosen Chester, S.C., as one of the places he would stop and take photographs? I don't know how long he was here. Probably a day. And then he moved on, you think about it, gosh, he was in Maine, he was in Louisiana. So it really was amazing to me that he was here. The photographs to me are photographs of people that probably don't have other photographs of these people. People that didn't have the means to have photographs taken. So, I think they are just a treasure for lots of reasons.[73]

Most of Chester's contemporary citizens don't know who Lewis Hine was, significant fact because it speaks to the nature of labor history awareness in Chester County. Much as the mill workers took it upon themselves to drive out the labor unions from Springs during the wildcat strikes of 1934 (as discussed in the previous chapter), contemporary awareness of Hine photographs, much less the political and activist implications behind his work are forgotten to time.

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[72] For instance I wanted to talk to Dr. Marion for two reasons. First, his research alerted me to the Hine photos. Second, Dr. Marion's family has deep roots in Chester and is actively involved in documenting community history. This, of course, is a sampling—one could devote a lifetime to just these photos and the responses they elicit within Chester.

[73] Dr. Doug Marion, interview by James Hughes, digital audio recording, 9 April 2010, York Street, Chester, S.C.

At one point in our conversation, Dr. Marion states: "You know to me, that's fascinating history and nothing to be embarrassed about, but then again my parents didn't do that. Maybe I'm looking at it from a different perspective." For Dr. Marion the photos are, as he states above, "treasures," in the sense that they are artifacts of the past that provide a context to the place where he was raised. By his own admission, however, he is approaching the photos from a different class standpoint ("People that didn't have the means to have photographs taken"). As he relays in the conversation below, some of Chester's citizens are ashamed of their connection to the mills, something predicated on how mill people are perceived and perceive themselves in stereotypical ways. Dr. Marion, on the other hand, approaches the photos as a history that provides a fuller context to Chester.

Dr. Marion engages the photos on personal terms. In contrast to Hine, who had a specific agenda and transient relationship to Chester, Dr. Marion's relationship to the photos acts as a catalyst for a type of historical nostalgia. His readings are shared in the context of lived history which he demonstrates by allowing the photos to transport him through memories. Hine's readings, on the other hand, where shaped in the institutional context of the NCLC through the narrow lens of a political agenda, serving a very particular purpose.

In contrast, using Hine's photos to evoke the past and comment on the present situation in Chester, Dr. Marion was able to open what Caroline Scarles calls "spaces within which deeper, nuanced and affectual knowledges are expressed as subjective experiences are shared."[74] As such, it was not only *what* Dr. Marion said in response to Hine's photos, but *how* he said it that allowed for an analysis through connection to place.

A. Photo-Elicitation with Dr. Marion

1. Class

Dr. Marion began talking about the photos, the general effect of the mills, and Hine before we looked at the photos. The beginning dialog describes his method and general feeling about the mills.

[74] Caroline Scarles, "Where Words Fail, Visuals Ignite: Opportunities for Visual Autoethnography in Tourism Research." Annals of Tourism Research, 37 (4), 922.

Dr. Marion: I haven't had a lot of luck tracking down actual people, I've got more census records and things like that I've actually found real relatives and the few that I've found [pause] have not been a lot of information about their relatives.[75]

JH: *Why do you think? Is it because they don't know?*

I think it is a combination. I think some people are embarrassed about having mill workers in the family and about having specifically child labor in their family, and I think some people don't want to be reminded of that [pause] make it that's where they came from.

These are courageous stories to me. I talked to Jerry Robinson a little bit about it and he said you know that's how these families survived.[76] A lot of these people, and I think one of the interesting ones, get little quips from Mr. Hine, what he happened to write down when he was talking to these children.

The one with the Benson family (**Photo 317**) where the man says you know that they had to leave the farm but as soon as they get back on their feet their going back to the farm, this is no place for children and that kind of thing. Unfortunately the Benson's ended up staying there [the mill].

I don't know whether I told you this story, one of my secretaries was a Benson, when I saw the picture, I asked her "Is this any of your relatives?" and she said, "No I am not any kin to those people." "I know who they were but they lived at the mill, I'm not any kin to those people." And after I did some research [pause] it's her family, it's definitely her family.

In fact some of the children in that picture are not identified, but I feel sure, looking at the census records, that one of them is her grandmother, her grandfather, excuse me. One of the little smaller children she didn't [pause] I don't think she knew I don't think she was covering up. I really don't think she knew she

[75] Dr. Marion, interview by James Hughes, digital audio recording, 9 April 2010, York Street, Chester, S.C.. All of following conversation is from this interview. The recording is on file in the author's personal archive. The interview has been edited for flow.

[76] Jerry Robinson is a local doctor and grandson of Wash Dover in Photo 369. He grew up and still lives in Chester, while practicing medicine in Columbia, S.C. Dr. Marion is his contemporary: they are both roughly the same age, and Dr. Marion refers to Jerry multiple times.

was really kin to those people and they were very, very close kin to these people. I think they kind of lost touch with these relatives, but like I said, that would be her grandfather in the picture.

But, going back, I tried to do some research [into] where these people come from and lived and some of the obituaries give you little hints when they moved to Chester and left the farm and stuff. I guess economic conditions—they just couldn't make a living on the farm.

The mills were a new thing and a way to make money and a way to have shelter over your head. I think a lot of these cases these people in order to keep food on the table [pause]…the kids had to work. By today's standards we think that's horrendous, but at that time that's what they did in order to make ends meet.

Here Dr. Marion is touching on quite a few themes of Chester's past while his story sheds light on the status of Chester's current day attitude towards that past. Rather than condemning the mills, Dr. Marion's take on "at that time that's what they did to make ends meet," shows that removed from the context, nostalgia is used as justification—a mental salve—for the conditions of Chester's earlier citizens. For instance, from the vantage point of his position, he calls the mill workers in the photos "courageous," but is countered by his secretary's claim of "those people." This, too, is a type of timelessness.

However, instead of encasing the past as a national monument or sacred space, as Patrick Wright argues, the past here is one of shame and guilt.[77] *In the South, to hail from a mill family in a small rural town can bear certain and specific connotations of ignorance stemming from poverty, which feeds stereotypes . Whether these connotations are true or not doesn't matter. Much like representation in scientific photos and early ethnographic films, the "type" (as I more fully discuss in Chapter3) sticks. Gone is an individuality and, with it, specific stories.*

For instance, as George G. Suggs, Jr. writes in his memoir about family and life in a mill village,

[77] Patrick Wright, *On Living in an Old Country The National Past in Contemporary Britain* (Oxford University Press, 2009).

> Regretfully, I early concluded that for the majority of local people outside the Old and New mill villages, cotton mill workers and their families were nothing more than uncouth illiterates who were too much inclined towards violence, the kind of people that they and their children should avoid unless compelled by circumstance to do otherwise. Mill people were all lumped together. This extremely critical attitude blinded outsiders to the diversity and richness of mill life, and it also obscured for them the sometimes subtle deference that workers showed to certain of their fellow workers.[78]

Even between the working classes there existed a social stratum with the mill workers at the bottom. In Hard Times Cotton Mill Girls, Aliene Walser remembers,

> Before I was married, I remember hearing that mill people wasn't nothing but slum people, that there wasn't nothing to them. I've heard it said that mill people are a lower class of people. A lot of them that worked at the furniture factory thought that they were better than mill workers. I got about seven or eight uncles that worked there and I know. They thought they was better than mill people and still do….Those that think we're a lower class of people ought to go in the mill and find out for themselves, if they got sense enough to do the work.[79]

Echoing his secretary's comments and general mill experience, Dr. Marion speaks of Chester specifically in such terms:

I think it's a combination of they were uneducated; lot of them couldn't read and write. And then the later generations don't want to be remembered of where they came from. If you made something better out of yourself you don't necessarily want it to be known that your mama and daddy couldn't read and write, or that your mamma and daddy went to work in the mill when they were 8 years old.

And, later Dr. Marion reminisces about his Chester childhood:

When I was growing up there was a definite class distinction. Not that you would not associate with people who worked in the mill or that kind of thing. There was a definite, you wouldn't, these were the kids... you wouldn't go down to the mill village and play with these kids in the mill village. Not that I was forbidden or anything like that, I think it was just understood. You know that was the 1960s. Think about what it would be in the 1900s.

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[78] George Suggs, *My World is Gone: Memories of Life in a Southern Cotton Mill Town* (Wayne State University Press, 2002), 79.
[79] Victoria Byerly, *Hard Times Cotton Mill Girls*: *Personal Histories of Womanhood and Poverty in the South* (ILR Press, 1986), 83.

2. Discovering and Reading Hine's Photos

Dr. Marion's initial foray into Hines' work was predicated on the formal and aesthetic qualities that appealed to him.

One of the things that draw me to these photographs is what a fabulous photographer he was and how he really got the emotions of these children in the photographs.

This initial studium led Dr. Marion to the captions. This combination of word and text allowed Dr. Marion to begin his exploration of Hine's work:

I was just totally shocked, I had done some research, well, not research, but just playing on the internet and Googled "Chester SC" and some of the pages from the pamphlets had come up that had the photographs in them, but it wasn't until I stumbled upon them, I guess it was at the university of Maryland, that had the original notation that he took, and it had all of them. Maybe four of them got used in the pamphlets of twenty-something photographs in Chester. His original notation she [Hine's wife, Sarah] took that got edited in the pamphlets.

It's interesting to read the edited captions of what they decided was worthy of actually putting in for propaganda purposes for lack of better words. To me they are so edited and such little information. There, you can understand a lot of times names are left out because that wasn't pertinent for what they were trying to do with these photographs.

That's why it was so exciting to me to find the original notes that he took. It was also interesting how he was speaking to children. I'm sure these children had quite a different accent than he was used to hearing. You really have to take what he wrote down with a grain of salt when you're trying to figure out names and things like that, because he wrote what he heard, a lot of times. Then I figured out who most of these people were, since they were taken in 1908. I went to the 1910 census, basically walked through piece by piece.

a. Photo 316 (Figure 5)



This was the first photo Dr. Marion addressed. His response concerns the nature of research and child labor practices of the era.

This is that one picture of the superintendent, and I can find absolutely nothing about that man. Of course, unfortunately, his name is Smith. I can't find somebody whose name was Smith living in that area in 1910. Of course, he could have left between 1908 and 1910. So, I don't know who Mr. Smith is. You think he would be the one person, being the superintendent, the overseer that you could find some information about.

Look at the banisters on the house, the quality of that house is so much greater than all the ones of the kids in the mill village. He obviously had a little higher standard of living.

JH: *Do you think those children are his children?*

I would think they would be his children. I would think that Mr. Smith particularly wouldn't want to pose with [pause]….

JH: *….with mill children?*

Well, with obviously the children who worked in the mill. He probably knows what is going on here, taking pictures of propaganda against child labor. I wouldn't think he would pose with the children who were working in the mill.

I 've been disappointed I couldn't find more information. I thought maybe, well we could figure out from the ages of the children who was who.

It does say he won't let his children work in the mill, we know he had children. I've always just assumed these were his children.

JH: *What do you think about the attitude he wouldn't let his own children work?*

I think, obviously, people who were a little more educated had a higher standard of living for themselves and I know there was definitely a class distinction there,

And these people, you know, they had their own school, their own grocery stores and nobody had a car. The mill village was a town unto itself. I think a lot of times you just didn't associate with these people.

I had a great aunt whose husband was a mill superintendent. They moved around quite a bit. They always had a home. They lived in the mill village, but they always had a palatial type home in the mill village--the mill owned it, you know, but it was almost like a feudal system, the castle and the hovels around it.

We tend to look at all that with our own prejudices, and looking at it with our eyes. These mill houses were probably much nicer than the shacks they lived in on the farm. It's kind of easy to look at them and condemn what we think the living situation was, but it probably was a pretty nice living situation at the time.

I'm not trying to sugar coat it, but I definitely think you have to step back and look at it from the point of view that nobody much had running water in 1908; nobody had electricity much in 1908. A lot of times these villages, had more than they would have before they moved there.

I think it's the same thing when people talk about slavery, what a horrible institution it was, but then you had people saying how much better off they had it than where they were. Obviously, those are two ends of the spectrum and it's probably somewhere in the middle.

Dr. Marion is attempting to put himself in the shoes of Hine's subjects. He is trying to achieve an empathetic response to understand the past as it was lived not as it is framed by orthodoxy. His attempt, sometimes unsuccessful, to identify the subjects is shaped by the historical frame and Hine's captions. As I have shown, when the two are combined, they can elicit a shift from the focus on the aesthetic quality of the photos to one that opens a personal lived history. In this case, Dr. Marion is trying to step outside of his class, and rely on what knowledge he has, from growing up in the county, of the mills in Chester.

b. Photo 317 (Figure 6)



Permentter Benson (with calf), which Hine heard as "Pimento," was born in Fairfield, South Carolina, around 1896 to James Henry Brown (1866-1918) and Nancy Benson. He was able to read and write, and, like so many of his time, his family came off the farm to work in the cotton mill in hopes of a better life. He died on Saturday, April 30, 1972, at seventy-six years of age, leaving behind his wife, Mrs.

Sarah Black Benson, and his son, James Neal Benson, who resided in Pittsburgh at the time.[80] *His brother Wray, in the photo next to Permentter, and five years his younger, did not share a similar fate as he died on Tuesday, March 31, 1939, at thirty-eight.*

It's interesting I've gotten little bits and pieces of information, the ones that are identifies are the fellow, he says Pimento, but his name was really Permentter which is interesting, because that really is an FFV Virginia name.[81] And I've never been able to figure out where that came from, where the Benson's… did they come from Virginia and have elegant ancestors? All I can do is trace them down to Fairfield County when they lived on the farm there.[82]

But he [Hine] names this one "Pimento" Benson, and I'm trying to remember who is, but one of them is not a Benson.

[He reads caption to jog memory]

Next to him is Wray Benson; he became a constable in the mill village. And then it says Clarence Roof, so Clarence Roof must have been a neighbor or a relative.[83] This is probably my secretaries' grandfather, then his sister, then here's half of somebody else who's probably another Benson.

Or, if he was much more interested in getting the cow. Because the cow, to me, is so different than any photograph I've seen him take. I wonder if the whole point was the cow, going back to the farm, you know what I mean?

At this point Dr. Marion's thoughts shift to memories provoked by the photo. He addresses our shared sense of place by asking me if I remember certain people in relation to those I currently know now.

Do you remember James Rape who used to have a photography studio going up the hill in Chester, kind of halfway between the commercial bank and my daddy's office? He's Jeff Orr's grandfather.

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[80] Chester Reporter, 5/3/1972, Obituaries
[81] The acronym "FFV" refers to "First Family of Virginia," which suggest original settlers with blue blood origins.
[82] Fairfield is the county that borders Chester to the south.
[83] Hine identifies him as Clarence "Rust," which is another instance of Hine not being able to decipher the thick accent.

[I admit that I vaguely remember]

He grew up in the mill village and decided that he was going to be a photographer and while he worked in the mill he took photographs at right until he was able to build up enough money and clients so he could quit working in the mill. I don't know how he came to my office when I was working on this, I don't know how he started talking about something and I realized and I asked him if he knew any of these people.

He talked about Wray Benson and what a mean man he was. I wish I could remember the exact story. In essence, he shot and killed his dog for no reason.

And I think what elegant names they had. You know, obviously these were not poor dirt farmers at some point in the game.

JH: *Tell me about the names, the lineage?*

You would think Nicholas W-R-A-Y Benson is kind of an unusual name, especially the spelling. And his brother's name is James Permentter Benson and both of these names sound like somebody got some education and some history behind them. I would think they would be family names.

But, it says here, in Wray Benson's obituary, he was born in eastern Fairfield, his parent's moved to Chester thirty-three years ago. That kind of coincides with the information you get from Lewis Hine that they just moved here from the farm. It's interesting how it weaves together for me, the story of this family.

It's just little fragments, I wasn't able to find out a lot about Clarence Roof, but I did find his obituary and there were a lot of leads.

I think it's interesting that's one of the photographs, or whoever the committee was that made the pamphlet, chose to put them in the pamphlet. I think the cow sort of tells the story that these were farm people who basically came to the mill as a last resort when they couldn't make ends meet. And the plan was to go back to the farm as soon as economic times got better.

JH: *Are there reasons why you think they don't make it back?*

The mill system was such a paternalistic system. You come to work for the mill, and I can't give you specifics about these mills, so I'm being a little bit more general.

I don't know how much you know about the Lando mill but it was set out in the middle of nowhere, by itself. It will be interesting when you talk to Granny, because she worked at the Lando mill for a while.

Its own little mill village was its own community within a town, but Lando was in the middle of nowhere as it was definitely its own community… people have no transportation. homes were owned by the mill, so if you quit working in the mill you didn't have a roof over your head, and they paid the people half in cash and half in tokens. And the tokens were only redeemable at the mill store.

That sounds like that's really padding their own pockets, because its forcing the people to buy stuff, but, in Lando, there was nowhere else to buy stuff!

If you were going to buy anything it was at the mill store. But, I think that combination of economic times, the fact that these people did not make a lot of money, I'm sure they existed from day to day on the amount of money that they made, so savings were probably unheard of once you got into the system. It would be extremely difficult to leave the system, you wouldn't be able to have a place to go, didn't have a house to live in, and didn't have anything, much savings to do things. Once you got in the system and that's the downside of the mill system for these people it was a generational thing, not only were you stuck in the system, your children were stuck in the system. I'm sure people left, but it was not many.

Lando is located in Richburg, in the eastern part of Chester County, off of Exit 65 on Interstate 77. To this day, Lando is isolated in a sense. Some prominent locals petitioned the county to put up lights off the exit to attract commerce, as Chester exists in a kind of no-man's-land between Charlotte and Columbia, 14 miles off the interstate down Highway 9. The Country Omelet and The Front Porch, are mom and pop restaurants that signify the "countryness" of the county but are also emblematic of regional authenticity and vie for dollars with national chains including Burger King, Waffle House, and

Kentucky Fried Chicken. On the other side of the Quick Stop gas station, down a former dirt road is Lando. There is little of the mill left. There is a small museum with artifacts. One cannot help but be struck by the disappearance of one form of capital, at the expense of its workers, for newer, service industry counterparts. Such an observation reconnects Chester's past and future, not diametrically opposed, but reimagined and reworked for the twenty-first century. The jobs that existed in the isolation of Lando now are part of a "global community" that is signified by ubiquitous fast food joints.

Dr. Marion's comment on the chain of being that extended from the farm to the mills is a pragmatic take. His rationale is one of necessity; "There was nowhere to buy stuff," "Running water," and "Indoor plumbing," speak to Dawley's assessments of the better life for farmers that entered into the mill villages. But he acknowledges a system that could keep one chained to its mission. As he looks at Permentter and friends, he sees the signifier of the cow and, in the process, he tries to make sense of both Hine's intent and—at the same time—grapples with the paternalism of the mill system.

I am also at play in the exchange. I have, per Pink and Harper, forged a symbiotic relationship with my subject, Dr. Marion. His insight is key into my analysis. It jogs my memory and uncovers connections between the past and present in my analysis of Richburg and Lando. Our shared connection to place is centered on Hine's work. My thoughts of James Rape, although I only vaguely remember, lead me to thoughts of when I was a child skateboarding downtown with my friends who were African-American. It leads to when we were stopped by local police, and I was not harassed as my friends were; I was told to go home. It leads to calls my mother received that alerted her to the fact that I was with "blacks," calls which quickly drew her ire and a response that the boys in question were family friends, welcome at her house anytime.

In addition to these memories of race relations, I am led to see how the mill system may be gone, but its remnants still exist in a global service culture with which it has a lot in common, including meager wages. The difference is that modern mill workers had federal regulations to protect them in ways the Bensons did not, which included federally mandated minimum wage and the better chance at a union. Of

course, the mills pointed to this higher wage as one reason that contributed to moving operations overseas.

c. Photo 369 (Figure 7)



Photo 369 includes Ethel Robinson's father, Wash Dover. He is second from the left. Hine reports the name "Barnado" in his notes for identification for the child to Wash's left. This is a mistake, as it should read Varnadore, a common last name in Chester County.

Jerry seems to think his name [Wash] was John Washington. That becomes "Washer" in the census. Jerry didn't know much about his grandfather.

I don't think Granny knows a lot about him. It was interesting, I knew that Granny was a Dover and it was just shortly after I found these pictures, days [later] she came to get her eyes checked. I just was talking to her and I said what was your father's name and she said "Wash Dover." I about dropped my teeth. I just found these pictures and got her talking about it. It was obvious to me [pause]… she was not

cagey in that she didn't want to talk about it, but I think her father died at such an early age. She didn't know a lot about…she was happy to talk to me about her experiences. She didn't really know a lot about him working in the mill. She was pretty amazed that there was a photograph of him.

***JH**: It's funny how these things cross.*

In fact she was really the first person that I was able to sort of make a connection with about these people.

I think there's a lot of mixed emotions, I think that in some ways she's excited that somebody wants to know something about her, but in other ways it's almost like it's a little bit embarrassing. This is who her family was and this is what they did. But the more I talk to her, the more she didn't seem to mind that. I think maybe she thought that I was going to think it was something to be ashamed of and when she figured it out that I didn't care about that, she seemed open to talk about it.

Dr. Marion tries to figure out the lineage between the Dovers and the Varnadores, which include Jerry's cousin Vicki. He reads his handwritten notes on the page, thinking aloud, and processing information as it comes.

This is a picture with Jerry's grandfather in it. I don't know who Vicki's…I would love to find out about Lloyd Varnadore, since there is a connection between the Dover and the Varnadore families. It took me forever just to figure out they were Varandores.

You probably saw my scribble here when I talked to Ethel.

[He starts reading his notes out loud]

Doesn't know if Wash Dover had another name. Was from York County. Dies at 39 yrs old. Buried at Evergreen Cemetery, His wife was Ora Franklin from York, Went back to the mountains. She dies in 1931 when her daughter Liv was born.

[Stops reading]

I think Liv is the one who married the Varnadore.

[Reading notes]

Wash was born at Eureka. Had heart attack several years before he died. History of heart trouble. All died young. Five children, three boys and three girls. Ethel quit school in the seventh grade.

Ethel worked at Lando with her two sisters, Pauline and Thelma, and then she was transferred to the Gayle. Married Ed Robinson when she was 21 years old.

[Ends reading]

I knew who Jerry was, but I didn't know any of his family growing up. So, I didn't know that for a fact.

[Pause]

Ok, I see I can't remember what I found. John Washington Dover was definitely his name, even though Ethel didn't know if he had another name.

[Reading notes]

Died suddenly. Health had not been good for the past 2-3 years. Death was a shock to his relatives. Survived by his widow, Mrs. Myrtle Bishop Dover.

[Stops reading]

Well, look at there! [Pause] She told me one time she wouldn't tell anybody what her middle name is. She wouldn't tell her children what her middle name was. Must not like it.

[Pause-Tries to figure out genealogy]

So see if you think about that—her mother died when she was 3. Her father remarried, and then he died. No wonder they went to work at the mills. The parents were both dead.

It's interesting, you kind of look at these things and you don't remember all these things—what you've found, what you haven't found.

You know to me this is just a fascinating part of history in Chester that is overlooked.

JH: *I have yet to find any history about the mill except told by the mill owners.*

You know to me, that's fascinating history and nothing to be embarrassed about, but then again my parents didn't do that. Maybe I'm looking at it from a different perspective.

In Ethel and Jerry's situation how excited would I be to have a picture taken of my grandfather in 1908. I just think that's wonderful. Whether he worked in the mill or didn't work in the mill. I bet that's the only picture of him as a child that exists.

VII. Conclusions

A. History and Photography: Revisiting Trachtenberg and Dimock

George Dimock suggests that the photographs were interpreted by Hine's contemporary, mill apologist George Dawley, in the opposite fashion from Hine's intent to promote change in child labor laws. Dawley argued that mills provided for the betterment of the children, and that if southern mill tycoons were "guilty" of anything, it was being indebted to Yankee financiers who lay at the origin of any perceived moral transgression.[84] Dawley based his conclusions by reading Hine's photos as proof that the rural conditions southerners found themselves in was the cause of their physical appearance, not work in the mills. Among the various culprits was hookworm disease, the physical marker of inferiority. Dawley addressed the photos out of context (the *Bulletins*, *The Survey*, and Hine's captions), which provided his revisionist reading. Here, he argued, were children better off in a mill village.

Furthermore, Dimock believed Hine's subjects lacked agency, suggesting that "The paradigm of Hine as political and artistic dissident undermining the mainstream codes of representation simply doesn't work. It cannot and should not be used to enlist his photographs unproblematic ally on the side of an alternative, working-class history of child labor. Hine's child-labor photographs must be read carefully

[84] Sallee, *The Whiteness of Child Labor Reform in the New South*, 12-13. Dawley's stance is a mixture of Trattner's critique in regards to Yankee intrusion and a reaction to McKelway.

and cautiously 'against the grain' given their complicity in the construction of the working-class 'other.'"[85] Dimock's critique is well-taken in light of photography's history as a marker of difference. Hine's subjects could easily be interpreted as "cracker," "hillbilly," or "redneck," stereotypes, based on the inference that worth follows from occupation and class. Dimock suggests that the photos could be read in certain ways to reinforce Southern types both then and now.

Thus, we have two competing historical readings of Hine's work. Both readings suggest that the external narrative shapes the internal narrative by way of historical actors and critics. Hine and Dawley's arguments stem from the image's force. Because they were contemporaries of the labor debate, the external narrative does influence their arguments—they could not escape something they helped to shape. However, both used the intrinsic power of the image, the internal narrative, as proof. Each employed the power of the camera as undeniable evidence of the way men thought.

Trachtenberg and Dimock use Hine's images similarly. Acknowledging the historical frame, both eventually return to them as "fixed" documents whose power and meaning lie outside any historical moment. Dimock advocates that Hine's child photos belong in the category of stereotype. Not only is the image fixed he insists, its meaning is as well. Trachtenberg, while taking the opposite view of Dimock, settles the assessment that the image possesses an extra charge: a cross-historical value of transcendence, a transcendence not like the punctum, which is subjective both in regard to the images and to the personal responses that resonate, but a transcendence that fixes the meaning objectively. Trachtenberg thus finds himself in the territory of nineteenth-century notions of race, culture, and type. Followed to its logical conclusion, his rationale can be used to promote stereotypes that Dimock uses as a warning or as a kind of cautionary tale.

Both of the readings point towards the challenges historical photographs pose for the researcher. Such visions encompass aesthetic as well as contextual analysis shaped by region, subject, and

[85] George Dimock, "Children of the Mills: Re-Reading Lewis Hine's Child-Labour Photographs," *Oxford Art Journal* 16, no. 2 (1993): 43,45,48. It is interesting to note that McKelway, in the interest of white solidarity, suggested in response to J. Borden Harriman, who believed poor whites were illiterate rubes, that "This was a serious indictment of a whole people…So far as my own memory and experience recall we were all 'poor whites' after the war." [Quoted in Hindman, 155]. Thus, McKelway positions himself in solidarity with whiteness that transcended class boundaries to evoke a common racial heritage that could assist in reform. Similar tactics were employed by politicians of the age to guard against white and black solidification of class interests, and, consequently, voting power.

photographer. While this is not an exhaustive list of variables (race and gender are two more that come to mind) the differing analysis of the two readings point to the myriad ways the historian can approach the subject. Conversely, such analysis shows the rich nature of photographs in research. While there is no complete and finite way to "read" a photograph—indeed the beauty of the object is that it allows for multiple subjective meanings—such pointed histories allow the generalizations to become more complicated, and allow for a more historically nuanced picture flowing from particular subjects. With this in mind, Dimock and Trachtenberg's readings point to the efficacy of a "third way" of "seeing" photographs, based on the method of anthropological photo-elicitation with contemporary subjects who share, in the case of Chester, a common industrial history.

B. The Uses Photo-Elicitation

In his book about trauma and photographs, *Spectral Evidence*, Ulrich Baer asks if "we can paste photography in to the album of historicist understanding."[86] He responds that it is inadequate to treat photographs from an imaginary continuous loop of time and life; instead, he focuses on "images revealing experiences that have not been, and possibly cannot be, assimilated into such a continuous narrative. Through analysis of these photographs of events and individuals, that, for various reasons, have been cast out of the forward-sweeping movement of history," he calls for not seeing history as "inherently flowing and sequential."[87] At the risk of oversimplifying his complex argument about the nature of time and space, what he means by this, simply, is that one should be careful to fit photographs into an overarching narrative while remaining respectful to the power of interpretation. Instead we, according to his Democritean concept of time, should look at photographs as "the rainfall of reality" which "can capture the shrapnel of traumatic time."[88]

Applied to Chester and the Hine photos in particular, this view of history foregrounds the subjects of Hine's work, to uncover *their* stories as lived history, not *the* stories of an institutional narrative. Far

[86] Ulrich Baer, *Spectral Evidence*, 1.
[87] Ibid.
[88] Ibid., 5,7.

from a continuous narrative, as Baer calls it, the gathering of such narratives can add up to a fuller picture of a particular community and culture. Dr. Marion's memory allows a glimpse at the subjects in the photos, but also says something about the contemporary situation, one beyond their own lifetime or experiences. This, according to Perlmutter, "is of interest and relevance to attempt to link historical meanings with present political contexts. This involves not just finding a primary historical meaning but also tracking how the image is used and viewed by subsequent publics."[89] Applied to this case study, recovering "the primary historical meaning" is the regional context of Hine's work and the NCLC. The usage of the photos from Dr. Marion points toward the treatment of "subsequent publics." Far from being a complete picture or history of Chester, the mills, or the South, photo-elicitation and personal history competes with orthodox representations of the past and present.

Photo-elicitation, coupled with oral history, provides a third method of interpretation, along with Trachtenberg and Dimock. Dr. Marion's research of Hine's subjects helps to reclaim lives and reveals the current state of Chester, which is a convergence of the past, present and future. The subjects in the photos and the corresponding interviews are not rendered as historical actors in an ideological game of child labor laws, nor are they fodder for formalist debate. Harper would suggest that this entails the subject and the researcher learning from one another. However, in my experience (itself subjective), I am hesitant to contend that I shaped the informant's knowledge. By simply holding a conversation and letting photographs stimulate the discussion, the less I "guided" and provided objective historical "fact," the more satisfying response I recorded. In addition, my conversation with Dr. Marion elicited a personal response that also helped shapes contemporary history around the photos. In the process, my subjects and respondents taught me more than I taught them.

Speaking of artist Jean-Michael Basquiat's works, bell hooks writes, "To see and understand these paintings, one must be willing to accept the tragic dimensions of black life."[90] Similarly, one must be prepared to at least recognize the tragic history of Chester's mill workers, especially before the age of child labor laws in order to achieve empathy. Here is not a deficiency of Darwinian selection, the "types"

[89] Perlmutter, "Visual Historical Methods."
[90] bell hooks, *Outlaw Culture: Resisting Representation* (Routledge, 2006), 32.

that were identified by visual methods in the social and natural sciences, but instead a man-made system that supported child labor and had developed long before "crackers" stepped off the farm into the doffing room.

Such pictures are artifacts to historians; they can indicate proof of a type of dress, living conditions, or other such "facts." However, the tendency is to look to pictures as proof of something already believed, as confirmation. In photo elicitation the photograph doesn't foreclose possibilities; instead, it acts as a "point of departure" for inquiry which can open up avenues that challenge forgone conclusions and give voice to people otherwise not heard.[91] Thus, we can use historical photos as a roadmap to inquiry about specifics.

For the scope of this study, Hine's photos are important because they provide a historical perspective of Chester in the post-Reconstruction South. The voices of the workers in Hine's photos have been replaced with visual depictions that obscure their emotions, thoughts, and feelings. Lewis Hine's photos were the beginning of a larger visual narrative about the rural- and working-class South that still exists today. Such a narrative continues to silence those it represents. Nowhere can this case be made stronger then in rural- and working-class stereotypes found in contemporary film, the focus of the next chapters of this dissertation.

Photo-elicitation helps us to reclaim voices that have been replaced the visual representations, In this case it provides a lived historical counterpoint to the institutional narrative of such corporations as Springs. Extending this analysis, contemporary film, when read through history, can help an audience understand the motivations and actions of working- and rural-class characters in films set in the South. In the process, historical readings of film can complicate stereotypes and representations about the region, similar to how photo-elicitation provides the possibility to open up new avenues of understanding about historical photos, and worker testimony can provide counter narratives from voices not otherwise heard. Films read through history, in other words, can provide new ways of looking at well-tread stereotypes about the South.

[91] This idea is attributed to Anna Gimshaw.

Chapter Two
Hixploitation: Southern Masculinity, the Past, and Representations of the Rural in *Cockfighter*



Figure 1: Warren Oates as Frank Mansfield in 1974's *Cockfighter*

The barn fell down
Since I saw it last
It's rubble now
Well, so much for the past

-Vic Chestnutt, "Everything I Say," from the album *North Star Deserter*, 2005

I. Introduction

Peter A. Soderbergh emphatically contends that films set in the South have focused on "the sordid, reactionary, and isolationist aspects" of the region.[1] As such, films about the region draw on narrow sets of ideas to construct the region and its Southerness, playing a large role in forming opinions about the South. The work of reading contemporary Southern films through the broader lens of Southern history helps to explore these issues, illuminates the role of the South within American cinema, and helps us understand the present through the past.

[1] Peter A. Soderbergh, "Hollywood and the South: 1930-1960," Mississippi Quarterly XIX, no.1.

Debates about genre cover vast ground, and, while important, my primary efforts here focus on the difficulty of defining a Southern film genre and the exploration of hixploitation.[2] While there is no critical consensus on a stable Southern genre of films, like the Western, partly because films set in the South prove to be too numerous and varied, the sub-genre of hixploitation films, which are, broadly speaking, exploitation films set in or associated with the South, provide a fertile sub-genre of films that provoke questions about the way the region and its inhabitants are portrayed on screen.

In particular, I explore ideas about what it means to be a Southern male in shifting historical winds that continually define and redefine manhood in the South. This exploration is framed in a larger sense by four overarching questions. First, what vision, possibly "interwoven into the popular imagination," of the South is presented in hixploitation films? Second, how does this representation illuminate distinct historical and contemporary situations in the South? Third, how consistent are hixploitation films with a broader set of representations and ideas about Southern masculinity? Finally, are these characteristics emblematic of a larger imaginary about the region that concerns Soderbergh?

To engage these questions and issues I use a specific film as a case study. Monte Hellman's 1974 hixploitation film *Cockfighter* is the story of a Southern drifter, Frank Mansfield (Warren Oates) who is searching for a place and self in the post-Civil Rights Act South. The film offers an avenue for exploring Southern manhood as embodied by Frank and his circumstances, taking an unconventional, if not always successful, approach to representations of the South.

My analysis of *Cockfighter* is contextualized in two primary ways. First, while there hasn't been much work published on films set in the South or hixploitation with the exceptions of *Gone With The Wind* (1939) and *Deliverance* (1972), several secondary sources sketch some contours of such films. The arguments (and limitations) in the work of Scott Von Doviak, Warren French, Jack Temple Kirby, and Allison Graham, among others, illuminate the pertinent traits of certain films set in the South in general and hixploitation specifically. Second, I seek to identify trends in economic, social, and cultural southern

[2] For a good synopsis of genre debates see Janet Staiger''s "Hybrid or Inbred: The Purity Hypothesis and Hollywood Genre History," in Barry Keith Grant, *Film Genre Reader II* (2003).

history that place *Cockfighter* in historical perspective. By drawing on the writings of Stephanie McCurry, Jack E. Davis, Tara McPherson, and Steve Hahn among others, I use historical frameworks in which to analyze *Cockfighter*. I conclude by using the works of Raymond Williams, Pete Daniels, and C.L.R. James to explore the idea of "country and city" and how this dichotomy shapes our view of hixploitation and cinema set in the South. After showing how interpretations of film based on the idea of the country and city can be effective, I explore the failure and promise of hixploitation based on my reading of the *Cockfighter*.

II. Context

Reaching their peak in the seventies, motion pictures set in the South focused on rural, working-, and lower-class Southerners.[3] These films used quickly identifiable stereotypes to draw their characters, locating their "Southerness" in over-determined portrayals of characters commonly referred to as "rednecks," "crackers," "honkys," and "white trash," among other negative monikers. Providing a framework for these characterizations, the films used mise-en-scènes reflecting a Southern location that included uses of regional dialect and stereotypical economic signifiers that showcased Southern markers of class.

[3] Peter A. Soderbergh traces cycles of Southern films from 1930 until 1960. These included films about the Old South, "controversial issue" films, and films about the South's decay. This combined with Amanda Ann Klein's contention that American film cycles tend to be exploitative in nature and possess the potential to become "so interwoven into the popular imagination that their images and themes can, in hindsight, stand in for reality." There is no doubt that the hixploitation peak of the 1970s is another such cycle especially since it espouses exploitative aspects indicative of what Amanda Klien contends are usually markers of such a cycle.

While not the concern of this dissertation or chapter, my initial thoughts point to the idea that the South needed something positive to look at after the negative way in which it was portrayed in the media during the Civil Rights years of the sixties. The films of the seventies usually portrayed their heroes as Southern bad-asses which elicited regional audience support, as I mention in the conclusion, for such films. The problem lay in the images the South was consuming about itself which were broadly drawn. While I touch on this first point and it complications in the conclusion, as well as some historical forces that perpetuated the hixploitation cycle of the 1970s elsewhere in the chapter, I readily admit fuller exploration of the historical confluence of the events and the audience reaction is ripe for study. Of course, on the other hand, an argument could be made that such films are not a cycle becuase hixploitation is still with us today. See Soderbargh, "Hollywood and the South," and Klien, *American Film Cycles*, 6.

Usually these characters lived in a trailer park, obeyed a violent code of manhood, engaged in drunken lewdness, casual racism, easy sex, and other publicly imagined "white trash" exploits. Typical characters were restricted to toothless brutes in overalls signifying a "redneck" or girls in "Daisy Duke" blue jean shorts that visually signaled a sexually promiscuous rural woman.[4] Despite these over determined portrayals, films set in the South have received scant attention in proportion to the number of works set in the region.

In 1978, Jack Temple Kirby's *Media-Made Dixie: The South in the American Imagination* Examined films, television, books, music, and their respective representations of the South. His book is useful as a survey of media, largely defined, from *Birth of a Nation* (1915) to James Garner's *Tank* (1984). With roughly seventy years to cover, the book only pauses for short descriptions of films that Kirby situates in historical eras defined by political culture.

For instance, Kirby suggests that a new way of looking at the South was reflected in regional media. Using Jimmy Carter's election to the presidency as an example, he writes:

> The historical quotient of Jimmy Carter's brief but brilliant political success relates to the 'New' South—the redemption of the white masses from pity and from racism….In such ways Jimmy Carter personified the resurgence of the white South that began about 1971. The memory and burden of *Tobacco Road* were purged by his work ethic and clean living. He was John-Boy Walton grown up. Or better—considering his political partnership with blacks—Carter was a magisterial 'Conrack'.[5]

By contrasting Carter with the Old South epitomized by Erskine Caldwell's infamous novel (later a play and film), which explored the ignorant whites of the sharecropping South with the "aw-shucks" country goodness of *The Waltons* and Pat Conroy's character Conrack[6] from his 1972 novel *The Water is Wide*, Kirby provides an apt historical framing device. As Carter rose from peanut farmer to president, he challenged the popular conception of what a rural, white Southerner was thought to be. Kirby uses Carter

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[4] Daisy Duke was a popular character on the long-running show *Dukes of Hazzard (1979-1985)*in which cousins Bo (John Schiender) and Luke Duke (Tom Wopat) evaded Sheriff Boss Hogg (Sorrell Booke) to solve Hazzard County's problems. Daisy, played by actress Catherine Bach, was known for her highly revealing cut-off jean shorts, which came to be known as "Daisy Dukes," in the American vernacular.

[5] Jack Temple Kirby, *Media-Made Dixie: The South in the American Imagination*, Revised. (University of Georgia Press, 2004), 170-171.

[6] In the novel, the author finds salvation teaching Gullah children on South Carolina's Sea Islands, a place with a rich and brutal plantation history. "Conrack" was the Gullah pronunciation of "Conroy" by the Sea Island school children.

to link the changes in both Southern media and history, but what Kirby's work fails to accomplish is a deep analysis of Southern films as read *through* Southern history. The above quote indicates Kirby's tendency to hint at such analysis rather than engage historical and textual readings of the films. What is missing is an understanding of the motivations of the characters in such films.

Published in the early 1980s, Warren French's edited book *The South in Film* takes a more direct approach to dealing with certain films, directors, and Southern locales. A collection of essays, *The South in Film* perceives the sheer difficulty of establishing a stable Southern genre film like the western.[7] In the introduction, French suggests that the western was "screen's principal contribution to our native [American] mythology," which could avoid the messy racial politics of the South.[8] French elaborates that westerns provided clear cut "good" and "bad" guys in cowboys and Indians, whereas films set in the South did not. Yet, French's critique seems to forget the racial politics between those two groups on the western frontier and how they were transformed by the cultural debates over Civil Rights.

Using Burt Reynolds's smash *Smokey and the Bandit*, the fourth highest-grossing film of 1977, French finally concludes that a Southern genre may be emerging through what he calls "gasoline dramas," films in which so-called bandits take to the road in cars to challenge the status quo. Adding to the argument that there was no stable Southern genre, these films, it could be argued, were modern day westerns where outlaw cowboys, such as Burt Reynolds's Bo "Bandit" Danville, roamed the South on their chrome "steeds." In any event, these films were directed at audiences who could identify more with a "motorhome" than a "plantation horse or a share cropper's cabin."[9]

French's analysis offers a useful juxtaposition of motorhomes with plantation imagery. The comparison speaks volumes about the shifting nature of both the audience and the filmic representation of the South during the seventies. The "moonlight and magnolia" South, so well represented and established

[7] Warren French, *The South and Film*, 1st ed. (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 1981), 3-13.
[8] Ibid., 3.
[9] Ibid., 13.

in the public consciousness by *Gone with The Wind* as Peter A. Soderbaugh argued[10], was being replaced by Southern automotive transients who took umbrage at the status quo and, in response, hit the road(s) to deal with frustration, fear, and freedom.[11] More important, these films spoke to the very real sense of rootlessness felt by white working-class southerners as the economic, social, and cultural reality shifted around them in the post-Civil Rights Act era, an idea explored more fully in the analysis of *Cockfighter* below.[12]

Beginning with Robert Mitchum's *Thunder Road* (1959), which pitted old-school moonshiner Luke Doolin (Mitchum) against federal agents in a dangerous game of vehicular cat-and-mouse, such films, I argue, used the symbolism of the road to speak to a burgeoning sense of Southern rural detachment from community and culture. Included among these films was *Easy Rider* (1969), in which genteel Southern lawyer George Hanson (Jack Nicholson) takes to the road with hippies to liberate himself from the manners and mores of the good ol' boy system within which he operates. The seventies also witnessed the creation of *Deliverance* (1972), in which the emerging South of commerce travels to the rural South with disastrous consequences; *White Lightning* (1973), which uses Georgia's roadways as a means for justice against the old guard of the South (exemplified by Ned Beatty's racist sheriff) while serving as a reason for federal intervention in the South[13]; *Macon County Line* (1974), in which the road leads unsuspecting Southern travelers to the sadistic whims of (what else?) a corrupt rural sheriff; and Sam Peckinpah's *Convoy* (1978), in which a band of Southern truckers led by Kris Kristofferson stage road protests of the new federal highway speed limit.[14]

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[10] See Peter A. Soderbergh, "Hollywood and the South, 1930-1960."

[11] There is, of course, travel in *Gone with The Wind*, but it is circuitous, with all roads leading back to Tara. The difference here is that the road goes on forever, so to speak.

[12] For evidence of the cultural, economic, and social shift see Jefferson Jefferson R. Cowie, *Stayin' Alive: The 1970s and the Last Days of the Working Class* (New Press, The, 2012); Beth Bailey and David Farber, eds., *America in the Seventies* (University Press of Kansas, 2004); Susanna Delfino and Michele Gillespie, eds., *Global Perspectives on Industrial Transformation in the American South*, 1st ed. (University of Missouri, 2005); James C. Cobb, *Selling of the South: The Southern Crusade for Industrial Development, 1936-90*, 2nd ed. (University of Illinois Press, 1993).

[13] I further discuss *White Lightning* below.

[14] The film also spurned the popular country song "Convoy" by Kristofferson.

Douglas Kellner and Michael Ryan take a different approach from French in analyzing Southern film. In their book, *Camera Politica*, Kellner and Ryan devote a section to films of the "New South."[15] Basing the New South in the rise of the Sun Belt, they state that "this period also witnessed a transformation in Hollywood's representation of the south [sic]. The malevolent rednecks that populate the hills in *Deliverance* give way to happy-go-lucky good old boys like Burt Reynolds in 'Bandit.' We shall argue that the cinematic and socioeconomic developments are not unrelated." [16] The basic premise—that there was a representational shift in Southern films (see footnote below), the same shift French confirms—is accurate in part. But Kellner and Ryan's reading of the film *White Lightning* (1973), which is their principal example, fails to capture a proper historical framework. For instance, their contention that "malevolent rednecks" gave way to freewheeling characters like the ones Burt Reynolds portrayed fails to take into account the rural horror films discussed in Chapter 3. The "malevolent redneck" has been a staple of cinema set in the South and continues to be so today.

For instance, in *White Lightning* Burt Reynolds stars as Gator McClusky, imprisoned for running moonshine. The federal government approaches him with the offer of commuting his sentence if he agrees to take down the corrupt Sheriff Connors (Ned Beatty), who, with his racist demeanor and staunch resistance to federal interference, is coded as the Old South.[17] Gator resists but is eventually swayed when he finds out that Connors killed his brother.

Kellner and Ryan suggest that "Gator represents an aspect of the Old South emerging into the New."[18] Gator, rooted in the vestiges of the Old South through his moonshining connections, does end up working with the feds, which stands in counter distinction to Beatty's Old South sheriff. Motivated by personal revenge, Gator realizes his brother was killed while protesting the Vietnam War. Gator comes to

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[15] There has been much debate over the meaning of "New South." Kellner and Ryan are referring to the business-centered South that began in the post-Civil Rights Act era. See Cobb, *Selling of the South* and Schulman, *The Rise of the Sunbelt* for context.

[16] Douglas Kellner and Michael Ryan, *Camera Politica*: *The Politics and Ideology of Contemporary Hollywood Film* (Indiana University Press, 1988), 129. I disagree with their contention that "malevolent rednecks" gave way. This character has been a staple of cinema set in the South and continues to be so today. For further discussion see Chapter Three.

[17] To complicate matters, however, one could make the argument for a southern Sheriff as a comic buffoon, with the most satirical being Jackie Gleason's character, Sheriff Buford T. Justice of Portague County, in *Smokey and the Bandit*.

[18] Ryan and Kellner, *Camera Politica*,, 131.

that see the violence of the Civil Rights era must be replaced by tolerance, confessing "I ain't done nothing good my whole life," with the concurrent realization that his brother died for a good cause. *White Lightning* leaves little doubt about Gator's federalist conversion to understanding "outside agitators" when, in the last line of the film, he states: "The good, they die young."

Kellner and Ryan state that Gator "rids himself of his localist loyalties," and argue that "The social liberalism of the film stands in contradiction to the implicit male individualist ideology of the car-chase adventure format."[19] They contend that this causes a tension between two political poles represented in the Old and New Souths. On the one hand, the Old South rested on the local ties to kin and community while the New South, as I state above, became unmoored from the community and was represented filmically by the individualism of the road. A closer reading of the text, however, calls their analysis into question. Specifically, the reality of the car chase between the sheriff and Gator is rooted in that hallmark of 1970s Southern film: highways. The material substance of the paved road system is a byproduct of federal government expansion and funds, from the New Deal to Eisenhower The "road" further undercuts the individualism in Gator as well, as he utilizes public works to combat the Old South, (as Kellner and Ryan identify the era through the sheriff) in his localized community framework.

Kellner and Ryan's assertion that Gator rids himself of "local loyalties" is questionable. Rather he works within community throughout the film to take down Connor; he receives help from two locals, Roy Boone (Bo Hopkins) and Dude Watson (Matt Clark), who provide shelter and transportation for Gator, while Dude eventually sacrifices his life for the cause. Moreover, after Gator is beaten by Connor's thugs, he finds refuge in an evangelical community of pregnant girls.

Gator does not reject his past by cutting his ties to his rural roots to emerge as a liberal hero. By occupying the middle ground, he utilizes community to negotiate between two worlds, local and federal, while combating the "state" in state's rights. He is for local community, white and black, as long as that

[19] Ibid.

community is progressive and egalitarian. He is, in effect, a type of neo-socialist whose character argues *against* the "male individualist ideology" of the "car chase format."[20]

The politics behind Kellner and Ryan are socialist,[21] and their ultimate project is to locate progressive films within the Hollywood system. One wonders, then, why they miss such "socialistic opportunities" in *White Lightning*. The socialist politics at play in Ryan and Kellner's work comes at the expense of fully developing the historical context of the South. A fuller understanding of Southern history could have better explained Gator's subjectivity. Because Kellner and Ryan start with a framework instead of working their way through Gator's action, a deeper understanding of Gator's motivations may have revealed the local community's role in the film.

Allison Graham's recent *Framing the South*: *Hollywood, Television, and Race During the Civil Rights Struggle*, addresses such a context. Her work's central thrust concerns the "redneck" as cinematic scapegoat. "Lacking a narrative framework for dramatizing institutional racism," she writes, "American movies have traditionally formulated our national racial crisis as a series of random encounters with evil incarnate…. Emerging from the shadows to enact his ghastly rituals, the redneck can be counted on to perform his time honored, generic duty: roar the hatred that his betters will only whisper, and then die at their hands in a near mythic purgation of the race."[22] Graham makes a compelling point and supports it with an overabundance of examples. However she does perform a deep analysis of a few films, including *Thunder Road*, a similar film to *White Lightening* in terms of the intersection of federal intervention, an anti-hero, and a road movie, which promises a possible correction to the readings of Kellner and Ryan.[23]

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[20] Moreover, the reality of the car chase between the sheriff and Gator is rooted in that hallmark of 1970s southern film: highways. The material substance of the paved road system is a byproduct of federal government expansion and funds, from the New Deal to Eisenhower. The "road" further undercuts the individualism in Gator as well, as he utilizes public work to combat the Old South (the sheriff) in his community framework.

[21] Ryan and Kellner, *Camera Politica*, 288.

[22] Allison Graham, *Framing the South: Hollywood, Television, and Race During the Civil Rights Struggle*, 1st ed. (The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), 12–13. I use this quote here and in the next chapter as it is links together one of the central tenants of this dissertation--namely that of rural- and working-class Southerners being drawn in broadly violent ways.

[23] Graham's best deconstruction focuses on the domesticated 1960s Elvis featured in film. Divorced from his country ways after his return from service, Elvis's NASCAR film *Speedway* illustrates her argument. The film is no more a NASCAR movie than *Lady and the Tramp*. The plot is simple: racecar driver Steve Grayson (Elvis) has to bail his manager/friend Kenny Danford (Bill

Thunder Road rests on the simple premise of moonshiner Luke Doolin (Robert Mitchum) trying to evade both federal tax agents and mob control over local affairs in the countryside. Graham states that: "Doolin's assertion of 'basic rights' of people in his region to conduct business according to longstanding tradition sounds uncomfortably close to the rhetoric of massive resistance. Standing up to the encroachment of federal laws into the time-worn rights of southern [sic] states seemed to many segregationists a patriotic act."[24] Southern states did and still do argue for state's rights, which are thinly veiled attacks on liberal policy. For example, Richard Nixon and George Wallace utilized these tactics as the "Southern Strategy" in the 1968 election by appealing to the loaded Civil War term of state's rights which appealed to the twin concerns of Southern nostalgia for the Lost Cause as well as the current backlash against the Civil Rights movement. Graham's attempt to read all films through this structure blinds her to other issues.

Reading *Thunder Road* in a different way exposes those concerns. For example, Luke Doolin is a Korean War veteran who has served his country, which suggests that he feels comfortable working with federal authorities. Pursued by the federal authorities for moonshining, Robin Doolin (James Mitchum), Luke's brother, and Roxanna Ledbetter (Sandra Knight) both implore Luke to talk with the tax "revenuers." Luke refuses. In the end, Luke is not killed by the feds, but by mob boss Carl Kogan (Jacques Aubuchon), whose men lay a strip of nails across the road that causes Luke to crash.

Thus, the film could be seen as arguing in favor of federal help, as Agent Barrett (Gene Barry) is more interested in trying to catch Kogan (with Doolin's help) than he is in catching Doolin. Ending *Thunder Road* with Luke outsmarting the federal agents would make Graham's argument seem more

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Bixby) and himself out of trouble with the I.R.S. because Kenny has cooked their books. It just so happens the pursuant agent is Susan Jacks played by Nancy Sinatra. The whole affair then becomes a series of musical interludes where the audience gets to witness Sinatra and Presley sing themselves into love. Released in 1968, the film is pure escapist fare for the turbulent times, and confirms Graham's thesis of Elvis's domestication in an industry that only portrays rednecks as thugs causing racism. Elvis cannot be a redneck—the public won't allow it. The movie even includes a jingoistic sing-along in an I.R.S. office about the beauty of paying your taxes! No doubt Elvis has been domesticated by way of the feds, becoming "New South" in the Southern era of federal money brining new business to the rural South. Elvis had a chance to play a country type in Robert Mitchum's moonshine film *Thunder Road*, Graham reports, and when she turns to the discussion of Mitchum's classic, her argument becomes less persuasive.

[24] Graham, *Framing the South*, 131.

plausible—the rebel outwits and defends his individual honor against the government. Instead Doolin's death signals the end of an era, as Doolin realized, lamenting, "I want to stop the clock, turn it back to another time in this valley that I knew before." In this case the "wild southerner" would have done well (like Gator) to work with authorities. The way the film is structured, however, implies that not working with them ends in dire consequences, reiterating Graham's blindspots in attempting to read the films through the issue of state's rights.

Thunder Road also complicates Graham's overarching thesis of society pinning white guilt on rednecks. Doolin, Southern though he is, is not a violent, racist thug.[25] Rather, he spends as much time in the city as he does in the rural countryside, and, surprisingly, dates jazz singer Francie Wymore (Keely Smith). These modern tendencies are rooted in the non-diegetic soundtrack, which is more rockabilly than fiddle and banjo. In 1958, the dawn of the rock and roll era, this was progressive. Doolin is country, but by associating him with Francie and the new rock craze, the film codes him as more nuanced than a stereotypical "cracker."

Graham suggests that "*Thunder Road* featured an antihero who was unambiguously white—who, in other words, revealed no markers of the class-based blackness so often associated with redneck criminality."[26] This further complicates Graham's theory. As indicated above, one could argue that since Doolin is more cosmopolitan or urban and, presumably more "black," he should be a "redneck criminal." But he is less criminal, than antihero (after all, he wants to do the right thing). Therefore, country criminality need not be associated or equated with blackness.[27]

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[25] Even Graham suggests "the film cannot help expressing admiration for these die-hard rebels." See p. 131.
[26] Graham, *Framing the South*, 138.
[27] Graham's thesis could be tested in other ways as well. For instance, what would Graham say about Southern films where the protagonist is a hero and not an antihero? Films such as *The Last American Hero* (1973) portray Jeff Bridges's character (based on NASCAR legend Junior Johnson) as not a redneck scapegoat but as a country champion. The fact that *Thunder Road* and *The Last American Hero* do not portray black victims as a target of racist violence hardly matters, as Graham says such films usually boil down to "white against white."

Kirby and French begin with broad surveys of films set in the South and progressively narrow their analytical frameworks to focus on particular Southern films. In the process, the form of their books illuminate the difficulty of establishing a solid Southern genre: each chapter speaks to a particular film set in the South rather than establishing the contours of Southern genre as a whole.

Kellner, Ryan, and Graham provide some historical context surrounding films set in the South, yet they impose a top down structured approach onto the films they read. For instance, Kellner and Ryan begin with the concept New and Old Souths and apply it to *White Lightning*, yet a fuller understanding of Southern history and culture would not have missed the community aspects so important to the film. Likewise, Graham's thesis, is convincing when she suggests that collective racism is laid at the feet of the "redneck," never attempts to see things from the "redneck" perspective. Certainly, there is more to be taken from cinematic rural Southerners than simply racism. For instance, the "rednecks" used to evoke a broad negative national imaginary can be reimagined as characters dealing with the complexities of history and modernity. This history can be used as an excavating tool to dig past surface characterizations and situations in these films. Only then can we begin to understand films set in the South and to better understand some of the rural customs and culture of the region. What influences the rural and working-class Southerner's behaviors and decisions? How can we begin to understand these actions?

One path is to analyze these films in terms of working-, lower-, and rural -class Southern history. Instead of trying to apply top down theories to specify aspects of the South on film, study should begin to read what the film provides through the lens of history. This is not an attempt to judge and evaluate films for historical accuracy, rather an attempt to recognize Southern historical issues in such films. This type of reading evolves organically from within the structure of the film and does not constitute an overarching unified theory or set of criteria that attempts to account for sheer diversity of films set in and dealing with the South. Such readings are important because they can start to unpack economic, social, and cultural issues located in these films. This type of understanding can evade judgments based in easily recognizable

stereotypes and characterizations of the South. Films have the possibility to allude to historical realities without explicitly presenting them.

Looking at exploitation films set in the South can help highlight some of these issues. These films, which are commonly referred to as "hixploitation," "hick flicks," and, "redneck cinema,"—contemporary pejorative terms designated for rural and working class Southerners—highlight and amplify stereotypes of the South in interesting ways. A historical analysis of these films deals with rural- and working-class representations directly.

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In William Ferris' and Charles Reagan Wilson's copious and comprehensive *The Encyclopedia of Southern Culture*, Jere Real's contribution for "Hick Flicks" focuses on the relationship between the law and working-class whites in such films as *White Lightning* and *Thunder Road*. However, hixploitation films encompass a wider set of circumstances (which, again, suggests the difficulty in establishing a Southern genre).[28] Collectively, these films represent part of what Scott Von Doviak calls "Redneck Cinema." Van Doviak's *Hick Flicks: The Rise and Fall of Redneck Cinema* is the only book-length treatment of Southern films of the seventies that deal with rural- and working-class white Southerners. Although he categorizes films by niche, including "swamp films" and "prison films," Von Doviak has trouble, like French, in giving shape to any sort of coherent Southern genre. He suggests redneck cinema is:

> …an umbrella genre of sorts, encompassing as it does many sub-genres—some of which, in turn, fall under the umbrella of other previously catalogued genres (horror movies, road pictures, musicals, et al)….Eventually I stumbled onto what might laughably be called my thesis, which simply means the movies discussed in this book collectively represent the rural American folklore of their time—in this case, the 1970s.[29]

[28] Charles Reagan Wilson, William Ferris, and Ann J. Adadie, eds., *Encyclopedia of Southern Culture*, 1st ed. (The University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 920–921.
[29] Scott von Doviak, *Hick Flicks: The Rise and Fall of Redneck Cinema* (McFarland & Company, 2004), 9.

Von Doviak's attempt to grasp and define such a large body of films speaks to the breadth and heterogeneity of Southern-based films of the seventies. The best Von Doviak can do is to categorize southern films loosely into what he calls "sub-genres." How, then, does one set about explaining hixploitation?

Hixploitation is a sub-genre that shares broader traits with its "parent" genre of exploitation. These comprehensive traits of exploitation also apply to hixploitation, and link all the sub-genres of exploitation. Exploitation, as it pertains to film, has come to signify a type of content that indicates to the viewer that what he or she is about to witness deals in over-the-top violence, sex, and other taboo subjects. Felicia Feaster and Bret Wood note that classic exploitation films in the pre-Hays code era, "capitiliz[ed] on such delicate issues as venereal disease, childbirth, drug abuse, abortion, prostitution, polygamy, nudism and a host of other thrillingly unwholesome topics."[30] Filmmakers chose such subjects in order to provide the audience with forbidden thrills and the promise of scandal. Such films, working to subvert the Hays code and local mores, promoted themselves under the aegis of being a "medical" film that promoted health or warned against criminal behavior.[31] A winking tension thus developed between the advertisement of such films and the audience's knowledge of what the film contained. During the 1960s,however, relaxed sexual mores spurred by the Kinsey report, the advent and social acceptance of *Playboy* which was first published in 1953, and the rising tide of hard-core pornography culminating with the box office clout of *Behind the Green Door* (1972), exploitation eschewed the subterfuge of social responsibility. The result was exploitation films that became more overtly and unabashedly violent, sexual, and taboo to guarantee revenues.[32]

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[30] Felicia Feaster and Bret Wood, *Forbidden Fruit: The Golden Age of the Exploitation Film* (Midnight Marquee Press,U.S., 1999), 9.

[31]See Eric Schaefer, *Bold! Daring! Shocking! True: A History of Exploitation Films, 1919-1959* (Duke University Press Books, 1999). Schaefer traces the early history of the exploitation film and these facts to their origin.

[32] Feaster and Wood, *Forbidden Fruit*, 190.

The exploitation films of the seventies, like their predecessors before them, were driven by returns.[33] One way producers sought to maximize potential profit was to produce films aimed at particular audiences. As such, 1970s exploitation films became known by the cultural subjects they addressed. This was a reflection of the era due to the prevailing trend of multiculturalism. Post-Civil Rights Act America had found a new cultural consciousness. Eric Porter has pointed out that the decade "was nothing less than a critical moment in the world historical development of race as a social, political, and cultural category….In the United States, Americans transformed the ways their society was structured along racial lines during the 1970s; they embraced, rejected, or otherwise negotiated racial identities and mobilized themselves around the movement in important new ways." [34] All of which kept in line with a film cycle's practice of reflecting the historical context in which they originated.[35]

This identity politics found its way into exploitation films, which came to be acknowledged by such culturally specific terms as "blaxploitation." An expression coined by Julius Griffin, head of the NAACP in 1970, blaxploitation became the moniker for exploitation films dealing with African-American experience. This way of specifying exploitation films became de rigueur, resulting in a prefix that designated the sub-genre of particular films. For instance, films dealing primarily with sex became "sexploitation"; films dealing with Hispanic themes became "mexploitation."[36] And, finally, exploitation films identified with the South became known in the public vernacular as "hixploitation." Such terms designated the film's main cultural content, providing easily recognizable subject matter. The cultural sub-genre that exploitation addressed targeted niche audiences that were provoked by specific cultural utilizations.

Exploitation relied heavily on advertising to sell such films to the public. Because the film was cheaply made and low-budget, exploitation culture produced print advertisements known for garish

[33] Eric Porter, "Affirming and Disaffirming Actions: Remaking Race in the 1970s," in Bailey and Farber, *America in the Seventies*, 64.
[34] Ibid., 52.
[35] Klein, *American Film Cycles*, 189.
[36] Wood and Feaster suggest that exploitation was replaced by sexploitation and gore films. However, rather than existing outside of the exploitation genre both types of films *are* exploitation that has more to do with particular subject matter.

presentation. These ads sought to sell the film by promising cheap thrills. As Eric Schaeffer points out, "The term exploitation film is derived from the practice of exploitation, advertising and promotional techniques that went over and above typical posters, trailers and newspaper ads. Exploitation producers conceded that because the films lacked identifiable stars or the recognition provided by conventional genres, they needed an extra edge to be 'put over' success. A kind of carnivalesque ballyhoo became integral to their success."[37] This "ballyhoo" went hand in hand in with the exploitation's subject matter of gratuitous nudity and sex, over-the-top violence, racial themes, or the nature of the "exotic," all of which promised to shock viewers in ways never before experienced.

Besides these broader traits, hixploitaion differed from other culturally specific exploitation counterparts in two main ways. First, hixploitation promoted certain such Southern stereotypes as lusty women, dumb rednecks, and various types of illegality commonly considered native to and synonymous with the South. For instance, in *Walking Tall* (1973), Sheriff Buford Pusser (Joe Don Baker) resorts to vigilante violence to force drug runners from his rural county in Tennessee. In *Smokey and the Bandit*, Burt Reynolds's character Bo Danville and his sidekick Cledus "Snowman" Snow (Jerry Reed) run Coors beer without a liquor license to Georgia. In the ironically named *Southern Comfort* (1981), National Guard trainees evade the violent inhabitants of the bayou. Other films such as exploitation raconteur Harry Novak's *Country Cuzzins* (1970), *The Pig Keeper's Daughter* (1972), and *Hot Summer in Barefoot County* (1974) featured thin plot lines for no other reason than to showcase nude, ditzy, rural Southern belles as pleasure receptacles. Such easily identifiable representations, as I stated earlier, allowed hixploitation to draw quickly identifiable characters with minimum plot development.

Second, and stemming from character development, hixploitation showcased an appetite for violence. While not as extreme as print ads promised, this was not violence for the sake of violence but a violence suggested to be genetically predisposed in the white Southern male. Violence as synonymous

[37] Schaefer, *Bold! Daring! Shocking! True*, 4.

with Southern representation is as old as film itself[38], but it took on renewed connotations in the post-Civil Rights Act era South, reaching a new extreme in the world of the Motion Picture Association of America's CARA (Classification and Ratings Administration) system which after 1968 replaced and relaxed Hays code standards.[39]

David Cook has described *Walking Tall* as "ultraviolent" and a "brutal endorsement of vigilantism."[40] The film showcased Buford Pusser as hero sheriff in the era of Bull Connor and Jim Clark. Yet, Buford's heroism is predicated on bashing perpetrators with an ax-handle, a type of pre-technological weapon that signifies the South as backwards in the era of industrialization. The film puts forth the argument that Southern heroism and prejudice are linked by a male violence that informs both—a violence that is biologically endemic in the white male Southerner.

Hixploitation followed this caveat with villains too. In describing the "redneck villain" Jim Goad writes:

> If he's unable to rape you, he will murder you instead, or he'll rape and then murder you. Or murder you and then rape you. And then drive around for months with your body stuffed in his trunk. Excepting Klan movies and other such racial thrillers, rarely is there a motive behind redneck cinematic violence. In *Easy Rider* when the intolerant bubbas bludgeon Jack Nicholson to death and the evil cracker in the pickup truck blows away Dennis Hopper, the villains hardly even say anything. We're to assume they're just bred for violence.[41]

In his polemical screed, Goad furthers the point: it is just not violence represented in film (which of course, is ubiquitous in cinema), it is the way that Southern characters act out violent tendencies. The hixploitation sub-genre bears this out in forceful ways. In addition to *Easy Rider* and *Walking Tall*, films such as Herschel Gordon Lewis's *Two Thousand Maniacs* (1964) exhibit scenes of tourists being impaled with nails in oak barrels by cheering locals. *Eaten Alive* (1977) showcases a redneck hotel proprietor who feeds his victims to an alligator; in *Southern Comfort* speechless swamp Cajuns kill national guardsmen;

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[38]For a complete account of how violence was tied to the South in film see J. W. Williamson, *Southern Mountaineers in Silent Films: Plot Synopses of Movies About Moonshining, Feuding and Other Mountain Topics, 1904-1929* (McFarland & Company, 1994).

[39] CARA began to take shape under MPAA president Jack Valenti in 1966. In 1968 the modern day ratings system was born.

[40] David A. Cook, *Lost Illusions: American Cinema in the Shadow of Watergate and Vietnam, 1970-1979*, 1st ed. (University of California Press, 2002), 196.

[41] Jim Goad, *The Redneck Manifesto: How Hillbillies, Hicks, and White Trash Became America's Scapegoats* (Simon & Schuster, 1998), 98.

in Stephen Spielberg's *Duel* (1971) a faceless trucker pursues an innocent motorist, a trope resurrected in 2001's *Joy Ride*; and, of course, in *Deliverance* the rural locals sodomize trespassers without provocation. All of these serve as hixploitative examples of Southern male violence as endemic to the region and manifested in its inhabitants.

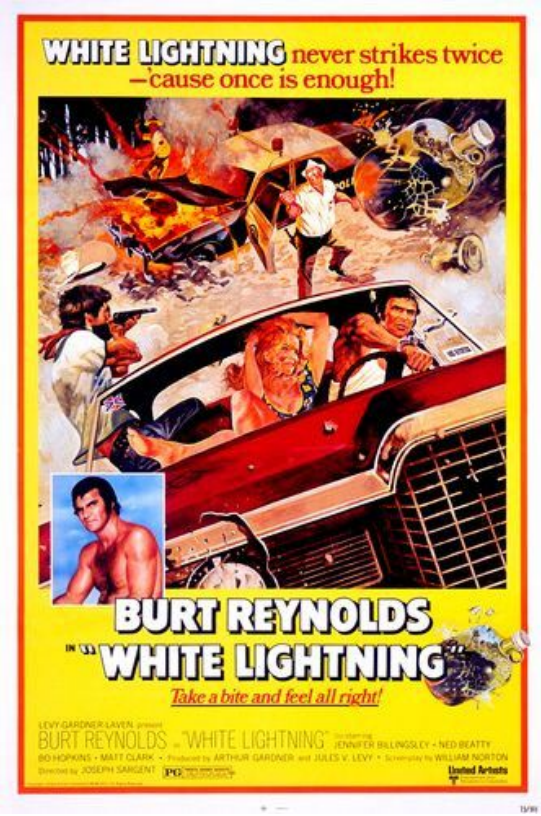


Figure 2: Southern sex and violence, Burt Reynolds style

This proliferation of hixploitation suggests the appeal of these orthodox representations of a region, culture, and its people and customs. Buoyed by the triple axis of representation, cultural reception, and cultural dissemination, such films dominate the American imagination about the U.S. South. Monte Hellman's *Cockfighter* embodies these aspects of hixploitation, and the circumstances surrounding the film speak to visual culture and the practice of hixploitation. However, *Cockfighter* also showcases the promise in historically reading films set in the South as I argue above. As it stands now, hixploitation, if

addressed at all, tends to get divorced from this historical context. Only by acknowledging the tension of hixploitation at work in and around *Cockfighter* can the film's deeper historical forces be revealed.

III.) Hixploitation Case Study: *Cockfighter*

Charles Willeford's novel *Cockfighter* was optioned by legendary exploitation producer Roger Corman to serve as the basis for the film.[42] Fresh off the triumph of his now classic existential film *Two-Lane Blacktop* (1971), Monte Hellman was hired to direct. Released in August 1974, *Cockfighter* tells the story of a Southern drifter, Frank Mansfield, traveling the region to participate in cockfighting's hustle and flow of underground culture. The film's premise is simple and its plot is slight. Mansfield, whom the viewer quickly realizes does not speak, moves through the cultural netherworld of cockfighting trying to avenge a loss he suffered at the hands of his nemesis, Jack Burke (Harry Dean Stanton). Burke's gamecock had beaten the boastful Mansfield's prize bird during an ill-advised impromptu bet. Stung by the loss, and seemingly learning from the perils of pride, Mansfield takes a vow of silence and sets about trying to redress the defeat and, in the process, regain his Southern manhood.

Brad Stevens suggests that Monte Hellman is a "humanist who insists on understanding before judging," not feeling the need to laugh at "ordinary' people."[43] These traits are exhibited in *Cockfighter* through its open-minded documentary impulse that is the stylistic manifestation of Hellman's humanist tendencies. Hellman confirmed his predisposition in an interview given during the release of *Cockfighter* in which he stated: "I tend toward a kind of realistic documentary style in costuming, choice of actors, and in camera…In *Cockfighter* the style is documentary and the whole picture could have been cast with non-professionals."[44]

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[42] Corman's status as an exploitation producer is legendary. For a broader case study of independent production of 1970s, exploitation films see Ed Lowry, "Dimension Pictures: Portrait of a Seventies Independent," The Velvet Light Trap, no. 22, 1986.
[43] Brad Stevens, *Monte Hellman: His Life and Films* (McFarland & Co Inc Pub, 2003), 107. Also quoted in Nicholas Pasquariello, "Monte Hellman on Corman and *Cockfighter*," *Jump Cut: A Review of Contemporary Media*, no. 10-11, 1976, p. 17-18. Accessed electronically at http://www.ejumpcut.org/archive/onlinessays/JC10-11folder/MonteHIntPasquarillo.html
[44] Brad Stevens, *Monte Hellman*, 104. Hellman reiterates this almost word for word in his interview with Pasquariello as well.

Compared to the posters, Hellman's version of *Cockfighter* showcases an ethnographic sensibility by highlighting the landscape and rural rhythms of the South. Hellman's style seemed to make economic sense for Corman's budget. *Cockfighter's* production values are typical of hixploitation as hiring locals and filming on location kept the film within Corman's modest budget.. The production's rural location is reflected in the mise-en-scène of the South's rural countryside tableau and in the use of unknown and non-professional actors that Hellman suggested were "more documentary in style" because they were locals from Georgia.[45] However, *Cockfighter'*s observational camera work, predicated on long takes that capture the nuance of the South's slower rural rhythm, is emblematic of the ethnographic intention of Hellman. Thus the film's "Southerness" stems from the rural Georgia location, the locals who acted in the film, its use of dialect, and the attention paid to the preparations of the cockfight mentioned above. All these factors give the film its authentic tone.

Yet, Hellman proved to be an odd choice for the production of *Cockfighter*. The manipulative nature of hixploitation stood in opposition to Hellman's humanism. Hellman's humanist impulse is summed up by how he viewed the location shoot and his idea of the film. He stated:

> I became stimulated by the idea of worlds within our own world. And the world of cockfighters was right there for us in Georgia—we just stepped into the cockpit and started shooting. And I discovered that these guys are not inarticulate rednecks. A lot of them are poets—literally. Jimmy Carter came on to the *Cockfighter* set and told me his family were cockfighters for generations. It was such a complete world that I became immersed in it. Almost everybody in the film, other than the main actors, is a cockfighter. I had come to Georgia with no knowledge of cockfighting other than reading the book and the script, and had never seen a cockfight.[46]

The tension between Hellman's vision rooted in ethnography and Corman's profit-at-all-costs attitude (the budget for *Cockfighter* was $400,000) resulted in a strain between director and producer that began with the script and choice of crew,[47] one that surfaced continually throughout production and post-production.

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[45] Hellman simply defines this as "If you're totally unaware that the person is an actor," in his interview with Pasquariello.
[46] Ibid., 105.
[47] Brad Stevens, *Monte Hellman*, 104.

Clearly, Hellman had more on his mind besides exploitation scenarios. Instead, Hellman tried to convey through *Cockfighter* a more nuanced portrayal of Southern custom, a type of ethnographic exploration that, instead of ridiculing the practice of cockfighting, found it to be a revealing part of regional culture worth understanding. The problem was Hellman's vision was not a fit representation of the violent and exploitative tendencies of hixploitation.

As such, although Hellman's representation challenged preconceptions, it was undermined by Corman's version of the film, which engages in many of the all-too-familiar tropes of hixploitation. Corman reworked the film by adding violent footage and reediting Hellman's work.[48] Editor Lewis Teague was dispatched to pick up extra cockfighting shots.[49] Corman thought Hellman had "pulled away from the action, the bloody stuff, and we never got the graphic close-ups that we should have….His [Teague's] stuff was so good, with such bloody close-ups of the action, that we had to cut back on it in the final cut."[50] Hellman confirmed Corman's account, responding: "If it's gratuitous gore, I didn't direct it."[51]

Corman had protégé Joe Dante[52] recut the film after Hellman's version fared poorly at the box-office, adding footage from other productions as a means to up the sex and violence ratio from Hellman's original vision. Dante recounted Corman saying: "We're going to take the sex scenes from *Private Duty Nurses*, and we're going to take the dynamite truck chase from *Night Call Nurses* and we're gonna [sic] cut 'em all together in a one-minute montage. And I want you to cut it into the movie right when Warren Oates goes to bed and turns the lights out. And that will be a dream sequence."[53] "We're going to call the picture *Born to Kill* and we're going to make a new trailer and we're going to put in all these new scenes

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[48] For Monte Hellman's complete take on the editing situation, as well as tension over the script, see Pasquariello, "Monte Hellman on Corman and *Cockfighter*," p. 17-18.
[49] One of the results of this action was that Monte Hellman never received editing credit for his work.
[50] Stevens, *Monte Hellman*, 106.
[51] Ibid.
[52] Dante would later become a known director in his own right. His most famous film is *Gremlins* (1984) in which reptilian demons terrorize a small town during Christmas.
[53] Beverly Gray, *Roger Corman: Blood-Sucking Vampires, Flesh-Eating Cockroaches, and Driller Killers*, (Thunder's Mouth Press, 2003), 120; Roger Corman, *How I Made a Hundred Movies in Hollywood and Never Lost a Dime*, 1st ed. (Random House, 1990), 200.

in the trailer and make it look like a picture with trucks and girls and tits and guns and all these things that aren't really in the movie. And we'll try to save the picture."[54]

The release of *Cockfighter* in August 1974 was surrounded by the sensationalized ephemera that accompany exploitation films. True to Corman's ethos, this was emblematic of the philosophical differences between Corman and Hellman. In addition to the over-the-top subject matter, sensational marketing and branding sold the film by promising a more scandalous story than it delivered. As Amanda Ann Klien has suggested "The unfulfilled promises of ballyhoo are one of the more striking aspects of exploitation advertising: images and slogans are often an exaggeration—and occasionally a complete misrepresentation—of what occurs in the film itself."[55] With hixploitation films, the mechanism for this usually involved poster art, and *Cockfighter* was no exception. Corman commissioned poster art that mirrored the violence and sex Dante and Teague were instructed to emphasize. Publicist Jon Davison remembers "I was responsible for numerous ad campaigns. 'Frank Mansfield strolled into town with his cock in his hand. And what he did with it was illegal in 47 states!' 'Women flock to see his cock,' that kind of stuff." [56] Using the blunt tact of an anvil, Corman's promotional campaign was an outward manifestation of Joe Dante's recut, focusing on the sex and violence in the film. The ads, playing off the stereotypical violent South, tell and sell a story different from Hellman's. Both versions of the poster, for *Cockfighter* and *Born to Kill*, confirm this.

The posters reveal scantily clad women, car chases, the spectacle of violence, and a style that suggests a fast-paced narrative and urgent tone (see Figures 3 and 4). The posters suggested *Cockfighter* contained spectacular action, including the visual focal point of Mansfield throwing an ax (which never occurs in the film), while *Cockfighter* offers no such explosions or grand battles, or sexual exploits.[57] As

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[54] Ibid.
[55] Klein, *American Film Cycles*, 7.
[56] Stevens, *Monte Hellman*, 106.
[57] In his Freudian review of the film, John Hess writes that, "the film is sexless. There are no sexual relationships, no sexual interactions." See "The Glamour of Individualism in *The Cockfighter* (*Born to Kill*)." in *Jump Cut*: *A Review of Contemporary Media*, no. 10-11, 1976, p. 19. Accessed electronically at http://www.ejumpcut.org/archive/onlinessays/JC10-11folder/CockfighterHess.html

a result, Hellman's subtle nuances in the film are overshadowed by its selling, branding, and imagery.

Hellman's nuances come through in quieter scenes. Such moments are evidenced when Mansfield marks a cock's beak with a razor blade, making the bird appear injured to swing the betting odds in his favor; when Frank visits Bardansky's (Richard B. Shull) rural cock farm adorned with cock barrels that are ever-present in the rural South; the weighing and preparation of the cocks for battle; and the rural cockfighting crowds. The film's leisurely pace is far removed from the kinetic action promised in the posters and it is in these smaller moments when the subtle shadings of rural Southern custom cuts through Corman's vision.



Figure 3: Exploitation style art for *Cockfighter* suggesting more than the film delivers.



Figure 4: Is that an ax in your hand, or you just happy to see me? Poster art for *Born to Kill*, aka *Cockfighter*

However, the film ended up being framed by the elements associated with a certain regional stereotype—a hero living in a trailer park, a code of violence and manhood based on potentially emasculating handshakes, drunken lewdness, easy women who are treated as objects, and casual sex. All these traits, in addition to its rural setting, mark *Cockfighter* as hixploitation. The excessive and exaggerated nature of *Cockfighter*'s hixploitative aspects would warrant a bemused response if they weren't perceived as commonplace and synonymous with the American South. *Cockfighter* was a missed opportunity for Hellman's humanism, which could have shown the rural South in new and different ways than what hixploitation usually offered.

Instead—by reproducing familiar violent and sexual images of the South— Corman relied on quickly identifiable stereotypes which kept the film from transcending its hixploitative nature. This pull between the stereotypical imagery of the South hixploitation was so adept at harnessing—and that Corman represented—and Hellman's intent to the contrary, creates an inherent tension in the film. For example, the sport of cockfighting did and does exist, but in the film it sustains a brutal legacy, real or imagined, at the expense of issues of Southern economics and class. Instead of engaging these issues

Cockfighter retreated to older patterns of Southern representation, rooting Frank's failures in individual flaws and not those of a man lost in the changing structure of a South that has become confusing for him.[58] Instead, Frank's state of rootlessness and propensity to survive on gambling is not attributed to Southern deindustrialization, regional decline, or class prejudice. Rather, it is predicated on the *character* flaw of his weakness for gambling. Because he is mute, Frank's physical *actions* are amplified as the sole cause of his financial and personal ruin. As such, the film suggests that Frank possesses an innate quality of failure (not unlike the innate penchant for violence Goad identifies) that arises from his nature. The object of language, the basis of most human misunderstanding, is not to blame. Frank's nature, represented by this pure action, is bred (not unlike a fighting cock) with a predilection for the idea of the eighteenth-century era of Southern backwoods living.

Frank's refusals of modern trappings are indicative of this. For example, he sells his house literally right out from under some tenants, rejecting an established situation to buy a prize fighting cock nicknamed "White Lightning," Southern vernacular for illegal moonshine. In addition, Frank's rootlessness is showcased when he loses his mobile trailer. The Southern nature of masculine independence is to be achieved at all costs, and in the process, the film shows ramshackle, irresponsible manhood situated in this Southern spirit of individuality.[59]

Such Southern masculinity and independence is seen as tied to class in the film. For the film's majority, class is signaled by dimly lit barns, backwoods hovels, and dingy hotel rooms—spaces in the popular imagination indicating the working and underclass. This stands in contrast to the space and place of the Milledgeville tournament. Set at an expansive plantation-era mansion, and presided over by a Georgia senator, the tournament provides an antebellum milieu. As the most prestigious event of the year

[58] While there are other male characters, for instance Omar Baradansky (Richard B. Shull) and Buford (James Earl Jones), in the film, I focus on Frank because he is the main protagonist with whom we are epistemically aligned. As well, my focus for this dissertation is on Southern male whiteness. The character of Omar is coded as "Yankee" and James Earl Jones's character is African-American.

[59] Bertram Wyatt-Brown in his seminal work *Southern Honor: Ethics and Behavior in the Old South* (Oxford University Press, 1983) details how sporting and betting games such as cockfighting contributed to the social network among gentlemen in the antebellum South. Eliot Gorn notes in "Gouge and Bite, Pull Hair and Scratch: The Social Significance of Fighting in the Southern Backcountry," that as international markets and the low country planters coalesced through trade they, at the behest of commodity and decorum, tended to leave such "pre-modern" conditions behind. As a result, cockfighting, brawling, and illegal betting were looked upon as activities of the much poorer upcountry regions which is where the majority of Scots-Irish settlers located. Such violent activities were still synonymous with rural Southerners well into the seventies according to Jack Temple Kirby in *Rural Worlds Lost: The American South, 1920-1960* (Louisiana State Press, 1997), 306.

for the cockfighting handlers, the Milledgeville tournament signals the historical past and the violence of slavery that is associated with its plantation location. As such, we can read the rural participants as subjugated to the South's "new" economic system predicated on anti-union sentiment and low wages in the era of rapid industrialization in the post WW II era.[60] However, this New South subjugation still relied on Old South political methods that held sway with rural white males.

Analyzing political relations between white classes in the South, Steve Hahn observes "In a social order that conferred status upon the ability to command the allegiances of lesser men, intracountry [sic] rivalries often reflected competition among members of the elite and their followers for influence. Thus, the electoral process offered poorer whites the advantages and favors that good connections might bring, while it reinforced the political and cultural hegemony of the master class."[61] More specifically, Stephanie McCurry claims that Southern elites "[moved] in social circles of their own kind except on those public and usually political occasions when forced to admit the local yeomen to the grounds—although never to the house—for July Fourth barbeques, militia dinners, and the like. Both the social distance and the intimacy were authentic and often simultaneous, parts of relations that yeomen and planters forged. Both were expressions of a society structured around households at once independent and deeply unequal in terms of the wealth and power they embodied."[62] The social relations described here between classes of Southern men who shared white skin allowed "authentic intimacy" but also prestige based on class that caused "social distance." Placing *Cockfighter* in this historical context reveals fresh and rich insights about the film and its regional portrayal of the modern South.

Mansfield's choice of vagabond poverty to gain social prestige at a rich man's tournament should be read as economic subjugation. This subjugation was ultimately invisible, however, because the film

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[60] For comprehensive accounts of the South's industrialization in the post-World War II era see James C. Cobb, *Selling Of The South* (University of Illinois Press, 1993); Bruce J. Schulman, *From Cotton Belt to Sunbelt: Federal Policy, Economic Development, and the Transformation of the South 1938–1980* (Duke University Press Books, 1994). and Numan V.Bartley, *The New South 1945-1980: The Story of the South's Modernization* (Louisiana State Press, 1995) especially the chapter entitled "The Sunbelt South."

[61] Steven Hahn, *The Roots of Southern Populism: Yeoman Farmers and the Transformation of the Georgia Upcountry, 1850-1890*, Updated. (Oxford University Press, USA, 2006), 94–95.

[62] Stephanie McCurry, *Masters of Small Worlds: Yeoman Households, Gender Relations, and the Political Culture of the Antebellum South Carolina Low Country* (Oxford University Press, USA, 1997), 105.

identifies a shared regional history of whiteness which bridges the divide of class through racial solidarity. As Hahn and McCurry point out, the senator is able to win over Frank by coercion and subtle nuance predicated on Frank's fierce independence that is harnessed and sanctioned by the state via the senator's social acumen. The state is able to achieve this through twin design: Frank's whiteness yolks him to the Southern gentry, and Frank's failure is framed as a flawed personality trait. These tactics find their roots in Southern history, and thus something the anachronistic Frank recognizes in the contemporary, albeit alien, world.

Frank's code of silence, self-enforced to keep his mouth from getting him in trouble, also signals a sublimation of his rural masculinity. More overtly, once he wins the Milledgeville tournament, he not only speaks again, but destroys White Lightning by tearing off his head to give to Mary Elizabeth; he castrates himself by destroying this extension of his "cock." Here is another instance of subordination of Frank's independent nature which begs the question: Why cockfighting? Besides being a cultural tradition in the American South, and in other places, cockfighting allows Frank to express his violent masculinity through a proxy. Instead of fighting himself, he lets the "chicken" in both the physical and descriptive sense do it for him.

While this display of violence renders him incompetent (perhaps, impotent?) in matters of the heart, this aggressive action also signals Frank's fiercely independent understanding of the world, which was typical of an earlier time in the rural South. Thus, in the era of rapid industrialization of the seventies signaled by Jimmy Carter's New South—that stood in the popular imaginary in stark contrast to the policies of fellow politicians George Wallace and Lester Maddox—*Cockfighter* persists in tying the region to antiquated barbarism.

One could argue that the film is unusual for seventies hixploitation in not exclusively pigeonholing lower-class rural folk to violence by including the senator, someone with social prestige, as a spectator and host of the Milledgeville tournament, still, *Cockfighter* falls back into hixploitation stereotypes. The South is portrayed as degenerate through the cockfighting tableau that produces Frank's archaic behavior. The film's insistence on this can be linked to its refusal to explore wider economic

structural inequality in a region that harnessed the power of rural folk without the safe guards of unions, for instance. In the end, *Cockfighter* offers a typical portrayal of the South, predicated on a type of masculinity tied to economics and a rough independence that privileges a selfish pride at the expense of personal well-being.

Cockfighter does not attempt to reconstitute a historic community based on Old South values in a modern world.[63] Instead, Frank Mansfield is trying to maintain his singular manhood through independence during the seventies when the South underwent such rapid cultural and economic change. Part of this change was predicated on traditional modes of Southern masculinity being reframed as dangerous and bad for business in the post-Civil Rights era South[64]. Frank's lone nature—his white masculine autonomy—comes under suspicion in the era of assassinations committed by singular gunmen. His Southern independence was under heightened scrutiny in the aftermath of the Kennedys, Shabazz, Evers, and King. Thus, Frank's actions are even more antiquated when viewed against this historical backdrop.

Rooted in the bias against the rural Southern way of life, economic subjugation was not viewed as the fault of mill barons and corporations looking for cheap union-free labor; instead it was deemed a personal failure on the part of the individual who was provided a better opportunity at the mill than by being, say, an independent farmer.[65] Ruling class power and prestige turned the Southern rural- and working-class male's independence against him.[66] This result was achieved through a shared whiteness that upper classes harnessed to get rural and working-class southerners to vote against their own interests. It was used as a cultural weapon against, among other things, working-class solidarity which, for example, was manifested in the regimented physical structure of the mill society which provided all the

[63] A situation I explore further in the next chapter with *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (1974).
[64] See Cobb, *Selling of the South*.
[65] One leading proponent of this view was mill apologist George Dawley. For a summary of some of Dawley's positions see George Dimock, "Children of the Mills: Re-Reading Lewis Hine's Child-Labour Photographs," Oxford Art Journal 16, no. 2 (1993). I discuss this position further as well in Chapter 2, "History, Method, and Representation: Photo-Elicitation and Lewis Hine's Photographs of Child Labor in Chester County, South Carolina."
[66] John Hess discussed the individualism of Mansfield in terms of misogyny at the expense of women in the film. He never couches it in terms of regional history and identity and instead calls the film "a fantasy having little or no contact with a real life, time or place." See Hess, "The Glamour of Individualism in *The Cockfighter* (*Born to Kill*)", p. 19.

"tools" and advantages for rural whites moving from farm to factory.[67] If one did not achieve economic independence, it was one's own fault in the capitalist matrix of mill towns and society.

Nowhere did this resonate more loudly than in the South's traditional notion of masculinity, which itself was rooted in cultural and economic independence. Because of this fact, Southern men were driven to blame themselves for their low economic status. With the blame directed inward, class power and prestige were safe from strikes and the realization of class-solidarity at the rural and working-class level. To fail in a capitalist society struck at the very root of Southern masculine independence. *Cockfighter* visually depicts this through Frank Mansfield's actions, temperament, and self-worth. The Milledgeville tournament gives Frank's masculinity official sanction that does not come from within but is contingent instead on the Senator's acknowledgement of Frank's victory.

Overall, *Cockfighter* is typical of many hixploitation films. Its exploitative traits overshadow possible deeper explorations of economics and class which are shared by similar films of the era such as *White Lightning*, *Walking Tall*, and *Thunder Road*. These films substitute violence for such economic explorations and, in the process, blame individuals for their failings instead of the social system that kept such rural Southerners, real or imagined, relegated to second-class status. All of these films to some degree walked the fine line of appealing to rural Southerners in their portrayals of white Southern males who clung to tradition in the face of the changing South. Simultaneously they perpetuated stereotypes for their audience, forgoing the type of cultural exploration that Monte Hellman sought to achieve.

Unfortunately, *Cockfighter's* hixploitative treatment of the South was not singular. Jack Temple Kirby writes:

> in large measure the South has always been a media colony, an elsewhere for the American majority's amusement or example. Some southerners have capitalized upon the imagery, reifying at times the most outrageous stereotypes. Yet colonials they remained along with those of us who chafed and snarled at imperial manipulations. So by the mid-seventies, when the yankee [sic] majority so wholeheartedly accepted the South as its own, the South—that mighty, imaginary one—nearly died.[68]

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[67] In the post-Civil War era this was exhibited in the populist movement in the South. See Lawrence Goodwyn, *The Populist Movement* and Steve Hahn, *The Roots of Populism*.
[68] Kirby, *Media-Made Dixie*, 162.

It is telling that Kirby identifies the decade of the seventies, a cultural flash-point in time when three things happened simultaneously. Both J.W. Williamson and Scott Van Doviak note the rural popularity of hixploitation and the fact that audiences saw positive depictions of themselves after the turmoil of the sixties. For instance, as Burt Reynolds stated about *White Lightning:* "It was the beginning of a whole series of films set in the South, about the South, and for the South. No one cared if the picture was ever distributed north of the Mason-Dixon Line. You could make back the cost of the negative just in Little Rock, where we filmed it."[69]

The images the South had been consuming and relating to, however, were highly orthodox representations. However, the perilous "imaginary" shifted from one of "moonlight and magnolias" to one predicated on class and culture in the post-Civil Rights Act Era. In the case of *Cockfighter* this is expressed though Frank's individual failure. Kirby's "Yankees" were ready to accept the South on these terms because they were based in negative representations of the South. While serving the national imaginary of the South to the South, a type of cultural feedback loop fed the South these images of itself.[70]

Kirby's point about Southerners appropriating these images for themselves is rooted in a visual culture predicated on images depicting filtered and reprocessed beliefs. These beliefs have lost their edge and been culturally appropriated by both Southerners and the nation[71] To take just one instance, hillbilly trucker hats became fashionable in the first decade of the 21st century. Tara McPherson writes that such emblems of commerce have a violent past associated with them. Critiquing such phenomena, McPherson warns that "celebrations of white trash use class to celebrate 'carnivalesque' behaviors that undermine prescribed decorum without recognizing that these modes of acting out also have racial implications."[72] Racial violence is indeed embedded in stereotypes of rednecks. However, McPherson delves into a

[69] Quoted in Von Doviak, *Hick Flicks*, 21.
[70] I return to this idea in the dissertation's conclusion.
[71] See Schulman, *The Seventies*, and Chapter 4: "The Rise of the Sunbelt and the Reddening of America". For a specific example of NASCAR going corporate see Daniels, *Lost Revolutions*, 119-120
[72] Tara McPherson, *Reconstructing Dixie: Race, Gender, and Nostalgia in the Imagined South* (Duke University Press Books, 2003), 250.

celebration of white trash as popular culture, realizing that working-class whites did, in fact, use extra aggressive means in resisting integration. But that is *one part* of the story, and not its *entire* part. What McPherson and hixploitation fail to analyze is why lower-class whites resorted to violence. What structures of power in a capitalist society are in place that make people lash out? Here, the type of one-dimensional depictions usually found in Southern cinema only examines one part, painting "lowdown" culture with too broad a brush. Very few films point toward a South grounded in reality, one that doesn't adhere to a stereotypical redneck formula and possesses a self-reflectivity and reflexivity in contrast to hixploitation.

IV.) Conclusions

Representations of Southerners in hixploitation films are problematic. These portrayals degrade character and region while forgoing exploration of root issues. Such characterizations are predicated on a rural-urban dichotomy, in which the country is undesirable as a proper habitat—or is a place of violence and natural law—which is coded as perverse.

In his book *The Country and the City*, Raymond Williams argues that ideas of the country and city are more complicated than thought to be in the human imaginary. He writes:

> Country and city are very powerful words, and this is not surprising when we remember how much they seem to stand in for the experience of human communities….On the actual settlements, which in the real history have been astonishingly varied, powerful feelings, have gathered and have been generalized. On the country has gathered the idea of a natural way of life: of peace, innocence and simple virtue. On the city has gathered the idea of an achieved centre: of learning, communication, light. Powerful hostile associations have also developed: on the city of a place of noise, worldliness and ambition; on the country as a place of backwardness, ignorance, limitation. A contrast between country and city, as fundamental ways of life, reaches back into classical times.[73]

Using English literature, Williams traces certain ways writers have portrayed this dichotomy. To take just one example of many, in his chapter "A Problem of Perspective," he recounts the nature of this generalization. Williams recounts the "formula" of a book which portrayed the country as a place of

[73] Raymond Williams, *The Country & the City*, (Oxford, 1973), 1.

"quietus" in the advance of civilization.[74] He believes this spatial dichotomy results in "social relations and forms of consciousness…[that] continue to act as partial interpreters."[75] The same can hold true for film. Southern films predicated on such a formula of city and country are rooted in certain assumptions and imaginaries about the American South. Acting as interpreters, these films tend to perpetuate orthodoxy that embodies Williams's statement of "the country as a place of backwardness, ignorance, limitation," while forgoing it as a place of "peace, innocence, and simple virtue."[76] The hixploitative sub-genre embodies this split.

What historian Pete Daniels calls "lowdown culture" typifies negative connotations in the popular imagination about the rural South. Daniels states that the "lowdown" is "an ambivalent term edged with pride and denigration. While the working class wore their lowdown status with pride, pretentious people looked askance at their rough edges and untamed enthusiasms."[77] Elvis and rockabilly music are two examples of the "lowdown,' while stock car racing, which found its roots in moonshine running that hailed from the hills of North Georgia (among other Southern locales), is another. The "lowdown" lifestyle serves as the basis for hixploitation's subject matter because of its rural or lower-class setting and situations. In *Cockfighter*, as I argue above, Mansfield's pride in his culture based on his rough, lowdown independence is harnessed against him. But what efficacy, if any, do these portrayals have? Representational effects of lowdown culture illustrate its powerful emblematic consequences.

Numerous, one-note, and well-tread depictions of what rural folk "are," have developed into stereotypes that span the globe. Jim Birckhead recounts traveling to the outback in Deniliquin, Australia to see a rendition of Jane Martin's play *Talkin With….* only to find that the performances of the play were

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[74] Ibid., 9.
[75] Ibid., 296.
[76] I argue in my next chapter "Rural Horror: Race, Representation, and Class In Post-War Cinema," that this dichotomy (the split of town and country) contributes to the fundamental horror of the rural lodged in the national imaginary. There is no need to recount this argument in full here except to say the dichotomy sets the scene for the horrific acts of violence found in slasher films and other rural horror vehicles.

[77] Pete Daniel, *Lost Revolutions: The South in the 1950s*, illustrated ed. (The University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 91–92.

based on pervasive patterns of "lurid images of bizarre, grotesque, inbred hillbillies."[78] Birckhead contrasts his experience with his ethnographic interactions with actual "hillbillies" who are far removed from the caricatures portrayed in media representation. In spite of this, the dominant image transmitted and acquired by Australian actors constitutes a cycle of representation that perpetuates such rural orthodoxy.

Such representation colors Allan Berube's recollection and memory of his "white trash" childhood in "Sunset Trailer Park." He writes:

> A conflicting stereotype portrayed trailer parks as trashy slums for white transients—single men drifting from job to job, mothers on welfare, children with no adult supervision. Their inhabitants supposedly engaged in prostitution and extra marital sex, drank a lot, used drugs, and were the perpetrators or victims of domestic violence. With this image in mind, cities and suburbs passed zoning laws restricting trailer parks to the 'other sides of the tracks' or banned them altogether. In the fifties, you could see this 'white trash' image in B-movies and on the covers of pulp magazines and paperback books.[79] (See Figure 5)

These examples illuminate and reinforce two key issues. First, this stereotype was often associated with the country and the rural. The type of white trash that supposedly lived in the trailer parks had all the traits associated with their backwoods counterparts in hixploitation—violence, sex, alcohol, and drugs. Removed from the farm and placed in the factory, such "people" were seen in terms of Southern "types"[80] and treated and dealt with as such geographically. Second, the key separation of country and city, like the physiological and cultural belief predicated on the proper whiteness within race, was also demarcated by social space. Historian Kenneth Jackson states that "…zoning was used by the people who already lived within the arbitrary bounds of a community as a method of keeping everyone else out. Apartments, factories, and 'blight,' euphemisms for black and people of limited means, were rigidly excluded."[81] In Berube's instance, zoning laws kept a safe distance between the perception of the lowdown culture of his trailer park and the respectable community. Trailer park culture is something to be kept at safe distance, in this case, through the force of law (see Figure 5). In hixploitation it is

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[78] Karl G. Heider, *Images of the South: Constructing a Regional Culture on Film and Video* (University of Georgia Press, 1993), 165.
[79] Annalee Newitz and Matt Wray, *White Trash: Race and Class in America*, 1st ed. (Routledge, 1996), 19.
[80] Fuller explanation of this, John Shelton Reed's concept, appears in following chapter.
[81] Kenneth T. Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (Oxford University Press, USA, 1987), 242.

questionable for non-rural citizens to travel outside of civilization, which is synonymous with the city.[82] Within civilization, it is equally beneficial to enact some type of spacial and social apartheid generated at the crossroads of class and race.

Williams's argument about the city and the country is more complicated than the simple formula portrayed in cinematic spaces dealing with or set in the South. We can begin to see why this is the case by turning to C.L.R. James. In his work *American Civilization*, James points to Hollywood's inability to deal with class issues. A couple of overarching themes arise in James's dealings with the production of Hollywood films, one of which is his main thesis that Hollywood has a tacit agreement with society not to approach certain subjects.[83] "Whenever possible a piece of direct propaganda is injected, but the C.I.O., the great strikes, capital and labor, war and peace, these are left out by mutual understanding, a sort of armed neutrality," he writes, "The films, therefore, if only negatively, represent some of the deepest feelings of the masses, but represent them with common agreement—no serious political or social questions which would cause explosions."[84]

James's theory offers one explanation for the orthodoxy of Southern culture on film. When his theory is applied one can start to surmise that the portrayal of Southern hixploitation situations, culture, and characters was relegated to certain "types" in direct proportion to the Civil Rights movement. In the seventies this reached its nadir with, and was consumed by, the very audience it proposed to represent. Beyond the selling of violence and sex, films such as *Cockfighter* defused post-Civil Rights Southern tensions by portraying the region as the racial punching bag of the nation.

By providing a visual culture and narrative that was predicated on a Southern independent spirit whose genesis was founded on the nostalgic timelessness of Civil War manhood, this "don't tread on me" efficacy served to placate the South while simultaneously portraying its rural citizens in a variety of unsatisfactory and incomplete ways. In the process, movies such as *Cockfighter* were emblematic of the

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[82] I explore this more fully in the next chapter.

[83] I touch on this earlier but it is worth calling attention to the fact that, in particular to the South, Warren French argues along similar lines stating that the South's racial relations are avoided by Hollywood producers. See French, *The South and Film*, p.3.

[84] C. L. R. James, Anna Grimshaw, and Keith Hart, *American Civilization* (Blackwell Pub, 1993), 123.

inability of film to address economic and class issues that could cause potential "explosions."[85] This was somewhat analogous to the region's reunion with the nation after the Civil War, itself predicated on the similarly false notion of a "moonlight and magnolias" South. Both were based on rebranding and selling the idea of the South to Southerners.

Conversely the South's culture of fighting provides one example that was turned from the fabric of rural custom to something with negative connotations divided by class. Elliot J. Gorn, who documents the history and nature of Southern fisticuffs, suggests that the nature of fighting grew naturally out of the "material base of life and the nature of daily work" and place:

> Even while cotton production boomed and trade expanded, a relatively small number of planters owned the best lands and most slaves, so huge parts of the South remained outside the flow of international markets or staple crop agriculture. Thus, backcountry whites commonly found themselves locked into a semisubsistent pattern of living….Such men played as lustily as they worked, counterpointing bouts of intense labor with strenuous leisure….The touchstone of masculinity was unflinching toughness, not chivalry, duty, or piety."[86]

Much like the spectacle of public lynching, fighting came to be identified with the rural and lower classes of Southern society. Post-Civil Rights, the South's independent spirit, what W.J. Cash called the "Savage ideal," was relaxed from its cultural moorings and repositioned as harmless nostalgia,[87] relegated to another time and place and as a scourge of the rural and lower classes. Finding themselves anachronistically positioned within the region, this repackaging of their ways of life was turned against those "Frank Mansfields" in a new era in which personal economic responsibility defined manhood in the new business- and corporate-led South.

Such films shaped the outlook of the Southerner's sense of self through rebranding "redneck" and the rural as a commodity.[88] In the process they failed to deal with any serious issues (foregoing topics that James would consider off-limits) such as deindustrialization, decline of farming, or union woes. When films such as Cockfighter did attempt to address those issues, they did so by framing them as individual

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[85] This is pragmatically demonstrated by the tension between Monte Hellman's view of the film and Roger Corman's plans to sell and recut it.

[86] Elliott J. Gorn, "'Gouge and Bite, Pull Hair and Scratch': The Social Significance of Fighting in the Southern Backcountry.," *The American Historical Review* 90, no. 1 (February 1, 1985): 34–36.

[87] W.J. Cash, *The Mind of the South*, Vintage Books ed. (Vintage, 1991).

[88] See Schulman, "The Reddening of America," in *The Seventies*, p. 102-121.

failures. In the process, these films missed the everydayness, negotiation, and the sense of the banal that reveals positive nuances about the South and its diverse culture. The region capitulated to these representations, because after the trauma of the Civil Rights movement, the regional energy to engage in such topics was lacking.

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In this chapter I have argued that problematic representations of the South can be found in hixploitation, which repackaged Southerness both for a mass audience and to define the self-image for the South where such films were popular. Films such as *Cockfighter* ultimately fail to redefine the region through unorthodox portrayals. Instead they were marketed and consumed on preconceived notions of what the South was, is, and could be. A film that challenges that orthodoxy would find redemption in the rural—a place of renewal, forgiveness, and industriousness—and by self-reflexively critiquing the stereotypical image of the South in the midst of challenging actual economic, rural and working-class issues.

Instead, the representation of the country in *Cockfighter* has particular static traits assigned to it. Because of the power of these traits, the rural South and its inhabitants are identified as the root cause of violence. They became scapegoats of the South's racial, economic, or social problems while consuming misrepresented and negative depictions of their own heritage, customs, and culture. As a consequence, the South has little hope of transcending its reductive status in American cinema. This reductivism contributes to the erosion of the way the South sees itself and misguides the American imaginary of the region.

All of this begs the question: are there any films based in the South that tackle substantive regional and class issues in any kind of alternative way? Such a Southern film would challenge stereotypical ideas of Southern class, race, and region. The question then becomes what films, if any, begin to reconcile that split? Would it have to sacrifice its "Southerness" to escape the orbit of orthodoxy and the "structures of society" as they pertain to Southern representation? Would a different genre of

filmmaking begin to address these questions? I now want to turn the genre of rural horror to explore such queries further.

Chapter Three
Rural Horror: Race, Violence, and Representations of the South in Post-War Film



Figure 1: Jason Voorhees as "hillbilly" in *Friday the 13th: Part 2*

"Even before the Wild West turned nasty, the cinema knew the Deep South was a hothouse of madness and murder."

--Kim Newman, *Nightmare Movies*

I.) Introduction

This chapter explores representations of the U.S. South in horror films. Certain questions guide my query. First, how can we read "Southerness" into the horror film? Does Southern history, real or imagined, contribute to such readings? Second, what role does class, race, and region play in these films? Do these characteristics exist independently, or do they promote continuity in the Southern horror genre? Third, how do these images confirm or contradict broader representations of cultures and customs about the South?

In exploring these broader questions, I look at an established sub-genre commonly identified with Southern films, what David Bell terms "rural horror," a type of film that associates the countryside with violence.[1] In particular, I examine whether certain characteristics of this genre relate to the South. If so,

[1] David Bell, "Anti-Idyll: Rural Horror," in Paul J. Cloke and Jo Little, *Contested Countryside Cultures : Otherness, Marginalisation, and Rurality* (London ; New York: Routledge, 1997).

what are these characteristics? For example, do most identifiably Southern films always involve issues of race and violence?

After briefly describing certain characteristics and specific examples of rural horror, my examination of these questions will be anchored in a case study: Tobe Hooper's 1974 film *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*. In exploring questions of race, class, and region, my analysis will draw on secondary materials dealing with concepts of whiteness and class in general and specific ways, as well as writings on the horror genre. I seek to establish whether this film offers different or similar perspectives on the identity and history of the region as it relates to the portrayal of rural and working class Southerners. Additionally, I look to see which images of the South are at play in the horror genre, how these have changed (or not) over time, and how film has served as a cultural vehicle for the exportation of certain ideas and representations of the South in the national imaginary. In the process I arrive at three conclusions that help answer such questions. First, the separation of town and country and the place of this dichotomy in the American psyche plays an important role in rural horror. Second, class is typically concomitant with this dichotomy. Finally there acts of vicious and virile violence are associated with rural spaces.

II.) Race, Region, and Film

A. Race:

David Roediger's *Wages of Whiteness* is a key work in its field which traces the etymology of certain racialized terms in ideological and psychoanalytic ways.[2] Among Roediger's arguments is the fact that there existed a social difference between whites that was situated in class. Proper cultural and racial ideas based on decorum, manners, appearance, and economics were required for proper whiteness, markers which excluded working, lower, rural, or "under" class whites. Because of this, Roediger locates a divide between slaves and lower-class whites in which whites used a shifting vocabulary in order to demarcate racial difference based on skin color and not class to preserve privilege.

[2] David Roediger, *Wages of Whiteness* (Verso Press, 2007).

The trouble with Roediger's analysis is that it attributes this system of naming difference to lower-class whites who sought to protect their skin privilege. But the situation was much more fluid. As Matt Wray has shown, slaves often thought themselves superior to whites who were located in similar economic circumstances.[3] For instance, the term "poor buckra" was used by slaves to describe economically disadvantaged whites in the antebellum era. As Wray points out however, "Whites quietly appropriated the term and pushed it into a wider circulation than it would have otherwise had. Blacks may have invented and used the term 'poor white trash' as an act of symbolic violence and micropolitical protest, but it was literate, middle-class and elite whites who invested its meaning with social power, granting it the powers of social stigma and prejudices and enforcing its discriminating effects with regards to labor."[4] The historical designation between whites in the context of proper whiteness based on privileged class is found in the regional writings of the Southern aristocracy (see below).

Wray bases his argument on the premise that whiteness is a social construct with meanings that shift according to context.[5] Matthew Frye Jacobson traces a similar line of thought by demonstrating how European immigrants sought to assimilate whiteness, to become properly "American" in both nationality and race.[6] In a Southern context, Jacobson argues that the lynching of Jewish Atlantian Leo Frank, accused of murdering worker Mary Phagan in the factory he managed, was justified by the twin causes of Franks' stereotypical "Jewish" physiogamy (not unlike visual evidence used to scientifically justify difference at the turn of the 20th century) and Southern chivalry, an oft used defense of protecting white womanhood.[7] Based on such readings, race is constructed on intersections of history, geography, and class. Thus, Frank's downfall was being a Jew in the Deep South.

The power of such "boundary work" manifests itself in social types. The Southern sociologist John Shelton Reed in his work on such types, *Southern Folk, Plain and Fancy*, suggests the efficacy of such characterizations:

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[3] Matt Wray, *Not Quite White: White Trash and the Boundaries of Whiteness* (Duke University Press, 2006), 157.
[4] Ibid., 43.
[5] Ibid., 6.
[6] Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Harvard University Press, 1999), 9.
[7] Ibid., 62-68.

> Particularly if a type acquires a label, it is likely to become not merely a social fact but also a psychological and a cultural fact. Along with the label goes a folk version of what Max Weber called an 'ideal type', an image of someone who has all the defining characteristics in their pure and unadulterated form, an idea which real, on-the-ground human beings approximate, to a greater or lesser degree. People carry this image around in their heads, and the label evokes it. The image helps them organize and deal with the reality they encounter. It lets them sort people out and pigeonhole them: it lets them believe they know what to expect from others. And because it is a shared image, it helps people communicate with one another…. But sometimes what we have are vicious stereotypes that have long outlived their usefulness (if, indeed, they ever had any), or that are used to justify discrimination and hard-dealing of various sorts…. In modern society, they often exist as media images: stock characters, no more complicated than they have to be, who are run onstage, perform their limited and predictable function, then exit."[8]

The powers of such images in treating class based whiteness have ingrained themselves in the popular imaginary of the South. Terms such as "redneck," or "white trash," immediately call to mind certain images and traits, a kind of shared truth seen and felt.

B. Film:

How do such images manage to hold sway in the popular consciousness? Andrew Tudor suggests the power of film within culture in *Image and Influence.* While allowing that more empirical studies are needed and that films are subjectively interpreted, Tudor suggests that film is involved in a type of "cultural encapsulation," in which people use culture as a "'map' through which we can interpret the world."[9] Such maps gain hold in well-tread genres which are value laden and contribute to socialization.[10] I suggest the transmissions of such cultural ideologies are not mutable, flexible and changing in relation to film. Instead films tend to transmit the categories in a static fashion. Thus, there is a tension between fixed representation as suggested by Reed, and the flexible category of race defined by class and region as put forth by Wray and Jacobson. In dealing with the horror genre, which is constantly evolving, fixed representation stands out more.[11]

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[8] John Shelton Reed, *Southern Folk Plain and Fancy: Native White Social Types* (University of Georgia Press, 1988), 6, 14.
[9] Andrew Tudor, *Image and Influence: Studies in the Sociology of Film* (St. Martin's Press, 1975), 233.
[10] Tudor, *Image and Influence*, 235. The three genres Tudor examines are the western, the horror film, and the gangster picture.
[11] For more recent takes on genre and representation see Rick Altman, *Film/Genre* (British Film Institute, 1999) in which he argues for the shifting of genre especially in Chapter 11, "Have Genres and Genre Functions Changed Over Time?"; Thomas Schatz, *Hollywood Genres: Formulas, Filmmaking and the Studio System* (McGraw Hill, 1981); and Steve Neale, *Genre and Hollywood* (Routledge, 2000).

Films, then, have been one of the most pervasive and powerful mediums for transmitting such fixed ideas of whiteness. As Anthony Harkins suggests, such representations have been enduring. In *Hillbilly: A Cultural History of an American Icon*, Harkins traces the popular growth of the "white trash" stereotype. "As films and other mass media continued to promote conceptions of thick headed yokels or savage feudalists and the public need grew for characters that could both prove by negative counterexample the benefits of life in modern capitalism and challenge the social limitations it imposed," he asserts, "the hillbilly slowly but steadily grew in national consciousness."[12] Harkins is speaking about representations of the "hillbilly," a character commonly associated with the Southern Appalachian Mountains. J.W. Williamson breaks down the different uses of the hillbilly in film which run from comic relief to noble frontiersman through backwoods savage.[13] To take just one example, in his comprehensive study, *Southern Mountaineers in Silent Film: Plot Synopses of Movies About Moonshining, Feuding and Other Mountain Topics, 1904-1929*, Williamson reports that between those years "there were at least 476 movies made about Southern mountain people in the Alleghenies, the Cumberlands, the Blue Ridge and the Ozarks."[14] Almost all involved male centered violence establishing a pattern which resulted in close to one thousand murders and assaults depicted on screen.[15]

The hillbillies' cultural cousin, the "redneck," has not been accorded the same multifaceted history. "Redneck," in contrast to the hillbilly, is associated with a proud violence.[16] Allison Graham in *Framing the South* addresses the term in filmic circumstances: "Lacking a narrative framework for dramatizing institutional racism, American movies have traditionally formulated our national racial crisis as a series of random encounters with evil incarnate…. Emerging from the shadows to enact his ghastly rituals, the redneck can be counted on to perform his time honored, generic duty: roar the hatred that his

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[12] Anthony Harkins, *Hillbilly: A Cultural History of an American Icon* (Oxford University Press, USA, 2005), 69.
[13] J. W. Williamson, *Hillbillyland: What the Movies Did to the Mountains and What the Mountains Did to the Movies* (The University of North Carolina Press, 1995).
[14] J. W. Williamson, *Southern Mountaineers in Silent Films: Plot Synopses of Movies About Moonshining, Feuding and Other Mountain Topics, 1904-1929* (McFarland & Company, 1994), 1.
[15] Ibid., 7.
[16] For a comprehensive discussion of the terms see Jim Goad, *The Redneck Manifesto: How Hillbillies, Hicks, and White Trash Became America's Scapegoats* (Simon & Schuster, 1998), 84; John Hartigan, *Odd Tribes: Toward a Cultural Analysis of White People* (Duke University Press Books, 2005), 147-165.

betters will only whisper, and then die at their hands in a near mythic purgation of the race."[17] Graham's line of reasoning is informed by Carol Clover, who has demonstrated that film viewers are witness to this recurring central motif of the "redneck" in horror films: "If 'redneck' once denoted a real and particular group, it has achieved the status of a kind of universal blame figure, the 'someone else' held responsible for all matter of American social ills."[18]

While writing about American culture in general, John Hartigan Jr. ties such sentiments explicitly to class: "With class relations," he observes, "white trash is an image of abject poverty, where the obviousness of a body's decency or lack of decorum and comportment 'explains' the economic condition, overwhelming any suggestion that systematic market forces are responsible for producing such conditions."[19] The market forces Hartigan refers to are structural and social which keep rural- and working-class Southerners poverty bound. To take just one example, mill owners paid their workers in company scrip which was worthless outside the confines of the mill store. As such, mill workers were tied to the factory for which he worked with no monetary means to escape. Annalee Newitz suggests representations of such images on film allow for both middle and upper-class white to alleviate feelings of racial guilt by pinning racist ways on lower class whites which also allows them to direct racist aggression towards a group other than minorities.[20] In horror films, the physical grotesquery of monsters, who also act as scapegoats, speaks to the validity of such claims.

As represented by film, this site of difference is separated by both the physical indicators (skin color, deformity) and social signs (class). That is to say, idealized whiteness is held as a monolithic social and physiological construct which is opposed within its own boundaries by class markers. Gwendolyn Audrey Foster in *Performing Whiteness* writes that "the allure of whiteness is one of the principle commodities of American cinema; it is a spectacle that assists in stabilizing the representation of

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[17] Allison Graham, *Framing the South: Hollywood, Television, and Race during the Civil Rights Struggle* (The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), 12-13.
[18] Carol J. Clover, *Men, Women, and Chain Saws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film* (Princeton University Press, 1993), 135.
[19] Hartigan, *Odd Tribes*, 135-136.
[20] Annalee Newitz and Matt Wray, eds., *White Trash: Race and Class in America*. (Routledge, 1996), 152.

whiteness as a social construct." [21] This ability is not only found in content (character construction) but technical aspects of film style as well.

Richard Dyer comments that whiteness manifests itself through the machinery of film production. Illustrating the effects of film technology on the color white, Dyer suggests that "Idealised white women are bathed in and permeated by light. It streams through and falls on them from above. In short, they glow."[22] The more "white" and incandescent characters become, the more pure and virtuous. The darker the character is, whether by lighting or skin tone, the more malevolent a force they embody. Such representations buttress the proper "look" where class and race intersect. In terms of "redneck" monsters in horror films, if they are not classically shot in low light and lurking in the shadows, such monsters are usually filthy, obscuring skin tone through physical deformity, a mask, or both.

C. Region:

Dyer's seminal work *White* considers not only technology but region as well. "The West constitutes a myth of origins for the USA, for a hundred years the leading edge of the white world," he writes. "It stands in contrast to another myth, the South. The West shows the construction of a (white) national identity centered on men and in the face of an indigenous ethnic other, whereas the South shows the construction of one centered on women and in the face of a fixed immigrant other."[23] Dyer's argument is based on the "moonlight and magnolia" version of the South, where a white women's' virtue is to be protected at all costs against the "other" ("fixed immigrants").[24] The fear of the properly classed white man of the intruding non-white phallus was, as many have argued, an emasculated response marked through lynching against supposed sexual perpetrators. However, such difference existed *within* what Southerners held to be proper whiteness, as well as between differences of skin tone. This thinking in "types" existed as far back as colonial times and further illustrates Matt Wray's point regarding the naming power of upper-class white males.

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[21] Gwendolyn Audrey Foster, *Performing Whiteness*, (State University of New York Press, 2003), 102-103.
[22] Richard Dyer, *White: Essays on Race and Culture* (Routledge, 1997), 122.
[23] Ibid., 35.
[24] The aforementioned Leo Frank case illustrates the dynamic between fixed immigrants and white women.

For example, in his 18th century diaries Anglican minister Charles Woodmason reinforced existing characterizations of poor Southern whites. Observing his racial counterparts in the colonial backcountry of South Carolina, Woodmason described a breed of people that he considered lazy, indolent, violent, and aggressive. He was appalled at the lack of decorum, manners, civility, and cleanliness of the people, writing, "I have not yet met with one literate or travel'd person--no ingenious mind--none of any capacity--only some few well dispos'd religious persons, but whose knowledge is very circumscribed."[25]

Such characterizations persisted in the Early Republic. Harry St. John Dixon, the son of an Antebellum Mississippi Delta cotton baron, somewhat kinder than Woodmason in assessing the lower class, still manifested the paternalistic tone that would soon to flourish in the cotton mills of the South: "They, though, are the stamp of men who form the bone and sinew of the nation--plain, unpolished yeomen who in many cases far surpass men in higher grades of society in goodness of heart and moral rectitude," he observed. "I only pity their ignorance; I do not hoot at them and would rebuke a fool who did because they had been this misfortunate."[26] Subscribing to the medical belief in physiological difference of such categories at the dawn of the Civil War, lawyer D.R. Hundley in a chapter entitled "Poor White Trash," explained:

> The chief characteristic of Rag Tag and Bobtail[27], however, is laziness. They are about the laziest two-legged animals that walk erect on the face of the earth. Even their motions are slow, and their speech is a sickening drawl, worse a deal sight than the most down-eastern of all the Down-Easters; while their thoughts and ideas seem likewise to creep along at a snail's pace. All they seem to care for, is, to live from hand to mouth; to get drunk, provided they can do so without having to trudge too far after their liquor; to shoot beef; to hunt; to attend gander pullings; to vote at elections; to eat and to sleep; to lounge in the sunshine of a bright summer's day, and to bask in the warmth of a roaring wood fire, when summer days are over, and the calm autumn stillness has given place to the blustering turbulence of hyemal storms.[28]

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[25] Charles Woodmason, *The Carolina Backcountry on the Eve of the Revolution: The Journal and Other Writings of Charles Woodmason, Anglican Itinerant* (The University of North Carolina Press, 1969), 138.
[26] Stephen Berry, *Princes of Cotton: Four Diaries of Young Men in the South, 1848-1860* (University of Georgia Press, 2007), 185.
[27] "Rag Tag" and "Bobtail" are the derogatory names Hundley gives his poor-white characters in his writing.
[28] D.R. Hundley, *Social Relations in Our Southern States* (New York: H. B. Price, 1860), 262-263.

Such early characterizations served as markers for distinguishing between classes and proper ideas of whiteness within Southern society, ones that made laziness, stupidity, and sloth the chief characteristics of rural whites.

How do such ideas of race, class, and region coalesce together in post-war film? A close reading of the seminal *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre,* serves to illuminate tensions between the post-Reconstruction and New South ideas of class and whiteness in the context of region, identifying shifting historical moments of what it means to be a proper white Southern citizen. The film helped to establish the contours of a horror sub-genre, the rural slasher film, and generates particular horrors that recollect the Southern tradition of lynching through the actions and rituals of the films' cannibalistic family. Finally, *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* and its associated genre have contributed to class representations of whiteness in the post-Civil Rights Act Era.

III.) Rural Horror and Slasher Films

"Going off the beaten path," remains one of the horror genre's central motifs. Grounded in familiar folk tales such as "Little Red Riding Hood," and "Goldilocks and the Three Bears," such stories permeate cultures with warnings to stay out of unknown spaces such as the woods or an unfamiliar town. The plot outline is simple: transgressors go where they are not supposed to only to face, at their peril, the fury of the wild or the unknown. The motif has been a staple in the horror film since the classic period of the genre, generally acknowledged to have begun with German expressionist films of the late teens and early twenties and Universal's classic monster films in the thirties. However, the form assumed a decidedly Southern tint in American horror beginning with the Civil Rights Era. In "Anti-Idyll: Rural Horror," David Bell describes some of the characteristics of horror films set in rural spaces: "Characters--hillbillies, mountain men, Cajuns, rednecks--prey on assorted city-dwellers who enter their territory…. Here are societies which seem idyllic, but which are malignant, at a dead end, and viewed in the grip of their own death throes. The condition is the real horror of the rural."[29] Additionally, Bell rightly suggests

[29] David Bell, "Anti-Idyll," 97, 106.

that the "slasher film," a sub-genre of horror which gained popularity in the seventies and eighties, is the main cinematic vehicle for "rural horror."

The slasher film is one in which a killer (or killers) hunt down and pick off victims one by one in gory and imaginative ways.[30] The advent of better special effects championed by make-up artists such as Tom Savini, as well as the end of the Hays code in 1966, allowed films a greater breadth of violent expression which was previously limited to independent exploitation films. "Slashers" thus became more mainstream. Known by terms such as "grindhouse," "exploitation," "meat films," and "teenie-kill pics," slashers became increasingly graphic and violent, leading to an explosion of a genre which tested audience thresholds for gore.[31] While slasher films are usually defined as vehicles for special effects and over-the-top murders, more than substance, the genre does raise issues of race, class, and region in interesting, if heavy-handed ways.

The slasher film has been much discussed and dissected.[32] While useful as a starting point to limit the boundaries of the rural horror sub-genre, existing critical templates cannot account for the emerging and evolving totality of the slasher genre. For instance, Carol Clover's idea of the "final girl," a morally upright virgin who is left to confront, and eventually defeat the monster in slasher films, can now be expanded to include the "final boy."[33] Contemporary slasher films such as *Hostel* (2005), *Wrong Turn* (2003), and the remakes of *The Hills Have Eyes* (2006) and *Friday the 13th* (2009), among others, all have young males standing at film's end to battle the killer.

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[30] For an exhaustive filmography of slasher films see Chapter 5 "Deep in the Heart of Texas" in Kim Newman, *Nightmare Movies* (Harmony Books, 1998), 51-64.

[31] Linda Williams argues in "Film Bodies: Gender, Genre, and Excess" that audience have physiological reactions to horror. She calls this a "body genre." See Barry Keith Grant, ed. *Film Genre Reader III* (Austin: University Of Texas Press, 2003), 141-149.

[32] Clover, *Men, Women, and Chain Saws,*21-64.; Vera Dika, "The Stalker Film: 1978-1981" in Gregory A. Waller, *American Horrors: Essays on the Modern American Horror Film* (University of Illinois Press, 1987).; Robin Wood, *Hollywood from Vietnam to Reagan...and Beyond*, Rev Exp. (Columbia University Press, 2003), 78-84. For a summary on the debate of the genre including the views expressed by Clover, Dika, and Wood, see Mikel J. Koven, "The Slasher Film as Folkloristic Social Script," in *Film, Folklore, and Urban Legends* (Lanham, Maryland: Scarecrow Press, 2008), 113-134.

[33] Nicholas Dessau Giannini, "Homeland (In)security: Terminal Masculinity & the Specter of 9/11" (PhD, Emory University, 2010), 119-154.

Vera Dika analyzes a series of tropes which slasher films display.[34] Plot elements include a young/old community in which the young community is "in the know" about the terror intruding on their clique, while the "old community" remains unaware of any looming threat (*Friday the 13th Part 2* (1982). In contemporary rural horror that otherwise would engage with Dika's schematic, there is no "old community." Sometimes, the "old community" *is* the killer (*Scream 3* (2000)).

In these contemporary slasher films, there are two wider-reaching constants which span the gap between the beginnings of the genre in the seventies, and its resurgence in the post 9/11 landscape. First, slasher films, as they pertain to rural horror, only need involve a rural-country/town-city dichotomy, a setting which allows one to be defined by the "other," providing a binary tableau which to script the fictional backwoods inheritors of violence in the popular imagination.[35] At the center of this geographic split is class. "One of the obvious things at stake in the city/country split of horror films is social class," Clover writes, "the confrontation between the haves and the have-nots, or even more directly, between exploiters and their victims."[36]

As the region began to rise economically in the seventies, slasher films increasingly used Southern settings. Migration to the South with the Sunbelt boom, the advent of industrial technology, white flight, and the pursuit of Southern industry by a vigilant boosterism were three important, overlapping features that shaped the decade. This is not to say that the rural South was entirely independent from its pre-war rural culture, but the fact remains that more people migrated and the South witnessed an increased outward expansion into the suburbs, whether for jobs, attempted escape from

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[34] Although Dika provides a similar structural template as Clover to dissect slasher/stalker films, she differs from Clover in her account of identification with the killer. Using a formalist argument Dika writes, "The structure of identification in the stalker film allows the viewer to identify with the killer's look but not his character." See Waller, *American Horrors*, 88. Thus the pleasure of adolescent masochism, contra Clover, is not to be found in Dika's estimation because of a reverse shot that shows the killer from an objective view. Ibid., 88-89.Additionally, Dika does limit her analysis to the three years (1978-81) she mentions, so she might be inclined to agree that some of her categories have outgrown their time limit.

[35]Both Clover and David Bell speak of the dichotomy between the town and city. Clover uses the rape-revenge film *I Spit on Your Grave* (1978) and *Deliverance* (1972) to explore the city's revenge on the county which she calls "urabanoia." Additionally, Bell addresses the split implicitly in "Anti Idyll: Rural Horror." See Clover, *Men, Women, and Chain Saws*. For Bell see Cloke and Little, *Contested Countryside Cultures*, 91-104.

[36] Clover, *Men, Women and Chainsaws*, 126; See 124-127 for a full discussion of the concept.

integration, or the proliferation of the automobile.[37] As such, rural, town, and urban areas experienced more contact with each other. As the rural- and -town dichotomy literally began to collapse, rural horror answered with increasingly more remote settings.

A clear example of this dichotomy is exploitation pioneer Herschell Gordon Lewis's 1964 film, *Two Thousand Maniacs!*, arguably a pre-slasher prototype and possibly the first horror film explicitly located in the South, is set in an idyllic small town (Figure 2). The brilliance of Lewis's film is that evil, in the form of a seemingly normal community, hides in plain sight behind "Southern" manners and civility.[38] As such, the film differs from more typical representations of the region in rural horror. Much more emblematic is the clan of (both the original and remake) *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, which lives in a remote area of Texas. The original *The Hills Have Eyes* (1977) was set in a desert; the remake takes place in an abandoned nuclear testing facility. Finally, the trio of terror in *Wrong Turn* lives so far "off the grid" as to not even belong on a map, the victims quickly find out.



Figure 2: Coded community of "monsters" in *Two Thousand Maniacs!*

[37] Kenneth T. Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (Oxford University Press, USA, 1987); Dolores Hayden, *Building Suburbia: Green Fields and Urban Growth, 1820-2000* (Vintage, 2004); Kevin M. Kruse, *White Flight: Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism* (Princeton University Press, 2007).
[38] The film could be read as a satire on Southern manners and the representation of the South. Its characterizations are so over determined as to be comical. Lewis is much too smart a director to not have intentionally done this. Dixie flags abound everywhere and every character in Pleasant Valley, from the mayor to the town "floozy," are riffs on stereotypes. On the other hand, the low budget may have had an influence on the production values.

A second broad characteristic of rural horror features inbred, grotesque, monsters devoid of empathy. In contrast to the classical period of gothic Universal monsters, such creatures lack feeling. Dracula's love for Mina Harker and the Wolfman's guilt have been replaced by a silent fury in which monsters speak through actions not words, via the graphic form of the slasher genre.

To name just a few examples, at the beginning of the 21st century, "Big Brain" in the *The Hills Have Eyes* remake is a genetically mutated freak with a hydrocephalic head he cannot hold upright.[39] The trio in *Wrong Turn* is coded as inbred, deformed, cannibal, and part animal, living off tourists in the isolated West Virginia hills. *Friday the 13th*'s Jason Voorhees has also been transformed with in the eleven films that compose the *Friday the 13th* series. First clad in overalls (a "hillbilly" marker; Figure 1) and a burlap sack in *Friday the 13th Part 2* (1981), he eventually evolved into a demonic spirit inhabiting other's bodies (*Jason Goes to Hell: The Final Friday* (1993)). Jason's transformation is indicative of characters becoming more fantastical in the genre.

Some contemporary horror (*The Ring* (2002), *Scream* (1996)) speaks to a society where threats lurk in seemingly unsuspecting and banal technologies such as cell phones that transmit deadly messages which mark the listener for demise. Such works summon the "classical age" of horror film whose monsters were of a higher economic class[40], a fact which serves to further highlight the marginal economic status of more recent rural horror protagonists. For instance, the killers in *Scream*, its two sequels, and *Urban Legend* (1998) are suburban teenagers, while malfeasance is birthed from the urban landscape in *The Ring* and *The Grudge* (2004).[41] But the success of rural horror remakes such as *Friday the 13th*, *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, and *The Hills Have Eyes* and their attending sequels, *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre: The Beginning* (2006) and *The Hills Have Eyes 2* (2007), as well as new versions of similar stories (*The Descent* (2005), *Wrong Turn*, *Wolf Creek* (2005), and *House of 1,000 Corpses* (2003))

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[39] In Wes Craven's original *The Hills Have Eyes* (1977), all the characters were savages, but distinctly human.
[40] David J. Skal, *The Monster Show* (Faber and Faber, 2001), 159.
[41] Wes Craven's *Scream* trilogy was a postmodern deconstruction of the slasher genre. In the films the victims are self-aware of the "rules" of slasher films. This meta-commentary in the age of irony effectively ushered in a new kind of self-aware pastiche of the formal aspects of the slasher genre, while simultaneously employing those formalities to the film itself with certain exceptions, one of which as mentioned above, was the obvious class of killer. This effectively killed the traditional slasher film until its resurrection following 9/11.

speak to the everlasting appeal of horror situated in the backwoods milieu. Even John Carpenter's original *Halloween* (1978) which was based on a suburban evil embodied in anthropomorphic form that Carpenter called "The Shape," (who became popular by his name Michael Myers), was re-imagined in Rob Zombie's 2007 remake of the same name as the product of a "white trash" upbringing, coded by a drunken, abusive stepfather and a pole-dancing mother.

Such a recent explosion of rural horror in the slasher tradition poses some interesting questions. Are there certain historical and regional events which coincide with the proliferation of rural horror? Some of these answers simply have to do with economic calculations within the film industry. Many of these remakes are reintroduce familiar classic characters to a younger audience while updating the films in terms of contemporary stars, fashion, special effects and taste. It remains to be seen if such a singular character as Jason, for instance, has the lasting appeal of a *kind* of character such as the classic vampire. But that is only part of the story. Maybe Jason is the embodiment of the same character, representative of a rural violence embedded in the cultural imaginary tied to race, region, and class. I now turn to a case study of *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, a key film in the genre of rural horror, to explore how such categories are visible in historically and regionally specific ways.

IV.) Case Study: *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*

Tobe Hooper began shooting *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* while a student at the University of Texas in Austin. Although he had made the short counterculture film *Eggshells* (1969) and went on to make *Poltergeist* (1982), *Chainsaw* is Hooper's most widely known and influential work. Its sway still pervades the horror genre thirty-six years later.[42] Challenged by production difficulties, shady financing, and supposed ties to the same mob owned film company that financed the pornographic blockbuster *Deep Throat*, Hooper nevertheless was able to make the film on a shoestring budget in the summer of 1973.[43]

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[42] There has been much discussion of Hooper's input on *Poltergeist*. It is widely assumed that producer Stephen Spielberg, who hired Hooper, ended up "directing" the film. Hooper's other works, *Lifeforce* (1985), *Eaten Alive* (1977), *Funhouse* (1981), and *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre 2* (1986), some of which are terrible, never achieved the same enduring cultural and genre resonance as *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*.

[43] For a comprehensive and detailed analysis of the production see "A Living Nightmare" in Alison Macor, *Chainsaws, Slackers, and Spy Kids: Thirty Years of Filmmaking in Austin, Texas* (University of Texas Press, 2010),

The film was banned in France, and given an "X" rating in the United States. However, such controversy allowed the film to become a cult classic grossing over thirty million dollars.

The look of *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* is defined by cinematographer Daniel Pearl's 16 mm stock that gives the film a washed out look and a documentary style and form, giving an illusion of reality to the horror. The setting of the film is equally spare. All of the action takes place in essentially one locale--the cannibal's house and its surrounding woods. The major movement of characters involves five friends arriving at the scene of their impending doom, which is done in short order. The rest of the setting, movement, and plot is efficient and to the point

The film begins with narration (John Laroquette) that establishes that what we are about to see is fact. (This "documentary" style voiceover approach, in addition to Pearl's work, positions the film as "real.") The screen turns black. Ominous digging sounds echo from the blackness. Camera flashes illuminate body parts. The blackness fades in on two decomposing corpses, crucified on a tombstone cross. The viewers are informed by a radio broadcast that there has been grave robbing in the area. We are then introduced to five friends listening to the radio in their van: Sally Hardesty (Marilyn Burns) and her wheel chair-bound brother Franklin (Paul A. Partain), Jerry (Allan Danziger), Kirk (William Vail) and Pam (Teri McMinn). Concerned about one of the family members buried in the cemetery, Franklin and Sally convince the others to go inspect the scene on the way to the old Hardesty family home, long abandoned, in rural Texas. Their summer drive goes awry after they pick up a hitchhiker (Edwin Neal), an act of unquestioned charity, and the traveler turns out to be a deranged and violent lunatic who cuts himself and marks their vehicle with his blood. To compound their problems, they stop to get fuel but, as so many were during the gas crisis of the early 70s, the station's tanks are empty.

17-47. In regards to the limitations of the budget, most of the "human-bone" props used in the film consisted of production managers going out and finding road kill to use the skeletons.



Figure 3: Leatherface in *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*

Arriving at the family home, Kirk and Pam hear a generator operating in the distance. Assuming that fuel is available, they investigate, but are viciously murdered by a large man, aptly named Leatherface (Gunnar Hansen; Figure 3), wearing a mask made of human skin. A concerned Jerry soon discovers the bodies and suffers the same fate. Distraught with worry, mounting anxiety, and completely ignorant of their friend's fates, Franklin and Sally, too, are stalked and, finally, brutalized by Leatherface. After Franklin is dispatched by chainsaw, Sally finds herself trapped in the carnivorous family's house, which is revealed to include the hitchhiker and the gas station attendant (the "Old Man" played by Jim Siedow), both Leatherface's brothers. About to die a slow and painful death, there is seemingly no way out for Sally. Yet she manages to escape, to become a "final girl," only to be pursued by Leatherface and the Hitchhiker. Finally she is rescued by a truck driver. The film ends with Leatherface swinging his phallic saw in the morning sunlight, frustrated at losing his final prey.

A. Southern Class

Addressing the class aspects of the film, Robin Wood writes about the cannibalistic family in *Chainsaw* that "We cannot cleanly dissociate ourselves from them. A sense grows that they are victims

too—of the slaughter house environment, of capitalism—our victims, in fact," and that they are "representatives of an exploited and degraded proletariat."[44] Wood couches his famous essay on horror films, "The American Nightmare," in terms of surplus Freudian repression in the form of capitalist expansion which manifests itself in monstrous ways.[45] With this in mind, in what ways does Wood's idea of the film character's class interact with race in relation to the South? Wood has suggested the class relationship between the victims and killers is a recurring trope throughout horror. Victims are usually coded superior in terms of capitalist definitions of success. For instance, in *Wrong Turn*, the victims are New York bourgeoisie; in the remake of *Friday the 13th*, the kids are ensconced in a magnificent lake house that connotes an upper middle class association between leisure and consumption; in *The Hills Have Eyes*, the vacationing family is marked by their leisure time to take a trip in an RV; in *The Descent*, the women are successful teachers and doctors. Are these categories dependent on Southern history which, in turn, accounts for the film's horrific power? Finally, does the rural horror genre contribute to a national imaginary? If so, what does it say about the South?

The class issue in the film is apparent in the divide between the murderous family and the group of five friends. A key exchange between Franklin and the Hitchhiker in the van establishes this fact and its intersection with proper masculine whiteness. Shortly before picking up the hitchhiker, Franklin explains the mechanics of the slaughterhouse to his friends: "They bash 'em on the head with a big sledgehammer. They usually won't kill them on the first lick….They don't do it like that anymore. Now they've got this big air gun that shoots a bolt into their skull and then retracts it." Disgusted at what Franklin has to say, the rest of the group requests that he stop his description. An apologetic Franklin sheepishly complies. His attempt at a type of Southern masculinity, one predicated on comfort with a tradition of violence, masculine honor, and frontier life, all hallmarks of proper whiteness as conceived by

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[44] Wood, *Hollywood from Vietnam to Reagan...and Beyond*, 82-83.

[45] Christopher Sharrett "wonders if the film's vision offers an authentically progressive critique, or if…it colludes with the hopeless, entrenched barbarism of American society." In Barry Keith Grant, *Planks of Reason: Essays on the Horror Film*, Revised Edition. (Scarecrow Press, 2004), 308. He concludes in his essay "Apocalypse in The Texas Chainsaw Massacre" that the film is "one of cinema's strongest statements of general bankruptcy of myth and communal belief in the world." Ibid., 139.

upper and middle class whites, is rendered mute by his friends, as well as by his immobility. In effect, Franklin, as Christopher Sharrett has pointed out, is portrayed as an emasculated male.[46]

Whiteness predicated on blue collar work and, by extension, a rough masculinity, was replaced by a type of male who has gotten in touch with his "feminine" side in the seventies.[47] This historical moment separates Franklin from traditional Southern masculinity, based on physical labor, violence, and deed, and identifies him with the economic commerce and mastery that was becoming the new masculine ideal in the post-Civil Rights South embodied by the new Southern kings of capital. Proper whiteness, still based on class, now manifested its masculinity through ownership of physical space, paternalistic control of the working class, and conspicuous consumption.

As Franklin delineates the mechanics of the bovine kill, driving his hand into his fist, Hooper intercuts Franklin's speech with shots of a slaughterhouse, dead cattle, and flies. This montage constitutes a shocking sequence cross-cutting between the image of Franklin and the violence he describes. The juxtaposition illustrates Franklin's wish-fulfillment fantasy to be one of those who can stomach such work and their masculinity predicated on older frontier ideals. This deindustrialization, as well as its extension of white masculinity, manifests itself in corporeal form when the hitchhiker enters the van. His conversation with Franklin illuminates how he and generations of his family once worked in the slaughterhouse business:

Hitchhiker: I was at the slaughterhouse.
Franklin: I got an uncle who works at the slaughterhouse.
H: My brother worked there. My grandfather too. My family's always been in beeves.
F: Hey man, did you go in that slaughterhouse room, of, whatever they call it? The place where they shoot the cattle in the head with that big air gun?
H: That gun's no good.
F: I was in there once with my uncle.
H: The old way with the sledge. See that was better, they died better that way.
F: How come? I though the gun was better?
H: Oh, no no. With the new way, people put out of jobs.

[46] Grant, *Planks of Reason*, 313.
[47] Bruce Schulman, *The Seventies: The Great Shift in American Culture, Society, and Politics* (Da Capo Press, 2002), 176-185

H: [Showing Franklin a picture of his handy work] I was the killer. They don't send the heads away.
F: You took these?
H: Yeah…See they make headcheese. They take the head and boil it, except for the tongue, and then scrape all the flesh away from the bone. They use everything, they don't throw nothing away. They use the jowls, the muscle, the eyes, the ligaments, everything. The nose, the flesh, and they boil it down to a big jelly, a fat.
F: I didn't know what's in that stuff.
H: Its really good. You like it?
F: I like it. It's good.

This exchange shows the class chasm between the hitchhiker and Franklin, who represents the rest of the group in the van and presumably the audience. With an apparent pride in his work, the hitchhiker recounts a craft, an artisanal practice that has been eradicated by mechanization, resulting in irreplaceable job loss. Franklin only understands this historical process from the point of demand, of mechanization and consumption. Although he professes to know about the slaughterhouse, having been with his uncle, the conversation reveals him to be an imposter, a tourist in a workingman's world. (He doesn't even know how his favorite snack is made.) Additionally, the leisure time the kids have to take a Sunday drive is mirrored by the hitchhiker, who is literally wandering in the heat of the road, out of the social stream, rootless and out of work.[48] Thus Franklin's Southern masculine ideal is embodied by the hitchhiker, whom Franklin admires. This is further evidenced by the hitchhiker's blood on Franklin's knife, which he stares at longingly and wonders "What does it take for someone to do that? To just cut yourself like that. That takes something."

The working class motif in the film is based on a skill, working with one's hands, that takes time to master. But the trade, which once provided income and a sense of masculine identity, is gone.[49] Such masculinity tied to work defines the family in terms of its regional affiliation. Thus, the family in *The*

[48] Robin Wood has commented briefly on the class aspect of the victims and the killer. This is a recurring trope throughout rural horror, as the ones who are struck down are usually coded superior in terms of capitalist definitions of success. For instance, in *Wrong Turn*, the victims are New York bourgeoisie; in the remake of *Friday the 13th*, the kids are ensconced in a magnificent lake house; in *The Hills Have Eyes*, the vacationing family is marked by their leisure time to take a trip in an RV; in *The Descent*, the women are successful teachers and doctors.
[49] See Tara Skipper's "Deindustrialization in A Southern Town," in Thomas W. Collins and John D. Wingard, *Communities and Capital: Local Struggles against Corporate Power and Privatization* (University of Georgia Press, 2000), 106. Also, in my interviews with Chester, South Carolina's citizens, many espoused the same opinion.

Texas Chainsaw Massacre keeps doing the only thing it has ever known how to do—butcher. They have been mechanized by society, enduring repetitive labor in the slaughterhouse.[50] The violence of the film drives their revenge home in class, racial, and regional ways.

B. Southern Whiteness

Rick Worland suggests "Texas in the American imagination meant the rural South with its tragic dynamics of race and class; but it also symbolized the West itself, with all the accumulated cultural mythology from cattle drives and Indian fighting to the Alamo."[51] Although Worland and Sharrett view the film through a Western analysis, reading the film as set in the South, and its family as Southern, provides new insights into the Sawyer's methods of murder.

These methods are what Carol Clover calls "pretechnological" means of violence in slasher films.[52] Leatherface bashes Kirk's head in with a hammer. Afterword he slams a metal door, (not unlike one found in a cattlehouse) retreating to his personal slaughter house filled with animal carcasses, bones, and furniture made out of both. Pam is next, as he impales her on a meat hook, while Kirk lies on the table, prepped to be carved with a chainsaw. After finding Pam near death in a freezer, the inquisitive Jerry meets the same fate as Kirk. Franklin is gutted by a chainsaw, and the family encourages Grandpa (John Dugan), a decrepit old man, to hit Sally's head with a hammer "just like old times," in an effort to rekindle the relatively stable life the family once enjoyed.

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[50] Bell has cast this fact in terms of the brutality of the film: "The themes of routinisation and repetition, also played out in *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, further emphasize the everdayness of the atrocities (something also signaled in work on Nazi death camps as a phenomenon of modernity). Thus, the long term shifts in American culture , society and the U.S. economy have together conspired to spawn many monsters, of which the rural 'underwolf' is a long running archetype." Quoted in Cloke, *Contested Countryside Cultures*, 98. Although Bell uses the Third Reich as an example, the atrocities of Vietnam could also be read into the film. Cast in a Southern way, the idea of the "underwolf" also points to the pervasive nature of Woodmason's accounts.

[51] Rick Worland, *The Horror Film: An Introduction* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2006), 210-211. Worland gives an extremely detailed account of *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre's* plot as well. Sharrett couches his article in terms of the American west as mythic place of renewal, which is denied in the film. Both men use Richard Slotkin's *Gun-Fighter Nation: The Myth of the Frontier in the Twentieth Century* (University of Oklahoma Press, 1998), to inform their arguments.

[52] It could be argues that Leatherface's anxiety following Jerry's death in which he paces and sits by the window is a type of moral ambiguity the character possesses. I disagree. His anxiety stems from the fact he was taken by surprise in finding Jerry trying to rescue Pam. This is supported by the fact that he shows no remorse at any other point in the film. Additionally, it probably stems as well from fear of reprisal by his older brother, who beats him like a child when he destroys the front door later in the film.

The victims, obviously, are human cattle led to the slaughter. Suggestively, Leatherface, who never speaks, squeals and grunts like a farm animal. This reverse anthropomorphic behavior codes him as synchronous with his job as he recalls his former swine victims. Unable to communicate like his two brothers, he has regressed to the only thing he has known; he squeals to re-create the work atmosphere he once enjoyed. This behavior simultaneously provides him with an identity, while dehumanizing his victims. Leatherface's butchering, we learn, supplies human meat to the bar-b-que stand his brother manages at the gas station. Thus, the capitalist system that destroyed the family tradition is countered on its own terms. But instead of appealing to a masculinity rooted in New South capital of acquiring and spending, and thus class, the family reenacts the violent, outwardly physical rituals of the post-Reconstruction South in order to seek revenge on the New South of the Post World-War II age.

Among these violent rituals none has been more closely identified with the South as the spectacle of lynching. Kris DuRocher explains, lynching expressed proper ideas of whiteness and class, which were inexorably bound with gender.[53] Two points in her argument as they relate to *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* are worth exploring here, for each illustrates the dynamic of revenge at work in the film, and the effect of horror on Southern and modern audiences.

First, lynching was used, especially after the Civil War, as an outward expression of white domination in the face of a rapidly changing Southern society. Lynching was usually a community event witnessed by many. Besides the pragmatic belief that physical destruction of African Americans would create fear on which to base their dominant racial position, lynching accomplished the simultaneous effect of proving their masculine worth to individuals and the public. This was especially important in shoring up the white male's pervasive belief in their presumed "lack" of sexual prowess in comparison with African American males. DuRocher writes that "As an audience, girls and young women served several purposes; primarily, white males needed spectators to approve of their masculinity."[54] The spectators in question were white females whose appearance on the grisly scene served as a matter of social etiquette;

[53] Kris DuRocher, "Violent Masculinity: Learning Ritual and Performance in Southern Lynchings," in Craig Thompson Friend, *Southern Masculinity: Perspectives on Manhood in the South since Reconstruction* (University of Georgia Press, 2009).
[54] DuRocher, "Violent Masculinity", 55.

their white witness connoted proper Southern social class to the violence at hand which, in turn, reified the proper idea of whiteness via physical and psychological dominance over African Americans with the proper sanction of community pillars. Yet, in *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, the family uses this same physical violence in different ways.

C. Southern Sanction

With class differences established between the five friends and the family, Hooper's film explores the regional violence of lynching, albeit with different intent as it pertains to class and whiteness. A key scene illustrates this. After Sally has been captured, she is "invited" to a family meal at the cannibal's table. Tied down and gagged, the scene involves the aforementioned attendance by Grandpa, who tries to strike Sally with a hammer to regain his sense of masculine vitality, by implementing the "old way" of "the head shot" used in the cattle houses. However, the body of deceased Grandma is also present to bear witness to the attempted murder of Sally.

Robin Wood suggests that the deficiency of females in the film connotes wildness on the part of the family, "The absence of woman (conceived of as a civilizing, humanizing influence) deprives the family of its social sense and social meaning while leaving its strength of primitive loyalties largely untouched."[55] Although the crime is white on white, instead of white on black, Grandma's company signals the era where presence by a white female sanctioned the spectacle of violence. Her presence is an effort by the family to restore some sense of wishful proper class identity that, as I have shown, was defined through slaughter house work. However, two key differences exist in the victim's gender and race. Because Sally is female and white, instead of a black male, her torture and attempted lynching, which after all is murder at its core, allows Hooper to develop the horror in his film.

Sally is coded as being of a higher class than the family. Her social status mirrors the type of community pillar that sanctioned lynching as an affirmation of proper class whiteness. In short, the post-Reconstruction South condoner becomes the New South condemned. This role reversal contributes to the horror of the film, recalling Carol Clover's concept of "urbanoia," a circumstance found in slasher and

[55] Wood, *Hollywood from Vietnam to Reagan...and Beyond*, 82.

rape-revenge films, the country takes class revenge on the city. The key to Hooper's film then is that the rural South has taken revenge on the town, using the town's own methods against them, or, in other words, the country takes revenge on the city for its use of capital to humiliate the country, or in Clover's term, perform "economic rape."[56] The culture of the city, demarcated as a safe space by the controlling parameters of lynching, gives way to rural wilds in *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*.[57] The murder techniques used by the family are ones historically familiar to many Southern, properly coded whites. The film's scenario counters this history in reverse terms, by striking fear through a recognizable past that is portrayed as conspicuously Southern in the popular American imagination.

This horror is compounded with a white woman as the victim. Hooper at once flips the category of race and gender with a single character. The class issues at play through the violence are further amplified because the honor of the white women, one of the primary justifications for lynching, is now the object of that murderous violence. White solidarity is replaced by class antagonism which is manifested by the destruction of five friends and written on Sally's tortured body. Skin color privilege, the last vestige of prestige in the family, a tacit and implicit agreement across classes of whites in the post-Reconstruction South has been usurped by class anger at the loss of jobs in the New.[58] In the post-Civil Rights Era that saw the rise of Nixon's Silent Majority, or angry working class white males,[59] skin privilege in the older working- and rural-class South did not carry the post-Reconstruction license of violence, the kind exhibited through public lynching. In the era of New South boosterism public bloodshed, such as that witnessed on television in Montgomery and Selma, drained economies. The film speaks to this by enacting it against the virtue of the white women it once protected in a private and not a public space.

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[56]Ibid., 128

[57]Ibid., 125. Illustrating Dyer's argument, she argues "country people" in rural horror, "live beyond the reaches of social law." This lack of class is reflected in the bad hygiene of the characters, she argues.

[58] The friends are coded as Hippies. Some historians believe that some of this working class anger was directed at what they saw was a degraded society. *Easy Rider* (1969) is another example of hippies getting killed by rural folk.

[59] Jefferson R. Cowie, *Stayin' Alive: The 1970s and the Last Days of the Working Class* (New Press, The, 2010), 75-166.

Thus, through the spectacle of lynching in *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, racial difference is not portrayed as skin privilege; instead it is predicated on difference *among* whites which stems from proper class action and decorum. Sally and friends are to be destroyed because they are guilty of being (properly) white. Looking down on their rural counterparts, making jokes about "country folks" at the gas station; their hubris is the cause of their destruction. At one point, the Old Man talks about private property as a man's castle--a last, albeit clichéd, retreat in the wasteland of deindustrialization that must be protected at all costs.

D. Southern Ritual

The Texas Chainsaw Massacre is nuanced in other particular Southern ways. This is also predicated on an aspect of lynching. The white lynching community not only came to assert its collective manhood, but it also fetishized its violence through the collecting of body parts, a type of trophy hunting that symbolized white masculine conquest. Atlantian Sam Hose, whose kneecaps and testicles were displayed on sale for all to see in downtown Atlanta after he was tortured and set on fire, is but one example of many. Historian Leon Litwack describes the scene surrounding Hose:

> Before Hose's body had even cooled, his heart and liver were removed and cut into several pieces and his bones were crushed in small particles. The crowd fought over these souvenirs. Shortly after the lynching, one of the participants reportedly left for the state capital, hoping to deliver a slice of Sam Hose's heart to the governor of Georgia, who would call Sam Hose's deeds '*the most diabolical in the annals of crime*.'"[60]

The reality was that Hose had killed his white boss, Alfred Cranford, in self-defense. This fact had devolved into a false charge of Hose's alleged attempt to rape Cranford's wife. The common mob reasoning for defending a white women's honor was plenty of moral justification for the male crowd. The distribution of Hose's body was another matter.

Speaking of such general lynching aftermaths DuRocher writes, "In collecting souvenirs, whites symbolically consumed the sacrificed body, which reinforced communal values," she continues, "Devouring the victim and the nearby scene may have been a type of communion, an embracing of the

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[60] Leon Litwack, "Hellhounds," in Nancy Scheper-Hughes and Philippe I. Bourgois, eds., *Violence in War and Peace: An Anthology*, (Blackwell Publishing, 2003), 123, italics in original.

dominant values of society, and a way to savor the perceived righteousness of such violent actions."[61] The type of behavior surrounding the Hose tragedy from Reconstruction through the Civil Rights Era was common. Contrary to such a Southern idea of white community solidarity, the general sense of cannibalism in *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, Sharrett suggests, is "representative of a process of inverting all values, myths, and symbols of a culture. The cannibal's meal, rather than a communion, suggests the utter fragmentation and atomization of society, beginning with basic identity and communication."[62] Sharrett speaks of this society quite literally feeding on itself, as he suggests cannibalism, specifically Sally's dinner banquet, in *The Texas Chainsaw* is a "primitive ritual."[63]

In the context of the South, however, the ritual *is* a shared sense of modern community and not an apocalyptic sense of societal destruction. In this way, the family, via the collective lynching of Sally, seeks to reconstruct community through a ghastly post-Reconstruction South "tradition." In the process of trying to recreate a community that has been destroyed through job loss, the family also wishes to regain its proper whiteness via matronly approval. In terms of the South, the horrific power of the film has a dual effect. The first is recollection of an unforgivable ritual which is lodged in the national imagination. Second, in terms of Southern audiences, the horror has the extra consequence of making properly classed whites the victims of their own racial heritage by inverting the traditional class, gender, and regional legacy of community lynching, replacing it with a private horror.

V.) Conclusions

Why take *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* as emblematic of a certain kind of Southern representation of the South articulated through film? Upon its release, Roger Ebert suggested, "It's also without any apparent purpose, unless the creation of disgust and fright is a purpose." I would argue that it was the first rural slasher film of its kind to have any type of impact on what followed, providing a template that scores of films have emulated. In particular, I would identify three factors which contributed as much to its horrific efficacy as any amount of actual on-screen violence. First, its

[61] Friend, *Southern Masculinity*, 57.
[62] Grant, *Planks of Reason*, 316.
[63] Ibid., 312.

separation of rural and town spaces enhances the trepidation familiar to American audiences of going into the unknown. Second, its dichotomy of class is linked to the separation of the physical space; the "other" is portrayed as rural. Third, by exhibiting proper whiteness defined by a brutal masculinity, both class and space are coded in violent stasis.

Besides the violent formal aspects of horror (especially low budget films) which give us a queasy cheap feeling of dirtiness, exploitation films tend to tackle issues and topics that mainstream Hollywood productions usually ignore. Foster has written that "I find it curious that such fascinating exemplars of white-on-white terror have been relegated to the dustbin of culture, trash films for laughs, enjoyed only at the level of camp, when they should be seriously considered for their problemitizing of race, gender, sexuality, and ethnicity, but especially whiteness."[64] The case of lynching is a history that white America tends to gloss-over, or erase, but as Clover and Graham point out, one that seeks to blame lower and working class whites. These "rednecks," "hillbillies," and "white trash," have become the scapegoats for America's racial, bigoted, and horrific past. In the genre of rural slasher film, John Shelton Reed's idea of these types and their cultural efficacy becomes an example Andrew Tudor's "cultural encapsulation." *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* criticizes the deindustrialization of the South while tracking the revenge of the working class, rural family as an extension of post-Reconstruction era violence. Although lynching was a community effort that was telling of proper class and whiteness, rural horror, and *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre,* ultimately lay the blame for such violence at the feet of the lower classes.

By placing this blame, properly classed whites not only absolve themselves of guilt , but also find an outlet to channel their racism in the post-Civil Rights era. In speaking of films, Annalee Newitz writes the following:

> …whites are still caught up in older forms of traditional racist thinking. While whites may not feel comfortable publicly calling non-whites 'savage' or bestial, they nevertheless want to call someone those names—preferably a group which cannot answer back very easily. Ultimately, whites in poverty make a perfect target for displaced white racist aggression, for one can denigrate them but avoid feeling like or even being called a 'racist'. Furthermore the idea that poverty is 'primitive' shores up many of the most cherishes beliefs of a capitalist—and imperialist—culture. First, it confirms the idea that those who are mature, and hence deserving, always achieve upper or middle class status. And secondly, it undergirds a

[64] Foster, *Performing Whiteness*, 68.

> myth of economic 'progress', in which the developed First World is naturally superior to the underdeveloped Third World; or, likewise, upper-or middle-class people in the First World should 'lead' their urban and rural poor.[65]

This city/ country split, that I have argued is one of the continuing hallmarks of rural horror, is predicated on social class where economic resentment comes into play on the side of the country and economic guilt on the side of the city.[66] In the revenge of the city it is the "redneck" who has all racial guilt blamed on him (to alleviate the city's guilt), and he only need commit an act heinous enough to deserve punishment by "proper" city folk.[67] Clover demonstrates that sometimes this revenge is embodied in an actual rape (*I Spit on Your Grave* (1978), *Deliverance* (1972)). In *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* it is personified in class retribution in the aftermath of regional deindustrialization.

Following from negative description and characterization in the 18th century, American films have reduced rural and working class Southerners to formula. While the idealized post- Civil War portrayal of a stereotypical and decidedly misleading "moonlight and magnolia" South may not be as prevalent in the post-World War II landscape, it has been replaced by equally misleading representations.[68] There exist very few films that treat working class and rural Southerners as fully realized, three dimensional characters, much less deal with systematic inequalities and myths that exist in the daily realm of existence and survival. In short, American cinema by and large still has not come around in any meaningful way to engage Southern class issues and structure. This is especially true of the horror genre.

In this chapter, I have suggested that filmic representations of the rural South are problematic. The separation and dominance over the country by the city, "urbanoia," can be seen as indicative of a cultural attempt to subjugate an agrarian, country way of life (Newitz's Third World) that could limit the effect of the march of capital (First World). Thus, the rural is depicted as violent, ruthless, uneducated,

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[65] Newitz and Wray, *White Trash*, 152.
[66] Clover, *Men, Women, and Chain Saws*, 129, 134.
[67] Ibid., 135.
[68] For a description and origin of how the "moonlight and magnolia" effect helped post-Civil War reconciliation see Nina Silber, *The Romance of Reunion: Northerners and the South, 1865-1900* (The University of North Carolina Press, 1997).

non-human, and, above all, deadly. From *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* to its 21st century brethren, this trope is frequently repeated. In rural horror films these characterizations are found in rural "monsters" both physically and psychologically "other" due to class difference and whiteness.

One could argue that such representation of rural inhabitants has coincided with an ever-widening scope of communications and land development. As a result, there is a sense that capitalism is slowly enveloping smaller, rural markets for profit. John Egerton and Bruce Schulman have suggested that, beginning in the seventies, America has come around to a "Southern" way of life.[69] However, what started as regional culture has been subsumed in the national culture at the expense of the rural and its citizens.[70]

Such blithely conservative forces have had political ramifications for rural Southerners in a media-driven "red and blue" state cultural dichotomy. Portrayals of the region as manifested through the sub-genre of rural horror contribute to such demarcations and class interests that are partitioned off against each other. The power of film is clear. Its negative regional effects stem from its efficacy of orthodox representations, the most static example of which is the continuing appeal of rural horror.

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[69]See Chapter 4 "The Rise of the Sunbelt and the 'Reddening' of America" in Schulman, 102-120; John Egerton, *The Americanization of Dixie: The Southernization of America*, (Harper's Magazine Press, 1974).

[70] The corporate co-opting of two rural Southern cultures point to this fact. First, is stock car racing. Developed in a rural setting, racing's roots stem from whiskey and moonshine runners in the rural South. Using technological (and capitalistic) implements (cars), the moonshine runners existed outside the power structures during prohibition. Because traditional structures were not making money on spirits, rural citizens, combing their labor and means of production, challenged the status quo in a black market economy of resistance.

A second rural cultural form, also arising from the South, is country music. Long the arena of individual rural expression, early pioneers, like their stock-car racing counterparts, also owned the means of production and cultural capital at the point of creation and performance. Once technology, under the guidance of record companies, decided to co-opt the form it, like the horror film, has steadily shifted on a continuum from un-polished singer-songwriters (Hank Williams Sr., Johnny Cash, Charley Patton) to varnished production. Culture that sprang from, and was nourished in, rural culture has now been replaced and controlled by national interest.

Chapter Four
A Global South Micro-History: Springs Industries in Chester County

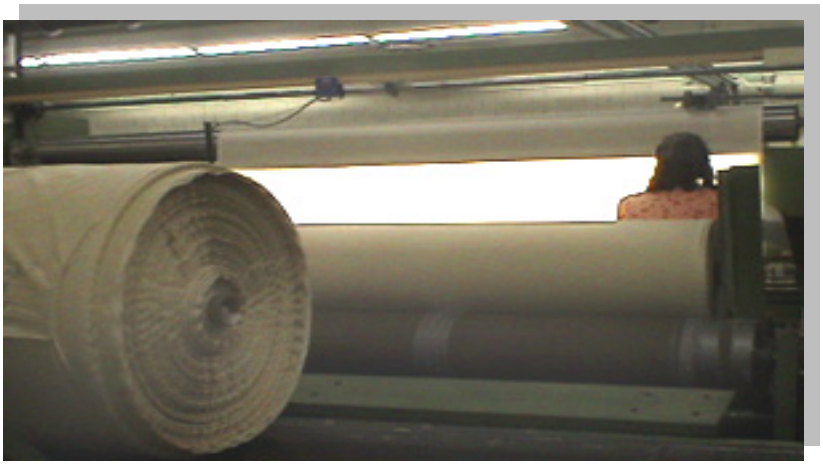


Figure 1: Worker at the Katherine Plant, Chester, South Carolina, 2006

"But when the Katherine closed, there was no place to go but home."

--Former Springs employee, Myra Mobley, November 2009

"First and foremost, our objective must be profit."

--Former Springs CEO, Bill Close, undated interview

I. Introduction

In 2008, the United States experienced its greatest economic crisis since the Great Depression, a tectonic shift with enormous human costs. Long before the economy became the country's major story, however, small Southern textile towns were slowly dying, among them, Chester, South Carolina.

This chapter explores the globalization of the textile industry in the Piedmont region of South

Carolina by engaging in case study through examining the decisions made by a particular cotton manufacturer, Springs Industries, and their cultural and economic ramifications on a particular town, Chester. The focus is placed on the post-World War II era, when the modern global economy began to take shape and weave sleepy Southern towns into its web.[1]

Specifically, I examine the decisions made by Springs and how those decisions have impacted Southern rural- and working-class cotton mill workers in specific ways. This examination is framed in part by three questions: what was Chester's particular relationship to the larger context of regional manufacturing? How did Springs establish its operations in Chester and then navigate the modern global economy in the post-World War II era? Finally, how did such decisions shift from one that encompassed a more broadly-conceived corporate responsibility to the community to one that was narrowly fiscal?

To address these questions and issues I construct a narrative comprised of primary documents as a case study. The personal papers of Bill Close, Springs CEO from 1959-1983, trace the particular actions of a Southern textile CEO as he guided his company through the changing global landscape. Compared with the outsourcing strategies of his daughter and heir, Crandall Close Bowles, which I touch on briefly, Bill Close's actions reveal the social consequences of Chester's relationship with Springs, which shuttered its last local manufacturing site in 2007. The narrative focuses on Close's correspondence while dealing with multiple geographic levels of his decision making—what he called "one-worldism."[2] Presenting the material thematically provides a nuanced view of the ways Close dealt with, and responded to, the changing global landscape. Organizing the material in this way also presents a clearer narrative rather than a strictly chronological account, which would overlap and unnecessarily complicate the local, state, and international fronts Close dealt with during his tenure as president and CEO.

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[1] Cynthia D. Anderson, *Social Consequences of Economic Restructuring in the Textile Industry: Change in a Southern Mill Village*, 1st ed. (Routledge, 2000), 120.

[2] This phrase was often used by the political right in the post-World War II era of the twentieth century.

I contextualize this account in various ways after giving a brief account of secondary literature. While there has been much work published on globalization, I place the Springs story within the context of the small mill town's genesis in the rural South. Using primary documents and the work of Allen Tullos, John Kenneth Moreland, and Broadus Mitchell, among others, I identify the broader economic and social conditions that allowed cotton mills to flourish throughout the Southern Piedmont in the post-Civil War era.

Second, I sketch the story of Larry Hyatt a lifetime employee of Springs. Specifically, Larry's long tenure as a Spring's employee and Chester native provides a glimpse of lived history rooted deep in experience and community—contrasting a worker's perspective with that of the management during the closing of the plants. Larry's perspective also foreshadows the films that follow which focus on various aspects of Chester's community.

A brief history of Chester and Springs serves as an example of the relationship between mill and town in the rural South. While there has been very little published specifically on Springs, I rely mainly on the work of Louise Pettus, Colonel Elliot White Springs, and primary documents to connect Springs and Chester to larger historical trends by examining the institutional narrative of Close and Bowles through the lens of Michael Dennis's idea of economic concerns presiding over social ones in the South. This context helps to frame the trajectory of Close and Bowles's thinking. Specifically, I question how globalization was handled by a particular cotton manufacturer, and its specific outcome in terms of a shift in concerns for the Southern rural- and working- class.

Finally, in keeping with the larger goal of this dissertation, this chapter also serves the purpose of contextualizing the ethnographic film series of modern Chester County, which concludes this study in Chapter Five. The development of this narrative history seeks to enrich the viewing of these films by providing a specific historical context for the current post-industrial era in Chester County while also bringing the dissertation full circle.

II. Context

A. A Worker's Perspective

On a cold and overcast November afternoon I drove out to the western part of Chester County down highway 321 towards Blackstock, one of the many small communities that dot Chester's 586 square miles. Ubiquitous county deer stood at the edge of the woods ready, at a moment's notice, to damage my car. However, I was nervous for another reason. I was travelling to Larry Hyatt's house.

A Chester native, Larry was employed by Spring Industries, like many in the county, since high school. Following his parents, who had both worked for Springs at some point, Larry started as a sweeper in the mill and devoted his life to Springs, eventually working his way through the ranks and advancing to supervisor. My anxiety centered on the fact that Larry had turned down my previous requests to talk about the closing of Springs and its impact on him. Even after agreeing to speak, I still approached our conversation with caution. Talking with him on the phone the day before, Larry was still circumspect as to exactly what it is I wanted. What were my aims, he wondered?

Pulling up to Larry's modest house, surrounded by vast woods, the first thing I noticed was the immaculate neatness to his yard. Getting out of the car I was greeted by Larry's dogs and his partner, Myra Mobley, who had also worked at the plant. She ushered me past the dogs and through the back door where I met Larry. Short and extremely stocky with a full grey beard, Larry extended his massive paw, shaped by years of labor in the mills, to greet me. Myra could feel my uneasiness. She quickly invited me into the den where Larry sat on the couch and I took a chair across from him.

Larry began immediately feeling me out—what were my plans? Why was I doing this? Why did I want to talk with him? He apologized for not talking to me sooner, but once he figured out that I was collecting stories from former employees, he quickly began talking about Springs. I initially wanted to videotape our interview, but when the conversation began I was hesitant to stop and get my camera.

Our conversation started with NAFTA, which in previous informal conversations seems to be a primary concern of former Springs workers. Both Larry and Myra, confirmed what I surmised, stating simply that he "never did support it [NAFTA] and never will." Despite Springs's best attempts to couch the act in terms of "Freedom," the oft-used American word usually dispatched to get people to vote against their own interests, by constantly pushing NAFTA's benefits through the Springs Bulletin, Larry remained adamant in not supporting the act. Refusing to wear the "Support NAFTA" buttons that the plant strongly encouraged the workers to wear in the early nineties, Larry instead chose to risk his job, as he had done numerous times before, by defending his beliefs. He explained his survival this way: "I guess [management] looked at it like once I made a decision, I'd stand my ground. I don't know"[3]

In further reflecting on NAFTA, Larry was quick to point out that John Spratt, a local democratic representative whose family has deep ties with Springs, favored NAFTA because it was going to make him richer, stating: "My opinion why they pushed it, they knew it wasn't going to benefit the business itself for the people. But they knew down the road, years, it was going to benefit them….And from what I understand, John Spratt, included, made millions off of it. But it didn't come down to the people. It eventually ended up taking people's jobs."[4]

Larry was right. If NAFTA was going to increase profits for Springs by free trade, he quickly realized that the outsourcing of jobs would follow. By reducing the payroll by paying lesser wages, first in Mexico and later in Brazil, profits would increase at the expense of American worker's jobs while driving stock value up. The Close family and John Spratt, whose family was one of the charter members of founder Leroy Spring's initial investment offering, would have benefitted from these stock gains. In the end, that's what happened. However this bothered Larry less than the way the closing of the plants was handled by Springs's executive management.

[3] Appendix A: An Interview with Larry Hyatt, 188.
[4] Ibid.

Spring led workers to believe, that in the throes of ending operations, the Katherine plant was operating well. Why would the workers not believe it? Just a few short years earlier Springs did a 13 million dollar upgrade. The plant was making money in the context of physical signs of success: "supply costs, quality, safety."[5] Under a new plant and division manager, Katherine had turned around from the red to the black. As Larry recounted:

> So I thought we was ok. One morning we were going to a 10'o clock staff meeting. We all walked in not knowing nothing. Just thinking it was a normal everyday staff meeting. And he said "The first thing I got to tell ya'll is the Katherine Plant's closing". BAM! Just like that. When I see a grown man sit in there, I looked over and tears was running down his cheek.[6]

They were going to survive, the common wisdom went, to support the massive Grace bleachery a little further east down the "number 9 corridor" in adjacent Lancaster County. Katherine produced the raw sheeting shipped by Spring's own 40 mile long private rail line, the L and N, to Grace for finishing. Surely they couldn't close. Who was going to supply Grace with the raw materials to finish? The workers at Katherine were hit hard. At the meeting announcing the closing, Larry recalls there "was just shock, hurt. I mean most everybody at that table was 25 years plus. And we had years, and years, and years combined. God I don't even know how many years it would be…. And people, I mean, just devastated. Crying. Men and women."[7]

After being blindsided by the announcement, the thing that disturbed Larry most was the loss of community. Well regarded as a leader and respected by his peers, Larry was the informal welcome party of one whose unofficial duty was to make new employees feel comfortable. Larry was visibly affected in remembering this. Pausing to gain his composure, Larry, speaking of this loss continues, "That's what bothered me most of all, I mean I come home, and I won't lie to you I cried too, I shed many tears. Not

[5] Ibid., 189.
[6] Ibid., 190.
[7] Ibid.

only for myself but for the people that were losing their jobs. You had people there that didn't have a lot of education. Young people and older people."[8]

This sense of loss was based on the fact that many of Springs's employees, Larry's friends, had dedicated their whole lives to the mill. Some were illiterate, but highly skilled craftsmen and women who could do what no one else could and took pride in their workmanship. In the tradition of Southern cotton mills, whole families, putting their faith in mill work, were going to be laid off. As a consequence Larry and Myra were deeply troubled by the fact that some of their fellow workers were close to retirement age. They were good at their jobs, but, in the end, that was all they knew. This fact ran rampant at Katherine. Because of the singular dedication, the alternatives when Springs left town were few as Larry explained:

> You didn't have an education, you didn't have the skills to go out and start working on airplanes and cars, but you were good at what you did because you made yourself that way. And now what were you going to do? You can't retire because you are not old enough….Nobody's going to hire them. I mean I know what they say, age discrimination and all…but that's a bunch of bull, because it [age] does go against you."[9]

The other thing that bothered Larry was the lack of respect for an alternative path for Springs to take. Larry understood that Crandall Close Bowles, heir and current CEO, was tired, as it was widely believed, but why not let another family member take over? Or, if plants had to be sold, why not sell it to someone in the United States? The plant being sold and the job loss was bad enough, but, on top of everything else, Larry had to train his successors which he likened to an invasion of his home, stating, "They come in and just, I mean right in front of people…..here come these Argentines. That was sickening to me." Larry had to stomach working with the Coteminas agents because, after expressing his classic mode of resistance as he had done with NAFTA, he had to or he was going to be fired. It was like being held at ransom, he concluded, because if he quit early, he would lose his severance.

Larry drew the line, however, at traveling to Brazil to train his Latin American counterparts. Springs had offered him the job but, out of his own quiet rebellion, he refused. Others were not so lucky. A combination of their old age and threat of no severance was too much for them to bear. "What was a

[8] Ibid.
[9] Ibid., 191.

56 year old that needed that job until the very last day could he gone and done? He was going to run it. Not because he wanted to. He didn't want to, you know, do that. That was pretty low down."[10]

This tension progressively mounted within the plant as Coteminas executives and managers continued to filter in during the last days at the Katherine. This was manifested in the waivers employees had to sign promising not to sue to the Coteminas official collecting serial numbers and tagging the giant looms that were going to be dismantled piece by piece and hauled on giant container ships to Brazil to be reconstructed in their new home.

After the Katherine plant closed in 2007, Larry and his colleagues missed the morning commute up highway 9. Forced with the daunting prospect of trying to find another line of work, Larry decided to live off his severance for six months while placing his unemployment checks in savings. This allowed him to take a whole year off. Arriving at this juncture, Larry would find himself sitting on the couch, staring off in the distance, at the edge of a breakdown according to Myra. Sunday mornings, when he would usually drive to the Katherine to check on things, were the hardest. Nights were quieter too. His beeper and cell phone had fallen silent, their incessant chirps and rings not rousing him out of sleep to put out another proverbial fire at the plant.

Larry roused himself from visions of ghosts after his yearlong furlough, attending York Technical College and getting his diploma in heavy equipment training and his CDL truck driver's license. Currently, he works for the South Carolina department of transportation placing road signs. Others were not so lucky:

> I'm still seeing people today struggling and just cannot make ends meet. They've lost their homes, cars, and they haven't found jobs yet….[Charlie Hopkins] came up to me yesterday and he said 'Larry, I see you are working now.' I said 'Yeah, what are you doing?' He said, 'I can't find nothing.' I see people like that everyday almost in grocery stores, hardware store, that's just haven't found any. And most of them is in that range I was telling you about, 55, 56, that's just having a hard, hard time with it….I see these very same people [who used to want to quit at Springs] now and they said they'd give anything in the world to be back."[11]

[10] Ibid., 194.
[11] Ibid., 199-200.

The joy was found in the small things whether it was a contest at work or a break in the cafeteria which had acted as a gathering place for the workers until it was phased out in favor of impersonal vending machines in the mid-90s. Such gestures are seemingly banal, but indicate the forces that lashed out at the heart of community gathered under Katherine's expansive roof.

Larry remembered:

> This is no lie, I'm telling you the god's honest truth, I was the last one to leave out, me and the shop and the plant engineer. But I had been there so long in those weave rooms and knew everybody on every shift. I knew that -- like when I walked out of my office into the weave room, I knew who was going to be in that corner, in the middle here and that corner. I knew who to look for. I could see those people out there when they was gone, when I'd walk out of there.
>
> Oh yeah. I mean, I could see them just right there. You always had some people that as soon as they seen you coming, throw their hand up, want to complain about something. You know that's every day. [12]

Larry's story is one of many. His is not just a story about job loss, but one about communal upheaval.

Springs was a way of life for people in Chester. It was not only the economic backbone of the community, but the cultural one as well. Springs was built on a rural society that came from the backwoods of the Piedmont Carolinas and grew into small towns situated around the mills. Its captains of industry promised a better life than the one found cultivated through the land. In some respects it did provide a better life through modern conveniences such as indoor plumbing, stable paychecks, and work free from the whims of the seasons; but the mill workers were able to retain vestiges of their rural past of outdoor activities, personal independent streaks, and belief in a hard-line Christian faith of heaven and hell, surrounded by these modern amenities. This extends into the new millennium. It is evidenced in Dale Earnhardt stickers adorning Chevy, Ford, and Dodge trucks throughout the county, evident, too, in the fresh mud on the tires on a Monday morning following a weekend deer and duck hunt, or from just plain "raising hell." It was evident in people's sense of religion which contextualized the back breaking labor that they took as pre-ordained as evidence of God's plan. It was evident all across Chester County.

[12] Ibid,. 207.

B. Regional Context

Roughly forty miles south of Charlotte and fifty miles north of Columbia, the small town of Chester, South Carolina, sits among rolling hills of loblolly pine and southern red oak. Adjacent to the Catawba River, named after the Native Americans who were the original inhabitants in this region, Chester's location below the fall line of the Carolina Piedmont made the county geographically ideal for the rise of Southern cotton mills after the Civil War.[13]

Besides the ecological conditions conducive to water-powered mills, a regional abundance of rural workers willing, or forced, to trade steady pay for the unstable whims of sharecropping culture and custom, were readily available as hired hands after the Civil War ripped the nation apart. Northern mill tycoons exploited these conditions, relocating away from labor unions in the North, and repositioning their operations in the staunchly anti-union South. As Allen Tullos observed:

> The devastation of the Civil War had irreparably ruptured both the plantation and yeoman ways of life, broken the ability of the Low Country planters to keep the Piedmont from increased trading and trafficking with the North….The men who took advantage of this wide-open, rough and tumble situation represented a patriarchal collection of capitalists that had never before stood in a position to set the pace and standards for Southern society.[14]

In short, town merchants, bankers, lawyers, and teachers provided a matrix of leadership that sought to shift the balance of power from the old plantation habits of the low country to the emerging rural towns in the upcountry. The workers employed in these new ventures hailed from the rural South whose lives were being transformed by changes in the rural Southern economy. Lawrence Goodwyn explains:

> Nowhere in America did the burdens of poverty fall more heavily than upon the farm families of the rural South. The crop lien system had driven millions west in the 1870s, by the late 1880s the system had graduated to new plateaus of exploitation: as every passing year forced additional thousands of Southern farmers into foreclosure and hence into the world of landless tenantry, the furnishing merchants came to acquire title to increasing portions of the Southern countryside.[15]

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[13] Allen Tullos, *Habits of Industry: White Culture and the Transformation of the Carolina Piedmont* (The University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 1.
[14] Ibid., 146.
[15] Lawrence Goodwyn, *The Populist Moment: A Short History of the Agrarian Revolt in America*, Abridged. (Oxford University Press, USA, 1978), 72.

These conditions were prominent in the Piedmont region of South Carolina, which served as the burgeoning economic backbone of the upcountry. The land then—a place of fierce independence that suited the tendencies of the immigrant Scots-Irish—cultivated habits, both farming and rough, that helped these inhabitants adjust to life on what was then the frontier and provided the able bodies and temperaments for the new mills.

The promise of better pay, company housing, and liberation from the caprice of nature lured these white men and their families to mill and town. Chester typified the Piedmont mill towns that Gay L. Gullickson describes: "Built in isolated areas with their own housing, stores, and school, mill houses were surrounded by garden plots and chicken coops, and more substantial amounts of farm and pasture land were available on the outskirts of town."[16] Particular to South Carolina, however, was the discrepancy between wages. As Stephen Shapiro has pointed out, during the period from 1919-1930—the end of WW I to the Depression—the average wage for the farm laborer was much lower than wages outside the South, with South Carolina having the lowest of any other state in 1929. [17] Compared to their neighbors in North Carolina, South Carolina male textile labor paid, on average, sixty cents less per laborer per day.[18]

Why then did South Carolina and other Southern millhands not migrate to higher wage states in unionized areas of the North? Besides ties to kin and land and lack of transportation, this discrepancy between wages was eclipsed by a solidarity found in mill culture's whiteness that yoked bosses to workers and workers to bosses in a faux class solidarity based on race. As a result of these social ties, millhands in South Carolina could look past or forgive their lack of wages. The millhands that did leave

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[16]Gay L. Gullickson, "Technology, Gender, and Rural Culture: Normandy and the Piedmont," in Jeffrey Leiter and Michael D. Schulman, *Hanging by a Thread: Social Change in Southern Textiles*, ed. Rhoda Zingraff (Cornell University Press, 1991), 43.
[17] Stephen L. Shapiro, *The Growth of the Cotton Textile Industry in South Carolina, 1919-1930* (University of South Carolina., 1971), 151. Also see David Carlton, *Mill and Town in South Carolina, 1880-1920* (Louisiana State University Press, 1983).
[18] Ibid., 151–152.

both state and job in search of better pay risked being black-listed. As a result, men who came from the farm to the mill villages faced particular economic hardships that accompanied their whiteness.

Such workers clung to their racial identity as something that distinguished them, giving them social privilege their theoretical economic counterparts in the black community lacked and could never have. Historian Broadus Mitchell recognized this as early as 1930 when he surmised that "all the workers are of one blood with each other and with their employers, and this racial identity has obscured economic cleavage. The thought has been held by employers and employees alike that this is a White man's industry; that this opportunity of work is to be reserved against the Negroes has further emphasized unity of interest."[19]

Workers were joined to technological advancement that could enable an unskilled laborer to learn easily and efficiently maximizing the mill's economic benefits through synergistic production.[20] The local paper, the *Chester Reporter*, described the beginning of one of the first mills in Chester, indicating the wondrous synergy of man, machine, and geography:

> Steam was raised in the engine of the cotton factory for the first time last Friday, Saturday and Monday were spent in putting on the belting. On Tuesday the machinery was set to running and this will go on for several days for the purpose of testing adjustments of the whole outfit of machinery. The whole number of looms received, nineteen, have been put into place. A contract has been made for the delivery of 100 looms as fast as the machine shops can turn them out. The big wheel is the object of much wonder and remark. It is about the biggest of the kind ever seen here by most of the people about here. The engine is of the Watts Campbell-Coliss pattern. Some of the factory hands have moved in and others are expected soon.[21]

This coming of technology allowed small Southern towns to trade rural custom and life for the enticements the mills promised. Casting for an economic foothold after the Civil War, towns and county became synonymous with mill culture's trading rural ways of life for the structure it demanded. However, as John Kenneth Moreland surmised in the 1940s, the Piedmont mill town of York, 19 miles from Chester, was cleaved into two cultural communities: the mill culture and the town culture. Moreland

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[19] Broadus Mitchell, *The Rise of Cotton Mills in the South* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1921), 125.
[20] Stephen Yafa, *Big Cotton: How A Humble Fiber Created Fortunes, Wrecked Civilizations, and Put America on the Map*, 1st ed. (Viking Adult, 2004), 184.
[21] Quoted in Elliott White Springs, *Clothes Make the Man*, (Self-published, 1949), 28.

surmised that "Kent mill people have not been fully integrated into the life of the town."[22] Moreland believed the specific factors of paternalism, perceived personal failures on the part of the workers, lack of education, and lack of interest from the captains of industry to involve mill workers, resulted in the common belief that "the mill worker (like the stereotype of the Negro in the minds of the town people) is satisfied with his lot and does not have the desire or the capacity for change."[23]

Town culture reserved special disdain for the "country types" who constituted the mill workers. As Majorie Potwin wrote in 1927, "As clay-eaters, or crackers, or sand-lappers they dragged themselves to the cotton mills and in mute appeal begged the industry to make what it could of them." "They were despised alike by the laboring whites and blacks, and it was mainly their presence, conspicuous because sensational, rather than in the majority, which stigmatized cotton-mill work and created prejudice against the mill people."[24] Led by the captains of industry, the identity, economic fortune, and mill communities of such towns were inexorably bound with the fate of mill business and capital that held millworkers in such low esteem. Millworker, in other words, were a breed apart, to be sequestered in their own part of town, and regarded as human cogs in the manufacturing machine.

C. Springs and Chester County

On the other side of town, men of industry, a new breed of town lawyer, doctor, and businessman in the South saw an opportunity, indeed a Christian duty, to begin such manufacturing efforts to rebuild, re-brand, and renew their local areas after the Civil War. [25] Such men sold their plan under the pretense of paternalistic care of their neighbors.[26] Bess Beatty rightly states that "Arguments such as these were intended to convince all segments of society that industry was beneficial; they were also intended to make

[22] John Shelton Reed, Dan Huntley, and John Kenneth Morland, *Millways of Kent* (University of South Carolina Press, 2008), 204.
[23] Ibid., 204–205.
[24] Marjorie Adella Potwin, *Cotton Mill People of the Piedmont; a Study in Social Change* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1927), 51.
[25] Yafa, *Big Cotton*, 188.
[26] Bess Beatty, *Alamance: The Holt Family and Industrialization in a North Carolina County, 1837-1900* (Louisiana State University Press, 2000), 57–58.

wage work appear respectable."[27] Filling a gap left by the landed "blue-blooded" gentry of the low country whose plantations were in shambles, physically, psychologically, and economically, the upcountry merchants saw untapped capitalist potential in the Piedmont.

In 1888, at the dawn of the South's manufacturing boom, Chester "was stirred by the coming of another railroad….The town at the time contained 2,800 people. It had a score or more of business firms, five white churches, three Negro churches and a good academy."[28] A mill prospector gave another view: "I was so impressed with the uninviting surroundings, lack of educational facilities and civilized society etc., that I decided that I would not move my family down there for the whole outfit as a gift."[29] Whatever one's opinion of Chester, the town was caught in the boom and promise of the manufacturing frenzy.

Born in neighboring Fort Mill, South Carolina, roughly thirty miles north of Chester, Confederate veteran Samuel Eliot White saw the opportunity the newly reconfigured South presented and acted on it. Spurred by *Charlotte Newspaper* editor D.A. Tompkins, who laid out a vision for the "New South" built on manufacturing, White convinced men of means to invest in the Fort Mill Manufacturing Company, incorporated in 1888.[30] Eager to rebuild after the Civil War, which left battle-scarred spaces across the Piedmont, the region was fueled and excited by the economic rehabilitation that the fervent Southern nationalism the Lost Cause promised. Capitalists such as White exploited this regional fervor and economic opportunity. Seizing the zeitgeist and responding to these social, cultural, and economic conditions, White formed the Chester Manufacturing Company (CMC) and the Catawba Manufacturing Company. White's venture, however, had a rough beginning. In its first decade the CMC suffered a fire, and the Catawba Manufacturing Company was placed on the auction block during the panic of 1893.

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[27] Ibid., 57.
[28] Pettus, Louise and Martha Bishop, *The Springs Story: Our First Hundred Years*, (Springs Industries, Inc.,1987), 66–67. The narrative that follows can be found in this volume and Elliot White Springs, *Clothes Make the Man*.
[29] Quoted in Carlton, *Mill and Town in South Carolina, 1880-1920*, 106–107.
[30] Pettus, *The Springs Story*, 19. Also see Tullos, *Habit of Industry*, 154-161.

Both events presaged an uphill struggle for Chester and its mill businesses and culture as nascent manufacturing concerns faced a whirlwind of ownership.[31]

In the process of Chester redefining itself in the post-Civil War manufacturing boom, the Springs family acquired three plants in Chester County. Both the CMC and the Catawba Manufacturing Plant (CMP) were eventually purchased by Samuel White's son-in-law, Leroy Springs and his family. The family promptly changed the name of the CMC to honor an old family name, the Springstein plant. They renamed the CMP the Eureka plant, after family land in Europe. Leroy was instituted as president.

The next phase of acquisition within Chester County was under the leadership of Leroy's son, Colonel Elliot White Springs, who purchased in 1933 (against the prevailing wisdom of the Depression) the Baldwin Plant, locally known as Chester Mill #3, which he then renamed the Gayle after textile magnate Walter Gayle, a friend of the family. With the purchase of the Springstein, the Eureka, and the Gayle, Springs Mills had gained a manufacturing monopoly in Chester County as it continued to expand its reach throughout the Carolina Piedmont and the adjacent towns of Lancaster, Fort Mill, and Kershaw.

With this purchase, the post-Leroy Springs era was ushered in by Eliot White Springs.[32] A thorn in his father's side, the flamboyant Eliot was a dashing fighter pilot in World War I and nationally known short story writer. Possessing a larger than life persona, which he employed to talk down the union-led wildcat strikes of 1934[33], "the Colonel," as he was affectionately called, consolidated his family's holdings and ushered in a period of rapid growth and progress until his death in 1959. Many concur that he accomplished this, in no small part, by way of his outrageous marketing ads (see Figure 2), whose double entendres were risqué in the post-war years.

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[31] The run of bad luck continued as the Springstein and Eureka both suffered fires in 1902 and 1913, respectively.

[32] Eliot White Springs's life has been covered in great detail in Burke Davis's *War Bird* as well as in the documentary of the same name. As such, this chapter, as stated in the introduction, deals mainly with Springs modern era, paying particular attention to Bill Close's tenure as president, and, later, CEO. There is much work to be done on the Colonel, however. Hundreds of his unfiled and unprocessed papers and ephemera can be found in the attic of the University of South Carolina's Caroliniana Library and Archive.

[33] Ethel Robinson, Interview with author, Fall 2009, Chester, S.C. Confirmed in Burke Davis, *War Bird: The Life and Times of Elliott White Springs*, 1st ed. (University of North Carolina Press, 1987), 140–141.



Figure 2: One of The Colonel's advertisements.

The expansion, modernization, and production of his burgeoning empire of cloth were never far from Elliot White Springs's mind. In a 1949 memorandum to J.D. Green, the Colonel detailed installing air conditioning and "trying to make the mill villages better places to live by repairing the houses, paving the streets, and building a better type of house."[34] Perhaps responding to the changing nature of the textile industry, which, by and large, was "no longer entirely composed of independent mills,"[35] White was responsible for the renovation of the Springstein plant into a modern manufacturing site resplendent with

[34]Eliot White Springs, "Memorandum to J.D. Green, September 14th, 1949," Hugh William Close Papers, Box 9, White Homestead Archives, Fort Mill, South Carolina.
[35] Bruce J. Schulman, *From Cotton Belt to Sunbelt: Federal Policy, Economic Development, and the Transformation of the South 1938–1980* (Duke University Press Books, 1994), 86.

the newest machines and amenities. He described in a letter to S.L. Bell, chairman of the Chester County development board, the upgrades and cost for the Springstein plant:

> I have already taken an option on the steel and some of the machinery. I have several options to cover the looms, spindles, cards, combes [sic]…that we think will be required. The building lighting, air conditioning, power wiring, and the new road will cost approximately 500, 000.00.
>
> I cannot tell you that the machinery balance will be but the spinning alone will cost another half million. The additional looms, spooling ,warping, carding, slashing, drawing …will probably run over a million, depending on how much we can find second hand.[36]

The Colonel's zest for modernization and expansion belied an old-style paternalism in which he sought to take care of his "people." He suggested that "when an employee has to be laid off because of discontinuance of a job that the robust employee should be given a substitute job such as sweeper, etc., until an opening occurs."[37] In hindsight, if his ideology was problematic, his sincerity was not.

As such, the Colonel always tinkered with production in his Chester operations with his employees in mind. In a 1951 memo to W.C. Summersby, the superintendent at the Eureka plant in Chester, the Colonel instructed Summersby take out warps and to speed up loom changes, so as not to displease the employees stating : "The management is spending a lot of money on improving the buildings and machinery, but, without the cooperation of the help and unless the help are willing to run the new machinery as efficiently as the old, the mills will soon be out of business and closed down."[38]

After guiding Springs to new economic heights and having lost his only son and heir to a plane crash, the Colonel turned to his Wharton-educated son-in-law William (Bill) Close as his chosen successor. During the Close years, imports in a burgeoning post-war economy became a growing concern. Specific episodes from Close's personal files identify the inner workings of Springs in commerce, government, and private deliberations. Close recognized factors that would eventually lead to the family empire's undoing as he took the company public, negotiated the expanding role of overseas production, and dealt with outsourcing in a growing global economy along with the rapid acceleration in

[36] Eliot White Springs, "Letter to S.L. Bell, August 19 1957," HWC Papers, Box 9.
[37] Eliot White Springs, "Letter to Mr. W.C. Summersby, 10 July 1950," HWC Papers, Box 9.
[38] Eliot White Springs, "Letter to Mr. W.C. Summersby, 15 September 1949," HWC Papers, Box 9.

manufacturing technology. Whether he sought to build plants and partnerships in Japan, dealt with South Carolina's governors, or respond to family considerations to get out of the manufacturing business altogether, Close's thoughts were never far away from the ramifications of globalization on the Springs empire.

III. Bill Close: Leading Springs into the Modern Global Age

After World War II the "textile-mill complex" entered into a new phase of globalization.[39] The Southern economy continued its shift from agriculture to corporate interests in the cotton belt region, which stretched from Eastern North Carolina to East Texas, including the former Confederate States of America stalwarts Alabama, Georgia, Mississippi, Louisiana, and South Carolina (traditionally referred to as the Deep South). These states brought new commerce into the region through the promise of tax-breaks, right-to-work laws, cheaper labor, government defense contracts in the burgeoning cold war, and a new technologically driven industrial economy.[40] Springs took advantage of such hunger for industry as Chester "shaped itself into a doughnut hole to provide a tax-free, inner-city haven for the Springs Mills textile Company, which threatened to move unless such a concession was made."[41] As a result, small Southern towns whose entire economy and personal livelihoods were situated around the local cotton mill—that drew on the web of local ties, custom, and commerce—now found themselves enmeshed in an increasingly global economy.

With this shift came a change in leadership style as well. Crandall Close Bowles, who would eventually step into the role her father and grandfather performed, described the difference between the two men this way:

> My grandfather, being the founder, knew everything about the business. He was very visionary in where he saw the company going. He also had a group of men who he relied on.

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[39] Anderson, *Social Consequences of Economic Restructuring in the Textile Industry*, 120.
[40] See Schulman, *From Cotton Belt to Sunbelt*, Chapter 6, "Missiles and Magnolias," 135–173.; Numan V. Bartley, *The New South 1945-1980: A History of the South* (Louisiana State University Press, 1996), 143–146.
[41] James C. Cobb, *Selling of the South: The Southern Crusade for Industrial Development, 1936-90*, 2nd ed. (University of Illinois Press, 1993), 61.

> My father had an expanded group of people he worked with and was more relationship-oriented. He was a better delegator. I would say he understood where the company was going and had the opportunity to expand.[42]

Additionally, the antics of the freewheeling, larger-than-life Colonel, similar to that of carnival barker in his outrageous stunts and ads, was replaced by the more outwardly somber appearance of Bill Close, who reflected a more "buttoned down" corporate approach in this new era of Southern business. This was due in no small part to Close's Yankee roots, a fact he was very self-conscious of.[43] The type of Southern showmanship the Colonel thrived upon in the rural South was soon replaced by the corporate approach of the Wharton educated, Wall Street minded Close. However, one thing the two men shared in common was that they kept their workers in mind when making decisions. This was reflected in both men's highly visibility, their physical presence in the mills, and their familiarity to their employees as evidenced in their preferred names: the "Colonel" and "Bill."

A. Close in State

Bill Close acted quickly upon his ascension to Springs's top post. In April, 1966, he fought off mergers while preparing to take the company public. In an internal memo he confidentially constructed the social and economic scaffold for the initial stock offering.[44] Although he was unsure about the number of shares he wanted to offer, Close, in his typically aggressive style, wanted the company's debut on the "big board" to be "triple A fashion,"[45] and for his executives to "keep their shirts clean" after their public "disrobing."[46]

In post-war advertising, the key to selling the brand was technology, specifically through the emerging and powerful new medium of television. Realizing this, Close saw public relations as the

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[42] Author Unknown, "Question and Answer: Crandall Close Bowles," *Triangle Business Journal* December 4 , 2006 http://www.bizjournals.com/triangle/stories/2006/12/04/editorial2.html It is also odd that she speaks of her grandfather as the "founder." While not historically accurate, I take this to mean the he was the founder of the modern Springs Industries through his champion of new technologies and aggressive acquisitions during the Depression.

[43] Throughout Close's papers he refers to himself as in terms of a transplanted Southerner, or calls attention to the fact that he was from the North. He usually did this in a self-effacing manner to loosen up those he was addressing.

[44] William H. Close, "Confidential Memo, 20 September 1966," HWC Papers, Box 8, Folder 10.

[45] Ibid.

[46] William H. Close, "Confidential Memo, 4 October 1966," HWC Papers, Box 8, Folder 10.

cornerstone to business expansion. He wanted to jettison the image fellow textile executive Frank Leslie called "ole' black joe plucking a banjo in the mill yard" which brought up the post-Reconstruction South in uncomfortable ways during the era of burgeoning civil rights activism. [47] This stress on public relations and image was predicated on Close's concern with imports. In a 1961 letter to South Carolina Governor Fritz Hollings, Close sounded the import alarm two years into his job, writing:

> I know you are probably more familiar with the import situation than I am; however it is becoming more obvious to all of us that imports are growing to the point where they can seriously affect domestic industries. I feel that textiles are perhaps in the worst position and that it is a factor, although not the major cause, of our business being at a very low point at present."[48]

This, according to Close, was tied directly to the well-being of communities and towns that were inextricably linked to cotton manufacturing. In the *Congressional Record*, Close demonstrated the impact that Springs had on the state of South Carolina, reporting that his company employed 15, 000 workers and paid eleven percent of the corporate income tax for the state.[49] The company's impact on the state, he argued, was directly threatened by both imports and the resulting "two price cotton" (the industry term for the domestic and international price of cotton) which was "forced to an unnaturally high level by Government action."[50]

Close continued lobbying lawmakers about the deleterious effect of imports on the Carolinas at the same time he explored options overseas. In late 1967, Close denied he had any interest in building plants abroad, including moving "brick and mortar" operations to Brazil in an eerily prescient

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[47] Frank Leslie, "What Management Expects of Public Relations," p. 19a, HWC Papers, , Box 8, Folder 10. "Ole' black Joe" was an interesting phrase for Leslie to use. In an example of how he was removed from day-to-day operations, only 5 percent of Chester County's total textile workforce of 4,394 in 1967 was black. See Timothy J. Minchin, *Hiring the Black Worker: The Racial Integration of the Southern Textile Industry, 1960-1980* (University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 210.

[48] William H. Close, "Letter to Governor Hollings, 11 January 1961," HWC Papers, Box 10b, Folder 4.

[49] Strom Thurmond, "Letter to William Close (Attachment): Congressional Record House" p. 7875, HWC Papers, Box 10b, Folder 22.

[50] Ibid, p. 7876.

acknowledgement of what was to come thirty years later.[51] Yet, by 1969 he was exploring options of a Mexican sheeting plant with Draper looms by supplying "know-how" to Mexican nationals.[52]

To promote these interests Close met with Ambassador Nobuhiko Ushiba of Japan at South Carolina Governor Robert McNair's office in winter 1970. After urging a meeting and looking to Close for confidential assistance in the talks, McNair was worried about being perceived as entering into negotiations on behalf of the textile industry as a public representative.[53] Close, however, assured him that a "private" talk with Ushiba would not be perceived as such.[54] The backdrop of these talks was the Trade Act of 1970, known colloquially as the "Mills Bill" which provided a strict quota on imports. Supported by the industry captains of the mill community, including Close, the bill would help staunch the flow of imports through protectionist measures. Having passed the House, however, the Mills Bill ran into trouble in the Senate, where it was defeated.

The defeat of the bill spurred Close and fellow leaders of industry to engage the ambassador on their own to try and work out an import agreement. To make it "private," the American Textile Manufacturers Institute (ATMI) denied any involvement or knowledge of the meeting in *The State*, South Carolina's major newspaper.[55] Yet confidential memos reveal Close in conversation with Robert Jackson, president of ATMI, copying Jackson on letters to the governor, and then following up with Jackson after the meeting.[56] Clearly the public relations of plausible deniability was a factor in not alarming President Nixon, or other industries about the "episode," as Close so carefully called it. In the end, the negotiations went nowhere. "I can't say what if anything was accomplished," Close later recalled, "If any conclusion could be reached, it would be that the Japanese in the person of their

[51] William Close, "Telephone Conversation with Mr. Jenkins, 6 December 1967," HWC Papers, Box 8, Folder 11.
[52] William Close, "Memo: Mexican Sheeting Plant, 26 November 1969," HWC Papers, Box 8, Folder 11.
[53]Robert McNair, "Letter to Bill Close," p.3, Box 8, Folder 9.
[54] Ibid.
[55] The State, "Japanese Ambassador Holds Meet in S.C. on Textiles, 22 December 1970," Clipping, HWC Papers, Box 8, Folder 9.
[56] William Close, "Personal Letter to Robert McNair, 25 November 1970," HWC Papers, Box 8, Folder 9; William Close, "Letter to Robert Jackson, 23 December 1970," Box 8, Folder 9.

ambassador would like to take another approach to the problem, that being industry to industry negotiations."[57]

With the import situation still a pressing issue, Springs turned its efforts inward to work on the concern about the impact of imports on South Carolina's economy after the first of the year. Sensing the pressing issue of ingresses, incoming governor John West, in a confidential conversation with Close, called to see if the state "could convert marginal textile plants into a producer of housing components, using federal monies to re-train [sic] our employees and to supply technical know-how….Initially, [West] said that production of lawn furniture had also come to his attention."[58]

Close responded on two fronts. Privately he discussed the lawn chair program, which he thought to be "wild," and far-fetched with his executives.[59] His assessment offered an alternative vision. He responded that besides "social overhead capital" to support business the state could "coordinate programs providing training subsidies, temporary tax incentives, and preferential financing to all interested business,"[60] based on the fact that "It would be impossible in the foreseeable future for S.C. to replace these investments and these jobs if such a disaster were to occur."[61] The disaster in this case, of course, was free trade with its "proponents hav[ing] an insidious, shortsighted, biased influence over our federal government trade policy without proper basis."[62]

Close sought advice on the matter from Springs attorney Francis Bell who suggested that "The task of working with individual companies concerning product changes and building adaptation to a different manufacturing process would be difficult, if not impossible, from a state government level."[63]

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[57] William Close, "Meeting with Ambassador Ushiba of Japan, 22 December 1970," p. 11-12, HWC Papers, Box 8, Folder 9.
[58] William Close, "Memo: Call From Governor-elect John West at 3:00pm, 1 January 1971," p. 2, HWC Papers, Box 8, Folder 8.
[59] Ibid, p. 3.
[60] William Close, "Confidential: Corporate Management Committee, 1 March 1971," p.4, Box 8, Folder 8.
[61] Ibid, p. 5.
[62] Ibid, p.7.
[63] Francis Bell, "Confidential Memo to William Close. 6 January 1971," p. 2, HWC Papers, Box 10b, Folder 8.

Additionally, Bell realized that the industry was in dire straits, his comments verifying Close's concern for job loss. "As you are aware, one of our primary interests in the past several years has been to maintain our work force," he continued, "This has been difficult and I do not visualize our current respite to last more than six to eight months unless there are other factors that I am not aware of."[64]

Similarly, Springs president Peter Scotese was blunt in his assessment of such a proposal, writing to Close that "Too many South Carolina towns and cities are dependent entirely too largely on a single employer, usually a textile company, and this can have disastrous consequences if, as and when that employer is forced out of business or forced to drastically curtail production."[65] Future events, of course, would prove Bell and Scotese right and, thus, disastrous to the Carolinas, including Chester.

Close issued a formal response to West, who succeeded McNair as governor and spoke publicly of his concern for the cotton mills and the rural town's dependence on them. In a response to a West press release concerning such matters, Close wrote that "On the positive side, I think the concept you put forth in your release of March 2 is certainly a step in the right direction….On the negative side, I must say that I feel that you have bitten off a pretty sizable chunk of [sic] problem here."[66] Ever aware of the power of public relations, Close took the Governor to task for what he perceived as a slight to the industry:

> Some people have suggested that your release of March 2nd was too negative and perhaps indirectly suggested that textiles should be sacrificed so that people could move into higher paying industries. I am sure you can understand that, justified or not, we in the textile industry take exception to anybody's negative comments about our industry.[67]

Realizing the enormous political influence of cotton production in the Carolinas, West sheepishly capitulated to the admonition, and echoing his idea of manufacturing housing components, stated that "I shall certainly follow your thought of keeping any subsequent publicity of this project to a minimum. We do need to find a plant or plants which will be phased out so that we can do our best to effect a conversion

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[64] Ibid
[65] Peter Scotese, "Confidential Memo to William Close: Your Conversation with Governor-elect John West on Dec. 31, 1970, 4 January 1971," p.1, HWC Papers, Box 10b, Folder 10.
[66] William Close, "Confidential Letter to John West, 19 March 1971," p.1, HWC Papers, Box 10b, Folder 10.
[67] Ibid., p. 2.

to some productive commodity. Naturally such a procedure would be possible only if all arrangements were confidential until they were completed."[68]

The specter of the post-Reconstruction "Ole' Black Joe" that concerned Frank Leslie as the national imaginary of the Southern cotton industry had now shifted into the very real concern of industry survival. *The Charlotte Observer*, a powerful arbiter of opinion in the Carolinas, reported that Governor West had contended that "Over 7,000 textile jobs have been lost in South Carolina…and the problem has reached a crisis stage."[69] Close had showcased his power to the new Governor, as he continued to call for legislation restricting imports.

. . .

These two encounters in the state halls of power show different avenues of approach by its executive authority. In McNair, Close encountered a tentative approach in which the governor was more concerned about interfering with the federal process of treaty negotiation instead of being proactive on the behalf of the state. This, of course, could be due to the fact that McNair was about to leave office, something that incoming Governor West could not use as an excuse. Instead, West's initial idea was to retrofit certain manufacturing plants to make lawn furniture, while creative, was a bizarre alternative to a global cotton concern who would face massive rebranding and physical restructuring to implement such an idea. Close, being disconcerted with these efforts, changed tack.

B. Close International

Unable to come to a consensus with the state or federal government, Close shifted his focus internationally in 1971. He knew outsourcing had become increasingly standard, although he thought advances in technology might offset the slow and painful process, writing that it would "severely retard

[68] John West, "Letter to HW Close, 22 March 1971," HWC Papers, Box 10b, Folder 10.
[69] Charlotte Observer, "S.C. Textile Plant, 5 March, 1971," clipping, HWC Papers, Box 10b, Folder 10.

the rate at which textile industry geographical dislocation will occur."[70] Ever the pragmatist, however, Close had a "considered opinion that [Springs] must always be on the lookout for opportunities that can be very beneficial to us in the international market in the future."[71] In a memo outlining different regions of the world, Close hit upon Brazil (once again) as a potential partner for the "purchase of cloth, the converting of cloth, joint ventures, and outright purchase of going enterprises."[72] But Brazil was not the only opportunity in South America.

In particular, Close's most sustained contact on this front was with Alfredo Mogollon, a Colombian banker and the director of the Foundation for the Development of Cartagena. In an initial letter to Mogollon, Close outlined Springs's international dealings in Indonesia, current ventures in trying to "break ground in Morocco," and pursuit of a "joint venture in Greece."[73] In addition, echoing his earlier proclamation concerning technology, Close noted that Springs was working on contributing "technical engineering and manufacturing skills in starting up plants in South America, Sudan, and perhaps in Nigeria."[74] As if to anticipate criticism, Close was quick to point out that although Springs's future involved "manufacturing outside the states," none of the goods would be re-imported for the American market.[75]

Less than a month later, Close was more direct in his approach, stating that "I continue to believe that there is a good possibility that working jointly with Colombian groups, Springs could efficiently and profitably develop a good operation in the Cartagena areas."[76] Springs's foray into Indonesia, was predicated on insurance from OPIC (Overseas Private Investment Cooperation), the World Bank, and the IFC (International Finance Commission).[77] However, OPIC was up for renewal and its doubtful outcome

[70] William Close, "Letter to T. Fujiyoshi, President of Toray, 16 April 1971," HWC Papers, Box 8, Folder 4.
[71] William Close, "Internal Memo,3 September 1971" P.3, HWC Papers, Box 8, Folder 8.
[72] Ibid., p. 9.
[73] William Close, "Letter to Alfredo Mogollan, 7 May, 1973," p.1, HWC Papers, Box 10a, Folder 29.
[74] Ibid.
[75] Ibid.
[76] William Close, "Letter to Alfredo Mogollan, 25 June, 1973," HWC Papers, Box 8, Folder 4.
[77] William Close, "Letter to Senator Edward Muskie, 8 October 1973," HWC Papers, Box 8, Folder 4.

may have affected Close's initial ventures into foreign markets.[78] Finally, three years later, in 1974, Close rebuffed an invitation to Cartagena during the summer but, reflecting on the volatility of the market, reversed course that December, offering a rapprochement to Mogollon. This, too, like the talks with Fujiyashi, hinged on federal action. Close only offered to reopen talks with Mogollan once the current trade bill, Nixon's Trade Act of 1974, which sought to liberalize international markets and promote overseas investment, was settled. Once worked out, Close felt the bill would open the import flood gates.[79] All the while Springs kept its opportunistic eye on Brazil[80] and Malaysia.[81]

Throughout the decade, Close repeatedly warned state senators and local representatives regarding the dangers of imports. After having major heart surgery in 1976, Close ceded more power to Peter Scotese who ran the company's day to day operations. Reassuring the public that Springs wasn't going to "get out of the textile business," Close's family did, indeed, explore such options at the end of the decade after his illness.[82] At this time Close's oldest daughter, Crandell Bowles was being groomed by Scotese to assume an ever-important role in the business. It was in these closed-door family discussions that her voice started to appear in important and persuasive ways.

C. Close and Private

Following his illness, while remaining the figurehead of Springs, Close relied on his family, including his children, to make decisions about the company. The initial platform from which the family operated was: "The one clear conclusion which came out of the meeting was that the family has deep and strong feeling about the textile industry and that it very much wants to see Springs Mills Inc. make every

[78]Ibid; William Close, "Letter to Ernest Hollings, 22 February 1974," HWC Papers, Box 8, Folder 3.
[79] William Close, "Letter to Alfredo Mogollan, 27 December 1974," HWC Papers, Box 8, Folder 3.
[80] William Close, "Letter to Etienne van de Boogaerde, 5 November, 1973, " HWC Papers, Box 8, Folder 4; William Close, "Letter to Gordon Kode, 12 July 1974," HWC Close Papers, Box 8, Folder 3.
[81] William Close, "Letter to Leo Fialla, 7 August 1974," HWC Close Papers, Box 8, Folder 3.
[82] William Close, "Letter to J.H. Moore, 28 December 1975," HWC Papers, Box 8, Folder 2. This letter was a response to the *Laurinburg Exchange* editorial published on 12 December 1975 that was critical of Springs and the textile industry. This is another example of Close's feeling on public relations and persona that he took very seriously.

effort to maintain a leading role in the industry."[83] In the aftermath of the stagflation of the seventies, however, growing diversification, overseas expansion, and relaxed trade tariffs, Close, within the family, debated the advantages of making the company a private family business again. In a speech entitled "Family Position" dated Dec 15, 1976, Close stated:

> It's almost a truism (at least in textiles) that you grow and prosper or you get out. We're doing neither. We're 'starving' ourselves out which may be the most costly way to shrink business and could eventually force us into full liquidation with a rapidly reducing return on funds employed….. We're all aware of new problems—federal and state regulations, consumerism, energy, labor supply and safety, occupational health, and imports.[84]

While concerned about these affairs, Close felt strongly about the future of textiles suggesting that they would always be around[85] while acknowledging the threat of outsourcing to "undeveloped" countries. Nonetheless his dealing with state and federal government left a bitter taste. Pulled by a responsibility to his stock holders, by 1977, Close, along with Scotese, was exploring the option of going private again, but decided against it when advised by counsel Dan Byrd in a forty-page argument opposing such a move. Byrd's opinion ended strongly on an unequivocal conclusion that the family would be looked at in less-than-glowing terms by the "courts, congress, and the SEC"[86] if privatization was to transpire. The temptation for change remained ever present, however.

The following year, the Corland Corporation, a Texas investment firm that made its profits overseas, offered to buy Springs and all its assets for twenty dollars a share. The proposal would reduce to twenty percent the family's share in its business. Erskine Bowles, Crandall's spouse, suggested that if the family sold because of the risk of a highly leveraged investment and a subsequent loss of control, they should sell completely and get out of the manufacturing business altogether.[87]

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[83] James Bradley, "Review of the Meeting, 19 August 1976," p.5, HWC Papers, Box 1.
[84] William Close, "Family Position, 15 December 1976," p.3 and 4, HWC Papers, Box 1.
[85] Ibid., p.5-6.
[86] Dan Byrd, "Memo: Going Private, 5 August 1977," p. 40, HWC Papers, Box 1.
[87] Erskine Bowles, "Corland Proposal, 5 July 1978" p, 2-3 HWC Papers, Box 1. Bowles was later to become president Clinton's Chief of Staff.

The Corland possibility elicited a very measured and reasoned response from Crandall who, in an intimate hand-written memo, listed advantages and disadvantages of the buyout offer. In a telling moment, she listed an "escape from responsibilities (towards employees and committees) of control,"[88] and agreed with her husband that the new company would be highly leveraged.[89]

. . .

For the moment, Springs decided not to sell and remained a public corporation. These internal discussions are interesting because they illustrate a tension between remaining loyal to a community that relied on Springs, and the temptation, by getting out of textiles, to abandon the very same commitment. Both hold in common a concern with outside influence from regulations imposed by the federal government or ceding majority control to an outside stock holder. In the confluence of these events we see the beginnings of a differing philosophy between Bill Close's idea of loyalty and his daughter's more market-directed approach concerning the possibility of selling. It is clear from the letters, memos, and correspondence detailing these discussions that Crandall represented a new era in Springs management, a point addressed more fully below.

D. Close in Full

Bill Close outlined new challenges to textiles during the 1980s. The two areas that most concerned him, as they had for the past ten years, were government regulations and new technology. Close was a laissez-faire capitalist in the sense that he thought government was ineffective in managing the free market. "For the protection of the thousands of employees who depend on the textile industry for their livelihood and the millions of consumers who buy textile products," he thundered, "we must

[88] Crandall Bowles, "Handwritten Response: Corland Proposal, 7 May 1978," p.2, HWC Papers, Box 1.
[89] Ibid., p.3

continue to insist that the increasing government regulations imposed on the industry have a cost-benefit justification." [90] Such rhetoric allowed Close to lay fault on the public sector.

He also faulted treaties as contributing to the problem. For instance, he argued that the impact on economic growth by the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) had failed allowing too many imports. "At the GATT conference last year, an agreement was reached," he asserted, "that foreign countries would not allow their imports to grow at any greater rate than the rate our economy was growing, about 1.5 percent. They have not lived up to this agreement in most cases and imports have flooded the American market."[91] Later, in one of his less guarded moments, in a pamphlet entitled "It's Time to Rise Above Special Interests," Close laid bare his strongest statement yet: "We have a pretty good idea where most of the problem lies. It lies in pervasive, debt-ridden, innovation-strangling government that has grown fat on two appealing, but flawed premises: government can do it better, and you can get something for nothing."[92]

In his prognostication on the benefits of technology, Close suggested that companies that did not expand aggressively in the technological sector would succumb to the market.[93] However, such technological advances suffered from a simple axiom: the more automated a plant became, the less actual people it employed. Close admitted as much, and wrote that successful businesses, including Springs, "have reduced their employment through higher technology. We don't like to do it, but greater productivity is necessary. Thus, far fewer people are making more goods. I don't foresee many of these

[90]H.W. Close, "Textiles Will Spin with Technology," Fort Mill Evening Herald, p. 6A, 25 March 1980, clipping, HWC Files, Box 9, Folder 2.
[91] Unknown, "Close Interview, " p.1, HWC Files, Box 9, Folder 19.
[92] William Close, "It's Time to Rise Above Special Interests,"P.10, HWC Papers, Box 9, Folder 36.
[93] Close, "Textiles Will Spin with Technology," p. 6A.

semi-permanent layoffs returning to work." [94] He also knew the repercussions for towns like Chester and the region as a whole.

IV. After Close: Toward a Market-Driven Perspective

Bill Close was eventually succeeded by his daughter Crandall Close Bowles who was groomed to assume leadership within the family company. Educated at Wellesley and Columbia, where she received her M.B.A., and, after a decade managing her family's private holdings, she was named executive vice president of Springs in 1992. She was then promoted to president and COO in 1997, and one year later became the company's chairman and chief executive. Bowles was also promoted in the context of her place on the boards of Duke Power and Wachovia, two powerful companies both nationally and in the Carolinas.[95] In addition she is the wife of Erskine Bowles, who, at the time of her appointment, was President Bill Clinton's chief of staff.

Bowles's tenure represented a substantial break from her father and grandfather. Much more reclusive than either predecessor[96], she stated that she brought "logic and a willingness to challenge preconceived notions and the way things 'have always been done,'" adding that, "I've had to lead through tremendous change in the industry."[97] At the heart of this change lay the elimination of jobs throughout the Piedmont region, and Chester specifically, due to outsourcing. Her predecessor, CEO Walter Elisha, who supported NAFTA in the early 90s, called for opening global marketplaces to benefit consumers, stating "One reason we were so enthusiastic about NAFTA is it creates a way to open more markets."[98] NAFTA did open more markets, but, in the process, also opened the way for imports based on cheaper

[94] Unknown, "Close Interview," p.6, HWC Files, Box 9, Folder 19. For a broader discussion of automation in the textile industry see Julia C. Bonham, "Robotics, Electronics, and the American Textile Industry," in Leiter and Schulman, *Hanging by a Thread*, 163–180.
[95]Robert Barker. "Just Which One is the Other Bowles?" *Business Week.* June 23rd, 1997. http://www.businessweek.com/1997/25/b3532119.htm
[96]Adam O' Daniel. "Crandall Bowles Speaks," *Harold Online*, December 8, 2007. http://www.heraldonline.com/2007/12/08/227697/crandall-bowles-speaks.html
[97] Author Unknown, "Question and Answer," *Triangle Business Journal*.
[98] John W. McCurry, "Elisha Embraces Global Enterprise," *Textile World*, March 1995, Vol. 145, Number 3, p. 40.

production in other countries in ways which always concerned Bill Close.[99] Elisha's way of thinking serves as a good way to contextualize Bowles's line of reasoning as she would soon find herself negotiating deeper global waters.

Bowles's willingness to change leadership style is reflected in her decision to take Springs private in 2001. Reasoning that this would give the company more leverage in a volatile market, the family bought out its stockholders. While this proved to be a disaster for the company[100], it also culminated in the slow death of Springs's relations to its surrounding community. The public programs established under Close and the Colonel, and grown under Close, such as Springmaid Mountain, Springmaid Beach, swimming pools, a cafeteria, and health services were all discontinued during Bowles's watch.[101] The systematic elimination of these employee benefits was a physical manifestation of Bowles's different

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[99] Michael Dennis suggests that NAFTA was presented by media not as job loss, but in terms of "freedom." This freedom would be predicated on the market that favored individual actors that, if they were strong enough, and worked hard enough, could prevail in the new global economy. This language appealed to Southern mill workers for two basic reasons. First, because of the subjugation they experience through their paternalistic mill experience. In terms of Chester, particularly, Springs infused the community not only by employing people but by providing a large tax revenue to the county. Dependency on the company ran deep in the community consciousness.

Second, when Walter Elisha told the workers to support NAFTA, for the most part, they complied not out of ignorance but out of fidelity. Finally, and most important, this type of thinking lays the onus on the worker—if one does not achieve the American Dream, then it is one's own fault. The language of freedom is symbolic for Southern worker as a way to be free within the confines of the mill system and their core belief in American myths.

But workers also sought to reconstitute some freedoms that also ran deep in the Southern character. Realizing this, one can see why Close thought public relations were important. Couching NAFTA in terms such as "liberty and freedom" appealed to the independent streak in the South. The Southern heritage of government interference during the Civil Rights movement and the perceived "war of northern aggression" were read as outside agitation. This confluence of heritage and representation allowed NAFTA, for instance, to be seen as a movement that exhibited independence that workers of rural culture and custom identified with their frontier past—a frontier past situated in a country/city split, once united in mill culture symbiosis in small towns such as Chester. Such a line of argument is interesting at the intersection of region, jingoism, and culture. While not the concern of my scope of study here, this line of argument opens up ripe avenues of inquiry for future studies.

[100] The investment firm that bought out the stockholders was former Director of Office and Budget under Ronald Reagan, David Stockman. His group, Heartland Industrial Partners, supplied millions to help Springs privatize. The partnership was short-lived, however, as Stockman was driven into bankruptcy and eventually charged with various accounts of fraud after being forced out of an auto parts conglomerate, Collins and Aikman, as chief operating officer. Springs additionally extracted and distanced itself from Stockman's group, but because of Stockman's mismanagement Springs lost an untold amount of money. See Doron Levin, "Stockman Outsmarts Self in Detroit: Doron Levin (Correct) - Bloomberg", n.d., http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=newsarchive&refer=columnist_levin&sid=a.cBZSUCgS3Y.

[101] As a child I swam, played, and vacationed at these places. While these places did benefit the Springs community, it could be argued that they were constructed by the Colonel as monuments to himself or just another instance of company paternalism.

management style, both signifying and provided by the changing times in a global economy where, to compete with cheaper outsourcing, every possible production expense had to be spared.

All of this presaged Springs's merger with Brazilian cotton magnate Coteminas. This merger precipitated the final blow in 2005, when, after the merger, Springs Industries became Springs Global. Two years later Bowles and her fellow descendants sold all their privately held stock to Coteminas and left textiles. "In the current stock offering, my family will sell a significant portion of our Springs Global holdings," Bowles offered, "I will continue to serve on the board of Springs Global. I will leave knowing that our company has survived radical change and emerged with solid market value. I have great confidence in my co-CEO and successor, Josue Gomes, and the rest of the management team."[102]

Coteminas's subsequent closure of Chester's Katherine Plant, cost Chester County upwards of 700 jobs in the last few months of the company's "phase-out." Built in 1968, and subject to a multi-million dollar upgrade in 2002, the Katherine Plant, which transformed raw cotton into unfinished sheeting and cloth, was the largest, and most modern of Springs's manufacturing sites in Chester. The last major Springs plant in Chester, Katherine closed its doors for good in 2007, following the closures of the Gayle, the Springstein, and the Eureka. After more than a century, except for a couple of minor distribution sites, the Katherine's demise signaled the end for any kind of meaningful work presence exerted in Chester County.

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In *The New Economy and the Modern South,* Michael Dennis suggests that "The defining ethos of American life was the veneration of market principles and economic efficiency over a 'social perspective.' That development, which had been emerging for some time but which only crystallized in

[102] Charlotte Business Journal, "Close Family to Sell Majority of Springs Holdings," *Charlotte Business Journal,* July 23rd, 2007, http://charlotte.bizjournals.com/charlotte/stories/2007/07/23/daily32.html (accessed August 10th, 2009).

the 1990s, is the period's most significant legacy."[103] Bill Close embodies this American way of thinking, as exhibited by tensions in which he genuinely cared for the community while remaining aware of his financial obligations to his stockholders. In patriarchal fashion, however, he thought he could take care of his "people" better than the federal government, a belief he held until the end of his life, insisting that private capital instead of government was the best way to ensure job growth.

In this way, Bill Close was politically conservative in his approach to business, employing a quasi-free market worldview. Yet, Close did favor federal intervention on the global level, particularly in relation to imports, in order to stop job hemorrhaging. Close exemplifies a man caught in transition, operating partially on a model of "social perspective" while living in an emerging era of "veneration of market principles." This tension was exacerbated by Close's responsibility to his public shareholders and his belief in turning a profit. When Close's contradictions are contrasted with the attitude of his daughter we see a progression of Dennis's maxim during the closing of Springs.

For instance, Bowles rationalized the 2001 stock sale by asserting "that taking the company private with a strong partner more effectively positions us to deal with this complex and changing environment."[104] This stands in stark relief to her father's decision to take the company public. In particular, Bowles, echoing her hand-written proclamation from the late 1970s, believed such a sale freed the company from the "social responsibility" of the communities reliant on Springs.[105] Furthermore, her public framing of job cuts after the merger and subsequent sale to Coteminas was consistent with Elisha's invocation of the world market in dealing with NAFTA more than a decade earlier. As she then elaborated, "The closing of [plants] reflects the global nature of the textile industry, which has made U.S. textile manufacturing uncompetitive."[106]

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[103] Michael Dennis, *The New Economy and the Modern South* (University Press of Florida, 2009), 21–22.
[104] Patricia Larson, "Springs May go Private," *Fort Mill Times,* 22 February 2001, Section A, Back Page.
[105] Crandall Bowles, "Handwritten Response: Corland Proposal, 7 May 1978," p.2, HWC Papers, Box 1.
[106] Springs Global, "Grace and Close Plants Will Cease Production," Press Release, Draft 3, 27 June 2007.

Bowles's public relations tone during the company's decision to cut jobs mirrored her attitude toward privileging private investment over the public good. In addition, in a *Time* magazine article debating about profits over jobs, Bowles hastily responded: "That whole thought process is so annoying to me. How many jobs can we have if we don't make a profit? If retailers will only sell goods made here and consumers will only buy products made here, I'll reopen my plants here. I'd love to do that. But that just isn't going to happen."[107]

In the failure of both going private and her public relations tactics, Bowles's "annoyance" highlights the nuance of her father's approach as her strategies resulted in community calamity. In the end, however, Bowles typified the transition from community welfare to profit margins that characterizes this era. In a rare interview given in 2007 Close stated, on one hand, that "I always felt part of my job was to keep the jobs. So, in that sense, I failed." But on the other hand, she felt success stating: "I feel like I did my job by putting the company in a position to move forward." Finally, in stating, "I could have tweaked a few things or done something different here and there, but none of that would have changed the outcome," Bowles sounded like someone defeated by the larger forces of the world economy.[108]

In any event, the end result is that a once proud mill town, Chester is now in the throes of cultural and economic crisis. It received a devastating blow to employment when Springs closed, becoming an unwilling participant in, and bearing witness to, the ongoing death of the Southern institution of cotton mills and the small town struggles that were created and amplified in their wake. Already having unemployment of 13.5%, the national recession would surface in the fall of 2008, which saw Chester's unemployment skyrocket 4% from November to December of that year. As it stands now, Chester holds

[107] Melba Newsome, "By a Thread," *Time*, Inside Business, 11 July 2005.
[108] All quotes in this paragraph taken from O' Daniel, "Crandall Bowles Speaks."

the 8th highest unemployment in the state, at 13.6% , an improvement from their first place ranking at 21.8% held in August of 2009.[109] However, the actual number hovers around 40%.

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Addressing the Charlotte Chamber of Commerce, Bill Close surmised that "This industry is vital to the economic well-being of the Carolinas, because it touches so many lives….Let's face it, in a great many cases textile jobs are the only jobs available in particular areas. Many of our workers are not going to get the highly touted high-priced jobs I keep reading about in the [Charlotte] *Observer*. Some simply won't have the skills, the education or the experience to qualify. So the textile industry is going to keep them employed…. It's probably fair to say our efforts won't create more textile jobs than now exist. The total probably will decline over a period of time, due to a combination of attrition, productivity, and competition."

In this speech, given shortly before he died in his sleep in 1983, Close summed up the contradictions within himself and the new financial world into which he ushered Springs. In the course of his Commerce address, he acknowledged the importance of the textile mills' place in the Carolinas, which included Chester. At the same time he hoped he could keep his "people" employed but realized that the global situation he simultaneously sought to regulate and invest in would, in the end, win the day. In 2007 that day finally came to Chester County, when the Katherine closed its doors for good. Those bearing the brunt of such a turn of events were not the Close family, who had sold the company to Coteminas, but the rank and file workers, like Larry Hyatt and Myra Mobley, who lost their jobs and with it their livelihood in a county built by, for, and around the mills.

[109] I updated this in April 2013 based on the last complete numbers for February 2013. See Employer's Association of South Carolina's website at http://eascinc.com/unemployment_rate.html.

Chapter Five

Interventions: Four Observational Films about Chester County



Figure 1: Fall Cotton at Cotton Hills Farm, Chester County, South Carolina

I. Introduction

In the aftermath of Springs's decline, this film series of Chester provides a counterpoint to the broader portrayals found in the films discussed in Part One. The four films, *Cotton Hills Farm: Enduring the Seasons in a Globalizing County, Alex and Carlisle: Exploring Masculinity and Politics among the Ruins, Good Samaritan Clinic: Administrating Health in Chester County* , and *Loaves and Fishes: Observations from the Bread Line at Christ Central Ministries*, that comprise this chapter each shed light on a particular aspect of Chester, exploring rural health care administration, rural farming, the blighted landscape of the mills, and the bread line.

These films are contextualized by the history of Springs in Chapter Four. Much like the readings of the films in Part One, the films in this chapter can be read through, and alongside, the history of Springs

found in the proceeding chapter. These films are the aftermath, a continuation of that story if you will, of what happened after Springs left Chester. However, these are only a sampling of the stories of Chester's rural- and working-class Southerners. Viewed individually, these films explore certain aspects of the town; taken as a whole in the context of Chester's history, a fuller picture of Chester's particular contemporary reality starts to emerge

To help locate and contextualize these films, I want to briefly touch on Southern documentaries that are idiosyncratic in respect to broader stereotypical representations. I then trace a short contextualization of ethnographic practice in cinema arriving at observational filmmaking, which is the method I use here. I chose the observational method because it unlocks possibilities for artistic explorations in documentary and ethnographic cinema and, in the process, opens up Southern rural and working class representations by focusing on day-to-day life in the South.

However, this written intro is not to explain or analyze the films that follow. To do so, would miss the point. One tenant of observational filmmaking is to allow the viewer to experience the rhythm, culture, and custom through visual nuance. Scenes included herein discover the way people across the racial spectrum work together on a farm (*Cotton Hills Farm*); an explanation of the way drug benefits work for the poor (*Good Samaritan Clinic*); the visual image of rural- and working class folks, now unemployed, standing in line together for a meal they cannot afford (*Loaves and Fishes*); and the juxtaposition of a city councilman standing in the physical disfigurement of a mill, trying to make sense of what happened (*Alex and Carlisle*). To explain any more is to do the viewer's job. It is the eye of the viewer that must unravel the subtle distinctions of these films and moments reading (or not) the underlying politics, culture, custom, and the ways in which Chester's citizens exist. In the process, I hope to show a different side of the rural- and working-class South (and therefore, the South in general) instead of promoting orthodox presentations. The "reality" of the South is much more complex than the broader generalizations lodged in the American imaginary.

II. Southern Documentary

A few films about the South stand out at least as being conversant in ethnographic perspective and provide a more nuanced portrayal of the region. The following works exhibit observational technique (Barbara Kopple) and Rouchian self-recognition (Ross McElwee). While not usually considered in anthropological circles, the following films and filmmakers seek to uncover details place and culture. What is important to note is that the following works accomplishes two things. First, they allow the South to be explored by first person voice, rendering it not unlike a visual companion to oral histories. Secondly, they achieve a different vision of the South than in fiction film previously discussed.

Following in direct cinema's footsteps, Barbara Kopple's *Harlan County USA* (1978) explores the 1973 UMW coalminer's strike and contentious election within the Kentucky's UMW. The observational approach Kopple utilizes portrays her subjects unapologetically and unfettered by stereotypes.[1] Contrasted to the signifying "cracker" of Hollywood cinema, the miners appear as "…real people…presented to us in a very straight way, from the gun-toting chief of the strike breakers to the old man dying of back lung disease."[2] The touch with her subjects, and the ability to elicit certain nuance speaks volumes about what was not said as well. Because Kopple shows respect to the miners and their families, the sense of what *is*, instead of what is *thought* to be, becomes a new way of looking at the South.

The films of Ross McElwee exhibit the South through inserting himself squarely in the narrative with near constant voice-over. "The filmmaker's voice has come to imply not certainty so much as a testimonial presence tinged by self-doubt or bemusement," surmises Michael Renov in *The Subject of Documentary*, "Instead of doubling the image or certifying its authenticity as a fact, this mode of documentary voice-over is a as likely to question what is shown as to interpret it authoritatively."[3] For

[1] William Rothman, "Looking Backward and Turning Inward: American Documentary Films of the Seventies", in *Lost Illusions: American Cinema in the Shadow of Watergate and Vietnam*, ed. David Cook (Berkley: University of California Press, 2002), 441.
[2] William Rosenthal, *The Documentary Conscience: A Casebook in Filmmaking* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 301
[3] Michael Renov, *The Subject of Documentary* (University of Minnesota Press, 2004), xxi.

example, McElwee's *Sherman's March* (1986) started out chronicling General Sherman's path through Atlanta, but became an exploration of the personal with McElwee interviewing the women in his life. Along McElwee's journey of self-discovery, he pokes fun at traditional documentary; deconstructs genteel notions of southern belles; and questions notions of manhood in the south. In a later endeavor, *Bright Leaves* (2003), McElwee endeavors to uncover his family's past in the tobacco business, all the while skewering one of North Carolina's biggest cash crops.

More specifically about Southern mills, is George Stoney and Judith Helfand's *Uprising of 34'* (1995) about the general textile manufacturing strike in 1934, and the violence and aftermath that accompanied it. Stitched together from oral history interviews and historical footage, the film never breaks for expert testimony so commonly found in today's documentaries, but instead relies on first-hand participants to tell the story. David Whitehead and Barbara Abrash suggest the film, following the tradition of documentary being used as a tool for social change, is a good example of a collaborative model between filmmakers and community for generating general awareness.[4] Moreover, Jane M. Gaines, suggests that the film also a public appeal that helps one remember the past, especially tragic events, and harkens back to a times when films routinely tried to make a social difference.[5]

Similar cases can be made for other documentaries about the South. Jacob Young's *The Dancing Outlaw* (1991) is a portrait of West Virginia tap dancer Jesco White. The film refuses to poke fun at the violent "Elvis," Jesco's alter-personality, but instead implicitly shows how he suffers from schizophrenia and grueling poverty in Bandytown, WV. *Morristown: In the Air and Sun* (2007) is Anne Lewis's look at small town Tennessee and the attending decade long culmination of lost jobs, immigration, and attempts at unionization.

[4] David Whitehead and Barbara Abrash, "The Uprising of '34: Filmmaking as Community Engagement," *Wide Angle* 21, no. 2 (March 1999), 87-99.
[5] Jane M.Gaines, "Radical Attractions: The Uprising of 34," *Wide Angle* 21, no. 2 (March 1999), 110-119.

III. **Ethnographic Documentary**

Many scholars look to Robert Flaherty's classic *Nanook of the North* (1938), which traced the daily practice and customs of an Inuit and his family, as one of the earlier anthropological exercises on film. Ethnographic cinema has since progressed to debates about the practice of observational technique that came of age in the sixties. More than just a "fly on the wall" approach, observational cinema immerses practitioner and practice with a respect for its subjects. In a technical sense, it was aided by the use of synchronous sound and hand held cameras, an innovation that was fore grounded in Jean Rouch's 1960 film *Chronicle of a Summer* in which a model sets out on the street with a microphone to ask people questions. Rouch's film was an important contribution to *cinema verite'* with a nod towards Italian neo-realism, which under-girded it and its analogous American counterpart, direct cinema.[6]

Set against the backdrop of the Civil Rights movement and the burgeoning sixties counterculture, direct cinema tended to gravitate towards historical instances.[7] Led by Robert Drew, Richard Leacock, D.A. Pennebaker, and the Maysles brothers, the practice, Anna Grimshaw argues, differed from its European counterpart in that cinema verite' was more self-conscious, while direct cinema sought to "inform" in a television broadcast context.[8]

To cite a few examples, Drew and Leacock's *Primary* (1960) documented John Kennedy and Hubert Humphrey on the campaign trail in 1960; Pennebaker chronicled Bob Dylan's 1965 tour in *Don't Look Back* (1967); and the Maysles contributed *Gimme Shelter* (1970) about the disaster in Altamont during the Rolling Stones's 1970 concert. Although different in content, such films shied away from the scientific expletory nature of previous anthropological excursions, and exhibited the form, if not the content, of an observational approach. Rouch, on the other hand, sought to insert himself in the proceedings. In *Jaguar*, a film about Niger villagers traveling to the Gold Coast in search of a better life, Rouch has the participants commenting on footage. Likewise in *Chronicle of a Summer* (1961), Rouch and sociologist

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[6] Anna Grimshaw, *The Ethnographer's Eye: Ways of Seeing in Anthropology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 79; Bill Nichols, *Representing Reality* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 38-44; Brian Winston, *Claiming the Real 2 (New York: Palgrave Macillan*, 2008), 147-152, 181-188.
[7] Grimshaw, *The Ethnographer's Eye*, 82.
[8] Ibid, 81-82.

Edger Morin appear on camera providing remarks that further call attention to the constructed nature of cinema.

In observational cinema, the work of David and Judith MacDougall is paramount. Their 1972 film *To Live With Herds* focuses on the Jie people in Uganda. Through the use of observational techniques such as long takes and non-invasive editing, the film juxtaposes ways of resistance in post-colonial Africa. MacDougall takes a slightly different tack in *The Wedding Camels* (1980). The film portrays intense dowry talks between two Turkana men in a tapestry of detail. MacDougall suggests about observational cinema in general, "The choices made leave huge gaps of time, space, and detail, and these become as eloquent as what is actually shown"[9] What is not directly shown, or explicated, is the threat of starvation that hovers over the proceedings. MacDougall additionally states that, "One approach is not necessarily more or less objective than another, or more or less personally engaged. They represent different temperaments and aims, not different moralities. In a single film, several approaches may be employed for separate purposes."[10] As a result, ethnographic film is not a means to an end, but is an end in itself. Using a camera as a vehicle for inquiry, film images are sites of exploration about the subject at hand as well as intrinsic artifacts.

VI. **Observational Technique**

Marcus Banks observes, "In order to do good social research, a researcher has to enter in that process self-consciously, not pretend that they can somehow trade their humanity and stood outside, merely observing."[11] In this case, because of my relationship to Chester, I was an insider. My connections to the town, and the social privilege I enjoyed because of the reputation of my family, allowed me to gain access to places I would have had a much harder time doing otherwise. To take just

[9] David MacDougall, *The Corporeal Image* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 34. It is worth noting that both MacDougall and Kopple integrate and forge relationships with their subjects.
[10] MacDougall, *The Corporeal Image*, 4.
[11] Marcus Banks, *Visual Methods in Social Research*, 1st ed. (Sage Publications Ltd, 2001), 112.

one example, being able to walk into the run-down mills with council man Alex Oliphant in *Alex and Carlisle* was made possible by knowing Alex beforehand.

In this way I am not in the films standing as an outsider. I am engaging the subjects and the situations through the camera. In other words, I am in these films exploring as the process unfolds. My hope, as Sarah Pink posits, is to try and fulfill the promise that "ethnographic documentary can bring hidden experiences into a public domain in ways that will intervene both to produce shifts in the lives of those who participated in the film and brought to light issues to command audiences."[12]

Specifically to Chester, I hope to show a side of the county others do not regularly see. Whether it is behind the scenes in a health clinic, or showing someone where their food comes from in *Cotton Hills Farm,* these films show sides of the South that are usually not addressed. Contextualized in the aftermath of Springs, the films touch on issues of rural health care and nutrition, city government's potential failure and promise, and the steady tradition of a rural family farm. Implicit in this is the federal, local, and familial social structures that Chester operates within. Instead of showing a financial structure in facts and figures I show the structures as they affect the day-to day lives of people who are affected by them either negatively or positively.

Finally, as Bill Nichols suggests about documentary, "Such films confront us with an alternative to our own hypotheses about what kinds of things populate the world, the relations they sustain, and what meaning they bear for us."[13] In comparison to the tendency to frame violence as indicative in rural- and working-class Southern males, the films below utilize a methodical approach taking their time in exploring the space around the subjects and the subject's relationship within that space and to each other, unfolding at a intentionally deliberate pace. The films herein, at the very least, present an alternative vision of the rural- and working-class South in comparison to the more broadly popular cinematic portrayals, serving as an intervention, if you will.

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[12] Sarah Pink, *The Future of Visual Anthropology: Engaging the Senses*, 1st ed. (Routledge, 2006), 99.
[13] Bill Nichols, "The Voice of Documentary," in Alan Rosenthal and John Corner, eds., *New Challenges for Documentary: Second Edition* (Manchester University Press, 2005), 28.



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This video is part of Chapter Five of a dissertation submitted to the
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Conclusion: Towards a More Perfect Southern Visual Culture

In order to challenge these broader and violent depictions of rural- and working-class Southerners in films like *Cockfighter* and *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre,* a counterpoint can (and must) be made outside of the traditional means of film production. Because of the low cost involved with documentary films and the ubiquitous nature of 21st century technology, documentaries constitute an economically feasible way to portray specific realities grounded in culture. Such portraits provide nuance where traditional production means tend to deliver broad depictions grounded in stereotypes at the expense of Southern rural- and working-class concerns. Documentaries can act as an intervention to destabilize those broader depictions.

Speaking of production means, Henry A. Giroux suggests, "With few exceptions Hollywood's treatment of working-class people and events has been characterized by the type of reductionism that functions merely to reinforce those myths and values that provide the ideological bedrock for the existing system of social relations. Both the form and content of Hollywood films about the working class render the latter in flat, one-dimensional representations that tell us nothing about the deeper concrete reality of working-class life and struggle."[1] Giroux is speaking about working-class in general, but his statement carries equal weight for rural- and working class portraits of Southerners on film. Films that try and address this reductionism run up against particular production conditions which limit their impact. Because of this, two larger contextual points are worth mentioning here, helping make the case for independent documentary films.

In his book *Working Class Hollywood,* Steven Ross explains how, in the nebulous formation of pre-WWI film production, when filmmaking had yet to be centralized in Hollywood, the means of production were scattered. Due to this fractured production system, the working classes were able to

[1] Henry A. Giroux, "Norma Rae: Character, Culture and Class," *Jump Cut*, Number 22 (May 1980), http://www.ejumpcut.org/archive/onlinessays/JC22folder/NormaRae.html (accessed August 25th, 2009).

harness means of film production to communicate with each other throughout the nation. [2]This type of propaganda formulated class-consciousness based on truthful and honest representations of working class life. Ross writes:

> For nearly two decades after the first nickelodeon opened in 1905, movies and the working class were intertwined in three important ways: working class people were the industry's main audience; they were frequent subjects of films; and they were makers of movies—but as employees who labored in studio lots and as independent producers who turned out their own pictures....Filmmakers were more concerned with portraying the hardships of working class life during the silent era than at any subsequent time in the industry's history.[3]

. However, the problem, which I echo with C.L.R James's critiques of production at the end of Chapter Three, was that certain states, including South Carolina, enacted censorship laws to banish any propaganda (perceived or real) that may upset labor relations.[4] After the hopeful beginning of class-conscious films, Hollywood, when portraying class labor, chose to characterize that labor as thuggish, corrupt, and violent without any "attempt to explain the larger forces responsible for the hardships endured by millions of wage earners," Ross continues, "Class problems were still portrayed in terms of corrupt individuals rather than a corrupt system. Consequently, all difficulties could be resolved either by outsiders who called for harmony between labor and capital or by a remarkable individual whose sheer force of will could save the day."[5] For example, the film *Norma Rae* (1978) has both an outsider, Rueben Warshowsky (Ron Leibman), a Northern Jewish union organizer who arrives in a small Southern mill town in order to unionize the workers which he can only do through the sheer force of will supplied by a singular local mill worker, Norma Rae (Sally Field). In addition, Crystal Lee Rogers, the real "Norma Rae" on which the film was based, was upset about her portrayal as overly promiscuous (an exploitation tactic) in the film stating "They made it into a Hollywood movie, playing up sex and violence."[6] It also speaks volumes that critics referred to Norma Rae as "trashy" and "red-neck," indicative of common

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[2] Steven J. Ross, *Working-Class Hollywood* (Princeton University Press, 1997), 6.
[3] Ibid., 7.
[4] Ibid., 171.
[5] Ibid., 244.
[6] Qtd. In Robert F. Ziegler, *Southern Labor in Transition*, (Univeristy of Tennessee Press, 1997), 263. Originally found in Atlanta Journal and Constitution Magazine, June 10, 1979. The attitude expressed should be couched in the fact that Jordan wanted to have more say in the film, and, after trying to get her consent, the producers went ahead on production without her.

social attitudes that unfortunately are shared by Hollywood's portrayal of Southern working class.[7] As such, *Norma Rae* is emblematic of a major studio trying to portray Southern rural- and working-class culture in a meaningful way are not only scarce, but flawed, due to their inability to transcend standard plots.

Independent film production, in contrast, provides an alternative way of challenging the class based stereotypes that are common in most productions. In particular to the South, of course, this can pertain to characters like mill employees who are emblematic of rural- and working-class Southerners. This is not to say, however, that all independent films challenge such representations. As I show in Chapter Two, the independent *Cockfighter* had a particular set of problems dealing with the South. What I am suggesting is that independent films hold great potential (the type of film that Monte Hellman imagined *Cockfighter* to be) to address the issues posited by Ross and Giroux. One such way is through documentary with its low production costs.

This, of course, immediately brings up the question of comparing documentaries with fictional films. Instead of this being a limitation of this project, however, I look at this as a strength. First, as John Shelton Reed suggests in Chapter Three, the way people look at South and Southerners is based on easily recognizable types. These broadly drawn types, found in fiction film, combined with the efficacy of film create powerful institutional American imaginaries about the South.[8] Because these imaginaries are fixed, finding little redress in fiction films[9], alternative forms of Southern visual representation must be

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[7] See Richard Schieckel,"Cinema: Strike Busting," Time, March 12,1979, http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,948444,00.html (accessed August 21, 2009); David Ansen, qtd. in Robert H. Ziegler, *Southern Labor in Transition: 1940-1955*, 253.

[8] For a fuller explanation see Chapter Three, 113-114.

[9] For example, Robert Nathan and Jo-Ann Mort referring to *Norma Rae* (1979), an award winning portrayal of economic justice and mill life in the small town South, advocate that, "In the realm of the political, it is virtually the only American movie of the modern era to deal substantially with any of these subjects. Even today it remains iconic--a major studio movie about the lives of working people…. Try to think of a contemporary American film with a similar message or a political statement anywhere near that blunt." See Robert Nathan and Jo-Ann Mort, "Remembering Norma Rae," *The Nation*, February 26, 2007, http://www.thenation.com/doc/20070312/nathan-mort (accessed August 20, 2009).

explored to give a fuller picture of both the South in general and working- and rural-class Southerners in particular.

These types can be complicated through documentaries. Scott Von Doviak suggests that documentaries about the South, which he terms "hickumentaries," are "a rich, vital cycle of films."[10] Using the three main examples, *Hands on a Hard Body* (1997) about a rural Texas endurance contest where the last person standing with their hand on a local pick-up truck wins that truck; Joe Berlinger and Bruce Sinofsky's *Brother's Keeper* (1992) and *Paradise Lost: The Childhood Murders of Robin Hood Hills* (1996); and *American Movie* (1999), Von Doviak implicitly suggests that this line of documentaries allows a more nuanced view of the South. Particularly, the films touch on broader themes of the human spirit (*Hands on a Hard Body*); the effects of rural and working class life in comparison to the American Dream (*American Dream*); and the effect of Southern stereotypes used by a small rural community in Arkansas to implicate three poor, innocent teenagers in the grisly murder of three children (*Paradise Lost*). Such subjects allow serious exploration via particular realities of Southern rural- and working-class issues set against the backdrop of the culture, custom, and day to day existence of life in rural communities.

In comparison, fictionalized film accounts of Southern lives tend to sell stereotypical versions of the South predicated on broadly drawn portraits of rural and working class Southerners. Central to these portrayals are representations of Southern masculinity that are based on an endemic violence that, as I have shown, Jim Goad suggests is visually rendered as genetically endemic in Southern males.[11] This focus on violence for violence sake obscures more nuanced economic, class, and social concerns that documentaries, like those above, tackle.

This Southern trope of violence can, and usually does, obscure systematic and structural issues of racism, poverty, and lack of education of rural- and working- class white males. One way to uncover

[10] Scott von Doviak, *Hick Flicks: The Rise and Fall of Redneck Cinema* (McFarland & Company, 2004), 183.
[11] Explored in Chapter Two, see page 88. .

some of the driving force behind this violence is to read these films through the lens of Southern history as I have suggested. Such readings do not seek to justify that violence, but rather seek to understand the character‘s motivations in a larger historical context. In the case of the films I look at in Part One, such motivations stem from characters that yearn to hold on to familiar traditions, as the South they once knew is rapidly shifting around them. This historical context also seeks to reveal historic structural factors predicated on class and culture, explaining the character's motivation and subsequent actions. In the process, I hope that such steps to understanding this aggressive behavior may reshape ways audiences may look at Southern behavior on screen, giving them pause when beginning to think about the South in stereotypical terms. Ideally, that understanding will manifest itself in concrete ways in the "real" world.

In lieu of any fictional films that help complicate those stereotypical portrayals, documentaries set in the South can help complicate the typical representation of the region.[12] Additionally, historically contextualizing fictional films set in the South paradoxically reveals the direct ways documentaries engage in class, social, and economic concerns which are easily obscured in fictional accounts. Particular to this dissertation, such concerns center around deindustrialization of the rural South in both the fictional case studies addressed in the case study of Chester contained herein. In other words, although the genre of film may be different, the rural- and working- class issues obscured by the standard Southern trope of violence in fiction are laid bare through nuance in documentary form.

With this being said, I will repeat my query found at the end of Chapter Two: are there *any* fiction Southern films that tackle substantive regional and class issues in any kind of alternative way documentaries can? Such a Southern film, I believe, would begin to challenge stereotypical ideas of Southern class, race, and region. Visual cultures, including hixploitation and rural horror, through their violent character, are effective in highlighting stark Southern orthodoxy found in cinema and culture, but what about other perspectives? What would such a film look like? What would its focus be? Would it

[12] Of course the case can be made that documentaries, while grounded in reality, are as highly constructed accounts. Leaving that argument and all that entails about the argument of the nature of reality itself, let us, for the consideration of this dissertation, accept the fact the fictionalized accounts of the South are a different genre than documentaries

have to sacrifice its "Southerness" to escape the orbit of orthodoxy and the "structures of society" as they pertain to Southern representation?

One promising example is Ray McKinnon's *The Accountant.* Produced in 2001 and shot with a poet's eye and sense of place, *The Accountant* was filmed on location in rural Douglasville and Covington, Georgia. The film tells the story of the O'Dell brothers, Tommy (Walton Goggins) and David (Eddie King), who are trying to save their family farm that is upside down in debt. Utilizing the labyrinth and cryptic suggestions made by the mysterious titular accountant (Ray McKinnon), the O'Dells try to figure the best way to save their land. In the end, David chooses not to demolish that past to save the future, but instead destroys himself by committing suicide for insurance money.

With his desire to keep the family farm solvent, David is tied to the land through the past. However, David does not try and reconstruct the past through outward expressions of violence or by allowing his independence to be used as a weapon against him (such as Frank Mansfield does in *Cockfighter*). Besides his bucolic existence, two scenes codify David's reluctance to destroy the rural nature, culture, and custom of his life and heritage predicated on class and economics.

In the old O'Dell home, which is literally falling down around him, David keeps old photographs of his family on his mantle suggesting he is longing for a past he is desperate to keep alive, but must paradoxically destroy to do so. In moments like these, McKinnon demonstrates the cultural pull of the Southern custom in the face of the new millennium and post-rural Southern age, but does not revert to the nostalgia of a glorious time past. Instead, the economic and structural situation David finds himself in contributes to a very real horror made visible in his suicide. This horror resonates loudly at the level of inwardly directed sacrifice involved,[13] as compared to the outward anger of the Sawyer family in *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*. Instead of this destructive external rage, David sacrifices himself to save others. Through David's act, Southern economic strife is made tangible and, in the process, addresses Southern rural- and working-class reality in direct ways. In other words, the hard reality of the economic

[13] An argument can be made for the Christ-like allegory in the film which warrants future discussion.

fallout for the rural South in *The Accountant* is made consequential through David's death. However, violence is still the plot's driving force in the film.

McKinnon's film, however, succeeds on another level and calls into question the very nature of "Southerness" in the media age. For example, David offers the Accountant the O'Dell family journal, bound in leather, and held together by a string. Stating that the family farm has dwindled from 1000 acres to 150 acres, which indicates a gradual erosion of the family's holdings, David believes his family story is "a tragedy" that "someone could turn into a book or something. Billy Bob Thornton done it. You said he's the real deal, a good ol' boy like us. If he can do it, why can't we?"

David is referring to the success of Thornton's film, *Slingblade* (1996), which he and Tommy, who made a comment about renting it again at the start of the film, look to as a template of "Southerness" that was a successful film. The irony is that a film based on the systematic destruction of a family farm that David describes would not be a hit because the subject matter does not conform to the popular imaginary of the South. As such, David shows confusion about what interests the public, which is not authenticity. McKinnon knows this. In a brilliant moment of self-reflexivity he both addresses the concrete realities of the rural South and touches on the ways in which Southern culture is processed through economic branding and subsequently resold back to the South. In doing so, McKinnon strongly ties corporatization, marketing, and Southern culture together. The Accountant sums it up in the following soliloquy:

> One world, one culture, one corporation. One-whatever you want to call it. First they take away the little man's ability to produce his own food by devising a system where he's got access to easy credit with easy terms. Once they get him hooked, then they change the rules. Suddenly they want their money—they want it yesterday. So this little farmer works hard, plants more crops, fattens more hogs. Then, like magic, the price drops. Supply and demand they say. He's offered $100 an acre, what costs him $200 to grow. The greater his yield the further he goes into debt with the banking corporations, til he's drown by em'. That's when a farming cooperation comes in, takes this fellow's land, leaving him no choice but to go to town to work for some manufacturing cooperation or retail.
>
> But they ain't done with him. Because, see, this boy, this farmer still has his culture and that scares him. His roots based in independence, even rebelliousness. His "countryness" if you will.
>
> So what do they do about that? Well that where their multi-media corporations step in. hey begin to bombard their new company man with caricatures and stereotypes of himself. Gomer Pyle, Dukes of Hazzard, Beverly Hillbillies, Hee Haw, so on and so forth until finally he can't trust his own reality. He don't know what it is no more.

> He starts acting country instead of being country. Until one day he'll [starts dancing] …he'll be like a Scotsman who puts on his kilt once a year to celebrate his Scottishness. Until, finally, this man, this farmer, who once worked on the land [grabs dirt from field] and with the land can be controlled.

The Accountant's exposition of his philosophy is a self-reflexive commentary on the state of media representations of and about the South. Referring to television, films, and the visual culture associated with both, McKinnon suggests one outcome was a co-opting of Southern culture and, with it, the ensuing regional popularity of films set in the South.[14] Such films offered a positive escape which a culture emerging from crisis, in this case the post-Civil Rights Act era, could identify with.[15] What was sacrificed, however, was the very naturalistic essence of the South. The result of this co-option is the type of problematic representations commonly found in visual culture based on the South.

The images, whether they were horror, hixploitation, or prestige pictures (*Gone With the Wind*), the South was consuming and relating to, were highly stereotypical, predicated on cultural repackaging that *The Accountant* rails against. McKinnon's dialogue explicitly addresses the subjugation of masculine rural independence (his "countryness") that Frank Mansfield of *Cockfighter* experiences first hand. The difference between a film like *The Accountant* and a hixploitation film like *Cockfighter* , for instance, is that the former straightforwardly addresses such issues rooted in Southern history that have contemporary bearing, while the latter sacrifices them for portrayals rooted in hixploitation tropes of sex and violence.

The nuance that *The Accountant* provides, of course, is lacking in the current American culture. Ideally, more films would address the structural economic forces aligned against rural- and working-class Southerners such as the O' Dell brothers. In reality, however, the mainstream production means and capital are scarce to generate such works. As a result, films like McKinnon's are independent gems that are rare. Because of this, independent documentary production which provides the means for Southerners to make films about their culture and custom, currently exists as the best means to portray the nuance of

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[14] See the Burt Reynolds discussing this phenomenon in Chapter Two, page 100.

[15] Von Doviak points to the popularity of "Southerns" in the South during the seventies calling it the "Golden Age of Redneck Cinema." See *Hick Flicks*, 10. While I touch on the confluence of forces at work in the seventies that produced hixploitation, further work needs to be done on the synergy of the decade and the popularity of films set in the South within it.

the rural- and working-class South. Like photo-elicitation in Chapter One, which seeks to recover the South through a rural Southerner's perspective, memory, and local knowledge, Southerners, armed with a simple digital camera, can begin to locate similar perspectives lost in the din of Southern stereotypes which currently populate the visual culture about the region. What results is not a picture of *the* South, but a picture of *their* South.

Appendix A:) A Worker's Perspective: An Interview with Larry Hyatt with Myra Mobley

Former mill worker Larry Hyatt, echoed by his partner Myra Mobley, provides a counterpoint to the official narrative of Springs. Based on a conversation I had with them shortly after the closing of Chester's last plant, Hyatt's account is unvarnished. Freed from the strictures of his job, Larry was candid and forthright with his story. Because of this, his interview is a key piece to understanding the last days of Springs from the perspective of a lived history and throws into relief the official management narrative by providing an example of the attitudes, thoughts, and feelings of the individual worker.

A Chester native, Larry worked for Springs since high school—up until the close of Katherine, his whole life—and eventually advanced to the position of supervisor. I visited with him and his partner Myra Mobley, also a Springs employee since she was seventeen, late in the afternoon of November, 5 2009. After approaching our conversation with caution (he had initially turned down my request), Larry warmly received me and immediately started talking about Chester, Springs, and other topics. What is excerpted here is the bulk of the conversation as it pertains to how Larry and Myra viewed work, his last days on the job, and his feelings on what happened during the shutting of the Katherine plant during Springs's last gasp of Carolina-based manufacturing. The following has been only lightly edited, as I tried to leave most of the conversation, including the natural rhythm of speech, intact..

. . .

***Jay Hughes**: So, NAFTA, what are your feelings?*

Larry Hyatt: The same as day one. I hated it, I was against it. I never did support it and never will. Never have and never will support John Spratt because I hold him as being one of the biggest ones for NAFTA.[1]

Myra Maloney: It was the beginning of the end.

LH: And I think it was the beginning of the end. My opinion.

MM: That opinion is shared by a lot of people I've talked to.

[1] John Spratt was a long time member of the U.S. House of representatives from the district of Chester, York, and Lancaster counties. His family was involved with Spratt Saving and Loan, and his family name was part of the "blue blood" lineage that helped found Springs. Spratt lost his seat in the midterm elections of 2010.

LH: And John Spratt was in on it, of course, in the Clinton administration and all. As a matter of fact I was so much against it and I was in management there at the [Katherine] plant. They came in with NAFTA, vote for NAFTA buttons, and I refused to wear them. And I never did. And my plant manager told me, he said "You're gonna wear that button" and I said "No sir, I'm not. I'm not gonna wear that button." This is the belief I have. You have yours; I have mine, and will not wear it. I never did. From day one it was my belief.

JH: I was looking at the Springs Bulletins and it seemed like they pushed it.[2] *They made it sound like it was going to benefit the people who worked at the plant. It was going to do the opposite.*

LH: Absolutely, I think. My opinion why they pushed it, they knew it wasn't going to benefit the business itself for the people. But they knew down the road, years, it was going to benefit them. And I think that's exactly why they did it. And from what I understand, John Spratt, included, made millions off of it. But it didn't come down to the people. It eventually ended up taking people's jobs.

JH: Yes sir. I was shocked looking through the bulletins and every single issue it was all….

MM: Oh yeah

JH: …wear your pins.

MM: NAFTA, NAFTA, NAFTA!

LH: Huge banners on the wall throughout the plant. The shop personnel put up huge banners throughout the plant. They just pushed it and pushed it and pushed it. It was almost like they were telling the people to accept it.

JH: When you didn't wear your button did your plant manager say anything?

LH: No. I was always….I retaliated a lot against some of these things they tried to do, but they never did fire me. Made it through it! I guess they looked at it like once I made a decision, I'd stand my ground. I don't know.

JH: Did that hamper your advancement?

LH: No not at all. Like I said, I started out as a sweeper. In 1971 I went right on up. It wasn't long, I didn't do that probably a year and then I went on onto weaving and then I just progressed on up to each job. And, later on I worked for a guy and he asked me would I'd be interested in becoming a spare supervisor. At that time they tried to have a spare on each shift. And I told him, "Yeah, I'd try it." And I just kept going on from there.

[PAUSE]

Springs was good to me. Really good. I raised a family, sent my son to college. He graduated. I did ok with the profit sharing plan, the benefits were good. I mean it was a good company to work for. And you can get promoted if you worked hard and done what they asked you to do.

[2] In fact in the years preceding the treaty then CEO Walter Elisha pushed NAFTA incessantly. During the early 90s The Springs Bulletin, which was distributed to the workers, hammered home the necessity to vote for NAFTA.

I didn't have any problems working for them. The problems I have today, is I think they absolutely sold us out, for personal gains, I guess you might say. You know she [Crandall] was getting a little old and rumor was she just wanted to retire and get out of the business. But the business had been going on probably; you could probably quote this better than me…. I don't know what time the old White plant started up in Fort Mill, but, the Eureka plant, when they decided to shut it down, I think at the time they decided to shut it down it was 114 years old.

JH: That's almost exactly right

LH: And what really made me so mad, in the end, we were told where they had already begun shutting plants down. We knew the textile business was hurting and it wasn't going to be as strong as it was. So they started shutting plants down. The old Gayle plant shut down, Eureka plant shut down. Of course they had another one here in Chester, called the Springsteen Plant. And all of them were shutting down.

And they were cutting back everywhere. But we had a meeting one day and they said "We're gonna survive!" We're going to have what they call the "Number 9" corridor from Katherine to the Fort Lawn area which, at that time, were the Francis Plant, Leroy Plant, Elliot, was still operating and doing very well.[3]

[PAUSE]

So that's what we all felt that was going to happen. We knew we were gonna' cut back. But we were going to keep our business. One thing that I know, our division manager had a meeting with us. Our plant manager had a meeting with us. And they told us that the Katherine Plant was in good shape. We had just got finished doing about a 13 million dollar project.

JH: What year was that? Was that the renovations?

LH: Yeah! We built a big, huge, new warehouse. We put in all new high-tech spinning equipment. It was about a 13 million dollar project, probably started in 05'. It wasn't long. I mean we really weren't completely through with it. So, here we are being told that we are going to survive, getting this project, getting new machinery in. I know that the numbers was good for that plant. I had to report them every week.

I sat in weekly and daily staff meetings. Supply costs, quality, safety. You know everything you look for on your numbers were good. That plant was not losing money, it was making money. I was told that by the plant manager, by the division manager [pause]…. We had been in some troubled times because of some bad decisions the [previous] plant manager had made and some of his assistant plant managers.

But then we got this new plant manager and he come down, and the new division manager, and they come down and told us what they wanted us to do. We turned that plant around and everything that was in red went to black.

[3] Here Larry is referring to South Carolina highway 9 which runs from interstate 77 to Chester, 13 miles to the West. The Katherine Plant sits roughly 3 miles off the interstate. Formally a two lane road, Chester widened it to four lanes, and installed lights off the exit to entice travelers off the interstate. The first pavement job "buckeld" and it had to be done all over. As of today there are a few fast food restaurants, gas stations, and one hotel off of the exit. It still has not brought development to Chester.

So I thought we was ok. One morning we were going to a 10'o clock staff meeting. We all walked in not knowing nothing. Just thinking it was a normal everyday staff meeting. And he said "The first thing I got to tell ya'll is the Katherine Plant's closing". BAM! Just like that. When I see a grown man sit in there, I looked over and tears was running down his cheek.

Everybody was stunned. And, at first I thought it just might have been [kidding with the lot of us]. I knew….it was going to happen. And why?

That was the question of everybody at the table. We were doing a good job. You told us we are, we see the numbers. We put em' up on the charts and show em'. Why? Don't know.

JH: Were there any rumors about it closing at all?

LH: No, the rumor was, we was gonna survive. The rumor was we were gonna survive and those along Number 9. It was gonna be kind of like a chosen few to remain.

JH: Grace ended up shutting down too.[4] *I went out there to talk to people and everyone seemed to think it was fine.*

LH: Well, what was told to us is the plants on Number 9, which was said to be four, were gonna remain and Grace would support them four plants. That was the plan that was given us. And, then we go to a staff meeting, and, out of the blue, Katherine Plant is shutting down.

JH: Was there a lot of anger involved?

LH: It was just shock, hurt. I mean most everybody at that table was 25 years plus. And we had years, and years, and years combined. God I don't even know how many years it would be. It was really….none of us wanted to believe it. And we went ahead and talked a little bit and he [the plant manager] just said "I'll let you know any further developments." That's just how it happened.

JH: That was it?

LH: For that meeting and then we started having meetings not about how well the plant was running anymore, about how we was gonna shut it down.

JH: Was it phased out?

YeaH, we started having shift meetings. And people, I mean, just devastated. Crying. Men and women. And that's one of the biggest things that bothers me. I had been there a long time and come up through and I knew everybody in the plant, I was in weaving my whole time. I knew everybody in the plant. When somebody new come to the plant they'd come get me to show em' around because I'd know Joe, Jim, Tom, Susie, whoever, even if they was out of my department in the whole mill. [Pause] It was sad. That's what bothered me most of all, I mean I come home, and I won't lie to you I cried too, I shed many tears. Not only for myself but for the people that were losing their jobs. You had people there that didn't have a lot of education. Young people and older people.

[4] I am referring to Grace Bleachery in Lancaster, right across the county line. When the rough sheeting was finished at Katherine, it would ship to Grace to be finished, packed, and then distributed. The Colonel had been the catalyst to build the plant to cut out the middle man from raw cloth to low finished product.

MM: Some couldn't even read or write.

LH: But they was good at what we had trained them to do. You take like a weaver, maybe a high school graduate, maybe not, but she was sitting there making 18 and 19 dollars an hour.

JH: One of the fears was when I talked to people in 2006 was if we lose out jobs we don't know what will happen.

MM: Like us, we went in at age 17 and that's all we knew.

LH: I mean they were happy. Up until this point, they lived a good life and what was really devastating was a husband and wife team in the same plant.

MM: We had a lot of those.

LH: They gonna both lose their checks.

You think like if a husband was a loom fixer and the wife was a weaver. He made 16 dollars an hour. If she was a good weaver, I mean they [would] make 18, 19 dollars an hour. So that's pretty good income. You know forty hours a week, well eighty hours a week for that family. That's pretty good income.

MM: Benefits were good.

LH: And just to Snatch the rug out from under them. Can you imagine that?

JH: No , unfortunately the more people I talk to, it's the same situation.

LH: And the other side, the other bad thing was, you had people who had spent their whole life with Springs, always there, always dependable, and they were 54 years old and that's all they knew how to do. Thought they were going to get to stay there until they were 62, they never learned anything else, they never took time to learn anything else, and now guess what? They're out of a job. Nobody's gonna hire them. I mean I know what they say, age discrimination and all but that's a bunch of bull, because it does go against you.

MM: I had people tell me "I am sixty years old, I am fifty-six years old. What am I going to do?"

LH: If you are fifty six years old, your trained and you do an excellent job on what you have, but that's all you know. You don't have an education, you don't have skills to go out here and start working on airplanes or cars, but you were good at what you did because you made yourself that way. And now what are you going to do? You can't; you can't retire because you're not old enough.

JH: You're kind of caught in between retirement and trying to find something else.

LH: Yeah. You can't go outside and afford any kind of health insurance probably for yourself or your wife you know.

JH: My dad, he got in between the health insurance. A doctor without health insurance. He had to buy COBRA. And my mom is three years younger than he is so when he gets on Medicare you know, there's going to be a gap there. And so they're trying to figure that out.

LH: Right. And people just, I mean they caught under such a bad -- and what gets me about this Springs have been in business all these years. A very good business, we were top of the chain one time, you know we were the best. And their whole family [the Close family] I mean are still rich from it. You know it started with I think her great granddaddy [The Colonel] had always told us it was the number one priority was to take care of the people and they would do the rest. You know if you take care of them, you build them houses on these mill villages, you set them up a general store, you do all these things.

MM: I grew up in one of those houses near Gayle. My mom's still there.

JH: Oh really? How old is your mom?

MM: Eighty-four. She worked, all my family worked in textiles with the exception of my brother.

JH: Okay. Was your family in textiles too?

LH: No.

LH: Well my mom worked for Springs too, at the old Gayle plant and then she left there.

But and what I was saying, it was a very good business. They made billions I guess. And the part that said was going to be left was still making money, still today could be making money and they just said, "No, we're walking away on all those thousands of people." You may know this, I don't know a number that at one time.

JH: When I visited over there, it was 700 people.

LH: Oh no in their prime --

JH: So but it was still a lot more, I know that.

LH: Oh my god, in their prime. I'm wanting to say -- we had 1,200 people at the Katherine plant. I'm wanting to say four or 5,000 at one time at Grace. I may be wrong on that because I never worked there.

JH: No that sounds about right. I know there was about 700 associates left when I visited but they were cutting back. And I think there were about 600 left when I came to Katherine and but they were in the process of cutting all that in half.

LH: So you had all these people who were doing a good job, they were still doing good. You know they say numbers don't lie. And I seen the numbers every day and every week, every month. That's what put the bad taste. I'm telling you about in the latter part of the people careers and lives in. It was just like you know why, I don't -- if she wants to retire, let her retire, pass it on to somebody else in the family or something. Sell it to somebody that's going to keep it in the United States, not to somebody over in Argentina and Brazil.

And the other thing was so bad that I thought was when we started phasing down and the people that bought us, hell they come over here and got offices up front, took our office space. They come in and just I mean, right in front of people. And people out there working and here come these Argentines and people. You know if there the one that's buying us and they going to move all our equipment and all, people had to put up with that. That was sickening to me.

You know I was told I had to work with Pedro, I don't know his last name. I said, "No, I ain't working with him. That ain't happening." Which I ended up doing it because, at that point, that's one I was going to lose. I was either going to work with him or, you know, be terminated.

JH: Right. I heard a story that of people who, they, the guys who fixed the loom, the loom fixers would take apart the looms. They were going to take the looms down and go put them back up wherever in Brazil and teach the workers over there.

MM: They offered him [Larry] to go over there.

LH: They tried to get me to get a passport and –

JH: Take the looms down and go put them back up wherever in Brazil and teach the workers in Brazil?

LH: And they said you needed a passport and all that and go --

MM: There were going to fly you home what once a month?

LH: Something like that. But I mean, it was, there we were, know that we were going down and they start bringing in boxes. You know it's got on there, "Destination: Argentina, Brazil." The brand new 13 million-dollar machines going to Brazil, going to Argentina. And here we are, these people come in and take over and they act like you know there the boss. I mean, I'm trying to think of a couple of the names but I didn't really want to learn. And that's pretty bad isn't it?

And then at the same point, they said, "You got to run your job until it goes out or you won't be here, you won't get your benefits."

MM: Won't get your severance.

LH: Won't get your severance.

MM: You were held at ransom basically.

JH: That's what my next question was: If you had left, you wouldn't have gotten any severance?

LH: Yeah…. I mean, tell them, if they don't run their job and do what they're supposed to do, they won't get a severance package. You know and was people going to do? What was a 56 year old that needed that job until the very last day he could have gone and done? He was going to run it. Not because he wanted to. He didn't want to, you know, do that. That was pretty low down.

JH: You know it's just like being stuck between a rock and a hard place.

LH: It was bad.

JH: So the severance, what kind of severance? I heard six months is that --

LH: It depended on the how long you were there. A lot of different circumstances. If you was on salary which I was, I got six months. I had to sign a waiver saying I wasn't going to sue the company, all kinds of stuff or I couldn't get it. And I think I still got a copy of it somewhere, I may have threw it away I don't know. You know and you got work with it and you got to help do this, you do this, you got to do all these things.

JH: When Cotemnias came into the plant I heard there was, you know you were telling me about the kind of the oddness of them walking around. But I heard that they tried to run things was totally different with the Close family and it was created a lot of tension.

LH: Oh it did. Oh absolutely. I mean, it was a lot of tension in that plant. And especially when they would come out and walk around and had their pads and write the serial numbers of every machine down right in front of them. I mean, in writing in all the dates that this machine was made and stuff like that. And knowing that that was the beginning of the end.

JH: So when you found out it was closing, when they said your job was going to be eliminated, how long when they told you? Did they tell you a day it was going to be eliminated ?

LH: They had a target date. And I cannot sit here and tell you what that target date was but and depending on everything going exactly right, they didn't do it --

MM: Your last day was in May.

LH: Yeah. I -- May -- I was the last one there. And weaving, we had, at one time we had two weaving superintendents. We had two people weaving with us. But I was chosen to stay there until the end. There was the other ones gone so I took over both departments. At that time I had eight supervisors and about 800 people I guess…..Well, maybe 700 because it was you know around the clock.

I sat there until the end.

JH: When you said Crandall sold the plant, I heard that none of her brothers had any -- did her brothers have anything to do with it or --

LH: I heard there was conflict in the family. The one brother was not wanting to do it and it was primarily her decision to do it. There really was, there was a lot of conflict in the family. Now whether that's true or not I don't know -- But it was a lot of rumor and it came from, from top people. So I think there was.

MM: I think Derick was wanting to keep it running wasn't he?

LH: And of course you know the one went and opened up, created profits down in Rock Hill.

MM: That's Derick.

LH: Yeah, that's Derick.

JH: I was hoping to interview Crandall, but I was told I would have to give her pre-written questions.

LH: Tell her I said, and I know your recording this: that she can go to hell.

MM: I think that's all the sentiments of the people in Chester.

LH: You would not believe the people and the things they've said about her while that place was closing down. See the people on the streets and what they say about her. I can tell you, in this area…

MM:…. her name is mud. That's putting it mildly.

LH:They said, at one time, we had a company that owned like 49% of us.

JH: It was the group that was led by the guy who was Ronald Reagan's, one of his financial advisors. I can't remember his name. He got in trouble in the early 2000s or late nineties and they had to pull out. I just started getting into that.

LH: Yeah this was an investment group that at the time was told us owned 49%. She [Crandall] still owned controlling interest at 51%. They got out of it.

MM: [*To Larry*] What was the guy's name from New York? That was CEO? The jewler?

That's when we started going downhill. Come on, help me. Work with me.

LH: You talking about ….he actually trained her.

MM: Trained Crandall.

JH: Oh, was it….Walter Elisha?

MM/LH: That's him!

LH: That's who Crandall trained under.

JH: He was the one pushing NAFTA in the bulletins. When you say it started going down hill, what kind of changes did you guys notice?

LH: Right off, nothing. Just, you know, they were wanting more and more and more for less and less and less money to spend on labor, less money to spend on supplies while raising production up.

MM: He was a jeweler, he didn't know anything about textiles.

JH: So it was kind of like the stretch out?

LH: Yeah.

JH: So when you tried to find another job, was it hard to find another one after Springs. Could you walk me through that?

LH: Me personally? Six- months severance. Well, I never drawn unemployment in my life. So of course your unemployment begin. I really felt guilty about signing up for unemployment. But they signed us up. So I was receiving an unemployment check each week plus my regular salary for the six months. So I said, "Well you know financially I'm okay". I don't know a lot, I don't have a lot of the bills that a lot of people did and I had some you know investments. So I took the six months off. Then I said I'm going to take another six months off. So what I did, I lived off my six-month salary, I took every unemployment check, I never cashed one, and put them straight in savings. When I run out on my severance, started picking up on up above, all those checks. So I took a year off.

JH: Well good for you, you deserved it.

LH: Yeah.

MM: Then he had to get education to get a job.

LH: Yeah. Then I signed up and went to York Tech on heavy equipment training and got my diploma there.

MM: He about drove me insane.

LH: And then I went to York Tech on and got my CDL, truck driving. Got my diploma on that. My whole plan was, and it worked out perfect, the day that they announced that we was going to shut it down, we did sit there and talk there a little bit later on that afternoon. And the guy [plant manager] asked me said, "Well, what's your plans? What are you going to do?" I said, "Well I'm going to take some time off. I'm going to throw this beeper down and this cell phone down. I'm just going to take some time off and enjoy." I said, "But what my plans are if you ask me today, would be to get my CDL and my heavy equipment training and go to work for the South Carolina Department of Transportation."

JH: And that's exactly…

LH: …And that's exactly what I did to the letter. I work in the York office.

JH: Okay. And what kind of work do you do now?

LH: A sign technician. I put up all these speed limit signs, stop signs, your signs on the interstate, the decals on the overpasses for the height of your truckers, I do all that.

JH: How long are you planning on working and then retiring?

LH: Well to work with the state, if you work five years, you're vested in their retirement fund, which is only what I'm putting in. You know they do add some to it. So I'll get that little check after five years. If you stay ten years, which I don't plan on doing, you can buy the insurance that you're at the current rate you're paying then until you know you go 65 or whatever. I'm gonna probably work -- I'm 55 now, I'll probably work until 59 1/2. And then at that time with the investments I got, my 401 that I rolled over and stuff, you know you can get it without any penalties. So my plan is 59 1/2.

JH: That's sounds like a plan to me for sure.

LH: And what really makes feel bad is I've been in this town all my life and I know most everybody in this town. And I'm still seeing people today struggling and just cannot make ends meet. They've lost

their homes, cars, and they haven't found jobs yet. Just yesterday, I was in Doc Sam's office and a guy come up to me, Charlie Hopkins.

He came up to me yesterday and shook my hand and he said, "Larry, I see you're working now." I said, "Yeah, what are you doing?" He said, "I can't find nothing." I see somebody like that everyday almost in the grocery store, hardware store that's " I can't find nothing."

See, somebody like that everyday almost in grocery stores, hardware store that's you know just haven't found any. And most of them of them is in that range that I'm telling you about. 55, 56 that's just having a hard, hard time with it.

JH: It seems like Chester is on the point it's almost 22% [unemployment]something like that.

LH: Yes. But I -- and this is kind of interesting. All the years that I was in management as a spare supervisor, supervisor, department manager, superintendent on up, maintenance manager. You would see the people come in there every day and just moan and complain, "I hate this place. I'm quitting, I'm getting me another job." And they wouldn't, they'd come back the next day. And now it's just like its amazing really. I see those very same people now and they said they'd give anything in the world to be back. Even some of them that have jobs said if it would open up today, I'd leave what I'm doing, and go straight back. You'd be surprised how many times I hear that.

JH: Yeah, I've heard it too like a lot of people use the word "family". Like all the people, everybody that worked there.

LH: Yeah, I would go back. And it's simply because I miss the manufacturing environment. I never thought I'd say that I miss all the pressure of it but man, when I first came out, you can ask, I didn't know what to do. See for years, I was on call, seven days a week 24 hours a day. I mean, that's what you had to do. You know you wasn't there on the weekends but you were responsible for that whole weekend.

So I wore a beeper and carried the phone and was on call seven days a week, 24 hours a day. If I go on vacation --

MM: Actually I thought he was going to have a breakdown, I really did.

LH: If I went -- you know and I would get calls during the middle of the night, Saturday night, Sunday morning accident, running bad, things are great, going good. Just everyday was like that. Seven days a week. I'd get up in the middle of the night, call and see how's it going or they would call me. Sunday morning, most always Sunday morning, I'd go down. So and I was being paid well for it so I didn't mind. And it was my job, that's what I was supposed to do.

JH: There's dignity in working like that.

LH: But just think about it now, one day you cut all that off and here I'm sitting here and don't have a flipping thing to do.

MM: But you're saying it's going from like 100 to zero.

LH: It was like going from 100 miles an hour to zero.

JH: The first few days what kind, what did you do --did you just kind of sit?

LH: Yeah. Yeah.

MM: Yeah.

LH: Yeah and I would actually sit and cry. You know people would call me up, "You heard anything?" "No". And it was really, really tough. The last month or two was hard from beginning to phase down when we did start phasing out. You know, everyday I'd go in and people would be in my office, grown people, crying. "Have you heard anything? Is anything going to change? You know can you help me get a job somewhere?"

MM: "Can I put you down for a reference?"

LH: Yeah. "I bet I give my phone number out and 500 people and that is well if they were -- "Yeah, I'll give you a reference." And I gave a lot of people a lot of references. I would get calls you know. And I would tell them, "Yeah, they're a great person." "Would you hire them back?" I said, "I sure would."

MM: But we had a good time at work though.

LH: Oh we had a ball.

MM: You didn't mind going to work.

LH: I said this many of times, some a lot of days, I had a better time at work than I would at home. Yeah, I mean, we had a ball.

MM: You look through these pictures, we ate and had something going on all the time.

MM: Little contest and different things.

LH: And I know I'm kind of contradicting myself on what I said. But in those days, you couldn't work for a better company. You know.

JH: Yeah, I've heard that. The same thing you're saying is people loved working there and they felt, they were shocked, like you said, at the end. And it felt like they were sold down the river so to speak.

MM: We were.

LH: Yeah. Well I think the rug was just snatched out from under us. You know when I first went to work in the mill… we had a full time cafeteria in that mill when I first started around the clock.

JH: Really?

LH: Oh you get on your break, I mean, you go sit down and breakfast anytime day or night…. cafeteria in that mill when I first started around the clock.

MM: Yeah.

LH: Oh you get on your break. I mean, you go sit down and breakfast anytime day and night. They cooked a full course meal on every shift, every shift. They had a cafeteria manager, she had people to work for her on every shift. You could get the full course meal or hamburgers or hot dogs or what -- and I think back in the early days you could get a full course meal for $1.34, plate full.

MM: A biscuit was like .35, sausage and biscuit.

LH: Good stuff.

LH: Had a nice cafeteria and I cannot tell you the year that they started -- they phased out the cafeteria, that's the one thing --

MM: That started in the nineties.

LH: Yeah and I think that was -- I'm not sure if Elisha was there then or not. But that's one thing they started taking away you know and then people didn't like that.

MM: Had vending machines put in.

LH: Put in vending and different things. Had a good profit sharing program. You know had a good 401 that you could actually put in up to 18%.

MM: Eighteen percent.

JH: Wow, that's a lot

LH: And they matched up to six. And that's one way that we were able to do good, her and her own account, me and mine, put in the max you know for those years. Otherwise you didn't get the match, and did pretty good there. You know.

MM: I worked in supply down there. I started off at the Gayle cloth room, then went to weave room, then went to the weave room office, and then they called us into the middle of the floor one day and said, "We're closing down." Luckily I got a job. I went from first shift to the night shift and then made my way back up.

JH: Okay. So at the Gayle cloth room did they shift people to other plants ?

MM: Yeah.

JH: Did everybody get shifted ?

MM: Everybody that wanted a job got a job because there were other mills that we could go to. But when Katherine closed, there was no place to go but home.

JH: Right. That was the last one. Because it seemed like from what I -- when it agreed to close to then Springsteen and then I think I got it back, it was a Gayle, and then Springsteen, and then Eureka. It seemed like people kept shifting.

MM: Yeah, so we could go to other plants.

JH: So there was always an option to go to another plants?

MM: You may not be on the shift that you were but you got a job.

LH: And at that time that if the Katherine plant couldn't support the number of people, then they went right on down the route to the Fort Lawn area. But on those three particular plants you're talking about, the people were given an opportunity to work.

JH: And that's because Katherine was obviously the end of the line. That's why you know I started documenting that because that was it. That was the end of it.

MM: When my daddy started at the Katherine plant and they still had the dirt floors and all down there.

LH: We called it the big K. ….And to get back to say that we were doing well. It ended up being when several plants were still running, we would get orders in. We would get -- our orders started getting a little tougher, home products that were made. But when no other plant, and this is the honest to god truth, when no other plant could make the new product or be successful at it, they'd send it to us and we never failed on one.

LH: I mean, it didn't matter. I mean, we were going to be the best at it and we were going to make whatever they wanted us to make and we did it. And everybody got, everybody that was in the business end knew it. And if they got something hard, send it to Katherine, those people will take care of you. And that was just the mentality of the people that worked there.

MM: They'd figure out way to make it work.

LH: I mean, they had a lot of pride in what they were doing. And they knew that if we could make it work, then we may get that order and better for us.

JH: Getting back to Chester County as a whole and you've lived here all your life. So how have you seen things change and throughout I guess to where they've gotten to right now?

LH: When they started shutting these mills down, I had friends that owned his own mechanic shop. He said it had a devastating effect on him. Just friends alone. City True Value Hardware, the guy that owned it, he told me the same thing.

MM: Eddie.

LH: You know Eddie?

JH: Yes Eddie.

LH: Eddie told me, "Man it was rough." He said, "It's" -- he said, "It was just devastating on us." And it was that way all through town from mechanics to the little small hardware stores, the small convenience store. The one right up above the plant down on Number 9. I mean, the guy that actually had it sold it. Another guy took it over. So I mean, it was, it was hard on people around in this area. It affected a lot more people in the economy of Chester than just the people working there.

JH: Yes sir, it trickled down. Because if you're not making money, you can't spend money.

LH: Oh absolutely. Yeah.

MM: I think for years, Springs had a lock on not letting new industry come into Chester County. And now, Chester County's paying twice for it.

JH: I'm researching that, it seems to be the case is they kept other industries out.

MM: Yep.

JH: Now look.

LH: And it all gets back to why? If you got a company that's doing good. Why do it? ….And today I mean, I'm sure you've been by. Look at that nice big plant sitting there [points at picture of Katherine].

MM: We went in it after it was actually closed all the way down. One of the guys was kind of like a watch keeper and Doug Udy (phonetic). And we went and walked back through it.

MM: It was like a death.

JH: I was in there when all the machines had stopped and --

MM: It's quiet, dead quiet.

JH: -- it was so quiet. Yeah, it's eerie almost.

MM: Yeah, ghostly quiet.

LH: This is no lie, I'm telling you the god's honest truth, I was the last one to leave out, me and the shop and the plant engineer. But I had been there so long in those weave rooms and knew everybody on every shift. I knew that -- like when I walked out of my office into the weave room, I knew who was going to be in that corner, in the middle here and that corner. I knew who to look for. I could see those people out there when they was gone, when I'd walk out of there.

LH: Oh yeah. I mean, I could see them just right there. You always had some people that as soon as they seen you coming, throw their hand up, want to complain about something. You know that's every day.

JH: So you knew exactly what to expect from people too?

[Laughter]

LH: Oh yeah. I mean, I knew what they were going to complain about before I even got there. You know. But after it closed, I could see them people throwing their hands up and all. I mean, that sounds crazy.

JH: No it's not crazy.

LH: But it was such a vision in my mind that I had been there so long and seen it all, I could see them. And that's when I'd come home, it would bother me a lot.

MM: He had people call to see if they could get some overtime because they was about to turn their electricity off.

LH: At the end.

MM: He'd get them some overtime some kind of way just to pay a bill.

LH: It was, it was rough.

JH: So what are your thoughts on the county, city, and county council in Chester? I've heard that a lot of people think they dropped the ball trying to --

MM: They dropped the ball.

LH: I think they dropped the ball and I think they were "buddy buddy" and worried about themselves more than the county. That's what I think.

MM: I actually talked to Hal Stone not this past Hillarity but the Hillarity before last, two years ago. [5] And I said, "When you going to get some new industry in?" "Oh it's coming, it's coming." Then they announced the poly bagging and no sign of it. Signs sitting down there but that's it, no dirt's moved.

[5] Hillarity is a Fall festival held in Chester, so named because it takes place upon the hill downtown.

LH: But I think that Springs had such a lock on it --

MM: They did.

LH: That -- and everybody thought it would be here forever. All of them were doing good by it, so why you know? Why have the vision to look out there and bring in new industry in and all this? They didn't think it would happen neither but …it did.

LH: Along with it. I went to the computer and printed out what the loom was running, the production it was running at the time we stopped it off. I think it was 95.8%. I wrote down the construction. The paper that I've got, the print out its got the date, and time, and all on it.

JH: The last one, wow.

LH: Last piece of cloth Springs ever was.

MM: You see back there it was downstairs in the file cabinet. This is the end.

LH: Yep. As a matter of fact, it was me Ralph Bailey, Jody Long, the guy I told you was in finance. He was standing there. Carla, you know the one who cut her finger off? She's the one that cut the cloth for me and took it to the cloth room. She was crying like a baby when she cut that last roll of cloth. She was an Hispanic. Couldn't talk good but she was a worker. And we ran a job that mostly always pertained to men and she did damn good or better than them.

MM: We didn't really have a whole lot of Hispanics in our plant.

LH: What do you mean? We had 150.

MM: Do you think it was that many?

LH: At one time when the textile plant or the textile industry, all of them were shutting down and those who could leave were leaving and going to other jobs. You know they were getting out before the end. At one time, we couldn't have ran those weave rooms at the Katherine Plant if it was not for the Hispanics we had in there. They come in and they'd run their job.

JH: Work hard?

MM: Everyday, they tried to get me to learn Spanish because I worked in supply. They gave me a book.

LH: They took me out front and told me that I was going to have to go take Spanish lessons. They give me the book and these little quick notes and I told them "No". They come to my house, live and learn my language. I have to say this, I know people have a lot of mixed emotions on them being here and different things and I do too. But they saved the Katherine plant for a while I'll tell you that, we could not have ran it. There was times when I would go up to interview people and that was all that was sitting up there wanting a job.

JH: That was it?

LH: Yeah.

MM: Tina might have told you a lot of times the blacks and the whites couldn't pass the drug test to get in the door.[6]

JH: That seems to be there now too, the drugs in the county seem to really be starting --

MM: And the shootings.

JH: Shootings. Yeah, I was talking to some people the other day about that and they were like yeah, they said, one woman, she said, "Well people get their backs against the wall and they don't know what else to do, her son killed himself and he was selling weed because, he had children to take care of and he

[6] Tina Colvin was a nurse at Springs. I had interviewed her earlier in the day.

couldn't get a job." And she said, "What are you supposed to --" I said, "Yeah, I understand." And she said, "He got so distraught over it, he killed himself."

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