Bless Her Hearth: Domestic Advice Media in the American South, 1920-present

A Dissertation

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Dedication

To Momma,

Sorry it took so long.

Abstract

This dissertation begins with the assertion that, well into the twentieth century, the American South did not contribute to cultural production on a mass scale. Instead, cultural production was the domain of the urban North, Midwest, and later, the West Coast as publishing firms, film and television studios, production companies, and advertising agencies were found predominantly in these regions.

The South's earliest cultural productions, instead, appeared in the form of domestic and lifestyle advice produced locally utilizing emergent domestic technologies beginning in the 1920s. This project presents a history of *southern* cultural production and the women and media institutions responsible for defining southern culture and identity from the twentieth century to the present. The ongoing (re)defining of southern culture during periods of industrialization and modernization was facilitated through the region's domestic and lifestyle media texts as many of the South's earliest cultural productions. Domestic advisors and lifestyle institutions utilized emergent domestic technologies such as radio, television, and VHS tapes to create, teach, and preserve the region's traditions, instructing white, middle-class women audiences towards the production of a uniquely southern domesticity and femininity.

The southern home and media texts devoted to its upkeep – physically, emotionally, and ideologically – form the case studies presented here; a successful life, region, and nation depended first on a successful home. Questions of how to be and live southern require ongoing training and adaptability as the region continues to change. From radio programs of the 1920s to home construction in the contemporary moment, southern domestic advisors instruct women to

perform a distinctly southern domesticity steeped in the region’s past for guidance on how to navigate the present and future.

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Abbreviations

ANEM: The American National Exhibition in Moscow

GWTW: *Gone with the Wind*

RFD: Radio Farmers Democracy

SL: *Southern Living*

SRAF: Sears, Roebuck Agricultural Foundation

TIG: *Today in Georgia*

Bless Her Hearth: Domestic Advice Media in the American South, 1920-present

Susan Myrick, farm editor for the *Macon Telegraph and News* and close friend of southern novelist Margaret Mitchell, was hired by Selznick Studios in 1939 to serve as a technical and cultural advisor on the film adaptation of Mitchell's *Gone with the Wind* (1936). A letter from the city council of Macon, Georgia to Selznick Studios recommending Myrick for the position reads:

> Because of the many ridiculous and 'professional Southern' types to which we have been treated in the past, it was with some degree of anxiety that we learned that Margaret Mitchell's great work was to be filmed. We were fearful that the play, at least insofar as the characters and the customs of the South were concerned, might be counterfeit rather than counterpart. Miss Myrick is a student who has looked closely into the life and manners of the South and has so learned to express and portray them with truth. The absence of this charming personality will be a distinct loss but we are comforted with the thought that she goes as our ambassador and as an educator to the moving picture industry. As such, she can, and we are sure will, render a great service to that industry and an even greater service to our section of the country. (Lindsley 2011, 170)

Myrick's official role, as detailed in her contract with Selznick International Pictures, included serving as "an expert consultant and advisor on the speech, manners, and customs of the period and localities depicted in the novel" and "as a coach and tutor of the pronunciations and accent characteristics of each social class and locality depicted in said novel for members of the cast (both white and negro)" (Myrick and Harwell 1982, 7).

In her role as technical advisor, Myrick sought to bring authenticity to the filming of *Gone with the Wind*, to remedy any offensively incorrect representations of the South, its customs, geography, and culture to avoid inflicting "any violence to the Southern feeling" and southern audiences (Lindsley 2011, 197). Myrick, Margaret Mitchell, and the people of Georgia

(among southerners across the region) expressed their hesitancy toward the filmic adaptation of the novel and the treatment it might face when handled by those from outside the region. The fears expressed in the above letter from the city of Macon over past "ridiculous" and "professional" (i.e., Hollywood) depictions of the South, those informed solely from an outside perspective, continued to plague the region well into the twentieth century.[1] The adaptation of *Gone with the Wind*, for this dissertation, marks the start of the ongoing adaptation of the South across texts and mediums throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

Long lacking the infrastructure – electricity, communications technologies, urban centers – to create its own cultural products, the South did not begin to produce nationally recognized media texts until the years following the end of World War II. Karen Cox (2009, 680-681) affirms that the

> overarching conclusion that, on the whole, southerners did not create mass culture is important and has a basis in fact. That is to say, the South did not and as rule does not manufacture mass culture – most publishing houses, television and film studies, and advertising firms are headquartered in New York and Los Angeles and have long been responsible for how nonsoutherners perceive the region.

The lack of mass culture production in the region produced fewer options for consumption; "a per capita circulation for newspapers and magazines that was less than half the northern rate, and

[1] This is not to assume that *Gone with the Wind* represents any authentic South, but more so, that Myrick was tasked with rendering a screen South that represented the region in a way that those from the region would accept, a rendition that felt authentic to the "Southern feeling" described by Myrick. Importantly, too, not all aspects of the film were acceptable to all audiences. For example, Myrick attempted to bestow lead actress Vivien Leigh with an honorary membership to the United Daughters of the Confederacy, a memorial/benevolence group focused on memorializing the Lost Cause, but the members refused, despite Leigh's portrayal as one of the most enduring icons of the antebellum era.

an illiteracy figure roughly three times the northern average further complicated the process of 'making southerners'" from a cultural standpoint (Cobb 2005, 51).

While the South largely did not contribute to mass cultural production well into the twentieth century, its regional, local, and later, national scale media texts and institutions sought to define and preserve what it meant to be southern in the face of regional growth and development throughout the twentieth century.[2] This dissertation presents a history of *southern* cultural production and the media institutions and women responsible for defining southern culture and identity from the twentieth century to the present through the utilization of emergent domestic technologies. The ongoing (re)defining of southern culture during periods of industrialization and modernization was facilitated through the region's domestic and lifestyle media texts as many of the South's earliest cultural productions. Women like Myrick, in their roles as southern cultural advisors, utilized emergent domestic technologies such as radio, television, and VHS tapes to create, teach, and preserve the region's traditions, instructing white, middle-class women audiences towards the production of a uniquely southern domesticity and lifestyle.

This dissertation analyzes domestic advice and lifestyle media produced and circulated in the southern United States beginning in the early twentieth century to the present. The genre of domestic advice includes fictional and non-fictional instructive media texts dispersed through multiple delivery technologies, often those historically associated with the domestic. The texts

[2] This is not to say there were no significant southern media texts produced prior to the mid-twentieth century but instead, that the region itself often was not part of the production of these texts. For example, *Birth of a Nation*, while drawing from southern literature as source material, was not filmed on location or produced by a southern studio, as is the same for *Gone with the Wind*. This raises questions about *southern* cultural production and the influence of outside perspectives.

analyzed here tend towards non-fictional examples including daytime radio and television programs, educational/instructional films, magazines, how-to manuals, and new media technologies. The fictionalized versions of these texts (e.g., domestic family sitcoms, melodrama, and southern domestic films like *Gone with the Wind*) serve to buttress the "construction of cultural myths" across popular culture with lesser emphasis on straight-forward didactics (Young 2008, 227).[3]

These texts focus primarily on skill acquisition, to greater and lesser degrees. As described by Laurie Ouellette (2016, 11), before the rise of broadcasting, "etiquette books, conduct manuals, women's pages, magazines, advertisements and educational films circulated instruction and advice about personhood, behavior, domesticity and everyday life." Radio and television adopted these strategies and offered "unadorned how-to and advice programming" on topics ranging from cooking to making drapes (11). The how-to nature of these programs required "necessarily repeatable protocols," the "result of experience and tradition, sedimented knowledge, best practices … [and] skill" (Skvirsky 2020, 24). What Salomé Aguilera Skvirsky (2020, 2) describes as the "process genre," akin to how-to media, "… organizes the representation of processes" as consisting of "a sequentially ordered series of steps with a clearly identifiable beginning, middle, and end." Skvirsky claims that "at the heart of the process genre … is the representation of labor" and more importantly, "an *aesthetic* of labor" (34). The

[3] The inclusion of both fictional and non-fictional texts in my discussion of domestic advice could also be understood as *explicitly* and *implicitly* pedagogical texts.

process genre centers labor, not only "*what* is done" but "*how* it is done" and is specified by its "capacity to absorb us in the drama and magic of labor" (16, 30).[4]

The role of skill acquisition is necessary for the larger project of self-making and lifestyle construction wherein those learned skills – cooking, decorating, hosting – contribute to one's successful embodiment of the "good life" as defined by their chosen lifestyle and its experts. For example, women in the South could refer to *Southern Living* magazine and its multiple transmedia extensions for information on how to live the good *southern* life, achieved through following the advice and instructions provided by the brand, and often, using the consumer products produced by the brand. To make a good, southern life and to live southern, women should follow *Southern Living* recipes, décor manuals, hosting tips, and even live in *Southern Living* approved neighbors in service of embodying the lifestyle promoted by the brand.

The southern home and media texts devoted to its upkeep – physically, emotionally, and ideologically – form the case studies presented here; a successful life, region, and nation depended first on a successful home. To this end, I argue the centrality of domestic advice and lifestyle media in the construction and preservation of regional culture and identity in the South, three centuries of guidance on how to be southern and practice good living. The white, middle-class southern wife, mother, and her home were presented as exemplary models of southern culture and regional exceptionalism and with the guidance of domestic advisors and lifestyle figures, white southern women were given a set of tools with which to perform and continually negotiate what good southern living looked like at specific historical junctures. In the case

[4] While Skvirsky does not linger on analyses of domestic or reproductive labor, she does state that recipes and instructional manuals would also belong to the process genre, despite her argument that the most exemplary process texts belong to the moving image.

studies presented here, the home, its occupants, technologies, architecture, and ideologies reveal southern domestic advice media, its institutions, and experts as arbiters of southern culture and good living throughout the region's history. Continual work on the self occurs on behalf of the region; through keeping a perfect southern home, southern women keep alive the traditions of the region and its claims of superiority in the face of what it understands as cultural erosion and "Americanization."

Through extensive, original archival research, this dissertation presents two understudied cultural and media histories; that of the American South, a region long unassociated with cultural production, and that of women's genres produced and circulated in the region as some of the most revelatory examples of the uses of emergent media technologies and the creation of many of the region's earliest media texts.

The South's adoption of domestic technologies such as radio and television, though slower and more uneven than other regions, signaled progress and growth. Domestic advice and lifestyle media, are, in turn, at least partially responsible for and essential to the economic development and cultural modernization (for one cannot happen without the other) witnessed in segments of the South throughout the twentieth century, largely concentrated in cities like Atlanta, Georgia and Dallas, Texas. Despite this, though, the cultural products of the region often used the affordances of these technologies as access ways to the past and its purported levels of higher authenticity and truth, things incompatible with and subject to erosion by rapid industrialization and modernization, especially seen within more urban, northern settings. As described by Katharina Niemeyer (2014, 2), "nostalgia is a traditional companion to progress," activated in times of perceived "[crises] of temporality." These domestic technologies and their

texts offered audiences a "present method of consuming the past," often reanimating the Old South in the present as the most authentic representation of southern culture (Joyrich 1992, 238). The mediated nostalgia of the antebellum South, perhaps most profoundly seen in the filmic adaptation of *Gone with the Wind*, continued to inform how domestic technologies were instructed for use by domestic advisors and lifestyle experts. If *Gone with the Wind*'s Tara, the plantation home of the protagonist O'Hara family, is the ur-home of the South, then the very notion of "home … is forever under siege, requiring defense against the plotting enemy," be it invading Union armies or the "Americanization" of the region wherein its regionality gives way to the national (Boym 2001, 43).

While this dissertation focuses on the twentieth and twenty-first centuries and their burgeoning media technologies, it is necessary to briefly synthesize the role of the antebellum era South and its bearing on southern media images and requisite southern culture throughout the region's history.

By the 1820s, the South "began to perceive itself … as part of a nation increasingly dominated by northern economic interests" and recognized the growing relationship forming between the northeast and the Midwest, "a union ordained by such technological triumphs as the completion of the Erie Canal, tying the Great Lakes region with New York, and by the subsequent forging of numerous east-west links between" the regions (Watson 2002, 6). As the South understood itself as increasingly isolated from the rest of the nation, what Ritchie Watson (2002, 7) describes as "cultural beleaguerment … produced a corresponding consciousness of pride" in the South's distinction. The emergence of the "plantation myth" in the 1830s, an "image of a genteel, non-competitive way of life, where old families ruled, old values were

retained, loyal slaves performed their happy tasks, and culture and chivalry abounded" contributed much to notions of southern distinction, pride, and fears over the threat of losing their way of life to that of the North (McCardell 1979, 48).

Southern studies scholars identify the early-to-mid-nineteenth century as a period of burgeoning sentiments towards that of *southern* nationalism. A southern nationalist framework is beneficial to understanding not only the roots of nationalist thought and action in the antebellum South but remains relevant to understanding more contemporary examples of southern media and lifestyle culture. Anne McClintock (1993, 61) drawing from Benedict Anderson writes, "Nationalism becomes … radically constitutive of people's identities" and is composed of "historical and institutional practices through which social difference is invented and performed." In the South, the embrace of a regionally specific nationalism whereby the region understood itself as fundamentally distinct from the rest of the nation, allowed notions of an idealized, superior South to calcify around whiteness, the institutions of slavery, the elite planter class, and later, the Confederacy. These notions, as discussed throughout this dissertation, continued to affect the cultural productions of the region throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Following Hazel V. Carby (1987, 22), the media texts discussed throughout this dissertation "will not be presented as reflections of 'real life' as it 'was,' but as *re*presenting and reconstructing history for us from particular viewpoints under specific historical conditions."

The "historical and institutional practices" of nationalism (Nairn 1997; Kandiyoti 1991; Bhabha 1991; McClintock 1993) rely on a contradictory expression of time and temporality – looking backward while attempting to move forward. Deniz Kandiyoti (1991) writes, "[Nationalism] presents itself both as a modern project that melts and transforms traditional

attachments in favour of new identities *and* as a reflection of authentic cultural values culled from the depths of a presumed communal past" (McClintock 1993, 65). The initial outgrowth of a southern nationalism, or what Kristen Brill (2022) calls a Confederate nationalism, intensified throughout the Civil War into the Lost Cause era carried out on the home front by conservative, planter class women. Brill describes the "centrality of gender to Confederate identity and nationhood" in the ante-and-postbellum South, emphasizing how women advanced the cultural elements of Confederate nationalism and ideology. Elite women, primarily those from the planter class, were charged with "the cultural maintenance of the Southern way of life," and are described as "knowing and keen participants in shaping and circulating a gendered nationalist narrative" (Brill 2022, 5). Both McClintock (1993) and Brill (2022) introduce gender into conversations of nation and nationalism, noting that a feminist theory of nationalism "[brings] into historical visibility women's active cultural and political participation in national formations" (McClintock 1993, 63). These women take the shape of both fictional and non-fictional historical figures, some made visible through historic research and others through technicolor media images.

The seemingly contradictory relation between nostalgia and progress or past and future is animated throughout the case studies in this dissertation wherein southern domestic advisors and cultural institutes, beginning in the 1920s - a century after the initial notions of southern nationalism began to form - rely on nostalgic renderings of the region and the uptake of antebellum era icons and imagery to inform contemporary domestic and lifestyle advice.

Domestic advice and lifestyle texts address the southern home, wife, and mother while revealing tensions between the antebellum era South and its more contemporary iterations. As

described by Ellen Glasgow, the "intellectual sterility of the Old South and the New South's struggle with the 'sentimental infirmity' of the past" mark both its past and present (Cobb 2005, 180). Domestic technologies including radio, television, and convergent new media allow for the circulation of domestic advice and lifestyle guidance that often references the region's past – its myths, memories, and long-held traditions – communicated through a nostalgic mode of expression. As such, media representations of the South produced both internally and externally have long defaulted to antebellum ideologies and images to animate the region, both historically and contemporarily. The figures most central to this dissertation are the southern lady and the southern home, necessities in all the configurations of domestic advice media presented here.

Southern gentility, hospitality, and manners loom large in the portrait of American domesticity, embodied above all by the southern lady or plantation mistress. The continuous deployment of the plantation home and mistress in media depictions of the region construct a media history of the South premised upon a white, upper-middle class ideal. As Thavolia Glymph (2008, 65, 89) notes, "the plantation household was the principal site for the construction of southern white womanhood" and the southern lady progressed "the idea of home as a critical agent of 'southern civilization.'" Despite the lingering and pervasive nature of the antebellum South in media, only "six percent of all southerners qualified as planters (those with 20 or more slaves)" and a "South of magnolias, mansions, and courtly men was real for only the tiniest minority of white women" (McMillen 2018, 11, 16). In pre-Civil War Virginia, the most populous of all the southern states at the time, only 15.8 percent of a population of 1.5 million owned 5 or more enslaved persons (Brill 2022, 12). Similarly, as described by Elizabeth Fox-Genovese (1988, 47), "The figure of the southern lady, especially the plantation mistress,

dominated southern ideals of womanhood" even though "slaveholding ladies were massively outnumbered" by non-slaveholding women.

Despite this, the reality of life in the antebellum South "does not undermine the power of the ideal" held then and perpetuated through media texts now (47). Southern studies scholars have "argued that the image of Southern white womanhood was inadequate to describe the day-to-day life of the white woman in the antebellum South" (Carby 1987, 29). My purpose is not to dispute this claim but instead to trace the image that emerged and calcified into that of the southern lady and its continued deployment throughout southern media (and arguably, national media) beginning in the early-to-mid nineteenth century. Despite any contestation to the "reality" of the southern lady image, or the notion that "the real life of the southern lady was more varied and more demanding than the fantasies of southern men would suggest," I am arguing the pervasive nature of the image itself, circulated and reanimated across southern media production (Scott 1970, 44). Beginning in southern periodicals and novels in the 1830s, writers were "'fanatical' in idolizing and idealizing southern women" (14-15). These ideals carry ideological baggage, most notably what Colleen Kennedy-Karpat (2020) describes as "fidelity to whiteness" in adaptations of an image or text with an insistence, above all else, to ensuring whiteness remains central and undisputed in the face of change or adaption. The preoccupation in replicating white dominion and racial hierarchies of the antebellum South in cultural products centuries removed from that period "[underscores] whose nostalgia is valued in the adaptive process" (Kennedy Karpat 2020, 286).

The southern lady and southern home exist beyond the realm of the individual, the material, and the real, exalted to mythic status. While the South arrived in technicolor in 1939's

Gone with the Wind, Scarlett O'Hara and her plantation, Tara, two of the most enduring icons of southern media and culture, exist only as reproductions of an idealized Old South. The ceaseless reanimation and circulation of these figures by media technologies, achieved through "cut-and-paste techniques … are constantly given new life in popular culture as they are inserted and reinserted into contexts and stories that may have nothing to do with the context of the original image" (Shome 2014, 20). Raka Shome's (2014) study of Princess Diana usefully defines white femininity, central to the figures of the southern lady and home, as "an assemblage of power … constantly reproduced through media circuits and their technologies" (19). As the images are reproduced and circulated, they generate a ubiquitous, commonsense quality wherein they become naturalized and taken-for-granted as mediated assemblages. Shome writes, "In an age of mechanical reproduction, it is the constant depthless consumerist reproduction of visual representations and images of white women that produce and stabilize hegemonic logics of white femininity" (19).

Reproductions of white women in the South's cultural productions – namely some version of the southern lady updated enough to fit the proximate time of her utilization across three centuries – contribute to the reification of white femininity as it pertains specifically to domesticity. In the years prior to the Civil War, southern women's periodicals such as *Southern Lady's Companion* "rhapsodized about women" and their sacrosanct place within the home; "let home be the little world, on which shall be shed the blessed light of her love" (McMillen 2018, 152). Homes served as "the center of southern white women's lives" throughout the nineteenth century as the region remained overwhelmingly agrarian, comprised of rural villages, farms, and occasionally, plantations, rather than the populous towns and cities of the northeast (9). Southern

cities in the years immediately preceding the Civil War often had population numbers that did not exceed 5,000 and the region, "as a whole did not include enough heavy concentrations of population to counterbalance its overwhelmingly rural character" (Fox-Genovese 1988, 78). Unlike women in the northeast, then, southern women were afforded far fewer opportunities to form connections with those outside their immediate households. As such, most rural southern women lived their lives within and interpreted their identities through the prism of specific households" with "discrete households [constituting] a microcosm of rural southern society" (81, 109).

The case studies presented in the following chapters analyze the treatment of the southern home as a space wherein white southern women were taught to perpetuate and nurture southern nationalist sentiments and to use emergent domestic media technologies that "function as platforms, projection place, and tools to express nostalgia" (Niemeyer 2014, 7). In these examples, homes act as "little worlds" bracing against the loss of southern particularities of lifestyle and culture as the region became more mainstreamed, or Americanized, throughout the twentieth century. As seen in southern domestic advice texts, women are not only tasked with solving crises within their individual homes, but crises of the region and its precarious identity throughout the twenty and twenty-first centuries.

The chapters move, to some extent, chronologically. However, domestic advice media's reliance on its own past, doubly applicable when considering *southern* domestic advice, renders chronological ordering imprecise. As Sarah Leavitt (2002, 4) describes, "Hundreds of women in several generations have written domestic advice manuals, regardless of the ever-changing boundaries between women and home. The subjects discussed in domestic advice manuals have

remained remarkably consistent over time, encompassing vast changes in the role of women in American society. Domesticity, in its many different forms, transcends historical" periodization. For example, to discuss contemporary examples of convergence culture in chapter four, I first discuss women's periodicals published as early as the 1840s as a forebearer of the genre of domestic advice and necessary source material for a publication like *Southern Living* magazine. This dissertation doubles back on itself repeatedly, a requirement to discuss the entangled nature of the texts at hand and a consequence of using the past as a guide for the present and future. To this end, the form of the dissertation follows that of the domestic advice texts it analyzes wherein "nostalgia is rebellion against the modern idea of time, the time of history and progress" (Boym 2001, xv).

The chapters also deal explicitly with states and cities belonging to the Sunbelt South, the lower 1/3 of the United States, spanning from the coasts of South Carolina and Georgia to Los Angeles. These states and cities, including Atlanta, Georgia, Dallas, Texas, and the low country of South Carolina benefited massively from the economic growth experienced in the Sunbelt beginning in the late 1960s. Additionally, Atlanta and Dallas were among the first metropolitan cities in the region and Atlanta was an early telecommunications center of the South. The cultural histories of these locales proved the most accessible across the archives and the combination of cultural and economic growth seen in these cities lent themselves to a more robust media and production culture as opposed to other, more rural sections of the region throughout the twenty and twenty-first centuries.

Questions of how to be and live southern require ongoing training and adaptability as the region continues to change. From radio programs of the 1920s to home construction in the

contemporary moment, southern domestic advisors instruct women to perform a distinctly southern domesticity steeped in the region's past for guidance on how to navigate the present and future.

Domestic advice media and the forgotten South

The field of feminist media studies, while it has largely foregone analyses of women's genres produced in the southern United States, attends to the ways media construct and circulate practices of American domesticity and femininity, particularly from the regional perspectives of the Northeast and Midwest (Welter 1966; Ehrenreich and English 1989; Ballaster et. al 1991; Leibman 1995; McHugh 1999; Brunsdon 2000; Spigel 2001; Leavitt 2002; Gillis and Hollows 2009; Sharpless 2010; Nathanson 2013; Ryan 2018; Leppert 2019). These analyses span from the earliest women's periodicals of the nineteenth century to the mommy blogs of the present and attend to women's genres and domestic technologies such as domestic advice manuals, cookbooks, magazines, melodrama, daytime television, lifestyle television, blogs, and social media platforms such as Pinterest and Instagram, among others. The domestic advice genre maintains longevity due to its adaptability across genres, mediums, and delivery technologies over the past three centuries, as well as its ability to shift between and combine implicitly and explicitly pedagogical addresses, recycling messages to middle-class women and those aspiring to middle-class status about the sanctity and management of the home and family through both fictional and non-fictional texts. While the genre has remained adaptive, its longevity also benefits from the general stagnation and prevailing normative conceptions of femininity, domesticity, and gendered labor.

I follow several genre theorists in their assertation that, existing beyond "aesthetic conventions … genres are situated within larger systems of power and thus, often come 'fully loaded' with political implications" (Gray 2006, 53; Mittell 2004, 47). To this end, genres participate "in the construction of cultural myths about everything from nationalist ideology to class mobility and gender roles" (Young 2008, 227). Southern cultural myths, then, those created in films like *Birth of a Nation* (Griffith 1915), *So Red the Rose* (Vidor 1935), and *Gone with the Wind* (Fleming 1939) concerning the Confederacy, the southern lady and plantation mistress, and race relations in the antebellum era South circulate beyond the scope of the films to infuse popular memory and culture outside of and across textual boundaries. To this end, "approaching genres as discursive formations enables us to balance notions of genres as both *active* processes and *stable* formations" wherein generic categories can shrink and expand while holding an identifiable set of ideologies at the center; certainly, these ideologies are subject to change, but such change is often subtle, gradual, and does little to alter the genre beyond its recognizable form at any given moment (Mittell 2001, 10).

The genre of domestic advice, too, is deeply self-referential and *intentionally* intertextual. As described by Jonathan Gray (2006, 4) intertextuality is "the fundamental and inescapable interdependence of all textual meaning upon the structures of meaning proposed by other texts." As such, texts can only make sense, develop use value, or live "by coming into contact with another text" for "by itself, isolated in a bubble … the utterance is completely meaningless, for we only know how to make sense of it through having read and experienced other utterances" (Bakhtin 1986, 182). Additionally, intertextual intentionally suggests that "texts … aim themselves at other texts and genres, and … want us to read them through other texts and genres"

(Gray 2006, 4). Martha Stewart, for example, implements histories of domestic advice into her contemporary products and texts, adding herself to a well-established lineage of domestic advisors prior. As Leavitt (2002, 1) discusses, "Stewart [displays] a remarkable knowledge of the history of domestic advice. She cited several names of nineteenth-century domestic advisors and noted that she had some of their works in her office, which she referred to from time to time for her magazine."

The genre, too, is one without an end, constituted of, instead, "an indefinitely expandable middle," made up of "mini-climaxes" (Modleski 1979, 13, 19). For the domestic advice genre, such mini-climaxes could be the end of a recipe or successfully putting a child to bed, but tomorrow, the difficulties and complications of domestic life reawaken and require attention and new solutions. These new solutions, too, are offered across various media delivery technologies; the messaging remains largely the same, but the platform or technology used to access the message changes or proliferates.[5] As Jane Feuer (1984, 12) notes, soap operas operate on the premise that the "plot must go on," precluding the possibility of a closed or conclusive narrative. Same, too, I argue can be said for domestic advice media. While television programs, recipes, and other domestic advice texts appear discrete, their advice is temporary while the issues they address remain in need of ongoing attention. As with soaps, the pervading truth that "all my children cannot be happy at once" operates within the genre of domestic advice just the same (12-13).

[5] While convergence culture has done much to question the necessity of medium specificity, domestic advisors continue to attract audiences across several platforms and rarely, if ever, produce a single advice text. Audiences can engage via books, social media, television programming, and even in-person events.

As domestic challenges are presented as inevitable and at times, crises, the expandable form of domestic advice is well suited to continually offer its expertise for any number of domestic issues; the genre is consistently reformatted to fit social, cultural, economic, and technological changes within the home and to address its external threats and stresses as they change over time. Popular domestic advisors, too, rarely publish a single volume of advice but instead continue to produce premised upon current needs, real or imagined, of homes and women living in them. The narrative seriality of domestic advice texts, "a process that produces its own follow-up possibilities, because structurally, a serial narrative is always open-ended, promising to constantly renew the ever same moment" thus "[promising] a potentially infinite innovation of reproduction" supports the genres' opportunities for increased convergence and multiplatform storytelling (Kelleter 2012, 22). To this end, the genre provides coordinated content across a range of mediums, genres, and platforms for women to engage with and build upon. While I discuss convergence culture in detail in chapter four, domestic advice has always been a space of convergence, serialized storytelling, and multiple entry points of engagement. In chapter one, for example, Georgia women could listen to Sears, Roebuck radio programming, shop via the company's mail-order catalogue, and visit an in-person storefront for inspiration.

The crux of the genre lies in the assumption that all domestic advice, regardless of periodization or medium, assumes a deficiency on the part of the audience and responds to, or more often, creates a crisis within the home, subsequently offering its own advice as remedy. Ballaster et. al (1991, 124) describe this as seen in women's periodicals: "The assumption of femininity as simultaneously natural and culturally acquired through labour" promoted by these texts both hail women readers and continually point to the "clear gap between what is and what

the magazine claims [the reader] ought (to desire) to be." The self and the home, domestic advice media's primary anxieties, are two areas in need of perpetual reflection and improvement, particularly the making or improvement of the self through the making or improvement of the home; domestic advice media articulates American cultural values of middle-classness, private property and home ownership, and family as constitutive of the good life, as seen across politics, culture, and popular media. The domestic advice genre, much like related women's genres such as daytime soaps promise that "the family can be everything, if only one is willing to stay inside it" (Lopate 1976, 81). To this end, mothers serve as arbiters and providers of the good life and are tasked with "the gendered practice of lifestyle cultivation" to ensure the happiness and (middle-class) prosperity of their families (Wilson and Yochim 2017, 11).

While the similarities of domestic advice across a three-century period are hyper-pronounced, what Ballaster et. al describe as seeking differences across media forms from the nineteenth century to the present, only to be "struck by similarity," what is not marked by sameness and inclusion becomes hyper-pronounced as well. Both primary source materials and their subsequent analyses across the fields of feminist media studies and media history focus almost exclusively on domestic advice and its advisors based in the northeastern United States and later, the midwestern United States. Analyses of domestic advice media recount moments of change regarding the positionality of women from the nineteenth century to the present and how such change creates new iterations of corresponding domestic advice. For example, the nineteenth century saw a rise in industrialization in the North and the removal of reproductive labor from the home and into factory settings. The subsequent creation of more rigid spousal roles and the segregation of home and work economies, different from the more collective

approach to life management seen in farm work, necessitated justification. Such was most often found in women's magazines, religious literature, and guidebooks published between 1820 and 1860 (Welter 1966). The nineteenth century saw the emergence of "The Cult of True Womanhood," in which "[women] judged themselves' and [were] judged by [their husbands], [their] neighbors and society" along the categories of "piety, purity, submissiveness and domesticity" (Welter 1966, 152). Women were described as handmaidens to God and tasked with restoring divinity to human nature and family life. This literature emphasized "The true woman's place [as] unquestionably by her own fireside – as daughter, sister, but most of all wife and mother" (162). Mothers and wives were tasked with creating comforting, alluring homes for the benefit of their families as the home served as a haven against the outside world and its immorality.

Barbara Easton (1976) explains that the move from farm living to cities of industry by New England families created sets of expectations for women under the auspices of The Cult of True Womanhood. She writes (1976, 393), "While this style of femininity had no relevance for farm women, it came to the United States at a time when, at least in New England, an increasing number of families were congregating in town centers, ceasing to farm and in other ways cutting themselves off from rural life." Early domestic advice texts of the North and the establishment of new arrangements of gendered labor in the home as described by Easton were less resonant and reflective of life in the South at the same time, for while the North shifted from an agrarian to an industrial economy, the South remained largely rural.

Relatedly, domestic technologies such as radio and television were established early in the northeast and Midwest as both served as ideological, cultural, and industrial centers of the

nation. In the South, though, the implementation of such technologies required rural electrification co-operations and infrastructure, comparatively underdeveloped to other parts of the nation due to its agrarian economy maintained well into the twentieth century; infrastructure was slow to appear with any sort of regularity in the region and only certain areas of the South developed industrially and infrastructurally, such as New South cities like Atlanta, Georgia and Dallas, Texas. As described by Victoria Johnson (2008, 7), "Broadcast executives … balanced public rhetorical appeals to 'universal' service … with internal strategic plans that encouraged network expansion only into markets with enough population density to rationalize the investment, thus reenforcing uneven access to rural consumers already mapped by transportation, telephone, and power lines."

The most prominent women of the domestic advice genre and those most often written about in feminist media studies analyses privilege the northeast; examples include nineteenth century domestic advisors like Catharine Beecher, twentieth century domestic scientists and home economists such as Christine Frederick and Ellen Richards, etiquette experts such as Emily Post, and more contemporary though still traditionally resonant home experts like Martha Stewart. In addition to these non-fictional advisors, fictional housewives of the midcentury like June Cleaver of *Leave it to Beaver* and prefabricated domestics such as Betty Crocker also serve as experts of domestic advice and are examples of popular midwestern advisors. Karen Cox (2009, 678) notes that "Popular or mass culture … often deals in 'idealized universal themes' and in the United States the idealized themes of what is American are often also northern."

Until the years following World War II, the South produced few widely circulated popular media texts as publishing houses and media studios were primarily located in the major

metropolitan cities of New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles. Additionally, until the same time, the South trailed the rest of nation economically, industrially, and as a result, in terms of cultural output; by this time, the messaging of domestic advice media had largely calcified as a product of northeastern and midwestern political, economic, and cultural trends. To this end, my dissertation seeks to excavate a history of domestic advice, lifestyle media, and advisors in the American South to explore the dual creation of southern domesticity and regional identity reflective of and constituting cultural, economic, and political trends in the region from the early twentieth century to the present.

Southern domesticity: a prehistory

As discussed throughout this dissertation, the association of northernness with Americanness was facilitated through the dichotomy of "northern dynamism" versus "southern stasis," wherein the South, its landed gentry, slave system, and agrarian economy represented idleness, leisure, and stagnation, and the North, through Protestant ethics of hard work and thrift, as well as the region's multifaceted approach to productivity and growth through the combination of agriculture and industry not only defined the region, but more importantly, America and Americanness more broadly (Cobb 2005, 26). The South's secessionist tendencies and the region's unwillingness to dismantle its slave economy intensified in the years preceding the Civil War and the region suffered monumental loss of persons and property by 1865. Well into the early twentieth century, the South maintained a "do without" attitude toward government

intervention and aid, resulting in an economically and industrially stunted South wherein the region remained largely agrarian "in an [otherwise] urban, industrial nation" (Schulman 1994, 3). While southern traditionalists (southern cultural supremacists), "those who think it is better to emphasize and preserve the innate strengths of their own way of life" rather than defer to the example of "more ostensibly advanced societies," sought to retain control over southern life and identity. While traditionalist mourned and commemorated their losses of the Civil War, southern liberal agendas, including Roosevelt's New Deal focused on integrating and updating sections of the South into "the American mainstream" by emphasizing "federal relief and unemployment insurance, housing, health facilities, labor standards and assistance to public education" (Cobb 2005, 120; Schulman 1994, 7, 43). The South remained poorer and less industrially developed than the rest of the nation until witnessing a surge in in-migration and financial prosperity for the first time only after World War II.

The creation of a southern middle class began in the mid-nineteenth century and initiated the production of the earliest examples of southern domestic advice texts. These early texts were often published by northern transplants, prominent New Englanders who moved to the region as adults and brought with them northern ideologies of modernization and industrialization. As Jonathan Daniel Wells (2004) notes, pre-Civil War southerners belonging to the burgeoning middle class often read publications produced in the North (*Godey's Lady's Book*, 1830-1898; *Arthur's Home Magazine*, 1852-1898) at the same rate as publications produced within the region. Wells concludes that by reading northern periodicals, southerners became well versed in the ideology of domesticity that historians have attributed only to the northern middle class. Northern magazines gave "… even frontier southerners with little or no firsthand experience

with industrialization or urbanization" exposure "to the same ideas as residents of bustling cities like Utica, Boston, or Hartford (Wells 2004, 47). The southern middle class, made up of bankers, doctors, and educators, distinct from both the extremely wealthy planter class and white, rural farmers, owed much of their class consciousness

> to their connections to, and admiration of, the northern middle-class. Middle-class southerners rallied around ideas about culture that they learned from their northern correspondents and restyled them to incorporate slavery. From ideas about gender and family, to notions about the virtues of industrialization, to discomfiture with the practice of dueling, the formation of the southern middle class depended to a significant extent on cultural values it adopted from its contacts with the North. (Wells 2004, 10)

Yet, models of northern prosperity could only take the South so far; southerners looked to the North for inspiration to grow the region industrially, economically, and culturally in the interest of freeing the South from its dependence on the North. Emulating the North was not an end in itself but a way for the South to gain independence and through such independence, establish itself as its own cultural entity.

Pre-Civil War periodicals such as *Family Companion and Ladies' Mirror* and *Southern Ladies' Book* encouraged a more robust participation from women writers and thinkers in the region. The publishers of *Southern Ladies' Book* were unconvinced that national (northern) publications such as *Godey's Lady's Book* offered suitable regional distinction to be relevant for southern audiences. The opposition to the conflation of northern culture as American culture continues to take shape in an editorial article in the July issue of the *Family Companion*; its editors, Sarah and Benjamin Griffin (1842, 251) write,

> Now we think there are many reasons why southern girls should be educated at the south – their home. The difference in the state of society, in the domestic institutions and

> manners of the different sections of the country renders this a matter of moments; for who will contend that our habits and most enduring tastes are not formed during the last few years of school day life? In the present state of the community, girls can hardly spend the time necessary for even a limited education in a northern seminary, without being in a degree weaned from home habits and home customs, and therefore becoming unfitted to enter with alacrity upon the duties before them.

These pre-Civil War periodicals began the process of southern cultural distinction and I identify the promotion of southern authors and educators, specifically women, as contributors to the formation of a southern middle class.

The region's lack of resources – industrial, technological – contributed to its lack of cultural output until the mid-twentieth century. Karen Cox's *Dreaming of Dixie* (2011) recounts the voracity of non-southern interest in producing and consuming representations of the region created by Hollywood film and television studies. Most of the media produced about or set in the region was not informed by the reality of the South at any given historical period but rather a set of stereotypes eventually incorporated into national popular memory including the southern belle, the plantation home, the happy slave, the southern gentleman, violent redneck, and befuddled hillbilly. The South pervaded film, literature, music, and television throughout the twentieth century and such media texts were often used by non-southern audiences as a fantasy escape to pre-industrial, slow and easy living desired by those in the throes of rapid urbanization, industrialization, and modernization. Cox (2008, 51) writes, "On both sides of the Mason-Dixon Line, businessmen sought to capitalize on the marketing and consumption of a Dixie that incorporated the mythology and traditions of the southern past." As discussed in later chapters, the South's entrance into modernity and the subsequent creation of culture often relied on the same sets of stereotypes to represent itself, leaning on the ideals that had come to define the

region such as leisure and agrarian pastoralism while stretching towards a present and future defined by progress, industry, and cultural production equal to more developed parts of the nation; the domestic advice genre was a key site of such antagonism. Southern domesticity and lifestyling practices combine both adherence to tradition and "choice within a plurality of possible options"; lifestyle in the South is both "handed down" and individually "adopted" (Giddens 1991, 81).

The domestic advice genre combines the backward- and forward-looking tendencies of the South, combining information on the newest modern conveniences with information on restoring historic southern homes. As mentioned above, the middle-class values of the nation largely gleaned from the northeast including private property, home ownership, and emphasis on the family persisted in the South as well. The domestic advice genre is the purview of the middle class as its advisors seek to perpetuate or instill middle class ideologies into audiences, achieved by following its prescriptions. To this end, the middle-class family home stands as an essential component of domestic advice and one of its main preoccupations. Additionally, homes in the South serve as physical embodiments of the push towards the future and pull to the past so prominent in domestic advice, the site wherein southern domesticity and identity converge with advisors attempting to lessen or reconcile the antagonism between the past/future binary.

As described in his study of Celebration, Florida, discussed further in chapter four, Andrew Ross (1999, 22, 28) details the lengths homeowners would go to "to pay for re-creating the past while preserving their modernity," to live in "old houses" with "new toys." The vernacular architecture of the South, seen in historic homes and more so in revival architecture, offer the region "a comforting respite" in the face of modernization and "whose referents point to

a possible history" and "a potential truth" (Wood 2005, 402, 403) rooted in Old South aesthetics and ideologies; southern historic homes and revival architecture contain entire worlds and lifetimes, the same "little worlds" and southern regional microcosms defined in early women's periodicals of the region.

The construction of new landmarks in the South during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, including public monuments and buildings, as well as residential homes "represented a set of interlocking beliefs, including the renewed place of the vindicated South in the American mainstream, the rightness and patriotism of Confederate causes, and the association of classical architecture with idealized southern virtues" (Bishir 1993, 5). Southern Colonial architecture, taking its inspiration from antebellum-era plantation homes, "offered the perfect setting for hospitality, patriotism, and ancestral distinction – all in an urban residence larger and more vastly convenient than most plantation houses had ever been." Colonial Revival style architecture "came to dominate upper-and-middle-class housing throughout the South" and was associated with "traditional domesticity, respectability, and continuity" (30-31, 34).

If "modernity implies mobility," it reasons that the South, fearful of its envelopment into the mainstream, would over imbue ancestral southern homes (and their more contemporary recreations) as essential to the preservation of southern culture and identity (Duyvendak 2011, 7). Jan Willem Duyvendak (2011, 18) argues that "Few Americans feel tied to their geographic location, and those who do often seem old-fashioned or misguided to the rest of us; the farmer resisting the encroachment of the suburbs … the old lady who has lived in the same peeling house all her life." The South, though, attaches much of its identity and cultural expression to geographic location and domestic dwellings. Southern homes contain entire worlds, lifetimes,

and ideologies. Southern lifestyle practices, time and pace antithetical to the "runaway" northeast are beholden to the southern home as always partially of the past; just as "agricultural workers were less likely to use clock time to organize their work, and clocks were of limited use to southern sharecropper well into the twentieth century," the region's independence from clock time "establishes the legitimate precedent for imagining the region as an alternate temporality" (Davis 2021, 62).

The ability to locate the South in an alternate temporality (i.e., the antebellum era) is an affordance of media technologies. Adaptations of an image of southern living "can only be re-enacted, repeated, reconstructed, reshown, rethought, and restored by an artificial act, by mimesis" (Niemeyer 2014, 5). Domestic advisors and lifestyle experts instructed southern women on how to socialize these technologies into their daily lives toward the perpetuation of southern domesticity and lifestyle also located and informed by past iterations of the region.

Chapter overview

The following chapters detail the implementation of domestic technologies into southern homes from the early twentieth century to the present and work to establish their dual functions of future progress and memorialization of the past. The arrival of domestic technologies aligns with critical junctures in U.S. history, culture, and politics, which I describe through the lens of southern women's media. Each chapter is organized around three intersecting topics: periods of

southern history within a broader national context, resultant domestic advice movements and their experts, and corresponding media technologies.

Chapter one, “From Farm Wife to Housewife: Women’s Programming on WSB, Atlanta” explores radio as a domestic technology in Atlanta, Georgia beginning in 1922. Atlanta’s first radio station, WSB, partnered with mail-order company Sears, Roebuck in 1926 to develop programming designed to educate rural women on the standards of middle-class domesticity under the auspices of the New South. The history of radio transmission’s arrival in the South coincides with political reform efforts to modernize and industrialize parts of the region. Emergent domestic technologies, including radio, for the farm and farm home claimed to increase productivity and efficiency in the rural South.

I trace a history of New South boosterism as it pertains to both mechanized, agricultural reform efforts and the industrialization of southern cities like Atlanta and Dallas, poised to grow into prosperous metropolises. The results of such reform were facilitated largely by the arrival of the Sears, Roebuck company in these cities at the turn of the century and the establishment of the Sears, Roebuck Agricultural Foundation (SRAF), Sears radio programming, and opening of a swath of facilities and storefronts across the region beginning in Atlanta in 1926. The goals of the New South were not only articulated through the material conditions of Atlanta and Dallas but were also dispersed across the rural South through radio. Before Sears farm and domestic content began airing in Dallas in 1925, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) identified radio as a tool to reach and unite those living in rural areas by bringing a slate of entertainment and educational programs designed to appeal to and match the rhythms of farm life over the airwaves. In tandem with domestic extension work programs which sought to bring

rural families and homes up to the standards of middle class living, domestic experts sought to educate farm women on the practices of homemaking utilized in more urban areas.

Women's radio programs on WSB, Atlanta, along with domestic extension work, sought to promote the farm and countryside as capable of modernizing in attempts to curb out-migration to larger cities. As such, imperatives to retain younger generations and to raise farm standards of living to the level of industrial efficiency seen in more urban areas lead to updates in the efficiency and convenience of historic southern homes without sacrificing their imbedded tradition.

Chapter two, "WSB-TV: Broadcasting the New Old South on *Today with Georgia* with Ruth Kent," presents two converging and interdependent histories; that of WSB-TV's long-running locally produced daytime program, *Today in Georgia*, and that of a cultural geography of Atlanta, Georgia told through the city's growth into a televisual center of the South. Host Ruth Kent's segments for the program, which ranged from cooking, homemaking, travel, fashion, and interviews, bridge together Atlanta's campaign of double vision in the mid-century: continuing to grow the city's reputation as a site of industry, culture, and technological innovation in the South, as discussed in chapter one via WSB radio, as well as its preservation of the region's southern heritage through perpetual commemoration of its past. WSB's local, daytime programming featured several shows designed for housewives and women viewers with *Today in Georgia* as its showpiece and longest running example. Kent and *Today in Georgia*, I argue, worked to position Atlanta as both regionally southern and metropolitan and modern, attempting to lessen the antagonism and incompatibility between the two, along with the conditions of local versus network programming.

WSB-TV's studio, White Columns, the antebellum-style mansion which housed the station from 1956 until its demolishment in the late 1990s contributes to Atlanta's future progress and past inspiration. The studio's exterior, constructed in the architectural style of the Old South, particularly the plantation home, Tara, from the 1939 film *Gone with the Wind*, housed a state-of-the-art telecommunications facility, likely one of the most sophisticated in the region.

WSB-TV, the station's local programming, and White Columns studio coalesce in a triad of technology, television, and tradition that, when analyzed together, show not only the trends of early, local television in an often-overlooked region, but also reveal the affective regional memory, and obligation to that memory, that influenced WSB's operations and programming from its beginnings in 1948. Ruth Kent and *Today in Georgia*, designed to bring the world to Georgians, held the tenuous balance of the station and the city of Atlanta as future-oriented yet always looking to the past for inspiration.

Chapter three, "What the World Needs Now is Mary Kay: Neoliberalism, Postfeminism, and Sunbelt Capitalism in Dallas, Texas," combines analyses of the rise of neoliberalism, postfeminism, and the growing prosperity of the Sunbelt South beginning in the late 1970s alongside the domestic advice of Mary Kay Ash, founder of Mary Kay Cosmetics company located in Dallas, Texas. Though Ash is primarily known as a businesswoman and Mary Kay Cosmetics is known as a multi-level-marketing (MLM) beauty company, I argue that Ash was also a domestic advisor during the company's most successful periods, beginning in the late 1970s through the 1990s, promoting Mary Kay not only as a job, but as a total lifestyle through her various media texts including VHS tapes, cookbooks, self-help books, and promotional films.

Ash promoted a lifestyle commensurate with the 1980s Sunbelt South and the city of Dallas, Texas, a place experiencing exponential growth in the sectors of industry, commerce, and culture during the 1970s and 80s.

Dallas saw rapid development throughout the mid-to-late twentieth century due to its geographic location, oil reserves, and economically minded city leadership. As an exemplarily city of the Sunbelt South, Dallas brought together unfettered capitalism, materialism, and religion; in what follows, I describe how Mary Kay Cosmetics came to represent the intersection of these ideals for housewives and women new to the workforce. I discuss the Mary Kay Cosmetics lifestyle as a postfeminist, neoliberal ideal premised upon domestic aspirations of bigger homes and happier families inspired by the aspirational luxury of 1980s Reaganism.

My concluding chapter, "Lifestyle, nostalgia, and convergence culture in the *Southern Living* South" explores the *Southern Living* brand, beginning with the magazine's publication in the late 1960s as constitutive of a branded, commodifiable South and trends in southern lifestyling texts beginning in the 1970s. I look specifically at the creation of Southern Living Inspired Communities, neighborhoods designed around the brand in which residents can fully live southern. The Inspired Communities program creates a livable brand experience that exceeds the boundaries of the magazine, its recipe books, and material goods, offering a transmedia experience to live within the mediated reality of *Southern Living*. Southern Living Inspired Communities, too, expand transmedia experiences long associated with popular franchise and fictional worlds, offering long-term rather than transient opportunities to engage with the brand at the granular level of the everyday.

The making over of the region, beginning with the growth of new South cities like Atlanta in the mid-century and the national dominance of the southern Sunbelt into the 1980s allowed the region to shift from its role of follower to that of leader. The growth amassed in southern Sunbelt cities also consolidated in other areas associated with tourism, the slow pace of southern life, and the South as a place to experience the past in the present. There are currently 11 Southern Living Inspired Communities across the region, and I focus specifically on the community of Habersham, located in the lowcountry of Beaufort, South Carolina. Habersham is an entirely prefabricated town with its own post office, fire department, and downtown. This chapter describes Habersham and its attempt to capture southern living in a hermetically sealed, branded community, its embodiment of the *Southern Living* brand, and how it was built and is sustained by the powerful myth of what southern living should look like as dictated by the white, upper middle classes, operating as a space and place of simulacra.

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Chapter One:
From Farm Wife to Housewife: Women's Radio Programming in the New South city of Atlanta, Georgia

This chapter explores radio as a technology of middle-class domesticity in Atlanta, Georgia in the early twentieth century. In the years following Reconstruction (1865-1877), middle-class southerners such as journalists, magazine editors, and local politicians sought to revitalize the region through the marriage of industry and scientific agriculture, seeking to establish a New South that no longer reflected the ruin of the Civil War, a region that was not "desperately poor, alternatively despised, ridiculed, or pitied, and saddled with many unwelcome burdens" (Gaston 1970, 7). New South booster campaigns throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, supported by the Roosevelt administration and New Dealers into the 1930s utilized radio as a tool in cities like Atlanta and its surrounding towns in the hopes of modernizing rural farms through educational programs, farm news, and domestic advice to bring the region up to the standards of living in the urban North. President Roosevelt "warned that 'Georgia and the lower South may just as well face facts" that "the purchasing power of millions of Americans" residing in the region was "far too low" and that with purchasing power came "better schools, better health, better hospitals, better highways" (Schulman 1994, 48). Implicit in Roosevelt's address, too, is the notion that more purchasing power would bring the farm home and family into the twentieth century, facilitated largely through consumer goods and emergent domestic technologies for use on the farm and in the farm home.

Atlanta's first radio station, WSB, whose call letters stand for "Welcome South, Brother," partnered with the Sears, Roebuck company in 1926 to develop programming designed to

educate rural and newly urban housewives on how to shop, cook, modernize, and furnish their homes towards the standards of domesticity under the auspices of the New South. The establishment of mail-order businesses such as Sears, Roebuck in the region revolutionized the way farm families shopped and the consumer products made available to them. The company, born in Chicago, opened offices in Dallas, Texas, its first in the South, as early as 1906. During his tenure with the company, Robert Wood, Vice President of factories and retail stores sought to serve "the emerging needs of the new working and middle classes" to "improve the American standard of living" in growing New South cities (Worthy 1984, 60).

The arrival of Sears in the South – offering families consumer goods ranging from household products to entire prefabricated homes – brought with it the cultural imperatives of the middle-class expressed through its radio programming, agricultural foundation, and numerous storefronts opened across the region. Southern farm wives were advised on creating comfortable, modern dwellings through consumption and by following the advice of experts in the fields of home economics and domestic science. Just as farmers were called to implement the techniques of scientific agriculture with its "gleaming machines and synthetic chemicals" to "end … the inherited enmity between agriculture and industry," farm wives were instructed to apply scientific techniques within the home, moving the farm family away from what New South boosters (and, arguably, the rest of the nation) saw as primitive, outdated, capitalist-non-compliant ways of living (Daniel 2000, 47; Gaston 1970, 67).

The construction of Sears' plants and storefronts, the establishment of its agricultural foundation, farmers' markets, and radio programs sought to modernize rural Georgia; the farm

and home programs of Sears' radio demonstrate the "long-sought solution to the Country Life[6] paradox of how to uplift and urbanize farm life without destroying its benefits" (Kline 2000, 118). The new technology of radio "promised to bring the city to the country while keeping people on the farm; it could thus maintain rural institutions while modernizing them" (118). For New South cities like Atlanta, radio functioned as a modernizing and pedagogical technology that promoted industry without abandoning the agrarian traditions of the region and the ideologies embedded within them such as unspoiled pastoralism, authenticity, and whiteness. In tandem with the store's opening in 1926, the Sears Agricultural Foundation extended its service to Atlanta and sought to provide "a most helpful service to the farmers of Georgia, Alabama, South Carolina, North Carolina, and Tennessee" ("Sears, Roebuck Farm Foundation"). By combining radio, agricultural and domestic pedagogy, and consumer goods, Sears promoted itself as an all-in-one service for the rural and urban residents of Atlanta toward the embodiment of a solid, southern middle-class. The Agricultural Foundation describes itself as "primarily economic in function, though from the beginning … [rendering] a helpful social service … helping the farmer and his family work better, live better, and sell better" ("Sears, Roebuck Farm Foundation"). Here, too, it is imperative to add the implicit but unspoken "buy better" included in the foundation's lists of goals. The Agricultural Foundation served two purposes: "Help farmers make more money, then get the farmers to spend some of that money at Sears" (Cash). After the opening of the store, a series of events established Sears' as not only a major part of the region's economic landscape but as essential to the promotion of a middle-class lifestyle vis-à-

[6] In 1908, President Roosevelt established the Country Life Commission to address the inequalities between rural and urban living across the nation. L.H. Bailey, horticulturist and leader of the Country Life Commission for rural reform published the findings of the commission in 1911 and described the goals of the movement as "working out the desire to make rural civilization as effective and satisfying as other civilizations" (Bailey 1911, 1).

vis the company's relationship with and employment of home economists and women's club members.

Radio provided guidance on how agricultural practices and farm families could more closely resemble the middle-class and urban through retooling agricultural labor to fit into a capitalist market system. As described by Kate Lacey (2002, 24), radio served as "both a consumer good and good means for producing consumers." Similarly, as described by Mary Neth (1995), the emphasis on rural reform in the early twentieth century was, in large part, to update agricultural practices to integrate and align with capitalist systems of industry; the organization of farm life and labor differed greatly from that of urban, industrial capitalism. Reform efforts

> viewed farm life as a problem and saw farm people who failed to adopt modern techniques as 'backwards.' 'Progressive farming' meant that farmers would adopt the scientific methods, new technology, and consumer goods developed and recommended by experts. Like the progressive reformers of urban America, those who hoped to reform rural America privileged the knowledge of experts and aspired to change society, using the language of progress and efficiency. Fundamentally, the goal of this progress was to increase agricultural production for commercial markets. (97)

Progress and efficiency, sentiments incompatible with the South's reputation and hard felt attachment to the slave labor system, created doubt amongst New South boosters as to how to proceed with reform efforts. Opinions on the extent to which the South had to assimilate into the American mainstream (both ideologically and economically) to rebuild differed amongst New South boosters, some claiming that every vestige of Old South culture, including the "antebellum ideal of the leisured gentleman who scorned manual labor," had to be excavated in order for the region to prosper, while others sought to retain southern heritage through the

promotion of the region as Edenic, unspoiled by rapid industrialization (Gaston 1970, 107). The agriculture versus industry dynamic prevalent in New South reform efforts dates back to the years preceding the Civil War in which "some Southerners contemplated diversification by encouraging manufacturing and trade" as a supplement to the region's agrarian and slave economies (McCardell 1979, 92). Others, however, namely the planter class, "found the impulse to Southern distinctiveness stronger than the idea of diversification," seeking to retain the region's agricultural economy as a superior model to "the savagery of life in the capitalistic North" (166).

The extent to which the South reformed, or became more Americanized (i.e., more like the urban North) in the early twentieth century was worked out largely in the space of the farm home. The farm home (and wives who kept them) was tasked with retaining regional tradition *and* embracing modernity. As domestic advisors and government extension workers claimed via local and national radio programming, life on the farm could be improved by complying with urban, middle-class advice and through the implementation of domestic and agricultural science techniques. Stricter gender roles, too, had to be adopted to facilitate the move to middle-class status and women, to remain feminine (as defined by northern/urban standards), had to abandon farm labor that brought in cash income to focus exclusively on the domestic labor of running the home. Such changes were not uniformly adopted as the most rural parts of the region lagged in basic infrastructure such as running water and electricity, as well as lacking purchasing power required to update domestic and agricultural tools aligned with scientific management.

In what follows, I discuss the rise of women's radio programming aired on WSB, Atlanta both pre and post its network affiliation with the National Broadcast Company (NBC) beginning

in 1927. The arrival of radio in the South coincides with reform attempts to modernize and industrialize the region through increased productivity and efficiency measures implemented on farms; New South boosters believed developing farms and farm homes into more modernized and convenient living spaces would prevent out-migration from the region into more developed parts of the nation. As discussed throughout, the farm home and farm family served as icons of the New South, marrying together the region's pastoral traditions, "where the rural approached mythic status in its perceived importance to the nation's founding and development," while heralding in a more modernized, convenient future "designed to modernize farming both to increase its imagistic appeal and to make it economically feasible for Americans to … remain with it" (Casey 2009, 5, 12).

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) identified radio as a tool to reach and unite those living in rural areas by developing a slate of entertainment and education programs designed to appeal to and match the rhythms of farm life. Included in both USDA radio programs and Sears, Roebuck programs were several women's shows designed for farm wives. In tandem with domestic extension work programs which sought to bring rural families up to the standards of middle-class living, domestic experts sought to educate farm women on the practices of homemaking popular in urban areas both in person and over the airwaves.

As described by radio historian Michele Hilmes (1997, 132), "Women in fact invented and sustained some of broadcasting's most central innovations" and "participated in the development of entire genres that spoke to them as a specific group about the interests and concerns of women's lives." Local, women's radio programs designed for farm women were

some of the South's earliest examples of daytime radio programming prior to WSB's network affiliation with NBC.

Radio as domestic technology: teach and sell

Feminist radio scholars describe radio as a "fundamentally feminine medium" and the "American family's electronic hearth" (Martin 2018, 175; Hilmes 2002, 1). Despite its beginnings as a masculinist technology, by 1925 "radio moved out of the garage and into the living room" with manufacturers producing receivers that "looked like furniture" (Smulyan 1994, 302). The home in the daytime hours became the preoccupation of networks and advertisement agencies who sought to capture the domestic space and its women occupants as dual listeners and consumers. As such, to "mitigate the threat posed by commercial programs to the productivity of housewives, the new mass medium needed to validate the consumption of both radio messages and their advertised goods as essential parts of women's unpaid responsibilities" in the home (Wang 2018, 59-60). Women listeners, then, could enjoy radio programs distractedly while working and would not feel "they were taking time from their busy schedules merely to enjoy light entertainment; instead, they would listen to become better wives and mothers," more efficient homemakers, savvier shoppers, and more educated and inspired to perform the compulsory habits of middle-class domesticity taught to them through radio programs (Smulyan 1994, 88).

Women listeners were addressed in the daytime hours by a mix of home economists, prefabricated domestic characters, and government workers such as extension service agents.

Aunt Sammy, the fictional wife of Uncle Sam and host of *Housekeeper's Chat*, was a domestic character created by the USDA in the 1920s. Understood as an extension of the USDA's focus on rural living standards in the twentieth century, "Aunt Sammy marketed the federal government's idea about how rural people should live" and adopted a tone of authority and trustworthiness through a blend of "modern" and "well-informed" advice and "traditionally small-town and conservative" values (Rouse 1979, 317, 307). Aunt Sammy serves as a useful starting place to understand the collaborative efforts of domestic advice radio and the players involved in constructing the messages sent to women audiences, ranging from government offices, advertisers, and the imperatives of local stations across the nation.

In addition to *Housekeeper's Chat*, the USDA, in coordination with NBC, also created the *National Farm and Home Hour* (1928) as a supplement to home demonstration work, often featuring testimony from farm women attesting to the value of extension work and the improvements it brought to farm living. A talk given by Mrs. T.L. Timberlake of Powhatan County, Virginia expresses such sentiments from a southern perspective. There are several moments in Timberlake's address in which she highlights the peculiarities of southern rural living. She explains,

> Powhatan county, like many others in Virginia, boasts of old homes owned and occupied by descendants of those to whom the original land grants were made by the English Crown: and though the women living in these old homes are proud of their tradition, they are keenly interested in new home-making ideas and home demonstration work which had made many of these ancestral dwellings more convenient, pleasant, and charming. ("Ten Years of Home Demonstration Work," 1934)

Mrs. Timberlake confirms the importance of such southern, ancestral dwellings while also seeking modern updates to make them more convenient. As discussed in detail throughout this

chapter, the USDA, agricultural extension programs, and reform agencies sought to promote the farm and countryside as adaptable, improving living conditions for farm families in an attempt to curb out-migration to large cities through the use of new technologies to make farm life easier and more enjoyable. Long-held fears of young southerners fleeing rural areas in the South to work and live in the modern, industrial North, are expressed by Timberlake through a bible verse in her talk: "Train a child the way he should go and when he is old, he will not depart therefrom." The imperative to retain younger generations and to raise farm standards to the level of industrial efficiency practiced in other parts of the nation, encouraged by both agricultural reformists and New South boosters, led to updates in efficiency and convenience without sacrificing the tradition imbedded in old southern homes. While New South boosterism's primary goal was a move toward modernization via industrialization, the need to preserve the agrarian tradition of the region and its highly mythologized qualities of whiteness, authenticity, pastoralism, and idealized ways of living, resulted in attention paid to agricultural and domestic *reform*, rather than abandonment, a way to bridge the space between the region's agrarian past and present and its envisioned modern, industrial future.

Homemaking programs produced by southern stations such as WSB came on air in the mid-1920s and women radio hosts "epitomized rural values and reflected … local culture" (Sethers and Jolliffee 1998, 138). The "radio homemaker became a spokesperson for the rural way of life" and the content of such programs "provided listeners with household management techniques, and above all, reflected pastoral, conservative, and individualistic values" (140). Women radio hosts across the nation adopted friendly, trustworthy cadences and spoke to audiences like a friend and neighbor. Domestic scientists and home economists, though, hoped to

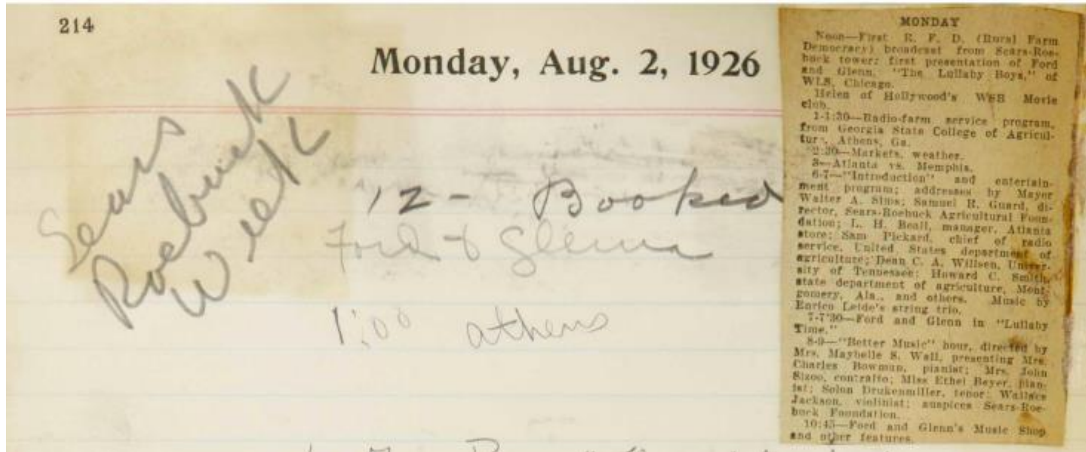
“facilitate the transformation of farm women into [housewives],” by promoting urban, middle-class domestic advice (Montgomery 2005, 112). The development of a national, rather than local radio created less diversity on air, with networks largely “[ignoring] differences … and [presenting and depending] on a white, urban, middle-class East Coast sensibility” (Smulyan 1994, 31). Programs like NBC’s *National Farm and Home Hour* eventually replaced local programming on stations like WSB, airing in the slot originally assigned to *Homemaker’s Half Hour*, a local women’s program created by Sears, Roebuck radio and its agricultural foundation, hosted by Georgia farm wife Mrs. R.F. Whelchel.

Rural women in the South had to retool radio advice to suit their circumstances on family farms that often did not or could not strive for modernization attempts directed at them by government agencies such as the extension service, which at the “federal, state, and local levels promulgated an urban, middle-class version of rural life” (Hoffschwelle 2001, 53). While women in non-southern states were expected to become “home consumption managers,” women in the South did not adhere to this division of labor and instead worked to supply the farm with additional income” from side jobs such as “canning, poultry work, and gardening, and selling their products at local markets” (53). As Mary Hoffschwelle (2001, 53) describes, “These projects were not ends in themselves – southern agents argued that their constituents did not and would not have the financial resources for the water systems, appliances, and furnishings deemed essential to the ideal rural dwelling unless they could earn their own cash income.” Farm women, then, could not fully conform to a middle-class version of femininity as their physical labor was essential to bringing income to the farm in the hopes of modernizing. Women living in the rural South in the early twentieth century shared with their antebellum ancestors the requisite training

in all parts of the farm and home. In the antebellum era, “no matter how large or wealthy the establishment, the mistress was expected to understand not only the skills of spinning, weaving, and sewing but also gardening, care of poultry, care of the sick, and all aspects of food preparation from the sowing of the seed to the appearance of the final product on the table” (Scott 1970, 31). As Derek Valliant (2002, 67) crucial notes, “The formulaic nature of farm and home programs cannot be confused with, or substituted for, critical study of the diverse audience of rural Americans engaging these broadcasts.” To this end, I focus on what extensions agents, government agencies, and domestic advisors, through radio, prescribed as the best practices for developing a middle-class femininity and domesticity to the rural and newly city-dwelling women of Atlanta as compatible with the goals of the New South rather than the actual adoption of their suggestions.

Contextually, as late as the 1930s, “only one-third of southern people resided in urban areas,” and the region remained “overwhelmingly agrarian … in an urban, industrial nation” (Schulman 1994, 3). The lack of technological infrastructure in large portions of the region through the early to mid-twentieth century, including electricity, created living conditions seen as less desirable and substandard. To this end, in the South, the usage and ownership of such technologies, including radio, remained one of the lowest across the country. As Karen Cox (2011, 61) notes, “The percentage of homes with radios in 1935 was the highest in the northeast, where 80 percent of homes had a radio, compared to the southeast, where that percentage was just 48 percent, including Mississippi, where radios were owned by just 24 percent,” as well as

that only 34 perfect of rural homes owned radios, compared to 93 percent of homes in urban areas.[7]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Monday, Aug. 2, 1926

Sears Roebuck Week

12 - Booked Ford & Glenn

1:00 others

MONDAY

Noon—First R. F. D. (Rural Farm Democracy) broadcast from Sears-Roebuck tower; first presentation of Ford and Glenn, "The Lullaby Boys," of WLS, Chicago.

Helen of Hollywood's WSB Movie club.

1-1:30—Radio-farm service program, from Georgia State College of Agriculture, Athens, Ga.

2:30—Markets, weather.

3—Atlanta vs. Memphis.

6-7—"Introduction" and entertainment program; addresses by Mayor Walter A. Sims; Samuel R. Guard, director, Sears-Roebuck Agricultural Foundation; L. H. Beall, manager, Atlanta store; Sam Pickard, chief of radio service, United States department of agriculture; Dean C. A. Willsen, University of Tennessee; Howard C. Smith, state department of agriculture, Montgomery, Ala., and others. Music by Enrico Leide's string trio.

7-7:30—Ford and Glenn in "Lullaby Time."

8-9—"Better Music" hour, directed by Mrs. Maybelle S. Wall, presenting Mrs. Charles Bowman, pianist; Mrs. John Sizoo, contralto; Miss Ethel Beyer, pianist; Solon Drukenmiller, tenor; Wallace Jackson, violinist; auspices Sears-Roebuck Foundation.

10:45—Ford and Glenn's Music Shop and other features.

Figure 1 WSB radio log for Monday, August 2, 1926

Domestic radio in the New South

WSB, Atlanta, the South's first radio station, deemed "The Voice of the South," began broadcasting in 1922. I focus largely on WSB for several reasons, including its establishment as the first station to broadcast radio transmissions in the southeast, as well as its location in Atlanta, Georgia, a New South city, and the eventual site of prosperous telecommunications industries in the region, and for its close affiliation with the Sears, Roebuck company.

[7] Despite the disparities between radio ownership in the North and South, southern studies scholars note that many farm families were able to purchase radios as it was a one-time purchase, rather than a recurring expense, and that most of these radios were battery powered meaning they could run without electricity.

After WSB's inaugural broadcast on March 15, 1922, the *Atlanta Journal* newspaper, owner of the station, claimed that the "radio broadcasting station [would] operate purely for the benefit and enjoyment of the public, and there [would] be no commercial feature connected with it. By broadcasting weather and crop news, it [was] hoped and believed that the service may prove particularly helpful to farmers who [were] beyond the reach of telegraph and telephone" (Cox Corporation 1974, 12). Early programming on WSB, prior to any sort of regulation or standardization, understood its use value to farmers and farm families. To this end, the "newly diversified farmer, the beau ideal of the New South" could use radio as tool to improve and modernize his farm through the incorporation of scientific agricultural principles provided, in part, through educational programming offered via schools of the air (Gaston 1970, 66).[8]

Alongside the rise of scientific agriculture grew the field of domestic science and the "gradual shift from religious devotion and duty … to ideas of efficiency based on self-improvement and individual accomplishment" (Gregg 2018, 33). As Sarah Leavitt (2002, 42) describes, "[domestic] advisors used the word 'science' to bring a secular authority to their texts and to their visions of the ideal home," imbuing homemaking with the professionalized qualities of skill, management, and education. Women required specialized training, "even a university education, in order to understand all the parts that made up the proper home," including food safety, sanitation, and home utility regulations (44). Home economists, too, understood and promoted radio as a pedagogical tool for women in the early twentieth century. An article in *Good Housekeeping* (1922) contributed by Christine Frederick titled "Radio for the

[8] Radio historian Steve Craig (2009, 5) notes that by the end of 1926, "some 90 stations were carrying an average of half an hour a day of USDA programs," such The United States Farm Radio School, "a three day a week, 15-minute educational program of advice on agricultural techniques."

Housekeeper," provides practical uses for radio by the homemaker and advances the understanding of radio "as a public utility of genuine importance." Frederick considers radio's ability to curb isolation, "whether mental or geographical," as its greatest feature. Farm women, geographically isolated and urban homemakers, mentally isolated, utilize radio to embed themselves within an on-air community. This, according to Frederick, does "much to give the housekeeper a stimulus in her work and make her feel that she is not engaged in degrading tasks, but is following an occupation which is worthy of professional interest and public recognition," as well as a creating a sense of belonging within a group of "thousands of other housekeepers who are also being trained" when they tune in to home service programs (Frederick 1922).

Importantly, the domestic science movement and its original practitioners and educators belonged to the northeast, urban, upper-middle class. As such, while farm women had long been required to understand the inner workings of both the farm and farm home, their expertise did not align with that of domestic science and was thus seen as outdated and unfeminine. Domestic scientists and time management specialists such as Ellen Richard, Lillian Gilbreth, and Christine Frederick sought to create a hierarchy of housekeeping with the institutionally trained homemaker or home scientist at the top; the chasm between the properly trained, educated middle class woman, and the traditional, primitive modes of housekeeping practiced by farm women grew substantially during this time. Similarly, efforts made by the USDA to modernize farms utilized a structure in which "substandard living implied inefficiency, and inefficient farmers were [seen as] expendable," resulting in the majority of resources and education reserved

for those most closely modeled after the urban middle class (Neth 1995, 189-190). This, too, applies to the resources distributed by New South reform.[9]

Rural, southern reform efforts cited the adoption of emergent technologies for both the farm and farm home as an integral step towards modernizing and making more efficient the labor of farmers and their wives. Such technologies included electricity, running water, automated farm equipment, and automobiles. For women, labor saving devices for use within the home, those that would decrease the drudgery of housework, as well as technologies like radio to decrease isolation and to teach women the newest methods of housekeeping were central to New South boosterism and towards inspiring the countryside to emulate the middle-class.

As a tool for use towards regional modernization in the South, WSB produced their own local programming and by 1927, became an NBC affiliate. One year after their affiliation, NBC split into two divisions, NBC Red and NBC Blue, due to its high number of local affiliate stations across the nation. NBC Red, the more commercial division, focused primarily on music and entertainment programs while NBC Blue focused on cultural prestige, news, and educational programs; WSB belonged to NBC Blue, likely due to its geographic location in the southeast (Hilmes 2007). WSB's affiliation with NBC contributed to increased network-supplied programming and established more routine scheduling practices regarding what went on air when. As an NBC affiliate, WSB had to "agree to clear the best parts of their schedules for network transmissions, leaving only late night, early morning, and weekday daytime hours" for locally produced programs (17). As a result, evidenced by WSB and stations around the country,

[9] Periods of reform and growth throughout the region's history only apply to certain groups or segments of the region. Left out of New South reform efforts were "impoverished and dependent small farmers," tenant farmers, and Black farmers (Cobb 2005, 84).

locally produced women's programming, at least until the 1930s, filled most of the station's daytime hours; by the mid-1930s, though, "almost all evening programs, and a large portion of daytime programs, were originated and produced by sponsors and advertising agencies" (18).

Consulting WSB's radio logs reveal that, like much daytime programming across the U.S., Georgia featured a variety of women's programs beginning in earnest in 1926. Home service programs featuring advice on housekeeping, health, gardening, and other "women's interests" became "some of the most popular shows on the air during radio's earliest years," alongside Schools of the Air and farm information programs (Hilmes 1997, 147; Hilliard 2001, 323). As described by Michele Hilmes (1997), a clear differentiation between daytime and primetime programming – not only its content and intended audience but its cultural cache – occurred relatively early in radio's history. She writes,

> … daytime became the venue for a debased kind of commercialized, feminized mass culture – heavily dominated by advertising agencies – in contrast to a more sophisticated, respectable, and masculine-characterized arena of prime time, also dominated by agencies but subject to stricter network controls … Nighttime thus became the highly 'visible,' public part of the broadcast schedule, and daytime hours increasingly private, less 'visible,' even obscure – despite their substantial audiences and important economic function. (154)

Hilmes' assessment of the less visible, obscured nature of daytime programming is confirmed by the WSB logs which often do not contain information on daytime broadcasts and do not adhere to any sort of regular schedule, unlike the primetime hours. Additionally, the transformation of radio from local imperatives to network coherence suppressed opportunities afforded by local programming to provide distinct, "direct, unmediated [addresses] to women" and their "social concerns" (149). I consulted programming logs from roughly 1926 to 1930 which are comprised

mostly of handwritten schedules, notes, and published schedules printed in local newspapers such as the *Atlanta Journal* and *Atlanta Constitution*. These logs are imprecise, much like the reality of early radio and its daytime, non-affiliate programming.

Some of the earliest programming aired with any regularity on WSB was supplied by the Sears, Roebuck Agricultural Foundation with programs hosted by local experts across the South. Sears agricultural radio programming began in Chicago, broadcasted on WLS and by 1924, the Radio Farmers Democracy (RFD) organization was established, featuring a host of programming provided by members of the Sears Roebuck Agricultural Foundation (SRAF). These "Dinnerbell" programs, consisting of "practical talks on all phases of farming by noted agricultural leaders, … advance information on the markets and … weather conditions to enable [farmers] to protect their crops," served as regional, educational forums to aid farmers ("Dinnerbell Radio Forum"). By early 1925, a Homemaker's Club was formed at WLS as "an auxiliary to the Radio Farmers Democracy," in which club members contributed and shared "a recipe, a household hint, [or] a suggestion on home management" to "solve the numerous problems that confront the busy homemaker" ("Homemakers Have Their Own Hour"). Mrs. Grace Viall Gray, "a mother, club woman, and home economics expert," presided over the program in Chicago ("Homemakers Have Their Own Hour").

An article from the *Lansing State Journal* in September 1925 states that the RFD organization proved so popular in Chicago that another branch was "organized southwest of the cotton belt where the Agricultural Foundation broadcasts through Station WFAA at Dallas, Tex" ("Chicago to Have New 5,000 Watter"). WFAA, Dallas featured Mrs. W.C. Martin as the women's expert on Radio Farmers Democracy beginning in 1925.

The first broadcast of RFD listed in the WSB radio logs took place on Monday, August 2, 1926, the day after the opening of the Sears, Roebuck plant and storefront in Atlanta; a handwritten note in the margins of the log reads “Sears Roebuck Week.” The introduction of RFD programming marks the beginning of Sears’ presence on WSB and in Atlanta. Sears’ synergistic strategy for its Atlanta operations combined the opening of the plant and storefront, the volume of content aired on WSB radio, and forming consumer relationships with farm families, housewives, and clubwomen of Atlanta. The agricultural and domestic programming offered by WSB and Sears began with RFD in August 1926, broadcast at noon each Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. The program featured a blend of farm and domestic advice, as well as hillbilly and country music; the start of the program was signaled by the sound of a dinner bell ringing, calling farmers in from the fields for lunch. As Jodi Cash notes, RFD “was just one of the spells Sears cast over the South” as it “laid the groundwork for … even more influential agricultural programs, like farmers markets and farm extension programs” (Cash).

Two months later, in October 1926, Atlanta’s Southeastern Fair, “an educational institution and as an exposition of Georgia products and resources,” opened for its 11th season and displayed “evidence of Georgia wealth and prosperity” (“Coming Southeastern Fair”). Sears’ presence at the fair, too, was extensively promoted through a series of exhibits, demonstrations, and radio broadcasts, including a model “modern home … equipped with all modern electrical appliances and labor-saving devices practical for farm use as well as for urban residences” (“Gigantic Exhibit,” 1926). Overseeing the Sears’ home exhibit was Mrs. R.F. Whelchel, the newly appointed home advisor for Sears Roebuck Agricultural Foundation. Whelchel, a graduate of the Georgia State College for Women and the University of Georgia, previously worked as a

county, district, and state home demonstration agent around the state of Georgia and, as described by the *Atlanta Constitution*, would be tasked with "all problems submitted to the mail order farm bureau by housewives of the South" ("Mrs. Welchel Named Farm Bureau Head," 1926). In addition to overseeing the fair exhibit, Mrs. Whelchel broadcasted live from the fair at 10am each day to "[discuss] household problems and [make] suggestions for more efficient home-making methods" ("Mrs. Welchel Named Farm Bureau Head"). From then, Mrs. Whelchel hosted the daily program *Homemaker's Half Hour* on WSB in coordination with SRAF. The program featured domestic advice on topics ranging from gardening, childcare, pest control, seasonal recipes, and on Friday mornings, included a homemakers' "playlet" presented by Whelchel and her associates ("Accordion Trio").

Whelchel was well-suited for the position of domestic expert and radio advisor due to her previous experience as an extension agent in Georgia, as well as her own experiences living on a farm where she "engaged in homemaking, poultry raising and gardening" ("Mrs. Welchel Named Farm Bureau Head"). WSB followed the common approach to radio home service programming by appointing an educated home economist/extension agent to host a program on domestic advice, particularly in Georgia, where Whelchel's education spoke to her credentials and ability to teach farm wives and newly urban housewives to emulate middle-class domestic practices under the auspices of the domestic science movement, while also speaking from a position of regional relevance, as Whelchel herself managed a small farm with her husband in Decatur, Georgia; as described by the *Atlanta Constitution*, Whelchel's "daily experience" would reach and help educate "thousands of housewives" ("Mrs. Welchel Named Farm Bureau Head").

Women's programming on WSB such as *Homemaker's Half Hour* utilized the relationship with Sears, Roebuck towards the creation of a middle-class consumer public. Sears promoted shopping to the aspiring middle-classes as "shoppers were expected to want, if not purchase, what was visibly arrayed all around them," which Sears facilitated through its storefront, sponsored radio programming, and its partnerships with domestic advisors and respected club women promoting middle-class values to a rural and newly urban audience of southern women (Ableson 1989, 11).

By 1927, the *Atlanta Constitution* reported that "Georgia had 2,116 or 58 percent more farm-owned radio sets in April 1927, than in 1925," with even greater increases in Alabama, Florida, Tennessee, and North and South Carolina ("Farmers Use Radio," 20). Letters sent to the SRAF expressed that "farmers and farm women [were] enjoying the programs," that "radio [was] helping to keep their boys and girls from town," and that "wives [were] better pleased than they would be if they had no radio" ("Farmers Use Radio").

WSB radio logs from October 15, 1928, specify that the "Last Sears prog" aired that day and by 1929, Sears' programming was absent from the schedule, replaced by network programming supplied by NBC for the majority of both the daytime and primetime hours. *The National Farm and Home Hour*, a collaborative effort between NBC and the USDA aired on WSB from 1929-1938, replacing Whelchel's *Homemaker's Half Hour*. The USDA and *The National Farm and Home Hour* aired talks given by regional supervisors assigned to different portions of the country to report on the value of home extension work. As mentioned above, the eventual establishment of a national, rather than local radio service, wherein regional interests were largely suppressed to emphasize a standardized, East Coast, middle-class sensibility, meant

that programs like *Homemaker's Half Hour* and regional experts like Whelchel were replaced by network fare. While programs like NBC's *National Farm and Home Hour* occasionally aired programming featuring regional experts, such features were less specific and regionally focused compared to local programming developed by stations like WSB.

Radio talks given by Mrs. Ola Powell Malcolm, the regional supervisor of home extension work in the southern states, contribute significantly to the goal of uplifting the farm home towards the standard of middle-class living began by Sears programming. Mrs. Malcolm focused on the home as a site in need of attention and provided information to farm women on how to improve their living spaces. In a 1929 talk titled "Developing Farm Home Resources," Mrs. Malcolm claims that well managed and attractive homes "testify that Better Homes on Better Farms make life in the country more worthwhile." Through domestic extension work, supervisors like Mrs. Malcolm used radio to teach women how to "[raise] farm home standards of beauty, comfort, culture, and power" ("Developing Farm Home Resources"). Attractive, convenient, and comfortable homes not only benefit those who live there, but also contribute to the uplift of rural living as comparable to urban living, a major goal of agrarian reform movements of the twentieth century.

In a 1934 talk titled "Living at Home Stimulates National Recovery," Mrs. Malcolm continues to emphasize the relationship between home improvement and "better living," particularly during the years of the Great Depression. During this time, Mrs. Malcolm teaches farm families to "readjust their agriculture in order to obtain a more abundant living and greater satisfaction on the farm and in the farm home," likely through a combination of home improvement and the adoption of both scientific agricultural and domestic techniques.

Lastly, in a talk titled “Better Country Living in 1938,” Mrs. Malcolm discusses the role of “family cooperation in the introduction of better business methods in farming and homemaking,” which contribute “a great deal to better farm life.” Here, farm women are taught to sell their homemade and homegrown products at markets to supplement the family income. This income then, could be funneled back into the farm home for beautification projects. Mrs. Malcolm claims that “more than 250,000 farm wives made their homes more attractive, convenient, and comfortable” in 1937 through both thrifty spending and repurposing materials from their respective farms, such as staple crops like cotton to stuff mattresses and sofas (“Better Country Living”).

WSB’s move from locally produced daytime programming to content supplied by NBC did not entirely erase the regional focus on the South, as Mrs. Malcolm’s contributions to the *National Farm and Home Hour* show. The emphasis on farm living in the South, though, became subsumed into NBC’s imperatives of mass appeal as opposed to local stations’ imperatives towards regionality.

Figure 2 Atlanta Clubwomen outside Sears-Roebuck, Atlanta Constitution September 25, 1926

Atlanta: New South city for some

While Sears' radio on WSB shuttered by 1929, the company continued to develop agricultural projects in Atlanta, including the opening of the Sears' Farmers' Market in May 1930. The educational imperatives of the company extended into the markets as well, featuring presentations by agricultural agents and enabling "the Georgia farmer and his family to offer their products direct to the Atlanta housewife" ("Farmers' Market to Open Saturday").

Prior to the arrival of Sears', though, Georgia clubwomen were responsible for establishing municipal markets, encouraging farmers to attend and sell. The cash incentive for farmers to sell at these curb markets led to an increase of crop diversity, from cotton to produce, fulfilling a major goal of New South reform efforts. Additionally, the collaboration between rural

and urban residents of the state featured in the work of markets established by women's club as they worked "toward a common object: The welfare of the farmer and the subsequent benefit to housewives of Atlanta" ("Mrs. Roberts Named Chairman").

Aligned with reform efforts to distinguish the region as superior and worthy of investment, Atlanta club women promoted Georgia-grown produce as superior to out of state substitutes. To this end, club women felt compelled to agitate for improvements to the state through a variety of means. President of the Atlanta Federation of Women's Clubs in 1927, Mrs. Norman Sharpe, claimed, "it seems that the United States government either cannot or will not offer any definite help to agricultural producers, and it seems to me that the women of Georgia have a great opportunity at hand to aid in the state's agricultural advancement by simply calling for Georgia-grown food products when they do their daily shopping" ("Georgia Products Day").

As described above, many government programs, including extension work, were incompatible and subsequently unadopted in the region due to economic disparities in the rural South and the inability or disinterest for farmers and farm women to emulate middle-class advice, reinforcing anti-interventionist attitudes and opting to solve their own problems through cooperation between those living and working within the state. As Rebecca Montgomery (2005) explains, the reform efforts of the New South narrowly focused on the maintenance and bolstering of a sold middle-class South, doing little to address the needs of the poorest and most rural sections of the region.

In studies conducted by the USDA regarding rural standards of living in the early twentieth century, Neth notes that those excluded included Black farmers and families, "all those who did not speak English, … people with smaller incomes" and tenant farmers, and that only

efficient farmers willing and able to adopt the prescribed techniques of scientific agriculture would "receive rewards equal to those received by the urban middle class" (189-190). Those able to adapt to modern agricultural practices were most often white, prosperous farm-owning families. The overinvestment in the ideal white farmer grew throughout the early decades of the twentieth century due to fears of an increasing number of immigrant and Black farmers occupying tenant farms. Domestic advisors such as Mrs. W.C. Martin, employed by the Sears, Roebuck Agricultural Foundation, and radio host of Dallas' WFAA's *Radio Farmer's Democracy* program, claimed that "all that [was] necessary to get desirable tenants [was] to furnish a comfortable home" ("A Great Handicap"). Martin stressed the necessity of acquiring the "right kinds of tenants" to live and work on farms to increase profitability. As such, this prompted groups like the New South spokesmen, the Country Life Commission, and domestic advisors to "reinvest farming with the Jeffersonian prestige of nativist nobility" that would not only recall an overly idealized past of premodern farm life as a remedy for the conditions of urban living at the turn of the century, but that would also lead to an "eugenics-inspired, racially sanitized future" (Casey 2009, 25). The comfortable and attractive farm home, then, became the first step in attracting desirable tenants and continuing to increase profitability for the farm family.[10]

Throughout the twentieth century, Atlanta continued to grow its reputation as a city of the New South. Prior to the opening of the Sears, Roebuck plant and storefront on Ponce de Leon Avenue, the site was home to an amusement park that offered "Atlantans not only a venue for

[10] Despite tenancy's perception as negative, 2 out of every 5 farmers in the 1930s were tenant farmers, according to the Agricultural Research Service of the USDA and the financial probability for farmers to own their own homes and farmers was much less a reality than was promoted by the USDA.

amusement, but also an interactive stage for emergent technologies" (Toton 2008). Lauren Rabinovitz (1998, 1) describes urban amenities such as the cinema, the department store, and the amusement park as sites "specifically produced for a combination of leisure, spectacle, social encounters, commerce, and cultural education." The cultural education provided by sites of industry, technology, and progress for New South cities like Atlanta often reveal the region's lingering attachments to racial politics of the antebellum era. Highly segregated spaces of technology and entertainment reveal the collision of the New South push towards modernization, as well as Old South indices of racial violence, culminating in a representation of "tradition and future" characterized by rising urbanity and modernization in the South (Rabinovitz 1988, 4). Atlanta demonstrated its commitment to growing the city for some, namely the white middle class; the residential segregation of the city, divided into a white north side and a Black south side, was sectioned off "with Ponce de Leon Avenue as the boundary," a key site of Atlanta's modern, industrial growth.

As local radio programs gave way to national, broadcast interests, the specificity of domestic advice programs waned and shifted instead to an imagined, homogenized, national audience. However, the arrival of television in Atlanta in the late 1940s realized a return to regional specificity on daytime programs. Chapter two continues this cultural geography of Atlanta and its continued development into a city of the New South facilitated through technologies such as television and the establishment of telecommunications industries in the region. As with radio, women's daytime programming on WSB-TV, the television division of the radio station discussed in this chapter, featured women hosts and the content they created for women audiences living throughout the South, particularly those in Atlanta and its surrounding

counties, instructing them not only on how to socialize the new medium of television into their homes and daily lives but how to utilize television programming towards the continued production of a white, southern femininity.

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Chapter Two:
WSB-TV, Atlanta: Broadcasting the New Old South

The October 6, 1948 "Television Edition" of the *Atlanta Constitution* spent its pages reckoning with the arrival of television transmission in Atlanta, Georgia. WSB radio, discussed in chapter one, expanded to include television transmission, and went on air September 29, 1948, the first station in the southern United States to do so. Its inaugural lineup of programming included a Baptist choir, puppet show, country western musical group, and local news coverage. Contributing writer for the *Constitution* Wellington Wright (1948, 32) claimed, "Yes, television is here … It's coming to Atlanta in a big way. Because of its location, Atlanta will be one of the nation's major television cities. So get your TV set ready."

This statement foresaw the major role Georgia would play in the global film and television industries. Georgia, the "Hollywood of the South," currently ranks third in national film and television production, after only New York and California, and is the fifth largest site of film and television production globally (Dockterman 2018). Writing in 1948, Wright's positioning of Atlanta as a major television city came to fruition around five years after WSB's initial broadcast. By 1950, the station became an NBC affiliate, a 31-year-long partnership that ended in the early 1980s when the station was acquired by ABC. In 1954, WSB became the first station in the South to broadcast a network program, *The Camel News Caravan* (NBC, 1949-1956), in full color. While Georgia's influence on the television industry today cannot be overstated, little has been written about its earliest, local programming and its function for Georgians. Known as both "The Voice of the South" as a radio station and the "Eyes of the

South" upon its expansion into television, WSB-TV developed into a local station with national scope, accumulating many firsts for the South in television production.

Despite its early affiliate relationship with NBC, WSB aired several local programs in the daytime hours with success and longevity. *Today in Georgia*, a magazine-style women's program, ran from 1953 to 1979 with host "Miss Television," Ruth Kent presiding. This chapter analyzes local programming on WSB-TV, namely *Today in Georgia* and other women's programming designed to attract middle-class women during the station's daytime schedule. As the host, Kent was tasked with utilizing the new medium of television as a tool to distribute entertainment and information towards "the cultural maintenance of the southern way of life" in the mid-century (Brill 2022, 5).

In what follows, I present two converging and interdependent histories; that of *Today in Georgia*, and that of a cultural geography of Atlanta told through the city's growth into a televisual center of the South. Kent's segments on the show, which included cooking, homemaking, fashion, travel, and interviews, bridged together Atlanta's campaign of double vision: continuing to grow the city's reputation as a site of industry, commerce, and technology in the South, as discussed in chapter one via WSB radio, as well as its preservation of the region's traditions through perpetual commemoration of its past, both afforded by the domestic medium of television throughout the mid-century.

Today in Georgia aired on WSB-TV for 26 years, its longest running locally produced program, and one of the few to survive network affiliation with NBC. The program kept Georgia and the region on the air at a time when the South was all but absent from national television programming. In addition to its programming, WSB-TV's studio, White Columns, the

antebellum-style mansion which housed the station from 1956 until its demolishment in the late 1990s, and its relationship to the 1939 film Southern *Gone with the Wind* reveal much about the city's attempts to move forward while looking backwards.

WSB-TV, *Today in Georgia*, and White Columns coalesce in a triad of technology, television, and tradition that show not only the trends of early, local television programming in an often-overlooked region, but also reveal the affective regional memory that influenced WSB's operations since its beginnings in 1948. As the first television station in the South, WSB-TV's initiatives included continuing to grow the station as a site of technology and culture, representing the South on the small screen and Atlanta as a site of progress in a region generally associated with stagnation and resistance to change. Alongside this, however, WSB participated in the city's persistent memorialization of the antebellum South amid industrial and cultural growth. Ruth Kent's *Today in Georgia*, a program designed to bring the world to Georgians and vice versa, held the tenuous balance of the program and the city of Atlanta as future-oriented yet beholden to the past.

Welcome South, Brother: television comes to Atlanta

While there is no lack of southern place-based television airing today, a trend that began in the 1960s primarily seen in the primetime lineup on the CBS network[11], the industry and the South

[11] See Sara Eskridge's *Rube Tube: CBS and Rural Comedy in the Sixties* (2018); Jack Kirby's *Media-Made Dixie* (1978); Allison Graham's *Framing the South: Hollywood, Television and Race during the Civil Rights Struggle* (2001)

on the small screen had a relatively slow start compared to the rise of television across the nation. NBC's early plans for rolling out television infrastructure

> outward from New York City [proposed] gradual interconnection from major cities across the United States to 'lesser' markets. In 1939, the original plan extended program service in New York and acquired broadcast facilities in 'key markets,' identified as Philadelphia, Chicago, Boston, Washington, Cleveland, and San Francisco. (Johnson 2008, 41)

NBC showed vested interest in serving the northeast with television infrastructure and programming as the region was regarded as the industrial and cultural center of the nation. NBC's plan for television development as of 1945 served "essential" markets in high-density metropolitan areas, followed by "desirable" markets they hoped to capture, and lastly, and of least consequence, "possible" markets such as the South and the mountain West (42).

In addition to the northeast, the Midwest, too, significantly shaped early television history and program content. Victoria Johnson (2008) describes early network television as a reflection of midwestern cultural values. As network television developed the LOP strategy (least objectional programming) to secure the highest number of viewers, the Midwest came to represent the least objectional region in the nation at the time of television's arrival to homes, as such states were considered "ideological middle-ground" (11); as discussed later, networks like NBC struggled to capture heartland viewers due to its overly polished programming and highbrow reputation. Many domestic sitcoms of the 1950s were set in the Midwest including the town of Mayberry, home to the Cleaver family of *Leave it to Beaver*, located somewhere between Chicago and Madison, Wisconsin. To this end, the South did not come to bear on the development of programs that have come to define early television as a domestic medium largely premised upon defining American values of family, gender, race, and class during the Cold War,

those most often articulated through domestic family sitcoms like *Leave it to Beaver* and *Father Knows Best*.

Geographical, technological, and ideological factors influenced content and accessibility of early television and, as such, the availability of television transmission to southern audiences was slow to reach any sort of regularity in comparison with the Midwest and urban northeast. Phoebe Bronstein (2020, 221) writes, "For instance, in 1953, Georgia had three stations, Florida had two, and Mississippi had none. By 1955, Georgia had thirteen, Florida had fifteen, and Mississippi had four." However, these stations were usually concentrated in more industrialized cities, as seen in Georgia, were seven of the state's thirteen stations were in Atlanta and Savannah (221). An article in the *Constitution*'s "Television Edition" briefly describes the process by which smaller southern cities would eventually gain access to the necessary infrastructure:

> With television stations sprouting up all over the nation, hookup facilities loom on the not-too-dim horizon. The ever-expanding rural electrification program, which has left only 31.9 percent of Georgia farms without electricity, seems to indicate that television will eventually reach a sizeable segment of the rural population. ("Small Cities" 1948, 39).

Television in the South, then, not only lacked initial network representation in terms of content, but rural parts of the (still mostly rural) region lacked televisual access all together. To this end, "Broadcast executives … balanced rhetorical appeals to 'universal' service and 'national' networking with internal strategic plans that encouraged network expansion only into markets with enough population density to rationalize the investment, thus reenforcing uneven access to rural consumers already mapped by transportation, telephone, and power lines," as discussed in

chapter one in the case of radio and access to other public services such as mail routes and consumer spaces (Johnson 2008, 7).

As described by Pete Daniel (2000, 8), “Rural change, urbanization, science, technology, racism, and popular culture were interlocking revolutionary components that swept through the South after World War II.” Atlanta, a southern city whose growth began prior to the war, continued to benefit from federal spending and urban renewal projects set in motion during the mid-twentieth century. Richard Bernard and Bradley Rice (1983) identify four contributing factors to the prosperous conditions of southern, Sunbelt cities like Atlanta: World War II defense spending, overall increased federal funds to the region, relaxed business and work regulations, and an overall lifestyle culture emphasizing leisure and recreation. Other factors included the rise of interstate highway construction, increased tourism, and the amenities that followed such as shopping malls, business centers, and subdivisions, as well as “urban redevelopment programs” to build and revitalize downtowns, stadiums, and universities (Bernard and Rice 1983, 15). Ohio governor James Cox purchased the *Atlanta Journal* newspaper in 1939, acquiring WSB radio and later, its television division. Upon the acquisition, Cox described Georgia as “a great empire with an inescapable progress of agricultural development” with the “town progressing more than any city in the South” (Glover 1998, 46). As described in Charles E. Glover’s (1998, 46) coverage of the Cox acquisition, he writes, “Cox often said he came to Atlanta with *Gone with the Wind*. The world premiere performance came a day or two after the

acquisition of the Journal. Some wag remarked that Cox bought the newspaper to get a ticket to the show."[12]

Atlanta's prominence as an increasingly industrialized southern city, as well as WSB's relationship with NBC beginning in the 1920s, contributed to its development as the first city to bring television transmission to the region. Just as WSB radio cleared its schedule for network programming, WSB-TV did the same for its primetime schedule beginning in 1950. The control over the primetime hours of television by networks relegated locally produced programming to fill the daytime hours. By the end of 1950, programming on WSB from 7 p.m. to midnight, when the station generally went off-air, consisted almost entirely of network fare. As such, much of the South's early television content came from locally produced programs aired in the daytime hours.

Atlanta grew into one of the most industrialized cities in the South throughout the twentieth century, to the point where questions arose about its southern character remaining intact. A volume published by the Works Project Administration of Georgia, 1942, claims, "At first sight the tourist may see no tradition at all [in Atlanta]. All the bustle and clamor of this ever-changing city seem to take no account of the past, to make no terms with anything but modern ways and rapid production. This city of big stores, smoking factories, of handsome modern residences, is truly a city of the modern South" (3). Atlanta's reputation as a city of the modern South often conflicted with its dedication to preserving its former, and no less important

[12] In 1950, James Cox purchased the *Atlanta Constitution* newspaper. He died in 1957, turning control of his telecommunications and publishing assets to his son, Jim Cox Jr and by 1964, Cox's broadcasting and cable services became Cox Broadcasting Corporation (CBC). Now called Cox Communications, the company is the largest privately owned broadband provider in the U.S. with its media hub, Cox Media, located in Atlanta, Georgia.

reputation as belonging to a former Confederate state, a city with a "spirit of dogged survival that brought recovery and increased power after the town had been burned by General Sherman's destroying forces" during the Civil War (7). WSB-TV's operations and segments on *Today in Georgia* articulate this tension; the station and its programming remained relevant and dedicated to southern audiences and southern sensibilities while able to speak beyond the boundaries of the state and region to promote Atlanta as a city of modern enterprise commensurate with those in more urban, industrialized, and culturally significant U.S. cities.

Figure 3 Ruth Kent, host of Today in Georgia

Daytime television and *Today in Georgia* on WSB-TV

Local television provides a distinct counterpoint to the South's lack of network presence and produces its own set of regionally specific characteristics independent of network intervention and oversight. Here, too, the histories of regional television and local programming are told primarily through the daytime lineup, as it was least affected by network imperatives to control the primetime hours.

WSB-TV gained national attention early in its operations for the innovative way it produced content during transit strikes across Atlanta beginning in May 1950. The station broadcasted live from local department store Rich's so that housewives and Atlantans unable to travel could shop from home.[13] *Rich's in Your Home* "garnered national news, outlasted the almost six-month-long transit strike and ran for more than a year" (Clemmons 2012). The department store utilized its "own clerical help in the show. Real salesmen and saleswomen appear on the screen" to model merchandise for sale to Atlantans shopping from home during the strikes ("Rich's Beats Bus Strike).

Daytime programming on WSB-TV beginning with *Rich's in Your Home* made up the bulk of the station's original programming; homemaking programs appeared on the schedules of local stations across the country quickly after going on air. According to Marsha Cassidy (2005, 29), a survey conducted at Iowa State College "found that at least 72 of the country's 108

[13] Among the Atlanta citizens killed by transit drivers, spurring the strike, included Georgia novelist Margaret Mitchell, author of *Gone with the Wind*. Her death influenced early programming decisions on WSB-TV as seen with the innovative program *Rich's in Your Home* and, as discussed in detail below, her novel and its filmic adaptation continued to influence the station and the city well into the late 1960s.

prefreeze television stations were producing homemaking programs, half of them running 30 minutes daily." By 1950, WSB offered a block of women's programming in the daytime hours beginning at 11 a.m. and programs included a combination of recipes and cooking demonstrations and generalized domestic advice. Local women's programming necessitated local women hosts; as seen on radio prior, domestic advice experts presided over home service programs, many of whom were trained in home economics or previously worked in women's programming divisions on radio.

In addition to daytime programming focused on domestic pedagogy, the primetime hours saw the rise of network-produced domestic family sitcoms, beginning in 1954 with *Father Knows Best* on CBS. The success of the series generated a genre of imitators and similar programs came on air in its wake, including *Leave it to Beaver* (CBS, 1957-1958, ABC, 1958-1963) and *The Donna Reed Show* (ABC, 1958-1966). Such indirectly pedagogical programs offered fictional examples of nuclear family relations and middle-class homes for audiences to aspire to. While not directly teaching the audience a skill, Nina Leibman (1995, 148) argues that "it is probable that the viewing family … was to understand its familial inferiority to the Nelsons and Cleavers and then learn from their examples" week after week, across the networks. As Ella Taylor (1989, 25) notes, "A quick survey of the major sitcoms of the 1950s suggest a vast middle class of happy American families who had already made it to the choicer suburbs (*Leave it to Beaver, Ozzie and Harriet, Father Knows Best*) or were on their way there (*I Love Lucy*) or aspired to middle-class status (*The Honeymooners, Life of Riley*)." These successful middle-class sitcom families represented "the white American suburban middle-class family, a social and economic arrangement which was valued as the cornerstone of the American social economy of

the 1950s" (Haralovich 1989, 63). Additionally, these sitcoms, with their "naturalized middle-class homelife, [masked] the social and economic entry into that privileged domain" by "effacing the separations of race, class, age, and gender which produced suburban neighborhoods" (74). The emphasis on family, the home, and middle-class living expressed in both nonfictional daytime programming and fictional primetime programming created a "continuous chronicle of domesticity" on television screens throughout the day with both direct and indirect pedagogies offered to women viewers on how to make their homes and family relationships, through the instruction of daytime women's programming, match those shown in primetime (Taylor 1989, 17).

While there were no Nelsons or Cleavers from the American South on network television, these programs, in combination with locally produced women's shows, created a set of pedagogical tools for women audiences to utilize towards the production of middle-class domesticity. Daytime programming on WSB, then, largely facilitated the defining of southern domestic advice and the image of the southern homemaker on television.

From 1949 to 1953, WSB-TV produced several daytime programs for women audiences, including *Strictly for the Girls*, *Come into the Kitchen*, *Wayside Inn*, *Rich's in Your Home*, *Nancy Carter's TV Cook Book*, and its first magazine-style program, whose format was later adopted by *Today in Georgia*, *At Home with Elsbeth*. These programs offered a range of content relevant to the home and the homemaker including cooking demonstrations, do-it-yourself décor advice, home shopping services, and interviews. Each program, too, featured an expert host to advise Georgia homemakers on matters of the home and its upkeep. These women, including Kent, who hosted *Come into the Kitchen*, *Wayside Inn*, and *Today in Georgia*, sought to instruct

audiences towards the performance of southern middle-class domesticity, realized through fashion, food, culture, and consumer goods.

Programs such as *Rich's in Your Home* and *Nancy Carter's TV Cookbook* were sponsored by local Atlanta businesses that offered product tie-ins to the programs' content. Nancy Carter's instructional program featured recipes and cooking advice from Carter who served as domestic expert and advisor for Colonial Stores, a prominent grocery chain in the southern states throughout the mid-century, serving 11 states in the region with its headquarters based in Atlanta. The program premiered in October 1953, just one month after both *Today in Georgia* and *Wayside Inn*, further solidifying the block of women's programming offered by WSB in the daytime hours.

A segment from a New Year's Day episode features Carter preparing food and drink for a New Year's party. Carter prepares a vast menu including New Year's punch, bleu cheese appetizer crackers, curried chips and cottage cheese topped with pepper strips cut to spell out HAPPY NEW YEAR, a luxurious scalloped oyster supreme, as well as microwavable potpies (deemed a labor saving alternative), and the main course, a roast beef garnished with "Nancy's toasted letter salute," pie dough cut into pieces to spell out 1955 and adhered to the roast beef ("WSB-TV Reunion"). Recipes from the program were supplied from free pamphlets available at Colonial Stores featuring Nancy Carter tested-and-approved ingredients; these pamphlets were later bound into an official cookbook, *Nancy Carter's Cook Book*, after which the program is named. Viewers could shop with Carter's recommendations by consulting the grocery pamphlet for the week, helping housewives shop for necessary ingredients and discern which products were best, as well as tune into the program to see her prepare the recipe in real time. Carter's

program is notable for several reasons, including her role as director of home economics for the most expansive grocery chain in the South during the mid-century, as well as her program's demonstration of the often-contradictory demands of homemaking in the mid-century.

The over-sentimentalization of the American home in the mid-century focused largely on the kitchen. 1959's American National Exhibition in Moscow (ANEM) premiered the American kitchen as representative of "the triumphs of capitalism" and the life of the American family as "the launchpad of happiness" (Baldwin 2016, 3, 34). A return to the sentimentalization of the home and the labor required in its upkeep replaced the sanitized, scientific approach of domestic science popular in the early twentieth century. The domestic science movement, discussed in chapter one, encouraged women to learn food safety and sanitation practices to promote healthy families while the sentimentalization of feeding the family, wherein lovingly prepared meals correlated to happy and subsequently healthier families, was the domain of the mid-century. However, the decade witnessed the rise of processed convenience foods, creating a paradoxical domestic landscape for housewives as they attempted to navigate interpellation as both dedicated domestics and labor-savers. In her program, Nancy Carter embodies this contraction, utilizing "flare" to dress up convenience foods served alongside homemade dishes to round out a family meal or party menu. While convenience foods purported to decrease labor in the kitchen, the mid-century saw the return of highly decorative food trends popular in the nineteenth century. The return of decorative food trends served to temper the labor-saving promises of convenience foods by making their preparation and embellishment more hands-on, creative, and homemade, potentially suppressing the guilt experienced by women who felt disconnected from the creative and immersive process of cooking. Domestic advisors on television, then, were able to navigate

mid-century housewives through the contradictory demands of homemaking, teaching them when to utilize convenience foods and when to avoid shortcuts.

Figure 4 Ruth Kent promoting convenience foods for holiday parties

Like Carter, Kent, too, served as a cooking expert before her tenure on *Today in Georgia* as the host of *Come into the Kitchen*. Her recipes and product endorsements were “usable by busy modern-homemakers” and were “typically Southern,” including cornbread dressing and ambrosia salad (Higgins 1955, 18). Seen in an advertisement for 7-Minit frosting, described as “a ‘boiled’ 7-minute type frosting made without cooking,” Kent’s face and a speech bubble appear above the product claiming, “You bake the cake – I’ll buy the frosting” and “Let Ruth Kent frost your next cake!” (Atlanta Constitution 1959, 49). Kent’s endorsement of the short-cut frosting as well as the imperative for women to not only bake cake but do so in a way that mimics intensive labor and skill positions her as a trustworthy source on convenience products and making them

work in the service of sentimentalized homemaking. Similarly, Kent contributed to a cookbook titled *Cooking with the Experts*, a volume comprised of recipes from "forty-eight experts from the United States and Hawaii … as they have appeared on … television screens" (Kaufman 1955, vii). The volume, featuring over 400 recipes "have stood the test of the TV cooks themselves and of their viewers" and Kent's contributions include her favorite meal to serve company, Beef Polonaise, though her busy schedule leaves "little time for entertaining" (Higgins 1955, 18).

On September 28, 1953, the *Atlanta Constitution* ran an article announcing the premiere of two local shows, *Today in Georgia* and *Wayside Inn*, that were specifically "designed to attract the attention of feminine viewers" (Jones, 8). *Today in Georgia* was described as "[emulating], on a Georgia basis, the popular NBC-TV *Today* program," featuring weather, interviews, and news, as well as household and children's segments, hosted by Don Elliot and Ruth Kent (8). *Wayside Inn* was a "departmentalized program, making possible the sale of a variety of commercial products," with a "how-to-do-it department," also hosted by Kent, to provide tips for "painting furniture, making draperies and on allied arts" (8). *Wayside Inn* also featured appearances by prominent Georgians, with the occasional national celebrity, like film and television actress Wendy Barrie and model Pat Reilly, passing through for interviews. The premiere of both *Today in Georgia* and *Wayside Inn* coincided with WSB-TV's fifth anniversary.

Today in Georgia utilized the magazine-style format, a strategy favored by NBC's vice president in charge of television programming, Pat Weaver, beginning with *Today* in 1952 and later adopted by *Home* in 1954. The similarities between WSB and NBC's daytime programs,

particularly *Today in Georgia*'s emulation of the *Today* show, highlight the tensions and dynamics between local and network daytime programs, their content, aesthetics, and aspirations for their target audiences, as well as the ability for local programming to reflect local trends.

Marsha Cassidy and Mimi White (2002) speak to these dynamics in their comparative history of two prominent daytime programs and their respective hosts, NBC's *Home* with Arlene Francis and the local Cincinnati, Ohio program *Fifty-Fifty Club*, hosted by Ruth Lyons. Networks and local stations sought to develop the voice, image, and advice provided by their respective "[femcees] … charming, witty, middle-aged [hostesses] who presided over daytime broadcasts aimed at women viewers" (31). Johnson (2008, 48) notes that while regional stations were tasked with defining standards of public good for their audiences, networks in locations such as the northeast were thought of as "extra-local, as exemplified by programming exhibiting high production values, genre diversity, and audience breadth." As such, the FCC described urban markets as inherently diverse, while "rural communities [were] removed from cultural flow" (48). In this sense, it is concluded that only *some* regions in the U.S. possess regional identities, while others represent the nation comprehensively. Consequently, women hosts, too, faced this local vs. extra-local comparison.

Francis was tasked with bringing metropolitanism and an urban, East Coast sensibility to those living outside of New York. In his conception of *Home*, Weaver sought to develop "a 'quality show' for housewives, unabashedly aspiring to introduce New York City to the country at large," (Cassidy and White 2002, 49) despite the prime audience for the program being middle-America housewives. Weaver's conception of *Home* was part of his larger broadcast strategy for NBC known as "Operation Frontal Lobes," in which he sought to bring high-end

programming to the network. To this end, "Francis' television persona perpetuated an unresolvable split between NBC's commitment to the diffusion of 'enlightenment' and the imperatives of mass appeal," resulting in the cancellation of the program after only three years (51). In contrast, Ruth Lyon's *Fifty-Fifty Club*, based out of Cincinnati, ran from 1949 until her retirement in 1967, with the program's longevity arguably due to her ability to resonate with audiences from a middle-class, middle-brow position in middle America.

Ruth Kent and *Today in Georgia*, I argue, worked to position Atlanta as both regionally southern *and* nationally metropolitan, attempting to lessen the antagonism and incompatibility between the local/network binary. Before adding *Today in Georgia* to its lineup, WSB-TV aired both *Today* and *Fifty-Fifty Club* in the daytime hours before replacing Lyon's program with its own locally developed shows; by 1954, *Today in Georgia* was preceded by two hours of *Today* and was followed later in the day by *Home*. *Today in Georgia* remained an important part of WSB-TV's daytime lineup while other local programs were lost to affiliate obligations.

Today in Georgia retained its regional status through its focus on the people, events, food, politics, and news of Georgia. Yet while Georgia was the focus, Kent also traveled to France and Haiti, interviewed Hollywood celebrities, and attended international conferences, adding to the exoticism and travel offered to audiences by early television, with hosts like Kent serving as their guides. Many of Kent's segments demonstrate her ability to move between and bring into harmony both southern charm and big city savvy, a main goal of WSB as the first station in the South and Atlanta as a burgeoning city of industry, technology, and culture. Kent's contributions to the station, beginning in 1951 until her departure in 1976, and her tenure as the

host of the station's premiere local program, contribute to the history of the station and its attempts to balance local and network obligations unique to the Atlanta station.

Kent served as a tastemaker and trusted source in her multiple roles at WSB. The intermediary work of television hosts like Ruth Kent brought both "visual entertainment and education" to Atlanta citizens, acting as a window to the world and a portal to the past (Jones 1948, 30). As a domestic advisor, Kent occupied the position of cultural intermediary, those who "perform the task of gentle manipulation" of tastes for "particular goods and practices" through jobs in radio and television, and other types of cultural work (Maguire and Matthews 2014, 16). To serve as a convincing cultural intermediary (specifically a southern cultural intermediary), Kent relied on "good manners, good taste, and physical charm, … familiarly with the culture of the dominant class and a mastery of signs and emblems of distinction and taste, … and aesthetic dispositions and appropriate forms of self-presentation" (22). As the host of several local productions, including *Today in Georgia*, Kent served as an "access point" – a person with "specialized knowledge who [mediated] the relationship between laypeople and modernity's abstract systems," in this case, television (Ngai 2012, 197).[14] As a cultural advisor, Kent did not teach audiences of mid-century Atlanta how the new medium of television worked on the level of tubes and wires but instead taught audiences how to socialize television into their daily lives and how to be socialized by it.

[14] Described by Anthony Giddens (1990), access points serve as "representatives of abstract systems." This could include anything from doctors or surgeons to flight attendants. To this end, Giddens claims we must trust these individuals both as people and specifically as people who possess knowledge or skills "to which the lay individual has no effective access" such as on how to fly a plane or perform brain surgery.

Kent describes the function of *Today in Georgia* as such: "If we have a primary function … it is to get a better understanding of anything and everything and everybody" (Curry 1964, 43). Additionally, she claims "I don't consider myself a personality – I'm merely an instrument between guest and viewer. The program is about any and everything – weighty subjects to philosophy, music to humor to frivolity. I try to have at least one thing a day to make the viewer think" (Alexander 1965, 15). Segments of the program demonstrate its dual mission to bring the world to Georgians and vice versa as Kent served not only as a community leader but as an intermediary between content and viewers, taking her audience along on educational and exotic endeavors. The program's target audience of Georgia housewives meant that Kent often presented homemaking and cooking segments, but the program's scope increased to include broader topics the longer the show remained on air. In an advertisement in *Broadcasting* magazine, *Today in Georgia* claims to "[operate] on the pleasant idea that ladies are interested in all that goes on around them" ("WSB-TV" 1960). An episode from December 1967 provides a useful survey of a typical episode of the program wherein Kent teaches viewers about the arts, culture, and hobby scenes across the state, including the Atlanta figure skating club, the Azealia chapter of the American Rhododendron Society, and a how-to segment on shopping for sophisticated, personal holiday gifts.

Beginning in 1960, Kent and *Today in Georgia*, having won the Radio TV Mirror Award for Best TV Women's Interest Show in the southern states, began to include features beyond the borders of Georgia. In 1964, Kent traveled to Nassau for an international tea manufacturing convention "filming holiday souvenirs for her Georgia viewers" (Curry 1964, 43). The trip extended to include stops in India, Ceylon, and Indonesia where Kent interviewed industry and

manufacturing leaders while also climbing coconut trees and doing the limbo with locals. In response to her trip, though, Kent claimed, "I still think there is so much in Georgia that we'd never run out of material … Contrary to some opinion … some of the swingingest and most sophisticated people around are in small towns" (43). In a later episode of *Today in Georgia*, Kent repeats this refrain, claiming "there's so many exciting things happening in our area, people sometimes get tired of our boasting about it, but I think we have something to be proud of!" ("Today in Georgia").

Figure 5 Ruth Kent interviewing Olivia de Havilland on Today in Georgia

In addition to international travel, Kent often interviewed celebrities and local Georgia officials on her program on topics ranging from childbirth to time management to film. In 1963,

Kent interviewed Dr. Lilian Gilbreath, prominent domestic scientist, on the "Personal Management of One's Life," seeking advice for Georgia audiences on self-improvement through self-management. In 1967, Kent hosted *Gone with the Wind* actress Olivia de Havilland on the program, inquiring about the film's long-standing effect on audiences, particularly those in Georgia. During the interview, Kent asks about the actress' beauty secrets and tips on staying youthful, as well as her ability to make time for family in her life as an actress. Throughout the interview Kent refers to de Havilland by her character's name, Melanie, in the film. Kent and de Havilland reminisce about Melanie's happiness and poise as if reflecting on the life of an old friend. Kent states, "Something that I don't think anybody's been able to explain, other than that it was a great novel to begin with, and the most superb cast attainable, is the fact that this has lasted, and probably will for long after we're dead and gone," with de Havilland agreeing that the film is "an eternal classic" (WSB Newsfilm collection).

As described by Matthew Bernstein (2014), the 1939 premiere of *Gone with the Wind* in Atlanta remains one of the city's most prominent events, claiming that the 1996 Olympic games "are the only phenomenon that equals it." In both cases, he says, "Atlanta felt the eyes of the world were upon it." Mitchell's novel and later, the film premiere brought national attention to the city that, at the time, "loomed large regionally, but not nationally" (Bernstein 2014). Additionally, as described in the introduction, *Gone with the Wind* promised to depict the region differently than it had been in the past, taking the "Southern feeling" into consideration in the film's execution and premiere.

de Havilland's appearance on *Today in Georgia* coincided with the 28th anniversary of the premiere of the film held in Atlanta. The 1967 premiere included, much like each earlier

premiere, the Tara Ball, described by attendee Susan Lindsley as such: "Tara's Theme filled the ballroom and the Grand March began. Mayor Hartsfield and Olivia de Havilland came in, under the raised swords of Confederate soldiers" (2011, 332)[15]. de Havilland's visits to Atlanta and her participation in *Gone with the Wind* anniversary celebrations over the span of nearly 30 years reanimate the image of the southern lady as essential to southern culture and its media products, as always relevant regardless of historical period. Kent and de Havilland agree that Melanie is someone to emulate, a "perfectly happy woman, and a perfectly loving woman" who never found herself in a situation "which caused her to lose her poise, and her spiritual serenity, and her love." The deployment of de Havilland and her character Melanie on *Today in Georgia* and at the anniversary ball reenforce Raka Shome's claims that figures like the southern lady are "constantly given new life in popular culture as they are inserted and reinserted into contexts and stories that may have nothing to do with the context of the original image" (2014, 20).

In addition *to Gone with the Wind*'s recurrent presence on WSB-TV in the form of interviews, behind-the-scenes specials, and in 1976, the two-night television premiere of the film on NBC, the contributed much to the station and city's identity throughout the mid-century.[16] The history of WSB-TV, though, remains complex and at times, seemingly contradictory, as told through the antagonism between the forward momentum of the station and the city and their attachment to icons and ideologies of the Old South. As Susan Courtney (2017) describes, the

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[15] Susan Lindsley is the niece of Susan Myrick, friend of Margaret Mitchell, columnist for the *Macon Telegraph*, and technical advisor for 1939's *Gone with the Wind*.

[16] *Gone with the Wind* re-premiered in Atlanta in 1961 for the Civil War Centennial celebration hosted by the city. Stars Olivia de Havilland, Vivien Leigh, Clark Gable, and producer David O. Selznick attended a film screening and ball. In this instance, the film re-premiered amid the civil rights movement in Atlanta including sit-ins and demonstrations, the arrest of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., and only a few years prior to the election of staunch segregationist Lester Maddox as Governor, who in 1964 attempted to forcibly remove Black protestors from his Atlanta restaurant, the Pickrick.

genre of the film Southern was not interested in the burgeoning New South of the early to mid-twentieth century, but instead obsessively depicted the antebellum era. She notes that "the period's screen Souths – albeit multiple – appear contained, and are routinely marked by the logics of containment" (16). Comparatively, locally produced southern television served as transportive, providing opportunities of exploration to audiences. In his article for the *Atlanta Constitution*'s "Television Edition," Wellington Wright (1948, 32) describes television, "like the other great American industries" as "capable of annihilating both time and space!" The affordances of televisual travel, though, did not always transport audiences to the future, but as seen in instances at WSB-TV, served as transportation back to the antebellum-era South.

Figure 6 WSB employees outside White Columns

Gone with the Wind, WSB-TV White Columns, and Southern Revival in the Mid-Century

"I love it as more than a house; it's a whole world that wants only to be graceful and beautiful" – Melanie Hamilton, *Gone with the Wind* (1939)

As the first television station in the South, WSB-TV sought to grow the station as both a technological and culture force, representing the South on the small screen and Atlanta as a site of progress. WSB's news programming captured and broadcasted the city's navigation of civil rights and integration struggles, hoping to confirm its reputation as "the city too busy to hate," as named by Mayor William Hartsfield in the mid-century. WSB anchor Monica Kaufman states, "The difference between Georgia and the Old South and Atlanta and the New South was even more apparent during school integration" and that everyone in Atlanta, leadership and media included, sought to ensure "that Atlanta's television stories would look different than those everyone had seen from Little Rock" (WSB-TV 50 Years in Atlanta"). However, as detailed below, the station's preoccupation with iconography and the memory of the Old South, including numerous television specials dedicated to *Gone with the Wind*, anniversary parties for the film's release, and the construction of White Columns studio create an antagonism between nostalgic longing and forward momentum, a prominent condition of southern life throughout the twentieth century. As Karen Cox (2011) describes,

> The conflict between 'backward-looking pastoralism' and the impulse toward modernity [seem] incompatible; however, popular culture helped to bring both ideas together in the marketplace, and frequently the antebellum South acted as a conduit. That is to say that pastoral images and themes of the Old South … were used to sell goods and entertainment to American consumers, all of which made possible by the modern urban-industrial world in which they lived. (3)

Television and other technological and cultural advancements, then, provided opportunities to relive and revive the Old South throughout Georgia.

The presence and effect of *Gone with the Wind* in Atlanta cannot be overstated for decades after the film's premiere in 1939, the city continued to celebrate the relationship between the two through anniversaries, premieres, and other special, often televised, events. In late 1950, Paul Jones of the *Constitution* writes, "Memories of the greatest movie premiere of all times will be recalled Friday night when WSB-TV commemorates the 11th anniversary premiere of 'Gone with the Wind' with the first showing of video of films made at the gala opening in 1939" (40). The film features Mayor Hartsfield as narrator, a key figure in bringing the film's opening to Atlanta, and includes footage of the premiere, featuring a parade, ball, and celebrity arrivals to the Loew's Grand Theater in December 1939. Hartsfield can also be seen taking star Clark Gable (Rhett Butler) and wife Carole Lombard to various landmarks around the city, particularly those of Old South relevance, such as the Cyclorama and the site of the Battle of Peachtree Creek.[17]

Four years later, the film re-premiered in Atlanta for its 15th anniversary. *Constitution* writer Celestine Sibley (1954) uses the film's original premiere and its upcoming anniversary to describe changes in Georgia and the world at large, writing

> Children have been born and grown old enough to read the book and see the movie. A world war has been fought, the United Nations born, the atom bomb developed, the last Georgia Confederate is dead. Sometimes it breaks your heart to think that things survive after the people who used them are dead but that kind of feeling will not sadden the festivities attending the opening of Gone with the Wind at Loew's Grant May 20 …

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[17] The Battle of Atlanta cyclorama painting depicts the Battle of Atlanta during the Civil War. The painting was completed in 1886 and has been on display throughout the city since.

> Good work, a good book, a good performance, lives on to delight generations as yet unborn. (15)

Despite such change, loss, and growth, *Gone with the Wind* persisted as part of Georgia's present in the mid-century, serving as an anchor to the Old South during periods of sustained growth, advancement, and change for the state; as described by Katharina Niemeyer (2014, 2), "nostalgia is a traditional companion to progress." Perhaps the greatest testament to the perseverance of the film and its Old South iconography in a city of rapid development is White Columns, WSB-TV's state-of-the-art television studio, dressed in antebellum style. Described by James Cobb (2005, 87), "The New South entered the twentieth century bedecked in the grandiose architectural splendor meant to invoke the Old South Golden Age." The use of plantation-style architecture in the construction of buildings like White Columns, as well as public architecture and suburban homes, "represented a set of interlocking beliefs, including the renewed place of the vindicated South in the American mainstream, the rightness and patriotism of Confederate causes, and the association of class architecture with idealized southern virtues" (Bishar 1993, 5).

A history of southern architecture and its embedded ideologies must begin with the largest looming sort – the house on the hill, plantation home, or Big House. *Washington Tribune* columnist Melvin B. Tolson ruminates on the Big House as seen in *Gone with the Wind*, writing, "Everything civilization has its symbols, its cornerstone, its label, its trademark … the symbol of the South is the Big House" (Farnsworth 1982, 221). The Big House, represented by the plantation home Tara in the film adaptation serves as the most enduring example, acting as a site of replication, tourism, and white southern fantasy. The Big House in *Gone with the Wind*, as well as subsequent iterations seen in southern colonial revival architecture across big and small

screens possess a "veneer of glamor … with its sweeping green lawns, its magnolia blossoms, its high-ceilinged rooms, its magnificent staircases, its waltzing couples, its mellow aristocracy" (222). This veneer, as Tolson describes, dilutes, and eventually erases any memory of the violence of the Big House and the "human misery" on which it is built and sustained, as well as its enduring legacies of white violence, leaving behind a sterilized memory of a falsified genteel South of hospitality, fecund gardens, and happy slaves (222).

While the Tara facade built for the film was never an actual home, but instead a combination of plywood and papier mâché, its influence on southern architecture in the twentieth century and its encompassing ideologies saw lasting influence. Variations of the plantation house were seen in residential and public architecture and these distinctly southern styles differed from architectural trends in other parts of the nation at the time. Atlanta continued its development throughout the twentieth century not only as a site of urban industry but as a suburban, commercial space, repopulating land once used for farming with new single-family homes after World War II. Constructing suburbs on farmlands occurred primarily because single-family homes were not built in the city center due to attempts by the FHA to "control design and construction … to achieve neighborhood stability" (Burns et. al 2001, 6). As such, these developments were built in such a way to prevent them from serving commercial, as well as residential functions, unlike multi-use spaces in urban areas. Attempts to establish neighborhood stability and "character" was largely a result of segregationist loan practices designed to attract white, up-and-coming middle-class veterans and their families to restrict buying and viable loan options for prospective Black homeowners. In 1947, the FHA described "mixed" neighborhood as potentially "less desirable to present and prospective occupants." To this end, as late as 1960,

"only 5.5% of the Atlanta population resided in integrated neighborhoods" (Burns et. al 2001, 15).

As Mary Beth Haralovich describes (1989, 61-62), "An ideal white and middle-class homelife was a primary means of reconstituting and resocializing the American family after World War II," and in the South, suburbs were built in revival styles to reconstitute vestiges of the Old South. Much like the suburbs themselves, television families residing in such spaces like the Cleavers or Andersons, were depicted as self-sufficient and contained, an "entity that can solve all crises on its own" (Leibman 1995, 153). It is necessary, then, to highlight the relationship between suburban, familial, and southern ideologies of the mid-century as self-possessed entities opposed to and often created in response to perceived threats from outside intervention.

Residential spaces embraced modern conveniences inside yet replicated "classical imagery akin to antebellum landmarks" outside that served to promote the South "as offering the best of modern reform … combined with the stable social hierarchy modeled by the Old South" (Bishar 1993, 28). Claims of stability in architectural trends and the establishment of suburbs are identifiable throughout the early to mid-twentieth century with their establishment constructed around these same themes. Older antebellum-style homes were lovingly restored and updated with modern conveniences while new revival style homes were built; these architectural trends extended to southern suburbs built to accommodate the upper-middle classes, identified with "traditional domesticity, respectability, and continuity" (Bishar 1993, 34). In Atlanta specifically, Greek and classical revival architecture was a trend of the 1930s, marking a second revival of such styles. In *Atlanta: A City of the Modern South* (1942), homes are described as implementing

"class decorations … with grace and distinction," such as "columns, chaste friezes, and well-portioned porticoes" (119).

The revival style architecture used in Georgia gained prominence in the 1930s; these revival structures make up most of the state's antebellum-style homes as the plantation home in the pre-Civil War South was not as ubiquitous as such an architectural revival might suggest. As Tara McPherson (2003, 44) notes, "such mansions were not widely prevalent in the antebellum South" and in the years before the Civil War, "fewer than 2,300 families out of a population of 8 million owned substantial numbers of slaves, thus constituting the planter aristocracy." Author of *Gone with the Wind*, Margaret Mitchell and technical advisor, Susan Myrick, contested Selznick Studio's preoccupation with featuring grandiose plantation homes in the film, as they both persistently argued that it did not align with the architecture of the region at the time. In several personal letters regarding the film's production, Mitchell speaks to the incongruency between North Georgia in actuality and the version created for the film. In April 1939, she writes

> The movie people wanted to see old houses that were built before Sherman got here and I obligingly showed them. While they were polite, I am sure they were dreadfully disappointed … I had tried to prepare them by reiterating that this section of North Georgia was new and crude compared with other sections of the South, and white columns were the exception rather than the rule. (Myrick and Harwell 1982, 8-9)

A letter written in 1942 reveals her continued exasperation at the misuse of Old South iconography:

> Since my novel was published, I have been embarrassed on many occasions by finding myself included among writers who pictured the South as a land of white-columned mansions … I took great pains to describe North Georgia as it was. But people believe what they like to believe and the mythical Old South has too strong a hold on their imaginations to be altered by a mere reading of a 1,037 page book. (Myrick and Harwell

1982, 18)

While revival architecture borrows from the aesthetics of the antebellum era, the role of the on-screen plantation house cannot be discredited as an influence on such styles well into the twentieth century as an affordance of screen technologies. The "claustrophobia of mansions" and narratives of "circularity, entrapment, and stagnation" describe the South on film in the early twentieth century; homes represent entire worlds in the screen-South and are renewed as containing entire worlds *and* lifetimes in subsequent revival architecture (Courtney 2017, 84). As de Havilland's character, Melanie, in *Gone with the Wind* remarks, "I love it as more than a house; it's a whole world that wants only to be graceful and beautiful." The Tara façade built for *Gone with the Wind* influenced southern architecture and its encompassing ideologies which saw lasting influence from seemingly benevolent residential dwellings to the use of former plantation homes by white supremacist groups like the Ku Klux Klan and the United Daughters of the Confederacy in twentieth-century Atlanta; such groups purchased and restored homes for use as offices of operations through the city.[18]

WSB-TV moved into White Columns in April 1956 and the studio's dedication ceremony was broadcasted on the station. According to the *Constitution*, "speakers lauded the $1,500,000 facilities as a blending of the Old South with the progress of the New" (Fuhrman 1956, 1). Speakers and attendees included Atlanta Mayor William Hartsfield, chairman of the board of NBC David Sarnoff, and president of the National Association of Radio and Television Broadcasters (NARTB) Harold Fellows, among others. Music from the *Gone with the Wind*

[18] Charles Charlton Moseley (1968) describes the resurrection of Ku Klux Klan activity in Georgia in the mid-1950s, spurred by the *Brown v. Board* ruling. He writes, "The modern KKK was founded in Georgia. This state has been the Imperial Headquarters for the order during most of its modern history" (v).

score was played during the ceremony as guests sat on the lawn and left with a special White Columns edition of Margaret Mitchell's novel. Don Elliot, co-host of *Today in Georgia*, described the building as a "symbol of the tradition, the progress, and the prosperity of the South" (Fuhrman 1956, 8). Speeches delivered by television industry leaders, particularly that of NBC president David Sarnoff, spoke to the virtues of White Columns as the best of the traditional and modern. Press and trade publication coverage of the studio focused extensively on its blend of the most innovative and advanced communication technologies housed within its neo-traditional façade. Additionally, White Columns' homage to the Old South is not vague recollection, but instead, one of technicolor Hollywood, an Old South specifically realized in 1939's *Gone with the Wind*. As executive director of WSB television and radio J. Leonard Reinsch describes, "While here is a touch of the Old South, White Columns is as modern as tomorrow. Yet, in a way, one can almost imagine Scarlett O'Hara opening the front door and stepping out upon this porch – which is a good old Southern word" (Fuhrman 1956, 8).

As discussed above, as a main representative of a city of the New South, Atlanta often resembled other modernized, urban cities throughout the U.S. However, the instillation of White Columns, a modern communications facility, likely the most sophisticated in the region, located "high upon a green and tree-crowned hill" materializes Atlanta's nostalgia/future antagonism. The state-of-the-art studio also included mobile news units outfitted with "2-way short-wave, mobile telephones, [and] police radio" in addition to having a helicopter "on call" to capture breaking news events across the city and state ("Front Line" 1960, 41). The studio, according to a 1956 article in *Broadcasting* trade journal, "bypassed the current station trend toward contemporary design to choose classic Georgia architecture" including "eight lofty, fluted

columns" that could "pass as a mansion for Scarlett O'Hara" ("White Columns," 64). Importantly, too, the facility was built on the site of the Wash Collier plantation, which in 1864, the year of the Atlanta fires, served as a defensive site against General Sherman's invading army towards the end of the Civil War. The burning and reconstruction of Atlanta in the years following the Civil War contribute to the city's history as spirited, progressive, and prosperous.

In his speech given during White Column's dedication, David Sarnoff speaks to the relationship between WSB-TV and NBC, as well as television's unique ability to collapse distance, bringing the world to Georgia and vice versa. He says, "This means that today Atlanta is less than one second away from any part of the world in which we live. [WSB] carried NBC's signal into the heart of the South for the first time" (WSB-TV Videotape Collection).

Through its relationship with NBC and its own local programming, WSB's reputation as "The Eyes of the South" produced numerous firsts for the South on the small screen, seeking to advance the region in terms of technology and cultural output to define Atlanta as a modern, industrial city throughout the twentieth century. Sarnoff continues,

> [White Columns'] architecture, its furnishings, and its 16 acres of beautiful landscaping reflect the grace of the Old South. Its completely modern TV and radio instillations reflect the economic advances of the New South … A reminder of a gracious and revered southern past and a promise of a prosperous, progressive future in harmony with the great developments of the nation's electronics and broadcast industries. (WSB-TV Videotape Collection)

As discussed throughout, WSB-TV possessed a dual function for the South in the mid-century; to distinguish the region as a viable producer of culture and to keep reverent and alive its Old

South past. These functions were carried out largely, transmitted throughout the state and broadcast to the nation, through WSB-TV's programming and operations since its start in 1948.

Conclusion

A series of changes occurred at WSB-TV beginning in 1968, including the first Black television host, Billye Williams, joining *Today in Georgia*. Upon joining the program, Williams described her goals in co-hosting, claiming "… I was haunted by the desire to fulfill a personal ambition and cognizant of the very limited opportunities for blacks to appear on television other than in riots and demonstrations. It occurred to me that if Atlanta was really 'a city too busy to hate,' it was time for it to manifest in it other than lip service" (Gray 1970, 37).

In 1974, Ruth Kent left the program after 21 years as its host. In an internal document from the same year titled "Station Programming Plan Outline," station leadership discusses its successes and areas of need improvement. The schedule from 6:30 a.m. until noon, which includes *Today in Georgia* from 9 to 10 a.m., denotes no change for the upcoming three years outlined in the document. However, a comment reads "In the last Station Programming Plan Outline I stated that TODAY IN GEORGIA needed a complete revamping. This is being accomplished as of July 1, 1974. We are optimistic." A *Constitution* article of the same date reports Kent's departure from the program. Later in the document, market and audience trends are discussed, including the lamentation that older Atlanta stations are drawing in younger audiences while WSB-TV's core audience is 50 years and older. The document reads

> Everyone views television – certain age groups more than others. We have constantly attracted over-50 age group – our objective is to maintain this group but to develop more viewership among younger demographics … We do not want to sacrifice our loyal audience – they have more time to view – they are not as fickle as the younger audience … The new TODAY IN GEORGIA SHOW, featuring new talent, a young attractive male, should produce younger demographics for TIG that has been badly needed. (4)

On April 13, 1979, *Today in Georgia* aired on WSB-TV for the last time, replaced by the syndicated talk show *Dinah*. Ruth Kent died later that year and her obituary provides much insight, more than was ever discernable at the time of her contributions to WSB-TV, into her history as an industry worker and face of local Georgia television and its longest running local program. Kent is described as “A favorite among housewives” who “entertained celebrities and local authorities” and who “talked on subjects ranging from religion to sex education in schools” (Bealer 1979, 81). Bob Thomas, a producer at WSB-TV and colleague of Kent’s for over 10 years described her as “Miss Television.”

Chapters one and two developed a cultural geography of Atlanta, Georgia, and the growth of the city into a site of *southern* cultural production, at least at the local level, with WSB radio and television programming serving as some of the region’s earliest media products. Chapter three shifts to explore another prominent southern city, Dallas, Texas, and the rise of the Sunbelt South in the national economy during the 1970s and 1980s. The concomitant ascendancy of Ronald Reagan, the Religious Right, and hyperactive capitalism are illustrated through Mary Kay Cosmetics, a company founded on the intersections of this trio of economic, political, and cultural occurrences.

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Chapter Three:
What the World Needs Now is Mary Kay: Neoliberalism, Postfeminism, and Sunbelt Capitalism in Dallas, Texas

In 1979, CBS's popular Sunday night news program *60 Minutes* (CBS, 1968-) aired an interview with Mary Kay Ash, founder and face of the popular direct sales organization Mary Kay Cosmetics. In an interview with Morley Safer, Ash describes founding her company with the intention of helping women succeed, earning "money commensurate with men" and being paid "on the basis of what they have between their ears … not because they are male or female" ("Pink Panther"). Founded in 1963, the company offers women a way to earn an (supplementary) income while largely working from home as much of the work of the Mary Kay beauty consultant can be done from the dining room table. Mary Kay Cosmetics credits the interview, aired 16 years after the company's founding, with bringing the Mary Kay gospel to the nation; within two years after the interview, the "independent sales force … more than doubled and sales almost tripled" ("Our Founder"). It is during this time, too, that a thick concentration of Mary Kay media texts filled the marketplace, including numerous self-help books, beauty guides, cookbooks, corporate promotional videos, and instructional VHS tapes. Though Ash is known primarily as a businesswoman and CEO, and Mary Kay Cosmetics is known primarily as a beauty brand, I argue that Ash also occupies the role of domestic advisor, promoting Mary Kay Cosmetics not just as a job, but a total lifestyle through her various media texts.

Her (autobiographical) self-help books *Mary Kay* (1981), *Mary Kay on People Management* (1984), and *Mary Kay: You Can Have It All* (1995) teach working women how to balance their relationships with God, family, and career, allowing them to prioritize faith and

family while contributing to the household income in a way that does not disrupt their traditional duties as wives and mothers. Similarly, a series of three promotional films – *It's a Way of Life* (1977), *All Your Tomorrows* (1980), and *Capture the Vision* (1981) – contain much of the same advice found in Ash's self-help literature and seek to teach women not only how to succeed as beauty consultants and saleswomen but claim that career success found through Mary Kay Cosmetics can improve and enhance a woman's entire life, making her and her family happier (and wealthier). Lastly, I consider two VHS recruitment videos released by Mary Kay Cosmetics – *One Step at a Time* (1989) and *Consider the Possibilities* (2002) as additional pedagogical tools produced by the company. Important, too, is Ash's promotion of a lifestyle commensurate with the 1980s Sunbelt South and the city of Dallas, Texas where the company is headquartered and where Ash lived until her death in 2001. The texts considered here speak to the influence of what Tandy Shermer (2011, 32) calls "hyperactive Sunbelt capitalism" on domestic advisors like Mary Kay Ash who promote self-betterment and lifestyle through conspicuous consumption and the acquirement of domestic goods.

The sociocultural and political shifts of the late 1970s and early 1980s in the U.S. are especially evident throughout the Sunbelt South, a "corporate dreamland" of "pro-growth, antiregulatory, free market assurances of venture capitalism" that "sought to limit the reach of the federal state in sectors that did not serve those interests" (Nickerson and Dochuk 2011, 5). The election of Ronald Reagan marked a return to the bolstering of "traditional family values," and the rise of a postfeminist media culture spoke to women caught between the dually opposed spheres of paid work and family. Relatedly, the rise of neoliberalism and the subsequent gutting of social welfare, along with deregulation measures, tax cuts for the ultra-rich, and a gospel

praising the benefits of free market capitalism saw wealth consolidation for the elite while the middle and working classes faced wealth erosion and the loss of government assistance programs. As Maureen Ryan (2018, 62) states, “While the desire to spend above one’s means is a long-standing tradition in American culture, the changing economic conditions of the 1980s made those aspirations perhaps the least realistic they had ever been.” The conflicting nature of the realities of middle and working class living and the aspirational media texts sold to them become visible through an analysis of the domestic advice and lifestyle culture promoted by Mary Kay Cosmetics and its founder Mary Kay Ash. The upper-class elites who benefited from Reagan-era economic policies “came to define material success, luxury, and comfort for nearly every category below it” and became “the visible lifestyle to which most Americans aspired, even as it became more and more inaccessible” (Ryan 2018, 62).

During this period, too, the rise of the Religious Right and evangelical culture brought about the establishment of telecommunications industries and megachurches, particularly in the Sunbelt South, which overlaps significantly with the southern Bible Belt, leading to the establishment of what Carol Flake (1984, 21) calls “Christian capitalism.” Mary Kay Ash and other prominent direct selling organization (DSOs) businesswomen like Mary Crowley, founder of Home Interiors & Gifts and televangelist Tammy Faye Bakker utilized evangelical teachings in the founding principles of their businesses. In the *60 Minutes* interview, Safer asks about the moral problematic of using God to sell products to which Ash responds: “Let me say this: I really feel that our company is where it is today and has been blessed beyond all belief by the fact that God is using our company as a vehicle to help women become the beautiful creatures he created” (“Pink Panther”).

While Mary Kay Cosmetics eventually saw national and international success, the company – from its reliance on religiosity to its bigger is better conviction – is constituted of and by its location in Dallas, Texas, a prosperous Sunbelt city. Ash's public persona, too, the 1980s southern lady, follows the same trajectory. Dallas brought together unfettered capitalism, materialism, and religion; in what follows, I describe how Mary Kay Cosmetics triangulated these ideologies for housewives and newly working women towards the pursuit and protection of middle-classness despite the economic realities of the women recruited by the company. I apply the above context specifically to the Sunbelt South and Dallas, Texas as sites experiencing substantial growth in the sectors of industry, commerce, and culture during the 1970s and 80s and how this was expressed in lifestyle and domestic advice media produced and circulated to southern women audiences. Additionally, through an analysis of Mary Kay Cosmetics as a postfeminist, neoliberal business, I discuss how the abovementioned media texts stoked domestic aspirations of bigger homes and happier families inspired by the aspirational luxury of 1980s Reaganism.

Hillbilly, redneck, urban cowboy: southern lifestyle in media and politics, 1960s to 1990s

The brief taxonomy of southern media and resultant lifestyle categories discussed below seeks to provide the necessary context to outline the changes in the region regarding cultural output and how such changes corresponded with the changing economic and cultural landscape of the South beginning in the 1960s through the 1990s.

As discussed in chapter two, television transmission reached the South sporadically throughout the late 1940s through the mid-1950s with stations in states such as Mississippi and South Carolina going on air up to five years later than most of the nation. Locally produced programs like *Today in Georgia* brought the South to the small screen well before networks aired southern place-based programming, instead airing domestic sitcoms and primetime programming depicting fictional families in locatable regions of the northeast and Midwest. The 1960s and early 1970s, however, saw a rapid increase in the South on television screens via network programs depicting the region and its citizens in primetime (with, of course, varying realities).

CBS was home to a collection of rural, "hayseed" programs beginning in 1960s with *The Andy Griffith Show* (1960-1968).[19] Several others joined Andy Griffith on air in the following years, including *The Beverly Hillbillies* (1962-1971), *Petticoat Junction* (1963-1970), *Gomer Pyle* (1964-1969), and *The Waltons* (1972-1981).[20] As Sara Eskridge (2018) describes, CBS's decision to develop a batch of rural programming included the network's attempts to repair its reputation from that of overtly progressive, and subsequently, Communist-affiliated, to one of wholesome, American family entertainment. Additionally, the surge of rural programming featuring white families and silly (i.e., harmless) hillbillies countered televisual images of the South aired on national news programs of violent white supremacist southerners in response to the civil rights movement and nationwide school desegregation.

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[19] As Sara Eskridge notes, ABC, not CBS, was the first network to experiment with rural programming as it was perpetually ranked third of the Big Three and had more room to experiment. In 1957, ABC premiered *The Real McCoys*, a direct predecessor to *The Beverly Hillbillies*, which premiered on CBS 5 years later.

[20] For more on these programs, see Allison Graham's *Framing the South: Hollywood, Television, and Race during the Civil Rights Struggle*; Jack Kirby's *Media-made Dixie: The South in the American Imagination*; Sara Eskridge's *Rube Tube: CBS and rural comedy in the sixties*

Discussed later in this chapter, the South's growing power as a site of industry and culture by the 1980s did not account for the rise of rural, southern programming in the 1960s; Eskridge (2018, 5) notes that "Conventional wisdom dismisses the rural craze as an attempt by networks to attract the burgeoning rural and southern audience." However, by 1966, at "the height of the rural comedy boom, southerners only owned approximately 14.4 percent of all the nation's televisions, not nearly enough to exert fundamental control over viewing preferences" (5). While examples discussed throughout this chapter detail the shift experienced in the South in which the region, its cultural products and overall lifestyle culture grew in popularity and led to the region's first instance as a national power, the television hillbilly popular in the 1960s had less to do with any sort of southern cultural dominance or network capitulation to South and more to do with the establishment of safe, friendly, American-coded programming for CBS in the midst of the Cold War and accusations of Communist sympathies.

The hapless hillbilly came to dominate primetime programming on CBS, considered by most Americans to be a "benignly humorous (if somewhat condescending) … characterization," as opposed to the "redneck," which held violent and racist connotations (Harkins 2004, 6). CBS's loyalty to hillbilly television, too, aligned with its overall mission to produce family-friendly programming, as well as to market itself as distinctly American in spirit. As described by Anthony Harkins (2004), the hillbilly character represents the "pioneer spirit" of pre-modern American society, as well as "strong family and kin networks ruled by benevolent patriarchs, authenticity and purity, and a rugged individualism" (6). By 1966, CBS aired 5 rural sitcoms "and rode to network dominance on the backs of these programs" (Harkins 2004, 199). The

popularity of rural programming allowed “seemingly overnight” for the “so-called Communist Broadcasting System” to become the “Country Broadcasting System” (Eskridge 2018, 9).

The decade-long success of CBS’ lineup of rural comedies began to wane in the 1970s as networks, namely NBC, worked to produce contemporary, urban programming; CBS followed suit the same year, hiring Fred Silverman as head of network programming who initiated the “rural purge” of all hayseed comedy programming. By 1971, the network canceled thirteen programs and “all remaining comedy shows and programs meant to appeal to rural and southern audiences” (Eskridge 2018, 176). Actor Pat Buttram of *Green Acres* described the rural purge as the cancellation of “every show with a tree in it” (176).

As the hillbilly faded from popular media, the redneck rose to take its place, coinciding with the rise of country music’s popularity in the 1970s and coalescing around the election of Jimmy Carter, a peanut farmer from Georgia, in 1976. The hillbilly – poor, hapless, and innocently ignorant – arrived on network television at the height of Cold War tensions and Communist anxieties, offering rustic, simple, salt-of-the-earth Americanism to audiences. Amanda Marie Martinez (2020) describes country music’s ascendancy as concurrent with a period of uncertainty in American life and a growing distrust in government, perpetuated by events like the Vietnam War, affirmative action, and Watergate. During the early 1970s, “white, urban Americans with middle incomes found refuge in Southern imagery and the signifiers of white rusticity, most notably found in a celebration of the white male Southern figure, the ‘redneck,’ and his musical counterpart, country music” (Martinez 2020, 129). Relatedly, as Harkins (2004, 212) describes, the election of Jimmy Carter, along with the rise of redneck media, “intensified the spread of redneck terminology and iconography,” particularly among

middle class white southerners who sought to embody the redneck lifestyle through consumption practices and social life such as "[dressing] in fancy Levis and boots" and attending events at the "newly fashionable honky tonks." Embrace of the redneck lifestyle pooled in the southern middle class who were "far from … the poor and rural whites" long associated with the label. Due to its adoption by the middle class, "redneck chic" grew into a popular lifestyle category throughout the 1970s with its own sect of consumer goods and aesthetics.[21]

The dawn of the 1980s witnessed the rise of the urban cowboy aesthetic with Ronald Reagan, silver screen cowboy and conservative leader as its figurehead. Martinez (2020, 140) writes, "By the end of the 1970s, the redneck chic fad had evolved into another craze celebrating a mythic white and rustic figure: Urban Cowboy. As Americans traded in their sweat-stained shirts for glitzy cowboy hats and boots, Ronald Reagan … was elected president in 1980." While not from the South, Reagan's "regional base consisted of the Sunbelt, Farm Belt, and the West – the traditional populist and antielite component of U.S. political geography" (Feuer 1995, 25).

The rural purge of the early 1970s gave way to a new brand of southerner on television, namely the arrival of popular primetime soap opera, *Dallas* (CBS, 1978-1991). Jane Feuer (1995) details the relation between Reganism and the lavish mise-en-scene of 1980s network programming, writing, "The media didn't exactly cause the 1980s to happen, nor did the 1980s exactly cause emblematic shows like Dynasty … rather, television and Reaganism formed

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[21] In addition to the rise of the country music genre, Hollywood films and television also favored the redneck in the 1970s, largely seen in the "hicksploitation" genre. Popular films include *Deliverance* (1972), *White Lightning* (1973), *Gator* (1976), and *Smokey and the Bandit* (1977), as well as CBS's *The Dukes of Hazzard* (1979-1985). These films and television programs feature redneck mischief such as illegal moonshining, car racing, and general debauchery and protagonists with a distaste and distrust for authority, resulting in the same "rugged individualism" and self-sufficiency mentioned above.

mutually reinforcing and interpenetrating imaginary worlds" (12). Like *Dynasty*, (ABC, 1981-1989), *Dallas* follows the wealthy Ewing family and their business as oil titans in Texas. Ien Ang (1996, 55) concludes that such programs "habituated the world public to American production values and American mise-en-scene, such as the vast prairie or the big cities, the huge homes with expensive interiors, luxurious and fast cars, and last but not least, the healthy and good-looking men and women, white, not young, not too old."

I linger here to contextualize *Dallas*' popularity in the late 1970s into the early 1980s as concurrent with the presidential election of Reagan and the promotion of luxurious living in the southern United States promoted by unbridled consumption towards the achievement of an urban cowboy lifestyle. Southern film, too, particularly those set in Texas, contributed to the "popular Texas myths about grandiosity, excessive wealth, conflicts about exploiting and developing the land" (Lev 1986, 62). The familiar maxim "everything's bigger in Texas" holds some weight here not just in terms of popular aesthetics like high teased hair and tall cowboy boots (not to mention Mary Kay Ash's signature pink Cadillac or pink mansion) but in terms of the state's overall land mass, its population, and its contribution to the national economy.

Dallas and Dallas, Texas encapsulate southern lifestyling and domestic advice in the 1980s through their twin promotion of excessive wealth, family values, religion, and capitalist sentiments. As Horace Newcomb writes, "small wonder that the Sunbelt flourishes and *Dallas* leads the ratings" (Ang 1996, 4). The rise of the Religious Right, neoliberalism, and boot-strap ethos resonated in the South, particularly in Sunbelt cities as a region prospering and moving into a leadership role after centuries of playing catchup to the rest of the nation. For the southwest portion of the Sunbelt and the growing appeal of the urban cowboy, "Dallas succeeds in an

inspired way in transplanting the old values of the Western into the new world of the American West, the world of express highways and stunning skyscrapers" (Ang 1996, 4).

The first five episodes of *Dallas*, originally released as a mini-series by CBS only to be serialized after the initial run's massive success introduces the Ewing family and their business, Ewing Oil. The episodes generally split their time between two main locations – the city of Dallas where Ewing Oil headquarters is located and the sprawling family ranch, Southfork. In both the title sequence and establishing shots across these five episodes, sweeping landscapes of Southfork Ranch, the massive Ewing family compound on which the patriarch and matriarch Jock and Ellie, eldest son J.R. and wife Sue Ellen, and youngest son Bobby and wife Pamela all live and the city of Dallas with its high-traffic freeways and skyscrapers (of which Ewing Oil headquarters seems to be the tallest) confirm the "everything is bigger in Texas" adage and establish the extreme wealth of the Ewing family. Family members are seen driving the newest model cars, from Bobby's shiny red convertible Mercedes to Jock's Lincoln Mark V, all marked with the family surname on the license plates. The main house on Southfork Ranch features traditional antebellum-style architecture with white columns adoring the front and a lavish interior of dark, polished wood, ornate light fixtures, and elaborate floral arrangements.

The Ewing family and their lucrative oil business are collapsed into one and inseparable, a fact immediately established in the pilot episode when Bobby marries Pamela (neè Barnes), the daughter of the rival Barnes family and sister of Cliff Barnes, a member of the Senate Investigating Committee looking into corrupt business and political practices across the state of Texas. To this end, what affects the family affects the business and vice versa and, as Ang (1996, 6, 9) describes, issues plaguing the family/business "go on ad infinitum" due to the serialized

nature of the show in which "when one problem is still unsolved, another looms on the horizon." The show's narrative function, as well as its seriality necessitates ongoing crises experienced by the Ewing family in terms of both the traditionally considered spheres of public (business) and private (family). However, within *Dallas*, these spheres are intimately connected and inseparably conjoined. Ang (1996, 60) and Charlotte Brunsdon (1981) note that "Questions from the public sphere have a place" in soap operas yet public sphere issues are "handled and take on meaning … from the standpoint of the private sphere: 'the action of soap opera is not restricted to the familial … but as it were *colonizes* the public masculine sphere, representing it from the point of view of the personal.'" Within *Dallas*, business discussions and family meals are held simultaneously at the large dining table with crystal serving ware and white table clothes or in the spacious living room with all the Ewings spread across plush couches. Despite numerous references to matriarch Ellie Ewing's distaste for the oil business and the intrusion of work matters into the home, the family resolves business tensions within the home as often or more so than at the Ewing Oil headquarters office.[22]

Despite the more hierarchical forms of work depicted in *Dallas,* the intimate relationship between work and family discussed above reads similarly to the collapse between work and family as seen across the domestic advice texts of Mary Kay. In addition to the extravagant displays of wealth as representative of the 1980s Sunbelt South, Mary Kay Cosmetics' ties to *Dallas* extend into the fictional universe of the show. In 1996, *Dallas: JR Returns*, a made-for-television movie, premiered on CBS five years after the cliffhanger ending of the show in 1991.

[22] In season 1, episode 1 "Digger's Daughter," Miss Ellie discourages her family from bringing business issues into the family home. She tells husband, Jock, "We don't talk business at this hour," presumably in the afternoon/evening when the workday is finished and later, Bobby tells brother J.R., "Mama don't like business talk with supper on the table."

The Mary Kay Newsroom published an article titled "The Mary Kay Boardroom Lands on Prime-Time Television" that describes the Mary Kay Cosmetics headquarters building's use as a filming location for scenes from the film. The "iconic Dallas landmark" serves as the interior for the fictional Ewing Oil headquarters and shots from the Mary Kay building's lobby and 13th floor boardroom are seen throughout the film. Unsurprisingly, the building's conspicuous display of wealth and good fortune make it an ideal interior for Ewing Oil.

The rise in southern lifestyle culture, media texts, political representation, and economic prosperity culminate throughout the 1960s well into the 1980s to produce a set of circumstances for a company like Mary Kay Cosmetics located in the city of Dallas, Texas and headed by the self-made Mary Kay Ash to resonant with southern women seeking happy families, bigger homes, and greater wealth under Reaganism, achievements promised only if they followed the advice of successful women before them.

Figure 7 Interior of Mary Kay Headquarters seen in Dallas: JR Returns, 1996

Figure 8 Mary Kay Headquarters, Dallas, Texas

Sunbelt South: Dallas, TX

As discussed in chapters one and two, trends in domestic advice media and their delivery technologies depend on the political, economic, and cultural factors at specific junctures in specific geographies. The landscape of the Sunbelt South plays an important role in understanding Dallas, Texas as a site of cultural output, capitalist splendor, and religiosity, and the influence this had on domestic advice and its appointed experts.

Founded in Texas with its headquarters and manufacturing plants located there, Mary Kay Cosmetics has grown into an international business. However, the rise of the South as a cultural, industrial, and economic power throughout the 1970s and 1980s, the company's ethos and Ash's promotion of the Mary Kay lifestyle is shaped by the overall climate of the 1980s Sunbelt South. As stated above, Dallas promoted free-market capitalism, an emphasis on material culture, and evangelicalism and as a domestic advisor and company founder based in Dallas, Mary Kay Ash articulated these ideologies into a series of domestic advice texts for housewives cum working women.

The Sunbelt, described by Richard Bernard and Bradley Rice (1983, 3) "is a mix of economics, conservative politics, and demographic change generally associated with the observation that the southeastern and southwestern sections of the country have been growing and prospering more than the Northeast and Midwest in recent years." Michelle Nickerson and Darren Dochuck (2011) also note that "southern rim states between South Carolina and California have far outpaced the nation since 1950 in popular growth … gross domestic product, and investment dollars from the federal government," allowing the Sunbelt region to serve "as a national pacesetter" beginning in earnest in the 1970s (13). Wartime production plants in the

South during World War II contributed substantially to the region's initial growth and Sunbelt boosters sought to keep jobs and businesses in place after the war. This necessitated the creation (or continuation) of a favorable "business climate" throughout the region, comprised of "low taxes, minimal regulations of business activity, and the enactment of legislation that weakened or discouraged trade unionism" (Shermer 2011, 33).

The reversal of these roles in which the northeast, the longstanding "center" of the nation, begins to slip behind the South in terms of industry, job opportunities, and migration is the result of several factors outlined by Bernard and Rice (1983), including defense spending during WWII, increased federal spending on state betterment projects, preferable business climate (i.e. anti-union and low waged), and overall lifestyle offered by the region. Other factors include the rise of interstate highway construction, a federal project that dramatically made over the South, increasing tourism and the amenities that followed such as malls, business centers, renovated downtown centers, and middle-and-upper class suburbs (Bradley and Rice 1983, 15). Fred Hofheinz, former mayor of Houston, Texas (1974-1978) understood the Sunbelt region as the "[frontier] of the new industrial America, where people can still reach the American dream" (Bradley and Rice 1983, 26). In Dallas-Fort Worth, "an elitist, business-oriented leadership … [guided] the destiny of the area. Its major goals [were] clean government, fiscal stability, economic prosperity, the preservation of middle-class values, and law and order" (Melosi 1983, 176). As a result, "pluralistic interests, democratic government, community, innovation, and human services, especially for the disadvantaged … carried lower priorities" (176). Put another way, the Sunbelt did not shine its light equally and instead state leadership chose to grow certain metropolitan areas and their surrounding affluent,

predominately white suburbs, a similar situation to the growth of white suburbs in Atlanta in the mid-century. As described by Matthew Lassiter (2006, 13), "Power and resources in the Sunbelt flourished to a favored quadrant of the metropolises … a cluster of upper-middle-class and wealthy white neighborhoods located inside city limits and protected by exclusionary zoning policies from racial integration and socioeconomic diversity."

Dallas experienced rapid development throughout the mid-twentieth century due to its geographic location, natural resources such as oil, and its business-forward leadership. As Martin Melosi (1983, 167) notes, "The city broadened its economic base and became the oil capital of the state in the early 1930s and 1940s," and with the addition of wartime production plants, Dallas emerged as "an industrial center" of the southwest. During this time, too, the 1930s through the 1960s saw the establishment of the Southern States Industrial Council in response to New Deal policies in which "southern manufacturers mobilized to maintain and promote a kind of domestic protectionism to safeguard their established industries" and "turned increasingly … to the language of free enterprise" to "promote the South as the nation's number-one economic opportunity" (Jewell 2017, 4-5). Political and economic leadership's desire to grow the region into a viable industrial, modern South "shaped the South's brand of free enterprise," as early adopters of neoliberal ideology. As Katherine Rye Jewell (2017, 5) describes, "Scholars have suggested that neoliberalism had roots in southern planter aristocratic paternalism, marked by devotion to 'property rights, hostility to [the] federal state for other than military purposes, faith in punitive governance as the key to social order, and enthusiasm for international trade." An emphasis on free enterprise during the region's period of extensive growth "facilitated the

redefinition of the South's economy from colonial, backward, and underdeveloped into the Sunbelt 'business climate'" discussed throughout this chapter.

Dallas, too, grew into a major retail center of the Sunbelt with "260 shopping centers and regional malls" by the mid-1980s (Melosi 1983, 167). The resultant "hyperactive Sunbelt capitalism" only intensified throughout the Reagan presidency (Shermer 2011, 32). The South, long the black sheep of the nation, saw sections of the region begin to outpace the longstanding cultural and industrial centers of the nation. Places like Fort-Worth and Dallas "shared an older regional identity that defined itself against northeastern power" and modeled their new growth on "a socially homogenous group of highly skilled, affluent inhabitants, and often, the powerful presence of defense and military," alongside growing industries of tech, commerce, and oil (McGirr 2001, 14). Mary Kay Cosmetics, then, promoted itself as part and parcel of Dallas' wealth and lifestyle, achieved through the selling of beauty products and the recruitment of middle class and middle-class aspiring homemakers.

You Can Have It All: Mary Kay Cosmetics Texts as Domestic Advice

"A woman's family should be her second priority, also placed above her career. After all, what value is professional success if family and personal happiness must be sacrificed? Remember, a career is a means to an end: you do well at your work to provide comfort and security for your family" – Mary Kay Ash, *Mary Kay: You Can Have It All* (1995, xiii)

"Very often a Mary Kay career is a self-improvement program and a way of life – not just a way to earn money" – Mary Kay Ash, 1981

The Sunbelt South offered a series of alternatives to the nation throughout the late 1970s and 1980s. Outpacing the once-dominant northeast, the Sunbelt became an alternative center of the nation; the rise of evangelical culture rose as an alternative to secularism; and the rise of DSOs like Mary Kay Cosmetics served as alternatives to traditional 9-to-5 work for women. Here, self-proclaimed notions of separate and superior held by the South beginning in the early-to-mid nineteenth century remain relevant and are expressed through the political, economic, and cultural characteristics of the Sunbelt South and through Mary Kay Ash as yet another version of the southern lady. Ash preached upholding femininity, beauty, grace, and God, supporting the family while knowing work should support the home and never detract from it. While "the Civil War and Reconstruction forced the issue of how one remains a lady under new historical conditions," Ash put to use the economic, political, and cultural conditions of the 1980s Sunbelt South to inform the version she embodied and taught (Scott 1994, 162).

In what follows I trace the rise of lifestyle culture in the 1980s Sunbelt South and the parallel growth of a postfeminist media culture, southern neoliberalism, conservative entrepreneurialism, and Christian capitalism through the frame of Mary Kay Cosmetics as a domestic advisor and lifestyle guide. Ash's collection of domestic advice texts, ranging from self-help books, cookbooks, promotional videos, and instructional VHS tapes offer women involved with Mary Kay Cosmetics advice and instruction that reinforced Reagan-era promises of growing wealth and, by extension, happier families. The Mary Kay Cosmetics beauty consultant, saleswoman, or sales director learned how to better her life by adopting the lifestyle promoted by the company, granting her not only a career but a total self and lifestyle makeover, all done in the service of her family's happiness.

Working women: DSOs, conservative entrepreneurialism, and postfeminist media culture

Mary Kay Ash's upbringing and her rags-to-riches story supply the foundational principles of her company and reflect the popular bootstrap narrative of neoliberalism spread throughout the 1980s. Born in a suburb of Houston, Texas, Ash tended to her sick father while her mother worked to support the family. By age 7, Ash attended school and managed the household in her mother's absence. Unable to afford college, Ash married at 17 and had three children with her first husband, Ben Rodgers, who was deployed during World War II. The couple divorced soon after his return, leaving Ash to raise the children as a single mother. In her self-titled memoir, Ash laments the dissolution of her first marriage, writing, "It was the lowest point in my life. I know many women will understand when I say I felt like a complete failure as a woman" (1981, 15). These "feminine failures" of her early life defined Ash's approach to business and later, her domestic advice texts. As Eva Illouz (2003, 33-34) crucially notes, "The story of failures could not produce celebrity if American culture did not have a cultural mechanism to transform failure into a positive experience." The work of domestic advisors and lifestyle experts of the 1980s drew heavily on rags-to-riches stories to appeal to audiences, serving as embodiments of the promises of neoliberalism; through hard work, perseverance, and good choices, anyone, regardless of circumstance, can achieve remarkable success. The Mary Kay beauty consultant need look no further than Mary Kay Ash herself for someone to embody that sentiment as truth.

When Ash "failed" at keeping her family together after her divorce, she sought employment as a saleswoman at Stanley Home Products, a direct sales company for household

products and toiletries. Under the company's Party Plan model, a Stanley distributor recruits a friend, family member, or neighbor to host a party in their home and invites guests for games, refreshments, and product demonstrations performed by the Stanley distributor. Other women in attendance are encouraged to host their own parties and invite their social networks to attend and shop. Ash's employment with Stanley Home Products serves as the precursor to her establishment of Mary Kay, founded alongside other popular DSOs such as Tupperware and Home Interiors & Gifts. In 1964, Ash launched Mary Kay Cosmetics with the goal of providing women with the empowerment of a career without sacrificing family in the process. Nine-to-five employment, according to Ash, "really puts pressure on a working woman," which she sought to remedy through the more dispersed forms of work seen in DSOs.

Nicole Woolsey Biggart's (1989) comprehensive study of DSOs describes the operational differences between bureaucratic business models and direct sales, namely that traditional models operate as chains-of-command with distinct hierarchies. She writes, "Such firms are usually nine-to-five organizations: when you're at work the boss is in control, but when you're at home your time is your own" (6). Comparatively, labor, time, and hierarchies are more diffuse within DSOs. Every seller serves as their own boss and business owner under an absent yet "often revered corporate leadership to which the distributor is morally, but not legally subordinate" (Biggert 1989, 8). Importantly, DSOs take into consideration and even encourage the integration of home and work life. The presumed benevolence of labor conditions considerate of non-work life allow many DSO workers to "see their work as a superior way of life" as it provides "not [just] a job, but a worldview, a community of likeminded others, and self-concept" (9).

For women, housewives in particular, the priorities that distinguish DSOs from traditional work models likely appeal to concerns regarding the effects their working lives will have on their family and home life. Women are supposedly attracted to careers at DSOs like Mary Kay Cosmetics "not only by the potential high earnings, but by the feasibility of arranging their careers around their husband's and children's activities" (Ash 1995, 23). In founding Mary Kay Cosmetics, Ash consistently describes the goal of work at the company not only as chance for women to empower themselves but as a means to an end, a way for women to "afford to enhance [their] family's lifestyle and expand [their] children's opportunities" (1995, 31). The Mary Kay beauty consultant does not have to worry about missing out on time with her family at the expense of her career but instead can contribute meaningfully to the family's income, elevating their class status, by working from home. As the face of Mary Kay Cosmetics, Ash expresses this belief frequently to her team of consultants, writing

> I believe that management must respect the sanctity of family. And the only way you as a manager will ever let this priority be known is by demonstrating it – as a family-oriented individual who truly loves his or her spouse and children. Yet it's not enough to love your family; you must also spend time with them and let them know that their happiness will never be sacrificed for your career. (1984, 103)

The domestic nature of Mary Kay Cosmetics, allowing women to set their own schedules and work largely from home, reflects and constitutes the villanization of the working mother who places career advancements over family happiness. With a Mary Kay career, women can greet their children as they arrive home from school and contribute to the family income, hopefully substantially enough to buy a nicer home or move to a neighborhood with a better school district.

The conservative entrepreneurialism promoted by Mary Kay Cosmetics in which women are encouraged to take control of their lives by entering a career organized around their needs allowed wives and mothers to supplement the family income while remaining readily available to perform duties at home like preparing supper or attending important events such as ballet recitals or sports games. Additionally, as Mary Kay Cosmetics sells beauty, the beauty consultant is encouraged, if not ordered, to embrace femininity, something Ash worried was sacrificed in other, more traditional careers. In her self-titled book, Ash claims she believes "women should pursue careers if they want to" but never at the sacrifice of their femininity (1981, 108). The ability for women to work from home in a career premised upon the upkeep and presentation of femininity does little to threaten the status quo of the traditional family structure (which, unlike DSOs, rely on hierarchies to function, according to Ash) or the God-given feminine nature Ash holds so dearly. Popular DSOs manage the family in four distinct ways, as outlined by Biggart (1989), including keeping husbands happy in spite of their working wives and how this might affect their ability to tend to their spouses' needs. Network DSOs argue that a commitment to direct selling can strengthen marriages through increased financial stability (Biggart 1989, 79). According to Ash, "'If you want to keep your husband excited, stay thin and make bank deposits'" (82). Without the stimulation of a job, women, according to Ash, become dull and uninspired partners to their husbands, knowing only how to converse about "dishes and diapers and debts" and that without their Mary Kay businesses, women would be "home, looking at *Days of Our Lives*" (1981, 70; "Pink Panther").

Despite the rise of DSOs as alternative forms of work for women, images of the career woman proliferated in the 1970s and 80s, largely seen on primetime television and television,

while not the focus of this chapter, does well to demonstrate the shift toward conservatism and the emphasis on family values in the 1980s. In soap opera, Elana Levine (2020, 179) notes a turn away from "social issue storytelling" popular in the 1970s that dealt with issues such as women's liberation and race relations. The early 1980s, however, promised "instead a turn away from such matters" with increased focus on displays of the "glorification of Reagan-style wealth" and "neoconservative interests" (179). The career woman on television created a contradictory landscape in which Reagan and his peers blamed her "for a downturn in the U.S. economy," and subsequently, for the erosion of the traditional family, yet television treated her image as "their prized demographic" (Leppert 2019, 1). Alice Leppert describes domestic family sitcoms as "cultural technologies" that provide pedagogical approaches to ordering the family and that offer images for families to emulate (4). Such programming serves as instructive texts that offer indirect advice to women at a time when definitions of home and family were fluctuating due to changes in household income, the slow erosion of the middle-class, and the necessity for women to contribute to a once-stable single income provided by the father/husband. This too had implications regarding the welfare of children of working mothers and fears of delinquency as a result of their absence. Mary Kay Ash claims that mothers "[set] the mood for the entire family" and warns working women to "make sure children don't become delinquent because [they] weren't around to guide them" (1995, 117, 107).

The influx of women entering the workforce in the late 1960s and 70s, seen as a result of feminist gains and the proposal of the Equal Rights Amendment in 1972, looked different in the 1980s and became less a gendered victory and more an economic necessity for family security and the maintenance of a middle-class lifestyle. As described by Andrea Press (1991, 4), "Dating

perhaps from Ronald Reagan's ascent to power in 1980, the hopes and dreams of the women's movement have been seriously threatened as our society's leaders and moods move farther and farther to the right. The ERA was soundly defeated by a sufficient number of state legislatures in 1982." As Eileen Byars and Jackie Meehan (1994, 20) discuss, the late 1970s and 80s saw a marked decline in employment, "real wages, job benefits, and buying power" amongst the lower and middle classes as wealth pooled in the upper classes under Reagan. This meant middle class families now required a dual income, facilitated by homemakers joining the workforce. By 1979, women made up 43 percent of the U.S. workforce; one year later, fifty percent of Texas women with children under the age of six were employed, along with sixty percent of women with children between the ages of 6 and 16. In 1982, Mary Kay Cosmetics was "Texas's top performer on the New York Stock Exchange with 200,000 beauty consultants" working for the company (Women in Texas). Additionally, in the years before World War II, women only accounted for less than 15 percent of the direct sales force in the U.S. but by 1980, women represented more than 80 percent (Biggart 1989; Manko 2021). DSOs, as described by Biggart (1989, 50) are "resolutely 'middle-American'" enterprises and women involved in such companies "were more likely than the general public to have completed high school yet less likely to have a college education. They held more conservative political views and were more religious than the average American."

The incompatibility of aspirational media and neoliberal rhetoric against the reality of shrinking wealth and status for the middle class plays out in the texts of the domestic advice genre and its new role in the 1980s instructing women on managing the home and a career in order to achieve the promised lifestyle of the decade. I understand the domestic advice and

lifestyle texts of Mary Kay Ash distributed through Mary Kay Cosmetics as offering women audiences a self-described remedy to the contradictory messaging of the 1980s in which women were simultaneously called home and pushed into the workforce.

In addition to proliferating images of career women on television, feminist scholars such as Diane Negra (2009) and Elsbeth Probyn (1990) discuss the trends of postfeminist retreatism and new traditionalism in which financially secure households were not sending wives and mothers to work outside the home but instead, welcoming once-successful career women back into the home as sanctuary. Martha Stewart's move from New York stockbroker to caterer and then lifestyle expert based in Westport, Connecticut is demonstrative of such a return. Probyn (1990, 149) describes this as a "post-feminist vision of home to which women have freely chosen to return," after their career success proves insufficient without equal or greater success in familial and romantic relationships. Similarly, Negra (2009, 4) argues "the overwhelming ideological impact that is made by an accumulation of postfeminist cultural materials is the reinforcement of conservative norms as the ultimate best choice in women's lives." Thus, as both terms describe, the best choices have *always* been available to women but were discouraged during women's liberation and the fight for equal rights. However, the rise of conservatism and the re-centering of the "traditional" family under Ronald Reagan, allow these choices to reemerge as attractive and valid with women able to choose them without feelings of feminist guilt. News stories of the "opt-out revolution" in which women were "[inundated] … with messages about how their rightful place was in the home, taking care of their children and veteran husbands – all of whom desperately needed their tender ministrations and nurturance" mingled with fictional texts about women returning home and leaving high-paying careers

(Vavrus 2007, 48). The postfeminist subject, the same subject attempting to piece together a coherent identity through consumption, "is represented as having lost herself but then (re)achieving stability through romance, de-aging, a makeover, and by giving up paid work, or by coming home" (Negra 2009, 5). Postfeminism and the re-centering of the home and family as the primary and natural domain of women produced a pool of cultural texts dedicated to reorienting the woman to her new (old) role as wife and mother. Women audiences surrounded by domestic advice and lifestyle media promoting an "aesthetically rich home life," must subject themselves to the ceaseless labor of self-improvement facilitated through the guidance of lifestyle experts who have achieved or represent the ideal home and family life for emulation.

While Ash frequently describes men and women as biologically, emotionally, and spiritually distinct, the ability for women to successfully balance the demands of modernity are not necessarily inherent; this contradictory premise, that women's intuition and biological distinction affords them the unique capacity to serve as family caregivers in ways men are not "designed" to, and the need for advice on how to be better women, mothers, and wives, is the cornerstone of domestic advice. For Ash, women need guidance to rectify mistakes in their lives, mistakes she has made and atoned for through her success, such as spending too much time on work, community, or selfishly prioritizing their social lives above their family. To this end, Ash's advice has much to do with sacrifice and social austerity for women, something she practiced as a single mother. She claims (1981, 11), "When I began my sales career, I gave up more sleep so I could do my housework and care for my children. I gave up my social life because there weren't enough hours in the day to work, keep house, and look after the children, and have any time left over for anything else." These changes, though, while sometimes framed

as sacrifice, are also framed as an essential part of being a successful wife and mother who gets total fulfillment from her home and family. For Ash, the domestic sphere is “woman’s work and woman’s world; in exchange for her sequester in it, she is granted substantial control over it” (Darnovsky 1991, 80). And for southern women, Ash included, “the domestic circle” quite literally “was the world” (Scott 1970, 42).

Postfeminist media’s preoccupation with time management shows up throughout Ash’s domestic advice texts, seen in the creation of the Mary Kay Five O’clock Club. She writes (1984, 52), “Some time ago I reasoned that since there are only twenty-four hours in a day and the only way I could get more mileage out of those hours was by rising at five o’clock each morning.” Here, Ash attempts to manipulate time, sacrificing sleep and working early in the morning to squeeze more out of each 24-hour period. The postfeminist time crunch felt by working women and the domestic advice media suited to address it is “designed around the postfeminist and neoliberal imperative to ‘have it all,’ to work and manage the family, to live indefinitely within the strictures of the double or triple shifts of family, career, and community” (Bayne 2022). Ash, however, foregrounds time and addresses anxieties around it, seeking ways to expand the twenty-four hours available. Clearly, rising earlier does not create more time in the day but, as Ash describes, manipulates time in a way that seem to increase productivity and subsequently, success. This relates, too, to neoliberal and conservative fanaticism of hard work and a disdain for “laziness” and poor decision making, attached particularly to minority communities, those perceived as stereotypical welfare recipients, those unable to manage or properly manipulate time for their benefit.

Ash's "you can have it all" philosophy for women, what I understand as a type of conservative, feminine entrepreneurship functions on the premise that women can and should have it all without sacrificing family *or* career while never forgetting the correct order of one's priorities.[23] For the Mary Kay Cosmetics company, this is God first, family second, and career third. Unlike other forms of domestic advice and postfeminist media that let the challenges of working wives and mothers go unspoken, Mary Kay Ash and Mary Kay Cosmetics directly address such challenges with Ash providing her own stories of failing towards success as inspiration and proof.

Southern neoliberalism and Christian capitalism

Maureen Ryan (2018) situates the rise of lifestyling in the 1980s alongside the rise of neoliberalism in the U.S. and traces the reorganization of women's genres around the concept with advisors such as Martha Stewart as its initial promoters. Advisors and their multitude of media texts – magazines, manuals, and the rise of cable television – sought to capture the burgeoning yuppie audience, defined as young, urban professionals, "around which most popular discourse of class and taste centers" and who "enjoyed corporate success, consumer luxuries, and a traditional bourgeois family life" (Ryan 2018, 64). The rise of lifestyling via consumer culture foretold the necessity and incredible popularity of domestic advisors such as Stewart and Oprah

[23] Catherine Rottenberg (2018) describes "having it all" as a central belief of neoliberal feminism. While I agree that many of Ash's texts look like others described as neoliberal feminist, I do think Ash's staunch refutation of feminism invalidates her contributions as belonging to the genre. Neoliberal feminism, in part, requires the adoption of the label of "feminist" and promoting it as popular and necessary. Instead, I describe Ash as both postfeminist and neoliberal, a combination which I believe better accounts for her anti-feminist sentiments.

Winfrey. Stewart's homemaking advice and her appeal to upscale, middle-class sensibilities (alongside New England traditionalism) allowed her version of a "fantasy life [to expand] across a range of platforms, with each one reinforcing the authority of the others" (Ryan 2018, 76). Likewise, "Oprah Winfrey and her show belong to the category of texts that are much thicker than others," including her talk show, book club, magazine, and website and these texts "[offer] a 'plausible myth of the ordering of existence" (Illouz 2003, 115).

The managerial techniques of domestic advice seen in the early twentieth century that promoted efficiency remain relevant throughout the 1980s. Throughout the twentieth century, T.J. Jackson Lears (1994, 138) describes the dominion of the "new and more demanding notion of individual well-being that could be summarized as 'personal efficiency.' The phrase signified a tighter fit between the supposedly private realm of physical or emotional health and the public world of organized competition for success." As discussed above, the collapse of boundaries and the total integration of personal and public in DSOs like Mary Kay Cosmetics do well to demonstrate this point. It is no surprise that in a cultural moment dictated by the neoliberal tenants of dispersed and distanced governance, women were changed with managing the self with the help of appointed lifestyle experts and therapeutic specialists. As Catherine Rottenberg (2018, 7) describes, neoliberalism, in addition to a set of economic policies, also functions as "a dominant political rationality or normative form of reason that moves to and from the management of the state to the inner workings of the subject, recasting individuals as capital-enhancing agents." To this end, neoliberalism "produces subjects who are individualized, entrepreneurial, and self-investing; they are also cast as entirely responsible for their own self-care and wellbeing" (Rottenberg 2018, 7). Biggart (1983, 299) describes neoliberal texts as a

"uniquely North American expression of a belief in self-reliance, the value of education, and hard work in achieving mobility." Rags-to-riches stories, popular throughout the self-help genre, depict spectacular instances of success in which "getting ahead [is] a matter of cultivating one's self, developing traits conducive to entrepreneurship" regardless of obstacles or background (Biggart 1983, 299-300). Mary Kay Ash's contributions to this literature combines elements of positive thinking, religion and prayer, and character work as well as an underlying belief, present in all neoliberal self-help, in "meritocracy, the idea that social rewards are distributed in proportion to individual work" (Biggart 1983, 306). Additionally, in the case of Mary Kay Ash and her company, the added evangelical emphasis on God's rewards for those who work hard add to the defining features of *southern* neoliberalism.

While the roots of self-help appeared in the early twentieth century, a flurry of texts, primarily written for women, proliferated throughout the 1980s. Heidi Marie Rimke (2000, 62) describes the genre of self-help as "an individualized voluntary enterprise, an undertaking to alter, reform, or transform the self, or some 'intrinsic' aspect of it, which is contingent upon a person's seeking some external form of authoritative assistance." The ideal of the "managed self," seen so frequently in women's advice texts asserts that women must constantly work to manage their emotions, needs, and responsibilities to find success, happiness, and fulfillment. Importantly for Mary Kay Cosmetics, this work is done not solely in service of the self, but in service of the self towards the betterment of the family. The thick supply of Mary Kay Cosmetics texts relies on the self-help techniques of the managed self, the self in need of betterment and the quest to find an elusive balance while trying to have it all. Similarly, as described by Laurie Ouellette and Julie Wilson (2011) seen in the multi-media texts of celebrity psychologist Dr.

Phil, "Conjoining active and intense media engagement across technological, temporal, and spatial boundaries to personal empowerment in the service of familial responsibilities … [elicits] and [facilitates] women's work 'all the time,' while also "[valorizing] feminized labor as enterprising citizenship" (549-550).[24] In neoliberal self-help texts, "we are told individuals possess the ability to choose happiness over unhappiness, success over failure, and even health over illness" (Rimke 2000, 73). Crucially, too, as happiness, success, and health are seen as indicators of will power and determination, "the moral lesson of self-help texts" is that "psychical and/or spiritual poverty results from a lack of self-governance" (Rimke 2000, 65). Ash describes such poverty as a lack of investing in oneself or seeking out empowering experiences. Ash describes Mary Kay Cosmetics as a "microcosm of the American free enterprise system," in which everyone who joins the company enters "on equal footing" and "In the true free-enterprise spirit, each woman gets out of her business what she puts into it. She is her own boss, and no one tells her when or whether to work. If she is a self-starter, and if she relies on the expertise available to her, she can rapidly build a successful career" (Ash 1984, 112).

While women are instructed to improve the self for the sake of the family, they are also taught to expect little in return. The rags-to-riches stories of Mary Kay Ash and other popular businesspeople and lifestyle experts do well to demonstrate the required tenacity, independence, and self-determination required of women to succeed. Arlie Hochschild (1994, 2-3) describes a

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[24] The Cult of True Womanhood (Welter 1966) advises women towards submissiveness – to their husbands and their households. Early-to-mid 19th century domestic advice texts such as an article titled "Domestic and Social Claims on Woman" describe "the true dignity and beauty of the female character" as "understanding and faithful and cheerful performance of social and family duties" (Welter 1966, 162). Additionally, while women were not expected to reform the world, they were expected to "begin the work by reforming ourselves and our households" (Welter 1966, 163).

trend in self-help and advice books published between 1970 and 1990 as "cooler in their approach to intimate life," insofar as such texts, rather than promoting reliance on an intimate support system, invite readers "to manage their needs more." While Hochschild and others (Blackman 2004) attribute this cooling to the reduction in emotionality or romance in women, namely seen in the single-girl texts of the 1980s and 90s; the same can be found in Mary Kay's self-help books regarding the requirements of the wife and mother (and beauty consultant) towards complete self-sufficiency. Ash repeatedly claims that mothers set the mood for the entire family and when the mother is negative or unenthusiastic, she inflicts those feelings on the rest of the family. Positive thinking and making invisible any outward sign of discomfort or negativity are key to Ash's advice in both the management of the family and the work of beauty consultants. Ash writes,

> It has always been my philosophy that a salesperson should never discuss personal problems … I suggest that our Consultants mentally 'turn off their problems' before they go to a show. When people ask, 'How are you?', they don't really want to know! They don't care that your husband has lost his job, your children have chicken pox, or your water heater just broke down … It's best to never let anyone know you have a problem. (1981, 51)

Similarly, after the abrupt passing of her husband Mel in 1980, Ash was set to attend a Mary Kay event the next day. She recounts feelings of responsibility to her beauty consultants and directors, reflecting on the composure of Jackie Onassis after the assassination of JFK. She writes, "I kept thinking of Jackie Kennedy Onassis, and how courageous she was when her husband was assassinated. The whole world praised her for her courage. She wouldn't allow herself the luxury of breaking down, and her strength had a tremendous impact on many other people" (1981, 53). "To be a lady is to have a public presence, to accept a public responsibility,"

and to never admit to or share information that might upset that presence (Fox-Genovese 1994, 162). While Mary Kay attended an event immediately after her husband's passing, a duty of her public responsibility, likewise, the southern lady would not "admit to being hungry in public. No lady would admit to sexual desire or pleasure," and would never consider her personal problems ahead of her public presence. Ash recommends that women take care of themselves so as not to upset the balance of the family (or any Mary Kay work obligations) and to keep things moving smoothly, implying that if the mother or wife gets sick, who will take care of the children, husband, and home? In such examples, women are instructed, implicitly, not to expect much emotional care from their own families, but instead to manage the self to such a degree that care isn't a requirement for functioning. This, too, reflects the neoliberal sentiments of choosing health over illness and making the correct choices to ensure wellness so as not to burden others (or the healthcare system). Ash admittedly adopts a "fake it 'til you make it" attitude and recommends women who want to be successful do the same – no negative emotions, hardships, painful events, even death, should stop a woman from carrying out her duties with a lipsticked smile.

Ash identifies balance in life as the key to success, happiness, and the well-being of the family. She writes (1995, 34), "A working mother must make a sustained effort to achieve and maintain [a balanced life], because without a certain symmetry in her days, she is flirting with disaster." Ash continually stresses the dangers of losing that balance as well as the ongoing labor involved in maintaining it, what Rottenberg (2018, 15) describes as the "*felicitous* work-family balance" required to have it all. Here, it is easy to qualify and understand the longevity of domestic advice insofar as the initial achievement is only the first step and women are assumed

to require continued assistance to maintain the desired results, particularly when considering the shifting realities and invited crises of everyday life. To this end, Ash advises women to learn to shift gears, moving seamlessly between work and family mode. Women, thus, cannot "afford to walk in the door and drop into a chair," but instead, after completing their workday, must instantly shift into mother and wife mode, tending to the needs of the children and husband, both physical, such as preparing dinner, and emotionally, such as asking family members about their days or being intimate with their husbands.

Direct selling organizations beyond Mary Kay Cosmetics utilize the practices of neoliberal self-help as part of their recruitment strategies as a way for women to understand that such jobs don't only produce income but self-esteem and overall betterment of the self. As described by Alison Clarke (1999, 90, 129), "positive thinking and popular religiosity are common themes in twentieth-century North American salesmanship" and companies like Tupperware and the founder of its party plan sales model, Brownie Wise "preached a potent doctrine of positive thinking, sisterly concern, and self-empowerment." Like Mary Kay Ash, Brownie Wise's story of feminine failure as seen in divorce and single motherhood and her rags-to-riches story are used a techniques to recruit women into the salesforce and the use of "popular psychology, positive thinking, and therapeutic self-help advice [form] the crux of" of the DSOs "ethos, [pervading] literature and sales rallies, and [feed] directly into the instruction of sales manuals" (Clarke 1999, 148-149). When women enter the Mary Kay workforce, they are, according to Ash, not only earning money, but a new lifestyle and ultimately, a new and bettered self.

As Ryan (2018, 62) describes, the rise of neoconservatism in U.S. politics in the late 1970s found its “moral foundation in Christian family values,” inviting women back into the home after the “failed project” of feminism stripped them of their sanctified status as housewives and mothers. This coincided, too, with the rise of evangelical culture and the Religious Right in the 1970s and 80s; journalists and scholars often cite the *Newsweek* article declaring 1976 the Year of the Evangelical alongside the presidential election of Jimmy Carter as demonstrative of this rise. Carol Flake (1984) offers an invaluable account of U.S. cultural shifts that came to fruition in the 1980s:

> Setting themselves against the Eastern liberal ‘establishment,’ who they felt ruled the nation without the consent of the governed, conservative Christian leaders attempted to smooth over long-standing doctrinal differences and territorial disputes among themselves in order to present a united front – a ‘Moral Majority,’ a ‘disciplined, charging army.’ They created a new common cause – the family – and identified a new common enemy – secular humanism. As Jerry Falwell described it, fundamentalists had hijacked the jumbo jet of evangelicalism and directed it on a new conservative course. (1984, 10)

Sunbelt cities like Dallas benefitted from the conservative and evangelical nature of Texas and the establishment of megachurches and Christian telecommunication services. As Flake notes, “In the new evangelical age … the bond between faith and fortune was consistently strengthened. Evangelicals of the booming Sunbelt were achieving success on a personal, corporate, and denominational level” (118). Mary Kay Cosmetics emphasized the symbiotic relationship between faith and fortune in its promotional materials and Ash’s self-help books, consistently referencing the blessings bestowed upon the company due to her faith in God and his guiding hand in business; for southern DSOs, God functions as an omnipresent business partner and rich (in more ways than one) benefactor. 1980s Dallas, the site of Mary Kay

Cosmetics headquarters and Ash's pink mansion, was also home to megachurch First Baptist Church of Dallas and its accompanying "giant 'family life [center]' that [provides] multitudinous functions for their members" such as "fitness training through twin gymnasiums, a skating rink, bowling alleys, racquetball courts, and a sauna" as well as "twenty or so choirs … a school for children from kindergarten through the twelfth grade, and an FM radio station" (Wilson 1995, 15-16). By the mid-1980s, the church's membership exceeded 20,000, "making it the largest Southern Baptist congregation in America" (Flake 1984, 51-52). It is unsurprising then that Dallas benefitted greatly, as did its elite, from its status as a shining Sunbelt city blessed by the parallel-growing, capital generating rise of evangelical total-lifestyle culture.

The rampant evangelicalizing of culture in the 1980s, particularly in the Sunbelt South (which overlaps substantially with the Bible Belt), had much to do with creating a competitive culture and marketplace of Christianity to combat the threat of secularism identified by conservative politicians, businessmen, and state leaders. What results, then, is the emergence of a separate Christian marketplace alongside (and within) the newest version of a separate southern way of life, now offered in an extreme form throughout the Sunbelt South. As Flake describes, "The notion of a separate Christian culture … led by a number of evangelicals to run their religious endeavors like a corporation," created a Christian marketplace of evangelical ideology, consumer goods, and entertainment services; "the real business of evangelicalism, after all, was spreading the word" through all available means.

Spreading the gospel of God and recruiting new followers is crux of evangelical culture, "exalting 'the individual's ability to choose God' and thereby take control of his or her own spiritual destiny" (Hendershot 2004, 2). Here, evangelical culture promotes the individual's

ability to choose and thus control the outcomes of their lives through the choice, like the emphasis on good choices in neoliberalism and the same qualities seen in DSOs such as recruitment and "spreading the gospel" of companies like Mary Kay Cosmetics. Dorothy Peven (1968) describes the atmosphere of the home party selling system and direct-to-consumer companies are comparable to "religious revival movements," particularly evangelist religions in which proselytizing and recruitment of others into the fold are two crucial elements for success (or savior).

Mary Kay Cosmetics relies much on praise and song in its business model, the most popular being a revision of the children's Bible song "I've got the joy, joy, joy, joy," with the lyrics changed to reflect what the salesforce refers to as "Mary Kay enthusiasm." The song features the lyrics:

> I've got that Mary Kay enthusiasm down in my heart
> I've got that Mary Kay enthusiasm down in my feet
> I've got that Mary Kay enthusiasm up in my head
> I've got that Mary Kay enthusiasm all over me/All over me to stay

Song, praise, and worship contain elements of "evangelistic religions, and the emotions of the audience are deliberately evoked and manipulated by techniques such as mass signing to create a collective consciousness and identification with the company, their products, and the spiritual philosophy which the companies claim" (Peven 1969, 98). In her self-help books, videos, and speeches, Ash details the importance of God to her success. She describes her popular practice of signing dollar bills for fans and employees, a success ritual for many involved in the company. She writes (1984, 91), "Next to my name I write, 'Matthew 25: 14-30,' which is the parable of

talents. It tells us to use and increase whatever God has given up, and that when we do, we shall be given more." Under the Mary Kay Cosmetics model, beauty consultants are recruited and asked to recruit more saleswomen into the company, building a pyramid and chain of connections through which the women who sell and recruit the most advance within the company. The recruitment model adheres to Ash's biblical reference insofar as when women help others succeed within the company, they succeed themselves to an even greater extent.

Ash, "like many entrepreneurs, possessed economic incentive to support politicians who favored unregulated capitalist expansion" and relied heavily on neoliberal thought to promote the path to success in Mary Kay (Kreydatus 2005). Ash describes Mary Kay as the embodiment of American business practices and the direct result of the free-enterprise system. She recalls a speech given by her son Richard Rogers, co-founder and executive chairman at an annual Seminar:

> Over the years I have given many Mary Kay speeches related to our free enterprise system. I feel our free enterprise system is important because without it you would not be here. I would not be speaking. Mary Kay Cosmetics would not exist. And the Mary Kay dream would never have become a reality. Free enterprise means different things to different people. To me it means individual liberty, which implies individual economic freedom, as envisioned by our founding fathers. The earliest leaders of this nation were determined to set up a free citizenry rooted in the natural law of supply and demand with minimal state and federal interference. They envisioned the right of everyone to succeed or fail according to his or her own initiative, drive, and ability. Since that original dream of our founding fathers, we've come a long way as a nation. We have become much more sophisticated. We have grown and capitalized on the free enterprise system, and we have established a standard of living never before known to mankind. (Ash 1984, 110)

Mentioned above, the business climate of the Sunbelt South, a major factor in its exponential growth, favored right-to-work laws and held anti-union sentiments. The speech given by Rogers credits the lack of government oversight and intervention to the success of the company,

alongside the thinly veiled anti-welfare rhetoric of neoliberalism emphasizing individual drive and ability. In her 1984 book *Mary Kay on People Management*, Ash explicitly addresses her distaste for unions. In 1985, Rogers bought out the company, making it "privately held" and "family-owned" (Mary Kay Executive Bios).

Figure 9 All Your Tomorrows, 1980

All Your Tomorrows (1980)

The remainder of this chapter analyzes Mary Kay Cosmetics recruitment and promotional films and VHS tapes. The company produced several recruitment films in the late 1970s and early

1980s, all filmed in Dallas and produced by Bill Stokes Associates, a production company specializing in industrial and promotional films.[25] The three Mary Kay films – *It's a Way of Life* (1977), *All Your Tomorrows* (1980), and *Capture the Vision* (1981) – provide potential Mary Kay Cosmetics recruits with educational and aspirational narratives from both Ash and her most successful beauty consultants and company directors.

Here, I focus specifically on *All Your Tomorrows* (1980), a film that follows newly recruited beauty consultant, Susan Anderson, on her journey with Mary Kay Cosmetics. Susan, a mother of two (implicitly single, though her marital status is never mentioned nor is a father/husband ever shown), loses her job and looks to Mary Kay Cosmetics as an opportunity to earn an income while she searches for full-time work. Susan describes herself as "down in the dumps," and worried about how she'll pay her bills, particularly for the daycare program of her youngest daughter. She attends a Mary Kay beauty party thrown by a friend seeking to lighten her mood and finds herself impressed with the products and more so, with the woman giving the demonstration, claiming, "She was so sure of herself, and she just looked like success" (All Your Tomorrows). Later that night, Susan sits at home with her children asleep in her lap on the couch reading over the Mary Kay Cosmetics materials from the party and decides to "invest in [herself]" by becoming a beauty consultant. When the first order of Mary Kay products arrives, Susan opens the package at her kitchen table and her children ask, "Is it a present? For who?" to which Susan responds, "It sure is … it's a present for me. No, it's for all of us."

[25] In addition to their work with Mary Kay Cosmetics, Bill Stokes Associates produced several films for tech and industry leaders across Dallas.

The film follows Susan from recruitment to her first annual Seminar, the yearly event held in Dallas to celebrate the highest earning individuals at the company. The film is narratively structured with Susan as the main character as we see her home life and work life, the ways they overlap, her successes and fears, and her eventual self-revelation gained by her involvement in Mary Kay. We see her laughing with friends and colleagues at Mary Kay events, giving inspirational speeches about her time with the company, and visiting Ash's home in Dallas, a rite of passage for all Mary Kay employees. Susan, not only inspired to better the lives of herself and her family, seeks to better the lives of others by recruiting more women into the fold. She asks, "Wouldn't it be wonderful if all businesses could be like Mary Kay? It would be the American Dream come true."

The film cuts between Susan's home life and her career travels with Mary Kay Cosmetics. She is seen greeting her children as they arrive home from school and jet setting to Dallas to visit the company's headquarters. As the film progresses, Susan incrementally transforms into a version of the successful beauty consultant she so admired at her first ever Mary Kay beauty party. At the beginning of her Mary Kay journey, Susan, self-described as "down in the dumps," wears minimal makeup and her hair is sparsely styled but as the film progresses, she becomes more glamourous with coiffed hair, smart business suits, and a face of Mary Kay makeup. Additionally, changes to her domestic space occur with the addition of large, plush white sofas replacing the cramped brown furniture seen in her living room at the start of the film, along with a new car in the driveway.

More of the same is seen in *Capture the Vision*, released one year later, as a testament to the business model of Mary Kay Cosmetics in which women are not drawn away from the

domestic, but instead, encouraged to work on its betterment, an opportunity afforded to them by their work with Mary Kay. The homes featured in these recruitment films (other than Ash's mansion) are middle-class in "nice" neighborhoods, full of happy children celebrating birthdays, wives preparing meals in between beauty shows, greeting their children as they step off the school bus, and even Ash serving homemade cookies and tea to employees visiting her home as she describes the essentiality of femininity to the success of the business.

Figure 10 All Your Tomorrows, 1980

The reality of Mary Kay work seen in the promotional films differed greatly from the reality of most Mary Kay beauty consultants in the 1980s. As Beth Kreydatus (2005) describes,

after the company's supposed boost in consultants after the *60 Minutes* interview aired, "most consultants worked part-time for the company" and earned only "$1,5000 a year in a 9-hour work week; the more active ones, perhaps $4000" (4). Additionally, with a turnover rate of up to 80 percent at times, Mary Kay Cosmetics sought to recruit as many women as possible, often describing work with the company as an opportunity for housewives, work-classing, or women of color, with little prior work experience or job skills, to earn money to help support their families. However, as Kreydatus crucially explains, "Despite the company's efforts to recruit working-class women, Ash clearly tried to cultivate an image of the consultants as middle-class 'ladies,'" relying heavily on the aesthetics of white, middle-class femininity in her recruitment and promotion films, including the depiction of Susan Anderson in *All Your Tomorrows*.

One Step at a Time (1989) and Consider the Possibilities (2002): VCR as domestic technology

In addition to the promotional films discussed above, Mary Kay Cosmetics also produced VHS tapes beginning in the mid-1980s. These tapes, produced through the 2000s, included pre-recorded skin care and makeup classes, information on recruitment for beauty consultants, and provided answers to questions about Mary Kay for prospective saleswomen. Pre-recorded tapes available for repeated home-viewing allowed women to brush up on skin care and makeup application techniques, learn more about business opportunities without necessarily having to attend a party or live demonstration, and, perhaps, share tapes with friends on their own time thanks to the autonomous viewing options provided by the VCR.

The VCR "was the subject of a consumer boom in the early 1980s and was quickly established as the major innovation in home entertainment since television" among middle-class households in the United States (Gray 1992, 1). The VCR "offered the novelty" of time-shifting, or "being able to record off-air and view broadcast materials at alternative times and to hire pre-recorded tapes" such as popular movies (1). Ann Gray's (1992) pioneering study of the gendered usage of the VCR situates its use by women within "the social and cultural dimensions of the household" in order to contextualize women's "work, both outside and inside the home; [their] responsibilities and obligations to others; and the amount of spare time that [they are] able to organize for [themselves]" (3-4). With the introduction of VHS tapes into the already-vast Mary Kay marketplace, women could now use the VCR to learn and teach, allowing them to remain in the home to, perhaps, an even greater extent. Gray specifically discusses the VCR as an entertainment technology located within the domestic space. While the women interviewed for her study used their televisions and VCRs for leisure, the VCR could arguably, as in the case of Mary Kay, be considered a domestic technology used for work. Clearly the VCR differs from other domestic technologies like the washing machine, stand mixer, or electric juicer, all designed with the intent to decrease manual labor, yet when considering the VHS tapes produced by Mary Kay Cosmetics, the VCR's status as technology purely for entertainment or leisure becomes compromised.

As Gray describes, too, the women interviewed for her study often had complex relationships with daytime viewing and regarded watching television or films during the day as guilt-inducing indulgences or used daytime viewing as a reward for finishing housework. Gray writes,

> Many women spent quite long periods of time in the house on their own. But even during this time they did not feel free of the constraints of their position as wives and mothers. This manifested in feelings of guilt at taking time off … and many engaged in complicated 'reward' negotiations with themselves in order to justify this 'indulgence.' (76)

For some women interviewed, watching a VHS tape during the day caused even more guilt than watching a television program as "The television is transmitting whether [they decide] to watch or not, but the use of a video tape implies a guilty decision to view which is totally in [their] control" (215). Watching a VHS tape, then, requires active decision making rather than passively letting the television play in the background with the assumption that even with the television on, women are watching only intermittently and engaging in distracted viewing that would not compromise their ability to complete housework. I wonder, then, if the viewing of Mary Kay tapes during the day might not evoke the same feelings of guilt women experienced when watching entertainment programming on VHS, associated with "taking time off," whereas the Mary Kay tapes would be an extension of their daily work.

Figure 11 One Step at a Time, 1989

In the 1989 VHS release *One Step at a Time*, a diverse group of beauty consultants converse about their experiences with Mary Kay Cosmetics. Seated in a comfortable, stylish living room, the women discuss the advantages of choosing a Mary Kay career. One beauty consultant mentions that what impressed her initially and drew her to the company was the fact that everyone starts at the same level; “Everyone starts out with a beauty case, and it is up to you exactly what you want to do with it … The only limits set on me are the ones I set on myself.” Meritocratic sentiments characteristic of neoliberalism are espoused throughout the video, as is the idea of individualism as a determinant of success. Women are given all the tools they need to succeed when they begin at Mary Kay (as well as all the supplementary tools provided through

numerous books and videos) and what they make of their business reflects only their own efforts and ability to follow Ash's guidance.

Consultant Rosa claims that she most enjoys selling the product and recruiting other women to the company. She says, "I have three college degrees and I've never had a job that pays me as much as I can make at Mary Kay. For once in my life, I can put God first in my life, my family second, and my career last and still make money." Rosa refers to the Mary Kay motto "God first, family second, career third" and notes that despite her extensive education, no other company values her like Mary Kay Cosmetics. An older consultant, retired from her previous job, says that Mary Kay allows her to remain active. Mary Kay Ash, too, a retired career woman, founded the company the same year she retired from her previous job. Throughout the video, the beauty consultants and directors are seen almost exclusively in their homes or visiting the homes of others, giving beauty and skin care classes. Groups of women are shown seated around kitchen tables or gathered on sofas and scenes of individual beauty consultants are seen filling orders in their home offices or at their dining room tables. Families, too, are intimately involved in the business with consultants praising their husbands for their support and their children helping to sort, stock, and deliver product.

One Step at a Time offers "steps" to success and mentions viewing VHS materials to teach oneself how to give skin care classes. A woman is shown sitting on her couch watching a skin care tutorial and taking notes. She is not relaxed but sitting astutely with her Mary Kay materials spread out on the coffee table, pen poised in her hand. While the women in Gray's study expressed guilt with viewing VHS tapes during the day, the woman in the Mary Kay tape

isn't necessarily watching for entertainment but as an extension of her work, learning a skill that will translate into material success and familial happiness later.

In *Consider the Possibilities* (2002), beauty directors and their husbands attest to the positive effect Mary Kay Cosmetics has had on their families. Additionally, as described above, many of the incentives for women to sell such as cars and diamond rings also include family-oriented prizes as well, things that husbands can use and enjoy. Sales director Nancy says that through her sales, she's earned a leather sofa where she watches movies with her family on Sunday nights; their big screen television, also earned through her sales, is something husband Kevin appreciates. They've also earned bedroom furniture and a set of Mary Kay dishes for everyday use, along with a top-of-the-line camcorder to capture family celebrations and holidays. *Consider the Possibilities* highlights the centrality of a comfortable home and the attendant middle-class luxuries like televisions, tech equipment, and new furniture afforded to Mary Kay employees. As Ryan (2018, 5) describes the lifestyle culture like that of Mary Kay promoted through these videos describe how "a modern individual who has a rich interior life rooted in their experience of home is central to the advancement of capitalism in the twentieth century" and specifically, the Sunbelt South in throughout the 1980s and beyond.

Successful sales director Sue Kirkpatrick describes the multiple layers of success and fulfillment a Mary Kay career can provide women and their families (One Step at a Time). Money is only one layer, offering women the opportunity to supplement the family income and increase its class status. *One Step at a Time* and *Consider the Possibilities* consistently reference flexible time provided by Mary Kay careers in which women can spend time with their husbands and children as well as working to afford family vacations and to purchase material goods to

enhance the home and entertain the family. Apart from money, Mary Kay Cosmetics offers women "paychecks of the heart," including increased self-esteem, a beautified lifestyle and happy domestic space, and well-tended children and husbands.

The vast marketplace of Mary Kay Cosmetics products, including makeup, Ash's books and memoirs, training videos, promotional films, and in-person events like the annual Seminar continue to advance the notion of domestic advice as a converged media space. The story of Mary Kay, beginning with Ash's founding of the company, extends to include the narratives of other rags-to-riches success stories, as do the technologies and platforms through which to access domestic advice and lifestyle guidance promoted by the company.

Chapter four takes this up as the central argument; serialized storytelling drives convergence, as seen in the case of *Southern Living* magazine and its expansive, ever-growing list of transmedia extensions. As stated in the introduction, domestic advice has always been, and as chapter four continues to argue, remains a key site of serialized storytelling, offering new advice, consumer goods, and narratives to adopt toward successful, southern living.

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Chapter Four:
Lifestyle, nostalgia, and convergence culture in the *Southern Living* South

The American South exists as geographical place as much as it does a commodity. Opportunities to possess and embody "southern-ness" through consumer products, technologies, tourism, and media have grown exponentially since the start of the twentieth century. Those seeking to experience the South beyond its geographical boundaries can visit countless pseudohistorical sites like the *Gone with the Wind* Museum in Marietta, Georgia, join a members-only society to visit curated locations and events across the region, and even build a custom home in one of *Southern Living* magazine's Inspired Communities with options ranging from beach cottages to Greek Revival style mansions meant to "respond to a sophisticated lifestyle" and "[recall] visions of plantation life" (Southern Living House Plans Azalea Hall). This chapter analyzes the *Southern Living* total lifestyle brand as constitutive of a branded, commodifiable South and its role in creating southern lifestyle culture beginning in the late 1960s. The *Southern Living* branded South, created through purposeful coordination across the brand's print and online magazine formats, consumer products, and lifestyle projects, serves as an example of *non-fictional* transmedia storytelling and convergence culture wherein content is "dispersed systematically across multiple delivery channels for the purpose of creating a unified and coordinated entertainment experience" (Jenkins 2007). While theorizations of convergence culture and examples of transmedia storytelling apply to fictional media franchises, the *Southern Living* total lifestyle brand offers its audience a range of experiences and opportunities for engagement through intensive "world-building" (Jenkins 2007).

Launched in 2014, the Southern Living Inspired Communities project, consisting of neighborhoods curated by the magazine as representative of the best ways and places to live southern is one of the latest and most immersive experiences offered by the brand. The Inspired Communities program creates a livable version of the brand that exceeds the boundaries of the magazine, offering readers a transmedia experience to live within the *Southern Living* South. Through its “rich, encyclopedic” universe, *Southern Living* expands transmedia experiences often associated with fictional media franchises such as theme parks, conventions, and tourism, instead offering long-term rather than transient opportunities to engage with the brand at the level of everyday life (Edwards 2012, 6).

Though a non-fictional media brand, *Southern Living* traffics in myths. Its use of highly nostalgic and commodified icons and images of the region, namely those sourced from the antebellum era, create a type of fiction, one of many “microSouths” to which audiences “can literally subscribe” (Romine 2008, 15). These microSouths, formed by “mobility and media” in which the “[preservation of] old divisions” collide with “new technologies of niche markets,” generate commodifiable versions of the region to suit wants, needs, and lifestyles (15-16). The *Southern Living* South, but one of numerous microSouths, offers audiences a version of the region rooted in antebellum mythology, white fantasy, and home/land ownership. Additionally, as Scott Romine (2008, 16) describes, “if one doesn’t subscribe to the South of Southern Living, then alternative subscriptions are available.” As a microSouth, *Southern Living* continues the legacy of commodifying and branding a South for sale, offered to audiences across a range of platforms and levels of immersion.

The South's place within the nostalgia industry, facilitated through popular culture and tourism, relies on the region's willingness to create and sell "spectacular displays and immersive experiences" of southern culture, often replicating a fantasy version of the antebellum period (McPherson 2003, 101). Beginning in the late nineteenth century, "businessmen sought to capitalize on the marketing and consumption of a Dixie that incorporated the mythology and traditions of a southern past," relying on the stock icons of the southern belle, the plantation home, and the Confederacy (Cox 2008, 51). As discussed throughout this dissertation, attempts to invent "new" Souths throughout the nineteenth, twentieth, and twenty-first centuries create an irresolvable tension of old versus new, tradition versus progress. Film, television, and tourism industries frequently forego more contemporary, updated portrayals of the region, instead opting to depict the South as a place of the past, a region "temporally disconnected from the United States … situated in an imaginary historical space" (Davis 2021, 50).

As southern cultural historians have noted, the "South's relatively abrupt entrance into modernity," beginning in earnest after World War II marks the start of industrial growth and national-scale southern cultural production, something largely unseen in the region until this point as most mass-produced cultural products came from well-established urban cities like New York, Los Angeles, and Chicago (Romine 2008, 4). Karen Cox (2009, 680-681) affirms that the "overarching conclusion that, on the whole, southerners did not create mass culture is important and has a basis in fact. That is to say, the South did not … manufacture mass culture – most publishing houses, television and film studios, and advertising agencies headquartered" on the East and West coasts "have long been responsible for how nonsoutherners perceive the region." What Cox (2009) terms the "geography of production" describes the ways in which the South

long lacked the infrastructure, funds, and resources to create its own cultural products, particularly those with national eminence, as it remained largely agrarian well into the twentieth century, leading to the creation of images of the region produced from an outside perspective. While depictions of the South created by those outside the region relied heavily on stunted stereotypes, the South itself adopted these same icons and imaginaries to market itself to the nation and the world, what Scott Romine (2008, 1) describes as the "Dixiefication" of the South, "its willing participation in self-caricature."

The *Southern Living* lifestyle brand is intimately involved in the process of "Dixiefication" in which southern cultural production relies, in part, on reinserting the region's most recognizable iconography into the present as *still* representative of lifestyle in the South regardless of periodization and its contextual or temporal distance from the antebellum era. While *Southern Living* certainly is not the original cultural product of the region, it is undoubtedly one of the most influential and recognizable, particularly regarding domesticity and lifestyle as it was the first regionally specific lifestyle publication in the South. At present, the *Southern Living* total lifestyle brand, which began as a magazine in 1966, includes a vast social media presence with visibility on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest, and TikTok, as well as the publication's website. Additionally, the brand offers cookbooks, décor manuals, and a wealth of consumer goods for the home such as bedding, cookware, and paint. Since the publication's start, they've also offered Southern Living blueprints for use in the construction of architecturally southern homes, ranging from beach cottages to antebellum-inspired mini mansions.

Southern Living has built toward a project like that of the Inspired Communities since its inception. For decades, the magazine and its transmedia extensions have focused not only on refining the aesthetics of southern homes, but the creation of an entire southern way of life expressed through design choices, consumer goods, and adherence to the cultural lifeways of the region dictated by the white, upper-middle classes. Former Editor-in-Chief Lindsay Bierman describes the project and goals of the Inspired Communities as bringing the pages of *Southern Living* to life for readers. He writes that the Inspired Communities program will allow readers of the magazine

> to engage with the brand like never before, by actually living it. Simply chose your SL House Plan and hire a SL Custom Builder to build it in an SL Inspired Community near you. Then decorate with SL products and landscape your yard with SL plants. Serve no-fail SL recipes at your housewarming … and so on. I don't expect anyone to take it to that extreme, but this program will radically simplify some of the major decisions that make building a home one of life's most stressful events. (2014, 12)

Bierman's comments reveal the central goal of the project – to build and sustain a simple, southern way of life through the utilization of approved goods and services by the magazine, a decades-long arbiter of southern taste and correctness. Additionally, so many of the Inspired Communities do just what Bierman describes - create spaces to live within the brand and live *as* the brand.

Southern Living magazine debuted as a lifestyle and domestic guide in the years of economic, industrial, and cultural growth in the region in which it advanced from its longtime status as the all-around runt of the nation to that of a national trendsetter. Bruce Schulman (1994, 152-153) explains that "between 1959 and 1980 the South led all American regions in economic growth," and, "no longer a satellite in the national economic universe, the South of the 1970s set

nationwide industrial trends." This growth, amassed in southern Sunbelt cities like Atlanta and Dallas was also witnessed in parts of the region associated with tourism, the slow pace of southern life, and the South as a place to experience the past such as coastal cities like Savannah, Georgia and Charleston, South Carolina.

The Sunbelt South's entrance into the American mainstream, while economically and culturally beneficial, reignited long-held fears of a disappearing South. Southern studies scholars (Reed 1972; Ayers 1996; Romine 2008) address the persistent eulogizing of the region throughout its history, claiming that "For as long as people have believed there was a South, they have also believed it was disappearing" (Ayers 1996). Additionally, as Richard L. Ayers (1996) describes, "From its beginning, people have believed that the South was not only disappearing but also declining, defined against an earlier South that was somehow more authentic, real, more unified and distinct." Insofar as the region understands itself as most authentic and distinct from the rest of the nation only in its past iterations, it leads to reason that a shoring-up of southern culture and the increased circulation of its most popular imagery, icons, and myths would emerge during times of exponential growth and change. *Southern Living* sought to remind audiences of the distinctive attributes of the region (both real and imagined) and its superiority to places like the urban North, despite its large-scale industrial and economic growth.

Beginning in 1966 and extending to the present, *Southern Living* continues to center the pastoral character of the region, reimagined in planned communities like Habersham, South Carolina, one of its first Inspired Communities. Cloistered suburban living offers residents a haven against the crime-ridden urban landscape of the North and the raced and classed assumptions that follow. The *Southern Living* total lifestyle brand and Inspired Communities

program model a South captured and preserved in the past as the region expands its national reputation.

There are currently 11 Southern Living Inspired Communities across the region in Florida, North and South Carolina, Texas, Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi; I focus specifically on the community of Habersham located in the low country of Beaufort, South Carolina. While all the communities, to some degree, are premised upon upper-middle class, cloistered community living with an emphasis on all-in-one amenities such as dog parks, medical centers, restaurants, and social and athletic clubs, Habersham is an entire town with a post office, fire department, and downtown city center. In what follows, I analyze the *Southern Living* total lifestyle brand to better understand how the magazine and its transmedia extensions built toward the construction of the branded suburb of Habersham. How does Habersham attempt to capture and preserve southern living through architectural styles and lifestyle culture provided by the *Southern Living* brand? How does Habersham offer residents and visitors a microcosm of southern living, built around nostalgia, myths, and simulacra?

As a domestic advice and lifestyle guide, *Southern Living* aided in the establishment of southern identity and lifestyle culture for the middle class throughout the 1960s and into the present. The magazine and its brand extensions, particularly the Inspired Communities program, negotiate and attempt to concretize southern identity and culture within the space of the home, constructed to serve as a monument to southern history and the home's ability to contain lifeworlds.

Selling and branding the South

As southern studies scholars have extensively described, bids to sell the South as a place worthy of investment have occurred since the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in attempts to improve the region's financial disparities and reputational precarity. New South boosterism campaigns popularized in the late nineteenth century led by middle-class southerners and public officials discussed in chapter one continued well into the mid-twentieth century. As described by James C. Cobb (1982, 64), "The crusade for new industry after World War II encouraged a great emphasis on development efforts by state and local governments and enlisted the services of key public officials, growth-oriented business leaders, and influential private citizens. Many of the state supported organizations that were to play such an active role in the post-WWII South's campaign for economic progress had their roots in the boosterism of the early 1920s." With industrial growth during World War II in which wartime industries moved to the South, public officials, local governments, and business leaders sought to transform these industries into permanent fixtures in the region after the war to sustain and continue the growth they produced.

Labor relations in the South were a major cause for its industrial development post-WWII leading into the 1980's Sunbelt South boom. As discussed in chapter three, the favorable business climate of the Sunbelt South lured outside investment to the region as it marketed its "lower operating costs, burgeoning markets nurtured by increased federal expenditures" and "an abundance of docile laborers more willing to work for wages well below the national average" (Cobb 1982, 179, 92). In addition to laboring conditions with staunch anti-union sentiments ideal for outside businesses, the region promoted itself as a place to work, live, and play; the Sunbelt

South became associated with leisure, "high pensions [and] early retirement," where the "affluent American middle class [could return] to the comforts of the endless summer" (186).

For those living outside the region, the South became a vacation playground, particularly the coastal areas with states like Florida drawing vast numbers of visitors. Tourism, according to Anthony Stanonis (2014, 23) "was a New South industry" that took hold after the Civil War and developed significantly as a result of railroad expansion. As such, southern coastal towns, via the arrival and attention of northern and Midwestern tourists, became "more cosmopolitan places" than considered in the past. Increased ability to travel to these towns lead to the "region's transformation from an agricultural to a service economy" throughout the twentieth century (23). Vacationers from the northeast and Midwest fleeing winter climates made up the bulk of southern tourism in the early twentieth century with Florida serving as a model for many southern coastal towns as they attempted to orient themselves to the needs and wants of tourists. Additionally, while winter prevailed as the most popular vacation time among northern tourists, measures were taken to ensure "year-round prosperity" in such towns through the introduction of "technologies, mainly air-conditioning, and the construction of military bases and universities after the Second World War" (24).

Advertising for the region, selling it as a place of warmth (both in terms of weather and hospitality) and leisure, focused primarily on attracting northerners to visit and spend. Ads for specific cities and towns ran in popular magazines such as *Better Homes and Gardens* and in major metropolitan newspapers and promotional films were produced and distributed to

television stations across the country.[26] In addition to coastal vacation spots and an emphasis on leisure, the South also promoted tourism as a way to visit the past, particularly the antebellum period. As Cox (2011, 7) notes,

> Southern state and local governments … not only understood the region's identity in the national imagination but sought to capitalize on it by providing nonsouthern tourists … with exactly what they had to come to expect of the South, whether it was being able to see blacks working in cotton fields, taking tours of old plantations, or experiencing that ubiquitous feature of life in Dixie known as southern hospitality.

Described by Tobias Becker (2018, 243), "the term 'heritage industry,' drew on nostalgia to explain the popularity of the phenomena as diverse as conservation, museums, heritage centers, heritage tourism, and period dramas." In the South, heritage tourism promotes spaces and events built around the remembrance and recreation of a white, fantasy-driven South in which plantations become wedding venues and vacationers can visit a *Gone with the Wind* Museum. The region's history, culled from historical events like the Civil War alongside mediated versions of those events are formatted into tourist attractions; the South's heritage tourism industry depends on a nostalgic retelling of historical events wherein "the once-upon-a-time pastoral southern paradise of long ago" is reanimated in the postbellum historical imaginations of many white southerners" (Cobb 2005, 74).

As extensively discussed in chapter two, Atlanta and Clayton County, Georgia both developed immersive relationships with *Gone with the Wind* related tourism and consumer goods, with the novel's release "[spurring] Atlanta's first tourist boom of the twentieth century

[26] Anthony Stanonis (2014) discusses two promotional films: *The Myrtle Beach Story*, produced by the Myrtle Beach Chamber of Commerce in 1950 and the 1953 film *Playtown, USA* produced by the Virginia Beach Chamber of Commerce which aired on television stations in the Midwest and Northeast.

when tens of thousands of visitors came to Atlanta looking for Tara, Margaret Mitchell's fictional plantation" (Dickey 2007, 4). Additionally, Clayton County, the site of Tara in the novel, attempted to "build a Gone with the Wind related theme park before finally settling on a more modest Gone with the Wind Historic District that included a welcome center [and] museum" (6). As late as 1992 plans for a 200-acre, $22 million *Gone with the Wind* theme park persisted. The park's central focus "would be Tara, based on the façade from the movie, complete with talking holograms of Rhett and Scarlett. Visitors could learn about how cotton was grown, ginned, and woven into cloth at this working plantation, and in an attempt at realism, the plantation complex would include slave quarters" (114-115). To this end, the historicity of the region utilized in the intertwined heritage and nostalgia industries, described below, follows Fitzhugh Brundage's (2008, 89) assessment that "The market [shapes] American historical identities and representations far more than the state" and that "tourism enterprises, not government officials, usually [serve] as the most significant architects of regional and historical identity."

Clayton County and Atlanta, among others, embraced the "dixiefication" of the region to generate revenue, utilizing caricatures of the region to sell itself to northern tourists and investors. The Tara plantation serves as "ground zero of southern cultural reproduction" and "constitutes a persistent seam between an idealized South and a material one" (Romine 2008, 27). Crucially, as Romine argues, "Tara stands positioned, as a kind of ur-simulacra, at the threshold of the South's entrance into the cultural industry, and its subsidiaries – the heritage industry, the nostalgia industry, and the tourist industry" (28). In understanding a fictional plantation home as the center of the South's cultural output, it becomes easier to reconcile brands

like *Southern Living*'s insistence on memorializing the region and using the traditional southern home to do so. Additionally, just as Tara serves as the "ur-simulacra" for the region, towns like Habersham continue this tradition. The referent here, Tara, functions with little regard to reality, instead relying on popular images of the South as featured in literature and film, dedicated to preserving the Old South despite the region's continued growth through the mid-to-late twentieth century.

Cultural institutions like *Southern Living* make use of nostalgia, a persistent feeling in Western societies and perhaps even more so in the American South, to create branded communities. In the examples discussed here, nostalgia is associated with "dominant and conservative sources in society," namely what Colleen Kennedy (2020, 86) describes as the "fidelity to whiteness" in ongoing adaptations of images, activating questions of "who is nostalgic for what, and in the names of which [communities]" (Tannock 1995, 454, 456). *Southern Living*, above all, utilizes nostalgic rhetoric towards the promotion of a white South, a South aligned with the racial hierarchies of the antebellum era and represented through projects like the Inspired Community of Habersham. In its vigilance to uphold a version of the region in which whiteness constitutes stability, *Southern Living* edits the history of the South by ["glossing] over contradictory or negative components" and cutting out "social groups and relations" that do not align with the brand (457).

Modernity, nostalgia, simulacra

"But remember that the revival of tradition will occur in a contemporary context. The snows of

yesteryear are falling again, but now they are created by artificial snow-making equipment" (Darnovsky 1991, 82)

As discussed throughout this dissertation, the core of the domestic advice genre and specifically for this chapter, southern lifestyle culture, is that of unresolved nostalgia for a time and place that exists in cultural memory, facilitated through media technologies such as film and television, but that exists less so in actuality. While the genre has arguably always deployed nostalgia, its applicability in the present relies on a convincingly arranged "random collection of images to which we turn in a frantic effort to appropriate a collective past" (Joyrich 1992, 238). Commodifying the past and its traditions is an essential part of southern lifestyle culture and the work of the *Southern Living* brand more specifically.

The South, perpetually understood as a place of the past and one less marked by "modernity's extreme dynamism" has much to do with the region's lingering agrarian traditions and its slow adoption of modern systems of industrialization (Giddens 1991, 16). As such, many of its most recognizable cultural products reflect on the past; the antebellum period pervades every iteration of the new, modern South. As described by Anthony Giddens, "The modern world is a 'runaway world': not only is the pace of social change much faster than in any prior system, so also is its scope, and profoundness with which it affects pre-existing social practices and modes of behavior" (16). The South, partially cloistered from the runaway effects of modernity well into the mid-twentieth century, invokes its slower pace of living as an alternative to the rest of the nation. As such, the region's tourism and cultural industries are situated within a nostalgic, largely pre-modern mode of expression that still seems viable in the present. The fragmentation of identity and "[undercutting of] traditional habits and customs" inherent in

modernity, of which the South remains fearful, are remedied through the region's attachment to "a past imbued with special qualities" that attends "to the pleas for continuity and to the comforts of sameness" in the face of transformation (Giddens 1991, 1; Davis 1977, 418, 420).

By the late 1960s and 1970s, the South began its entrance into the American mainstream, largely facilitated through its cultural products such as country music, film and television, as well as the presidential election of Plains, Georgia native Jimmy Carter; as such, "regional peculiarities became intriguing and amusing rather than burdensome" (Cobb 1982, 185). As the region grew substantially culturally and economically during this time, the South's fears over its envelopment into the American mainstream and the subsequent loss of its unique cultural identity festered. Cultural products like *Southern Living* turned to what Wendy Brown (1995, 35-36) describes as "reactionary foundationalism," in which "fetishized, decontextualized [fragments] or [icons]" come to stand in for any sort of comprehensive history. These fragments, often produced in the form of commodities, allowed readers of *Southern Living* to piecemeal together a sense of southern identity and lifestyle practices as the region underwent what many describe as its "Americanization" beginning in the late 1960s and extending into the present.

The overidentification with and overinvestment in icons such as the family or the home, or even more granular objects of southern living – family heirlooms, recipes, Tara – permit southern lifestyle culture to function without a true referent as the persistent circulation and veneration of icons of the "good life" in the middle and upper-middle class South stand in for any "real" version yet are just as affectively resonant, if not more so. Suburban white-flight and segregated suburbs of the mid-century obsessively depicted on U.S. television with the rash of domestic sitcoms such as *Leave it to Beaver* and *Father Knows Best* "presented a world in which

white people lived in a redlined landscape populated by white people like themselves, in leafy suburbs from which all the tensions shimmering around them had been deleted" (Stabile 2018, xxi). The images of the ideal family and the middle-class good life sourced from such programs remain relevant into the contemporary moment, resulting in the domestic sitcom-ization of the American family and home. Similarly, Habersham combines such ideals of family togetherness and cloistered living, adding southern standards of the good life into the construction of the town. Like the *Leave it to Beaver*-ization of the American family and home, Habersham and southern revival architecture more broadly engage in something akin to the *Southern Living*-ization of family and home. As Stephanie Coontz (1992, 29) writes, "Contrary to popular opinion, Leave it to Beaver is not a documentary," but, regardless, has come to serve as an overidentified set of codes and signs that stand in and replace the realities of life and family, just as *Southern Living* erases what living in the South means for much of the region's population, creating a sellable version available to those who can afford to live within the fantasy.

It is possible, then, to trace a line from the South's experiences of modernity, its nostalgic mode of expression, particularly regarding its cultural productions, to the creation of Southern Living Inspired Communities like Habersham. Baudrillard (1995, 9, 8) explains that "We require a visible past, a visible continuum, a visible myth of origin, which reassures us about our end," which is achieved through "[stockpiling] the past in plain view." The South's most highly visible, recognizable, mythologized, and promoted pasts contributed to the "fetishized history" of the region, making it apt for commodification and branding (31).

Figure 12 Front Gate of Tara Club Estates, Loganville, GA

The *Southern Living* total lifestyle brand

Southern Living magazine, first published in 1966, began as an organ of the popular southern farming periodical, *Progressive Farmer,* and its home service column, "The Progressive Home," later renamed "Southern Living" (Roberts 1996, 86). In the years following the Civil War, C.G. Scruggs and Smith W. Moseley (1979) attribute agricultural journalism to regional uplift and rehabilitation, describing farm magazines as "among the principal engines of change in the agricultural South" (23). Many early farm and literary magazines established after the Civil War folded in the 1960s, the same decade that *Southern Living* began as an extension of *Progressive Farmer* and expanded the purview of southern life beyond the farm; *Progressive Farmer* is still operable and created *Southern Living* to broaden its appeal and circulation to people who had moved off the farm into more urban/suburban areas.

The magazine's inaugural issue, published February 1966, describes the publication as one with a regional purpose; a guide for best living practices in the southern United States as well as a celebration of what sets the region apart from the nation, its distinctions and ultimately, its superiority. In the editor's note, President and Editor-in-Chief Eugene Butler clearly states that the magazine is designed around southern dispositions and preoccupations – those who enjoy "good food, recreation, and hospitable climate" (1996, 4). The need to set the South apart as not only different from the rest of the nation but a better place to live, work, and play is explicitly stated in the opening pages of the magazine. Butler writes,

> *Southern Living* will seek to help Southern cities alleviate many of the hazards of crowded living. Dirty air, filthy water, growing crime, traffic jams, noise, and tension combine to make life in many cities a frustrating and sometimes dangerous experience. By wise, long-range planning, our most modern Southern cities are sidestepping the obvious mistakes that have blighted so many Northern urban areas. We will bring to you well documented stories of these modern miracles of planned development. (4)

Southern Living not only claims to showcase the best of the South in comparison to the North but serves as an advertisement for the South's best attributes, a long-standing tradition in southern marketing seen throughout the early twentieth century.[27]

The mid-nineteenth century saw a rise in literary magazines published in the American South which sought to develop a distinctly southern and regionally specific contribution to the growing body of national literature produced almost exclusively in the northeast. In these volumes, laments abound regarding the lack of southern voices in developing knowledge and culture and towards the general sentiment that such things existed solely as the domain of the

[27] See Stanonis 2008; Cox 2008, 2009; Brundage 2008

North, the industrial and cultural center of the U.S. Women's periodicals such as *Southern Ladies' Book* and *Family Companion and Ladies' Mirror* published treatises throughout the early 1840s calling for a more robust participation from the region's women writers and thinkers, expressing fears that the cultural monopoly of the North would deteriorate the specificities of southern living, celebrated as superior by the grace of God. A plea to the women of Georgia to contribute to the region's literary culture published in the July 1840 issue of *Southern Ladies' Book* reads:

> The prosperity and honorable fame of our native State, lie near the heart of every true Georgian. It is our pride to see her take a conspicuous stand among nations; but this can never be, unless her children throw off the lassitude which has cast its enervating influence over every energy of the mind, and send through all her boarders the rich treasures of knowledge, they have too long ingloriously suffered to remain buried. A few days since a Northern man observed to me that there was not talent enough in the South to sustain one literary work. Young ladies – shall this stigma rest upon your names? Shall it be said abroad, that there is not sufficient genius, among the daughters of our land to give literary standing and character to one periodical? No, no! ("A Lady of Milledgeville" 1840, 44)

These nineteenth century periodicals called for distinctively southern literature and cultural products as a way to free the region from northern dependence (both culturally and economically) and to establish a unique literary, educational, and overall lifestyle culture of the region. These pre-Civil War periodicals began the long history of southern distinction, claims of exceptionalism, and at times, separatist notions that came to define the region during the antebellum era. *Southern Living* generously borrows from the prospectuses of such publications insofar as it clearly defines itself in opposition to the rest of the nation; Eugene Butler's introductory note to readers describes the magazine as edited "for the South's unique differences" and implied superiority (Butler 1966, 4). *Southern Living* leans into southern

exceptionalism, the same marketing tactics use to sell the South, claiming those in the region "live better because [they] are taking advantage of assets found more abundantly in the South than in any other part of the nation," allowing readers to "live better because [they] use and enjoy the South's open country, its mild climate, long growing season, and relatively uncrowded highways" (Butler 1966, 4).

Southern Living, part of a lineage of media products promoting and selling the South as unique and superior, not only advanced notions of what it meant to live in the South in the late 1960s, but also held tight to prevailing half-truths that the region was unscathed by rampant urbanization and industrialization (unlike the northeast), and instead could offer visitors or transplants a slower, simpler way of life with less highway congestion, less crime, noise, and anonymity; the South marketed itself as a salve for the difficult conditions of urban living in the northeast. As Cox (2011, 3) describes, "Americans felt antipathy toward modernity and longed for a return to America's pastoral and romantic past, with its emphasis on leisure and individualism. Such a dream seemed elusive in the urban factory setting of the North but still possible in the American South."

Since its inaugural issue, the magazine (and later, total lifestyle brand) has promoted ways to embody southern living through décor, architectural styles, and an emphasis on stereotypical southern comforts such as deep front porches and enduring hospitality. Diane Roberts (1996, 85-86) describes the magazine as being "in the business of transmitting traditions, teaching old-time gracious living; it is the Bible of the genuine and aspiring upper-middle classes." The magazine's first issue presents a coherent treatise of *Southern Living*'s purported

function for readers, as well as establishing several themes and preoccupations that continue into the brand's present transmedia extensions.

While not the first southern periodical, *Southern Living* is the region's first publication devoted exclusively to lifestyle culture. As Scruggs and Moseley (1979, 28) note, "Until Southern Living was established … there was no magazine of any type with strong southern regional circulation other than farm magazines." While early periodicals, as well as the mother publication, *Progressive Farmer*, ran features on southern living in terms of cooking, gardening, and domestic advice, *Southern Living* sets itself apart as a "special interest magazine" exclusively written for "urban and suburban people in the South and Southwest" who want to "improve [their] homes, like to travel, enjoy good food, take part in community affairs, and seek to know more about the South's people and progress" (Butler 1966, 4).

The magazine's table of contents for its first issue features sections for travel, homes, foods and entertaining, fashion, outdoor recreation, and gardening/landscaping. As described by Butler, all "how-to-do-it articles" are written to "inspire [readers] … to do things – build, make, repair, or plant something, or go someplace" and should inspire and instruct readers on how to "live a more enjoyable life in the South by making use of … growing incomes … leisure, and … mental and physical assets" (1966, 4). Articles for choosing and installing laminate floors, traveling to southern states (and occasionally beyond), and adding southern flare to French recipes sit alongside advertisements for the newest model cars, all of which promote themes of expanding incomes and suburban comforts, packaged specifically for the southern homeowner and homemaker. The magazine, too, while aimed at the southern, white, upper-middle classes

"teaches those who aren't from the region, or aren't quiet as polished as their neighbors, how to be an upper-middle class Southerner" (Roberts 1996, 87).

As described by David Bell and Joanne Hollows (2006, 4), lifestyle media "offer the opportunity to 'make over' our lives and our selves, demonstrating how we can both morally and aesthetically improve," and serve as guides regarding "what and how we consume." The 1980s is identified as the booming period of lifestyle media production in the U.S. and western Europe, a transitional period in which identities "are no longer fixed or ascribed," or passed down as tradition, but instead are created, re-created, and refined through consumption with "consumer culture … [offering] … the resources to play with identity" and to "[develop] individual lifestyle projects" (1).[28] Additionally, as argued by Maureen Ryan (2018), I posit that lifestyle media "[understands] the self as constituted in and through the domestic," and that questions of culture and identity are worked out within the home under the guidance of domestic advisors and lifestyle experts.

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[28] Bell and Hollows (2006) describe lifestyle as a social, cultural, and economic process of self-making, a process utilized well before the 1980s with some examples dating to the 16th century. The decline in lifestyle inheritance from family tradition, first seen in 16th century Elizabethan royal courts, marks the turning away from "the old kind of family-oriented consumption, and an emphasis instead on newness" and individual forms of lifestyle construction (Bell and Hollows 2006, 7). While media culture in the 1980s provided the means, through television, magazine, self-help books, etc., for self-reflection, self-work, and eventual self-improvement based largely on middle-class standards of living, the traditionalism of lifestyle as inherited remains important to my discussion of southern lifestyling, as seen in *Southern Living* and its transmedia products. As Bell and Hollows (2006, 5) describe, "The construction of lifestyles … cannot simply be thought about in terms of processes of detraditionalization"; particularly for southern lifestyle culture, tradition remains a key component of living southern. In the above-mentioned 16th century Elizabethan royal courts, "goods were purchased with long-term view to inheritance: goods would be passed down through generations" and older things "were more valued as they signified longevity and lineage: having old things marked your family as having long-term stability and status over time, and was one of the key ways of policing boundaries between social groups" (Bell and Hollows 2006, 6-7). This example is crucial to mapping the historical and contemporary dimensions of southern lifestyle as seen across the *Southern Living* brand, and more broadly, southern lifestyle culture as a whole.

The publication of *Southern Living* and its evolution into a total lifestyle brand marks the development of a distinct, commodifiable southern living experience and lifestyle culture. As Brooke Erin Duffy (2013, 5) notes, “As content spills off the printed page and across the internet, … mobile, television, and retail industries, magazines are seemingly evolving from *objects* into *brands*.” As such, print magazines like *Southern Living* that have since expanded into media enterprises utilize “the new magazine language of brands, platforms, and communities to reach and engage audiences across the media landscape and beyond the printed page (116).

Domestic and lifestyle advice relies on its own past to produce each future text or installment. As Sarah Leavitt (2002, 4) describes, “Hundreds of women in several generations have written domestic advice manuals, regardless of the ever-changing boundaries between women and the home.” The narrative seriality of brands like *Southern Living* supports its ever-growing convergence. As Frank Kelleter (2012, 22) describes, “[seriality] is a process that produces its own follow-up possibilities because structurally, a serial narrative is always open-ended, promising to constantly renew the ever same moment … [promising] a potentially infinite innovation of reproduction.” Serial texts “… indicate the temporality of culture more directly and more strongly than single texts are able to do” (28). In conjunction with convergence culture, *Southern Living* can narrativize the best practices for living southern across the historical junctures of its publishing wherein the information in the print magazine might differ from information found on the brand’s TikTok, each reaching different but similar-enough audiences to warrant each group’s engagement with the brand. *Southern Living* relies on a serialized structure to continually develop its consumer goods and commodified ideologies, offering slight

variations on the theme of living southern across its platforms – print, online, social media, and communities like Habersham.

As discussed throughout, the obsessive need to preserve and memorialize the past and use those preservations to navigate the present feature heavily in southern lifestyle culture. In southern lifestyling, the past cannot be removed from one's present station or class status; middle-class southern living so often returns to regional traditions for legibility, most obviously seen in southern revival architecture so popular in the region. To this end, the branding of entire communities organized around these principles resonate with the magazine's original prospectus. The first issue contains blueprints for homes that adhere to the standards of southern architectural styles and all that such styles encompass such as family, tradition, entertaining, and creating a space aligned with the ethos of southern living as unique, special, and sacrosanct.

Headquartered in Birmingham, Alabama and born during the civil rights movement, *Southern Living*, since its beginnings, narrativized and aestheticized a South irrespective of racial tensions and the region's history of racial violence, offering instead a perspective of the region catered to a white, affluent audience who had moved off the farm and relocated to the (segregated) suburbs. The traditionalism of the magazine aligns with the region's broader suspicions regarding the effects of modernization, resulting in the Americanization of the South. Tracy Lauder (2007, 186) describes the magazine's content as designed to "comfort and reassure the region's white, upper-class elite while reinforcing segregationist attitudes." Importantly, too, *Southern Living* sought to reframe the region as advantageous and good, a direct counter to the negative press the region received during civil rights and desegregation efforts. Such segregationist attitudes were inherited from its mother publication, *Progress Farmer*, and editor

Clarence Poe in the early twentieth century. Described by agricultural historian Elizabeth A. Herbin-Traint (2013, 171), Poe sought to segregate the southern countryside in order to create "what he called a 'great rural civilization' for whites by untangling yeoman farmers from their African American neighbors whom he believed undermined their prospects" of land ownership. *Southern Living* readily admits its goal to absolve itself from current events happening literally in its own backyard during the late 1960s and 1970s. Lauder (2007, 29) writes, "In 1977, Forbes [magazine] quoted John Logue, Southern Living's executive editor at the time: 'Advocacy journalism isn't our bag. We are out to save the South, but one front yard at a time.'"

Described as "the first truly mass medium in the United States, magazines provided guidelines for creating entertainment and informational content, appealing to advertisers, and commodifying niche audiences – trends that were later copied or expanded upon by other media organizations" (Duffy 2013, 15). An organ of the Southern Progress Corporation, one of the nation's largest publishers of lifestyle content, *Southern Living* currently has a circulation of 2.8 million subscribers with a median age of 57 years and a median income of approximately $78.5k; 75 percent of readers own their own home and the magazine's readership is decidedly female, at a ratio of 76:24. The editorial mission of the publication in 2023, the time of this writing, reads

> [Southern Living brings] enjoyment, fulfillment, and inspiration to our readers by celebrating the best of the Southern lifestyle. We inspire creativity in their homes, their kitchens, their gardens, and their personal style. We are relentless champions of our region, we celebrate a diverse and welcoming South, and we set the standard of excellence in Southern content regardless of platform or medium. (Southern Living Media Kit 2023, 2)

As of 2023, the print version of *Southern Living* features a mix of food (32%), travel and culture (33%), home and garden (25%), pets, family, and health (8%), and beauty and style (2%) content. As the editorial statement above describes, the magazine acknowledges its transmedia products and growth beyond the print publication. The editorial mix of the magazine's digital content features the same categories with slightly different percentages of focus, including increased beauty and style content, as well as the addition of a "news" category. The digital content, which spans across the magazine's website to social media platforms including Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Pinterest, YouTube, and TikTok, skews female and attracts an audience with a median household income of over $5,000 more per year than the average print reader. While the print and online versions overlap considerably, the print version skews towards an older, more traditional media audience while the brand's digital enterprises adopt attention-grabbing strategies such as videos, memes, and its overall social media presence to resonate with younger audiences, with a combined subscriber count of over 8.1 million across Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Pinterest, YouTube, and TikTok. The "brand extensions" listed for the magazine include: the Southern Living Idea House, a yearly installation of a tour-able display home designed to inspire those who visit (the Idea House is listed as a "tourist attraction" when searched online), Customer Builder Program, House Plans, Inspired Communities, a partnership with 1-800-Flowers, a Home Collection available at major department store Dillard's, Hotel Collection, Plant Collection, stores, television programs, and podcasts.

The exceptional number of *Southern Living* consumer goods, new media platforms, and in-person experiences work together to form a coherent, converged brand wherein coordinated content "[flows] … across multiple media platforms," necessitates "the cooperation between

multiple media industries" and witnesses "the migratory behavior of media audiences who will go almost anywhere in search of the kinds of entertainment experiences they want" (Jenkins 2006, 2). To this end, "watching the advert or consuming the product is no longer enough; the company invites the audience inside the brand community" to partake in and experience "world making" through the wealth of coordinated content (Jenkins 2006, 20-21). While transmedia storytelling and convergence culture are generally applied to fictional worlds, brands like *Southern Living* create non-fictional (to some extent) multi-platform narratives of what life in the South can look like for those who utilize the numerous brand extensions, allowing readers to live within and *as* the brand. While *Southern Living* is non-fictional media, it does produce a version of a fictionalized South, discussed above. The *Southern Living* South, through its coordinated media and brand extensions, as well as its expansive opportunities for engagement, provides audiences with a coherent version of the region, if not one that is largely based in fantasy. As Eileen Meehan (2005, 11) describes, "the saturation of multiple markets with branded products means less airtime, cable time, shelf space, and the like for nonbranded products." Here, the *Southern Living* South suppresses the region's more complex identities, as these versions are less profitable and promotable. Non-fictional convergence generates more intensive opportunities for brand engagement and opportunities not just to visit branded tourist sites, but to live within them.[29]

The collision of "old and new media" seen in convergence culture parallels the collision of past and future in southern lifestyle culture and its cultural products (Jenkins 2006, 2). The

[29] The 2023 Society of Cinema and Media Studies conference featured a panel titled "Non-fiction Transmedia Storytelling and Worldbuilding" with contributions from Bärbel Göbel-Stolz, Stephanie Brown, and Megan Connor who all explore transmedia storytelling within non-fictional spaces such as stand-up comedy and the television industry.

nostalgic mode of expression of the region's cultural products, relying on a set of prescribed icons from the Old South, are offered to audiences through increasingly interactive, immersive sites of engagement. Opportunities to engage with the Old South are afforded to audiences as a result of new media technologies. As Gina Caison (2021, 19) describes, both "new Souths and new media share remarkable similarities in form and content with their predecessors."

As mentioned above, the magazine offered information on custom blueprints for specifically designed homes said to capture the best of southern living as early as its inaugural issue, alongside advertisements for *Southern Living* cookbooks and other branded, promoted products audiences could use to expand their engagement with the brand. In 1984, Southern Progress Corporation published *At Home with Southern Living*, a manual/coffee table book featuring southern décor styles and information about adding on to historic homes and building within southern environments; this is a locatable point in time where the work of the later established inspired communities program begins to take shape. As the center of southern life, the home is elevated beyond a dwelling space, beyond even a sanctuary, to form the core of what living in the South means and how homes serve as monuments to the region and its traditions. The introduction to *At Home with Southern Living* reads:

> There is substance to a frequently made observation that Southerners are in love with their houses. The home tours that mark spring like opening azaleas, the attention lavished on historic houses in every town and county, the care taken with even the newest house at the end of a just-planted walk so everything will be right for family, friends, and visitors – all attest to the fond compulsion that transforms bricks and beams and newel posts into affairs of the heart. (Morris 1984, vii)

The book's introduction specifies components essential to the southern home, no matter its age or location such as "a proper formal dining room" for hosting and "some fine antiques

(preferably from the family)" to maintain a sense of living tradition in even the newest homes. To this end, Executive Editor Philip Morris (1984, vii) claims that "style in the South has less to do with fashion – with this year's color or that year's look – and more to do with the interplay between long-term traditions of style and individual expression." The brand's insistence on the "interplay" between tradition (inherited) and individual taste (middle-class) recall Bell and Hollow's discussion of lifestyle as both new and old, a pastiche of tradition and growth of the individual lifestyle culture boom in the 1980s; published in 1984, this volume falls squarely within that boom. Additionally, the book places great emphasis "upon adding on and remodeling" as "Southerners have been leaders in the movement to stay put and redo" (Morris 1984, viii). The South's commitments to "staying put," too, contribute to the region's sense of difference when compared to the rest of the nation. While "few Americans feel tied to their geographic location … those who do often seem old-fashioned or misguided to the rest of us" (Duyvendak 2011, 18).

The magazine and its affiliate publications such as *At Home with Southern Living* hyperfocus on the planning of the home, from the initial construction to hosting parties upon its completion. *Southern Living* audiences are instructed to use the all-inclusive line of *Southern Living* branded and approved products and goods needed to update and style their homes. Importantly, too, while *Southern Living* emphasizes tradition, heritage, and the authenticity so readily attached to such ideologies, the brand itself offers a mass-produced and commodified version of the South for sale and "competent late southerners … immediately make sense of the difference between an authentic 'old family tradition' and a fake one cribbed from Southern Living" (Romine 2008, 14). To this end, though, the competency to distinguish between

authentic and inauthentic tradition makes little difference in late-stage capitalism as it is both "responsible for the broadly diffused experience of dislocation and disembedding" and "[offering] solutions in prepackaged and commodified forms of culture" (-12). This, discussed below, is the strategy of lifestyle brands like *Southern Living* and the greater nostalgia industry of the South – tradition, heritage, history all become compressed and broken down into their most basic (and attractive, lucrative) parts and sold as southern living, both a crisis and remedy of late-stage capitalism. Towns like Habersham allow residents to live within a brand premised on a piecemeal version of history, media, and nostalgia meant to recapture authenticity supposedly declining in the South as the region becomes more industrialized and Americanized. As Karen Cox (2011, 3) crucially describes, the South's "conflict between 'backward-looking pastoralism' and the impulse toward modernity seemed incompatible; however, popular culture helped to bring both ideas together in the marketplace and frequently, the antebellum South acted as the conduit. That is to say that pastoral images and themes of the Old South and southerners were used to sell goods and entertainment to American consumers, all of which was made possible by the modern urban-industrial world in which they lived."

While this chapter focuses on the transmedia products and experiences of *Southern Living*, the publication is not alone in creating subscription-based Souths. It is worth briefly considering the related but alternative microSouth of *Garden & Gun* magazine, a younger, hipper option in comparison to traditional *Southern Living*. Founded in 2007, *Garden & Gun* sought to showcase "fine Southern living … that could draw both women and men," focusing on the "land" (i.e., the garden) and recreation and sporting life (i.e., the gun) of the region (Elliott 2012). Co-founder of the magazine Rebecca Darwin describes the title as "a metaphor for the

South – its land, the people, their lifestyle, and their heritage" (McGehee 2021, 109). She claims that she wanted "the magazine to appeal to a sophisticated, worldly person" who didn't necessarily subscribe to *Vanity Fair* or *Conde Nast* as "most of their stories come out of the Northeast or the West Coast" (Elliott 2012).

Much like *Southern Living*, *Garden & Gun*, too, has gone on to expand the brand beyond the magazine, growing into a multi-platform media experience referred to as "The World of G&G," which includes Fieldshop, the brand's store, the Garden & Gun Club restaurant in Atlanta, Georgia, and the Garden & Gun Society, "an exclusive members-only group, designed to allow G&G's most engaged readers to experience the magazine as never before" ("The Society"). The publication describes the world of the brand as "The best of the South, on the page and beyond" ("The Society"). As Margaret T. McGehee (2021, 109) notes, "Garden and Gun plays a significant role in defining and commodifying the U.S. South in producing and recycling a consumable popular imaginary for the region – one rooted in aristocratic activity and at times, postbellum iconography."

Garden & Gun also has a similar program to that of the Inspired Communities called "Land," in which the magazine curates places "that embody the Southern spirit" and offer "uniquely Southern lifestyles" ("Find Your Place"). The Land program offers living options in a variety of geographies and climates, including North Carolina's Cashiers-Highlands Plateau in the Blue Ridge Mountains, Kiawah River properties located 20 miles outside of Charleston, South Carolina (where the magazine is headquartered), the residential community of Palmetto Bluff located in Hilton Head, South Carolina (near Habersham), and lakeside living at the Heritage at Lake Martin in Alabama.

As described by Romine (2008, 15-16), a proliferation of "microSouths" have emerged throughout the region's history, many coinciding with the region's cultural and industrial growth in the years following World War II. Many of these MicroSouths, too, usually follow what *Oxford American* editor Marc Smirnoff calls the "Gone with the Wind myth," a place of the past, fantasy, whiteness, and wealth, and what Caison (2021, 4) describes as the "repackaging [of] the all-too familiar dynamics of race, class, gender, and environmental degradation that undergird many of the region's representational moments" (Elliott 2012).

Figure 13 Habersham Main Street and Post Office, @habershamsc, 07/27/22

Habersham, South Carolina: A Beautiful Coastal Town

Vacation rentals and planned communities built around brands are commonplace in the South, with Disney World in Orlando, Florida as the premiere example. On a smaller scale, though, gated communities throughout the region such as Tara Club Estates in Loganville, Georgia, "with homes from the 250s located on streets named after the novel's characters," offer residents the opportunity to imagine themselves as part of the fictional world of *Gone with the Wind* (Romine 2008, 56). Habersham, a Southern Living Inspired Community near Beaufort, South Carolina, follows such traditions.

Andrew Ross' (1999) study of Celebration, Florida, the town built by the Walt Disney Company, describes the construction of a branded town in the early-to-mid 1990s. The "showcase town for 20,000 residents, designed as a corrective to sprawl – broke ground in Osceola County to the south of the [Disney] theme parks," and was designed around architectural and city planning principles prioritizing small, walkable, community-oriented living (5). In the planning phases of the project, the town was to be "[dated] … by providing it, Disney style, with a themed backstory," one of which proposed Celebration as a town built "out of the rubble left by General Sherman's ruinous march through the South" (22). To this end, the town's commercial-use buildings and homes offer a mix of traditional and modern, what Ross describes as the "heritage formula of selling the trappings of tradition alongside the conveniences of modernity" (25). The Walt Disney Corporation's construction of a town of tradition updated to include modern conveniences reads similarly to the restoration projects of older homes and the

construction of old-looking but modern-living revival homes throughout the South in the early twentieth century.

Habersham is a development of the DPZ CoDesign firm who practice New Urbanism planning (the same principles used in the construction of Celebration), "a movement promoting mixed-use, traditional neighborhood planning over the segregated-use suburban sprawl seen worldwide" with an emphasis on "compact, pedestrian-oriented, transit-friendly communities" (DPZ About). *Southern Living*'s sponsorship of Habersham as one of its premiere Inspired Communities follows Habersham's use of New Urbanism planning principles, the same principles touted in the magazine's original prospectus and long-term goals to resolve or all together side-step the issues prescribed to urban living in the North. The town, designed in 1996 and commissioned by the Habersham Land Company consists of 1,120 homes and 28,000 square feet of retail space. DPZ describes Habersham's architectural style as "[respectful of] the local vernacular" where "tradition" is "respected and updated" to capture "a fresh, timeless aesthetic adapted to modern needs" (DPZ Habersham). This description, too, matches to *Southern Living*'s home design ethos and opinions on the importance of tradition amid (and in response to) the modern. The town has received numerous awards, named by Coastal Living Magazine as #4 in the Top 20 Places to Live on the Coast, awarded "Best Neighborhood Design in America" by the National Association of Home Builders, and most importantly for this project, selected as South Carolina's premiere Southern Living Inspired Community. The Habersham website proudly displays its affiliation with *Southern Living* as a crucial component of the town's identity as its Inspired Community title is listed directly beneath the town's logo and motto (A Beautiful Coastal Town) at the top of the website.

In addition to New Urbanism design, Habersham also reflects “planning principles inherent to small southern towns throughout the region” (Habersham, SC). As such, the development team for Habersham “toured many historic villages, neighborhoods, and civic squares and studied the details that make up the aesthetic and functional character of these great places,” citing Savannah, Georgia and Beaufort, South Carolina as inspiration (Habersham, SC). Ross (1999, 30) notes to that the development team for Celebration set out on the “Disney trail” to visit places such as Charleston and Savannah to conduct “research on traditional southern towns.” The tour of southern towns resulted in Celebration’s multiple architectural styles, including apartments inspired by “the traditional houses of St. Augustine,” homes modeled after “the Low Country houses found in the coastal areas of the Carolinas,” and “large plantation [houses] with the posture of Deep South comfort” (Ross 1999, 14). Habersham, too, offers living options ranging from apartments and cottages to row houses and manors.

Despite the town’s newness, less than three decades old at the time of this writing, Habersham extensively promotes its proximity to neighboring historic towns and cities, including Beaufort, Charleston, and Savannah. Habersham’s website describes Beaufort as “unique in that its entire downtown has been designated by the National Trust for Historic Preservation as a historic district” and makes note that during the Civil War, Beaufort “was one of the only Southern towns that became occupied by Union troops, rather than being destroyed” (Habersham, SC). Lastly, Habersham’s website notes that Beaufort has been recognized and celebrated by several prominent regionally focused publications and brands including *Southern Living* and *Garden & Gun*, described as “an outdoors man’s paradise, a shopper’s delight and one of the ‘friendliest seaside towns in America,’” ideal for “tourism, relocation, and retirement”

(Habersham, SC). Habersham's proximity to history via its proximity to Beaufort, a history the town itself does not possess and cannot commodify, is a point of fixation for the town's marketing as a destination. Residents and visitors can experience the new traditionalism and modern conveniences of Habersham but can also experience the classic moonlight-and-magnolias South by driving a few miles down the road. Habersham's façade of history – a town built to replicate the most identifiable and thus most commodifiable elements of the antebellum era – mimics that of *Southern Living*, a mass-produced version of tradition affected to look like the "real" thing.

The nostalgia industry, a booming business in the South, and seen in the years following the filmic release of *Gone with the Wind* in 1939 wherein souvenir shops hawked items "such as bricks from the ruins of the Loew's Grand Theater, refrigerator magnets, and toilet seats" looks quite like the selling of southern homes and lifestyle in Habersham (Dickey 2007, 94). These nostalgic commodities and tourist experiences, including "plantation tourism, behind which Tara inevitably hovers as the fiction *even better than the real thing*," speaks to the branded, themed space that the South sells as a version of history and reality (Romine 2008, 55).

Figure 14 @habershamsc on Instagram, 07/12/23

Branded towns like Celebration and Habersham come with built-in expectations of quality and experiences sourced from the brands they are attached to, be it the magical world of Disney or the leisured South of *Southern Living*. In the case of Celebration, the town's attachment to Disney meant that it "could not avoid its baptism as an instant utopia, nor could it ever live this identity down" (Ross 1999, 8). For Habersham, its hand-picked status as offering the premiere experience of living southern generates a set of expectations beyond the realm of feasibility (or even reality). The town's website has a section devoted to testimonials provided by

visitors and residents ("Testimonials and Reviews"). Many of the reviews repeat the common refrain that the town does not seem entirely real, comparing it to a movie set, or, as reviewer Chloe F. describes, like "physically walk[ing] into [a] Pinterest board." Nancy O., a guest at a rental property in the summer of 2011 claims "driving into the neighborhood was like coming into a movie set. This is America of yesteryear." Visitors Lavelle and Warren A., after visiting in April 2015, claim that Habersham "is really a time warp!" Another, Robert A., said he "felt like [he] was an extra in the Truman Show."[30]

The town's design, down to its logo, provides a glimpse into the dreamlike, "yesteryear" quality of Habersham. Two figures, an adult man, presumably a father or grandfather, walks alongside a child, presumably his son or grandson, both holding fishing poles. They head towards the water, walking down tree-lined streets with a front porch off to one side, Savannah moss forming a canopy, and seabirds flying over the waterfront. The aesthetics and ideologies of Habersham are captured in the logo insofar as the lifestyle held most dear by the town and the South in general appear in harmony, a snapshot of what life in the town supposedly offers. The father/son or grandfather/grandson duo offer images of family life, togetherness, and outdoor recreation. The tree-lined streets and nearby water access offer residents opportunities for such recreation while also promoting the natural landscape the town built itself around. Lastly, the

[30] *The Truman Show* (1998) stars Jim Carey as Truman Burbank, a man living his life, unbeknownst to him, on the set of television show. The film was shot primarily at Seaside, Florida, a planned community in the Florida Panhandle. Seaside, Florida is also a development of DPZ Designs and utilizes many of the same planning principles as Habersham, including attempts to "approximate the scale and character of historic Southern towns" (DPZ Project Information, Seaside). Additionally, Seaside also exists as an entire town with a downtown commercial district, school, fire station, post office, and church.

front porch, large and welcoming, displays the communal and hospitable nature of southern living celebrated in Habersham.

An 1863 photo titled “View on the Habersham Plantation, Port Royal Island, S.C.” shows a man and a boy walking side-by-side beneath the Spanish moss. While there is no definitive way to claim the town’s logo drew reference from the photo, the similarities are worth mentioning (Cooley 1863). To this end, again, while somewhat inferential, Habersham Place plantation on Port Royal Island, located 3.7 miles from the present town of Habersham, could potentially be the town’s namesake and the photo depicting the plantation a reference for its logo. The South Carolina Plantations repository collects “information about South Carolina plantations and the people who lived and worked on them. It includes dates for more than 2,000 SC plantations” all of which cataloged “were established before the Civil War” (South Carolina Plantations). The repository lists over 300 plantations around Beaufort, including Habersham Place and links to an article in Beaufort’s *New South* newspaper, published Saturday, December 3, 1864, which lists land tracts and parcels for sale, including the 750-acre Habersham Place (Habersham Place Plantation – Beaufort County).

The nostalgic draw of Habersham operates through a variety of pre-planned, coordinated, and sometimes granular-level details. Commodifying the past and its traditions is an essential part of southern lifestyle culture and the work of the *Southern Living* brand more specifically. The town’s obsessively manicured appearance reflects the rules and regulations for building and residing there, drawing from historic southern towns as well as overwrought shorthand for southern culture such as revival architecture and homages to the Big House; all houses in the town must be constructed using Habersham-approved plans and blueprints. Themes of stability

and continuity, particularly in discussions of neighborhoods, communities, or suburbs in the South, stem from what Jack Bass and W. Scott Poole (2009, 127) describe as the "system of aristocratic racism" in which "stability and an orderly society" were prioritized and which prevailed in South Carolina throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. They write, "Race was the dominant force behind political and social decisions, but with aristocratic racism there ultimately developed a value system in which stability was valued almost as much as segregation" (128). Here, Habersham's hermetically sealed quality and emphasis on the enduring aesthetics of what *Southern Living* understands as properly, authentically "southern" appear in the town's strict rules for residents and visitors. The website currently lists 113 house plans and offers custom building options that match the aesthetics of the already established homes. After prospective residents choose their plan or create an approved custom design, Habersham Properties matches them with a contracted builder. These homes are constructed using "enduring design principles … while incorporating contemporary floor plans, building materials and new household technologies and conveniences." Robert Turner, owner of Habersham Land Company and developer of Habersham describes it as a "traditional neighborhood made up of many types of homes, all of which have a historic, antebellum vernacular" ("Reimagining Southern Home Styles"). Vernacular architecture, as described by Andrew Wood (2005, 401) "refers to local, traditional, and/or cultural forms associated with a particular region," and such forms "[reflect] the power of design to evoke a sense of place." For Habersham, this sense of place is not only the South but often the Old South specifically. Habersham, then, due to its reliance on vernacular and revival architecture, sourced through the traditions of historically preserved cities like Beaufort and Savannah, functions as a historic dupe, a reproduction of life in the Old South

premised upon earlier reproductions, such as the ur-simulacra, Tara. As Tara McPherson (2003, 44) crucially describes,

> Although plantation homes have come to represent southernness in the years since the Civil War, such mansions were not widely prevalent in the antebellum South. During the decades preceding the war, fewer than 2300 families out of a population of 8 million owned substantial numbers of slaves, thus constituting the planter aristocracy. Expansive plantation houses certainly existed in that period, but they were not as widespread as current tourist industries would suggest.

Towns like Habersham and southern cultural industries like *Southern Living* "stockpile the past to guarantee authenticity" (Joyrich 1992, 235).

Unlike many other planned communities, Habersham is not gated, and nonresidents can visit the neighborhood to shop and eat in the downtown center. Habersham, however, is built almost literally in the middle of nowhere, the road into the community described as "[running] past the city's older retail strip, past a busy Wal-Mart and then down country roads lined with worn mobile homes and simple cinder-block houses" (Blackmon 2004). Habersham does not blend in with or match its surroundings as a large, affluent, newly constructed township plopped in the middle of trees and bordered on all slides by mobile homes and jalopies. The signs pointing the way to Habersham eventually lead to an opening in the trees, revealing a *Southern Living*-tinged mirage of neatly arranged homes and shops. As Douglas Blackmon (2004) explains, "however beautiful downtown Beaufort may be and however visionary communities like Habersham are, this is still rural South Carolina. Many of the surrounding areas are much less affluent than the community of newcomers, often from distant parts of the country, looking for blithe retirement leisure." Libby Barnes, president of the Greater Beaufort Chamber of Commerce agrees that "As more and more people flock to live in this area, home values

appreciate significantly, and that’s a good thing, until it makes it unaffordable for the work force to live here and they’re forced out” (Blackmon 2004).

Conclusion

The *Southern Living*-ification of rural areas like that outside of Beaufort intensifies the gap between the material South surrounding Habersham and the facades within the town’s boundaries, painted and processed to match the proximate history of its neighboring cities yet ultimately, existing as a facsimile strewn together from the most identifiable, commodifiable aspects of the region. Promotional materials for Habersham, including articles from *Southern Living* magazine, persistently emphasize how the town embodies “the idealistic Southern Lifestyle,” is an “idyllic place to call home,” and a space of “timelessness” (Low Country Living). Habersham, constructed to appear separated from *contemporary* time, does not exist outside of time. Instead, Habersham and the like – from theme parks, gated communities named after *Gone with the Wind*, *Southern Living* Magazine – provide “a visible past, a visible continuum, a visible myth of origin” that proves as affective, if not more so, than any actual past or history (Baudrillard 1995, 9).

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Conclusion:
Gone with the Wind?

This dissertation begins with the assertion that the South, well into the twentieth century, was not associated with mass cultural production. Cultural production, instead, appeared in the form of domestic and lifestyle advice produced locally utilizing emergent domestic technologies beginning in the 1920s. These domestic technologies afforded a southern past to be resurrected throughout the twenty and twenty-first centuries, with images and ideologies sourced from the antebellum era. Domestic advice texts, then, are intentionally intertextual insofar as "any text … can potentially live on forever to haunt future texts, to conduct its unfinished business" (Gray 2005, 226). Similarly, John Fiske (1989, 66) writes that "all previously-read texts can act as ghost texts … like the image on a television set with poor reception."

The Sears, Roebuck plant and storefront opened in Atlanta in 1926 and continued to grow to accommodate the company with five additional add-ons completed between 1928 and 1960, totaling over 2.2 million square feet of retail and business space on Ponce de Leon Avenue. The retail store closed in 1979 and the announcement of the closure of the distribution warehouse came in 1987 with plans to complete the company's phase out by 1989. In 2014, the site was reimagined as Ponce City Market – a retail, dining, living, and events space. Described by development firm Jamestown LP, "Ponce City Market is the latest incarnation of a long legacy of community-centered built environments along this iconic stretch of Ponce de Leon Avenue. The National Trust for Historic Preservation recognizes Ponce City Market as 'History in the

Making' and part of a plan 'to move Atlanta forward while maintaining and emphasizing the city's unique history and culture" ("History").

The space includes a roof-top mini-amusement park reminiscent of the Ponce de Leon theme park opened in 1903 on the future site of Sears and a rooftop tower event space and bar called RFD Social. The tower, referred to as "Sears Tower" during the 1920s by WSB radio, is named after popular radio program Radio Farmer's Democracy, discussed in chapter one. Ponce City Market "held onto powerful nostalgia for the building's history" in its development, "[using] everything it could from the original facility," leaving tributes to the radio station and Sears' programming throughout the space (Cash). The space allows for visitors and residents of Atlanta to "experience an elevated version of what Atlantans of the Gilded Age loved most: eating, drinking, and lounging" (Cash).

In June 1998, WSB moved its radio and television operations from White Columns studio into a newly built facility "designed for the new millennium" (The History of WSB-TV). WSB-TV produced a special titled *Remembering White Columns* that aired a month earlier, detailing the history of the station and ending with a eulogy, "goodbye, old friend," before a portrait of White Columns faded and gave way to a design of the station's new facility.

A fair amount of archival footage of White Columns' demolition exists, including a striking frame where the new facility, sleek and rounded, seems almost haunted by the partially demolished shell of White Columns. White Columns was eventually razed though four columns from the original structure were preserved and now stand in the garden area of the new studio.

Figure 15 White Columns Demolition, 1998

In the summer of 2020, amid nationwide protests against police brutality and the murder of George Floyd by the Minneapolis Police Department, many television programs and films were cancelled and pulled from streaming platforms, including FOX's *Cops* (1989). *Gone with the Wind* was removed from streaming platform HBOMax (now Max) in June 2020 with the promise that the film would be reinstated with necessary historical context regarding its treatment of slavery, the antebellum South, and the Confederacy. Returned to Max in late June 2020, the film is now preceded by an introductory note from film scholar Jacqueline Stewart; she describes *Gone with the Wind* as one of the most "enduringly popular films of all time" that, despite its continued success and significance, "was not universally praised." Like Selznick's assurances discussed in the introduction over fears of inflicting violence to the "southern

feeling," according to Stewart, he made similar promises to Black audiences and organizations fearful of the forthcoming film's depictions of chattel slavery. Stewart goes on to say that, due to the nostalgic lens through which the narrative unfolds, the "horrors of slavery, as well as … [legacies] of racial inequalities" are denied, buried beneath the "veneer of glamor" of the Old South (Stewart 2020; Farnsworth 1982, 222).

Despite its slow start, the South has grown into a site of substantial media production. Georgia, nicknamed the Hollywood of the South, ranks third in national film and television production, after only New York and California and is the 5th largest site of media production in the global entertainment industry (Dockterman 2018). Beginning in 2008, the state has offered tax incentives for film and television productions and in 2014, "the industry generated $5.1 billion for the state economy" after nearly 250 media productions were filmed in the state (Dockterman 2018). South Carolina, too, offers tax incentives and cash rebates for productions filmed in the state and three popular HBO series – *Eastbound & Down*, *Vice Principals*, and *The Righteous Gemstones* – are shot on location. Charleston serves as the headquarters for Rough Trade Pictures, the production studio of Danny McBride, the creator of the programs.

Apart from scripted content, reality and lifestyle television has taken up the South, its people, stereotypes, and customs, as a content cash cow. Much like the Dixiefication of *Southern Living* to sell a particular type of southern lifestyle, the South on reality and lifestyle television gives in to a "willing participation in self-caricature and the commodifying logic of capitalist enterprise" (Romine 2008, 1). Laurie Ouellette (2016, 124) describes the TLC program *Trailer Park: Welcome to Myrtle Manor* as "an entire TV program revolving around the home life, relationships, occupations and leisure practices of trailer park residents" promising both

"unprecedented visibility" to a group largely absent from popular culture and backlash against the "caricatures of unintelligent, over-sexualized, alcohol and cigarette-addicted 'trailer trash' for laughs."

The rednecks of Myrtle Manor are but one group of southern reality participants as most southern states "have served as a backdrop for a reality-based show" with countless programs dedicated to facets of southern culture including the old families of Charleston, South Carolina on Bravo's docu-soap *Southern Charm*, the $400 million empire of Louisiana's Robertson family on A&E's *Duck Dynasty*, and the young, drunk party people of CMT's *Party Down South*. These programs, along with dozens of others offer a "typecast South: a mythically rural, white, poorly educated and thickly accented region that has yet to join the 21st century" alongside old money and Old South ideologies (Cox 2014). The South as a site of production culture, background or setting, and anthropomorphized character itself continue well beyond the scope of this project to be framed in the narrowest sense, the most Dixiefied sense.

This project offers an initial foray into analyses of southern cultural production and domestic advice media texts throughout the twenty and twenty-first centuries. However, the case studies presented here represent a *fractionate* portion of materials, institutions, and women left to study who aided in the formation of defining southern domesticity and femininity. Studies of southern cultural production more broadly, too, pick up where this project leaves off. The South, as mentioned above, has developed into a hub of media production, and stands as a corrective to the argument that pioneered this project.

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