

In the Heat of the Night: Teaching the American Nightmare to the World

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ABSTRACT

Cultures built on the ideological promise of a dream life will have recourse to the metaphor of the nightmare when confronting moments of conflict in their evolutions. The feverish nightmare of the civil rights' struggles in the United States 60's was experienced by Norman Jewison (director of *In the Heat of the Night* in 1967) and known to Spike Lee (*Malcolm X* 1993). One stark difference in their heartfelt, didactic treatments of this tempestuous period is that Spike Lee's film remains fixed on the literal tensions of race relations in the U.S. Norman Jewison's film constructs a semiotics of the complicity between commercial imagery and narrative depictions of race relations, notably, the image of the South's soft drink industry as a thirst quenching alternative to true racial reform. Cinematographer Haskell Wexler is instrumental in highlighting these links. The article suggests Jewison's film as a pedagogic base for further considering how American corporate culture used and continues to use depictions of race to suppress real racial reform in its relations with the rest of the world.

KEY WORDS

American nightmare, John Ball, Black separatism, Dr. Pepper globalization, *In the Heat of the Night*, Norman Jewison, Moss Kendrix, Rodney King, *Malcolm X Medium Cool*, *Night of the Living Dead*, *No Logo*, provincialism, Scott Silliphant Suture theory, T. Todorov, Cornel West, Haskell Wexler



We never had no American Dream. We're living the
American Nightmare

— Malcolm X

When I was a child and first heard the words “soda
fountain” I thought it was a real fountain, but instead of
water, it spouted Coke.

— A Scottish Gent

Any culture built on the ideological promise of a dream life, as is the case in the United States, will have recourse to the metaphor of the nightmare when confronting moments of discord or conflict in its evolution. As typified in the quote given above, Black activist Malcolm X centralized the contrast in his speeches during the 60's civil rights' struggles, and the feverish quality of this nightmarish period was known both to Norman Jewison when he made the film *In the Heat of the Night* in 1967, and to Spike Lee when he adapted the life of Malcolm X to film in 1993, just after the L.A. riots. Through their films, both filmmakers were ultimately recording personal reactions to discordant periods in their nation's history. Both constructed didactic treatments of the American nightmare which they offered to the U.S. public and to the world. Both visions suggest in heartfelt ways that wanting to live the dream may sometimes result in submitting to the nightmare, even for the spectator.

One stark difference to be noted in their treatments is that while Spike Lee's film *Malcolm X* remains fixed on the literal tensions of

race relations in the U.S., Norman Jewison's film *In the Heat of the Night* dissects the complicity between a semiotics of commercial imagery and the semiotics of representations of race in the 60's of the southern United States. As cinematographer Haskell Wexler orchestrates this dissection and it is to a closer analysis of how his cinematography accomplishes this dissection that this article will turn. Nonetheless, it must be noted that by defining the American nightmare differently the two directors sketch out alternative possibilities for applying their own lessons to today's world, notably with respect to the effects of American culture on the rest of the world. While I have no intention of implying that one film or the other is more aesthetically valuable, I would like to explore the possibility that the older and more possibly dated film may have more to reveal about American corporate culture's use of racial tension to construct potentially damaging relations with the rest of the world.

Part 1: Defining the Nightmare

"We never had no American dream. We're living the American nightmare." In a powerfully righteous voice-over, Malcolm X's response to the nightmare life of Afro-Americans in the 60's civil rights' era is cross-cut with an image of the Rodney King beatings, an image which is then cut into the slow burning of the American flag.¹ The burning of the flag is only the background image for the credits rolling in Spike Lee's historical adaptation of the Malcolm X autobiography, but it and the voice-over which accompanies it are literally visions of fire. In his didactic treatment of the American nightmare, after the outbreak of the L.A. riots, Spike Lee resorted to the overlaying of two distinct moments in America's history: the moment of Malcolm X's rise and fall on the American scene, and the violent aftermath of the Rodney King beatings. The fact that his intent was met with suspicion is evidenced in responses to his film by self-described liberal white critics, notably Alan Stone, who accuses Lee of exploiting his own provincialism as a young black American to preach a black separatist message. Stone states, in the *Boston Review*: "He [Lee] has

taken a decided black separatist turn. Provincialism is no barrier to an *auteur*, but to succeed, provincialism requires an artist who plumbs the depths of his narrow world and finds images that send a chill down the spines of everyone in his audience."²

Despite Stone's critique, Spike Lee's ultimate intention was indeed to re-valorize Malcolm's reputation. Despite the claims of a black separatist turn, Lee did include a consideration of Malcolm X's eventual change in attitude towards whites in his treatment. While a romanticized version of Malcolm X does control the film, Lee, nonetheless, incorporates a treatment of Malcolm X's shift from centralizing civil abuses to centralizing human abuses in the final sequence of the film. That sequence is a roughly half-hour long segment of "documentary footage" which begins with footage of the assassination of Malcolm X, and then a collage-like survey of major figures or events in civil and human rights' struggles since 1965. Viewers are finally confronted with several medium long shots, shown inside a classroom, with young children of color from around the world speaking the words, "I am Malcolm X" one by one. For critics like Stone, this useful approach in appealing to cross-over audiences is perhaps too little too late.

Rather than focus on valorizing Malcolm as a figure of the Afro-American's concept of manhood, Spike Lee should perhaps have shifted to a focus on divisions in American public life and the ways in which such divisions are rooted in automatism of perception in the shaping of that public life and its racial tensions.³ His romanticized portrayal of Malcolm X in the long mid-section of his film serves inadvertently only to reinforce the biased nature of such automatic reactions. Unlike Alan Stone, I do not reject Spike Lee's portrayal of Malcolm X, but do question its value in helping Americans to learn to talk about race in positive ways, both amongst ourselves and with the rest of the world.

In my experience, students from around the world most often feel untouched by the black-white struggles in the U.S., but it seems that analyzing that struggle, precisely by resorting to provincialisms, can be a key to revealing the inner mechanisms of the civil and humanitarian

victimization which took place in that struggle's history. Through these means, the civil rights movement in the U.S. can become a form of glocal knowledge, to be used in teaching about permutations of the American nightmare in the world today. Introspection on the American mentality, as it is encoded by American filmmakers, is one crucial key to re-thinking the place of the U.S. in the world today.

As Cornel West has so eloquently stated, "we confine discussions about race in America to the 'problems' black people pose, rather than considering what this way of viewing black people reveals about us as a nation" (256). Teaching the American nightmare to the world requires that we turn the burning gaze of blame onto how we reveal ourselves in our discussions of race. Looking at the moments when Hollywood productions on the civil rights questions touched audiences from cross-over audiences allows for such introspection, which in turn, creates a space for teaching the pertinent issues to a global audience in tangible ways.

This last point is crucial, because in limiting myself to *In the Heat of the Night*, I am contrasting a film like Spike Lee's *Malcolm X* with the older film through an appeal to Todorov's distinctions between exemplary memory and literal memory, as does William Boelhower in his article, "Open Secrets: African-American Testimony and the Paradigm of the Camp." Boelhower's article similarly relies on these two types of memory, though he bases his work on Todorov's 1995 pamphlet entitled, *Les abus de la memoire*, which is later expanded into the book, *Memoire du mal, tentation du bien: enquête sur le siècle*.⁴ Todorov asserts that our choice, with respect to memory of the 20th century, is not a choice between forgetting and remembering, but rather, of how we are to remember, and *who* will remember *what*.⁵ He further suggests that a balance must be struck between "la manie analogique" and "l'obsession literaliste."

The mid-section of Lee's *Malcolm X* relies on literal memory in its depiction of X. By contrast, and without wishing to abuse the analogical, *In the Heat of the Night* offers material for constructing an exemplary memory of racial struggle in the U.S. because it was made in 1967, so its cinematography is contemporaneous with the construction

of images, both cultural and commercial, which was taking place in the midst of the time being used as the basis of the narrative construction. The images are also displayed to an audience which is experiencing the 60's civil rights struggle as a real event. The film functions as one side of an analogical memory. Does it really give us an example to be compared to the ways in which American mentality and culture is imposed in the world today, as I am claiming? The images are precise examples of how manipulations of racial perceptions, (also referred to as race-baiting), were and are constructed. Since students in today's world are constantly confronted with "*la manie analogique*" it makes sense to teach something about how such a practice affects us by making use of examples from which it might be constructed.⁶ Playing on Todorov's idea that how you choose to look at what happened in the 20th century depends upon your identity, determines my decision to focus on this particular film. The portrayal of racial tensions in *In the Heat of the Night* is reminiscent of portrayals I witnessed growing up as a white child in a racially tense south (10).⁷

The heat of racial tension is by no means new to Hollywood or American cinema, and one might say that it is the meat upon which Hollywood has continually fed. From Hollywood's seminal production of D.W. Griffith's *Birth of a Nation*, through to Lee's *Malcolm X*, the American film industry has often provided a window into the nightmarish aspects of American culture.⁸ The continual rebirth of interest in *Birth of a Nation* attests to our inability to suture deeply-felt wounds, not only caused by blows inflicted through racial tensions themselves, but also because the cinematic encoding of national unity in this film is through white northern and southern bonding, against the black man who is regarded as wanting to obstruct this unity. As a result, *Birth of a Nation* perpetuates the discourse alluded to and denounced by Cornel West, i.e., the black man poses a problem to our American way of life. For obvious ideological reasons *Birth of a Nation* does not entertain the notion that we ourselves are the problem as long as we do not admit that the failed integration of the black man in American life is the *effect* of our difficulties, not the *cause*.⁹ The fact that *Birth of a Nation* is regarded as the birth of American national identity from the

perspective of cinematic history is regrettable, since the film ultimately grounds a racist perspective as part of our national cinematic epic.

A shift from considering the black man's struggle as an effect and not a cause of a dysfunctional America can be gleaned from Jewison and Wexler's film *In the Heat of the Night* in ways that Spike Lee's *Malcolm X* cannot. Taking place in the south, *In the Heat of the Night* uses the hot summer backdrop for a development of themes such as illicit desire and institutionally sanctioned racial prejudices. Haskell Wexler, one of the most controversial cinematographers of the period, shoots the film such that it can convey its liberal-minded message through a realistic *mise-en scène*, where illicit desire is quenched with corporate Coca Cola.

In short, racial prejudice is being conveyed as a thirst-quenching alternative to *real reflection on racial reform*. Jewison and Wexler's use of screen space, and specific ways of filming the public sphere, highlight the extent to which racial issues in the south were generated in conjunction with the white man's sense that the black man was most guilty not because he was black but because he was transgressing spaces, actual physical locations reserved for whites. The black man became a problem because he wanted to look at or be in spaces where he was not wanted. Those spaces "housed" the illusion of restored unity in American life.¹⁰

It is difficult to grasp the tense nature of race relations in America without understanding the staunch defense of those privileged spaces mounted by whites. It is tragically ironic that those spaces range from the white man's private home, to the white woman's reproductive "space," to the sacrosanct soda fountain. The soda fountain was home to Coca-Cola, a cool beverage designed to quench not only thirst but every form of desire. A full survey of the importance of the soft drink beverage industry to the economic and social life of the post-Civil War south is outside the scope of this paper, but the concerted effort to turn the soft drink, particularly Coca-Cola, into the band-aid for all suffering in a reconstructing south cannot be underestimated. Coca-Cola played the central role as a way of satisfying all desire. This is certainly at the heart of the *mise-en scène* of the film. And certainly,

one-time CEO of Coca Cola Robert Woodruff's goal was that Coca Cola be "within an arm's reach of desire." The specificity of that expression, in spatial terms, is quite literally followed in the making of *In the Heat of the Night* (quoted in Hays 7).

Thinking about soft drinks in the South is linked not simply to commerce, but also to desire, the American way, and ways of filming such desires and ideologies. Filming the consumption and visual presence of Coca-Cola iconography leaves a cinematic trace of links between desires, frustrations and consumer choices in the American South of the 60's.¹¹ Teaching the ambiguities between globalization and Americanization in more precise ways can be accomplished by re-examining how this insertion of Coca-Cola iconography in this particular film is read by a "native" of the 60's southern landscape. By providing metaphoric variations on the "hot seat", the filmmaking team of Jewison (director), Silliphant (scriptwriter), and Wexler (cinematographer), construct the absence of any spaces but tense ones, once races collide. And since the soda fountain, the closest thing to a secular public space in the post civil-war south, was forbidden to the black man through segregation, the cinematography of the entire film can be read as evoking that deeper rooted problem of talking about race in the south, namely, there was simply no public forum for the discussion, a reality which was systematically repressed through the selling and consumption of Coca-Cola. The heat generated by talk about race, could never be cooled off at the soda fountain, but the confusions and frustrations generated through the lack of racial harmony could.

In short, rather than seeking to solve the problem posed by the presence of the black man in America, which is a misconstruing of the real nature of social tensions in the nation's history, we need to recognize that the violence witnessed in the evolution of the racial divide in America is more properly about the absence of a meaningful public sphere in America. This film functions as a construction of that problematic. As West puts it, "Both [liberals and conservatives] fail to see that the presence and predicaments of the black people are neither additions nor defections from American life, but rather *constitutive*

elements of that life" (256). Segregation and integration, considered as solutions but to opposite problems, misconstrue the real issues behind racial tensions in the U.S., i.e., that there is no public forum for discussion in the U.S., a fact hidden by the illusion that our TV is our public space. These insights are anticipated by the film crew of *In the Heat of the Night*. This ensures the film's relevance as an articulation of the real problems that were facing America at the time the film was made.

The cast and crew of the film were ardently liberal-minded and the film was popular when it came out, despite its unprecedented and blunt treatment of the racial divide in America.¹² It was one of the earliest films to address such issues straightforwardly as well as serving as a reminder of how important visuals were to race baiting or encoding racism in America.¹³ With emphasis laid on the importance of such visuals, screen space becomes yet another tool either for creating an illusion of restored unity or disrupting it, according to one's personal agenda. In effect, Jewison and Wexler's use of screen space, coupled throughout with the inevitable linking of desire to the consumption of Coca-Cola, shows how wounds inflicted by lost unity are sutured over and ultimately repressed through particular constructions of images of the black man.

Wexler's construction of such a dialogue is managed through careful adaptation of the novel upon which the film is based, and through a foregrounding of precise codes and suturing techniques in two central excerpts in the film, namely Virgil's visit to the home of the small town's most prominent citizen, Mr. Endicott, and in an underage white woman's testimonial to the police about how she was raped.

Using visual tactics such as those employed by Jewison and Wexler in order to search for a lost unity was not entirely new but was perhaps less pronounced in their film. In fact, *Birth of a Nation* requires two rescue scenes at its end, one depicting the rescue of the southern white woman from the hands of the mulatto leader, and the other, the rescue of a small group of northern and southern whites who have bonded together to protect the "purity of the Aryan race."¹⁴ Two spatial locations of imprisonment and subsequent rescue stress two forms of

restored unity. Clearly in *Birth of a Nation*, the protected space is the white woman's womb in the first rescue scene. In the second, the protected space is the nation itself which requires a re-uniting of the white races of the north and the south in order to be saved.

In the Heat of the Night's innovation is to shift the search for a new space of unity to the legal and commercial hopes for a small southern town. It also transforms the threat of sexual violence from something a black man should not do, to something a black man should not see or hear about. While this does not provide for a restoration or creation of an actual public space of unity between the white and black, the film itself becomes a public space of dialogue. The ending of the film shows the white police officer, Gillespie, and the black police officer, Tibbs, parting ways, even though there *has* been a moment in the film where Tibbs has been invited into Gillespie's private home. Constructing a space of restored unity which can incorporate the black man has been concretized in this sequence and requires that Gillespie admit his shortcomings with respect to how his notions on race affect his immediate perceptions of Virgil Tibbs. In terms of suture theory, this implies an admission of "lack" which the camera must somehow "suture over" or heal. The moment of revelation remains ephemeral but the definition of the American nightmare has been altered to incorporate the emotional and cultural lack of both the white and the black man.

Part 2: Teaching the Global Nightmare on the Basis of the Glocal Nightmare

From a narrative perspective, *In the Heat of the Night* is straightforward and though some aspects of the plot must be treated in order to deal with the film's encoding of desire, violence and public space, my focus is on aspects of the film which would have an affect on the viewer without necessarily demanding that they pay conscious attention to those effects.¹⁵ In other words, it functions in ways that a race baiting encoded commercial does, though its ultimate message is a critique of such tactics. For the purpose of this analysis plot takes a

back seat to the cinematography, character acting and *mise-en-scène* in the film. The clear emphasis in the film is on drawing attention to how codes of race-baiting function.

John Ball's novel of the same title, which came out in 1965, provides small kernels or narrative details from which the cinematography of the film blossoms. With only two years separating their appearances, but with the assassination of a major spokesperson for Negroes having occurred in the meantime, one can see the rampant acceleration of racial tensions in the period from 1965 to 1968. In its simplest form, the plot involves a black northerner, Virgil Tibbs, who makes a stopover at 4 in the morning, in a small southern town. He has been visiting his mother and is on his way back to his home town in the north, where he is a police officer and a homicide expert. At around the same time, Sam Wood, a night officer in a small town in North Carolina, (in the film it will become Sparta, Mississippi), finds the body of a prominent visitor to the town, murdered and lying in the street. When asked by Chief Officer Gillespie, a transplanted Texan, to scour the town to find suspects, Sam Wood ends up at the train depot where he picks up Virgil Tibbs as a murder suspect. An example of how the film exploits narrative detail for its own purposes can be gleaned from the *mise-en-scène* of this sequence.

In the *mise-en-scène*, we see a sign in the background of the arrest scene, which reads "No Loitering," a reminder that a black man in a public place, especially on a hot summer night, is already suspect.¹⁶ Most people watching this scene in 1967 would probably unconsciously assume his guilt themselves. Common perceptions of the image have been recognized and the *mise-en-scène* seeks to embed such common perceptions into the image, through the use of the sign. The rest of the film will pit Virgil Tibbs against the police chief, Gillespie. Gillespie is himself an outsider since he comes from Texas. Texans are a brand of southerner apart from all others.

Gillespie finds cold hard cash in Tibbs' pocket, a sign that Tibbs must be guilty, because a black boy could not earn as much money as was found in his wallet. But Woods and Gillespie's reading of the sign, the full wallet is misguided because it relies on the assumption that

Tibbs is a southern black man. Tibbs is not a southern black man, he is a northern black and a police officer to boot. The money is a sign of prosperity, not aggression against the white man's property. Once the true nature of the sign has been established, Tibb's northern police chief, reached by telephone to clarify a confusing situation, requests that Tibbs assist Gillespie with the murder investigation.

The fact that Tibbs was visiting his mother clues the viewer into the fact that though he lives in the north, he is originally from the south, thus he is tainted by the same racial bile as Gillespie. It is on the basis of this shared southern mentality that the growing affinities between Tibbs and Gillespie are based. Gillespie's eventual respect for Tibbs comes when he recognizes that Virgil, like himself, is a true southerner, subject to the same racial prejudice as himself. This is indeed a break-through, because it forces both men to confront that prejudice. It also reinforces the idea that America's racial problems are further complicated by the north-south divide. It by no means solves the racial problems of the south, but it does help in reconfiguring the articulation of the problematic.

Constructing this complicity between two characters which might stereotypically be seen as diametrically opposed is difficult, and again involves notions of physical location and the quenching of desire through liquid refreshment. Each of these men has a secret with respect to public spheres and desire. Virgil Tibbs is a law officer, who secretly desires to overcome the non-negotiable law, or what I referred to earlier as the institutionally sanctioned racism which controls the south in the 60's. Gillespie has nothing but that patrician south to legitimate his power.¹⁷ As the film develops, we see Gillespie slowly break down and invite Virgil to his home, and his empty private lifestyle reveals his lack. To evoke the beverage industry for the moment, though he drinks Dr. Pepper at the office, he drinks nothing but alcohol at home. Once again, lack is encoded both through references to the beverage industry and physical spaces, and his complicity with Virgil becomes threatened, when Virgil hints at the fact that he must be lonely at times, that he must desire something that a beverage cannot fulfill.¹⁸

The film continues to transform the opening sequence of the

novel in ways that couple racial prejudices with soft drink consumption, but extends the problematic to include consideration of illicit sexual desire. It thus sets up another avenue for exploring the black man as a problem for American society, namely, that the white woman represents the reproductive space which must be protected from the black man, but to act on this assumption often conceals the illicit sexual desires of the white man as well.

Sam arrests Virgil just after having driven by the house of Delores Purdy (the southern pronunciation of the word “pretty” is evoked here), the underage white trash exhibitionist woman who will form the center of the film’s other main issue concerning the alignment of sexual desire with consumption. Driving by the Purdy house is part of his patrol duty, though it requires that he voyeuristically look through Delores’ window. In doing so, he witnesses her parading completely in the nude, drinking a nice cold Pepsi Cola, thus turning his patrol duty into a paradoxical transgression of that duty. Being able to make an arrest in the murder investigation relieves the guilt he feels about his desire for this underage girl. His arrest of Virgil is a kind of penance, and in case we don’t want to read that message into the scene, Jewison and Wexler enforce such an interpretation, again through *mise-en-scène*.

As Sam is driving his patrol car to the Purdy house, we have a deep focus shot, which foregrounds the statue of the Virgin Mary hanging from the rear view window in Officer Wood’s patrol car against a backdrop of the shantytown neighborhood. While he is watching Delores through her window, we again have a deep shot which combines foregrounding of the window itself (the approximation of a screen space), with what it frames, the nude figure of Delores Purdy seductively drinking from a Pepsi bottle.¹⁹

More importantly, if his arrest of Virgil is a kind of penance, violence sutures sexual desire. His moment of weakness or lack (in terms of suture theory), while looking through Delores’ window, is compensated for by his importance in finding the murdered man and a murder suspect. But since the film will constantly insist on a parallel between the murder investigation and an investigation into Purdy’s claim that she was raped by Officer Wood, this suture will not hold.

The racial coding which empowers Officer Wood to arrest a black man simply because he is black will eventually become unraveled by an alarmingly explicit gender coding. The film combines the two in order to assert that the problems of American culture have been created by all forms of unexamined repression, a message which contrasts starkly with the idea that harmonious existence in American society has been destroyed by the black intruder to the white man's desires and their fulfillments.

In short, the opening sequence could read as follows: the white police officer 1) resists desire created by the image of a naked white woman; 2) confronts the violent murder of the town's primary economic hope, industrialist Mr. Colbert; and 3) arrests an anonymous, intruding black man who might become privy to the sight/site of the white woman, since she puts herself on display on a nightly basis. Illicit desire is sutured through a racially inspired violence. Sam Wood both protects the white woman and solves the problem of the town by making the black man the ostensible cause in their loss of economic hope. This reading reveals the extent to which "the defections of American life itself," to quote Cornel West again, are sutured over by punishing the black man for the white man's own lack of restored unity (256). The suturing process is revealed even more precisely when one considers whether or not certain scenes privilege looking or touching as the primary form of the black man's transgression.

The politics of adaptation used by the film crew can be evoked to emphasize the crew's need to drive their perspectives home, and encode the aforementioned perspectives, in a period of extreme unrest.²⁰ The central perspectives requiring cinematic coding are: 1) that there is a north-south divide in the U.S. as well as a black-white divide; and 2) that the white man's need to protect his property, i.e., the white woman, from sexual abuse by the black man is not only central but is also a reminder that the blacks have "long served as the cultural repository of whites' repressed fears and projected fantasies", to quote James Allen and Lawrence Goodheart, in their review of Warren Beatty's film, *Bulworth*.²¹ Most of the shifts from novel to film echo these concerns and the embedding of soft drink icons into the film's

mise-en-scène stresses that there are only false solutions for the South's real needs. The film also transforms the novel so that it may shift its focus to the economic inequities plaguing the south in the long reconstruction period after the Civil War.

In reinforcing divisions, particularly between the northern and southern views on how blacks should fit into the economic growth of America, scriptwriter Silliphant has Virgil Tibbs coming from Philadelphia rather than California. The murdered victim, about whom I spoke earlier, is an industrialist from Chicago, rather than the Italian American orchestra conductor, Maestro Enrico Mantoli. In the novel, Mantoli is in charge of mounting a music festival in the town and is brought to the town by the town's most prominent white citizen, Mr. Endicott, both to provide cultural enlightenment and to enhance the tourist industry in the town. In the film, Mr. Endicott is a traditional southern gentleman, owner of the cotton industry, and fundamentally opposed to the construction of a new factory by Mr. Colbert, because the factory would provide work for the blacks currently working for Mr. Endicott in the cotton fields.

The sense of hope evoked by the promised construction of a new factory which would provide jobs for poor blacks and whites is central but misguided. The nature of the factory is not mentioned but the murdered industrialist responsible for the building of the factory is from Chicago, a possible allusion to C.C. Colbert, CEO of the Royal Crown Cola, a company born in Columbus Georgia but re-located in Chicago in the post WWII period. Always struggling to remain visible on the southern landscape, and constantly thwarted in its efforts by its competitor Coca-Cola, Royal Crown Cola was the most user-friendly brand of soft drinks for blacks in the early 20th century. Despite early relocation to the north, RC Cola expanded at a later point in the south with the advent of Diet-Rite Cola, the first diet cola to be marketed in the U.S. While the re-expansion period was initiated under Colbert, his reign at Royal Crown Cola was from 1940–1955, and thus, doesn't coincide with the time period of the film. Nonetheless, it is notable that Royal Crown Cola was widely regarded as the brand of choice for southern blacks, since the company early recognized the value of the

minority market, and that the economic hope of Sparta was being spearheaded by a man called Mr. Colbert in the film.²²

In the film's narrative, Mr. Colbert was indeed a friend to the black man of Sparta, Mississippi. Gillespie will later refer to the building of Colbert's factory when he assures Tibbs that it will help Tibbs' *people*, referring to blacks in Sparta. Tibbs responds by remarking that they are not his people, but rather Gillespie's people, underscoring the fact that the north-south divide is more pronounced than the black-white divide, and that differences between the north and the south over the Negro problem were economic. In the south, tensions between blacks and whites were cultural. The choice of Colbert as the name for the black man's salvation in this small southern town is a throwaway but it ties a generic reference to economic promise together with a specific reference to the soft drink industry. While one might argue that Jewison and Wexler could hardly expect people to make such distant connections, it is clear that Wexler at least was conversant with the soft drink industry, as he was the cameraman chosen in 1971 to film the well-known Coca Cola commercial *I'd like to buy the World a Coke*, a commercial made at a time when Coca Cola was interested in strengthening its world-wide reach and reputation for multiculturalism.²³

The film's focus on economic prosperity through suitable factory labor for poor southern blacks replaces the novel's focus on high culture, represented by the promise of a music festival, *versus* the low culture of a deeply prejudiced and tone deaf small southern town. In the novel, when Virgil Tibbs is taken to meet Mr. Endicott he is fully accepted by Mr. Endicott, who even takes his hand and shakes it without hesitation. There is no typical southern prejudice against a black man on the part of the novel's Mr. Endicott. The novel's Mr. Endicott is also strongly influenced by European culture. He is in sharp contrast to the novel's Officer Wood, who "as a matter of principle . . . did not like Negroes, at least not on anything that approached a man-to-man basis" (Ball 20). He had Virgil pegged from the beginning as an "educated black, one of the sort that hung around the United Nations in New York, according to the news reels" (Ball 21).

In the novel, Sam Wood's experience with a person like Virgil

Tibbs is limited to newsreels. For him, the assassination of Malcolm X, which occurred the same year as the publication of this book, would have carried a double message: 1) educated blacks do exist, but perhaps only in the north; 2) they do nothing but stir up trouble, which was definitely the underlying message of news coverage of Malcolm X.²⁴ Transforming Endicott, Sparta's most prominent citizen, from a Euro-centric, racially unbiased manager of cultural institutions, into a respectable, powerful and decidedly traditional southern gentleman, who runs the town economically and politically through his cotton industry, still employing both black house servants and field workers to pick cotton in the hot sun, charges the film with a more palpable racial tension. These shifts allow for a more sustained development of the ideological tensions exhibited through the Gillespie/Tibbs relationship. Indeed, the encounter between Mr. Endicott and Virgil Tibb's, with Gillespie's confused reaction to the violence of it, forms one of the most central displays of Jewison's and Wexler's concerns.

Many of the filming choices made in the opening of the film take their cue from the first pages of the novel. The reader is introduced to the town at night, and all of the public places, which include stores, gas stations, and a "surviving movie theater," are closed. Only the Simon Pharmacy, with its automatic air conditioning, is still open. The pharmacy, and its importance as the original public space wherein a Coca Cola might be purchased, is also the location chosen for the opening establishing shot of the film.²⁵

In the novel Sam Wood apparently goes to the drive-in soda fountain every night, after his heated drive through shantytown, where he literally looks in on Delores Purdy. Every night he orders a hot coffee, but on the night when the novel opens he orders a King Coke, clearly in need of liquid refreshment. This is the only mention of Coca-Cola in the novel, but this motif of quenching desire through soft drinks is the seed from which the film develops its *mise-en-scène*. Once the credits have rolled, the film opens with a close-up shot of a fly crawling on a wall calendar. The reverse shot is of the soda jerk, a grotesque looking teenager who is aiming at the fly with a rubber band, which he proceeds to snap in order to kill the fly.

There is a quick cut to Sam Wood drinking Coke from a fountain glass. Though the focus is very closely zoomed in on Sam Wood's face, the close foreground shows us the tops of Coke bottles, and when Sam finally leaves the soda fountain, we have a sequence of shots with Coca-Cola signs affixed to the building from which he emerges. When he gets in his car and takes off, the typically low-angle shot Wexler favors throughout the film pans up slightly so that the camera highlights a set of road signs in bright lights, one marked *Pepsi*, the other marked *Sprite*. The car recedes in the background. The camera remains fixed on the signs as its focus, and this will be the establishing shot throughout the film whenever anyone returns to the drive-in soda fountain.

This opening emphasizes the economy with which the film will embed the central theme of the film, the stagnation of the southern mentality because of its racial prejudices, its continual thirst. Though the people of Sparta seem to have no idea about how to quench that thirst, they are willing to believe that the answer lies in the soda and the soda fountain, the film's space for living life the American way: white and supposedly cool. We must recall that the soda fountain is a segregated space, and so for a black man to get relief from the heat would require transgressing that space. Realistically, soft drinks were available as early as 1902, when bottlers became part of the soft drink industry, and later, from a machine or in segregated soda fountains. The shot is, thus, primarily a reminder that soft drinks might satisfy a black man's thirst but only under certain conditions. The shot also emphasizes the extent to which the beverage industries, Coca-Cola, Pepsi, Royal Crown Cola and Dr. Pepper primarily, were part of the very landscape of the south at that time, and created divisions and loyalties through their proliferations of bottles, signs and soda machines. Corporate involvement in the most intimate details of the individual's daily life and even ideologies is encoded in the shot.²⁶

This insistence on showing how embedded Coca-Cola and other soft drinks were in the cultural landscape of the south is a totally original addition of the filmmaking team.²⁷ It is instructive to see Wexler's expansion of this tactic in his subsequent quasi-documentary

film, *Medium Cool*, where he is allowed to give free rein to the influences the French New Wave was having on his camerawork in 1968 just after he worked on *In the Heat of the Night*.²⁸ I will return to further discussion of this tactic when considering Delores Purdy's testimony to the police, where Jewison and Wexler's allusions to places are more closely linked with the "place" or property represented by the white woman's body.

On the other hand, the use of space which is developed directly out of the novel's concerns has to do with physical contact between blacks and whites and gets developed out of the handshaking episodes to which I alluded earlier. Though it is largely unthinkable to suppose that a mere handshake could be the seed for a nightmarish form of existence, the film's treatment of this theme will again underscore the tension of the north-south divide in the filmmaker's search for better ways of confronting racial tensions in America. Despite the fact that Mr. Endicott does not hesitate to shake Virgil Tibb's hand in the novel, the Texan officer Gillespie, is described as "letting go of the first Negro hand he had ever clasped" when he shook hands with Virgil for the first time towards the end of the novel. Virgil responds emotionally and then Gillespie tells him he is a "credit to his race." He quickly prompts himself to correct this racial slur by saying "I mean the human race" (Ball 172-73). This tentative hand shaking is coupled with the last lines of the novel, where "Chief [Gillespie] thought about shaking hands with him [Virgil] but decided not to. He had done it once and that had made the point" (Ball 185).

While these deep considerations about whether or not to shake a black man's hand are consistent with reality in the south of 1965, they are downplayed in Ball's account. By contrast, the film constantly uses close-up shots of black flesh meeting with white flesh, notably: 1) when Virgil examines the body of the dead man, Mr. Colbert; 2) when Mrs. Colbert takes Virgil's hand in order to steady herself when she learns of her husband's death and; 3) when Virgil and Gillespie shake hands at the end of the film. One must remember that these shots were mounted at a time when the thought of portraying a white person coming into actual physical contact with a black man was not

impossible, but certainly still shocking for the majority or people in the south. The visual image no doubt carried more shock value than the image of the burning American flag in the opening credits to Spike Lee's film.²⁹

In terms of suture theory, these shots would be difficult for either a black or white viewer. The close-up shot of black flesh touching white flesh, unfamiliar to viewers of either race, makes them hyperaware of the controlling power of the camera's gaze, and the viewer's lack of control over the social taboo implied in the shot is magnified. In order to suture that lack, a reverse shot would have to provide them with an alternative gaze with which they can identify in order to take control over what they will next see. In this instance, the possibilities for identification in the reverse shot are located in Gillespie, Virgil Tibbs, or a rather ignorant set of southern medical workers who refuse to let Virgil wash his hands at the white washbasin. The shot remains un-sutured, unless some kind of introspection on the real nature of racial tensions takes place.³⁰

To further insure the encoding of the north-south divide, this scene will stand in contrast to a subsequent scene where Mrs. Colbert, a northern white woman, will choose to take hold of Virgil Tibb's hand to steady herself after he informs her of her husband's death. Again, we have the close-up shot of a black man's flesh in contact with a white woman's, and she even pulls his hand closer to her face as she reacts to the news. The reverse shot is a shot of Virgil, and though the viewers can still choose to identify their own gazing act with that of the camera, their choice has been limited and this limiting posits Virgil as more central to the narrative than he had been in the first sequence.

Accepting this gaze as the one with which the viewer will identify becomes synonymous with accepting this form of suture, i.e., learning to identify with a black man's gaze. This suture is accomplished only because this white woman holding Virgil's hand is from the north. Her identity as a white woman is overpowered by her identity as a northerner. If this weren't the case, we would read this image as Virgil's transgression against the unspoken predominantly southern codes which deny the black man's right to touch a white woman.

Instead, we read it as complicity between two northerners. The viewer must accept this form of suture if he or she is reading the film as a classic Hollywood narrative.³¹ Since the aim of the classic Hollywood narrative is to be as seamless as possible in its narrative construction, any overt attention to how a shot is constructed, or why suture is not occurring, is to be avoided.

Black flesh on white is an image which requires suture, even in such nonviolent sequences as the ones I have mentioned, but to make sure the violence of such juxtapositions is fully appreciated, it takes on a much more explicitly violent form in one of the central scenes for my purposes, a scene which has no resonance whatsoever with its counterpart in the novel: when Tibbs and Gillespie visit Mr. Endicott in his garden hothouse.

The entire sequence relies on having two levels of viewers embedded in the shots. The first viewer is the film viewer, and the second is Gillespie. In both the beginning and ending of the sequence, Gillespie is watching Virgil, then Virgil and Mr. Endicott, and one of the central climax close-up shots focuses on that act of viewing violence, not on the violence itself.

The sequence opens with a tracking shot of black cotton pickers, with a close up of a poor, slightly deformed black female cotton picker cross cut with various close ups of Tibbs looking out the car window at them, cross cut with Gillespie looking at Virgil. At one point, Gillespie says "That's not for you, is it Virgil?" Virgil realizes that his thoughts have been read, and that Gillespie is beginning to understand a little bit about Tibb's own prejudice toward Endicott and his cotton industry.

Cutting to the entrance of Endicott's home, we have a still shot where we see the backs of Gillespie and Tibbs as they walk up to the front door, and as they pass, the camera remains fixed on a small statuette of a black boy slave, a typical garden ornament of southern homes. Virgil and Gillespie are admitted to the hothouse by an old black servant, the sequence will rely on a series of medium close ups shared among the three characters, Gillespie, Tibbs and Mr. Endicott, which are cross cut with shots of Tibbs and Mr. Endicott sharing medium long shot screen space. In these second types of shots,

Gillespie is clearly in the position of the observer, whether he is actually on screen or not.

Mr. Endicott and Virgil Tibbs naturally do not shake hands when they first meet, though Mr. Endicott voices an offer to have his manservant “fetch” them something to drink. Gillespie declines the offer for both himself and Virgil, but Virgil chimes in with an acceptance, saying “I’ll have something cold, something soft,” the implication being a soft drink, which is the term applied to Coca-Cola or Pepsi-Cola. Mr. Endicott sends Henry off for lemonade, a non-commercial soft drink.

While Mr. Endicott has clearly drawn the traditionally sanctioned racial boundaries by not shaking Virgil’s hand, Virgil quickly shows that he is conversant with the botanical expertise displayed by Mr. Endicott, in their conversations about orchids. The choice to have them meet in the constricting hothouse, a place where orchids flourish, is crucial for the scriptwriter’s intent. That intent becomes glaringly obvious when their cultural one-upmanship is stopped short by Mr. Endicott, who asks Mr. Tibbs which orchid he prefers, and then explains to him that the orchid Tibbs has chosen is not surprising since it, like the Negro, requires lots of care and feeding. One can also consider here that such orchids should often be confined to a hothouse because they “require a temperature consistent with their place of origin.”³²

In essence, the hothouse becomes much hotter as this conversation continues. It reaches boiling point when it becomes clear that Virgil Tibbs is there not simply to visit Mr. Endicott but to interrogate him about the murder. Virgil Tibbs even suggests that he is justified in coming to Mr. Endicott’s private home to question him on these matters, because Mr. Endicott’s opinions about Mr. Colbert and his building of a new factory are a matter of public record. Mr. Endicott, upon realizing that he is suspected of murder, slaps Virgil Tibbs who immediately slaps him back. Black flesh meets white in this enclosed and overheated space.

Having a black man slap a white man as part of a narrative sequence was unprecedented when this film came out, though it set a

precedent for films such as George Romero's cult classic, *Night of the Living Dead*, which came out the following year and features a black man slapping a hysterical white woman.³³ In both cases, there is a tension between the slap, where both black men in each respective film are justified from a narrative perspective, but the justification is undermined by the lack of familiarity with this kind of image on the part of the contemporary viewer. Screen space becomes an outlet for transgression of racial taboos. Mr. Endicott quickly points out to Gillespie that he was expected to shoot Virgil for slapping a white man.

The scene's ultimate effect is to shake that unquestioned perception that the black man is the cause rather than the effect of societal dysfunction in America. Two moments in the sequence emphasize that shift away from the black man as the problematic intruder, in order to call for a greater introspection on how we talk about race. Both of them involve putting Gillespie's act of watching the proceedings at the center of the screen. As spectator, he is hoping for the dream but being forced to live the nightmare. When Tibbs finds the presence of fern root in the hothouse, and asks Endicott about it in a seemingly innocent way, there is a quick cut to a close up of Gillespie's face. The presence of fern root in the hothouse effectively incriminates Mr. Endicott, in Gillespie's view (though as it turns out, he was not the murderer), since Gillespie has already been informed by Virgil that fern root was also found at the scene of the crime. We watch Gillespie as he realizes that the black boy has gotten the better of the powerful Mr. Endicott. The fact that the camera centers on him, rather than Endicott or Tibbs, emphasizes the extent to which Gillespie, as witness to this scene in the hothouse, has to change his world view.³⁴

The second cut to a close-up of Gillespie's face comes just after the slap, as Mr. Endicott asks Gillespie what he intends to do about the act of aggression against a white man. The intonation of his response "I don't know" conveys a genuine confusion about his budding respect for Virgil Tibbs *versus* the unquestioned law that a black man should not abuse a white one in this way. By extension, the viewer of the film is thrown into a similar confusion due to the unprecedented nature of the scene. The concluding shot of the sequence is a medium long shot

which foregrounds Mr. Endicott with the manservant and Gillespie positioned so as to form a line to the door. This effectively puts everyone's backs to Virgil, so the shot remains un-sutured. Because we can see Gillespie when the slap occurs, there is no character with whom we can identify in order to wipe out the control of the camera's gaze.

Black flesh meeting white was one of the original taboos avoided through segregation, as the scenes treated above have shown. Forbidden spaces, such as the soda fountain and the white woman's reproductive space, are also embedded in the film's treatment of illicit desire and institutionally-sanctioned racial prejudice. The primary sequences which facilitate this conflation of soda fountain and illicit desire of the white woman are: 1) when Delores Purdy testifies that Sam Wood has raped her and that she is pregnant with his child; and 2) when Virgil Tibbs asks Sam Wood to take him on the exact route that he took on the night that he discovered the body of the murdered man. The two scenes work together to conflate the woman's body with spaces where thirsts can be quenched. It is noteworthy that Sam Wood will be wrongly accused of both the murder and the rape, but proved innocent of both charges by Virgil Tibbs. It is also crucial that the charge of rape is not made against a black man, though the fear of a black man's transgression of the white woman's body will, nonetheless, be evoked.

The sequence where Virgil accompanies Sam Wood on his route to shantytown opens with a three to four-second still shot of Virgil standing in the dark night next to a Coke machine, as Sam Wood drives up to him. Virgil and the Coke machine will be lit up by the headlights of Sam Wood's car. While three to four-seconds does not seem like a long time, it is a long enough still shot that it draws attention to itself. The sequence will continue with a series of shots taken from the opening sequence of the film, with the notable absence of any shots of the Purdy home, as Sam Wood has decided that he will take Virgil on his route but will "censor" the sight of Delores Purdy for a black man's eyes. Just as in the opening sequence, Sam will eventually go to the drive-in soda fountain for his King Coke though Virgil will not be allowed to enter. Not only is he denied the right to see the naked white

woman, which Sam thinks is the right course of action to take, (even though it means misrepresenting the facts in the murder case), Virgil is also denied the right to drink a fountain drink, unless he gets it from a bottle outside the police station. He is banned from the public space of the soda fountain.

This sequence ends with a conversation about the murder case, which is shot outside the drive-in lunch counter, using the same establishing shot as was used in the opening sequence, with the Pepsi and Sprite signs in the background. Both the lunch counter and the image of the white woman become paralleled as off limits for him, and the King Coke, which had earlier been established as the quencher for Wood's desire, is denied to Tibbs as well. This paralleling serves as a reminder that the landscape of consumption in the American south was as segregated as the rest of its landscape, and that even the choice of liquid refreshment was part of this segregation. The film will not develop this notion of choice of beverage explicitly, but will instead rely on the ubiquity of the soft drink industry, as I have argued throughout.

Ultimately, the critique accomplished by a conflation of sexual desire and desire for liquid refreshment is a critique of a budding consumer culture. To return to Cornel West's critique of American life with which I began, his claim that the spiritual impoverishment which accompanies the evolution of a consumer culture is another of the defects of American life which should be addressed, and that it can no longer be addressed by making the black man the problem. We see the complicity of a consumer culture and racial tension encoded in this film. Rather than looking for ways of achieving real unity through clearer articulation of how public space for discourse between blacks and whites was denied, the idea seemed to be perpetual manufacture of illusion, by eventually extending the beverage industry's false offers of satisfaction, happy family life, and the American way to the black man. Once the black man could choose his soft drink as freely as the white man, the illusion of integration was constructed. The need for a real space for dialogue was repressed.

Even the illusory space of integration was slow in coming. For

poet Amiri Baraka. Of additional interest is the speech given by Spike Lee in San Francisco on June 8, 1996, reprinted in *In Motion* magazine of July 13, 1996, wherein he claims that one of his greatest pleasures growing up in Brooklyn, was to go to the movies and “drink all the Coca-Cola we could drink”. The interview is available at <www.inmotion.com/slee2.html> Further reading on reactions to the Rodney King beatings and their influence on the L.A. Riots from different disciplinary perspectives, includes, Cornell West’s “Learning to Talk of Race” in *Reading Rodney King*, ed., Robert Gooding-Williams (London: Routledge, 1993, 255–260. I will be referring specifically to several of the articles found in that text throughout, though West’s article is my principal focus. The collection will be cited hereafter as *Reading Rodney King*. For a solid survey of reactions to the subsequent revival of attention to Malcolm X’s legacy after the L.A. Riots, cf., *The Malcolm X Reader*, ed. David Gallen (New York: Carroll and Graf, 1994).

² “Spike Lee: Looking Back” in *Boston Review*, December 1994/January 1995 issue, <www.Bostonreview.net/BR19.6/spike.html>

³ One of the more revealing episodes in U.S. history about how catastrophic events such as the L.A. riots can generate a problem-solving discourse which has completely misconstrued the real nature of the problem is the appearance of the book, *The Bell Curve: Intelligence and Class Structure in American Life* (New York: Touchstone Books, 1994), which came out in indirect response to the L.A. riots. The main argument of authors Richard Herrnstein and Charles Murray is that they can provide genetic proof that blacks are inferior to whites in terms of intelligence quotients, and they propose ways of compensating for this inferiority in policy-making decisions about public spending. The book was immediately denounced as race-baiting and a series of essays entitled, *The Bell Curve Wars: Race, Intelligence and the Future of America*, ed., Stephen Fraser (New York: Basic Books, 1995), which asserts the faulty logic of Herrnstein and Murray’s argumentation. Of particular interest is Jacqueline Jones’ article, “Back to the Future with The Bell Curve: Jim Crow, Slavery and G”, 80–93.

⁴ Boelhower’s article appears in the *Working Papers Series in Cultural Studies, Ethnicity and Race Relations*, ed., E.; San Juan, Jr., (Pullman, Washington: Washington State University 1998); *Les abus de la memoire*, (Paris: Arléa 1995); and *Memoire du mal, tentation du bien: enquête sur le*

siècle, (Paris: Editions Robert Laffont 2000).

⁵ *Memoire du mal*, “Le choix de ce qu’il y a eu de plus important de ce qui permet donc d’en construire le sens, depend de votre identité.” 10, i.e., choosing the most important events about which we will construct a meaning will depend on your identity.

⁶ I’m thinking in particular of the recent comparisons of world political leaders to Hitler and of the increasing tendency in world media to liken the Iraqi war to Vietnam. While such analogies may be instructive, they must be thought carefully, something undergraduate students aren’t necessarily equipped to do.

⁷ I currently own land in South Carolina which is used to grow cotton. When I was young, my grandmother taught me and my siblings racial tolerance by making us go out and pick cotton for an entire long hot day, giving us each a dime at the end of the day, with the remark, “in the old days, the cotton pickers didn’t even get a dime.” What happened to me in the 20th century was desegregation. Learning how to remember it and talk about it in meaningful ways can help me in placing myself within the more global discourse about the American mentality in today’s world.

⁸ *The Birth of a Nation: D.W. Griffith Director*, ed., Robert Lang, (Rutgers, New Brunswick, 1994), in particular, Janet Staiger, “The Birth of a Nation: Reconsidering its Reception”, 195–213; and Sergei Eisenstein, “Dickens, Griffith and Film Today”, in *Film Form*, trans., Jay Leyda, (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1949), 195–256.

⁹ The close ties between moviemaking and searches for national identity is the base of such texts as Robert Sklar’s *Movie-Made America: a Cultural History of American Movies*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1994); and particularly, Jean-Michel Frodon’s *La projection nationale: cinéma et nation*, (Paris: Odile Jacob, 1998). Of course, Griffith’s epic *Birth of a Nation* asserts the absolute complicity of film depictions of our collective past with control over constructing national identity. Embedding the black man as the obstacle to unity in our nation was largely accomplished through the making and reception of *Birth of a Nation*. Getting rid of the ideological force of that idea has been no easy task. In all uses of “we” or “our” when referring to the American mentality, I am referring to some elusive sense of the American population, despite the fact that each individual American might disagree with another one on which people belong to that group. For example, some Americans might consider the

Turkey 8 (1998), 73–80, gathered from <[www.bilkent.edu.tr/~jast/Number 8/Goodheart.html](http://www.bilkent.edu.tr/~jast/Number8/Goodheart.html)>

²² A full history of Royal Crown Cola can be found at www.glaverne.com/rca.htm. One can note from this brief history that the original inventor of Royal Crown Cola planned for the Pichett-Hatcher Education Fund for underprivileged students, which in 1968, was the largest student loan funding of its kind.

²³ Recounted in “*The Hilltop Ad: Story of a commercial*” at <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/ammem/ccmphtml/coladv.html>. As Bill Becker, marketing director at Coca-Cola at the time put it, “Coca-Cola was becoming more than a liquid refresher, it was becoming a tiny bit of commonality between all peoples” in, *Care and Feeding of Ideas*, (New York: Times Books/ Random House, 1993).

²⁴ Actually, the end of Spike Lee’s film, *Malcolm X*, is instructive here, since it contains a good deal of original footage of the Malcolm X assassination. Another source for Sam Wood’s education about blacks would have been the “Greensboro Four,” a group of 4 young black college students who defied segregation laws banning black people from sitting at the soda fountains in white drugstores, by staging a sit-in at a Woolworth lunch counter in February of 1960. Lunch counters were desegregated much later than public transport, primarily because, as I have said before, the soda fountain was the central secular public space for southerners, with the advent of the beverage industry. The owner of the Woolworth’s, where the sit-in was staged, reflected one of the tenets of the early soda fountain ideology, when he claimed that resistance to de-segregation was because “a man’s business is an extension of his home.” Cf., <www.sitins.com> or <www.News-Record.com>.

²⁵ A full account of the ideological importance of the soda fountain to southern family life in the early 20th century is given in Constance Hays’ book *Pop: Truth and Power at the Coca Cola Company*, (London: Hutchinson, 2004).

²⁶ Stressing the importance of the soft drink to the ideologies of the typical American, one has only to look at the recent scandal caused by Dr. Pepper, when they designed a new can intended to express their patriotism and commemorating those who died in the September 11 attacks. The can had a Statue of Liberty on it, with the words “One Nation, Indivisible.” The company

was vehemently attacked and boycotted, because it used words from the Pledge of Allegiance, but did not include the words “under God”. A summary of the scandal can be found on www.drpepper.com and one example of the self-righteousness of the attack can be found in a letter written by the President of the American Family Association, www.afa.net/activism/ud020702.html >

²⁷ Though one could find comments of a similar sort for most of the seminal soft drinks, this passage from Constance Hays’ book *Pop: Truth and Power at the Coca-Cola Company* is telling: “People drank Coca-Cola morning, noon and night in the United States where Coke had gotten started. It had replaced milk and fruit juice in many lunchboxes, even in baby bottles in some places. ...Ivester liked to predict that one day, along with red wine and water goblets, a formal table setting would have to include a broad-shouldered Coca-Cola glass”. From a personal perspective, I must attest that growing up in the south, when you were invited to someone’s house, adults and children alike were asked not what they would like to drink but rather if they would like a Coke (or a Pepsi, if that household was a Pepsi-drinking family).

²⁸ The influences of the French New Wave are clearly there, with a huge poster of Jean Paul Belmondo in the protagonist’s apartment, and comparisons of Coke and water, which implied that drinking water did not really quench thirst. Critics were impatient with the film, and Andrew Sarris even accused him of “lifting” from Godard. *Anthology of the National Society of Film Critics*, ed., Joseph Morgenstern and Stefan Kanfer, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1969). Reviews of John Simon and Andrew Sarris, 165–72.

²⁹ As mentioned previously, the first director chosen by Warner Brothers to direct the Malcolm X autobiography was Norman Jewison, but Spike Lee intervened and insisted that he be the one to do it. It would have been interesting to see what Jewison would have done with the material. www.galegroup.com/free_resources/bhm/bio/lee_s./htm>

³⁰ For the seminal text on cinematic suture, cf., Jean Pierre Oudart’s “La suture”, *Cahiers du cinéma*, 211 and 212, April and May 1969. An English translation by Kari Hanet is available in *Cahiers du cinéma 1969–1972: The Politics of Representation*, ed., Nick Browne, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1990), 45–57.

³¹ Articles defining the techniques of the genre in *Classic Hollywood Narrative*, ed., Jane Gaines, (Durham: Duke UP, 1992).

³² Any number of sources for the care and feeding of orchids are available, though the reference to temperature requirements is taken from <http://home.att.net/siegfried.stern/ORCHIDS.htm>. Other sources which stress the strong associations between orchids and lust are the film *Adaptation* (2001) directed by Spike Jonze, which is the screen adaptation of the non-fiction book, *The Orchid Thief: A True Story of Beauty and Obsession*, by Susan Orlean, (New York: Random House, 1999). This book and its film adaptation trace the life of a man who illegally tracked down and stole specimens of a particular type of orchid in order to make a drug from distillations of the flower, which greatly enhanced sexual desire. Of interest is Eric Hansen's *Orchid Fever: A Horticultural Tale of Love, Lust and Lunacy* (New York: Vintage, 2001), in my work on the *Adaptation* film.

³³ The fact that this was the first slap of a white man by a black man, has become part of the legacy of the film, though it re-emerges in contemporary reviews, which are necessarily linked not to the film itself, but to reviews of re-issues of it, for example, in Rick Babcock's review found on www.dvdangle.com.

³⁴ Cf., Ron Miller's review on www.thecommunists.com/Oscars01/Best67.html

³⁵ Moss Kendrix legacy and a copy of his original proposal can be obtained on the Public Relations Museum website, www.prmuseum.com/kendrix, (April 4, 2004). As mentioned in a previous footnote, the most complete source of information on the Royal Crown Cola company can be found at www.glavergne.com/rca.htm, (April 5, 2004). It is important to keep in mind that American soft drinks were distributed in other countries outside the U.S. before the 60's, but primarily as part of the war effort, and were therefore, part of the American presence in other countries. With the 1971 commercial, the idea was that Coke could belong to everyone, and thus, the strategies for expanding the market targets to foreigners closely parallel the strategies for appealing to blacks in the U.S.

³⁶ Though Michael Moore's *Bowling for Columbine* is the most recent full cinematic treatment of this issue, the Willy Horton ad is probably the most common example used when discussing how race-baiting works. Cf., Sara Fritz's "Clinton Haters Now Take on Gore", in the St. Petersburg Times, April 7, 2000, www.polkonline.com/stories/070400/opi_fritz.shtml which gives a

brief summary of the ad, as well as showing long lasting relevance, since the ad originally appeared in 1988, but continues to be spoken about in relation to visual imagery and race-baiting.

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