

The Rural Past-in-Present and Postwar Sub/urban Progress

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Introduction

The suburban ideal of the postwar (mid-1940s to the late-1960s) United States, like other eras of suburban development, has been widely studied as a reflection of the fears, desires, and aspirations of its society. Such studies portray the postwar suburb as what Dolores Hayden calls a “landscape of the imagination where Americans situate ambitions for upward mobility and economic security.”¹ Scholars have also pointed out that such a landscape was geared toward particular members of American society. For example, Kenneth Jackson has pointed to the implications surrounding the government policies that “supported the income and racial segregation of suburbia” so that only a select few had access to the dream of suburban home ownership: those who aspired to upward mobility and the appearance of middle-classness, and who were also white.² As a result, the suburban ideal and the white middle class who participated in such an ideal has been seen as an expression of racist tendencies and a desire to separate from inner-city minorities.³

In addition to maintaining a physical separation from racial minorities, it also seems that a cultural separation was maintained between white middle-class suburbanites and the white working class and working poor generally speaking, and in particular, those who were associated with the rural spaces into which the suburbs were built. Postwar discourse illustrates that the shared whiteness

of these middle-class suburbanites and white working-class rural inhabitants created a dilemma that was in turn framed through the larger conceptions surrounding rurality. Rurality in the postwar was simultaneously idealized through a nostalgic lens and devalued as the province of the most retrograde members of society, considered a mere backdrop against which the postwar forged ahead. And although it is clear that the national imagination was concerned with other races who also occupied a working-class rural position during this period, it is also true that rurality (even when associated with specific “southern” regions) was largely coded as a white space, either implicitly or explicitly, in a discourse concerned with the arising middle-class suburbia.⁴ The intersection of class and geography in postwar discourse was thus used to centralize the markers of postwar progress and development associated with a white middle-classed sub/urban development, while overwriting those places and people—including the rural, white working class—that fell outside such appearances.

Even the briefest look at the US Census illustrates that such discourse is a reaction to the rapid population shifts toward suburbanization that was occurring throughout the postwar period. One measure of the suburbanization of the United States can be seen in the steadily decreasing percentage of people living in rural areas; by 1970 the population of rural areas decreased to 26 percent as compared to 36 percent in 1950.⁵ In addition to migratory shifts that could result in this decreasing rural population, it should also be noted that in 1950 the census adopted a new definition of what constituted the “urban” to account for the “many large and built-up places [that would be] excluded from the urban territory” as defined in earlier censuses.⁶ This new definition clearly refers to the suburban development that extended into previously rural areas, classified as an extension of the urban in contrast to the rural locations into which such development was occurring. This distinction—the sub/urban as differentiated from the rural—can also be seen in regard to the differences (or at least the appearance of differences) in class. According to the 1970 census, for example, the percentage of those living near or below the poverty level was greater for rural residents as compared to their sub/urban counterparts, and this was a disparity that held for all races (though it is important to note that the percentage of minorities who suffered poverty was greater than white residents in both rural and urban areas).⁷ This disparity is highlighted further when “urban” and “rural” are broken down into categories of metropolitan (inside and outside of central cities), “Areas of 1,000,000 or more,” and nonmetropolitan (including urban and rural farm and nonfarm). Those whites who lived “outside central cities” but are still considered “urban” (i.e., the suburban fringe) had the lowest percentages of poverty, in some categories by almost half as much, in comparison to rural farm and nonfarm whites in both metropolitan and nonmetropolitan areas.⁸

These numbers, which provide only a glimpse of the composition of postwar society, begin to show us the difference between the classed and urban association of the “suburban” and the “rural” in postwar society.⁹ These statistics reflect that in the attempt to separate from those elements of urban society that appeared

to contradict the postwar suburban ideal, suburbanites had to also contend with people like the white, rural working-class and working poor who also did not exhibit the markers of progress associated with a middle-classed suburban development even as they shared a similar racial composition and occupied a geographical location outside the urban. Judging from publications spanning journalistic reportage and the social sciences, this intersection of race, class, and geography was something of sustained interest throughout the postwar period. Class, as in the present, largely seemed to be understood in relational terms that exhibit what Michael Zweig sees as the power differential “between and among different people or groups.”¹⁰ Thus, the terms “middle-class” or “working-class” as understood in the postwar discourse discussed in this article do not directly refer to measures of income or particular occupations (although, as will be clear in the following discussion, such measures obviously figure into the postwar understanding of “class”). Instead, class in postwar discourse seemed to be measured in the particular types of people who could attain the standard of the time, that being the appearance of the middle-classed *and* suburban lifestyle. In this way, class in the postwar period reflects what Stanley Aronowitz observes in a different context: “Class never appears in its pure form. It is always alloyed . . . with other identities, discourses and movements.”¹¹

As mentioned above, class in the national imagination was often inextricably linked with race (i.e., the *white* middle-class in contrast to a *nonwhite* underclass). Yet understandings of class during this time period were also understood through geography and, in particular, a “urban” and “rural” dichotomy in which the rural was at times implicitly cast as a white space, an undeveloped realm that existed outside of a modern world associated with both the sub/urban and the middle class.¹² Upon first glance, the “suburban” in the postwar, as the physical embodiment of the insular, white middle class, might appear to align itself with such a rural place in its attempts to separate from the “problems” of urban centers. For example, as Clifford Clark analyzes, the ranch house and the suburban developments modeled on it became a physical indicator of a “protected suburban environment” removed from the chaotic (and “low-class” minority) urban centers from which these suburbanites sprang.¹³ Yet this “protected suburban environment” includes more than just racist undertones. Again, Clark’s description of the ranch house is instructive: The ranch house was “seen as creating a unity with nature, but it was a unity that pictured nature as a tamed and open environment.”¹⁴ The presence of white working-class rural inhabitants seemed to complicate the pastoral associations of such an environment—its associations of a pure “peace, innocence, and simple virtue”—and in turn needed to be made sense of in the midst of middle-classed notions of progress and modernity associated with whiteness and development beyond the urban core.¹⁵

Postwar discourse illustrates that although the new suburban migrants may have lived among “low-class” whites in more removed rural outreaches, they were not culturally associated with the negative implications of such outreaches. In these cases, racial difference could not be evoked to protect the new in-migrants,

but geography could be used to explain why middle-class whites could not be conflated with their rural counterparts preceding them. As with previous generations, and the generations following it, the postwar understood “urbanity” as the progenitor of progress and development and “rurality” as anything not associated with the urban.¹⁶ That the suburban is considered an offshoot of the urban—and *not* the rural—is clear enough by the very name “suburban” (and not “subrural” for example) and is a relationship also evident in scholarship that focuses on suburbia. For example, Kenneth Jackson refers to the postwar suburban trend as an “urban development,” and other scholars heighten this connection in discussions of suburban development and its connection to the deterioration of the inner city during this time period.¹⁷ Further, while the suburb may have always held connotations as a “borderland” that invites an escape from the undesirable aspects of the urban while simultaneously partaking of the pastoral, it has also always included a desire to separate from the low-class associations of both the “urban row house” and the “country farmhouse.”¹⁸ As revisionist scholars demonstrate, the escape from the urban is clear enough, but postwar discourse also exhibits a desire to separate from what was perceived as the regressed rural regions, often implied as the province of working-class *whites*, that suburbanites were physically moving toward.

The assumed whiteness of rurality in postwar discourse demonstrates that, in addition to race, the arising suburban middle class in postwar American society was represented as holding a privileged classed and geographic position, an intersection that was crucial in pushing particular forms of progress and development such as suburbia during that time. I will examine this phenomenon through popular journalism and scholarship from the social sciences focusing, first, on the representation of rurality as a *past-in-present* that exists in a parallel world to the sub/urban postwar and, second, the application of this conceptual framework to representations of middle-classed sub/urban development of the time. The focus on rurality and its relationship to changing postwar society in both popular journalism and the social sciences illustrates the prevailing attitude toward rurality that existed across many different sectors of postwar society. Further, through applying this framework to a specific social issue such as suburban development, we can see the ways in which the association of rurality with spatiotemporal and cultural regression, both good and bad, helps uphold the assumed normative center of the middle-classed sub/urban, including its markers of progress and development.

Rural Past-in-Present: Postwar United States

The postwar period is not the first or last time in American history in which rurality is conceived as a regressed other to “modern” sensibilities, nor is it unique in equating such places with a failed whiteness. According to historian Anthony Harkins, rurality’s function within the national American imaginary extends beyond physical space itself to intersect with race and class, becoming a con-

ceptual container for cultural “negative counterexamples” to white middle-class urbanity.¹⁹ Although focusing his discussion on the highly recognizable southern “hillbilly,” his observations can be brought to bear upon conceptions of rural places across the United States: Not exclusively tied to a “concrete geographical locale,” the “label has historically been applied to literary and cultural figures from upstate New York to western Washington State,” applicable to “anywhere on the rough edges of the landscape and economy.”²⁰

Whites are not the only group of people to occupy what is seen as an impoverished rural geography, but as Harkins points out, such figures loom large in American discourse, their whiteness set apart by an intersection with a devalued class and geography.²¹ The hillbilly is only one manifestation of this process and can be similarly compared to such figures as “rednecks” and “white trash.” These figures, while predominantly situated in the southeastern United States, are also used to understand rural space generally speaking and help American society make sense of the particular intersection between white, working-class and working-poor rural inhabitants. In regards to the term “redneck,” social scientists find it has come to represent “a largely unproblematized slur against working-class rural people, a generalized assumption about their politics, and a generalizing stereotype about the degeneracy and lack of morality that has historically defined poor people in Euro-American discourse.”²² The rurality of the “redneck” cannot be dismissed, much as the rurality behind the term “white trash” helps solidify its place outside of a proper, middle-class “whiteness.”²³ Although these terms pointedly refer to the race and class of this particular subject position, they also use a geographical dichotomy in which to keep this subject at an arm’s length from a mainstream center, in this case, one imagined in an urban form.

The continuing currency of these figures is due in part to their rurality, particularly as it is associated with the white lower classes. Although these figures can be used to directly disparage the “rurality” of one’s position in American discourse, we will see that in the postwar era a similar effect can be achieved through more general references to rurality and its inhabitants as a *past-in-present*: a spatially, temporally, and culturally regressed entity that is set apart from “modern” progress. One place we can turn in order to illustrate the logic underlying such representations is the field of anthropology and, in particular, Johannes Fabian’s classic discussion of the use of time and space to understand society and culture. Fabian’s discussion highlights the process by which dominant perspectives use time to centralize their own position in comparison to cultures seen to exist outside their purview, a point relevant to the topic at hand. Fabian finds that anthropologists, like the general population, use “typological time” in which to place cultural others in a contained, and hence knowable, past. Fabian writes: “As distancing devises, categorizations of this kind are used, for instance, when we are told that certain elements in our culture are ‘neolithic’ or ‘archaic’; . . . or when certain styles of thought are identified as ‘savage’ or ‘primitive’.”²⁴ Fabian’s analysis helps explain the postwar representation of white working-class

rurality as a spatiotemporally regressed state, a devalued past-in-present: The use of time becomes a “distancing device” setting apart those “elements in our culture” or “styles of thought” that are considered irrelevant to “our” *present* situation (hence “they” are archaic or savage). In the postwar era, rural space is portrayed as static, lacking the markers of progress associated with the sub/urban processes that define the present, a dichotomy that simultaneously reinforces the centrality of the middle-classed sub/urban. As a result, geography and temporality are intertwined: Rurality is a *space*, but it is also seen as a *time*, an interrelationship that also has implications for those people inhabiting rural spaces as well. Just as rural “space” is seen as stuck in the past, its perceived culture is seen as irrelevant to the modern forms comprising postwar society.

This “typological time” and its inflection upon culture can be seen in the distinction between a middle-classed sub/urban “present” and a rural “past-in-present,” a distinction that underscores a dominant discourse on rurality in the postwar and that can be found in both scholarly studies in the social sciences and journalistic reportage. One example is Julie Meyer’s “The Stranger and the City” in the *American Journal of Sociology*, where rurality is marked by an orientation toward “place” as opposed to the urban’s orientation toward “time.” For Meyer, the place-oriented rural is a static entity: “Time plays a part only in so far as it is ‘inclosed’ in place as the periods in which its established values and ways have been formed. Time is connected to place by the past, and this connection serves as yardstick for the present and future.” On the other hand, in the city, place is “subordinated” to time; the urbanite is one whose “experiences” are in the present and future: “They are nevertheless his and thus constantly enlarge and transform his very substance of life.” It is because of the urban subject’s orientation toward time, not place, that he or she becomes the “bearers of things to come, more advanced than the outsiders [*not* urban] and knowing more than they.” For Meyer, the urbanite is an evolved being who spurs social changes, and there is inevitable tension and conflict between the urban as it is aligned with the “modern” and the rural associated with the “backwoods.”²⁵

Meyer’s formulation—that rurality is a premodern, regressed space without consciousness whereas the urban is an emblem of modernity, change, and evolving humanity—reflects the larger assumptions of the postwar period. However, not all social scientists in the postwar subscribed to the idea that the rural and urban were inherently separated. From both sides of the Atlantic, studies in geography, rural sociology, and urban sociology show that while the social sciences may have internalized the unsaid assumptions surrounding geography within American culture, there were also others who were critical of such dismissive and short-sighted attitudes.²⁶ However, although these criticisms existed, they did not dispel the larger notion that geographic space *was* a determinate of one’s cultural place in modern society, as particularly evident in the mainstream media. I turn now to the persistence of such an idea in postwar journalistic reportage, in particular, the notion that rurality is a space inherently regressed temporally and

culturally, or a past-in-present existing separately from what could be perceived as a modern, middle-classed, and sub/urban society.

This spatial past-in-present is both positively and negatively viewed in the postwar and can be seen in early debates of the postwar period coinciding with the initial migration toward suburban locations. This debate may take on a light-hearted tone, such as a *New York Times* compilation of quotes defending the superiority of town or country, but it may also be illustrated in stereotypical imagery of city versus rural, and the reflection on those who choose one geographic space or the other.²⁷ Thus is the case in *Life*'s "pictorial debate" between a city writer (Charles Jackson) and a small-town writer (Granville Hicks).²⁸ In the pictures and captions of the city, Jackson is associated with sophistication and glamour, shown at the restaurant 21 with "sophisticated company" or backstage with actress Patricia Neal. Hicks, on the other hand, is photographed within scenes of a winter pastoral and a community of old men in a country store. The connotations of city and country are clear: the glamorous city full of intellect and culture, and the country as the province of the simple life fading away into oblivion (hence, the tie of the rural community to the elderly). Although not necessarily passing judgment in this article, *Life* still evokes and reinforces the cultural conceptions of rurality as the past, urbanity as the vibrant present and, by extension, the future. In the context of the accompanying photos, this binary is imagined as one occurring between the all-white communities depicted in both city and country.

Whether particular articles or publications hold rural space in a positive or negative light, rurality in this period is generally tied to the contained "place" of Meyer's sociological formulation, a past-in-presentness constructing a foreign land within the borders of the United States. This foreign land may be portrayed idealistically, as a space of security existing outside modern urban society. One such example is the *Saturday Evening Post* article "My Town," in 1945, where Murphy's neighbors are still "tilling the same soil their forefathers tilled" in 1776.²⁹ More urban-identified publications like the *New York Times* also documented rural space as an idealized foreign land. The very title of the pictorial essay "Remembrance of Things Present" displays rurality as a past (a "remembrance") to be drawn out for an urban audience wholly disconnected from such a past-in-present rural America.³⁰

As rural space was seen as a perpetual past-in-present, people inhabiting rural places were viewed in kind. In journalistic reportage, "rurality" was not always explicitly aligned with a particular race in its written descriptions; in the "My Town" article, for example, the reference to the "forefathers" of 1776 implies that the lineage in question is assumed to be white. In other instances, the accompanying images to such stories made it clear that "rurality"—even that of the working class—was the province of whites. Because these people are seen outside of modern time, they become personally devolved, for better or for worse, in comparison to the perpetually evolving sub/urbanite. In idealistic portrayals of rurality, rural people are equated to children, thus creating a safe place for

the nostalgia of the implied (white) reader who has supposedly moved on and into a more adult, modern world. For example, in the *Saturday Evening Post*'s "They Escaped from Civilization" we are given a California river community an hour and a half from San Francisco, yet completely removed from its modernity. Regardless of the supposed thousands of tourists who arrive every year, the place is represented as in the grips of a perpetual Peter Pan childhood, in "a never-never land where thousands have learned to laugh at clocks, jobs and security."³¹ This association gestures toward the undeveloped nature of rural inhabitants (all white, according to the accompanying photographs), thus reinforcing the subject position of the implicitly evolved middle-classless sub/urban reader, and through the nostalgic associations of rurality with innocence and childlike freedom. Such double-edged nostalgia can also be found in publications like the *New Yorker* and the *Times*, whether a writer merely evokes the "familiarity" and "sense of belonging" in pastoral rural Maine for a Christmas Eve edition (see E. B. White's *New Yorker* column "Letter from the East"), or as a writer recalls his own childhood past in rural America (Wright Morris in the *Times*).³² Both writers evoke a rural space from which they also distance themselves. In White's case, it is clear that he is merely a participant observer transplanted from the metropolitan (at one point he compares watching deer hunting to a Harvard-Yale game) and who is writing for the metropolitan, as is suggested by the advertisements for New York City restaurants and shops accompanying his piece.³³ In Morris's case, the small town is portrayed as an idealized place that formed the bedrock of modern society, yet it is a place that the postwar present has necessarily evolved beyond. For Morris, this unreachable past is a source of ambivalence: On one hand, there is the desire to return to the familiarity of childhood, yet on the other it is a past better left behind for greater, modern things, as we see in his pictorial essays "American Scene" and "Home Town Revisited."

Particularly in "Home Town Revisited," Morris equates "progress" with the evolution beyond the small town; as he states, "If there is any truth in this notion—we're all small-town boys at heart—it may help to explain why some of these towns have never grown up. We're from there, but we do our living somewhere else. This is known as Progress. Most of us are familiar with it." Small towns may breed great people, but great people do not make small towns: Great people outgrow these places (literally, in Morris's picture of grass growing around sidewalk), leaving behind a population in perpetual childhood. Morris's reference to out-migration ("most of us are familiar" with moving) distinguishes between those who have evolved out of the town, and those who remain behind, physically and culturally, an association that continued through the late 1960s.³⁴

Personal recollections help reinforce such a vision of rural places, including small towns, as pasts-in-present that remain embalmed for "modern" America to remember/compare itself against. That this rural place is subtly equated with whiteness can be seen once again in the accompanying photos of the all-white rural inhabitants. In Morris's case, his own evolution from rural to urban subject portrays him as an expert on these rural pasts-in-present places and confirms

their function as a limit case for modern society. This point is also reflected in other types of mainstream reportage rooted in autobiography, such as reflected in a reminiscence of leaving an Amish background, and in the expert opinion of social scientists.³⁵ This latter article from a 1963 *Newsweek* edition explicitly ties the decimation of one Iowan small town to the inevitable, if welcome, fate of rural America, quoting sociologist Phillip Hauser to make its point: “What the small town may have contributed in the past is one side of the coin; the other side is urbanism and the greatest opportunity in the history of man for him to reach his full potential. . . . If the small town is passing, we can’t bemoan it.”³⁶ As sociologists like Hauser believe, and what is encapsulated in articles like this, the declining small town truly becomes a thing of times past, eventually fading into a place beyond cultural memory, a process that allows for true humanity to emerge. By the end of the postwar, even this nostalgia starts to disappear; as a 1970 *Time* article claims, “Few modern Americans feel much nostalgia for the farm or small town.”³⁷

The notion of “rurality” as a spatiotemporal past-in-present, and one that is aligned implicitly with whiteness, is portrayed in diverse publications across the postwar period. Some of these articles tie this past-in-present to an inherent cultural regression, since it does not provide the necessary *urban* conditions for an evolved state.³⁸ This conception of a rural past-in-present underlies more specific issues that arise in a postwar period marked by rapid social and cultural change, such as those pertaining to suburbanization across the country.

The Sub/urban and the Rural

In the process of portraying rurality as a past-in-present, American discourse also largely aligned “rurality” with whiteness, and, in coverage of particular issues, this rural whiteness became infused with low-classness. Discourse surrounding the rapid suburbanization of the postwar period is a particularly apt place to consider white working-class rurality’s role in a rapidly changing America, as many different concerns intersect within the suburban form: the physical reorganization of American society toward the suburbs (physical mobility) and issues of class difference within a time of supposed universal prosperity. In other words, the suburb created a place to examine the material indicators of one’s economic and thus personal capability—and a place in which to set an example to contrast those people deemed as social, cultural, and economic failures.

Revisionist scholars have touched upon the complicated role that suburbia played within the early postwar period, providing a framework for this article’s analysis of the dominant discourse on rurality within representations of postwar suburbia. It is clear from historians that the concept of “suburbia” preceded the postwar US context; still, its popularity in the postwar demonstrated larger social and cultural changes of the period, namely, the rapid geographic and class mobility after World War II due in part to the GI Bill (access to college, affordable housing, and access to home loans).³⁹ For many revisionist scholars, the postwar

suburb is seen as a reflection of, or upward mobility toward, the middle class. As theorist Mark Clapson points out, the “suburban home” became a material indicator of one’s achievement of the American Dream, reflecting a “suburban aspiration” filled with both agrarian nostalgia, urban amenities, and class division.⁴⁰

In Clapson’s analysis, class difference sets in part the “social tone” of a suburb by a hierarchy of class and status between and within individual developments; in other words, merely owning property outside urban centers (for example, working-class suburbs, to be discussed) did not necessarily achieve the perceived norms of middle-classed sub/urbanity.⁴¹ However, as we will see in various discourses in the postwar period, this class difference was understood in part through notions of geography. Thus, “suburban aspiration” is associated with images of both the agrarian ideal (i.e., the pastoral) and urban (i.e., modern) amenity, and those who do not attain such material indicators are seen as spatiotemporally and therefore culturally regressed.

This becomes especially pertinent in the postwar period’s classless rhetoric: Without a vocabulary for understanding class, other indicators for distinction arise.⁴² Some of these indicators rest upon geographic metaphor, that is, through understandings of spatiotemporally and culturally regressed rurality as negative counterexample to a progressed, modern period. Even as a “rural ideal” may exist within the conception and development of suburbia (as pointed out by Barbara M. Kelly), it is ultimately an ideal that serves as a limit case for middle-class and urban development.⁴³ For example, in rhetoric of the postwar period, places like Levittown “‘sprang up’ from potato farms,” a conception recognized in testimonies from Levittown workers and shared across the country.⁴⁴ The suburb was thus associated with *developing* geographic space through a specific, middle-class outlook, even in suburbs such as Levittown that were directed at lower-income and working-class people.⁴⁵ Rural land is seen as being developed on both a spatial and temporal level, modeled into “modern” social forms, and satisfying the cultural ideals of the sub/urban subject. Those who are not aligned with this ideal, such as white working-class rurality, are seen as undeveloped figures of the past (for example, the rural inhabitants who preexisted Levittown described as “Okies,” that is, as beings stuck in the Depression era).⁴⁶ The “Okie” was a powerful figure in the American imagination of the time, and its use further illustrates the conflation of a low-class whiteness with regressed rural spaces.⁴⁷ This association continued with conceptions surrounding the suburb into the 1960s, as we see in Nicholas Bloom’s analysis of “new towns,” where a distinction was upheld between the ethnically diverse suburban residents of Reston, Virginia, and the “rural residents” who served as the “soda jerks and grease monkeys and janitors” of the town.⁴⁸

The vocabulary that aligns a middle-class ideal with spatiotemporal and cultural progress can be found in postwar writings surrounding suburban development, ranging from critiques of suburbia and celebrations of it as a new frontier developed by cultural pioneers.⁴⁹ Part of this vocabulary rests on notions

of *developing* regressed rurality into modern, sub/urban respectability. For example, in early celebrations of suburbia as found in a 1949 edition of *Harper's*, the suburban atmosphere is aligned with urban taste and interest, as set in contrast to the precivilized atmosphere of the country, which lacks modern safeguards such as paved roads, human companionship, and culture.⁵⁰ In this context, the cultural pioneer reaffirms the superiority of the sub/urban middle-classed subject over the rural space he or she had come to inhabit, while simultaneously justifying the transformation of rural places in his or her image. This rhetoric, and its particular coding of geography and class, lends urban subjects the ability to see themselves as purveyors of progress and postwar modernity who, once migrated to rural spaces, could still distinguish themselves from their regressed, rural surroundings.

The term “city yokel,” as used in mainstream publications, is a demonstration of the distinction made between the urban middle-/upper-class and their culturally regressed “country” surrounds. In 1953 John Gould writes about the phenomenon of the urban to rural migrants and their mirror image to the rural-to-urban migrant of a “generation before” who was “properly recognized as a stock character,” a “hick, a rube, a yokel, a hayseed.”⁵¹ From the title of Gould’s article in the *Times*, we can see that a name is given to this urban to rural migrant, the “city yokel.” The name “city yokel” itself provides a comical dissonance between the urban-to-rural migrant and the regressed character of the rurality in which they find themselves, a point underscored not just by the stories relayed by Gould but by the accompanying caricatures of (white) locals in contrast to the (white) newcomers. This dissonance is one way that the urban-to-rural migrant can maintain a culturally superior position over their rural neighbors; a “city yokel” may live in the country, but he or she will never be *of* the country, he or she will never become just a plain “yokel.”⁵²

The imagery of the “city yokel” illustrates a typology negotiating the shifting terrain of rural and urban, and the cultural implications of such a shift. Some writers explicitly delineate this typology through aligning specific geographic positions with personality traits, such as we see in the *Times* throughout the 1950s.⁵³ The need to demarcate between a modern, sub/urban “us” and a regressed rural “them” may be particularly important in those situations where urban subjects moved beyond suburban development to more culturally far-flung places. Thus, attaching the term “pioneer” is one way to make such a move not just acceptable, but laudable. Relatedly, the figure of the small farmer also became popular during this time, either in an attempt to actually practice farming or to use it as a scenic backdrop. Where the pioneer evokes the image of taming wilderness, the farmer becomes a cultivator of nature and democracy. In the rhetoric surrounding both the suburban development and the attempt to be a farmer in some fashion or another, rurality is portrayed as in need of development by modern, urban norms, and that those doing the developing were not as devalued as those who had traditionally existed within the rural. This point is perhaps best illustrated in the movement of society’s elite to the appearance of farming.⁵⁴ Further, this

sentiment underscores the popularity of “farming” for even the less glamorous urban-to-rural migrant as can be seen in publications ranging from the *Times* to *Saturday Evening Post*.⁵⁵

As J. K. Galbraith satirizes the turnover of farmland to sub/urban amenity, “Poor land makes good scenery,” and it is within this observation that we can see the position of rurality within dominant discourse.⁵⁶ There is a duality within this conception of country living: the devalued position of “poor” land in both social and cultural terms, but an idealized backdrop in which the suburbanite can prove one’s own developed nature. This assumption underlies articles like *Life*’s 1948 “Escape to the Country” where professionals leave the city for a “simpler existence on a farm or in a small town.”⁵⁷ The lure of the country is that of a simple life, outside modern pressures, and from the West to the Northeast, these families made a break for the idealized aspect of a rural past-in-present. In other articles, this lure is explicitly tied to the past, through reference to childhood and feelings of home. This sentiment emerges particularly in articles where the trials and tribulations of actual farming and/or primitive country living are detailed, such as *Life*’s pictorial essay entitled “The Simple Life” (which ran in 1955). The story of one couple’s struggle with their farm is used to illustrate the rewards gained within regressed rural spaces. As a past-in-present, these rewards are the typical “closeness to soil,” the return to childhood, and, of course, home: “Sometimes you recapture the simple / pleasures that delighted you as a child. / The change of the seasons, the rich smell / of outdoors, the spicy kitchen smell / of cookies baking for the holidays.”⁵⁸

Many publications embrace the idealized backdrop of rurality, while simultaneously maintaining distance from the devalued associations of rural space (and people). This point is evident in articles that justify the urban subject’s decision to move toward regressed rural places: It is admitted that rural space is *not* modern, and as such, can become a space to live out regressive tendencies or perhaps fantasies. This sentiment can be found in a 1956 *Saturday Evening Post* article in which Stewart Alsop describes why he loves his country home, which he calls his “rural slum.” Alsop agrees with the description of his country home as a “nostalgie de la boue” put forth by one of his “more intellectual friends.” Alsop’s friend believes that his place is “so ugly and ill-kempt that you have absolutely nothing to live up to, and you feel as though you were back in your sandbox, happily making mud pies.”⁵⁹ Alsop agrees: “It is really remarkable to rediscover the joys of squalor, the pleasures of being grubby,” and this rediscovery leads Alsop and his family into a precivilized state where they no longer “care whether the guest towel is clean—or even whether there is any guest towel at all.”⁶⁰ It is interesting that Alsop uses his “intellectual” friend and a French expression (always an indicator of higher class intellectualism in the United States) to qualify his enjoyment of a country home: His home is a *rediscovery* of squalor and a regression to childlike innocence and aimlessness (nothing above making “mud pies” in a sandbox). The country home instills a prehuman consciousness within its owners, although clearly, since they are aware

of the difference between civilized/uncivilized, their experience of rural living is transformed by the “sophistication” of seeing it as “nostalgie de la boue.” By inference, those unaware of the difference because they have never left the mud (i.e., low-class rural inhabitants) become part of what this nostalgia remembers: the unconscious mud itself. For “nostalgie de la boue” means more than just a return to the mud—it is an “attraction to what is unworthy, crude, or degrading.”⁶¹ As with many representations of rurality within postwar discourse, this “nostalgie de la boue” serves as the backdrop to a white rurality (the Alsop family and friends in the accompanying photographs), while it simultaneously exhibits an intersection between geography and class: These urban-to-rural migrants move into regressed rural places to live out their nostalgia, but it is seen as a different kind of rurality than that of the (implied white) working class or poor. As a result, the cultural mud has become scenery for the civilized, urban spectator who is capable of actively separating the “unworthy” (rural regression) from the worthy (rural amenity as defined by the pioneer/farmer, the “city yokel”).

Class Distinction, the Rural, and the Working-Class Suburb

As with many representations of rurality within postwar discourse, this “nostalgie de la boue” assumes a whiteness shared between urban-to-rural migrants and the rurality in which they are moving toward and simultaneously exhibits an intersection between geography and class. These urban-to-rural migrants move into regressed rural places to live out their nostalgia, but it is seen as a different kind of rurality than that of the working class or poor. Yet this connection to class difference is rarely mentioned in any direct sense, and it is at this point that I would like to draw out the subtle and not-so-subtle ways in which the dominant discourse of the time distinguished between working-class and working-poor rural inhabitants and the middle-/upper-classed suburbanite physically moving toward these places. A look at journalistic reportage and a few scholarly works in the sociology of the time show that the devaluation of the figure of white working-class rurality became a vehicle for establishing class difference, without having to necessarily name “class” in and of itself. Geography and, in particular, the dominant discourse on regressed rurality was instead used as a viable substitute.

One obvious place to start is with the upper-class urban migrants readily identified as “exurbanites,” or those urban-to-rural migrants who have settled in the furthest reaches of suburbia. Within this discourse, ironically, the status of these upper-class migrants rises as they move beyond the suburban ring, their incursion affirming their claim to “new” territories in rural places beyond this ring, while also signaling their rejection of a postwar society they see as degraded by such phenomena as encroaching suburbia, overindustrialization, and mass society.⁶² These representations lend an aura of superiority to the exurbanite even as he or she moves further into the wilderness and, as such, become emblematic in their development of the cultural wasteland of rurality in their own image. Thus, in

mainstream publications like *Newsweek* and book-length popular press studies like A. C. Spector's *The Exurbanites*, the exurbanite is portrayed as a general "VIP" of American culture, and tied to the urban (in Spector's case, New York City) and wealth, elite trendsetters that "set the styles, mold the fashions, and populate the dreams of the rest of the country."⁶³ In the national imaginary, exurbanites exemplify a coveted lifestyle, in contrast to the suburban commuters, who, as Spector suggests, desire to attain the status of the exurbanite but are unable to do so for they lack both the money and *savoir faire* of these elites.

Spector offers an interesting postwar view toward the exurbanites: Slightly condescending toward the upper-class posturing of exclusivity, while also demonstrating the associations of rurality with that of a low-classed and largely irrelevant population, a common theme in dominant discourse of the time. Within such a discourse, white working-class rurality more explicitly provided a counterexample for the exurbanites as an idealized rustic figure amid a pastoral backdrop, but one that was also coded as retrograde and backwards. Thus, Spector notes that although these rural areas had already been "settled" for a couple of hundred years, it is a settlement so irrelevant to the exurbanite society that it may as well have never happened. For Spector, these "original settlers have, largely, removed" either to settle further West (i.e., during the 1800s) or to the "industrialism" of the city, illustrating the larger belief that progress is associated with movement away from rurality and toward the modern (i.e., urbanity and capitalism). The settlers that remain behind are thus marked by their failure to keep up with the progress that is seen as constituting postwar society, a cultural difference that is recognized in terms setting apart the "natives" from the more enlightened exurbanites who were the new pioneers. Spector portrays these natives as the inherently regressed "original settlers," easily recognized by the "faint trace of native speech" and their working-class or working poor position at the "local garage" for example. Described as "occasionally of a fruity vintage," some of these residents are then likened to the "spiritual first-cousins of the celebrated Jukes family."⁶⁴ This allusion marks white working-class rural inhabitants, in comparison to the exurbanites, as culturally regressed through a reference to the Jukes, who were the test sample for early-1900s eugenics studies that sought to prove the biological inferiority of poor, rural whites in the North.⁶⁵ Ultimately, in discourses such as this, white working-class rural subjects are portrayed as an almost different species than the exurbanites who have come to occupy the same space.

The exurbanite may be a blueprint for the upwardly mobile sub/urbanites who hope to keep separate from the encroaching low-class rural population in their backyards while simultaneously partaking of the pastoral backdrop of which both groups share. As H. J. Gans observes in his postwar study of Levittown, the "popular desire for suburban home ownership imitates the fashion-setting upper and upper middle classes."⁶⁶ In this way, the desire for the idealized pastoral as we see in publications such as *Life* (see the pictorial essay "Spring on a Farm") and *Saturday Evening Post* (particularly its "Faces of America" series) or the

coverage of “country” fashion and commodities in the *Times* reveals as much about its sub/urban audience through what it omits.⁶⁷ As we saw in Spectorsky, even the more elite exurbanites had to contend with the white working class in their mobility toward rural outreaches.

In this way, the pastoral can be seen as a backdrop for “modern” society to blissfully continue its progress and development in the image of the middle-class suburbanite, and to simultaneously overwrite those rural people who fall outside the appearance of modern progress and development. One telling example of this rewriting can be found in the *Saturday Evening Post*’s “The Happy Storekeeper of the Green Mountains,” an article detailing Vrest Orton’s old-fashioned country store in the Green Mountains of Vermont after a successful professional life in the city. Orton’s “return” to an implied white rurality (the reader is shown photos of the white residents of Weston, Vermont, in backdrop to the tale of his childhood in Vermont and the country store owned by his father) is part of a revitalization of Weston that began in the 1930s.⁶⁸ Despite the fact that the town had been established many decades prior, the article depicts Orton as a settler, a rugged pioneer taming the “ghost town” Weston: “Weston, a thriving and industrious village in 1860, had suffered the fate of many Vermont hill towns. Its most ambitious and energetic families had moved west; its enterprise had vanished. By 1910 it was a forgotten village where a few hundred people strove to live.”⁶⁹

A tale of decaying small towns turns into a backdrop for postwar development: towns like Weston were settled (it was once a “thriving and industrious village”), but then those settlers with personal aptitude (“most ambitious and energetic families”) left for better opportunities in the city, their upward mobility inextricable from physical movement across geographies. As those people left, the town died (note that “enterprise” disappeared *after* the talented left and not vice versa), becoming a “forgotten village.” Never mind that a “few hundred people” still lived here: The village was, to the sub/urban eye, dead. Then, from an undeveloped town (we are given a portrait of no indoor plumbing or electricity) populated by the least ambitious of the old settlers, the new settlers created a goldmine, a couple of whom, incidentally, were also highlighted in the “Escape to the Country” article in *Life* discussed above.

By the time of this article, Orton opened his old-fashioned store, “the key-stone of the whole restoration project,” a primarily mail-order business that in turn fuels tourist stops at the actual store in Vermont. The catalog reflects the old-fashioned items sold in the store and the very same nostalgia that propelled Orton to rediscover his rural past after the “circle of his life had been completed”; according to the article, one woman compared the catalog to “getting a letter from the homefolks.” This pastoral slice of rural America becomes a contained past-in-present tied to home, childhood, and simplicity and is reinvoked through the nostalgic reminiscences of the suburbanites consuming its wares. Note that the original settlers have all but disappeared by the end of the article.⁷⁰

However, those less desirable aspects of rurality, as symbolized in the few hundred locals left behind in Weston, are still amid the modernizing newcomers.

Again, this coexistence creates a problem: Regressed rural people seemingly unable to progress live side by side with the middle class in-migrating to these “undeveloped” rural places. Where Orton’s exurbanite circle have the means to rewrite an entire town in the pastoral, the consumer of his pastoral wares may overwrite regressed rurality in his or her own personal space, perhaps in that of a new suburban development, hence the popularity of country life shows just mentioned.

The pastoral is one example of the suburban overwriting the less desirable rural inhabitants outside of its developments. However, finding ways of distinguishing from this devalued aspect of rurality also provided suburbanites with a vocabulary to draw class distinctions between themselves and other sub/urban migrants who did not conform to the middle-class associations of suburbia. Mainstream publications and sociologists alike insisted upon the separation between the middle-class and their negative counterexamples. Ostensibly, this separation was used to demonstrate that suburbia was not a homogenous beast: There was occupational and, by the early 1960s, admitted class difference existing within suburbia, something that some academic treatments made sense of through geography. These treatments of suburbia relied on tropes of geographic otherness (i.e., urban versus rural) to differentiate the low-class inhabitants between and within particular suburbs, using the rural background of residents to explain the perceived division between less desirable, mass-produced suburbs and those that were more exclusive. In line with the journalistic reportage already discussed, the race of both suburbanite and rural inhabitant often goes unremarked, both assumed to be white.

Scholars such as William Dobriner and Bennett Berger maintained the allegiance between the urban and the suburban: Even as all suburbs shared a similar geographic area outside the city, they were not necessarily homogenous, and they were emphatically *not* rural. Strangely, the logic of such assertions rests upon the notion that geographic generalities such as “urban” and “rural” are understood as *classed* positions, coextensive of the occupational and lifestyles “natural” to each. As a result, both sociologists insisted that the class make-up of each suburban development was more indicative of the composition of suburbia than the “place” of suburbia (i.e., outside the urban) itself. Indeed, the main point of William Dobriner’s *Class in Suburbia* was to “establish that class rather than place plays a critical role in the shaping of suburbia.”⁷¹ Given that suburbs are all physically secured outside of the city, “place” alone cannot be used to recognize the social worth of a suburbanite. Instead, as Dobriner suggests, the suburbanite maintains another classed position than that of the more rural surrounds in which he or she finds themselves, a higher class associated with the urban. Berger takes this sentiment a step further to help explain the fact that not all suburbs are the same in “quality” or status, as the existence of both low-class and more prestigious middle-/upper-class suburbanites makes clear. To help explain the phenomenon of low-class residents within the suburban, Berger ties the low-classness of less desirable suburbanites to the *geographic* background of its inhabitants, namely,

the rural origins of the low-class suburban in-migrants. Like Dobriner, Berger's conflation of rurality and low-classness helps explain the existence of class difference within the postwar progress and development so exemplified in suburban forms.

It is clear from Dobriner's argument that geographic forms are imbued with a class structure that is reflective of their residents, as we see in the following quote taken from a section entitled "Faces of the Middle Class": "Neither do the 'lower classes' figure significantly in influencing the character of the suburbs. The city slum and the rural shanty-town are where the 'lower classes' live. . . . They are the hopeless, passive, and brutalized products of their own blunted perspectives and hooded vision. They are the current faceless waste products of the fine free, social, economic, and political mechanisms of our time."⁷²

In this formulation, both the "rural shanty-town" and "city slum" are detritus of sub/urban progress; neither is aligned with the postwar progress of which suburban development is reflective. Where the suburb cannot be aligned with either of these low-class places, Dobriner also repeatedly insists on suburbia's allegiance to urbanity, the two "joined together by common *class* bonds, and relatively few place factors separate them."⁷³ Although the "city slum" may exist, it can be seen as an exception to urbanity rather than the rule, in contrast to the rural slum that may very well reflect the cultural regression associated with rurality in general. It follows that through this alliance with the urban, the suburb is opposed to rural regression even as it coexists with it, allowing Dobriner to completely write the rural and its retrograde associations into extinction for his postwar audience:

But there was no compromise of rural and urban forms. The suburbanites carried the spirit of the city to rural areas, and, in the long run, very little of rural America remained once suburbanization invaded the rural countryside.⁷⁴

For this sociologist, suburbanites were truly pioneers who had developed an otherwise spatiotemporally and culturally regressed rurality. And, to make sure of completely extricating the postwar suburbanites from any of these rural implications, Dobriner dates this process as occurring by 1925.

It is clear that Dobriner sees the urban as an evolutionary force and rurality as an economically and socioculturally devolved space. By joining the suburbanite to urbanity, Dobriner avoids aligning the suburb with regressed, rural space, a point explicitly made in an article he wrote for the *Yale Review*. The article, "Natural History of a Reluctant Suburb," immediately portrays the suburb as the product of a natural evolution from regressed rurality to that of the modern middle-class sub/urb. Through his description of the transformed landscape, Dobriner illustrates the inherent differences between the sub/urban (the commuter's cars and new homes) and the rural (signified by an abandoned mill):

The great shuddering bulk of the mill squats in the hollow, *intimidated* by the headlights of the commuters as they race down and through the valley, *dreary from the city* and hungry for home. *Pencils of light* search into the gaping slats and crudely intrude upon the *embarrassment of the mill's decay*. . . . Through the empty windows, across the tide basin, and over the harbor, you can see the new shopping center bathed in neon and fluorescent light. . . . Up along the darkening necks the lights are going on in the new split levels and “contemporaries” tucked into the ridges.⁷⁵

It is worth quoting Dobriner at length, as the passage exemplifies his definition of progress as everything affiliated with suburban development. In contrast, the forces resistant to change in these rural communities are portrayed as incapable of moving forward with the rest of the nation, hostile to a modernity they seemingly cannot comprehend.

This notion of natural evolution from rural to suburban is something shared by other sociologists of the time, such as H. J. Gans, who suggests that rural-ity was merely a “preindustrial” holdover from the past.⁷⁶ We can place Gans’s own perspective in a lineage along with Dobriner, but it is a perspective also shared with Bennett Berger, who suggests that the class differentiation that occurs within suburbia is tied to the personal development (or lack thereof) of the residents within it. In Berger’s analysis, it is the rural background of residents that most likely contributes to a less than middle-classed position: “And if, as is not unlikely, many of the residents of [mass-produced suburbs] are rural-bred, with relatively little education, and innocent of white-collar status or aspirations, then we may expect sharp differences between their social and cultural life and that of their more sophisticated counterparts in white-collar suburbs.”⁷⁷

Berger uses the rest of his book to highlight the difference between a particular California working-class suburb and middle-class suburbia generally speaking. In this working-class suburb, there is no upwardly mobile aspiration, in terms of either job or property ownership advancement, something Berger relates to the aptitude of the individual: “The rationale *probably* goes something like this: ‘Here I am the son of a sharecropper with a ninth grade education and no really salable skills, and look at me: . . . what more do I have a right to expect?’”⁷⁸ The operative word here is “probably”: The above is not a quote from an actual resident, but Berger’s personal reading into his interviewees’ reactions. Berger’s projected attitude is ultimately highlighted as a negative counterexample to postwar upward mobility and progress, where “aspiration and anticipation are things for educated people with a fluid position in an organizational hierarchy,” qualities that are then associated with the urban.⁷⁹ As Berger states in his preface, middle-class “ways of life” are not “developed” in this particular working-class suburb for “reasons which also suggest the implausibility of any such development in the near future,” as the “overwhelming majority” of the respondents are

originally from “rural farm or working-class backgrounds.”⁸⁰ Berger draws a line between, in his words, the “Okies” and “Arkies” that populate this suburb and the background of the middle-class inhabitants in a more desirable kind of suburb, a distinction that operates along the intersecting axes of class (working-class versus middle-class) and geography (rural versus sub/urban) even as it assumes whiteness across the divide.

Geography was used in these discourses to naturalize the difference between the aspiring middle-class sub/urbanite and a working-class rurality, both of which were assumed to be white. The distinction set forth by these discourses served a dual function. First, conceptions of geographic and class difference justified the forms taken by middle-classed sub/urban development and, ultimately, the middle-classed sub/urban presence in otherwise culturally retrograde rural places. Second, the perceived difference between these two subject positions helped explain why certain segments of the population failed to achieve the appearance of modernity considered the benchmark for postwar society—that of the white, upwardly mobile suburban. In dominant discourses in scholarly studies and journalism alike, the socioeconomic and cultural superiority of the middle-classed sub/urban as compared to seemingly undeveloped and retrograde white working-class rural inhabitants could be attributed solely to the personal aptitudes inherent to each instead of to the arbitrary systems used to further the aspirations of one group of people to the detriment of all others.

While specific to the postwar period, these writings also illustrate the historical role played by rurality: As a past-in-present, this geographic space simultaneously operates as an idealized backdrop and a container for all things undesirable to American society at a given point in time. And although this study may be considered revisionist in the sense that its main focus is on the past, it is also striking that the undercurrent to the specific issue of suburban development in the postwar period—that rural people, particularly of the white working-classes, reside in a spatiotemporally regressed state, and are thus culturally retrograde—remains recognizable into 2014, a discussion perhaps best undertaken at another time.

Notes

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1. Dolores Hayden, *Building Suburbia: Green Fields and Urban Growth, 1820–2000* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2003), 3.

2. Kenneth Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 213. See chapter 11 for an in-depth discussion of the roots of such discrimination in government funding.

3. Douglas S. Massey and Nancy A. Denton claim that between 1940 and 1970 there was “widespread support among whites for racial discrimination in housing and for the systematic exclusion of blacks from white neighborhoods.” In *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 49. See also chapter 2, “The Construction of the Ghetto.”

4. James Gregory notes in regard to discourses surrounding rural-to-urban migration of the mid-1900s that “The figure of the black migrant faded from view while the white migrant, especially the Appalachian white, gained clarity” in no small part due to the widespread conflation of “southerners” with whiteness. In *The Southern Diaspora: How the Great Migrations of Black and White Southerners Transformed America* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 77.

5. U.S. Census Bureau, “Table 7: Population by Urban and Rural Residence: 1790–1970,” in *1970 Census of Population: Characteristics of the Population. I* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1973), 1–46.

6. U.S. Census Bureau, “Characteristics of the Population,” in *Census of Population: 1950: Characteristics of the Population. II* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1973), 11.

7. U.S. Census Bureau, “Table 95: Poverty Status in 1969 of Families and Persons by Race and Urban and Rural Residence: 1970,” in *1970 Census of Population: Characteristics of the Population. I* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1973). Admittedly, these particular figures focus on “rurality” and “urbanity” as general entities across the country and are not adjusted for region.

8. U.S. Census Bureau, “Table 1: Types of Residence of Persons by Poverty Status, 1969,” in *1970 Census of Population: Subject Reports: Low-Income Population* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1973).

9. Given space considerations, a fuller portrait could not be painted of the difference between “suburb,” “urban,” and “rural” geographies. This portrait would have to include the 1950 and 1960 censuses in regard to differences in income, occupation, housing, and adjusted by region and size of place.

10. Michael Zweig, “Introduction. The Challenge of Working Class Studies,” in *What’s Class Got to Do with It?: American Society in the Twenty-first Century*, ed. Michael Zweig (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2004), 4.

11. Stanley Aronowitz, *The Politics of Identity: Class, Culture, Social Movements* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 72.

12. In this way, postwar discourse reflects what Raymond Williams points out in regard to English society: Rurality, whether idealized or devalued, was posited as a place that the “modern” (read: middle-class and urban) world had conquered and moved beyond. In “Pastoral and Counter-Pastoral,” in *The Country and the City* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973).

13. In Larry May, ed., *Recasting America: Culture and Politics in the Age of Cold War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 179.

14. *Ibid.*

15. Williams, “Pastoral and Counter-Pastoral,” 1.

16. Even the US Census Bureau makes this distinction: “The definition of ‘urban’ has changed over time in response to changes in settlement patterns, data use needs, and technology available for use in defining urban areas. The Census Bureau has continued to define ‘rural’ as all territory, persons, and housing units not defined as urban.” In “Urban and Rural Areas—History,” US Census Bureau, https://www.census.gov/history/www/programs/geography/urban_and_rural_areas.html. For a more in-depth discussion, see David L. Brown and William A. Kandel, “Rural America through a Demographic Lens,” in *Population Change and Rural Society*, ed. William A. Kandel and David L. Brown (Dordrecht, Netherlands: Springer, 2006).

17. Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier*, 238; Massey and Denton, *American Apartheid*, 44.

18. Hayden, *Building Suburbia*, 21–23.

19. Anthony Harkins, *Hillbilly: A Cultural History of an American Icon* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 4.

20. *Ibid.*, 5.

21. As Harkins points out, it is the very whiteness of such figures that allow for an “apolitical” way to explore the limits and possibilities of modernity across different time periods. *Ibid.*, 7–8.

22. Lucy Jarosz and Victoria Lawson, “‘Sophisticated People Versus Rednecks’: Economic Restructuring and Class Difference in America’s West,” *Antipode* 34 (2002): 12.

23. John Hartigan, *Odd Tribes: Towards a Cultural Analysis of White People* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005), 2. See also Matt Wray, *Not Quite White: White Trash and the Boundaries of Whiteness* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006).

24. Johannes Fabian, “Time and the Emerging Other” in *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object* (1983; reprint, New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 30.

25. Julie Meyer, “The Stranger and the City,” *American Journal of Sociology* 56 (1951): 480–81.

26. In the field of geography, see J. B. Jackson, “‘The Need of Being Versed in Country Things,’” *Landscape* 1 (1951): 1–5; rural sociology, see R. E. Pahl, “The Rural-Urban Continuum,” *Sociologia Ruralis* 6 (1966): 299–329; and urban sociology, see Francisco Benet, “Sociology Uncertain: The Ideology of the Rural-Urban Continuum,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 6 (1963): 1–23.

27. Frances Rodman, “Town vs. Country” *New York Times*, July 13, 1947.

28. “City vs. Country,” *Life* March 17, 1947.

29. T. E. Murphy, "My Town," *Saturday Evening Post*, July 7, 1945, 14.
30. C. B. Palmer, "Remembrance of Things Present," *New York Times*, September 5, 1954.
31. Darrell Berrigan, "They Escaped from Civilization," *Saturday Evening Post*, August 14, 1954, 24.
32. E. B. White, "Letter from the East," *New Yorker*, December 24, 1955; Wright Morris, "American Scene," *New York Times*, July 4, 1948, and "Home Town Revisited," *New York Times*, April 24, 1949.
33. White, "Letter from the East," 62.
34. For an example from the late 1960s, see Derrick Williamson, "Country Life," *Saturday Review*, August 1968.
35. Charles E. Kaufman, "My World Stood Still," *American Mercury*, January, 1961, 74.
36. Quoted in Leslie Hanscom, "Smalltown, U.S.A.," *Newsweek*, July 8, 1963, 20.
37. "American Notes: Suburbia Regnant," *Time*, July 6, 1970.
38. For one example, see John Lardner, "Debate: The Case for Living Here—," *New York Times*, April 29, 1956.
39. See Margaret Marsh, "The Mystique of Fulfillment" in *Suburban Lives* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1990); Robert Fishman, "Beyond Suburbia: The Rise of the Techno-burb," in *Bourgeois Utopias: The Rise and Fall of Suburbia* (New York: Basic Books, 1987). For an in-depth explanation of the intersection of government policy and limited mobility for postwar suburbanites, see Elizabeth Cohen, "Reconversion," in *A Consumers' Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2003).
40. Mark Clapson, *Suburban Century: Social Change and Urban Growth in England and the USA* (Oxford: Berg, 2003), 51–52.
41. *Ibid.*, 69–71.
42. For one discussion of the postwar rhetoric surrounding a seemingly classless society, see Andrew Hoberk, *The Twilight of the Middle Class: Post-World War II American Fiction and White-Collar Work* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005).
43. See the chapter "Myths and Meanings" in Barbara Kelly, *Expanding the American Dream: Building and Rebuilding Levittown* (Albany, NY: State University of Albany Press, 1993). For a specific case study of this idea as it plays out in Pennsylvania, see the chapters "Domain of Abundance" and "The Landscape of Progress" in David Walbert's *Garden Spot: Lancaster County, the Old Order Amish, and the Selling of Rural America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).
44. For examples of the rhetoric surrounding the building of Levittown, Long Island, see vol. 1 of David Halberstam's *The Fifties* (New Video Group, 1997). For examples in the South and Midwest, see Kelly, *Expanding the American Dream*, 237.
45. See Kelly; see also Rosalyn Baxandall and Elizabeth Ewen, *Picture Windows: How the Suburbs Happened* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), 124–25.
46. Quoted in Kelly, *Expanding the American Dream*, 150.
47. See James Gregory, *American Exodus: The Dust Bowl Migration and Okie Culture in California* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), Introduction.
48. It is noteworthy that this resident does not provide the racial composition of these rural residents, an oversight that is perhaps indicative of the conflation of rurality with whiteness occurring across the postwar period. Quoted in Nicholas Dagen Bloom, *Suburban Alchemy: 1960s New Towns and the Transformation of the American Dream* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2001), 160.
49. For a more focused analysis on the particular issue of postwar pioneers, see Clapson, *Suburban Century* 6, 145.
50. Phyllis McGinley, "Suburbia: Of Thee I Sing," *Harper's Magazine*, December 1949, 80.
51. John Gould, "When a City Yokel Buys a Farm," *New York Times*, April 19, 1953, 25.
52. This sentiment can be found even into the late postwar, as in Allen R. Dodd's "Okay, Thoreau, We Know You're in There," *Saturday Review*, June 13, 1970.
53. C. B. Palmer, "All Suburbia Is Divided into Three Parts," *New York Times*, March 6, 1955; Ralph G. Martin, "Life in the New Suburbia," *New York Times*, January 15, 1950.
54. See John P. Callahan, "Artists, Writers, Executives Bending Backs to the Plow," *New York Times*, May 13, 1957.
55. In the *Times*, Betty Fible Martin, "The (Week-End) Land," *New York Times*, July 13, 1952; *Saturday Evening Post*, Richard Thruelson, "Pioneers on the 5:15," *Saturday Evening Post*, March 29, 1947.
56. J. K. Galbraith, "Abandoned Farms, Unabandoned Hopes," *New York Times*, September 13, 1953, 64.
57. "Escape to the Country," *Life*, September 27, 1948, 131.
58. "The Simple Life," *Life*, November 14, 1955, 164.
59. Stewart Alsop, "Why Do I Keep the Damned Place?" *Saturday Evening Post*, September 15, 1956, 39.
60. *Ibid.*, 39, 78.
61. "nostalgie de la boue," *Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary*, <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/nostalgie%20de%20la%20boue>.

com/dictionary/nostalgie%20de%20la%20boue.

62. Such attitudes toward what is seen as an encroaching mass society can be seen in “quality of life” debates of the period, including the desire to implement zoning laws. For two examples discussed in the postwar *Times*, see Richard H. Parkes, “Redding Is Rural and Likes It; Plans to Avoid Being Suburban,” *New York Times*, September 18, 1960; and Edith Evans Asbury, “Our Changing City: Nassau-Suffolk Area of Long Island,” *New York Times*, August 19, 1955.

63. “Exurbia,” *Newsweek*, June 3, 1957; A. C. Spector, *The Exurbanites* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1955), 6–7.

64. Spector, *The Exurbanites*, 17–18.

65. See the chapter “Blood Will Tell” in Hartigan, *Odd Tribes*; see also Wray, *Not Quite White*.

66. Herbert J. Gans, *The Levittowners: Ways of Life and Politics in a New Suburban Community* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1967), 286.

67. “Spring on a Farm,” *Life*, May 30, 1955; for an example from “Face of America,” see “Upstate,” *Saturday Evening Post*, July 6, 1957. For the prevalence of pastoral fashion, see “News of Food,” *New York Times*, April 15, 1950; “Students Present Country Life Show,” *New York Times*, February 23, 1951; and Cynthia Kellogg, “Home Fashions to Go on View at Race Track,” *New York Times*, April 18, 1959.

68. Edward Shenton, “The Happy Storekeeper of the Green Mountains,” *Saturday Evening Post*, March 15, 1952, 26, 80.

69. *Ibid.*, 80.

70. *Ibid.*, 80, 84.

71. William M. Dobrin, *Class in Suburbia* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1963), 83.

72. *Ibid.*, 38–39.

73. *Ibid.*, 59; emphasis added.

74. *Ibid.*, 75.

75. William M. Dobrin, “The Natural History of a Reluctant Suburb,” *Yale Review* 49 (1960): 412; emphasis added.

76. See Gans, *The Levittowners*, 29 and 286–87.

77. Bennett M. Berger, *Working-Class Suburb: A Study of Auto Workers in Suburbia* (1960; reprint, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), 12.

78. *Ibid.*, 25; emphasis added.

79. *Ibid.*, 98.

80. *Ibid.*, ix.