Precarious Locations: Streaming TV and Global Inequalities

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Hollywood makes an increasing number of contemporary TV series in precarious places, profiting from conditions that produce structural inequalities for people of color while projecting conflicted representations of race and difference. I examine three streaming TV series and their filming locations: *Watchmen* in Atlanta, Georgia and environs; *Los Espookys* in Santiago, Chile; and *Vida* in Boyle Heights, California. The three shows contain disavowed critical knowledge about how government incentives to attract TV and filmmakers reproduce racial inequality and, more broadly, about the historical preconditions for contemporary precarity.

That knowledge remains invisible, however, so long as we view TV shows as cultural narratives isolated from their places of production. There are excellent, content-based readings that decode ideological meanings in particular shows, but such research can suffer from a textual reductionism that ignores racial capitalism, labor, and the role of government in media production and distribution.[1] Drawing inspiration from Black, Chicanx, and Indigenous TV studies of state and capitalist power in media production, I instead attempt to bring together political economic and textual analysis.[2] Which is to say I present a materialist account of how location shooting contributes to the reproduction of unequal spaces that in turn influences the meanings of television texts. Although in their content TV series often repress their locations in an effort to preserve their fictional worlds, the conditions of their genesis nonetheless seep into their narratives and images, rewarding against the grain readings of televisual places.

I also draw on research in critical geography which analyzes how capitalism, state power, and cultural production make and transform different places.[3] In *A*

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People's Guide to Los Angeles, Laura Pulido, Laura Barraclough, and Wendy Cheng argue that rather than being fixed and natural, landscapes are dynamic and changing, the product of "millions of individual decisions, all made within the constraints of state policies and capitalist imperatives that are occasionally, and sometimes successfully, resisted by people, with an alternative vision of how the world should work."[4] Corporate and state institutions maintain the upper hand in part because they obscure or hide their landscape creating decisions. As Pulido, Barraclough, and Cheng put it, "This is, in fact, one of landscape's greatest tricks and one of the most important ways in which landscape operates in the service of maintaining an unequal status quo. Because it is not always apparent why a landscape looks the way it does, it becomes easy to assume that it somehow naturally reflects the character, qualities, and moralities of the people who inhabit it."[5]

If we substitute "filming location" for "landscape," we can see how TV locations "provide evidence about past generations, economic and political regimes, and ecologies. History is literally embedded in" them. "Even if certain histories are excluded" from TV shows, "they cannot be entirely silenced, because there will almost always be some piece of evidence" in the filming location itself "that we can use to challenge dominant historical narratives and recover hidden histories." Finally, locations can help us "rethink commonsense understandings of history and local geography and of the unequal relationships of power that sustain them."[6] TV shows intervene in their locations, helping to reproduce a sense of place that naturalizes racial inequality. Textual methods alone can miss how media makers, together with state agencies, promote TV production as a boon to the communities where they film, thereby legitimating a place-based status quo, or new neoliberal forms of "creative destruction" that build off of the old.[7]

One model for my study is research on the production of HBO's *Treme* in New Orleans. In his essay about "the role of scripted cable television in the making and remaking of place in the conjuncture of post disaster crisis and the neoliberal transformation of urban space," Herman Gray argues that *Treme* helped remake post-Katrina New Orleans with representations of local authenticity (food, music, and diversity) and narratives of individual enterprise that preclude a "critical engagement with public policy choices and state-centered redress for economic, cultural, and social injustice and inequality."[8] Helen Morgan Parmett similarly analyzes the show "as a site-specific spatial practice that plays a material role in rebuilding New Orleans" along neoliberal lines. Parmett traces "*Treme*'s spatial practices of production as they are implicated in on-location shooting, local hiring, charity, and tourism." She concludes that the show abets the abdication of "governmental responsibility for the care of its citizens, and for the maintenance and building of crucial infrastructure, as such labors are offloaded onto the private sector and citizens themselves and to the charitable contributions of the television industry and its viewers."[9]

Like Gray and Parmett, I analyze collaborations between state governments and media in the form of financial incentives for TV producers and their implications for labor, healthcare, social welfare, housing and policing. These programs

are promoted as sources of employment, but multiple studies conclude that their positive effect on local economies is small and in some places they actually have a negative effect.[10] Instead, state incentive programs offload both social costs and the cost of production onto poor taxpayers in precarious places.[11]

State media incentives are part of what Jodi Melamed calls the "state-finance-racial violence nexus." For Melamed, racial capitalism presupposes collaborations between finance and state power to promote and protect capital accumulation. As she writes, "'state-finance-racial violence nexus' names the inseparable confluence of political/economic governance with racial violence, which enables ongoing accumulation through dispossession by calling forth the specter of race (as threat) to legitimate state counterviolence in the interest of financial asset owning classes." State racial violence in support of capitalism includes not only the police murder of Black and Latinx people but also the "letting die of the racialized poor."[12] From this perspective, by enabling accumulation at the expense of poor people of color, state programs that divert tax money from social welfare to Hollywood constitute forms of state violence.

My three case studies--*Watchmen, Los Espookys* and *Vida*--represent the material contradictions of making progressive TV in poor places. On the one hand, in dramatic contrast with so many other white male-dominated TV series, all three shows employ Black and/or Latinx producers, directors and writers and present challenging representations of race, class, gender and sexual difference. On the other hand, however, *Watchmen, Los Espookys* and *Vida* disavow how they profit from state media programs that effectively undermine social services for poor people of color. Understood in terms of disavowal, the diverse producers and progressive narratives of the three shows symbolically displace from view and critical reflection the costs and consequences of filming in poor regions, as well as the broader conditions of racial capitalism that make precarious places attractive as TV locations in the first place.[13]

Contemporary TV shows imaginatively dislocate the fictional worlds they create from their conditions of production. Their fictional settings displace their material locations and encourage viewers to insulate themselves from critical place-based thinking. Streaming TV platforms, I conclude, reinforce and amplify such perceptual insulation, promoting among viewers a kind of imaginative cocooning shielded from knowledge about inequalities in real places.

Watchmen in Georgia

Although set in Oklahoma, HBO's TV series *Watchmen* was mostly shot in Georgia and its narrative indirectly sheds light on the history of racial capitalism that has made the state financially appealing to media producers. The show creates an alternative reality that reflects critically on our own, a world in which the police and the Klan are effectively the same institution. It includes two Klan orders, the Cyclops, which infiltrates the New York Police Department in the 1930s, and the Seventh Kavalry, which permeates present day police and government in Tulsa. The emphasis is on anti-Blackness but naming the Oklahoma Klan after Custer's

doomed military unit also draws attention to colonial violence. Similarly, in one episode we learn that white supremacist senator Joe Keene (James Wolk) has given the Chief of Police with a KKK uniform in his closet, Judd Crawford (Don Johnson), a painting called "Martial Feats of Comanche Horsemanship," which seems like a kind of trophy of conquest. *Watchmen* further presents a compelling origin story for Black resistance in the form of Hooded Justice (Jovan Adepo) and Sister Night (Regina King), two masked Black avengers. As Rebecca A. Wanzo notes, "*Watchmen* imagines a redemptive narrative for superhero origins, both by writing a black man into the origin story and by making state-ignored (and state-generated) white supremacy the enemy."[14]

Devoting relatively few resources to support its poor Black citizens, Georgia nonetheless provided substantial tax incentives to the producers of *Watchmen*. The state has become the most important location for films and TV, eclipsing even California by some measures.[15] Georgia spends more on its tax credit program than any other location in North America and Europe, totaling $5 billion over the course of its history.[16] This is because, in contrast with other states, Georgia does not cap the amount of its annual payouts. Moreover, whereas other state programs exclude above the line labor costs for actors, writers, directors and show runners, Georgia's program includes them.[17]

Georgia's tax incentives have helped attract important Black writers, directors and producers to projects filmed in Atlanta, including many of the writers for *Watchmen* as well as Stephen Williams, the director of one of the series' most acclaimed episodes titled "This Extraordinary Being." Jordan Peele's Monkey Paw Productions partly filmed *Lovecraft Country* (2020) at Atlanta's BlackHall Studios and in the city of Macon, Georgia. The show was created by Misha Green, who also worked as show runner and wrote one episode and directed another. In 2019 Tyler Perry opened Tyler Perry Studios, a huge production facility on 330 acres of the former Fort McPherson in Atlanta. The studio partners with the Georgia Film Academy to provide internships in client services, construction, studio operations, security, facilities, and warehouse management.[18] According to its website the GFW is a "collaborative effort of the University System of Georgia and Technical College System of Georgia supporting workforce needs of the film and digital entertainment industries." The website projects significant growth in local media jobs in the near future.[19] Indeed, the promise of jobs is the state incentive program's biggest selling point.

But official claims that Georgia's program has resulted in significant job growth are exaggerated. Economist John Charles Bradbury from Georgia's Kennesaw State University argues that the Georgia Department of Economic Development significantly overestimates the program's contribution to the state's economy. Financial incentives produce a relatively small number of jobs for local below the line film workers, many of which are part time and with low salaries compared to national averages. Most of the wealth goes to relatively privileged people based in Southern California, including the diverse above the line talent that work on shows shot in Georgia. Proponents of the program argue that it has a multiplier effect,

Figure 1: Extras on break during filming for *Watchmen*'s recreation of the Greenwood Massacre. Although set in Tulsa, the show was shot in Georgia. Courtesy HBO/Mark Hill.

producing local jobs beyond the film sector, but there is little evidence to support such claims. On the contrary, research indicates that film incentives actually have a negative impact on Georgia's economy.[20] According to Bradbury, the benefits of tax breaks for filmmakers "appear to be flowing entirely outside the state" as Los Angeles based companies capture the savings as rents and/or cut costs for consumers. He concludes that state spending on education and health care would be a better investment.[21] From the perspective of poor Black people in Georgia, the tax funded incentive program thus looks like accumulation by dispossession.[22]

Watchmen's first Georgia-made episode begins with the 1921 massacre in Greenwood, Oklahoma, a Black neighborhood in Tulsa where over the course of two days white supremacists murdered as many as 300 people, looted, and destroyed businesses, homes, and churches. The episode sparked extensive media discussion when it was released in October 2019, and in the wake of the police murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis on May 25, 2020 and President Donald Trump's announcement 15 days later of a campaign rally in Tulsa, blocks from Greenwood. (The rally was initially scheduled for Juneteenth but bowing to public pressure the Trump campaign postponed it a day.) In response, HBO made all episodes of *Watchmen* available for free from June 19th to the 21st. Meanwhile, Washington's Mayor Muriel Bowser painted "Black Lives Matters" in large block letters on 16th Street in front of the White House, and a similar painting was produced on Greenwood Street in Tulsa in celebration of Juneteenth and in protest of Trump's rally. These and other yellow BLM paintings appear to mimic the typeface and color of *Watchmen*'s distinctive episode titles.[23]

Watchmen's Georgia locations are saturated with Confederate memorials and we can read the show as a contradictory reaction to them.[24] In its content

Watchmen opposes the history of white supremacy that Confederate monuments stand for but at the same time the show obscures what such statues mean now as icons of contemporary racial capitalism and Hollywood's complicity in it. The first episode starts inside a Black-owned movie theater that is attacked by Klansmen, based on Greenwood's actual Williams Dreamland Theater, owned by John and Loula Williams, and destroyed by white supremacists. The theater's interior was filmed in Macon's Douglas Theater, which is located blocks from two Confederate monuments, one representing a 10-foot-tall, generic Confederate soldier holding a rifle atop a tall pedestal and shaft, and the other a "Monument to the Women of the Confederacy." The more extensive exterior scenes of the massacre depicting the destruction of the theater, the murder of Black people by Klansmen, white looting, and airplanes dropping firebombs, were all filmed in Cedartown, Georgia's historic downtown, three blocks from another large memorial featuring a lone Confederate soldier with a gun.

Named after a regional fort that was used as an internment camp for Cherokee people along the "Trail of Tears," Cedartown is about an hour northwest of Atlanta. At the turn of the 19th century it became an important mill town, producing clothing and ultimately cotton cloth for Goodyear tires. The mills, however, were Jim Crow employers, and Black workers were excluded from them until the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. This also means that the large number of company-built homes in "Goodyear Village" were reserved for white people.[25] When the mills closed, the economic base shifted toward corporate call centers, Walmart, and the manufacture of office furniture. Cedartown has a sizable Black and Latinx population, with 24.3% of its people living below the poverty level (compared to 11.3 nationally).[26]

Following Cedric J. Robinson, we could say that Confederate memorials are representations of racial capitalism aimed at policing Black workers and using anti-Black racism to control white workers.[27] Such memorials were largely erected in two waves: around the turn of the 19th century, as complements to Jim Crow and revisionary "lost cause" narratives about the Civil War; and during the late 1950s and early 1960s, in response the civil rights movement.[28] Their locations in front of courthouses and city halls symbolize white supremacist state power as a means of terrorizing Black people. Efforts to preserve them respond to moments like the current one, when dominant racial regimes are in question, which helps explain why contemporary local white leaders have resisted calls to remove Cedartown's Confederate monument.[29] The marble "pedestal-shaft-soldier" memorial standing between the town's two courthouse buildings is typical of similar monuments throughout the south, which raise everyday white supremacy to superhero status.[30] The town is in fact surrounded by hundreds of Confederate graves and multiple Confederate memorials in the region. It would be virtually impossible to film a TV series there without noticing the area's numerous monuments to white supremacy.

Similar stories can be told about many of *Watchmen*'s other Georgia locations. In episode three, "She Was Killed by Space Junk," the big blue phone booth

where FBI agent Laurie Blake talks to Dr. Manhattan was filmed in Decatur's East Court Square, steps away from the Court House and its obelisk monument to the Confederacy, which would likely have been visible to cast and crew during shooting. (*Watchmen* returned to that setting in episode nine, "See How They Fly.") In *Watchmen*'s third episode, Sherriff Crawford's funeral was filmed in two cemeteries. Outside scenes were shot at Atlanta's Historic Oakland Cemetery, which includes a Confederate Memorial Ground where approximately 7,000 soldiers are interred, as well as two large memorials to the Confederate dead.[31] But interior scenes were filmed in the Decatur Cemetery, home to numerous Confederate graves as well as a Confederate memorial cross, erected by the United Daughters of the Confederacy in 1984.[32]

Set in New York City, episode six, "This Extraordinary Being," was shot in Macon. The exterior of the movie theater where Will Reeves/Hooded Justice discovers a Klan plot to pit Black people against each other is Macon's Hargray Capital Theater, across the street from the statue of the giant Confederate soldier and blocks from the memorial to Confederate women mentioned previously. The scene of a Klansman firebombing a Jewish deli in that episode was filmed nearby, on the same street. The town of Newnan, the location for the Hoboken carnival in episode five, "Little Fear of Lightening," includes a Confederate memorial in front of the local county courthouse. And the scenes set in U.S.-occupied Saigon in episode seven ("An Almost Religious Awe") and episode eight ("A God Walks into Abar") were shot in Griffin, a town with several Confederate memorials and a Confederate cemetery. Finally, many interior scenes were filmed at Atlanta Metro Studios. As a local reporter recently noted, the State Capital is home to a mother lode of Civil War and segregationist artifacts.[33]

Black people and their allies have agitated for their removal, and Confederate monuments are increasingly objects of vandalism, but Georgia's white ruling elite remain committed to preserving them as contemporary reminders of who is in charge. In April 2019, Governor Brian Kemp signed SB 77, expressly protecting memorials to the Confederate States of America.[34] Such efforts are framed as historical preservation but they also speak to the conditions of racial capitalism in the present, including conservative projects aimed at policing Black people and precluding interracial solidarity by encouraging white racism.

As far as I can tell none of the memorials I've described appear in the show, but in many ways *Watchmen* represents a critical response to their presence in local filming locations.[35] The show reframes the masked vigilante from comic books as a kind of memorial to white supremacy. Alan Moore, author of the *Watchman* graphic novel, has argued that with their hoods and capes, Klansmen were models for comic book heroes, and historian Chris Gavaler has persuasively shown how Thomas Dixon's representations of KKK costumes and vigilantism helped inspire golden age comics.[36] *Watchmen* taps into those histories with its depiction of the 1930s Cyclops and the Rorschach-mask-wearing members of the contemporary Seventh Kavalry. As part of a test to determine if a suspect is a white supremacist,

Agent Looking Glass (Ted Blake Nelson) monitors their vital signs as they view images of monuments to American whiteness—a milk advertisement, a man on the moon, cowboys, a Confederate flag, Mount Rushmore (with the addition of Richard Nixon), Grant Woods' *American Gothic*, and photos of Klan rallies. Recalling Macon's statue of a larger-than-life Confederate soldier, *Watchmen* visually links white supremacy to an aesthetics of white male monumentalism that also characterizes the Confederate monuments in its midst.

The order of the Cyclops, for example, is named for the giant one-eyed monster from Homer's *Odyssey*. In the premiere episode, members of the Seventh Kavalry live in a trailer park called "Nixonville" with a large statue of the President atop a pedestal in the style of a Confederate memorial, reminding us of Nixon's law and order, silent majority racism. Episode three prominently features a CGI modified image of the Washington Monument, which slaves helped build to honor a slaveholder in the form of a giant obelisk that anticipates many similar Confederate monuments. As revealed in the final episode, Klansman and U.S. Senator Keene dreams of stealing Dr. Manhattan's massive powers in order to enforce white global domination. *Watchmen* suggests with these examples that the white supremacist monumentalism associated with the South defines U.S. nationalism as such. By shooting scenes of Saigon amid Confederate monuments in Georgia, the show also implicitly connects U.S. imperialism and white supremacy.[37]

It's not surprising that a state with a history of erecting Confederate monuments and an ongoing commitment to preserving them, as well as a history of anti-Black violence and white looting, would use taxes from its poor Black citizens for the benefit of corporations. By contrast, TV producers have supported liberal causes in Georgia. Many opposed the state's so-called "fetal heartbeat bill" before a federal judge struck it down, and they are likely against preserving Confederate monuments (although to my knowledge none have publicly criticized Georgia's law protecting them).[38] We could from this perspective read the exclusion of Confederate monuments from *Watchmen*'s frame as the visual anticipation of an alternative reality where they no longer exist.

Foregrounding the material context of the show's production suggests another interpretation, however, in which editing out the monuments signifies the producers' inability or unwillingness to critically engage with what those marble statues represent today, as symbols of inequality under forms of racial capitalism in which they participate. Georgia's Confederate monument law isn't just about the past but also about (re)enforcing inequality in the present, and Hollywood plays a role in that process by consuming resources that could otherwise go to social services. While commentators admire *Watchmen* for teaching them about an historic tragedy in Oklahoma they apparently didn't know about before, the show makes it harder to see what's happening in Georgia now. By filming anti-racist stories there and feeding into false narratives promoting the trickle-down benefits of corporate incentives, TV producers legitimate status quo inequalities.

Los Espookys in Santiago

Set in a fictional Latin American country, the HBO show *Los Espookys* is like *Scooby-Doo* except in this case the group of friends don't solve scary mysteries but produce them. It features goth and horror movie fan Renaldo (sic) and his *grupo,* "Los Espookys," who organize frightening events for paying customers, starting with his cousin's horror-themed *quinceañera*. Other escapades include staging a sea monster sighting to attract tourists to an ocean side town; simulating a demonic possession to help a Catholic priest impress his flock; and masquerading as a professor's space alien research subjects so she can secure funding. With its bright lighting, pastel pallet, and earnest goofiness, *Los Espookys* is a critical alternative to monotonous representations of Latin American narco-violence.

Los Espookys makes fun of such trends and what transfeminist Mexican scholar Sayak Valencia calls the "consumption of decorative violence." In her book of the same name Valencia introduces the concept of "gore capitalism" to analyze how extreme forms of violence produce profits across the globe, although her particular focus is on Tijuana. Taking their cue from the ruthless capitalism of the global north, Valencia argues, many in the south have become gore capitalists, invested in "ultraviolent forms of capital accumulation" such as kidnapping and murder.[39] Under gore capitalism violence is both a means of making money and a commodity. This includes the marketing of decorative violence to privileged consumers such as expensive lamps in the shape of AK-47s and the "militaristic aesthetic" of all-terrain vehicles such as Hummers.[40] "Understanding violence as decorative psychologically prepares society, making violence progressively less offensive, dangerous, and frightening, allowing both public and private spaces to be invaded by consumption with clear connections to warfare, ultimately converting these objects into desirable, enjoyable, and consumable items."[41] With its DIY severed heads and limbs, amateur makeup and costumes, and silly horror scenarios, *Los Espookys* satirizes gore capitalism and the commodification of decorative violence the way in which comedy often creates humor out of cultural trends. Rather than normalizing it like Valencia's lamps, *Los Espookys* draws comedic attention to the weirdness of decorative violence.

The show also presents a critical perspective on the United States from the vantage point of Latin America. The U.S. embassy, with its well-connected but comically incompetent staff, stands in the way of the group's plan to travel to Los Angeles to work on a low budget horror movie. According to Julio Torres, the *Los Espookys* co-creator and writer who plays Andrés, the show's visa plot represents a critique of U.S. immigration policy: "It always felt really funny and humanizing to be like, Andrés is at times clairvoyant, but he can't go to America without a visa…That's what we felt was so drastic and funny, that, like, 'Oh no, he can burst lightbulbs when he's really angry, but he would be detained at the airport for having the wrong paperwork because he was born in the wrong country.'"[42] Both here, and in a plot about *grupo* member Tatia (played by writer and co-creator Ana Fabrega) and her ballooning debt to a North American corporation running a

Herbalife-like pyramid scheme, *Los Espooky*s lampoons U.S. state and capitalist power in Latin America.

Fred Armison, the show's third co-creator and costar, had initially hoped to sell *Los Espookys* to HBO Latino, but it was instead picked up by the general HBO channel in the name of inclusion and diversity, which is odd given the show's whiteness.[43] With the exception of Bernardo Velasco, the dark-skinned actor with indigenous features who plays Renaldo, the main cast scan as white, and most of the show's minor roles are played by white Spanish-speakers with European features. The only (minor) Black character in the show is a staff member in the U.S. embassy, suggesting that blackness is foreign to the show's vision of Latin America.

The whiteness of *Los Espookys* reflects its filming location. Although Mexico City's goth subculture inspired the series, it proved cheaper to shoot in Santiago because of Chile's substantial subsidies for international film and TV production. The *Corporación de Fomento de la Producción de Chile* (CORFO) administers the program, which provides a 25% cash rebate for TV shows filmed in Chile, the largest incentives offered by a Latin American country.[44] As Torres told an interviewer, "never in a million years" did he imagine they would film there, but "we were looking for safe, cost-efficient places," and Santiago proved to be like Canada in that "you can make it look like anything you want."[45] Such benefits help explain the overrepresentation of white Chilean actors in *Los Espookys'* many supporting roles.[46] The CORFO incentives have in effect incentivized whiteness on the show since it seems unlikely *Los Espookys* would be quite as white if, for example, it had been shot with Spanish speaking actors in Los Angeles.

Since the late 19th century, according to Erika Beckman, "the cornerstone" of Chilean nationalism has been "whiteness, a racial category that went far beyond phenotype to vouch for the virility, discipline, and morality of a homogenized 'Chilean race.' Peruvian and Bolivian creoles, mestizos, Indians, blacks and Chinese, in contrast, were coded as racially degenerate, with inferiority measured in terms of effeminacy, laziness, and backwardness." Maya Doig-Acuña further notes that in the 20th century, Chilean immigration policy aimed to attract Europeans and "whiten" the population," while marginalizing Indigenous peoples such as the Mapuche and Aymara and rendering Black people invisible in the national imaginary. Afro-Chileans "have never been acknowledged on the national census," meaning that "one cannot simultaneously claim Chilean and Black identity." Today, Beckman concludes, "Chilean identity remains deeply embedded within claims to Europeanness" and "discourses of white supremacy." Recalling CORFO's pitch to foreign media makers, she argues that "appeals to the country's 'racial homogeneity,' temperate climate, industriousness, and institutional stability are fundamental to national identity, and have proven quite useful when courting foreign capital."[47] Like *Watchmen* in Georgia, *Los Espookys* indirectly benefits from the history and present reality of white supremacy in Chile.

Starting in October 2019, massive protests shook Santiago. A rise in public transit fees sparked the protests but they included demands for health care, educa-

tion, and an increased minimum wage. Protesters in effect opposed Chile's white nationalism and its consequences for the poor, including Black and Indigenous people. Neoliberal policies have created the greatest gap between rich and poor in Latin America, a situation that Chile's history of white supremacy drives and justifies. Doig-Acuña writes that the protests have "wrenched open space for a reconsideration of what it means to be Chilean" by opposing "the wedding of whiteness and nationalism." Mapuche organizers have led to some protests, and protesters fly the Mapuche flag, including from atop an equestrian statue of former Commander-in-chief of the Army, Manuel Baquedaro. That monument has been repeatedly vandalized, and in Southern Chile, Mapuche protesters have torn down statues of Spanish Conquistadors.[48]

The protests are large and participants are heterogeneous, but in numerous news photographs many appear costumed for horror, like *Los Espookys* extras. They are made up as the Joker and other terrifying clowns, or wear U.S. movie monster masks ("Chuckie" and "Jason") and carry shields emblazoned with skulls for protection from police pellets and tear gas canisters. Although there are numerous images of real wounds suffered at the hands of the police, some protesters simulate wounds with red paint and latex makeup like the amateur effects in *Los Espookys*. Others wear bloody makeup or bandages around their eyes in reference to hundreds of traumatic eye injuries the police have inflicted, leaving many blind or partially so. Images of bloody eyes appear on carboard signs and shields and painted on hands and the Chilean flag.[49] Government forces have deliberately sought to injure protesters on a scale that rivals Israel's policies of Palestinian debilitation.[50]

Los Espookys was in post-production when the protests began, but it shares their emphasis on eyes in episode two, where Renaldo recalls his childhood interests in horror and his first special effect makeup simulating his own blinding with a crayon. With hindsight, the TV series anticipates police violence directed at an oppositional gaze. The show's theme song, "Ellos quieren sangre" ("They Want Blood") suggests such a possible connection between *Los Espookys* and its location. The Peruvian band Varsovia wrote and perform the eerie gothic synthesizer song with lyrics decrying state-sponsored disappearances and the murder of protesters, which they describe as "genocido" and "un a campaña por la exterminacion." But the show's framing as an imaginary Latin American country "where nothing bad ever happens" (*Los Espooky*'s working title), not to mention its oft-noted "optimism," foreclose such connections by imaginatively distancing its setting from its location. We might say the show one-ups decorative narcoviolence with comedy reminiscent of the state violence greeting popular protest where the show is filmed. Even in the wake of the protests, at the start of 2020 *Los Espookys* returned to Santiago for season two and more government subsidies.[51]

Vida in Boyle Heights

Questions of gentrification and queer inheritance drive *Vida*'s narrative about sisters Emma and Lyn Hernandez (Mishel Prada and Melissa Barrera), who return

home to the Chicanx neighborhood of Boyle Heights on the east side of Los Angeles after years away when their mother Vidalia (Rose Portillo) dies and leaves them her old school lesbian bar. They learn that their mother was queer and married to a Chicana[52] lesbian named Edy (Ser Anzoategui), to whom Vidalia also willed part of the bar. Created by queer Chicanx playwright Tanya Saracho, who is also the show runner and the director of several episodes, *Vida*'s writers are mostly queer women of color, and Saracho self-consciously foregrounds a queer Chicanx gaze. This is evident in the show's carefully choreographed sex scenes; non-binary actors and characters; and gender-queer discourses, self-presentations, and practices, including a gay wedding where the couple are dressed like *norteño* musicians, and an elaborate queer *quinceanera* for one of Lyn's friends (season two, episode three; season three, episode four).

Steeped in *joteria* and *brujaria*, as well as code-switching and Spanglish shade, *Vida* is perhaps the queerest show ever made about a Chicanx community. Different episodes present critical representations of masculinity; Chicanx identification with and desire for whiteness; gender/sex policing in queer of color communities; and differences of generation and class (both within Boyle Heights and between West and East Los Angeles). Finally, *Vida* dramatizes the recent history of protests over gentrification in Boyle Heights, where it was set and partly filmed.

Historian of Boyle Heights George J. Sánchez demonstrates that in the 20th century, the neighborhood was hit with three waves of removal that anticipate the more recent displacements produced by gentrification. He charts the Southern California history of restrictive housing covenants which helped make Boyle Heights a racially mixed neighborhood filled with Mexicans, Japanese, and Jews excluded from other parts of Los Angeles. City officials projected ideologies of white supremacy and racial inferiority onto regional social space, paving the way for the displacement of Mexicans from the neighborhood during the era of California's mass deportations in the 1930s; the internment of Japanese residents during World War II; and the displacement of working-class people of color due to urban renewal and the building of freeways in the 1950s and 1960s. As Sánchez explains,

> A certain ideology developed among city leaders and urban planners that joined local politicians and bureaucrats on both the conservative and liberal sides of the political spectrum in the region, linking racial depravity and urban space. This ideology associated particular neighborhoods like Boyle Heights with slum conditions and urban decay, and it prompted local officials to consider residents of these neighborhoods as utterly (re) movable in order to make way for their plans to improve social conditions and urban progress. [53]

The racist ideology governing earlier forced removals continues to shape contemporary gentrification in Boyle Heights, where the forces of redevelopment implicitly draw on historic images of the neighborhood's people as barriers to progress.

Contemporary anti-gentrification activism there is in line with the longer history in the neighborhood of what Sánchez calls "interracial radicalism," particularly among labor unions and fair housing activists.

Vida emerged at the intersection of these two, dialectically related histories of white supremacy and interracial radicalism in Boyle Heights. In response to a *Los Angeles Times* story about anti-gentrification protests there, an independent film production company commissioned a "world building document" about Boyle Heights from queer Latinx writer Richard Villegas Jr., which they then used to pitch a show idea to the streaming cable network STARZ. An executive for STARZ in turn pitched to Saracho a number of Latinx properties, including a telenovela remake, a Santeria zombie show, and *Vida*. STARZ told Saracho they wanted a show set in East Los Angeles, featuring millennial women, and about "chipsters" (Chicanx hipsters) and "*gente*fication" (Chicanx gentrification of Chicanx neighborhoods). Saracho says she added queerness to the mix, but it's clear that the East LA *gente*fication narrative was a corporate, algorithmic choice aimed at appealing to middle class and middle class aspirant Chicanx viewers.[54]

Vida centers brown on brown "*gente*fication" within Boyle Heights to the relative exclusion of gentrification from the wealthier and whiter west side of Los Angeles. While local protesters have opposed *gente*fication, their activism has been primarily aimed at economic redevelopment projects from outside the neighborhood, notably by the United Talent Agency. Headquartered in Beverly Hills, UTA has built an art gallery in Boyle Heights promoting artists from outside the neighborhood. Local protesters have posted mock eviction notices on the UTA gallery and marched behind banners reading "Keep Beverly Hills Out of Boyle Heights." UTA is also the agency that represents Saracho, and *Vida* has itself been the object of anti-gentrification protests, forcing the show to limit location shooting in the neighborhood. As a result, Saracho and her crew filmed many scenes in the Pico Union neighborhood of Los Angeles, home to large numbers of working-class Mexican and Central American people.

The Boyle Heights groups organizing against gentrification are represented in *Vida* by the Vigilantes, which Anastasia Baginski and Chris Malcolm argue represent "a made-for-TV composite of community resistance groups in East Los Angeles," including Defend Boyle Heights, Boyle Heights Against Artwashing and Displacement (BHAAD), and the Ovarian Psycos.[55] The term "artwashing" refers to the use of state-subsidized art developments to justify and distract from gentrification. As Kean O'Brian, Leonardo Vilchis, and Croina Maritescu write,

> Artwashing presents gentrification as beneficial to communities (variations on "improving the artistic life of a neighborhood") while ignoring the material impacts and effacing the actual needs of the neighborhood (Boyle Heights, for one, needed job-providing factories, grocery stores, and laundromats more than it needed galleries). The state displaces low-income folx, immigrant families, and other vulnerable communities under the

> cover of "building arts districts," or "river revitalization" efforts, together with public investment and tax subsidies, and the development of so-called affordable housing and luxury living.[56]

For the past 20 years, Los Angeles city government has invested more than $3 billion in Boyle Heights to attract capital. City investments in the neighborhood are part of an "aggressive arts-oriented development," including a new arts district. City redevelopment projects have attracted art galleries, cafes, restaurants, and condos that have displaced an estimated 2,500 local families.[57]

BHAAAD protested location shooting for *Vida*, which benefited from state tax incentives. Among other actions, the organization attempted to block filming in Boyle Heights' Mariachi Plaza, which the series finale features.[58] The Plaza is a rare memorial to vernacular Mexican culture in Los Angeles, with a bronze statue of the great Mexican singer Lucha Reyes. As Pulido, Barraclough and Cheng write in *A People's Guide to Los Angeles*,

> Consumers of mariachi music have long known that they can hire musicians at Mariachi Plaza, making this site one of the older "shape-ups" in Los Angeles. A shape-up is a site where workers in the informal economy congregate while awaiting work…The growth of the informal sector is part of the region's increasingly polarized economy, which is characterized by both high-wage and low-wage employment. Though mariachi musicians are not usually associated with the day laborers who provoke ire and angst among some segments of the population, they too are caught in the more vulnerable end of this polarized economy as it manifests in Los Angeles. [59]

One consequence of the polarized economy in the neighborhood is the residential displacement of day laborers, including mariachis, due to gentrification.[60] In their protest against *Vida* filming in Mariachi Plaza, BHAAAD argued that the show had appropriated and belittled its members' images and contributed to gentrification. Shortly thereafter, *Vida* was joined by the similarly themed Netflix show *Gentefied*, which also filmed in the neighborhood. To avoid protests, though, *Gentefied* was mostly shot on an enclosed soundstage at the LA Hangar Studios in Boyle Heights.[61]

One of *Vida*'s central characters, Mari Sanchez (Chelsea Rendon), is a bike-riding member of the Vigilantes who joins them in agitating against the Hernandez sisters and their efforts to "update" their mother's bar and attract younger, wealthier customers. Mari's militant attitude toward Lyn and Emma, who she derisively calls "coconuts" and "whytinas," softens when Emma gives her a job and a place to stay after her sexist father kicks her out. In the season 2 finale, she warns Emma that the Vigilantes are planning to disrupt the bar's new chipster music night, but in the ensuing protest Mari stands nervously on the sidelines, ignoring her best

friend Yoli's entreaties to join in. Lyn then makes an impassioned speech to the protesters, claiming a genealogical link to the bar, which her grandfather built and her mother owned, and reminding them that she and her sister grew up in Boyle Heights. Unmoved, Yoli throws powdered white detergent in her face as protesters chant "wash her out!" In response Emma runs out of the bar, tackles Yoli, and punches the activist in the face before friends pull her away. As Emma cradles her sister, the police arrest Yoli, who we subsequently learn is a DACA student vulnerable to deportation.

In seemingly neoliberal fashion *Vida* disappears state-sponsored redevelopment schemes to instead spotlight individual actors and choices. As Baginski and Malcolm conclude about season two,

> The problem which is staged in *Vida* of staying versus leaving reframes the structural effects of gentrification and displacement—of not being able to stay *and* not wanting to leave—as one of personal choice…The effect of conceiving of the activist characters through reactive positions, and as hung up on ideas of racial identity which the main characters view as immature and ignorant, is to (re-)position them as obstacles to processes and forms of "progress" that are figured as inevitable. It is because Emma and Lyn's decisions are motivated by exchange value and ideas of inevitable progress that they register as making the most sense within the ideological context of the show.

The second season finale stacks the deck against the anti-gentrification movement. Mari's reluctance to join the protest, Lyn's emotional speech, Emma's protection of her sister, and, finally, Lyn's vulnerability (the soap burns her eyes and her sister must support her as she walks to the bar's bathroom) mobilize sympathy for the gentrifers over and against the protesters. The episode reinforces the opposition between the two visually, in terms of hegemonic beauty norms, since Emma and Lyn look like tall, thin dress-wearing models and Yoli is shorter, rounder, and costumed in less femme and more functional jeans and t-shirt. Finally, although the scene correctly suggests that gentrification has brought more police to Boyle Heights, *Vida* affirms Emma's attack on Yoli and the activist's subsequent arrest.[62]

In the show's third and final season, Mari seems to follow the sisters' neoliberal lead. She grows out of Vigilante's militant groupthink, resolving to "go it alone" by providing content for a socially conscious digital magazine (season three, episode six). The show caricatures the Boyle Heights anti-gentrification movement as childish and ineffective, so obsessed with trivial challenges to rigid ideas about authenticity that they are unable to recognize "real shit" like mass deportations, as if anti-gentrification activists aren't also engaged in immigrants' rights organizing. In these ways *Vida* represents what we might call "TV-washing," replete with bad-faith self-justifications for state-sponsored gentrification.

Streaming Precarious Places

All three of my case studies are distributed on streaming platforms, a fact with important implications for contemporary TV's spatial practices in precarious locations. HBO, STARZ, Hulu, Amazon, and Netflix all promote streaming as an advance in consumer choice. Such services, the story goes, free audiences from the tyranny of fixed schedules, enabling them to tailor the viewing experience to their own needs and desires. Corporate algorithms, however, limit those freedoms by directing viewers to familiar categories and genres. As Sarah Arnold argues, algorithms "use data gleaned from online user interactions as a way of profiling and controlling" audience behavior. The personalized schedules made possible via streaming "might allude to the liberation of the individual from the mass" but they also mask "more profound forms of individual manipulation and governance manufactured through data algorithms." [63]

Algorithms encourage viewers to stay in their comfort zones and watch more shows like the ones they already watch, which effectively reproduces white TV tastes and hence a white demographic. According to Mark D. Pepper, the "algorithm's suggestions effectively shape our sense of what matters into a self-gratifying mirror of previously validated ideas, tropes, and identities." As an example he suggests that streaming algorithms result in de facto segregation, directing white viewers toward conservative white family sitcoms such as Tim Allen's *Last Man Standin*g (described on imdb.com as about "a married father of three (who) tries to maintain his manliness in a world increasingly dominated by women"), and away from family of color sitcoms like *Fresh Off the Boat* and *Blackish*.[64]

Or TV algorithms may direct white viewers to what Jorie Lagerwey and Taylor Nygaard call "Horrible White People" shows: bleak comedies featuring liberal, middle-class white characters, especially women, living in vulnerable, marginal conditions. Lagerwey and Nygaard argue that HWP shows represent "White precarity," or the failure of whiteness to secure good jobs and home ownership. They conclude that by targeting white audiences with TV shows that center white vulnerability while marginalizing people of color, streaming platforms help maintain and promote white supremacy.[65] With their white algorithms, streaming platforms reproduce a perceptual segregation for viewers that can reinforce segregation in the material world. The imagined freedom to choose a status quo of racial inequality via streaming complements the reproduction of racial inequality via state subsidies for TV location shooting.

Streaming platforms promote the pleasures of binge watching to similar effect. TV scholars have extensively analyzed the psychology and phenomenology of binge watching. Zachary Snider argues, for example, that binging produces intense "emotional self-immersion" and "empathic" involvement in TV worlds that he calls "narrative transportation." Binging "psychologically affects viewers' perceptions of reality" by imaginatively transporting them beyond the mundane every day in ways that can compromise their "real-world judgements."[66] Mareike Jenner similarly claims that Netflix encourages binge watching as an "insulated flow" of viewing. The streaming platform discourages exiting the flow by, for example, automatically

starting the next episode or reminding viewers of unfinished shows.[67]

Corporations promote it as new, yet binge watching builds on classical film spectatorship. Elsewhere, drawing from the work of Miriam Hansen, I have argued that silent film production and exhibition norms aimed to constitute respectable, middle-class white spectators focused attentively on a central, narratively coherent feature film—the binge watching of the day. Over the course of the 1910s and 1920s, filmmakers strove to produce the "diegetic illusion" whereby the film fiction becomes its own, self-enclosed world. The suspension of disbelief necessary for the illusion encouraged spectators to take for granted that the fictional world of the film was perceptually segregated from the space of the theater, and more generally, from Southern California social space. Such spectatorship reinforced the imaginary autonomy of the fictional film world from its larger production and reception context. I argued in particular that early Hollywood films transported local white audiences beyond Mexican Los Angeles, psychically insulating them from the low-wage Mexican workers on which the film industry (and others) depended.[68] In similar fashion today, binge watching transports viewers beyond their surrounding social spaces, including many precarious places. The insulated flow of streaming platforms also protects viewers from knowledge about TV's conditions of production. Binging promotes immersion in fictional settings at the expense of attending to real locations.

Contemporary TV's modes of production and reception detach settings from locations such as Santiago, Cedartown and Boyle Heights, making it more difficult to critically reflect on race and the politics of place. By contrast, in this essay I have tried to interrupt contemporary TV's insulated flows by reconnecting settings to material locations, highlighting collaborations between governments and media corporations and their responsibility for (re)producing inequality. But as Pulido, Barraclough and Cheng argued at the outset, state and capitalist domination of different locations is "occasionally, and sometimes successfully, resisted by people, with an alternative vision of how the world should work."

As I write this, protesters are pulling down statues of slavers, colonists and racists. After white nationalist protests in Charlottesville, Virginia in 2017 over the proposed removal of a statue of Robert E. Lee, members of the Beacon Hill Black Alliance for Human Rights (BHAHR) in Macon began calling for the removal of the local courthouse monument near a *Watchmen* location. In June 2020 a DeKalb County judge ruled that it should be taken down and so the obelisk was removed near midnight on the day before Juneteenth, 2020. Hundreds of people gathered to watch and cheer, drink champagne out of red plastic cups, and chant "Take it Down!"[69] The group organizes for educational and economic justice and, in the words of its website, BHAHR's monument committee had worked to connect the monument to "current manifestations of white supremacy in Decatur and surrounding communities."[70] The contrast with *Watchmen* is illuminating. Whereas *Watchmen* disconnects its critical representation of white supremacy from the context of its filming location, in part by disappearing its Confederate memorials,

BHAHR's monument committee endeavored to link the courthouse monument to local, contemporary forms of white supremacy. As this example reminds us, studying TV filming locations can open critical perspectives on how poor people of color oppose dominant constructions of precarious places.

The method of analyzing contemporary TV I have developed here could be called "streaming in reverse." Rather than concentrating primarily on the final product as it appears on our screens, I have streamed *Watchmen*, *Los Espookys* and *Vida* backwards, as it were, asking where they all began. Rather than abstracting TV shows from their shooting locations, streaming in reverse views them concretely, as interventions into the politics of place. Streaming in reverse means to investigate the material conditions of possibility for TV shows in histories of white supremacy and resistance to it. Streaming in reverse makes visible the precarity of particular places that both attract TV productions and prompt popular protests.

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Notes

1. On the limits of textual reductionism see Toby Miller, Nitin Govil, John McMurria and Richard Maxwell, *Global Hollywood* (London: BFI Publishing, 2001), 14-15.

2. Steven D. Classen, *Watching Jim Crow: The Struggles over Mississippi TV, 1955-1969* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004); Faye Ginsburg, Brian Larkin, and Lila Abu-Lughod, *Media Worlds: Anthropology on New Terrain* (Berkeley: University of California, 2002); Herman Gray, *Watching Race, Television and the Sign of Blackness* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004) and *Cultural Moves: African Americans and the Politics of Representation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005); Devorah Heitner, *Black Power TV* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013); Chon Noriega, *Shot in America: Television, the State, and the Rise of Chicano Cinema* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000); Yeidy Rivero, *Tuning Out Blackness: Race and Nation in the History of Puerto Rican Television* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005); Dustin Tahmahkera, *Tribal Television: Viewing Native People in Sitcoms* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014); Sasha Torres, *Black, White, and in Color: Television and Black Civil Rights* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003).

3. See Ruth Wilson Gilmore, *Golden Gulag: Prisons, Surplus, Crisis, and Opposition to Globalization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007); Kirstie Dorr, *On Site, In Sound: Performance Geographies in Latina/o America* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018); and Rosaura Sánchez and Beatrice Pita, *Spatial and Discursive Violence in the U.S. Southwest* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2021).

4. Laura Pulido, Laura Barraclough and Wendy Cheng, *A People's Guide to Los Angeles* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 7-8.

5. Ibid, 7.

6. Ibid.

7. See David Harvey, "Neoliberalism as Creative Destruction," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 610 (March 2007): 22-44.

8. Herman Gray, "Recovered, Reinvented, Reimagined: *Treme*, Television Studies and Writing New Orleans," *Television & New Media* 13, no. 3 (2012): 268–278. The essay is part of a special issue on *Treme*. In the same issue see also Helen Morgan Parmett, "Space, Place, and New Orleans on Television: From *Frank's Place* to *Treme*," 193–212; JV. Fuqua, "'In New Orleans, We Might Say It Like This . . .': Authenticity, Place, and HBO's *Treme*," 235–242; L.L Thomas, "'People Want to See What Happened': *Treme*, Televisual Tourism, and the Racial Remapping of Post-Katrina New Orleans," 213–224; and W. Rathke, "*Treme* for Tourists: The Music of the City without the Power," 261–267.

9. Parmett, *Down in Treme: Race, Place, and New Orleans on Television* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag Wiesbaden GmbH, 2019), 16-17.

10. Economist John Charles Bradbury surveyed existing research on the topic as well as conducting his own study and concluded that film and TV incentive programs "divert tax revenue to the film industry from other economic sectors (public and private) without generating corresponding economic growth." Bradbury, "Do Movie Production Incentives Generate Economic Development?," *Contemporary Economic Polic*y 38.2 (August 2019): 327-342.

11. This is part of a larger Hollywood system of material and ideological offloading. Caldwell, for example, argues that Hollywood often "offloads" its duplicity and culpability in union busting and piracy onto "the perimeter of the nation's cultural map" such as the "right-to work states" in the U.S. south and countries in the global south. John T Caldwell, *Production Culture: Industrial Reflexivity and Critical Practice in Film and Television* (Durham: Duke University Press 2008), 80.

12. Jodi Melamed, "Racial Capitalism," *Critical Ethnic Studies* 1, no. 1 (Spring 2015): 78.

13. Caldwell argues that different kinds of disavowal are defining features of contemporary film and TV making. See *Production Culture*, 317-319, 368-69.

14. Rebecca A. Wanzo, "Thinking about *Watchmen*: A Roundtable," *Film Quarterly* 73, no. 4 (Summer 2020), https://filmquarterly.org/2020/06/26/thinking-about-watchmen-with-jonathan-w-gray-rebecca-a-wanzo-and-kristen-j-warner/.

15. *Film LA Inc. 2016 Feature Film Study* (Hollywood: Film L.A. Inc., 2016). According to the study, Georgia "hosted primary production for 17 of the top 100 domestic films released in 2016" (3). The state placed well above California and attracted nearly three times as many feature films as fifth-place New York and Louisiana (5).

16. Bradbury, "Opinion: Ga's Film Tax Credits are Big-Budget Flop," *Atlanta Journal Constitution*, February 24, 2020, https://www.ajc.com/news/opinion/opinion-film-tax-credits-are-big-budget-flop/sGEByrCHPnbNDFn2QzazSP/.

17. *Film LA Inc. 2016 Feature Film Study*, 16.

18."Tyler Perry Studios Partners with Georgia Film Academy to Nurture the Atlanta Film Industry," *Tyler Perry Entertainment*, https://tylerperry.com/tyler-perry-studios-partners-with-georgia-film-academy-to-nurture-the-atlanta-film-industry/.

19. *Georgia Film Academy*, https://georgiafilmacademy.edu. I am grateful to an anonymous reader for encouraging me to think more precisely about this context of Atlanta's filmmaking industry.

20. Mark F. Owens and Adam D. Rennhoff, "Motion Picture Production Incentives and Filming Location Decisions," *Journal of Economic Geography* 2, no. 3 (May 2020): 679-709.

21. Bradbury, "Do Movie Production Incentives Generate Economic Development?"; "A Comment on Georgia Department of Economic Development Report: 'The Economic Impact of the Film Industry in Georgia," *SSRN*, January 27, 2020, https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3526169.

22. Hobson's study of the 1996 Atlanta Olympics suggests that the games were a formative precursor to more recent efforts to attract film and TV producers to Georgia. In his account Black politicians joined with white businessmen to bring the games to Atlanta. He concludes that white elites profited the most from their collaboration with Black political leaders while the Black poor and working class "remained in dire straits that were as bad or worse than anything they had experienced before." Anticipating the state's film incentive program, government officials used local tax dollars to bring the Olympics to the Atlanta and to advertise the city to international visitors at the expense of poor Black residents. See Maurice J. Hobson *The Legend of the Black Mecca: Politics and Class in the Making of Modern Atlanta* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017), 5, 183. I am grateful to anonymous reader for alerting me to this book.

23. Ashley Lee, "'A Crime upon a Crime': Trump's Tulsa Rally Gives 'Watchmen' Episode New Resonance," *Los Angeles Times*, June 19, 2020, https://www.latimes.com/entertainment-arts/tv/story/2020-06-19/watchmen-tulsa-1921-massacre-trump-juneteenth-rally; Meghan O'Keefe, "HBO's 'Watchmen' was Ahead of its Time—By Nine Months," *Decider*, June 4 2020, https://decider.com/2020/06/04/watchmen-on-hbo-2020-relevance-tulsa-massacres/?fbclid=IwAR3SibnNSJlNHfGQ9jK4JL5pqdei6ZKlghDr_cnJODaJ31e3EK4kCtZYllg; Ray Flook, "Watchmen: Damon Lindelof Knows What His Episode 10 Title Would Be," *Bleeding Cool*, June 5, 2020, https://bleedingcool.com/tv/watchmen-damon-lindelof-know-what-his-episode-10-title-would-be/; Astead W. Herndon, "Black Tulsans, with a Defiant Juneteenth Celebration, Send a Message to Trump," *New York Times*, June 20, 2020, https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/19/us/politics/juneteenth-tulsa-trump-rally.html.

24. Kevin Myrick, "'Watchmen' Episode Shown on HBO Featuring Downtown Cedartown," *Rome News-Tribune*, October 26, 2019, https://www.northwestgeorgianews.com/rome/lifestyles/watchmen-episode-shown-on-hbo-featuring-downtown-cedartown-copy/article_e39b343c-f836-11e9-93a2-2f5eca383764.html; Ra Moon, "Filming Locations: Where was *Watchmen* Filmed?," *Atlas of Wonders*, https://www.atlasofwonders.com/2019/10/watchmen-series-filming-location-tulsa-castle.html; Carrie Burns, "Have You Watched *Watchmen*? We're Not in Tulsa Anymore!," *Atlanta Movie Tours*, December 18, 2019, https://atlantamovietours.com/blogs/watchmen/.

25. "Cedartown," *West Georgia Textile Heritage Trail*, https://westgatextiletrail.com/cedartown/; Lisa M. Russell, *Lost Mill Towns of North Georgia* (Charleston: The History Press, 2020), 167-68.

26. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, Cedartown's population is 20.20% Black and 22.4% Latinx.

27. Cedric J. Robinson introduced the concept of racial capitalism in *Black Marxism*: *The Making of the Black Radical Tradition* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1983), and further developed it in *Forgeries of Memory and Meaning*: *Blacks and the Regimes of Race in American Theater and Film Before World War II* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2008).

28. Dell Upton, *What Can and Can't be Said: Race, Uplift, and Monument Building in the Contemporary South* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015), Kindle Location 598.

29. In 2017, in the wake of white nationalist protests in Charlottesville and the murder of Heather Heyer by a neo-Nazi, local officials in Polk County announced they would not take down the Cedartown memorial. See "No Plans to Remove Polk Count's Monument for Confederate Soldiers," *The Polk County Standard Journal*, August 17, 2017, https://www.northwestgeorgianews.com/polk_standard_journal/news/local/no-plans-to-remove-polk-countys-monument-for-confederate-soldiers/article_7d822454-8361-11e7-b636-0f54981c180e.html.

30. Kirk Savage, *Standing Soldiers, Kneeling Slaves: Race, War, and Monument in Nineteenth-Century America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018).

31.See "Character Areas and Landmarks," *Historic Oakland Foundation*, https://oaklandcemetery.com/character-areas-and-landmarks/.

32. "Lives That Made Our City: Decatur Cemetery Walking Tour" (Decatur: City of Decatur, no date or page numbers), https://issuu.com/decaturga/docs/decatur-cemetery-walking-tour-2017.

33. Chris Joyner, "Georgia Capitol Heavy with Confederate Symbols," *The Atlanta-Journal Constitution*, September 5, 2015, https://www.ajc.com/news/state--regional-govt--politics/georgia-capitol-heavy-with-confederate-symbols/z051suEoa7bqO5cWhXlZnJ/.

34.Georgia Senate Bill 77, *TrackBill*, https://trackbill.com/bill/georgia-senate-bill-77-state-flag-seal-and-other-symbols-additional-protections-for-government-statues-provide/1680705/#/details=true).

35. By contrast, in its episode recreating the Greenwood Massacre, *Lovecraft Country* prominently features the Confederate monument in its Macon location.

36. Alan Moore, "Moore on Jerusalem, Eternalism, Anarchy and Herbie!," *Alan Moore World*, November 18, 2019, https://alanmooreworld.blogspot.com/2019/11/moore-on-jerusalem-eternalism-anarchy.html; Chris Gavaler, "The Ku Klux Klan and the Birth of the Superhero," *Journal of Graphic Novels and Comics* 4.2 (2013), 191-208. See also Alison Kinney, "How the Klan Got its Hood," *The New Republic*, January 8, 2016, https://newrepublic.com/article/127242/klan-got-hood.

37. In an editorial titled "How 'Watchmen's' Misunderstanding of Vietnam Undercuts its Vision of Racism," Viet Thanh Nguyen faults the show for failing to represent U.S. imperialism's "entwinement with white supremacy" (*Washington Post*, Dec. 18, 2009, https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/2019/12/18/how-watchmens-misunderstanding-vietnam-undercuts-its-vision-racism/). I find his arguments about the show's content persuasive, but they are complicated by a consideration of *Watchmen*'s filming locations, which implicitly link Saigon to histories of white supremacy in Georgia.

38. Hollywood actors and producers opposed the bill (which was signed into law by the same governor who signed the bill protecting Confederate memorials) but differed over strategy, with some calling for a boycott of filming in the state while others such as Jordan Peele vowed to donate profits to the ACLU and a voting rights group founded by Stacey Abrams. Abrams opposed calls for boycott, encouraging Hollywood to stay in the state and support voting rights. See Hamza Shaban, "Stacey Abrams Urges Hollywood to '#StayAndFight' in Georgia Instead of Boycotting Over Abortion Law," *Washington Post*, June 4, 2019, https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2019/06/04/stacey-abrams-huddle-with-hollywood-execs-potential-boycott-meets-calls-stay-fight/.

39. Sayak Valencia, *Gore Capitalism*, trans. by John Pluecker (South Pasadena: Semiotext(e), 2018), 10, 20-1, 228-33.

40. Ibid, 135.

41. Ibid, 23.

42. Quoted by Shirley Li, "The Strangely Charming World of *Los Espookys*," *The Atlantic*, June 21, 2019, https://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2019/06/los-espookys-hbo-fred-armisen-julio-torres-ana-fabrega/592066/.

43. Ibid.

44. Anna Marie de la Fuente, "Chile Offers 30% Cash Rebates to Int'l Films, TV and Digital Location Shoots," *Variety*, September 25 , 2017, https://variety.com/2017/film/festivals/chile-cash-rebate-intl-film-tv-digital-location-shoots-1202570192/; Shannon Bowen, "From Locations to Incentives: The Cheat Sheet for Filming in Latin America," *Hollywood Reporter*, May 18, 2019, https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/lists/cheat-sheet-filming-latin-america-1211897/item/filming-latin-america-cheat-sheet-brazil-1211898.

45. Riley Chow, "Julio Torres Reflects on the Origins of 'Los Espookys' and Teases Season 2," *Goldderby*, April 23, 2020, https://www.goldderby.com/article/2020/julio-torres-los-espookys-hbo-video-interview/.

46. Gonzalo Valdivia, "*El Acento Chileno de Los Espookys*," *Latercera*, July 6, 2019, https://www.latercera.com/culto/2019/07/06/acento-chileno-los-espookys/.

47. Erika Beckman, "Imperial Impersonations: Chilean Racism and the War of the Pacific," *Emisférica: Hemispheric Institute* 5, no. 1 (2008), https://hemisphericinstitute.org/en/emisferica-5-2-race-and-its-others/5-2-dossier/imperial-impersonations.html; Maya Doig-Acuña, "Recognizing Blackness in Chile," *Guernica* (March 2, 2020), https://www.guernicamag.com/recognizing-blackness-in-chile/.

48. Laurence Blair, "Conquistadores Tumble as Indigenous Chileans Tear Down Statues," *The Guardian*, November 5, 2019, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/nov/05/chile-statues-indigenous-mapuche-conquistadors.

49. The preceding summary is based on a search of Getty Images for "Chile Protests,"https://www.gettyimages.com/photos/chile-protests?phrase=Chile%20Protests&sort=best#license.

50. Naomi Larsson, "He Saw White: Why the Eye Became a Symbol of Chile's Unrest," *Aljazeera*, March 16, 2020, https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/white-eye-symbol-chile-unrest-200316191357757.html; "Chile: Deliberate Policy to Injure Protestors Points to Responsibility of Those in Command," *Amnesty International*, November 21, 2019, https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2019/11/chile-responsable-politica-deliberada-para-danar-manifestantes/.

51. Production was cut short however by the Covid 19 pandemic.

52. I use "Chicana" here because the character expressly identifies as a "girl" in season 3, episode 5, although the actor that plays the character, Ser Anzoategui, identifies as non-binary.

53. George J. Sánchez, "Why Are Multiracial Communities So Dangerous? A Comparative Look at Hawai'i, Cape Town, and Boyle Heights, California," *Pacific Historical Review* 86, no. 1 (2007): 166.

54. Jeff Goldsmith, "*Vida* Q & A—Tanya Saracho," *The Q&A with Jeff Goldsmith*, 2019, https://www.mixcloud.com/theqawithjeffgoldsmith/vida-qa-tanya-saracho/.

55. Anastasia Baginski and Chris Malcolm, "Gentrification and the Aesthetics of Displacement," *Field: A Journal of Socially Engaged Art Criticism*, Fall, 2019, http://field-journal.com/issue-14/gentrification-and-the-aesthetics-of-displacement.

Although those groups have dominated media coverage, anti-gentrification efforts have also been organized by Latina immigrants living in public housing as part of the L.A. Tenants Union. See Ultra-red, "*Desarmando Desarrollismo*: Listening to Anti-Gentrification in Boyle Heights," *Field: A Journal of Socially Engaged Art Criticism*, Fall, 2019, http://field-journal.com/issue-14/desarmando-desarrollismo.

56. Kean O'Brian, Leonardo Vilchis, and Corina Maritescu, "Boyle Heights and the Fight against Gentrification as State Violence," *American Quarterly* 71, no. 2 (June 2019): 393.

57. Ibid, 389.

58. During the filming of season one, BHAAD prevented *Vida* from shooting in Mariachi Plaza but the show filmed there for its third season finale. Alejandra Reyes-Velarde, "Drama on Set and Off; 'Vida,' a TV Show About Gentrification, Faces Protests by Some Who Say it is Doing Just That," *Los Angeles Times*, September 1, 2018, A.1.

59. Pulido, Barraclough and Cheng, 97.

60. "As Rents Soar in L.A, Even Boyle Heights' Mariachis Sing the Blues" *The Los Angeles Times,* September 9, 2017, https://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-boyle-heights-musicians-gentrification-20170909-htmlstory.html.

61. Yvonne Villarreal, "Netflix Tackles Gentrification; 'Gentefied' Debuts Amid Concern it May Contribute to Problem in Boyle Heights," *Los Angeles Times*, February 2020, E1.

62. On gentrification and the police in Boyle Heights see O'Brian, Vilchis, and Maritescu, 392.

63. Sarah Arnold, "Netflix and the Myth of Choice/Participation/Autonomy," *The Netflix Effect: Technology and Entertainment in the 21st Century*, eds. Kevin McDonald and Daniel Smith-Rowsey (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2018), 49-51. See also Mareike Jenner, *Netflix a*nd the Reinvention of Television (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 162.

64. Mark D. Pepper, "Can Television Diversity Overcome the Rise of Algorithmic Recommendations?," *Flow*, March 2, 2020, http://www.flowjournal.org/2020/03/television-diversity-algorithmic-recommendations/

65. Jorie Lagerwey and Taylor Nygaard, *Horrible White People: Gender, Genre, and Television's Precarious Whiteness* (New York: New York University Press, 2020).

66. Zachary Snider, "The Cognitive Psychological Effects of Binge-Watching," *The Netflix Effect*, 117-19.

67. Jenner, 119-134, 161-2.

68. Miriam Hansen, *Babel and Babylon: Spectatorship in American Silent Cinema* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994); Curtis Marez, *Drug Wars: The Political Economy of Narcotics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), 146-84.

69. See Faith Karimi, "A Controversial Confederate Monument Goes Down in the Atlanta Suburb of Decatur," CNN News, June 19, 2020, https://www.cnn.com/2020/06/19/us/decatur-square-confederate-monument-removed/index.html.

70. Beacon Hill Alliance for Human Rights, https://beaconhillblackalliance.org.