american studies

WITH AMERICAN STUDIES INTERNATIONAL

MID-AMERICA AMERICAN STUDIES ASSOCIATION

MEMBERSHIP

On the cover: Extras on break during filming for *Watchmen*'s recreation of the Greenwood Massacre. Courtesy HBO/Mark Hill.

american studies

WITH AMERICAN STUDIES INTERNATIONAL

A quarterly interdisciplinary journal sponsored by the Mid-America American Studies Association, the University of Kansas College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, the KU Department of American Studies, and KU Libraries

EDITORIAL BOARD

GUIDELINES FOR CONTRIBUTORS

SUBMISSIONS

We require authors to submit their manuscripts and a 300-word abstract using the journal's online submission system. For questions regarding submissions or the online system, please contact the assistant editor at: asjo@ku.edu. As photographs and other imagery often enhance the text and the journal considerably, the editors strongly encourage authors to provide illustrations with their submissions. Additional guidelines for contributors can be found at: https://journals.ku.edu/amsj/about/submissions.

FORMAT AND STYLE

American Studies uses a double-anonymous review process. Contributors should remove any identifying information from their work before submitting it to the journal. Only the manuscript's title, text, and citations should appear on the Microsoft Word document the author submits. Manuscripts should be double-spaced with one-inch margins on all sides and be between 20 and 30 pages in length. We strongly urge authors to use endnotes, which should be in Arabic numerals, and to place all images and figures at the end of the document. All work should be prepared following the most recent editions of Chicago, MLA or APA citation formats. Any manuscript not meeting these standards may be returned to the author for proper reformatting before it is considered. Contributors agree upon submission that manuscripts sent to *American Studies* will not currently be under consideration for publication elsewhere while under review by *American Studies*.

american studies

WITH AMERICAN STUDIES INTERNATIONAL

Book Reviews

Notes

EDITOR'S LETTER

Dear readers,

We're pleased to be in the second year of our revamped *Dialogues: Blog of the American Studies Journal*, which kicked off last April in the wake of the pandemic. Our 2020 summer issue (59.2) highlighted just a small selection of the essays published on *Dialogues*, and we are thrilled to invite you back to read our featured essay from late 2020, as well as essays forthcoming in 2021.

In October 2020, sociocultural anthropologist Maurice Rafael Magaña's "Giving Form to Black and Brown" illuminates Latinx and Black artists making new forms of solidarities through creative expression. His book, *Cartographies of Youth Resistance Hip-Hop, Punk, and Urban Autonomy in Mexico* (University of California Press), was published last fall. Mangaña shared his research in Lawrence as a keynote speaker for the 2016 KU Commons symposium "Trans/forming Activist Media in the Americas."

At the end of 2020, *Dialogues* published "Our Resiliency with Destruction: fronteristxs Artist Collective and the Politics of Protest" by a collective art crew in New Mexico. They work with community advocates to end migrant detention and to transform the state's relationship with prisons and all carceral institutions. And Debadrita Chakraborty's "Indian Migrant Solidarities and Futures," published in September, takes a close look at the politics of racial, classed, and gendered solidarities within Indian diasporic communities in the United States.

We have several in-progress pieces by contributors thinking across the fields of American studies. Forthcoming essays highlight our "On Teaching" series, as well as a new series called "On Writing." Vineeta Singh's "On Grading" takes a critical look at the history of grading in higher education and reflects on evaluating students during the pandemic. Crystal Mun-Hye Baik — whose 2018 article "Sensing Through Slowness: Korean Americans and the Un/making of the Home Film Archive" was published in *American Studies* (56.3/4) — narrates the long arc of writing in academia in "On Promiscuous Writing." Josen Masangkay Diaz, Emily Hue, and Davorn Sisavath's collective essay "'Working in Friendship': Writing in the time of Coronavirus" meditates on why "communing"— being together virtually in ritual writing sessions — matters now more than ever.

Bookmark us at amsj.blog and consider contributing an essay! Contact us at amsjblog@ku.edu.

Chris Perreira
Associate Editor, *American Studies*
Editor of *Dialogues: Blog of the American Studies Journal*

Ashley Aranda
Media Assistant, *American Studies*

Precarious Locations: Streaming TV and Global Inequalities

Curtis Marez

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*

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 chang- ing, 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 loca- tions "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 en- gagement 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 hir- ing, 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 televi- sion 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 implica- tions 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 co-cooning 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 pay outs. 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 over-representation 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 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 protestors 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 protestors 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 protestors 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 protestors, 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 protestors 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 member's 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 protestors, 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 group think, 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 Standing* (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.

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 Policy* 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=IwAR3SibnNSJINHfGQ9jK4JL5pqdei6ZKIg hDr_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.

Precarious Locations: Streaming TV and Global Inequalities

Curtis Marez

Hollywood makes an increasing number of contemporary TV series in pre-carious 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 capi-talism, 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*

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 co-cooning 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 pro-duced 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 over-representation 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 Standing* (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.

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 Policy* 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=IwAR3SibnNSJINHfGQ9jK4JL5pqdei6ZKIghDr_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.

Beyond the 'Futureless Future': Edward O. Bland, Afro-Modernism and *The Cry of Jazz*

William Sites

At a key moment in Edward O. Bland's *The Cry of Jazz*, the film's central char-acter and voiceover narrator – an African American music arranger named Alex – is asked by fellow members of their interracial jazz club to offer his authoritative opinion on the future of the music. "Yes," he replies dramatically, as the camera suddenly zooms in on his face: "Jazz is dead." Rapid reaction-shots show the startled faces of the group. The club's white members erupt in outrage and dismay.

What soon follows is a climactic sequence that actively stages the musical death of jazz. Narrated by Alex and performed by the silhouetted figures of pianist Sun Ra and members of his Arkestra, this dramatization re-presents jazz – hitherto portrayed as an extraordinarily rich and powerful medium central to African Ameri-can cultural survival – as a fatally constricted musical style, a sonic cul-de-sac whose rigid formal constraints signal the social imprisonment of Black America. As Sun Ra's hands are seen playing the same discordant piano run over and over again, and other instruments join in to repeat the passage, the result is a closed and unyielding musical loop – a "circular see-saw," in Alex's somber voiceover, one which leads African Americans and America itself to "nowhere." Shots of the shadowed musical performers intersperse with images of abandoned buildings being demolished as the musical passage recurs, dissonant yet wholly caged within its repetitions. Montaging a staged musical impasse with a dispassionate destruction of ghetto structures, this sequence culminates in a black screen and an extended moment of silence – then returns viewers to the fictional social-club gathering, whose troubled members besiege Alex for further insights. But what is the future of music, of America, after the death of jazz? Alex, speaking for the

film director, delivers an emphatic if enigmatic answer: only a clean break from the "sound of jazz" can liberate music and, by extension, bring about "the salvation of the Negro" and the rest of America through the birth of a new way of life.[1]

The Cry of Jazz, initially released in 1959, has come to be recognized as a major landmark in independent Black cinema. An early influence on 1960s-era intellectuals Amiri Baraka and Harold Cruse, this "lost film" still confounds conventional histories of African American moviemaking even after its inclusion on the National Film Registry of the Library of Congress.[2] It also remains an unsettling and surprisingly understudied cultural artifact. Shot and produced in late-1950s Chicago, the 16-millimeter film failed to gain widespread distribution at the time of release but elicited strong reactions from the audiences who managed to see it. Many white viewers were stunned by the confrontational attitudes of the movie's Black characters; even a sympathetic review called the picture "the first anti-white film made by American Negroes." A post-screening debate in New York became racially incendiary enough for the police to take down the names of the participants. Criticism at the time fastened on a range of perceived flaws, from wooden acting and amateurish direction to unfair portrayals of the club's white members. Film commentators today are more likely to appreciate Bland's gleeful puncturing of liberal pieties about racial "sameness under the skin" – while also noting that the movie's own race politics often center on a contest between Black men and white men for the possession of white women.[3]

What remains especially striking, however, is that the musical and social claims advanced by Bland's short "thesis film" have eluded serious engagement.[4] Barely thirty minutes long, *The Cry of Jazz* takes the viewer through more than a few disconcerting shifts in genre and tone. Initially conveying the earnest pedagogical style of a 1950s-era instructional short interspersed with illustrative dramatic sequences, the film actively unsettles viewers, not only with its contentious racial politics but with a tone that switches between sly and awkward, celebratory and somber, sharply polemical and coolly observational. Stagy social-club interactions alternate with documentary-style and often lyrical footage of Chicago street life – all stitched together by Alex's theoretical elaborations on the nature of jazz. Despite these jarring shifts, though, the film's intellectual arguments about Black America and its music are quite coherent and well sustained.

Bland was a composer and music arranger, not a professional filmmaker, and his movie's strongest claims emerge from a particular theoretical approach to the formal structures of jazz music and their historical evolution. In fact, even as its cinematic style oscillates between the didactic and the poetic, the film patiently elaborates a utopian-modernist conception of twentieth-century music – one with surprising parallels to that of Frankfurt School theorist Theodor Adorno – in order to set up its own combative challenge to post-World War II conceptions of American racial identity and social progress. The unconventionality of this hybrid intellectual stance, along with the idiosyncratic manner in which it is set out within the film, raises interesting questions about Bland's broader aesthetic project and complicates recent perspectives on the contributions of Black musical expression

to twentieth-century Afro-modernist culture. That the composer and bandleader Sun Ra also plays a prominent (if persistently veiled) role in the film provokes further questions, not least regarding the relationship of Bland's claims about the "death of jazz" to Ra's own emerging musical project – one that saw jazz as the basis for a quite different futurist vision in which outer space becomes an imagined realm for Black emancipation.

This article examines the interwoven conceptions of musical and racial identity articulated in *The Cry of Jazz*. I explore how the central themes of the film are marked by Bland's own early experiences in Chicago, including his family's involvement in Bronzeville literary circles, his connection to the University of Chicago and its Hyde Park neighborhood, and his professional encounters with the South Side commercial music world. These themes gain intellectual shape, however, through the development of an ambitious argument about the musical elements of jazz and their relation to Black urban experience – an argument that ultimately hinges any further advance of African American musical culture on a sharp break with jazz traditions and the destruction of the ghetto that produced them.

The result is not only a more uncompromising contribution to 1960s-era Black cultural radicalism than is often recognized but also a distinctive reformulation of the Afro-modernist aesthetic – and one that is strongly inflected by the film's utopian staging of slum-clearance urban renewal. Linking liberation from the postwar American ghetto to a new aesthetic fusion of avant-garde classical and African American vernacular styles, *The Cry of Jazz* puts forward a high-modernist, composer-centered conception of Black art music as racial emancipation. This aesthetic project is in many ways far removed from Baraka's call several years later for a music with "no reliance on European tradition or theory." To advance this conception, Bland tailors the film's visual and auditory portrayal of the Sun Ra Arkestra in ways that advance his tightly scripted thesis – a mode of presentation that, when seen in retrospect, offers a striking contrast to Sun Ra's own utopian Afro-modernism during this period.[5]

Reconstructing the musical arguments advanced in *The Cry of Jazz* provides new insights into post-World War II African American creative culture. Recent musicological scholarship by Porter, Ramsey, Monson and others has begun to differentiate in helpful ways between the multiple Afro-modernist strategies at play in postwar jazz and other musics of the period. Scholars in literary and cultural studies, for their part, have begun to recognize not only the aesthetic influence of jazz music on mid-twentieth-century modernist writers and artists but also, increasingly, the centrality of urban experience to historically evolving conceptions of African American modernism.[6] *The Cry of Jazz*, with its alternately provocative and meditative ruminations on musical form and ghetto existence, develops a challenging and underappreciated position on the historical relationship between modernist innovation and Black urban life. Claiming that jazz music's ties to ghetto conditions block it from further development, Bland offers up the death of jazz – and the creative destruction of the ghetto – as a surprising path forward for Black-led musical innovation as well as the emancipation of African America itself. Beyond

presenting a powerful commentary on the postwar racial politics of jazz, the film opens up a still-disquieting consideration of cultural modernism, urban destruction, and the utopian possibilities inherent in African American creative expression.

The Race of Jazz

The intellectual and social themes explored in *The Cry of Jazz* emerged, in multiple ways, from Chicago's South Side. Bland himself dated the film's genesis to conversations in the early 1950s with various African American friends at Jimmy's Woodlawn Tap, a tavern located near the University of Chicago in interracial Hyde Park, where he lived at the time. Recently struck by the global reach and "propagandistic power" of the cinema, Bland and his friends became convinced that a powerful documentary about music and race could be made cheaply, though none of them had actually produced or directed a film before. Along with three of these friends – novelist Mark Kennedy, urban planner Nelam Hill and mathematician Eugene Titus – Bland formed a production company called KHTB, and the four of them soon started contributing their own incomes to get the project off the ground. They wrote the script collaboratively in 1957 and, relying largely on piecemeal donations and volunteer labor, shot the Parkwood Jazz Club scenes as well as most of the documentary segments the following year. The KHTB team enlisted local theater and music producers for technical and post-production assistance, including soon-to-be Second City co-founder Howard Alk, who edited the film. Yet *The Cry of Jazz* remained a KHTB-led project throughout, and the film's script and direction, along with the publicity materials, advanced what Bland and his co-producers saw as an uncompromisingly African American point of view.[7]

Bland himself came from an intellectually distinguished family. He was born in Chicago in 1926, the son of a postal worker who was also a literary critic affiliated with the city's Black Renaissance cultural scene. His uncle, Alden Bland, was a well-regarded fiction writer. His father, also named Edward, took him as a boy to gatherings frequented by Richard Wright, Gwendolyn Brooks, Arna Bontemps and other intellectuals and artists associated with the South Side Writers Group and the South Side Community Arts Center. According to recollections by the younger Bland, his father's thinking was strongly influenced by Marxism, and his mother, Althea Bland, was deeply interested in "voodoo" – whereas he himself rejected both approaches to the world. After graduating from high school at sixteen, he attended Wilson Junior College, majoring in music, and then, in 1945, he enlisted in military service, spending a year in San Francisco playing in the U.S. Navy band and reading music criticism and philosophy. He returned to his hometown to attend the University of Chicago on the GI Bill, but after two years of studying in the music department (and apparently fighting with his professors over what was relevant to study) Bland finished his undergraduate education at the American Conservatory of Music and then studied composition privately with composer John J. Becker. As there were few opportunities for African American composers in Chicago or elsewhere, his future remained uncertain.[8]

During the early 1950s, while working on soundtracks for educational film projects, Bland also "started hanging around" Chess, Vee-Jay and other local record companies that specialized in popular music, hoping to make money selling them songs. This effort seems to have run aground when he refused to surrender copyright to the labels – a common practice by which African American songwriters in jazz, blues and other popular genres lost control of their music to white producers and music companies. Bland's critical perspective on the racial dynamics of cultural appropriation was further sharpened, in his own estimation, by ongoing arguments he was having with young white jazz fans in Hyde Park. The 1950s was a decade in which jazz, no longer seen as a vaguely disreputable music performed by African Americans and distributed separately through "race" records, was finding a significant niche as an art music with a middle-class fan base, particularly among white college students. Young listeners in university settings often expressed their passion for the music by forming jazz clubs, and in areas such as racially mixed Hyde Park these clubs were often roiled by conflictual understandings of the music – its history, different styles, and complex relationship to racial identity and social progress. For Bland, whose *Cry of Jazz* would center on a fictionalized gathering of one such club, the powerful cultural investment in the music by young white fans seemed to be accompanied by a disturbing sense of racial entitlement and intellectual authority. As he later put it, "[T]he thing that was getting to me was that they [whites] were trying to take all the credit for its invention and everything else" – even though "they don't know anything" about "the technical side of music or the historical side." The polemical edge that viewers would perceive in *The Cry of Jazz*, therefore, was born in part of Bland's determination to assert his own musical expertise as well as the rootedness of jazz in African American community life.[9]

It is not surprising, as media scholar Anna McCarthy has pointed out, that Bland's sharp edge was forged in the particular racial circumstances of 1950s Hyde Park. Home to precisely the sort of white middle-class liberals who would comprise the film's intended and often infuriated audience, the neighborhood also was undergoing the intense racial conflict often associated with postwar urban renewal. The University of Chicago, armed with special legal powers, had spent much of the decade directing one of the most ambitious "slum clearance" and redevelopment efforts in the country – largely to limit the influx of Black residents into its Hyde Park neighborhood. Black leaders, though, found themselves divided over the issue; the community's more middle-class residents rarely faced displacement, and many African American leaders continued to voice support for "breaking up the ghetto." During the years when Bland was producing his film, the university's redevelopment authorities began demolishing the increasingly African American working-class blocks surrounding Jimmy's tavern – an area that was home to several jazz clubs. Not only jazz musical styles, then, but also the neighborhood places where the music was still performed were being taken over by whites.[10]

Bland's determination to make a film about jazz encouraged him to seek out a local pianist and bandleader whose music he liked – and might use.

> When it became time to make *Cry of Jazz*, I could've written the music for it, but that would cost money, so the thing was how to get the jazz soundtrack without spending any money. So, I got in touch with Sun Ra and … Alton Abraham, who was his manager at the time, about using the music for the soundtrack of the film. And that's how it happened. And his music was certainly good enough and interesting enough to be used to illustrate some of the points I wanted to make in terms of music.[11]

Abraham essentially agreed to provide Arkestra recordings free of charge – a major windfall for KHTB's shoestring project.[12] Ra and Abraham also allowed Bland to film the ensemble performing in local clubs; the filmmaker, in turn, shot the group almost entirely in silhouette, partly to evade censure by Local 208, the African American musicians' union. By this time, Sun Ra himself was starting to develop a reputation in local circles as a kind of Afrocentric futurist, but Ra's own ideas, or what Bland later referred to dismissively as his "Sun God of Jazz propaganda," apparently held little interest for the filmmaker. Bland also acquired several music tracks from a local arranger and bandleader named Paul Severson; little is known about their relationship, though this music also figures in the film.[13]

The Cry of Jazz opens, as title credits appear, amid casual post-meeting conversations among the Black and white members of the fictional Parkwood Jazz Club. After a young white woman named Natalie thanks Bruce, a white man, for teaching her that "rock and roll music is jazz," Alex, a club officer and music arranger who also serves as the film's narrator, intervenes. Sharply redrawing the musical boundaries of jazz (and implicitly the racial ones as well), Alex exclaims: "Bruce, how square can you get? Rock and roll is not jazz. Rock and roll is merely an offspring of rhythm and blues." Then what *is* jazz? ask the white members of the club – to which an African American member named Louis responds, "Jazz is merely the Negro's cry of joy and suffering." John, the white president of the jazz club, takes issue: "Oh, now wait a minute, Louis. You talk as if Negroes were the only ones who could have created jazz!" Alex responds categorically: "Not only *did* they create jazz – they were the only ones" with the "necessary musical and human history" to do so.

The battle lines thus drawn, the remainder of the film pursues the question of *whose* music jazz really is and what the implications might be for American society and for the music's future. The overall structure of the 34-minute film intersperses dramatic segments in the unfolding jazz-club discussion with three instructional, documentary-style sequences. Published commentaries on *The Cry of Jazz* have tended to center, perhaps understandably, on the jarring racial conflict in the Parkwood scenes. Yet it is in the documentary-style sections that the intellectual arguments of the film are most effectively presented, and by fo-

Figure 1: Sun Ra and His Arkestra in *The Cry of Jazz* (Alton Abraham Collection of Sun Ra, Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library/ Adam Abraham).

cusing carefully on their development the larger stakes of Bland's aesthetic – and racial – project become clear.

The first and longest of these documentary-style sections intersperses film footage of various South Side neighborhood scenes with shots of Arkestra musicians in silhouetted performance (see Figure 1). While a re-edited recording of Sun Ra's "Blues at Midnight" plays in the background, Alex-as-voiceover-narrator softly instructs viewers on how the musical language of jazz remains anchored in African American city life. Jazz music, we are told, exists in close connection with the social dynamics of Black urban existence, revealing in both realms the fundamental tensions between freedom and constraint, "joy" and "suffering." The rhythms of the music – along with its sound textures, improvisatory flights and expressive powers – are connected visually to shots of everyday human movement in the streets, playgrounds, churches, bars and tenements of Black Chicago. Voiceover narration breaks down the mechanics of swing rhythm ("born of the conflict of two types of rhythm… a rhythm of stress and one of length") with a balletic montage of sinuous dancers, strutting pedestrians and crisscrossing feet, all accompanied by the stuttering attack of John Gilmore's saxophone and Sun Ra's comping piano. After "Blues at Midnight" (lengthened from six to nine minutes by edited-in repetitions) finally fades out, a shot of a drummer's snare cues up the intro to Ra's "Demon's Lullaby." The song's pulsing beat and rollicking ensemble head-statement play over a crisply edited sequence of African American men shooting pool, balls caroming around the table amid the chiaroscuro lighting of a billiard hall.[14]

These urban segments, interlacing a certain Arkestra sound of the period with the street life of Bronzeville, give expressive weight to Alex's coolly articulated music lesson. In doing so, Bland was suturing the story of jazz back into the texture of Black urban existence at a moment when strong economic and cultural forces were pulling the music elsewhere. From one side, there were non-conformist "hipsters" (as they were called in Norman Mailer's then-influential essay, "The White Negro") embracing jazz because of its association with Black subcultural style; from the other, market-seeking musicians and producers were working to elevate jazz into a more remunerative art-world commodity. *The Cry of Jazz* offers up resistance to both tendencies, as Bland himself echoed in a letter to *Film Culture* editor Jonas Mekas.

> [I]n the past 10 years or so [jazz] has become a cult of romantic and futuristic pretensions. No one could be further from the spirit of jazz than the typical member of this romantic futuristic cult: the Hipster who seems to be invading and disturbing the present but shaky sanctum of American conformity.[15]

His criticism was directed at Black hipsters as well as white ones. According to an account by British critic Kenneth Tynan, Bland was asked at a public forum shortly after his film's release "if whites should follow the recommendation of Norman Mailer" and become white Negroes or hipsters.

> Mr. Bland sighed and said that Negro hipsters were more often conservatives than radicals. They wore special clothes and spoke a special argot – why, he inquired, would a progressive Negro want to wear a "double uniform"?[16]

The Cry of Jazz offers more, however, than a rhetorical critique of hipsters. By insisting on an enduring connection between the "spirit of jazz" and the community life of African Americans, the film resists the notion of the music as a free-floating artistic commodity. Jazz, Bland argues, remains the community's own defense against cultural annihilation – "the Negro's answer," as Alex's voiceover claims, "to America's ceaseless efforts to obliterate him."

Several scenes within the film's initial documentary sequence spell out the racial implications of this musicological position in no uncertain terms. The musical concept of "sonority," in particular, is illustrated through a pointed contrast between "the sound of Negro music" and "the sound of jazz as performed by whites." Accordingly, the extended pool-players sequence begins with Bland's narrator enjoining the listener: "Think of the sound of much Negro music compared to Negro life." As the Arkestra recording of Sun Ra's "Demon's Lullaby" begins to play, with its driving, swinging rhythm and brassy large-ensemble timbres, the camera shows an urban world that is unmistakably Black, working-class, masculine and public. The narrator then cuts in: "Now contrast this to the sound of jazz as performed

by whites compared to white life." A sudden musical shift ushers in the thin, light sound of an orderly, precise, small-group jazz composition – characteristics that later on in the film are labeled as inescapably "cool jazz" in style. Meanwhile, the camera focuses on a quite different metropolitan scene: cars, commuter trains and white pedestrians move impersonally through a snowy streetscape, followed by an indoor shot of a white woman carefully grooming her poodle – an urban or suburban world coded as private, cold, female, privileged, and indisputably white. The metonymic implications are overt and stark: hard-driving bop is the strong, virile music of the Black urban working class; cool jazz is the thin, effete soundtrack of a feminized, middle-class white world.

Bland was hardly the only postwar commentator to parse differences in jazz styles in ways that were sharply coded by race, class and gender. Contributors to 1950s-era debates often drew essentialized connections between styles of jazz and the racial identity of its practitioners, or between a style and the racial milieu allegedly evoked by the music. Other writers and musicians pushed back, arguing for a "color blind" approach to jazz styles and performers in the name of a musical universalism. These debates often focused on perceived aesthetic differences between individual instrumentalists or musical styles, ignoring, as Ingrid Monson has pointed out, the structural realities of racial discrimination that unequally affected all American musicians of the era.[17] *The Cry of Jazz*, to its director's credit, draws attention to the deep inequalities in postwar America that continued to make social opportunities and everyday life vastly different for whites and African Americans – musicians and non-musicians alike. Like many commentators at the time, though, Bland's starkly racialized presentation of bop and cool ignores how the styles that musicians play may result from aesthetic choices and prior experiences that are not reducible to race or other social identities. Sun Ra's own music from this period, it is worth noting, ran the stylistic gamut, from hard-driving swing and bluesy saxophone workouts to lyrical duets and romantic, densely orchestrated tone poems; the Arkestra heard in Bland's film, in other words, conveys little of this ensemble's stylistic reach and mercurial inventiveness. Consequently, the film's essentialization of various types of jazz – the presumed correspondence between a particular community and a distinctive musical style – diminishes recognition of the full range of musical resources available both within and across communities. As becomes clear later in Bland's film, this musical essentialism also contributes to the filmmaker's sense that African American jazz has arrived, both aesthetically and socially, at a dead end.

The film's second documentary-style section presents a history of the stylistic development of the music. Dixieland, swing, bebop, cool jazz – the voiceover narrator provides a fast-moving narrative of how this succession of jazz styles emerged from the evolving racial strictures of American urban life. Alex's thumbnail account of swing, for example, archly underlines broader historical continuities in African American oppression while also situating the formal and performance conventions of this new musical style within the particular urban conditions of the industrial North.

> Years later, after many Negroes had left the inhuman South
> and migrated to the more cleverly inhuman North, their prob-
> lem, among others, was how to retain their identity among the
> restraints of city living, mechanized and brutalizing jobs, and
> fragmented families. The musical answer came in the form of
> swing, in which you have a highly arranged, precise music with
> only a few key men using their individuality to improvise.

Bland's historical account of post-World War II jazz is similarly anchored in the racial dynamics of its era. Bebop, Alex observes, was "a revolt against the subservient Uncle Tom role given Negroes in the war effort and the entertainment world of that era." Cool jazz, in turn, is a white rejoinder to the Black assertiveness of bop; it "has been called by some an attempt to remove the Negro influence from jazz, because jazz is the one element in American life where whites must be humble to Negroes." Much of the visual attention in this instructional section, as in the previous one, is focused on Arkestra members performing in silhouette, as the audio track samples a series of the group's musical recordings intended to illustrate Alex's music-history lesson.

Then Sun Ra is finally introduced in his own right. Alex's voiceover gently observes: "The newest sounds to come along in contemporary jazz are written by the composer-arranger The Sun Ra, out of Chicago" – at which point the audio track launches the rhythmically jarring piano, wood block and bass opening of his composition, "A Call for All Demons." It is a dramatic intro, and the voiceover continues:

> The Sun Ra, among other things, fuses the snakelike bebop
> melodies with the colors of Duke Ellington and the experimental
> changes of Thelonious Monk. The Sun Ra says of his music
> that it is a portrayal of everything the Negro really was, is, and
> is going to be – with emphasis focused on the Negro's triumph
> over the demonic currents of his experience.

This paraphrase represents the only moment in *The Cry of Jazz* when a musician speaks (even if only second-hand through Alex) about what the music means to him. From the vantage point of today, this "portrayal" does seem to encapsulate at least a portion of the ambitious meanings that Ra himself was ascribing to his own music at the time. The words "triumph over" seem to have been added late in the production process; an earlier version of the script says simply "with em-phasis focused on the demonic currents of his experience." The added words skew the commentary away from Sun Ra's customary use of "demonic" in relation to Blackness as a positive attribute – something to embrace rather than triumph over.[18] In effect, even this brief presentation of Sun Ra's perspective is tweaked to serve Bland's own jazz account -- a historical narrative of struggle and, ultimately, overcoming.

By this time in the film, viewers would have grown accustomed to the silhou-etted presentation of Arkestra members as generic jazz musicians. Except for brief moments, the faces of individual musicians remain difficult to distinguish throughout. But their race is not; these clearly are Black musicians, a visual observation that remains salient as the voiceover commentary often marks the identity of jazz music in racial terms. Also discernible is the gender identity of these musicians: they are all men. This distinction is made pertinent by many other aspects of the film, from voiceover invocations of the "jazz man" to the romantic attention from Faye, a white Parkwood member, that Alex is able to attract with his jazz knowledge. Bland's narrative account, moreover, excludes any mention of vocal jazz, thereby erasing the contributions of Bessie Smith, Billie Holiday and countless other innovators. This absence is only the most sweeping way that *The Cry of Jazz* effaces female musicians from the music's history.

Black women, in fact, have no significant presence in the film at all – an omis-sion that early audiences seem to have criticized in no uncertain terms.[19] Beyond any pragmatic reasons for obscuring its performers, then, the film's visual style collectivizes the Arkestra musicians as Black jazz men, a status which confers upon them a generic musical authority to enact the meaning of jazz as the film defines it. At the end of this sequence, viewers are returned to the Parkwood Jazz Club, where it quickly becomes apparent –as Alex and the other members clash over the future of jazz – that a similar dynamic of authorization is at work.

Constraint and Freedom

The film's return to the Parkwood club sets the stage for the contentious claim that jazz is dead. After the white club members respond to Alex's disturb-ing pronouncement with alarm, two African American members push back, yet more calmly and analytically, with genuine curiosity. One of them, Bob, asks, "But in what *way* is jazz dead, though, Alex?" Alex responds, somewhat formulaically, that "the jazz body" is dead because "inherently the material of jazz does not allow for further growth." Louis, also a Black member, reiterates the question. Following a close-up of Louis's face assuming a listening posture, Alex proceeds, in his role as voiceover narrator, to explain – again using footage of the silhouetted Arkestra members to illustrate his points – how the repetitive nature of jazz music mirrors a larger trap that ensnares African Americans.

How has a music so rich and historically vital to Black survival become a fetter on the community's further development? The explanation, in Alex's telling, lies in what might be called the film's structural-formalist conception of jazz music. *The Cry of Jazz* argues specifically, as the filmmaker himself later noted, for a "structural identity" between "the Black experience" and "the nature of the music."[20] As we have seen, this stance entails strong claims that jazz is categorically an African American form of cultural expression – a music born of Black historical circumstances, pioneered and innovated by Black musicians, and still deeply and uniquely embedded in the everyday cultural life of African American urban communities. Such claims enable non-expert members such as Louis and Bob to speak authoritatively about what jazz is and what it expresses in ways that the

white members simply cannot. Concrete experience with Black suffering – the "hazards of being Negro," as Alex terms it – endows African Americans with unique aesthetic authority.

Bland's structural approach, though, also underscores how the formal constraints within jazz music have social implications. As Alex explains, the repetitive nature of the music's compositional structure, exemplified by the recurring chorus as well as conventionalized harmonic progressions ("the changes"), severely constricts the formal possibilities of the music. By contrast, says Alex, rhythm and melody constitute the freeing aspects of jazz, linked socially to the joyful components of African American experience. Yet even these freeing elements in jazz are inherently encased within the music's unyielding formal constraints; musicians improvise or create rhythmic variation, that is, only within the confines of a delimited set of harmonic and compositional patterns, leading in the long run to repetition and stasis. This lack of genuine musical development, in turn, is symptomatic of the social condition of Black Americans: "endless repetition" in jazz expresses "what the Negro experiences as the endless daily humiliation of American life, which bequeaths him a futureless future."[21]

The film's harsh verdict on what it portrays as the constraining elements of jazz overlaps in striking ways with Adorno's famously scathing critique of the music—against which Bland's own position in *The Cry of Jazz* emerges more clearly. Although defenders of jazz often dismiss Adorno's stance as the product of elitism or simple ignorance, this harsh appraisal was consistent with his aesthetic theory. This theory was grounded in a critical Marxist elaboration of the early twentieth-century modernist approach to European art music associated with figures such as composer Arnold Schoenberg – an approach that more recent music scholars have characterized as "structural listening." In Adorno's own conception, set out in a series of publications beginning in the 1930s, the broader development of modern music, along with the particular musical materials to be found within any composition, tend to be historically marked by capitalism's oppressive and ideologically distorted set of social relations – including, as Fumi Okiji has put it, the "machinery of capitalistic cultural production" itself. Just as the modern organization of social life has robbed human subjects of their individuality, twentieth-century musical compositions and other individual works of art have increasingly struggled to express their particularity in the face of a dehumanization of art. "Society's discontinuities, its untruths and ideologies," Adorno observed, "emerge in the work as structural discontinuities, as deficiencies." Only when a work's elements – its harmonic principles, rhythmic properties, compositional forms and so forth – combine spontaneously, that is, dialectically, to create genuinely new musical development can the work's ability to convey "truth content" about its society, and thereby contribute to social emancipation, be fulfilled.[22]

For this reason, Adorno remained unrelentingly critical of all types of twentieth-century music that failed to engage in deep and thoroughgoing formal innovation. He was particularly derisive toward musical genres such as jazz that celebrated what he saw as a kind of pseudo-individuality – a merely superficial spontaneity

and creativity overlaying an unchanging or "dead" musical structure. Lacking any true dialectal development in its internal relations, jazz music could only mask an exhausted musical grammar with surface ornamentation, its vaunted improvisations creating the illusion of authentic innovation and foreclosing music's potential for spurring critical social reflection. And this underlying rigidity, for Adorno, was not simply a cultural formula; it was an unmediated expression of the oppressive structure of the larger society.[23]

The Cry of Jazz takes seriously the central thrust of Adorno's critique of modern music. Despite the fact that, as Okiji has observed, Adorno considered the Black experience "wholly inconsequential" to his own narrative of the modern, Bland effectively transposes Adorno's social claims to American conditions of racial domination.[24] Using a similarly structural approach, Bland argues that jazz – its historical development as a musical art as well as the formal elements at work within individual pieces of music – is deeply connected to the racist social conditions oppressing African Americans. As with Adorno's critique of capitalist culture, Bland sees the musical constraints within jazz initially as formal but ultimately as social and political; the compositional and harmonic structures that have given the music its evolving sound and expressive effect have been tightly tethered to the harsh confinements of twentieth-century Black existence. An inability to remove the music's "constraining elements" – to alter or recombine them, in Adorno's terms, to produce dialectical or transformative development – results in part from inherent formal limitations, especially the difficulty of developing new compositional structures without sacrificing the music's "swing." Yet these constraints also stem from inherited social conditions, such as the ongoing restrictions posed by racial segregation – restraints that are central to the portrayal of the city in *The Cry of Jazz*.

This kind of structural-formalist approach rarely surfaced in African American cultural pronouncements of the postwar period. There were prominent Black musical artists – William Grant Still and Duke Ellington among them – who drew freely and easily on jazz elements, seeing little contradiction between these traditions and their own concert-hall ambitions or interest in modernist innovation. Pianist John Lewis, artistic director of the Modern Jazz Quartet, aligned his music with aesthetic values associated with European modernism, yet he also embraced a "respectability politics" that, unlike Bland's film, signaled cultural accommodation to the standards of white society.[25] Plenty of American modernist composers, meanwhile, rejected jazz as a source of musical inspiration for the concert stage; typically, though, these composers were white, and their attitudes toward jazz were filtered by racial condescension or simply by a limited understanding of the music. Bland, by contrast – a composer and arranger who understood and deeply appreciated the historical significance of jazz – was arguing quite forwardly that its traditions were no longer relevant to the social and musical moment.

One stimulant to Bland's aggressively modernist conception of music may have been John J. Becker, his composition teacher. By the time Bland studied with him in the late 1940s, Becker was teaching in relative obscurity, but during the

interwar period he had gained significant attention as an enthusiastic crusader for an "ultra-modernist" American classical music. Part of a group including Charles Ives, Henry Cowell and others, Becker was a respected composer in his own right, known in particular for a style of dissonant counterpoint that Bland would later incorporate into his own compositions. Bland's studies at the American Conservatory of Music, in turn, no doubt exposed him to the ideas of Schoenberg and other European modernists, and perhaps Adorno as well – ideas he took seriously enough that his early compositions were written in the twelve-tone system. If Bland learned a certain ultra-modernist approach to music from his studies with Becker, though, his reworking of an Adorno-like structural critique of African American jazz was probably developed on his own.[26]

There is much in Adorno's critique of jazz that Bland's film did not embrace. The German philosopher's tendency to conflate jazz and all forms of popular music as mere entertainment; his assertion that jazz has little to do with "genuine black music"; the insistence that the relationship between commodity capitalism and aesthetic creation had become entirely parasitic – these sweeping claims did not find their way into *The Cry of Jazz*, though they may have indirectly informed its approach to cultural appropriation. Nor does Bland's socio-political critique of America's history of racial domination seem guided by any clearly formulated version of Black Marxism.[27] However, the film's thesis that jazz is dead does emerge from an insistently structural critique of American musical and social development – one that, while appreciative of the music's expressive power and social contributions in ways that Adorno certainly was not, draws a similar connection between musical stasis and social dehumanization. Jazz music, condemned to repetition, remains fatally tied to a racist way of life.

This critique of musical and social stasis is dramatized quite emphatically, in visual as well as auditory terms, in the third and final instructional sequence of *The Cry of Jazz*. As Alex reminds viewers that the restraining elements of jazz relate to the music's compositional and harmonic structures ("the form and the changes"), the filmmaker presents images of Sun Ra at an upright piano – its upper panel removed so that the hammers are exposed – playing the same brief passage over and over again. Alex's voice continues:

> If any attempts are made to develop the form and/or the changes, the swing or the spirit of jazz is lost. Since the jazz body cannot grow, it can only repeat itself – and in so doing, is stagnant – and in so doing, is dead.

As Sun Ra's hands repeat the same passage, Alex elaborates on this point, reestablishing the link between the music and its people.

> Jazz cannot grow because it was not meant to grow. Its dead body stands as a monument to the Negro, who was supposed to die in the American scheme of things.

Figure 2: Creative Urban Destruction in *The Cry of Jazz* (Library of Congress).

In the structure of American society, then, both jazz music and African Americans were expected to disappear – to be superseded by the march of historical progress.

What follows is a cinematic enactment of the fatal cul-de-sac in which jazz, and thus African Americans, remain trapped. As Sun Ra is heard playing this same run over and over, the visual focus now rests fully upon the piano hammers, no longer visibly guided by any pianist, moving in inhuman fashion through the same repetitive pattern. Drawing out this visual and aural portrayal of dehumanization and stasis, Alex's voice comments:

> Jazz is dead because, in a way, the strangling image of a future-
> less future has made the Negro a dead thing, too. The Negro
> can only become alive by the destruction of America's future.

Abruptly, with the uttering of this last sentence, there is a dramatic visual and musical shift: now viewers are presented grainy images of urban destruction – ghetto houses being demolished and set afire – alternating with shots of Arkestra musicians playing their instruments (see Figure 2).

These images accompany the sound of the familiar piano passage heard in discordant combination with other instruments (trumpet, trombone, drums), which seem to be playing unrelated lines. At the end of each passage, there is silence; then the same musical sequence is repeated, each time separated by a reflective (funereal?) moment of silence. Brief shots of the individual musicians show calm faces, reinforcing the reigning sense of composure and control. The start-stop nature of the sequence creates an effect not of utter chaos but of planned and controlled destruction – the end of jazz not as a tragic loss or even a gradual pro-

cess of exhaustion but a disciplined historical exercise in creative destruction, an engineered demonstration of how profound musical contradictions lead inexorably to a moment of crisis and, then, to the possibility of change.

It is a striking cinematic sequence. The didactic quality of the segment is almost Brechtian in its "working out" of the film's thesis: how the formal contradictions within the structures of jazz, reaching a historical impasse, pile up and must be discarded. Musically, Bland appears to have used "sound superimposition" – as his audio script calls it – to layer together brief audio segments from different pieces of music. Although it is not clear which sound segments were ultimately employed, this particular script designates four Severson-related audio tracks from the film to be superimposed in this way: a lightly Latin-inflected composition ("My Rhapsody") used in the film's opening-credit sequence; two cool-jazz pieces ("Too Much" and "Who, Me?"); and "Lela," a recorded piece from which the repetitive piano run – actually played not by Sun Ra but by a white jazz musician named Eddie Higgins – is taken. A fifth Severson-associated piece also may have been sampled for this climactic sequence, judging from what sounds like a Dixieland-style cadence played by the brass instruments at the very end of the repeated sequence. In any event, Bland seems to have assembled these various audio clips into a harsh, repetitive sound collage – the sort of sonic demonstration capable of dramatizing the jazz tradition's historical dead-end. Using clips of white-related styles to stage the death of jazz may have been, for Bland, something of a musical in-joke.[28]

Meanwhile, the visual frames of this sequence intersperse, as already noted, the darkened images of Arkestra musicians with sudden shots of urban decay and devastation. This latter footage appears to be from different source material, perhaps provided by Hill, the urban planner among the KHTB production team. From the vantage point of today, these images – abandoned apartments, boarded-up tenement windows, half-demolished and burning buildings – may seem to anticipate the urban riots of the 1960s. However, at the time of the film's release these shots were more likely to be associated with the ghetto decline and slum-clearance demolition of urban renewal, precisely the sort of destruction taking place in certain sections of Chicago's Hyde Park. Throughout the sequence, Alex's voiceover coolly instructs viewers that Black Americans "can only come alive by the destruction of America's future." Taken together, the various elements of this sequence – the rapid cross-cutting between buildings and instruments, the softly intoned commentary, the relentless reprise of the same sonic mash-up – fully merge the death of jazz with the creative destruction of the ghetto.[29]

While somber, the sequence does not convey a sense of history as tragedy. For Bland, the death of the "jazz body" represents a musical and historical necessity – a requisite break with a dead past, opening up a much-anticipated moment of cultural and social transformation. Of course, the inherited forms of African American musical and urban life, symbolized by the formal structures of jazz and (their social corollary) the built environment of the northern ghetto, once served important purposes, including the triumphant survival of the "spirit" of

Black America. Yet, for Bland, these structures not only sustained communal life but also, over time, came to restrict it. By leaving behind these forms of "genteel slavery," as Alex calls them, Black cultural producers henceforth can look forward to creating entirely new kinds of music, perhaps bringing, as Faye suggests in the final Parkwood Jazz Club sequence, the "spirit of jazz" to "serious music." African Americans, in turn, can refashion their cultural identity under new conditions of freedom and even, as Bland implies, take on new positions of leadership. The final shot of the film – an upward-angled close-up of Alex's face with an African statuette looming behind him – suggests that creative, intellectual Black men are well placed to stand tall and powerful at the center of this new world.

This concluding section of the film sharpens the role of gender and sexuality in mediating the racial power struggle at the Parkwood club, along with the aesthetic stakes at play. The complete absence of Black women, as Martin and Wall have observed, helps to position Faye, a white woman, as the central object of value and desire.[30] As Alex's musical authority inexorably draws her to him (much to the consternation of John, the club's white president), Faye's evident refinement makes her an obvious symbol of the prestige of "serious music" itself – an object bearing precisely the sort of elevated aesthetic capital that postwar modernist composers often possessed but that African American musicians and composers were typically denied. Alex, by winning Faye, becomes confirmed not only in his masculine status but in his intellectual autonomy and cultural leadership. As if the presence of Black women at the club might risk re-anchoring new Black music in some type of traditional African American community, their absence enables Alex to shine all the more powerfully as an autonomous artist and a Black man unencumbered by ghetto attachments. Given this framing, it may be fitting that Bland's next project, a dramatic film co-written with Nelam Hill that focuses on a Black composer and arranger who battles heroically with a racist film producer, was titled *The American Hero*.[31]

What is the "serious music" to come that is alluded to near the end of *The Cry of Jazz*? The precise nature of this music remains unelaborated in the film, along with the social or urban circumstances that might bring about African American freedom. Bland's own commentary, as expressed in a letter to Mekas one year after *Cry*'s release, emphasized the need for Black "creators and musicians" to work through the African American experience "to enlarge on the legacy which jazz has left," but he did not spell out what this might entail musically. In the same letter, Bland harshly dismissed the creative efforts of a deracinated Black middle class, which he saw – echoing a critique that had been recently launched by sociologist E. Franklin Frazier – as crippled by cultural insecurity or slavishly devoted to finding "some way of identifying with white America." Bland's own subsequent career as a composer would draw on a range of musical styles and approaches. Often combining atonal or dissonant counterpoint with many elements of jazz, funk and blues, these diverse compositions yielded a body of work that he himself ended up characterizing as "urban classical" music.[32]

The Future of Spirit and Structure

The musical aesthetic advanced by *The Cry of Jazz* emerges from a utopian cultural vision of music and society of a very particular kind. Utopian modernism as a revolutionary agent – destruction of the old to make way for the new – had become by the late 1950s a well-established project of twentieth-century avant-gardes, though most often a project embraced by white musicians and artists. Black modernist sensibilities, especially in relation to music, did not typically reject past forms, seeking instead to develop aesthetic visions that might bring together, or rework, tradition and the new. Philosopher Alain Locke's mid-1930s call for a new African American music with the elevated status of classical European music, for instance, envisioned a "symphonic jazz" that did not reject traditional forms but, rather, might "carry native jazz through to this higher level." What remains most striking about Bland's film, then, is the sharpness of the break it advocates with the past, consigning a people's "survival music" to the dustbin of history, along with the Jim Crow urban structures in which, he claimed, jazz was inescapably imprisoned. What Bland is also doing, though, is implicitly asserting a claim that would be taken up by growing numbers of African American composers and performers over the decades that followed: the right to access and freely make use of any and all musical resources traditionally denied them.[33]

Recent studies of twentieth-century Afro-modernism have come to recognize certain aesthetic commonalities spanning the singular contributions of different musical innovators. Focusing on Duke Ellington's compositions of the 1920s, for instance, Jeffrey Magee emphasizes the bandleader's aspiration to defy racial and musical categories by crafting a complex sound capable of blending blues-based traditions with more sophisticated, cosmopolitan forms. Guthrie P. Ramsey, Jr. has located within the Black vernacular styles of the post-World War II era a rich "North-South cultural dialogue," similarly manifested in juxtapositions of the earthy and the urbane in jazz, gospel, rhythm and blues and more; it is in these interactions, he suggests, that we find a certain aesthetic or spiritual center for Afro-Modernist musicality. Ingrid Monson, in turn, has explored how American jazz musicians of the 1950s and '60s selectively combined musical elements from a very broad array of aesthetic streams, from African American vernacular styles and Tin Pan Alley songs to the modern classical repertoire and the music of the African diaspora. For Monson, what is distinctive about Afro-modernism in this period seems to be not so much any particular mix of musical styles, or even the commingling of elements from folk music and art music, but rather the sheer range of different ways to apply the combinatorial principle itself to advance a creative "blackening" of modernist aesthetics.[34] In this sense, Bland's own musical aesthetic – assuming it involves bringing the spirit of African American jazz to post-tonal classical music – needs to be understood as residing very much within this broader field of twentieth-century Afro-modernist strategies of renewal. However, his insistence on a Black-led ultra-modernist music strongly implicated in the racial transformation of American society sets out a postwar aesthetic project that is both intellectually distinctive and culturally contentious.

It was a position that provoked strong reactions among early viewers, Black and white, of *The Cry of Jazz*. Ralph Ellison, at a post-screening discussion in New York attended by the producers, was deeply critical of the film, declaring that he himself looked upon African American life not as a humiliation but as a discipline "out of which strong people can come." At the same forum, jazz historian Marshall Stearns vigorously disputed the death-of-jazz thesis, and argued that the music had long ceased to be representative of purely African American aspirations – only to find himself (at least in Bland's account of the interchange) peppered by a flurry of rebuttals from Bland and his co-producer Mark Kennedy, who were also in attendance.[35] Nevertheless there were clearly signs of musical renewal everywhere in the larger jazz world. The year 1959 alone witnessed a flood of album releases, opening up new channels for the music's future: Miles Davis's *Kind of Blue*, John Coltrane's *Giant Steps*, Ornette Coleman's *The Shape of Jazz to Come*, Charles Mingus's *Mingus Ah Um*, and others besides. Jazz artists themselves seemed to be contesting Bland's death-of-jazz claim at every turn – and in the process demonstrating the ever-expanding diversity of Afro-modernist musical expression. What Raymond Williams has called that "restless and often directly competitive sequence of innovations and experiments" characteristic of modernism was now streaming in multiple directions out of urban cultural spaces too often defined simply as ghettos.[36]

Sun Ra, meanwhile, was responding to *The Cry of Jazz* in his own singular fashion. In *Jazz in Silhouette*, an album also released in 1959, Sun Ra and His Arkestra presented a mix of older- and newer-sounding jazz material bearing futuristic titles, along with one musically forward-looking composition – "Ancient Aiethopia" – with a title and a sound that gestured in spirit back to the earliest moment of African civilization. Rejecting the narrow linearity of Bland's conception of jazz history, *Jazz in Silhouette* instead crafted together past-, present-, and future-laden sonic statements that encouraged listeners, as Paul Youngquist has noted, to reimagine – rather than merely triumph over – what was, is, and will be. Sun Ra's writings for the album also offered a coded response to *The Cry of Jazz*. Printed as part of the album booklet, Ra's poem entitled "Jazz in Silhouette" played with the visual image of the silhouette (the figure given shape by what it is not) as both a relational symbol of racial definition and an unsettled question of musical identity. When understood within his playful and nonlinear approach to history, Ra's poetic lines seemed to define the musical sounds of past and present, whether Black or white, as the sonic equivalent of silhouette images projected backward in time from a future world. In this sense, jazz – not merely its path ahead but even its past forms — remained alive, strange, and still not fully revealed.[37]

Both Bland and Ra, as it happened, would strongly influence the shape of Afro-modernism to come. Baraka later recalled *The Cry of Jazz* as a major inspiration for the Black Arts movement – in the process, overlooking the film's intellectual debt to a European formalist aesthetics that he strongly rejected. He also came to champion the influence of "Ra the pioneer," a jazz musician possessing a much more diasporic conception of Black music.[38] Over the course of the 1960s, new

directions in African American creative expression – in urbanism no less than in music and the arts – sought to merge in various ways a contentious demand for cultural self-determination with various aesthetic paths of Black modernist reinvention. In Chicago, New York, and other cities, urban planners and community organizers alike found in notions of Black autonomy and cultural leadership the inspiration for what Brian Goldstein (following Stokely Carmichael and Charles Hamilton) has called "a search for new forms" – innovative philosophical or spatial projects directed toward collective emancipation. For certain intellectuals, such as the poet June Jordan in her Harlem "Skyrise" collaboration with Buckminster Fuller, modernist reinvention took the form of completely replacing New York's ghetto structures with urban renewal-style tower developments. For others, such as Baraka himself, Newark offered the opportunity to refashion urban renewal itself into a development tool for the preservation and cultural advancement of the city's existing Black community.[39]

Musicians affiliated with the jazz world looked in this period for similarly ambitious ways to rework their relationships, organizationally as well as musically, to audiences, communities, traditions and one another. Like Bland, these musicians often spoke the language of Black leadership, aesthetic autonomy, and cultural self-determination. However, their notions of independence often expanded beyond individualistic conceptions of creative authorship, embracing more collective or communal approaches to artistic practice and performance. This difference emerged, in part, because of changing material conditions: African American experimental musicians of the 1960s and '70s were working in the destructive wake of urban renewal, and their efforts to rebuild their devastated communities often infused the Afro-modernist aesthetic with a newly collectivist ethos.[40]

All the same, many of the forward-looking musical ideals championed by Bland became fundamental principles for the next generation of Black experimental musicians. Composer-centered ideologies, extended compositional forms, new tonal systems, concert-music performance settings – many post-jazz attributes of the new "serious music" implied in *The Cry of Jazz* soon developed into taken-for-granted expectations within the African American avant-garde. And for many of its practitioners, these musical commitments continued to be closely linked to social and cultural projects of racial emancipation. *The Cry of Jazz*, though rarely viewed over the final decades of the twentieth century, nevertheless projected certain ideals forward – beyond a futureless future – to an expanding world of Afro-modernist strategies with transformative aspirations.

Notes

1. *The Cry of Jazz*, a film directed by Edward O. Bland (KHTB Productions, 1959, B&W, 16mm). In 2010 the Library of Congress named the film to its National Film Registry as a "historic and fascinating" commentary on "racism and the appropriation of jazz"; see Library of Congress, press release January 4, 2011; https://www.loc.gov/today/pr/2010/10-273. html. To view the film, see https://www.loc.gov/item/mbrs01195283/.

2. For recent judgments by film scholars, see Armond White, public remarks, Maysles Documentary Center, June 27, 2016 ["lost film"]; https://www.maysles.org/videoeducation-alblog/2016/6/27/armond-white-introduces-the-cry-of-jazz; Jacqueline Stewart, public remarks, 7ᵗʰ Orphan Film Symposium, April 9, 2010; https://www.nyu.edu/orphanfilm/orphans7/audio/Orphans7_Day3.20_JacquelineStewartPresentation.mp3; and Chuck Kleinhans, "*The Cry of Jazz* and the Expressive Politics of Music and Race: Interview with Ed Bland," *Jump Cut* 54 (2012). For an early appreciation of the film, see the manifesto of the New American Cinema Group, September 30, 1962; https://www.undergroundfilmjournal.com/the-first-statement-of-the-new-american-cinema-group-september-30- 1962/.

3. Ernest Callenbach and Dominic Salvatore, "The Cry of Jazz," *Film Quarterly*, Winter 1959 ["anti-white"]; this review also called the film "brave" and "immensely significant." See also Will Leonard, "Mickey Rooney But When He Isn't Mickey Rooney," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, March 29, 1959, p. F10, which refers to the film as "jazz music with a chip on its shoulder." For police activity, see Kenneth Tynan, "A Contrast in Black and White," *The Observer*, March 20, 1960, in Nelam L. Hill Papers [hereafter NLH Papers], Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Box 4, Folder 12. See also Anna McCarthy, "Screen Culture and Group Discussion in Postwar Race Relations," in *Learning with the Lights Off: An Educational Film Reader*, ed. Deron Orgeron, Marsha Orgeron, and Dan Streible (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 412 ["sameness under the skin"]. McCarthy effectively situates the cinematic style of *The Cry of Jazz* within the context of the post-World War II educational "race relations" film, showing how the interracial discussion format – typically operating as a vehicle for Negro exemplarity, white self-enlightenment and cross-racial brotherhood – is both reproduced and subverted by Bland. For a close examination of the racial and gender politics of the film, see Michael T. Martin and David Wall, "Race, Space, and Gender in Ed Bland's *The Cry of Jazz*," *Quarterly Review of Film and Video* 31 (2014): 136-147.

4. Although the film is often described as a semi-documentary, Bland himself characterized *The Cry of Jazz* as a "thesis film"; see Edward Bland, Letter to Jonas Mekas, April 12, 1960, p. 3, NLH Papers, Box 4, Folder 26.

5. Amiri Baraka, "Jazz and the White Critic," *The LeRoi Jones/Amiri Baraka Reader*, ed. William J. Harris (New York: Thunder's Mouth, 1991), p. 186; for Baraka's embrace of Sun Ra, see Lorenzo Thomas, "Classical Jazz and the Black Arts Movement," *African American Review* 29, 2 (1995): 237-240. For Sun Ra's own aesthetic project at the time of the making of *The Cry of Jazz*, see William Sites, *Sun Ra's Chicago: Afrofuturism and the City* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2020), pp. 173-179.

6. Eric Porter, *What Is This Thing Called Jazz? African American Musicians as Artists, Critics, and Activists* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002); Guthrie P. Ramsey, Jr., *Race Music: Black Cultures from Bebop to Hip-Hop* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004); Ingrid Monson, *Freedom Sounds: Civil Rights Call Out to Jazz and Africa* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007); Guthrie P. Ramsey, Jr., "Afro-Modernism and Music: On Science, Community, and Magic in the Black Avant-Garde," in Samuel A. Floyd, Jr., with Melanie L. Zeck, and Guthrie P. Ramsey, Jr., *The Transformation of Black Music: The Rhythms, the Songs, and the Ships of the African Diaspora* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), pp. 155-172. For literary and cultural studies centering Black urban experience, see Charles Scruggs, *Sweet Home: Invisible Cities in the African American Novel* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993); Davarian L. Baldwin, *Chicago's New Negroes: Modernity, the*

Great Migration, and Black Urban Life (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2007); James Smethurst, *The African American Roots of Modernism: From Reconstruction to the Harlem Renaissance* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011); and Erica R. Edwards, *Charisma and the Fictions of Black Leadership* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012). For a recent study of the influence of jazz on Afro-modernist literature, see John Lowney, *Jazz Internationalism: Literary Afro-Modernism and the Cultural Politics of Black Music* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2017).

7. Kleinhans, "*Cry of Jazz*." Bland's address was 5473 S. Kimbark Ave.; see NLH Papers, Box 3, Folder 22.

8. On the older Edward Bland, see Lawrence Jackson, "Edward Bland," *Writers of the Black Chicago Renaissance*, ed. Steven C. Tracy (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2011), pp. 76-82. He was killed in action in World War II; the poet Gwendolyn Brooks subsequently dedicated the collection *Annie Allen* to him. His brother, Alden Bland, was the author of the novel, *Behold a Cry* (New York: Scribner's, 1947); see Robert Bone and Richard A. Courage, *The Muse in Bronzeville: African American Creative Expression in Chicago, 1932-1950* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2011), pp. 201-202. For the early life of the younger Edward Bland, see Kleinhans, "*Cry of Jazz*."

9. Ed Bland, quoted in Kleinhans, "*Cry of Jazz*" ["started hanging around"; "the thing was"]. Despite Bland's recollection that racial frustration was a motivating factor in the making of the film, it is worth noting that several early versions of the screenplay focus more narrowly on the musical aspects of jazz, with little mention of race; see, e.g., "The Destiny of Jazz," NLH Papers, Box 3, Folder 12.

10. McCarthy, "Screen Culture and Group Discussion," p. 418. For Hyde Park urban renewal, see Arnold R. Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto: Race and Housing in Chicago, 1940-1960* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), pp. 135-170, and Preston H. Smith II, *Racial Democracy and the Black Metropolis: Housing Policy in Postwar Chicago* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012), pp. 141-154. The most significant of the displaced music venues was a jazz club called the Beehive; see "Beehive Jazz Combo Blows Renewal Blues," *Hyde Park Herald*, 1 June 1955, p. 4.

11. Ed Bland, quoted in Kleinhans, "*Cry of Jazz*."

12. Agreement between Enterplan Publishing and KHTB Productions, February 24, 1959, Alton Abraham Collection of Sun Ra, Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library, Box 16, Folder 9, Financial Records, 1956-1971.

13. Ed Bland, "Personal Recollections of Sun Ra, 1956-1967," Ed Bland: Urban Classical Funk… Essays, http://www.edblandmusic.com/SunRa.htm. Bland and Ra continued to work together musically after they moved separately to New York in the 1960s. Severson, in addition to his jazz-related activities in 1950s Chicago, composed for television shows and commercials, and is credited with the Doublemint gum jingle ("Double your pleasure, double your fun with Doublemint gum"); see Sharon Sullivan, "Quite a Jazz Man," *Grand Junction Free Press*, May 29, 2007; http://www.gjfreepress.com/article/20070529/COMMUNITY_NEWS/70529004.

14. Le Sun-Ra and His Arkestra, "Blues at Midnight," *Super-Sonic Jazz* (Saturn SR 0216, 1957, LP), and Le Sun-Ra and His Arkistra, "Demon's Lullaby," *Angels and Demons at Play* (Saturn 9956-2, 1965 [orig. rec. May 16, 1956], LP); see Robert L. Campbell, Christopher Trent and Robert Pruter, "From Sonny Blount to Sun Ra: The Chicago Years," revised 9 September 2016, http://campber.people.clemson.edu/sunra.html.

15. Bland, Letter to Jonas Mekas, NLH Papers, Box 4, Folder 26.

16. Norman Mailer, "The White Negro: Superficial Reflections on the Hipster," *Dissent*, Fall 1957; Tynan, "A Contrast," NLH Papers, Box 4, Folder 12.

17. Monson, *Freedom Sounds*, p. 73.

18. Untitled shooting script, p. 20, NLH Papers, Box 3, Folder 17.

19. Bland responded to these criticisms by claiming he had been unable to induce any

Black female performers to work for free – which may have been the terms accepted by the other actors. Co-producer Mark Kennedy conceded privately in a letter to Bland, however, that he was unsure if this was actually the reason – and reported that, "with Negroes, especially, the omission is so glaring that it rouses their defensiveness against us." Mark Kennedy, Letter to Bland, April 23, 1959, NLH Papers, Box 3, Part 2. See also Martin and Wall, "Race, Space, and Gender in Ed Bland's *The Cry of Jazz*."

20. Ed Bland, quoted in Kleinhans, "*Cry of Jazz*."

21. The phrase "the futureless future" may have been adapted from a similar phrase in T. S. Eliot's *Four Quartets* ("The Dry Salvages"): "The future futureless, before the morning watch/When time stops and time is never ending…." For a quite different perspective on the aesthetics of repetition, see James A. Snead, "On Repetition in Black Culture," *Black American Literature Forum* 15, 4 (1981): 146-154; see also Fumi Okiji, *Jazz as Critique: Adorno and Black Expression Revisited* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2018), pp. 68-73.

22. For structural listening, see Rose Rosengard Subotnik, *Deconstructive Variations: Music and Reason in Western Society* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), pp. 148-176. For an insightful engagement with Adorno and Black modernity, see Okiji, *Jazz as Critique*, p. 6 ("machinery of capitalistic cultural production") and passim. For "society's discontinuities," see T. W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, trans. Christian Lenhardt (Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984), p. 396; see also Max Paddison, *Adorno's Aesthetics of Music* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 261. For a discussion of "truth content," see Max Paddison, "Immanent Critique or Musical Stocktaking? Adorno and the Problem of Musical Analysis," in *Adorno: A Critical Reader*, ed. Nigel Gibson and Andrew Rubin (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2002), pp. 209-233.

23. For Adorno on jazz, see "On Jazz" (1936), in Theodor W. Adorno, *Essays on Music*, ed. Richard Leppert and trans. Susan H. Gillespie (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), pp. 470-495 and, for useful commentary, 349-358; see also, in the same volume, "On the Social Situation of Music" (1932), pp. 391-436, and "On the Fetish-Character in Music and the Regression of Listening" (1938), pp. 288-317. Adorno claims that while modern music in general is commodified, certain music will attempt to struggle against the alienation that commodification engenders by conveying its social content "through the coded language of suffering" (Adorno, *Essays on Music*, p. 393; p. 332 as well). See also Robert W. Witkin, "Why Did Adorno 'Hate' Jazz?" *Sociological Theory* 18, 1 (2000): 145-170.

24. Okiji, *Jazz as Critique*, p. 24.

25. See, e.g., Catherine Parsons Smith, *William Grant Still* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008), and John Howland, *Ellington Uptown: Duke Ellington, James P. Johnson, and the Birth of Concert Jazz* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2009). For Lewis, see Kelsey A. K. Klotz, "On Musical Value: John Lewis, Structural Listening, and the Politics of Respectability*," Jazz Perspectives* 11, 1 (2018): 25-51.

26. For Becker, see Don C. Gillespie, "John Becker: Midwestern Musical Crusader," PhD dissertation, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1977; Don C. Gillespie, "John Becker, Musical Crusader of Saint Paul," *The Musical Quarterly* 62, 2 (1976): 195-217 ["dissonant counterpoint": p. 198]; Carol J. Oja, *Making Music Modern: New York in the 1920s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 110, 127; and William Powell, "Ed Bland: Composer, Filmmaker, Clarinetist, Philosopher," *The Clarinet* 44, 4 (2017); https://clarinet.org/2017/09/05/ed-bland-composer-filmmaker-clarinetist-philosopher/. For dissonant counterpoint, see Charles Seeger, "On Dissonant Counterpoint," *Modern Music* 7, 4 (1930): 25-31; and John D. Spilker, "The Origins of 'Dissonant Counterpoint': Henry Cowells's Unpublished Notebook," *Journal of the Society of American Music* 5, 4 (2011): 481-533.

27. Adorno, *Essays on Music*, p. 477 ["genuine black music"]. In my view, the sociopolitical critique presented in *The Cry of Jazz* articulates no consistent political ideology. For example, while adaptation of the critique of modern capitalism to the struggle against racial oppression is characteristic of a certain kind of Black Marxism, the call for affirmative action toward full racial equality within an existing America is entirely compatible with African

American liberalism, whereas the demand for Black autonomy as well as the male, patriarchal appeal to an undifferentiated African American unity are hallmarks of Black nationalist ideology. For a helpful conceptual mapping of these political traditions, see Michael C. Dawson, *Black Visions: The Roots of Contemporary African-American Political Ideologies* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001); see also Cedric J. Robinson, *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1983).

28. "The Spirit of Jazz (Audio)," NLH Papers, Box 3, Folder 2, p. 11 [sound super-imposition]. Noting that Higgins played for a time with a New Orleans-style group, Campbell and his colleagues have speculated that the pianist may have been involved with the Dixieland illustration piece that Bland uses earlier in the film – the sole remaining unidentified piece of music in *The Cry of Jazz*; see Campbell, Trent and Pruter, *From Sonny Blount to Sun Ra*, which also discusses other Severson-related source material.

29. Bland's implicit embrace of urban renewal was hardly unusual among African American intellectuals of the period; but for more critical reactions, see Chicago Urban League, *Urban Renewal and the Negro in Chicago* (Chicago, 1958); Arnold Hirsch, "'Containment' on the Home Front: Race and Federal Housing Policy from the New Deal to the Cold War," *Journal of Urban History* 26, no. 2 (2000): 158–89; and Myka Tucker-Abramson, *Novel Shocks: Urban Renewal and the Origins of Neoliberalism* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2019).

30. Martin and Wall, "Race, Space, and Gender in Ed Bland's *The Cry of Jazz*," 144.

31. "The American Hero," NLH Papers, Box 5, Folder 1. Bland's portrayal of the composer as masculine hero drew on longstanding tradition; see, e.g., Scott G. Burnham, *Beethoven Hero* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995). In the early twentieth century, as the world of concert music in America was seen increasingly as a feminized sphere, modernist composers often made extreme efforts to wrap their musical projects in masculinist ideals; see Oja, *Making Music Modern*, p. 223-227, and Catherine Parsons Smith, "'A Distinguishing Virility': Feminism and Modernism in American Art Music," in *Cecilia Reclaimed: Feminist Perspectives on Gender and Music*, ed. Susan C. Cook and Judy S. Tsou (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994), pp. 90-106. A similar gendering of aesthetic status can be heard in the public pronouncements of many post-World War II modernist composers; see Susan McClary, "Terminal Prestige: The Case of Avant-Garde Musical Composition," in *Keeping Score: Music, Disciplinarity, Culture*, ed. David Schwarz, Anahid Kassabian and Lawrence Siegel (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1997), pp. 54-74.

32. Letter to Jonas Mekas, April 12, 1960, p. 3, NLH Papers, Box 4, Folder 26. See also E. Franklin Frazier, *Black Bourgeoisie* (Glencoe, IL: The Free Press, 1957). For recordings of Bland's music, see *Urban Classical: The Music of Ed Bland* (Cambria 1026, CD, 1994), and *Urban Counterpoint: The Piano Music of Ed Bland*, Judith Olsen, piano (Cambria 1256, CD, 2019).

33. Raymond Williams, *The Politics of Modernism* (New York: Verso, 1989); Alain Locke, *The Negro and His Music* (Washington, DC: Associates in Negro Folk Education, 1936), p. 99. Debate among African American intellectuals about jazz and its potential elevation extends back to the earliest years of the music; see Porter, *What Is This Thing Called Jazz?* pp. 1-53. For important historical context behind the efforts by postwar Black musicians to claim "classical" music status and resources, see George E. Lewis, *A Power Stronger Than Itself: The AACM and American Experimental Music* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), pp. 370-388.

34. Jeffrey Magee, "Ellington's Afro-Modernist Vision in the 1920s," in *The Cambridge Companion to Duke Ellington*, ed. Edward Green (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 85-105; Ramsey, "Afro-Modernism and Music"; Monson, *Freedom Sounds,* p. 71.

35. Tynan, "A Contrast," NLH Papers, Box 4, Folder 12.

36. Williams, *Politics of Modernism*, p. 43.

37. Sun Ra and His Arkestra, "Ancient Aiethopia," issued on *Jazz in Silhouette* (Saturn K7OP3590/1, 1959, LP), and reissued as Sun Ra, *Jazz in Silhouette* (Evidence 22012, 1991, CD); Paul Youngquist, *A Pure Solar World: Sun Ra and the Birth of Afrofuturism* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2016), p. 127; Sites, *Sun Ra's Chicago*, pp. 176-179, 186-187.

38. Amiri Baraka, "Sun Ra," *African American Review* 29, 2 (1995): 253. For the influence of *Cry of Jazz* on Baraka, see his comments in Lorenzo Thomas, *Don't Deny My Name: Words and Music and the Black Intellectual Tradition* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 2008), p. 106: "I think what *The Cry of Jazz* did was plant the seeds in some of our minds of what the aesthetic of our music was."

39. Brian D. Goldstein, "'The Search for New Forms': Black Power and the Making of the Postmodern City," *Journal of American History* 103, 2 (2016): 375-399; Stokely Carmichael and Charles V. Hamilton, *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation in America* (New York: Random House, 1967); Cheryl J. Fish, "Place, Emotion, and Environmental Justice in Harlem: June Jordan and Buckminster Fuller's 'Architextual' Collaboration," *Discourse* 2/3 (2007): 330-345; Daniel Matlin, *On the Corner: African American Intellectuals and the Urban Crisis* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013), 123-194; Daniel Matlin, "'A New Reality of Harlem': Imagining the African American Urban Future During the 1960s," *Journal of American Studies* 52, 4 (2018): 991-1024; Komozi Woodard, *A Nation Within a Nation: Amiri Baraka (LeRoi Jones) and Black Power Politics* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), pp. 224-229.

40. See, e.g., Benjamin Looker, *'Point from Which Creation Begins': The Black Artists' Group of St. Louis* (St. Louis: Missouri Historical Society Press, 2004); Steven L. Isoardi, *The Dark Tree: Jazz and the Community Arts in Los Angeles* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006); Daniel Widener, *Black Arts West: Culture and Struggle in Postwar Los Angeles* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010); Naomi Beckwith and Dieter Roelstraete, *The Freedom Principle: Experiments in Art and Music, 1965 to Now* (Chicago: Museum of Contemporary Art/University of Chicago Press, 2015); and Lewis, *Power Stronger Than Itself*. For a helpful discussion of collectivist and communalist conceptions of musicmaking, see Michael C. Heller, *Loft Jazz: Improvising New York in the 1970s* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2017), pp. 65-93.

Red Myth, Black Hero: Frederick Douglass, the Communist Party, and the Aesthetics of History, 1935-1945

Luke Sayers

In Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* (1952), the narrator joins a group called the Brotherhood, commonly thought to represent the Communist Party in America. In one scene, as the narrator begins working enthusiastically at his Brotherhood office, Brother Tarp, an older, more experienced black member of the Brotherhood, enters the Invisible Man's office to hang a portrait of Frederick Douglass (1818-1895) on the wall. "He was a great man," Brother Tarp says, "You just take a look at him once in a while." Brother Tarp refuses to accept the Invisible Man's gratitude for the portrait, telling him that Douglass "belongs to all of us."[1] But Brother Tarp's "us" is ambiguous. He could be referring to the entire working class, to all the members of the Brotherhood, or simply to the black Brothers who see in Douglass a model for their own role in the Brotherhood. Readers of *Invisible Man* know that Brother Tarp eventually leaves the Brotherhood, taking his portrait of Frederick Douglass with him, and his removal of the Douglass portrait invites the question once more: to whom does Douglass belong, and how is his image, both literally in the portrait and figuratively as a hero, being used?

Initially, the Invisible Man sits "facing the portrait of Frederick Douglass, feeling a sudden piety" that motivates him to continue his work with a renewed sense of purpose, but the Invisible Man eventually leaves the Brotherhood as well, and his discussion with Brother Tarp about Douglass plays a part in his departure.[2] Although direct connections between the Invisible Man's experience and Ellison's own are often tenuous, sometimes there are remarkable similarities between them, and if the tension between the Invisible Man's identification with Douglass and his identity as a Brother had anything to do with his leaving the Brotherhood,

then it is worth investigating if Ellison too, as well as other black Communists during the 30s and 40s, might have left the Communist Party for reasons related to the Communist appropriation of black symbols and stories, particularly that of Frederick Douglass.

An examination of Communist sources from the Popular Front to the Second World War suggests that the Communist retelling of the story of Douglass influenced many black Communists in their decision to leave the Communist Party. For the purposes of this essay, I will look at three authors in particular: Claude McKay, Richard Wright, and Ralph Ellison. Two things, however, need to be clarified before examining the Douglass narrative in Communist discourse. First, although the Communist Party's appropriation of black history negatively affected some its members, I do not mean to suggest that McKay, Wright, and Ellison somehow represent a mass exodus from the Communist Left. As William Maxwell rightly observes, "African-American literary communists…exited the Old Left much as they entered it, for compound reasons and at numerous moments but with a common obligation to the promise of interracial struggle and disclosure and their own and their racial community's self-direction."[3] Maxwell's statement is a helpful reminder of the great diversity within black Communist experience during the Popular Front and the Second World War. My purpose, therefore, is not to make generalizations about black Communists but rather to call attention to a frequently overlooked element of Communist discourse. Whereas scholarship has often focused on Communist politics or activism, I want to draw attention to Communist storytelling. Second, by focusing on Communist narratives—their aesthetic representations of abolitionist history in particular—I do not mean to imply that the Douglass narrative was the sole cause of these writers' departure from the Party. It was simply one cause among many, but it was a significant enough cause to appear in their aesthetic representations of the Party, such as in *Invisible Man*.

In other words, this examination of Communist depictions of Douglass sheds light on the ways Communist Popular Front narratives affected the Party's black membership. Representations of Douglass were a part of what Michael Denning calls an "extraordinary flowering of the historical imagination" during the Popular Front, but Denning, as well as other scholars of the Popular Front, have only briefly identified the "Americanized" myths of the Communist Party.[4] This essay expands upon this work by providing an in-depth analysis of one such instance of Americanization by looking at the Douglass narrative in Communist discourse. As such, this essay takes an interdisciplinary approach to the subject by examining both the historical development of Party's reception of the Douglass narrative and its subsequent influence upon the literary tradition of black modernism. First, I examine James Ford's 1936 election campaign, arguing that the Douglass narrative was essential to his imagined political identity. Then I argue that the Party's changing political commitments during the Second World War were accompanied by a reimagining of the historical narrative of Douglass. Finally, I consider the legacy of the Party's historical representations in the writings of McKay, Wright, and Ellison.

James Ford: "The Frederick Douglass of 1936"

The history of the reception of Frederick Douglass in the American imagination is a long one, but for the imagination of American communists the story begins in 1936 when James Ford ran alongside Earl Browder for the office of vice president on the ticket of the Communist Party. Ford was the only black candidate on the ballot that year, but he carried the banner that had been raised in 1872 by the first black vice presidential candidate, Frederick Douglass. In fact, Ford soon became known on the campaign trail as "the Frederick Douglass of 1936."[5] Ford and Browder were "nominated as Communist Standard Bearers," seeking to promote workers' rights in the tradition of Marx and Lenin, but Ford's campaign also drew upon the tradition of Douglass and the abolitionists as distinctively American predecessors. In his speech accepting the nomination of the Communist Party, Ford set the tone for his campaign by invoking the Civil War: "In these elections the American people face their greatest crisis since the Civil War." Ford's promise as vice presidential candidate was to continue the legacy of the abolitionists by remaining committed "to the liberation not only of the Negro people but of all oppressed races and nationalities." In order to gain his audience's confidence, Ford presented himself as the heir of the legacy of abolitionist heroes Frederick Douglass and John Brown: "Earl Browder and the Communist Party," Ford said, "are the inheritors of Frederick Douglass and John Brown. We Communists, Negro and white together, will carry out what they dreamed of."[6] Figures such as Douglass and Brown, as well as the larger history of the Civil War, allowed Ford to conceptualize his own identity as both a black American and as a Communist. Ford here was participating in the process of historical mythmaking. As a new Frederick Douglass, Ford could promise revolutionary social change in the manner of the real Douglass's accomplishments. Douglass inspired the efforts of the Communist Party, and the Communist Party saw their forerunner in the figure of Douglass.

Figure 1: James Ford and Earl Browder on Communist Election Campaign Pamphlet, 1940, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Browder-Ford-40.jpg

In a column beside Ford's acceptance speech, *The Daily Worker* printed the text of the platform of the Communist Party that was adopted at the nominating convention. The platform clarified the crisis that Ford described as being the greatest the

nation has faced since the Civil War: "Extreme reaction threatens the country, driving towards fascism and a new World War."[7] Working conditions, women's rights, social security, and nationalized banking, among other things, were certainly major concerns in the Communist platform, but the rise of Hitler had made the defeat of fascism exigent to Communist politics. No other aspects of their political program were considered safe or achievable so long as global fascism—either in Hitler's Germany or domestically in the United States—survived. The platform text summarizes the crisis as a battle between "democracy or fascism, progress or reaction—this is the central issue of 1936." At this point, however, their strategy for the defeat of fascism was a peaceable one. The platform commends "collaboration with the Soviet Union" and the establishment of a socialist economy that would bring "abundance and security for all," thereby ending poverty and unemployment. Fascism would be defeated, it seems, not by direct conflict but by making fascism undesirable in contrast to a system that could satisfy the basic needs of the working class. Their policy toward war, in short, was to "keep America out of war by keeping war out of the world."

Notably, the platform's suggested program, like Ford's speech, appeals to the popular imagination through references to history and myth. The platform opens by saying that fascism must be faced "in the spirit of 1776" and closes by saying that Americans must fulfill their heritage as one of the "most revolutionary peoples of the world." "Communism," the text said, "is 20th Century Americanism," but this Americanism, patriotic as it seems, had much in common with the Soviet Union.[8] These appeals to popular sentiment and the commitment to defeat fascism were very similar to the global Communist strategy of the Popular Front set forth at the Seventh World Congress of the Communist International. "The Soviets called on Communists everywhere," Mark Naison summarizes, "to abandon temporarily their goal of a revolutionary conquest of power and join with Socialists, trade unionists, and liberals in a 'Broad People's Front' to stop the rise of fascism and prevent a new world war."[9] Georgi Dimitrov, leader of the Communist International, outlined this strategy in "The Fascist Offensive" in 1935, in which he defined fascism as the efforts of the ruling class to find salvation from the crumbling system of capitalism. Dimitrov's program consisted in "refusal to support one's own bourgeoisie in an imperialist war," collaboration with non-Communists to create "a mass party of the working people," and finally the use of "a common language with the broadest masses" in order to expand their popular base.[10]

The Party's use of the Douglass myth, the Civil War narrative, and the abolitionist legacy, by the time of Ford's political campaign, was a part of this common language intended to appeal to a broad audience, reject the imperialist war, and forestall the growth of fascism. Yet, as Robert Paxton observes, the term fascism is a slippery one. "Everyone is sure they know what fascism is," Paxton says, yet many use the term to refer to a loose collection of political images—a "chauvinist demagogue," "surprise invasions," "disciplined ranks of marching youths," etc.— which convey brutality without naming a precise historical referent.[11] James Ford and the Communist Party were no exception. Their campaign against fascism was often imprecise, and the term fascism was flexible enough to be used to refer to

anti-blackness, anti-Americanness, or anti-Marxist depending on the context. Fascism, as Foucault observes, can be "a floating signifier, whose function is essentially that of denunciation," an observation true of the Communist Party at this time, whose goal in appealing to a black hero like Frederick Douglass was often to denounce the political Other, whether that be the domestic fascism of American racism or the international fascism of Germany's anti-Communism.[12] The Douglass narrative developed organically for Ford, Davis, and others as they sought to find a rhetoric that was both distinctively black and distinctively American and that could be used to construct a black Communist identity opposed to fascism, and the story of Douglass, whose life involved numerous conflicts with slaveholders, politicians, or the Confederacy, was also flexible enough to adapt to the changing faces of fascism.

The clearest evidence of this flexibility is that the legend of Douglass repeatedly changed among black Communists before the Seventh Congress, during the Popular Front, and into the Second World War. Just as Communist foreign policy frequently changed in the years leading up to the Second World War according to the "shifting exigencies" of the Party, to use Maurice Isserman's words, so also did Communist historical narratives change.[13] Cathy Bergin helpfully points out that *The Negro Liberator*, a paper whose tone was characteristic of the more revolutionary and radical tradition of the Communist Party before the Popular Front, regularly spoke of Douglass as a model revolutionary.[14] *The Negro Liberator* presents a radical Douglass who criticized Lincoln for his compromising attitude toward black rights in America: "Those who seek to link the name of Douglass with the open lily-white policies of the Republican Party are degrading the militant tradition of the Abolitionists." This column went on to urge Communists to "Save the militant traditions of the Abolitionists from the snare-net of reformism!"[15] Later that month the paper issued the "Fred Douglass Anniversary Edition," which featured a number of articles on the legacy of Douglass. This issue consistently denounced Lincoln as a compromiser and applauded Douglass for his commitment to revolutionary principles. Americans, one author asserted, should not hold "Lincoln-Douglass celebrations together" because "Lincoln and Douglass represent two vastly different policies." Another wrote that "the Negro people should honor Douglass only." This issue also featured cartoons of Douglass wrestling with white slaveholders, surrounded by Douglass's proverbial quotations, such as "If there is no struggle, there is no progress" and "Men are whipped oftenest who are whipped easiest," the point being that the life of Douglass should act as a warning to those black leaders "who seek to compromise with the system of oppression."[16] Fascism was still presented as an enemy in this pre-Popular Front paper, but the emphasis was not yet on encouraging unity and cooperation among many organizations in a collective effort to stop international fascism. Instead, *The Negro Liberator* condemned a domestic fascism in America, the growth of which would lead to "a thousand fold increase" of "lynch-terror, discrimination, misery and oppression," and Douglass, the archetypal revolutionary hero, was a fitting model of how to wage that war without compromise.[17]

The Negro Liberator was discontinued in 1935 because Popular Front strategies required a more conciliatory tone than was characteristic of the radical paper, but the convention of the National Negro Congress in 1936 shows how the mythology of Douglass continued to develop into the Popular Front. The National Negro Congress, which Ford thought should be convened on the birthday of Frederick Douglass in 1936,[18] shows the ethos of Douglass shifting from that of a revolutionary to that of a reformer and a peace-maker. Before the congress even began, participants considered it necessary to address the problem of the Italian invasion of Ethiopia a few months prior. Ford said that one of the demands on their agenda was "To oppose war and fascism, the attempted subjugation of Negro people in Ethiopia."[19] The consistent theme of Ford's reflections on the congress, perhaps even more frequent than his calls for anti-lynching laws, women's rights, and worker enfranchisement, was his call "for aiding in forestalling the growth of fascism and the outbreak of war." Others at the convention agreed with Ford's analysis. W.E.B. DuBois, for example, saw "fascism armed to the teeth" as "the chief aggressor and threatener of violence" (DuBois, however, also saw Communism as a violent threat at this point, warning that "One of the worst things that Negroes could do today would be to join the American Communist Party"). A. Philip Randolph also spoke in behalf of unity against fascism, urging the formation of "an independent working class political party" "for the protection against economic exploitation, war and fascism."[20] Yet the Congress's call to arms was figurative, not literal, asking for "liberty- and peace-loving forces." Those in the congress were not urging a military intervention in Ethiopia or against Hitler, nor were they invoking Douglass as Lincoln's military advisor but rather as abolitionist, statesman, and diplomat. Furthermore, members of the Congress also stressed the importance of supporting black rights in America, calling for members "to struggle in defense of the smallest civil liberty and for free citizenship on an equal footing with their white brothers." Like the Seventh Congress, then, the National Negro Congress worked to create a "people's front against fascism and war," a "united front" with the equally desirable goals of peace abroad and human rights at home.[21] These features of their rhetoric are important to note because they underwent a great change when the United States entered World War II a few years later.

Although Browder and Ford did not win the presidential election, the legend of Douglass continued to be a powerful narrative for the next few years of the Popular Front as a means of negotiating and defining black Communist identity. A towering figure like Douglass enabled a greater sense of empowerment among the Communists in their quest for social reform. The prolonged legal defense of Angelo Herndon and the Scottsboro Boys, for example, was called "the living embodiment of the fighting spirit of Frederick Douglass."[22] Louise Mitchell, writing an article on the continued struggle for women's rights, commended Douglass for being "the only man who consented to appear on the platform" of the first convention for women's rights in 1848.[23] Periodically, especially in the month of February, articles appeared in *The Daily Worker* celebrating the life of Douglass or reprinting excerpts from his writings.[24] Ford even wrote a book in the years fol-

lowing the election campaign entitled *The Negro and the Democratic Front*, which William Patterson said "picks up the thread of the conflict of the Negro people where 'The Life and Words of Frederick Douglass,' that great Negro revolutionist of the period of the Civil War, laid it down."[25] Although it appeared less frequently than it did during the 1936 campaign, the story of Douglass was still being used as a symbol intended to discourage the growth of fascism, abroad and at home, by encouraging the social reform promoted by the Communist platform.[26]

Changing Policy, Changing History

World War II dramatically changed the use of the Douglass myth. His story transitioned from one of black liberation in American politics to one of militant support of the Allied powers, a process that began with the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact of 1939, which raised many questions about the Communist anti-fascist narrative. Thus far, the Communist Party had taken a vehement stance against Hitler's Germany, but Stalin's treaty with the chancellor cast doubt on the Party's commitment to fighting fascism abroad, which, in turn, cast doubt on the Party's domestic policy as well. Naison writes that the Nazi-Soviet Pact "deeply disillusioned most of its important Harlem allies and undermined the Party's ability to serve as a catalyst of community protest," leaving them ostracized from many of the allies they had made through the National Negro Congress.[27] This decision, jarring as it seemed, was consistent with the Party's longstanding policy against the war. Many wrote to *The Daily Worker* to express their admiration for the non-aggression pact. Hailing the treaty as "the firmest possible stand for peace at the present critical moment," for example, the coincidentally named Frederick Douglass Branch of the Young Communist League spoke the thoughts of many Communists toward the war.[28] For a long time the war had not been seen as a workers' war but as an imperialist war, and the best policy seemed to be non-participation.

One reason for the Communists' committed anti-war stance was the continued reality of racial injustice in the United States. To fight a war on behalf of a nation that practiced what they saw as a domestic version of fascism would be purposeless. In February, 1941 a delegation from the NAACP, the Communist Party, the National Negro Congress, and other organizations met to dedicate a statue of Frederick Douglass. They protested lynching, poll taxes, and Jim Crow as they expressed their desire "to preserve the principles of Douglass for unity of all peoples against oppression and war." As a part of their ceremony, the youth chanted the "Douglass Pledge of Youth," which reveals their frustration with the increasingly pro-war stance of the United States government: "We re-dedicate ourselves to continue the work which [Douglass] courageously initiated to liberate the Negro people from slavery…We are aware of the conditions which prevail throughout our nation"—conditions which included a segregated military and "government contracts for weapons of war." The pledge continued by saying, "We cannot agree with those who would have us give our lives in the conflict of war, when, right here at home, the evils of lynching, discrimination and poll taxes and Jim Crow in the army and navy are officially sanctioned by them."[29] Such

commemorations were not uncommon—Angelo Herndon wrote about another one later that year—and black Communists consistently protested the "fascism" of racism in America, which was exemplified by the policy of segregation in the military. Ben Davis reinforced their anti-war stance on the same grounds: "Douglass refused to recruit Negro soldiers—the Union's 'powerful black arm'—until crass abuses of the Negro in the armed forces were curtailed."[30] For the first two years of the war, the Communist Party remained consistent with the program laid out in the Popular Front, and the Douglass myth fit into this program in its use as a symbol of protest against domestic injustice.

Only a few months later Ben Davis dramatically altered this message. When Hitler broke the anti-aggression pact and invaded the Soviet Union in June, 1941, the Communist Party reconsidered its stance on the war, coming to realize that militant opposition to Hitler was the only remaining option in the fight against fascism. During an all-day conference of Communist Party leaders, Robert Minor, general secretary of the Party, stressed "the changed character of the war," calling it "now a patriotic war" for the defense of national independence, a notable comment since it occurred *before* the attack on Pearl Harbor but *after* the German invasion of the Soviet Union, making Minor's use of the word "patriotism" highly unusual. In his speech Minor emphasized the urgent need for black communities to support the war effort, saying that "No one has a greater stake than the Negro people in defeating Hitler." Davis's editorial commentary on the speech says Minor invoked the Douglass myth in direct contrast to Davis's earlier anti-war interpretation of Douglass: the situation of black Americans during the war

> is similar to that in which Frederick Douglass found himself during the Civil War...He did not make the abolition of jim-crowism a prerequisite to support of the Negro people for Lincoln, for the annihilation of slavery was the main issue for the Negro people. Instead, Douglass called upon Lincoln to use the Union's 'powerful black arm' to crush the slaveholders' empire. Today the Negro people call upon President Roosevelt to use the nation's 'powerful black arm' in every phase of national defense to crush Hitler.[31]

This is not to say that the Communist Party abandoned its mission to de-segregate the military; it continued to criticize segregation regularly in *The Daily Worker*. It does mean, however, that the issue became secondary to the defeat of Hitler. The Party could put up with what it now saw as a minor issue at home in contrast to a major threat abroad. Fascism, to invoke Foucault again, shifted in signification from the American adversary of racism to the geopolitical and military entity of Hitler's Germany.[32]

This change in policy toward the war was contemporaneous with a change in rhetoric toward black rights in America. In 1942 Ford republished Douglass's speech "Negroes and the National War Effort" and included his own foreword to the text. This was the speech Douglass gave to encourage black enlistment in

the Union Army. The preface, however, reads more like an anti-Nazi tract than an introduction to the life of Douglass. Ford self-consciously applied the story of the Douglass to his present moment, urging black participation in the war. "Unless all unite *effectively* to defeat Hitler," Ford wrote, "white and black will become the chattel slaves of fascism" [emphasis original]. Ford's emphasis on *effectively* uniting reveals that Ford, and by extension the Communist Party, still protested the segregation of the military, which Ford said "militates against their fullest mobilization for the war effort," but desegregation became negotiable, a desire but not a necessity.[33] Furthermore, Ford framed the issue as a means to an end—an equitable military is an efficient and effective military—rather than as an end in itself.

These changes to the Communist narrative were sometimes subtle. Douglass, commonly called the "great emancipator" in earlier issues, became the "liberator." Instead of John Brown and Frederick Douglass, the heroes shifted to Douglass and Lincoln. [34] Lincoln, who has previously been presented in the paper as the ally of capitalist industry, was now presented as having formed an "alliance with labor" in his military efforts.[35] Earlier Communist denunciations of the "imperialist war" became the repeated chant to "win the war and Negro rights."[36] The narrative that "Frederick Douglass Fights Fascism" came to mean beating Hitler abroad and "doing something for Frederick Douglass' people—Negro and white" at home.[37] Angelo Herndon, in a lecture on Douglass, seemed to soften his presentation of domestic problems, calling upon black Americans "to support the war effort as the only way they can move towards progress even though the Administration at times tends to capitulate to reactionary pressure."[38] But such reprioritizations did not go unnoticed. While Herndon accused the administration of capitulating, others saw his emphasis on the necessity of war as a form of capitulation in its own right. The shifting policies of the Communist Party towards the war were attended by a similar change in historical narratives.

The Communist response to the Double V campaign—the idea of achieving victory over both Hitler and Jim Crow—illustrates the influence of shifting Communist politics on their historical narratives. Cathy Bergin summarizes the Party's position on the Double V campaign: "While the major black organisations and the black press rallied behind the slogan of the 'Double V' (victory over both Hitler and Jim Crow)," Bergin says, "the Party consistently refused to consider such a campaign to be anything other than a deviation from the war effort."[39] Their position, in other words, was one of unqualified and total support of the war. It required unity at all costs, even going so far as to suspend their efforts at achieving racial equality. Win the war first; then end segregation. This view, however, is not unanimously held. Referring to the "Double V" and "Don't Buy Where You Can't Work" campaigns, for example, Mary Helen Washington says "it was the CP and the black labor Left that supplied the armor for those slogans."[40] Washington goes too far by failing to acknowledge the Communist Party's sometimes serious conflict of interests between domestic and international policy, but her statement helpfully nuances the Party's relationship to the Double V campaign by pointing out that the Party continued to promote black rights during the war.

A special issue of *New Masses* devoted to "The Negro and Victory" illustrates the Party's fraught relationship with the Double V campaign. The opening editorial in the issue attempted to link black wellbeing in America to the success of American military efforts: "Today we must give jobs to Negroes, provide them with decent housing, abolish the poll tax, outlaw lynching, jail inciters of race hatred, and make at least a start toward ending Jim Crowism in the armed forces by organizing a mixed Negro and white brigade—measures likewise necessary to win the war."[41] The editorial blames the legacy of American racial injustice for setbacks in the war, and it claims that what is best for the African Americans would be best for the American military. In the same issue, Doxey Wilkerson examined the destructive effects of workplace discrimination on wartime industrial production, making it seem as if the issue was promoting the Double V, but other portions of the issue read like political propaganda promoting black enlistment. James Ford repeated his usual call for black Americans to enlist against the fascists, and many of the graphics communicate the idea that joining the war effort was not a debatable question, as if refusing to support the war was anti-communist. In one, a gaunt, sorrowful Soviet woman stands over a starving child surrounded by rubble, smoke, and corpses. The caption reads "Stalingrad: 'But Mother, Don't We Have Allies?'" A few pages later there is an image of a strong, shirtless, black male standing with arms upraised, broken shackles on his wrists, the falling pieces of which spell "poll tax," over a cowering Hitler and a hooded clansman. This image is especially revealing: the black male towering over Hitler is foregrounded, but the clansman and the reference to the poll tax are less conspicuous. In other words, the image, although promoting an idea similar to the Double V, gives visual priority to the black man and Hitler. Lastly, printed beside excerpts from Union General John Ames' letters, is an image of black soldiers fighting the Confederacy in the Civil War. The lesson of this issue seems to be that the Communist Party's rejection of Double V was not total. Rather, it was a subtle reprioritization of the war effort over domestic reforms that left little room for serious protest or debate.

Robert Minor's comments are even more explicit in this regard. He wrote to commend the Negro Freedom Meeting in New York for its vital display of national unity and strength, what he called "a great movement in support of a people's war." Notably, Minor commended the meeting by contrasting it with other groups of black leaders who opposed black participation in the war unless certain conditions were met. Minor did not specify which groups he was referring to; instead, he challenged all groups that demanded black liberation through boycotting the war. Minor went on to explain that the cost of such demands was too high to pay, and that the black community could not afford to hold the position expressed in phrases like "We oppose the war unless…" or "We will support the war if…." He finished his attack on these groups by recruiting "the great Frederick Douglass" to his cause because Douglass believed that "those who fight for Negro rights must fight with all their fury on the 'Lincoln side.'" To Minor, no difference in political opinion, racial identity, or religious affiliation could equal the difference between the Axis and the Allies. Defeating the Axis powers, therefore, required putting

aside all other differences in the attempt to achieve national unity. Success in the war required "the wholehearted belligerent spirit of all our people, of all races and religious faiths and shapes of patriotic political opinion and party alignment." [42]

Minor's article, as well as its editorial companion, continued to tell and retell the Douglass narrative as a part of the Communist strategy to support the war effort. "Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass would have loved it," the editor affirmed, referring to the rally at which Minor spoke. The editorial expanded upon Minor's argument by denouncing the position that this was a "white man's war," a position similar to the Party's own rejection of the imperialist war a few years earlier. The "Nazi-inspired idea that this is 'a white man's war,'" the article continued, was pernicious because "the Negro people have a great stake—their all—in this war." [43] The article also compared Hitler's tyranny to a kind of slavery. However true this may have been in a general sense, in the context of references to Lincoln and Douglass, the article could not have failed to cause the reader to associate the reign of Hitler with antebellum America. Continuing what started in the Civil War, therefore, World War II was another battle in the campaign against racial inequality. Although the official position of the Communist Party on race in America had changed little, the stories they told about race, fascism, and American history had shifted dramatically. Constant adaptations in wartime policy were attended by alterations to the historical narrative, changes that those attuned to the significance of these narratives took note of and criticized.

"Myths, Symbols, and Wartime Folklore" in McKay, Wright, and Ellison

By the midpoint of the war, many black writers had begun to accuse the Communist Party of betrayal. Claude McKay famously denounced the work the Communist Party was doing in Harlem, writing as early as 1940 that the Communists "were actually doing nothing to help alleviate the social misery of Negroes." [44] McKay's account is full of anger and disillusionment. He called black politicians such as Ford and Davis "Bolshevik propagandists," condemned white Communists "who promoted themselves as the only leaders of the Negroes," and challenged the entire philosophy of the Communists as being premised on "the abnegation of all individuality, collective servitude and strict discipline in every domain of life with one man as supreme dictator." [45] McKay, in short, urged a complete and total rejection of Communist involvement in the political life of black Americans, even critiquing the Party's appropriation of black heroes. He claimed, for example, that the Communist Party appropriated black heroes to establish the National Negro Congress. "They chose," McKay said, "instead [of Marx or Lenin] the vibrant romantic figure of the great Negro leader of the Abolitionist period, Frederick Douglass," to which he then added his perspective on their use of the story. "Frederick Douglass," McKay writes, "was so opposed to Communism that he became estranged from those white abolitionists who were partisans of Communist theories." [46] McKay's contempt reaches its climax in the final paragraph of the book: "Russia has a great lesson to teach. And Negroes might learn from it
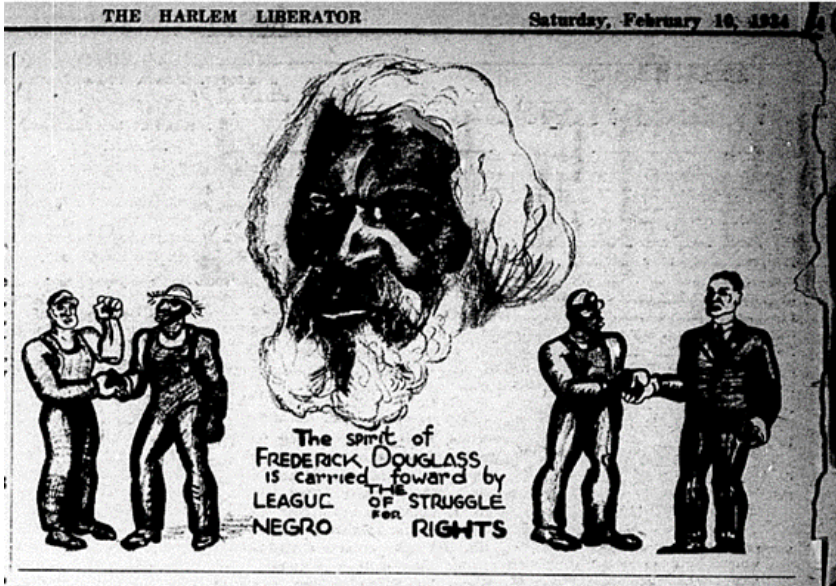
Figure 2: Frederick Douglass and Class Solidarity, *Harlem Liberator*, February 10, 1934, 4.

just what they should not do. They can learn enough at least to save themselves from becoming the black butt of Communism."[47] McKay obviously had very strong objections to both the tactics and the goals of the Communist Party, and it is not without significance that in the midst of his extended critique of the Communist Party, McKay thought it worthwhile to mention what he saw as a destructive form of historical misappropriation.

McKay's account comes surprisingly early. Writing in 1940, he points out his objections to Communist rhetoric even *before* the major shift that occurred after Hitler invaded the USSR. This suggests that the narrative shift after 1941 only exacerbated a problem already present in earlier Communist mythmaking. Nevertheless, McKay was an outlier among those who left the Party around this time. It was more common for black intellectuals to leave the Party during the last few years of the war, some even going so far as to denounce the Party publicly. Richard Wright is probably the most famous black ex-communist because of the publication of the story of his departure from the Communist Party in his well-known 1944 essay "I Tried to be a Communist." Although Wright's account does not examine Frederick Douglass's story specifically, his account still stresses the importance of Communist narratives, aesthetics, and rhetoric over policies or economics. What drew Wright into the Party, he says, "was not the economics of Communism, nor the great power of trade unions, nor the excitement of un-derground politics...my attention was caught by the similarity of the experiences of workers." Wright then explains his interest in the stories of fellow workers from around the world. Similarly, when he leaves the Party, he describes his departure in

terms of books. "He talks like a book," a fellow Communist said of Wright, a statement that forever branded Wright as "bourgeois" in the Party, and Wright repeatedly stresses that his self-motivation, creativity, and independence of thought caused friction between him and the Party.[48]

But Wright and McKay spoke little of the influence of Communist wartime policy on their departures from the Party (they both left the party early enough that it could not have influenced their decisions). The implication is that it was not only the Party's stance toward the war that contributed to their disillusionment with the Party; their aesthetic commitments and historical myths were also a large factor in black-Communist relations. Certainly, the Party's controversial war measures had an effect on many black radicals. Dayo Gore, describing these Party policies, such as their no-strike pledge, support of the Smith Act, and disregard for the internment of Japanese Americans, acknowledges the backlash the Party faced as a result, but she also claims that these policies were intended as a compromise that would yield among radicals "a stronger postwar coalition in the United States."[49] While Gore convincingly argues that black radicalism, prominent throughout the Cold War, did not subside after the end World War II, she fails to acknowledge how Communist Party narratives, and not simply postwar American anticommunism, created obstacles to radical black resistance. Robin D. G. Kelley makes an argument similar to Gore's by pointing out that the Popular Front had "singed," without completely burning, bridges among radicals. His reason is that the Party had compromised its values during the Popular Front: the Party was not radical enough in its commitment to Left politics.[50] The works of Gore, Washington, and Kelley helpfully reveal the continuity of black radicalism before and after the War, but for those black writers who did leave the Party—Wright, McKay, and Ellison, among others—it is worthwhile to explain why in terms other than political compromise.

More so than either McKay's or Wright's decisions to leave the Party, Ralph Ellison's departure reveals the significant influence of the Communist historical imagination during the Popular Front and Second World War. Ellison wrote an article late in 1943 that shows a deep concern for the Party's wartime rhetoric. Ellison had been enamored with the Communist Party for roughly half a decade, but, according to his biographer Arnold Rampersad, he seems to have been transitioning out of the Party by 1942.[51] Ellison began by describing three general attitudes among black Americans toward the war: "unqualified acceptance," "unqualified rejection," and "critical participation." Ellison commended critical participation in the war effort, which simultaneously required the recognition that "Negroes have their own stake in the defeat of fascism" and the imagination to reject the "slavishness" and "blind acceptance" of military segregation. Ellison situates his position between acceptance and rejection in the following way:

> The only honorable course for Negroes to take is first to protest
> and then to fight against [policies of segregation]. And while will-
> ing to give and take in the interest of national unity, [this attitude]
> rejects that old pattern of American thought that regards any

> Negro demand for justice as treasonable, or any Negro act of
> self-defense as an assault against the state. It believes that to
> fail to protest the wrongs done Negroes as we fight this war is
> to participate in a crime, not only against Negroes, but against
> all true anti-Fascists.[52]

Although not an explicit reference to Communist policy, Ellison's description of "critical participation" comes very close to criticizing Communist actions in 1943. Although the Communist Party claimed to promote something similar to critical participation, Ellison's emphasis on *true* anti-fascism, once again reminding of Foucault's floating signifier, suggests his awareness of the changing enemy of fascism, and Ellison, even while supporting the war effort, was less compromising in his approach to desegregation than the Communist Party.

Ellison's "Editorial Comment" did not explore the Douglass narrative's connection to contemporary politics explicitly, but it did comment on the importance of narrative in understanding black identity in the midst of the war against fascism. Ellison appealed to the Civil War to situate black agency in the midst of World War II: "they have the Civil War to teach them that no revolutionary situation in the United States will be carried any farther toward fulfilling the needs of Negroes than Negroes themselves are able, through a strategic application of their own power to make it go."[53] Like the Communist Party, therefore, Ellison used the example of black participation in the Civil War to encourage black participation in World War II. Unlike the Communist Party, however, Ellison here added sufficient nuance to that mythology by reconfiguring the story to be one about black agency in the quest for freedom and self-definition rather than a simple precedent for black enlistment in the military. Ellison was explicit on this point. He said that black leadership must learn "the meaning of the myths and symbols which abound among the Negro masses" in order to overcome black resistance to the war. This is because the problem of black resistance

> is psychological; it will be solved only by a Negro leadership that
> is aware of the psychological attitudes and incipient forms of
> action which the black masses reveal in their emotion-charged
> myths, symbols and wartime folklore. Only through a skillful and
> wise manipulation of these centers of repressed social energy
> will Negro resentment, self-pity and indignation be channelized
> to cut through temporary issues and become transformed
> into positive action. This is not to make the problem simply
> one of words, but to recognize…that words have their own vital
> importance.[54]

In this editorial Ellison had not yet reached the conclusion that he would in *Invisible Man*, where the poster of Frederick Douglass is misappropriated by the Brotherhood and then removed when Brother Tarp leaves, but Ellison was clearly

moving closer to his position in *Invisible Man* by attending to the significance of cultural symbols, pointing out how their use (or misuse) was a key factor in black participation in or rejection of the war.

By 1944 the Communist Party's credibility as a defender of black rights was tenuous enough that the *Negro Digest* published an article called "Have Communists Quit Fighting for Negro Rights?" Five authors contributed an answer to this question. William Patterson, Ben Davis, and James Ford all answered a resounding "no," appealing to the Communist legacy of defending black rights in the Scottsboro and Herndon cases, but George Schuyler and Horace Cayton both answered "yes," Schuyler going so far as to say that the Communist Party had never fought for black rights in the first place. That the article was published at all suggests that suspicion of the Communist Party was widespread enough to merit such a discussion. Each author took a different approach to the question, but a common concern to all of them was the Communist perspective toward the war. In every case, the answer to the relationship between the Communist Party and black dignity seemed to be determined by the war. Patterson, for example, argued that the war's influence on the world had made the welfare of the black community inextricable from global politics:

> The war has changed America. It has changed the world. The Negro now need not, indeed he can not, fight alone. He is a part of a great democratic coalition. His problems are merged with the problems of the colonial peoples, the nations enslaved by Nazism, those who at home are menaced by unemployment in the postwar period…Fascism in all its forms must be rooted out everywhere or nowhere is democracy safe. Democracy is indivisible. The first task before mankind seeking freedom from tyranny and want is the destruction of the base of fascism.[55]

Likewise, Ben Davis argued that "The greatest service that can be contributed to Negro rights is unconditional support of the war" (Davis once again cited Douglass as his predecessor in order to support his case).[56] Moreover, James Ford added that "all other considerations would have to be subordinated to this central objective" of destroying fascism in the war.[57] Common to their approach was the subordination of black rights within the broader destiny of international labor. Racial discrimination was wrong, they affirmed, but racial discrimination would best be fought by addressing the global spread of fascism.

George Schuyler and Horace Cayton, however, believed that the Communists had unjustly taken advantage of racial activism by redirecting these efforts toward the Communist agenda. On these grounds, Schuyler condemned the Communist support of the war after the invasion of Russia, saying that the Communists believed that "Everything must be done to save Russia even if Negro rights have to go by the board." Schuyler went even further in his accusation by calling Stalinism itself a form of fascism. The Communist Party vehemently opposed fascism,

Schuyler said, "except the Stalinist brand."[58] And here Cayton continued the attack, pointing out that it was exactly this policy that undermined Communist credibility: "Most damaging to Communist prestige is their failure to formulate any program against Jim Crowism in the armed forces and their tacit acceptance of the Jim Crow practices of the Red Cross."[59] Cayton had apparently picked up on the fact that the Communist Party had paid lip service to ending segregation in the military without taking any active steps toward that goal. To create such a plan, as Minor's earlier comments suggested, would have threatened the total, national unity required to win the war.

The pressures of the historical moment created a situation in which crafting an appropriate historical narrative was almost impossible for the Communist Party. Their actions failed to become, as Isserman writes, a "'usable past,' in the sense of providing models to emulate or political blueprints to follow."[60] They found themselves in a difficult, complex situation with no clear answers, and they made what seemed to be the best choice for them at the time by appropriating the myths and symbols of the Civil War and Frederick Douglass to rally their supporters against the various forms of fascism. However, the Communist discussion of anti-fascism, as well as their appropriation of black heroes, was inconsistent, and these inconsistencies damaged their credibility among black Party members such as Ellison, planting the seed for what would become a central image in *Invisible Man:* Brother Tarp's portrait of Frederick Douglass.

This examination of the Douglass narrative in Communist discourse has two important consequences for understanding this scene in *Invisible Man.* First, Ellison has often been criticized for presenting the Brotherhood as an unfair caricature of the Communist Party. Barbara Foley, for example, accuses Ellison of profiting from Cold War anticommunism rather than staying true to his art: "I suggest that he may have been deliberately ascending—and helping to steer-the anti-communist bandwagon, possibly to advance his own career."[61] Such criticisms, however, fail to consider the real historical referents embedded within *Invisible Man*. What may appear to some to be an insignificant detail or a mere flourish in the novel—Brother Tarp's Douglass portrait—reveals that Ellison's "caricature" often had historical precedent. Second, this analysis contributes to our understanding of the role of Douglass in *Invisible Man* as a whole. David Messmer has helpfully pointed out that Douglass acts as a rhetorical model for the Invisible Man, creating a "call and response" between the two figures.[62] Whereas Messmer considers the role of the historical Douglass in the novel, however, I have considered the story of Douglass as it relates to the novel's historical timeline. The novel's references to Douglass must be understood in terms of both the narrator's relationship to the historical Douglass and his relationship with the Brotherhood. In other words, this history of the Douglass narrative in Communist discourse functions as an extended footnote to these lines in *Invisible Man*.

This history, however, has broader consequences as well. The Communist Party's historical narratives had a large influence on many black intellectuals' decisions to leave the Party, yet the coming and going of black intellectuals has

commonly been examined in terms of Communist policies rather than Communist narratives. Although the significance of Communist Popular Front and wartime policies cannot be underestimated, the significance of the Communist Party's imaginative constructions of American identity should not be overlooked. This analysis expands our understanding of the Americanization of the Communist Party by providing a detailed account of one such historical narrative in the figure of Frederick Douglass. Long after finishing *Invisible Man*, Ellison reflected upon his experience with the Communist Party underlying his fiction, summarizing once again his reason for leaving in terms of the Party's identity-forming myths and stories: "They fostered the myth that Communism was twentieth-century Americanism, but to be a twentieth-century American meant, in their thinking, that you had to be more Russian than American and less Negro than either. That's how

Figure 3: Political Cartoon Protesting Hitler, the KKK, and the Poll Tax, *New Masses*, October, 20, 1942, 15.

they lost the Negroes."[63] Ellison's comment suggests that the Party's politics were always intertwined with its narratives, that its political commitments and historical representations cannot be disentangled. Ellison suggests, in other words, that a thorough understanding of the American Communist Party requires a sensitivity to the narratives used to construct their identity.

Notes

1. Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man* (New York: Vintage International, 1995), 378.

2. Ellison, *Invisible Man*, 378-379.

3. William J. Maxwell, *New Negro, Old Left: African-American Writing and Communism Between the Wars* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 201.

4. Denning identifies a pattern in the Popular Front imagination to retell "American mythologies" with a "radical edge." These stories, he writes, "were attempts to imagine a new culture, a new way of life, a revolution," while simultaneously appealing to the American national consciousness and to American history. Denning names Abraham Lincoln and John Brown as examples of Americanization, but he does not provide an extended analysis of either. Likewise, Mark Solomon points to Gabriel Prosser, Denmark Vesey, Nat Turner, and Frederick Douglass as Party symbols of "militant Negro manhood" used as a "response to national oppression and a legitimate manifestation of the struggle for national identity," yet they are only mentioned in passing. Michael Denning, *The Cultural Front: The Laboring of American Culture in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Verso, 1996), 131-135. Mark Solomon, *The Cry Was Unity: Communists and African Americans, 1917-36* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1998), 184.

5. Without his knowledge, Douglass had been nominated alongside Victoria Woodhull on the Equal Rights Party ticket. Ben Davis, the prominent Harlem-based Communist eventually elected to the New York City Council, gave Ford this name. Ben Davis, "James W. Ford: 'Frederick Douglass of 1936,'" *Daily Worker*, 29 Sept. 1936.

6. James W. Ford, "C.P. Champions Negro Struggle, Declares Ford," *Daily Worker*, 29 June 1936.

7. "Text of Communist Platform Adopted at Ninth Convention," *Daily Worker*, 29 June 1936.

8. "Text of Communist Platform Adopted at Ninth Convention," *Daily Worker*, 29 June 1936. Despite its many failings as a slogan, Maurice Isserman writes, "Communism is Twentieth Century Americanism" was met with "genuine enthusiasm" during the Popular Front as a part of the strategy of Americanization. The slogan was a significant change from William Foster's earlier exhortation "Toward Soviet America." Nevertheless, even this effort to Americanize the Communist Party was in many ways an international, collaborative effort on the part of the communists. Maurice Isserman, *Which Side Were You On? The American Communist Party During the Second World War* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1982), 9-11.

9. Mark Naison, *Communists in Harlem during the Depression* (Urbana: Illinois University Press, 1983), 169.

10. Georgi Dimitrov, "The Fascist Offensive and the Tasks of the Communist International in the Struggle of the Working Class against Fascism." In Georgi Dimitrov, *Selected Works Volume 2* (Sofia: Sofia Press, 1972). For general discussions of African Americans and the Popular Front that emphasize a bottom up history of ordinary Communists instead of the top down story of the Comintern elite, see Mark Solomon, *The*

Cry Was Unity: Communists and African Americans, 1917-1936 (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1998), 258-284; Glenda Elizabeth Gilmore, *Defying Dixie: The Radical Roots of Civil Rights, 1919-1950* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2008), 185-189; and Robin D.G. Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe: Alabama Communists During the Great Depression* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 159-175.

11. Robert O. Paxton, *The Anatomy of Fascism* (New York: Afred A. Knopf, 2004), 9.

12. Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 139.

13. Isserman, *Which Side Were You On?*, 16.

14. Cathy Bergin, *"Bitter with the past but sweet with the dream": Communism in the African American Imaginary: Representations of the Communist Party, 1940-1952* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2016), 60-61.

15. A.W. Berry, "Renew Fighting Traditions on Douglas Day!" *Negro Liberator*, 1 Feb. 1935.

16. "Fred Douglass Anniversary Edition," *Negro Liberator*, 15 Feb. 1935.

17. "Fascism in America," *Negro Liberator*, 15 June 1935.

18. Ben Davis also thought the date of the convention was significant. On the eve of the congress, Davis commemorated Douglass in an article about Douglass's participation in a convention on black suffrage in 1866. Davis contrasted Douglass's demand for the "immediate enfranchisement of the rfeed [sic] Negroes" with the compromising position of William Lloyd Garrison. "It is in the spirit of these traditions," Davis said, "that the National Negro Congress will memorialize the birthday anniversary of Frederick Douglass." Ben Davis, "Negro Congress a Fit Tribute to Douglass," *Daily Worker,* 13 Feb. 1936.

19. James W. Ford and A.W. Berry, "The Coming National Negro Congress," *Communist* Volume 15, No 2 (February 1936), 141.

20. James W. Ford, "The National Negro Congress," *Communist* 15, no. 4 (April 1936), 317-324.

21. James W. Ford, "Political Highlights of the National Negro Congress," *Communist* 15, no. 5 (May 1936), 457-462.

22. "Frederick Douglass—A Great American," *Daily Worker*, 13 Feb. 1937.

23. Mitchell's article is an unusual instance of the Douglass narrative being used in service of women's rights. Usually, Douglass, as well as other black male historical figures, are enlisted in the cause of what Mark Solomon calls "militant Negro manhood," a revealing observation considering the three primary writers in this essay, as well as James Ford, were male. Louise Mitchell, "Ninety Years of Women's Rights," *Daily Worker*, 19 July 1938. Solomon, *The Cry Was Unity*, 184.

24. Ben Davis, "Progress of America and the Revolutionary Role of the Negro People," *Daily Worker*, 12 Feb. 1938. "'Too Thoughtful to Be Happy': Knowledge From Books Deepened Fred Douglass' Hatred of Slavery," *Daily Worker*, 16 Sept. 1938.

25. William L. Patterson, "Ford's Book Vital to Fight for Negro Rights, Advance of American Progress," *Daily Worker*, 26 Nov. 1938.

26. Two other events that occurred during the Popular Front, unfortunately beyond the scope of this essay, deserve a brief mention here. The first is the Italian invasion of Ethiopia, and the second is the Spanish Civil War. Put briefly, Ford responded to the Ethiopian crisis by exhorting his audience to uphold the "best traditions of Douglass and Lincoln" by rejecting "fascism and war in the United States." The Spanish Civil War is relevant to this discussion for two reasons. First, the general trend of invoking the history of abolitionism against fascism continued during the war. The volunteer armies of the Comintern's International Brigades were sometimes named after American Civil War heroes: the Abraham Lincoln Brigade, the Lincoln Battalion, and the John Brown Battery. Langston Hughes' even connected Harpers Ferry with the Siege of Oviedo in the poem "October 16th." Second, the Spanish Civil War reveals the Communist Party's complex and sometimes contradictory stance toward war. Ford's calls for peace at the National Negro

Congress, for example, were not unanimously supported by those black Communists who soon afterward volunteered to fight in the Spanish Civil War. Party members sometimes protested "imperialist" wars between capitalist powers while at other times supporting wars against colonialism. For Ford's response to the Ethiopian crisis, see James W. Ford, "Fascism Would Mean Terrible Treatment Of the Negro Masses," *Daily Worker*, 10 July 1936. For the Spanish Civil War, see David Featherstone, "Black Internationalism, International Communism and Anti-Fascist Political Trajectories: African American Volunteers in the Spanish Civil War," *Twentieth-Century Communism* 7 (2014): 9-40; Robin D. G. Kelley, "This Ain't Ethiopia, But It'll Do," in *African Americans in the Spanish Civil War*, ed. Danny Duncan Collum (New York: G.K. Hall & Co., 1992), 5-57; and Langston Hughes, "October 16th," in *African Americans in the Spanish Civil War,* 109-110.

27. Naison, *Communists in Harlem*, 287.

28. "Letters From Our Readers Express Views on Soviet-German Non-Aggression Pact," *Daily Worker,* 28 Aug. 1939.

29. "Negro and White Youth Lay Wreath At Statue of Frederick Douglass," *Daily Worker*, 21 Feb. 1941.

30. Ben Davis, "New 'Life of Frederick Douglass' Is Monument to Great Liberator," *Daily Worker*, 6 Apr. 1941.

31. Ben Davis, "Negro Communist Parley Stresses Need For Anti-Hitler Front; Ford, Minor Speak," *Daily Worker*, 16 Sept. 1941. Minor here conflates the discriminatory Jim Crow laws, a postbellum phenomenon, with antebellum forms of discrimination. In context, Minor is suggesting that Douglass could have prioritized ending segregation in the Union Army but chose not to in order to achieve a faster Union victory.

32. In some ways the domestic and foreign concerns are connected, but the nuance reveals the subtle prioritizations of blackness, Americanness, and Marxism within the multi-faceted construction of Communist identity. Ben Davis compared these two adversaries in his explanation for the need to enter the war. Black Americans should support the war because "they are daily recognizing that the world victory of Nazism would throw back a hundred years their struggles to end the slave-market stench still in America." Ben Davis, "Browder's Contributions to Negro Rights Aid Anti-Fascist Unity of the Nation," *Daily Worker*, 1 Dec. 1941. Likewise, Angelo Herndon called for full black support of the war. Just as Frederick Douglass urged Lincoln to "let the weight of twenty millions crush and destroy [slavery] forever!" so also should black Americans support the war effort. Herndon continued, "For the love of God, tear away, and fling from you the hideous and deadly poison of Jim Crow and race hatred, and let the weight of fifteen millions help to crush the common enemy of Nazism and Fascism!", Angelo Herndon, "Frederick Douglass: Negro Leadership and War", *Negro Quarterly* 15, no. 4 (1943).

33. James W. Ford, Foreword to "Negroes and the National War Effort" by Frederick Douglass (1942), 5-6.

34. "Boston Celebrates Month of Liberation," *Daily Worker*, 31 Jan. 1943. Michael Denning sees Popular Front Americanisms as invoking the more radical figures of American history, such as John Brown, but he overlooks the ways in which Popular Front Americanisms softened at the outset of World War II. Denning, *The Cultural Front*, 131.

35. Elizabeth Lawson, "Lincoln's Alliance with Labor," *Daily Worker*, 12 Feb. 1943.

36. James W. Ford, "New Opportunity for Negro Unity," *Daily Worker*, 30 Jan. 1943.

37. This column, responding to the naming of a U.S. naval vessel *The Frederick Douglass*, called for the support of an Anti-Poll Tax petition in the South. "Frederick Douglass Fights Fascism," *Daily Worker*, 30 Apr. 1943.

38. "Foster Brands Hoover at Capital Rally," *Daily Worker*, 17 Feb. 1943.

39. Barbara Foley and Robin D.G. Kelley have made similar arguments about the Double V campaign. See Bergin, *"Bitter with the past but sweet with the dream,"* 134; Barbara Foley, *Wrestling with the Left: The Making of Ralph Ellison's Invisible Man* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 39; and Kelley, "This Ain't Ethiopia, But It'll Do," 40.

40. Mary Helen Washington, *The Other Blacklist: The African American Literary and Cultural Left of the 1950s* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), 6.

41. "Let this People Fight: Full Citizenship Rights for the Negro—a Crucial Issue in Winning the War. An Editorial," *New Masses* 45, no. 3 (20 Oct. 1942), 2.

42. Robert Minor, "The Negro Freedom Meeting, A Discovery of Strength," *Daily Worker,* 9 June 1943.

43. "This is the New Negro!" *Daily Worker*, 9 June 1943.

44. Claude McKay, *Harlem: Negro Metropolis* (New York: E.P. Dutton & Company, 1940), 188.

45. McKay, *Harlem*, 188, 48.

46. McKay, *Harlem*, 260. Although McKay's account is impassioned, it demonstrates that Communist narratives during the period had tremendous significance in mediating the relationship between the Party and the black residents in Harlem. The Communists' use of Frederick Douglass was apparently so prevalent that their critics noticed. McKay goes on to admit at least one similarity between Frederick Douglass and some black Communists in Harlem: they both married white women, something which McKay uses as an example to show Douglass', and therefore the Communists', "forfeiting his enormous influence among Negroes." These themes appear again in McKay's recently discovered manuscript *Amiable with Big Teeth*, whose subtitle summarizes well McKay's view of the Communist Party, *A Novel of the Love Affair between the Communists and the Poor Black Sheep of Harlem*. In the novel, McKay connects Communist activity with the history of abolitionism by calling the Popular Front "the second emancipation," which McKay then challenges throughout the book. Claude McKay, *Amiable with Big Teeth: A Novel of the Love Affair between the Communist and the Poor Black Sheep of Harlem* (New York: Penguin, 2017), 197, 235.

47. McKay, *Harlem*, 262.

48. Richard Wright, "I Tried to be a Communist," *Atlantic Monthly* 174 (1944), 62, 66. Notably, Wright includes similar themes in his novel *The Outsider* (1953), a fuller discussion of which, while relevant, cannot be included here. Put briefly, *The Outsider*, whose major themes include false identities, forgotten/remembered histories, and a black man's involvement with the Communist Party, portrays the Communist Party as a duplicitous manipulator of history. In the novel, the Party frequently tries to reconstruct personal and communal histories to its own advantage, such as with its involvement in a crime scene or with its control over members' identities. At one point the narrator says the Communists were known to "establish new identities" for themselves by stealing the names of the dead. Richard Wright, *The Outsider* (New York: Signet, 1953), 129.

49. Dayo Gore, *Radicalism at the Crossroads: African American Women Activists in the Cold War* (New York: New York University Press, 2011), 37.

50. Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe*, 218.

51. Arnold Rampersad, *Ralph Ellison: A Biography* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2007), 162.

52. Ralph Ellison, "Editorial Comment," *Negro Quarterly* 1, no. 4 (1943), 297-299.

53. Ellison, "Editorial Comment," 300.

54. Ellison, "Editorial Comment," 301-302.

55. "Have the Communists Quit Fighting for Negro Rights?" *Negro Digest* 3, no. 2 (1944) 59-60.

56. "Have the Communists Quit Fighting for Negro Rights?" 65.

57. "Have the Communists Quit Fighting for Negro Rights?" 69.

58. "Have the Communists Quit Fighting for Negro Rights?" 63-64.

59. "Have the Communists Quit Fighting for Negro Rights?" 67.

60. Isserman, *Which Side Were You On?*, 17.

61. Barbara Foley, "The Rhetoric of Anticommunism in *Invisible Man*," *College English* 59, no. 5 (1997): 532. Others have criticized Ellison's depiction of the Party on aesthetic grounds. See Arnold Rampersad, *Ralph Ellison*, 255; Irving Howe, "Black Boys and Native Sons," *Dissent* 10, no. 4 (1963): 363; and Saul Bellow, "Man Underground," *Commentary*, June 1952, 609.

62. David Messmer, "Trumpets, Horns, and Typewriters: A Call and Response between Ralph Ellison and Frederick Douglass," *African American Review* 43, no. 4 (2009): 589.

63. Ralph Ellison, *The Collected Essays of Ralph Ellison* (New York: Modern Library, 2003), 748.

Hollywood, Washington, and the Making of the Refugee in Postwar Cinema

Libby Garland

Real life is becoming indistinguishable from the movies.
—Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno[1]

Universal-International's film *Illegal Entry* opened in June 1949. It tells the tale of Anna (Marta Toren), a beautiful European woman tangled up with the criminal ring that smuggled her brother, a concentration camp survivor, over the Mexico-US border.[2] The studio marketed the film as an authentic depiction of contemporary US border enforcement—"the first explosive exposé of the illicit border traffic in human cargo," as the film's publicity materials put it.[3] Universal-International was so committed to this notion of authenticity that, at one point, filmmakers even arranged to embed themselves with the Border Patrol near the Mexico-US border. While on site, or so the studio claimed, "the filmmakers and their camera crew flushed a car parked in dense undergrowth." The car sped away, and the Border Patrol jeep pursued it, overtook it, and arrested the driver "and four aliens jammed like sardines in the fleeing car's turtleback."[4] Whether true or invented, the story of this car chase serves to blur the line between the work of law enforcement and that of movie-making. The filmmakers, however briefly, are cast in the role of the Border Patrol itself, doing the work of securing the border against smuggled aliens.

Universal-International was not the only studio looking to capitalize on the real-life dramas generated by the US government's anti-alien-smuggling operations. In 1947 and 1948, several Hollywood studios pitched government officials on similar projects, hoping to be granted permission to mine the Immigration and Naturalization Service's (INS) case files for screenplay material. Thus deluged,

government officials decided that they could not accommodate all the studios. Columbia Pictures, for one, having proposed crafting "an 'A' picture of great interest and suspense" based on INS exploits, was rebuffed.[5] Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer (MGM), however, succeeded in getting federal government partners on board with its alien-smuggling picture. In 1950, MGM came out with *A Lady Without Passport*, exploring similar themes to those taken up in *Illegal Entry*.[6] This time, the obligatory beauty (Hedy Lamarr) is herself a concentration camp survivor, stranded in Havana and desperate enough to pay smugglers to fly her to Florida.

Neither of these noirish films turned out to be a great critical or popular success ("unimpressive," the *New York Times* yawned of *A Lady Without Passport*).[7] Both, however, are of interest for reasons apart from artistic merit or mass appeal. The two films help us understand a piece of the process by which legal and cultural discourse of the post-World War II era created a new character—"the refugee"—and instilled it in the national (and international) imagination. The movies illuminate this process in two ways. The first is at a narrative level. The plots of both films wrestle evocatively with the liminal figure of the refugee. The tension between the imperative to extend sympathy toward those fleeing war-torn lands, on the one hand, and the desire to control the nation's borders, on the other, was very much on the American public's mind. In the early postwar years, government officials, journalists, civic leaders and ethnic community organizations engaged in heated public debate about the nation's stance toward refugees—in particular, toward the millions of European "displaced persons." That stance was undergoing momentous shifts in ways that would fundamentally reshape US policy. In 1946, a vast majority of Americans surveyed told pollsters they did not want US immigration law changed to allow more European refugees, broadly seen as undesirable and potentially dangerous influences, into the United States.[8] In early 1948, when the films were first pitched, "refugee" was still not yet really a category recognized formally by notoriously restrictive US immigration law.[9]

By the time both films had premiered, however, two major and controversial pieces of legislation—the Displaced Persons Act of 1948 and an amended version of that law passed in 1950—had begun permitting hundreds of thousands of refugees to resettle in the United States.[10] At the heart of debates over these measures was the same fundamental question that animated the plots of the two films I examine here. Did war refugees pose a threat to the sweepingly restrictive immigration system that the United States had implemented after World War I in the name of protecting the nation from political, racial, and economic threats? In the real world of policy that served as the films' backdrop and context, some lawmakers railed about the hordes of dangerous criminals and political subversives who would take advantage of any visas the United States made available. Refugee advocates, meanwhile, including Jewish, Italian, and other ethnic and civic groups, conducted widespread media campaigns in support of the displaced persons legislation, portraying refugees as deserving victims of the same evil regimes the United States had gone to war to fight. Those politicians who increasingly saw refugee policy as an important element of strategy in the emerging Cold

War also made a case for increasing admissions, which, they hoped, would, along with the Marshall Plan, help stabilize Western Europe and counter Soviet power. In the face of this determined advocacy, public opinion about the desirability of refugees had moved by the time the legislation passed, too. However, the nation remained divided on the issue. In 1948, when the original Displaced Persons Act passed Congress, pollsters estimated that only about half of the American public had come to favor admitting more refugees.[11]

The two films I consider here joined other movies of the wartime and postwar period in dramatizing the very topical tales of war refugees. The plots of well-regarded pictures like *Casablanca* (1942) and *The Search* (1948), for example, also revolved around the desperation refugees faced.[12] But *Illegal Entry* and *A Lady Without Passport* are noteworthy for the way they navigate a particular set of tensions that characterized debates over US policy in that postwar moment. On the one hand, in the happy endings granted their leading ladies, the films help chart a national shift toward an acceptance—however grudging and qualified—of the idea that refugees might be particularly deserving of sympathy and, at least when granted by benevolent authorities, of admission to the nation. On the other hand, both films portray refugees as objects of suspicion. In both stories, refugees are tangled up in a shadowy criminal underworld of "alien smuggling" and implicated in the undermining of US control over its geographic borders. Indeed, neither film uses the term "refugee" at all, instead employing the word "alien" to refer to the foreigners in the story.[13] And as the tale of Universal-International's Border Patrol ride-along suggests, both productions explicitly celebrated the work of federal immigration enforcement. The films thus gave expression to the nation's uneasy efforts to reconcile a strict devotion to immigration restriction and border control with emerging humanitarian and political commitments to the displaced peoples of Europe.

They enacted, too, the uncertainties inherent in the emergent legal category of "refugee." Those advocating for admitting migrants displaced by war made the case that refugees were different from other migrants, people whose stories of suffering should make them exceptions to the rule of restricted immigration; these stories thus served as the key to an otherwise closed door to the nation. But what, precisely, was the line between refugees and other would-be immigrants, or between refugees and "illegal aliens?" Were foreigners who fled terrible circumstances and who felt desperate enough to be smuggled into the United States potentially dangerous invaders who should be kept out? Or were they people with a right to haven within the nation? This question was, as it has remained, at the heart of struggles over national policies and attitudes toward refugees.

At the narrative level, then, the dramas that *Illegal Entry* and *A Lady Without Passport* depict are compelling reflections of broader cultural attitudes toward such issues. But these two films are also of interest at a second level: the level of production. The behind-the-scenes history of their making reveals some of the curious circuitry by which narratives around refugees could be generated at this volatile postwar moment. Both films were very much active collaborations between

Hollywood studios and government authorities. Each partner looked to the other as a source of authenticity, positive publicity, and narrative possibilities. The studios sought the added value that "real" government files and government spokespeople could provide their productions. Government officials, meanwhile, saw the power in crafting dramatic narratives around their own practices. Film was a way for the immigration authorities to launder their own images. On screen, they could be cast as dedicated but benevolent protectors of national sovereignty. To be sure, these films, a form of soft propaganda, were not the first such Hollywood-Washington coproductions, nor the last.[14] But at a moment when both the institutions of the major film studios and US immigration authorities were, as we shall see, politically challenged and working to redefine themselves, they became symbiotically intertwined in particularly strange ways.

Whatever claims to authority drove the collaborative work of state and Hollywood, however, semi-documentaries—these "ripped from the headlines" dramas—were always a volatile mix of reality and artifice.[15] Even as these films lay claim to a measure of verisimilitude, they also, like all reality productions, point toward their own constructedness. The fictionalization is explicitly announced, after all, in the "semi-" of the genre's name, and further made visible via the familiar conventions of melodramatic romance that structure the story on screen. Simultaneously, if less explicitly, the films also point in the other direction. By making government actors visible as active collaborators in film production—in film credits, publicity materials, and, indeed, on screen like "actors" in the dramatic sense—semi-documentaries remind viewers that the state, too, crafts narratives. By extension, then, semi-documentaries also gesture more broadly to the way that the state is always already telling stories through its laws and policies about, in these cases, the distinctions between the alien and the refugee, between the criminal and the victim, and between the foreigners who should be hunted down and arrested and those who should be welcomed and protected. Such distinctions—like the blurred line between the state and the film industry that both paralleled and generated the blurred line between reality and fiction that characterized these films—remained fundamentally unstable, both onscreen and in real life. And that instability reflected the nation's moral and cultural ambivalence. Seen in their historical context, these films reveal a postwar moment defined by uncertainty and contradiction, when the United States wished to cast itself as a global savior even while it refused "the refugee" a stable role in the national imagination.

Finally, I would suggest that these particular films, and the peculiar notion of "reality" that characterized their making, help shed light on some of the historical roots of recent public discourse around immigration and refugees, which has been as toxic as during any time in the last half century. The precariously thin line that divides the refugee from the "illegal alien" has been nearly erased by our recent reality-show President, who made border enforcement the centerpiece of his regime's political show—a show that sought to fully collapse any distinction between fiction and news, the state and the entertainment industry, to disastrous effect. It is perhaps the case that the "border drama" has never been at its current

pitch before, but the intertwining of media spectacle and border enforcement is, as the story of the two films discussed here show, not new.

The discourse of immigration restriction in the era of mass media

Despite *Illegal Entry's* publicity claims to originality, movies whose plots revolved around the traffic in unauthorized immigrants appeared regularly during the decades of mid-century. After all, Hollywood studios and US immigration restriction both came of age during the 1920s, and the real-life dramas produced by the harsh new regime of migration control were readymade for the rapidly growing motion picture industry. In 1921 and 1924, the United States passed laws to sharply reduce what had been an unprecedented influx of immigrants into the country during the century's first two decades. By allocating only small quotas to the nations of southern and eastern Europe and almost entirely blocking immigration from Asia and Africa, the new legislation—which remained in place until 1965—was supposed to stem the tide of foreigners considered racially inferior and politically dangerous. These restrictive immigration laws were thus a grand experiment in statecraft and social engineering. They resulted, however, in an upsurge in illicit immigration that posed a grave challenge to the new legal regime. People from countries targeted by the restrictions now drew on networks and strategies long employed by Chinese immigrants, who were largely banned from legal entry into the United States since 1882, to get around US law. Foreigners who in earlier years might have entered the United States legally now had to seek alternatives. Some, for example, sailed into major ports with forged documents. Others paid smugglers to get them across the Mexican and Canadian borders on foot, or traveled from Cuba to Florida, hidden in boats that might also be transporting contraband liquor.[16]

Scriptwriters took note. Cinema has always had a special affinity for stories of artifice and fakery, undercover adventures and hidden identities. Film is itself, after all, always a form of counterfeiting. As in theater, the illusion created by script, set, and acting simultaneously does its work to tell a story even as it points beyond itself, toward the actors underneath the costumes and the scripted lines. But film's counterfeit nature exceeds the theater's, for even the most reality-based of films can never be more than a two-dimensional simulacrum of whatever appears onscreen.[17] Real-life tales of human trafficking thus lent themselves easily to the silver screen, filled as they were with smugglers masquerading as legitimate businessmen and investigators in disguise as smuggled foreigners. Indeed, in the realm of migration, the very idea of authentic identity had become both highly charged and extremely unstable. Amidst the rise of ethnic nationalisms after World War I, both emerging and established nation-states sought to shore up sovereignty and national identity by means of legal barriers to migration. Nations engaged in an immigration-control "arms race," creating new technologies of documentation and implementing new forms of border-guarding.[18] In the universe of international alien smuggling, fabricated identities thus became commodities for sale, a way to

navigate or profit from the regime of borders and migration control. That regime, in other words, had produced a highly theatrical underworld; this was the stuff of movies.

In 1936, for example, audiences could see Claire Trevor, Brian Donlevy and Rita Hayworth (then still calling herself Rita Cansino) in the Twentieth Century Fox production *Human Cargo*. Trevor plays a plucky aspiring journalist who teams up with a seasoned reporter (Donlevy) to investigate a nefarious alien smuggling ring; their exploits get Hayworth's character—a Latin dancer named (naturally) Carmen Zoro, who is mixed up with the ring's boss—shot, and they themselves are nearly killed when they go undercover posing as foreigners purchasing the smugglers' services. In the end, the daring couple escapes and the evil smugglers are busted. In the detective drama *Yellow Cargo* (1937), a small Hollywood production company serves as a front for smuggling Chinese immigrants, achieved by disguising the company's white actors in "yellowface" and pulling a switcheroo with the aliens. This scheme, too, is derailed by diligent undercover work. Other films of the 30s, 40s, and 50s also explored the smuggling and illegal entry of Chinese immigrants (*On the Border,* 1930; *Border Phantom,* 1936; *Shadows of the Orient,* 1937; *Daughter of Shanghai,* 1937) as well as Mexicans (*Border Incident,* 1949; *Wetbacks,* 1956). Like *Illegal Entry* and *A Lady Without Passport,* some depicted Europeans' illicit entry into the nation (*Paddy O'Day,* 1936; *Forged Passport,* 1939; *Secret Service of the Air,* 1939).

Film studies scholars have ignored most of these films. Immigration historians have not paid attention to them either. This scholarly neglect has, I think, a few main causes. With some important exceptions, cinematic representations of alien smuggling have gotten lost in the realm of film studies because they were not necessarily the flashiest examples of the famous genres of which they were part—genres which have commanded most of the field's attention in studies of the era. Scholarship on the gangster and crime films that proliferated in the 1930s and in the era of film noir, for example, is plentiful, as is scholarship on "social problem" films, but in neither of these subfields does the issue of alien smuggling merit more than a passing reference.[19] For their part, historians who write about immigration during this era, particularly those who explore the phenomenon of unauthorized immigration, have generally approached their studies from the perspective of legal and social history rather than cultural history. These scholars are diverse in terms of the groups they have studied; their recent works include explorations of the mid-twentieth century efforts to control the immigration of Europeans, Asians, West Indians, and Mexicans, for example. But these historians share a focus on the genesis and implementation of exclusionary immigration laws and policies, not on cultural reflections of such policies.[20]

The mass culture of the time, however—the respectable and not-so-respectable press, fiction, radio and film—both reflected and helped generate the discourse that produced and propped up the restrictive immigration regime. This first struck me many years ago, as I sat in the archives reading government documents whose authors were trying to get a handle on the alien smuggling

business that burgeoned in the wake of the 1921 and 1924 laws. The nation had never attempted immigration control on that scale, and there was vast confusion on the government's end about how the new legislation would work and to whom, precisely, it would apply. Thus it is not surprising that government functionaries, corresponding with each other or pounding out their endless reports, sometimes deployed the pulp-fiction twang of Hollywood scripts, hard-boiled detective stories, or the sensationalist press. The slangy talk about rackets, gangsters, and bootlegging allowed those in government to describe murky realities of law enforcement in stark moral terms, as talk of criminality always does. The bureacratic officialese of government authories, in turn, could lend an air of dramatic gravitas to fiction, movies and pulp journalism.

In the 1930s and early 1940s, US immigration policy remained severely restrictive, reflecting an abiding suspicion of newcomers. The Depression saw the flow of immigrants cut to a trickle by strict implementation of existing statutes as well as by executive actions such as President Herbert Hoover's 1930 order instructing consuls to be rigorous in their denial of visas to anyone deemed "likely to become a public charge."[21] The deportation machine went into high gear, as foreigners were increasingly seen as burdens on overtaxed public relief systems, and increasingly feared as successful fomenters of dangerous leftist ideologies.[22] By the mid-1930s, for example, nearly a half-million Mexicans—and Mexican Americans—had been deported or coercively "repatriated," in the name of national and local economic interests.[23] In Congress, several bills that would have suspended all immigration entirely were proposed.[24] As of 1939, with the start of hostilities in Europe, fears of German spies and "fifth columnists" were added to existing reasons to clamp down on immigration and resist calls to take in those trying to flee the Nazis. A bill to admit twenty thousand German refugee children died in Congress. In 1940, meanwhile, the INS was transferred from the Department of Labor to the Department of Justice, a move that signaled policymakers' conviction that the war unfolding in Europe demanded stronger border and immigration enforcement. Immigration authorities were now officially under the auspices of a federal crime-fighting, law-enforcement apparatus.[25]

The Hollywood alien smuggling films of the era thus reflected and magnified (and sought to profit from) the national mood around immigration.[26] Even an industry that became home to a number of high-profile European exile actors and directors produced movies reminding viewers, however melodramatically, of the dangers associated with foreigners.[27] Simultaneously, and relatedly, Hollywood and Washington were building partnerships. The relationship particularly flourished around spy movies. FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover saw great value in the power of mass media, and worked closely with both radio and film producers to shape the depictions of "G-men," approving a stream of straight-from-the-files-of-the-FBI scripts.[28] After the Border Patrol was moved to the Justice Department, where its budget and personnel were vastly expanded, it followed suit, launching its very own serialized radio show.[29] Modeled on popular adventure-story radio shows of the era, it presented what were clearly intended to be suspenseful dramatizations

of actual heroic Border Patrol exploits, including, of course, the busting up of alien smuggling rings. [30] By the start of World War II, then, narratives of immigration restriction and border control had long been jointly produced by government and the popular media, woven back and forth between the two.

Hollywood and the US government: wartime collaboration

Illegal Entry and *A Lady Without Passport* were a genre of collaborative propaganda with roots in the early years of big studio productions. But they also represented more recent forms that merged state projects with Hollywood ones. The United States' entry into World War II further tightened the relationship between the government and Hollywood. The US government gave film studios freer reign to continue production as usual than it did to other industries (such as the auto industry), which were fully converted to the massive war effort. Nevertheless, the government was eager to harness the power of film for the Allied cause. [31] As a division of the Office of War Information, which coordinated the US government's extensive wartime media strategy, the Bureau of Motion Pictures liaised with studio heads. Commercial studios obliged the government's desire for strong media support for the war effort. They produced an enormous quantity of military training films and war-related newsreels. [32] Donald Duck and Bugs Bunny appeared in propaganda cartoons. [33] Feature films took up patriotic and war-related themes. Movie theaters, meanwhile, became central hubs for supporting and promoting the war effort. Not only were commercial theaters screening government films as well as their own patriotic output, they also served as a sales force for US war bonds, and as collection sites for precious war materials, from blood to paper to scrap metal. [34] To enter a cinema during wartime was thus often to encounter the dual worlds of the film industry and the state, and the intertwined realities and fantasies of war narratives both on- and off-screen.

During the war, too, the notion of "reality" and the artifice of the moving image became fused together in new ways. This was the heyday of newsreels and news magazines, both of which entailed extensive cooperation between filmmakers and the US government, and which brought the war vividly into the nation's movie theaters. [35] Realism and fiction converged most dramatically in depictions of battle. Hollywood producers adopted a semi-documentary approach to the combat films they churned out. Filmmakers who entered the military, meanwhile, often served in the Army's cutting-edge filmmaking ventures. They brought their own stylized sensibilities and Hollywood war-movie tropes to their military work, which included documentaries featuring frontline action. [36] By midway through the war, studios' combat films, in turn, were drawing heavily on the look and feel of such frontline production.

Filmmakers with experience in movie-making for the military brought their new realist sensibilities back to Hollywood. [37] They employed the semi-documentary style in a number of postwar crime films. In this breed of film noir, filmmakers worked closely with government agencies to produce movies that projected a vision of the large, manly federal institutions that had come to characterize the

mid-century state protecting a nation from, as scholar R. Barton Palmer puts it, "an underworld of the maladjusted, dissatisfied, or conspiratorial."[38] The bad guys' story lines are invariably more dramatically compelling, but the state triumphs in the end, putting to work modern techniques of surveillance, investigation, and law enforcement. *The House on 92nd Street* (1945), for example, an FBI-hunts-German-spy film set in 1939, was a ripped-from-the-files picture from Twentieth Century Fox, made in full cooperation with the FBI. Hoover even appeared briefly—as himself—in the film, which also included real footage of lesser FBI personnel at work. The Bureau, moreover, allowed two of the lead actors to train at Quantico with their agents.[39] With *To the Ends of the Earth* (1948), Columbia Pictures took a similar tack, working with the Department of Treasury's Bureau of Narcotics to produce a high-octane tale of international opium smuggling. Both of these films were cited by studio executives in their above-mentioned correspondence with the government as inspirations for the alien smuggling films they hoped to make.[40]

Movie studio executives had both economic and political reasons to want to please government officials. Tensions between Hollywood and the federal government resurfaced after the war, throwing the film industry into crisis. First, the Justice Department resurrected an antitrust suit against the industry, charging that the studios' ownership of the vast majority of the nation's movie theaters was monopolistic. Between 1945 and 1949, the case got battled out in the courts, even reaching the Supreme Court. Ultimately, the studios lost, and were forced to separate their production and exhibition businesses. The dismantling of the vertically integrated structure that had been so critical to the studios' economic success made this an anxious, uncertain time for industry leaders.[41] Second, Hollywood faced attack once more for its supposed infiltration by dangerous leftists. In 1947, the House Un-American Activities Committee held contentious hearings meant to ferret out Hollywood's Communists, launching an era of blacklisting and intra-industry division.[42] In response to such political pressure, the film industry worked all the harder to portray itself as a promoter of American values and a partner with government. The Motion Picture Industry Council, for example, was established by corporate leaders in Hollywood in 1948 to coordinate public relations. It conducted intensive media campaigns and goodwill tours with famous actors, and pledged to make sure that the film industry toed the emerging Cold War policy line.[43] Postwar films, particularly those featuring contemporary political themes and the exploits of government agencies, thus reflected the complexities of Hollywood-Washington relations during this era. It was out of these relations that *Illegal Entry* and *A Lady Without Passport* emerged.

Illegal Entry (Universal-International Pictures, 1949)

After the film's opening credits roll against a backdrop of the official seal of the INS, viewers must endure not one but two exceedingly wooden introductions from government officials seated at their desks. The first is delivered by the Attorney General of the United States Tom Clark, the second by INS Commissioner Watson B. Miller. "It is not wrong to wish to enter the United States," Clark intones,

staring straight into the camera. "But it is wrong to enter illegally, or to remain here unlawfully." After a narrator explains that the movie is a "tribute to the men and officers of the Immigration and Naturalization Service," including forty-three who have lost their lives in the line of duty, Miller explains that his agency's "greatest single problem is illegal entry, including attempted and sometimes actual smuggling of aliens." Cut to a shot of an accordion file, from which is drawn a folder marked "Case file number 191: The Blue Danube Affair." Then the action finally begins.[44]

A forest ranger in the woods of San Bernadino County finds a corpse face-down in the dirt. A close-up reveals the tattoo on his back: "DACHAU 57437." The Los Angeles INS office takes up the case. The authorities soon get a call from the dead man's distraught cousin, who explains that he paid $2000 to have the victim smuggled in from Poland. Before the caller can explain the details of the scheme, he is fatally stabbed. But he manages to gasp out "Blue Danube Café" before expiring on the phone booth floor. INS higher-ups in Washington authorize the L.A. office to recruit a new undercover agent in the form of Bert Powers (Howard Duff). Bert is an Air Force veteran who was war buddies with the American husband of the Blue Danube's owner, Anna Duvak (Marta Toren), who came to the country legally as a European war bride before her husband was killed in action.[45] Bert agrees to the gig. He befriends Anna, who is indeed reluctantly connected to the alien smuggling ring. Soon, Bert finds work flying for the small charter plane outfit that serves as the front for their alien smuggling operation, operating back and forth across the Mexico-US border. These are brutal gangsters, willing to toss their migrant cargo out of the plane if they fear detection. We meet Dutch Lempo (Richard Rober), the boss, deported from the United States and now headquartered in Mexico. He has the hots for Anna, but she rebuffs him. After narrowly escaping a sting operation, the smugglers realize they have been infiltrated, and set out to find the snitch.

Meanwhile, Bert, too, has developed feelings for Anna. She comes clean. She explains that she has figured out that he is the undercover agent, but that she has not ratted him out to the smugglers. Bert also learns that Anna is entangled with the criminal ring because she had them smuggle in her ailing brother Stefan (Eric Feldary) from Europe; the brother is holed up at her place, looking distressed. Bert prepares to collude with Anna to get Stefan out of the city to make a fresh start, but Stefan, distraught over the trouble he is causing his sister, hangs himself in her apartment. After this, events unfold quickly. Bert manages, after some quick thinking in a cockpit fight, to deliver the plane and smugglers to waiting agents. The bad guys are arrested. Anna, happily, avoids any charges being brought against her, as a reward for cooperating with law enforcment, and Bert is allowed to take her into romantic "custody."

Illegal Entry got mixed reviews. One critic thought it had "zip and . . . polish;" another that both script and acting were "pedestrian" and dull.[46] They were not all convinced by the film's breathless claims to being a vessel for truth. Some critics noted that the film's ripped-from-the-files-of format was hardly original—"the latest contribution to the alphabet soup of documentary-style films dealing with 'G-men,' 'C-men,' 'T-men,'" as *Newsweek* put it.[47] But some found the focus on alien smuggling in the current moment interesting, and the "authenticity" compelling.[48]

Illegal Entry, though explicitly proclaiming its loyalty to the US government's immigration enforcement apparatus, nevertheless captured deep national ambivalence about the extent to which war refugees might be seen as "illegal aliens" violating US borders. Critics' terminology picked up on some of the sympathy that infuses the film's portrayal of Anna and her brother (played by Swedish and Hungarian actors, respectively). But the narrator's voice-over at the start of the action, as the camera dwells on the Dachau tattoo of the faceless dead man whose murder gets the plot rolling, is tellingly cryptic. "Tattooed markings on the dead man's back told their own story," the narrator says. But, in fact, we—like the characters in the film—are left not knowing precisely what that story was, or what its implication is for American viewers.[49] This narrative uncertainty permeates the film. Although the exact origins of the smuggled, doomed brother remain unclear, he is a figure for the contemporary drama playing out in the real world outside the theaters. A few movie critics gestured to this reality, in which "American families of 'war-weary' Europeans" were struggling to help their loved ones cross the geographic and legal barriers to get to the United States.[50] We see, briefly, such "war-weary," meek, but respectably dressed Europeans being smuggled aboard the small plane Bert flies. But the desperation of such people's relatives, in the film's world, produces nothing but blood and mayhem—bodies thrown from planes, informants stabbed in phone booths. "Dachau" tattooed on a dead man's back may signify that we owe him sympathy. But how far our relationship should extend remains unclear.

Anna is also herself something of a cipher, and not only because we don't know where she is from. We know only that she is European, and that, as a war bride, she has been deemed by law to be exempt from immigration restriction.[51] Indeed, we learn in an early scene that she has become a US citizen since her arrival. But if her legal status relative to the nation is clear, her moral status is less so. On the one hand, her strength and resolve are admirable, and part of what (along with her impeccable posture and beautiful face) seem to draw the upstanding, square-jawed Bert Powers to her. On the other hand, Anna's loyalty to her refugee brother has led her down a criminal path; she is facilitating the operations of some very bad men, whose alien smuggling operations bring violence and unvetted foreigners into the space of the nation.

Anna is, at the film's end, fully redeemed by Bert—made legitimate in the eyes of the US authorities, for the second time, by the love of a patriotic war hero. Any criminal threat she embodies has been defused; she has been safely "domesticated." It is also helpful in her redemption that her illegal alien brother has been removed from the equation. But the real heroes are, as the film explicitly states, the immigration officials—the INS officers and the Border Patrol. The authorities can be merciful when appropriate, as in the case of Anna. And, the film suggests, they don't have serious beef with migrants themselves, who are the victims of alien smugglers. The US government's business is to protect the nation's borders, and as such its nemesis is the alien smuggling rings—the film's true villains. Two scenes drive this home. In the first, we are inside the office of the INS, where the immigration officer is contemplating a regional map on the wall, labeled "Immigration and Naturalization District 16." The border, and the outlines of the INS district,

are clearly, darkly drawn on this map. The officer is interrupted by the entrance of a uniformed underling informing him that a plane is on its way with smuggled aliens.

In the second scene, the smuggler ring-leader Lempo is plotting with his colleagues about how to ferret out the snitch in the group. They are meeting in Lempo's posh lair on the Mexican side of the border, where he has lived since being deported. "There's a leak somewhere, so we find it," he tells them. From behind the bar, he pushes a button that, proto-James-Bond-style, raises a painting (depicting a bucolic scene of Mexican figures in iconically rounded hats) to reveal a map of the region. "This is the border," he says, pointing. "There's a rat on your side, or on mine." Lempo's map indicates the border (though not quite as starkly as the INS map) but says nothing about US enforcement. The immigration officials' cartography, meanwhile, signals their crystal clarity about how the territory should work. The border may be an abstraction, especially transgressable by air, but the INS district is real. Smugglers might try to make good profit off the mismatch between the border's sharply defined meaning in immigration law and its porousness in practice. But in the end, the tables are turned on them, because the INS is on the case. The immigration authorities are the ones, ultimately, who find and close "the leak," not Lempo. The border's integrity is restored.[52] That this integrity entails blocking an avenue of ingress for "war-weary" Europeans, or others, is a consideration that remains uneasily at the margins of the film's moral universe, its story as unexplored as that of the corpse at the film's start. Nor does the film consider, as indeed government officials did not in real life, that the smuggling rings themselves were called into being not by the criminal tendencies of bad eggs like Lempo, but by the political fiction of the border itself. That political fiction was in turn conjured up by the authors of US immigration law, and given material reality by the actions of those charged with enforcing it.

If the moral bearings of the film were somewhat murky, so, too, relatedly, was the film's relationship to "reality." As with other from-the-files-of thrillers, the studio capitalized as much as possible on the picture's "authenticity." Publicity materials played up the true-life nature of the story: "Based on actual files of the Department of Justice!" read one version of the film poster printed in the production's pressbook. "Only from real people could such SHOCK DRAMA be torn!"[53] The studio milked its partnership with the INS and the Justice Department for the film's launch, too, promoting the film as an important, authentic commentary on the realities of immigration and border enforcement. Along with the usual blitz of radio and print spots, the publicity campaign added some creative touches. In cooperation with the INS, Universal produced a glossy souvenir brochure for the occasion, with bios of the film stars alongside glowing narratives of INS and Border Patrol history.[54] Senator Alexander Wiley (R-WI) praised the film from the Senate floor.[55] The film premiered at the RKO Keith theater in Washington, DC, on June 8, 1949. Generals, Supreme Court Justices, ambassadors, White House representatives and other Washington VIP's were scheduled to attend, their entrance into the theater's lobby to be broadcast on local TV.[56]

All of this cozying up to official Washington was no doubt intended to serve multiple purposes. Most obviously it was all part of the marketing of hard-boiled authenticity that studios seemed to think audiences were hungry for in this era, as evidenced by the many films they made in the "government files" genre. Universal was also clearly engaging in the sort of anxious politicking mentioned above. Tom Clark, who delivered the film's opening monologue, was not only the Attorney General. He was also the very person who, before his promotion to the Justice Department's top spot, had built the government's ongoing antitrust case against the film industry. One can imagine that Universal executives might have calculated that it could pay to cultivate his good will. They may have felt, too, that such a display of patriotic loyalty, premiering in the nation's capital, could serve as an antidote to the highly public official suspicion directed at Hollywood via the HUAC investigations.

The efforts to imbue *Illegal Entry* with authenticity took some strange turns, however. The government partners in the enterprise were not always satisfied that they were being fairly represented, and stepped into scriptwriting territory to try to shape the film's portrayal of them more to their liking. The Attorney General's office wrote to Universal in November 1948, for example, to complain that the script sorely neglected the good work of the Border Patrol, and to suggest revising the script to include a "flashback" showing the Border Patrol at work screening immigrants, all "while the conspirators are plotting."[57] The studio did not, apparently, think that this flashback would make for a good revision, as they did not ultimately include it.

Filmmakers did, however, exploit the story of their brief stint with the Border Patrol on the nation's boundary with Mexico, recounted above, for publicity purposes. And in a weird inversion of that ride-along's melding of law enforcement and movie roles, Universal's publicity people arranged for two Border Patrol officers to be flown from Texas to New York City for *Illegal Entry*'s premiere there. The two men made the rounds of local radio and TV to promote the film. The publicity plan also called for the officers to stand in the movie theater's lobby, in front of a photo exhibition about the Border Patrol, answering any questions moviegoers might have about "I-Men."[58] One wonders what theater patrons made of these two. Did they assume the officers were from the Border Patrol? Or that their uniforms were costumes, and the two men actors? Where did the world of the movies leave off, and the world of immigration enforcement begin?

A Lady Without Passport (Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 1950)

The strange intersections of these worlds continue in *A Lady Without Passport.* At the start of the film, a murder on a street in New York City leads US immigration authorities to Cuba and an alien smuggling ring. In Havana, INS officer Pete Karczag (John Hodiak) goes undercover to try to get to the ring's leader, known as Palinov (George Macready). Palinov runs his operation out of the nearly empty Gulf Stream Café, where a grim bartender presides over the liquor. Posing as a Hungarian migrant eager to reach the United States, Pete presents himself at the

Gulf Stream. He meets with Palinov and engages the smuggler's services. While at the café, Pete also encounters the beautiful Marianne Lorress (Hedy Lamarr), a concentration camp survivor from Vienna. Lorress is stranded in Havana, unable to get a US visa, and thus has also sought out Palinov. Palinov, who has a thing for her, intimates that he would waive his usual smuggler's fee in exchange for sexual favors, but Marianne spurns this offer.

Pete, too, falls for Marianne. She begins to reciprocate his feelings after Pete gets her out of a jam. As an alien, Marianne is not allowed to work in Cuba. In need of money, however, she dons a glittery outfit and goes to work selling cigarettes. When a local cop insists on arresting her for working illegally, Pete, who happens upon the scene, pretends that she is his wife, and whisks her away. Marianne eventually promises Pete that she will give up her scheme to get to America, despite her hopes of joining her father there, if Pete stays with her in Cuba. Pete is so smitten that he agrees to this, and privately types a letter of resignation from his job as an immigration inspector. He never gets the chance to send it. The romance goes sour when Palinov, who has discovered Pete's identity, reveals to Marianne that Pete is working undercover for the INS. Disillusioned, Marianne returns to plan A. Ultimately, all three end up in the United States, Pete tracking the small plane the smugglers are using to bring Marianne, five other European aliens, and Palinov (who has decided things are too hot for him to stay in Havana) illegally to Florida. There is a chase scene that involves a dramatic crash landing in the Everglades and an unfortunate encounter between the pilot and a venomous snake. In the end, Pete triumphs. Like Bert at the end of *Illegal Entry,* Pete finishes the film with the glamorous foreign object of his affections safely, and willingly, in his "custody."[59]

Unlike *Illegal Entry, A Lady Without Passport* was not marketed explicitly as a straight-from-the files-of semi-documentary. Indeed, the film's relationship to "authenticity" shifted over the course of its production. Apparently, the original plan was to draw heavily on documentary techniques. Director Joseph H. Lewis recalled that Louis Mayer had envisioned the film being made together with immigration authorities, involving "no actors," and "all portable equipment," a prospect Lewis found exciting.[60] Ultimately, however, the filmmakers did not employ such "real-life" footage or other documentary conventions. Nevertheless, the finished picture retained many of its semi-documentary trappings. The opening credits thanked Immigration and Naturalization Service officials for their cooperation. The studio's publicity materials, meanwhile, emphasized the film's connection to "daily news headlines telling of the growing problem faced by the US Immigration Service in its attempt to halt illegal immigration." These materials also highlighted that producer Samuel Marx's "extensive study of official records" and two research trips to Cuba were integral to the making of the film.[61]

Indeed, the picture grew out of an ongoing interchange of documents and ideas between the studio and government authorities. In 1948, for example, MGM gave an early draft of the film's story to Ray Farrell and Walter Miller of the INS and Dean Schedler of the Attorney General's office. The film's plot, at that point—drawn from contemporary events—involved American pilots who started out smuggling

arms from the United States to Dominican exiles plotting Trujillo's overthrow from their base in Cuba, and then turned to smuggling European and Chinese aliens in the other direction. The studio reported that all three of the officials "expressed complete satisfaction with the line of the story." In particular, the three men admired the realism of MGM's story, agreeing "that many situations could have happened exactly as written."[62]

As it happened, however, events unfolding in the real world were rendering MGM's draft story obsolete. To make the film "entirely authentic," the filmmakers explained to the government officials, they now wanted to change the storyline to capitalize on the recent arrest and confession of a "daredevil" pilot by the name of William Murphy, who had played a crucial role in the complicated Cuba-Florida smuggling scheme. The impending trial of Murphy and co-conspirators, suggested the studio, "offers MGM an unprecedented opportunity to base a film on an adventure which will certainly merit space in newspapers and news weeklies throughout the nation."[63] The authorities were amenable to the new plot twist. Possibly, they felt that a flattering film was just what they needed to bolster their professional profile, given that, humiliatingly, the smuggling ring's leader, a Russian named Gregorio Simonovich (formerly an informant for the INS), remained frustratingly at large in Cuba.[64] In any event, the Miami office of the INS helpfully provided the studio with extensive reports on the case, which the studio then used to craft background materials and story outlines.

The studio, for its part, seemed delighted by how these government reports almost seemed able to author the script themselves, down to the characters involved. MGM's write-up of the "background and facts" gleaned from the INS documents noted, for example, that the star immigration inspector in Miami who had helped solve the Murphy case had the air of a classic superhero about him: he "is a crack shot, can do anything with his hands. I watched him change a flat tire on a car in less than five minutes, single handed, in the dark, without even a flashlight, and never get a single smear of dirt on his sleeve cuff."[65] Even better, the man looked like movie star Robert Mitchum and had a name almost too perfect to be true: his last name was Fullilove and, though his first name was Cecil, he went by Chuck. "A pretty incredible combination," the MGM writer observed.[66]

In a remarkable extension of the state-studio collaboration, the smuggler-pilot Murphy himself played a role in shaping the film from behind the scenes. In September 1949, producer Samuel Marx sent Murphy the latest draft of the script. Murphy read it closely and wrote copious detailed comments, "for the most part unessential but for purity," he explained in the note that accompanied the script when he sent it back to Marx. He noted, for example, that the small plane the smugglers flew would have no partition separating pilot from passengers, and he suggested minor changes to dialogue.[67] Murphy said nothing about why he was invested in the authenticity of MGM's picture (in which the pilot character's exploits played a fairly modest role), but his willingness to perform this editorial work underscores just how much authority on-screen depictions of events, however obviously fictionalized, could have. If the film was to be the public's view of the

underworld of Cuba-Florida alien smuggling, then not only the INS but also the convicted smuggler wanted a shot at shaping the narrative.

Ultimately, neither the complicated back story of Edward Murphy's smuggling career, nor the details of his sensational trial, made it into *A Lady Without Passport*. The film instead centers, as its title suggests, on the character of Marianne. This shift in storyline was perhaps because the studio was eager to capitalize on Lamarr's star power. Even though Lamarr's Austrian refugee character takes the film's center stage, so to speak, *A Lady Without Passport*, like *Illegal Entry*, expresses a deep ambivalance toward refugees, and uncertainty around what, if anything, distinguishes refugees from "illegal aliens." Marianne is fully prepared to violate US immigration law, and the film's plot revolves around the urgency of the authorities' mission to combat such violations. But she also makes a powerful case for the impossible position refugees occupy vis-à-vis legal regimes, an argument that co-exists uneasily with the film's law-and-order narrative. This critical perspective emerges most clearly in a scene after Pete rescues Marianne from the local cop who tries to arrest her for working without permission. Pete takes Marianne, still clad in her sparkly two-piece cigarette-girl outfit, back to his hotel. In an exchange with Pete about her near-arrest, Marianne articulates the collective predicament war refugees face. "For ten years," she says, "they've driven me and everyone like me around the world. We can't stay here. 'We have laws. Get out!' But where can I go? Now I'm in Cuba. I may stay, but I can't work. The law says, 'Don't earn your living or you'll be deported. Find your bread on the street!'" Pete attempts to calm her down and come on to her at the same time: "You live with anger. There are more pleasant companions." But when he comes up behind her and places his hands on her arms, she throws him off, sits down angrily on the bed, and turns to face him, putting her hand to her hip in a gesture of defiance. The motion serves to shift the fabric of her off-the-shoulder halter top such that a concentration-camp tattoo is revealed on her upper arm. She looks down at it, and then at Pete: "Another souvenir of the law. Buchenwald!" Pete backs off, chastened. "The law," both in Marianne's telling and in the person of Pete, does not come off looking admirable.

The law's capacity for putting refugees in an untenable position is driven home again in a later scene. Pete urges Marianne to reconsider her plan to be smuggled to the United States, noting that some migrants "wait to enter legally." Marianne tells him that getting where she needs to go is not a matter of patience. Her father, she explains, has been in the US for a decade but cannot help her enter legally, because he himself is unlawfully present in the United States. Marianne's story thus confronts viewers with the uncertainties about law, morality and deservingness that threaded through the era's debates about refugees.

How much viewers are meant to take Marianne's side in the matter, however, remains uncertain. Her moral stature is called into question not only by the film's ultimate insistence on the righteousness of US border-guarding, but also by the presence of Lamarr herself, an ambiguous character in both her on- and off-screen personae. Lamarr was one of Hollywood's most famous European exiles, and the

parallels between Marianne and Lamarr—both glamorous Austrians fleeing to America—would have been obvious to anyone in the audience. The connection between actress and character is underscored by the fact that a painting of the very vessel with which she arrived in New York's harbor for the first time—the *Normandie*—hangs (unremarked) on the wall in the Gulf Stream Café. Indeed, the story of Lamarr's landing a contract with Louis Mayer while both were aboard that ship was a legend of both beneficent rescue of a lovely damsel and of fairy-tale success in Hollywood.[68] Marianne, too, may indeed be deserving of rescue and a fairy-tale ending. But the painting's positioning in the unsavory Gulf Stream Café, a hub of Havana's European criminal underworld, gestures as well to darker associations carried by the actress's European past. As a young actress, Lamarr became infamous for appearing nude and acting out sexual climax in the 1933 Czech film *Ecstasy*, which caused an uproar on its release and met with condemnation and censorship in the United States. This scandalous history made Lamarr permanently suspect, a celebrated Hollywood beauty who nevertheless remained marked as a dangerously sexualized foreigner.[69]

This tension imbued Lamarr's most famous femme fatale characters, which in turn would seem to cast doubt onto Marianne's virtue. Every viewer watching Lamarr as Marianne in *A Lady Without Passport* would have had in mind the image of the actress in her most recent role: Delilah, the exotic seductress who betrayed and unmanned the hero in Paramount's 1949 blockbuster *Samson and Delilah*.[70] Indeed, MGM went out of its way to link the two characters, exploiting the earlier film's success in its publicity as much as possible. The movie poster for *A Lady Without Passport,* with Lamarr in her form-fitting metallic cigarette-salesgirl outfit, clearly evoked Delilah's golden two-piece number. The idea that "Delilah" was present onscreen in *A Lady Without Passport* would have been obvious even without the film's trailer pitching the story as an encounter between Hodiak as a "super snooper with a soft heart" and Lamarr as the "delectable Delilah who cut him short!" The script, too, takes care to remind us of the danger inherent in Marianne/Lamarr's sexuality. "Never trust a beautiful woman," Palinov warns, when Pete catches sight of her in the Gulf Stream. And indeed, Pete's infatuation with Marianne nearly leads him to abandon his vital, patriotic job. That his feelings for her mirror Palinov's further serves (like Lempo's relationship with Anna, also described as "clever and dangerous," in *Illegal Entry*) to highlight Marianne's moral ambiguity, positioned as she is at the point of a love triangle with the smuggler on one side and the "I-man" on the other.

What of the five other foreigners on the plane with Marianne to Florida? Like Marianne, all of them are involved in a sinister alien smuggling underworld, and all are prepared to violate US law to enter the country. Are they so different from her? After we see them board the smugglers' small airplane in Cuba, the film cuts to the Miami INS office, where Chief Patrol Inspector Frank Westlake (James Craig), the officer in charge of the smuggling sting operation, is going over the intel on the Florida-bound group with an underling. Westlake holds a stack of portraits of the Florida-bound migrants, courtesy of an undercover quick-sketch artist whom the

accommodating Cuban police cleverly stationed in front of the Gulf Stream Café. Portrait by portrait, Westlake announces each of the migrants' foreign-sounding names and the attribute which marks him or her as clearly "undesirable" and thus excludable under US law. Each would-be immigrant in the plane, in other words, is not only entering the country in a clandestine manner—a misdemeanor or felony at the time, depending on whether it was a repeat offense—but is clearly marked as a distinct threat to the well-being of the nation. First portrait: "Dimitri Matthias, seventeen. Tubercular. Refused visa on account of contagious disease." Second one: "Asa Sestina. Forty-seven. Naturalized in 1929, stripped of US citizenship and deported in 1938" for involvement in "the rackets" (i.e., a gangster). Third one: "Elizabeth Alonescu, 35. The lady doesn't believe in paying duty on the jewelry she brings into the country." When Westlake comes to Marianne's portrait (as glamorous an image as any publicity still of Lamarr), however, he gets as far as reciting her name, but is interrupted by Pete's sudden entry into the room. We are left hanging. Was Westlake about to announce some hitherto unrevealed reason that Marianne—about whose back story we know very little, after all—is an "undesirable alien" like the others? Or was he going to recount her experience in Buchenwald and thus suggest that she has some claim on our, and the law's, sympathy? This uncertainty underscores that the line between Marianne and her co-passengers is a thin one at best. The distinction between "deserving refugee" and "undesirable illegal alien" hangs on the thread of Marianne's chance relationship with Pete, the INS inspector who sees her as very desirable indeed. Unlike Marianne, the other passengers either die a violent death or are captured, and, presumably, not given the same opportunity for redemption that Marianne will (we assume) be.

Film scholar Diane Negra observes that the characters Lamarr played who were located outside US borders tended to be dangerous, exotic temptresses. Those she played inside the space of the nation, by contrast, were inclined to be respectable and dull. Thus, the roles in which Lamarr was cast reinscribed the geographic divide central to her own narrative arc, in which she began as a sexually wild young woman in European film, but was later "domesticated" by Hollywood's wholesome values and restrictive production code, which served to strictly limit displays of sexuality.[71] *A Lady Without Passport* encapsulates this geographic trajectory within its own narrative. After the film's action moves from Havana's moody foreign streets to the United States, the exotic Marianne appears to be wholly tamed. In the film's final scene, deep in the Florida Everglades, Marianne stands on a wooden dock between Palinov and Pete, caught in the middle of their showdown. Palinov urges her to return with him to Cuba. "We'll make it the next time," he says. "He'll arrest you, and you will be jailed and deported." Pete confirms that he must arrest her. "I have no choice, Marianne," he says. Faced with the choice between speeding away on a boat with the villain and returning to foreign territory to try her hand a second time at illegal entry into the United States, or remaining in the United States with the upstanding Pete (forgiven, it seems, for deceiving her) and facing the immigration enforcement music, Marianne opts for the latter. In this moment of submission to US law, the INS, and generic cinematic

conventions about the power of love, Marianne looks utterly demure, nothing like the defiant woman in the cigarette-seller's outfit who bared her Buchenwald tattoo. Being within the nation's borders, it seems, in combination with the love of a loyal American, has acted upon her, and she has proven herself redeemable.

If the film's depiction of its own geographic universe thus highlights the liminal space occupied by its central character, it also produces a spatial counternarrative to the triumphant inevitability of the script's action. As Chief Inspector Westlake narrates the story of the aliens in the portraits in the scene described above, he conveys brisk certainty about the mission at hand, and indeed viewers can guess who is likely to prevail. But throughout the scene, Westlake is seated in front of an enormous map that bears witness to a rather more complicated reality than the one the film's narrative arc insists on. The map depicts the region that makes up Westlake's beat: the empty expanse of the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean, rimmed by the US coastline from Texas to Georgia, as well as Cuba.[72] Like the map in the office of immigration authorities in *Illegal Entry,* it is simultaneously a reminder of the US government's vigilance and determination to control its borders as well as of the difficulty of the border-guarding enterprise.[73] There would not be a smuggling business, after all, if those borders were impenetrable.[74] Unlike the map we see in *Illegal Entry,* however, there are no crisply defined lines here. This time the map, like the film's narrative itself, is centered on the watery borderlands of the Caribbean and the Gulf. The image suggests that the narrative of migration, and of immigration enforcement, is not always one of clearly demarcated lines between here and there, good and bad, refugee and illegal alien. That the film's action culminates in a the remote, swampy wilderness of the Everglades intensifies the sense that the legal and moral terrain the film occupies is a morass, providing a dramatic visual backdrop that calls into question the tidy ending provided by the script.

Authenticity and erasure

In their tales of sinister "alien smuggling" and limited redemption for selected beautiful European women, *Illegal Entry* and *A Lady Without Passport* represent carefully curated versions of authenticity and government authority. Yet in their efforts to control the meaning of the refugee story and its relationship to US border guarding, they present some telling omissions. Indeed, by looking at the narratives that the two films obscured, we can observe some fascinating contrasts. The aliens whose stories these films explored were European. To be sure, "illegal entry" of European aliens was in the news during this period, and government officials (as their willing participation in these film projects suggests) were concerned about the supposed dangers posed by unauthorized European border-crossers.[75] Nowhere in *Illegal Entry*, however, do we see evidence of the traversing of the Mexico-US border that was fast becoming of far more pressing concern in the era, namely the migration of Mexicans themselves. We do see Mexicans in some minor background roles, but not as migrants, authorized or otherwise. This is not because Hollywood was uninterested in the dramatic potential of this phenom-

enon. In the same year that *Illegal Entry* came out, MGM's *Border Incident* hit the theaters. Directed by Anthony Mann, *Border Incident* featured Ricardo Montalban as a Mexican government investigator working with his US counterpart, played by George Murphy, to bust up an alien smuggling scheme on the Baja California/ California border. The distinction between the narrative in Mann's film and the stories told in *Illegal Entry* or *A Lady Without Passport* is stark. Mexicans receive sympathetic treatment in *Border Incident*, and US law enforcement does not come off looking particularly good. The aliens here, however, are not refugees. They are workers. And however sympathetic the film is to the Mexican workers it depicts, they are clearly marked as "illegal."**[76]** Indeed, the film reflected and appeared in a moment in which US authorities were ratcheting up their apprehensions and deportations of Mexicans traversing traditional northbound routes to work in the United States, and in which the notion that these migrants were "illegals," or "wetbacks," became lodged firmly in the nation's discourse.[77] The different worlds of the films throw into sharp relief the emerging divide in the political imagination between "refugees" and undocumented immigrant labor. The line between refugees and illegal aliens may be blurry in *Illegal Entry* and *A Lady Without Passport*, but for the Mexican migrants of *Border Incident*, the divide between legality and illegality is capricious but absolute.

If *Illegal Entry* erases Mexican migration from the drama of the region, sketching out a national and regional drama purely centered around European war refugees and ignoring questions of migrant labor, *A Lady Without Passport*, similarly, erases the ethnic other from its universe. It was clear to the filmmakers from the government reports they were relying on—as well as from the press—that, while indeed some of the smuggling in the region was of European aliens, much of it also consisted in the traffic in Chinese migrants, who were still, even after World War II, largely barred from entering the United States. There were, of course, millions of Chinese displaced by World War II and then the revolution in 1949. Unlike Europeans, however, Chinese were less likely to constitute, in US policies or political imagination, refugees. Thus they did not even have access to the liminal legal status of "potential refugee," a category to which at least some Europeans did have access.[78] The real-life events on which *A Lady Without Passport* was based makes this evident. Most of the aliens Murphy smuggled into the United States were, in fact, Chinese, as the INS reports that the filmmakers drew on in to create their script detail.[79] The film transposes the story onto Hedy Lamarr, however, through whom it narrates the possibility that some—a select few, perhaps, but some nonetheless—European immigrants, even those determined to enter the country without permission, might be deserving of admission.

To be sure, neither *Illegal Entry* nor *A Lady Without Passport* resolves the uncertainties around the status of European refugees. The sympathy and welcome accorded Anna and Marianne are provisional, mediated through the deeply gendered tropes of heterosexual romance. Other Europeans in the films who share their desire for safe haven are not so fortunate. The question of who is cast as a refugee, and who is not, remains at the whim of the scriptwriters—as it did, in real

life, of the government authorities whose own narratives were so intertwined with these Hollywood fantasies. This conceptual struggle continues in the present. It is, of course, not simply a matter of representation, but of life and death. The fate of migrants from many nations seeking asylum at the nation's southern border, in particular over the last several years and at the current moment, rests in large part on the determination—in popular understanding, in media portrayals, in policy and law, in official hearings—of whether they are threatening invaders or people deserving of safe haven.

Notes

1. Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception," in Meenakshi Gigi Durham and Douglas M. Kellner, eds., *Media and Cultural Studies: KeyWorks* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2001), 75.

2. *Illegal Entry*, directed by Frederick de Cordova (Universal-International Pictures, 1949).

3. "Showman's Manual," file "Illegal Entry," Box 36, Pressbook Collection, University of Southern California Cinematic Arts Library (hereafter USC-CAL).

4. January 26, 1949, file 12854, box 442, Illegal Entry collection (hereafter IE), USC-CAL; on the shooting along the Mexican border and cooperation with the US government see also "Story Plans Develop Rapidly at Warners; Rooney Slate Expands," *Los Angeles Times,* Dec. 10, 1948.

5. E. Maurice Adler to B.B. Kahane, January 22, 1948; B.B. Kahane to Hal Hode, January 23, 1948; Hal Hode to William Coblenz, January 28, 1948; Irving Cummings to W.A. Carmichael, February 3, 1948; William Coblenz to Watson Miller, February 6, 1948; file 56234/356, Entry 9, Records of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, Record Group 85, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC (hereafter RG 85, NARA).

6. *A Lady Without Passport,* directed by Joseph H. Lewis (Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 1950).

7. "Hedy Lamarr as 'Lady Without Passport,'" *New York Times*, August 4, 1950.

8. Leonard Dinnerstein, *America and the Survivors of the Holocaust* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 115; Maddalena Marinari, *Unwanted: Italian and Jewish Mobilization Against Restrictive Immigration Laws* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2020), 103; Aristide Zolberg, *A Nation by Design: Immigration Policy in the Fashioning of America* (New York & Cambridge, MA, Russell Sage Foundation and Harvard University Press), 305.

9. Although there was no real legal framework for refugee admission until the postwar era, there were, however, some early precedents for treating those understood to be fleeing persecution differently within US immigration law. On US policies regarding providing haven for refugees in earlier eras, see Carl Bon Tempo, *Americans at the Gate: The United States and Refugees During the Cold War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 15; Julian Lim, "Immigration, Asylum, and Citizenship: A More Holistic Approach," *California Law Review* 101.4 (2013): 1013-1078; Marinari, *Unwanted,* 36-42; Yael Schacher, "Exceptions to Exclusion: A Prehistory of Asylum in the United States, 1880-1980" (PhD diss., Harvard University, 2015).

10. Displaced Persons Act of June 25, 1948 (62 Stat. 1009) and Displaced Persons Act of June 16, 1950 (64 Stat. 219).

11. Dinnerstein, *America and the Survivors of the Holocaust,* 176. On the Displaced Persons legislation and the debates around them, see, in addition to Dinnerstein's thorough exploration, Bon Tempo, *Americans at the Gate,* 21-26; Roger Daniels, *Guarding the Golden Door: American Immigration Policy and Immigrants Since 1882* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2004), chap. 5; Libby Garland, *After They Closed the Gates: Jewish Illegal Immigration to the United States, 1921-1965* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014), 188-196; Gil Loescher and John A. Scanlan, *Calculated Kindness: Refugees and America's Half-Open Door, 1945-Present* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1998), chap. 1; Marinari, *Unwanted,* 98-110; Daniel J. Tichenor, *Dividing Lines: The Politics of Immigration Control in America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 181-188; Zolberg, *A Nation by Design,* 304-308. In 1951, the fledgling United Nations would produce a treaty declaring that refugees were people with a "fear of persecution" in their home countries and who could not be protected by those countries, and that signatories to the treaty had an obligation to recognize their claims to asylum. The UN definition is still the basis for the one much of the international community, including the United States, recognizes today.

12. *Casablanca,* directed by Michael Curtiz (1942); *The Search,* directed by Fred Zinnemann (1948). On *The Search*'s portrayal of war refugees, see Anna Holian, "Hidden in Plain Sight: Jewish Children and the Holocaust in Fred Zinnemann's *The Search* (1948)," *Film History* 31, no. 2 (2019): 116-43, https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2979/filmhistory.31.2.05; Sharif Gemie and Louise Rees. "Representing and Reconstructing Identities in the Postwar World: Refugees, UNRRA, and Fred Zinnemann's Film, *The Search* (1948)," *International Review of Social History* 56, no. 3 (2011): 441–73, doi:10.1017/S0020859011000198. Interestingly, Fred Zinnemann had also directed *Forbidden Passage* (1941), a short film about refugees and alien smuggling for the MGM series of shorts *Crime Does Not Pay* that anticipates many of the themes of the films I consider here. (Thanks to Anna Holian for this reference, and to Jacob Fuentes for pointing me to *The Search.*) On short film projects that the International Refugee Organization and voluntary agencies produced in the immediate postwar era to publicize their work and the plight of displaced persons, see Gerard Daniel Cohen, *In War's Wake: Europe's Displaced Persons in the Postwar Order* (London: Oxford University Press, 2011), 74; Rachel Beth Deblinger, "'In a World Still Trembling': American Jewish Philanthropy and the Shaping of Holocaust Survivor Narratives in Postwar America (1945-1953)," (PhD diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 2014), 103-109.

13. Indeed, in *Illegal Entry,* the characters use terms like "cargo," "passengers," or other circumlocutions that avoid the issue of classifying the story's foreigners, although the immigration officials whose speeches introduce the film use the term "aliens."

14. On Hollywood's historical role in propaganda production, see, for example, James E. Combs and Sara T. Combs, *Film Propaganda and American Politics: An Analysis and Filmography* (New York & London: Garland Publishing, 1994); Thomas Doherty, *Projections of War: Hollywood, American Culture, and World War II* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993); Jennifer Fay, *Theaters of Occupation: Hollywood and the Reeducation of Postwar Germany* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008); Clayton R. Koppes and Gregory D. Black, *Hollywood Goes to War: How Politics, Profits and Propaganda*

Shaped World War II Movies (New York: The Free Press, 1987); Thomas Schatz, *Boom and Bust: American Cinema in the 1940s* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), esp. chap. 7; Tony Shaw, *Hollywood's Cold War* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007); Peter H. Smith, *Talons of the Eagle: Dynamics of US-Latin American Relations* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 82-85. Shaw's exploration of "state-private networks" that characterized the "grey" propaganda media productions of the Cold War era is relevant here, though he does not explore films about immigration or human smuggling. Shaw, *Hollywood's Cold War,* 4-5. On particular government agencies' active involvement with the worlds of film and television, see, for example, Anita Huizar-Hernández, "Bordering Reality: Dramatizing Policing the North American Borderlands in American Television," in *Border Policing: A History of Enforcement and Evasion in North America,* ed. Holly M. Karibo and George T. Díaz (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2020), 252-268; Tricia Jenkins, *The CIA in Hollywood: How the Agency Shapes Film and Television* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2016); John Sbardellati, *J. Edgar Hoover Goes to the Movies: The FBI and the Origins of Hollywood's Cold War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012); Simon Willmetts, *In Secrecy's Shadow: The OSS and CIA in Hollywood Cinema, 1941-1979* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016).

15. On the genre of semi-documentary, particularly in relation to film noir, see R. Barton Palmer, "Borderings: The Film Noir Semi-Documentary," in *A Companion to Film Noir,* ed. Andrew Spicer and Helen Hanson (Malden, MA and Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), 125-141.

16. Ashley Johnson Bavery, *Bootlegged Aliens: Immigration Politics on America's Northern Border* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020); Grace Peña Delgado, *Making the Chinese Mexican: Global Migration, Localism and Exclusion in the US-Mexico Borderlands* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012), chap. 3; Patrick Ettinger, *Imaginary Lines: Border Enforcement and the Origins of Undocumented Immigration, 1882-1930* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2000); Garland, *After They Closed the Gates*; Madeline Y. Hsu, *Dreaming of Gold, Dreaming of Home: Transnationalism and Migration Between the United States and South China, 1882-1943* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), chap. 3; Erika Lee, *At America's Gates: Chinese Immigration During the Exclusion Era, 1882-1943 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003);* Julian Lim, *Porous Borders: Multiracial Migrations and the Law in the US-Mexico Borderlands* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017), chap. 3; Marinari, *Unwanted*, 88-93; Adam McKeown, *Melancholy Order: Asian Migration and the Globalization of Borders* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), chaps. 8-10; Mae Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), chaps. 1-2; Elliott Young, *Alien Nation: Chinese Migration in the Americas from the Coolie Era Through World War II* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014), chaps. 3-5.

17. For musings on the question of cinema's claims to "reality" in the realm of documentary filmmaking, even while remaining essentially "mimetic distractions and counterfeitings," see Bill Nichols, *Representing Reality* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1991), 3. Film theory and criticism continues to debate film's relationship to reality—as its reflection, its generator, and its foil. For more on this debate, see, for example, Richard Rushton, *The Realities of Film: Theories of Filmic Reality* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013).

18. See John Torpey, "The Great War and the Birth of the Modern Passport System," in *Documenting Individual Identity: The Development of State Practices in the Modern World*, ed. Jane Caplan and John Torpey (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 256-70; Aristide R. Zolberg, "Global Movements, Global Walls: Responses to Migration, 1885-1925" in *Global History and Migrations,* ed. Wang Gungwu (New York: Westview Press, 1997), 279-80 and Zolberg, *A Nation by Design,* 240-41.

19. See, for example, Lee Grieveson, Esther Sonnet and Peter Stanfield, eds., *Mob Culture: Hidden Histories of the American Gangster Film* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2005); Jonathan Munby, *Public Enemies, Public Heroes: Screening the Gangster from* Little Caesar *to* Touch of Evil (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009); Jack Shadoian, *Dreams and Dead Ends: The American Gangster Film* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003); Brian Neve, *Film and Politics in America: A Social Tradition* (New York: Routledge, 1992). There are a few notable exceptions to the neglect of these films, particularly in explorations of unauthorized Mexican immigration and the US-Mexico border. See, for example, Jonathan Auerbach, *Dark Borders: Film Noir and American Citizenship* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), chap. 4 and "Noir Citizenship: Anthony Mann's 'Border Incident,' *Cinema Journal* 47, no. 4 (Summer 2008): 102-120; Dominique Brégent-Heald, "Dark Limbo: Film Noir and the North American Borders," *Journal of American Culture* 29, no. 2 (June 2006): 125-138; Camilla Fojas, *Border Bandits: Hollywood on the Southern Fontier* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2008), esp. chap. 3; and David R. Maciel and Maria Rosa Garcia-Acevedo, "The Celluloid Immigrant: The Narrative Films of Mexican Immigration," in *Culture Across Borders: Mexican Immigration and Popular Culture*, ed. David R. Maciel and María Herrera-Sobek (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1998).

20. My own work falls into this category, as do the other works that explore the history of unauthorized immigration listed in footnote 11, above. To this list one might also add Kelly Lytle Hernández, *Migra! A History of the US Border Patrol* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010) and S. Deborah Kang, *The INS on the Line: Making Immigration Law on the US-Mexico Border, 1917-1954* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017).

21. Roger Daniels, *Coming to America: A History of Immigration and Ethnicity in American Life* (New York: HarperCollins, 1990), 295; Tichenor, *Dividing Lines,* 155-56; Zolberg, *A Nation by Design,* 268-69.

22. Cybelle Fox, *Three Worlds of Relief: Race, Immigration, and the American Welfare State, from the Progressive Era to the New Deal* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 124-27; Gardner Jackson, "Doak the Deportation Chief," *Nation,* March 18, 1931; Kang, *The INS on the Line,* 63-64; Ngai, *Impossible Subjects,* 75-80.

23. Francisco Balderrama and Raymond Rodriguez, *Decade of Betrayal: Mexican Repatriation in the 1930s* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1995), 49–71, 97–125; Abraham Hoffman, *Unwanted Mexican Americans in the Great Depression: Repatriation Pressures, 1929–1939* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1974), 33–35, 120–21; Kang, *The INS on the Line*, 64-67; Ngai, *Impossible Subjects,* 71-75; George Sánchez, *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture, and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900–1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), chap. 10; and Zaragosa Vargas, *Proletarians of the North: A History of Mexican Industrial Workers in Detroit and the Midwest, 1917–1933* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), chap. 5; Zolberg, *A Nation by Design,* 269-270.

24. E. P. Hutchinson, *Legislative History of American Immigration Policy, 1798-1965* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981), 228-229; 241.

25. Hernández, *Migra!,* 104.

26. On the "Gestapo spy" films of the period, which likewise reflected deeply xenophobic fears around alien infiltration, see Auerbach, *Dark Borders,* chap. 1.

27. David Wallace, *Exiles in Hollywood* (Pompton Plains, NJ: Limelight Editions, 2006). The fact that studios had so many foreign actors to hire made for even more possibilities for "authentically" representing foreigners in movies, which movies like *Illegal Entry* and *A Lady Without Passport* made use of, albeit, like the industry had often done, freely swapping in other national identities for the actors' actual ones, and letting their accents just vaguely signify "foreignness."

28. Combs and Combs, *Film Propaganda and American Politics*, 123-125. Relatedly, on the FBI's relationship to Hollywood during the early Cold War era, see Sbardellati, *J. Edgar Hoover Goes to the Movies.*

29. On the move to the Department of Justice and the Border Patrol's expansion, see Hernández, *Migra!,* 104-106.

30. Sound Recording 85.17-85.21.A (1941?), Records of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, Record Group 85, National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.

31. Schatz, *Boom and Bust*, 139. Schatz observes here that some in the US government advocated for the movie industry, too, to be fully converted to the war effort, as were the movie industries of Germany and Italy. For more on the relationship between Hollywood and the war effort, see Doherty, *Projections of War.*

32. Schatz, *Boom and Bust,* 248.

33. Ibid, 222-23.

34. Ibid, 150.

35. Thomas Doherty, "Documenting the 1940s," chap. 12 in Schatz, *Boom and Bust*, 397-404. Doherty also discusses wartime government-studio collaborations around military training films, propaganda films, and combat reports. Ibid, 405-413.

36. Schatz, *Boom and Bust*, 139-142; 222-24; 244-49; Robert Sklar, *Movie-Made America: A Cultural History of American Movies* (New York: Vintage Books, 2nd ed., 1994), 150-51.

37. For example, E. Maurice ("Buddy") Adler, the producer making one of the many pitches for semi-documentary alien smuggling films in 1948, had wartime experience working on documentaries in the military. B. B. Kahane to Hal Hode, January 23, 1948, file 56234/356, Entry 9, RG 85, NARA.

38. Palmer, "Borderings: The Film Noir Semi-Documentary," 134.

39. "The House on 92nd Street," American Film Institute Catalog of Feature Films, American Film Institute, https://catalog.afi.com/Catalog/MovieDetails/24454?cxt=filmogra phy; "FBI Filmed Nazis with a Telephoto," *New York Times,* Sep. 13, 1945.

40. E. Maurice Adler to B.B. Kahane, January 22, 1948; Irving Cummings to W.A. Carmichael, February 3, 1948, file 56234/356, Entry 9, RG 85, NARA.

41. Schatz, *Boom and Bust,* 160-164; Sklar, *Movie-Made America*, 272-73.

42. Shaw, *Hollywood's Cold War,* 44-46; Sklar, *Movie-Made America*, 256-68; Reynold Humphries, *Hollywood's Blacklists: A Political and Cultural History* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press)*,* chap. 4.

43. Kathryn Cramer Brownell, "'Movietime USA.': The Motion Picture Industry Council and the Politicization of Hollywood in Postwar America, *The Journal of Policy History* 24, no. 3 (2012): 518-542.

44. The *LA Daily News* griped that "for at least half a reel, audiences find themselves listening to government authorities like Atty. Gen. Tom Clark, and it takes some time to shake off the impression that one has walked in on a newsreel." Review of *Illegal Entry*, *LA Daily News,* June [?] 1949, file "Illegal Entry," Motion Picture Association of America, Production Code Administration records (hereafter MPA-PCA), Margaret Herrick Library, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, Beverly Hills, California (hereafter MHL).

45. The film seems to have fudged a bit here with the real world's war bride timeline, however, as the War Brides Act was only enacted on December 28, 1945 (59 Stat. 659).

46. Review of *Illegal Entry*, *Motion Picture Daily,* June 9, 1949 and Review of *Illegal Entry* in *LA Daily News,* June [?] 1949, file "Illegal Entry," MPA-PCA, MHL.

47. "I-Men," *Newsweek*, June 27, 1949.

48. "Smugglers' Crimes Told in Feature," *LA Times*, June 13, 1949; Review of *Illegal Entry*, *Motion Picture Daily,* June 9, 1949.

49. On the trope of the concentration camp tattoo as a visual motif identifying concentration camp survivors in visual media postwar, see Deblinger, "'In a World Still Trembling'," 119, 272. Auschwitz was the only camp to tattoo numbers on prisoners' arms; some camps also tattooed "KL" for *Konzentrationslager.* The tattoo on the back reading "Dachau" was thus an invention of the filmmakers, and perhaps speaks to their

sense that they needed to spell out the name of a camp in order for the tattoo to "tell its story." United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, "Tattoos and Numbers: The System of Identifying Prisoners at Auschwitz," *Holocaust Encyclopedia*, https://encyclopedia.ushmm. org/content/en/article/tattoos-and-numbers-the-system-of-identifying-prisoners-at-auschwitz.

50. Review of *Illegal Entry, Hollywood Citizen News*, June 14, 1949, file "Illegal Entry," MPA-PCA, MHL.

51. At least as far as European war brides were concerned, the War Brides Act of 1945, which allowed servicemen to bring their foreign wives to the United States outside of immigration quotas, was fairly uncontoversial. Many Asian women, however, remained excluded by the law. David Reimers, *Still the Golden Door: The Third World Comes to America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), 21-22; Daniels, *Guarding the Golden Door*, 94, 97; Philip E. Wolgin and Irene Bloemraad, "'Our Gratitude to Our Soldiers': Military Spouses, Family Re-Unification, and Postwar Immigration Reform," *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 41, no. 1 (2010): 27-60, http://www.jstor.org/stable/40785025.

52. Dominique Brégent-Heald observes in her study of what she calls "border noirs"—the noir films that play out on the Mexican and Canadian borders with the United States, rather than in the more conventional noir spaces of urban streets—that "filmmakers frequently use maps or establishing shots of the landscape to insert the audience into the geographic specificity presented on screen. The mapping of territory indicates the need to control space, or be controlled by it." The maps thus call attention to the geopolitical backdrop, the United States struggling to assert its claims to control over space in the shifting terrain of the postwar world. Brégent-Heald, "Dark Limbo," 126.

53. "Showman's Manual," file "Illegal Entry," Box 36, Pressbook Collection, USC-CAL.

54. "World Premiere of Illegal Entry," file 12747, box 453, IE, USC-CAL.

55. US Congress, Senate, *Congressional Record*, 81st Cong., 1st sess., June 6, 8, 1949, Vol. 95, pt. 6, 7224; 7397.

56. Phil Gerard to Al Horwitz, press release, June 7, 1949, file 12747, box 453, IE, USC-CAL.

57. Leo M. Cadison to William Gordon, November 23, 1948, file 05364, box 197, IE, USC-CAL.

58. Herman Kass to [Charley] Simonelli, June 9, 1949 and Alfred L. Mendelsohn to Charley Simonelli, June 9, 1949, file 12747, box 453, IE, USC-CAL.

59. Louis Mayer had lured Lamarr into the production with promises that it would be even bigger than the recent blockbuster *Samson and Delilah* (Paramount, 1949), which Lamarr had starred in. But *A Lady Without Passport* met with mixed reviews, and its box-office take was poor enough that MGM canceled its contract with Lamarr for two more films. Stephen Michael Shearer, *Beautiful: The Life of Hedy Lamarr* (New York: Thomas Dunne Books/St. Martin's Press, 2010), chap. 16, Kindle.

60. Quoted in Ruth Barton, *Hedy Lamarr: The Most Beautiful Woman in Film* (Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press, 2010), 178. At least one other person at the studio, too, suggested that a few days of filming immigration authorities at work in Miami, and attending the court trial of a suspected alien smuggler, would produce excellent material for inclusion in the film. "'The Undesirables': Some Background and Facts," n.a., November 11, 1948, 14 and 32, f.L. 170, Turner/MGM scripts, MHL. It is unclear who authored this document (cited hereafter as "Background"). It may have been produced by the studio's research department. On the work of Hollywood's research departments, see George F. Custen, "Hollywood and the Research Department," in *Why Docudrama? Fact-Fiction on Film and TV*, ed. Alan Rosenthal (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1999), 133-145.

61. MGM Pressbook, file "A Lady Without Passport," Core Collections Files-Clippings, MHL.

62. "Background," 15.

63. Ibid, 16.

64. "Smuggling Leader 'Shanghaied' to U.S.," *New York Times*, Nov. 6, 1951. In 1949, Simonovich seems to have been arrested by Cuban authorities in Havana, but US officials claimed that the Cubans had released him. "Alien Smuggling Leader Named," *New York Times,* June 24, 1950. The immigration officials in Florida may also have felt under particular pressure by changes that were reshaping the expanding INS, such as a recent reorganization that moved the agency's District 6 headquarters from Atlanta to Miami.

65. "Background," 4.

66. Ibid, 3. In the event, Hodiak's character in the film was a sort of amalgam of Fullilove and his boss, Frank Hornyak, described as "stocky, swarthy," and the Hungarian-speaking son of immigrants. Ibid, 4.

67. Edward W. Murphy to Samuel Marx, September 26, 1949, f.L 193, *A Lady Without Passport,* Turner-MGM Scripts, MHL. Murphy served ten months in the federal penitentiary in Atlanta for his smuggling activities, but was under indictment once again for similar exploits when he turned up dead in Lake Okeechobee—the very lake the smuggler's plane flies over in the film—in January 1953. "Smuggler's Body Found in Fla. Lake," *Schenectady Gazette,* Jan. 16, 1953. This is the very lake that his fictional counterpart flies over in the climatic chase in the film.

68. Barton, *Hedy Lamarr,* 61-64; Shearer, *Beautiful*, chap. 17; Diane Negra observes that Lamarr's roles often reprised the trope of benevolent male rescue. Diane Negra, *Off-White Hollywood: American Culture and Ethnic Female Stardom* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 22.

69. Barton, *Hedy Lamarr*, 1, 64; Shearer, *Beautiful*, chaps. 4 and 5. A recent documentary about Lamarr also explores this theme. *Bombshell*, directed by Alexandra Dean (Zeitgeist Films, 2017).

70. *Samson and Delilah* was 1950's top-grossing film. Barton, *Hedy Lamarr,* 174.

71. Negra, *Off-White Hollywood*, 104. On Hollywood's Production Code Administration, see Gregory D. Black, *Hollywood Censored: Morality Codes, Catholics, and the Movies* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Thomas Doherty, *Hollywood's Censor: Joseph I. Breen and the Production Code Admnistration* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007). If Lamarr was always pushing at the boundaries of the sexually permissible, with both her serial marriages and divorces and her devouring, delectable Delilah-ness a titillating aspect of her glamor, she never—thanks to the production code—was truly able to cross the lines of respectability.

72. Miami was the headquarters of the newly reorganized INS district 6. See https://www.archives.gov/research/guide-fed-records/groups/085.html. Filmmakers knew this. The author of MGM's research background for the film explained, "[District Director Walter Miller's] territory (Sixth District) covers our borders for 2,371 miles. It begins part way up the coast of Georgia and runs clear around Florida and west across the Gulf past New Orleans. It is the duty of Mr. Miller and his men to prevent all smuggling of aliens by any means, through air or water, across these boundaries." "Background," 2-3.

73. *A Lady Without Passport*, most of which takes place in Cuba, illustrated just how much border-guarding required the United States to move its policing into the international realm. Diane Negra makes the related point that Lamarr was a figure who helped to fashion a narrative of US interventionism in the postwar years. Negra, *Off-White Hollywood,* 107-09.

74. The background document for the film remarks on the challenge the INS District Director Walter Miller faced in his border-guarding operations for the Gulf region. "To do this work, he has a staff of 59 men." "Background," 3.

75. For more contemporary news coverage highlighting the unauthorized entry of Europeans, in addition to the coverage of Simonovich's activities cited in note 58 above, see, for example, "Aliens Smuggled in by Air at $500 Each; Ring Smashed," *Daily Boston Globe,* Dec. 7, 1949; "U.S. Hits at 2 Rings in Alien Smuggling," *New York Times,* June 24,

1950. News coverage also reflected fears that even many of the people entering under the new Displaced Persons legislation were "illegal." See, for example, "Half of D.P.'s in U.S. Called 'Illegal,'" *Washington Post*, Feb. 4, 1950.

76. For compelling readings of *Border Incident'*s portrayal—and interrogation—of the "illegal" status of the Mexican laborers in the film, see Auerbach, *Dark Borders,* 125-142 and Auerbach, "Noir Citizenship."

77. Hernández, *Migra!,* 172-82; Joseph Nevins, *Operation Gatekeeper: The Rise of the 'Illegal Alien' and the Making of the US-Mexico Boundary* (New York and London: Routledge, 2002), 27-28; Ngai, *Impossible Subjects,* 89, 147-53.

78. Leonard Dinnerstein discusses postwar refugee advocates' and policy's focus on Europeans rather than Asians or Africans. Dinnerstein, *America and the Survivors of the Holocaust,* 124. On the general European-centeredness of postwar refugee policy, see also Bon Tempo, *Americans at the Gate,* 5, 59, 86. Mae Ngai observes that Chinese immigrants, despite the World-War II era repeal of Chinese Exclusion, came to be seen after the the Revolution of 1949 as potential political threats. Ngai, *Impossible Subjects,* 203. On how and when Chinese migrants were defined as "refugees" post-World-War II, see also Laura Madokoro, *Elusive Refuge: Chinese Migrants in the Cold War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016).

79. Frank Hornyak to Officers, Miami Sector, April 14, 1948, 3-4; 7-8; Frank Hornyak to Officers, Miami Sector, May 11, 1948, 3-8; both appended to "Background."

Hollywood, Washington, and the Making of the Refugee in Postwar Cinema

Libby Garland

Real life is becoming indistinguishable from the movies.
—Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno[1]

Universal-International's film *Illegal Entry* opened in June 1949. It tells the tale of Anna (Marta Toren), a beautiful European woman tangled up with the criminal ring that smuggled her brother, a war survivor, over the Mexico-US border.[2] The studio marketed the film as an authentic depiction of contemporary US border enforcement—"the first explosive exposé of the illicit border traffic in human cargo," as the film's publicity materials put it.[3] Universal-International was so committed to this notion of authenticity that, at one point, filmmakers even arranged to embed themselves with the Border Patrol near the Mexico-US border. While on site, or so the studio claimed, "the filmmakers and their camera crew flushed a car parked in dense undergrowth." The car sped away, and the Border Patrol jeep pursued it, overtook it, and arrested the driver "and four aliens jammed like sardines in the fleeing car's turtleback."[4] Whether true or invented, the story of this car chase serves to blur the line between the work of law enforcement and that of movie-making. The filmmakers, however briefly, are cast in the role of the Border Patrol itself, doing the work of securing the border against smuggled aliens.

Universal-International was not the only studio looking to capitalize on the real-life dramas generated by the US government's anti-alien-smuggling opera-tions. In 1947 and 1948, several Hollywood studios pitched government officials on similar projects, hoping to be granted permission to mine the Immigration and Naturalization Service's (INS) case files for screenplay material. Thus deluged,

government officials decided that they could not accommodate all the studios. Columbia Pictures, for one, having proposed crafting "an 'A' picture of great interest and suspense" based on INS exploits, was rebuffed.[5] Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer (MGM), however, succeeded in getting federal government partners on board with its alien-smuggling picture. In 1950, MGM came out with *A Lady Without Passport*, exploring similar themes to those taken up in *Illegal Entry*.[6] This time, the obligatory beauty (Hedy Lamarr) is herself a concentration camp survivor, stranded in Havana and desperate enough to pay smugglers to fly her to Florida.

Neither of these noirish films turned out to be a great critical or popular success ("unimpressive," the *New York Times* yawned of *A Lady Without Passport*).[7] Both, however, are of interest for reasons apart from artistic merit or mass appeal. The two films help us understand a piece of the process by which legal and cultural discourse of the post-World War II era created a new character—"the refugee"—and instilled it in the national (and international) imagination. The movies illuminate this process in two ways. The first is at a narrative level. The plots of both films wrestle evocatively with the liminal figure of the refugee. The tension between the imperative to extend sympathy toward those fleeing war-torn lands, on the one hand, and the desire to control the nation's borders, on the other, was very much on the American public's mind. In the early postwar years, government officials, journalists, civic leaders and ethnic community organizations engaged in heated public debate about the nation's stance toward refugees—in particular, toward the millions of European "displaced persons." That stance was undergoing momentous shifts in ways that would fundamentally reshape US policy. In 1946, a vast majority of Americans surveyed told pollsters they did not want US immigration law changed to allow more European refugees, broadly seen as undesirable and potentially dangerous influences, into the United States.[8] In early 1948, when the films were first pitched, "refugee" was still not yet really a category recognized formally by notoriously restrictive US immigration law.[9]

By the time both films had premiered, however, two major and controversial pieces of legislation—the Displaced Persons Act of 1948 and an amended version of that law passed in 1950—had begun permitting hundreds of thousands of refugees to resettle in the United States.[10] At the heart of debates over these measures was the same fundamental question that animated the plots of the two films I examine here. Did war refugees pose a threat to the sweepingly restrictive immigration system that the United States had implemented after World War I in the name of protecting the nation from political, racial, and economic threats? In the real world of policy that served as the films' backdrop and context, some lawmakers railed about the hordes of dangerous criminals and political subversives who would take advantage of any visas the United States made available. Refugee advocates, meanwhile, including Jewish, Italian, and other ethnic and civic groups, conducted widespread media campaigns in support of the displaced persons legislation, portraying refugees as deserving victims of the same evil regimes the United States had gone to war to fight. Those politicians who increasingly saw refugee policy as an important element of strategy in the emerging Cold

War also made a case for increasing admissions, which, they hoped, would, along with the Marshall Plan, help stabilize Western Europe and counter Soviet power. In the face of this determined advocacy, public opinion about the desirability of refugees had moved by the time the legislation passed, too. However, the nation remained divided on the issue. In 1948, when the original Displaced Persons Act passed Congress, pollsters estimated that only about half of the American public had come to favor admitting more refugees.[11]

The two films I consider here joined other movies of the wartime and postwar period in dramatizing the very topical tales of war refugees. The plots of well-regarded pictures like *Casablanca* (1942) and *The Search* (1948), for example, also revolved around the desperation refugees faced.[12] But *Illegal Entry* and *A Lady Without Passport* are noteworthy for the way they navigate a particular set of tensions that characterized debates over US policy in that postwar moment. On the one hand, in the happy endings granted their leading ladies, the films help chart a national shift toward an acceptance—however grudging and qualified—of the idea that refugees might be particularly deserving of sympathy and, at least when granted by benevolent authorities, of admission to the nation. On the other hand, both films portray refugees as objects of suspicion. In both stories, refugees are tangled up in a shadowy criminal underworld of "alien smuggling" and implicated in the undermining of US control over its geographic borders. Indeed, neither film uses the term "refugee" at all, instead employing the word "alien" to refer to the foreigners in the story.[13] And as the tale of Universal-International's Border Patrol ride-along suggests, both productions explicitly celebrated the work of federal immigration enforcement. The films thus gave expression to the nation's uneasy efforts to reconcile a strict devotion to immigration restriction and border control with emerging humanitarian and political commitments to the displaced peoples of Europe.

They enacted, too, the uncertainties inherent in the emergent legal category of "refugee." Those advocating for admitting migrants displaced by war made the case that refugees were different from other migrants, people whose stories of suffering should make them exceptions to the rule of restricted immigration; these stories thus served as the key to an otherwise closed door to the nation. But what, precisely, was the line between refugees and other would-be immigrants, or between refugees and "illegal aliens?" Were foreigners who fled terrible circumstances and who felt desperate enough to be smuggled into the United States potentially dangerous invaders who should be kept out? Or were they people with a right to haven within the nation? This question was, as it has remained, at the heart of struggles over national policies and attitudes toward refugees.

At the narrative level, then, the dramas that *Illegal Entry* and *A Lady Without Passport* depict are compelling reflections of broader cultural attitudes toward such issues. But these two films are also of interest at a second level: the level of production. The behind-the-scenes history of their making reveals some of the curious circuitry by which narratives around refugees could be generated at this volatile postwar moment. Both films were very much active collaborations between

Hollywood studios and government authorities. Each partner looked to the other as a source of authenticity, positive publicity, and narrative possibilities. The studios sought the added value that "real" government files and government spokespeople could provide their productions. Government officials, meanwhile, saw the power in crafting dramatic narratives around their own practices. Film was a way for the immigration authorities to launder their own images. On screen, they could be cast as dedicated but benevolent protectors of national sovereignty. To be sure, these films, a form of soft propaganda, were not the first such Hollywood-Washington coproductions, nor the last.[14] But at a moment when both the institutions of the major film studios and US immigration authorities were, as we shall see, politically challenged and working to redefine themselves, they became symbiotically intertwined in particularly strange ways.

Whatever claims to authority drove the collaborative work of state and Hollywood, however, semi-documentaries—these "ripped from the headlines" dramas— were always a volatile mix of reality and artifice.[15] Even as these films lay claim to a measure of verisimilitude, they also, like all reality productions, point toward their own constructedness. The fictionalization is explicitly announced, after all, in the "semi-" of the genre's name, and further made visible via the familiar conventions of melodramatic romance that structure the story on screen. Simultaneously, if less explicitly, the films also point in the other direction. By making government actors visible as active collaborators in film production—in film credits, publicity materials, and, indeed, on screen like "actors" in the dramatic sense—semi-documentaries remind viewers that the state, too, crafts narratives. By extension, then, semi-documentaries also gesture more broadly to the way that the state is always already telling stories through its laws and policies about, in these cases, the distinctions between the alien and the refugee, between the criminal and the victim, and between the foreigners who should be hunted down and arrested and those who should be welcomed and protected. Such distinctions—like the blurred line between the state and the film industry that both paralleled and generated the blurred line between reality and fiction that characterized these films—remained fundamentally unstable, both onscreen and in real life. And that instability reflected the nation's moral and cultural ambivalence. Seen in their historical context, these films reveal a postwar moment defined by uncertainty and contradiction, when the United States wished to cast itself as a global savior even while it refused "the refugee" a stable role in the national imagination.

Finally, I would suggest that these particular films, and the peculiar notion of "reality" that characterized their making, help shed light on some of the historical roots of recent public discourse around immigration and refugees, which has been as toxic as during any time in the last half century. The precariously thin line that divides the refugee from the "illegal alien" has been nearly erased by our recent reality-show President, who made border enforcement the centerpiece of his regime's political show—a show that sought to fully collapse any distinction between fiction and news, the state and the entertainment industry, to disastrous effect. It is perhaps the case that the "border drama" has never been at its current

pitch before, but the intertwining of media spectacle and border enforcement is, as the story of the two films discussed here show, not new.

The discourse of immigration restriction
in the era of mass media

Despite *Illegal Entry's* publicity claims to originality, movies whose plots revolved around the traffic in unauthorized immigrants appeared regularly during the decades of mid-century. After all, Hollywood studios and US immigration restriction both came of age during the 1920s, and the real-life dramas produced by the harsh new regime of migration control were readymade for the rapidly growing motion picture industry. In 1921 and 1924, the United States passed laws to sharply reduce what had been an unprecedented influx of immigrants into the country during the century's first two decades. By allocating only small quotas to the nations of southern and eastern Europe and almost entirely blocking immigration from Asia and Africa, the new legislation—which remained in place until 1965—was supposed to stem the tide of foreigners considered racially inferior and politically dangerous. These restrictive immigration laws were thus a grand experiment in statecraft and social engineering. They resulted, however, in an upsurge in illicit immigration that posed a grave challenge to the new legal regime. People from countries targeted by the restrictions now drew on networks and strategies long employed by Chinese immigrants, who were largely banned from legal entry into the United States since 1882, to get around US law. Foreigners who in earlier years might have entered the United States legally now had to seek alternatives. Some, for example, sailed into major ports with forged documents. Others paid smugglers to get them across the Mexican and Canadian borders on foot, or traveled from Cuba to Florida, hidden in boats that might also be transporting contraband liquor.[16]

Scriptwriters took note. Cinema has always had a special affinity for stories of artifice and fakery, undercover adventures and hidden identities. Film is itself, after all, always a form of counterfeiting. As in theater, the illusion created by script, set, and acting simultaneously does its work to tell a story even as it points beyond itself, toward the actors underneath the costumes and the scripted lines. But film's counterfeit nature exceeds the theater's, for even the most reality-based of films can never be more than a two-dimensional simulacrum of whatever appears onscreen.[17] Real-life tales of human trafficking thus lent themselves easily to the silver screen, filled as they were with smugglers masquerading as legitimate businessmen and investigators in disguise as smuggled foreigners. Indeed, in the realm of migration, the very idea of authentic identity had become both highly charged and extremely unstable. Amidst the rise of ethnic nationalisms after World War I, both emerging and established nation-states sought to shore up sovereignty and national identity by means of legal barriers to migration. Nations engaged in an immigration-control "arms race," creating new technologies of documentation and implementing new forms of border-guarding.[18] In the universe of international alien smuggling, fabricated identities thus became commodities for sale, a way to

navigate or profit from the regime of borders and migration control. That regime, in other words, had produced a highly theatrical underworld; this was the stuff of movies.

In 1936, for example, audiences could see Claire Trevor, Brian Donlevy and Rita Hayworth (then still calling herself Rita Cansino) in the Twentieth Century Fox production *Human Cargo*. Trevor plays a plucky aspiring journalist who teams up with a seasoned reporter (Donlevy) to investigate a nefarious alien smuggling ring; their exploits get Hayworth's character—a Latin dancer named (naturally) Carmen Zoro, who is mixed up with the ring's boss—shot, and they themselves are nearly killed when they go undercover posing as foreigners purchasing the smugglers' services. In the end, the daring couple escapes and the evil smugglers are busted. In the detective drama *Yellow Cargo* (1937), a small Hollywood production company serves as a front for smuggling Chinese immigrants, achieved by disguising the company's white actors in "yellowface" and pulling a switcheroo with the aliens. This scheme, too, is derailed by diligent undercover work. Other films of the 30s, 40s, and 50s also explored the smuggling and illegal entry of Chinese immigrants (*On the Border,* 1930; *Border Phantom,* 1936; *Shadows of the Orient,* 1937; *Daughter of Shanghai,* 1937) as well as Mexicans (*Border Incident*, 1949; *Wetbacks,* 1956). Like *Illegal Entry* and *A Lady Without Passport,* some depicted Europeans' illicit entry into the nation (*Paddy O'Day,* 1936; *Forged Passport,* 1939; *Secret Service of the Air,* 1939).

Film studies scholars have ignored most of these films. Immigration historians have not paid attention to them either. This scholarly neglect has, I think, a few main causes. With some important exceptions, cinematic representations of alien smuggling have gotten lost in the realm of film studies because they were not necessarily the flashiest examples of the famous genres of which they were part—genres which have commanded most of the field's attention in studies of the era. Scholarship on the gangster and crime films that proliferated in the 1930s and in the era of film noir, for example, is plentiful, as is scholarship on "social problem" films, but in neither of these subfields does the issue of alien smuggling merit more than a passing reference.[19] For their part, historians who write about immigration during this era, particularly those who explore the phenomenon of unauthorized immigration, have generally approached their studies from the perspective of legal and social history rather than cultural history. These scholars are diverse in terms of the groups they have studied; their recent works include explorations of the mid-twentieth century efforts to control the immigration of Europeans, Asians, West Indians, and Mexicans, for example. But these historians share a focus on the genesis and implementation of exclusionary immigration laws and policies, not on cultural reflections of such policies.[20]

The mass culture of the time, however—the respectable and not-so-respectable press, fiction, radio and film—both reflected and helped generate the discourse that produced and propped up the restrictive immigration regime. This first struck me many years ago, as I sat in the archives reading government documents whose authors were trying to get a handle on the alien smuggling

business that burgeoned in the wake of the 1921 and 1924 laws. The nation had never attempted immigration control on that scale, and there was vast confusion on the government's end about how the new legislation would work and to whom, precisely, it would apply. Thus it is not surprising that government functionaries, corresponding with each other or pounding out their endless reports, sometimes deployed the pulp-fiction twang of Hollywood scripts, hard-boiled detective stories, or the sensationalist press. The slangy talk about rackets, gangsters, and bootlegging allowed those in government to describe murky realities of law en-forcement in stark moral terms, as talk of criminality always does. The bureacratic officialese of government authories, in turn, could lend an air of dramatic gravitas to fiction, movies and pulp journalism.

In the 1930s and early 1940s, US immigration policy remained severely re-strictive, reflecting an abiding suspicion of newcomers. The Depression saw the flow of immigrants cut to a trickle by strict implementation of existing statutes as well as by executive actions such as President Herbert Hoover's 1930 order instructing consuls to be rigorous in their denial of visas to anyone deemed "likely to become a public charge."[21] The deportation machine went into high gear, as foreigners were increasingly seen as burdens on overtaxed public relief systems, and increasingly feared as successful fomenters of dangerous leftist ideologies.[22] By the mid-1930s, for example, nearly a half-million Mexicans—and Mexican Ameri-cans—had been deported or coercively "repatriated," in the name of national and local economic interests.[23] In Congress, several bills that would have suspended all immigration entirely were proposed.[24] As of 1939, with the start of hostilities in Europe, fears of German spies and "fifth columnists" were added to existing reasons to clamp down on immigration and resist calls to take in those trying to flee the Nazis. A bill to admit twenty thousand German refugee children died in Congress. In 1940, meanwhile, the INS was transferred from the Department of Labor to the Department of Justice, a move that signaled policymakers' convic-tion that the war unfolding in Europe demanded stronger border and immigration enforcement. Immigration authorities were now officially under the auspices of a federal crime-fighting, law-enforcement apparatus.[25]

The Hollywood alien smuggling films of the era thus reflected and magnified (and sought to profit from) the national mood around immigration.[26] Even an in-dustry that became home to a number of high-profile European exile actors and directors produced movies reminding viewers, however melodramatically, of the dangers associated with foreigners.[27] Simultaneously, and relatedly, Hollywood and Washington were building partnerships. The relationship particularly flourished around spy movies. FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover saw great value in the power of mass media, and worked closely with both radio and film producers to shape the depictions of "G-men," approving a stream of straight-from-the-files-of-the-FBI scripts.[28] After the Border Patrol was moved to the Justice Department, where its budget and personnel were vastly expanded, it followed suit, launching its very own serialized radio show.[29] Modeled on popular adventure-story radio shows of the era, it presented what were clearly intended to be suspenseful dramatizations

of actual heroic Border Patrol exploits, including, of course, the busting up of alien smuggling rings. [30] By the start of World War II, then, narratives of immigration restriction and border control had long been jointly produced by government and the popular media, woven back and forth between the two.

Hollywood and the US government: wartime collaboration

Illegal Entry and *A Lady Without Passport* were a genre of collaborative propaganda with roots in the early years of big studio productions. But they also represented more recent forms that merged state projects with Hollywood ones. The United States' entry into World War II further tightened the relationship between the government and Hollywood. The US government gave film studios freer reign to continue production as usual than it did to other industries (such as the auto industry), which were fully converted to the massive war effort. Nevertheless, the government was eager to harness the power of film for the Allied cause.[31] As a division of the Office of War Information, which coordinated the US government's extensive wartime media strategy, the Bureau of Motion Pictures liaised with studio heads. Commercial studios obliged the government's desire for strong media support for the war effort. They produced an enormous quantity of military training films and war-related newsreels.[32] Donald Duck and Bugs Bunny appeared in propaganda cartoons.[33] Feature films took up patriotic and war-related themes. Movie theaters, meanwhile, became central hubs for supporting and promoting the war effort. Not only were commercial theaters screening government films as well as their own patriotic output, they also served as a sales force for US war bonds, and as collection sites for precious war materials, from blood to paper to scrap metal.[34] To enter a cinema during wartime was thus often to encounter the dual worlds of the film industry and the state, and the intertwined realities and fantasies of war narratives both on- and off-screen.

During the war, too, the notion of "reality" and the artifice of the moving image became fused together in new ways. This was the heyday of newsreels and news magazines, both of which entailed extensive cooperation between filmmakers and the US government, and which brought the war vividly into the nation's movie theaters.[35] Realism and fiction converged most dramatically in depictions of battle. Hollywood producers adopted a semi-documentary approach to the combat films they churned out. Filmmakers who entered the military, meanwhile, often served in the Army's cutting-edge filmmaking ventures. They brought their own stylized sensibilities and Hollywood war-movie tropes to their military work, which included documentaries featuring frontline action.[36] By midway through the war, studios' combat films, in turn, were drawing heavily on the look and feel of such frontline production.

Filmmakers with experience in movie-making for the military brought their new realist sensibilities back to Hollywood.[37] They employed the semi-documentary style in a number of postwar crime films. In this breed of film noir, filmmakers worked closely with government agencies to produce movies that projected a vision of the large, manly federal institutions that had come to characterize the

mid-century state protecting a nation from, as scholar R. Barton Palmer puts it, "an underworld of the maladjusted, dissatisfied, or conspiratorial."[38] The bad guys' story lines are invariably more dramatically compelling, but the state triumphs in the end, putting to work modern techniques of surveillance, investigation, and law enforcement. *The House on 92nd Street* (1945), for example, an FBI-hunts-German-spy film set in 1939, was a ripped-from-the-files picture from Twentieth Century Fox, made in full cooperation with the FBI. Hoover even appeared briefly—as himself—in the film, which also included real footage of lesser FBI personnel at work. The Bureau, moreover, allowed two of the lead actors to train at Quantico with their agents.[39] With *To the Ends of the Earth* (1948), Columbia Pictures took a similar tack, working with the Department of Treasury's Bureau of Narcotics to produce a high-octane tale of international opium smuggling. Both of these films were cited by studio executives in their above-mentioned correspondence with the government as inspirations for the alien smuggling films they hoped to make.[40]

Movie studio executives had both economic and political reasons to want to please government officials. Tensions between Hollywood and the federal government resurfaced after the war, throwing the film industry into crisis. First, the Justice Department resurrected an antitrust suit against the industry, charging that the studios' ownership of the vast majority of the nation's movie theaters was monopolistic. Between 1945 and 1949, the case got battled out in the courts, even reaching the Supreme Court. Ultimately, the studios lost, and were forced to separate their production and exhibition businesses. The dismantling of the vertically integrated structure that had been so critical to the studios' economic success made this an anxious, uncertain time for industry leaders.[41] Second, Hollywood faced attack once more for its supposed infiltration by dangerous leftists. In 1947, the House Un-American Activities Committee held contentious hearings meant to ferret out Hollywood's Communists, launching an era of blacklisting and intra-industry division.[42] In response to such political pressure, the film industry worked all the harder to portray itself as a promoter of American values and a partner with government. The Motion Picture Industry Council, for example, was established by corporate leaders in Hollywood in 1948 to coordinate public relations. It conducted intensive media campaigns and goodwill tours with famous actors, and pledged to make sure that the film industry toed the emerging Cold War policy line.[43] Postwar films, particularly those featuring contemporary political themes and the exploits of government agencies, thus reflected the complexities of Hollywood-Washington relations during this era. It was out of these relations that *Illegal Entry* and *A Lady Without Passport* emerged.

Illegal Entry (Universal-International Pictures, 1949)

After the film's opening credits roll against a backdrop of the official seal of the INS, viewers must endure not one but two exceedingly wooden introductions from government officials seated at their desks. The first is delivered by the Attorney General of the United States Tom Clark, the second by INS Commissioner Watson B. Miller. "It is not wrong to wish to enter the United States," Clark intones,

staring straight into the camera. "But it is wrong to enter illegally, or to remain here unlawfully." After a narrator explains that the movie is a "tribute to the men and officers of the Immigration and Naturalization Service," including forty-three who have lost their lives in the line of duty, Miller explains that his agency's "greatest single problem is illegal entry, including attempted and sometimes actual smuggling of aliens." Cut to a shot of an accordion file, from which is drawn a folder marked "Case file number 191: The Blue Danube Affair." Then the action finally begins.[44]

A forest ranger in the woods of San Bernadino County finds a corpse face-down in the dirt. A close-up reveals the tattoo on his back: "DACHAU 57437." The Los Angeles INS office takes up the case. The authorities soon get a call from the dead man's distraught cousin, who explains that he paid $2000 to have the victim smuggled in from Poland. Before the caller can explain the details of the scheme, he is fatally stabbed. But he manages to gasp out "Blue Danube Café" before expiring on the phone booth floor. INS higher-ups in Washington authorize the L.A. office to recruit a new undercover agent in the form of Bert Powers (Howard Duff). Bert is an Air Force veteran who was war buddies with the American husband of the Blue Danube's owner, Anna Duvak (Marta Toren), who came to the country legally as a European war bride before her husband was killed in action.[45] Bert agrees to the gig. He befriends Anna, who is indeed reluctantly connected to the alien smuggling ring. Soon, Bert finds work flying for the small charter plane outfit that serves as the front for their alien smuggling operation, operating back and forth across the Mexico-US border. These are brutal gangsters, willing to toss their migrant cargo out of the plane if they fear detection. We meet Dutch Lempo (Richard Rober), the boss, deported from the United States and now headquartered in Mexico. He has the hots for Anna, but she rebuffs him. After narrowly escaping a sting operation, the smugglers realize they have been infiltrated, and set out to find the snitch.

Meanwhile, Bert, too, has developed feelings for Anna. She comes clean. She explains that she has figured out that he is the undercover agent, but that she has not ratted him out to the smugglers. Bert also learns that Anna is entangled with the criminal ring because she had them smuggle in her ailing brother Stefan (Eric Feldary) from Europe; the brother is holed up at her place, looking distressed. Bert prepares to collude with Anna to get Stefan out of the city to make a fresh start, but Stefan, distraught over the trouble he is causing his sister, hangs himself in her apartment. After this, events unfold quickly. Bert manages, after some quick thinking in a cockpit fight, to deliver the plane and smugglers to waiting agents. The bad guys are arrested. Anna, happily, avoids any charges being brought against her, as a reward for cooperating with law enforcment, and Bert is allowed to take her into romantic "custody."

Illegal Entry got mixed reviews. One critic thought it had "zip and . . . polish;" another that both script and acting were "pedestrian" and dull.[46] They were not all convinced by the film's breathless claims to being a vessel for truth. Some critics noted that the film's ripped-from-the-files-of format was hardly original—"the latest contribution to the alphabet soup of documentary-style films dealing with 'G-men,' 'C-men,' 'T-men,'" as *Newsweek* put it.[47] But some found the focus on alien smuggling in the current moment interesting, and the "authenticity" compelling.[48]

Illegal Entry, though explicitly proclaiming its loyalty to the US government's immigration enforcement apparatus, nevertheless captured deep national ambivalence about the extent to which war refugees might be seen as "illegal aliens" violating US borders. Critics' terminology picked up on some of the sympathy that infuses the film's portrayal of Anna and her brother (played by Swedish and Hungarian actors, respectively). But the narrator's voice-over at the start of the action, as the camera dwells on the Dachau tattoo of the faceless dead man whose murder gets the plot rolling, is tellingly cryptic. "Tattooed markings on the dead man's back told their own story," the narrator says. But, in fact, we—like the characters in the film—are left not knowing precisely what that story was, or what its implication is for American viewers.[49] This narrative uncertainty permeates the film. Although the exact origins of the smuggled, doomed brother remain unclear, he is a figure for the contemporary drama playing out in the real world outside the theaters. A few movie critics gestured to this reality, in which "American families of 'war-weary' Europeans" were struggling to help their loved ones cross the geographic and legal barriers to get to the United States.[50] We see, briefly, such "war-weary," meek, but respectably dressed Europeans being smuggled aboard the small plane Bert flies. But the desperation of such people's relatives, in the film's world, produces nothing but blood and mayhem—bodies thrown from planes, informants stabbed in phone booths. "Dachau" tattooed on a dead man's back may signify that we owe him sympathy. But how far our relationship should extend remains unclear.

Anna is also herself something of a cipher, and not only because we don't know where she is from. We know only that she is European, and that, as a war bride, she has been deemed by law to be exempt from immigration restriction.[51] Indeed, we learn in an early scene that she has become a US citizen since her arrival. But if her legal status relative to the nation is clear, her moral status is less so. On the one hand, her strength and resolve are admirable, and part of what (along with her impeccable posture and beautiful face) seem to draw the upstanding, square-jawed Bert Powers to her. On the other hand, Anna's loyalty to her refugee brother has led her down a criminal path; she is facilitating the operations of some very bad men, whose alien smuggling operations bring violence and unvetted foreigners into the space of the nation.

Anna is, at the film's end, fully redeemed by Bert—made legitimate in the eyes of the US authorities, for the second time, by the love of a patriotic war hero. Any criminal threat she embodies has been defused; she has been safely "domesticated." It is also helpful in her redemption that her illegal alien brother has been removed from the equation. But the real heroes are, as the film explicitly states, the immigration officials—the INS officers and the Border Patrol. The authorities can be merciful when appropriate, as in the case of Anna. And, the film suggests, they don't have serious beef with migrants themselves, who are the victims of alien smugglers. The US government's business is to protect the nation's borders, and as such its nemesis is the alien smuggling rings—the film's true villains. Two scenes drive this home. In the first, we are inside the office of the INS, where the immigration officer is contemplating a regional map on the wall, labeled "Immigration and Naturalization District 16." The border, and the outlines of the INS district,

are clearly, darkly drawn on this map. The officer is interrupted by the entrance of a uniformed underling informing him that a plane is on its way with smuggled aliens.

In the second scene, the smuggler ring-leader Lempo is plotting with his colleagues about how to ferret out the snitch in the group. They are meeting in Lempo's posh lair on the Mexican side of the border, where he has lived since being deported. "There's a leak somewhere, so we find it," he tells them. From behind the bar, he pushes a button that, proto-James-Bond-style, raises a painting (depicting a bucolic scene of Mexican figures in iconically rounded hats) to reveal a map of the region. "This is the border," he says, pointing. "There's a rat on your side, or on mine." Lempo's map indicates the border (though not quite as starkly as the INS map) but says nothing about US enforcement. The immigration officials' cartography, meanwhile, signals their crystal clarity about how the territory should work. The border may be an abstraction, especially transgressable by air, but the INS district is real. Smugglers might try to make good profit off the mismatch between the border's sharply defined meaning in immigration law and its porousness in practice. But in the end, the tables are turned on them, because the INS is on the case. The immigration authorities are the ones, ultimately, who find and close "the leak," not Lempo. The border's integrity is restored. [52] That this integrity entails blocking an avenue of ingress for "war-weary" Europeans, or others, is a consideration that remains uneasily at the margins of the film's moral universe, its story as unexplored as that of the corpse at the film's start. Nor does the film consider, as indeed government officials did not in real life, that the smuggling rings themselves were called into being not by the criminal tendencies of bad eggs like Lempo, but by the political fiction of the border itself. That political fiction was in turn conjured up by the authors of US immigration law, and given material reality by the actions of those charged with enforcing it.

If the moral bearings of the film were somewhat murky, so, too, relatedly, was the film's relationship to "reality." As with other from-the-files-of thrillers, the studio capitalized as much as possible on the picture's "authenticity." Publicity materials played up the true-life nature of the story: "Based on actual files of the Department of Justice!" read one version of the film poster printed in the production's pressbook. "Only from real people could such SHOCK DRAMA be torn!"[53] The studio milked its partnership with the INS and the Justice Department for the film's launch, too, promoting the film as an important, authentic commentary on the realities of immigration and border enforcement. Along with the usual blitz of radio and print spots, the publicity campaign added some creative touches. In cooperation with the INS, Universal produced a glossy souvenir brochure for the occasion, with bios of the film stars alongside glowing narratives of INS and Border Patrol history.[54] Senator Alexander Wiley (R-WI) praised the film from the Senate floor.[55] The film premiered at the RKO Keith theater in Washington, DC, on June 8, 1949. Generals, Supreme Court Justices, ambassadors, White House representatives and other Washington VIP's were scheduled to attend, their entrance into the theater's lobby to be broadcast on local TV.[56]

All of this cozying up to official Washington was no doubt intended to serve multiple purposes. Most obviously it was all part of the marketing of hard-boiled authenticity that studios seemed to think audiences were hungry for in this era, as evidenced by the many films they made in the "government files" genre. Universal was also clearly engaging in the sort of anxious politicking mentioned above. Tom Clark, who delivered the film's opening monologue, was not only the Attorney General. He was also the very person who, before his promotion to the Justice Department's top spot, had built the government's ongoing antitrust case against the film industry. One can imagine that Universal executives might have calculated that it could pay to cultivate his good will. They may have felt, too, that such a display of patriotic loyalty, premiering in the nation's capital, could serve as an antidote to the highly public official suspicion directed at Hollywood via the HUAC investigations.

The efforts to imbue *Illegal Entry* with authenticity took some strange turns, however. The government partners in the enterprise were not always satisfied that they were being fairly represented, and stepped into scriptwriting territory to try to shape the film's portrayal of them more to their liking. The Attorney General's office wrote to Universal in November 1948, for example, to complain that the script sorely neglected the good work of the Border Patrol, and to suggest revising the script to include a "flashback" showing the Border Patrol at work screening immigrants, all "while the conspirators are plotting."[57] The studio did not, apparently, think that this flashback would make for a good revision, as they did not ultimately include it.

Filmmakers did, however, exploit the story of their brief stint with the Border Patrol on the nation's boundary with Mexico, recounted above, for publicity purposes. And in a weird inversion of that ride-along's melding of law enforcement and movie roles, Universal's publicity people arranged for two Border Patrol officers to be flown from Texas to New York City for *Illegal Entry*'s premiere there. The two men made the rounds of local radio and TV to promote the film. The publicity plan also called for the officers to stand in the movie theater's lobby, in front of a photo exhibition about the Border Patrol, answering any questions moviegoers might have about "I-Men."[58] One wonders what theater patrons made of these two. Did they assume the officers were from the Border Patrol? Or that their uniforms were costumes, and the two men actors? Where did the world of the movies leave off, and the world of immigration enforcement begin?

A Lady Without Passport (Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 1950)

The strange intersections of these worlds continue in *A Lady Without Passport.* At the start of the film, a murder on a street in New York City leads US immigration authorities to Cuba and an alien smuggling ring. In Havana, INS officer Pete Karczag (John Hodiak) goes undercover to try to get to the ring's leader, known as Palinov (George Macready). Palinov runs his operation out of the nearly empty Gulf Stream Café, where a grim bartender presides over the liquor. Posing as a Hungarian migrant eager to reach the United States, Pete presents himself at the

Gulf Stream. He meets with Palinov and engages the smuggler's services. While at the café, Pete also encounters the beautiful Marianne Lorress (Hedy Lamarr), a concentration camp survivor from Vienna. Lorress is stranded in Havana, unable to get a US visa, and thus has also sought out Palinov. Palinov, who has a thing for her, intimates that he would waive his usual smuggler's fee in exchange for sexual favors, but Marianne spurns this offer.

Pete, too, falls for Marianne. She begins to reciprocate his feelings after Pete gets her out of a jam. As an alien, Marianne is not allowed to work in Cuba. In need of money, however, she dons a glittery outfit and goes to work selling cigarettes. When a local cop insists on arresting her for working illegally, Pete, who happens upon the scene, pretends that she is his wife, and whisks her away. Marianne eventually promises Pete that she will give up her scheme to get to America, despite her hopes of joining her father there, if Pete stays with her in Cuba. Pete is so smitten that he agrees to this, and privately types a letter of resignation from his job as an immigration inspector. He never gets the chance to send it. The romance goes sour when Palinov, who has discovered Pete's identity, reveals to Marianne that Pete is working undercover for the INS. Disillusioned, Marianne returns to plan A. Ultimately, all three end up in the United States, Pete tracking the small plane the smugglers are using to bring Marianne, five other European aliens, and Palinov (who has decided things are too hot for him to stay in Havana) illegally to Florida. There is a chase scene that involves a dramatic crash landing in the Everglades and an unfortunate encounter between the pilot and a venomous snake. In the end, Pete triumphs. Like Bert at the end of *Illegal Entry,* Pete finishes the film with the glamorous foreign object of his affections safely, and willingly, in his "custody."[59]

Unlike *Illegal Entry, A Lady Without Passport* was not marketed explicitly as a straight-from-the-files-of semi-documentary. Indeed, the film's relationship to "authenticity" shifted over the course of its production. Apparently, the original plan was to draw heavily on documentary techniques. Director Joseph H. Lewis recalled that Louis Mayer had envisioned the film being made together with immigration authorities, involving "no actors," and "all portable equipment," a prospect Lewis found exciting.[60] Ultimately, however, the filmmakers did not employ such "real-life" footage or other documentary conventions. Nevertheless, the finished picture retained many of its semi-documentary trappings. The opening credits thanked Immigration and Naturalization Service officials for their cooperation. The studio's publicity materials, meanwhile, emphasized the film's connection to "daily news headlines telling of the growing problem faced by the US Immigration Service in its attempt to halt illegal immigration." These materials also highlighted that producer Samuel Marx's "extensive study of official records" and two research trips to Cuba were integral to the making of the film.[61]

Indeed, the picture grew out of an ongoing interchange of documents and ideas between the studio and government authorities. In 1948, for example, MGM gave an early draft of the film's story to Ray Farrell and Walter Miller of the INS and Dean Schedler of the Attorney General's office. The film's plot, at that point—drawn from contemporary events—involved American pilots who started out smuggling

arms from the United States to Dominican exiles plotting Trujillo's overthrow from their base in Cuba, and then turned to smuggling European and Chinese aliens in the other direction. The studio reported that all three of the officials "expressed complete satisfaction with the line of the story." In particular, the three men admired the realism of MGM's story, agreeing "that many situations could have happened exactly as written."[62]

As it happened, however, events unfolding in the real world were rendering MGM's draft story obsolete. To make the film "entirely authentic," the filmmakers explained to the government officials, they now wanted to change the storyline to capitalize on the recent arrest and confession of a "daredevil" pilot by the name of William Murphy, who had played a crucial role in the complicated Cuba-Florida smuggling scheme. The impending trial of Murphy and co-conspirators, suggested the studio, "offers MGM an unprecedented opportunity to base a film on an adventure which will certainly merit space in newspapers and news weeklies throughout the nation."[63] The authorities were amenable to the new plot twist. Possibly, they felt that a flattering film was just what they needed to bolster their professional profile, given that, humiliatingly, the smuggling ring's leader, a Russian named Gregorio Simonovich (formerly an informant for the INS), remained frustratingly at large in Cuba.[64] In any event, the Miami office of the INS helpfully provided the studio with extensive reports on the case, which the studio then used to craft background materials and story outlines.

The studio, for its part, seemed delighted by how these government reports almost seemed able to author the script themselves, down to the characters involved. MGM's write-up of the "background and facts" gleaned from the INS documents noted, for example, that the star immigration inspector in Miami who had helped solve the Murphy case had the air of a classic superhero about him: he "is a crack shot, can do anything with his hands. I watched him change a flat tire on a car in less than five minutes, single handed, in the dark, without even a flashlight, and never get a single smear of dirt on his sleeve cuff."[65] Even better, the man looked like movie star Robert Mitchum and had a name almost too perfect to be true: his last name was Fullilove and, though his first name was Cecil, he went by Chuck. "A pretty incredible combination," the MGM writer observed.[66]

In a remarkable extension of the state-studio collaboration, the smuggler-pilot Murphy himself played a role in shaping the film from behind the scenes. In September 1949, producer Samuel Marx sent Murphy the latest draft of the script. Murphy read it closely and wrote copious detailed comments, "for the most part unessential but for purity," he explained in the note that accompanied the script when he sent it back to Marx. He noted, for example, that the small plane the smugglers flew would have no partition separating pilot from passengers, and he suggested minor changes to dialogue.[67] Murphy said nothing about why he was invested in the authenticity of MGM's picture (in which the pilot character's exploits played a fairly modest role), but his willingness to perform this editorial work underscores just how much authority on-screen depictions of events, however obviously fictionalized, could have. If the film was to be the public's view of the

underworld of Cuba-Florida alien smuggling, then not only the INS but also the convicted smuggler wanted a shot at shaping the narrative.

Ultimately, neither the complicated back story of Edward Murphy's smuggling career, nor the details of his sensational trial, made it into *A Lady Without Passport*. The film instead centers, as its title suggests, on the character of Marianne. This shift in storyline was perhaps because the studio was eager to capitalize on Lamarr's star power. Even though Lamarr's Austrian refugee character takes the film's center stage, so to speak, *A Lady Without Passport*, like *Illegal Entry*, expresses a deep ambivalance toward refugees, and uncertainty around what, if anything, distinguishes refugees from "illegal aliens." Marianne is fully prepared to violate US immigration law, and the film's plot revolves around the urgency of the authorities' mission to combat such violations. But she also makes a powerful case for the impossible position refugees occupy vis-à-vis legal regimes, an argument that co-exists uneasily with the film's law-and-order narrative. This critical perspective emerges most clearly in a scene after Pete rescues Marianne from the local cop who tries to arrest her for working without permission. Pete takes Marianne, still clad in her sparkly two-piece cigarette-girl outfit, back to his hotel. In an exchange with Pete about her near-arrest, Marianne articulates the collective predicament war refugees face. "For ten years," she says, "they've driven me and everyone like me around the world. We can't stay here. 'We have laws. Get out!' But where can I go? Now I'm in Cuba. I may stay, but I can't work. The law says, 'Don't earn your living or you'll be deported. Find your bread on the street!'" Pete attempts to calm her down and come on to her at the same time: "You live with anger. There are more pleasant companions." But when he comes up behind her and places his hands on her arms, she throws him off, sits down angrily on the bed, and turns to face him, putting her hand to her hip in a gesture of defiance. The motion serves to shift the fabric of her off-the-shoulder halter top such that a concentration-camp tattoo is revealed on her upper arm. She looks down at it, and then at Pete: "Another souvenir of the law. Buchenwald!" Pete backs off, chastened. "The law," both in Marianne's telling and in the person of Pete, does not come off looking admirable.

The law's capacity for putting refugees in an untenable position is driven home again in a later scene. Pete urges Marianne to reconsider her plan to be smuggled to the United States, noting that some migrants "wait to enter legally." Marianne tells him that getting where she needs to go is not a matter of patience. Her father, she explains, has been in the US for a decade but cannot help her enter legally, because he himself is unlawfully present in the United States. Marianne's story thus confronts viewers with the uncertainties about law, morality and deservingness that threaded through the era's debates about refugees.

 How much viewers are meant to take Marianne's side in the matter, however, remains uncertain. Her moral stature is called into question not only by the film's ultimate insistence on the righteousness of US border-guarding, but also by the presence of Lamarr herself, an ambiguous character in both her on- and off-screen personae. Lamarr was one of Hollywood's most famous European exiles, and the

parallels between Marianne and Lamarr—both glamorous Austrians fleeing to America—would have been obvious to anyone in the audience. The connection between actress and character is underscored by the fact that a painting of the very vessel with which she arrived in New York's harbor for the first time—the *Normandie*—hangs (unremarked) on the wall in the Gulf Stream Café. Indeed, the story of Lamarr's landing a contract with Louis Mayer while both were aboard that ship was a legend of both beneficent rescue of a lovely damsel and of fairy-tale success in Hollywood.[68] Marianne, too, may indeed be deserving of rescue and a fairy-tale ending. But the painting's positioning in the unsavory Gulf Stream Café, a hub of Havana's European criminal underworld, gestures as well to darker associations carried by the actress's European past. As a young actress, Lamarr became infamous for appearing nude and acting out sexual climax in the 1933 Czech film *Ecstasy*, which caused an uproar on its release and met with condemnation and censorship in the United States. This scandalous history made Lamarr permanently suspect, a celebrated Hollywood beauty who nevertheless remained marked as a dangerously sexualized foreigner.[69]

This tension imbued Lamarr's most famous femme fatale characters, which in turn would seem to cast doubt onto Marianne's virtue. Every viewer watching Lamarr as Marianne in *A Lady Without Passport* would have had in mind the image of the actress in her most recent role: Delilah, the exotic seductress who betrayed and unmanned the hero in Paramount's 1949 blockbuster *Samson and Delilah*.[70] Indeed, MGM went out of its way to link the two characters, exploiting the earlier film's success in its publicity as much as possible. The movie poster for *A Lady Without Passport,* with Lamarr in her form-fitting metallic cigarette-salesgirl outfit, clearly evoked Delilah's golden two-piece number. The idea that "Delilah" was present onscreen in *A Lady Without Passport* would have been obvious even without the film's trailer pitching the story as an encounter between Hodiak as a "super snooper with a soft heart" and Lamarr as the "delectable Delilah who cut him short!" The script, too, takes care to remind us of the danger inherent in Marianne/Lamarr's sexuality. "Never trust a beautiful woman," Palinov warns, when Pete catches sight of her in the Gulf Stream. And indeed, Pete's infatuation with Marianne nearly leads him to abandon his vital, patriotic job. That his feelings for her mirror Palinov's further serves (like Lempo's relationship with Anna, also described as "clever and dangerous," in *Illegal Entry*) to highlight Marianne's moral ambiguity, positioned as she is at the point of a love triangle with the smuggler on one side and the "I-man" on the other.

What of the five other foreigners on the plane with Marianne to Florida? Like Marianne, all of them are involved in a sinister alien smuggling underworld, and all are prepared to violate US law to enter the country. Are they so different from her? After we see them board the smugglers' small airplane in Cuba, the film cuts to the Miami INS office, where Chief Patrol Inspector Frank Westlake (James Craig), the officer in charge of the smuggling sting operation, is going over the intel on the Florida-bound group with an underling. Westlake holds a stack of portraits of the Florida-bound migrants, courtesy of an undercover quick-sketch artist whom the

accommodating Cuban police cleverly stationed in front of the Gulf Stream Café. Portrait by portrait, Westlake announces each of the migrants' foreign-sounding names and the attribute which marks him or her as clearly "undesirable" and thus excludable under US law. Each would-be immigrant in the plane, in other words, is not only entering the country in a clandestine manner—a misdemeanor or felony at the time, depending on whether it was a repeat offense—but is clearly marked as a distinct threat to the well-being of the nation. First portrait: "Dimitri Matthias, seventeen. Tubercular. Refused visa on account of contagious disease." Second one: "Asa Sestina. Forty-seven. Naturalized in 1929, stripped of US citizenship and deported in 1938" for involvement in "the rackets" (i.e., a gangster). Third one: "Elizabeth Alonescu, 35. The lady doesn't believe in paying duty on the jewelry she brings into the country." When Westlake comes to Marianne's portrait (as glamorous an image as any publicity still of Lamarr), however, he gets as far as reciting her name, but is interrupted by Pete's sudden entry into the room. We are left hanging. Was Westlake about to announce some hitherto unrevealed reason that Marianne—about whose back story we know very little, after all—is an "undesirable alien" like the others? Or was he going to recount her experience in Buchenwald and thus suggest that she has some claim on our, and the law's, sympathy? This uncertainty underscores that the line between Marianne and her co-passengers is a thin one at best. The distinction between "deserving refugee" and "undesirable illegal alien" hangs on the thread of Marianne's chance relationship with Pete, the INS inspector who sees her as very desirable indeed. Unlike Marianne, the other passengers either die a violent death or are captured, and, presumably, not given the same opportunity for redemption that Marianne will (we assume) be.

Film scholar Diane Negra observes that the characters Lamarr played who were located outside US borders tended to be dangerous, exotic temptresses. Those she played inside the space of the nation, by contrast, were inclined to be respectable and dull. Thus, the roles in which Lamarr was cast reinscribed the geographic divide central to her own narrative arc, in which she began as a sexually wild young woman in European film, but was later "domesticated" by Hollywood's wholesome values and restrictive production code, which served to strictly limit displays of sexuality.[71] *A Lady Without Passport* encapsulates this geographic trajectory within its own narrative. After the film's action moves from Havana's moody foreign streets to the United States, the exotic Marianne appears to be wholly tamed. In the film's final scene, deep in the Florida Everglades, Marianne stands on a wooden dock between Palinov and Pete, caught in the middle of their showdown. Palinov urges her to return with him to Cuba. "We'll make it the next time," he says. "He'll arrest you, and you will be jailed and deported." Pete confirms that he must arrest her. "I have no choice, Marianne," he says. Faced with the choice between speeding away on a boat with the villain and returning to foreign territory to try her hand a second time at illegal entry into the United States, or remaining in the United States with the upstanding Pete (forgiven, it seems, for deceiving her) and facing the immigration enforcement music, Marianne opts for the latter. In this moment of submission to US law, the INS, and generic cinematic

conventions about the power of love, Marianne looks utterly demure, nothing like the defiant woman in the cigarette-seller's outfit who bared her Buchenwald tattoo. Being within the nation's borders, it seems, in combination with the love of a loyal American, has acted upon her, and she has proven herself redeemable.

If the film's depiction of its own geographic universe thus highlights the liminal space occupied by its central character, it also produces a spatial counternarrative to the triumphant inevitability of the script's action. As Chief Inspector Westlake narrates the story of the aliens in the portraits in the scene described above, he conveys brisk certainty about the mission at hand, and indeed viewers can guess who is likely to prevail. But throughout the scene, Westlake is seated in front of an enormous map that bears witness to a rather more complicated reality than the one the film's narrative arc insists on. The map depicts the region that makes up Westlake's beat: the empty expanse of the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean, rimmed by the US coastline from Texas to Georgia, as well as Cuba.[72] Like the map in the office of immigration authorities in *Illegal Entry,* it is simultaneously a reminder of the US government's vigilance and determination to control its borders as well as of the difficulty of the border-guarding enterprise.[73] There would not be a smuggling business, after all, if those borders were impenetrable.[74] Unlike the map we see in *Illegal Entry,* however, there are no crisply defined lines here. This time the map, like the film's narrative itself, is centered on the watery borderlands of the Caribbean and the Gulf. The image suggests that the narrative of migration, and of immigration enforcement, is not always one of clearly demarcated lines between here and there, good and bad, refugee and illegal alien. That the film's action culminates in a the remote, swampy wilderness of the Everglades intensifies the sense that the legal and moral terrain the film occupies is a morass, providing a dramatic visual backdrop that calls into question the tidy ending provided by the script.

Authenticity and erasure

In their tales of sinister "alien smuggling" and limited redemption for selected beautiful European women, *Illegal Entry* and *A Lady Without Passport* represent carefully curated versions of authenticity and government authority. Yet in their efforts to control the meaning of the refugee story and its relationship to US border guarding, they present some telling omissions. Indeed, by looking at the narratives that the two films obscured, we can observe some fascinating contrasts. The aliens whose stories these films explored were European. To be sure, "illegal entry" of European aliens was in the news during this period, and government officials (as their willing participation in these film projects suggests) were concerned about the supposed dangers posed by unauthorized European border-crossers.[75] Nowhere in *Illegal Entry*, however, do we see evidence of the traversing of the Mexico-US border that was fast becoming of far more pressing concern in the era, namely the migration of Mexicans themselves. We do see Mexicans in some minor background roles, but not as migrants, authorized or otherwise. This is not because Hollywood was uninterested in the dramatic potential of this phenom-

enon. In the same year that *Illegal Entry* came out, MGM's *Border Incident* hit the theaters. Directed by Anthony Mann, *Border Incident* featured Ricardo Montalban as a Mexican government investigator working with his US counterpart, played by George Murphy, to bust up an alien smuggling scheme on the Baja California/ California border. The distinction between the narrative in Mann's film and the stories told in *Illegal Entry* or *A Lady Without Passport* is stark. Mexicans receive sympathetic treatment in *Border Incident*, and US law enforcement does not come off looking particularly good. The aliens here, however, are not refugees. They are workers. And however sympathetic the film is to the Mexican workers it depicts, they are clearly marked as "illegal."**76** Indeed, the film reflected and appeared in a moment in which US authorities were ratcheting up their apprehensions and deportations of Mexicans traversing traditional northbound routes to work in the United States, and in which the notion that these migrants were "illegals," or "wetbacks," became lodged firmly in the nation's discourse.[77] The different worlds of the films throw into sharp relief the emerging divide in the political imagination between "refugees" and undocumented immigrant labor. The line between refugees and illegal aliens may be blurry in *Illegal Entry* and *A Lady Without Passport*, but for the Mexican migrants of *Border Incident*, the divide between legality and illegality is capricious but absolute.

If *Illegal Entry* erases Mexican migration from the drama of the region, sketching out a national and regional drama purely centered around European war refugees and ignoring questions of migrant labor, *A Lady Without Passport*, similarly, erases the ethnic other from its universe. It was clear to the filmmakers from the government reports they were relying on—as well as from the press—that, while indeed some of the smuggling in the region was of European aliens, much of it also consisted in the traffic in Chinese migrants, who were still, even after World War II, largely barred from entering the United States. There were, of course, millions of Chinese displaced by World War II and then the revolution in 1949. Unlike Europeans, however, Chinese were less likely to constitute, in US policies or political imagination, refugees. Thus they did not even have access to the liminal legal status of "potential refugee," a category to which at least some Europeans did have access.[78] The real-life events on which *A Lady Without Passport* was based makes this evident. Most of the aliens Murphy smuggled into the United States were, in fact, Chinese, as the INS reports that the filmmakers drew on in to create their script detail.[79] The film transposes the story onto Hedy Lamarr, however, through whom it narrates the possibility that some—a select few, perhaps, but some nonetheless—European immigrants, even those determined to enter the country without permission, might be deserving of admission.

To be sure, neither *Illegal Entry* nor *A Lady Without Passport* resolves the uncertainties around the status of European refugees. The sympathy and welcome accorded Anna and Marianne are provisional, mediated through the deeply gendered tropes of heterosexual romance. Other Europeans in the films who share their desire for safe haven are not so fortunate. The question of who is cast as a refugee, and who is not, remains at the whim of the scriptwriters—as it did, in real

life, of the government authorities whose own narratives were so intertwined with these Hollywood fantasies. This conceptual struggle continues in the present. It is, of course, not simply a matter of representation, but of life and death. The fate of migrants from many nations seeking asylum at the nation's southern border, in particular over the last several years and at the current moment, rests in large part on the determination—in popular understanding, in media portrayals, in policy and law, in official hearings—of whether they are threatening invaders or people deserving of safe haven.

Notes

1. Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception," in Meenakshi Gigi Durham and Douglas M. Kellner, eds., *Media and Cultural Studies: KeyWorks* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2001), 75.

2. *Illegal Entry*, directed by Frederick de Cordova (Universal-International Pictures, 1949).

3. "Showman's Manual," file "Illegal Entry," Box 36, Pressbook Collection, University of Southern California Cinematic Arts Library (hereafter USC-CAL).

4. January 26, 1949, file 12854, box 442, Illegal Entry collection (hereafter IE), USC-CAL; on the shooting along the Mexican border and cooperation with the US government see also "Story Plans Develop Rapidly at Warners; Rooney Slate Expands," *Los Angeles Times,* Dec. 10, 1948.

5. E. Maurice Adler to B.B. Kahane, January 22, 1948; B.B. Kahane to Hal Hode, January 23, 1948; Hal Hode to William Coblenz, January 28, 1948; Irving Cummings to W.A. Carmichael, February 3, 1948; William Coblenz to Watson Miller, February 6, 1948; file 56234/356, Entry 9, Records of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, Record Group 85, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC (hereafter RG 85, NARA).

6. *A Lady Without Passport,* directed by Joseph H. Lewis (Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 1950).

7. "Hedy Lamarr as 'Lady Without Passport,'" *New York Times*, August 4, 1950.

8. Leonard Dinnerstein, *America and the Survivors of the Holocaust* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 115; Maddalena Marinari, *Unwanted: Italian and Jewish Mobilization Against Restrictive Immigration Laws* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2020), 103; Aristide Zolberg, *A Nation by Design: Immigration Policy in the Fashioning of America* (New York & Cambridge, MA, Russell Sage Foundation and Harvard University Press), 305.

9. Although there was no real legal framework for refugee admission until the postwar era, there were, however, some early precedents for treating those understood to be fleeing persecution differently within US immigration law. On US policies regarding providing haven for refugees in earlier eras, see Carl Bon Tempo, *Americans at the Gate: The United States and Refugees During the Cold War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 15; Julian Lim, "Immigration, Asylum, and Citizenship: A More Holistic Approach," *California Law Review* 101.4 (2013): 1013-1078; Marinari, *Unwanted,* 36-42; Yael Schacher, "Exceptions to Exclusion: A Prehistory of Asylum in the United States, 1880-1980" (PhD diss., Harvard University, 2015).

10. Displaced Persons Act of June 25, 1948 (62 Stat. 1009) and Displaced Persons Act of June 16, 1950 (64 Stat. 219).

11. Dinnerstein, *America and the Survivors of the Holocaust,* 176. On the Displaced Persons legislation and the debates around them, see, in addition to Dinnerstein's thorough exploration, Bon Tempo, *Americans at the Gate,* 21-26; Roger Daniels, *Guarding the Golden Door: American Immigration Policy and Immigrants Since 1882* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2004), chap. 5; Libby Garland, *After They Closed the Gates: Jewish Illegal Immigration to the United States, 1921-1965* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014), 188-196; Gil Loescher and John A. Scanlan, *Calculated Kindness: Refugees and America's Half-Open Door, 1945-Present* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1998), chap. 1; Marinari, *Unwanted,* 98-110; Daniel J. Tichenor, *Dividing Lines: The Politics of Immigration Control in America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 181-188; Zolberg, *A Nation by Design,* 304-308. In 1951, the fledgling United Nations would produce a treaty declaring that refugees were people with a "fear of persecution" in their home countries and who could not be protected by those countries, and that signatories to the treaty had an obligation to recognize their claims to asylum. The UN definition is still the basis for the one much of the international community, including the United States, recognizes today.

12. *Casablanca,* directed by Michael Curtiz (1942); *The Search,* directed by Fred Zinnemann (1948). On *The Search*'s portrayal of war refugees, see Anna Holian, "Hidden in Plain Sight: Jewish Children and the Holocaust in Fred Zinnemann's *The Search* (1948)," *Film History* 31, no. 2 (2019): 116-43, https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2979/filmhistory.31.2.05; Sharif Gemie and Louise Rees. "Representing and Reconstructing Identities in the Postwar World: Refugees, UNRRA, and Fred Zinnemann's Film, *The Search* (1948)," *International Review of Social History* 56, no. 3 (2011): 441–73, doi:10.1017/S0020859011000198. Interestingly, Fred Zinnemann had also directed *Forbidden Passage* (1941), a short film about refugees and alien smuggling for the MGM series of shorts *Crime Does Not Pay* that anticipates many of the themes of the films I consider here. (Thanks to Anna Holian for this reference, and to Jacob Fuentes for pointing me to *The Search.*) On short film projects that the International Refugee Organization and voluntary agencies produced in the immediate postwar era to publicize their work and the plight of displaced persons, see Gerard Daniel Cohen, *In War's Wake: Europe's Displaced Persons in the Postwar Order* (London: Oxford University Press, 2011), 74; Rachel Beth Deblinger, "'In a World Still Trembling': American Jewish Philanthropy and the Shaping of Holocaust Survivor Narratives in Postwar America (1945-1953)," (PhD diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 2014), 103-109.

13. Indeed, in *Illegal Entry,* the characters use terms like "cargo," "passengers," or other circumlocutions that avoid the issue of classifying the story's foreigners, although the immigration officials whose speeches introduce the film use the term "aliens."

14. On Hollywood's historical role in propaganda production, see, for example, James E. Combs and Sara T. Combs, *Film Propaganda and American Politics: An Analysis and Filmography* (New York & London: Garland Publishing, 1994); Thomas Doherty, *Projections of War: Hollywood, American Culture, and World War II* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993); Jennifer Fay, *Theaters of Occupation: Hollywood and the Reeducation of Postwar Germany* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008); Clayton R. Koppes and Gregory D. Black, *Hollywood Goes to War: How Politics, Profits and Propaganda*

Shaped World War II Movies (New York: The Free Press, 1987); Thomas Schatz, *Boom and Bust: American Cinema in the 1940s* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), esp. chap. 7; Tony Shaw, *Hollywood's Cold War* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007); Peter H. Smith, *Talons of the Eagle: Dynamics of US-Latin American Relations* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 82-85. Shaw's exploration of "state-private networks" that characterized the "grey" propaganda media productions of the Cold War era is relevant here, though he does not explore films about immigration or human smuggling. Shaw, *Hollywood's Cold War,* 4-5. On particular government agencies' active involvement with the worlds of film and television, see, for example, Anita Huizar-Hernández, "Bordering Reality: Dramatizing Policing the North American Borderlands in American Television," in *Border Policing: A History of Enforcement and Evasion in North America,* ed. Holly M. Karibo and George T. Díaz (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2020), 252-268; Tricia Jenkins, *The CIA in Hollywood: How the Agency Shapes Film and Television* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2016); John Sbardellati, *J. Edgar Hoover Goes to the Movies: The FBI and the Origins of Hollywood's Cold War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012); Simon Willmetts, *In Secrecy's Shadow: The OSS and CIA in Hollywood Cinema, 1941-1979* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016).

15. On the genre of semi-documentary, particularly in relation to film noir, see R. Barton Palmer, "Borderings: The Film Noir Semi-Documentary," in *A Companion to Film Noir,* ed. Andrew Spicer and Helen Hanson (Malden, MA and Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), 125-141.

16. Ashley Johnson Bavery, *Bootlegged Aliens: Immigration Politics on America's Northern Border* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020); Grace Peña Delgado, *Making the Chinese Mexican: Global Migration, Localism and Exclusion in the US-Mexico Borderlands* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012), chap. 3; Patrick Ettinger, *Imaginary Lines: Border Enforcement and the Origins of Undocumented Immigration, 1882-1930* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2000); Garland, *After They Closed the Gates*; Madeline Y. Hsu, *Dreaming of Gold, Dreaming of Home: Transnationalism and Migration Between the United States and South China, 1882-1943* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), chap. 3; Erika Lee, *At America's Gates: Chinese Immigration During the Exclusion Era, 1882-1943 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003);* Julian Lim, *Porous Borders: Multiracial Migrations and the Law in the US-Mexico Borderlands* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017), chap. 3; Marinari, *Unwanted,* 88-93; Adam McKeown, *Melancholy Order: Asian Migration and the Globalization of Borders* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), chaps. 8-10; Mae Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), chaps. 1-2; Elliott Young, *Alien Nation: Chinese Migration in the Americas from the Coolie Era Through World War II* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014), chaps. 3-5.

17. For musings on the question of cinema's claims to "reality" in the realm of documentary filmmaking, even while remaining essentially "mimetic distractions and counterfeitings," see Bill Nichols, *Representing Reality* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1991), 3. Film theory and criticism continues to debate film's relationship to reality—as its reflection, its generator, and its foil. For more on this debate, see, for example, Richard Rushton, *The Realities of Film: Theories of Filmic Reality* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013).

18. See John Torpey, "The Great War and the Birth of the Modern Passport System," in *Documenting Individual Identity: The Development of State Practices in the Modern World*, ed. Jane Caplan and John Torpey (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 256-70; Aristide R. Zolberg, "Global Movements, Global Walls: Responses to Migration, 1885-1925" in *Global History and Migrations,* ed. Wang Gungwu (New York: Westview Press, 1997), 279-80 and Zolberg, *A Nation by Design,* 240-41.

19. See, for example, Lee Grieveson, Esther Sonnet and Peter Stanfield, eds., *Mob Culture: Hidden Histories of the American Gangster Film* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2005); Jonathan Munby, *Public Enemies, Public Heroes: Screening the Gangster from* Little Caesar *to* Touch of Evil (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009); Jack Shadoian, *Dreams and Dead Ends: The American Gangster Film* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003); Brian Neve, *Film and Politics in America: A Social Tradition* (New York: Routledge, 1992). There are a few notable exceptions to the neglect of these films, particularly in explorations of unauthorized Mexican immigration and the US-Mexico border. See, for example, Jonathan Auerbach, *Dark Borders: Film Noir and American Citizenship* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), chap. 4 and "Noir Citizenship: Anthony Mann's 'Border Incident,' *Cinema Journal* 47, no. 4 (Summer 2008): 102-120; Dominique Brégent-Heald, "Dark Limbo: Film Noir and the North American Borders," *Journal of American Culture* 29, no. 2 (June 2006): 125-138; Camilla Fojas, *Border Bandits: Hollywood on the Southern Fontier* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2008), esp. chap. 3; and David R. Maciel and Maria Rosa Garcia-Acevedo, "The Celluloid Immigrant: The Narrative Films of Mexican Immigration," in *Culture Across Borders: Mexican Immigration and Popular Culture*, ed. David R. Maciel and María Herrera-Sobek (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1998).

20. My own work falls into this category, as do the other works that explore the history of unauthorized immigration listed in footnote 11, above. To this list one might also add Kelly Lytle Hernández, *Migra! A History of the US Border Patrol* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010) and S. Deborah Kang, *The INS on the Line: Making Immigration Law on the US-Mexico Border, 1917-1954* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017).

21. Roger Daniels, *Coming to America: A History of Immigration and Ethnicity in American Life* (New York: HarperCollins, 1990), 295; Tichenor, *Dividing Lines,* 155-56; Zolberg, *A Nation by Design,* 268-69.

22. Cybelle Fox, *Three Worlds of Relief: Race, Immigration, and the American Welfare State, from the Progressive Era to the New Deal* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 124-27; Gardner Jackson, "Doak the Deportation Chief," *Nation,* March 18, 1931; Kang, *The INS on the Line,* 63-64; Ngai, *Impossible Subjects,* 75-80.

23. Francisco Balderrama and Raymond Rodriguez, *Decade of Betrayal: Mexican Repatriation in the 1930s* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1995), 49–71, 97–125; Abraham Hoffman, *Unwanted Mexican Americans in the Great Depression: Repatriation Pressures, 1929–1939* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1974), 33–35, 120–21; Kang, *The INS on the Line*, 64-67; Ngai, *Impossible Subjects,* 71-75; George Sánchez, *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture, and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900–1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), chap. 10; and Zaragosa Vargas, *Proletarians of the North: A History of Mexican Industrial Workers in Detroit and the Midwest, 1917–1933* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), chap. 5; Zolberg, *A Nation by Design,* 269-270.

24. E. P. Hutchinson, *Legislative History of American Immigration Policy, 1798-1965* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981), 228-229; 241.

25. Hernández, *Migra!,* 104.

26. On the "Gestapo spy" films of the period, which likewise reflected deeply xenophobic fears around alien infiltration, see Auerbach, *Dark Borders,* chap. 1.

27. David Wallace, *Exiles in Hollywood* (Pompton Plains, NJ: Limelight Editions, 2006). The fact that studios had so many foreign actors to hire made for even more possibilities for "authentically" representing foreigners in movies, which movies like *Illegal Entry* and *A Lady Without Passport* made use of, albeit, like the industry had often done, freely swapping in other national identities for the actors' actual ones, and letting their accents just vaguely signify "foreignness."

28. Combs and Combs, *Film Propaganda and American Politics*, 123-125. Relatedly, on the FBI's relationship to Hollywood during the early Cold War era, see Sbardellati, *J. Edgar Hoover Goes to the Movies.*

29. On the move to the Department of Justice and the Border Patrol's expansion, see Hernández, *Migra!,* 104-106.

30. Sound Recording 85.17-85.21.A (1941?), Records of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, Record Group 85, National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.

31. Schatz, *Boom and Bust*, 139. Schatz observes here that some in the US government advocated for the movie industry, too, to be fully converted to the war effort, as were the movie industries of Germany and Italy. For more on the relationship between Hollywood and the war effort, see Doherty, *Projections of War.*

32. Schatz, *Boom and Bust,* 248.

33. Ibid, 222-23.

34. Ibid, 150.

35. Thomas Doherty, "Documenting the 1940s," chap. 12 in Schatz, *Boom and Bust*, 397-404. Doherty also discusses wartime government-studio collaborations around military training films, propaganda films, and combat reports. Ibid, 405-413.

36. Schatz, *Boom and Bust*, 139-142; 222-24; 244-49; Robert Sklar, *Movie-Made America: A Cultural History of American Movies* (New York: Vintage Books, 2nd ed., 1994), 150-51.

37. For example, E. Maurice ("Buddy") Adler, the producer making one of the many pitches for semi-documentary alien smuggling films in 1948, had wartime experience working on documentaries in the military. B. B. Kahane to Hal Hode, January 23, 1948, file 56234/356, Entry 9, RG 85, NARA.

38. Palmer, "Borderings: The Film Noir Semi-Documentary," 134.

39. "The House on 92nd Street," American Film Institute Catalog of Feature Films, American Film Institute, https://catalog.afi.com/Catalog/MovieDetails/24454?cxt=filmography; "FBI Filmed Nazis with a Telephoto," *New York Times,* Sep. 13, 1945.

40. E. Maurice Adler to B.B. Kahane, January 22, 1948; Irving Cummings to W.A. Carmichael, February 3, 1948, file 56234/356, Entry 9, RG 85, NARA.

41. Schatz, *Boom and Bust,* 160-164; Sklar, *Movie-Made America*, 272-73.

42. Shaw, *Hollywood's Cold War,* 44-46; Sklar, *Movie-Made America*, 256-68; Reynold Humphries, *Hollywood's Blacklists: A Political and Cultural History* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press)*,* chap. 4.

43. Kathryn Cramer Brownell, "'Movietime USA.': The Motion Picture Industry Council and the Politicization of Hollywood in Postwar America, *The Journal of Policy History* 24, no. 3 (2012): 518-542.

44. The *LA Daily News* griped that "for at least half a reel, audiences find themselves listening to government authorities like Atty. Gen. Tom Clark, and it takes some time to shake off the impression that one has walked in on a newsreel." Review of *Illegal Entry*, *LA Daily News,* June [?] 1949, file "Illegal Entry," Motion Picture Association of America, Production Code Administration records (hereafter MPA-PCA), Margaret Herrick Library, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, Beverly Hills, California (hereafter MHL).

45. The film seems to have fudged a bit here with the real world's war bride timeline, however, as the War Brides Act was only enacted on December 28, 1945 (59 Stat. 659).

46. Review of *Illegal Entry*, *Motion Picture Daily,* June 9, 1949 and Review of *Illegal Entry* in *LA Daily News,* June [?] 1949, file "Illegal Entry," MPA-PCA, MHL.

47. "I-Men," *Newsweek*, June 27, 1949.

48. "Smugglers' Crimes Told in Feature," *LA Times*, June 13, 1949; Review of *Illegal Entry*, *Motion Picture Daily,* June 9, 1949.

49. On the trope of the concentration camp tattoo as a visual motif identifying concentration camp survivors in visual media postwar, see Deblinger, "'In a World Still Trembling'," 119, 272. Auschwitz was the only camp to tattoo numbers on prisoners' arms; some camps also tattooed "KL" for *Konzentrationslager.* The tattoo on the back reading "Dachau" was thus an invention of the filmmakers, and perhaps speaks to their

sense that they needed to spell out the name of a camp in order for the tattoo to "tell its story." United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, "Tattoos and Numbers: The System of Identifying Prisoners at Auschwitz," *Holocaust Encyclopedia*, https://encyclopedia.ushmm. org/content/en/article/tattoos-and-numbers-the-system-of-identifying-prisoners-at-auschwitz.

50. Review of *Illegal Entry, Hollywood Citizen News*, June 14, 1949, file "Illegal Entry," MPA-PCA, MHL.

51. At least as far as European war brides were concerned, the War Brides Act of 1945, which allowed servicemen to bring their foreign wives to the United States outside of immigration quotas, was fairly uncontoversial. Many Asian women, however, remained excluded by the law. David Reimers, *Still the Golden Door: The Third World Comes to America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), 21-22; Daniels, *Guarding the Golden Door*, 94, 97; Philip E. Wolgin and Irene Bloemraad, "'Our Gratitude to Our Soldiers": Military Spouses, Family Re-Unification, and Postwar Immigration Reform," *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 41, no. 1 (2010): 27-60, http://www.jstor.org/stable/40785025.

52. Dominique Brégent-Heald observes in her study of what she calls "border noirs"— the noir films that play out on the Mexican and Canadian borders with the United States, rather than in the more conventional noir spaces of urban streets—that "filmmakers frequently use maps or establishing shots of the landscape to insert the audience into the geographic specificity presented on screen. The mapping of territory indicates the need to control space, or be controlled by it." The maps thus call attention to the geopolitical backdrop, the United States struggling to assert its claims to control over space in the shifting terrain of the postwar world. Brégent-Heald, "Dark Limbo," 126.

53. "Showman's Manual," file "Illegal Entry," Box 36, Pressbook Collection, USC-CAL.

54. "World Premiere of Illegal Entry," file 12747, box 453, IE, USC-CAL.

55. US Congress, Senate, *Congressional Record*, 81st Cong., 1st sess., June 6, 8, 1949, Vol. 95, pt. 6, 7224; 7397.

56. Phil Gerard to Al Horwitz, press release, June 7, 1949, file 12747, box 453, IE, USC-CAL.

57. Leo M. Cadison to William Gordon, November 23, 1948, file 05364, box 197, IE, USC-CAL.

58. Herman Kass to [Charley] Simonelli, June 9, 1949 and Alfred L. Mendelsohn to Charley Simonelli, June 9, 1949, file 12747, box 453, IE, USC-CAL.

59. Louis Mayer had lured Lamarr into the production with promises that it would be even bigger than the recent blockbuster *Samson and Delilah* (Paramount, 1949), which Lamarr had starred in. But *A Lady Without Passport* met with mixed reviews, and its box-office take was poor enough that MGM canceled its contract with Lamarr for two more films. Stephen Michael Shearer, *Beautiful: The Life of Hedy Lamarr* (New York: Thomas Dunne Books/St. Martin's Press, 2010), chap. 16, Kindle.

60. Quoted in Ruth Barton, *Hedy Lamarr: The Most Beautiful Woman in Film* (Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press, 2010), 178. At least one other person at the studio, too, suggested that a few days of filming immigration authorities at work in Miami, and attending the court trial of a suspected alien smuggler, would produce excellent material for inclusion in the film. "'The Undesirables': Some Background and Facts," n.a., November 11, 1948, 14 and 32, f.L. 170, Turner/MGM scripts, MHL. It is unclear who authored this document (cited hereafter as "Background"). It may have been produced by the studio's research department. On the work of Hollywood's research departments, see George F. Custen, "Hollywood and the Research Department," in *Why Docudrama? Fact-Fiction on Film and TV*, ed. Alan Rosenthal (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1999), 133-145.

61. MGM Pressbook, file "A Lady Without Passport," Core Collections Files-Clippings, MHL.

62. "Background," 15.

63. Ibid, 16.

64. "Smuggling Leader 'Shanghaied' to U.S.," *New York Times*, Nov. 6, 1951. In 1949, Simonovich seems to have been arrested by Cuban authorities in Havana, but US officials claimed that the Cubans had released him. "Alien Smuggling Leader Named," *New York Times,* June 24, 1950. The immigration officials in Florida may also have felt under particular pressure by changes that were reshaping the expanding INS, such as a recent reorganization that moved the agency's District 6 headquarters from Atlanta to Miami.

65. "Background," 4.

66. Ibid, 3. In the event, Hodiak's character in the film was a sort of amalgam of Fullilove and his boss, Frank Hornyak, described as "stocky, swarthy," and the Hungarian-speaking son of immigrants. Ibid, 4.

67. Edward W. Murphy to Samuel Marx, September 26, 1949, f.L 193, *A Lady Without Passport,* Turner-MGM Scripts, MHL. Murphy served ten months in the federal penitentiary in Atlanta for his smuggling activities, but was under indictment once again for similar exploits when he turned up dead in Lake Okeechobee—the very lake the smuggler's plane flies over in the film—in January 1953. "Smuggler's Body Found in Fla. Lake," *Schenectady Gazette,* Jan. 16, 1953. This is the very lake that his fictional counterpart flies over in the climatic chase in the film.

68. Barton, *Hedy Lamarr,* 61-64; Shearer, *Beautiful*, chap. 17; Diane Negra observes that Lamarr's roles often reprised the trope of benevolent male rescue. Diane Negra, *Off-White Hollywood: American Culture and Ethnic Female Stardom* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 22.

69. Barton, *Hedy Lamarr*, 1, 64; Shearer, *Beautiful*, chaps. 4 and 5. A recent documentary about Lamarr also explores this theme. *Bombshell,* directed by Alexandra Dean (Zeitgeist Films, 2017).

70. *Samson and Delilah* was 1950's top-grossing film. Barton, *Hedy Lamarr,* 174.

71. Negra, *Off-White Hollywood*, 104. On Hollywood's Production Code Administration, see Gregory D. Black, *Hollywood Censored: Morality Codes, Catholics, and the Movies* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Thomas Doherty, *Hollywood's Censor: Joseph I. Breen and the Production Code Admnistration* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007). If Lamarr was always pushing at the boundaries of the sexually permissible, with both her serial marriages and divorces and her devouring, delectable Delilah-ness a titillating aspect of her glamor, she never—thanks to the production code—was truly able to cross the lines of respectability.

72. Miami was the headquarters of the newly reorganized INS district 6. See https://www.archives.gov/research/guide-fed-records/groups/085.html. Filmmakers knew this. The author of MGM's research background for the film explained, "[District Director Walter Miller's] territory (Sixth District) covers our borders for 2,371 miles. It begins part way up the coast of Georgia and runs clear around Florida and west across the Gulf past New Orleans. It is the duty of Mr. Miller and his men to prevent all smuggling of aliens by any means, through air or water, across these boundaries." "Background," 2-3.

73. *A Lady Without Passport*, most of which takes place in Cuba, illustrated just how much border-guarding required the United States to move its policing into the international realm. Diane Negra makes the related point that Lamarr was a figure who helped to fashion a narrative of US interventionism in the postwar years. Negra, *Off-White Hollywood,* 107-09.

74. The background document for the film remarks on the challenge the INS District Director Walter Miller faced in his border-guarding operations for the Gulf region. "To do this work, he has a staff of 59 men." "Background," 3.

75. For more contemporary news coverage highlighting the unauthorized entry of Europeans, in addition to the coverage of Simonovich's activities cited in note 58 above, see, for example, "Aliens Smuggled in by Air at $500 Each; Ring Smashed," *Daily Boston Globe,* Dec. 7, 1949; "U.S. Hits at 2 Rings in Alien Smuggling," *New York Times,* June 24,

1950. News coverage also reflected fears that even many of the people entering under the new Displaced Persons legislation were "illegal." See, for example, "Half of D.P.'s in U.S. Called 'Illegal,'" *Washington Post*, Feb. 4, 1950.

76. For compelling readings of *Border Incident'*s portrayal—and interrogation—of the "illegal" status of the Mexican laborers in the film, see Auerbach, *Dark Borders,* 125-142 and Auerbach, "Noir Citizenship."

77. Hernández, *Migra!,* 172-82; Joseph Nevins, *Operation Gatekeeper: The Rise of the 'Illegal Alien' and the Making of the US-Mexico Boundary* (New York and London: Routledge, 2002), 27-28; Ngai, *Impossible Subjects,* 89, 147-53.

78. Leonard Dinnerstein discusses postwar refugee advocates' and policy's focus on Europeans rather than Asians or Africans. Dinnerstein, *America and the Survivors of the Holocaust,* 124. On the general European-centeredness of postwar refugee policy, see also Bon Tempo, *Americans at the Gate,* 5, 59, 86. Mae Ngai observes that Chinese immigrants, despite the World-War II era repeal of Chinese Exclusion, came to be seen after the the Revolution of 1949 as potential political threats. Ngai, *Impossible Subjects,* 203. On how and when Chinese migrants were defined as "refugees" post-World-War II, see also Laura Madokoro, *Elusive Refuge: Chinese Migrants in the Cold War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016).

79. Frank Hornyak to Officers, Miami Sector, April 14, 1948, 3-4; 7-8; Frank Hornyak to Officers, Miami Sector, May 11, 1948, 3-8; both appended to "Background."

BOOK REVIEWS

Editorial note: Book reviews are lightly edited for clarity and typographical errors.

A FIELD GUIDE TO THE POETRY OF THEODORE ROETHKE. By William Barillas, ed. Athens: Ohio University Press, 2020.

Throughout much of his literary career, Theodore Roethke was considered a preeminent twentieth-century American poet, likened by his contemporaries to T.S. Eliot and even hailed as a successor to Walt Whitman. Poets of Roethke's generation bridged the historical transition from traditional patterned forms to free verse, and his own writing reflects that trajectory. With essays by forty-four contributors encompassing poems from seven major collections, *A Field Guide to the Poetry of Theodore Roethke* reassesses the magnitude of his contribution to American letters. In aggregate, this eclectic collection of essayists brings a variety of theoretical and philosophical perspectives—ranging from Romanticism to pastoral, Judeo-Christian thought, classical mythology, and even Eastern religion (e.g. Taoism)—that add nuance and complexity to the discussion of Roethke's poetics and our appreciation of his work.

The manuscript is organized chronologically, progressing through Roethke's collections in order of publication from *Open House* in 1941 to *The Far Field* in 1964. This arrangement is conducive to appreciating development of Roethke's mature style as his writing gravitated toward free verse. The book's embrace of formal analysis of verse is a contribution in itself, and the comprehensive reconsideration of his distinctive poetics is a valuable addition to Roethke studies. In fact, the volume offers a timely corrective by re-emphasizing elements of poetic form, a central critical concern for generations that has gradually waned. In fact, each essay offers a close reading of a single poem, often examining the impact of formal elements while reappraising the poet's craft in terms of new directions in literary criticism ranging from feminist to ecocritical, for instance. To his credit, the editor does not privilege any one approach, evenhandedly juxtaposing a variety of theoretical frameworks such as feminist or ecocritical perspectives. As Edward Hirsch describes in the Foreword, the volume's title evokes an underlying ecological metaphor: "We think of a field guide as a manual to help us identify things in their natural environments… This guidebook leads us down the different pathways of his imagination. It enables us to see him whole." (*xiii*)

Editor William Barillas, author of *The Midwestern Pastoral: Place and Landscape in Literature of the American Heartland* (Ohio University Press, 2006) which also addresses Roethke in depth, has assembled an impressive array of essayists representing a wide range of critical perspectives conveying a host of fresh insights into the poet's craft. While many contributors are established academics teaching at colleges and universities across the country, the roster of scholars includes others teaching and writing outside of the U.S. in Canada, Germany, Hong Kong, Ireland, and Spain – as well as a cadre specialists affiliated with the Society for the Study of Midwestern Literature. Particularly masterful chapters include several by prominent Roethke scholars such as Walter Kalaidjian, Jay Parini, and Bernard W. Quetchenbach. In "The Ecological Visions

of 'The Far Field,'" for example, Quechenbach concludes that "Roethke's ecological mysticism emphasizes horizontal movement across liminal zones where matter and spirit intersect and communicate… the convergence of worlds, and a traveler could cross between environments… Nature abides in immediate particulars integrated into a holistic, enduring net of relationships" (259). These are quintessentially ecological insights.

This *Field Guide*, the first book on Roethke in more than twenty years, will appeal to readers from a variety of interlocking disciplines, including scholars and students of American literature as well as twentieth-century poetry more generally. With its emphasis on close reading and formal analysis, it might also be of use to practicing as well as aspiring poets. Similarly, since chapters are written in a highly accessible style, the book is of value to students of creative writing, especially at the graduate level.

Taken together, these essays provide a synthesis of previous generations of criticism, while a number of contributors adopt forward-looking critical approaches such as ecocriticism. As such, it represents a unique contribution to Roethke studies: a comprehensive analysis of his craft, a careful examination of his poetics, and a timely reassessment of his literary legacy and relevance.

<div align="right">

Christian Knoeller
Purdue University

</div>

TRAFFIC IN ASIAN WOMEN. By Laura Hyun Yi Kang. Durham: Duke University Press, 2020.

Laura Hyun Yi Kang's *Traffic in Asian Women* centers the "comfort women issue," working from its ascendance to international prominence in the early 1990s to trace backwards and illustrate the ways "Asian women" have been enfigured — and effaced — within the 20th century's evolving ideological movements surrounding "women's rights as human rights."[1] Taking the "comfort women issue" as exemplary of the complexities of inter-Asian geopolitics both past and present, Kang proposes "*thinking* 'Asian women' as method" (Ch. 1)—as *analytic* rather than hapless object of study subject to "empathetic identification with *those* bodies in pain" (35). Such method, rather, "think[s] and think[s] again through 'Asian women' as bodies of knowledge and ways of knowing" (35). Performing this methodical work, Kang connects disparate records in archives of "global governance" such as the League of Nations, United Nations, and Allied military intelligence organizations with literature, testimony, news media, and other cultural productions, demonstrating how the "comfort women issue" falls through so "many cracks in the shifting international edifice of investigating and monitoring" sexual and gendered violence across the 20th century (104)—from "traffic in women" between the World Wars (Ch. 2) through Cold War anxiety over "sexual slavery" (Ch. 3). Tracking these through their transformation to the capacious category "violence against women," Kang charts the coinciding transnational conditions of possibility which have made the issue hypervisible from the 1990s into our present (Ch. 4). For instance, Kang's close archival review shows that the early-20th century linguistic turn to "traffic in women" as "inclusive" corrective to the late-19th century use of "white slavery" as synonym for prostitution persistently retained the former's racial hierarchy. And, although "sexual slavery" is now the definitive concept for understanding the "comfort system," Kang's

study reveals the issue was ignored in UN discourses that initially focused on the years *after* WWII, an oversight designating it an unremarkable wartime exception.

In the latter half, *Traffic* presents now familiar subtopics in the "comfort women issue," such as truth, reparation, and memorials for our re-consideration. Kang prompts us to dwell on photographs and military intelligence reports "unearthed" from the US archives in the early-1990s, for example, which have circulated as "irrefutable proof" of Japanese war crimes, re-reading them, first, as incriminating proof of U.S. knowledge about and complicity in making the "comfort system" unvisible; and second, as a discomforting record of imperial contact between Asian American servicemen and Asian women (Ch. 5). Next, she challenges notions of "just compensation" through re-examination of the Asian Women's Fund, situating it as one of several rhetorical calculations of the economic cost of "violence against women" which reduce women's bodies, labors, and traumas to measures of capitalist (un)productivity (Ch. 6).[2] Finally, Kang considers the rhetorical effects of digital memorials, an unexpected pivot away from the "controversies" over physical memorials in recent years (Ch. 7). Specifically, she analyzes the digital museum of the AWF, an enduring memorial not for honoring the "comfort women" but to remember this Japanese effort at "correcting" the past.

Traffic in Asian Women is a generative text for scholars of the comfort system and its legacies, Asian Studies, transnational American and Asian American Studies, and Gender and Sexuality Studies, among others. Kang critically rethinks "comfort women" in order to dislodge the term from identifying only persons affected by a fixed temporal event.[3] Effectively "zooming out" from this example, Kang demonstrates the value of continuously learning from those possessing intimate knowledge about experiences of racial and gendered violence and living their effects. In the "comfort women" case, specifically, survivors' situated knowledges do not uphold the comfort system as just one egregious instance but collectively and repeatedly use it to point to patterns of violence and injustice—particularly toward Asian and other marginalized women—that are deeply rooted, intersecting, and ongoing.

Nicolyn Woodcock
Clark University

Notes

1. "Comfort women" is a euphemistic nomenclature that refers to the women and girls victimized by the Japanese Imperial Army's Pacific/World War II-era system of militarized sexual enslavement. Estimates suggest that more than 200,000 women and girls were forced into sexual servitude from the early 1930s through 1945 across a geography spanning the growing Japanese empire and occupied territories through the wars, including but not limited to the Korean peninsula, the Chinese mainland, Taiwan, the Philippines, and Indonesia.

2. Established in 1995, the Japanese Asian Women's Fund was controversial because it was privately funded by donors rather than by the Japanese government. While some former "comfort women" accepted payment from this fund, most refused them as a disingenuous attempt at reparation.

3. See Kandice Chuh's call for such work in "Discomforting Knowledge, or, Korean 'Comfort Women' and Asian Americanist Critical Practice," *Journal of Asian American Studies* 6, no. 1 (2003): 5-23.

A FIELD GUIDE TO THE POETRY OF THEODORE ROETHKE. By William Barillas, ed. Athens: Ohio University Press, 2020.

Throughout much of his literary career, Theodore Roethke was considered a preeminent twentieth-century American poet, likened by his contemporaries to T.S. Eliot and even hailed as a successor to Walt Whitman. Poets of Roethke's generation bridged the historical transition from traditional patterned forms to free verse, and his own writing reflects that trajectory. With essays by forty-four contributors encompassing poems from seven major collections, *A Field Guide to the Poetry of Theodore Roethke* reassesses the magnitude of his contribution to American letters. In aggregate, this eclectic collection of essayists brings a variety of theoretical and philosophical perspectives—ranging from Romanticism to pastoral, Judeo-Christian thought, classical mythology, and even Eastern religion (e.g. Taoism)—that add nuance and complexity to the discussion of Roethke's poetics and our appreciation of his work.

The manuscript is organized chronologically, progressing through Roethke's collections in order of publication from *Open House* in 1941 to *The Far Field* in 1964. This arrangement is conducive to appreciating development of Roethke's mature style as his writing gravitated toward free verse. The book's embrace of formal analysis of verse is a contribution in itself, and the comprehensive reconsideration of his distinctive poetics is a valuable addition to Roethke studies. In fact, the volume offers a timely corrective by re-emphasizing elements of poetic form, a central critical concern for generations that has gradually waned. In fact, each essay offers a close reading of a single poem, often examining the impact of formal elements while reappraising the poet's craft in terms of new directions in literary criticism ranging from feminist to ecocritical, for instance. To his credit, the editor does not privilege any one approach, evenhandedly juxtaposing a variety of theoretical frameworks such as feminist or ecocritical perspectives. As Edward Hirsch describes in the Foreword, the volume's title evokes an underlying ecological metaphor: "We think of a field guide as a manual to help us identify things in their natural environments… This guidebook leads us down the different pathways of his imagination. It enables us to see him whole." (*xiii*)

Editor William Barillas, author of *The Midwestern Pastoral: Place and Landscape in Literature of the American Heartland* (Ohio University Press, 2006) which also addresses Roethke in depth, has assembled an impressive array of essayists representing a wide range of critical perspectives conveying a host of fresh insights into the poet's craft. While many contributors are established academics teaching at colleges and universities across the country, the roster of scholars includes others teaching and writing outside of the U.S. in Canada, Germany, Hong Kong, Ireland, and Spain – as well as a cadre specialists affiliated with the Society for the Study of Midwestern Literature. Particularly masterful chapters include several by prominent Roethke scholars such as Walter Kalaidjian, Jay Parini, and Bernard W. Quetchenbach. In "The Ecological Visions

of 'The Far Field,'" for example, Quechenbach concludes that "Roethke's ecological mysticism emphasizes horizontal movement across liminal zones where matter and spirit intersect and communicate… the convergence of worlds, and a traveler could cross between environments… Nature abides in immediate particulars integrated into a holistic, enduring net of relationships" (259). These are quintessentially ecological insights.

This *Field Guide*, the first book on Roethke in more than twenty years, will appeal to readers from a variety of interlocking disciplines, including scholars and students of American literature as well as twentieth-century poetry more generally. With its emphasis on close reading and formal analysis, it might also be of use to practicing as well as aspiring poets. Similarly, since chapters are written in a highly accessible style, the book is of value to students of creative writing, especially at the graduate level.

Taken together, these essays provide a synthesis of previous generations of criticism, while a number of contributors adopt forward-looking critical approaches such as ecocriticism. As such, it represents a unique contribution to Roethke studies: a comprehensive analysis of his craft, a careful examination of his poetics, and a timely reassessment of his literary legacy and relevance.

Christian Knoeller
Purdue University

TRAFFIC IN ASIAN WOMEN. By Laura Hyun Yi Kang. Durham: Duke University Press, 2020.

Laura Hyun Yi Kang's *Traffic in Asian Women* centers the "comfort women issue," working from its ascendance to international prominence in the early 1990s to trace backwards and illustrate the ways "Asian women" have been enfigured — and effaced — within the 20th century's evolving ideological movements surrounding "women's rights as human rights."[1] Taking the "comfort women issue" as exemplary of the complexities of inter-Asian geopolitics both past and present, Kang proposes "*thinking* 'Asian women' as method" (Ch. 1)—as *analytic* rather than hapless object of study subject to "empathetic identification with *those* bodies in pain" (35). Such method, rather, "think[s] and think[s] again through 'Asian women' as bodies of knowledge and ways of knowing" (35). Performing this methodical work, Kang connects disparate records in archives of "global governance" such as the League of Nations, United Nations, and Allied military intelligence organizations with literature, testimony, news media, and other cultural productions, demonstrating how the "comfort women issue" falls through so "many cracks in the shifting international edifice of investigating and monitoring" sexual and gendered violence across the 20th century (104)—from "traffic in women" between the World Wars (Ch. 2) through Cold War anxiety over "sexual slavery" (Ch. 3). Tracking these through their transformation to the capacious category "violence against women," Kang charts the coinciding transnational conditions of possibility which have made the issue hypervisible from the 1990s into our present (Ch. 4). For instance, Kang's close archival review shows that the early-20th century linguistic turn to "traffic in women" as "inclusive" corrective to the late-19th century use of "white slavery" as synonym for prostitution persistently retained the former's racial hierarchy. And, although "sexual slavery" is now the definitive concept for understanding the "comfort system," Kang's study reveals the issue was ignored in UN discourses that initially focused on the years *after* WWII, an oversight designating it an unremarkable wartime exception.

In the latter half, *Traffic* presents now familiar subtopics in the "comfort women issue," such as truth, reparation, and memorials for our re-consideration. Kang prompts us to dwell on photographs and military intelligence reports "unearthed" from the US archives in the early-1990s, for example, which have circulated as "irrefutable proof" of Japanese war crimes, re-reading them, first, as incriminating proof of U.S. knowledge about and complicity in making the "comfort system" unvisible; and second, as a discomforting record of imperial contact between Asian American servicemen and Asian women (Ch. 5). Next, she challenges notions of "just compensation" through re-examination of the Asian Women's Fund, situating it as one of several rhetorical calculations of the economic cost of "violence against women" which reduce women's bodies, labors, and traumas to measures of capitalist (un)productivity (Ch. 6).[2] Finally, Kang considers the rhetorical effects of digital memorials, an unexpected pivot away from the "controversies" over physical memorials in recent years (Ch. 7). Specifically, she analyzes the digital museum of the AWF, an enduring memorial not for honoring the "comfort women" but to remember this Japanese effort at "correcting" the past.

Traffic in Asian Women is a generative text for scholars of the comfort system and its legacies, Asian Studies, transnational American and Asian American Studies, and Gender and Sexuality Studies, among others. Kang critically rethinks "comfort women" in order to dislodge the term from identifying only persons affected by a fixed temporal event.[3] Effectively "zooming out" from this example, Kang demonstrates the value of

continuously learning from those possessing intimate knowledge about experiences of racial and gendered violence and living their effects. In the "comfort women" case, specifically, survivors' situated knowledges do not uphold the comfort system as just one egregious instance but collectively and repeatedly use it to point to patterns of violence and injustice—particularly toward Asian and other marginalized women—that are deeply rooted, intersecting, and ongoing.

Nicolyn Woodcock
Clark University

Notes

1. "Comfort women" is a euphemistic nomenclature that refers to the women and girls victimized by the Japanese Imperial Army's Pacific/World War II-era system of militarized sexual enslavement. Estimates suggest that more than 200,000 women and girls were forced into sexual servitude from the early 1930s through 1945 across a geography spanning the growing Japanese empire and occupied territories through the wars, including but not limited to the Korean peninsula, the Chinese mainland, Taiwan, the Philippines, and Indonesia.

2. Established in 1995, the Japanese Asian Women's Fund was controversial because it was privately funded by donors rather than by the Japanese government. While some former "comfort women" accepted payment from this fund, most refused them as a disingenuous attempt at reparation.

3. See Kandice Chuh's call for such work in "Discomforting Knowledge, or, Korean 'Comfort Women' and Asian Americanist Critical Practice," *Journal of Asian American Studies* 6, no. 1 (2003): 5-23.

CONTRIBUTORS

Libby Garland teaches immigration history and urban history at Kingsborough Community College, The City University of New York, as well as courses on border studies and urban studies in the Master of Arts in Liberal Studies Program at the CUNY Graduate Center. She is the author of *After They Closed the Gates: Jewish Illegal Immigration to the United States, 1921-1965* (University of Chicago Press, 2014).

Curtis Marez is a professor in the Ethnic Studies Department at the University of California, San Diego, Curtis Marez is the author of *Drug Wars: The Political Economy of Narcotics* (University of Minnesota Press, 2004), *Farm Worker Futurism: Speculative Technologies of Resistance* (University of Minnesota Press, 2016), and *University Babylon: Film and Race Politics on Campus* (University of California Press, 2019). Along with Lisa Duggan, he edits the *American Studies Now* book series for the University of California Press. Marez is a former editor of *American Quarterly* (2006-2011) and a former president of the American Studies Association (2013-2014).

Luke Sayers is a graduate student in the English Department at Baylor University, where he studies twentieth century American literature. His research interests include Cold War literature, political ideologies, and propaganda. He has published in *Reception* and other journals. His dissertation will examine four American authors during the Cold War.

William Sites is Associate Professor in the Crown Family School of Social Work, Policy, and Practice at the University of Chicago and the author of *Sun Ra's Chicago: Afrofuturism and the City* (University of Chicago Press, 2020).

CALL FOR PAPERS

American Studies 2022 Special Issue

**Across Global Souths:
Asian Migrations through the U.S. South
and the Circum-Caribbean**

Guest Editors: Joo Ok Kim and Giselle Liza Anatol
University of Kansas

Across Global Souths: Asian Migrations through the U.S. South and the Circum-Caribbean seeks to investigate Asian/American cultures, politics, and relationships across multiple Souths, with an emphasis on the U.S. South and the Caribbean. In the United States, ideas of "Asian America" continue to circulate around communities on the East and West coasts. The *Across Global Souths: Asian Migrations through the U.S. South and the Circum-Caribbean* project reframes the conversation with an emphasis on journeys to and from multiple *souths*. The CFP considers the broader U.S. geopolitical designation of "South" (including Texas and the US Gulf Coast). Grounded within recent scholarly developments in the field of American Studies, the CFP invites further reflections on the diasporic condition of the category "Asian," as well as the diasporic condition of the category "Southerner," and simultaneously challenges conceptions of an exclusively white, Euro-American U.S. citizenry.

What distinguishes this research, firmly ensconced within both American Studies and current Global South frameworks, is the comparative focus on Asians in the U.S. South and the Caribbean and Caribbean diasporas. While Global South Studies has raised important questions on "south/south" and hemispheric discourses, and Caribbean Studies has long foregrounded archipelagic and transnational critiques of colonialism, an interdisciplinary examination of Asian migrations within two locations that share centuries of overlapping histories—the U.S. South and the Caribbean—has been understudied. Even as we foreground the geographical spaces of the U.S. South and the Caribbean, we also invite broader theorizations of "south" that convene other underexamined geographies, such as the U.S. Midwest, and a range of methodologies.

We seek essays that articulate the transregional, comparative U.S. South or Caribbean emphasis and interdisciplinary approaches. Possible topics could include:

- politics and politicians of Asian heritage across the U.S. South and Caribbean, Asian American grassroots politics, and radical political cultures;
- nineteenth-century history, such as Asian indentured servants transported to the Caribbean, the arrival of Chinese workers from Cuba and California to the Mississippi Delta, the building of the Panama Canal, the Filipino Saint Malo settlement in Louisiana;

An Afro-Indigenous enby with their best friend, an Asian transfemme enby in their queer home. Courtesy of ggggrimes Art.

- twentieth-century history, such as Japanese American internment in the U.S. South, the Japanese American presence in postwar Georgia and Arkansas, including in the chick-sexing industry;
- literary representations of Asian/Americans in the Caribbean, in the U.S. South, in Latin America;
- films; visual arts, music, and sound studies;
- Indigeneities across the Caribbean
- studies of multiracial subjectivities: racial affiliation, being "claimed" or "rejected" by multiple heritage communities;
- Gulf South and Caribbean ecologies;
- ethnographic work that investigates convergent spaces and unexpected places in the American Souths (e.g. farms, restaurants, motels, beauty supply stores, spas, fishermen's circles, Asian sweat-shop economies) as sources of cultural production;
- overlapping legacies of food and colonialism across the U.S. South and Caribbean;
- gender, sexuality, and/or misogynist anti-Asian/American violence; queer and trans* liberation;
- alternate kinships and genealogies; the movements of DNA ancestry testing on Asian/American populations; Asian adoptees in the U.S. South;
- exploring or challenging archival collections;
- parallels among South Korea, South Vietnam, and the American South;
- religion and spirituality.

Email abstracts of 250 - 400 words to j.kim@ku.edu and ganatol@ku.edu by May 21, 2021. Notification of invitation to submit articles by mid-June 2021. Full drafts will be due by Friday, December 3, 2021.

Women, Gender, and Families of Color

WGFC is a multidisciplinary journal that centers the study of Black, Latinx, Indigenous, and Asian American women, genders, and families. Within this framework, the journal encourages theoretical and empirical research from the social and behavioral sciences and the humanities. It welcomes comparative and transnational research as well as analyses of domestic social, cultural, political, and economic policies and practices. Available in libraries through Project MUSE and JSTOR, the journal has a rolling submission policy to receive manuscripts, proposals for guest-edited special issues, and book reviews at any time.

WGFC, published bi-annually in the spring and fall, is available electronically and in hard copy. It is sponsored by the University of Kansas and published by the University of Illinois Press.

For more information, contact the editors or visit our website: wgfc.ku.edu

SUBSCRIBE TO WOMEN, GENDER, AND FAMILIES OF COLOR
www.press.uillinois.edu/journals/wgfc/subscription.html

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS PRESS

CALL FOR PAPERS

American Studies 2022 Special Issue

**Across Global Souths:
Asian Migrations through the U.S. South
and the Circum-Caribbean**

Guest Editors: Joo Ok Kim and Giselle Liza Anatol
University of Kansas

Across Global Souths: Asian Migrations through the U.S. South and the Circum-Caribbean seeks to investigate Asian/American cultures, politics, and relationships across multiple Souths, with an emphasis on the U.S. South and the Caribbean. In the United States, ideas of "Asian America" continue to circulate around communities on the East and West coasts. The *Across Global Souths: Asian Migrations through the U.S. South and the Circum-Caribbean* project reframes the conversation with an emphasis on journeys to and from multiple *souths*. The CFP considers the broader U.S. geopolitical designation of "South" (including Texas and the US Gulf Coast). Grounded within recent scholarly developments in the field of American Studies, the CFP invites further reflections on the diasporic condition of the category "Asian," as well as the diasporic condition of the category "Southerner," and simultaneously challenges conceptions of an exclusively white, Euro-American U.S. citizenry.

What distinguishes this research, firmly ensconced within both American Studies and current Global South frameworks, is the comparative focus on Asians in the U.S. South and the Caribbean and Caribbean diasporas. While Global South Studies has raised important questions on "south/south" and hemispheric discourses, and Caribbean Studies has long foregrounded archipelagic and transnational critiques of colonialism, an interdisciplinary examination of Asian migrations within two locations that share centuries of overlapping histories—the U.S. South and the Caribbean—has been understudied. Even as we foreground the geographical spaces of the U.S. South and the Caribbean, we also invite broader theorizations of "south" that convene other underexamined geographies, such as the U.S. Midwest, and a range of methodologies.

We seek essays that articulate the transregional, comparative U.S. South or Caribbean emphasis and interdisciplinary approaches. Possible topics could include:

- politics and politicians of Asian heritage across the U.S. South and Caribbean, Asian American grassroots politics, and radical political cultures;
- nineteenth-century history, such as Asian indentured servants transported to the Caribbean, the arrival of Chinese workers from Cuba and California to the Mississippi Delta, the building of the Panama Canal, the Filipino Saint Malo settlement in Louisiana;

An Afro-Indigenous enby with their best friend, an Asian transfemme enby in their queer home. Courtesy of ggggrimes Art.

- twentieth-century history, such as Japanese American internment in the U.S. South, the Japanese American presence in postwar Georgia and Arkansas, including in the chick-sexing industry;
- literary representations of Asian/Americans in the Caribbean, in the U.S. South, in Latin America;
- films; visual arts, music, and sound studies;
- Indigeneities across the Caribbean
- studies of multiracial subjectivities: racial affiliation, being "claimed" or "rejected" by multiple heritage communities;
- Gulf South and Caribbean ecologies;
- ethnographic work that investigates convergent spaces and unexpected places in the American Souths (e.g. farms, restaurants, motels, beauty supply stores, spas, fishermen's circles, Asian sweat-shop economies) as sources of cultural production;
- overlapping legacies of food and colonialism across the U.S. South and Caribbean;
- gender, sexuality, and/or misogynist anti-Asian/American violence; queer and trans* liberation;
- alternate kinships and genealogies; the movements of DNA ancestry testing on Asian/American populations; Asian adoptees in the U.S. South;
- exploring or challenging archival collections;
- parallels among South Korea, South Vietnam, and the American South;
- religion and spirituality.

Email abstracts of 250 - 400 words to j.kim@ku.edu and ganatol@ku.edu by May 21, 2021. Notification of invitation to submit articles by mid-June 2021. Full drafts will be due by Friday, December 3, 2021.

Women, Gender, and Families of Color

WGFC is a multidisciplinary journal that centers the study of Black, Latinx, Indigenous, and Asian American women, genders, and families. Within this framework, the journal encourages theoretical and empirical research from the social and behavioral sciences and the humanities. It welcomes comparative and transnational research as well as analyses of domestic social, cultural, political, and economic policies and practices. Available in libraries through Project MUSE and JSTOR, the journal has a rolling submission policy to receive manuscripts, proposals for guest-edited special issues, and book reviews at any time.

WGFC, published bi-annually in the spring and fall, is available electronically and in hard copy. It is sponsored by the University of Kansas and published by the University of Illinois Press.

For more information, contact the editors or visit our website: wgfc.ku.edu

SUBSCRIBE TO WOMEN, GENDER, AND FAMILIES OF COLOR
www.press.uillinois.edu/journals/wgfc/subscription.html

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS PRESS