

Location, Relocation, Dislocation:

Television's Spatial Capital

By

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of

the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

(Communication Arts)

at the

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

2015

Date of final oral examination: 6/5/2015

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Acknowledgments

J.G., for steadfast advising that kept an at-times overly adventurous project from going off-road.

D.J., M.H., and the rest of the faculty at UW-Madison, whose guidance was crucial to seeing this project through to completion.

J.M., for being part of this project and for setting off the larger journey itself back in 2009.

H.W., for benevolently refusing to allow me to explore a set of ideas in the previous project that would become foundational to this one.

My UW-Madison colleagues and friends in MCS and beyond, in particular the M.F., without whom this would not have been the experience it was, and imminently lesser for it.

My family, whose unwavering moral support was consistently matched by a desire to understand the project—and my work in general—that went beyond expectation.

My social media communities, both academic and non-academic, for being a sounding board when inspiration struck, and for consistently enriching my engagement with this subject and others.

The research within this project would not have been possible without the generous participation and assistance of the following: Rebecca Puck Stair, Michael John Meehan, Brandi Bradburn, Lafe Jordan, Luke Pebler, Tony Salome, and the Location Managers Guild of America.

This research was supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.



Social Sciences and Humanities
Research Council of Canada

Conseil de recherches en
sciences humaines du Canada

Canada

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Introduction

Like many children, I had a globe growing up, and as a teenager there was a world map pinned onto my bedroom wall. Geography is something we are all familiar with: it is something we live within, something we strive to explore, and something that will change as we do so. Over the course of our lives we map ourselves onto various geographies, whether local or global, and in the age of Google Maps and GPS technology we can technically locate ourselves on the map at any given moment provided we have access to that technology.

The impact of this intensified spatiality can be felt in many contexts, but as a media scholar it has emerged most prominently in the media I consume, in particular television. In July of 2012, I sat down to watch the fourth season premiere of the USA Network series *White Collar* (2009-2014), which typically follows Neal Caffrey, a former con artist turned consultant for the FBI in New York City. The show films on location in New York, and has the distinction of being the first media text shot in New York City that I watched after visiting the city for the first time in October of 2009. Despite the hundreds of media texts I've watched that have shot in Central Park, I always associate Bethesda Fountain with *White Collar*, as I had the strange experience—for someone from the Atlantic coast of Canada, at least—of seeing somewhere I had just been on my television screen in the series' second episode.

In the fourth season premiere, however, Neal is on the run, and has taken refuge in an island paradise where he is wooing a local shopkeeper and building sandcastle cities in honor of his former home. The episode, "Wanted," turns his location into a mystery, but his friends at the FBI—who are hoping to find him before a bounty hunter hot on his trail—solve the mystery mid-way through the episode: Neal is in Cape Verde, a series of volcanic islands off the coast of

West Africa in the Atlantic Ocean. Whereas the show's New York City setting had been thrillingly familiar in that second episode after I had just mapped it out myself, Cape Verde was exactly the opposite, given that I did not know the archipelago country existed before *White Collar* set its two-part premiere there. However, in the age of Google Maps and Wikipedia, I was able to instantly familiarize myself with Cape Verde, and get a better perspective on its role in the episode.

As I dug deeper, though, some issues rose to the surface. The island where Neal was hiding out featured predominantly Spanish-inspired architecture, but Cape Verde was a Portuguese colony—it's even a plot point in the episode, as the characters note a Spanish bell overheard on a phone recording with Neal was out of place, and discovered to be the result of a shipwreck. Moreover, moving beyond architecture, the vast majority of the locals are Hispanic, despite the fact that the majority of Cape Verde's population is Creole; along similar lines, the characters on *White Collar*'s Cape Verde speak Spanish, despite the fact that Portuguese is the official language, and local Creole dialects represent the other widespread languages on the islands. What became immediately clear was that even if I had been an expert on Cape Verde, I never would have been able to solve the mystery of Neal's location before the FBI, because none of what appears onscreen in the episode in any way resembles Cape Verde.

This project's goal is to create a framework to better understand why, in our age of intensified spatiality, *White Collar*'s Cape Verde has so little relationship to the real Cape Verde. We could guess that the people involved simply didn't care about verisimilitude—it is not as though television has never gotten places terribly wrong in the past, after all. We have come to understand that television production involves turning one place into somewhere else, and it is expected we will use our imagination to let the transformational magic transport us to Cape

Verde even when we know it was produced somewhere else entirely. However, the erasure of a country's history, people, and language struck me as an extreme example, one that shed new light on broader questions regarding the relationship between space, place, and television in our contemporary moment. What resources were available to the production to locate these episodes in Cape Verde that they chose not to take advantage of? How do the realities of television production and television textuality limit or disincentivize a more authentic Cape Verde, and how is this particular case reflective of changes in those realities? In making an effort to map out how space and place intersect with contemporary television, this project seeks to answer these questions, with the hopes of better understanding how places like *White Collar*'s "Cape Verde" end up on our television screens.

Putting Television on the Map

Maps do not simply exist to show us where things are: maps have their own values, and can be made with a range of purposes in mind. This project has brought me into contact with many different maps, none of which perfectly encapsulate the complex dynamics of spatiality as evidenced in *White Collar*'s Cape Verde. That being said, two maps that came to my attention over the course of this project serve as productive entry points into exploring how we can "map" contemporary television, and begin the process of understanding the role of space and place in television studies.

The first map came in the form of a poster created by James Chapman, a graphic designer, and entitled “America: The home of television.” The poster, originally made available on Chapman’s Etsy shop in March 2013, plots over 130 television series across a map of the continental United States and Hawaii, and was subsequently updated in 2014 to include over 170 series, including shows as recent as Netflix’s *Orange is the New Black* (2013-) and HBO’s *True Detective* (2014-). The map includes shows set in real cities like Los Angeles and Atlanta, along with fictional towns like Dillon, Texas, featured in NBC’s *Friday Night Lights* (2006-2011). And while it does not feature *White Collar*, it does feature over a dozen shows set in Manhattan, alongside a dozen more set in the other boroughs of New York. On his Etsy page, Chapman positions his poster for TV lovers, asking a series of questions: “Have you ever wondered how far it is from *Breaking Bad* to *Arrested Development*? Or which coast has more crime drama? Or

how many shows are set in Idaho? (Spoiler alert, it's none). Well, wonder no more."¹ For Chapman, the map is the answer to the question of where television takes place, and that answer is America.²

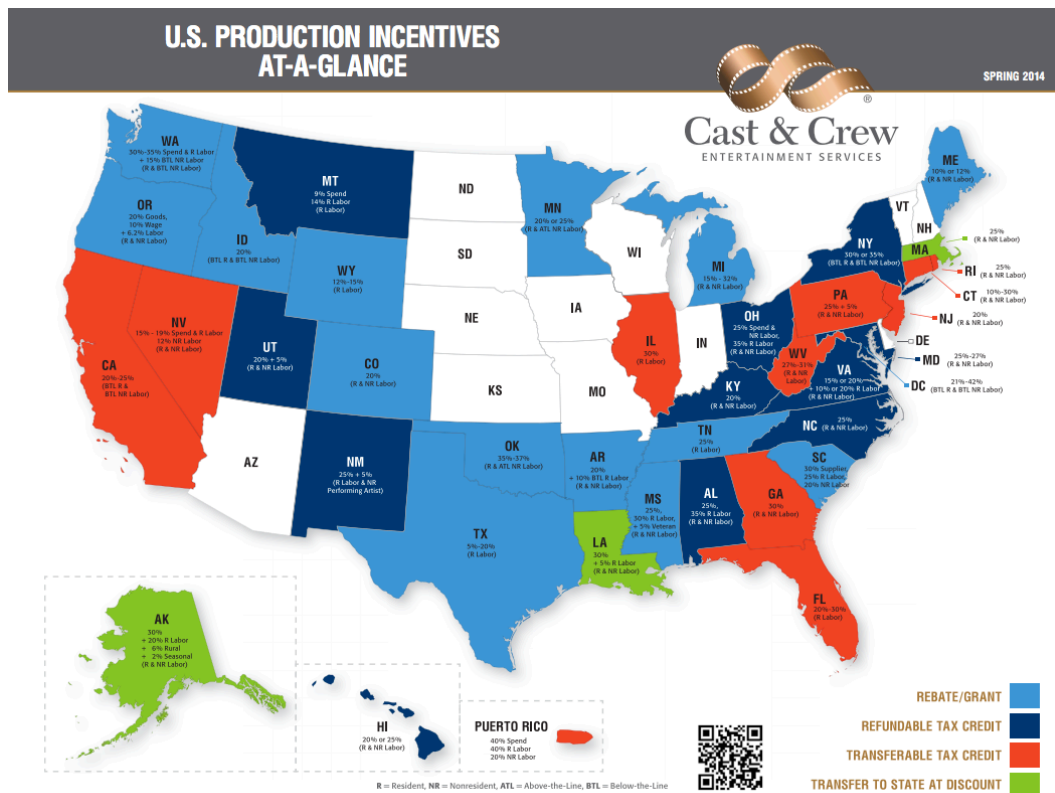
While I have my quibbles with the map's exclusions, including a number of settings both real and fictional that will be discussed in this project, the map is a potent example of the value of place in the context of television culture more broadly. While Chapman himself has done the labor of mapping out these different locations, the viewer of the map then maps their own television viewing habits onto the cartography, creating their own geography of television by nature of the places they have "visited" through their television screens. Chapman's is not the only map to do this—as I completed this project, numerous people would post similarly spatialized renderings of television on social media, whether in the form of the University of Wisconsin Fox Valley's "United States of Television" map choosing a single series to represent each state and featured on *Time* and *The Huffington Post*, or efforts to map out the geography of a single series like *The Simpsons* (1989-), in a map created by *Slate* in February 2012.³ Such maps reaffirm that where television takes place matters, and can in these and other examples function as a lens through which audiences engage with television series.

¹ James Chapman, "Map of US TV Shows (A1) UPDATED 2014," *Etsy.com*, https://www.etsy.com/listing/125086059/map-of-us-tv-shows-a1-updated-2014?ref=shop_home_active_7.

² This is, notably, despite the fact that Chapman himself is from the United Kingdom.

³ Andrew Shears, "Promoting UWFox Geography, Fall 2011: Growing interest in the discipline and, hence, our little department," *AndrewShears.com*, 20 November 2011, <http://andrewshears.com/2011/11/20/promoting-uwoff-geography-fall-2011-growing-interest-in-the-discipline-and-hence-our-little-department/>; Forest Wickman et al., "'The Simpsons Are Going to...' Every Destination, Over 500 Episodes," *Slate*, 17 February 2012, http://www.slate.com/blogs/browbeat/2012/02/17/the_simpsons_are_going_to_a_map_of_every_simpsons_destination_over_500_episodes.html

However, while Chapman's map helps us understand why *White Collar*'s Cape Verde setting is something that I and other viewers connected with, it does not explain why audiences who engaged with *White Collar*'s trip to Cape Verde through this lens would find a setting that bears no resemblance to Cape Verde. For this, we must refer to a different map, which is less likely to show up on websites as a novel way to kill time on the Internet. I personally received this map while attending the Association of Film Commissions International (AFCI) Locations Show in Los Angeles in March 2014. Like Chapman's map, this map features the United States, and is in many ways an effort to help its user understand where television takes place. However, in this map created by production consulting company Cast and Crew Entertainment Services, "television" is understood as the industrial engine of television, and is mapped out according to the production incentives offered by state governments to draw film and television production to their localities.



Much as there is a geography of television culture, mapped out by viewers based on the representational spaces created by their favorite series, so too is there a geography of television production. This map, divided into four separate colors denoting different forms of incentive programs ranging from rebate/grant systems to transferable tax credits, is not intended for casual television viewers; instead, it's designed for producers looking to make the most of their production dollar. And it would be a map like this one, or an accountant who has access to the same information, that the producers of *White Collar* would have turned to when determining where they could film their island paradise. And while the island territory of Puerto Rico may not have much Portuguese-inspired architecture, and may lack Portuguese-speaking extras, it does have a transferable tax credit of 40% of total local expenditures, 40% of resident labor, and 20% of nonresident labor. All of this makes it a popular production location for any series looking to send its characters somewhere warm and exotic on a budget, and made it the production location for *White Collar*'s Cape Verde.

Separately, these two maps each confirm that there is a measurable relationship between place and television, one that can shape how that television is consumed and produced, respectively. However, as the case of *White Collar*'s Cape Verde reinforces, neither map can function alone, and it is in the relationship between the two maps that we can begin to unpack the dynamics of spatiality within contemporary television. Putting the maps in conversation with one another reminds us that many of the shows on Chapman's map are filmed north of the Canadian border, while highlighting the absence of shows either set or filmed in states with no incentive programs to support production. While each map alone identifies the value of space and place to studies of television, together they emphasize the diversity of that value, and of the complex spatiality of contemporary television production.

This project seeks to plot North American television across both of these maps, in the process locating, relocating, and dislocating understandings of what I frame as television's "spatial capital." Such a framework for completing television analysis engages in the specific values given to space and place within the distinct production cultures and textual forms of television, building on existing studies of media spaces to confront the ever shifting landscape of spatial capital in our contemporary moment. It is a framework that will come to understand *White Collar*'s Cape Verde not simply as a case of willful ignorance, but rather as the product of a system in which spatial capital is activated, negotiated, and in some instances created within industrial structures that can and often do constrain the complexity of place-identity resulting from that process.

From Placing Media to Mediating Place

In proposing the close study of television's "spatial capital," I seek to better understand the ways in which space and place are valued in the context of contemporary television culture, focused specifically in the North American television industry. This conception of spatial capital draws loosely on Pierre Bourdieu's framework of social and cultural capital, and considers how place is used as a form of distinction within the context of television production specifically, but also in the media more broadly.⁴ It does not seek to limit the ways that spatial capital can manifest in the context of television or other industries, but rather works to investigate the ways space and place have taken on significant value within television production and textuality.

In some instances this spatial capital is drawn from forms of social capital, wherein relationships between Hollywood producers and local workforces outside of Hollywood generate

⁴ Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste* (London: Routledge, 1984).

spatial capital for states and provinces invested in developing into television production destinations. When a show chooses to set itself in a given location, meanwhile, they are drawing on the cultural capital of a given location to serve the story being told, and activating spatial capital that may serve as a point of interest for audiences. Over the course of this project, the negotiation of this spatial capital relative to these and other decisions—often within the same show—will be investigated in order to better understand how this intersection between television and space and place has evolved into a key component of where and how television is produced in a contemporary context. Space and place matter within television culture, and the way the capital associated with space and place is determined, developed, activated, and contested is an increasingly valuable framework for engaging with television, and is thus the subject of this study.

This study, by its nature, is limited in two key respects. First, one key space of spatial capital is in the space of reception, where audience's individual relationship with space and place frame the way they engage with examples like *White Collar*'s Cape Verde. This project is focused primarily on the space of television production and the textual forms it produces, but spatial capital undoubtedly extends into reception, and although outside the scope of this project this is the crucial next step in understanding spatial capital's place in television culture more broadly. Furthermore, its study is limited to the North American television industry: while spatial capital is undoubtedly present and negotiated in global television markets, it would manifest in distinct ways that require local and regionalized case studies unrepresented here. However, the principles of spatial capital outlined by this project are designed as a foundation, capable of expanding into these and other areas.

In building this foundation, we must first explore the relationship between place and media more broadly, and the very meaning of place itself. Roger Aden broadly defines studies of cultural geography as investigations into “the role played by the physical terrain in our development of a sense of community or culture,” and in this case that culture shares a distinct relationship with space and place that has been the topic of considerable debate.⁵

In *Place: A Short Introduction*, Tim Cresswell defines place as occurring “when humans invest meaning in a portion of space and then become attached to it in some way.”⁶ Cresswell goes on to explain that this investment of meaning is happening all over the world as people engage in what he calls place-making activities:

Homeowners redecorate...; Neighborhood organizations put pressure on people to tidy their yards; city governments legislate for new public buildings to express the spirit of particular places. Nations project themselves to the rest of the world via postage stamps, money, parliament buildings, national stadia, tourist brochures, etc.⁷

Cresswell’s examples of place-making activities are diverse. While neighborhood ordinances on yard maintenance come with the auspices of Foucaultian discipline, evoking the surveillance of the Panopticon and Foucault’s analytical conception of space, others speak to what Michel de Certeau powerfully describes as “an anthropological, poetic and mythic experience of space” defined by the lived experience of homeowners making their mark on their neighborhood.⁸ This diversity reinforces that place-making activities come neither exclusively from above nor

⁵ Roger Aden, *Popular Stories and Promise Lands: Fan Cultures and Symbolic Pilgrimages* (Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 2007): 53.

⁶ Tim Cresswell, *Place: A Short Introduction* (London: Wiley-Blackwell, 2004): 10.

⁷ 5.

⁸ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995); Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984): 93.

exclusively from below; instead, place occurs as spaces are acted upon from multiple directions, creating a complex web of cultural, social, and political interactions that together shape our conception of a given location.

To extend these place-making activities into the space of media is a contested subject, given the large body of scholarship that has positioned media as the antithesis to place-making. In *No Sense of Place: The Impact of Electronic Media on Social Behavior*, Joshua Meyrowitz imagines media creating a world without walls, wherein “our ability to segregate encounters would be greatly diminished” and “the clear spatial segregations of situations would no longer exist.”⁹ The notion of media erasing—rather than creating—place gains further steam in postmodern engagements with media. Jean Baudrillard, discussing reality television among other subjects, argues that abstraction is “no longer that of the map” and “no longer that of a territory,” but rather “the generation by models of a real without origin or reality: a hyperreal.”¹⁰ Baudrillard’s placement of media at the heart of his study of simulacra is echoed by Marc Augé, who sees media as a key component of the non-places of supermodernity which function as “closed universes where everything is a sign, collections of codes to which only some hold the key but whose existence everyone accepts.”¹¹ Collectively, these works seek to position media as placeless, either through having erased traditional barriers or through having created abstract simulations that share only symbolic trace relationships to “real” places.

Over time, however, these claims have been challenged in ways that open the door for a more complex engagement with place and media. David Harvey acknowledges the collapsing

⁹ Joshua Meyrowitz, *No Sense of Place: The Impact of Electronic Media on Social Behavior* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986): 6.

¹⁰ Jean Baudrillard, “The Precession of Simulacra” in *Simulacra and Simulations*. Trans. Sheila Faria Glaser. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995): 538.

¹¹ Marc Augé, *Non-Places: An Introduction of Supermodernity* (London: Verso, 2009): 33.

impact that satellite television has on our conception of place in *The Condition of Post-Modernity*, but he argues “the collapse of spatial barriers does not mean that the significance of space is decreasing,” believing that “as spatial barriers diminish so we become much more sensitized to what the world’s spaces contain.”¹² Nick Couldry, meanwhile, notes in *The Place of Media Power* that “the media do not simply ‘cover’ territory, let alone ‘collapse’ the boundaries between places. Instead they shape it and reorganize it, creating new distances...and building new presences, new places of significance.”¹³ Whereas Meyrowitz perceives technological change within the media industries as a threat against place itself, Harvey and Couldry reframe such change as destabilizing rather than annihilating, prompting closer analysis that mirrors Doreen Massey’s call “to uproot ‘space’ from that constellation of concepts in which it has so unquestionably been embedded (stasis; closure; representation) and to settle it among another set of ideas (heterogeneity; relationality; coevalness...liveness indeed) where it releases a more challenging political landscape.”¹⁴ For Harvey, such studies reveal the importance of what he terms place-identity, which he sees as crucial given that “everyone occupies a space of individuation (a body, a room, a home, a shaping community, a nation), and how we individuate ourselves shapes identity.”¹⁵

Media studies research has embraced Harvey’s notion of place-identity, although such work has primarily followed two distinct modes of analysis. The first is through media as symbolic representations of location, broadly investigating how a given place—whether a country, a region, a city, or even a neighborhood—has been depicted within the media. Examples

¹² David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (London: Wiley-Blackwell, 1991): 294.

¹³ Nick Couldry, *The Place of Media Power: Pilgrims and Witnesses of the Media Age* (London: Routledge, 2000): 26.

¹⁴ Doreen Massey, *For Space* (London: Sage Publications, 2005): 13.

¹⁵ Harvey, 302.

of this mode of analysis are plentiful, and varied, with place and setting becoming another lens through which a text can be viewed alongside—and intersected with—representations of gender, race, class, and more. Such work explores the symbolisms of the first of the two maps identified above, considering how a series' setting functions within its larger web of meaning—Edward Soja potentially viewed the text as a map, and this work explores the potential of this metaphor, embracing the spatiality of film and television texts and the subsequent representations of location.¹⁶

However, others have argued that place needs to be understood in different terms than textual representation in order to capture the larger meanings at stake. Henri Lefebvre argues in *The Production of Space*—which I will return to—that

when codes worked up from literary texts are applied to spaces—to urban spaces, say—we remain, as may easily be shown, on the purely descriptive level. Any attempt to use such codes as a means of deciphering social space must surely reduce that space itself to the status of a *message*, and the inhabiting of it to a status of a *reading*.¹⁷

If we consider television shows as a form of social space, distributed and consumed within a larger cultural context, there are social and cultural concerns that are inaccessible through close textual analysis alone. Echoing this claim within a media studies context in *Media, Place and Mobility*, Shaun Moores suggests that media analysis has “been focused rather too tightly on the

¹⁶ Edward W. Soja, *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory* (New York: Verso, 2011): 1.

¹⁷ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (New York: Wiley-Blackwell, 1992): 7, emphasis in original.

symbolic and interpretive,” and calls for “an appreciation of media uses as place-constituting activities, among a range of other activities in everyday living.”¹⁸

Such work has been observed in media studies by shifting our investigation of place from the text to the audience who engages with it. Roger Aden’s work on symbolic pilgrimage in *Popular Stories and Promised Lands* connects cultural geography to our understanding of fan engagement, reimagining “fan encounters with popular stories as a communicative experience in which we are centered selves able to move symbolically, in a variety of ways, to communities that provide an alternative to historical habits.”¹⁹ Drawing on Victor Turner’s principle of liminoid ritual and the voluntary formation of communities, Aden creates the framework on which we can understand media as pilgrimage, which has become the foundation for studies of media tourism. In *Media and the Tourist Imagination*, Rhona Jackson observes “the complex relationship that visual media texts have with place, space, and travel, and the tensions this creates for tourists imbued with such images when they encounter the reality on which those texts are based.”²⁰ In subsequent research from Matt Hills and Will Brooker, among others, such media tourism—whether in the form of formal tours or fans actively seeking out locations on their own—gives the fan the opportunity to, in Hills’ words, “extend the productivity of his or her affective relationship” with the text in question.²¹ Moreover, Nick Couldry uses media tourism as a centerpiece in his investigation of “the myth of the mediated center,” moving past

¹⁸ Shaun Moores, *Media, Place and Mobility* (London: Palgrave, 2012): 46.

¹⁹ Aden, 79.

²⁰ Rhona Jackson, “Converging cultures; converging gazes; contextualizing perspectives” in *The Media and the Tourist Imagination: Converging Cultures*, Eds. David Crouch, Rhona Jackson and Felix Thompson (London: Routledge, 2004): 184.

²¹ Matt Hills, *Fan Cultures* (Routledge: London, 2002): 149; Will Brooker, “A Sort of Homecoming: Fan Viewing and Symbolic Pilgrimage” in *Fandom: Identity and Communities in a Mediated World*, eds. Gray, Sandvoss and Harrington (New York: New York University Press, 2007): 149-164.

postmodern dismissals of spaces ritualized by media production by considering how media pilgrimages “[reinforce] those places’ special significance and thereby the key structural hierarchy of the media’s ritual space: the hierarchy of places ‘in’ the media over those which aren’t.”²²

These are all studies of spatial capital, understanding and interrogating either the value of place within a media text itself or the value of place in audiences’ relationship with media texts, but they ultimately only explore spatial capital within one space of television culture. In their introduction to *Mediaspace*, Anna McCarthy and Couldry propose the eponymous term to consider a much larger relationship between media and space, which includes media within space and media as a link between spaces, in addition to media as representations of space.²³ They view mediaspace as a larger system of interactions, similar to how Massey understands place as live and relational, constantly under negotiation.

Understanding media’s relationship with place as a lived process was one of the goals of Stijn Reijnders’ *Places of the Imagination*, which creates a circular model for exploring the process by which media tourism is inspired. On the right side of the circle, Reijnders captures the basic genesis of media tourism: “Imaginary places become appropriated by fans” and then “Fans go in search of physical references to imaginary places.”²⁴ In the other half of the circle, Reijnders begins to explore the ways this spatial capital is generated, pushing the discussion of place and media—or, to use McCarthy and Couldry’s term, mediaspace—into the process of

²² Nick Couldry, *Media Rituals* (London: Routledge, 2003): 80.

²³ Anna McCarthy and Nick Couldry, eds. *Mediaspace: Place, Space and Culture in a Media Age* (London: Routledge, 2004).

²⁴ Stijn Reijnders, *Places of the Imagination: Media, Tourism, Culture* (London: Ashgate, 2011): 17.

production. Continuing around the circle, Reijnders suggests that “Physical places inspire artists” and “Artists construct imaginary places.”²⁵

While Reijnders’ model acknowledges how studies of media tourism are in many cases predicated on how spatial capital is activated within the text itself, the model’s understanding of how this takes place is problematic. First and foremost, Reijnders’ use of “inspiration” and “artists” speaks to a creative process divorced from the financial realities of production, which are prevalent particularly in the context of the ad-supported television industry. This is in part a byproduct of Reijnders’ analysis generalizing amongst literary, cinematic, and televisual examples, but it also speaks to a strongly author-focused understanding of creative industries. Reijnders consciously limits his definition of artists to “authors, scriptwriters, and film directors,” which fails to account for studies of production culture that acknowledge the creativity of both above-the-line department heads like production designers and art directors as well as below-the-line laborers such as location scouts and set decorators.²⁶ Moreover, Reijnders’ model has no way of accounting for the diversity of production modes within media, applied only to location-shot productions and making no effort to engage with the spatiality of studio-based production in conjunction with location shooting.

Studying Spatial Practice

Reijnders’ push toward a more comprehensive understanding of how place functions throughout the circuit of production is valuable, but his model fails to accommodate the specific labor and structure of television. In proposing a spatial capital approach to analyzing television, this project

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ See John T. Caldwell, *Production Culture: Industrial Reflexivity and Critical Practice in Film and Television* (Raleigh: Duke University Press, 2008); Vicki Mayer, *Below the Line: Producers and Production Studies in the New Television Economy* (Raleigh: Duke University Press, 2011).

works to accommodate the specificity of television production and textuality. Henri Lefebvre offers a framework for understanding the production of space, distinguishing between spatial practice (which embraces production and reproduction), representations of space (which are tied to the relations of production), and representational spaces (which embody complex symbolisms).²⁷ While existing research has focused its attention on representations of space within the television text, as well as representational spaces created through examples of media tourism, it is in the space of spatial practice where we find the place-making activities of television, and where we can locate the negotiation of spatial capital that creates those representations of space and representational spaces.

Doing so subsequently pushes us to better understand not only the spatial dimensions of television production itself, but also the ways in which spatial capital inflects the labor of television more broadly. Vicki Mayer's call for the study of the "cultural geography of production" is influential here, and works to reveal how our understanding of place identity is not simply a fact of social power.²⁸ The erasure of blackness in *White Collar*'s Cape Verde is, adopting Edward Said's understanding of Orientalism, a case of "willed human work."²⁹ Said frames Orientalism as an active interrelationship between authors, their work, and the term itself, exploring both how authors strategically locate themselves relative to the term along with considering how the larger textual body of work—the strategic formation—interacts and shapes our broader understanding of the term. In doing so, he not only describes what Orientalism looks

²⁷ Lefebvre, 29.

²⁸ Vicki Mayer, "Where Production Takes Place," *The Velvet Light Trap* 62 (2008): 71-72.

²⁹ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Vintage, 1979): 15.

like, but also considers how it operates within society, understanding it as shaped by both distinct textual representations and by “‘strong’ ideas, doctrines and trends ruling the culture.”³⁰

In this project, I will discuss spatial capital not simply as what we see of a place within a given text, but also the ways that spatial capital is negotiated throughout the process of production, during which pre-existing modes of production and long-standing principles of spatial capital within the television industry will shape a given text’s sense of place. These institutional structures are the strategic formations, which prescribe and limit spatial capital: these include dominant genre forms, commercial imperatives, financial limitations, focus testing hindrances, and other realities of the television industry which discipline and constrain spatial practice. Meanwhile, workers strategically locate themselves by engaging with spatial capital throughout the course of a given production, working within these structures to activate the value of spatial capital but in terms that serve the strategic formations in place. When we understand representations of place as the product of spatial practice, and embrace the strategic formations of television production and their distinct impact on that spatial practice, we acknowledge that a text’s spatiality is an ongoing negotiation, and can work to more closely identify the formations that create televisual places like *White Collar*’s version of Cape Verde, and which shape the map of television more broadly.

Through a careful study utilizing industry interviews and close analysis of industry trade discourse and a range of television texts spread across multiple forms and genres, this project maps the place of place within contemporary television culture, providing a framework that deepens our analysis of place identity to the negotiated value of spatial capital within the process of television production. In doing so, I hope to answer questions regarding how space and place

³⁰ 22.

are represented through the medium of television, whilst simultaneously providing a set of questions that can be applied to a wider ranges of texts and contexts, offering further insight to spatial capital in subsequent studies of location, relocation, and dislocation in media's past, present, and future.

Mapping the Mapping of Spatial Capital

In order to begin investigating spatial capital, this project first must establish what it understands as the spatial economy of contemporary television. In the first two chapters, two interconnected maps of spatial capital are offered in order to identify the spaces of negotiation within the process of both television production and television textuality, and the way in which changes in the spatiality of those areas are shaping those negotiations.

In Chapter One, I consider the spatial economy of television production, embracing Mayer's call for a cultural geography of production approach by considering how a larger push toward studies of media capitals and location work frame our understanding of the contemporary North American television industry. While acknowledging the political and economic realities that were visible in the production incentives map discussed earlier, the project pushes toward a cultural approach to understanding the way spatial capital circulates within the process of television production, outlining the various stakeholders in the industry's spatial economy and focusing on how those stakeholders are engaged with the relocation of that industry to new locations supported by those production incentives.

By focusing on one such stakeholder, below-the-line location professionals, the chapter pushes against historical discourses of runaway production toward an understanding of mobile production, in which the expanding map of locations capable of sustaining long-term television

production have destabilized our understanding of where television is produced, and thus heightened the precarity facing below-the-line workers. Through personal interviews with location professionals, the chapter maps out the ways in which these workers in particular are both crucial generators of and increasingly subject to spatial capital—while their work is necessary to support the spatial challenges created as television expands into new regions, their work is also highly localized in an increasingly unstable environment, offering a vital—if also concerning—case study for understanding the relationship between spatial capital and television laborers.

In Chapter Two, the place-making activities of spatial capital are mapped onto another space of change in the television industry. While the locations where television is produced are expanding, so too are the textual strategies available during production and post-production to generate spatial capital. By exploring this spatial economy of television textuality, this chapter identifies four evolving strategies for activating spatial capital within the television text, and the ways these strategic formations reveal the opportunities and limitations of contemporary television textuality. The chapter's cartographical analysis of television reveals the spatial practice that further negotiates the spatial capital embedded within the space of production detailed in the previous chapter.

Additionally, the chapter works to identify the labor behind these textual strategies of spatial capital, with a case study specifically exploring post-production labor in the creation of the fictional town of Bluebell for The CW's *Hart of Dixie* (2011-2015). Through interviews, the chapter discovers the way individual laborers contribute to the series' negotiation of spatial capital, while simultaneously identifying the challenges they faced operating within strategic formations of spatial capital tied to industrial hierarchies facing workers nearer the bottom of

those hierarchies. This case study specifically reveals the limitations of place identity within these textual strategies, prompting consideration of how intersections of place with issues such as race or class are incongruent with forms of spatial practice found within the process of television production.

Together, Chapters One and Two reveal the ways in which spatial capital functions within contemporary television more broadly, setting the stage for more focused case studies. Although the spatial economies of production and textuality outlined in these chapters can be observed across all televisual forms and genres, discrete televisual forms offer their own distinct negotiations of spatial capital depending on realities of production or textuality. The following three chapters explore those negotiations across three such televisual forms, in the process mapping new dimensions of television's spatial capital that manifest through these case studies.

In Chapter Three, I focus attention on the specific spatial affordances of the multi-camera sitcom, a format predominantly limited from engaging in location shooting that is typically used to activate "authentic" spatial capital. By pushing against claims that the multi-camera format lacks what we have come to understand as television style, the chapter breaks down the spatial practices specific to the format, and considers how production design and textual strategies combine to embrace spatial capital through depictions of what the chapter terms the "sitcom city," specifically in the depiction of social spaces within multi-camera production.

After acknowledging the limitations to the spatial capital created through the sitcom city, the chapter explores the specific case study of CBS sitcom *How I Met Your Mother* (2005-2014), both through its depiction of New York City as well as its extension to engagements with the "sitcom nation" through its serialized depiction of Canada over its nine-season run. This case study reveals the limitations of the multi-camera format to engage in spatial capital through

strategies typically used to construct a complex place-identity, but it resists dismissals of spatial capital within the format by considering how *How I Met Your Mother*'s Canada taps into what Eric Hobsbawm terms "proto-national" symbols that maximize the format's spatiality despite a lack of access to verisimilitude.³¹

In Chapter Four, meanwhile, I turn toward the contemporary television drama, and consider how the evolution of television storytelling has impacted its relationship with spatial capital. This chapter is crucial for acknowledging that spatial capital is, like so many other elements of television culture, tied up in popular and critical discourses, in this case specifically discourses of television hierarchy manifesting in what has been termed the "golden age of television." By considering how hierarchies of spatial capital have emerged relative to hierarchies of heavily serialized dramas as compared to episodic procedurals, the chapter acknowledges how negotiations of cultural capital within discourses of television ultimately influence the negotiation of spatial capital within individual texts, particularly in terms of drama series like *Breaking Bad* (2008-2013) and *The Wire* (2002-2008).

The chapter focuses its analysis on one particular discourse, in which place is imagined as a "character" in a given series as a marker of distinction. Breaking down the logic by which this discourse has been applied, I argue that its deployment is related to but ultimately lacks a nuanced connection to how spatial capital is tied to the distinct affordances of television narratives. By proposing two new designations for engaging the relationship between place and television narrative, place as narrative backdrop and place as narrative engine, the chapter offers a more detailed consideration of how evolutions in television drama heighten or limit a text's engagement with spatial capital, culminating in a close analysis of both serial and procedural

³¹ Eric Hobsbawm. *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality*. Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1992.

stories set in a single location—Miami, Florida—to consider how place-identity is shaped by the negotiations inherent to narratives in contemporary drama series.

Finally, in Chapter Five, the project expands to focus beyond the spatial capital of scripted programming to consider how space and place function within the space of reality television. Although relying on similar textual strategies for activating spatial capital, reality television formats share a distinct relationship with spaces of production, which this chapter conceptualizes through Victor Turner's study of liminal ritual. In considering the specificity of reality television's engagement with spatial capital, the chapter frames reality production as a form of hyperliminal ritual, in which the negotiation of spatial capital is inherent to the process of production but also visible within the artifice of the text itself, creating complex representative spaces that simultaneously locate, relocate, and dislocate our sense of space and place within a given text.

The chapter considers the impact of these hyperliminal rituals on our understanding of reality television's spatial capital, with a specific interest in the genre's relationship to the nation as a strategic formation. Through a close analysis of two nationalized reality competition formats, *The Amazing Race* and the *Got Talent* franchise, the chapter explores how spatial capital is negotiated as reality formats designed in one country are translated for another. By considering the labor of these place-making activities as a function of hyperliminal ritual, the chapter breaks down how the previously-explored spatial economies of scripted television are both crucial to and insufficient for engagements with the spatial economy of reality formats in which the local, regional, national, transnational, and global are negotiated through distinct forms of spatial practice.

Location, Relocation, Dislocation

“Location, location, location” is a phrase most commonly associated with real estate, but I have adopted it—and adapted it—here in the interest of acknowledging what happens when we approach television through the lens of spatial capital. As the maps that opened this introduction identified, this mantra in some cases describes an existing preponderance on place within television culture and television production culture, such that one does not need to stretch significantly to say that every television show contains some form of spatial capital, and can thus benefit from being investigated through this lens.

However, as the case of *White Collar*’s Cape Verde and the range of case studies in the chapters that follow individually and collectively demonstrate, television’s spatial capital is not a set value. While “location, location, location” explains the philosophy by which one might approach a problem or a question, the actual process of applying that philosophy is not so simple. There are strategic formations shaping that spatial capital, which are in and of themselves constantly in flux as the television industry relocates, and as textual strategies evolve to dislocate spatial capital as required by a given text. These formations are also more important now than ever before—*NPR*’s Pop Culture Happy Hour podcast dedicated a 2015 episode to exploring what it termed “pop culture geography,” while new maps exploring the geography of American television continue to emerge, like a *Mic.com* map determining the most popular shows set in each state as determined by IMDB ratings.³² From the people who make television to the people who consume it, and in the discourse in between, where a television show takes place matters,

³² Kevin O’Keefe, “The Most Popular TV Show Set in Each State—in One Surprising Map,” *Mic.com*, 27 April 2015, <http://mic.com/articles/116612/the-most-popular-tv-show-set-in-each-state-in-one-surprising-map>

and this project explores how this spatial capital is created, negotiated, and ultimately valued in our contemporary moment.

When we dig deeper into the maps of television's spatial capital, we discover that by the time a story goes from script to screen, spatial capital has been located, relocated, and dislocated by individual workers working within industrial structures, their collective labor creating a web of spatiality that—when broken down in the following chapters—reveals both the limits and potentials of televisual place-identity in our contemporary moment.

Chapter One

Television's Spatial Economy: Mobile Production and Locating Spatial Capital

Why does a television series shoot in one location as opposed to another?

In the spring of 2012, independent production company Gaumont International Television was in pre-production on *Hemlock Grove*, a dark supernatural drama series from producer Eli Roth that was set to debut on Netflix in the United States in 2013. The series is based on a novel by Brian McGreevy set in the fictional town of Hemlock Grove, Pennsylvania, with McGreevy playing a role in its adaptation that extended to the decision of where the series would be filmed. Having grown up in Pennsylvania, and having set his novel there, McGreevy's goal was clear: speaking with *The Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, McGreevy tells of how

in our first meeting [with]...Gaumont, they presented us with options for Vancouver and Pittsburgh, and I made a very long argument for why it had to be Pittsburgh. And it turned out I was completely wasting my breath. They said, "Cool, it's Pittsburgh. Moving on."¹

On its surface, free from any context, this seems logical: with a novel and series both set near Pittsburgh, shooting in the city is common sense. However, the decision meant that *Hemlock Grove* would be the first television series to film in Pittsburgh since the introduction of Pennsylvania's film tax credit program in 2004. Although numerous feature films had filmed in

¹ Rob Owen, "Author Brian McGreevy pulled to have 'Hemlock Grove' series filmed near Pittsburgh," *The Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, 28 March 2012, <http://www.post-gazette.com/ae/tv-radio/2012/03/28/Author-Brian-McGreevy-pulled-to-have-Hemlock-Grove-series-filmed-near-Pittsburgh/stories/201203280206>

and around Pittsburgh to take advantage of the incentives offered, *Hemlock Grove* signaled a major turning point in Pennsylvania's efforts to establish itself as an emergent media capital. As Pittsburgh Film Office director Dawn Keezer tells the *Post-Gazette*, *Hemlock Grove*

illustrates everything we've been working toward since the beginning of the film tax credit program. We've always wanted a series. Series mean long-term employment opportunities, and the icing on the cake for this one is it's written by a local Pittsburgher. He gets his first deal and brings it home. We're extremely grateful to Gaumont and Brian McGreevy.²

It was as close to a home run as you could imagine for the intersection of production studio, creator, and local film commission. Gaumont praised Keezer and the Pittsburgh Film Office, with head of production Andy House admitting "I've always found big state and federal applications to be daunting to say the least and Dawn explained the process and held our hand to guide us through."³ Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development press secretary Steven Kratz touts the importance of his government's role, pointing out, "it's safe to say without tools like the film tax credit, it would have been difficult to have a project like this."⁴ Meanwhile, after believing that "to film in Vancouver would not convey the notion of place as a character," McGreevy gets his wish of shooting a series in his hometown and maintaining the sense of place established in his novel.⁵ In the *Post-Gazette* coverage of the news, all parties were already looking forward to the show filming in Pittsburgh for multiple seasons, imagining the impact it could have on the city's crew base and its capacity to compete with other locations

² Ibid.

³ Owen, "More on 'Hemlock Grove,' the TV series," *The Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, 28 March 2012, <http://communityvoices.post-gazette.com/arts-entertainment-living/tuned-in/32407-more-on-hemlock-grove-the-tv-series>

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

like Louisiana, Georgia, and North Carolina. A production office opened in late April, McGreevy and Roth were scheduled for a local reading from McGreevy's book in mid-May, and *Hemlock Grove* was set to help put Pittsburgh and Pennsylvania on the map as a prime location for television production.

Hemlock Grove never filmed in Pittsburgh. In mid-May, the production office was closed, the local reading was canceled, and Gaumont packed up production and moved to Toronto, Ontario.⁶ Keezer, the individual praised for walking Gaumont through the tax incentive system, wrote in a letter to the Pittsburgh Film Office board of directors that the change was the result of Gaumont simply not understanding how the Pennsylvania Film Tax Credit program works—specifically, they did not realize that the transferable tax credits would not be available until each episode of the series was actually aired, which ran into conflict with Netflix's plan to hold all episodes until they could be released at once for binge viewing, thus delaying their ability to transfer the tax credits and recoup that portion of their investment. While McGreevy had convinced Gaumont on the merits of Pittsburgh, it was at a time when the production company saw the state's incentives as comparable to those in cities like Toronto or Vancouver (where no such delays would exist); when their misunderstanding was revealed, McGreevy's argument no longer carried significant capital in their decision-making. McGreevy calls the decision "heartbreaking," but tells the *Post-Gazette* that "it just comes down to economics. There were complications that, frankly, I don't completely understand."⁷

⁶ Rob Owen, "Pittsburgh-set TV series 'Hemlock Grove' pulls out a month before filming," *The Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, 11 May 2012, <http://www.post-gazette.com/ae/tv-radio/2012/05/11/Pittsburgh-set-TV-series-Hemlock-Grove-pulls-out-a-month-before-filming/stories/201205110194>

⁷ Ibid.

These economic complications have been identified as the dominant answer to the question of why a television series shoots in one location as opposed to another. In trade journal conversations about the rise of media capitals, incentive programs are the dominant narrative in how states like Louisiana or Georgia emerged as competitors to Los Angeles and New York, dating back to Vancouver's emergence in the early 1990s. In preparing to interview industry professionals regarding this project, I was forewarned by an industry executive that decisions of where to film a series ultimately come down to money. At the 2014 Association of Film Commissioners International Locations show in Los Angeles, where film commissions from around the world gather to pitch themselves as a media capital, nearly every city, state, or country with a booth had their percentage incentive prominently displayed, and industry professionals speaking on organized panels knew those percentages to the point where accountants had detailed spreadsheets that could run comparisons between different locations at a moment's notice.

However, the case of *Hemlock Grove* reinforces that such decisions are not wholly political economic in nature. The decision to film *Hemlock Grove* in Toronto was the result of economic considerations, and the decision not to film in Pittsburgh was the result of political confusion surrounding the state's film tax credit program, but at stake in that decision was the cultural capital associated with a locally-set series created by a "local boy" being filmed in the state of Pennsylvania. Also at stake were the estimated 150 jobs provided by the production, a foundation for what the community hoped would become an established production culture sustained by multiple seasons of one-hour drama production that Keezer characterizes as the "Holy Grail" of local film production.⁸ Although these may be direct consequences of political

⁸ Ibid.

economic dimensions of the television industry's relationship with geography, there are cultural dimensions to these decisions that reverberate throughout the production chain, from above-the-line creatives like McGreevy—whose goal of being true to his local roots was valued until it was financially infeasible—to below-the-line laborers who would make up the vast majority of the 150 local jobs lost in Pittsburgh (and the 150 jobs that were subsequently gained in Toronto, and in many cases likely maintained when Gaumont moved forward with second and third seasons of the series in 2013 and 2014).

In this chapter, I will address the cultural dimensions of such decisions by outlining the spatial economy of American television production, wherein various stakeholders at every level of the production chain make choices that collectively determine where a television series is filmed and the “spatial capital” negotiated by various stakeholders within that process. Following the lead of Vicki Mayer, said outline explores what she terms the “cultural geography of production,” tracking the local and institutional dynamics that emerge from decisions that may be decided at a corporate level, but have reverberations through individual laborers working at various stages of the production process. While political and economic concerns are well represented in this spatial economy, a full accounting of the relationship between geography and television production requires engaging with the cultural negotiation operating at each stage of the decision-making process. The ongoing, collaborative nature of television production creates a distinct production culture that maps onto shifting political and economic circumstances differently from film, necessitating a more focused scholarly framework than existing media industries research has offered. Although the chapter will not argue against the thesis that production incentives are a huge factor in enabling a state to emerge as a media capital, and in convincing a production studio to make the commitment to produce a television series in that

location, I am primarily interested in the cultural negotiations—and negotiators—that emerge from such decisions, which are at times obscured in scholarly, trade, and industry discourse.

Based on this understanding of the spatial economy of television production, the chapter goes on to reframe the contemporary moment in television production as one of “mobile production.” While the shift of television production away from Los Angeles has been historically framed as “runaway production,” the chapter explores how this term has become ahistorical in a contemporary environment where decision-making can no longer be seen as centered on Los Angeles. Instead, series like *Hemlock Grove* are untethered to any location, choosing between a growing number of potential filming locations as incentive systems and crew bases emerge in more and more locations across North America; it even becomes possible to switch between them at the last minute should circumstances like those that befell *Hemlock Grove* in Pittsburgh emerge unexpectedly. The chapter will consider how this era of mobile production has impacted the negotiation of spatial capital within the development of television production, considering its relative impact on both above-the-line and below-the-line laborers. Although shifts in the geography of television production have created logistical and creative challenges for television showrunners and other above-the-line contributors to television’s spatial economy, impacting how a “sense of place” is constructed and negotiated, mobile production has also created localized below-the-line work forces whose jobs are dependent on political and economic forces that could change at any given moment.

Through considering multiple case studies of decision-making regarding production location relative to television’s spatial economy, I will demonstrate the inherent precarity of the labor forces on which mobile production is predicated, and the need for closer analysis of their place within the spatial economy. The chapter will then focus in on a specific category of below-

the-line laborers whose work has become especially crucial to facilitating and sustaining an expanded spatial economy of television production. While the establishing of a deep local crew base is commonly accepted as a requirement for a city or state to emerge as a media capital, the chapter identifies location professionals as crucial to nascent media capitals, particularly in the context of series television and its demand for locations across a large number of episodes. All below-the-line workers are on some level tied to their location by means of becoming part of a local crew base, but location professionals develop specific skills and expertise that are explicitly tied to a particular location, expertise that would require greater investment to transfer to other locations. Through personal interviews with location professionals and analysis of limited trade discourse surrounding their labor, this particular category of laborer emerges as an ideal case study for understanding how television's spatial capital is negotiated through localized below-the-line labor, while also considering how the intensely local nature of their knowledge makes them vulnerable to the flows resulting from an era of mobile production.

Although each series like *Hemlock Grove* will run into different roadblocks and considerations that could change where production takes place, the negotiations that result can be generalized as a key space through which we can understand cultural geographies of production, even if political economic considerations remain the dominant force behind industry decision-making. This chapter works to reinforce the importance of such work to any study of how and where television is produced in the contemporary moment, and on the broader consideration of television's spatial capital outlined in the subsequent chapters.

The Spatial Capital Exchange

The show floor at the 2014 AFCI Locations Show is busy on its first day. In the registration area, large ads for the State of Illinois cover the sign-in desks, while Hawaii and Iceland sponsored a coffee and snack bar, respectively. The bags you pick up at the registration desk are emblazoned with a logo for one state/province/country or another, while every attendee is carrying some form of paraphernalia that they have picked up from one of the dozens of booths scattered across two large rooms at a Los Angeles-area hotel. Each booth hopes to draw attendees—who range from top-level industry executives to minor producers—looking for more information about where they might film their next project. The United Kingdom brought the Iron Throne from Northern Ireland-filmed *Game of Thrones*, while Utah hired a caricaturist to help keep people in their booth for a longer period (although the artist knew little about the film industry, which somewhat limited the effectiveness of this strategy). On industry panels held during the event, producers and executives spoke to attendees about broad shifts in the dynamics of where film and television series are produced, after which Q&A periods often devolved into representatives from different locations taking over the microphone to ask why there was not more discussion of the great local incentives offered by, for example, their own state of Massachusetts.⁹

Walking through the show floor as a researcher, I saw the “spatial economy” of television production—where series are produced and why—come to life. The AFCI Locations Show is far from the only place where decisions are made regarding where a particular film or television series will film: industry professionals spoke of employees whose sole job is to “run the numbers” regarding the wide range of potential locations where a project could be produced, while the Internet has made most of the information available in pamphlets or printed onto

⁹ The answer was weather: the presenter suggested we should “let global warming have a few years,” after which point Massachusetts would become more competitive.

signage readily accessible without needing to travel half-way across the country or the world to be in attendance. However, the event offers a rare opportunity to see the various participants in the spatial economy sharing one space, engaging in networking that forms the foundation for how these decisions are made. We could think of it as the Spatial Capital Exchange, a shared space for the studios who make decisions, the producers who work within those decisions, the state/provincial film commissions who govern incentive programs, the smaller film commissions who help facilitate local production, companies like Hilton Hotels, and even specific locations like warehouses, universities (Yale and Penn State shared a table), or the Battleship Iowa, located on the Los Angeles waterfront. For some, attending the Locations Show is a long-standing ritual that reinforces their claim to spatial capital and reaffirms their place within the spatial economy; for others like Canada's Northwest Territories or the Battleship Iowa, this is their first time announcing their presence, hoping to get noticed by the industry professionals there to get a read on where that spatial economy is headed in the future.¹⁰

Not unlike the floor of the New York Stock Exchange, there is almost too much information to interpret in order to get a clear read on the spatial capital being exchanged on the show floor. Is the absence of major players like Georgia and Puerto Rico a simple concern regarding the budget necessary to attend the event, or a broader sign of its irrelevance to certain groups in an era of easy online communication? While individual cities and communities within Louisiana chose to attend, the absence of the overarching Louisiana Film Commission meant those communities were scattered throughout the exhibition areas, whereas the Texas and North Carolina Film Commissions were each in attendance and brought each of the local groups

¹⁰ The representative from the Battleship Iowa felt he left with some good leads, although he noted that the prominence of the word "Iowa" on their signage gave some people the wrong impression regarding where the Battleship was located. He intends to change that next year.

together in one larger booth space. During the formal presentations, representatives from Film Commissions spoke out against claims by producers that it was their job to make production cheaper, arguing their onus to taxpayers outweighs the ease with which studios are able to save money, and drawing applause from the crowd. Every corner was a moment of negotiation, with different representatives of various stages of production converging to engage with how location will influence the film or television show they are about to make.

Understanding the Spatial Economy of Television Production

Within the context of media studies research, these negotiations have been predominantly studied in two ways. First, the work on media tourism referenced in the Introduction has focused on how this spatial economy has been received and engaged by audiences. However, the specific production circumstances of this spatial economy have historically been explored within studies of runaway production. The expansion of film and television production outside of Los Angeles has specifically been framed in these terms, exploring the political economic moves and counter-moves that have shaped and reshaped the map of media production over the past century. Peter Hall traces the very origins of Hollywood to “runaway” productions originally based in New York and Chicago, while Gasher and Ellmer point to the dissolution of the studio system as a “push” factor in increasing location shooting outside of Hollywood; meanwhile, in *Global Hollywood 2*, Toby Miller et al. consider the New International Division of Cultural Labor, which media corporations have embraced in an effort to reduce costs and take advantage of an increasingly globalized media landscape.¹¹ Such runaway production can, according to Aida A.

¹¹ Sir Peter Hall, “The Dream Factory: Los Angeles 1910-1945” in *Cities in Civilization* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1998): 520-552; Greg Elmer and Mike Gasher, “Introduction: Catching up to Runaway Productions” in *Contracting Out Hollywood: Runaway Productions and Foreign*

Hozic, be seen as “the symptom of ‘footloose corporations,’ or an era in which an unprecedented mobility of capital and production has enabled corporations to constantly seek—and find—friendlier and friendlier business environments.”¹² As Miller et al. observe, there is an inherent unpredictability to such flows of capital, acknowledging that the NICL “relies on cultural consanguinity, favorable rates of exchange, supine governments, minimal worker internationalism and high levels of skill equivalency”; however, they ultimately conclude that “it is real,” and confront it as one of the most significant shifts in the political economy of creative industries.¹³

Such perspectives offer a valuable framework for engaging with the impact of runaway production on broader conceptions of what Michael Curtin terms “media capital” as more and more production—particularly in television, which had historically “helped to offset the decade-long slide in moviemaking”¹⁴—moves outside of southern California.¹⁵ As Curtin notes, “the study of media capital directs our attention to complex interactions among a range of flows (economic, demographic, technological, cultural and ideological) that operate at a variety of levels (local, national, regional and global).”¹⁶ Following these flows, political economic work considers how increases in runaway production—most often tied to production incentives offered by countries, states, provinces, and territories like those present at the AFCI Locations

Location Shooting (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2005): 1-20.; Toby Miller et al., *Global Hollywood 2* (London: British Film Institute, 2005).

¹² Aida A. Hozic, *Hollyworld: Space, Power, and Fantasy in the American Economy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001): 112.

¹³ Miller et al., 171.

¹⁴ Richard Verrier, “Los Angeles losing the core of its TV production to other states,” *The Los Angeles Times*, 15 August 2012, <http://articles.latimes.com/2012/aug/15/business/la-fi-ct-runaway-tv-20120814>

¹⁵ Michael Curtin, “Media Capital: Towards the Study of Spatial Flows,” *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 6.2 (2003): 202-228.

¹⁶ Curtin, 222.

Shows—are altering the macro-level economy of the creative industries more broadly as well as the economies of the cities, regions, or countries in question. More focused case studies consider the economic impact both on existing centers of media production such as Los Angeles along with aspiring media capitals that seek to “pull” production using incentives, including U.S. states such as Louisiana, Michigan, or North Carolina.¹⁷ Such analyses have proved crucial in understanding this dramatic reshaping of the map of media production based on government subsidies and increasingly mobile capital, evaluating the impact of these incentive programs on existing and emerging economies of production in these regions.

However, although such frameworks have proven valuable in understanding what Curtin and John Vanderhoef identify as the “metatheory” of this “race to the bottom,” expanding research in the area of production studies has called for more focused analysis of the lived reality of these broader economic patterns.¹⁸ Curtin and Vanderhoef, in considering the case of visual effects artists, argue for “adopting a multivalent approach to address the relentless and pervasive class warfare being waged against the creative workforce in Hollywood and around the world.”¹⁹ One of the impacts of an increasingly globalized space of media production is an increase in

¹⁷ See Allen J. Scott, *On Hollywood: The Place, The Industry* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005); Susan Christopherson and Jennifer Clark, *Remaking Regional Economies: Power, Labor and Firm Strategies in the Knowledge Economy* (New York: Routledge, 2007); Amelia Hurt, “Hollywood on the Bayou: An Optimal Tax Approach to Evaluating and Reforming the Louisiana Motion Picture Investor Tax Credit,” *Louisiana Law Review* 74 (2014): 581-612; Cathy Yang Liu, Ric Kolenda, Grady Fitzpatrick and Tim N. Todd, “Re-Creating New Orleans: Driving Development Through Creativity,” *Economic Development Quarterly* 24 (3): 261-75; Stephen R. Miller and Abdul Abdulkadri, “The Economic Impact of Michigan’s Motion Picture Production Industry and the Michigan Motion Picture Production Credit Centre for Economic Analysis,” Michigan State University, February 2009; John E Connaughton and Ronald A. Madsen, “The Economic Impact of the Film and Video Production and Distribution Industry on the Charlotte Regional Economy,” *Journal of Business & Economics Research* 9.4 (2011): 15-26.

¹⁸ Michael Curtin and John Vanderhoef, “A Vanishing Piece of the Pi: The Globalization of Visual Effects Labor,” *Television and New Media* (Feb. 2014): 220.

¹⁹ 221.

contingent employment, particularly among below-the-line workers. Andrew Ross characterizes contingent laborers by “the radical uncertainty of their futures, the temporary of intermittent nature of their work contracts, and their isolation from any protective framework of social insurance.”²⁰ As this “race to the bottom” unfolds in search of cost advantages within the media industries, more workers’ employment is contingent on incentive structures that make their jobs possible. However, those structures could change in value at any moment, whether through political upheaval or through another country with better incentives changing the terms of the marketplace. Kevin Sanson, identifying location and labor as a critical crossroads in global film and television, explains “media workers...exist in the midst of friction: facilitating it, resisting it and ever coerced by it, as a new geography of creative labor envelopes them.”²¹ (57). Vicki Mayer, meanwhile, notes how these new economies of media production work as structural forces that transfer buzzwords like “dynamic, global, networked, and flexible” onto television laborers, leading to “clusters of temporary work communities [that] collaborate more sporadically for shorter-term contracts and then must migrate and remobilize.”²²

This focus on the workers caught up in this new geography is moving media studies scholarship toward what Mayer identifies as the “cultural geography of production,” which “would not only expand our repertoire of locations but allow [media studies] to look at the location of production in relation to labor markets, capital flows, and global politics of enfranchisement.”²³ It is a framework that acknowledges the political and economic concerns

²⁰ Andrew Ross, *Nice Work If You Can Get It: Life and Labor in Precarious Times* (New York: New York University Press, 2010): 6.

²¹ Kevin Sanson, “Location and Labor: Critical Crossroads in Global Film and Television,” *Creative Industries Journal* 7.1 (2014): 57.

²² Vicki Mayer, *Below the Line: Producers and Production Studies in the New Television Economy* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011): 177.

²³ Vicki Mayer, “Where Production Takes Place,” *The Velvet Light Trap* 62 (2008): 71.

that often drive decision-making and mark industrial progress, while simultaneously engaging with the interrelationship between those developments and the politics of labor and capital on a local level within what John Caldwell identifies as the “borderlands of production culture.”²⁴ A cultural geography of production approach asks us to consider not only the political and economic forces to lead a production to a particular location, but also the production cultures that determine how the unit functions once established in what Goldsmith, Ward, and O’Regan characterize as “local Hollywoods” in their case study of Australia’s Gold Coast.²⁵ Such production studies work—focused on many of the regions referenced previously—has created a strong foundation for considering the impact of a newly globalized map of media production on local, regional, national, and transnational levels.²⁶

In framing this chapter as focusing on the spatial economy of television production, I follow this cultural geography of production approach, with the hopes of better understanding what Sanson characterizes as the “friction” within the contemporary geography of creative labor. However, while many such studies are focused on a specific labor group or more broadly generalized between film and television, I want to focus here on the specific stakeholders in television’s spatial economy, with the interest of understanding its distinct spatiality in the contemporary moment.

²⁴ See also John T. Caldwell, “Industrial Geography Lessons: Socio-Professional Rituals and the Borderlands of Production Culture,” in *MediaSpace: Place, Scale, and Culture in a Media Age*, Eds. Nick Couldry and Anna McCarthy (London: Routledge, 2003), 164.

²⁵ Ben Goldsmith, Susan Ward, and Tom O’Regan, *Local Hollywood: Global Film Production and the Gold Coast* (Queensland: University of Queensland Press, 2011).

²⁶ For an example of work that has followed this model in analyzing local production cultures supported by incentives, see Serra Tinic, *On Location: Canada’s Television Industry in a Global Market* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005); further work in this area can be found in Part III, “Production Spaces: Centers and Peripheries,” in *Production Studies: Cultural Studies of Media Industries*, Vicki Mayer, Miranda J. Banks, and John T. Caldwell, Eds. (New York: Routledge, 2009).

Stakeholders in TV's Spatial Economy

While all workers whose labor is tied to the television industry are inherently participants in the spatial economy of television production, the following are the primary stakeholders that contribute to the flows of television production within an American context. Each holds their own level of spatial capital, which depending on the location and circumstances will carry influence within the decision-making process of where a particular television series is filmed.

Politicians: Foregrounding the importance of considering political dynamics within any consideration of the spatial economy, political efforts to create production incentives lie at the heart of television's expanding geography. In order for a state to be seen as financially competitive with the established media environment of Los Angeles, financial incentives—in the form of tax credits, tax rebates, and a range of other local- and state-level considerations—are considered a necessity for a state or province to establish itself as a base for media production in general, and ongoing television production in particular. Such programs therefore require political support, introduced by state or local legislators and then signed into law by Governors or Premiers. Such support is also crucial to the continuation or expansion of those incentive programs: should such support disappear, an incentive program may be allowed to “sunset,” at which stage the spatial capital created by the program, and the infrastructure supported by that capital, may be threatened.

These programs are introduced on the basis of spatial capital, and include a wide-range of economic and cultural benefits to the local community. During negotiations to renew the state of Oklahoma's incentive program in March of 2014, *The Hollywood Reporter* noted that those who supported the legislation argued it “brings the state revenue, taxes, and attention, and it is a boost to tourism,” while the bill's critics criticized the program for supporting films like *August: Osage*

County that “portrayed the state in a negative light.”²⁷ In making the decision to establish or renew an existing incentive program, states must weight these various elements of spatial capital, particularly given that the majority of states have some kind of incentive system in place.

Production Studios and Networks: The political dimensions of television’s spatial economy are best witnessed in cases where negotiations take place between the political leaders responsible for introducing incentives and the industry forces that seek to take advantage of those incentive structures. The production studios who produce television content, and networks or channels who will eventually distribute that content, have specific financial baselines that they are expected to meet. Given that deficit financing remains the dominant model for television production, the upfront costs to a production studio are a crucial space in which to reduce deficits while also potentially reducing the license fee they charge networks or channels, therefore potentially increasing the longevity of the series if competing against a more expensive series for renewal; shifting production to a less expensive location supported by a stronger incentive system is a common way to reduce these costs.

As production continues, however, there are cases where the political support for a capped incentive system—where only a limited amount of funds can be distributed through incentives to film and television productions in a given year—may be challenged by a production studio’s demands. In 2014, both Netflix’s *House of Cards* and ABC’s *Nashville* challenged the spatial economies of Maryland and Tennessee respectively, with their production studios threatening to move production to another state if incentives were not expanded beyond the scope of existing legislation. In Maryland, lobbying from *House of Cards* producer Media Rights

²⁷ Alex Ben Block, “Last-Minute Effort Saves Movie and TV Tax Incentives in Oklahoma,” *The Hollywood Reporter*, 4 March 2014, <http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/last-minute-effort-saves-movie-686052>

Capital led the state to expand its available incentives from \$4 million to \$11.5 million, while a combined consortium of the state of Tennessee, the city of Nashville, the Nashville Convention and Visitors Corporation, and Grand Ole Opry-owner Ryman Hospitality Properties were able to offer *Nashville* \$8 million in incentives for its third season.²⁸ In both cases, political negotiations led to incentive packages below what the productions had received in previous seasons, and likely below the ideal level for the studios involved, but the results were enough to retain the jobs, local spending, and tourism benefits of the series filming in those locations.

Film Commissioners and Film Offices: While such large-scale negotiations directly connect studios with figures like state governors or city mayors, typically studios interact directly with film commissioners working out of film offices. In New Mexico, the New Mexico Film Office functions as a division of the state’s economic development department, and is responsible for a range of tasks including “consult[ing] with productions regarding the financial aspects of their projects, guiding them through the incentives,” along with “connect[ing] productions with the crew, vendor services and film liaisons throughout the state.”²⁹ Productions shooting in New Mexico will also likely have a relationship with a municipal film office, like the Albuquerque Film Office, which similarly works to walk studios through the incentive programs while also facilitating production in other ways. In 2014, the Albuquerque Film Office won a Location Managers Guild of America award for Outstanding Film Commission, cited during the award ceremony for their skill working—among other tasks—to get AMC’s *Breaking Bad* the proper permissions to film in crowded downtown locations in the city. As evidenced in the above

²⁸ Ted Johnson, “‘House of Cards’ Receives Maryland Tax Credit,” *Variety*, 25 April 2014, <http://variety.com/2014/biz/news/house-of-cards-maryland-filming-1201164393/>; Nate Rau, “ABC’s ‘Nashville’ accepts \$8 million incentive package,” *The Tennessean*, 16 May 2014, <http://www.tennessean.com/story/money/2014/05/15/abcs-nashville-accepts-million-incentive-package/9154383/>

²⁹ “About Us,” *New Mexico Film Office*, http://www.nmfilm.com/About_Us.aspx

example of *Hemlock Grove*, these city film offices are often the direct points of contact for a production on a daily basis, and are particularly important given that each state or province—or even city—has different procedures that it would be difficult to navigate without someone to contextualize them. Foster, Manning, and Terkla identify local film offices as a key intermediary within emerging “production clusters,” identifying their ability to “connect mobile creative professionals and boundary-crossing creative production networks to particular local settings and resources.”³⁰ Such services are crucial to the perceived viability of a given location, and to the production’s initial move to and continued movement within that location.

Accountants and Lawyers: However, as *Hemlock Grove*’s departure from Pittsburgh demonstrates, there are often cases where the complexity of these incentive systems creates confusion beyond what local film offices—who are likely more well-versed on how their own system works than how the industry at large operates—are able to offer. Claiming production incentives can be a complex procedure requiring a knowledge of state and local tax laws: although some states offer a straight cash rebate, most states offer tax credits that require conversion into direct economic benefit. In the case of Louisiana, out-of-state producers can sell tax credits back to the state at 85% of their value or sell them to a company with greater in-state tax liability at roughly 90% of their value, therefore requiring accountants and lawyers to help navigate the hurdles required to recoup the studio’s costs.³¹

Furthermore, studio accountants are a key part of choosing where to film a particular project: as mentioned previously, producers presenting at the AFCI Locations Show in 2014

³⁰ Pacey Foster, Stephan Manning, and David Terkla, “The Rise of Hollywood East: Regional Film Offices As Intermediaries in Film and Television Production Clusters,” *Regional Studies* 49.3 (2015): 434.

³¹ Chelsea Brasted, “Louisiana’s film tax credits: How do they work?” *The Times-Picayune*, 2 October 2014, http://www.nola.com/entertainment/baton-rouge/index.ssf/2014/10/louisianas_film_tax_credits_ho.html

spoke of studio workers whose sole job it is to run the numbers of how much a production would cost to shoot in a range of potential locations. While the average producer is likely aware of the basic dimensions of different states or provinces' production incentive structure, the specific infrastructure required to capitalize on those strategies is handled by legal and economic professionals. In this way, information that film offices would typically offer has become embedded within the studio decision-making process, as accountants build systems to model cost-benefit analysis regarding the dynamics of the wider spatial economy. While these individuals are rarely active decision-makers, and their work is often invisible within discourse surrounding the spatial economy, they are crucial to the decision of where to shoot a particular television series.

Above-the-Line Laborers: At the same time, economic considerations must be tempered with the creative goals of a given production. In the case of *Hemlock Grove*, creator Brian McGreevy's ties to Pittsburgh were taken into consideration by Gaumont early on in the process, pushing them to choose Pittsburgh as the initial location where the series was shot. Although financial considerations eventually outweighed the creative value of shooting in the state where the series itself was set, the creative needs of the production nonetheless remain a key voice within the spatial economy. A series set in a large city requires certain types of locations that some cities would not be able to offer, while a series focused on rural areas has a similarly limited selection of production centers that will serve its needs. In this sense, while the wishes of above-the-line laborers like creators or showrunners may not override broader financial concerns at the studio level, the content of a script will dictate what locations will be considered, and therefore give the creator or showrunner some degree of authority over the decision made.

In addition, some above-the-line workers may be important enough to the production that their personal preferences could outweigh financial considerations. *The X-Files* (1993-2002), one of the early success stories of runaway production in television based out of Vancouver, British Columbia, famously moved production to Los Angeles for its sixth season after actor David Duchovny pushed to leave Vancouver. As he told the *Vancouver Sun*, “however lovely this city is, and however wonderful the people have been, and however talented the crew that works here, and however perfect the city is for *The X-Files*, that hasn't really figured into the personal dislocation that I've felt.”³² This personal dislocation also appears to be behind the decision for *The Good Wife* (2009-Present) to film in New York, rather than Chicago where the series is set: while Illinois has a solid incentive system and a strong local production crew, star Julianna Margulies—also a producer on the series—wanted to remain based out of New York where she lives full time, a decision that also served co-stars Alan Cumming and Chris Noth, who have continued to balance work on the series with theater roles on and off-Broadway.³³

Not all actors have the same ability to fight against this personal dislocation: in the case of an ensemble drama like ABC's *Mistresses*, Alyssa Milano's choice not to follow the production to Vancouver from Los Angeles resulted in her departure from the series.³⁴ Most actors are required to move to find work, while other above-the-line crew like directors are required to dislocate themselves to follow different productions to the wider range of cities

³² Alex Strachan, “The Alienation of David Duchovny,” *The Vancouver Sun*, 17 February 1998, <http://www.mjq.net/xfiles/dd-sun-interview.htm>

³³ Margulies discusses this in a 2012 interview with *TimeOut Chicago*, where she notes that “I’m from New York, and aside from my family being here, when you’re on a television show, it’s your life. It’s nine and a half months a year, five days a week, 14 hours a day.” See Novid Parsi, “Julianna Margulies on *The Good Wife* | Interview,” *TimeOut Chicago*, 8 March 2012, <http://www.timeout.com/chicago/tv/julianna-margulies-on-the-good-wife-interview>

³⁴ Lesley Goldberg, “Alyssa Milano Exits ABC's ‘Mistresses’” *The Hollywood Reporter*, 1 October 2014, <http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/live-feed/alyssa-milano-exits-abcs-mistresses-737178>

drawing television production. While some above-the-line workers are in a position to have a direct impact on the spatial economy, others are subject to the decisions of those at a higher pay grade.

Below-the-line Laborers and Production Infrastructure: By comparison, it is unlikely that a production would ever make a decision based on the needs of an individual below-the-line laborer—as Vicki Mayer’s research has noted, below-the-line work in television production is historically marginalized, making it challenging for any one laborer to articulate their importance to the production.³⁵ However, the spatial economy is one place where below-the-line labor is collectively valued, as the strength of a labor pool within a given location can be a determining factor in where a studio chooses to produce a given series. Given that many incentive structures offer a higher percentage rebate if local labor is used in the production, the quality and quantity of local labor is crucial to any effort to take full advantage of a state or province’s incentive system.

Television production in particular relies on a strong “crew base,” a term typically used to describe a city, state, or region’s labor pool—locations are often ranked based on how many “crews deep” they are, a term that refers to how many simultaneous productions may be in production at a given moment. At the 2014 AFCI Locations show, a producer spoke of being pushed by a network to shoot a television series in Shreveport, Louisiana as opposed to Atlanta, Georgia for the state’s more lucrative tax incentives, but then being forced to fly in crew from Georgia when the Louisiana crew base was not deep enough to support the project due to multiple other projects draining the labor pool. Such considerations were also central to the decision to move production of Syfy series *12 Monkeys* (2015-) from Detroit—where it shot and

³⁵ Vicki Mayer, *Below the Line: Producers and Production Studies in the New Television Economy* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011).

set its pilot—to Toronto: producers were willing to pay slightly more to shoot in Detroit, where Michigan’s capped incentive pool would likely offer less money than Ontario’s production incentives, but the presence of Zack Snyder’s *Batman v Superman: Dawn of Justice* (2016) in the city meant that there was not enough experienced local crew available during the window they needed to shoot the series.³⁶

While decisions like this one may on the surface appear to be financial, based solely on the incentive system, the labor pool becomes a crucial variable for balancing the different financial models with the logistics of actually producing a television series within that environment. Crew base therefore functions similarly to other forms of production infrastructure, such as sound stages or equipment rentals, which take time to establish but offer long-term value for supporting ongoing production. It may be possible to fly in crew, or temporarily transform warehouses into sound stages (as *Nashville* did when it went into production for its first season in Tennessee), but established infrastructure can be of immense value to the demands of ongoing television production, and therefore to studios making a decision regarding where to produce a particular series.

The Spatial Economy and Mobile Production

Every American television series contributes to, and is shaped by, this spatial economy. While it is unlikely that every series ends up in an intense negotiation with each individual stakeholder outlined above, any one of the categories involved could influence the decision-making of where a television series chooses to film. This accounting of the spatial economy of television production outlines the importance of engaging in the cultural geography of these industrial

³⁶ Executive producer Richard Suckle, personal correspondence.

practices, as the political and economic frameworks on which the spatial economy is built are consistently placed into conversation with both established macro-industrial production cultures and emerging local production cultures. There are some cases where economic concerns trump any creative or logistical concerns that come from filming in a certain location, as was the case with *Hemlock Grove*'s sudden departure from Pittsburgh for Toronto when the economic picture became clearer. However, there are other cases where a production will choose to spend more money to film in a particular location based on the value of authenticity to the production, as was the case with El Rey Network's *Matador* (2014) and its decision to film in Los Angeles, which producer Roberto Orci highlighted as a creative decision during the Summer 2014 TCA Press Tour. There may even be instances where a strong relationship with local crew could convince a studio to take an initial hit financially if they know that the crew in a particular location can keep a series both on-time and on-budget compared to the less experienced group in a state with a stronger incentive system.

The uncertain nature of the spatial economy makes it difficult to generalize about why television series choose to film in particular locations, which also reinforces why runaway production offers an inherently limited framework for thinking about the flows of television production in a contemporary moment. As Goldsmith et al. argue, the term is misleading when attempting to speak to the realities of globally dispersed production, noting "you cannot really describe something as running away when it is from inception 'born international.'"³⁷ While runaway production is a valuable macro-economic term for considering broad, historical shifts in media production, its current utility is primarily focused on a Hollywood-centered view of media

³⁷ Goldsmith et al., 25.

production within industry trade discourse.³⁸ It also continues to hold purchase within the industry given Allen J. Scott's reminder that those in power—studios, writers, etc.—remain tied to the tradition of Hollywood, and thus perceive production as “running away” from a centralized location.³⁹ Within a contemporary context, however, runaway production presumes a more comprehensive center than exists in reality—while industry power may remain concentrated in Los Angeles, the physical productions and the laborers involved can no longer presume to be anchored in the city and the surrounding area. As a result, runaway production's use as a theoretical framework for considering flows of television production reinforces an outdated understanding of where television—and media more broadly—is physically produced both in North American and globally.

In considering the impact of runaway production on Hollywood television production, Scott observed in 2004 that

it may not be entirely far-fetched to speculate on a possible future scenario in which Hollywood actually starts to function within an extended spatial division of labor embodied in a world-wide patchwork of specialized production centers, though for the present its integrity as a self-sufficient cluster remains intact.⁴⁰

In the decade since this observation, as outlined by many of the studies previously referenced, the increased number of states and provinces competing aggressively to draw television

³⁸ This was most recently evident in trade discourse in discussions surrounding the state of California's own tax credit system. See Tina Daunt, “L.A. Mayor Eric Garcetti Calls Runaway Film Production a Civic ‘Emergency,’” *The Hollywood Reporter*, 2 July 2013, <http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/la-mayor-eric-garcetti-calls-578740>; Ted Johnson, “Governor, Legislative Leaders Reach Deal on California Film and TV Tax Credit,” *Variety*, 27 August 2014, <http://variety.com/2014/biz/news/governor-legislative-leaders-reach-deal-on-california-movie-and-tv-tax-credit-1201291914/>

³⁹ Allen J. Scott, “The other Hollywood: the organizational and geographic bases of television-program production,” *Media Culture & Society* 26.2 (2004): 183-205.

⁴⁰ Scott, “The other Hollywood,” 202.

production have made this patchwork tenable: the question of where a television series will be produced and shot has never been as open-ended as it is today.

A crucial component of this openness, and to the initial emergence of runaway production, is the inherent mobility of production, in which the technology and infrastructure necessary to make a television series can either be moved to a location or be found in that location. While economic incentives may be the most commonly cited “pull factor” that dictates where a television series is produced, those incentives are only viable if the necessary infrastructure is in place, as the above breakdown of stakeholders in the spatial economy demonstrates.⁴¹ This is particularly true in the case of television production, which shares a distinct relationship with production mobility compared to film. While Scott argues in *On Hollywood* that television production is more likely to be mobile due to its “relative standardized” nature as compared with film, television production also requires a different scale of infrastructure than a feature film, and can carry higher stakes given the investment being made.⁴² Feature film production at large is mobile, in that individual films are in production for a finite period of time in a particular region, and “the project-based character of high-budget feature films ensures that decisions are one-off decisions.”⁴³ If there is a change in an incentive structure, or if the infrastructure in a given location is found to be lacking, the producers of that film can simply choose to film their next project in a different location. By comparison, however, television productions set up for a much longer period, and may return to that location over the course of two, five, or even ten years. They also shoot on tighter schedules, and require constant adjustments as new directors adapt to the series’ tone, or new scripts change that tone and

⁴¹ Goldsmith et al. 3.

⁴² Scott, *On Hollywood*, 55.

⁴³ Ben Goldsmith and Tom O’Regan, *The Film Studio: Film Production in the Global Economy* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2005): 13.

necessitate further adjustment among local below-the-line crew or local production infrastructure.

As a result, as states, provinces, or countries seek to lure television producers to film in a given location, part of their goal is replicating the production infrastructure available in Los Angeles. The plethora of sound stages located in Los Angeles is one reason why television production has remained comparatively stable in California compared with film production, but as Goldsmith and O'Regan observe, a wide range of other locations across the United States and the world are investing in similar studio infrastructure, such that "location production now means extensive or complete packages of facilities, services, and natural and built environments rather than simply being the obverse of studio-based production."⁴⁴ More recently, states such as Georgia (where U.K. Studio Pinewood has invested in its first American facility) and New Mexico (where an additional tax incentive is offered to those filming on one of the state's sound stages) have consciously expanded their studio capacities as part of an effort to replicate Hollywood infrastructure, a broader trend that has, according to Goldsmith and O'Regan, "led to the significant reduction of risks involved in location production and expanded the range of places offering infrastructure of the requisite standard."⁴⁵

This reduced risk has created an environment where a television show is no longer presumed to be shooting in Los Angeles. Rather than being pulled or pushed away from the stability of southern California, television series now enter a competitive location marketplace where any given television production could theoretically shoot in any given location depending

⁴⁴ Ibid., 6.

⁴⁵ Richard Verrier, "Pinewood Studios expands into Georgia," *The Los Angeles Times*, 29 April 2013, <http://articles.latimes.com/2013/apr/29/entertainment/la-et-ct-pinewood-atlanta-20130429>; Todd Longwell, "Tax Incentives Build Thriving Production Culture in New Mexico," *Variety*, 14 August 2014, <http://variety.com/2014/film/news/tax-incentives-build-thriving-production-culture-in-new-mexico-1201283012/>; Goldsmith and O'Regan, 10.

on financial, logistical, and geographical considerations for that particular production. This contemporary moment can therefore best be understood as one of **mobile production**, rather than runaway production, as the “patchwork” of media capitals has evolved in such a way as to fundamentally displace Los Angeles from its reputation as the primary site of American television production (if not from its continued position at the center of the American television industry).

While shifting to a discussion of mobile production helps us—on a basic level—to move away from a centered discourse of runaway production, it also works to capture the contradictory relationship between this increase in stable production locations and the increasing instability of a production’s relationship with a given location. As Aida A. Hozic observes, “the crucial paradox of the intense competition between states and localities for investment dollars is that their attempts to differentiate themselves from each other are ultimately making them more similar.”⁴⁶ Noting that “the basis of these offerings continues to consist of relatively low labor costs and the willingness to adapt to the needs of business they are trying to attract,” Hozic concludes that “such produced similarities make these new sites of production far more susceptible and vulnerable to the whims of mobile businesses than they had originally set out to be.”⁴⁷ While Hozic does not account for variables in the stakeholders referenced above, such as the value of local incentives, the availability of local production crew, or other components of what Goldsmith, Ward, and O’Regan term “location interest” in the context of production and I consider here more broadly as part of spatial capital, he captures the inherent challenge of mobile television production: there is always another location offering similar—if not identical—infrastructure and labor, meaning that even small shifts in a given location’s spatial capital can

⁴⁶ Hozic, 120.

⁴⁷ Ibid, 121.

result in mobile productions packing up for somewhere else.

In addition to better reflecting the contemporary decision-making over where any individual television series is filmed, mobile production also better describes the ongoing relationship between a given television production and geography. The terms of the spatial economy are not constants: as incentive structures fluctuate, or as crew bases are depleted, production companies adapt to the financial and logistical challenges therein, on occasion choosing to move production to another state or province entirely. Fox drama series *Fringe* (2008-2013) shot its pilot in Toronto before moving to New York to take advantage of the state's incentive program, but left the city for Vancouver after the first season when the New York incentive system ran out of money.⁴⁸ MTV's *Teen Wolf* (2011-) filmed its first two seasons in Atlanta, Georgia, but moved production to Los Angeles after winning a tax break through the state of California's lottery system.⁴⁹ Television production does not simply run from Los Angeles to other cities: it is constantly in motion, untethered to a location both in the initial decision-making of where it should be produced, and in the reevaluation of that location, should the circumstances that brought it there suddenly change.

Impacts of Mobile Production: Above-the-Line

A spatial economy characterized by mobile production has consequences in terms of the creative visions of creators and showrunners. Both AMC's *Breaking Bad* and HBO's *True Detective*, two

⁴⁸ David Fleischer, "Reel Toronto: The *Fringe* Pilot," *Torontoist*, 2 January 2014, <http://torontoist.com/2014/01/reel-toronto-the-fringe-pilot/>; Dave Itzkoff, "As New York Tax Credits Disappear, So Does Fox's 'Fringe,'" *The New York Times*, 24 February 2009, <http://artsbeat.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/02/24/as-new-york-tax-credits-disappear-so-does-foxs-fringe/>

⁴⁹ Richard Verrier, "'Teen Wolf' transforms into an L.A. production," *The Los Angeles Times*, 12 December 2012, <http://articles.latimes.com/2012/dec/12/business/la-fi-ct-onlocation-20121212>

series often lauded for their strong engagement with place, were both originally conceived in different locations, resetting the series to New Mexico and Louisiana respectively in order to take advantage of production incentives.⁵⁰ Furthermore, as production continues to expand outside of Los Angeles, the ability for writers to be hands-on with production becomes more challenging: as writer's rooms typically remain on studio lots in Los Angeles regardless of where a series is produced, they must rely on Skype for production meetings, and rotate "on set" writers to ensure a presence should any rewriting or adjustments need to be done. If the writer's room is functioning as production is ongoing, it becomes impossible for the showrunner to be in both places at once, requiring greater delegation to other executive producers, and a greater confidence in the local labor whose work is under less intense supervision by those whose vision is being executed.

In this way, mobile production reinforces the collaborative nature of television production, pushing away from Reijnders' author-centered model for engaging with the spatial dynamics of a given television text referenced in the Introduction. While the showrunner may be in charge of the series' overall goals, and workers beneath them are ultimately functioning in service of those goals, the mobility of production means that there is a greater distance being negotiated within those collaborations, as greater responsibility falls to the local laborers who must translate specific goals of a production into local production cultures that those who establish those goals may be unfamiliar with. Fox's *Red Band Society* offers a general case of where a series must make creative sacrifices as a result of difficulties with regards to location. The series, which was set at a Los Angeles children's hospital, chose to film in Atlanta, Georgia to take advantage of the state's incentive system, but it remained set in Los Angeles as Margaret

⁵⁰ The impact this has on the series' engagement with spatial capital will be explored in greater detail in Chapter Four.

Nagle's initial script had established—she had based it on a UCLA hospital, and her research had been based out of southern California, and so the show chose to engage in what is known as “city-for-city doubling” to make Atlanta into Los Angeles.

As this task began, however, it necessitated two changes in Nagle's original script. The first change was purely cosmetic, but demonstrates the loss of specificity when not being able to access the actual location: whereas three patients who break out on a joy ride originally traveled to Los Angeles staple In-N-Out Burger in Nagle's original script, they travel to a generic convenience store in the final version of the pilot, as there are no In-N-Out restaurants to visit in Atlanta. From a production perspective, the loss of specificity was a necessary evil in order to take advantage of the incentive system, and it ultimately does little to change the storyline or the character development for those involved. Such small changes are necessary when a series is produced somewhere other than where it is set, which also goes for any series produced in Los Angeles but which is set in other locations around the country, or the world.

However, the second change is more substantial. In the original version of the script, the pilot episode opens with the character of Jordi traveling across the Mexico-U.S. Border with his cousin, Alex. Jordi, while born in Los Angeles, had been sent to Mexico to stay with his cousins following his mother's death, and was traveling across the border to gain access to a specialist. While the backstory is discussed in later scenes, the border sequence marks his cross-border journey and articulates his Latino background directly. It also works to remind audiences that a series set in southern California is also a series set on the Mexico border, calling further attention to the cultural dynamics of a deeply multi-racial part of the country.

The scene is missing from the final version of the pilot. While there are other changes in the pilot that would result from the natural editing of the original script based on running time,

test screenings, and network notes, the opening scene wasn't cut based on a network note or for running time. And while the scene was never filmed, it was not because the producers decided the scene no longer had value. Rather, the scene was never filmed because they were informed that there was nowhere in Atlanta nearby the series' other locations where they could logistically shoot a scene set at the U.S.-Mexico border in southern California.⁵¹ The choice to film in Atlanta would impact the production in many ways, limiting the pool of actors compared to a larger market and making it more challenging to garner on-set press coverage, but the loss of this scene is a case where the creative goals of the script were fundamentally incompatible with the reality of producing in the series in the location in question. As a result, the character's Latino identity is less central to the finished pilot, as the series' negotiation of the spatial economy and embrace of mobile production have made it more challenging—albeit not impossible—for the series to focus on this component of his character in subsequent episodes.

Impacts of Mobile Production: Below-the-Line

In addition to demonstrating the impact of mobile production on the content of a given television text, which will be expanded on in Chapter Two, the case of *Red Band Society* also reinforces the key role of local below-the-line labor in navigating mobile production. Although eventually writers, directors, and editors will make the final decisions regarding what we see onscreen, local labor like the location professionals who made the call on the impossibility of finding a location to double for the U.S.-Mexico border are crucial to keep production moving smoothly. In order for a production studio to have confidence in moving a production from the stable history of television production in Los Angeles or cities like Vancouver or New York, they need to have

⁵¹ Series creator Margaret Nagle, personal correspondence.

confidence in the local crew who has knowledge of the region built up through local experience. In this way, mobile production demands a strong local labor pool, and television series offer a great tool to help build an experienced labor pool in a given location: many of the workers who work on *Red Band Society* in Atlanta will have worked on series like *Teen Wolf*, USA's *Necessary Roughness* (2011-2013), or Lifetime's *Drop Dead Diva* (2009-2014), which as smaller cable productions helped build the framework for a broadcast network series to film in the city.

We can therefore understand the relationship between mobile production and below-the-line laborers as a symbiotic one. The work that below-the-line workers find on television series in cities like Atlanta is predicated on the existence of mobile production, and on the expansion of television's footprint to states that have begun competing with strong incentive systems. However, at the same time, a given city's participation in mobile production is also predicated on the strength of its crew base, and therefore on the quantity and quality of the workers involved. While incentive systems and the production they draw create a demand for local labor, that local labor also becomes necessary for a given location to continue to draw productions of a higher caliber. As television's spatial economy evolves, it creates strongly localized work forces whose initial introduction was dependent on a system of mobile production that has subsequently become dependent on that labor force to compete with other states and labor pools evolving in a similar fashion.

Given this symbiosis, however, we can also understand below-the-line workers as being particularly vulnerable in cases where the spatial economy of a given location is threatened in some fashion. When *Hemlock Grove* left Pittsburgh right before beginning production, the most significant impact was the loss of 150 jobs, nearly all of which would be considered below-the-line. Mobile production is characterized by a consistent reexamination of the spatial economy, as

it is feasible for production to move should costs for the series need to be reduced, or if a change to an incentive system makes it impossible for make the series for its current budget in that location. The latter was the case in North Carolina in 2014, when Governor Pat McCrory eliminated the existing 25% tax rebate and replaced it with a capped grant system, meaning that ongoing television series like CBS' *Under The Dome* (2013-) or Fox's *Sleepy Hollow* (2013-) would lose millions of dollars in incentives if they continued to shoot in the state. Quoted by the *Wilmington Star News* in their overview of the impact this change will have on production, Wilmington Film Commission director Johnny Griffin boiled it down to a simple truth: "I don't care how much somebody likes you and loves you, they are not coming going to come here and spend 25 percent more than they can spend somewhere else."⁵² While North Carolina has drawn a consistent stream of television production over the past decade, building a significant crew base over that period, this change in the tax incentive dramatically altered the economics of shooting in the state, leading both *Sleepy Hollow* and Cinemax's *Banshee* (2013-2016) to leave for Atlanta and Pittsburgh, respectively, with *Under the Dome* choosing to stay and claiming half of the state's production grant money in the process.

This potential for sudden change is central to understanding mobile production in the context of television labor. While runaway production is inherently framed as a labor issue in trade discourse—both in terms of the labor benefits of production incentives and the challenges facing laborers in Los Angeles as production becomes scarcer—it does so from a centered perspective focused on those who have historically worked in Hollywood, as in the case of a *Los Angeles Times* article focusing on below-the-line workers put out of work by the loss of hour-

⁵² Hunter Ingram, "Grant program darkens chances for TV series, indie productions in N.C.," *Star News Online*, 13 August 2014, <http://www.starnewsonline.com/article/20140813/ARTICLES/140819864/1177?Title=Grant-program-darkens-chances-for-TV-series-indie-productions-in-N-C->.

long drama production in Los Angeles.⁵³ However, production incentives have also created this new generation of below-the-line television laborers across the United States and Canada whose jobs were created by incentives systems, and whose ability to find work is dependent on the stability of production within a given state. Whereas Los Angeles television production has decreased significantly, there remains a stable infrastructure to support television production: in cases like North Carolina, where the capped grant system is considered incompatible with television production, it becomes possible that all series production will exit the state at some point in the future, dramatically altering the employment landscape for workers who have built their living in the state's television industry.

In the wake of North Carolina's decision to dismantle its existing system, *The Hollywood Reporter* ran a story under the headline "North Carolina Kills Film Incentives: Which States Benefit?" that reports on the outflow of production from the state referenced earlier: this includes not only series productions like *Banshee*, but also production studios like Chris Cates' C3 Studios (which he is considering moving to Georgia from Charlotte), as well as individual laborers who anecdotally intend to leave the state because they "have to go where the work is."⁵⁴ Here we see evidence of how the mobility of television production—wherein production en masse can migrate from one location to a finite but substantial number of other locations at any given moment—also necessitates the mobility of television labor. For below-the-line workers in locations like North Carolina, they must be prepared that any roots they create could be destroyed by a political decision in which their voice—whether in formal petitions or other forms

⁵³ Richard Verrier, "Los Angeles losing the core of its TV production to other states," *The Los Angeles Times*, 15 August 2012, <http://articles.latimes.com/2012/aug/15/business/la-fi-ct-runaway-tv-20120814>

⁵⁴ Alex Ben Block, "North Carolina Kills Film Incentives: Which States Benefit?" *The Hollywood Reporter*, 22 August 2014, <http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/north-carolina-kills-film-incentives-726966>

of public advocacy—is marginalized given their low standing both within television production itself and within general socioeconomic hierarchies. When the spatial economy changes, whether based on shifts in network budgets or in political overhauls of a state’s incentive system, below-the-line workers must be willing to follow the work and uproot the rest of their lives in the process.

In this way, engaging with mobile production also means engaging with the conditions of mobile labor, and its impact on below-the-line workers throughout the television industry. Whereas above-the-line laborers have remained largely centralized in Los Angeles, below-the-line workers are expected to be willing to move to find work, sacrificing their personal stability in order to meet the expectations of the industry’s broader financial and logistical interests. This concern also emerges in aforementioned considerations of runaway production’s influence on laborers in Los Angeles, but it is not simply that workers must be willing to be displaced from one location for another: they must also be willing to move again should their secondary location destabilize, requiring an ongoing rather than one-time mobility. All below-the-line workers face the expectations created by mobile production, and many—including casting directors and production designers—develop knowledge bases tied to local communities, but location professionals offer a particularly critical case study for how the cultural geography of television production is reframing the spatial dimensions of television labor. Focusing on the work of location professionals reveals a below-the-line position that is both crucial to the emergence of mobile production and singularly indicative of how mobile production is reshaping the expectations on localized below-the-line laborers within television’s spatial economic fluctuations.

Case Study: Location Professionals

In cases like North Carolina where changes in an incentive system re-arrange the spatial economy and threaten the job security of below-the-line laborers, all workers are affected: fewer jobs means it becomes more difficult to make a livelihood. In the months leading to the Governor's decision to overhaul the program, below-the-line workers were therefore among those advocating for the continuation of the tax credit program in its more robust form. In a profile of *Under the Dome* location manager Brooke Barnhill published by the *Wilmington Star News*, whose "Wilm on Film" blog covers film and television production from a local angle, a significant portion of the feature is dedicated to the pending decision regarding the state's production incentives. Barnhill states that the death of the incentive would be "devastating," arguing that "it's not just about the film crew." She cites the extra income provided to families whose homes or properties are used for filming, along with donations made to local school programs, as well as what author Hunter Ingram describes as "a unique communal sense of pride, arising from the ways in which a major television show can highlight the region's diverse locales."⁵⁵

The interview offers a clear evocation of spatial capital, and in the broader value of the spatial economy beyond purely economic benefits. Additionally, while Barnhill may be a below-the-line laborer, she speaks from a position with a distinct connection to the local dimensions of television production, given the strong relationship between location professionals and local communities. It was no coincidence that when the *Wilmington Star News* reported on the impact of the incentive structure's dismantling, they spoke with another location professional, locations

⁵⁵ Hunter Ingram, "'Under the Dome' location manager always looking for a place," *Star News Online*, 20 July 2014, <http://www.starnewsonline.com/article/20140720/ARTICLES/140729992?p=1&tc=pg>

coordinator Christopher Courter, who was among those facing displacement due to the outflow of television production in the region.⁵⁶ It was also not a coincidence that reporting on the impact of mobile production on television production in Los Angeles in *The Los Angeles Times* also featured a location professional, locations manager David Henke, among its interview subjects.⁵⁷ Their presence makes sense: given that mobile production is about changes in where production is located, it tracks that location professionals—a category that includes location managers, scouts, and coordinators—whose responsibilities are tied to finding, facilitating, and managing locations would be among those most invested in the spatial economy.

Although those who work in locations for a production can be broadly termed as location professionals, and function in similar ways, the location scout and the location manager are the two primary roles that a location professional will be expected to perform over the course of his or her career. The location scout, according to one location professional, is “a person whose basic job is to go out and look to find certain locations”; another adds “the scout finds where you film, or they find the options for the director to pick where they film.”⁵⁸ This second description captures the way the location scout functions within the process of pre-production, whereas the location manager then takes over by securing the use of a particular location (which may involve negotiating with a homeowner or getting the necessary permits from a local government), ensuring the necessary resources are in place to film in that location, and then supervising the restoration of that location once filming is complete. One location professional referred to

⁵⁶ Hunter Ingram, “Dome crew faces dim outlook as season finale set to air,” *Star News Online*, 19 September 2014,

<http://www.starnewsonline.com/article/20140919/ARTICLES/140919610&tc=ix>

⁵⁷ Richard Verrier, “Los Angeles losing the core of its TV production to other states,” *The Los Angeles Times*, 15 August 2012, <http://articles.latimes.com/2012/aug/15/business/la-fi-ct-runaway-tv-20120814>

⁵⁸ These and other stated observations derive from personal interviews conducted with location professionals in 2014.

location managers as “the face of the production,” as they are responsible for ensuring a smooth relationship with the people in and around a particular location, which is crucial to the ability for the production to operate on schedule.

When it comes to the production itself, the location manager has been described as “first one in, last one out,” a process that needs to carry over to each location that a production would use in a given week, or even a given day. The location manager therefore must balance both space and time: As location manager Rebecca Puck Stair—who is based in New Mexico—notes, “it’s a rolling thing, because the location manager is prepping one location while shooting in the second while cleaning up the one they shot in yesterday. You have to be able to think fluidly in time.”⁵⁹

Stair has worked as a location professional on a range of film and television productions based in New Mexico, entering the film and television industry after switching careers from English teacher to production assistant during the early days of the state’s incentive system, eventually transitioning into locations work. With her work limited to New Mexico, Stair frames her specific approach to locations in close relationship to the region she works in: arguing that locations work is divided between the left brain and the right brain, she considers the specific question of “how do you get 300 people comfortably and safely into someplace that doesn’t look like Earth and get back out again?” The right brain is responsible for finding the right location to represent that extraterrestrial environment, chosen among the diversity of landscapes available in New Mexico, while the left brain then needs to work through the logistics of how to get to those locations, which Stair notes “are not around the corner.”

⁵⁹ Rebecca Puck Stair, Personal interview, 11 March 2014.

In order to complete this work, Stair has over the past decade developed an intense knowledge of the state of New Mexico, knowledge she is able to draw on when a production is looking for a particular type of location for a particular scene. Comparing location professionals to taxi drivers, Stair claims “I pretty much know the entire state and if you show me a picture I will tell you where it is, anywhere in that state.” This a necessary claim in order to be able to find locations on the short time frames offered by productions, and to ensure that those locations work logistically for the production in question. She explains that “there’s some part of the location scout’s brain that’s always on that’s off for most people most of the time, because we’ll remember [locations we drive by] and exactly what it looks like, and where it was.” Although she officially scouts certain locations, taking photos and building a library, she also relies on these mental pictures—and on technology like Google Streetview—to tap into her personal map of New Mexico and offer directors or producers a sense of her plan for a particular scene.

Given this self-representation, we can understand Stair’s role as a location professional as being explicitly tied to the local geography. Although the skills she uses apply to most location professionals, and are skills she could apply in a range of different states, it takes a considerable amount of time to gain the knowledge necessary to quickly and easily find a location that could serve a particular scene, or double as a different location entirely. Stair presents herself as being able to complete this work quickly based not on a unique set of skills among all television professionals, but on the locality of those skills within New Mexico, gained through personal experience scouting and managing locations in the state.

The emergence of workers like Stair has been crucial to enabling locations like New Mexico to benefit from the increased mobility of television production, as their labor replicates established location-based production cultures present in Los Angeles. Michael Meehan, a

location professional who began his career working in television in Los Angeles before branching out into global film production, describes working in Los Angeles in the mid-1980s as a “plug-and-play” environment.⁶⁰ He explains that he would “run around to try to find a mansion and knock on the door and [hear] ‘there’s my agent’s number.’ Aw jeez - [I] might as well have just looked through the books.” He is describing books filled with potential locations, which he notes many location professionals contributed to and contain “the usual suspects: where do you find this, where do you find that, who owns this, all that kind of stuff. That used to be the calling card of Los Angeles.” A producer whose sitcom shoots Los Angeles for New York refers to location professionals as “unsung heroes,” whose knowledge of the city gave them quick and efficient access to locations in downtown Los Angeles that successfully stood in for Brooklyn when they needed something beyond the scale available on a backlot, and have likely stood in for Brooklyn on other shows set in the borough.

Meehan, reflecting on the rise in production outside of Los Angeles, observes “that’s what [other cities] would do too—just show and tell. Where can you shoot New York? Where can you shoot the usual suspects there?” Stair’s self-representation confirms this: while discussing her ability to serve as a local expert, she explicitly offers that “I can quite quickly think of doubles,” and discusses the distinct challenges between “landscape for landscape doubling”—which would be common on a New Mexico-filmed series like A&E’s *Longmire* (2012-2014), which is set in Montana—and “city-for-city doubling.” She argues that the former is more challenging “because we tend to hold the camera wider and be closer to 360 degrees if we can. It’s easier to cheat an urbanscape with an interior or a city block—you need fewer degrees of sellability to make it work.” That Stair frames her work in the terms of doubling

⁶⁰ Personal interview, 30 March 2014.

indicates the degree to which her knowledge has been framed not simply in terms of places in New Mexico that would be ideal for shooting, but also in terms that translate those locations into practical terms expected by producers, which are also terms that emulate the type of institutional knowledge that has existed in Los Angeles for decades.

Accordingly, this knowledge takes time to generate, and is not as easily acquired by a production as other forms of television labor in the context of mobile production. In a state with a nascent incentive system and the lack of an established crew base, a production has the option of bringing in more experienced crew from a neighboring state or from Los Angeles—it costs more money, and may not hold the same production benefits depending on the state’s incentive system, but those crew members are guaranteed to be familiar with the equipment and the process of making a television series. However, if little to no major production has been done in a particular state, there may be no location professionals who have exhaustively scouted that state to be in a position to facilitate a production expecting to double that state for another, or manage locations efficiently. That labor takes time to develop, requiring professionals like Stair who enter the film industry as incentives create demand for local labor, latch onto locations as their area of focus, and then gain the local experience necessary to generate the same base of knowledge Los Angeles location professionals have access to. In the case of the United Kingdom, where TV production was expanding rapidly in 2014 due to new tax incentives, the Production Guild of Great Britain even created an extensive training program specifically for location managers, with chief executive Alison Small explaining, “Location teams pave the way

for well-managed and smooth productions and play a key role in ensuring the UK film and television production sector maintains its competitive edge and excellent delivery.’’⁶¹

In the absence of this labor, other participants in the spatial economy outlined earlier in this chapter are at times forced to step in. At the 2014 Location Managers Guild Awards, long-time Film Commissioner Sheri Davis was lauded for her years of service as part of the Ontario County Film Commission in California, and a producer told a story about sending her out into the field to take photos decades earlier, and instructing her on the procedures expected from a location scout. While film offices will often offer some pre-scouted locations as part of their services, in other cases workers outside of the formal film industry can become part of the spatial economy in the absence of location professionals. A tourism bureau employee working in Louisiana when that state’s incentive system was first introduced relayed her experience getting phone calls from producers asking for photos, and driving some distance to capture images of a particular home in her area. In these cases, professionals with different or indirect ties to the film and television industry have the type of local knowledge that is valuable for location professionals, and are at times asked to use this knowledge to play an informal role in the production process. This is further reinforced by the tourism bureau’s presence at the AFCI’s locations show, with the employee’s role having evolved to include facilitating filming that takes place in that area in a role supplemental to formal location professionals and film offices in the region.

⁶¹ Paul Banks, “Production Guild: Location manager training,” *The Knowledge*, 6 June 2014, <http://www.theknowledgeonline.com/the-knowledge-bulletin/post/2014/06/16/Production-Guild-launches-location-manager-training-scheme>

Locating Spatial Capital in *Killer Women*

Whether through formal or informal laborers, locations work is therefore the below-the-line labor categories most distinctly tied to location, a significance that has been overlooked in academic engagement with the cultural geography of production and media production more broadly.⁶² Although other below-the-line workers have a strong tie to local communities, such as casting directors with intense knowledge of local talent or production designers with strong relationships with local vendors, location professionals are responsible for directly negotiating a series' engagement with the location where it is produced, and are crucial components in the spatial economy of television production in an era of mobile production as a result. And while this is technically true for both film and television production, Rebecca Puck Stair's experience on the ABC drama *Killer Women* (2014) indicates the specific location challenges found when working on an ongoing television series, and the importance of considering such below-the-line workers in any consideration of how elements of location are engaged with during the process of production itself.

Killer Women is a crime procedural following a group of Texas Marshals, and filmed its first and only season in Albuquerque after filming its pilot in Austin and San Antonio, taking advantage of an expanded incentive system for television production in New Mexico which has an additional 5% incentive on top of the state's existing 25%, instituted in early 2013 in what became known as the *Breaking Bad* bill (so named after the hit AMC series that helped establish Albuquerque as a major benefactor of mobile production).⁶³ The series was one of two series

⁶² This is beginning to change, as evidenced by a presentation by Kevin Sanson at the March 2015 Society for Cinema and Media Studies Conference in Montreal, drawing on forthcoming research.

⁶³ Aaron Couch, "New Mexico Governor Signs 'Breaking Bad' Subsidy Bill Into Law," *The Hollywood Reporter*, 4 April 2013, <http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/new-mexico->

produced in 2013 to double Albuquerque for Texas, although NBC's *The Night Shift* (2014-) has the advantage of being set primarily inside a hospital—as a crime procedural, *Killer Women* spends most of its time traveling between different locations, requiring upwards of forty different locations over the course of an eight-day shoot for a single episode, according to Stair.

As the location manager on *Killer Women*, Stair was responsible for finding locations suitable for the ongoing procedural storylines. It was her first ongoing television series, and came with a distinct set of challenges compared to her work in film up to that point. Reflecting on her experience, she observes

it's harder to get away with things. In a feature, if one location doesn't quite work—first, you have more resources in terms of time and money, that kind of thing. And if one particular scene doesn't exactly sell itself, it's okay, because you're not coming back there. It's like sleight of hand—they never do the same trick twice, because people will catch on. But in television, you have episodic characters, and you never know if we're coming back to a location. We don't know, because scripts are coming out as we're filming, so the standards are higher for finding believable locations.

Although Stair is speaking generally regarding the challenges of finding believable locations—which could include simply passing off one type of building for another—she is specifically confronting the challenge of city-for-city doubling Albuquerque for Austin. Acknowledging that this made locations more challenging than if the series had—like *Breaking Bad*—been set in Albuquerque, Stair notes that “at the beginning of the season we found a lot of locations and we

[governor-signs-breaking-433168](#). The additional 5% comes from those productions that use qualified production facilities (most often soundstages), which helps support production infrastructure crucial to drawing television production in particular.

had our pick. But by the end of the season, by episode eight, we really had to stretch ourselves to see what we could get away with.”

Location professionals are not the only below-the-line laborers whose jobs on series like *Killer Women* involve dealing with city-for-city doubling: Stair notes that she worked closely with the production designer, together reporting to the producers and directors who make the final decisions, and jokes that “sometimes we’ll shift the burden onto the shoulders of the DP—if you film this action scene correctly, no one will be paying attention to the buildings in the background. So there.” At the same time, the process of city-for-city doubling starts with a location that can be realistically doubled for another, placing a great deal of responsibility on Stair and her locations team. This must also be balanced by the other logistics of the production, including limited budgets and a limited amount of time to film each episode. Stair recalls that with “pretty much with every location there was the dream place that would have been gorgeous, but logistically with the time there was no way we could get there to shoot.” Locations therefore become one of the many elements of television production that are prioritized or not depending on what else is happening in a given episode: according to Stair, “the question I always ask producers is ‘How much do we want it?’ Because, sometimes you really want it...so we pay the time and the money it takes to get to that particular location. But at times, eh—you don’t care so much. We’ll scrimp on that to save time and money on something you really do want.”

This negotiation happens over the course of the series, and involves not only the location managers and other below-the-line crew in Albuquerque, but also the writers back in Los Angeles. The job of the crew is to facilitate the scripts, which were all set in and around Austin and therefore set the specific parameters that the production 800 miles away would then have to translate into the locations available (and accessible) for the production’s use. From Stair’s

perspective, the below-the-line crew in Albuquerque was very aware of the limitations, and “knew from the beginning that there were certain iconic Austin landmarks we just couldn’t do.” This included the Austin State Capitol and its proscenium dome: as Stair notes in very plain terms, “there is no such building in New Mexico.” However, the series included the character of Jake, who was a State Senator, and so the crew in Albuquerque received scripts early on with scenes set in front of the Capitol building, which had been used as a location in the pilot produced on location in Texas. Although Stair notes they “would do their best to find what was available,” she recalls “it started dawning on the producers earlier and earlier with each episode that they’d have to kick the script back. ‘We can’t have this scene outside the State Capitol, can we put it in Jake’s office instead?’”

This form of negotiation returns to the case of *Red Band Society* referenced earlier, and reinforces that the negotiation of spatial capital within the context of a given production is the result not simply of the intentions of above-the-line laborers, but also of the goals of writers and producers as facilitated through local below-the-line laborers. The writers’ perception of what elements of the Austin setting were doable in Albuquerque were established over the course of the production in close coordination with workers like Stair, who felt personally responsible for the series’ engagement with spatial capital. In fact, Stair reports that all involved were concerned about ensuring that the doubling was successful: “All the time we’re thinking about who’s going to be watching, and whether our double is close enough to fool them.” This included having to replace locations that were unsuccessful in capturing the script’s sense of place according to the series’ producer, as well as other instances where Stair was forced to explain that there was no other option, at which point their producer would go and get the script changed. Therefore, the end product’s relationship with “Austin” is the result of the Albuquerque crew’s interpretation of

the original script, which in some instances would actually dictate changes to the script's relationship with place based on the limited capacity of the production based on either access to distinct locations like the State Capitol or production logistics that made it difficult to get to the locations necessary to meet the ideal location for a scene as scripted.

The example of *Killer Women* outlines the crucial role of location professionals like Stair in navigating the contemporary spatial economy, which through mobile production has turned city-for-city doubling into an increasingly common practice in a wider range of locations. Without a locations team capable of finding doubles on a hectic television schedule, the production would be forced to accept a lesser standard of city-for-city doubling or move the production to Texas and sacrifice the incentives. In fact, this was a possibility had *Killer Women* been picked up for a second season: reflecting on the challenges they faced toward the end of the season, Stair explains “the consensus on the crew was that if there was a season 2, it would have been extraordinary difficult to continue to cheat and film it in New Mexico. We and the production designer agreed that we really needed to go to Texas to pull it off again.”

This remains a hypothetical situation, given that ABC canceled *Killer Women* before it aired its eight produced episodes, but whether or not ABC would have been willing to take Stair and the production designer's professional opinion into account when choosing a production location for a second season is unclear. On the one hand, as laborers whose work is crucial to the ability for television production to be sustainable when doing this kind of doubling work, they are the category of production laborer best suited to make such a judgment—without them, mobile production would be significantly more difficult for a city like Albuquerque to sustain, giving them greater spatial capital than the average below-the-line laborer. On the other hand, however, they remain decidedly below-the-line laborers whose recommendation that the

production lose a significant percentage of its tax incentives is unlikely to override the studio or network's bottom line. As important as their labor might be within television's spatial economy, television's more basic economy could overrule their determinations—if Stair and her team had expressed their belief that a second season in Albuquerque would not be possible, it is possible they simply would have brought in another locations team to do the same work.

The Precarity of Localized Labor

The case of Stair's work on *Killer Women* reinforces the distinct spatiality of location professionals' labor, and thus their strong tie to other elements of the spatial economy. While a strong crew base is a broad criteria used to distinguish one location from another, and informal labor could make up for the lack of location professionals in a given location, their presence is crucial to allowing a city like Albuquerque to function as a hub of television production. However, given the instability of the political components of that spatial economy, the strong relationship between these workers and location means that in circumstances where mobile production necessitates mobile labor, the spatial capital they hold may no longer have any value to the television industry.

Although there are basic attributes that make someone a good location professional, their greatest asset is knowledge of a city, state, or region, which is something that would need to be recreated in each new location they travel to. It is a process that requires considerable time and experience, and thus one that makes their livelihoods more vulnerable when a state like North Carolina's incentive system is put into a position of political uncertainty. Whereas the lighting technicians or camera operators on a series like *Under The Dome* would have been forced to sacrifice personally by making their labor mobile if they wish to continue working on the series

had it left the state of North Carolina for its third season, location manager Brooke Barnhill would also have to sacrifice long-standing relationships with the local community, knowledge of local geography, and work to replicate that knowledge in other locations if she wished to remain part of the series (and, based on the outflow following the change in the state's incentive structure, any television series). In the aforementioned case of *Under the Dome* locations coordinator Charlie Courter, locations workers are described as “rel[ying] heavily on a familiarity with the region,” with Courter observing “You can’t just move to a place and have that knowledge. It takes time to build that base of information.”⁶⁴ This means that even if the production had been willing to allow its workers become mobile to follow them to Georgia or Louisiana, Courter and other location professionals would be unable to replicate their knowledge base in the new location, likely leading the production to hire local location professionals in its new production location who have the knowledge necessary to serve the production's needs.

Any worker who has a family or is tied to a particular location for other reasons has a stake in the politics of tax incentives, but this is particularly true for location professionals: Stair, who in May of 2014 became a board member of the advocacy-focused Location Managers Guild of America, argues “part of my job is being political [and] being in contact with my legislators educating them about what the film industry does and who I am and how it’s benefitted me, and how it’s benefitted the state. I consider that as my job when I’m not working on a project.” Although not all location professionals are as politically engaged, they are more keenly aware than most about the political side of incentive structures, given that their work is so tied to the geography on which those incentives are mapped by the studios producing content, and considering that they work so closely with local film commissions in completing day-to-day

⁶⁴ Ingram, “Dome crew faces dim outlook as season finale set to air.”

labor on a given series. The time they spend connected to the local community gives them incredible value to productions, but only in circumstances where other elements of the spatial economy within a given state or province give the knowledge gained value.

For this reason, Stair argues that mobilizing her labor is a requirement for someone in her line of work. She says she is “actively working right now to be able to work in other places as a sort of insurance against [the possibility of the New Mexico incentive disappearing]. It probably will happen. That’s my choice, and my personal family situation. Many other crew will have to choose between the work they love and the place they love.” As much as the incentive system made it possible for Stair to break into the film and television industry and develop into a location professional, the loss of that incentive system could just as easily make it impossible for her to find sustainable work in the state, thus pushing her to expand beyond the single state while she in a personal position to do so.

There are no clear signs that New Mexico’s incentive system is in jeopardy, but the case of North Carolina reinforces that highly localized laborers like location managers have reason to diversify the geography of their labor without a looming crisis. Whereas runaway production changed the expectations placed on below-the-line laborers working out of Los Angeles, mobile production has normalized expectations that laborers are willing to cross borders in circumstances where shifts in the spatial economy of television production disrupt local production cultures, as has happened in North Carolina. The case of location professionals offers insight into how these new expectations are reshaping the spatialization of labor within the context of the television industry, and how the era of mobile production both demands and requires an increasingly mobile labor force.

This also affects laborers who are working in states without incentive systems, and who have been unwilling to mobilize their labor. One location professional in a Midwest state without incentives has chosen not to chase work in nearby states with incentives in order to prioritize his family, but it means he has primarily done work in commercials, which with their shorter production periods are more feasibly shot in states without incentives. Accordingly, this professional has been part of lobbies to get the state government to consider an incentive system, and to address other infrastructural problems like taxes on transportation that make it more difficult to lure production to the state.

It is possible for location professionals to mobilize their labor. Meehan, for example, credits his longevity in the industry to his choice to leave Los Angeles in the early 1990s to focus on international productions: “As life would have it, the industry left! But I didn’t know that—I wish I could say I was so bright, but I wasn’t. I just took the chance.” But what was serendipity for Meehan, who gained a reputation for working in exotic locations around the world, is now necessity for location managers like Stair. If they want to be able to secure a stable future in the film and television industry, they cannot rely on a stable spatial economy on which they will continually find work for the foreseeable future. As crucial as their labor may be to the facilitation of local production in an increasing number of locations within the context of television production, location professionals are subject to the other stakeholders in television’s spatial economy, whose decisions may force them to either move and rebuild an entire knowledge base in a different location, or consider leaving the industry entirely to stay where they have placed significant roots.

Location Professionals in the Spatial Economy

If we return to the show floor of the AFCI Locations Show, a space where spatial capital is consistently negotiated, the industry representatives on the show floor are not simply there to make specific decisions regarding where to shoot a television series. While it is possible that producers from Gaumont International attended an earlier AFCI Locations Show and spoke with representatives from Pittsburgh regarding the possibility of filming *Hemlock Grove* in the city, many of the workers who attend the show are not necessarily there to work on a specific project. This is partly because technology has made it easier to scout locations from afar: as Meehan notes, while you used to bring a script to the location show to talk to local film representatives and discuss potential options, now “I could just take Google Earth and look at the beach.” However, he stresses “nothing beats a face with a name, as opposed to the Internet.” The event is as much about networking as it is about decision-making, as individual workers, film commissions, or studios each work to lay claim to spatial capital, and position themselves within the evolving spatial economy developing around them.

This is especially important for location professionals, who as noted have reason to expand their networks beyond their local communities. Stair specifically cites the Locations Show as a crucial space for earning work as an instructor in workshops in Jordan and Abu Dhabi, where connections with local film commissions create better opportunities for future work in those countries. Furthermore, the event is also linked to the aforementioned Location Managers Guild of America (LMGA), a non-profit networking organization that provides resources to location professionals, and which held a special roundtable focused on the work of location professionals as part of the 2014 event.

The Location Managers Guild of America is unlike other media industry guilds, like SAGAFTRA or the Director's Guild of America, as it serves no bargaining function. In fact, one of the challenges facing location managers as a below-the-line labor category is that they are represented by different unions in different parts of the country: the Teamsters Local 399, for example, represents only those workers who “perform services in the County of Los Angeles, or [are] hired by the Producer in the County of Los Angeles to perform services outside the said County, but within the thirteen Western States.”⁶⁵ It is another space in which the labor of location professionals is overdetermined by their geographical location, which limits their ability to bargain collectively and come together as part of a single professional organization. While the LMGA has spent its ten years trying to bring together such a community, through events like Comic-Con panels featuring professionals like Stair, they face the challenge of bringing together workers whose labor is more tied to the local than the national, a challenge that reflects the individual struggles of the laborers themselves.

However, the weekend of the 2014 AFCI Locations Show was a significant moment for the Location Managers Guild of America, and location professionals more broadly. At the inaugural Location Managers Guild Awards, held on the same weekend, the organization had an opportunity to articulate its place within the spatial economy of film and television production in a ceremony awash with spatial capital. The event was sponsored by the Fort Lauderdale Film Commission, who purchased a formal presentation during the award ceremony itself, a logo on the red carpet backdrop, and a central position in the event program. Representatives of various film commissions were among those in attendance, having moved from the show floor to the

⁶⁵ “2012 Location Managers Agreement,” *Teamsters Local 399*, 1 August 2012, <http://www.ht399.org/pdf/contracts/location-managers/2012%20Location%20Managers%20Agreement.pdf>. Those who work in New York are represented by the Directors Guild of America.

Writer's Guild Theater where the event was being held. There was even the aforementioned award for Outstanding Film Commission, in which eventual winner Albuquerque competed with Iceland (*The Secret Life of Walter Mitty*), Los Angeles (*NCIS: Los Angeles*), Long Beach (*Dexter*), and South Pasadena (*Dexter*). Topics of conversation in the pre-awards cocktail party included recent news regarding the aforementioned *House of Cards*, which at that point was in the midst of its battle with the state of Maryland—the Baltimore and Maryland representatives had been fielding many questions about it earlier in the day, and it was discussed by some at the awards as a potential coup if it could be relocated to California.

The LMGA Awards are designed to generate industrial legitimation: by holding an awards presentation, below-the-line labor categories can more clearly articulate their importance to production, resulting in trade publication coverage—including *The Hollywood Reporter*, *Deadline*, and *Variety*—and a space to celebrate their own accomplishments as a group. The awards show itself featured a monologue full of “location manager” jokes, with host Jamie Kaler paying off a man who entered the theater using a leaf blower, and reacting to sound effects of planes flying overhead and dogs barking nearby; one winner—who would go on to host the following year's awards—joked that the award itself be named the “Angry Neighbor.” However, in addition to jokes, it also gave them the opportunity to reward those who have contributed to the field, and to celebrate the specificity of their labor—many spoke of the event as a long-awaited chance to come together as a group and celebrate one another, a primary goal of the LMGA as an organization.

Significantly, this celebration took the form of a direct performance of spatial capital, as the awards served to highlight the importance of location professionals within the production process. It framed locations work as crucial to the expansion of production into new locations

like Belfast, the primary home of Outstanding Location Scout (Television) and Outstanding Locations TV Show winner *Game of Thrones*, while connecting that work to film offices like the one in Albuquerque whose partnership with location managers is often elided in considerations of a series' spatial capital compared to above-the-line workers like—in the case of *Breaking Bad*, for example—creators or cinematographers. It was a crucial moment for location professionals who, as specific below-the-line laborers with a substantial stake in television's spatial economy, have more reason than most to assert their spatial capital within spaces of industrial discourse. Although it is uncertain whether or not this will help those location professionals displaced in North Carolina, it is a step forward in making visible the broader cultural dynamics of where television production takes place.

Conclusion

This chapter opened with a question: why does a television series shoot in one location as opposed to another?

Rather than offering a single answer to this question, the chapter has outlined the dynamics of television's spatial economy, and the contemporary environment of mobile production that sets the stage for individual decisions, which depend on a wide range of variables. We cannot simply use the case of *Hemlock Grove* as evidence for the inability for Pittsburgh to sustain ongoing television production, as the circumstances that led the series to shift production to Toronto were based on a conflict between a specific incentive structure, a specific distribution strategy dictated by a “network” (in that case Netflix), and a specific set of expectations from the production studio; other shows have filmed in Pittsburgh in the years since, and others will continue to film there provided the incentive structure remains viable. The

inability to generalize regarding where a television series is produced is the result of the sheer complexity of the spatial economy, which with its multitude of stakeholders is continually evolving as incentive systems are introduced, changed, eliminated, or misinterpreted.

The chapter's primary goal has been to push away from considerations of this spatial economy that limit how we engage with the negotiation of spatial capital within the context of television production. Whereas existing frameworks have privileged broader political economic dimensions of where television is produced, Los Angeles-centric conceptions of production flows, or author-centered conceptions of production's relationship with location, the chapter's engagement with mobile production specifically highlights the central role of below-the-line labor in a range of locations to the facilitation of television production in a contemporary moment. Given that their jobs are both crucial to supporting mobile production and made specifically precarious by the uncertainty surrounding mobile production, location professionals offer a critical case study for exploring how shifts in where television is produced is changing the way television is made, and our understanding of where spatial capital is located within that process.

However, the chapter also serves to build a foundation for another dimension of the cultural geography of television production. Whereas this analysis has focused on how we engage with television production cultures, broader engagement with the relationship between television and local geography comes in the form of the text itself. The above analysis functions as a framework for considering the circumstances under which a given series was produced in a specific location, and pushes for close analysis of the production cultures that generate series like *Red Band Society* or *Killer Women* that double one location for another. While this analysis contributes in its own right to research into media industries and labor hierarchies more broadly,

it also functions as a framework for engaging with the text itself. When we watch a series like *Killer Women*, there is a legible “sense of place” that we can now understand as the product of Rebecca Puck Stair and other workers’ negotiation of spatial capital, knowledge of which allows for a better understanding of how and why that “sense of place” manifests in the way it does, and who was responsible.

These additional dimensions are crucial to mapping out a spatial economy of television in an age of mobile production and to this project as a whole, but they are not the primary space in which a series’ spatial capital is constructed for general audiences. While events like the AFCI Locations Show make the negotiations of the spatial economy visible for those in attendance, and events like the Location Managers Guild Awards extend that visibility to an audience following industry trade discourse, the text itself remains the dominant framework in which the public engages with television, and the spatial capital therein. In thinking about spatial capital as a broader cultural phenomenon, the following chapter considers specific strategies within evolving understandings of television textuality that serve to translate the spatial economy of television production from industrial discourse into a legible “sense of place” for viewers across the country and around the world.

Chapter Two

Textography: The Spatial Economy of Television Textuality

Pawnee, Indiana is not a real place. It is the construct of a television series, NBC's *Parks and Recreation* (2009-2015), which is produced by NBC Universal Television in Los Angeles, California.

Although Pawnee might not be real, however, it is important to *Parks and Recreation* that Pawnee *feels* like a real place. The show's premise depends on Leslie Knope's service to her town, both as deputy director of the eponymous department and as a city councilor, and thus the town of Pawnee needs to register as meaningful. While no fictional town can ever escape the bounds of fiction to become real, shows like *Parks and Recreation* depend on the development of spatial capital through the establishing of a sense of place, a representation that develops its own authenticity within the inherent limitations of television production and the specific limitations of a particular program format.

This transformation has been central to television—and other forms of visual media—since its inception, but as the previous chapter demonstrated this transformation has become more complicated as the production geography has expanded beyond cities like Los Angeles. Whereas the task of doubling Los Angeles and its soundstages for other cities is a part of the medium's institutional history for any series set outside of southern California, the range of spatial transformations being attempted has expanded dramatically. Now Vancouver is standing in for Portland (The CW's *Life Unexpected* [2009-2010]), Atlanta is standing in for Los Angeles (Lifetime's *Drop Dead Diva*), Toronto is standing in for New York (USA Network's *Suits*

[2010-Present]), and New York is standing in for Chicago (CBS' *The Good Wife*); in addition, each of the cities being stood-in for have their own television productions being filmed and set in those locations, creating a television landscape dotted with representations of the same city filmed hundreds if not thousands of miles apart.¹

While the previous chapter engaged with the way this forces a reconceptualization of television labor as tied to spatial capital through its relationship with the spatial economy of television production, this chapter will consider the spatial economy of television textuality, where spatial capital is negotiated once more through strategies inherent within the text itself. Although representations of place in television have been considered both through forms of textual analysis and through the proliferation of media tourism, less work has been done to consider how the circumstances of production are filtered through the lens of television textuality in reaching audiences. How much are shifts in production geography expanding the audience's sense of the televisual "sense of place," both within specific series and within the basic affordances of television as a medium? What forms of spatial capital does television rely on to establish a sense of place, and how are those forms of spatial capital changing both in response to that expanding geography and as a result of evolving forms of textuality and technology within the television industry?

In order to answer these questions, this chapter will lay out a production-oriented method for considering representations of televisual place, outlining key spaces in which television laborers engage in explicit place-making activities that frame a series' sense of place for audiences. In these claims to spatial capital, located within both the space of production and—

¹ This includes NBC's *Grimm* (2012-Present) in Portland, NBC's *Chicago Fire* (2012-Present) and *Chicago P.D.* (2014-Present) in Chicago, CBS' *Elementary* (2012-Present) in New York, and Fox's *Gang Related* (2014) in Los Angeles (among others in each location).

especially—the space of post-production, below-the-line laborers complete the work of transforming one place into another. Such labor has largely gone unstudied both because of the general focus on above-the-line labor within scholarly attention to television, and also through the fact that such labor is often invisible within the text itself—the very purpose of this work is to elide the circumstances of production and present a cohesive representation of place, such that the spatial capital being engaged with is often at its most successful when the workers' contributions are less conspicuous. By making this labor conspicuous through a combination of close textual analysis, industry discourse, and personal interviews with those involved, this chapter will explore a set of place-making activities that are often hiding in plain sight.

In revealing this labor and creating a framework for understanding the construction of representations of place in television series, the chapter outlines the burden of spatial capital that a text takes on when it is set in a specific location, whether real or fictional. While the fact that a series is set in a specific location does not necessarily mean that the text in question is interested in or must represent that location in a realistic fashion, the conscious engagement with spatial capital through the strategies outlined in the chapter to follow raises the burden on the text to engage with place identity in a meaningful way. The subsequent negotiations between locations, individual laborers responsible for activating spatial capital, and a number of specific textual strategies that hold their own limitations, creates the spatial economy of television textuality, which works in conjunction with the spatial economy of television production outlined in the previous chapter.

Text as Map: The Televisual Sense Of Place

As noted in the Introduction, Edward Soja has described the text as a map, and while such a perspective is useful in considering the representative potential of a text based on any category, it is particularly valuable when considering representations of place. To say that a text has a “sense of place,” or that it has gained access to specific forms of spatial capital, is to acknowledge that representations of location are not clearly defined objects but rather constructed tableaux of symbols and meanings that—in the case of visual media such as television—live and breathe as one part of a broader web of textuality.

Soja’s description of the text as a map foregrounds issues of place while simultaneously pushing against certain forms of textual analysis prevalent with visual media. In more basic studies of how place is represented within the media, a particular city or country is identified and then analyzed by considering how specific texts represent that city through a combination of visual and narrative developments.² Such work breaks down the basic ideological meaning of distinct images or story developments, exploring the spatial signifiers operating within the text to unlock the way its sense of place contributes to its broader goals as a text.

This work is crucial to understanding the way place is constructed within the media, and this project—and any project considering any questions of representation—should be engaged with the text as a space of analysis. However, such work risks eliding the complexity of space and place in two separate ways. First and foremost, it risks obscuring the circumstances of production outlined in the previous chapter, which influence and shape the types of symbols being utilized in ways that inflect their meaning, and which are crucial to engaging with the

² See the majority of analyses within *Taking Place: Location and the Moving Image*, Eds. John David Rhodes and Elena Gorfinkel (Minneapolis: U. of Minnesota P., 2011). Specifically within studies of television, see also the range of analyses of HBO’s *Treme* (2010-2013) in *Television & New Media* 13.3 (May 2012).

medium's engagement with place more broadly (as the previous chapter demonstrated).

Secondly, they risk failing to confront the complexities of place as they function within our lived reality. As noted in the Introduction, both Henri Lefebvre and Shaun Moores have spoken to the importance of understanding place as an ongoing, lived process, and their objections push us away from thinking about a text's spatial capital purely through the representation of a given location within the text itself.

In this way, Soja's description of the text as a map is central to this project's approach to considering televisual representations of place. If a map functions as a set of signifiers designed to help us interpret and navigate a particular geographical space, then we can understand the text as a tool developed by laborers and used by audiences to engage with spatial capital. It is not simply an image of a particular location, but rather a carefully-selected set of representative strategies that work to create a relationship between the characters, narrative, and action of a particular series and a particular location of any scale, from a neighborhood to a continent depending on the context involved. Rather than considering the text as a definitive representation of a particular location, then, this chapter regards the television text as a map constructed to help the audience travel to a particular location for the duration of a particular program.

As outlined in the Introduction, this logic has typically been deployed to think about the audience's engagement with spatial capital through following the map within the text to participate in media tourism. However, in looking to expand the production side of Reijnders' aforementioned model, this chapter considers how the map itself is constructed, and how spatial capital is negotiated by those who create the text—or map—in question. Such work is not wholly absent within media studies. Both Victoria Johnson and Serra Tinic's work on regional and national identities—in the United States and Canada, respectively—focuses on readings of

industry and production culture with a direct engagement with textual analysis, relating questions of spatial identity through the specific forms of the television text.³ In the British context, Robert Fish explores televisual tourism through the lens of production in a study of depictions of rurality in three British television series, interviewing those involved with the production and arguing their approach to rural life was framed by the tourist gaze of its audience.⁴ Such studies offer a precedent for the work called for in this chapter, but they also simultaneously shy away from fully engaging with the complexities of the television form: Johnson and Tinic's foundational concerns are simply—and understandably—located in specific categories of regional and national identity, whereas Fish only engages with narrative with no consideration of other elements of the television form within his analysis.

As a result, there exists no sustained engagement with the spatial affordances of television that contribute to any “sense of place” constructed within a television text; to return to Soja's term, there has been no attempt to undergo a cartographical study of how spatial capital is mapped out within the process of creating a television series. While any discussion of representations of place within television deal with these affordances, and although any engagement with media tourism is predicated on the map's effectiveness, this chapter engages with the inherent spatiality of television textuality specifically. Doing so reveals the burden that a series takes on when it is set in a given location, and a variety of strategies that have been used to negotiate the spatial capital resulting from that burden. Those strategies—opening title sequences, establishing shots, strategic location shooting, and virtual backlots—are solutions to

³ Victoria E. Johnson, *Heartland TV: Prime-time Television and The Struggle for U.S. Identity* (New York: NYU Press, 2008); Serra Tinic, *On Location: Canada's Television Industry in a Global Market* (Toronto: U. of Toronto P., 2005).

⁴ Robert Fish, “Mobile viewers: media producers and the televisual tourist” in *The Media and the Tourist Imagination: Converging Cultures*, Eds. David Crouch, Rhona Jackson, and Felix Thompson (London: Routledge, 2004).

the problem of representing place within the structural limitations of television production, and they are also strategies that are changing as modes of production are shifting and our understanding of the television text changes as a result. This analysis focuses on the negotiation inherent to these strategies, while also considering how the end product of these negotiations is shaped by realities of television production that disincentivize more complex interpretations of spatial capital making it onto television screens.

Structures of Location: Opening Title Sequences and Establishing Shots

If studies of media tourism are studies of viewers who follow the textual map to places around the world, we typically understand this map to be leading them to where a text was produced. People travel to New Zealand to see how Middle Earth was brought to life in the *Lord of the Rings* and *The Hobbit* trilogies, or visit Vancouver to see which locations stood in for Caprica in *Battlestar Galactica* (2004-2009). We can also see how these pilgrimages function through backlot tours, designed to give viewers access to the formalized spaces where media has “taken place” for decades. Nick Couldry’s work in *Media Rituals* (2003) particularly emphasizes the way these rituals hierarchize those locations where media production occurs, and the aforementioned work on media tourism has made visible how these relationships foreground issues of geography within audience engagement with specific texts. Outside of the realm of academia, even, the rash of video content built around pilgrimages to Albuquerque in the wake of *Breaking Bad*’s highly-anticipated series finale in 2013 clearly demonstrated an appetite for

location-based coverage of the series within the mainstream online coverage of television content.⁵

However, such coverage—and such academic analysis—at times obscures that the sense of space within a particular program may not necessarily be connected to the location in which the primary production of a television series took place. If one were to perform a Google image search for “1709 Broderick Street,” there would appear numerous images of people standing outside this attractive San Francisco Victorian. Those same people might also have taken photos outside of Alamo Square Park’s famous “Painted Ladies” row homes on the city’s Steiner Street. These individuals are often participating in a media pilgrimage, but they are not traveling to a space where a television series was produced on a weekly basis, as was the case with *Breaking Bad* and Albuquerque—instead, these individuals are traveling to spaces that were used to construct place outside of the traditional space of production, through the use of the opening title sequence and establishing shots in the ABC sitcom *Full House* (1987-1995). The series, filmed at Warner Bros. Studios in Burbank, California, but set in San Francisco, uses these locations to gain access to spatial capital, and to relocate the series for audiences from the realities of production to where the series was set by its creators.

Opening title sequences function as orienting paratexts, albeit ones that—unlike other paratexts that will be discussed later in this chapter—are embedded within the text itself. The orientation in question depends on the series and the sequence, but they are capable of orienting the viewer to a series’ tone, plot, themes, characters, and—most related to this project—setting. Although one can distinguish between these functions, which may or may not be among the tasks

⁵ This includes a 2013 episode of *The A.V. Club’s Pop Pilgrims* webseries (2011-2013), in which staff from the site visits locations like Albuquerque to visit key locations tied to either film, television, or music industry production. Chapter Four will cover this and other location-based coverage of the series.

of a specific title sequence, one of the key capacities of a title sequence is to map them in relation to one another. Through the choice of images, music, and style, opening title sequences have the ability to shape the viewer's introduction to the series' story world, working to connect characters to plot, or tone to setting, or any other combination of the qualities in question. The resulting paratexts are discursive spaces of identity formation, in which representative work is completed often before—or at least shortly after—the text itself has begun. While DVRs and DVDs have made it possible to skip these credit sequences, they remain embedded within the text as a weekly reinforcement of what kind of show the audience is about to watch, and—specific to this project's interests—where that show takes place.

Scholars have touched on the function of opening credit sequences, whether as part of Jonathan Gray's larger web of paratextuality or through specific engagement with ideological questions of identity—specifically blackness—in R. Means Coleman and A. Cavalcante's investigation of the opening title sequences for *A Different World*.⁶ Tied to this project's concerns, Victoria Johnson's work on the opening credits for *The Mary Tyler Moore Show* in *Heartland TV* is a thorough investigation of how the series' credits construct an image of Minneapolis as “a glamorous, vibrant city wherein Mary Richards can ‘graduate’... to a ‘free woman’ of the 1970s,” utilizing analysis of the theme song's lyrics, the use of color and graphics, and the way different views of the city are used to frame Mary and her experiences. Specifically, she identifies how an expanded sequence in the second season expands from Mary's arrival in Minneapolis to “further detailing Mary's day-to-day, happy, full integration

⁶ Jonathan Gray, *Show Sold Separately: Promos, Spoilers, and Other Media Paratexts*. (New York: NYU Press, 2010); R. Means Coleman and A. Cavalcante, “Two Different Worlds: Television as a Producers' Medium” in *Watching While Black: Centering the Television of Black Audiences*. Ed. Beretta Smith-Shomade (New Jersey: Rutgers U.P., 2013).

within the life of the city,” while a third season sequence further emphasizes location through the superimposed image of a “Minneapolis/St. Paul” freeway sign.⁷

In addition to identifying the capacity for opening titles to establish a sense of place, Johnson’s analysis rightfully highlights integration as a key goal for a credit sequence. The opening title sequence for *Full House* is a strong example of this, as its goal is not simply to establish that the series takes place in San Francisco, but rather to emphasize that the Tanner Family *exists* in the space of the city. The sequence used in the series’ first season begins with a shot of the entire Tanner family driving in a convertible, with the camera gradually pulling out to a helicopter shot revealing the convertible is driving across the Golden Gate Bridge. The characters are shown playing soccer in a park, and are then each introduced through individual title cards—some of these shots feature the characters outdoors in what the rest of the sequence codes as San Francisco, while others place them inside the home, beginning to link the two spaces. A sign for Fisherman’s Wharf begins the next segment, in which Danny and his two eldest daughters, D.J. and Stephanie, are placed in the San Francisco landmark before being shown fishing as the camera not-so-subtly pans to reveal Alcatraz in the background—we also see the two daughters, along with younger sister Michelle, in the back of the convertible as one of the city’s iconic streetcars passes behind them. The sequence then shifts to an image of Danny with Michelle on the back of his bicycle, with the next shot showing the character driving the bike down San Francisco’s famous Lombard Street. The opening title sequence concludes with the family in their kitchen, before shifting to an exterior shot of their home at 1709 Broderick, then a wider shot of the neighborhood around them, followed by an even wider view of San Francisco.

⁷ Johnson, 132.

As is the case with most multi-camera sitcoms, *Full House* is not filmed on location—the series was produced in sound stages at Warner Bros. Studios in Burbank. However, primarily through its title sequence, the series has become one of the most iconic shows to be set in San Francisco, as it successfully integrates the characters and their home within the broader geography of the city. The opening titles are a constructed reality designed to attain spatial capital, a reality that relies on editing to bridge the spatial gap between the studio backlot and the streets of San Francisco. At closer examination, the constructive nature of the credit sequence is apparent: while the shots of San Francisco locations are clearly done on location, those shots appear to have been taken with body doubles (their faces are conspicuously never seen), with the actors being filmed separately on or near the backlot. Editing combines shots of the actors in what would appear to be generic backlot approximations of locations like Fisherman’s Wharf or Lombard Street with location shots that obscure the faces of the actors; the same goes for the opening—and iconic—convertible shot, where the shot featuring the actors lacks any of the bridgework in the foreground that is visible in the wider shot (where the actors’ identities are obscured). While the shot of the three sisters in the convertible is obviously a product of a green screen, the other work is more subtle in its spatial subterfuge, and yet productive in crafting a relationship between these characters, their lives, and the series’ setting in San Francisco.

It is also a relationship that is reinforced—and allowed to evolve—over the course of a series’ run. While the opening title sequence is not exclusive to television, the way it recurs week by week makes it function distinctly from the opening titles to feature films.⁸ By airing with the series every week, the setting is consistently reestablished, lest audiences forget where the series takes place. In the case of a long-running series like *Full House*, analysis can extend to consider

⁸ For a consideration of the feature film title sequence and space, see Will Straw, “Letters of Introduction: Film Credits and Cityscapes” *Design and Culture* 2.2 (2010), 155-66.

how the sequence changes over time. As the show became more successful, it began to engage more directly with its location, bringing the actors to San Francisco to more effectively integrate them into the city's landmarks and landscapes through both actor title cards and footage of the Tanner family out and about in the city. Starting in season four, the title sequence shows the entire family on a real San Francisco streetcar rather than in front of a green screen, and the final image of the family together moved from the studio space in Los Angeles to the now iconic Alamo Square Park with the Painted Ladies in the background. By the eighth and final season, each actor had their own title card shot on location in San Francisco, embracing the connection between the series and the city it claims to call home.⁹ Although the *Full House* credits are being asked to introduce the actors, characters, and the familial themes of the series, those are all projects that the show can also access through the writing of the show on a weekly basis—by comparison, the show's sense of place is more difficult to reinforce within the confines of the studio, making the location-based work of the credit sequence a crucial component in engaging spatial capital and laying claim to the San Francisco setting.

This consideration of the opening title sequence can be extended to the function of establishing shots, which complete similar work within the text itself. Establishing shots offer brief contextual images of where a scene is taking place, generally used either to remind the audience of a broader sense of setting or to signal to audiences that a scene is taking place in a different location. In the case of *Full House*, these establishing shots work to reiterate images established through the opening title sequence, as the exterior of 1709 Broderick Street and the Painted Ladies of Alamo Square Park are consistently echoed within the text.

⁹ Interestingly, perhaps tied to production logistics, the three Tanner children remained inside the soundstage for their title cards in season four, further linking them to the home. Only in season eight, when the actresses were considerably older, were they each linked to the broader space of San Francisco through on-location title cards.

Opening title sequences are common in film too, of course, but on television they can create a dynamic relationship with the audience, gaining familiarity over the course of a series' run; while the basic function of an establishing shot is to signal a change in location, or using a location to signal a change in time of day, they have a cumulative potential in television to become constitutive of a series' sense of place. This accumulated spatial capital is evident when, in the case of *Full House*, audiences are making pilgrimages to locations that became associated with a television series almost exclusively through the work of these textual strategies—it was through the text, and not through production, that an intense connection between series and location was mapped out for audiences.

However, while opening title sequences have been analyzed in a variety of different contexts, establishing shots have received comparatively limited analysis in academic work on television. This stems, in part, from a general lack of attention to television style and form comparative to similar work on film.¹⁰ There is also the fact that establishing shots are often delegitimated through their reliance on stock footage, with some series reusing establishing shots from studio stock libraries, creating situations where viewers can recognize the same establishing shots from show-to-show. Rather than adding to a text's spatial capital, then, this practice positions establishing shots as an efficient and non-creative way to set a series in a particular location, with no engagement with ideas of spatial practice or place-making activities this project is concerned with. There is also the fact that, as with opening title sequences, establishing shots are becoming less common—as the economics of the industry are changing, the time allotted for commercials within an hour has increased, and the running time of a series has been considerably

¹⁰ The exceptions to this absence are Jeremy G. Butler, *Television Style* (New York: Routledge, 2009) and John Thorton Caldwell, *Televisuality: Style, Crisis, and Authority in American Television* (New Jersey: Rutgers U.P., 1995), both of which will be discussed in the following chapter.

reduced. The average broadcast sitcom used to run roughly twenty-four minutes when *Full House* debuted in 1987, whereas contemporary sitcoms run closer to twenty-one.

Although this truncation has required shorter scenes and smaller stories, it has also become common practice to cut down on the use of establishing shots and the length of opening title sequences in order to avoid having to cut jokes or other content. *Full House*'s opening title sequence ran a minute and twenty-six seconds in its first season, along with thirty seconds of closing credits in which many of the shots of San Francisco from the opening titles were reused. When *Full House* airs in syndication on Nick@Nite (as of 2014), its title sequence is cut down to 41 seconds, while the closing credits are—as per contemporary standards—consigned to the bottom of the screen and sped through during previews of upcoming content or the beginning of the following episode. In contemporary series, even forty seconds would be considered a luxury: some shows have eschewed title sequences entirely in favor of title cards, which run roughly five to fifteen seconds. While these are still capable of laying claim to spatial capital, or completing specific ideological and representational work, they must do so with considerably less time, and thus with a reduced capacity. *Mike & Molly* (2010-Present), a Chicago-set sitcom also filmed on the Warner Bros. Lot, used a five-second title card in its first two seasons, featuring the show's title over a shot of the city's skyline—the idea of a ninety second sequence featuring the series' actors walking around Chicago is an artifact of a televisual past, inaccessible to broadcast sitcoms in today's televisual context.

Establishing shots have become similarly less common, as it is now far more likely that an episode will need to be trimmed than padded, creating less of a need for transitional material—it also increases the likelihood that series will rely on pre-existing stock footage rather than shooting their own establishing shots on location, as they may not be used often enough to

justify the expense associated with them. MTV's *Awkward.* (2011-Present), a sitcom produced and set in and around Los Angeles, is specifically set in Palos Verdes, well-known for its beach-side communities; however, if someone has seen the series but has done no further research on Palos Verdes, they might now be aware of this reputation, given that the series has neither visited the beach nor used any kind of establishing shots to emphasize its proximity to the Pacific Ocean. Series creator Lauren Iungerich frames the absence of the beach as a question of economy, both in terms of the series' budget and their struggle to edit lengthy scripts into their allotted time, and says the production has shifted to focusing on location scouting and production design instead.¹¹ Similarly, the Chicago-set *Happy Endings* (ABC, 2011-2013) has brief glimpses of the city in its 10-second photo montage title sequence, but relies predominantly on costuming and set dressing to establishing location, such as a conspicuous tub of Garrett's popcorn.¹² The spatial economy of the television textuality is shifting as the basic affordance of time shifts compared to the era of the 24-minute sitcom.

However, there is also an economy to the lengthy title sequence and omnipresent establishing shots on *Full House*. By focusing so heavily on San Francisco through these claims to spatial capital, the series creates a burden of representation that it is otherwise unable or unwilling to meet once one considers a more complex understanding of San Francisco's place-identity. The show spends almost no time exploring the specific social dimensions of San Francisco, in particular its racial diversity or significant gay community, predominantly because those topics were unlikely to make their way into a "T.G.I.F. sitcom"—as ABC branded *Full*

¹¹ Myles McNutt. "Cultural Interview: Awkward. Creator Lauren Iungerich [Part Two]" *Cultural Learnings*, 27 June 2012.

¹² "The Butterfly Effect," *Happy Endings*, Season 2, Episode 15, 22 February 2012. In this case, the need to establish a sense of place merges with advertisers' desire to embed products within the text through product integration.

House and others sitcoms on Friday nights—in the early 1990s. While the show’s studio-bound multi-camera sets may disassociate the series with verisimilitude, the continued reinforcement of its San Francisco setting raises further questions about why lived realities of the city are continually unexplored by the Tanner family in the series’ episodic storylines.

While the chapter is interested in how the spatial economy of television textuality is changing, the limited negotiation with spatial capital evident in *Full House*’s use of these two strategies reinforces that limitations are not new in regards to televisual strategies for representing place. On the one hand, one could point to *Full House* as a successful negotiation of spatial capital, given that viewers continue to associate the show with the city, and vice versa. However, on the other hand, one could point to *Full House* as a failed negotiation of spatial capital, as its engagement with the city failed to evolve beyond basic symbols of place toward real engagement with place identity. In either case, however, we acknowledge this process as a negotiation, played out here through two specific strategies that are deployed strategically in order to activate spatial capital. This process is crucial to understanding the value of space and place in contemporary television, and it is a process that runs beyond the text itself to the individuals responsible for crafting it, as the following case study outlines.

Building Bluebell: The CW’s *Hart of Dixie*

In their efforts to map a sense of place for the audience, television laborers engage in place-making activities that negotiate spatial capital as evidenced in the previous section of this chapter. These problems include the shrinking runtime of ad-supported programs previously outlined, the financial realities that require a city like Albuquerque to stand in for a city more expensive to shoot in, or—to go back further in television history—the necessity of the generic

backlot space to cut costs compared to expensive location shooting. Such problems require a range of solutions, and while these problems continually arise there remain efforts to solve them and successfully locate and relocate programs. Television has not crumbled into a placeless landscape in the wake of this new production geography, but rather has adopted new tools (or new approaches to developing and using old tools) to continue to access and negotiate spatial capital.

Such is the case with The CW series *Hart of Dixie* (2011-2015), an hour-long broadcast drama series produced by Warner Bros. Television. *Hart of Dixie* tells the story of Zoe Hart (Rachel Bilson), a New York City doctor who takes over her estranged father's medical practice in the small town of Bluebell, Alabama; the following seasons document her predictable transition from fish-out-of-water to an integral member of a tight knit community, as she comes to appreciate the appeals of small town living. The series presents what we could categorize as a regional idyll of the South, a town where everyone knows one another, everything is in walking distance, and where walking by the town square gazebo means running into someone you know. Before Zoe first travels to Bluebell, she only knows it from postcards sent by her estranged father, foreshadowing that Bluebell is perhaps best described as a postcard come to life.

For that postcard to come to life, however, *Hart of Dixie* needs to negotiate the spatial economy of production found within the series' filming location. Although Bluebell is enchanting enough to inspire numerous online commenters to express their desire to visit or live in the town,¹³ it is constructed on the Warner Bros. backlot, taking place in stages not far from where *Full House* was being produced two decades earlier, and sharing the same streets as *Mike & Molly* and other productions filming "on the lot." It is also being produced in the same spaces

¹³ See: "Small town like Bluebell in Louisiana.?", *Yahoo! Answers*, <https://answers.yahoo.com/question/index?qid=20131118131803AAsuPvI>.

as other small town series like The WB's *Gilmore Girls* (2000-2007) or ABC's *Eastwick* (2009), each occupying the same Warner Bros. town square—with its iconic gazebo—that has been used in countless other film and television productions, making it more difficult for the series to develop a distinct sense of place identity. Through the long history of backlot production, series like *Hart of Dixie* must negotiate spatial capital inherent to this generic studio space—used primarily to save money and time necessary to travel to locations—and used in a range of other series into a specific place, in the process facing the inherent limitations of the contained studio environment.

These are distinct negotiations compared to series that film on location. Whereas a show like the Alaska-set *Northern Exposure* (1990-1995) filmed its exteriors in a real town in the Pacific Northwest—if not actually a town in Alaska—and therefore made a stronger claim to realism, *Hart of Dixie* is limited to a smaller selection of “locations” to access on an episode-by-episode basis given the limited size of the Warner Bros. backlot. Accordingly, one of the series' strategies for accessing spatial capital was choosing to shoot the pilot in North Carolina, taking advantage of both regional tax incentives and, more importantly, the opportunity to film the series on location in the southern United States. By placing characters in specific locations with symbolic ties to the south as a region, the series gains access to the what is more easily understood by audiences as “authentic” spatial capital, which is more easily accessed in series shot on location. This serves to consciously activate spatial capital in ways that would impress test audiences and network executives who would make the decision regarding the series' fate. However, shooting a pilot on location before moving the production to the backlot—which was always the intention behind *Hart of Dixie*, should it be picked up, in order to save costs—also necessitates further negotiation, as the production must now reconcile “authentic” Southern

locations within the more generic spaces on the backlot which are limited, for example, to a single body of water that had to double for any number of lakes, rivers, and ponds over the series' run.

These acts of negotiation—reconciling pilot locations with the backlot, establishing a diverse sense of place within the confines of the backlot, and confronting the backlot's intertextuality—are central to understanding *Hart of Dixie*'s sense of place, and how we can understand spatial capital operating in its construction of Bluebell. And while the series' art department is central to how viewers experience Bluebell, and narrative developments focused on the town are present throughout its four-season run, it is in the work of post-production laborers where this negotiation is undertaken directly, and where Bluebell is most clearly being constructed for audiences. It is also where we see the continued capacity of opening title sequences and establishing shots in gaining access to this spatial capital, albeit in ways that simultaneously reinforce their limitations.

Establishing Bluebell

In line with contemporary practice, *Hart of Dixie*'s opening title sequence is only ten seconds long, and in addition features no location shooting; however, in spite of these limitations, it gains access to spatial capital through its shrewd engagement with locations featured in the series' pilot and technological advances in the years since *Full House* debuted. During the series' pilot, two locations are given particular attention, captured both through wide angle establishing shots and through specific location work featuring the series' actors. One is a plantation home, surrounded by large trees with Spanish moss hanging from their limbs and branches, which is meant to stand in for the home of Bluebell mayor—and former professional football player—Lavon Hayes. The

second is a gazebo, extending out into the water, on which Zoe and potential love interest George Tucker share a climactic, golden hour conversation that contributes to her decision to stay in Bluebell rather than returning to New York. While the entire pilot was shot on location, these were the locations chosen to represent key moments, and used to most clearly signify the South and the location shooting therein; consequently, they became symbols of Bluebell, and thus valuable markers of place identity.

The opening title sequence for *Hart of Dixie* opens with a high-heeled shoe in New York City, before zooming into the sky to show an airplane transforming into a bird, charting Zoe's journey from big city surgeon to small town doctor. Using entirely computer-generated imagery, the sequence shifts from these symbols of urbanity—high fashion, skyscrapers, air travel—to symbols of the southern small town. However, these symbols are neither random nor generic, but rather reconstructions of the iconography constructed within the series' pilot. The sequence first reveals a sign for the town of Bluebell, reiterating the specific location, before then panning past a plantation house, a large tree with Spanish moss hanging from it, and then finally a gazebo extending out into the water.¹⁴ Zoe Hart herself is then seen integrated into the space through green screen, occupying not just a generic set of symbols, but a specific collection of images that viewers could associate with the locations from the series' pilot. Although only ten seconds long, the sequence uses advances in technology and the specific spatial capital accumulated in the series' pilot to complete work not dissimilar from that seen in the *Full House* credits; in subsequent seasons, the entire cast joined Rachel Bilson in the sequence's final shot, all of them brought together within this virtual reality cobbled together from locations with real significance to the series and—potentially—its audience.

¹⁴ The sequence also features a “Gator Xing” sign to signify Burt Reynolds, Hayes' pet alligator and itself a symbol of the series' regionality.

This is also work being completed by establishing shots, which are used throughout the series to link locations from the series' pilot to the sets constructed onstage at Warner Bros. Although the series has—some would argue conspicuously—never returned to the gazebo on the water, it continues to be used as an establishing shot to transition between scenes. Additionally, the series has continually shown different angles of the plantation used during production on the pilot when cutting to action happening in Lavon's home, which existed only as a limited collection of rooms on Warner Bros. Stage 11. The series also uses establishing shots captured in North Carolina to connect other standing sets on the backlot to the pilot shooting location, including the Breeland estate (where the other town doctor lives with his daughters) and the doctor's office.¹⁵ Although the interiors shot during the pilot do not match those constructed on the backlot, where spatial limitations necessitate separate floor plans to best facilitate production, this connection to the exteriors shot on location enables the series to maintain a persistent connection to the spatial capital that appeared in the pilot; this is further reinforced through the title sequence, and works to triangulate between North Carolina, Burbank, and the series' Alabama setting.

However, in addition to establishing shots that link specific spaces on the backlot with specific images shot on location, *Hart of Dixie* also uses what I will refer to as non-specific establishing shots. These are designed less to signify in what building or location a scene is taking place, and more to provide a sense of scale that is impossible to capture in the spatial dynamics of the backlot. In the series' pilot, these images were used to build on location shooting: although no scenes take place at a derelict road house, and no characters cross either of

¹⁵ The establishing shot of the Doctor's Office changed in the show's second season, when the production began to use the office exterior to set scenes; accordingly, a new establishing shot of a house located on the Warner Bros. backlot was introduced, although there is never a diegetic acknowledgement that the office changed appearance or location.

the two bridges featured in these establishing shots, they nonetheless work to sketch in the space around the characters and the locations they occupy. One shot maps Bluebell more explicitly, offering what we presume is an overhead view of the town itself, placing it relative to the water and giving audiences a read of its basic geography. Although this particular shot is never repeated in the series proper, its work is continued by other non-specific establishing shots interspersed throughout the series' four seasons; their proliferation runs counter to the broader trend wherein such shots are becoming less common, and the presumption that they would not be a priority for a broadcast series, making them a conspicuous negotiation of spatial capital as compared with its televisual contemporaries.

While the symbolic work of these non-specific establishing shots is negotiated through the text itself, it is equally important to consider the labor that went into making these shots possible, both in terms of who produced these images as well as who is responsible for where they are placed within the text. In visiting the post-production facility for *Hart of Dixie*, located on the Warner Bros. Studios backlot in Burbank, and in performing interviews with those responsible (the cartographers, if we extend the consideration of the text as a map), evidence emerges to indicate how establishing shots are central to the series' negotiation of spatial capital, and how their claims to spatial capital are defined by those who create and use them, and limited by both the strategies in question and those workers' position within industrial hierarchies.

Bluebell Town Planners: The Labor of Establishing Shots

Hart of Dixie's establishing shots come from three separate production cycles. The first is a collection of second-unit footage captured during the production of the pilot in the Spring of 2011, in which members of the production crew traveled in and around North Carolina to capture

images that could eventually be used as connective tissue and help mask the limited capacity of backlot production. These are primarily non-specific establishing shots, capturing scenes like a covered bridge in a wooded area. They are also constructed images, chosen by and in some cases manipulated by the production crew: in the case of the covered bridge, a longer version of the shot—which only ever appears for a few seconds in the series—shows a member of the production crew throwing an object into the water to create ripples that offer a sense of movement and give the image greater interest.

Although these images are generally attractive, they were not well received by the editorial staff that would use them. Editor Brandi Bradburn, who worked on all four seasons of the series, characterized this footage as “sorely lacking,” both because the production was more focused on the pilot itself and because “the tone of the pilot is not the tone of the show.” As the series went through development, its aesthetic shifted toward a specific, idyllic version of the South that isn’t reflected in the pilot, where the North Carolina locations offer a grittier angle on the region. While there are some striking images among the footage captured by the second unit, much of it—from the perspective of a viewer of *Hart of Dixie*—feels as though it belongs to another series entirely, something the editors realized when they began looking for footage for episodes beyond the pilot and finding nothing that fit the tone of the stories they were telling among the second-unit library. While one could likely create an impressive video essay on abandoned buildings of the South or a regional variant on the credits to a grittier series like *Deadwood* (2004-2006) out of these images, they were ultimately ill-suited to the show they were made for; this is logical given that when the second unit were shooting them, the series did not exist yet, and thus the generic collection of images they collected lack an explicit connection to the material while nonetheless having an explicit connection to the region.

Instead of using this footage, the editors primarily used the second round of establishing footage shot for the series, which was produced under circumstances in stark contrast to the second unit footage out of the pilot production. This footage was shot in Alabama by Lafe Jordan, at that time working as the pilot's post-production coordinator.¹⁶ Jordan was working on the series' pilot when its sense of place was being negotiated, and felt Bluebell "had been well-establishing throughout working with producers in post during the pilot because that's when they're really hammering that out anyway." As this process was concluding, Jordan was discussing a trip to Alabama—to visit his grandmother and complete research for a writing project—with co-producer Ben Kunde, who according to Jordan "kind of half-jokingly said 'Hey, you should shoot stock footage for the show.'" Although the series had not been officially picked up, Jordan traveled to Alabama and shot his own collection of establishing footage—according to Bradburn, that footage was "basically...all we used because it was the only stuff that worked."

This footage differs from the previous stock footage in two important ways. The first is that it is produced after the pilot existed, and therefore after the tone of the show had been more closely conceived; whereas those who shot the original footage were shooting with no sense of the finished product, Jordan's footage was completed after producers had debated and considered the tone of the show relative to the pilot footage and in planning for how the show might look if it were picked up. As Jordan explains, "I knew what 'Bluebell' looked like, and what the feel was of it, that it's this happy, perfect Southern town." By having someone directly involved with the post-production process engaged in this practice, they are able to capture not generic stock footage of the south, but rather footage explicitly designed to construct images that are

¹⁶ The post-production coordinator can best be described as the head administrator for the post-production department.

meaningful to the series and connected to its sense of place. In this sense, Jordan could construct a better map of Bluebell because he knew what Bluebell looked like, something that the second unit could not have accomplished given such a conception of Bluebell had not been fully worked out by its producers.

The other reason this footage is different is that it is produced outside of the standard production process. Jordan shot his footage with a Canon T2i, a consumer grade SLR digital camera that is more often associated with tourists than television production (where SLRs are becoming more common, but in the form of professional models like Canon's 5D Mark II). While the footage lacks the sophisticated lighting and high image quality produced by the second-unit during the pilot's production, the quality was good enough for broadcast, and the perspective gained from working on the pilot created footage that the editors and producers felt better reflected the series they were making. As technology becomes more accessible, more members of the production process—or those outside of the production process—can engage in place-making activities like the construction of establishing shots; Jordan attended film school and learned the basics of composition, but had no formal filmmaking experience to draw from. Although Jordan admits he did not stray far from his Grandmother's home in capturing his establishing shots, and characterizes his work as “just kind of shooting pretty things,” the process produced footage that would over the course of the first season make up the audience's primary understanding of Bluebell and its surrounding geography.

Jordan followed this with the third set of stock footage the show draws from, which was captured between *Hart of Dixie*'s first and second seasons in the spring and summer of 2012. After completing an entire season, Jordan explains that “we really, really knew what Bluebell's look was at that time,” which created greater certainty from editors regarding what kind of

footage they were lacking: according to Jordan, “there were things throughout the season the editors were like ‘Oh, it’d be great if we had a night shot of this or a magic shot of this.’” Jordan met with each of the show’s editors to learn what kind of shots they felt were missing, made a list of the specific requests, and then planned a road trip through Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama, doing research on towns and areas where he would be able to find specific images. However, at the same time, Jordan has been involved enough in the post-production process, and in talking with the editors, that he also curated other establishing shots as he drove through the region:

I knew stuff that they liked to use, and what they would like to use if they had it, and things like that. There were some things along the way, along the trip, that I’d see it and I’d be like “Oh, that’s pretty, I’m going to shoot that” or “That’s very Bluebell, I’m going to shoot that.” You stop, it takes a minute and a half, and then back in the car.

The incentive for Jordan to return was undoubtedly personal: although not compensated for his time or travel during these trips, he is compensated each time the footage is used, providing a secondary stream of revenue. However, Jordan describes it as a “mutually beneficial” arrangement, as the editors are able to gain access to material that better serves their needs, and which has been created to their specifications. This material has been prominent throughout the second, third, and fourth seasons, drawing from a collection of small towns and areas in the region, including the town of Fairhope, Alabama, which Jordan describes as “literally Bluebell.”

The impact of these second and third rounds of footage is evident throughout the second season, as the expanded collection of non-specific establishing shots enables more thorough negotiation of spatial capital. In “Baby Don’t Get Hooked On Me,” an episode edited by

Bradburn, Jordan's footage becomes a key factor in negotiating the show's distinct production context.¹⁷ In the episode, Bradburn uses combinations of three establishing shots—two non-specific followed by one specific—in quick succession when transitioning between scenes. Repeated four times in the episode, the technique enables Bradburn to draw clear connections between different locations, and in the process map those locations together. In the first sequence, two images of town streets are featured, the first outside a courthouse and the second outside of a beauty salon; this is then followed by a shot of the Butter Stick Bakery, a storefront located in the town square on the Warner Bros. Backlot.



By linking together two similar town shots—it is unclear whether they were shot in the same town—and then linking it to the backlot, the images create a sense of travel for the viewer, who moves from location to location with no discernible evidence there is at least close to two thousand miles between the second and third images. Although a single non-specific establishing

¹⁷ “Baby, Don’t Get Hooked On Me,” *Hart of Dixie*, Season 2, Episode 7, 20 November 2012.

shot would have worked to authenticate the backlot location, it is the combination of shots that most successfully expands the scale of Bluebell beyond the confines of Warner Bros.' spatial limitations. The same technique also works to bridge the gap between the different collections of footage existing within the series' library. In one sequence, Bradburn connects shots from both of Jordan's trips to the south with an establishing shot located on the backlot, while in another, Bradburn uses similar shots to set up an establishing shot of the plantation from North Carolina pilot shoot—while the above description reveals the different timeframes and geographies of these images, their close proximity and relation to one another nonetheless achieves a basic sense of spatial cohesion.

We can also observe here the negotiation of the Warner Bros. backlot's history, as *Hart of Dixie* lays its own claim to backlot space that has been similarly featured in other series. In the fourth sequence of establishing shots in the episode, two images on the water featuring fishing boats lead into an image of the Dixie Stop, the generic grocer/convenience store location in the backlot's town square.



Although the building may remind viewers familiar with The WB's *Gilmore Girls* of Dooze's Market, an association that *Hart of Dixie*'s producers likely value on some level given both its generic claims to that network's reputation for family drama and specific episodes that would appear to directly call attention to this intertextuality,¹⁸ the establishing shots nonetheless lay claim to the location through spatial capital, attempting to make a similar connection that will need to be negotiated by the next series to take over the space. Although these sets may be transformed into a snow-covered Chicago city street for *Mike & Molly* days later (as they were when I visited the backlot in early 2014), in the context of these images they are explicitly located in Bluebell, or at least in the geographic markers of Bluebell being negotiated by Jordan and Bradburn.

¹⁸ This was most apparent in the series' duplication of *Gilmore Girls*' "basket auction" storyline—from that show's second season—in "Sparks Fly," *Hart of Dixie*, Season 2, Episode 9, 4 December 2012.

Bradburn's labor highlights the importance of editors in how we understand the potential use of establishing shots and their ties to spatial capital. Bradburn cites the use of establishing footage on the show as instinctive for an editor working on a series confined to the backlot: "when you're on an 'on the block' show, and you never leave the lot, the first impulse is 'Oh shit, we better put something in here that doesn't look like the backlot.'" In this sense, the negotiation of spatial capital through establishing shots is explicitly framed as a solution to a problem tied to its specific production context. Bradburn also notes that establishing shots are used to solve logistical difficulties editing a series together outside of these broader challenges: while scripts written with transitions in mind or episodes with directors who shoot transitions into and out of scenes are generally light on establishing shots, they are more common in episodes where scenes "smack up against each other," requiring some form of transitive material. As a result, one cannot necessarily claim that each and every non-specific establishing shot outlined above is exclusively designed to negotiate Bluebell's sense of place, even if their function in the text contributes to the series' spatial capital regardless of the logic behind their use.

This being said, Bradburn nonetheless emphasizes her connection to Bluebell's sense of place in framing her labor on the series, acknowledging the burden of representation the show has taken on through its consistent performance of spatial capital. She suggests that, for her, "there's a responsibility to keep reminding people where we are—this isn't your neighbor's backyard." This responsibility is heightened by the fact that Bradburn lived in the South, and has a personal connection to the region, which potentially explains why she uses so many more non-specific establishing shots than her counterparts: in the show's twenty-two episode second season, Bradburn averaged 9.1 of such shots in her eight episodes, while her counterparts Jeff

Granzow and Les Butler averaged only 4.8 and 1.5 respectively in their seven episodes each. Although this could simply be due to her episodes happening to require more transitive solutions—as in the case of the show’s second season finale, where the need to indicate travel required seventeen of such shots—Bradburn admits that “coming from that region, especially, there’s shots that I’ve fallen in love with from that area, and for me it grounds it better... I might be guilty of finding the beauty shots of the South [more often than my colleagues].”

For this reason, it is important to acknowledge that this case study is distinctly tied to these particular laborers: Jordan’s ties to the South initiated his involvement in the creation of establishing shots, while Bradburn’s personal experience with the region makes her relationship to place-identity distinct from her counterparts (who, although completing similar labor, do so without the same investment). While Jordan’s experience in the region shaped the footage captured, Bradburn’s personal investment in Bluebell’s spatial capital then works to map out Bluebell through her careful selection of specific images that evoke her impression of the region and the fictional town. She works out of her own personal library of establishing shots, collated together from the three phases of shooting. Explaining one of her favorite shots—which she identifies as “Brandi’s Faves”—Bradburn reveals how her own connection with the show and specific shots is framed through the audience’s experience:

But I think there’s a comfort to the viewer when they see the shots, because I use the same ones over and over. I don’t go digging for new, because the ones that work work great. So there’s a shot of the blue truck, a turquoise bright blue truck, going over the bridge—I love that shot, I think it’s a season one shot, and it’s just the best shot. And to me, as a fan of the show as well, it’s a comfort to me—it’s like “Oh, the blue truck goes here.”



Although only one of three editors, Bradburn's more extensive use of the shots as well as her choice to use the same shots consistently makes her one of the laborers most responsible for negotiating spatial capital on *Hart of Dixie*. This extends into her influence on not simply which of Jordan's footage is used, but also what footage Jordan captured in the region: while the other editors requested specific shots, Bradburn's requests reflected not simply practical use but a goal of reflecting her own experience in the area. "Because I have experience in the South, I'm like 'Well we definitely need to see this, and we definitely need to see that.' These were things that were part of my everyday life there." In requesting shrimp boats like the teal one used in one of the series' most-utilized establishing shots (and one of her "Faves"), Bradburn pushed Jordan to capture images she has subsequently used to heighten the series' connection to the region she knows. Her commitment to the series' sense of place is also dynamic, as evidenced by the fact that her approach to using establishing shots changed when the town was literally put on a map in season two—with the reveal the town was closer to Mobile Bay than she had realized, she

amplified her use of water, and adjusted her philosophy to reflect her understanding of the series' reality.

Bluebell Town Founders: Limits of Post-Production Place Identity

Characterized by one of her co-workers as one of the production workers most invested in the series, Bradburn exhibits a clear connection to Bluebell as a location, and in the goal of representing the South. She speaks with pride that some viewers think they shoot on location in Alabama, and describes interactions with Twitter users about what the show gets right and wrong about the South. However, as identified earlier, the show's focus on engaging spatial capital creates a greater burden of representation, one that Bradburn has chosen to negotiate herself but which is not as much of a concern for others involved with the production.

Although Bradburn and her fellow editors have the authority to choose establishing shots to place into their edits, those edits remain subject to the approval of the series' producers, specifically series showrunner Leila Gerstein. Bradburn describes one of her favorite shots, an image of two rusted-out trucks on the side of the road with "Roll Tide" written across their windshields, which first appeared in the series' pilot. From Bradburn's perspective, it's an image emblematic of the region: "That's the South! That's what it looked like when I lived there." However, after using the shot multiple times—usually when characters are leaving or coming back to Bluebell—Bradburn was told by producers not to use the shot again: it was "too sad." Subsequently, the shot has been removed from her "Faves," and never appeared in any of the series' remaining episodes.

While Bradburn is able to create her selection of shots that represent Bluebell, the representation they create must match that of the producers, whose vision for the show informs

the labor of all of their employees. In the instance of place, however, this is complicated by the fact that Gerstein has—by her own admission, according to Bradburn—never been to the South. It is unclear how the South is being defined here, or how literal this might be, but during a panel for the series at the ATX Television Festival in Austin in 2013, Gerstein explains the genesis for the show's location, coming entirely through indirect exposure:

The show was always going to be set in the South. Bluebell felt like a place that hadn't been seen before. When I was coming up with the pilot, the BP oil spill was going on, and I was hearing all these amazing stories coming out on 'This American Life.' News pieces on small little towns, where everyone was working together, seemed so beautiful to me.¹⁹

Whereas Bradburn draws her perceptions of the South from her experience there, Gerstein comparatively draws from mediated representations of the region (in this case the personal interest stories of *This American Life*). The result is two different conceptions of the region, creating conflict with images like the Roll Tide trucks: as Bradburn explains, “from the showrunner's point of view, this is the ideal place—everyone in the world should want to live there. So nobody wants to live where rusted out trucks are.”

Although Bradburn has made clear efforts in her work to capture the South within her contributions to representations of Bluebell, this focus on the idyllic South limits her capacity to do so. While she has established a burden of representation pushing toward realism, the show as a series has focused on an idyllic South with less relationship to the real, reinforced by the use of computer-generated graphics in its title sequence. In the process, however, the limits placed on

¹⁹ Desirae Gabrielle, “*Hart of Dixie* Creator and Stars Dish on Audition Process, Ultra-Passionate Twitter Fans, and More,” *Yahoo TV*, 1 July 2013, <https://tv.yahoo.com/news/hart-dixie-creator-stars-dish-audition-process-ultra-173100005.html>

spatial capital within Bradburn's role extend into the text itself. In exploring the series' stock library, a number of images of fishing boats feature the confederate flag as a consistent symbol, one that is associated with this region and its history. However, these shots have never been used by the series, as it would acknowledge a complicated set of racial politics still operating in the South that *Hart of Dixie* has consistently avoided.

Although Bluebell's mayor Lavon Hayes is African American, the series has struggled to introduce other African American characters, with both Ruby Jeffries and Lynley Hayes introduced and abandoned in the second and third seasons respectively. The series has also shied away from exploring racial politics in storylines that present a clear opportunity to do so: when Lavon began dating Bluebell resident Annabeth, her white parents objected to the relationship, but only on the grounds that he played for Alabama as opposed to their favored Auburn, in what played as an attempt to playfully wink at "outdated" racial conflict and assert a post-racial South. Similarly, although some establishing shots reveal fishermen and other seasonal workers whose livelihoods are continually in jeopardy, the series rarely acknowledges the politics of class that the rusted-out trucks evoke; in considering the series' realism, Bradburn admits that "the shrimp boats and the crab on the dock—all of that stuff is the only real reality that we can afford to have." Because the series' narrative is designed to obscure the politics of race and class, the series' establishing shots must equally steer away from implying those politics exist in and around Bluebell.

For these and other reasons, Bluebell is not an "authentic" representation of the south, as its idyllic perspective on the region glosses over significant politics of race and class that need to be unpacked to gain a real understanding of the past, present, and future of a small town in Alabama. It is a representation formed in the writers' room by a showrunner with limited

experience with the region, but it is also reinforced by a network who picked up the show based on that representation; with the exception of *Jane The Virgin* (2014-Present), The CW has not traditionally ordered series that engaging with issues of race and class in a substantive fashion, more often choosing allegorical investigations of politics—e.g. supernatural series like *The Vampire Diaries* (2010-Present) or science fiction series like *Star-Crossed* (2014)—that can be carefully framed around characters and stars with broader appeal with young audiences. Through the process of development, a set of guidelines for the town of Bluebell were established, and then enforced throughout the production and post-production processes, shaping the labor of those involved and the maps they create. While the above examples demonstrate the potential for post-production laborers to negotiate spatial capital of Bluebell through their capturing and deployment of establishing shots, for instance, their capacity to bring their own experience in the South to bear was framed by their place within the broader hierarchy of television production.

In speaking about the series' authenticity, or lack thereof, Bradburn largely accepts that the show is limited by its context as both a CW drama and as a series created by someone who has no experience in the region. She explains "our goal from the get go in terms of the show is this idyllic place, and so my responsibility to that is to make it idyllic but with responsibility to that region too." Bradburn acknowledges the realities of the series' relationship with the South, which keeps the show from embracing deeper complexities of Southern life, and instead works to redefine "authenticity" within the limitations of both the series' idyllic framework and the structural limitations of production more broadly. In the third season, Bradburn directed an episode of the series, and brought her sense of responsibility into a role with greater influence over the production itself.²⁰ However, although she was now in a position to instruct the art

²⁰ "I Run To You," *Hart of Dixie*, Season 3, Episode 7, 18 November 2013.

department on how to create a location set in the bayou, she was still limited by the small scale of the series' budget: when she requested Spanish moss, a common image in the establishing shots she uses on a regular basis to sell the South on the backlot, she was told it was too expensive. She eventually settled on a dilapidated pier falling into the water as the production design element that signified her vision of the South, then working with the episode's editor to find establishing shots that would meet her own burden of spatial capital within the confines of limited resources.

Considering the labor of Jordan and Bradburn reveals, on the one hand, the potential for establishing shots to map out a fictional town through the careful negotiation of spatial capital by post-production laborers. Through their efforts to engage with the real South, efforts framed by their own experiences with the region, *Hart of Dixie* has established a substantial library of images that work to negotiate the spatial realities of backlot production and create a strong connection between audiences and the fictional idyll of Bluebell, Alabama. However, while their personal connection to the region instructs and shapes their participation, that connection is also inherently limited by the production's focus on a broader representative framework informed by logics of network branding and audience demographics. Indeed, it seems unlikely that The CW—or Warner Bros. Television as the series' producer—would have prioritized the shooting of new establishing shots if not for Jordan's initiative, while the likelihood of the editorial department pushing for authentic representations of the South without Bradburn's influence seems slim; although the show's engagement with the politics of the region are inherently limited already, one imagines how much more limited its textual map of Bluebell would be without the presence of workers willing to engage with the region more directly. As much as Bluebell shows the potential for post-production to construct a sense of place within the context of television

production, it also emphasizes the broader hierarchies that shape their labor, and which limit the representative capacity of television more broadly.

Off the Lot: Strategic Location Shooting

The case of *Hart of Dixie* demonstrates how strategies for activating spatial capital must ultimately be understood as existing within strategic formations of television production, in which existing limitations placed on representation impact resultant engagements with place identity. However, given that the series remained almost exclusively tied to the backlot during its four-season run, it represents a traditional mode of television production in which strategies like opening title sequences and establishing shots are among the only textual strategies of spatial capital available. Television more broadly has developed more strategies, which theoretically hold the potential to expand the capacities of spatial capital through increased mobility and technological advancement.

While Chapter One considers how we can understand all contemporary television production as being inherently mobile, we can also think about individual series being able to harness this mobility in a selective capacity. Although the kind of city-for-city doubling Rebecca Puck Stair was required to do on *Killer Women* in Albuquerque is a solution to the problem of having no access to location-specific landmarks like Austin's State Capitol, another solution would be to shoot a selection of scenes in Austin. It is a solution that costs more money, giving texts access to "authentic" locations, and with them easier access to spatial capital. It is also a solution that is becoming increasingly feasible as more and more locations become potential homes for television production, building crew bases and making local equipment—itsself

becoming more mobile through a smaller size and the increase in prosumer SLRs capable of delivering high-definition picture—more plentiful.

In the case of USA Network's *Covert Affairs* (2010-Present), an espionage drama starring Piper Perabo as CIA field agent Annie Walker, the series is based out of Toronto to take advantage of the cheaper production costs of shooting in Canada. However, while the series typically uses Toronto and the surrounding area to represent both its primary Washington D.C. setting and a range of other global locations, over the course of the series it has used what I term “strategic location shooting” in order to tap into spatial capital, traveling to cities like Paris and Buenos Aires for episodic storylines that embed Annie within real global locales.

Although I am positioning this strategy as a result of the current and expanded production geography of production, strategic location shooting is not a new phenomenon within television production: it has its origins in “vacation episodes,” where characters typically confined to familiar sets or backlot locations are suddenly placed in a “real world” location for an episode. Returning to the discussion of *Full House* earlier in the chapter, that series used location shooting in vacation episodes set and filmed in Hawaii and at Walt Disney World in Florida;²¹ in addition, the series filmed its eighth season premiere on location in San Francisco, lending further “authenticity” to its day-to-day setting.²² However, these episodes were only possible once the series became a success, and usually coincided with premieres or finales that took place during valuable sweeps periods where the novelty of spatial capital—for multi-camera sitcoms, especially, as will be discussed further in Chapter Three—could help draw in viewers. Although

²¹ See: “Tanner’s Island,” *Full House*, Season 3, Episode 1, 22 September 1989 for Hawaii, and “The House Meets The Mouse,” *Full House*, Season 6, Episodes 23-24, 11 May 1993 and 18 May 1993. *Full House*’s trip to Walt Disney World predates Disney’s purchase of ABC, but subsequent ABC series—including *Modern Family* (2009-Present)—that travel to the theme park often do so as part of a larger brand synergy.

²² “Comet’s Excellent Adventure,” *Full House*, Season 8, Episode 1, 27 September 1994.

spatial capital is considered to have value in these contexts, it is only accessible through the considerable investment necessary to cover the costs of moving the production across the country.

In the case of *Covert Affairs*, the series has deployed location shooting both more consistently and strategically, sending small production units and limited cast to overseas locations to coordinate with local crew and engage with spatial capital at minimal cost (especially given the budgetary limitations on basic cable dramas). The series has filmed very few episodes entirely on location, instead combining soundstage work in Toronto with exterior work on location in over a half dozen international cities. While establishing shots can create an indirect relationship between a location and a set, and place the actors in proximity to authentic images of a particular place, location work offers the ability to place actors in locations on a consistent basis. The more often Annie Walker appears within real locations, the more convincing the show can be regarding its global scale. The series has used these strategies often enough that it has become one of the series' defining features: the show's website features a "Globe Tracker" map in which audiences can see which locations the show has visited, including photos and videos cast and crew took on location.²³ It is a performance of spatial capital, one predicated on new realities of mobile production that make such efforts both possible and feasible, and which creates a greater burden of representation through the conscious placement of characters within real locations.²⁴

²³ "Covert Affairs Globe Tracker," *USANetwork.com*.

<http://www.usanetwork.com/content/covert-affairs-globe-tracker>

²⁴ Furthering the series' efforts to blend soundstage work and location work, Globe Tracker offers both locations where episodes have been set but not filmed alongside those where strategic location work was done. Only in the descriptions of each location is a distinction made between them.

We can also see strategic location shooting functioning in series that travel to fewer locations but split their production time between the city in which production logistics are most feasible and the city in which they are set. In the case of *The L.A. Complex* (2012), a Canadian series distributed on The CW in the United States, the show was primarily filmed in Toronto where its production studio, Salter Street Films, was based. However, given that the show was set in Los Angeles and focused specifically on characters attempting to break into the entertainment industry, the show traveled to Los Angeles to shoot strategic scenes. Although the show also relies on establishing shots to engage with its setting, the use of recognizable locations throughout the series' production enabled it to access a level of authenticity that both helped frame its characters' experiences and likely helped sell the show to The CW by minimizing the "Canadianness" of the production.²⁵

In the case of Showtime's *Shameless* (2011-Present), meanwhile, the series strategically shoots most of its exterior scenes in Chicago while filming much of its interior work in Los Angeles. The choice allows the show to engage in the spatial capital of specific Chicago landmarks—like the El Train—on a consistent basis, while nonetheless relying on studio stages in Los Angeles where production on interior scenes can be controlled and scheduled with greater certainty. The choice is made possible by the State of Illinois' tax incentives, and the ability for the production to use Chicago-based crew when filming in the city; it is now possible for shows like *Shameless* to function in two different states with two different crews without much difficulty, a reality that makes strategic location shooting a much more feasible option.

While strategic location shooting would appear to offer greater access to complex dimensions of spatial capital inherent to the locations where shows like *Covert Affairs* and

²⁵ The role of distribution as tied to spatial capital will be discussed further in the Conclusion.

Scandal are shot, most cases of strategic location shooting function predominantly through symbolic iconography with no ties to complex place identity. Given that productions like *Covert Affairs* have only limited screen time in which to engage with the specificity of location shooting work, they tend to rely on quick forms of spatial recognition. In a set of third season episodes where Annie is engaged in an affair with a businessman tied to illegal activities, Simon Fisher, she travels to Paris in order to plant a bug in his phone charger. When Simon initially calls to invite Annie to Paris in “The Last Thing You Should Do,” actor Richard Coyle is immediately seen in frame with the Eiffel Tower in the background, so as to avoid any confusion regarding his location.²⁶ The following episode, “Speed of Life,” opens with a montage of Annie and Simon’s time in Paris, relying on recognizable landmarks like the Eiffel Tower or “pond boating” at Luxembourg Garden.²⁷ While a shot of the two characters running to the Sacré-Cœur—the Roman Catholic basilica located at the city’s highest point—establishes a sense of the city’s scale, the show does little to engage with the city’s identity beyond those landmarks. While symbolically powerful, the representative capacity of these strategic location shoots begins and ends with images that must immediately communicate their specificity to audiences, meaning that lesser known or more ideologically complicated spaces of these cities are unlikely to be featured.

Examples of strategic location shooting are evidence that space and place hold capital within the context of television production, but they also reveal how efforts to engage with that spatial capital rely heavily on surface representation—the spatial capital here is not in representations of place identity, but rather in the evidence that place mattered enough for the production to relocate for this particular story, resulting in reduced burdens of representation

²⁶ “The Last Thing You Should Do,” *Covert Affairs*, Season 3, Episode 3, 24 July 2012.

²⁷ “Speed of Life,” *Covert Affairs*, Season 3, Episode 4, 31 July 2012.

from the production's perspective. Strategic location shooting can best be understood not as an effort to construct a strong sense of place, but rather a way to tap into broader reserves of spatial capital without mapping out the complexities of place identity contained within any location. When *The Good Wife* traveled to Chicago for a single scene in the show's fifth season after having been produced exclusively in New York before that point, the placement of actor Josh Charles within the Chicago skyline made no significant contribution to the series' depiction of the Midwest city;²⁸ similarly, when the series produced an episode later in the season in which the characters "traveled" to New York, placing a few key characters within spitting distance of Times Square and featuring a cameo by mayor Bill de Blasio did not amount to a substantive engagement with the city and its identity.²⁹

Such efforts can best be described as a pilgrimage of production: in much the same way as media tourists experience selective, mediated versions of cities they visit based on their place within the media, strategic location shooting frames cities based on selective, symbolic representations that will clearly communicate specificity—if not complexity—to audiences and engage in valuable spatial capital. Although these efforts have access to a more immediate sense of "authenticity" than the work of opening title sequences or establishing shots within the context of post-production by placing actors directly within the landscape, the transient nature of many of these pilgrimages limits their effectiveness relative to the cumulative work being done in series like *Shameless*. When the series turned its eyes toward the gentrification of Chicago's south side in its fifth season, the series had spent considerable time in the neighborhood, meaning that the stakes of increased development and shifting class dynamics were specifically tied to locations that had gained meaning through their continued use. When strategic location

²⁸ "A Precious Commodity," *The Good Wife*, Season 5, Episode 3, 13 October 2013.

²⁹ "A Few Words," *The Good Wife*, Season 5, Episode 14, 16 March 2014.

shooting is episodic as opposed to seasonal, this type of place identity is comparatively inaccessible, and disincentivized by the limited conception of spatial capital driving the pilgrimage of production from a practical standpoint.

Off the Lot, On The Lot: Virtual Backlots

Much as strategic location shooting's theoretical capacity to take television to any location has failed to dramatically expand its capacity for engaging with place identity, similar limitations have been placed on technology's claim to spatial capital. Although it has become more possible to move production to other locations, technology has also made it possible to "travel" anywhere within the confines of the soundstage: with the use of a green screen, characters can be transported to any location through the use of expanding visual effects technologies within post-production. Although backdrops have long made it possible for shows that film on sound stages to engage in symbols of place-identity (like the backdrops of the Chicago skyline that appear outside the windows of the Lockhart Gardner offices on *The Good Wife*), and are an important historical component of soundstage production, green screens have shifted this work of spatial representation into the space of post-production. Visual effects workers are asked to fill-in the spatial capital of a series, either placing the characters in front of entirely different landscapes (common in driving sequences), establishing a sense of place through a window of a generic room, or in some cases constructing entire digital sets in which characters interact with one another.

Green screens have been in use in television for quite some time, but the rise in primarily digital sets represents a key shift in representations of place, combining the composite work of establishing shots with the integrative work of location shooting. Effects company Stargate

Studios, based out of a range of different global locations in order to maximize local incentives offered in different states and countries, has promoted itself based on its ability to use these technologies in what it terms a “Virtual Backlot.” In a series of videos released on Vimeo and YouTube, the company catalogs its work using this trademarked virtual backlot system, which its Vimeo account description claims contains “hundreds of photo-real, virtual locations covering 28 major cities from around the world.”³⁰ In a yearly video series, the company combines finished work product with work-in-progress footage before their visual effects were introduced, demonstrating the substantial degree to which even television series we would not normally associate with visual effects—like NBC’s *Parenthood* (2010-Present), which shoots in Los Angeles but is set in Berkeley—rely on green screen technology in lieu of location shooting. Videos like this one have become common online surrounding other television series—like HBO’s *Game of Thrones* (2011-Present)—or feature films—like *The Great Gatsby* (2013)—where supporting visual effects are used to substantially shape the visual signature of a series.³¹ In the case of the Virtual Backlot videos, however, the primary focus is on the wide range of productions that use the service in varied capacities (and which do not fit the mold of a visual effects-heavy series). For some series, the virtual backlot is used to place characters in foreign cities, often combined with the use of traditional backlots or partial sets—in other cases, however, shows consistently use the virtual backlot to establish a series’ setting, as is the case with ABC’s *Grey’s Anatomy* (2005-Present) and *Ugly Betty* (2006-2010).³²

³⁰ “Stargate Studios on Vimeo,” *Vimeo.com*. <http://vimeo.com/stargate>

³¹ “CGI VFX Breakdowns: ‘Game of Thrones’ by Pixomondo,” YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i4GkA6rIPDc>; “The Great Gatsby (2013) Visual Effects Before & After Clip [HD],” YouTube, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u_NreiUYdbw

Although this technology promotes itself based on its ability to complete the work of location shooting within the contained space of the studio, its negotiation of spatial capital is limited in part by the shaky reception the technology has received. While the 2009 version of the Virtual Backlot video gained significant traction online in early 2010 as an example of how far visual effects have come, the work of Stargate and other studios has also often been criticized in the context of particular texts. Some uses of the technology are relatively seamless, but others are more glaring, as is the case with the visual effects work on ABC's *Revenge* (2011-Present), the Hamptons-set drama filmed largely on sound stages in Los Angeles and featured in the company's 2013 compilation video. On the one hand, it represents an extensive use of the technology, constructing a virtual set based on a location used during the production of the pilot in North Carolina (returning to the challenges faced on *Hart of Dixie*). The location was problematic, though, in that it was the house of the show's lead character, and was located directly off the beach, meaning that it would be difficult for a backdrop to be dynamic enough to capture the location around it. Whereas typically the location would be shot from the outside in to obscure the soundstage and avoid having to try to capture the surrounding landscape, Stargate worked with producers to construct a virtual version of the location, with the production using blue screens in order to place the characters against a dynamic landscape approximating that which appeared in the pilot.³³ Whereas *Hart of Dixie* relies on establishing shots to retain access to the spatial capital of its location-based pilot shoot, *Revenge* uses the virtual backlot—along with establishing shots—to answer the burden of representation, despite the fact the technology is unable to meet this burden for some viewers.

³³ While “green screen” has become a catch-all term for describing the use of visual effects compositing in film and television, some of this work actually uses blue screens instead of green, including on *Revenge*.

Beyond failing to achieve the realistic effect of location shooting, *Revenge*'s use of virtual sets also reverberated in popular discourse around the series. Margaret Lyons at *Vulture* observes "the weird green-screen effects for scenes shot on Emily's porch are laughable," while Maureen Ryan at *AOL Television* describes the "terrible green-screen" as "like something from a Syfy Saturday night movie."³⁴ Meanwhile, at *TV.com*, Lily Sparks writes that *Revenge* has a chance to become a classic soap opera "if we can kindly ignore some of the worst green screen shots 21st century television has ever seen."³⁵ In an interview with *The Daily Beast*, creator Mike Kelley attempts to argue the "weird" visual effects were on purpose: "There is this lovely, surreal quality about the show: something doesn't feel quite right, but it's still beautiful to look at ... We like keeping the viewer trapped in our world."³⁶ Although he lays claim to a form of cinematic authenticity with a comparison to Alfred Hitchcock's *Marnie* (1964) and its use of painted backdrops, the fact remains that *Stargate* frames the Virtual Backlot through its realism, and not through its stylistic flair. The technology is designed to negotiate spatial capital without having to leave the soundstage, but in cases like *Revenge* the technology was apparent enough to call attention to its artificiality in ways that directly affected the critical reception of the series—a Twitter search for "*Revenge* Green Screen" reveals the discourse has spread to audiences, who share screen caps of particularly bad green screen use and compare it to other examples of shoddy effects work (specifically The CW's *Ringer* [2011-12], which has become the most

³⁴ Margaret Lyons, "Revenge: The Best Half-Terrible Show on TV," *Vulture*, 18 April 2012, <http://www.vulture.com/2012/04/revenge-return-terrible-nolan.html>; Maureen Ryan, "Revenge on ABC is Sweet: Let Us Count The Ways," *AOL Television*, 9 November 2011, <http://www.aoltv.com/2011/11/09/revenge-on-abc-is-sweet-let-us-count-the-ways/>.

³⁵ Lily Sparks, "Revenge: Panic at the Tea Party," *TV.com*, 13 October 2011, <http://www.tv.com/news/revenge-panic-at-the-tea-party-26919/>.

³⁶ Jace Jacob, "Revenge: Emily VanCamp, Mike Kelley, Madeleine Stowe, and Gabriel Mann on the ABC Soap," *The Daily Beast*, 28 February 2012, <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2012/02/28/revenge-emily-vancamp-mike-kelley-madeleine-stowe-gabriel-mann-on-the-abc-soap.html>

common example of poor visual effects work in a television context). Whether these failures are the result of budgetary limitations or the difficulty of maintaining a level of visual effects work within the context of a 22-episode broadcast drama series that makes extensive work of visual effects, the fact remains that these criticisms complicate the ability for virtual backlot respond to the burden of spatial capital in the way it is intended to.

However, more importantly, virtual backlots—even when they move—are static. They contain the symbols of spatial capital necessary to inform audiences a scene is taking place in a given location, but they are a computer-generated image that aims for photo-realism as opposed to place identity. The virtual backdrops being created rely on the same signifiers common in strategic location shooting—in the 2013 reel, actor Cliff Curtis is seen in a clip from ABC's *Missing* (2012) that places the character in a virtual version of the Champs de Mars near the Eiffel Tower, which was not coincidentally also featured in the Paris montage on *Covert Affairs*. While technology has made it much easier to activate spatial capital through the process of post-production, it has removed any of the stages where the complexity of a given location could inform the text's understanding of spatial capital. While strategic location shooting would have local location managers that could theoretically lead the production to a less iconic location and explore areas of a given city less commonly seen on screen, and the case of *Hart of Dixie* shows how the creation and use of establishing shots comes from individual laborers who can make efforts to engage with place identity albeit within the limitations of production hierarchies, virtual backlots epitomize an approach to spatial capital in which “being there” is stripped of place identity in favor of symbolic capital that creates the illusion of place for dramatic effect. In addition to creating a Washington D.C. where you can see the Washington Monument or the Capitol building from any location, or a Seattle where the Space Needle is always a stone's

throw away, virtual backlots are also disengaged from issues of class and race as they intersect with place identity, and from the potential of spatial capital in television more broadly.

Conclusion

In breaking down these four specific techniques—opening title sequences, establishing shots, strategic location shooting, and virtual backlots—for representing place within the context of television textuality, this chapter explores the tools through which spatial capital is negotiated within the television text. While each of these strategies functions as a way for a text to activate spatial capital and collectively demonstrate the value given to place in a wide range of television texts, the chapter has also explored the limitations placed on these strategies, and the subsequent limitations on the sense of place identity created through them. We can understand these limitations as, on the one hand, inherent to the forms: establishing shots are only seconds long, for example, while virtual backlots often rely on whatever stock images are available (and thus affordable) for the production. Returning to Said's discussion of strategic formations, there is simply only so much that can be done within the limitations of television production, which necessitate these problem-solving strategies for accessing spatial capital.

On the other hand, however, these limitations are also the product of what forms of spatial capital are prioritized within the television text, a variable determined by broader hierarchies within the space of television production. When a series' setting consciously activates spatial capital, it creates a representational burden that must be negotiated through the process of production and post-production. However, the ability for laborers who participate in place-making activities to exhibit agency over how place is represented in a series from the marginalized positions outlined in these examples is minimal. Bradburn may have wanted to

create a more “authentic” South in *Hart Of Dixie* through the limited form of the establishing shot, but the image of the South created by the showrunner and desired by the network limits her capacity to do so. Location managers may have given *Covert Affairs* the option to explore other areas of Paris, but the spatial capital of traveling to Paris is more efficiently accessed through the Eiffel Tower than spaces of class struggle or racial unrest. And while it remains possible that visual effects compositors at Stargate Studios yearn to explore the politics of place identity through their virtual backlots, the value of their work is in its simplicity, and in forms of spatial capital that rarely push past the symbolic.

Accordingly, we can understand the spatial economy of televisual textuality as a space of struggle, in which individual laborers access spatial capital because it has value to the text in question, but must do so within restrictive strategies for activating spatial capital that have been predetermined by the logistics of television production more broadly. However, this is not intended as a pessimistic rejection of television’s capacity to create a meaningful sense of place, nor is it a rejection of textuality’s potential to engage with spatial capital in new and complex ways.

As the introduction to this chapter identified, *Parks and Recreation*’s Pawnee became a significant component of the series over the course of its seven-season run, in part based on the strategies discussed in this chapter. The show uses establishing shots of the Pasadena City Hall to stand in for Pawnee, and connects this City Hall to Indiana through an opening credit sequence that opens with Midwest rurality. The show has used visual effects to create a bird’s eye view of the town during an emotional, climactic moment in season six’s “Ann & Chris,” and has used strategic location shooting in Washington D.C., London, Paris, and the Grand Canyon over the course of its run. Most importantly, though, the series made multiple trips to Indianapolis,

Indiana—discussing that trip with a local news reporter, creator Mike Schur said the trip had “always been on our kind of to do list, to actually go to Indianapolis and...make the place where the space has been set a part of the actual show and it’s finally happening.”³⁷ Those trips worked to place the characters not only nearby to Pawnee’s real location, but also in a state that is rarely ever depicted in scripted television, given that there are no production incentives to support ongoing production in the state.

Parks and Recreation created a burden of representation with its setting, and faced the same limitations to the negotiation of spatial capital as the case studies referenced throughout the chapter, but the show’s strong sense of place comes in part from the growing complexity of the contemporary television text. This includes the role of paratexts that extend beyond the opening title sequence, including the Pawnee town website and the “Leslie Knope”-authored *Pawnee: The Greatest Town in America* that moved beyond the diegetic world of the show to hit bookstore shelves in 2011. The show’s negotiation of spatial capital also plays out in the series’ cumulative narrative, as major story arcs focus on the town’s feud and eventual merger with nearby Eagleton, and Leslie’s character arc continually relies on her love of her town for motivation. The specific strategies outlined in the above case studies offer productions easy access to spatial capital to meet representational burdens, but the complexity of those representations is often determined by how well these strategies are used in conjunction with new ways to negotiate spatial capital outside of these formal production modes. The dramatic shifts in the spatial economy of television production prompted by mobile production, as outlined in Chapter One, run parallel to the shifts in the spatial economy of television production outlined here, up to and including the rise of the paratext as an activation point for spatial capital.

³⁷ Andrea Morehead, “NBC ‘Parks and Recreation’ brings show to...” *WTHR.com*, 17 January 2013, <http://www.wthr.com/story/20616485/parks-and-rec-brings-show-to-indianapolis>

In these first two chapters, a spatial capital approach to television criticism has been outlined, considering dimensions of local production culture and textual production that will be mapped onto specific televisual forms in the chapters that follow. These dimensions have been explored as the work of individual laborers, who negotiate spatial capital as stakeholders in television's spatial economy but must shape their labor to confront limitations placed on them by the tools available and the specific burdens created by stakeholders further up the production chain. While these laborers are crucial for changing the map of television production, and crucial in creating spatial capital within the text we can understand as a map, the primary modes of activating spatial capital are predicated on notions of value that privilege basic signification over complex place identity.

However, rather than use this reality as a way to dismiss television's spatial capital, these chapters create a framework for understanding how this negotiation of spatial capital shifts and changes in light of the diversity of forms and genres within the wide range of contemporary and historical television programming. This framework does not exist to prove that representations of place on television are unrealistic, or that they need be realistic, but rather serves to explore the dynamics that value certain forms of spatial capital over others, and understand the place of those dynamics within distinct televisual contexts. The maps embedded within these texts are going to be different depending on the production context of a particular series, both broadly (i.e. the distinction between multi-camera and single-camera sitcoms) and specifically (as in the distinct tasks of doubling one city for another that may only ever be attempted by a single show). They will also function differently depending on the scale of representation: mapping the town is different from mapping the city, while mapping the region differs from mapping the nation. Additionally, in considering the paratextual Pawnee, they must also be mapped onto shifting

forms of textual production as much as they need to be mapped onto shifting geographies of production.

Neither Pawnee, Indiana, nor Bluebell, Alabama, are real places. However, they are mapped as real within their respective texts, a process that requires the ongoing, complex, and constrained negotiation of spatial capital. Exploring—rather than dismissing—this process is central to television’s complicated relationship with space and place, and will begin with the multi-camera sitcom’s attempts to map an entire country from the confines of a studio soundstage.

Chapter Three

This Location Is Filmed In Front of a Live Studio Audience: The Sitcom City, the Sitcom Nation, and Multi-Camera Spatial Capital

Although many of the tens of millions of viewers who watched NBC's *Friends* (1994-2004) may have visited New York City, where the show was set, it's likely a smaller percentage made the pilgrimage to the series' set. Like the Tanner home in *Full House* and like the interiors of Bluebell on *Hart of Dixie*, *Friends*' New York City apartments were filmed on soundstages at Warner Bros. Studios in Burbank, California, accessible only through VIP Tours offered to visitors. In an undated "Warner Bros. Backstage" video promoting the studio tour, host Suzanne Wong speaks with tour guide Dean Ricka, who has just come from the set of *Friends*. The video—uploaded to the Warner Bros. Tours YouTube account in 2011—deconstructs the construction of place outlined in the previous chapter, with Wong feigning surprise that the show is not filmed in New York City, and Ricka revealing how they use soundstages and generic outdoor spaces on the backlot to create both Central Perk—the series' iconic coffee house—and the streets of Manhattan, when necessary.¹

Whereas the previous chapter discussed how spatial capital is negotiated in backlots and other spaces of production through textual strategies that consciously work to evoke real places, the interest of this chapter lies more in Central Perk than Central Park. Its focus is on the specific, stage-bound spaces created by multi-camera sitcoms like *Friends*, which rely heavily on interior sets in which the vast majority of a series' episodes take place. As much as *Friends* was

¹ "The Friends Set – Warner Bros. VIP Tour." YouTube.com, 12 April 2011, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q8MC40tpxc0>

set in New York City more broadly, whether through the recreation of Central Park on the backlot as featured in the Warner Bros. promotional video or through key art like the poster of the six main characters sitting on a construction girder high above the city, it was also set in Central Perk, or the two apartments—connected by a small hallway—that the show’s characters occupied throughout the series’ run.

There are the requisite tours of New York City inspired by *Friends*, visiting locations that are approximate to or the inspiration for locations featured on the show itself, but the series never made a pilgrimage of production, existing instead in its own version of New York City that fans could visit in Los Angeles. Whereas Chapter Two investigated cases in which “real” space is used to lend authenticity and meaning to the constructed spaces of television production, *Friends* highlights the degree to which constructed spaces of television production have their own sense of spatial capital that can exist distinct—if not independent—from the categories of place attached to them, with its New York joining *Frasier*’s Seattle (1993-2004), or *The Mary Tyler Moore Show*’s Minneapolis, among countless others.

This is also a sense of spatial capital distinct to the multi-camera sitcom, a televisual format distinguished by its three-walled proscenium sets, its theatrical production style, the use of multiple cameras to capture a given scene, and the presence of either a live studio audience or a laugh track simulating one. Whereas dramatic television production has been central to the expanding geography of television production, the television sitcom—and the multi-camera sitcom, in particular—has remained almost exclusively located in Los Angeles, a fact that is fairly common knowledge compared to the city-for-city doubling of shows like *Killer Women* filming Albuquerque for Austin. Whether through tours like the one featured in Warner Bros.’ promotional video, or through the ability for viewers to sign up to be in the studio audience of a

contemporary sitcom like *The Big Bang Theory* (which also films on the Warner Bros. lot in Burbank), there is a general understanding that regardless of where a multi-camera sitcom is set, chances are the apartments or workplaces or coffee shops or watering holes exist on studio stages in and around Los Angeles, California.²

This fact could be perceived as limiting the spatial capital available to the multi-camera sitcom; indeed, the cultural capital of the multi-camera sitcom more broadly when considered as a televisual form is often discounted based on the limitations of the multi-camera format and its reliance on the artifice of soundstage sets and its theatrical—rather than cinematic—style. This chapter intends to work against these perceptions, positioning the multi-camera sitcom as an evolving televisual form that over time has developed stylistically in order to create its own forms of spatial capital distinct from those more commonly associated with location shooting and realism as a production aesthetic. While unavoidably placed in conversation with other televisual forms, the spatial capital of the multi-camera sitcom has evolved to translate categories of place and place-identity into elements of production design and textuality that harness the affordances of multi-camera production while evolving in instances where the form of multi-camera production is evolving in kind.

After working to rescue the multi-camera sitcom from claims of a lack of style and a marginalized place within considerations of televisual place, the chapter will consider how spatial capital manifests within the form. The chapter will isolate the work of production designers as crucial to evoking and engaging with spatial capital within the limitations of the soundstage, before then considering how production design works in conjunction with

² Among the few exceptions in the broadcast or cable space are multi-camera sitcoms filmed at Tyler Perry's studio in Atlanta, Georgia, which currently includes OWN's *Tyler Perry's For Better Or For Worse* (2011-Present).

storytelling and textual constructions of place to evoke what I term the “sitcom city,” wherein combinations of private and public spaces are constructed on sound stages and used as intertextual windows beyond the liminal spaces of the sitcom’s proscenium stage. Built around “spaces of individuation” in which place-identity is framed and understood, the sitcom city relies on forms of symbolic capital that transform potentially generic spaces into parts of not the real city itself, but the collection of spaces that together construct the city within a particular sitcom (and potentially other sitcoms set in that city).

The chapter is not suggesting that the sitcom city is immune to the limitations of televisual place outlined in the previous chapter, and in considering examples of the sitcom city through series like NBC’s Detroit-set *Undateable* (2014-Present) and CBS’ New York-set *How I Met Your Mother* (2006-2014) it remains critical of the narrow conception of place-identity typically deployed in television. However, I argue that these limitations are not—as one might presume based on the multi-camera format—the result of the means of production, which are inherently capable of evoking and engaging with place-identity despite the apparent artifice. Rather, these limitations are the same as those discussed in Chapter Two: the multi-camera sitcom has developed its own ways to create a meaningful sense of place in a form often distinguished based on its setting, which translates into representations of place that do not transcend the limitations observed in textual strategies of place more broadly, which will be recurrent throughout this project.

In order to explore these limits further, the chapter pushes beyond the sitcom city—a category of place fairly consistent across all multi-camera sitcoms—toward the category of nation, testing the capacity for the form’s distinct engagement with place to expand its focus. Few multi-camera sitcoms explicitly engage the national on a regular basis, most often implicitly

engaging in the national by being set in the country where it is produced. Although we can observe the sitcom nation emerge directly in the context of vacation episodes that extend beyond the boundaries of the soundstage, a consideration of *How I Met Your Mother*'s engagement with Canada explores the potential for the symbolic capital of the multi-camera sitcom to translate into an engagement with the construction of imagined communities of national identity, with spaces of individuation expanded to be considered spaces of nationalization. This analysis reveals the adaptability of the multi-camera format as tied to spatial capital, while also emphasizing the way the form's affordances affect the kind of Canada that the series maps out over the course of its nine-season run.

If the previous two chapters worked to outline a set of criteria by which we can evaluate the relationship between a television series, its mode of production, and its negotiation of spatial capital, then this chapter isolates the multi-camera sitcom as a particular mode of production, and demonstrates how its stylistic affordances—often ignored in broader considerations of television style—have developed distinct ways of engaging with space and place. The critical analysis of that spatial capital functions not to diminish its inherent capacity to create a sense of place, but rather to explore its potential, and to consider the ways one can understand the sitcom city or the sitcom nation as meaningful engagements with place-identity in the television landscape.

Style, Realism, and the Multi-Camera Sitcom

Although contemporary television studies work has shifted away from the sitcom toward other genres, there exists a strong lineage of research on the sitcom in confronting the history of television as a medium. In *Critiquing the Sitcom*, editor Joanne Morreale argues that “perhaps more so than any other fiction television genre, sitcoms have provided fodder for major cultural

controversies and conversations.”³ In *Comic Visions: Television Comedy and American Culture*, David Marc refers to the sitcom as a “genre of mitigation,” considering how the sitcom as a narrative form connects with different periods in America’s cultural history.⁴

In her study of television genre, Jane Feuer describes the ritual mode of accessing genre as one that “sees genre as an exchange between industry and audience, an exchange through which a culture speaks to itself.”⁵ Considered as a broad genre, the television sitcom has primarily been considered through this lens, with studies of sitcoms focused on questions of gender, sexuality, class, and other identity categories.⁶ This includes identity categories tied to space and place: Roger Silverstone considers the relationship between the sitcom and domesticity in *Television and Everyday Culture*, Victoria Johnson highlights a number of sitcoms—*The Mary Tyler Moore Show*, *Ellen*, etc.—as they relate to the construction of popular conceptions of Middle America in *Heartland TV*, while Lynn Spigel’s canonical *Make Room for TV* charts the relationship between the function of the television in the home and the construction of domesticity, with the sitcom as her primary genre of focus.⁷

Such a ritual framework is crucial to any study of genre, which Jason Mittell has compellingly conceptualized as a discursive formation within television culture, thus constituted

³ Joanne Morreale, “Introduction” to *Critiquing the Sitcom*, Ed. Joanne Morreale (Syracuse: Syracuse U.P., 2003): xii.

⁴ David Marc, *Comic Visions: Television Comedy and American Culture* (New York: Wiley-Blackwell, 1997).

⁵ Jane Feuer, “Genre Study and Television” in *Channels of Discourse, Reassembled: Television and Contemporary Criticism*, Ed. Robert C. Allen (Raleigh: U of North Carolina P., 1992): 145.

⁶ Numerous examples of these frameworks can be found in Morreale’s *Critiquing the Sitcom* and Mary M. Dalton, Laura R. Linder, *The Sitcom Reader: America Viewed And Skewed* (New York: SUNY Press, 2005).

⁷ Roger Silverstone, *Television and Everyday Life* (London: Routledge, 1994); Victoria E. Johnson, *Heartland TV: Prime-time Television and The Struggle for U.S. Identity* (New York: NYU Press, 2008); Lynn Spigel, *Make Room For TV: Television and the Family Ideal in Postwar America* (Chicago: U. of Chicago P., 1992).

by these wide range of examples of the generic form.⁸ At the same time, however, the ritual mode's focus on ideological analysis of characters and storylines at times limits analysis of the style of the television sitcom. Feuer also outlines an aesthetic mode for accessing genre, which encompasses "all attempts to define genre in terms of a system of conventions that permits artistic expression, and whether an individual work fulfills or transcends a genre."⁹ Outlining these conventions for the sitcom, for instance, Feuer argues it is delineated by "the half-hour format, the basis in humor, [and] the 'problem of the week.'"¹⁰ And yet little research has been done on the sitcom through this mode, with Paul Attalah claiming "on the whole, one does not talk about situation comedy as a mode of address or as televisual form."¹¹

Much ritual analysis implicitly confronts aesthetic considerations of genre, in that such work explicitly marks off the texts in question as sitcoms by making judgments of their genre based on these pre-established conventions—in completing analysis of sitcoms, there is inherently an engagement with the aesthetics of the program, and Feuer herself acknowledges that "in practice these [modes of analysis] are not absolutely distinct."¹² However, if most television studies work balances the ritual and aesthetic modes of accessing genre, such work leans primarily on the ritual in the case of the television sitcom, largely accepting Marc's designation of the sitcom as a genre through which contemporary issues are negotiated.¹³ This is not to suggest that the genre is entirely devoid of aesthetic value, but rather that its place within

⁸ Jason Mittell, *Genre and Television: From Cop Shows to Cartoons in American Culture* (New York: Routledge, 2004).

⁹ Feuer, 145.

¹⁰ Ibid., 146.

¹¹ Paul Attalah, "The Unworthy Discourse: Situation Comedy in Television" in *Critiquing the Sitcom*, Ed. Joanne Morreale (Syracuse: Syracuse U.P., 2003): 93.

¹² Feuer, 145.

¹³ See Brett Mills, *The Sitcom (TV Genres)* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009); *Television Sitcom* (London: British Film Institute, 2008).

television culture has primarily been framed through its ideological rather than aesthetic contributions.

This general acceptance in the field has limited aesthetic considerations of the sitcom form, even during a period in which the form of the sitcom has changed dramatically. What was once a clearly demarcated genre has become splintered into single-camera and multi-camera sitcoms, with modes of production working to separate the genre into two distinct stylistic forms. Single-camera sitcoms have a greater ability to use handheld camera techniques, four-walled sets, and extensive outdoor location work to tap into spatial capital, building sets and inhabiting locations that tap into a fairly realistic television aesthetic. By comparison, the traditional multi-camera sitcom exists in a world where every room has three walls, and where characters rarely—if ever—venture outside of the designated spaces constructed for them to exist within. Principles of production design and cinematography shift accordingly, even requiring a separate Primetime Emmy category for multi-camera art direction and multi-camera cinematography.¹⁴ The result has been a rich space in which to compare and contrast the two styles, although such work has remained fairly marginal in studies of the sitcom as a genre. In *How To Watch Television*, a collection designed to offer examples of accessible frameworks for engaging with varied forms of television production, the section focused on “TV Form: Aesthetics and Style” features the analysis of zero sitcoms—sitcoms appear instead in sections on “TV Representations,” “TV Politics,” and “TV Industry.”¹⁵ As television has evolved as a form, the sitcom has become largely disconnected from expanding research into areas such as narrative complexity or

¹⁴ The Outstanding Art Direction in a Multi-Camera Series Primetime Emmy Award existed from 2000 to 2013, when the award was replaced with Outstanding Art Direction for a Contemporary Program (Half-Hour or Less) as part of a broader shuffling of Art Direction awards designed to separate Period and Contemporary series.

¹⁵ Ethan Thompson and Jason Mittell, Eds., *How To Watch Television* (New York: NYU Press, 2013).

transmedia storytelling, which are more likely to be considered through the lens of dramatic programming like the series highlighted by *How To Watch Television*'s contributors, or single-camera comedies where aesthetics and storytelling are considered more advanced.¹⁶

Jeremy Butler's *Television Style* offers one of the only concentrated considerations of the sitcom's evolution in the twenty-first century, building on John T. Caldwell's work in *Televisuality: Style, Crisis, and Authority in American Television*—one of the only previous engagements with television style more broadly—to consider how aesthetic modes of television address function across a range of forms and genres.¹⁷ Butler considers television style as a function of industrial circumstances operating in dialogue with cultural values, continuing to balance the aesthetic and ritual modes but privileging the former. Although Caldwell's work focuses on similar questions, it makes an effort to separate the television sitcom from considerations of television style. Caldwell writes that multi-camera production does not care about style, arguing it represents what he terms a "zero-degree style" that returns TV to its theatrical roots.¹⁸ He refers to the world of the multi-camera sitcom as "set bound [and] dialogue-driven" while tying the evolution of quality television to its expansion beyond the set-bound world, positioning the multi-camera sitcom as an artifact of a time before television style moved outside the inherent limitations of the soundstage.¹⁹

¹⁶ Brett Mills, "Comedy Verite: contemporary sitcom form," *Screen* 45.1 (2004): 63-78; Ethan Thompson, "Comedy Verite? The Observational Documentary Meets the Televisual Sitcom," *The Velvet Light Trap* 60 (2007): 63-72.

¹⁷ Jeremy G. Butler. *Television Style* (New York: Routledge, 2009); John T. Caldwell. *Televisuality: Style, Crisis, and Authority in American Television* (New Jersey: Rutgers U.P., 1995).

¹⁸ Caldwell, *Televisuality*, 56.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 57.

Writing over a decade later, Butler meaningfully asserts that “all television texts contain style.”²⁰ He offers a different perspective on the television sitcom, reflective of both a greater interest in the mode of production and the evolution of the sitcom form in the years between the two publications. Although distinctions between single-camera and multi-camera sitcoms have existed since early in the genre’s history, the rise of prominent single-camera sitcoms both on premium cable (*Sex and the City*) and on broadcast (*Malcolm in the Middle*, *Scrubs*) around the turn of the century necessitated a more careful consideration of distinctions in sitcom style. In addition to allowing some sitcoms to engage in the same stylistic conversations as dramatic television, the distinction also brought greater attention to the distinctive appeals of the multi-camera form: in his consideration of the shift from multi-camera to single-camera sitcoms, Butler insists “the overarching distinction that I feel is worth making...is not between single-camera and multi-camera modes of production, but between a scheme organized to capture live performance and one organized to allow the medium itself to perform.”²¹ A mode of production Caldwell had once designated as having no style—albeit in ways that created specific cultural meanings—is instead framed by Butler as two distinct engagements with media forms and the appeals within.

Caldwell draws this distinction along the lines of the cinematic and videographic, based on the historical distinction between single-camera film and multi-camera video recording methods, but Butler writes in a time where high-definition cameras have largely removed this basic aesthetic marker of difference. Instead, he argues, the distinctions become more nuanced considerations of mise-en-scene, in which production design, lighting, and other elements of production distinguish the aesthetics of single-camera and multi-camera productions. Rather than

²⁰ Butler, 15.

²¹ Ibid., 197.

erasing the distinctions between the two media, it instead highlights the role of these elements of the production that function specific to multi-camera production. Butler focuses his attention on the example of *Scrubs*' "My Life In Four Cameras," an episode where the show was reimagined as a multi-camera sitcom as part of one of J.D.'s fantasies. The episode offers an exaggerated take on the difference between the two forms, with oversaturated colors, a shift to a three-walled hospital set, and the live audience or "laugh track."²²

In the same way that it is difficult to distinguish between the ritual and aesthetic modes, however, it becomes difficult to accept Butler's description of multi-camera as theatrical and thus not—like single-camera—allowing the medium to perform. In the case of CBS sitcom *How I Met Your Mother*, the series is presented largely in the form of the traditional multi-camera sitcom, with most of the series produced in the proscenium stage associated with the genre. However, although the series features audience laughter, the series is not produced in front of a studio audience, instead utilizing audience laughter recorded for other series. The decision gives the series greater freedom both in terms of logistics—able to spread shoots over multiple days, and shoot episodes out of order—as well as in terms of being able to experiment with single camera production within what remains predominantly a multi-camera series aesthetically.²³ The series still relies on studio stages and New York City backlot streets at Fox Studios in Los Angeles' Century City, but it has greater freedom to explore off-lot locations like the Natural

²² The distinction here being that some series use a live studio audience, while others use laughs recorded from other series to simulate the presence of a live audience; while "laugh track" has begun to be used more widely than examples where there is no live audience, it remains a description of a specific industrial practice, and not the broader use of audience laughter within the multi-camera sitcom form.

²³ Such experimentation is not exclusive to the series—many multi-camera sitcoms, including *That 70's Show* (1998-2006) engage in a range of editing and cinematography techniques more familiar within single-camera series, while Caldwell's consideration of the sitcom form includes dream sequences on *The Mary Tyler Moore Show* (1970-1977). *How I Met Your Mother* simply embeds those principles into its very premise in a way uncommon for multi-camera series.

History Museum of Los Angeles County, which stood in for New York City's American Museum of Natural History in season six episode "Natural History."

Christine Becker has considered the hybrid nature of the program as it relates to performance style, ultimately concluding that "it is possible to get lost in a wormhole trying to negotiate the various definitions of realism, naturalism, authenticity, and genuineness attendant to these different formats and different moments."²⁴ Perhaps unsurprisingly, this wormhole has proven irresistible to cultural critics, as such negotiations have been central to discussions regarding television's cultural value. HBO was where *Sex and the City* helped define the single-camera comedy aesthetic through its use of film—rather than videotape—and primarily location-based shooting in New York City, and where the single-camera dramedy emerged as a hallmark of premium cable (extending into a range of half-hour series on both HBO and Showtime).²⁵ In 2006, however, it was also home to multi-camera sitcom *Lucky Louie*, which ran for a single season on the channel. The series combined the type of content HBO was known for—graphic language, sexual content—with the purposefully bare bones aesthetics of the multi-camera sitcom, with series star and creator Louis C.K. playing a part-time mechanic.

The series was canceled after a single season, with HBO pulling the series before it could air all of its episodes. The show was ripped into by critics: Matthew Gilbert at the *Boston Globe* writes that "it's the antithesis of the more sophisticated TV comedy that HBO has championed," while Robert Bianco of *USA Today* says "one more show like *Lucky Louie* and subscribers might

²⁴ Christine Becker, "Acting for the Cameras: Performance in the Multi-Camera Sitcom," *Mediascape* (Spring 2008),

http://www.tft.ucla.edu/mediascape/Spring08_ActingForTheCameras.html

²⁵ Ron Simon, "Sex and the City" in *The Essential HBO Reader*. Eds. Gary R. Edgerton and Jeffrey P. Jones (Lexington: U.P of Kentucky, 2008): 194.

start demanding refunds.”²⁶ As Marc Leverette argues in considering the construction of HBO’s “It’s Not TV” brand, “much of [*Lucky Louie*’s] critical commentary came from the fact that it was *so much* like the rest of TV—formulaic plots, poorly developed characters, its aesthetics, etc.”²⁷ The first two distinctions may be shared across both single- and multi-camera production, but the specific aesthetics of the multi-camera sitcom became reframed as the antithesis of television quality within the discourse around the series. While some of the rejection of those aesthetics comes from the working class austerity of the purposefully basic sets constructed for the series, distinct from the luxury of *Sex and the City* or *Entourage* among other HBO comedies of the period, there is also an explicit rejection of multi-camera aesthetics in favor of the single-camera style. Implicit in that rejection are the issues of realism and authenticity that Becker observes within performance, but that can be equally transferred to considerations of production design and aesthetic concerns tied to the multi-camera sitcom’s engagement with space and place, and often neglected in larger aesthetic engagement with the medium.

Spatial Capital and the Multi-Camera Sitcom

Accordingly, my goal in this chapter is to reassert the stylistic value of the multi-camera sitcom through engaging with the form’s inherent spatial capital. Such work goes against more common-sense driven understandings of the form’s place within television more broadly,

²⁶ Matthew Gilbert, “HBO Banks on the Boys with a Trio of Comedies,” *The Boston Globe* – *Boston.com*, 9 June 2006, http://www.boston.com/ae/tv/articles/2006/06/09/hbo_banks_on_the_boys_with_a_trio_of_comedies/?page=full; Robert Bianco. “Bummer of a TV summer on network and cable channels.” *USAToday.com*, 23 August 2006, http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/life/television/news/2006-08-23-bianco-summer-tv_x.htm

²⁷ Marc Leverette, “‘Cocksucker, Motherfucker, Tits’” in *It’s Not TV: Watching HBO in the Post-Television Era*, Eds. Marc Leverette, Brian J. Ott, Cara Louise Buckley (New York: Routledge, 2008): 124, emphasis in original.

wherein the labor of multi-camera sitcoms is perceived as simple compared to more evolved television forms. In *Production Design for Television*, former New York-based production designer Terry Byrne offers an introductory how-to guide to the production of television. Outlining the origins of the medium, he makes a connection with theatre rather than film, arguing that through early live productions “television simply lifted the old proscenium arrangement from the theatre, complete with the missing fourth wall and dropped it into a television studio, replacing the audience (wholly or in part) with cameras.”²⁸ He suggests this setup, which as of the book’s 1993 release “still predominates in the situation comedy,” is one wherein shots are flat, and in which audiences must be “willing to meet their entertainers halfway in suspending their disbelief and allowing their imaginations to fill in the blank spots.”²⁹ He believes that this is particularly true with comedy, which is how he justifies how “the scenery in most sitcoms is rather badly painted—the level of detail anything but realistic—and the furnishings and props only those that are actually used in the action of a typical episode.”³⁰

The job of bringing this badly-painted scenery and utilitarian furnishings to life belong to the production designer. The production designer, according to Byrne’s professional opinion, is responsible for “the entire look of the program. In order to work successfully the production designer must be capable of originating a style which will identify a particular program in the public mind.”³¹ They function as the coordinator of areas such as set design, art direction, costume design, and various trade laborers responsible for constructing sets like those featured in situation comedies. Implicit in his depiction of the situation comedy, however, is Byrne’s belief

²⁸ Terry Byrne, *Production Design for Television* (Massachusetts: Focal Press, 1993): 9.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid., 18.

that the role of the production designer is less rigorous in the case of sitcoms that rely on detail that is “anything but realistic.” In a later breakdown of the set for *Cheers*, Byrne argues that

while it may not provide the sort of visual variety typical of a feature film with a much larger budget and only one camera to accommodate at any moment, the set for “Cheers” is very functional in terms of direction and action and reflects a great deal of preproduction attention to the script requirements and a production designer with a good understanding of the possibilities and limitations of the three-camera studio setting.³²

Cheers is not the only multi-camera sitcom, nor is Byrne’s perspective necessarily reflective of contemporary understandings of production design. However, in using terms like “functional” to describe the principle of multi-camera production design, Byrne highlights the how understandings of spatial capital in the context of multi-camera production are focused on the logistics—and thus limitations—of multi-camera production more than in principles of authenticity or realism that we might associate with the work of production designers in film or in single-camera productions. In the previously mentioned designation between Emmy Awards in both single-camera and multi-camera art direction, for instance, we see organizing bodies distinguishing between the work that production designers would be responsible for within these two types of series, a distinction that places the work of multi-camera production designers within a separate conversation.

We can see further evidence of this in a *Variety* feature ahead of the 2013 Art Directors Guild awards, where multi-camera art direction competes with variety and unscripted series (and in a separate category than half-hour single-camera series). As part of *Variety*’s coverage of the

³² Ibid., 43.

awards, members of the guild wrote pieces in support of particular candidates, in the process outlining what made their work remarkable in the given year. In his article highlighting Derek Hill's work on History Channel miniseries *Hatfields & McCoys*, for instance, Dave Blass writes that "with grit, dirt, and hewn timbers as his tools, [Hill] and his team paint the deeply immersive landscape of Appalachia for the miniseries... Each wooden shanty, cabin and barn is layered with a rich veneer of antiquity that creates a unique sense of place for each of the families, and the culture around them."³³ Meanwhile, Dawn Snyder's essay focusing on Denise Pizzini's work on NBC's *Community* focuses primarily on the logistical challenges of the single-camera comedy, which has fewer limitations and thus higher expectations wherein "shows often require 35 pages of dialogue to be shot with up to 10 to 15 swing sets that must be designed in five days."³⁴

Whereas these single-camera productions are framed through the lens of immersion or impressive feats of logistics, Raf Lydon's piece on CBS sitcom *2 Broke Girls* (2011-Present) comparatively focuses on Glenda Rovello's stylistic contributions to the series.³⁵ He highlights three of the series' standing sets: the diner where Max and Caroline work, the girls' apartment, and the cupcake shop they opened in the series' second season. He writes that Rovello "breathes life into the world of greasy-spoon diners," and that she "transforms the humdrum eatery into a

³³ Dave Blass, "Dave Blass on Derek Hill for 'Hatfields & McCoys,'" *Variety.com*, 1 February 2013, <http://variety.com/2013/scene/awards/dave-blass-on-derek-hill-for-hatfields-mccoys-1118065437/>

³⁴ Dawn Snyder, "Dawn Snyder on Denise Pizzini for 'Community,'" *Variety.com*, 1 February 2013, <http://variety.com/2013/scene/awards/dawn-snyder-on-denise-pizzini-for-community-1118065432/>

³⁵ Raf Lydon, "Raf Lydon on Glenda Rovello for '2 Broke Girls,'" *Variety.com*, 1 February 2013, <http://variety.com/2013/scene/awards/raf-lydon-on-glenda-rovello-for-2-broke-girls-1118065430/>

trendy spot where Max and Caroline come alive with comic bravado” through the use of—among other things—“funky ‘70s pattern wallpaper.” Furthermore, he writes how

the cupcake shop set adds another dimension. Beautifully crafted, it’s where contrasting personalities come together. Outfitted with whitewashed displays and French-inspired seating, the shop combines eclectic and romantic, and serves as the backdrop of the story of two women struggling to make ends meet and seeking their dream.

In these descriptions, Lydon highlights the creative potential for production design: rather than focusing on immersion, or on elements that are intended to make a set seem either more real or more functional from a production perspective, he instead identifies Rovello’s sets as a symbolic backdrop for the series’ storytelling, which through design elements can contribute to the broader themes and rhythms—and, to this project’s interest, spatial capital—of the sitcom and its characters.

This focus on the symbolic raises the specter of the simulacrum, the postmodernist term Jean Baudrillard uses to lament the death of the real in the wake of an age of simulation. The multi-camera sitcom is built on symbolic capital that Baudrillard would read as a descent into hyperreality, and in the proliferation of the “effect of the real” in place of the real itself, which has been obliterated by simulacra.³⁶ However, as explaining in the Introduction, such postmodernist dismissals of media’s spatial capital are limiting, as referenced in David Harvey’s focus on “spaces of individuation” people take within a postmodern spatial environment. Following Harvey’s logic then, I argue we should consider the spaces of the multi-camera sitcom

³⁶ Jean Baudrillard, “The Precession of Simulacra” in *Simulacra and Simulations*, trans. Sheila Faria Glaser (Ann Arbor: U. of Michigan P., 1993): 540. The project will return to Baudrillard in more detail in Chapter Five.

as spaces of individuation, through which characters and audiences engage with place-identity and the identity categories attached to it.

Engaging with the role of place-identity within multi-camera space, Lydon outlines the spatial capital inherent to Rovello's work. Whereas Blass' treatment of *Hatfields and McCoy's* identifies immersive landscapes, Lydon focuses on what we can consider the "essence" of *2 Broke Girls*' New York City. He writes that "in a city where space is limited but style is limitless, Glenda and her team expand on life in today's New York." Max and Caroline's apartment is further described as "a place where vintage and modern meet, and is enhanced with eclectic use of set dressing and inventive set design." Although Lydon is steering away from the "rich veneer of antiquity" that Blass used to describe *Hatfields & McCoy's* construction of Appalachia, he is nonetheless describing the series' sense of place, here attached to eclectic set dressing and the mirroring of the limited space of the proscenium stage with the limited space of New York City architecture. Lydon acknowledges through his descriptors the heightened reality of the proscenium stage, and the shift away from realism toward the eclecticism of the series' depiction of Brooklyn's Williamsburg neighborhood, but he nonetheless locates place as a key to Rovello's craft, and as a key space for individuation for the sitcom and its characters.

2 Broke Girls, like many sitcoms, also engages in the textual strategies for negotiating spatial capital outlined in the previous chapter. Its brief opening title sequence features an extended aerial shot of the Brooklyn Bridge, and it uses dialogue and situations to highlight its hip Williamsburg setting (with Max, for example, educating her boss Han on how to tell the difference between hipsters and homeless people in an early episode).³⁷ However, given that multi-camera sitcoms are inherently limited to a select number of sets where the majority of the

³⁷ "And The Reality Check," *2 Broke Girls*, Season 1, Episode 11. 5 December 2011.

action of each episode takes place, those sets themselves become important spaces wherein spatial capital is negotiated, often with greater regularity than the larger number of sets featured in a single camera series. Although *2 Broke Girls* has access to the New York City street portion of the Warner Bros. backlot used in series like *Friends*, its primary action will remain in these three spaces, prioritizing markers of place-identity embedded within production design being continually reinforced with each episode bound to these spaces of individuation.

We can therefore see spatial capital being negotiated on two levels with sitcom sets, with power both as specifically televisual spaces tied to the medium's past (and present), and as resonant spaces of individuation that audiences actively interpret in the context of less inherently televisual forms of spatial capital and place-identity. Although the visible artifice of multi-camera production may preclude them from being considered "real" spaces, and thus reduces their ties to language of authenticity even more than other forms of soundstage production, the design of these spaces has nonetheless been framed as a key element of the cultural capital of these sitcoms. Of the imaginary television floor plans created by fans and shared in trend pieces by pop culture sites like *Buzzfeed*, the majority are for multi-camera projects, suggesting their novelty lies less in the architectural rendering of locations already framed in realistic terms and more in the realistic renderings of sets that audiences understand as being bound to the logics of television production.³⁸ The images highlight the liminality of sitcom sets, where the goal is not verisimilitude but rather the bridging of the realities of production with the realities of the series' setting. It results in place-making activities distinct to the form, through which evocations—

³⁸ Stacy Lambe, "15 Floor Plans of TV's Best Homes," *Buzzfeed*, 23 August 2012, <http://www.buzzfeed.com/stacylambe/15-floor-plans-of-tvs-best-homes>. Of the other series featured on the list, *Mad Men* and *Sex and the City* represent single-camera series, while *The Flintstones* and *The Simpsons* demonstrate the comparatively limitless, but nonetheless constrained, spatial capital of animated programming.

rather than representations—are used to activate and negotiate spatial capital despite the confines of the soundstage, and through the stylistic and symbolic language of the form.

Social Space and the Multi-Camera Sitcom

The cultural capital tied to sitcom sets demonstrates the capacity to engage with the multi-camera sitcom as a meaningful vessel for place-identity, but an individual series' ability to tap into this capacity depends on the work of production designers and other TV laborers responsible for evoking a sense of place. The transformation of the generic proscenium stage into a specific place can take many forms in a given series. In addition to the use of opening credits, establishing shots, and dialogue, design elements built into the sets can serve as a permanent reminder of where a series is set. Most directly, an effort to capture the world “outside” the soundstage can be found in something as simple as what the audience sees outside of the “windows” on a multi-camera set. *Frasier* Crane’s apartment in Seattle has perhaps the most conspicuous backdrop in recent television history: two large windows overlook the Seattle skyline, complete with the Space Needle, which also appears in the series’ logo and title card. Such backdrops are rarely realistic (it’s unlikely any apartment in Seattle would have exactly that view at that scale), but they serve as a way to suggest that the world beyond the soundstage is a specific place, as opposed to another soundstage.

This spatial worldbuilding is not particularly complex, although the multi-camera sitcom has not gone untouched by the evolution of technology. Green screen has consistently been used for driving sequences on multi-camera series, but the technology has expanded to extensions of

existing exteriors.³⁹ On *Mom* (2013-Present), another CBS sitcom filmed on the Warner Bros. lot, the series uses a virtual backdrop for a scene set on the roof of a home, creating the illusion of space beyond the limited exterior set constructed in the proscenium. The series is placed broadly within California, and thus the virtual backdrop is not necessarily being asked to signify any specific sense of place. Nonetheless, it creates the possibility for these new methods of production to expand the spatiality of the multi-camera sitcom beyond the inherent limitations of the soundstage, and toward the specificity accessible when a series can film on location (something typically reserved for the “vacation episodes” referenced in Chapter Two, and which will be returned to later in this chapter).

However, these efforts to suggest the space beyond the soundstage are also embedded within the production design of sets that transfer the aesthetics of the multi-camera sitcom into the realm of social space. While the sitcom “home” remains perhaps the most iconic type of spatial capital tied to the multi-camera sitcom, and the one most commonly featured in the blueprints referenced above, the form is equally interested in social spaces that have a more active relationship to place. Spaces like *2 Broke Girls*’ diner or *Friends*’ Central Perk are not simply spaces that a series’ characters occupy, but rather spaces that are occupied by the “public” of the sitcom’s world, extending questions of place-identity beyond individuation to a broader sample of the location’s population. The home is inherently limited as a conduit for spatial capital: although the design of a house or apartment may evoke certain geographic areas, whether through scale or design, it nonetheless is a structure that could be placed in a range of different locations were producers to use a separate backdrop, presuming there is a window—

³⁹ Among the demo reels featured on Stargate Studios’ Vimeo page—highlighted in the previous chapter—are a collection of driving “plates” showcasing the different locations they can place a car into for such sequences.

some sitcom sets feature no markers of place-identity, relying on dialogue or other textual elements to code a space as being set in a particular location. By comparison, social spaces like diners, bars, or coffee shops are placed not only through the use of backdrops or exterior establishing shots—which may or may not be present—but also through their patrons, and through decor that is more likely to bear markers of place-identity.

An engagement with these social spaces takes us further away from explicit markers of place-identity like backdrops or establishing shots, and toward how the production design of particular spaces works to engage with spatial capital. NBC sitcom *Undateable* (2014) is set in Detroit, Michigan, through a variety of techniques, including a season one opening title sequence that features a paper cut-out recreation of the Detroit skyline and the series' title being spelled using the "D" and the "E" from a rearranged Welcome to Detroit sign.⁴⁰ Within the text, the most obvious marker of place-identity is not a space at all, but rather what one of the show's characters wears in all of the spaces featured in the series. Played by comedian Ron Funches, Shelly is notable for the fact he is almost always shown wearing clothing related to the city of Detroit. These include sweaters, hoodies, and jackets featuring professional sports franchises (MLB's Detroit Tigers, the NFL's Detroit Lions, the NHL's Detroit Red Wings), state universities (University of Michigan), as well as specific local references that would require those not local to the area to Google them. Although many of the characters would appear to be from Detroit—or Michigan more broadly—it is through Shelly that the local specificity of the series is established, and largely unremarked upon: no efforts are made to explain his "Mackinac Style" or "Detroit Coney" hoodies featured in the fifth and sixth episodes, respectively, but they

⁴⁰ This sequence would change in season two, with title cards for each actor with faded images of Detroit in the background—place is still prominent, but it is now a more explicit backdrop for the characters/actors.

exist as easter eggs for those familiar with the area, and a symbol of spatial capital built into the series' aesthetic and reinforced in each episode.

They are also reinforced in paratexts surrounding the series. During the airing of the first season, the series' costume designer Carey Bennett tweeted about her role in establishing the series' sense of place, linking to a necklace one of the characters wore featuring a grid map of Detroit.⁴¹ Expanding on the necklace and Shelly's wardrobe, an interview with the Costume Designers Guild tells of how Bennett "has never been to Detroit, but she was intent on following a producer's directive that the city appear almost as another character."⁴² This manifested in Shelly's wardrobe, but also reveals details of how she searched out Detroit locals for their input, and "mined blogs for images of locals." The series' commitment to engaging with spatial capital as part of its identity may be something that works its way into scripts, but its presence onscreen depends on laborers like Bennett to translate the producers' goals into a legible sense of place.

Such efforts function as surface-level place-making activities, without much in the way of substantial representation, but there is a clear effort to remind the audience the series is taking place in Detroit, an effort that extends to the social space where much of the series' action takes place: local bar Black Eyes. The series does not use place-specific establishing shots when cutting to the bar (and away from Justin's home, the series' only other standing set on the Warner Bros. backlot), instead showing a generic exterior featuring the bar's name. However, the interior of the bar is designed as a distinctly local watering hole, decorated with an extensive collection of sports memorabilia highlighting the same sports teams featured in Shelley's wardrobe. Although Black Eyes is not explicitly a sports bar—there are no televisions where

⁴¹ The item description for the necklace, produced by Brooklyn-based AMINIMAL Studio, suggests a buyer can "show off your city savvy by honoring this influential cultural hub."

⁴² "Undateable." *Costume Designers Guild*. 29 May 2014, <http://costumedesignersguild.com/articles-videos/pick-of-the-week/undateable/>

anyone could watch a game, and characters are shown watching a Lions game at Justin's apartment in the series' third episode—it nonetheless uses the language of sports to connect to its patrons, who may be arriving at the bar before or after attending a game in the city; the season one opening title sequence includes a street sign for Woodward Avenue, which is adjacent to Joe Louis Arena, Comerica Park, and Ford Field in the city's downtown. Detroit is also notably one of the twelve cities in the United States that has a team in each of the four major professional sports leagues (baseball, football, hockey, and basketball), meaning that its local bar culture would be incentivized to highlight sports fandom as a design aesthetic. Black Eyes' main bar area features pennants, flags, banners, street signs, and framed photos representing the Tigers, Lions, Red Wings, and Pistons, along with both the University of Michigan Wolverines and the Michigan State University Spartans. The bar's back room lacks the same sports signage, but a stylized painting of the city sits behind Justin's desk, while a "City of Detroit" piece of artwork and boxes of Detroit Imperial Ale are scattered around the room.

It would be difficult to argue that *Undateable* is about the city of Detroit. It is set there because its creator, Adam Styzkiel, is from Michigan, and made the conscious choice to set the series there. Unlike other series recently set in Detroit—AMC's *Low Winter Sun* (2013), HBO's *Hung* (2010-12)—*Undateable* is not interested in exploring the city's bankruptcy and reputation for extensive urban decay as central thematic material. Although sitcoms are capable of tackling such serious issues, this is less true in the context of the contemporary multi-camera sitcom than it was in the era of *All In The Family* (1971-1979) or *Maude* (1972-1978), making it unlikely for a 2014 dating comedy set in Detroit would be invested in those concerns. As noted in the previous chapter with regards to *Hart of Dixie*'s reality as a CW drama series, the nature of *Undateable*'s development—in this case as a broadcast multi-camera sitcom—disincentivizes

complex negotiations of spatial capital as it relates to specific efforts to build out the city beyond the bar and the symbols therein. Furthermore, the choice to set so much of the series in the stereotypically masculinized space of the sports bar and the series' predominantly male cast showcases how demographic appeals that shape a series' production also shape how its production design articulates the series' setting.

That being said, the production design of the bar offers a space of individuation with the capacity to engage with spatial capital emerging in other dimensions of the series. Although the consistent presence of the Detroit-themed items and Shelly's clothing offers a perpetual reminder of setting, the events that take place within the social space of the bar are implicitly working toward a representation of the city. In some cases, this manifests as storylines that explicitly deal with and refer to place. In "Three's a Crowd," Shelly takes offense to remarks that Leslie—who is new to the friend group—makes about Detroit during the Lions Game: "It's like everything associated with the word Detroit has to suck. It's a joke of a team for a joke of a city."⁴³ Shelly's response—anticipated by the others in attendance, who warn Leslie about continuing her remarks—is extreme, as he announces "I will not sit here while you talk about Detroit that way. I was born here, and I plan to die here." Although Shelly has been shown wearing five separate Detroit-themed outfits in the previous episodes, the storyline actively acknowledges his connection to the city for the first time here: a punchline later in the scene is a character pointing out that "every article of clothing he has has the word Detroit on it," and Shelly emerging from the bedroom wearing a Tigers jacket over the Lions t-shirt he had been wearing previously.

In a scene later in the same episode, which takes place at Black Eyes, Shelly's friends attempt to talk some sense into him after he has completely frozen out Leslie. In order to expose

⁴³ "Three's A Crowd," *Undateable*, Season 1, Episode 3. 5 June 2014.

the absurdity of Shelly's "code" as it relates to those who insult his city, each character takes a turn pointing out a flaw of the city. "Detroit has seen better days", suggests one character; another character observes, in a meta nod to the location of the series' production, that "Detroit is the most messed up city I've ever seen, and I've been to Los Angeles."⁴⁴ Tying into the use of sports teams as a marker of place-identity, another character notes "Detroit's so bad it couldn't even keep a WNBA franchise," a joke that reinforces the masculinized Detroit constructed by the more successful male sports franchises on the walls around them. Finally, Justin goes in for the kill, arguing "Detroit is a bankrupt ghost town where you've got a better chance of getting shot than finding a street light that works."

The storyline is an acknowledgment that there are spaces outside of Black Eyes that reflect the city's public reputation, even if the series itself is not interested in exploring—or does not have access to the spatial capital necessary to negotiate through—them. Although the same storyline could be easily replicated in another city with a different set of facts and details (including, depending on the city, another failed WNBA franchise), it nonetheless engages with specificity of place beyond the level of the symbols surrounding the characters as they engage in the conversation. Such active engagement with place further reinforces the passive engagement with place embedded in the production design, and contributes significantly to the series' successful transformation of a potentially generic soundstage into a social space embedded within the fabric of Detroit, or at least a version of Detroit.

It's a model that pushes us to consider not just what storylines are taking place as a reflection of place-identity, but who is taking part or observing them. In considering the role of production design in creating a sense of place, background casting is particularly crucial in

⁴⁴ This is a case where the show directly appeals to the live audience, getting an exaggerated laugh from a crowd likely consisting of mainly Los Angeles residents.

engaging with the lived reality of place-identity. While *Undateable*'s Black Eyes is never explicitly located in any part of Detroit, the choice of extras nonetheless constitutes a representation of the "the people of Detroit" in the broadest sense. Despite the fact the bar is rarely busy, there are always patrons during working hours, and they collectively stand in for the city's residents.

Through the series' first six episodes, they represent a small portion of the city's residents, based on recent demographic data on Detroit's population. That the clientele is typically at least half white in any given scene would suggest the bar is located in areas where the city's predominantly African American population is less well-represented, given that, as of 2010, the city was 83% African American. The series' elision of Detroit's African American population extends to its lead cast, where only Shelly—admittedly the character most associated with the city—is African American. The series is clearly investigating a particular community within Detroit, one that undoubtedly exists but stands as an inherently limited window into the city's diversity—the closest the show comes to confronting the city's African American population in its opening episodes is in its pilot, when one character mishears the name of the bar as "Black Guys" and a series of jokes ensues.

That said, there is notably at least one African American individual—other than Shelly—present in the bar during all but one of the scenes located at Black Eyes through the first six episodes, meaning that few scenes go by without at least an implicit acknowledgement of the city's racial diversity. What is unclear is whether the presence of African Americans among the bar patrons is an active effort by the series to strive for some reflection of the city's diversity (limited as that reflection might be), or the product of standardized diversity practices inherent to Warner Bros. Studios' background casting process, or simply the luck of the draw based on those

individuals who appeared in the pool of background extras available for the series. Regardless, the spatial capital built into the space recodes these casting practices—whether generic or specifically designed for the series—within the framework of Detroit as a city even in instances where the racial divide in the series is unexplored by the narrative and largely incidental to the series’ cast.⁴⁵

When Caldwell considered the multi-camera format as what he considered zero-degree style (which, despite the evolution of the form, would include *Undateable*), he argued that it was a form where style functioned regardless of questions of identity. Citing the conservative style dominant during the early 1970s, formalized by Norman Lear, he writes that “even in shows like *Good Times*, where race, ethnicity, and class might have suggested a different style-specific treatment, the three-camera Lear formula persisted. African-Americanness was simply reduced to stereotypical surface-trappings on the stock soundstage.”⁴⁶ One could therefore consider the limited engagement with race in a Detroit-set sitcom as being in part the product of the generic multi-camera sets that pervade in series like this one.

However, I argue here that social spaces like *Black Eyes* are ideal vessels for engaging with place-identity, and that the series’ lack of engagement with issues of racial diversity in Detroit is not based in the format itself, but rather the choices made within that format. While the limitations of the soundstage mean that such representations function more as symbolic links to spatial capital than a more realistic engagement with place-identity, spaces like *Black Eyes* nonetheless carry the potential through production design and background casting to evoke the

⁴⁵ The series was cast based on the pre-existing relationship between the four stand-up comics at its center, a form of racially-blind casting in which chemistry was the most important criteria, potentially outweighing the hiring of more African American actors to make a better effort to reflect the vast majority of Detroit residents.

⁴⁶ Caldwell, *Televisuality*, 56.

city in which they are set even in instances when the storytelling functions independent of that setting. It creates what we could describe as the sitcom city, one that is constructed through spaces of individuation—often social in nature—that are coded as specific despite being built on generic bones; one could redecorate Black Eyes to be located in another city with relative ease, but one could also reimagine similar locations from other sitcoms (like *2 Broke Girls*' diner) to represent Detroit through the work of production design and storytelling. A legible connection between Black Eyes and Detroit is developed over the course of *Undateable*'s first two seasons, establishing a link between the artifice of production and the reality of place-identity—that we can then interrogate that link based on questions of race does not suggest the link is unsubstantial, but rather demonstrates the limited function of race and other forms of identity within negotiations of spatial capital in television more broadly. The problem is not that the form is devoid of potential to engage with issues of identity through production design, but rather that those elements are not prioritized within the labor of production.

This is not to say that we should accept such limited conceptions of place-identity, but rather that we should interrogate them without diminishing the inherent capacity of the form to engage with place-identity (and the identity categories tied to it). *Undateable*'s Detroit is particularly open to critique given that few other multi-camera projects have been set in Detroit: although *Home Improvement* and a number of failed spinoffs (*Soul Man*, *Buddies*) were set in the region, none features a social space along the lines of Black Eyes, while the city lacks the same lengthy sitcom tradition as Los Angeles or New York. This places a greater burden on *Undateable* to reflect the city's breadth, whereas by comparison show set in New York City or Los Angeles could—theoretically, if not in reality—cover a wider range of dimensions of place-identity by focusing on different neighborhoods or population groups. The sitcom city is

therefore an inherently intertextual entity: to think about *How I Met Your Mother*'s New York is inevitably to think about *Friends*' New York, even though the two series were shot on separate backlots. In some cases, this intertextuality is directly visible: multi-camera sitcoms often use pre-existing sitcom sets for their pilot episodes, such that the Winslow's home in *Family Matters* (1989-1998) was transformed from Chicago to New York City for the pilot of Fox's *Living Single*. In other cases, however, series implicitly add to our understanding of the sitcom city through its additions to the collection of multi-camera sitcoms set in a particular city, as in the case of *How I Met Your Mother*.

Case Study: *HIMYM*'s New York City

As the previous section demonstrated, we can understand the sitcom city as a loose set of representative strategies that work to associate potentially generic studio space—whether interior or exterior—with a specific location through the negotiation of spatial capital. The sitcom city is inherently intertextual, both with other media representations of the city in question and with other sitcoms set in the same location, and can be constructed and/or activated through any combination of production design, paratexts, and storytelling over the course of a series' run. The resulting sense of place is inherently limited in its capacity to capture the nuance of a city like New York, but the multi-camera form is nonetheless structured around the city as a representational category and on spaces of individuation, and is thus structured to connect with spatial capital in meaningful ways. Although Baudrillard's treatise on the simulacrum would suggest such simulative spaces risk erasing the meaning of the real, the sitcom city works to develop its own sense of the real, acknowledging through its aesthetics the constructed nature of the representation while working to over time associate that artifice with place-identity in

resonant ways. The structures of representation for the sitcom city will shift slightly depending on the ways in which an individual program builds on the basic multi-camera format, but there remains a consistent investment in the city as a key element of the multi-camera sitcom and of television's representation of place more broadly.

The central location of *How I Met Your Mother*'s New York remains in line with the social spaces of *Central Perk* and *Black Eyes*. The series' central meeting place is MacLaren's, an Irish pub located around West 81st street in Manhattan's Upper West Side.⁴⁷ The pub is located directly below the apartment that Ted Mosby shares with his roommate Marshall when the series began, and which is occupied by at least one of the characters over the course of the series. MacLaren's is an amalgamation of many pubs frequented by series creators Carter Bays and Craig Thomas during their time working in New York, and functions as the meeting place where the series' characters come together within almost every episode of the series. Although each of their individual homes are—for most of the series—located in the city and based in part on Bays and Thomas' experiences, MacLaren's is the series' most iconic set, and the one that most often evokes New York as a location.⁴⁸

Unlike *Black Eyes*, MacLaren's primarily avoids blatant symbols of location within its production design. The set design in the pilot includes a prominent "New York Yacht Club" sign

⁴⁷ This is based on a map featured in the Season Six episode "Subway Wars"—there is some debate regarding the apartment's address, with a CBS Watch article on the series' inception claiming it to have a 75th Street address based on the apartment where creators Bays and Thomas lived in New York City. See: Jim Colucci, "How They Created Mother," *CBS Watch Magazine* (April 2008): 50.

⁴⁸ Colucci reveals that the apartment is based on one Bays and Thomas lived in, but made larger to accommodate the four-camera setup that would be difficult in a cramped New York City apartment.

behind the bar, but the sign is absent for the remainder of the series.⁴⁹ Rather, MacLaren's is located in New York based on the storylines and "exterior" New York spaces located around it, in much the same way that locations like the diner in *Seinfeld* were framed as authentic New York City locations. Because of New York City's recognizability with audiences, either from having visited the city in person or through one of the hundreds of shows—or films—set in the city, it becomes possible for MacLaren's to evoke a city without the overt sports-related production design found in *Black Eyes*, where the lack of comparative symbolic capital for Detroit requires a more overtly placed production design aesthetic.

How I Met Your Mother shares with *Seinfeld* a more substantial engagement with exterior backlot shooting than *Undateable*, expanding its capacity to locate MacLaren's within the social space of the city. MacLaren's is often seen as an exterior, either as the characters prepare to move upstairs to the apartment or as the characters are arriving or leaving the bar. The exterior, located on the 20th Century Fox backlot, evokes that we can consider a New York City aesthetic, in which the bar is located below street level; although subterranean bars are not unheard of in other cities, and the bar that most directly inspired MacLaren's is located above ground, the bar's exterior taps into the reality of the limited space available for development in the city (earlier evoked in Lydon's consideration of *2 Broke Girls*' production design). This exterior space also enables further overt symbols of place-identity that would be inaccessible if the series were limited to interior sets: New York City's iconic yellow cabs are a staple in the series, a recognizable symbol of the city that immediately distinguishes it even for those audiences who have only ever experienced the cabs as televisual or filmic symbols of the city. By developing scenes that take place outside the bar, rather than simply establishing shots that indicate the bar's

⁴⁹ Pilot sets are typically cobbled together from existing resources, so as to avoid a significant investment in a set that may never be used again should the pilot not be ordered to series.

exterior, production design expands to play a more substantial role in activating the spatial capital of New York.

Many multi-camera sitcoms integrate exterior work and locations outside of their central “standing sets” over the course of their run, but *How I Met Your Mother* is particularly able to explore the broader space of New York City given that—as mentioned previously—it follows a hybrid style without a studio audience, one of a range of series that expand beyond the zero-degree style once commonly associated with the multi-camera format. While the spaces seen on the show remain—by and large—governed by the same production design and aesthetics as other multi-camera sitcoms, the show is able to visit more locations in a given episode based on its looser production schedule, which can spread the shooting of a single episode over multiple days. The choice comes with sacrifices: *Undateable*’s relative lack of mobility is in part due to the importance of audience interaction with its improv-heavy performance style, meaning that the absence of the audience in any given scene—including scenes shot on a backlot exterior at Warner Bros.—would fundamentally change the rhythm of the series. While *How I Met Your Mother* lacks that sense of rhythm, however, the greater sense of mobility within the backlot allows it to expand its spatial footprint, and represent a wider range of spaces within its backlot New York City.

As a result, to consider *How I Met Your Mother*’s New York City is to consider a wide range of different kinds of spaces constructed within the series’ 208 episodes, rather than simply MacLaren’s and the apartment above it. While MacLaren’s functions as a consistent meeting place, the show has also built sets for locations like the organ room at Madison Square Garden (“Glitter”) or the lobby of the Empire State Building (“First Time In New York”), or the rooftop

of Ted and Marshall's apartment building, among many others.⁵⁰ In "First Time In New York," Robin Scherbatsky's sister is visiting from Canada, and the characters spend much of the episode flashing back to their first sexual experiences while waiting in line for the elevators to the top of the Empire State Building. The small set makes no effort to mirror the actual lobby of the Empire State Building, with its grand ceiling or iconic art deco architecture. Instead, the series constructed a generic lobby setting with multiple framed images of the Empire State Building on the walls, in no way resembling the real location but offering basic symbols that would remind the audience where the characters were located. The set evokes the austere and blatant symbolism often associated with multi-camera sitcoms, particularly ones like *HIMYM* that at the time of the episode's production remained on the bubble with no certain future, likely making it difficult to justify the construction of a more elaborate set reflecting the real location. By the same logic that "bottle episodes"—which primarily limit the action of an episode to a single set—are used as a cost-saving mechanism when a series is over budget, multi-camera sitcoms are often limited in terms of how many new locations they can build, and by the amount of money spent on sets like this one that would only ever be used in a single episode.

The series would eventually become a success for CBS, enabling more ambitious episodes like season six's "Subway Wars."⁵¹ In what is one of the most place-specific episodes in the series' run, the five central characters each race via a different method of transportation to travel from MacLaren's to a fictional downtown steakhouse: Robin attempts to hail a cab, Ted

⁵⁰ "Glitter," *How I Met Your Mother*, Season 6, Episode 19, 15 November 2010. "First Time In New York," *How I Met Your Mother*, Season 2, Episode 12, 8 January 2007. The organ room at Madison Square Garden is preceded by establishing footage of a game between the New York Rangers and the Philadelphia Flyers, has walls adorned with images of Rangers players, and the window out into the arena displays what appears to be footage from inside Madison Square Garden, composited in using visual effects.

⁵¹ "Subway Wars," *How I Met Your Mother*, Season 6, Episode 4, 11 October 2010.

suggests the bus, Lily takes the subway, and Marshall runs through the streets of the city.⁵² The episode presents a number of spatial challenges, in that it sets out to capture a sense of travel within the city in ways that the series was not typically forced to tackle on an episode-by-episode basis. Accordingly, the series makes what the previous chapter identified as a pilgrimage of production, but not to the streets of New York City; instead, the series travels to Universal Studios, which has a more substantial New York City backlot that enables larger-scale production and a glimpse of a part of the city the show had never depicted before that point.⁵³ This ten-mile journey from Century City to Universal City may remain within the greater Los Angeles area, but the expanded affordances of the Universal backlot nonetheless expand the social space available for the series and its characters to explore. This includes the subway, a mode of transportation the characters conspicuously never used prior to this episode based on the absence of a standing subway set at Fox.

The spaces used in “Subway Wars” remain a backlot, and therefore remain limited in their capacity to portray a realistic version of New York City. However, by comparison with the limited exterior work seen in earlier episodes, the expansion of scale nonetheless sells that the characters are traveling into more of the city than they had previously. It is an expansion of the sitcom city, helped both by the new locations and by strategies within the text that bring this connection to the surface. Although primarily designed as product integration for Microsoft’s Bing search engine (combined with additional product placement in store windows along the characters’ journey), the use of the search engine to display a map of the distance between MacLaren’s and Gregor’s Steakhouse nonetheless works to place both locations within the island

⁵² Barney’s plan to take an ambulance evolves into a luxury car service, before devolving to a pedicab by the end of the episode.

⁵³ This pilgrimage is documented in a *Hollywood 411* segment that aired the week before the episode, highlighting the actors’ awe at the scale of the Universal backlot New York.

of Manhattan. Furthermore, the episode is predicated on Robin feeling as though she's not a real New Yorker, and one of the results of the search is Robin completing the three tasks—stealing a cab from someone who needs it more, crying on the subway and not caring what others think about it, and killing a cockroach with your bare hand—that her friends suggest are necessary before you can truly claim to be a resident of the city. While the series had done considerable work developing its version of New York before this episode, the combination of the expansion of scale with Robin's investment in residency draws a clear tie between the series' use of space within production and the series' engagement with spatial capital in the text itself.

While "Subway Wars" is built around elements of production design selling the move into a broader geographic area of Manhattan, those textual elements highlight the series' stylistic expansions of the multi-camera format facilitated by the specifics of its format. The episode is the only multi-camera sitcom episode nominated for Outstanding Direction for a Comedy Series since the finale of *Everybody Loves Raymond* (1996-2005) in 2005, with the category having recently been dominated by single-camera comedies considered to be more stylistic. While it would be impossible to determine precisely on what garnered the nomination, the ambitious scale of the episode compared to an average episode of a multi-camera sitcom is a meaningful point of distinction. Additionally, the episode embodies the series' non-diegetic narrative structure, which is used as the justification for many of the stylistic details dominant in the episode. The series narrative is told from the perspective of "Future Ted," and therefore is framed not as events that are taking place in the present, but rather a future character retelling the story of what took place years earlier. In "Subway Wars," this manifests through onscreen graphics to depict the characters' journeys, complete with split-screen similar to that used in drama series like *24* (2001-2010) and animated maps that continually reinforce the distance

being covered by the characters. Such hyper-stylized devices are common for the series, which in addition to its expansion beyond the proscenium stage also uses non-linear flashbacks, flash forwards, and fantasy sequences more often associated with animated series like *The Simpsons* or *Family Guy* or single-camera comedies like *Arrested Development* or *Scrubs*.⁵⁴ Although in this case those devices are explicitly tied to the sense of place and the journey through New York City, they function throughout the series to build the series' universe beyond the limitations of the proscenium stage or the backlot.

These self-aware narrative devices are often used by the series to directly engage with its setting, working to authenticate its New York City in ways inaccessible through production design. In "We're Not From Here," Ted and Barney pose as tourists in an effort to have strings-free hookups with local women.⁵⁵ When Barney first introduces the plan—"You know where I've been meaning to visit?"—the show is reframed from the tourist's gaze: a stock image of the New York City skyline and the Brooklyn bridge at night appears along with a chyron identifying it as "New York City," while generic big band music plays. These are all techniques the show has rarely used before: while some scenes of the series—like the trip to the Empire State Building—have used establishing shots, and the show occasionally uses shots of the city as transitional material—including in the second episode, as though to make sure audiences remembered the show was set in New York during its early stages—the blatant stereotypical signifiers of place are evoked here in an ironic fashion.

This continues later in the episode, when the show returns to the storyline with the same big band music and with a series of establishing shots combined with voiceover from Future Ted.

⁵⁴ Paul Booth discusses this episode in terms of its negotiation of temporality, rather than spatiality, in *Time After TV: Temporal Displacement and Mashup Television* (New York: Peter Lang, 2012): 198-99.

⁵⁵ "We're Not From Here," *How I Met Your Mother*, Season 3, Episode 2, 1 October 2007.

The establishing shots are of Washington Square Park's iconic arch, the Flatiron building, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, all iconic New York City locations that are potentially familiar even to someone who has never lived in New York. They are also locations the show has never visited, and which are not typically used to establish the series' setting. The voiceover frames the location as "places to visit" in the city, with the punchline that the "locals" who Barney and Ted picked up chose instead to go to a chain restaurant, Tater Skinz. The episode is invested in the idea of an "authentic" New York City, as Ted struggles to contain his frustration with these so-called locals' idea of what it means to show tourists the city; specifically, the chain restaurant serves to legitimate spaces like MacLaren's, which are rendered as local and embedded within the series' New York City in ways that Tater Skinz—its sign hastily composited onto a random restaurant storefront in post-production—is not.

Through episodes like "Subway Wars" or "We're Not From Here," the series invests in the idea of New York City and its meanings to its characters, deploying textual strategies that work to legitimate the multi-camera spaces in which the show typically operates. In "The Best Burger in New York," Future Ted narrates an introduction to the episode, which focuses—not surprisingly—on the characters searching for the best burger in the city.⁵⁶ Ted opens with telling his kids—who are hearing the frame narrative—that, "when I first moved to New York it was dingy, disgusting, dirty, ugly, flea-ridden, stinky, and altogether terrifying." This narration is combined with stock images of the city, each one depicting the adjective in question, showing parts of the city that the sitcom itself rarely explores given that MacLaren's and their apartment are located on the Upper West Side: this includes—in order— an abandoned lot, a graffiti mural, discarded mattresses and other trash, a drunk patron outside a liquor store, a row of dumpsters, a

⁵⁶ "The Best Burger In New York," *How I Met Your Mother*, Season 4, Episode 2.

fish market, a graffiti-lined street, and a wider view of the city with buildings covered by graffiti. Future Ted continues, explaining that “then, sadly, the whole city started to go...uphill. The streets got a little cleaner, the rents got a little higher, and one by one the crappy old places we loved began to disappear.” This sentiment highlights its own set of images, including a chain coffee shop (modeled on Starbucks), a family walking outdoors, a “gourmet grocery,” an upscale set of brownstones, a large upscale clothing store, and a sunny, clean street.

The juxtaposition of the images functions as an argument against the city’s gentrification, and is further highlighted by computer graphics that portray the transformation of beloved fictional landmarks—a music venue, a bar, and a lounge—as they are replaced by drug stores, fast food restaurants, and banks. This all happens outside of the diegesis of the episode, justified by Future Ted’s framing of the narrative rather than the multi-camera space the series typically operates. Whereas the previous chapter identified establishing shots as a way for editors and producers to negotiate the place-identity of production through the text, here stock images serve as a way to tap into ideas that would be difficult to depict within the confines of the proscenium stage or even the backlot around it—when Barney and Ted traveled to the south Bronx in “We’re Not From Here,” and were subsequently mugged in an area far outside the series’ typical Upper West Side haven, a short portion of the backlot is redecorated with torn band posters and graffiti that lazily adopts shorthands of dereliction.

How I Met Your Mother’s expansion of the sitcom city reveals the potential for distinct program formats to move beyond the perceived limitations of multi-camera style to engage in place-making activities both through the production design of spaces like MacLaren’s and through storytelling both diegetic and non-diegetic to the multi-camera space. Over the course of nine seasons, the series used this city as a centering point, around which storylines like Ted’s

fiancé wanting him to move to New Jersey, or Ted buying a home in the suburbs, or Lily and Marshall moving to Long Island are reframed as journeys away from the city's anchor in the Upper West Side. Although the relationship between the series' New York and the real New York is tenuous, the length of the series' run meant that locations like MacLaren's were indelibly linked to the city, so much so that McGee's, which served in part as the inspiration for the bar, has built a media tourism market around a location the show never visited, and which only vaguely resembles the set viewers are most familiar with.

However, moments like the series' cheap symbolism of the Bronx emphasize that its construction of place-identity outside of its backlot production context does not necessarily result in a diverse sense of place-identity. The series' New York is more substantial for these devices and episodes focused around them, but the show cannot necessarily overcome the lack of interest in exploring the messier dimensions of place-identity within the context of a mass-audience broadcast sitcom. While the narration serves as another tool through which generic spaces can be mapped onto the city, and demonstrates the potential of such devices to authenticate a multi-camera sitcom's sets through an engagement with place-identity, it does not always extend to the production design of brief glimpses of areas like the Bronx. Furthermore, other persistent elements of the series work to limit the nuance of the series' New York City: one must reconcile the series' heteronormative white cast in one of the country's most diverse cities, alongside the relegation of characters of color to either bit supporting players or—more often—as background patrons at MacLaren's or as passerby on the sitcom's backlot streets. *How I Met Your Mother* demonstrates how pushing beyond the traditional production methods of the multi-camera sitcom opens up new avenues for place-identity and our understanding of the sitcom city, but it

nonetheless reinforces the limited ways this sense of place-identity is being imagined at crucial stages in the series' production, at times within the very same episode.

Proto-Nations and the Proscenium: The Sitcom Nation?

In considering the evolving and adaptable nature of the multi-camera sitcom, this chapter has been invested in engaging with its stylistic potential, and how its symbolic capital has been translated into spatial capital. While we can and should be critical of the results, there is no doubt that series like *How I Met Your Mother* are pushing the geographic boundaries of the multi-camera sitcom in meaningful ways. The previous analysis focused on how these efforts are altering our understanding of the multi-camera sitcom's relationship with the city, but the freedom offered by moving beyond the proscenium opens the door to considerations of how multi-camera series engage with other categories of place that are less embedded within the DNA of the format.

By and large, one can perceive of the sitcom as being set in a particular city, or at times a specific neighborhood within a city. While most American sitcoms are set in the United States, this is something rarely focused on within the show itself, given that its predominant aim is to appeal to American audiences who would have a pre-existing understanding of American culture. Investigations of the television sitcom have inherently been investigations of the relationship between television comedy and American culture, and the sitcom has consistently been perceived as a form that enables writers to engage with politics, current events, or general cultural details of a particular moment in the United States. This is particularly visible in the subtitle to *The Sitcom Reader: America Viewed and Skewed*, which features no essays explicitly dealing with national identity, and yet frames its collective investigation of identity as distinctly

American through its title.⁵⁷ However, these series often take for granted their relationship to the national as a spatial category, and the subsequent analysis of sitcoms can at times focus more on specific identity categories tied to the national rather than considering the way in which they contribute to our understanding of national identity in and of itself. While it is impossible to extricate the national from the identity categories tied to it, there is nonetheless room for a more careful consideration of the way the sitcom as a specific televisual form engages with the national as a category of identity in and of itself, and beyond the simple fact that the series is produced and set in the United States.

Such efforts must, as with all engagements with the nation, confront the multiplicity of national identity across the wide range of television texts that represent it. If we accept Benedict Anderson's understanding of the nation as an imagined community, then we can see the television sitcom as a space where that imagined community is constructed, reinforced, but also challenged.⁵⁸ In his study of the relationship between popular comedy and Englishness, Andy Medhurst argues that "the national, like any category of identity, is never immobilized or singular," outlining his belief in what he terms "Englishnesses."⁵⁹ Along the same lines, to think about America as a "sitcom nation" is not to think of a clearly bounded representative object, but rather an immense collection of different perspectives both in terms of the region being depicted, the race or class of the series' characters, the sociocultural politics of the storylines being told, and the time period in which the series is produced and/or set. Medhurst asks these questions of the British sitcom, while one could equally consider how sitcoms function in Russia, or Israel, or

⁵⁷ Mary M. Dalton, Laura R. Linder. Eds, *The Sitcom Reader: America Viewed and Skewed* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2005).

⁵⁸ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983).

⁵⁹ Andy Medhurst, *A National Joke: Popular Comedy and English Cultural Identities* (London: Routledge, 2005): 53.

a range of other countries where a combination of local programs and program formats adapted to local customs would converge in a complex web of national representation within this specific genre.⁶⁰

Such analysis of national culture tends to isolate the text as an ideological construction, with a focus on storylines as opposed to the specific elements of textual production as outlined in this chapter. As a result, within the context of the American sitcom the national is most legible as a spatial category in episodes where the nation in question changes compared to the typical setting of the series. Whereas the forms of textual representation or production design used to construct the sitcom city are rarely used to establish that a series is set in the United States, they are deployed very similarly in instances where a series travels to another country. Although vacation episodes need not necessarily travel to a new country—with Hawaii and Disney World as popular destinations—they in all circumstances require the translation of the series’ representational strategies to a new location. Such episodes also specifically call attention to the role of spatial capital in television production, as they almost always coincide with “Sweeps” months where broadcast series are incentivized to create event programming; one of the easiest ways to create an event is to move the series’ production to a new location, often one that is in some way exoticized.

These vacation episodes are facilitated through a number of textual strategies for negotiating spatial capital, including many outlined in the previous chapter. Although the logics of the vacation episode apply to other forms of television—specifically common in animated programming, where changing location is a less arduous logistical challenge—they are distinct in

⁶⁰ Chapter Five will explore program formatting and the nation in greater detail in regard to reality television—for a sitcom-specific investigation, see Philip Rosenthal’s documentary *Exporting Raymond* (2010).

the case of the multi-camera sitcom, in that the logics that would typically govern pilgrimages of production also fundamentally impact the means of production. A single camera series like *Parks and Recreation* traveling to London to shoot on location mirrors their work city-for-town doubling Los Angeles for the fictional Pawnee; by comparison, *Friends*' trip to London for Ross' wedding to Emily at the conclusion of its fourth season is one of few examples of location shooting in the series, which only rarely engaged in outdoor sequences, and typically did so by redressing corners of the Warner Bros. backlot.⁶¹ The majority of *Friends* takes place in clearly bounded and familiar proscenium stages, meaning that the pilgrimage to London to produce the London-set episodes seemingly pushes the series well outside of the spatial limitations of the multi-camera format.

The series constructs London through a combination of textual elements and strategic location shooting. To signal the characters' arrival in London, a montage set to The Clash's "London Calling" features images of the Tower Bridge, Big Ben, and Buckingham Palace, a montage comparable to those featured in other series that have done episodes shot on location in the city (such as Fox's *Bones* (2005-Present), CBS' *Elementary* (2012-Present), or the aforementioned *Parks and Recreation*). These elements are paired with location shooting, primarily in a storyline featuring Joey and Chandler sightseeing around the city. This includes a scene in front of Westminster Abbey, as well as a scene outside of the London Marriott Hotel in Grosvenor Square, which was identified as the hotel the characters were staying at and was used as an establishing shot when cutting to soundstage sequences set inside the hotel. During this sequence, Joey reveals his map of the city, which includes pop-up versions of many landmarks featured in the initial montage, and which Joey "goes into"—by stepping on the map—to help

⁶¹ "The One With Ross' Wedding," *Friends*, Season 4, Episodes 23 and 24, 7 May 1998; also "The One After Ross Says Rachel," *Friends*, Season 5, Episode 1, 24 September 1998.

orient himself to the space. The location shooting also includes cameos from Sarah Ferguson and Richard Branson, as well as a sequence where Joey and Chandler take a double decker bus tour of the city that is not used as a scene in the episode, but appears over the closing credits on the longer version of the episode, and reappears in part during the opening credits of the fifth season premiere that incorporates scenes from the London episodes in the previous season. Overall, these sequences work to authenticate the characters' transatlantic travel, and to ensure that audiences understand that the characters are in another country—this is further reinforced by the character of Phoebe remaining in New York, conversing with the characters over the phone and reinforcing the distance between the two spaces.⁶²

However, while there is no question that England and the United Kingdom more broadly are being represented and used as key spatial categories in these episodes, they are not necessarily being engaged with directly. Rather, the sitcom is using the city of London as a stand-in for broader categories of nation, leveraging that the city is the category most efficiently captured within the context of a multi-camera environment. Although the series has the relative freedom to explore other parts of the country once unbounded from the studio environment, both the logistics of the production and the need to center the representation results in the use of the city as itself a signifier of nation. The exteriors are used to place fairly generic soundstage sets—restaurants, upscale houses, and hotel rooms—within the city, but nothing about those sets establishes the setting in greater detail; in fact, despite the fact these sets were constructed in London and the scenes were filmed in front of a London audience, there is minimal evidence of this within the text, relying on DVD bonus features or press promotion regarding their visit to reveal the scale of the production pilgrimage or the role of British broadcaster C4 in facilitating

⁶² Actress Lisa Kudrow was too pregnant to travel, and therefore did not make the trip to London.

the production.⁶³ Although the image of Joey wearing a novelty Union Jack hat and recording his conversation with Sarah Ferguson undoubtedly signifies that he is in England, to consider it a substantive representation of an entire nation is challenging not only given its simplistic symbols of national identity, but also because the series limits its representative scale to a single city.⁶⁴

Friends' trip to London reveals the contradictory logics by which the sitcom nation is governed. On the one hand, given that the sitcom city already pushes the limits of the multi-camera sitcom's spatial capital, to expect it to address an even more complex spatial category in the nation may seem untenable; this chapter has to this point defended the capacity for the multi-camera sitcom to engage with spatial capital in meaningful ways, but expanding the scope of place-identity would logically create a greater burden for elements of production design or storytelling. However, at the same time, it is very easy for *Friends* to establish a change in the national when the national is so rarely presented as a category of place-identity within the sitcom. While *Friends*' England relies heavily on overly simplistic symbols, the sitcom as a whole relies on those symbols to signify place as evidenced through the construction of Detroit and New York City earlier in the chapter, meaning that there is an existing economy of spatial capital within the sitcom that fits with the symbolic shorthand used here to signify the national. Furthermore, the novelty of location shooting says more about the generic backlot where the series normally resides (and where even its opening title sequence was filmed), meaning that the pilgrimage of production is more legible—while the show uses editing to mirror stylistic

⁶³ Interestingly, the involvement of C4 is obscured in the DVD feature "*Friends Goes To London*" on the Season 4 DVD set, whereas it is heavily featured in C4's *Making Friends In The U.K.* companion published in 1998 (Penny Stallings, *Making Friends In The U.K.* [London: Boxtree, 1998]). These different origins further reframe the impact of the national on how pilgrimages of production are framed and understood.

⁶⁴ In *Making Friends in the U.K.*, set decorator Greg Grande reveals the origins of the Union Jack hat, which was—unsurprisingly—spotted on a French tourist as opposed to a London local.

elements of the multi-camera format when shooting exteriors, there is nonetheless a clear aesthetic shift between the soundstage and location sequences, meaning that more blatant symbolic efforts to establish a sense of place—globally recognized landmarks, cameos, the Union Jack hat—are also distinguished based on the shift in production style.

I want to propose, therefore, to think of the sitcom nation not as a broad representation of national identity, but specifically as what Eric Hobsbawm refers to as a “proto-nation.” He argues that one of the ways that national bonds are formed is through “sentiments and symbols of imagined community,” which travel across regional borders to become identifiable alongside the nation. He refers specifically to holy icons, suggesting they “represent the symbols or rituals or common collective practices which alone give a palpable reality to otherwise imaginary community.”⁶⁵ Although sitcoms are rarely invested in holy icons specifically, I argue the concept of the proto-nation is central to the logic by which nations are represented within the multi-camera sitcom, and within television more broadly. Such proto-national symbols are rarely nuanced enough to capture the experience of every individual, but they gain their ties to national identity through their ubiquity, especially through their presence in media representations of the nation in question. The more landmarks like those featured in *Friends*’ trip to London are highlighted by shows making the same pilgrimage, the more they become part of the proto-national understanding of the televisual England. In their effort to emphasize the pilgrimage and sell the episodes as a major event for the characters and the series, *Friends* relies on efficient and recognizable tools by which nation has been evoked in the past, in the same way that common conceptions of national identity are constructed around those symbols that have proven most resonant with the population regardless of their applicability to each and every individual. While

⁶⁵ Eric Hobsbawm. *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1992): 71.

the proto-nation may be insufficient to address the nuance or multiplicity of national identity given that there is no guarantee of “common collective practices” extending to all those who relate to that national identity, the sitcom nation functions to choose those symbols that are most common, and most recognizable, for the purpose of evoking the national where valuable for the production at hand.

The proto-national is most easily evoked through symbols and rituals that can be easily located within the nation in question through location shooting, but the same principles can similarly be evoked through elements of production design. In *Making Friends in the U.K.*, the official companion published by British broadcaster C4, set decorator Greg Grande admits “some people have asked why we went to London to shoot this episode when we could have easily recreated everything in Los Angeles.”⁶⁶ Grande frames the decision as a gift to local fans, but it also created logistical challenges—Grande’s contribution to the book comes with stories of having to adjust to working in an unfamiliar environment, along with a shopping list of places to go to acquire set dressing that would not have required the same level of research in Los Angeles. The potential to mix strategic location shooting with Los Angeles soundstage work—and thus avoid many of those challenges—within the context of vacation episodes can be seen in *Everybody Loves Raymond*, which uses a number of soundstage sets in combination with strategic location shooting during its trip to Italy at the beginning of its fifth season.⁶⁷

The trip follows similar principles of the sitcom nation as outlined by *Friends*, complete with an opening montage set to Italian music—heavy on strings—and featuring shots of a plane traveling over the ocean, a car traveling through the Italian countryside, and then the family’s

⁶⁶ *Making Friends in the U.K.*, 150.

⁶⁷ “Italy,” *Everybody Loves Raymond*, Season 5, Episodes 1 and 2, 2 October 2000 and 9 October 2000.

van driving up to the town of Anguillara Sabazia outside of Rome. The series also uses location shooting at key Roman landmarks—the Coliseum, the Spanish Steps, Trevi Fountain—to establish the pilgrimage, with characters visiting the landmarks at multiple points during the two episodes shot on location in Italy. In the town of Anguillara, meanwhile, key locations include a gelato shop and a pizza stand, fitting comfortably into proto-national understandings of Italy through some of its most prominent culinary exports, and relying on similar principles of strategic location shooting as seen in *Friends*' trip to London.

Its soundstage set, however, is distinct in its ties to the region and to the specificity of location: whereas *Friends* traveled to the U.K. in order to build hotel suites and restaurants that could easily be reframed as American using different textual strategies on London soundstages, *Everybody Loves Raymond* remained in Los Angeles and constructed the residence of distant relative Cosette and her husband Georgio as overtly Italian in origin. The episode places the home in a specific location within the town through its location work: multiple scenes take place in the courtyard outside of the residence, while an early shot in the episode reveals Ray and his wife Debra emerging onto the home's second floor balcony before panning back into a wide shot of the town as a whole. Therefore, the production design works to construct a very specific kind of household that would fit within this geography, with a large stone fireplace, a vintage claw foot tub with no shower that figures into key plot points, and small bedrooms featuring stone walls and Crucifix statues hung on the walls (so as to remind the viewer of Italy and Rome's ties to Catholicism, and inadvertently reinforce Hobsbawm's consideration of holy idols). The set is not necessarily realistic: the view out of the front door is a very typical multi-camera design, with a generic stone wall and some foliage to suggest an exterior where one does not exist. However, its efforts to match the location footage leverages the potential for production design

to work in tandem with strategic location shooting in the same way it works in tandem with establishing shots. It may not be as precise or “authentic” as the location work in the episode, but the effort to create a distinctly Italian proscenium nonetheless works to expand the reach of the proto-national such that it is not necessarily only accessible through pilgrimages of production, which may not be accessible to series with lower budgets—both *Friends* and *Everybody Loves Raymond* took these trips at a time when they were among the highest-rated series on television, and where the cost of such trips could be justified.

Although the representational burden of the nation would seem to be greater than the city, which is already pushing the limits of the multi-camera sitcom’s spatial capacity, the rarity with which the nation is evoked on this scale makes it easier for the spatial capital afforded the multi-camera format to signal a change of setting on a national scale. In these two examples, however, this is done in part by inherently expanding the spatial capital of the format by engaging in location shooting. Warner Bros. Studios partnered with British broadcaster C4 to produce *Friends*’ episodes in London, enabling the use of London’s Fountain Studios and requiring local labor—including location professionals to scout and manage exteriors—that may not typically be relevant to a traditional multi-camera production process. *Everybody Loves Raymond* similarly required collaboration with local producers, in this case Panorama Films, a production company based out of Rome. This staff included a producer, a production manager, a first assistant director, a director of photography, a production designer, as well as a location manager, Robin Melville, who has done Italian location scouting for a range of international productions filming in the country. The engagement with local labor does not necessarily expand the representation within the texts beyond the proto-national, but it emphasizes the way in which the typically grounded nature of the multi-camera sitcom could be seen as requiring local labor to ensure

access to the symbols and rituals that will establish the sense of place on which the episodes in question are predicated.

Let's Go To The Mall, Eh?: *How I Met Your Mother's* Proto-Canada

If *Friends* demonstrates the ways location shooting can be used to connect generic soundstages with the national as a spatial category, *Everybody Loves Raymond* demonstrates the capacity for production design of those sound stages to connect with and reinforce the work being done through strategic location shooting and the engagement with local production. However, if we accept that the sitcom nation is inherently built around the symbols and rituals of the proto-national, then the pilgrimages of production that most strongly reinforce the national in these instances are not necessary for the national to function as spatial capital within a multi-camera sitcom. While the absence of location shooting limits a production's access to "real" spaces of individuation—or, if one prefers, nationalization—that automatically register as authentic, the multi-camera format is built around the symbolic as a representational tool, and is inherently invested in the way space can be used to evoke and engage with place. Provided the proto-national is engaged with directly through production design and storytelling, the limited spaces of the multi-camera sitcom can nonetheless construct and evoke the national as an identity category without ever leaving the backlot.

How I Met Your Mother spends the majority of its time in New York City by way of Los Angeles, although it occasionally uses strategies of representation typical to the form to depict characters in a range of locations: these include Marshall's home state of Minnesota, Chicago, San Francisco, and Italy, among others. Such representations are brief and limited, constructed through strategies previously outlined: when Barney is shown through flashback traveling to San

Francisco to convince Lily to come back to New York and reunite with Marshall, the scene opens with a shot of the Golden Gate bridge, and Barney ends the conversation in the doorway of Lily's generic studio apartment weighing whether to visit Alcatraz or Fisherman's Wharf before his flight home.⁶⁸ And when the show traveled to Italy in its series finale to show Marshall and Lily starting part of their new life after the birth of their second child, the set consists of only a small veranda, with any specificity of place established through the character's Italian dialogue and an establishing shot that opens the sequence.⁶⁹ Although these shifts in location engage in principles of spatial representation, they do so with limited engagement with place-identity, which requires a more sustained engagement with a location and a stronger connection between elements of production and the location in question.

This engagement emerges in *How I Met Your Mother* through the character of Robin Scherbatsky, and through her status as a Canadian citizen. In the audio commentary for the Season Two episode "Slap Bet," co-creator Craig Thomas recalls that he told Cobie Smulders—the Canadian actress who plays Robin—that they would make her character Canadian in order to break down pervasive stereotypes about the country, but also admits that they largely used it "to tell the cheapest jokes imaginable."⁷⁰ In an early scene in "Slap Bet," the first episode to deal with Robin's national background explicitly, the characters reel off a range of jokes about Canada that address the country's bilingualism—"They speak French there too? God, that place is a mess!"—and its international reputation—"It's Canadian marriage! It's like their money, or their army: nobody takes it seriously!" These jokes bring to mind satirical treatments of Canada

⁶⁸ "Bachelor Party," *How I Met Your Mother*, Season 2, Episode 19, 9 April 2007.

⁶⁹ "Last Forever," *How I Met Your Mother*, Season 9, Episodes 23 and 24, 31 March 2014.

⁷⁰ "Slap Bet," *How I Met Your Mother*, Season 2, Episode 9, 20 November 2006; DVD Commentary is from the *How I Met Your Mother: The Complete 2nd Season* box set.

like those seen in a series like *South Park* (1997-Present), and suggest an engagement with cultural stereotypes more than understandings of national identity.

However, in the same commentary track, Thomas insists that “Slap Bet” is a “small, real story” for Robin, a claim that is reinforced by the episode’s importance to the character’s arc over the course of the series. After Robin reveals an odd aversion to shopping malls, the show’s characters realize they have no knowledge of Robin’s past, with the audience similarly in the dark beyond traces of an accent and an occasional Canada-specific reference. After a typically zany sitcom plot where Robin lies about having been married in a mall in Canada, and where Barney learns of that lie and believes she did pornography instead, the episode eventually reveals Robin’s shameful secret: she was a teenage pop star in Canada. What follows that revelation is “Let’s Go to The Mall,” a music video from the early 1990s starring Robin’s teenage alter-ego “Robin Sparkles.”

At first glance, the video reflects American popular culture more than Canadian: the story of a mall tour, and the bedazzled jackets and new-age haircuts, is inspired by artists like Tiffany and Debbie Gibson who grew to prominence in America during the 1980s. The video could furthermore be positioned first and foremost as a parody of 1980s music videos, complete with cheesy post-production effects, a nonsensical appearance by a robot, and a range of 80s fashions and haircuts on display for Robin Sparkles and her backing band. However, the show uses symbols of national identity to signify its Canadian origins, albeit in a shorthand typical to the sitcom format. The song’s lyrics include Robin Sparkles promise to “rock your body like Canada Day,” a reference to Canada’s July 1st holiday celebrating the nation’s confederation, as well as “hair like Gretzky” in reference to perhaps the most prominent of the country’s most well-known hockey stars (who would go on to be the torch bearer for the last leg of the Vancouver 2012

Olympics Opening Ceremonies, another space of symbolic engagement with the national). Furthermore, the Canadian flag with its iconic red maple leaf makes two appearances in the video, and as the most obvious symbol of national identity makes the video's origins legible for what would be a predominantly American audience watching the series. These symbols are joined by details such as the heavily accented pronunciation of "sorry" and "about" in the song's opening verse, along with the reference to and appearance of a caricature of Prime Minister Brian Mulroney during the video's rap breakdown, which did not appear in the episode itself but was featured when the video was released in full on YouTube and MySpace by CBS when the episode aired.

The "Let's Go To The Mall" video is disinterested in being an authentic representation of Canada. The video makes minimal effort to suggest it was produced in Canada: the mall set used is completely generic, with no effort made to signify specific stores that would have been located in Canadian malls during that period. Furthermore, it is placed in the generic "Canada," with no effort to signify where it was produced or set beyond the fact that it took place in the large geographic expanse of Canada as a nation. However, the video is nonetheless positioned as an artifact of Canadian popular culture; although the series invented this artifact, it nonetheless stands in as a key part of Robin's national identity within the context of the series. And although it relies on cheap jokes and basic symbols of national identity, it is also a key part of Robin's backstory, and would become a recurring element in the character's development. The "Robin Sparkles Quadrilogy" would come to encompass "Let's Go To The Mall," ballad followup "Sandcastles In The Sand," kids show *Space Teens*, and the *Behind the Music*-like *Underneath The Tunes* documenting Robin Sparkles' fall from grace.

In each case, Robin's Canadian past is constructed not simply through flashbacks, but through specific cultural artifacts that bear the mark of their Canadianness. The video for "Sandcastles In The Sand" features a plan to "travel the globe / from Alberta to Ontario," complete with an onscreen map with a dotted line, and also features a sandcastle with a Canadian flag perched on top and an appearance by Alan Thicke (who has recurred on the series as a person from Robin's past in Canada).⁷¹ *Space Teens*, styled as an educational kids programming starring Sparkles, features another appearance by Thicke, along with the song "Two Beavers Are Better Than One," honoring an animal that has emerged as a symbol for the country.⁷² And *Underneath the Tunes: Robin Sparkles* features a range of Canadian celebrities reflecting on the pop cultural significance of Robin Sparkles, and her dark turn toward grunge—mirroring the transition of Canadian Alanis Morissette from teen star to rock star with *Jagged Little Pill*—following her appearance at the 1996 Grey Cup and the release of her video for "P.S. I Love You."⁷³ All of these are also positioned as discrete artifacts within the series: although they are presented to audiences intercut with shots of the characters responding to them in most instances, they are all visible in the series as either video files on computers, VHS cassettes, or DVDs, and the three music videos were posted on YouTube by CBS in their complete forms. Although audiences can understand that *Underneath The Tunes* is a fictional play on *Behind The Music*, given that it details the rise and fall of a fictional pop star of the show's making, the show plays the conceit straight, even referencing that the series originated on Canada's equivalent to MTV or VH1, MuchMusic (which aired episodes of *Behind The Music*).

⁷¹ "Sandcastles in the Sand," *How I Met Your Mother*, Season 3, Episode 16, 21 April 2008.

⁷² "Glitter," *How I Met Your Mother*, Season 6, Episode 9, 15 November 2010.

⁷³ "P.S. I Love You," *How I Met Your Mother*, Season 8, Episode 15, 4 February 2013. The Grey Cup is the championship of the Canadian Football League.

As individual artifacts, these glimpses into Robin's past offer little in the way of substantial engagement with Canada as a nation: a Canadian flag and the presence of Alan Thicke does not qualify as a substantial negotiation of spatial capital, and such pop cultural artifacts offer only a limited glimpse of national identity to begin with. The video for "P.S., I Love You" features a mob of Mounties, an appearance by fictional curling zine *RIOT CRRRL*, and a distinctly Canadian take on anarchy with the message to "Consider Questioning Authority, Please," but these small details mark each video as a product of Canada more than they enable it to speak to the national as a category. However, when taken collectively, these artifacts form a substantial foundation for the series' own construction of Canada as an imagined community. Anderson argues in outlining his understanding of imagined community that "to understand [cultural artifacts of nationalism] properly we need to consider carefully how they came into historical being, in what ways their meanings have changed over time, and why, today, they command such profound emotional legitimacy."⁷⁴ Although these artifacts' Canadianness depends on symbolic markers of proto-nationalism, their serialized presence in the series has made the Robin Sparkles texts into artifacts of an imagined Canada as it exists in the realm of *How I Met Your Mother*. Robin Sparkles and her career become a set of symbols the series can use to evoke and develop Robin's Canadian identity throughout the series, ones that rely less on ties to "real place" and authenticity and more on the series' own efforts to construct a version of Canada useful for their own storytelling purposes.

This also takes place, by and large, outside of the proscenium stages we most often associate with the multi-camera format. This shift in format, as discussed earlier, is in part justified by *How I Met Your Mother*'s consistent formal experimentation, and its pushes beyond

⁷⁴ Anderson, 13-14.

the multi-camera structure (except in cases where it is diegetically relevant, as in *Space Teens*). It also does not necessarily have specific ties to the national in the same way as the location shooting of *Friends* or *Everybody Love Raymond*, although the shift in style nonetheless works to distinguish the content spatially from the series' typical locations. The music videos also function as paratexts, ones that can be separated out from the text and consumed as artifacts in the same way they are positioned within the text itself. The series has also built storylines around other Canadian paratexts, including a "Canadian Sex Acts" web page referenced in the series and featuring yet another cameo appearance by Alan Thicke.⁷⁵ Although the relationship between these paratexts and Canada is tenuous at best, the consistent return to Robin Sparkles and its role in shaping the series' engagement with Canada functions similar to how broader conceptions of national identity are constantly evolving and adapting to new identity formations. Rather than trying to represent Canada as a nation, *How I Met Your Mother* built its own proto-Canada using symbols of its own making, and tied back to the "real" Canada through the careful negotiation of pre-existing and constructed symbols of national identity coexisting within these artifacts. To Anderson's point, *How I Met Your Mother* has established artifacts with a sense of history, charted their meanings over time, and has emphasized their emotional legacy for the characters in the series and among the series' viewers.

Although these artifacts serve as the foundation for *How I Met Your Mother*'s proto-Canada, the series nonetheless works to demonstrate the function of the traditional multi-camera format in activating national identity as a category. On the one hand, storylines that focus on

⁷⁵ The site—CanadianSexActs.com—remains live, with Thicke appearing in the error messages behind purposefully dead links. The episode also continues to draw traffic: anecdotally, my critical review of the episode in which it appeared, "Old King Clancy," continues to draw significant traffic when the episode airs in syndication from viewers searching for "The Frozen Snowshoe" or the "Halifax Fudge Badger."

national identity inherently address the nation, but they also activate meaning within the production design around the characters; for instance, the small American flag decoration located on the wall behind the characters when seated in their booth at MacLaren's is more conspicuous in episodes that feature storylines that address Robin's Canadianness and inevitably the other characters' Americanness in kind. However, on the other hand, the series has also deployed the proscenium stage as a meaningful vessel for place-identity, resisting the lure of location shooting in favor of designing spaces specifically to engage with national identity. The construction of these spaces of individuation relies less on the use of establishing shots and more on an engagement with the same symbols used to develop the Canadianness of the Robin Sparkles artifacts, and the ones central to the series' conception of Canadian identity.

In "Little Minnesota," the series engages with Robin's separation from home by drawing out the parallels between Robin and Marshall, who is originally from Minnesota.⁷⁶ Marshall takes Robin to the Walleye Saloon, a bar in New York where displaced Minnesotans gather. Covered with Minnesota Vikings paraphernalia and featuring various characters wearing the team's jerseys, the Walleye Saloon is a self-aware simulacrum—whereas Baudrillard spoke of such simulations as obliterating the real, in this case the logics of simulation are deployed in order to reinforce the real for those living in exile from their home state. When patrons step into the space, they are leaving New York and entering a liminal space in which the rituals of being in Minnesota—(video game) fishing, oversized portions, Vikings fandom—are upheld without leaving the geographic area of New York City. The "production design" done to the Walleye Saloon is part of the series' diegesis, a conscious effort by the bar's owners and its patrons to construct a space where they can feel at home.

⁷⁶ "Little Minnesota," *How I Met Your Mother*, Season 4, Episode 11, 15 December 2008.

The logics of the Walleye Saloon are extended to the national when Robin, who assimilated to the Minnesotan customs based on her homesickness and the similarities between the Midwest state and her Canadian home, is found out to be an impostor and is evicted from the bar. Before she leaves, she gives an impassioned speech about her Canadian identity:

You know what, I'm glad you found out, because I'm proud to be Canadian. We may not have a fancy NFL team, or Prince, but we invented Trivial Pursuit – you're welcome, Earth! Plus, in Canada you can go to an all-nude strip club *and* order alcohol. That's right – from Moose Jaw, to the Bay of Fundy, you can suck down a 20 oz. Pilsner while watching a Coal Miner's Daughter strip down to her pelt: jealous?! In Canada, people don't care where you're from as long as you're friendly, and maybe loan them a smoke or hand over a donut. I'm proud to be from the Great White North...and I wish I was there right now.

The collection of trivia revealed in this speech is ultimately irrelevant, but it emphasizes the focus on “being there” as a key part of national identity. It also foregrounds the relationship between place-identity and social space, given that her markers of identity are tied to spatial capital (through the mentions of Moose Jaw and the Bay of Fundy), specific social spaces (strip clubs), as well as the kind of interactions one shares with people within those spatial parameters. Although Marshall could just as easily construct a simulacrum of Minnesota in a spare room with a collection of Vikings paraphernalia, what makes the Walleye Saloon effective for Marshall—and ineffective for Robin in its absence—is the presence of other people who relate to the space in the same way, and who understand his pain about the Vikings' 1999 NFC Championship loss.

The episode concludes by extending the logic of the Walleye Saloon to the nation and introducing the Hoser Hut, a space of expatriation in New York City where Canadians can go for a taste of home. As in the case of the Walleye Saloon, the Hoser Hut is a self-aware simulacrum, relying heavily on basic signifiers of nation in the form of Canadian flags, hockey on the televisions, pictures of prominent Canadian celebrities like Paul Shaffer and Geddy Lee, and characters wearing toques indoors. When Robin and Marshall first arrive, the Crash Test Dummies song “Mmm Mmm Mmm Mmm”—a Canadian one-hit wonder—is being performed at karaoke, and Robin tests the space’s authenticity by running into a male employee, after which he apologizes to her and offer her a donut on the house.

The Hoser Hut would go on to appear in multiple episodes of the series, positioned as a ritualized social space where Robin was able to reconnect with her Canadian heritage—or, more specifically, with her Canadian heritage as defined by the series. Canadian rituals such as CBC’s *Hockey Night In Canada* are referenced in the series, and the presence of hockey jerseys and Canadian flags undoubtedly taps into general conceptions of Canadian identity. However, the Hoser Hut’s Canadianness is also defined relative to the series’ definition of Canada: the final scene in “Little Minnesota” features Marshall performing “Let’s Go To The Mall” as a karaoke song, with the entire crowd joining in to sing the chorus. The Hoser Hut also appears in “Glitter,” the episode in which *Space Teens* is introduced, and features Robin reuniting with her co-star Jessica Glitter to perform “Two Beavers Are Better Than One.” The end of that performance is admittedly broad: as the characters repeat the song’s chorus, a large Canadian flag falls behind them, and they are joined by a Mountie, multiple hockey players, a woman impersonating Queen Elizabeth II, the same actor who played Brian Mulroney in the “Let’s Go To The Mall” video, and a man in a bear costume, while Alan Thicke appears from behind the bar. However, it

reaffirms that the Hoser Hut's ritualized Canada is constructed primarily based on the series' own engagement with the country—Thicke's cameos, Robin Sparkles—rather than any sense of an “authentic” Canadian identity.

This is further reaffirmed by the series' two trips to Canada in its fifth and eighth seasons. While the series had before that point used flashbacks to depict periods of Robin's life, relying on combinations of production design and green screen work to depict Canada as a cold and isolated space where Robin was hardened as a child and as a reporter, these visits specifically see characters travel to Canada as part of storylines in the present timeline. In “Duel Citizenship,” Robin is faced with the threat of deportation and considers becoming an American citizen; after being reprogrammed by Barney to think like an American—a test that includes knowledge of classic American sitcoms and mistaking Queen Elizabeth II for Elton John—Robin ducks into the Hoser Hut and “goes Canadian,” participating in a singalong of “O Canada,” connecting with a women's curling team, and traveling to Toronto for a Bryan Adams/Rich Little double bill.⁷⁷ Barney flies to Toronto and discovers her in a trashed hotel room, surrounded by Canadian beer and sporting equipment.

It is the series' first trip to Canada for any sustained period, but it is noticeable for the absence of any traditional establishing devices. In fact, it goes so far as to lampoon negotiations of spatial capital in the multi-camera sitcom: when Robin expresses she is unclear where she is, Barney dramatically opens the blinds, claiming that she went “THIS Canadian!” as though the view from the window would solve her confusion. However, the view is only of another building, leaving him to explain that “that was supposed to be a dramatic view of the Toronto skyline - you're in Toronto!” Even when the series returns to the Toronto storyline after

⁷⁷ “Duel Citizenship,” *How I Met Your Mother*, Season 5, Episode 5, 19 October 2009.

transitioning back to the episode's other story—Ted, Marshall, and Lily on a road trip to Chicago—there is no establishing shot of the fairly iconic Toronto skyline and its CN Tower, despite the fact that a shot of the Chicago skyline precedes Ted and Marshall's arrival to that city. While it is theoretically possible that the production had no access to a stock shot of the Toronto skyline, that seems unlikely given the resources available to the series—rather, the series acknowledges the artifice of place, tacitly admitting that the show and its characters have not crossed a national border in the production of this episode of television.

Nonetheless, however, the series engages in the principles of the Hoser Hut's ritualized ex-patriot space to tap into the ritual space of the nation. The subsequent scene in “Duel Citizenship” set in Toronto takes place at a Tim Hortons, a coffee chain strongly associated with the country—although it expanded into the United States in 1985, Tim Hortons is the most ubiquitous restaurant in Canada, known for its coffee and donuts.⁷⁸ In partnership with the restaurant chain, the set mirrors a typical Tim Hortons location, with signage, coffee cups, and donuts matching those one would find in one of their stores. Although only Barney's dialogue and a reference to being near the Hockey Hall of Fame explicitly place the location in Toronto, the series uses Tim Hortons as a stand-in for the social space of the nation. Robin questions her Canadianness when she is out of step with the cashier's understanding of what it means to be Canadian—she uses American money, she doesn't say “please” or “thank you,” and she did not watch the Toronto Maple Leafs game the night before. Barney is also subsequently pummeled for insulting Canada for making Robin feel unwelcome, reframing Tim Hortons as the equivalent

⁷⁸ Anecdotally, a friend has created a Facebook album of photos he has taken of Tim Hortons locations across Canada, and even created a Google Map plotting the locations across the country.

to the Hoser Hut or the Walleye Saloon (where the presence of an outsider was similarly met with ill will in “Little Minnesota”).⁷⁹

This use of Tim Hortons as a stand-in for the nation is extended in “P.S., I Love You,” as Barney—now engaged to Robin—travels to Vancouver, British Columbia in order to interview Robin’s ex-boyfriends and discover who the stalker-esque song is in reference to. In lieu of an establishing shot of a Vancouver landmark—which at the time of the episode’s 2013 airing could have included images made recognizable by the 2010 Winter Olympics—the series instead features an exterior of a Tim Hortons location, with Barney’s interviews taking place at one of the restaurant’s over two dozen locations in the city. The *Underneath the Tunes* documentary about Robin Sparkles also engages in Tim Hortons role as a key ritual space among Canadians: former Barenaked Ladies singer Steven Page recounts the tragedy of Robin Sparkles’ self-destruction during the Grey Cup halftime performance, and suggests that “to this day, if you ask a Canadian where they were when Robin Sparkles lost it, not only can they tell you what Tim Hortons they were in, but what donut they were eating.” A range of celebrities go on to list the various locations they were in—Halifax, Victoriaville, Sudbury, Red Deer, Squamish—and the donuts they were eating, emphasizing the cultural importance of the series’ fictional artifacts of Canadian identity while simultaneously linking them to the space the series has chosen to represent Canadian space in the series.⁸⁰

⁷⁹ It should be noted that the episode is built around a fundamental misunderstanding of both the complications tied to applying for citizenship, and obscures the existence of dual citizenship for the entire episode to justify a speedy resolution and capture Robin’s relationship to her home country.

⁸⁰ Tim Hortons took advantage of this detail, and made a “Priestley”—a timbit stuffed into a Strawberry-Vanilla donut—in honor of Jason Priestley’s fictional creation referenced in the series, with the Twitter image retweeted over 1800 times. Priestley would go on to judge a national contest for new donut flavors later in 2013.

The relationship between Tim Hortons and Canadian space is not without some precedent: in his study of depictions of Atlantic Canada, *Anne of Tim Hortons: Globalization and the Reshaping of Atlantic-Canadian Literature*, Herb Wyile positions the chain as a symbol of a post-rural identity for the region, which we could extend to the nation.⁸¹ However, at the same time, it deserves considerable scrutiny. The choice of Tim Hortons allows Canada to be defined almost exclusively through commercial spaces: as much as the ritual of waiting in the Tim Hortons drive-thru can be observed on many morning commutes in the country, and there is a tie between the chain and national identity, it creates a bond between capitalism and nationalism that risks precluding competing views of national identity. And while the spaces are inherently social, their patrons lack any emphasis on the diversity of the two cities chosen, among the most diverse in North America and crucial to conceptions of Canadian nationalism linked to its mosaic of multiculturalism. Furthermore, if we were to nitpick the series' production design, the wintery establishing shot and ice-covered doors at the Vancouver location in "P.S., I Love You" suggest highly unseasonal weather for comparatively temperate Vancouver, which is a strange choice in general considering that the city has never factored into previous Robin Sparkles backstory where Manitoba, Alberta, and Ontario have been more commonly referenced. A joke in "Duel Citizenship" about Barney believing he crossed the Atlantic Ocean to get to Toronto reveals a playful engagement with Canada's geography, but the series' universe is grounded enough—and creates a significant enough burden of spatial capital—to make strange choices like these recognizable as a Canadian viewer of the series.

However, at the same time, the appearance of Tim Hortons in "Duel Citizenship" and "P.S., I Love You" displays the capacity for the basic symbolic capital of the multi-camera

⁸¹ Herb Wyile, *Anne of Tim Hortons: Globalization and the Reshaping of Atlantic-Canadian Literature* (Brantford: Wilfrid Laurier U.P., 2011).

sitcom—so often marginalized in formal considerations of television—to engage with the national in meaningful ways. For these reasons and others, it would be difficult for anyone who has spent considerable time in Canada to consider this a realistic representation of the nation, given its reliance on sound stages and on Tim Hortons as a broad signifier of an entire country, not to mention the production choices within that reveal a homogenized, capitalist conception of Canada. However, those choices reflect television more broadly more than they reflect the multi-camera format, given that the same logics that govern the lack of attention to issues of diversity would be the same for a single-camera series. What is evident in *How I Met Your Mother*'s Canada is that the apparent spatial limitations of the proscenium stage, and its lack of access to authentic locations and its relatively minimal use of traditional place-making activities, do not preclude it from engaging with the national as a category of place-identity, albeit within a comic, exaggerated form. Through an engagement with symbols of Canadian identity recognizable to audiences and the development of artifacts of Canadian identity developed exclusively for the series, *How I Met Your Mother* uses the multi-camera format's heightened reality and capacity for symbolic engagement with spatial capital to emphasize the inherently ritualistic and liminal nature of national identity. While unable to engage with conceptions of place that rely on realism or verisimilitude as their determining factors, the sitcom engages with the nation as an imagined community, enabling Robin Sparkles videos, spaces of expatriation, and a national coffee chain to evoke and engage Robin's sense of national identity. It may not be the real Canada, predicated as it is on half-truths, absences, and exaggerations, but it is decidedly *a* Canada, and emerged as a crucial spatial category throughout the series' nine-season run.

Conclusion

This chapter has, like the chapter before it, been focused on the function of spatial capital, and the way in which elements of television production contribute to this spatial capital through distinct place-making activities. However, at the same time, it has focused on different forms of negotiating spatial capital, ones governed by production methods that work against principles of realism in considering the representation of space and place in television. The multi-camera sitcom is built on the principles of symbolic capital, as the limitations of the proscenium stage require distinct combinations of techniques to evoke—if not necessary “represent” in a traditional, verisimilitude-driven fashion—a sense of place by negotiating spatial capital. While these principles exist in elements of production design for single-camera series, including many of those mentioned in the previous chapter, they are more easily augmented by place-making activities that work to obscure the artifice of production in a way the multi-camera sitcom struggles to by comparison.

This being said, as the analysis within the chapter has indicated, to frame this as an impossible struggle is to accept a limited framework for understanding place-identity and its representation within television content. Although the multi-camera sitcom has less access to location shooting and an aesthetic style that acknowledges the artifice of television production more directly than single-camera production, the form is also distinctly invested in the spaces a series occupies, and in the setting constructed through those spaces. The symbolic capital inherent to the form manifests through production design and storytelling, bolstered by the work of extradiegetic elements or strategic location shooting but nonetheless translating those meanings through the set-bound production method common to the form. The sitcom has at times been dismissed for its lack of television style, but the adaptive nature of the form as it

relates to questions of place-identity suggests that the form is only devoid of style in circumstances where producers fail to engage with its affordances carefully. The multi-camera sitcom may be the most grounded of television's forms, with nearly all American multi-camera series filmed on Los Angeles backlots compared to the increasing sprawl of drama production and the greater likelihood of single camera work to build in extensive location work, but it has always been grounded, and these examples demonstrate its capacity to evolve to take advantage of expanded textuality to augment tried-and-true proscenium place-making.

This is not to suggest that the sense of place constructed in the multi-camera sitcom is inherently more or less authentic than that in single-camera series, or in dramatic programming. Indeed, the reliance on symbolic capital often results in an inherently shorthand understanding of place, present across each of the series considered in the above analysis. However, the format is often self-aware of its simulation, and has the benefit of often existing in these spaces of place-identity over the course of an entire series' run, and in the long-running history of these forms of symbolic capital in the production of multi-camera sitcoms. *How I Met Your Mother* has tried to use green screen technology to evoke New York City more directly, with a ninth season episode featuring a scene of Ted and ex-girlfriend Jeanette on a specific bridge in Central Park.⁸² The green screen compositing was more geographically specific than a generic backlot location would be, and was likely less expensive than the production design in such a circumstance, and yet the artifice of green screen's symbolic capital is less established within the format, and registers as less "real" than the established, equally simulated locations like MacLaren's. While those spaces come with their own limitations, they are limitations that the series confronted through the development of its own markers of place-identity, developing them into recurring

⁸² "Sunrise," *How I Met Your Mother*, Season 9, Episode 17, 3 February 2014.

symbols deployed to construct cities and nations within—rather than outside of—the multi-camera sitcom form.

How I Met Your Mother's spatial capital is tied to the length of the series' run, and to the series' development of ongoing serial storylines foregrounded by its frame story. Its New York City is richer—if not more diverse, racially speaking—for having had nine seasons worth of storylines to develop, while its ability to develop its own proto-national Canada is dependent on its recurring presence throughout the series. In the ninth season, Canada makes its final appearance when Barney surprises his fiancé Robin with a wedding shower by bringing Canada to her in an elaborate gesture that recalls much of the symbolic capital accrued in previous seasons.⁸³ As the surprise begins to be unveiled, “Mmm Mmm Mmm Mmm” takes over as the musical score, and Alan Thicke appears to sing a rewritten version of the song about Barney and Robin with Barney's brother James dressed half as a Mountie and half as Robin Sparkles. Whereas the Canadian flags would register as symbols of Canada regardless of what series they appeared in, the other details are symbols of the series' own version of Canada, having gained significant meaning and resonance over the seven years of storytelling in between the first and last episodes in which Robin's Canadian heritage was a focus. That they would reappear in the final season reinforces their ties to the development of the series' storylines and characters, emphasizing the relationship between the series' narrative framework and its sense of place.

It also pushes a consideration of the role of larger narrative frameworks in considering how space and place are constructed within television production, a conversation that requires an expansion beyond the proscenium, and—quite often—beyond the confines of the Los Angeles backlot.

⁸³ “The Rehearsal Dinner,” *How I Met Your Mother*, Season 9, Episode 12, 2 December 2013.

Chapter Four

“Like A Character In The Show”: Spatial Capital, Cultural Capital, and Dramatic Television Storytelling

When AMC drama series *Breaking Bad* began the final episodes of its five-season run in the summer of 2013, the channel and the series’ producer Sony Pictures Television purchased a series of billboards commemorating the occasion. However, these billboards didn’t go up in Los Angeles or New York City to promote the series to the largest possible audience: they went up in Albuquerque, New Mexico, where the series was set and shot. Featuring an image of series stars Bryan Cranston and Aaron Paul, who played meth producers Walter White and Jesse Pinkman respectively, information about the series’ return date and timeslot were placed in small font in the bottom right corner of the image. In the middle of the image, meanwhile, was a direct message to the city itself: “Thanks Albuquerque! We had great chemistry together!”

These localized billboards reflect a mutually-beneficial relationship between *Breaking Bad* and Albuquerque over the course of its production. As referenced in Chapter One, Albuquerque has emerged as a location for television production in part based on the visibility and production infrastructure created by *Breaking Bad*, to the extent that New Mexico’s 2013 legislation establishing increased production incentives was known as the “*Breaking Bad* Bill.”¹ The series—which tracked Walter White’s journey from cancer-stricken school teacher to drug kingpin—brought legitimacy to New Mexico as a filming location, its cultural capital as an Emmy-winning and critically-acclaimed series building significant spatial capital for the state

¹ Aaron Couch, “New Mexico Governor Signs ‘Breaking Bad’ TV, Film Subsidy Bill Into Law,” *The Hollywood Reporter*, 4 April 2013, <http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/new-mexico-governor-signs-breaking-433168>

and the city of Albuquerque; in fact, it is one of only a small number of series filmed outside of Los Angeles or New York to win the Emmy Award for Outstanding Drama Series, and the first since PBS' *Upstairs, Downstairs* (1971-1975) to do so more than once.²

These billboards were far from the only location where the connection between the series and its setting was remarked upon. Writing for *The New Yorker*, Rachel Syme characterizes *Breaking Bad* as “a show organically tied to its shooting location,” arguing as a native New Mexican that it represents

the first story to truly commit the full spectrum of New Mexico to film: the grandiose visuals, the soaring altitudes, the banal office complexes, the Kokopellis and Kachina dolls, the seamy warehouses, the marshmallow clouds.

The show seems to root itself deeper in the landscape with every new montage. It has become our newest monument.³

Interviewing locals who have profited from the tourism of the series and reflecting on New Mexico's aspirations to function as a media capital, Syme confronts the series' “seediness and monstrosity” given its subject matter, arguing that “New Mexicans are proud of anything that draws us out of neglect, out of never really fitting in. We are just happy to be considered, even if it is for our underbelly.”

Syme's is not the only piece of mainstream journalism about *Breaking Bad* that narrows in on its setting as a point of distinction. In a travel article focused on the series' setting in *The New York Times*, series creator Vince Gilligan describes Albuquerque as “a character in the

² In the past three decades, Showtime's *Homeland* (2011-)—filmed in North Carolina—and CBS' *Northern Exposure* (1990-1995)—filmed in Washington State—have been the only other series filmed outside of Los Angeles or New York to win the award.

³ Rachel Syme, “Walter White's Home Town,” *The New Yorker – Culture Desk*, 7 August 2013, <http://www.newyorker.com/culture/culture-desk/walter-whites-home-town>

series,” a distinction that is further reinforced by Cranston in an interview with Albuquerque alt-weekly *Alibi*: he suggests Albuquerque has “become an important character to our show. The topography. Really the blue skies, and the billowy clouds, and the red mountains, and the Sandias, the valleys, the vastness of the desert, the culture of the people.”⁴ The “characterization” of Albuquerque also emerges in a *Forbes* interview with series cinematographer Michael Slovis, whose evocative images of that topography have become iconic of the series.⁵ *The Sante Fe Reporter*, writing about the series’ finale, makes the distinction as explicit as possible: “while many TV shows use a city as a setting, none have used it like a character like *Breaking Bad* did.”⁶

The discourse of “city as character” is a specific manifestation of spatial capital, evident in popular discourse, program marketing, and discourses specific to the spatial economy of television production discussed throughout this project. It is not a new discourse: in the study of film, the city of Los Angeles has often been understood as a character, whether in Thom Anderson’s documentary *Los Angeles Plays Itself* or in Alain Silver and James Ursini’s book *L.A. Noir: The City As Character*.⁷ In the context of television, meanwhile, it has been used in reference—among other series—to Atlantic City in *Boardwalk Empire*, Baltimore in *The Wire*,

⁴ Emily Brennan, “Albuquerque’s Role on ‘Breaking Bad,’” *The New York Times – Travel*, 6 August 2013, <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/08/11/travel/albuquerques-role-on-breaking-bad.html>; Sam Adams, “The Colorful Mr. White,” *Alibi*, 4 August 2011, <http://alibi.com/feature/38033/The-Colorful-Mr-White.html>.

⁵ Allen St. John, “Working Bad: Cinematographer Michael Slovis on 35mm Film, HDTV, And How ‘Breaking Bad’ Stuck The Landing,” *Forbes.com*, 26 September 2013, <http://www.forbes.com/sites/allenstjohn/2013/09/26/working-bad-cinematographer-michael-slovis-on-35mm-film-hdtv-and-how-breaking-bad-stuck-the-landing/>.

⁶ Matthew Reichback, “Morning Word: Thank you and goodbye, Breaking Bad,” *The Sante Fe Reporter*, 30 September 2013, <http://www.sfreporter.com/santafe/blog-4811-morning-word-thank-you-and-goodbye-breaking-bad.html>

⁷ Thom Anderson, *Los Angeles Plays Itself*, 2003; Alain Silver and James Ursini, *L.A. Noir: The City as Character* (Santa Monica: Santa Monica Press, 2005).

and New Orleans in *Treme*, while broader categories of place have gained the status of character in series like *Friday Night Lights* (Texas) or *True Detective* (Louisiana). However, with *Breaking Bad* the discourse intersects with the emerging prominence of New Mexico in the geography of television production, and with a moment in television culture when the series' claims to spatial capital function concurrently with significant claims to cultural capital in what has been termed a "golden age of television."

This chapter considers these intersections, exploring how the negotiation of spatial capital is inherently linked to the negotiation of cultural capital more broadly in the context of dramatic television programming. Although this is true in the context of all programming, it is particularly true in considering the television drama, where series like *Breaking Bad* have engaged discourses of quality television that privilege seriality and complexity. Through a close exploration of discourses of "place as character," I will identify how claims to spatial capital function as legible claims to authenticity, and how the emergence of these discourses is as dependent on hierarchies of cultural capital functioning within the television industry as they are to the textual representation of place within a given program. By framing the discourse of "place as character" as a legitimating gesture, the chapter seeks to refocus attention on how participants in the spatial economy of television production negotiate the cultural geography of production to translate spatial capital into cultural capital.

After breaking down the logic under which these discourses function, the chapter works to offer a more rigorous framework for examining the specificity of how television drama engages with spatial capital. Pushing past the notion of place as "character," the chapter links spatial capital to television narrative, which is crucial both in delineating between different forms of television drama—serial, procedural, and hybrids thereof—and in terms of distinguishing the

“television city” from the “cinematic city,” where considerably more research and analysis has taken place. While the emergence of “city as character” discourse is itself reflective of the distinct affordances of dramatic television narratives, a closer investigation of a broader collection of dramatic series reveals two specific strategies for activating and negotiating spatial capital operating in contemporary dramatic programming. Through a close analysis of depictions of the city of Miami, the chapter considers how these narrative strategies—place as narrative backdrop and place as narrative engine—manifest across both serial and procedural programming, intersecting with discourses of quality and questions of cultural identity in the process.

If the multi-camera sitcom—the focus of the previous chapter—is the epitome of television’s formal rigidity, the hour-long drama represents the pinnacle of freedom by comparison. While still subject to certain restrictions, the hour-long drama is comparatively free to go anywhere, a freedom that can engage spatial capital in ways unavailable to other formats. This chapter explores how those freedoms are or are not activated, and how shows like *Breaking Bad* lauded for their impressive sense of place are part of a broader, more complex engagement with spatial capital within the realm of dramatic television.

Setting the Scene: The City and Media

In an interview with Karen Lury in a 1999 issue of *Screen*, Doreen Massey is asked a series of questions tied to the relationship between film and television and three terms: space, place, and the city. The specific inclusion of the city as a category in and of itself reflects a subfield of “city studies” within investigations of cultural geography, although Massey resists the distinction: she explains to Lury that

my own position is that cities (of the kind which we have in mind here) are indeed particular forms of spatiality, but that particularity consists primarily in an intensification, a dramatic exaggeration, of characteristics that I would argue are intrinsic to “space” more generally.⁸

Massey’s observations regarding the intensified spatiality of the city—or, to put it in terms of this project, the intensified spatial capital tied to cities—speak to the rise of studies of the “cinematic city” as a specific concept with film and media studies. While the project as a whole has demonstrated how—to Lury’s point in framing the interview—“socially deterring factors such as gender, race and class are seen to be revealed, constructed, and contested in the way in which films and programs construct space and place” (232-3), it has inevitably looked to bounded geographical entities in order to contextualize this analysis, in the same way that the creators of these shows choose—e.g. *Undateable*’s Detroit, *How I Met Your Mother*’s New York—or create—e.g. *Hart of Dixie*’s Bluebell—cities or towns in which to set stories. While our understanding of space and place need not necessarily be focused on these intensified locations of spatial capital, they serve as a guiding post both within the process of production—where setting can serve as a key point of signification for the creators in selling the type of show they want to make—and within the process of reception, where our understanding of Bluebell’s location is framed relative to the real towns and cities referenced around it, or our familiarity with the map of Alabama when it appears onscreen.

In both collections and monographs, the politics of the cinematic city have been explored in great detail, whether through theoretical discussions of the relationship between these two

⁸ Karen Lury and Doreen Massey, “Making connections,” *Screen* 40.3 (Autumn 1999): 231.

modern institutions or through in-depth case studies of specific cities as depicted on film.⁹ However, there has been significantly less research into the televisual city, as discourses of the cinematic city have often centered on genres and discourses that reinforce the hierarchy between film and television. In the introduction to *Taking Place: Location and the Moving Image*, John David Rhodes and Elena Gorfinkel suggest the idea that “movies take place” is “a cliché of both realist location shooting and avant-garde film practice.”¹⁰ The explicit appeal to aesthetic filmmaking strategies reinforces that “cinematic” is not simply a term to distinguish between film and television, but rather an aesthetic judgment on the type of images depicting a particular location, and a term historically disassociated from television. Only a single essay in Rhodes and Gorfinkel’s collection relates to television specifically, suggesting that the relationship between location and the moving image remains predominantly seen through the lens of film;¹¹ this hierarchy emerges in Lury’s conversation with Massey, where the former argues that “television is, of course, a medium that is determined by different commercial and public interests, and its ideological function is often to try and erase or obscure real multiplicity and difference.”¹²

While the distinctions between business models in film and television are logical, the generalization regarding television’s ideological function presumes a particular understanding of television production as beholden to advertisers and network executives who are set on appealing to the broadest audiences. While this traditional broadcast model remains a part of the

⁹ See James Donald, *Imagining the Modern City* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999); D.B. Clarke, ed. *The Cinematic City* (London: Routledge, 1997); Charlotte Brunsdon, *London in Cinema: The Cinematic City Since 1945* (London: British Film Institute, 2007).

¹⁰ “Introduction” to *Taking Place: Location and the Moving Image*, Eds. John David Rhodes and Elena Gorfinkel (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011): viii.

¹¹ The essay in question, Meghan Sutherland’s “On The Grounds Of Television” (339-361), focuses on the ontology of television viewership, focusing exclusively on news broadcasts with limited ties to the fictional programming focused on in this project.

¹² Lury and Massey, 234.

contemporary television ecosystem, the fifteen years since Lury and Massey's conversation was published has brought significant change to the spaces where television is produced. While one could argue that the commercial imperative continues to separate all ad-supported television content from the purest of independent film productions, the rise in basic cable channels appealing to specific audiences and the increase in production for premium cable channels where subscription revenues offer greater creative freedom has made such generalizations insufficient. Although we can—and should—critique the ideological functions of the texts that emerge within these and other models, such restrictive framing of television's relationship to any form of ideology was already on shaky ground before fifteen years of industrial change that dictates a more nuanced engagement with the medium and its relationship with ideologies tied to place.

Such a clear effort to generalize regarding television's relationship with place could originate within the technological form itself, and in the basic distinction—returning to the previous chapter's discussion of the style of the multi-camera sitcom—between the cinematic use of film as opposed to the televisual use of videotape. However, Lury's discussion with Massey would appear to have taken place immediately prior to what has been discursively constructed as the modern “golden age of television,” where series like *The Sopranos* and *Sex and the City* set new baselines for both hour-long dramas and half-hour comedies in part due to their attention to aesthetic detail: in *The Essential Sopranos Reader*, William C. Siska goes as far as to posit *The Sopranos* as “Art Cinema,” an effort to legitimate the text by elevating it beyond its status of television.¹³ In *Legitimizing Television*, Michael Z. Newman and Elana Levine deconstruct this effort, accurately assessing the legitimization of television as a discursive act that

¹³ William C. Siska, “‘If all this is for nothing’: *The Sopranos* as Art Cinema,” in Online edition of *The Essential Sopranos Reader*, eds. David Lavery, Douglas L. Howard, and Paul Levinson (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2011): [Online version](#).

problematically elevates some television over other television, ascribing value in uneven and often problematic ways that seek to claim that television as a medium does not itself have claim to legitimacy.¹⁴ Rather, it is these individual programs—compared to cinema or literature—that transcend the medium, leaving the generalized notion of television’s inferiority—whether in reference to a historical past or a contemporary margin—intact.

This culture of legitimation is a double-edged sword as it pertains to the study of television’s relationship with place, particularly as it pertains to the hour-long drama. Although what Jason Mittell identifies as “complex television” includes a wide range of genres, it is most commonly associated with the contemporary hour-long television serial, of which *The Sopranos* is considered a touchstone.¹⁵ These are also the texts that Newman and Levine place at the center of discourses of quality television, a space in which the type of analysis typically reserved for film is considered more viable. As a result, series like HBO’s *The Wire* and *Treme*—both co-created by David Simon, and set in Baltimore and New Orleans—have been embraced as ideologically complex engagements with their respective cities. *Treme*, in particular, was the subject of a special issue of *Television and New Media* in 2011, and the topic for a number of panels at the 2011 Society for Cinema and Media Studies Conference in New Orleans, with many of the papers in question focused on the series’ complex relationship with post-Katrina New Orleans and the politics of race and class therein.¹⁶ Such work has crucially extended our consideration of the “cinematic city” beyond the bounds of film, engaging with television representation of location in substantive ways.

¹⁴ Michael Z. Newman and Elana Levine, *Legitimizing Television: Media Convergence and Cultural Status* (New York: Routledge, 2011).

¹⁵ Jason Mittell, *Complex TV: The Poetics of Contemporary Television Storytelling* (New York: NYU Press, 2015).

¹⁶ Special Issue on *Treme*, *Television & New Media* 13.3 (2012).

However, the intense focus on these particular texts risks creating the impression that spatial capital is not manifest within texts that lack the same claims to legitimation. There has not been the same level of analysis of Fox's 2007 drama *K-Ville*, which similarly investigated post-Katrina New Orleans—although the series' short one-season run was likely a contributing factor, the lack of prestige associated with the program and its network compared to Simon and HBO is a barrier to its consideration in these terms. Although analysis of *The Wire* and *Treme* is crucial and productive work, it remains analysis that is too often reduced to a narrow set of case studies of series that have concurrent claims to cultural capital to support analysis of spatial capital. This project has as a whole worked to frame television's relationship with place as a broad concept spanning across distinct forms, genres, and time periods, but within the contemporary environment there are certain genres—including the multi-camera sitcom, analyzed in the previous chapter—less likely to be viewed through the lens of spatial capital, despite the fact that a broadcast procedural like CBS' *NCIS: New Orleans* is watched by over ten times as many people as *Treme*, is likely to run for significantly more episodes, and features its own negotiation of spatial capital.

This is not to suggest that there should be no hierarchies in how we evaluate spatial capital: indeed, we can and must hold shows accountable for their limited engagement with place-identity through this framework, and there is ultimately productive and evaluative distinctions that will be made in this process. However, while access to cultural capital has at times enabled texts to take on equivalent spatial capital, this does not mean that texts without cultural capital have no access to spatial capital by comparison. Rather, it pushes us to think about the ways in which spatial capital and cultural capital are at times at odds, and the ways that different shows in different contexts negotiate spatial capital in distinct ways. Rather than using

distinction in order to separate some shows from the rest of television and created hierarchies of spatial capital, we must understand spatial capital functioning as a spectrum, intersecting with a spectrum of cultural capital emerging in popular, critical, and scholarly discourse.

While some research in television studies has embraced this spectrum of spatial capital, that work nonetheless runs into generalizations regarding television's capacity to engage with spatial capital more broadly. While William Sadler and Ekaterina Haskins' work on televisual depictions of New York City productively moves cross-genre to consider multi-camera sitcoms (*Friends*, *Seinfeld*), single-camera comedies (*Sex and the City*) and hour-long dramas (*Felicity*, *The Sopranos*), and resists elevating the "cinematic" HBO series above their broadcast counterparts by default, the article argues broadly that "contemporary portrayals of cityscapes on television create a 'postcard effect,' a way of seeing that affords the viewer the pleasure of a tourist gaze."¹⁷ Accepting a dichotomy between television hyperreality and the grittiness of cinematic portrayals of New York City, the article suggests that "television images of cityscapes...in location specific serials deserve critical attention as a special sort of image marketing," in the process limiting their capacity to represent a complex sense of place.¹⁸ As much as the article's structure offers a productive lens through which to think about how television engages with place, its central premise rests on problematic discourses in the opposite direction of those which acknowledge the negotiation of spatial capital in relation to the negotiation of cultural capital within the television industry—while television settings can function as an advertisement for a given location, that need not be the case, and limiting television in this way works against the sheer multiplicity of the medium.

¹⁷ William J. Sadler and Ekaterina V. Haskins, "Metonymy and the Metropolis: Television Show Settings and the Image of New York City," *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 29.3 (2005): 195.

¹⁸ 213

The complicated relationship between spatial capital and cultural capital within the study of place and television is central to this project's intervention more broadly, but it also reflects how spatial capital and cultural capital intersect within the discourses surrounding the hour-long drama as a specific televisual form. Although the distinctions between single-camera and multi-camera comedies have already offered an example of how these forms of capital intersect in popular and critical discourse surrounding television, the discourses surrounding the hour-long drama offer a rich space for considering how spatial capital is not only impacted by discourses of legitimization, but also itself functions as a legitimating tool for critics, networks and channels, creators, and locations where hour-long dramas are produced in the contemporary television landscape.

Place as Character

In the *Critical Dictionary of Film and Television Theory*, Ken Fox outlines a range of theories for understanding the functions of place in film and television (although, continuing a theme, his examples come exclusively from film). He considers a range of different ways that films have used place, whether metonymically or metaphorically, or in ways that authenticate narratives or cut against the narrative flow of a given film. However, he begins with a clear dichotomy: while “place as a backdrop” is identified as “the least sophisticated function,” in which place “invest[s] a scene or an action with aesthetic or emotional significance,” “place as character” offers scenarios where “the location becomes vital in the way the film’s narrative develops.”¹⁹ Citing examples such as Monument Valley in the work of John Ford, or New York in *On the Town*

¹⁹ Ken Fox, “Space/Place” in *Critical Dictionary of Film and Television Theory*, eds. Roberta E. Pearson and Philip Simpson (London: Routledge, 2001): 413.

(1949), Fox argues that in these cases place is “more than just a backdrop: it defines the attitudes and actions of the characters.”²⁰

Fox is drawing his categories from a 1980 article by filmmaker Michael Rappaport, and so the absence of television as a topic of conversation is unsurprising.²¹ However, in addition to being attached to various films—as evidenced in the aforementioned *Los Angeles Plays Itself*, where “Los Angeles as Character” serves as one of the discrete sections of the visual essay—it has earlier origins in literature.²² The notion of “place as character” forms a key framework for literary analysis, including a 2013-2014 class at Pitzer College entitled “The City as Character in Literature and Film”—this is logical given that in the context of the written word a sense of place is described through similar strategies as a book’s characters or situations, with authors describing place in ways that work to activate the reader’s imagination. Although the same may not be true for film and television, which rely more readily on visual signifiers of place, the discourse still emerges more broadly, as well as tied to specific genres, such as science fiction.²³ In all cases, “place as character” serves to signify an importance of place that is notable and meaningful within the context of a given text, either by how it framed in a shot or described on the page.

However, distinct from the clarity of Fox’s categories, the way that discourse is deployed in regards to television in particular is uneven. Sometimes the discourse is intangible: actress Blake Lively used the simile in order to capture how she feels about shooting The CW’s *Gossip*

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Michael Rappaport, “Place in the Cinema,” *Framework* 13 (1980): 26.

²² See the fourth chapter in Elizabeth Fowler, *Literary Character: The Human Figure in Early English Writing* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003).

²³ Philip Strick, “The Metropolis Wars: The City As Character in Science Fiction Films” in *Omni’s Screen Flights/Screen Fantasies: The Future According to Science Fiction Cinema*, ed. Danny Peary (New York: Doubleday, 1984): 43-49.

Girl (2007-2012) on location in New York, describing it as “a magical place” that “just makes me warm and fuzzy.”²⁴ In other cases, the use of the phrase calls one’s attention to the series’ conscious claims to spatial capital: in an interview for her Canadian single-camera “black comedy” series *Sensitive Skin* (2014-), actress Kim Cattrall uses her own intertextuality to compare Toronto’s role as a character in the series to New York’s role in *Sex and the City*, noting the show’s choice to focus on the city specifically—including Director Don McKeller “show[ing] the crew neighborhoods they didn’t know existed—rather than setting the show in “Nameless City, North America.”²⁵ In some cases, the lines between Fox’s categories are blurred: in an interview for the Belfast-set BBC/Netflix series *The Fall* (2013-), actor Jamie Dornan acknowledges “There’s no definitive need for it to be set in Belfast, but it’s a great backdrop. Belfast is like a character in the show.”²⁶ And in at least one case, the discourse even blurred into a television show itself: in the opening scene of the final season of NBC’s *30 Rock* (2006-2013), Liz Lemon tells her boss Jack Donaghy that she’s always seen New York as a character on diegetic sketch comedy series *TGS with Tracy Jordan*, to which Jack replies with a derisive laugh and his belief “that’s idiotic.”²⁷

²⁴ “Blake Lively: The gossip on Hollywood’s newest star,” *The Independent*, 22 August 2008, <http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/films/features/blake-lively-the-gossip-on-hollywoods-newest-star-904881.html>

²⁵ Chris Jancewicz, “Kim Cattrall on ‘Sensitive Skin,’ Making TV For Baby Boomers And Why She Took A ‘Time Out,’” *Huffpost TV Canada*, 17 July 2014, http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/2014/07/17/kim-cattrall-sensitive-skin-interview_n_5596431.html

²⁶ “The Fall’s Jamie Dornan reveals: ‘It’s fun playing a psychopath,’” *Mirror*, 12 November 2014, <http://www.mirror.co.uk/tv/tv-news/falls-jamie-dornan-reveals-its-4616724>.

²⁷ Season 7, Episode 1, “Beginning of the End.” A distinctive variant on this discourse can be seen in an interview with *Astronaut Wives Club* executive producer Stephanie Savage, wherein she argues that “the sky is like a character” in the ABC period drama series debuting later in 2015; see Dave Walker, “ABC’s ‘Astronaut Wives Club’ miniseries wraps filming in New Orleans,” *The Times Picayune*, 13 February 2015, http://www.nola.com/tv/index.ssf/2015/02/abcs_astronaut_wives_club_mini.html

These all offer examples where the discourse of “place as character” is consciously deployed by those within the television industry—or, in the case of Liz Lemon, a fictional character within the industry—as a legitimating gesture, and as a claim to spatial capital. While there are—as this chapter will outline—reasons to be critical of this discourse, Jack Donaghy’s dismissal has fallen on deaf ears when it comes to the promotion of contemporary television dramas. Showtime’s *The Affair* (2014-) is focused on the characters of Noah, played by Dominic West, and Alison, played by Ruth Wilson, who meet and begin an affair. In promotion surrounding the series, four central characters emerged: Noah and his wife Helen (Maura Tierney), and Alison and her husband Cole (Joshua Jackson). In the series’ press kit, two small hardcover books are divided between the two couples, reflecting the series itself, which evocatively divides each episode between Noah and Alison’s respective perspectives on a series of events.

As with any new series, Showtime produced a range of paratexts ahead of the series’ premiere, and as a character-driven drama series there was a video for each of the four characters with the actors describing their role within the story. However, there was also a fifth video on Showtime’s website, prominently featured in the set of revolving images on the show’s website. Although this video could have focused on one of Noah and Helen’s four children who feature prominently in the series, or Cole’s brother whose death serves as an anchor for the series’ ongoing mystery, the video instead focused on what promotional copy refers to as “an important character in the show”: Montauk, the hamlet of East Hampton, New York where the eponymous affair develops.

In the video, West acknowledges that this particular ‘characterization’ is not distinct to *The Affair*: he points out, matter of factly, that “the setting is so often this sort of other character

in the show.”²⁸ The discourse is particularly relevant to West given his involvement in *The Wire*: when that series was remastered for High-Definition and re-aired on HBO in late 2014, numerous stories remarking on the series’ legacy highlighted the role of its Baltimore setting. Washington radio station *WTOP*’s website wrote in an overview of the remaster that “the greatest character in the show is the city of Baltimore itself,” while star Sonja Sohn remarks to *Digital Trends* that “I’ve heard where David [Simon, co-creator] has said Baltimore is a character in the show.”²⁹ As observed in a general online search, similar comments emerge in the discussion sections on articles related to the show, on fan-made wikis like *TV Tropes*, and in personal blogs reflecting on the series both during its run and years after. It has even emerged as a point of comparison in reviews of related projects: in a review of 2014 documentary *12 O’Clock Boys*, which followed a Baltimore teenager over the course of three years, *The Playlist*’s Kimber Myers suggests that “In ways that won’t be surprising to fans of *The Wire* Baltimore is a character as well.”³⁰

With examples like *The Wire* and *The Affair*, “place as character” functions as a marker of distinction, connecting to larger discourses of legitimation tied to narratively complex dramas commonly associated with premium cable channels like HBO and Showtime. In *WTOP*’s story on the subject, author Jason Fraley connects the show’s depiction of Baltimore to its evolution

²⁸ “The Affair | Behind the Science – ‘Montauk’ | Season 1,” *YouTube*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=77wIxGrMIZA>.

²⁹ Jason Fraley, “HBO’s ‘The Wire’ now available in remastered HD,” *WTOP.com*, 5 January 2015, <http://wtop.com/tv/2015/01/hbos-wire-now-available-remastered-hd/>; Mike Mettler, “The Wire Cast Members Reminisce As An HD Christmas Marathon Kicks Odd,” *Digital Trends*, 25 December 2014, <http://www.digitaltrends.com/movies/the-wire-goes-hd-for-christmas-marathon-cast-members-reminisce/>.

³⁰ Kimber Myers, “Review: Documentary ‘12 O’Clock Boys’ Is A Beautifully Shot Look At Baltimore’s Dirt Bike Riders,” *Indiewire - The Playlist*, 31 January 2014, <http://blogs.indiewire.com/theplaylist/review-documentary-12-oclock-boys-is-a-brief-look-at-baltimores-dirt-bike-riders-20140130>.

over five seasons, arguing it is a character due to how “its levels of corruption [were] dissected through a different prism in each of the show’s five seasons.”³¹ The series’ gradual expansion of focus from its original interest in the police and the criminals they investigate to the dockworkers, politicians, educators, and journalists that populate the same story world charts a relationship between the discourse of place as character and the discourses of contemporary television seriality. Similarly, *The Affair*’s claims to the discourse are supported by its narrative complexity, with Noah and Alison’s respective halves of the episodes exploring different perspectives on Montauk and achieving greater dimensionality as a result.

In considering the range of contexts in which it has been used, we can broadly understand “place as character” to be a claim to spatial capital, insofar as it is designed to elevate the role of place within a given text beyond the spatial capital typically associated with a show being “set” in a particular location. Identifying place as a character suggests an increased importance placed on the spatial as an organizing principal within a series, in the case of *The Affair* elevating Montauk to fifth-billing and placing considerations of spatial capital at the heart of the text’s introduction and subsequent reception. In cases like *The Affair*, this discourse of spatial capital is deployed to lay claim to latent cultural capital consistent with serialized premium cable dramas, but in other cases we can see this legitimating gesture as aspirational. Much as *Lively* used the discourse to articulate her glossy teen soap opera on a marginalized broadcast network in more legitimate terms, ABC’s *Nashville* (2012-Present) uses DVD bonus features to emphasize its relationship with the eponymous city, deploying “place as character” as a claim to authenticity in contrast with the show’s reliance on sensationalist plot developments to drive narrative momentum.

³¹ Fraley.

Whether used in an aspirational context or activated as part of a longstanding tradition of spatial capital in premium cable, exploring a wide variety of instances where “place as character” has been deployed identifies three central factors that support the discursive claim.

Filming on Location

The sheer volume of attention paid to the role of Montauk in *The Affair* would not be the same if it were not filmed on location on New York’s Long Island. Although the discourse is not exclusively associated with texts in which a series is shot in the same location as where it is set, it tends to emerge more often in cases where locations are not asked to stand in for a different setting. The use of real Montauk locations—including, for instance, the local public library—reinforces the town’s role in the story, serving as a point of distinction when compared with other series set in the Hamptons like ABC’s *Revenge*, which—as discussed in Chapter Two—uses virtual backdrops on sound stages and location doubling in Los Angeles to signify locations from the series’ pilot that were already doubling North Carolina for the Hamptons. *The Affair*’s use of location shooting continually works against this, both in the primary shooting in Montauk along with further location shooting both in New York City—where Noah’s story begins and ends following the end of the summer—as well as on nearby Block Island, where Noah and Alison travel together in the series’ fourth episode.

While examples like *The Affair* continually use location shooting to develop spatial capital tied to the story being told, shooting on location can also be a way to tap into existing spatial capital within a given city. In his profile of AMC drama *Low Winter Sun*, set and shot in Detroit, Michigan, *The New York Times*’ David Carr argues that “*Low Winter Sun* gives Detroit a leading role,” suggesting it is a “persistent character” not only in this show, but in a range of

other television series, narrative feature films, and documentaries.³² Citing the city's reputation for urban decay, Carr's description makes it seem as though Detroit was cast in this role, which could be true given the city was consciously chosen as the setting for a remake of an existing British series of the same name.

We can therefore return to Chapter One's discussion of mobile production and consider how the spatial capital attached to location shooting may be so pivotal to a series' identity that it becomes less mobile as a result. *Under the Dome*'s decision to remain in North Carolina for a third season despite reduced tax incentives, for instance, speaks to the way that certain locations in and around Wilmington held greater spatial capital than in a typical series given that *Under the Dome* exists almost entirely within a closed society, making finding new locations to mirror those in Wilmington more challenging and potentially breaking the illusion that Chester's Mill is entirely contained within a translucent dome. Although Wilmington may not have held significantly distinct spatial capital from other states with strong incentive programs before the series began, the locations chosen became tied to its construction of a fictional location, thereby gaining spatial capital and creating gradual—rather than initial—authenticity that could support a case for Chester's Mill as a character in the CBS drama given the discourse's parameters.

However, the discourse tends to emerge in cases where there are no such barriers to authenticity; although one could make the case that New York serves as a character in sitcoms like *How I Met Your Mother* or *Seinfeld*, for example, this relies on the understanding that this is a version of New York constructed on the backlot, and not on location, which can work against such claims as compared with single-camera projects that utilize the city itself. Furthermore, we

³² David Carr, "Broken Men, Broken Place," *The New York Times*, 2 August 2013, <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/08/04/arts/television/low-winter-sun-gives-detroit-a-leading-role.html>

could also contrast shows like *The Affair* with shows like USA Network's *Royal Pains* (2009-Present), which similarly shoots on Long Island and focuses on the Hamptons, but relies on more standing sets and studio work due to tighter budgets and a larger production order. A series that shoots on location is the platonic ideal of "place as character" in the context of television production, while the degree to which location shooting is engaged within a series becomes a crucial variable for how the discourse is applied in more complicated negotiations of spatial capital within the location of production—where *The Affair* negotiates these discourses easily, *Royal Pains* would face a greater challenge based on comparatively less location work done within the series.

Active Setting of Scenes within the Landscape

Following on this, although Montauk was positioned as a character in the aforementioned video before the series premiered and its negotiation of spatial capital began within the choice to set and film the series there during pre-production, the discourse of place as character in most cases depends on the place being a visible part of the text itself. Although spatial capital can undoubtedly be connected to the interiors of buildings, the reality is that we most commonly associate a sense of place with a landscape: Andrews and Roberts, writing about landscapes and liminal, identify a landscape as a "visual index of an area of land...as viewed from a given perspective."³³ As a result, we can understand a series' relationship with spatial capital as its chosen perspective on the area of land in question, whether that is a heavily urbanized cityscape or an untouched natural landscape.

From a production perspective, locations manager Rebecca Puck Stair remarked that "when landscape is in the shot, it's usually almost a character," an acknowledgment that the

³³ Hazel Andrews and Les Roberts, Introduction to *Liminal Landscapes: Travel, Experience and Spaces In-between*, eds. Hazel Andrews and Les Roberts (London: Routledge, 2012): 1.

logistics of shooting a given scene on location are usually only undertaken if the presence of the landscape serves a specific purpose.³⁴ The effort required to activate spatial capital through setting a scene within a landscape implies a degree of importance to the production that pushes away from “setting” as a passive process toward an active engagement with place as a character in its own right.

In a case like *The Affair*, this conspicuous assertion of spatial capital comes primarily in the form of location shooting, in which the authenticity of the filming location is foregrounded through scenes vividly set within Montauk. The use of locations like farmer’s markets for crucial interactions between Noah and Alison work to map out the community over the course of the series’ first season, while key locations such as Alison and Cole’s beachfront home consciously move characters in and out of doors in the midst of scenes to foreground the home’s place within the landscape.³⁵ Although the series does rely on some green screen work during driving sequences, other location-shot scenes feature characters traveling through the landscape, including Alison’s trips through Montauk on her bicycle as well as Noah’s morning runs. Both of these practices isolate the characters through solitary modes of transportation, with the camera tracking their movement within the landscape.

This engagement with the landscape privileges productions which shoot on location, or who engage in strategic location shooting to achieve the engagement with the landscape in order to augment studio-based production in a different location as discussed with *Shameless* in Chapter Two. Moreover, virtual backlots work to emulate the placement of scenes and characters

³⁴ This was in response to an unrelated question—Stair raised the discourse herself in this instance.

³⁵ This is particularly evident in the first season’s third episode, in which the opening scene of Alison’s side of the story begins inside their home and moves onto the balcony overlooking the ocean.

within specific landscapes, albeit with the limitations attached to these constructed landscapes that lack the same instantaneous authenticity associated with location shooting. We can also consider the way in which establishing shots work to ascribe spatial capital to generic backlot spaces or cases of city-for-city doubling as an effort to create the effect of a landscape, even if the realities of production make it impossible for the camera to move wide enough to create the same effect as location shooting proper.

The privileging of location-based landscapes extends the hierarchies of spatial capital tied to location shooting in and of itself: although there remain hierarchies of spatial capital within multi-camera production determined by how often, for example, *Seinfeld* engages in street-level backlot cityscape compared with a show like *Friends*, by and large the discourse of place as character relies on engagements with the landscape more common in single-camera comedies like Comedy Central's *Broad City* or HBO's *Girls*, both of which use conspicuous location shooting to articulate particular perspectives on living as a woman in not just New York City as a larger spatial entity, but distinct neighborhoods and class structures within New York City based on the cityscapes the characters inhabit. Within the context of series where place is identified as a character, the way that series uses the landscape available to it becomes a crucial sign of how important spatial capital is to the development of its ongoing stories, and whether place plays enough of a role to bring forth discourse likening it to those who inhabit its landscapes.

Place as a Paratextual Signifier

The "Montauk" video on Showtime's website is part of a broader promotional push for *The Affair*, one which continually foregrounds its Montauk setting. The two books that were sent to critics ahead of the series' release do not feature traditional key art of the show's characters on their covers: instead, they feature images of Montauk, or at the very least images designed to

evoke Montauk. For Noah and Helen, an image of a pristine private beach works to signify Helen's parents' privileged place within Montauk's elite residents over the summer months. By comparison, the image on Alison and Cole's book is of the rocky beaches near the Montauk Point Lighthouse, the oldest in New York and a key symbol in other key art for the series, including a foreboding black-and-white landscape image superimposed with the series' title. These paratexts work to extend the role of place in a given series beyond the contexts of production and textuality, working to help shape reception of a text based on a text's given spatial capital. In cases such as *The Affair*, paratexts like the video or the press kit foreground Montauk's role in the story, which is then further reinforced by its place in the text itself.

We can look to opening title sequences as an important paratext in this regard: although *The Affair*'s is not explicit in terms of location, its foreboding beachside imagery nonetheless connects with the specificity of location, placing the characters—seen in often obscured or filtered images—within the same aesthetic space as the waves and beaches that come to signify Montauk in the other paratexts surrounding the series. While title sequences were earlier identified as a key outlet for spatial capital more broadly, they can specifically complete work designed to articulate distinct claims to place as character. In the opening title sequence to HBO's *True Detective*, which won the Emmy for Main Title Design in 2014, various landscapes from the series are superimposed on silhouettes of the series' characters, and vice versa. The visual effects work to blur the line between characters and the landscapes they occupy, a blurring that previews the series' prominent location shooting in Louisiana as well as director Cary Fukunaga's extensive use of wide landscapes throughout the eight-episode first season.³⁶

³⁶ The seasonal anthology structure of the series is also notable here, as subsequent seasons would feature an entirely new cast of characters, including a new California location.

Here we can see an example where paratexts very clearly articulate a claim to spatial capital, consciously participating in the discourse of “place as character” as a legitimating gesture. On the one hand, we can look to the fact that these paratexts are more common with texts that already have access to cultural capital more broadly—note, for instance, the limited time available to ad-supported dramas for title sequences, as compared with *True Detective*’s luxurious ninety-second opening. The type of behind-the-scenes paratexts that emerged ahead of *The Affair*’s release and which similarly coincided with the release of *True Detective* are particularly tied to prestige drama series, performing cultural capital in line with the brand identities of premium cable channels. As part of a 12-minute behind-the-scenes feature that aired on HBO ahead of *True Detective*’s release, Fukunaga suggests “the world that [the show] is set in becomes another character,” setting up a sequence in which various members of the cast and creative team speak of the crucial role Louisiana played in the series. Fukunaga describes Louisiana’s mashup of lush green landscapes and industrial detritus as “the texture of our story,” while series creator Nic Pizzolato suggests “landscape is an important part of the story we’re telling”; actress Elizabeth Reaser goes on to connect the series’ use of place to Pizzolato’s authentic experience growing up in the region, while Michelle Monaghan specifically articulates their locations in South Louisiana from the typical—and, in her construction, artificial—use of New Orleans and Bourbon Street in signifying the state. Subsequent consideration of the challenging weather and the contributions of the art department in selecting and transforming locations highlights the intensive labor and sacrifice that went into accessing such crucial spatial capital in the interest of making place a character in the series. While these paratexts can be deployed by shows like *Nashville* in DVD bonus features, HBO’s versions of such paratexts air on the network itself, as in *Game of Thrones: A Day in the Life*, a thirty-minute documentary

charting the production's multiple production crews across a variety of European locations being used in the show's fifth season.

Paratexts like these work in conjunction with interviews, critical reviews, and other ancillary texts to reinforce the role of spatial capital as evidenced in the text itself—whether experienced before, during, or following a series' run, the reiteration of the discourse of “place as character” in these locations can in some cases be more influential than the role of place in the series itself.

Place as Character as Misleading

Identifying these three guiding principles that group together texts associated with the discourse of place as character, we can understand the resulting engagement with spatial capital as a privileged one. The types of series that can afford to be produced in the same location as where they are set, and place scenes consistently within the landscape (which costs significantly more given transportation and logistics, not to mention time traveling to the location), and which is likely to coincide with significant paratextual engagement with place are selective. Series like *The Affair*, *True Detective*, *Breaking Bad*, and *The Wire* all contain meaningful negotiations of place that justify their use as examples of how spatial capital functions in dramatic television, but their dominance within these discourses does not necessarily preclude other shows from engaging with spatial capital in their own right. As a result, in addition to pushing for a consideration of shows beyond those whose claims to spatial capital are affirmed by cultural capital, I also want to critique the way this discourse understands spatial capital in the first place. As “place as character” takes on a discursive role in television culture, its actual relationship to

the text becomes wrapped up in discourses of legitimation, and the term is revealed to be a limiting and ultimately unproductive lens for television criticism.

This is particularly evident if we consider the broader engagement with spatial capital within the series in question. Although *True Detective* is positioned as a story intricately tied to its location in formal paratexts and within the series itself, HBO's behind-the-scenes feature chooses not to reveal that Pizzolato originally set his story in the Ozarks, only moving it to Louisiana when the state's lucrative production incentives made it a more feasible economic prospect.³⁷ While this negotiation of spatial capital is crucial to understanding the mobility of contemporary television production, as outlined in Chapter One, the pragmatic balancing of spatial capital with the economic realities of television production is inconsistent with the artistic construction of place as character. Whereas Pizzolato describes Fukunaga's work capturing the landscape as a South Louisiana that "nobody's ever seen before" in ways that foreground their respective authorship over the series' sense of place, the role of what Fukunaga identifies during a Television Critics Association press tour panel as the "realities of production" that pushed Pizzolato to change the series' location is obscured, along with the role of location professionals whose contributions to the production are obscured in favor of Fukunaga's vision and the art department's execution of that vision. While Fukunaga acknowledges in his answer to a press question about regional specificity that it was the original Arkansas landscapes that drew him to the series, he also carefully retains the show's ties to spatial capital, emphasizing how Pizzolato "went to work in earnest to translate the story and bring some of those themes over." In this way, they each retain authorship over the series' construction of place, and over the series as a whole,

³⁷ Alyssa Rosenberg, "Why The 'True Detective' Shot That Has Everyone Talking Is Overrated," *Think Progress*, 11 February 2014, <http://thinkprogress.org/alyssa/2014/02/11/3273741/true-detective-just-violated-potential-make-great/>.

while simultaneously obscuring—or at least not actively highlighting—how they “recast” their location in their process of turning it into a character.

Breaking Bad follows a similar pattern. The series embodies the qualities common to series in which place is framed as a character: the series is very notably shot on location in Albuquerque, continually sets scenes within the landscape, and has its sense of place reinforced through paratexts like the “Ozymandias” video released during its final season, in which Bryan Cranston’s reading of the Percy Bysshe Shelley poem is combined with a collection of time-lapse establishing images used throughout the series.³⁸ The series’ surge in mainstream attention and ratings in its final season also amplified the visibility of media tourism to Albuquerque, where the intense online appetite for coverage of the series resulted in numerous unofficial paratexts where websites such as *The A.V. Club* and *The Etc.* visited locations like Walter White’s house and the car wash where he laundered his drug money.³⁹ As noted at the beginning of this chapter, the show has subsequently been held up as a paragon for “place as character,” effectively putting Albuquerque on the map in the space of television culture and even creating a “recurring character” that remained central to discourse surrounding spin-off prequel *Better Call Saul*, which debuted in February 2015.

However, although creator Vince Gilligan and cinematographer Michael Slovis have both been positioned as the creators of *Breaking Bad*’s Albuquerque, it—like *True Detective*’s

³⁸ “Ozymandias – As Read by Bryan Cranston: Breaking Bad,” *YouTube*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T3dpghfRBHE>.

³⁹ Erik Adams, “Pop Pilgrims: We go on location with Breaking Bad,” *The A.V. Club*, 8 August 2013, <http://www.avclub.com/video/we-go-on-location-with-breaking-bad-101337>; “The ULTIMATE BREAKING BAD TOUR!! – ETC Daily, bitch,” *ETC News – YouTube*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4jZBeZ7zO3Q>. Notably, *The A.V. Club*’s video is a rare case of a location professional being placed prominently within the context of media tourism, focused on an interview with location manager Christian Diaz De Bedoya, who—consistent with the discussion at hand—refers to Albuquerque as a character in the video in question.

Louisiana—was the result of financial considerations. Gilligan originally set his story of a teacher-turned-meth cook in Riverside, California, but before shooting the pilot producer Sony Pictures Television and network AMC made it clear that the economics would not work in southern California. In a roundtable interview with Charlie Rose in the buildup to the series finale in 2013, Gilligan spoke of his reaction to the mandated move to New Mexico to take advantage of its production incentives:

They said ‘What’s the big deal, you put new license plates on that say California instead of New Mexico, it’ll be fine.’ And I’m glad they came to us with this idea, but I’m so glad I said ‘no, let’s make it Albuquerque.’ Because the sad truth of it is, unfortunately, you can’t swing a dead cat in this country without hitting a meth lab somewhere or other...It could be California, it could be—no one state has the lock on it, unfortunately.⁴⁰

These comments raise two crucial points within the conscious engagement with the discourse of “place as character.” First, Gilligan is acknowledging here that the basic concept of his series is untethered from the location in which it is set: while the popular press articles cited earlier in this chapter highlighted how intricately connected *Breaking Bad* is to its geography, Gilligan is simultaneously suggesting that it could have been set anywhere in the United States. Such a suggestion goes against the type of intricate, inherent place-based storytelling evident in shows like *The Wire* or *Treme* which originate with specific efforts to tell stories emerging out of Baltimore and New Orleans, respectively, and against the principles on which a strong connection between media and a particular city is constructed. While this does not preclude the show from engaging in the place-making activities discussed in this project in complex ways, it

⁴⁰ “The Creator and Cast of *Breaking Bad*,” *Charlie Rose*, 9 August 2013.

pushes away from spatial capital as a priority in the series' initial conception. Rather, it becomes equivalent to casting, with producers scanning the spatial economy of production for the most feasible location, and then grafting that location onto the story, a process that is less likely to create strong connections between the stories being told and the location in question.

Gilligan's narrative of how spatial capital was negotiated during the production works against these concerns, and in the process serves to legitimate his own labor relative to spatial capital. Gilligan positions himself agent of authenticity, pushing back against the studio and channel's support of city-for-city doubling in favor of setting the series in Albuquerque, similar to Fukunaga's emphasis on his and Pizzolato's respective labor in translating *True Detective* from Arkansas to Louisiana. Citing the work of Van Gennep, Andrews and Roberts argue "landscape is understood as something that is 'shaped' and 'produced,' and by which is thus contingent to human or natural 'processes or agents.'"⁴¹ In this case, Gilligan is placing himself as the figure most responsible for shaping the landscape, here constructing place as character through his conscious resistance to less authentic engagements with place. While *Breaking Bad* may not have originally been set in Albuquerque, the fact that it was his decision to do so allows him to retain authorship, whilst simultaneously reframing the series' engagement with location in similar ways to how authors construct place as character within literature, despite the expansive amount of labor that goes into constructing those images relative to the descriptive language evident in literary works, as evidenced in previous chapters.

Writers and directors like Gilligan and Fukunaga are not the only ones who articulate their labor in terms consistent with this discourse. Individual locations adopt the language of place as character as a way to appeal to both media tourists as well as media producers looking

⁴¹ Andrews and Roberts, 1.

for a location to film their next project. On the City of Albuquerque Convention and Visitors Bureau website, the bureau boasts “the city...stars as a character in [*Breaking Bad*] with film locations throughout the metro area,” and includes testimonials from Gilligan and the series’ cast that speak to the fact—in Gilligan’s words—that “Albuquerque has meant the world for *Breaking Bad*.”⁴² Here, the discourse of place as character serves as a form of tourism marketing, translating practical realities of filming—like the city’s 310 days of sunshine and a large number of productions supported by strong local incentives, all outlined on the city’s Film Office webpage for prospective producers—into a broader discursive form of spatial capital that could draw tourists in addition to future production. Such efforts further divorce place as character from the text itself—while the presence of a map of filming locations supports media tourism practices, the site does little to articulate the relationship between the show and the text, focused more on the cultural capital the show brings the city among television fans.

While Albuquerque’s use of the discourse reflects a pre-existing success, we can also see the discourse functioning in an aspirational context when it comes to specific locations without the same established production culture. Charleston, South Carolina has yet to emerge as a key hub of television production, but it made a move into television production with CBS’ *Reckless*, a summer series that debuted in 2014. In a press release sent out on behalf of the South Carolina Film Commission, recipients are invited to “meet Charleston: The Newest Cast Member on CBS’ *Reckless*.” It is suggested that “the city is central to the series’ storyline,” before outlining a series of prominent locations used in the legal drama, including the exteriors of Charleston’s City Hall and County Courthouse, along with Fountain Walk, which stands in for the local police

⁴² “*Breaking Bad* in Albuquerque,” *Albuquerque Convention & Visitors Bureau*, <http://www.visitalbuquerque.org/albuquerque/film-tourism/breaking-bad/>. There is also a “*Better Call Saul* in Albuquerque” page as of April 2015.

headquarters in the series. Duane Parrish, Director of the South Carolina Department of Parks, Recreation, and Tourism, says that they “are thrilled that the *Reckless* cast and crew have found a home in Charleston and welcomed it as a main character of the show.”

The co-opting of this discourse as an explicit marketing tool for the purposes of promoting the spatial capital of a given location would appear to support claims by Sadler and Haskins that televisual representations of place exist primarily in order to promote the locations involved. With small thumbnail images of the beautiful Charleston locations featured in *Reckless*, and suggestions that “the series really highlights all the city has to offer,” in this case Charleston being in a character in the show is effectively the state of South Carolina using production incentives to place the city of Charleston within a broadcast drama series, much as a corporation would pay in order for a product to be placed into an episode. In this release, the use of “place as character” serves as an effort to legitimate the series using a discourse that was not echoed in critical or popular discourses to the degree of other texts—although one of the series’ writers and a number of locals in Charleston took to Twitter in order to speak to how Charleston was a character in the series, another user remarked that it had failed to achieve the same level of character as in other series, specifically citing the absence of the city’s large African American population as a barrier to such claims.⁴³

However, while the promotion of *Reckless* by the South Carolina Film Commission does support Sadler and Haskins’ claims that television can function as an elaborate postcard for given

⁴³ Writer Allen MacDonald (@deathspa2) tweeted “#Charleston is a real character on #Reckless” on July 20, 2014 - <https://twitter.com/deathspa2/status/491030994548314112>; user @AzrielNeighbors wrote on August 17, 2014—across two tweets—that “A good show should make the city a character. That isn’t happening with #Reckless...African American’s [sp] certainly aren’t represented in #Reckless. #Charleston has a large black population. There is one black character” - <https://twitter.com/azrielneighbors/status/501193058902634498>, <https://twitter.com/azrielneighbors/status/501197680920756224>.

locations, it says more about the discourse of place as character than about the role of place in television drama more broadly. Although “place as character” has become shorthand to signify the importance of place within a given text, the discourse has lost a clear relationship to texts themselves through its ties to broader discourses of cultural capital, and to specific negotiations of spatial capital tied to the location of production. Rather than push us away from considering the role of place in television dramas, the discourse’s increasing emptiness pushes us to develop new ways to explore how the specific engagements with place possible in the context of the ongoing television drama engage with place identity. This is particularly true in an age where what Mittell’s *Complex TV* identifies as the “poetics of television storytelling” are reshaping our understanding of how television stories are told, and how place intersects with those narratives.

Place as Narrative Backdrop

In returning to Fox’s basic categories for the function of place, understanding place as a backdrop remains valuable. However, in considering television’s seriality as compared with film, we can understand place functioning as a narrative backdrop, with the long-term evolution of the series’ plot and its characters developing a relationship with spatial capital over the course of a show’s run. Whereas Fox notes that films like *Thelma and Louise* (1991) “[draw] attention to these places as sites of mythical imaginings, where other screen stories have been played out,” within television those mythic imaginings can become intratextual rather than intertextual.⁴⁴

Although series in which place functions as a narrative backdrop may remain engaged with place in limited ways, the seriality of television creates a distinct engagement that draws out the value

⁴⁴ Fox, 413.

of spatial capital in conjunction with the long-term development of stories and characters in an ongoing series, as identified in the previous chapter's discussion of *How I Met Your Mother*.

In the case of a series like *Breaking Bad*, place is consistently utilized as a backdrop to heighten thematic impact or draw out character distinctions as the narrative unfolds. There is a conscious engagement with the landscape in the series: in the series' pilot, for example, the bank where Walt withdraws the money to pay for the R.V. is consciously isolated, surrounded by desert and mountains. Placing Walt's scene with Jesse within the landscape as opposed to a crowded urban environment calls attention to the characters' efforts to be as discrete as possible, while also previewing their journey into the desert to complete the cook in question. That iconic location in the Navajo reservation of To'hajiilee becomes crucial again at the end of the series, when Walt buries his drug money in the same location, and ends up in the middle of a shootout trying to ensure its safety. In one of the series' most powerful engagements with spatial capital, the opening scene of "Ozymandias" calls attention to this serialized use of location: beginning with a "flashback" to previously unseen moments from the events of the pilot, that scene ends with Walt in the foreground, and Jesse and the R.V. in the background, fading away. Then, following the series' opening title sequence, we see the same location, this time with the action from the previous episode—two vehicles, Aryan gunmen, Walt, his DEA agent brother-in-law Hank, and Jesse—gradually fading in, the location the link between the past and present.

However, although To'hajiilee is central to the series' narrative, its sense of spatial capital is defined purely through its aesthetic and symbolic value to the story. It is a landscape that is given meaning through the storylines that unfold within it, but the location itself holds no agency over that story—in this case specifically, the Navajo Nation plays no significant role in the series' narrative, with the series choosing not to engage with the cultural or political

dimensions of those who own and govern the land in question. Although the episode is named after the reservation, and early speculation from *Vulture*'s Margaret Lyons—based on episodes of *The X-Files*, which Vince Gilligan wrote for, that took place on Navajo reservations—hoped that the episodes would explore the specifics of Navajo culture, the series went no further in investing the series with the place-identity of the lands its characters occupied in these pivotal scenes.⁴⁵ A Google search for “To’hajiilee,” as of March 2015, features primarily coverage of the episode by that name, with the minimalist Wikipedia page for the reservation itself pushed to second in the search results by the more-detailed Wikipedia entry for the episode of *Breaking Bad* that bears its name.

While *Breaking Bad* is undoubtedly leveraging spatial capital in these scenes, tied to its use of Albuquerque filming locations distinct from shows filmed in other parts of the country, their investment with place is limited by their selective engagement with spatial capital. Although the landscape is of significant value to the series, the place-making activities central to that community are less crucial. The community's name is actually a relatively recent development, which may in fact be part of the reason for its low Google ranking: in 2000, local high school law students petitioned to have the reservation returned to its traditional name, which means “the place where the water is drawn up,” from its original name “Canoncito,” Spanish for “little canyon,” which had been bestowed on the tribe by President Truman.⁴⁶ While crucial to the culture of this location, this information is less valuable to the series given that none of the

⁴⁵ Margaret Lyons, “Predicting What Will Happen in *Breaking Bad*'s Final 4 Episodes From Their Titles,” *Vulture*, 5 September 2013, <http://www.vulture.com/2013/09/predicting-breaking-bad-final-four-episodes.html>.

⁴⁶ “A MEMORIAL: ACKNOWLEDGING THE NAME CHANGE OF THE NAVAJO NATION CHAPTER FORMERLY CALLED CANONCITO AND NOW TO BE KNOWN AS THE TO’HAJILEE CHAPTER OF THE NAVAJO NATION,” Nevada Government Session, <http://www.nmlegis.gov/Sessions/99%20Regular/FinalVersions/HM042.html>

show's main characters are of Najavo descent, and the root narrative of the series was—as noted above—understood to lack a connection with any single location within the United States. The series took full advantage of Albuquerque and the surrounding area to serve as an evocative and distinct backdrop for the series, but the resulting representations of place show limited engagement with the complexities of spatial capital, even if they are memorable for audiences and valuable for the future of local production in the region.

Place as Narrative Engine

Every television series has a narrative engine, which is distinct from the engines that drive cinematic storytelling. In order to generate enough storylines to support an ongoing television series, a show must start with a set of themes, situations, or character relationships that sustain the series moving forward. Whether considering a high school drama or a workplace sitcom, all shows rely on one or more engines to maintain storytelling momentum through an entire season. In the context of contemporary drama, meanwhile, shows tend to rely on multiple engines, able to generate storylines that can function both episodically and serially over the course of a season or series.

Some engines are designed to last for a single season, whether in increasingly common short-order limited series like *True Detective*, or in shows like FX's *Justified* (2010-2015) where an episodic procedural engine—in this case, the Lexington, Kentucky office of the U.S. Marshal Service—is supplemented by season-long narrative engines designed to start and finish within a single season. Such serialized arcs are more common in cable dramas, while procedurals like CBS' *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation* (2000-) tend to rely primarily on narrative engines like the

workplace dynamics of a forensics lab, which in its basic day-to-day function generates over a decade of crimes to be investigated.

However, although plots and characters might be perceived as the most logical sources of narrative momentum, place is often a crucial component of these series' arc structures, and a productive narrative engine. Although it may not have been based in Louisiana originally, *True Detective* was nonetheless reworked to connect its ongoing criminal investigation to what *Slate* writer Adrian Van Young identified as the "supernaturalism" and "cultural otherness" of Louisiana Voodoo, both of which it used to construct narrative momentum within its season-long murder investigation.⁴⁷ *Justified* has primarily remain focused on Kentucky more broadly, but the series used its second season to dig deeper into the local culture of Harlan County, with a season-long arc focused on drug matriarch Mags Bennett's efforts to defend her community against the threat of a mining company's attempts to access the nearby mountain. While Martindale's Emmy-winning performance and the character's memorable exit were widely considered the season's largest contribution to the series, its use of Harlan as a narrative engine was equally crucial, grounding Mags' actions in their relationship to the community, and building a stronger sense of place that the show would continue to leverage into its final season, which was celebrated in part by a screening of the series in Harlan.

The strong relationship between seasonal serialized story arcs and place within shows like *True Detective* or *Justified* has been more likely to draw the discursive engagement with spatial capital discussed in this chapter, but place equally functions as a narrative engine within episodic procedurals like *CSI*. The show's status as part of a larger franchise, and as part of a

⁴⁷ Adrian Van Young, "Santeria and Voodoo All Mashed Together," *Slate*, 4 March 2014, http://www.slate.com/articles/arts/culturebox/2014/03/true_detective_louisiana_is_more_than_just_the_setting_it_s_the_inspiration.html.

genre that relies on small variations to a basic episodic crime-solving template, could suggest that place functions in a narrative backdrop, with the *CSI* franchise moving the same basic procedural engine from Las Vegas to Miami and New York in its subsequent spin-offs. However, while certain episodes of *CSI* may rely on non-specific establishing shots of the Las Vegas strip as a way to add flourish to rote murder mysteries with limited ties to location, Derek Kompare argues in his book on the series that “Las Vegas is an essential component of *CSI*,” specifically noting that “the component sensibilities of Vegas explored [in the chapter]—as indulgent resort, as workaday city, as mythic realm, and as environmental extreme—set the stage for a wide variety of compelling, horrific, and spectacular crimes.”⁴⁸ Here, Kompare details the how different spaces within Las Vegas function as separate yet interconnected engines for episodic storytelling, with the wilderness around Las Vegas proving as productive as the Las Vegas Strip most commonly associated with the city within the cultural imaginary; collectively, these four different points of view on the city create the diversity necessary to generate over 300 episodes of the series over fifteen seasons, as of March 2015. For a show like *CSI*, place becomes a crucial narrative engine, with any given episode able to engage with Las Vegas from a new angle, albeit within short episodic stories.

Backdrop vs./and/or Engine

While the discourse of “place as character” serves as a broad evaluation of a series’ spatial capital, separating it from shows in which place is apparently not a character, understanding place relative to narrative is not a question of definitive claims as to a series’ engagement with location, nor is it about hierarchies of spatial capital. While we could generalize and suggest that

⁴⁸ Derek Kompare, *CSI* (West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010): 54.

shows that engage in place as a narrative engine are in a better position to investigate the sociocultural dimensions of spatial capital as opposed to the visual dimensions of the landscape, this ignores the episodic and seasonal realities of television, in which a show's relationship to spatial capital will change over time.

There are, of course, exceptional circumstances where this is not true. *The Wire's* narrative structure relies on Baltimore as a narrative engine throughout its run as each of its seasonal arcs taps into a different dimension of locality (labor, politics, education, media, etc.); similarly, *Treme's* narrative development drew its anchor point from post-Katrina New Orleans, with each of its characters sharing a relationship with the socioeconomic challenges it created, and over time revealing deep connections to the cultural dynamics of contemporary New Orleans. But whereas those series may stand as exemplars of the potential for place to function as a narrative engine, most series engage with place in variations over the course of a series' run, taking varied positions on the spectrum of spatial capital referenced earlier. A show like *CSI* will have some episodes that draw on spatial capital in limited ways, as in a Season 14 episode focused on the death of an Elvis impersonator, but there are also episodes like Season 9's "Young Man With a Horn," where an abandoned casino is both the site of flashbacks to the Strip's early origins and a marker of the city outside of the Strip, heightened by the focus on a homeless suspect who has been living in the casino. These variations are inevitable as procedural dramas work to balance and utilize their various engines, diversifying storytelling and keeping the concept fresh.

For serial dramas, meanwhile, the utility of place as a narrative engine can ebb and low as the story dictates. AMC's *Mad Men* (2007-2015) began with place as a crucial narrative engine, with the separation between Don Draper's life as an ad man in Manhattan and as a family man in

the Westchester suburb of Ossining central to the show's exploration of New York in the 1960s. But when Don travels to California at the end of the second season, place functions more as a backdrop, with the change in scenery activating Don's relationship to his past and becoming symbolic of his reconciliation of Don Draper and Dick Whitman. However, by the sixth season Los Angeles is functioning more as a narrative engine, with the separation of characters between New York and Los Angeles central to both the workplace and character relationships driving the series toward its seventh and final season.

While a general statement that place has played a crucial role in the narrative development of *Mad Men* may be accurate, a more thorough understanding of how spatial capital is negotiated in the series requires a more careful analysis, considering the series' relationship with place on an episodic and seasonal level. In the case of *The Affair*, for example, its understanding of the class hierarchies of Montauk is framed by the distinct engagement with spatial capital in its two different narrative perspectives. In Noah's story, place functions as a narrative backdrop, a summer vacation in which the father becomes swept up in a Hamptons love affair that he leaves behind when he returns to New York City and the reality of his struggling marriage; Noah is ostensibly doing research for his book to be set in the region, but he never engages with the local dimensions of Montauk in any detail, never—for example—getting to the town meeting he intends to attend in the first season's third episode. For Alison, however, place is a narrative engine: in the same episode, we bear witness to the town meeting along with Alison, where her husband Cole appeals to the community to stop a commercial development by emphasizing his and Alison's roots in Montauk, building on an earlier scene at their beach house where Cole laments the lavish residential development being built by summer residents nearby. While Noah's perspective offers insight into the upper class tourists who flock to Montauk each

summer and build such houses, Alison's point-of-view emphasizes the working class locals—while the latter perspective may be complicated by Cole's family's drug-running business, their ties to the community run deeper, and the show's perspective on that community becomes deeper accordingly.

Considering shows through the spectrum of spatial capital, therefore, is about understanding how distinct narratives deployed by a given series over the course of a season or an entire series engage with spatial capital. By applying this framework to dramatic representations of a single city, like Miami, we can better understand how television narratives engage with distinct categories of spatial capital tied to specific localities, without relying on discursive claims that allow cultural hierarchies to presume spatial hierarchies where they may not exist.

Welcome to Miami: Spatial Capital in *Dexter* and *Burn Notice*

In his book on NBC drama *Miami Vice* (1984-1990), James Lyons outlines the circumstances of the series' development, and specifically turns to its sense of place early in his narrative. Series creator Anthony Yerkovich emphasized the crucial role of place in the story, telling *The New York Times* that he “wanted to explore the changes in a city that used to be a middle-class vacation land. Today Miami is like an American Casablanca, and it's never really been seen on television.”⁴⁹ However, in addition to being novel, the Miami Yerkovich observed is also a prime narrative engine for a television crime drama. Miami was undergoing a dramatic change in which increased Latin-American immigration—including the infamous 1980 Mariel boatlift—had ushered in a period of racial tension, and where the rise in the drug trade and related illegal

⁴⁹ Anthony Yerkovich, qtd. In James Lyons, *Miami Vice* (West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010): 10.

activity would reshape Miami's reputation and begin a period of significant economic growth (albeit through drug money being laundered into construction projects). Lyons remarks that the resulting

image of a subtropical city jittery on a cocktail of cocaine, currency, and construction lent itself readily to crime fiction, and De Palma's *Scarface* provided Yerkovich with the prototype for *Miami Vice*'s vision of high-rolling drug lords reveling in the trappings of the 1980s consumer boon.⁵⁰

Lyons' description captures the role that both context and intertexts play in the development of spatial capital, and in this case to how place is inscribed in a series' narrative. On the one hand, we can understand place as a narrative backdrop, relying on the visual signatures of *Scarface* as well as the constituted "image" of the socioeconomic and cultural dimensions of early 1980s Miami. However, on the other hand, we can consider how the rising crime rates offer a functional engine alongside a stylistic value to the series: although *Miami Vice* would go on to become known for its contribution to television style under the guidance of Michael Mann, embodying what John T. Caldwell identifies as a "designer televisuality," it also signals a case of spatial capital being crucial to establishing a narrative engine to generate procedural storylines.⁵¹ However, although Lyons carefully breaks down the series' evolving episodic narratives relative to its original premise, he makes no explicit links to its Miami setting, despite making those links in considering the series' stylistic evolution.

Lyons' analysis reinforces how Miami's place within television culture has been determined predominantly by its value as a stylistic backdrop, rather than as a generator of significant narrative developments. This is reflected not only in the limited place of Miami

⁵⁰ Lyons, 13.

⁵¹ Caldwell, *Televisuality*, 86.

within analysis of the series' narrative, but also in the way that Miami has been discursively constructed within more contemporary series set in the city. In one of the promotional images created for Showtime's *Dexter* (2006-2013) ahead of its first season, blood spatter analyst Dexter Morgan stands reading a copy of the fictional *Miami Star*, with the headline "Miami Killer Beats The Heat." He is wearing a colorful shirt, standing in front of a colorful backdrop, with bold hues tinting an image of what we can identify as Miami's South Beach.

If you know the plot of *Dexter*, then the contrast here is purposeful: Dexter is himself a serial killer, a vigilante who finds criminals who pass his father's "code" and murders them to take them off the streets and satisfy his "dark passenger." The more you come to understand *Dexter*, the more you understand the promotional image as one of camouflage, with Dexter using the newspaper to try to hide in plain sight, despite being a monster in the same way as the season's antagonist, the Ice Truck Killer, who graces the newspaper's cover.

The centrality of Miami in the promotion surrounding the series is a choice made by Showtime, but the setting itself was a choice made by author Jeff Lindsay, whose books served as the basis for the series. In a 2015 interview with Australia's *Cream Magazine*, Lindsay says that he "can't imagine [Dexter] being anywhere else." The interviewer, Antonino Tati, says Miami "seems the perfect setting for his dark shenanigans," and then asks Lindsay if he would agree that the city "stands for all the superficiality of the western world and yet, not far beneath it, lurks this certain darkness." Lindsay agrees with the leading question, and says "there's just something about the beautiful scenery and the palm trees and the pastel colors in the sky—all of that as the background for a headless corpse or two. It just makes it so much more interesting."⁵²

⁵² Antonino Tati, "Interview with Jeff Lindsay: Dexter's not dead...yet," *Cream Magazine*, 5 February 2015, <http://www.creammagazine.com/2015/02/interview-with-jeff-lindsay-dexters-not-dead-yet/>

Dexter says much the same in the series' pilot. Arriving at the episode's first crime scene, Dexter remarks through voiceover—a motif used heavily throughout the series—“there’s something strange and disarming about looking at a homicide scene in the daylight of Miami. It makes the most grotesque killings look staged, like you’re in a new and daring section of Disney World”—he dubs this “Dahmerland,” after noted serial killer Jeffrey Dahmer. There is brightness to Miami, which makes for a strong contrast with the darkness of a crime series, especially one as dark as *Dexter*. One of the other crime scenes in the show’s pilot takes place in a brightly lit Miami living room, with white furniture against white walls, which is that much more effective for showcasing the blood spatter Dexter uses to paint the audience a picture of the gruesome crime that took place. As Dexter says observing another crime scene in the series’ second episode, “Crocodile,” “another beautiful Miami day: mutilated corpses with a chance of afternoon showers.”

In promotional material ahead of the series’ debut, Showtime positioned Miami as part of what would make *Dexter* “thought-provoking,” “complex,” and “fascinating” drama. Identifying that the series would be shot in both Miami and Los Angeles, they suggest “the series captures the unique vibe and scenic vistas of South Florida. Gone are the pink flamingos, neon stucco and pastel suits of yore—this Miami is a character all its own.” The deployment of the discourse of “place as character” is unsurprising, similar to the series’ claims to their use of place transcending those which came before. Executive producer Clyde Phillips tells would-be viewers “we are trying to show the Miami that you haven’t seen,” and that while they are shooting on location in Los Angeles and “in interesting parts of Miami,” *Dexter* is ultimately “a show that’s

filmed on location in Dexter's soul, and it's all through his eyes that we are watching his own home movie."⁵³

As noted above, these discursive claims to spatial capital have issues in their own right, particularly in the claims to be shooting on location in "interesting" parts of Miami—interesting to whom, and in what way? However, more importantly, the series is an ideal example of a case where place is positioned as crucial to a series when it in fact serves predominantly as a backdrop for narrative action unrelated to the location in question. While symbolic and evocative, extending from Lindsay's use of Miami in his novels, Dexter's negotiation of spatial capital showcases an uneven and limited engagement with the cultural identity of the Florida city, accepting its function as an "interesting" place to set this story, rather than a necessary dimension to telling it. It also demonstrates the challenge of engaging with spatial capital within serial narratives that consistently pull the character in question away from the spatial capital located in minor, episodic dimensions of the series' setting.

In the series' pilot, the spatial capital of Dexter's Miami is activated in three ways. The first is through location shooting in Miami, which features more prominently in the early episodes than later in the season, and all but disappeared as the show moved deeper into its run. The opening scene of the pilot features Dexter driving through South Beach at night, with its art deco hotels and bright neon lights. South Beach is crucial spatial capital within mediated images of Miami, with *Time Out Magazine* noting in 2014 that "every Miami scene ever filmed in any movie seems to have been shot here."⁵⁴ This iconography is subsequently supported by the second point of activation, Dexter's voiceover, which dominates the series' point-of-view, and

⁵³ Official Press Release, *Dexter* Season One, found reprinted at <http://www.freewebs.com/dextermorgan/aboutdexter.htm>

⁵⁴ "South Beach neighborhood guide," *TimeOut Magazine*, 15 September 2014, <http://www.timeout.com/miami/south-beach>

completes work—including those quotes mentioned above—to engage audiences with regards to the series' setting. As Dexter drives through South Beach, he remarks that “Miami is a great town. I love the Cuban food, the pork sandwiches—my favorite. But I’m hungry for something different now.”

In addition to voiceover, the episode itself doubles down on food as a cultural referent, with Dexter and his girlfriend Rita attending an outdoor clam bake toward the end of the episode, with Dexter’s voiceover remarking that this is what normal people do for fun. Beyond these three primary place-making activities evidenced in the pilot, the series also uses Latin music over multiple sequences, calling attention to Miami’s substantial Latino community. This extends to two of the series’ characters, Angel Batista and Maria La Guerta, who are both written as being of Cuban descent, although this information is never explicitly addressed in the pilot. In the case of Batista, his Latin heritage is evident primarily through the fact that he continually peppers his sentences with randomly inserted Spanish words, while Dexter also randomly throws Spanish into his interactions with Batista. In “Crocodile,” the show continues to use language as a signifier, this time with Batista and LaGuerta having a conversation in Spanish without subtitles, working to articulate their shared heritage and the place of Cuban culture within the series’ Miami.

These place-making activities are effective at activating basic forms of spatial capital: it is clear that *Dexter* is set in Miami, and the series acknowledges basic facts about Miami’s culture—the language, the music, the food—to engage the audience’s own knowledge of the location. The show even inspired one ambitious fan, Gary Wayne, to devote significant time and energy to document the real location of every space featured in the series, using Google Maps and other forms of online forensics to discover which locations were really in Miami, and which

were shot on location in Long Beach, California. The spatial dimensions of his fandom speak to the series' commitment to spatial capital, and to the effectiveness of these place-making activities both in the series' pilot and throughout the show.

However, notably, none of the storytelling in either the first or second episode is driven by that culture. While various Miami locations serve as effective backdrops, the specific details of the Ice Truck Killer's murders have little to do with Miami, and Dexter himself shares no clear relationship to the local culture despite having grown up there. That the seasonal arc would be tied more to Dexter as a character than to Miami as a city makes sense, but it also limits the opportunities for the show to engage with place as a narrative engine. When the series focuses more on Miami in an episode where the Ice Truck Killer is leaving body parts around the city, the locations involved are all framed through their connections to Dexter's past. While the investigation eventually touches on the city's redevelopment, with one detective remarking that "the whole fucking city of Miami reinvents itself every five years," the point is raised primarily as a thematic backdrop for Dexter, who is haunted by his past and is confronting a fellow serial killer who knows his secrets. The Ice Truck Killer would be the first of eight seasonal arcs in the series that largely ignored the function of place as a narrative engine, content to play out the "interesting" contrast of Dexter's line of work set against the sunny Miami backdrop.

This is not to suggest that *Dexter* entirely ignored the possibilities presented by Miami for generating narrative developments. The show twice frames Dexter's work through statistical details about Miami, albeit not positive ones: in the pilot he remarks that "with the solve rate for murders at about 20%, Miami is a great place for me. A great place to hone my craft. Viva Miami." He further notes that "Florida prisons kick free 25,000 inmates a year" in "Popping the Cherry," which is tied to one of the episodic storylines that Dexter uses to flesh out its

storytelling. The show would often pair small developments in its ongoing case with Dexter investigating and eventually murdering a criminal. During the middle of the first season, one of these stories stretches across two episodes, and focuses on a human smuggler who is murdering those who illegally immigrate from Cuba but are unable to pay his fees. However, in “Crocodile,” which is the first episode to feature a substantial storyline of this nature, the character of Matt Chambers is consciously identified as a traveler, who tells Dexter that “there’s nothing a new city can’t cure” as he celebrates getting off on his latest hit-and-run rap. The series’ average victim was not a character engineered out of the Miami setting, but rather a stock character placed against the Miami background for dramatic effect.

While *Dexter* may well have explored locations in Florida that are shot less often than South Beach, it nonetheless relied on pre-existing forms of spatial capital to serve as a narrative backdrop, utilizing other locations predominantly as generic symbolic capital as opposed to spatial capital tapping into the specificity of Miami as a location—there are certainly no voiceovers to contextualize such locations within the sociocultural dimensions of Miami more largely. The series’ gradual shift to exclusively shooting in Long Beach and doubling for Miami is indicative of the role place plays within the storytelling: it is the most basic forms of spatial capital offered by Miami—the sun, the blue skies, the palm trees—that Dexter seeks as its backdrop, rather than any specific locations that speak to the series’ storytelling. And in cases where the series’ storytelling would seem to contradict the geographic realities of Florida, as in a scene in the show’s fourth season that revolved around a basement that even *Entertainment Weekly* points out would be highly unlikely to exist in Miami, it is evidence that Miami’s value

to the series lies in its symbols, and not in a deeper exploration of its contemporary spatial capital.⁵⁵

Dexter's appropriation of the symbolic dimensions of Miami's spatial capital functions similarly to cases like *Breaking Bad* or *True Detective*, wherein a base serialized storyline is inflected—rather than generated—by location. Over the course of the series' run, the continued presence of racial diversity and the series' use of the surrounding swampland in contrast with Dexter's white suburban existence would undoubtedly continue to connect to Miami in meaningful ways, but these negotiations of spatial capital are rarely connected to the negotiation of the show's serialized narrative on a significant level. In general, serialized storytelling tends to be primarily drawn from plot and characterization, with place considered more of a static object despite the ways in which spatial capital can fluctuate over time. The same is true for USA Network's spy drama *Burn Notice* (2007-2013), which in its love of non-specific establishing shots of bikini-clad women on South Beach and waves lapping onto the city's beaches epitomized the channel's "blue skies" programming philosophy—in fact, former NBC Universal Cable Entertainment president Bonnie Hammer revealed in a 2009 interview that the series was originally set in Newark, in "rat-infested alleyways," prompting her to request a change in location.⁵⁶ "A couple weeks later," she explains, "we got the same fabulous voice in sexy Miami. It brought a sense of humor and levity to the series." In this way, the show's Miami setting was a conscious effort to retain what this "blue-skies feel," albeit a case where place would seem to have been incidental to the genesis of character and plot in the pilot's original conception.

⁵⁵ Missy Schwartz, "From the Mom Blog: Dear 'Dexter,' there are no basements in Florida," *EW.com*, 4 December 2009, <http://www.ew.com/article/2009/12/04/mom-blog-dexter-basement-florida>

⁵⁶ Dan Snierson, "USA Network's secrets for success," *EW.com*, 13 November 2009, <http://www.ew.com/article/2009/11/13/usa-networks-secrets-success-0>

Despite this, *Burn Notice* is another series in which place has been identified as a character in the show, both in interviews with co-stars Bruce Campbell and Gabrielle Anwar and in discourse surrounding efforts to keep the show's production in Miami.⁵⁷ The importance of Miami is reinforced in the text itself: although—as evidenced by the series' original Newark setting—Michael Westen could have been dropped into any city after being blacklisted by the CIA, the opening montage that begins each episode continually reinforces that it was Miami, where Michael grew up but has not visited for some time. The series' serial through line focuses on Michael's efforts to escape from Miami, investigating the people who “burned him” and trying to re-enter the agency. In these circumstances, Miami serves as a narrative backdrop to Michael's quest for redemption, as he gradually discovers that his real home is with his friends and family in a setting that suits USA's brand identity needs.

In this way, *Burn Notice* functions similarly to *Dexter*, but the series' balance of serial and procedural narratives is distinct. While the serial components of *Burn Notice* show little engagement with the cultural specificity of its Miami setting, they make up a small portion of the series in its early seasons. While most episodes of the show involve some type of connection to the ongoing storyline, in many episodes this constitutes only a few scenes, compared to *Dexter* where the Ice Truck Killer storyline is the dominant narrative engine in most of the first season's episodes. Instead, *Burn Notice* relies more heavily on episodic storylines in its early seasons, with the procedural engine of Michael taking on freelance jobs to make ends meet driving the

⁵⁷ Matt Mitovich, “*Burn Notice*'s Gabrielle Anwar Ponders a Combustible Coupling,” *TVGuide.com*, 18 June 2009, <http://www.tvguide.com/news/burn-notice-anwar-1007038/>; Brian Gallagher, “Bruce Campbell Talks ‘Burn Notice,’” *Movieweb*, 2 June 2009, <http://www.movieweb.com/bruce-campbell-talks-burn-notice-2>. The discourse also emerged in a Facebook discussion celebrating the show staying in Miami for its final season, with one user noting that “Miami IS a character in the show!!!” Another user requested they film at their mother's museum.

plot of most episodes. This engine is also distinct in the fact that it offers a greater variety of storylines for Michael to investigate: *Dexter*'s procedural engine of either fellow killers whom Dexter eliminates as a vigilante or cases being investigated by the Miami Police Department's Homicide Unit relies on the victims and perpetrators of violent crime, providing a limited vantage point into the culture of the city. By comparison, Michael Westen's set of skills are applied more broadly, allowing him to battle the same cartels as the Miami P.D. in one episode while helping one of his mother's friends from a scam artist who conned her out of her retirement savings in another.⁵⁸

Similar to *Dexter*, the series' approach to Miami is reinforced in part through voiceover narration: As Michael notes upon waking up in Miami following being "burned,"

Most people would be thrilled to be dumped in Miami—sadly, I am not most people. Spend a few years as a covert operative, and a sunny beach just looks like a vulnerable tactical position with no decent cover. I've never found a good way to hide a gun in a bathing suit.

This voiceover echoes Dexter's detached relationship with Miami as a location, and draws out a similar contrast between Michael and Miami as was evident in the Showtime series between Dexter and Miami. The voiceover plays over a sequence of images of women in bathing suits, a recurring motif that is joined by watersports and other beachside activities in the series' plentiful non-specific establishing shots. As compared with *Dexter*, however, the series uses more substantial location shooting, given it was exclusively shot in Miami over its seven seasons, meaning that Michael's voiceover plays out between scenes of the character walking along South Beach, and in an episode shot exclusively in and around the city.

⁵⁸ While cartels are a consistent antagonist in the series, Madeline's retiree friends emerge less often, although one forms the basis for the series' second episode, "Identity."

However, these sun-soaked establishing shots and voiceover claims to spatial capital do not function alone, connecting to the pilot's episodic storyline. The plot sees Michael get involved in the case of Mr. Pyne, a rich condo developer—who are “everywhere nowadays,” according to an art dealer Michael interviews as part of his investigation—and a victim of theft in the form of \$22 million worth of goods missing from his waterfront estate. Michael is brought in to help clear the name of Pyne's Cuban caretaker, Javier (coincidentally played by David Zayas, who plays Batista on *Dexter*)—upon first meeting with Pyne, Pyne places Javier's presumed guilt in the eyes of the police in light of Miami's racial politics: “This is Miami—any incident and the police blame the nearest Cuban, or Haitian. You should have seen how they were all over my gardeners.” In this scene and the one previous, stunning views of Miami's skyline can be glimpsed in the background, working in conjunction with the work done to establish Miami's local culture in previous scenes. However, the dialogue in the sequence works to outline the cultural politics of that skyline, emphasizing the racial dimensions of the case.

Moreover, the storyline engages the class politics of Miami, with the rich condo developer's manipulation of his Cuban caretaker framed in light of Miami's intense redevelopment. When Pyne is revealed to be a corrupt real estate developer who stole from himself for the insurance money to cover his corrupt business dealings, it gives new meaning to the Miami skyline in the distance, as well as the non-specific establishing shots of waterfront condo developments used at various points in the episode. This intersection of race and class is built into the series' procedural engine, with Michael's cases often focused on those who are marginalized by society more broadly. In the pilot, a larger investigative firm refers the case to Michael when it is considered “too small,” but Michael's disadvantaged position in Miami makes it ideal for his situation, similar to the season's seventh episode, “Broken Rules,” where

Michael is enlisted to help a local merchant in Miami's Little Havana neighborhood, or season two episode "Truth and Reconciliation," where Michael assists a Haitian national whose daughter was imprisoned and executed for speaking out against a corrupt government regime. In these cases, the show's narrative engine embeds Michael in the struggles facing these communities, and moves beyond the notion—expressed in the expositional sequence that opens each episode—of being "dropped in a city" to embrace Miami as a narrative engine in and of itself.

The show also does this through one of its standing locations, as Michael takes residence in an abandoned warehouse space. The warehouse—dubbed "The Loft"—stands as a symbol of Miami's uneven redevelopment, which would intersect with reality when the building that was used for establishing shots of the location was torn down in the midst of production on the final season, as tweeted by star Jeffrey Donovan and confirmed by would-be media tourists on social media. The destruction of the Loft was not the only such case of Miami's redevelopment intersecting with the series, as starting in 2008 the series and its producers Fox Television Studios engaged in an ongoing struggle over the Coconut Grove Convention Center, an abandoned complex that had been retrofitted into a production studio for use on the series.⁵⁹ Plans to demolish the building in order to install a public park would drag on for five years, finally culminating in the demolition of the complex the summer following the end of production on the show's seventh and final season in 2013.⁶⁰ During the initial 2008 conflict, *The Miami Herald* reported that the city sought to terminate the show's lease in July—when confronted by

⁵⁹ Douglas Hanks, "Lease dispute could send 'Burn Notice' out of Miami," *The Miami Herald*, 21 November 2008, <http://www.miamiherald.com/business/story/781024.html>

⁶⁰ Booby Brooks, "Coconut Grove Convention Center Demolition Begins," *NBC Miami – Channel 6*, <http://www.nbcmiami.com/news/Coconut-Grove-Convention-Center-Demolition-Begins-230660541.html>.

the fact that shooting was scheduled to take until September, the city allegedly inquired why the production couldn't simply shoot seven days a week to meet schedule, a notion that suggests a very limited respect for the labor of all crew both above- and below-the-line working on the production.⁶¹

These negotiation of spatial capital tied to the series' production are echoed in the series itself, which would set scenes in abandoned condo developments and foreclosed mansions as the 2008 recession dramatically changed the realities of the real estate market over the course of the series' run. However, such developments would never emerge as the series' primary narrative motivation: although the engine at the heart of *Burn Notice* is well-suited to exploring the cultural politics of Miami as a distinct location, the spatial capital engaged by the series was limited by the series' place within USA Network's programming block. In the era of "Blue Skies" programming in which *Burn Notice* was a strong anchor for the channel, the show's storylines leaned toward the action-packed, high stakes spy storylines that brought Michael into contact with drug dealers, human traffickers, and other threats that hearkened back to the Miami of *Miami Vice*. In these episodes, Miami shifts into functioning as a narrative backdrop, wherein basic realities of crime in the city are extrapolated for the most exciting procedural cases possible. However, the structure of the narrative engine still *allows* for more complex negotiations of spatial capital, in a way that *Dexter*'s heavier focus on serialized storylines disconnected from location did not.

Although the "Blue Skies" brand would begin to fade as *Burn Notice* concluded its run, pushing shows more toward edgier, serialized storytelling, this change did not push the series toward embracing Miami as a narrative engine. Instead, as *Burn Notice* pushed further toward

⁶¹ Hanks.

serialized storytelling in its sixth and seventh seasons, its narrative engine shifted almost exclusively to Michael's quest to restore his place within the espionage community, a shift that pushed the show further away from the specificity of its Miami location. Whereas we often associate complexity with seriality, in this case the complexity of the serialized case pushed the Miami location further into the background, replacing an episodic engine with the potential for stories rooted in Miami's spatial capital with a serialized engine tied to global espionage. Although the show's episodic storylines drew on this spatial capital inconsistently, they still represented an opportunity for more culturally specific storytelling, which would fade as the series moved away from its initial premise.

Miami nonetheless holds a crucial place in *Burn Notice*'s series finale: after Michael and Fiona fake their own deaths and escape to a wintry cottage, the first shot inside the location is of a Miami snow globe.⁶² Although not identical to the one that Michael gave Fiona in episode eight of the series' first season, upon discovering she collected them, it nonetheless places the city at the heart of its ending even as its protagonist is forced out of the city and into hiding. The relationship between *Burn Notice* and Miami, however, was built primarily in episodes that lacked such major plot development, and in episodes that may be considered 'skippable' if the series is being viewed with character or plot as the primary narrative engines. In considering place as a narrative engine, we can identify episodes where *Burn Notice* utilized its procedural structure to explore the local dimensions of its Miami setting, whilst also observing how shifts in how the show told its stories would push away from that locality and turn Miami into a meaningful—but also limited—backdrop by the time the series came to its conclusion.

⁶² The establishing shot in question is very noticeably from the 2006 feature film *The Holiday*, creating a point of intertextual confusion that complicates the supposed anonymity of the locale for the audience.

Conclusion

Currently, Miami is represented on television by The CW's *Jane the Virgin* (2014-), a comedic drama based on the Venezuelan telenovela *Juana le Virgen*. However, there have been no billboards erected in Miami celebrating the series' success, which includes earning a Golden Globe for lead actress Gina Rodriguez, an early second season renewal, and a Peabody Award. The show—which follows a young Latina woman, Jane Villanueva, who is accidentally inseminated during a doctor's visit—may be set in Miami, but it has never filmed there, relying exclusively on city-for-city doubling based out of California's Manhattan Beach. No one is calling Miami a “character” on *Jane the Virgin*: when asked about the choice to set the show in Miami during a Television Critics Association press tour panel, given that California itself could have played host to the series' multi-generational Latina family unit and beachside hotel storyline, showrunner Jennie Urman suggested that was a “specific energy and vibe” to the city, and that it felt right as she was writing the pilot from her backyard in southern California's Sherman Oaks.⁶³ While this comment reinforces the role that authorship plays in considering how series engage with spatial capital, Urman makes no attempts to emphasize this spatial capital, largely accepting the setting as a secondary construction of the series' narrative.

However, while the show's wide variety of narrative engines calls attention to its telenovela roots, the family drama at its center plays out with a degree of specificity, as Florida is

⁶³ Lisa de Moraes, “TCA: CW's ‘Jane The Virgin’ EP Ben Silverman Hopes Show Name Bunches Undies Of Conservative Groups,” *Deadline*, 18 July 2014, <http://deadline.com/2014/07/tca-cws-jane-the-virgin-ep-ben-silverman-hopes-show-name-bunches-undies-of-conservative-groups-806061/>. The article also suggests that the critic who asked the question regarding location “seemed to think they were owed an explanation why the show is set in Miami,” but for the record, as the person who asked the question, no such accusation was inherent to the question.

home to the country's largest collection of individuals of Venezuelan descent. The character of Alba, Jane's grandmother, is the show's strongest tie to this heritage, notably speaking Spanish in the household despite understanding English, and thus necessitating subtitles and expanding the show's engagement with the role of language in Latino/a communities. However, most notably, Alba is in the United States illegally, a fact that emerges most prominently during a hospital stay mid-way through the first season where Alba faces medical repatriation, in which hospitals forcibly deport undocumented immigrants. Utilizing the series' omniscient "Latin Lover Narrator," who often uses on-screen chyrons to engage with the narrative, the episode assures audiences that "yes, this really happens. Look it up." The chyron then uses the hashtag "#ImmigrationReform" to encourage audiences watching live to tweet about the injustice involved in this practice.

These concerns are not exclusive to Miami: medical repatriation is a problem across the country, and the Villanueva family could be facing similar challenges in a range of other cities (including Los Angeles, where the series is produced). However, the family drama engine within the series nonetheless shares a clear tie with Miami, one that has the potential to activate latent spatial capital inherent to the series' setting depending on the direction it goes in upcoming seasons. Its access to this spatial capital is not determined by where it is shot, or promotional paratexts, or the series' use or disuse of the Miami skyline in its storytelling—rather, it is determined by the stories it tells and how it tells them, with its sense of place continually under construction as its narrative engines evolve. *Jane the Virgin* may lack a clear discursive claim to spatial capital as understood within popular television culture, but a closer investigation of its narrative structure reveals the potential to explore the place identity of Miami in greater detail as the series progresses.

This chapter has emphasized the importance of such close readings in considering the place of spatial capital within dramatic television programming. Dramatic television is a televisual form where discourses of spatial capital often function in conjunction with discourses of cultural capital, as hierarchies privileging complex serial cable series over basic cable procedurals emerge through discursive frameworks such as “place as character,” which is applied unevenly and often in spaces independent of the text itself. The place of spatial capital within forms of channel branding, program promotion, and critical discourse is crucial to understanding how space and place function within television culture, but they also offer a misleading image of how spatial capital actually functions within dramatic series. In proposing alternate frameworks—place as narrative backdrop and place as narrative engine—for engaging with spatial capital in such series, this chapter focuses on the way television stories are told, and the way the spatiality of those stories is best understood through careful analysis of the text as opposed to claims to spatial capital manifesting in interviews or press releases.

The chapter’s demonstration of this methodology on dramatic depictions of Miami reinforces two challenges to accepting these generalized discourses of spatial capital. In the case of *Dexter*, the series’ claims to a complex Miami worthy of being considered a character are deconstructed by the series’ limited capacity to engage with the complex place identity of the city, rendering Miami an evocative backdrop largely employed as symbolic capital in contrast with Dexter’s “dark passenger.” However, in the case of *Burn Notice*, the difficulty of generalizing spatial capital goes deeper: not only does the series push beyond the low cultural standing of the USA procedural to engage with spatial capital through a narrative engine capable of nuanced engagements with place identity, but it also abandons that engine as the series progresses, its engagement with Miami’s spatial capital shifting as the series shifted priorities in

later seasons. It is a reminder that as television shows evolve, whether through adding new characters or new ways of telling stories, their relationship with location shifts accordingly. Similarly, all shows used as case studies in this project have explored their respective locations to different degrees depending on either seasonal arcs or episodic storylines, meaning that their negotiation of spatial capital is an ongoing process as opposed to a static component of their respective origins.

The interwoven relationship between place and fictional narratives reveals the complexity of spatial capital, and the close analysis necessary to unpack its relationship to televisual forms. However, it is not only fictional narratives where such complexity must be unpacked, as the next chapter's exploration of television's engagement with "real" spatial capital explores in greater detail.

Chapter 5

The Real (and the) World: Hyperliminal Ritual and the Spatial Economy of Reality Television

In its third season, CBS reality series *Survivor* (2000-Present) traveled to Africa, where each week's tribal council was held amidst a collection of straw-roofed huts on a nature reserve in Kenya. In the season finale, the show returned from commercial break after the final votes had been cast, and host Jeff Probst began to read the votes and determine the winner between Ethan Zohn and Kim Johnson.¹ While the show was still in its infancy, this was counter to how the vote had been handled in the previous season, where Probst had collected the votes in Australia and traveled back to Los Angeles to reveal the results in front of a live studio audience; instead, it was a return to the structure of the first season, which was filmed before the series became a national phenomenon and substantial ratings draw for CBS, where the result was also revealed on location.

However, when Probst revealed the fourth and deciding vote for Zohn, something strange happened: a crowd erupted. As Zohn celebrated his victory, the camera panned back to reveal that the tribal council set we presumed was still in Kenya was in fact on a soundstage at CBS Television City in Los Angeles, California. As the "reality" of the situation set in, one realizes the lengths executive producer Mark Burnett had gone to in order to trick the show's audience: contestants had to match clothing and facial hair growth, the set designers had to build a close facsimile of something originally constructed nearly ten thousand miles away, and the lighting

¹ "The Final Four: No Regrets"/"Winner Revealed," *Survivor Africa*, Episodes 13/14, Jan. 10, 2002.

and camera operators needed to recreate the aesthetic achieved within an outdoor space in an indoor environment. It is enough work that it raises an important question: what, exactly, was accomplished through this elaborate ruse?

One could argue that Burnett was simply trying to create a memorable television moment, and it would be difficult to suggest he was unsuccessful: it has been over a decade since the episode aired in January 2002, and I still vividly remember the gymnastics going on in my brain when that applause started. But while there is no clear sense of why Burnett and his crew chose to pull one over on the audience, the fact remains that, regardless of their motives, it was the viewer's sense of place the show disrupted in an effort to create buzz and excitement around the series.

It represents a logical decision considering the degree of spatial capital embedded within the *Survivor* format. Given the similarities between each season's respective casts, place was originally what differentiated one season from another, transitioning from Borneo to the Australian Outback and then to Africa (and then to other locations in subsequent seasons).² Additionally, the game typically begins with each tribe using a map to navigate to their tribe encampment, which in the case of the Africa season was surrounded by a Boma fence to keep out dangerous predators. Establishing shots throughout the season highlight those predators and the expanse of the Kenyan landscape, while each week's episode ends with a ritualized journey to tribal council for the tribe unlucky enough to lose that week's immunity challenge. When the camera pulled back to reveal that what the audience at home believed to be Kenya was in fact Los Angeles, it was not simply contradicting the scene we had witnessed before the commercial

² *Survivor* would later move away from this structure of place-based differentiation when, for financial reasons, they began shooting back-to-back seasons in the same location in 2009. The two seasons to be produced in 2015 in Cambodia are the first to be produced in an entirely new location since 2012.

break: it was contradicting fourteen weeks worth of spatial certainty in which that location and those people were located within a space we had been asked to associate so strongly with those Kenyan landscapes.

Survivor's spatial subterfuge is an isolated incident, one that the show has—as of yet—never repeated, and one that no other show has attempted. However, it captures both the complexity and the prominence of what one could refer to as “reality space”: the locations, sets, and other televisual spaces that constitute the geography of reality television. While this project has demonstrated the degree to which all televisual space is mediated, and the way all television engages in the negotiation of spatial capital, the space of reality television is particularly fraught with ties to both the presence and absence of everyday space within a postmodern media environment. The crisis created by the sudden shift in place-identity in the above example may be a special case, but it offers a microcosm of broader tensions regarding how spatial capital is engaged within the context of reality programming.

Following on earlier chapters, I will argue here that we can understand the spatial economy of reality television through analyzing the ways space is ritualized—and, to a lesser degree, disciplined—through the mode of production that typifies the genre and through the textual codes that have emerged to shape the text of reality television. However, the chapter must also confront the distinct spatial capital of reality programming, which both reinforces and challenges the argument of the project thus far. Its aesthetic of surveillance foregrounds concerns over discipline, its conversion of real spaces into televisual ones is a potent form of ritualization, and its origins served as the archetype for Jean Baudrillard's seminal consideration of postmodernism; however, at the same time, reality television's modes of production further complicate the question of who is responsible for negotiating spatial capital, while its intense

postmodernity raises distinct questions about how regional and national spaces—and the identities tied to these spaces—are mediated in a televisual context.

This chapter, in acknowledgment of reality television's distinct mode of production compared to the scripted narrative programming discussed so far in the project, rearticulates the project's framework of the spatial economy of television production to account for the genre's breadth and diversity. While certain principles—including textual strategies for representing place discussed in Chapter Two—are consistent across most types of television programs, the different modes of production analyzed in this project thus far have continually expanded our understanding of how both production and textuality shift in relation to questions of cultural geography. Reality television's heightened level of production—where the production and the liminal rituals therein are made visible within the text, in what I will describe as hyperliminality—reaffirms the importance of expanding questions of representation beyond the text itself, while the direct ties to so-called reality engage in potent—if not necessarily realistic—relationships between what is seen on screen and the spaces and places being depicted.

To explore these hyperliminal rituals more carefully, the chapter will consider the case study of reality competition formats, first focusing on *The Amazing Race* (2011-Present). The series, which has numerous international versions based on the American format, is built around hyperliminal rituals distinctly designed to articulate spatial capital, making it an ideal case study for investigating how values of space and place are negotiated through reality programming. Moreover, the series creates a framework for understanding reality competition formats as vessels for spatial capital, given they remain one of the last forms of programming with distinct ties to the nation as they are adapting for distinct markets. Through close analysis of textual depictions of national, regional, and local identity and discourse surrounding multiple versions of

the format, the chapter considers how hyperliminal rituals of reality competition formatting struggle to engage with the intersections of place-identity inherent to the locations visited and mediated. Following this, the chapter expands to consider how understandings of reality television's spatial economy require exploring the local dimensions of many of these hyperliminal rituals to fully understand how spatial capital inflects the experience of those participating and the labor of those involved, with a participant observation case study of regional auditions in reality competition formats.

The dislocation of this project's title has been evident throughout its varied case studies, and speaks broadly—returning to the introduction—to instances where the location and relocation inherent to television's negotiation are made visible and come into contact—and often conflict—with our understanding of space and place. In examples like *Survivor* tricking its audiences into believing it was still in Africa, this dislocation of television's spatial economy is itself made visible, establishing the producers' authority over spatial capital as rendered through reality television. However, in this chapter I will argue that such visible dislocation is inherent to reality television's textuality, as its emphasis on hyperliminal ritual openly reveals and engages with its negotiation of spatial capital. However, rather than accepting or dismissing this relationship between reality television and “real” places as the postmodern hyperreal, this chapter will explore the dynamic sets of decisions and consequences that function within these rituals, which can differ both between formats and between different versions of the same format. If previous chapters have explored how spatial capital is harnessed to develop fictional depictions of real places, this chapter explores how negotiations of spatial capital function within a spatial economy that retains a stronger discursive connection to the “real” and the categories of place-identity attached to it.

Reality's Spatial Economy and Hyperliminal Ritual

I was visiting the Santa Monica Pier as a tourist in April 2009, and upon entering Pacific Park—the Pier's amusement park—I was confronted by a sign at the park's entrance. Hastily taped to a planter, the posterboard informed visitors that

filming of a television program, *Dancing with the Stars*, is taking place beyond this sign and in this area. By entering this area, you hereby grant to BBC Worldwide Productions, LLC...the right but not the obligation to photograph and/or videotape you.

This is essentially a legal contract—the sign concludes by noting that footage of you can be used “in any and all media now known or hereafter devised throughout the world in perpetuity without compensation to you, and you waive any claims you may have in connection therewith.” It is designed to transform this otherwise public—albeit privately owned—space into a televised space, albeit not through any direct intervention. The sign features no explicit rules on how people should behave, no parts of Pacific Park were explicitly shut down for filming during my time there, and if I had been distracted when entering the park I may well have never known that country singer Chuck Wicks and his partner Julianne Hough were in the vicinity recording footage for a video segment of ABC reality competition series *Dancing with the Stars* (2005-Present).

Having seen the sign, however, my experience in the park was changed. In between the two passages cited above, the sign suggests that producers can “utilize your likeness, voice, actions, appearance and other sound effects in any manner in connection with the production, exhibition, distribution, publicity, advertising and other exploration of such television program.” In this way, one could argue that the production seeks to “discipline” the behavior of those who

enter the park. What if I scream too loud on the rollercoaster? What if I walk into a shot accidentally and trip and fall on my face in the process? The poster does not explicitly ask visitors to curtail any behaviors, but this passage seeks to make the visitor conscious of their behavior in light of its potential to appear in an overwhelming number of contexts.

However, these are not functions of social power, nor are they tied to any notion of social experimentation. Rather, they are an acknowledgment that the presence of cameras—and the surveillance implied—is capable of temporarily transforming otherwise social space into distinctly televisual space, and shows an effort to negotiate the terms of the space with those who occupy it. This ritual engages in spatial capital in conscious and distinct ways, but it ultimately does so temporarily and selectively: cameras turn off, footage is edited, and eventually the sign will be removed as the camera crew retreats to the comforts of CBS Television City.

Pacific Park is both an amusement park on the Santa Monica Pier and a potential filming location; on the amusement park's website, one of the "fast facts" about the park is that it "frequently serves as the backdrop for popular television shows, feature films, commercials and still photography," with *Dancing with the Stars* among the shows listed.³ In the fall of 2013, Pacific Park also appeared in the pilot episode of NBC's *Welcome to the Family* (2013), where the park—and the surrounding Pier—served as the setting for the climactic sequence. As a recurring presence in film and television, aided by its location in a media capital like Los Angeles, Pacific Park has become what was discussed in the Introduction as a "mediaspace," building a reputation in part based on its ability to double as both a public space and a rentable television set.⁴

³ "Private Events," *PacPark.com*. http://204.200.202.186/private_info1.php?location=private

⁴ Anna McCarthy and Nick Couldry. *Mediaspace: Place, Space and Culture in a Media Age* (London: Routledge, 2004).

In considering real locations being transformed into television sets, as discussed in Chapter One's case study of location managers, the spatial economy of television production more broadly engages with liminal ritual. In his "Variations on a Theme of Liminality," Victor Turner considers the state during social rituals in which participants are trapped in-between the pre-ritual state and the post-ritual goals. He argues that such liminality "is particularly conducive to play," and can therefore result in "the introduction of new forms of symbolic action."⁵ Within the context of this project, therefore, the negotiation of spatial capital within the process of television production is a form of liminal ritual, in which spatial capital is articulated and rearticulated within established patterns of television production that result in particular conceptions of place-identity. These rituals have varied depending on the form in question—multi-camera rituals privilege particular production aesthetics that support different place-making activities than single-camera drama series, while rituals for series on broadcast networks like The CW are likely to engage with spatial capital differently than those on premium or basic cable channels. In all cases, however, we can see the space of television production as inherently liminal, a space of play through which the various participants in the spatial economy outlined in this project to this point perform symbolic actions.

Couldry's *Media Rituals* offers one of the few studies of ritual specific to the space of reality television, although his chapter on the genre does not engage with the questions of place that the rest of the book covers in greater detail, as outlined in the Introduction. Couldry's chapter on reality television largely elides spatial capital, focusing instead on aesthetics of surveillance and principles of liveness and mediation. He characterizes reality television as "broadcasting that claims to present 'reality' but falls between the recognized and clearly

⁵ Victor Turner, "Variations on a Theme of Liminality" in *Secular Ritual*, eds. Sally Moore and Barbara Myerhoff (London: Van Gorcum, 1977): 40.

separate zones of pure news/documentary and pure fiction,” an acknowledgment of its liminality.⁶ He also argues “it is the ambiguity of ‘reality TV’ programmes with regard to their factual or fictional status that reproduces most effectively television’s ritualized claims to present ‘reality,’” positioning reality television as central to his view on the ritual space of media.⁷ However, Couldry does not link his consideration of the ritual space of media to the spaces of reality television, and to the distinct negotiations of spatial capital in situations like those observed on the Santa Monica Pier.

Engaging with the liminal rituals of reality television reveals that there is a difference between the liminal ritual of television production within *Welcome to the Family* and *Dancing with the Stars*’ respective uses of Pacific Park. Within scripted programming like *Welcome to the Family*, as earlier chapters of this project have discussed, the liminality of television production is an artifact of spatial capital within the text: by recognizing a real location, we can understand that the ritual of television production took place in that location. The fact that a scene is happening in that location is a significant form of spatial capital with the text and within the context of the spatial economy of television production: the Los Angeles setting of a series like *Welcome to the Family* becomes more “real” by placing characters in a recognizable rather than generic location, while Pacific Park’s spatial capital is bolstered by its presence in another series (even if that series is watched by very few people—*Welcome to the Family* was canceled after airing only three episodes). However, the ritual is hidden by the text, and these conclusions are based on readings of the text that only some viewers would have access to: while trade reports, social media posts, or personal knowledge could make some viewers aware that production took place in a specific location, others viewers will have no idea, as the liminal ritual is obscured in

⁶ Nick Couldry, *Media Rituals* (London: Routledge, 2003), 103.

⁷ Ibid.

order to present a world where television's spatial capital is uncomplicated by the location and relocation being undertaken within this process.

By comparison, the ritual of *Dancing with the Stars*' trip to Pacific Park is a part of the series' textuality. Airing on April 13, 2009, the rehearsal segment filmed on the day I visited Pacific Park was framed as a return to the site of the two contestants' first date, as Wicks and Hough were in a relationship at the time and wanted the opportunity to reconnect with each other outside of the dance studio. Although—as in *Welcome to the Family*—the series never shows the cameras or signs or production workers responsible for creating the space necessary to produce the segment within Pacific Park, the sequence is contained within the ritual inherent to the series' format. The sequence may be taking place outside of the studio stage-turned-ballroom at CBS Television City, but the footage nonetheless carries ties to the live, direct address competition segments. Through voiceover and interviews, both Wicks and Hough reinforce this rehearsal footage as a document of their experience while simultaneously acknowledging it was being documented; neither of them explicitly announce that *Dancing with the Stars* filmed at Pacific Park, but one's understanding of the series' format and the footage combine to reveal that production took place at that location.

Dancing with the Stars' trip to Pacific Park exemplifies a form of ritual distinct to reality programming that can be understood as hyperliminal. Reality television is inherently a document of the ritual of television production, and thus a document of the liminal negotiation of spatial capital that takes place between social space and televisual space within a given location. Although the presence of a specific location signals that television production happened in that location, reality television also documents the process of television production within the text in a way inaccessible to other televisual forms. This hyperliminal form of ritual neither entirely

claims a public location as a space of television production nor attempts to claim that a space is entirely removed from the artifice of production. Rather, it documents the brief period in which the space is neither unmediated nor mediated, creating a connection between the viewer and the process of television's negotiation of spatial capital rather than simply creating a connection between a television series and a particular location. If Couldry argues that studies of ritual reveal how "media production happens in particular places, here and not there,"⁸ hyperliminal rituals explicitly display where media production is happening, while simultaneously making it possible to observe how the production is functioning within that space even if we did not happen personally stumble onto the filming location on the day in question as I did in this instance.

This hyperliminality preserves evidence that television production took place, which is historically not present when public spaces are transformed into mediaspaces. When considering the ritual space of media and the principles of media pilgrimage, Couldry largely cites examples of filming locations cordoned off as a sort of memorial, or studio lots that accept admission from tourists looking to get closer to where films or television shows were made. Couldry argues "there is something odd about the idea of boundaries around the (in principle) public space which things or people 'in' the media inhabit,"⁹ but no such barriers exist in spaces like Pacific Park; if you have never seen a television show filmed at the amusement park, you would be unlikely to place it within the spatial economy of television production. Even if you saw it within the context of *Welcome to the Family*, you would have access only to the textual deployment of spatial capital, which wholly obscures the presence of production and the control of the space by location professionals and other crew members. If the ritual of television production in public

⁸ Couldry, *Media Rituals*, 81.

⁹ 83.

spaces in general creates latent mediaspaces capable of being activated only by those who watch the text in question and are familiar with the space in question, the hyperliminal rituals of reality television make the audience familiar with the space, and acknowledge the negotiation of spatial capital being undertaken by the series' engagement with that location.

Hyperliminal Ritual and Spatial Capital

In this way, whereas it is possible for a location to anonymously appear in the context of a traditional television series, it is more challenging for a series that purports to document real events in the context of public spaces to obscure the mediation taking place. The result is a significant connection between the spatial economy of reality television production and the broader negotiation of spatial capital within a local, regional, or national context. British reality series *Ramsay's Kitchen Nightmares* (2004-2009) follows chef Gordon Ramsay's efforts to revamp troubled restaurants, thereby turning struggling local establishments into both successful restaurants and, more central to our concerns, mediaspaces. The series is built around hyperliminal ritual, embodying three central characteristics we can extrapolate from the above definition. First, the series acknowledges the liminal ritual of television production in its premise, with episodes bookended by Ramsay's arrival to and departure from the restaurant. Second, the series transforms the restaurant into a television set by installing lights and introducing cameras, and moreover makes aesthetic and structural changes to the restaurant within the context of the ritual of production—however, the restaurants ultimately bear no permanent marks of televisuality upon Ramsay's exit. Third, the series actively makes the audience aware of the fact that television has happened in that given location, memorializing the ritual in ways that will carry into public and popular discourse around the restaurant in question.

Through these specific rituals, *Kitchen Nightmares* transforms restaurants into mediaspaces, in the process working to improve the standing of these restaurants within their respective neighborhoods, towns, or cities. The series was a commercial success, eventually adapted for American audiences introduced to Ramsay through his *Hell's Kitchen* (2004-2009 in the U.K., 2005-Present in the U.S.) format, but a 2011 infographic spread online considered the series' success on another metric: the economic fates of the restaurants left behind when Ramsay's production left town.¹⁰ Ramsay's makeovers cover a range of different areas of restaurant management, including menu changes, changes in managerial style, and aesthetic improvements.¹¹ However, the other prominent benefit Ramsay offers is the impact of being featured "in the media," and the exposure that comes from receiving a makeover of this magnitude in front of a national audience. The infographic analyzes the five seasons of the U.K. series based on a range of followup reports published by websites about the restaurants featured, and reaches a clear conclusion: as its title suggests, "*Kitchen Nightmares Fails!*"

The infographic argues—based on the data available—that Ramsay's program offers no long-term benefit to these restaurants, and while this is an indictment of Ramsay more generally the collected responses from restaurant owners specifically highlight the failed promise of mediation and the real world value of being part of the spatial economy of television production. Sue Ray, an owner from the show's first season, captures this in her recalling "the program makers told us the show would put us on the map. Instead it put us out of business. The bookings just vanished." That the program would cite mediation as an appeal of the program is unsurprising, but that this improved spatial capital would fail to have a positive impact is counter

¹⁰ "Kitchen Nightmares Fails," *PizzaExperts.com*, <http://www.worstpizza.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/08/KitchenNightmare-Craig-070711-Final1.jpg>

¹¹ Aesthetic improvements are one area where there will remain physical marks of the production's presence, although their ties to the production are unlikely to be readily apparent.

to common understanding. In fact, according to another owner Laura Kelly, mediation can often have the precise opposite effect than the producers imagined: “Many locals felt because of the program they didn’t need to support us as we obviously had it made, but the reality was very different.”

Here we see Couldry’s “myth of the mediated center” perpetuated by local patrons, who saw the restaurant in the media, understood it to have therefore become successful, and no longer viewed it was a local restaurant needing their support.¹² Couldry notes that “a striking feature of media rituals is precisely the way they make natural (against all the odds) the idea that society is centred, and the related idea that some media-related categories...are of overriding importance.”¹³ However, this “natural” order created through mediation can fundamentally contradict local communities’ perception of specific locations. If a local restaurant has crafted its spatial capital based on its ties to the community, and patrons of that restaurant have supported that restaurant in the interest of supporting their local community, its place within the spatial economy of television production ties the restaurant to broader regional or national conceptions of spatial capital that risk contradicting its identity as a small, local establishment.

Some of the restaurants cited in the infographic saw an upswing in business as a result of their appearance on *Kitchen Nightmares*: another owner reports that “we still get new customers on the back of the programme 1-1/2 years later.” However, what this conflicting data identifies is that the mediation found within hyperliminal rituals is not a simple accumulation of spatial capital. Although hyperliminal ritual foregrounds and acknowledges that mediation has taken place, this acknowledgment offers a very specific kind of spatial capital associated with that

¹² Another restaurant, meanwhile, was “Destroyed by two arson attacks within a month of being on *Kitchen Nightmares*,” although it seems difficult to tie this to the failures of mediation.

¹³ Couldry, *Media Rituals*, 14.

format and with the circumstances of its broadcast. While the tone of the infographic and its social media reach through users sharing it as noteworthy speaks to the *surprise* evident among viewers—or random Internet users who stumble upon the infographic—when they discover that appearing on television has not improved these restaurants’ business, this stems from an oversimplified conception of how reality television must negotiate social and spatial capital respectively.

For the authors of the infographic, pizza restaurant consulting firm The Pizza Experts, the infographic is their way of puncturing the myth of the mediated center in an effort to prove why Ramsay’s flashy, televisual makeovers pale in comparison to their own services. We also must acknowledge that many of the restaurants may have simply suffered from poor management or other unpredictable factors and failed to see any significant effects from the mediation offered by the program. However, I would nonetheless argue the restaurants’ failures also reveal the complicated negotiation of spatial capital inherent to hyperliminal rituals. As texts which acknowledge the transience of production, and the brief period of transformation from public to televisual space inherent to their formats, such rituals offer variable and nuanced depictions of space and place that challenge any attempt to generalize regarding how a televisual sense of place is constructed.

This is not to say that all reality television functions through these types of hyperliminal rituals: a series like *The Bachelor* (2002-Present), for example, uses the same mansion for each of its seasons, treating it more like a traditional television set with semi-permanent lighting rigs and architectural features designed to facilitate camera angles. When series with one or more “permanent” spaces move beyond those spaces, though, they rely on the principles of hyperliminal ritual, as *The Bachelor* does when it sends its contestants on dates, or as *Dancing*

with the Stars did when they moved outside of the ballroom and onto the ferris wheel at Pacific Park. We could also think about the hyperliminal rituals of transforming real estate into a televised decision-making process in HGTV's *House Hunters* (1999-Present), or the different frameworks articulated through channel brand identity and host personalities for travelogues like CNN's *Anthony Bourdain: Parts Unknown* (2013-Present) or Esquire's *The Getaway* (2013-Present). Accordingly, an engagement with spatial capital in the context of reality television must account for the prominence of these hyperliminal rituals, which is best served through a consideration of one of the most long-standing and substantial hyperliminal rituals within the genre.

The Hyperliminal and the Hyperreal: *The Amazing Race*

The Amazing Race, which debuted on CBS in 2001 and has reached its twenty-sixth season as of Spring 2015, is a format built on hyperliminal ritual. Over the course of twelve episodes, the series documents teams of two traveling around the world, completing tasks and competing to reach the finish line ahead of their competitors. While each leg takes place in real locations, the race itself is a constructed ritual that briefly occupies and claims those places as its own: the Detours and Roadblocks that racers must complete are based on real elements within local, regional, or national customs, but the racers are completing those tasks alongside—rather than within—day-to-day activity in these areas. When the race leaves a given location, tasks similar to the ones completed by its contestants will exist, but the red-and-yellow flags and clue boxes that translate place-identity into structural negotiations of spatial capital will be gone, moved to other locations where the show's ritual will go on in subsequent legs and subsequent seasons. As a result, *The Amazing Race* is a helpful aid for understanding the ways spatial capital is negotiated

through hyperliminal ritual, as the burden it takes on is global in its claims to racing around the world, national in its focus on the number of countries visited, and local in its relationship with discrete places and the people who live in them in the midst of designing and completing its tasks.

In considering the textual representation of the locations featured on the race, however, this chapter's hyperliminal lens must also confront the hyperreal. Jean Baudrillard's term, confronted earlier in this project, has distinct ties to reality television. Speaking to what he terms the "American TV *verité* experiment attempted on the Loud family in 1971," more commonly known as *An American Family* and often viewed as the first instance of what we now consider reality television, Baudrillard is withering in his critique. He argues in "The Precession of Simulacra" that

in the 'verité' experience it is not a question of secrecy or perversion, but of a sort of frisson of the real, or of an aesthetics of the hyperreal, a frisson of vertiginous and phony exactitude, a frisson of simultaneous distancing and magnification, of distortion of scale, of an excessive transparency.¹⁴

For Baudrillard, the Loud family welcoming cameras into their lives to document their every move creates "TV that is the truth of the Louds, it is TV that is true, it is TV that renders true."¹⁵

Expanding on his discussion of *An American Family*—which he never refers to by its official title, as though denying the final product and focusing instead on the ritual inherent to its creation—Baudrillard argues the Loud family's experience demonstrates "the watershed of a

¹⁴ Jean Baudrillard, "The Precession of Simulacra" in *Simulacra and Simulations*, trans. Sheila Faria Glaser (Ann Arbor: U. of Michigan P., 1993): 539.

¹⁵ 540.

hyperreal sociality, in which the real is confused with the model.”¹⁶ Baudrillard’s analysis of *An American Family* is prescient, mirroring more popular discourse about the falsehoods of reality television that would proliferate decades later as the genre exploded with the introduction of series like *The Real World*, *Survivor*, *Big Brother*, and more.¹⁷ However, as discussed in the Introduction, his notion that real space has been wholly eradicated or that categories of place no longer hold meaning are overstated, even in a genre as inherently postmodern as reality television. Although we must confront the postmodernity of reality television, we must simultaneously analyze *how* that postmodernity intersects with spatial capital as opposed to denying a connection that manifests across the genre and is inherent to the form. It is here where hyperliminality, rather than hyperreality, better engages with the framework of reality television programming by acknowledging the existence of meaningful spatial capital being mediated through the genre. This is not to suggest that issues of hyperreality and postmodernity are not evident within the hyperliminal ritual of a series like *The Amazing Race*, but rather an effort to find the real operating *within* the ritual through close analysis rather than suggesting its erasure.

Where an episode of *The Amazing Race* takes place matters, as the text itself continually reinforces where the racers are through a variety of textual strategies that engage in spatial capital. At the beginning of each leg of the race, racers open their first clue and are told their next destination: although this is sometimes within the country where they are currently located, it most often involves teams discovering they will be traveling to somewhere else around the world. These journeys are central to the race, often punctuated through explicit mapping sequences wherein the route for each flight is traced onscreen over a Google Earth-style map

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ For a recent example, see Naomi Schaefer Riley, “Reality TV torture: inflicting horror to fake drama,” *The New York Post*, 1 February 2015, <http://nypost.com/2015/02/01/reality-tv-torture-inflicting-horror-to-fake-drama/>.

through what became known as the “Amazing Yellow Line.” This explicit mapping is mirrored by the show’s use of establishing shots and voiceover. In “You’ve Just Made Me a Millionaire,” the series’ fifth season finale, the final three teams leave the Philippines to begin the race’s final leg.¹⁸ Upon the beginning of the leg, a series of establishing shots of islands featured in the previous leg are shown while Phil Keoghan delivers a voiceover: “This is the Philippines. And this is Lagen Island, a lush forested haven from the unforgiving South Pacific sun.” Utilizing similar techniques to strategies identified in Chapter Two, the series is careful—even though the Philippines leg had just concluded in the first hour of the two-hour finale—to orient viewers spatially before the next leg begins.¹⁹

After this, teams receive their Route Info for the next leg, which in this case informs them they will be traveling to “the city of Calgary in Alberta, Canada.” Establishing shots of the city are used to contrast the South Pacific splendor of the Philippines and the cold weather urbanity of Calgary, while the editors then construct the path teams must travel: a charter plane to Manila will be followed by what Keoghan reveals in voiceover is an eight thousand mile flight to the Canadian city. The sequence uses on-screen “Route Info” chyrons to identify the city—reading “Calgary, Canada”—and then their destination of Lookout Mountain. The focus on distance traveled carries throughout the sequence, as the trip to Lookout Mountain is positioned as an eighty-mile journey and the subsequent snowshoe task is positioned as a 1000-foot hike up the mountain. This emphasis on distance traveled carries into the series as a whole. When winners Chip and Kim cross the finish line in Dallas, Texas at the conclusion of the episode, Keoghan

¹⁸ “You’ve Just Made Me a Millionaire,” *The Amazing Race*, Season 5, Episode 12, Sept. 21, 2004.

¹⁹ It is possible this reminder of where the previous leg had concluded five minutes earlier was a result of the two episodes being edited before CBS chose to air a two-hour finale; it is also possible that the series’ formula is so rigid that these hallmarks of the series’ format are repeated even when their usual purpose of locating the audience seems unnecessary.

emphasizes—as he does in most seasons—the sheer geographic scale of the race: “six continents, eleven countries, 72,000 miles.” Through these strategies, *The Amazing Race* consciously and explicitly ties its hyperliminal ritual to its claims to spatial capital.

However, as Jonathan Gray has argued, the burden of representation created by the race’s engagement with global place-identity is significant, and in some cases problematic. Gray observes “the premise of *The Amazing Race* suggests that we will see competitors in “real” situations with ‘real’ people around the world, but instead they are often interacting in highly contrived situations.”²⁰ These hyperliminal situations—which Gray discusses as “stage design”—are most often constructed as the aforementioned Roadblocks and Detours, which adapt spatial capital into challenges that have discrete rules, and which must be completed in order for the race to continue. While Roadblocks are a single task that must be completed by one team-member, Detours offer the most significant space for negotiating spatial capital, as teams have a choice between two tasks, each of which highlights an element of place-identity. In the leg that first brought the teams to the Philippines in season five, for instance, teams were given the choice between “Plow or Fowl,” highlighting two elements in the country’s rural agriculture. Although some elements of the race occur outside of these formal tasks, such as teams navigating from one location to another, these hyperliminal rituals offers the most explicit articulations of spatial capital in the context of the series.

Considering these detours in the context of larger conceptions of a location’s place-identity reveals the limits of these hyperliminal rituals. As Gray notes, these rituals are the series’ most explicit representative strategies for a given location, placing considerable representative power in tasks that—while acknowledged as constructed—nonetheless “decide what is worth

²⁰ Jonathan Gray, “The Amazing Race: Global Othering,” in *How to Watch Television*, ed. Jason Mittell and Ethan Thompson (New York: NYU Press, 2013): 96.

depicting from a country, and hence...decide what should be represented.”²¹ Gray’s focus is on the way these rituals other local residents in Non-Western countries by limiting their capacity to represent themselves, but we can equally think about how locations are othered based on their relation to other countries featured in the race. In the aforementioned season five episode where the teams arrived in the Philippines, teams travel from New Zealand, and the comparable tasks between the two locations work to draw distinctions of class and culture between the two countries.²² Although both Auckland and Manila are similar in size, the two cities are framed in divergent ways. Tasks in New Zealand are focused around feats of architecture and luxury: the Roadblock involves teams scaling the Auckland Harbour Bridge, a journey framed through establishing shots of the city’s skyline, its harbor, and its iconic Sky Tower, the tallest free-standing structure in the Southern Hemisphere. By comparison, despite the fact that Manila has a similar skyline and other markers of urbanity, the task in the Philippines takes teams to a rural area where they complete the Detour involving plowing fields and herding ducks into a pen. In establishing shots of the Philippines, Manila’s skyline is passed over for more closely-framed shots of crowded urban life, mixed in with overhead views of rural areas or exotic south pacific locales—this is despite the fact that both Singapore and Hong Kong, where racers caught connecting flights, were framed through urban establishing shots comparable to those found in Auckland. Through both the specific hyperliminal rituals of the race format and through the post-production work done in editing and choosing establishing shots (including what appears to be stock footage of a crowded Philippine street), the race others one country relative to the other.

As Gray observes, *The Amazing Race* is aware of its construction, and the text itself communicates this awareness to audience. Citing the contestants’ common refrain that they

²¹ Ibid., 96.

²² “It’s Okay, Run Them Over,” *The Amazing Race*, Season 5, Episode 11, Sept. 14, 2001.

would like to return to countries featured in the race to “really” see them, Gray argues, “such moments actively frame the show’s depictional mode as superficial, and thereby gesture to depths of cultures and countries that *The Amazing Race* is not showing.”²³ This “acknowledgment of the show’s inability to represent the world” is central to its hyperliminality, as the series never suggests that the tasks it has people take part in are anything but artificial constructs of a reality television format that would exist neither before nor after the race moves through a particular region.²⁴ The representational consequences of this remain both problematic and often regrettable, but they cannot be dismissed as hyperreal; rather, they must be embraced as a distinct negotiation of spatial capital central to the format’s structure and appeal, and central to the program’s relationship to the real locations it visits. However, as these moments of awareness show, it is also a relationship that is dependent and often contextualized by the racers themselves. Although the hyperliminal rituals that the producers design and the post-production labor articulating spatial capital all serve to negotiate space and place, the race is nonetheless viewed in part through the lens of the people the producers cast to participate in the ritual.

Each team of two on *The Amazing Race* is described through both a pre-existing relationship—dating, married, best friends, etc.—as well as where they are from. In the majority of cases, where a team is from takes on minimal significance over the course of the race, often never mentioned again past their first introduction—the only ongoing evidence that Dave and Rachel, who won the CBS series’ twentieth season in 2012, were from Madison, Wisconsin was their title card during the title sequence being shot at the city’s Monona Terrace (which was

²³ Gray, 100.

²⁴ Ibid.

never specifically identified within the series).²⁵ The exceptions to this rule are teams whose geographic region amplifies their relationship with the “fish out of water” structure of *The Amazing Race*, in which racers leave their comfortable American homes to discover the exotic world outside their typical reach. Teams such as season five’s David and Mary or season twenty’s Mark and Bopper—both from Kentucky—are identified by their rurality, with David’s work as a coal miner emphasized and Mark and Bopper becoming known as “Team Kentucky.” The producers and editors use this otherness to heighten the impact of the race—in David and Mary’s official biography, for example, it is noted that “Mary can count the number of times she’s been on an airplane on one hand,” and that “their primary motivation for being on *The Amazing Race* is to expand their horizons and see what the world holds outside of the ‘Bluegrass State.’”²⁶

This articulation recalls the work of Jon Kraszewski, who observes the construction of otherness through reality television editing in the first edition of *The Real World* and its contrast of rural and urban stereotypes.²⁷ In this instance, otherness is used to amplify the gap between the racers and their surroundings, intensifying the spatial capital of challenges like an intense Bollywood dance routine, which Mark struggled to complete in Season 20;²⁸ by othering certain contestants based on their rurality, the series can subsequently more effectively—and efficiently—exoticize certain elements of the race, and use to more clearly articulate difference

²⁵ Another team from Madison would win the series’ twenty-third season in 2014, and they were further removed from the location, defined almost exclusively through their “Sweet Scientists” moniker versus the location where they were studying to get their PhDs.

²⁶ “David & Mary,” *The Amazing Race Wiki*, http://amazingrace.wikia.com/wiki/David_%26_Mary

²⁷ Jon Kraszewski, “Country Hicks and Urban Cliques: Mediating Race, Reality, and Liberalism on MTV’s *The Real World*,” in *Reality TV: Remaking Television Culture*. Eds. Susan Murray and Laurie Ouellette (New York: NYU Press, 2004), 179-96.

²⁸ “Bollywood Travolta,” *The Amazing Race*, Season 20, Episode 9, Apr. 22, 2012.

as a dramatic engine for storytelling. While Jordan Harvey has considered the degree to which the casting of *The Amazing Race* constructs images of American identity through those it allows to participate, we can equally see articulations in casting contributing to how elements of the race function to other the locations visited.²⁹ Indeed, the hyperliminal rituals of the race depend on a degree of unfamiliarity with these local cultures among the show's contestants, which subsequently mirrors the audience at home who is implicitly asked to view these racers as surrogates for their own experience.

In this way, the hyperliminal ritual of *The Amazing Race* relies on multiple negotiations of spatial capital throughout the process of production, consciously constructing a journey around the world by nature of who they select to participate, what tasks teams will be expected to complete, and how those locations will be framed through narration and montage, among other production decisions. Although the subsequent representations of place-identity may be compromised by these decisions by exaggerating distinctions tied to race and class among other identity categories, they each nonetheless work together to create a certain type of hyperliminal ritual that is embedded within the race format itself. We can explore the negotiation of spatial capital within this ritual further by considering how the depiction of a single country, in this case Canada, is constructed similarly across multiple versions of the format.

²⁹ Jordan Harvey, "The Amazing Race: Discovering a True American," in *How Real is Reality TV? Essays On Representation and Truth*, David S. Escoffery, ed. (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2006): 212-29.

The Amazing Race and Canada

Doreen Massey describes place as “the unavoidable challenge of negotiating a here-and-now (itself drawing on a history and a geography of thens and theres).”³⁰ On the one hand, as addressed in the previous section, hyperliminal rituals like those in *The Amazing Race* work to make this negotiation visible, embracing the challenge and confronting the lived reality of place in the wide variety of locations it travels to, in the process creating a significant burden of spatial capital. However, at the same time, the structured representative components of *The Amazing Race* encourage stasis and closure, meaning that choices made in the design of each leg serve as a representation of the locations depicted within. Moreover, these representations are tied to different forms of spatial capital, as depictions of local or regional practices are circumscribed within broader national constructions. *The Amazing Race* format’s capacity to engage with these varied levels of place-identity is tested when considering how a particular nation is constructed across different seasons and versions of the format, and how the choices of what spaces to highlight within the ritual—and thus used to locate the country for audiences—shape the representation as a whole.

The nation is the dominant spatial category that the series relies on to differentiate a given episode—although specific states or provinces, cities, or towns may be cited directly within a given clue, it is the number of countries visited by the race that ends up defining its global scale, while online documentation of *Race* geography includes a map organized by how many times the show has visited individual countries without differentiating the cities within. Any given episode is primarily framed by the country where the racers are located, which will

³⁰ Massey, *For Space*, 140.

subsequently engage with cities or other cultural landmarks within a given country that offer spatial capital to help the series tie that episode to that particular location.

By comparison to Gray's analysis of the series' Orientalist approach to Non-Western countries, the *Amazing Race*'s depiction of Canada seems less volatile, although it offers a compelling example of how hyperliminal ritual articulates specific constructions of place-identity. A country broadly similar in demographics and culture to the United States, Canada has appeared on American version of *The Amazing Race* only twice, first in the aforementioned fifth season trip to Calgary and again in the show's geographically limited "Family Edition" in season eight—which remains bound to North and Central America—where contestants visited Montreal, Toronto, and Niagara Falls before crossing the border to the finish line in New York state.³¹ However, in part building on the consideration of the televisual, protonational Canada constructed in *How I Met Your Mother* from Chapter Three, the country is a useful framework through which to consider how more subtle local and regional cultures are framed through the totalizing framework of the *Amazing Race* format. Although the series' hyperliminality may acknowledge that one is not seeing an entire country—or state or province, or even city—it nonetheless creates a constructed image of that space through the choice of tasks, locations, and other elements of both production and post-production.

However, Canada also offers a meaningful shift to the series' existing hyperliminal rituals: whereas we can understand Roadblocks and Detours as opportunities to explore the difference between the American contestants and exotic locations around the world, in the case of Canada the show uses hyperliminal rituals to articulate a form of place-identity that is strikingly familiar. Specifically, *The Amazing Race* frames Canada through the lens of its

³¹ "25 Days, 50 Cities, And More Than 600 Consecutive Hours Together as a Family," *The Amazing Race: Family Edition*, Season 8, Episode 11, Dec. 13, 2005.

existing international reputation, resisting deeper cultural differences between the two countries in favor of basic markers of nation with some purchase to American viewers. In season five, Calgary's difference is represented primarily through its weather, where the cold temperatures and snow/ice-based tasks are a stark contrast from the Philippine challenges in the previous leg—it even necessitates the teams to purchase winter gear, including exaggerated maple leaf-shaped toques with “Canada” embroidered on the front, at the Calgary airport.³² Beyond the country's climate, though, the main task on the leg takes place at Canada Olympic Park, framing the city of Calgary through its hosting of the 1988 Winter Olympic Games. The two tasks—Slide and Ride—focus on winter sports that would be just as likely to take place in a location like Salt Lake City (where the show's eighth season visited Utah Olympic Park in Park City for a collection of Olympic-themed events), and fail to connect to Canada's distinct winter sporting culture. Although a Roadblock involving the construction of a tipi was planned and filmed, its lack of impact on the race standing and other priorities within the episode meant that it was edited out, leaving the only attempt to reflect on Canada's First Nations off camera and thus outside of the series' representation of the country. It also limits the series' representation of the country to locations that are explicitly designed for international competition, meaning that racers in no way engaged with spatial capital that one would associate with the regional, local, or even national.

In season eight, we see a similar pattern used in Montreal, where the city's Quebecois culture and history are elided in favor of more basic national signifiers. Although one clue uses French as part of its structure—“La Porte J” indicating for the teams to find “Door J”—and one

³² We never actually see them purchasing the cold weather gear—while airport purchases of items like maps are often featured to demonstrate racers adjusting to their consistent relocation within the series' premise, the series skips over the racers' trip through the airport in Calgary.

team acknowledges the large French-speaking population in the province where French is the official language, the series never contextualizes this in any way; the series never even acknowledges that Montreal is located in Quebec, referring to the city only as “Montreal, Canada” (in contrast to season five, where “Calgary, Canada” chyrons were supplemented with voiceover locating the city in Alberta). The Detour in the city—Slide It or Roll It—is equally devoid of cultural complexity: although Slide It involves curling, which is at least a sport distinctly associated with Canada, one of the teams skips the task because they already curl at home in Minnesota, while Roll It reduces Canada to the image of lumberjacks and wilderness in a log-rolling challenge. The race then moves to two Montreal locations with international appeal: the American Pavilion from the city’s Expo 67, and then Montreal’s Olympic Stadium, mirroring the Calgary race structure. A third location, a circus training facility where one member of each team completed a trapeze Roadblock, has roots in the province—home to Cirque de Soleil—that are never mentioned by the race, leaving it as a largely generic activity that could have just as easily have been located in one of the American locations the race visited previously. The race then moves onto Toronto, where the city’s iconic CN Tower is flanked by a task sending teams to a local sailing ship or the Bata Shoe Museum, where cameras focus on shoes belonging to famous American celebrities such as Madonna and Shaquille O’Neal.

Both series feature elegant shots of the Calgary and Toronto skylines, and through the depiction of French-speaking and French-accented taxi drivers in Montreal *The Amazing Race* does at least provide a brief glimpse into the city’s distinct culture. However, by and large, Canada’s story is told through spaces with international appeal, its comparative cultural makeup to the United States used to isolate and utilize locations that will be legible to American audiences. Although hyperliminal rituals occupy space in ways that increases the burden of

representation, in the case of *The Amazing Race* they must equally face the burden of connecting with American audiences. And whereas the hyperliminal rituals of the race can work to exoticize and dramatize difference in the case of unfamiliar environments, they can also serve to outline commonalities, in this instance constructing a version of Canada that ignores major regional distinctions in favor of broad conceptions that hold cultural capital with American audiences. While the hyperliminal ritual of the series makes its movement through space and negotiation of spatial capital visible, the way that ritual manifests limits the movement to certain types of spaces that stand in for Canada in the series' representational frameworks.

One could argue that this is a byproduct of America's own form of cultural imperialism, through which Canada is considered a slightly different country to its north. Analyzed within the framework of Canada's content regulations designed to protect against American programming dominated the country's airwaves and erasing its local culture, we can see representations like those put forward in these episodes as contributing to reductive takes on the nation's cultural specificity—or lack thereof—compared to its neighbor to the south. However, I argue that these are not simply a product of American producers, but rather inherent to the form and structure of the race, which supports limited negotiations of spatial capital that privilege legibility over complexity. This claim can be observed in the breakdown of the strategies in the chapter thus far, but it is most supported by considerations of how international versions of the format have engaged with the same sense of place-identity.

The Amazing Race Australia (2011-Present) also visited Canada in its second season in 2012, and used nearly identical framing mechanisms for the country in those episodes. In “Leg 9,” teams traveled from Cuba to Vancouver, British Columbia, while “Leg 10” saw the teams

travel from Vancouver to Banff, Alberta.³³ When Vancouver is introduced at the beginning of “Leg 9,” host Grant Bowler explains in voiceover that “this Canadian city hosted the last Winter Olympics and is consistently voted the most livable city in the world.” It is a statement that mirrors the American version’s focus on framing the country through an international lens, and it is also a statement the series embarrassingly uses at again at the beginning of “Leg 10,” implying they were unable to find any other points of interest about Vancouver to use in order to frame the city for Australian audiences. The Detour in Vancouver also mirrors the “Roll It” option present in Montreal, with “Tumble” and “Toss” leading teams through two lumberjack competitions—the log roll and the ax toss—with the national champions in both overseeing the tasks.

The series also engages with another place-making element of *The Amazing Race* format that was never accessed by the American version in their two visits to Canada. The “Greeter” at the end of each leg is used as a human signification of the location in question, whether a Maori warrior in New Zealand or a young Philippine woman wearing regionally specific clothing. While these greeters are able to give a brief welcome to the racers, they are largely there as symbols of the country in question, chosen for their ability to signify location rather than their ability to provide deeper context or depth of representation—a gallery of Greeters accessed on The *Amazing Race* Wiki makes no effort to explain who the people are or what specific cultures they may represent, choosing instead to simply label them by location and accept the series’ equivalency.³⁴ However, in considering *The Amazing Race*’s representation of Canada, this

³³ “Leg 9,” *The Amazing Race Australia*, Season 2, Episode 9, July 23, 2012; “Leg 10,” *The Amazing Race Australia*, Season 2, Episode 10, Aug. 13, 2012.

³⁴ “Greeters,” *Amazing Race Wiki*, <http://amazingrace.wikia.com/wiki/Category:Greeters>.

particular tool was never used—because teams always visited Canada as part of the final leg, there has never been a pit stop in Canada on the CBS series.³⁵

The Amazing Race Australia has two pit stops in Canada, located at Crab Park on Vancouver's waterfront and at the historic Banff Springs Hotel, and their greeters fit into fairly predictable categories of representing Canadianness through costuming and casting. In Vancouver, the greeter is a woman wearing a fur-lined parka—the parka has patterns that could be First Nations in origin, but although a headband is visible under the hood of the parka neither its significance nor her ethnicity are discussed in any detail. In Banff, meanwhile, teams are greeted at the mat by an older male member of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police—affectionately termed a Mountie—in full regalia, a commonly used symbol associated with the country through texts with international appeal including *Due South* (1994-1999) and *Dudley Do-Right* (1999). In both of these instances, greeters erase the regional distinctions of their respective locations: teams are welcomed to “Vancouver, Canada” and “Banff, Canada,” respectively, and neither British Columbia nor Alberta are ever mentioned over the course of the two episodes.

As with previous chapters' engagement with the negotiation of spatial capital within the process of television production, the elision of the provincial is a conscious construction: it seems incredibly unlikely that the racers were never once captured on camera mentioning the province they were traveling to, and the writers who chose the language for the voiceover and the producers who determined what the chyrons would say would need to make a conscious choice to exclusively define the locations based on city and nation. These laborers—editors, writers, producers—did not entirely elide the local and regional specificity of these locations:

³⁵ The closest they came was an overnight stay in Montreal's Olympic Stadium, which did not involve a greeter and was simply a break in the final leg.

The Vancouver leg begins with the racers participating in a First Nations ceremony on Squamish territory in Stanley Park, the episode frames a dogsled portion of the leg in Banff as a form of travel common among Canadian Inuit, and the Roadblock in the Vancouver episode puts British Columbia's stunning geography to use as contestants stand atop a cable car traversing Grouse Mountain. Additionally, the racers themselves talk about Canada considerably more than those on the American series—Lucy and Emilia, sisters, refer to Canada as “The home of *Anne of Green Gables* and Bryan Adams,” with Emilia paying off this reference by performing Adams’ “Heaven” while on top of the cable car (insisting that you “gotta sing Bryan Adams in Canada”). While far from in-depth cultural insights, the editors’ choice to leave these references in includes more of the racers engaging with Canada as a specific—if popular—cultural entity, and not just as the collection of tasks, locations, and symbols being presented to them by the race itself.

And yet the nature of hyperliminal rituals, transitory and fleeting as they are, means that *The Amazing Race* offers very little context for how these symbols connect with the spaces they ritualize. The absence of provincial identity means that the Squamish people—who are distinctly tied to British Columbia and not other parts of the country—become a symbol divorced from any particular region, whereas the traditional cowboy activities in Alberta—a bull-riding challenge and a number of racers wearing cowboy hats to the pit stop—are never contextualized to the province’s country-western culture (like the annual Calgary Stampede rodeo). These regional distinctions are visible to those who live in Canada or who are familiar with its geographic and cultural makeup, but articulating these distinctions would require a reworking of the hyperliminal rituals on which the race depends, and which are not built on subtle regional variations. In the absence of explicit otherness, the series’ Canada relies on symbols of national identity that are easily interpreted by the audiences in the country where each version of the

format will be consumed. While hyperliminal rituals encourage us to engage with spatial capital and consider the way in which place is negotiated in *The Amazing Race*, they simultaneously create representative structures that lack the contextual engagement with the complexity of place-identity that would be able to translate their rituals of spatial capital across categories of place—such categories, quite simply, are outside the scope of their limited representations of a given location.

Formatting *The Amazing Race* and Formatting Spatial Capital

The introduction of *The Amazing Race Australia* into this discussion requires an engagement with the specific entity of the reality television format, and the process of program formatting. In *Copycat TV: Globalisation, Program Formats and Cultural Identity*, Albert Moran defines a format as “a cultural technology which governs the flow of program ideas across time and space.”³⁶ Expanding on this point, Moran suggests that formatting “has led to both a formalisation and a regulation of the movement of program ideas from one place to another.”³⁷ We must therefore confront the spatial capital of *The Amazing Race* not just as a text that documents teams of two traveling around the world, but also as a format that travels around the world in different international versions based on the American original. Much as the series’ hyperliminal rituals foreground the series’ movement through space, the expansive formatting of the series to other countries contains negotiations of spatial capital that call attention to the format’s capacity to engage with complex interrelationships of place-identity in distinct local contexts.

³⁶ Albert Moran, *Copycat TV: Globalisation, Program Formats, and Cultural Identity* (Luton: U. of Luton P., 1998): 23.

³⁷ 23.

To confront formatting is also to confront questions of globalization and global media flows. One of Moran's key contributions to our understanding of formatting is conceptualizing it as a complicated process as opposed to a simple case of copying someone's work. In analyzing previous scholarly work on television formats that reinforced this notion of "mechanical repetition of the initial format," Moran argues that "an adaptation of a format for a particular national territory will involve considerable amounts of skill and experience in adapting, varying, amending, improvising, creating, and so on using the initial format as a source."³⁸ In order for formats to move from one space to another, it requires an extensive amount of creative labor, labor governed by legal, logistical, and cultural forces operating within this process. As a result, Moran and other scholars resist traditional cultural imperialist views of formatting: while proponents of the cultural imperialist model argue that "formats inevitably carry the values and ideological outlook of their original source" and that "adaptation does nothing but spread these among the viewing population of the importing country," Moran and Justin Malbon note this ignores "empirical evidence that audiences are active generators of meaning rather than passive recipients of dominantly encoded messages."³⁹ In addition to bringing consumption into sharper relief, Moran also asserts how even the technological processes of production are "conditioned by a unique set of historical factors, reflecting certain national characteristics, institutions, values, and goals."⁴⁰

Moran's insistence on the relationship between the nation and formatting has been challenged by scholarship that seeks to sever this connection in light of globalization. In "McTV: Understanding the Global Popularity of Television Formats," Silvio Waisbord argues that

³⁸ 22.

³⁹ Albert Moran and Justin Malbon, *Understanding the Global TV Format* (Bristol: Intellect Books, 2006): 171.

⁴⁰ 174.

“formats are culturally specific but nationally neutral,” and that “the DNA of formats is rooted in cultural values that transcend the national.”⁴¹ Here we see what Moran identifies in “Reasserting the National?” as “postmodernist claims about the increasing irrelevance and disappearance of the national sovereign state,” based exclusively on considering the object of formatting—the format itself—as opposed to the process of formatting, which Moran and others have analyzed through close production studies of specific formats across multiple adaptations.⁴² Given this project’s similar interest in analyzing the negotiation of spatial capital in the process of television production as well as the text itself, Moran’s argument resonates as an important space in which to consider questions of nation as filtered through the process of television formatting.

Given the foregrounding of the national within *The Amazing Race* as a format, it functions on a basic level to question Waisbord’s desire to remove the national from the conversation surrounding formatting. However, Waisbord is not wrong to suggest that cultural specificity need not be wholly tied to the national; in considering various international versions of *The Amazing Race*, many have been structured as transnational television formats. *The Amazing Race Asia* saw winners from Malaysia, Singapore, Hong Kong, and the Philippines alongside competitors from six other Asian countries, while the Latin American adaptation of *The Amazing Race* has featured participants from thirteen countries in the region over the course

⁴¹ Silvio Waisbord, “McTV: Understanding the Global Popularity of Television Formats” in *Television: the Critical View*, Seventh Edition, Ed. Horace Newcomb (New York: Oxford U.P., 2006): 382.

⁴² Albert Moran, “Reasserting the National: Programme Formats, International Television and Domestic Culture” in *Television Studies After TV: Understanding Television in the Post-Broadcast Era*, eds. Graeme Turner and Jinna Tay (New York: Routledge, 2009): 157. See also: A range of strong examples in Sharon Shahaf and Tasha Oren’s collection *Global Television Formats: Understanding Television Across Borders* (New York: Routledge, 2011); Aswin Punathambekar, “Reality TV and the making of mobile publics: The case of Indian Idol” in *Politics of Reality Television: Global Perspectives* Eds. Marwan M. Kraidy and Katherine Sender (London: Routledge, 2011): 241-55.

of its five seasons. Even *The Amazing Race Australia*, which through its first two seasons featured only contestants from Australia, expanded in its third season to include teams from New Zealand.⁴³ These transnational versions of the format have been facilitated through broadcasting partnerships—like Australia’s Channel 7 and New Zealand’s TVNZ—or through cable/satellite channels that serve transnational audiences within a particular region. In these instances, Waisbord is correct in noting that it would be reductive to suggest that the national is the only geographic lens through which these formats are to be considered.

Conversely, however, there are a range of other versions of the format—Ukraine, Vietnam, Norway, Israel, etc.—that are designed for and limited to a specific national audience. In these instances, however, *The Amazing Race* is revealed as a format that requires minimal changes in order to be deployed by local broadcasters in these countries. In these instances, the basic format of the American version is replicated as the racers travel around the world: the nationalizing of the format, then, comes in the shift from American contestants to Ukrainian, Vietnamese, Norwegian, or Israeli contestants. Compared to other program formats, which may require the translation of complex cultural codes, *The Amazing Race*’s gestures toward globalization make it a fairly straightforward format to translate: provided the race structure remains similar, the “fish out of water” dynamic between the racers and the countries they visit will be similar if not identical to that of Americans traveling around the globe. Most of these formats mirror their American counterparts, with longstanding versions of the format even adopting race adjustments first introduced in the American version. In these instances, the hyperliminal rituals of *The Amazing Race* remain more or less identical, except that the people taking part in that ritual—both in front of and behind the camera—are different. Although the

⁴³ “The Amazing Race Australia, Season 3,” *MyCastingNet.com*, 23 October 2013, <https://go.mycastingnet.com/Apply/Show/TARAUS3>

format itself is built around the challenges of adapting to new cultures, the actual components of that format can travel across borders fairly easily, without requiring a considerable structural shift in the formatting process.

However, there have been other versions of the format that have made more significant changes, in the process reshaping the function of the series' hyperliminal rituals. Whereas having people from a different country travel around the world retains the basic negotiations of spatial capital found within the series' Roadblocks, Detours, Greeters, and Narration, among other elements of the format, altering the geography of the race reframes those rituals in a new context, testing their capacity to adapt to new dimensions of place-identity.

Rediscovering the Nation: *The Amazing Race Canada*

When *The Amazing Race Canada* was announced in 2012, it presented a more considerable structural shift from the original CBS series—which originated the format—than *The Amazing Race Australia*. *The Amazing Race* has long been a simulcasting success story in Canada, regularly outdrawing other reality imports like *American Idol* and *Survivor* that outdraw *The Amazing Race* in America, and a Canadian version was considered a logical move for simulcast partner CTV, Canada's largest privately owned broadcaster. Given that Canadians have long been able to watch the American version while being unable to legally participate, the brief announcement of *The Amazing Race Canada* featuring U.S. host Phil Keoghan embedded within the simulcast of an episode of the American series in December 2012 crashed the show's website and drew national and international media attention.⁴⁴ However, the press release that

⁴⁴ Tony Wong, "The *Amazing Race Canada* to be a 'love letter' to Canada: John Brunton," *The Toronto Star*, 3 December 2012, http://www.thestar.com/entertainment/television/2012/12/03/the_amazing_race_canada_to_be_a

accompanied Keoghan's announcement revealed that unlike most international versions, *The Amazing Race Canada* wouldn't be traveling around the world; instead, the series would be traveling exclusively within Canada's borders. It is a decision that reframes the process of formatting as an explicit negotiation of spatial capital, albeit one that must also negotiate the pre-existing hyperliminal rituals that have been calibrated based on different categorizations of space and place within globally-scaled editions of the franchise.

This decision is not unprecedented. As previously noted, the American series' "Family Edition" stayed largely within the continental United States barring brief journeys to Panama, Costa Rica, and Canada, focusing on major American landmarks in the same way the series' other seasons focus on international locations—however, this framework in part depended on the presence of young children among the families, for whom the educational journey through America's past was less familiar. In addition, various local versions of the format—including those developed for Vietnam and the Philippines—have featured a race limited to the country in question, while other versions have stayed primarily in one country or region as opposed to traveling worldwide. The most pertinent example of this more focused engagement with spatial capital is *The Amazing Race: China Rush*, a format developed for the International Channel of Shanghai, an English-language satellite station. In this version of the series, teams of two travel around China, showcasing the country's rich and diverse history, as well as its geographic diversity. In instances like these, the series' hyperliminal rituals are shifted to focus on its country of origin; rather than American producers working to craft tasks and other gameplay

love_letter_to_canada_john_brunton.html; Brendan Kelly, "Canada gets its own *Amazing Race*," *Variety*, 3 December 2012, <http://variety.com/2012/tv/news/canada-gets-its-own-amazing-race-1118063056/>.

elements within a foreign country, here we see producers based in those countries reshaping a national identity for their own national—or transnational—audience.⁴⁵

China Rush appears to be the template on which *The Amazing Race Canada* was designed, albeit with shifts in rhetoric to allow for a more culturally specific intra-national journey. In the press release, CTV suggests “*The Amazing Race Canada* will provide a uniquely Canadian take on the original series, with competitors discovering the world within the borders of Canada.”⁴⁶ It goes on to clarify this statement—already a direct claim against the country’s reputation for multiculturalism and regional diversity—by noting that

Canada offers divergent topography and disparate locales that are bound to add to the excitement and complexity of the show and its challenges, from Vancouver Island’s tropical rainforest, Alberta’s parched Badlands, the peaks of the Rockies, and the barren tundra of the Great White North, to the Boreal forests of Ontario and Quebec, the sea-faring ports of the Maritimes, the fjords of Newfoundland, and the teeming metropolises and undiscovered towns in between.

CTV President Phil King reiterates much the same point, explaining that “with the incredible diversity, scope, beauty, and sheer land mass that Canada has to offer, *The Amazing Race Canada* will explore the world within Canada.” The press release goes on to claim “most Canadians have not travelled beyond their own province,” before promising “a stunning depiction of the Canadian fabric” in which “the teams will travel through both the country’s

⁴⁵ In the case of *China Rush*, the producers of the series were Disney-ABC International Television Asia Pacific, working in conjunction with Fly Films, a local production company who works with foreign producers to facilitate filming in China. Fly Films is also notable for having produced a thinly-veiled copy of *The Amazing Race*, entitled *Shanghai Rush*, in 2009.

⁴⁶ “CTV Greenlights Amazing Race Canada,” *Broadcaster: Canada’s Communication Magazine*, 4 December 2012, <http://www.broadcastermagazine.com/news/ctv-greenlights-amazing-race-canada/1001902823/?&er=NA>

urban centres as well as the most remote outposts in the land, all while exploring its broad cultural and ethnic diversity, wildlife, and iconic landmarks.”

The sheer volume of nation-building rhetoric at work—the above citations, numerous as they are, are still not comprehensive—in this press release is a preview of the series itself, which debuted in the Summer of 2013. Like *China Rush*, the first season of *The Amazing Race Canada* focused on viewers being able to discover or rediscover their own country, playing on regional differences within the fabric of national identity. Beginning in Niagara Falls and finishing in Toronto, the series would go on to visit seven provinces and three territories, with nine teams of two Canadians traversing the country completing Roadblocks and Detours similar to those featured on other versions of the race. Fulfilling the press release’s promise, the series often focused on Canada’s multiculturalism as a way to reach out to the world, with challenges highlighting Vancouver’s Chinatown, a Ukrainian folk dance in Saskatchewan, the German settlers of Nova Scotia’s south shore, and Canada’s substantial immigrant population who arrived through Halifax’s Pier 21. The series also either consciously or unconsciously reclaims some of the patterns in representations of Canada in the American and Australian series: hosted by Olympic gold medalist Jon Montgomery, the series substituted a line dance for bull riding in Alberta, contextualized hatchet throwing within the pioneer tradition of the Yukon, and featured a challenge in Regina, Saskatchewan where teams participated in a Royal Canadian Mounted Police boot camp. The series also followed the pattern of having greeters at each pit stop, with each representing their respective province or territory.

Whereas these greeters have largely taken on national identities in the context of global versions of the format, here the series’ use of these greeters articulates a distinctly regional form of spatial capital that accumulates over the course of the race. Greeters are still put into

costumes, like the young woman dressed up in period-era burlesque attire in the Yukon after a gold rush-themed leg, and greeters representing Vancouver's Chinese community and Iqaluit's Inuit population are once again framed as other relative to the race contestants. However, the final challenge of the first season is a Roadblock in which teams are asked to identify the provincial and territorial flags and flowers for every province and territory they visited, a task foreshadowed by the flower worn by each of the greeters. Their integration into the gameplay does not necessarily give them a substantial voice, but it emphasizes the way they each contribute to a larger map of Canadian identity rather than the American version where they are contributing to a vague notion of the global other. The memory task focused on the greeters or other elements from different locations is itself part of the original format, but the mapping of the greeters onto the nation foregrounds the series' efforts to capture the aforementioned "fabric." It was also more distinctly tied to regional culture than the equivalent final task in the primarily U.S.-based eighth season of the U.S. version of the series, which simply had contestants put together a puzzle of North America. The provincial and territorial flags and flowers are not particularly deep representations of local culture and identity, but they nonetheless foreground the regional in a format where rituals have typically relied on the city and the nation as the primary markers of place-identity in a more globalized take on the format.

These articulations manifested throughout the race, but were particularly highlighted at its conclusion: as winning team Tim and Tim Jr. stood at the finish line, they were asked not just about their own personal journey but also what Canada could take from the experience, turning the series' nation-building structure back on the audience.⁴⁷ The series never developed an entirely new type of challenge that delved deeper into the cultural specificity of a particular

⁴⁷ "The Family Race Off," *The Amazing Race Canada*, Season 1, Episode 10, Sept. 16, 2013.

region or country than those found in other versions of the format, but the challenges were more consciously contributing to a negotiation of national identity that extended throughout the season, and was identified as its purpose from the time of its announcement. The hyperliminal rituals of the race remain largely the same, but their negotiation of spatial capital is more focused, reducing scale in ways that reduce the burden on each individual ritual. Here, we see the adaptability of these rituals, which when deployed on a smaller geographic scale are capable of articulating more discrete identity categories within a larger national framework, expanding the complexity of the series' engagement with place identity.

Much as *The Amazing Race* adapts its frameworks to serve its audience, *The Amazing Race Canada* is able to deploy this more focused form of spatial capital because it knows its audience would be familiar with these regional distinctions. Even when *The Amazing Race: Australia*'s third season—branded *The Amazing Race: Australia vs. New Zealand*—held early legs in Australia and New Zealand, the series relied on broad cultural signifiers that obscured regional differences and replicated signifiers—Ayers Rock for Australia, and the memorial for the victims of the Christchurch earthquake for New Zealand—that would be just as likely to be featured should another version of *The Amazing Race* choose to set a leg in those countries. Moreover, a series of tasks set in New Zealand feature the racers carrying an oversized “ring” with them, and the voiceover at the beginning of the following episode reminds audiences that “New Zealand’s unspoiled, harsh, and beautiful landscape played backdrop to the world-famous *Lord of the Rings* trilogy,” reducing the country to its most prominent pop cultural export. Given that the series was being broadcast in both countries, these reversions to broad national signifiers acknowledge the perceived limitations of regional identity as legible spatial capital to those from the opposite country. By comparison, as a domestic series, *The Amazing Race Canada* has the

benefit of being able to speak to audiences who should all have an existing conception of the national that can be challenged, expanded, or reinforced through the series' negotiation of regional or international spatial capital as they intersect with that national idea.

Casting Canada

However, while this shift in scale unveils new potential negotiations of spatial capital within the format's hyperliminal rituals, *The Amazing Race Canada*'s sense of place-identity is limited in distinct ways as a result of the shifting of the format from the global to the national. Although the scale of the race may have changed, the sense of discovery driving its contestants has not; this means that in order for place to continue to function as a narrative engine driving contestants to explore their own country as contestants on the American series explore the world, the producers need to make changes that retain this sense of discovery despite the fact those contestants will not even need a passport for their journey. Accordingly, much as casting works to accentuate the series' exoticization of global locales, the casting of *The Amazing Race Canada* works to retain the themes of the race's core hyperliminality, even when the framework of spatial capital has shifted significantly.

In considering versions of the format like *The Amazing Race Canada* or *China Rush* that remain within a specific country, casting logic is forced to shift in order to maintain the same basic race narratives or rituals. In the case of *China Rush*, the series uses an international cast in order to maintain a narrative of discovery. In its first season, every team consisted of internationals living or working in China, allowing the same "fish out of water" storyline to flow naturally as teams confront language barriers, cultural differences, and the diversity of a country they may only know within specific educational or business cultures. In subsequent seasons, the

series opened itself up to Chinese competitors, although they maintained the presence of teams from different national backgrounds: in the show's third season, this included two Harvard graduate ex-pats working in Shanghai, twin siblings from Malaysia, and a team of 'socialites' from Australia and Sweden, among others. These teams allowed the sense of adventure and exoticism inherent to the *Amazing Race* format to remain without having to drastically change the way challenges were designed and thus disrupt the format's rhythms; rather than changing how the race works, the producers simply shaped who participates in the race in order to maintain its basic narratives within an intranational—rather than international—structure.⁴⁸

The Amazing Race Canada similarly utilizes casting as a way to maintain the format's distinctive hyperliminal ritual, and in the process engage in similar strategies of othering despite taking place in a single country. In its first season, *The Amazing Race Canada* sought to render different regions of the country as othered in the interest of completing the work of reintegrating them into its version of the national framework, which required contestants to function as fish out of water in regions such as the country's northern territories or the easternmost province of Newfoundland and Labrador. As a result, despite a nationwide casting search, the series primarily cast teams without a strong connection to marginal regions of the country. Of the nine teams, five were from Ontario, Canada's most populous province. The remaining four teams were from British Columbia, Manitoba, Quebec, and Alberta, but they largely fit into casting tropes from the American version of *The Amazing Race*—the "pre-existing relationships"—rather than specific cultural markers of those regions: B.C.'s Kristen and Darren were the "hippies," Manitoba's Tim and Tim Jr. were framed by Tim's Parkinson's diagnosis, Quebec's

⁴⁸ The shift to both Chinese and International competitors also coincided with the series' simulcast on DragonTV, a Chinese-language station; episodes subsequently aired in two separate versions, one with English subtitles and the other with Chinese-language subtitles.

Holly and Brett were “married doctors,” while Alberta’s Jamie and Pierre were the “Gay cowboys.” Despite the presence of a substantial aboriginal population both in the territories and in other provinces across the country, none were represented among those participating in the race. Similarly, despite the fact that French is one of Canada’s two official languages, no team on the race’s first season spoke French as a first language, and there were no contestants representing the four provinces that make up Atlantic Canada (including Newfoundland and Labrador).

As a result, legs that emphasized regional specificity did not need to make dramatic adjustments to the *Amazing Race* format in order to frame racers as so-called “fish out of water” in their own country. None of the teams had visited Iqaluit, Canada’s least populous province or territory, before driving a snowmobile across Frobisher Bay and confronting a Roadblock that asked teams to eat whale blubber;⁴⁹ although some teams appeared to speak some conversational French, no teams entered Quebec City and blew through a challenge involving teams’ knowledge of French vocabulary words;⁵⁰ when teams were “Screeched In”—a local custom involving a shot of liquor and kissing a fish—in Newfoundland, none of the teams were simultaneously being welcomed back to their home province.⁵¹ While the series was predicated on a belief that most Canadians have not traveled widely across the country, the choice to highlight those from more populous provinces and minimize the geographic dimensions of the cast functions as a lynchpin of the series’ negotiation of spatial capital, enabling a narrative of Canadians discovering their own country by limiting their definition of Canadian to those who do not necessarily represent a specific region of the country. As a result, however, the racers

⁴⁹ “We Don’t Have Time for the Bathroom,” *The Amazing Race Canada*, Season 1, Episode 7, Aug. 26, 2013.

⁵⁰ “Check the Cannons,” *The Amazing Race Canada*, Season 1, Episode 6, Aug. 19, 2013.

⁵¹ “Ah-Mazing,” *The Amazing Race Canada*, Season 1, Episode 9, Sept. 9, 2013.

themselves—another space of representation of the national in the context of localized versions of the formats—offer a more limited conception of national identity than in versions of the format focused on global travel.

There are industrial logics that support this particular negotiation of spatial capital. For one, it allows the series to avoid making more substantial adjustments to the *Amazing Race* format, effectively treating different regions as other versions treat the world. In addition, it reflects the regionality of its production: although Canadians ostensibly made *The Amazing Race Canada* for Canadians and featuring Canadians, its definition of Canada is shaped by the production company that was chosen to adapt the format. The series was produced by Insight Productions, a Toronto-based production studio known for its work on Canadian versions of international formats including *Canadian Idol*, *Top Chef Canada*, and *Canada's Got Talent*. The choice of a Toronto-based production studio makes sense given its status as one of the country's two media capitals, but it also meant the race was being constructed from the perspective of those who most likely live and work within central Canada. While the workers creating challenges or researching regions or writing scripts shared a basic Canadian identity with the people whose regions they were representing, they nonetheless—like the majority of the racers themselves—were constructing those representations from the perspective of Canada's most populous region, and thus the region where the most potential viewers would come from.

In other words, the utility of maintaining the otherness of Canada's diverse regions was not only an effort to maintain the basic structure and patterns of the *Amazing Race* format, but also a byproduct of the series' production circumstances, and by the understanding of spatial capital tied to those circumstances. This extends into the series' sponsorship model, which was built on the same structure as the CBS series' partnership with Travelocity, who provides

vacations as prizes for winning specific legs. The Canadian series' principle sponsor was airline Air Canada: a year's worth of travel on Air Canada was part of the grand prize, teams flew exclusively on Air Canada flights throughout the race, and the airline provided multiple trips as prizes for winning certain legs, ran advertisements and special online promotions tied to the race, and even used the final leg as an advertisement for their business class service when the racers were upgraded on their flight from St. John's to Toronto. Similar opportunities were seen by local tourism boards, who used the more localized nature of *The Amazing Race Canada* to appeal to reach a Canadian audience interested in televisual depictions of nationwide travel, the majority of whom would be from outside of their province or territory. During the show's trip to Iqaluit, for example, the territory's tourism board ran on-screen bugs promoting that capital Nunavut was only a four-hour plane ride from Montreal, encouraging viewers to follow the racers' lead and journey to a new part of the country. When Kristen and Darren were eliminated from the competition, she tells the camera that "seeing Canada from this vantage point was kind of a teaser," a sentiment that the series' sponsors are counting on driving interest among viewers to experience the country in a less hyperliminal fashion.⁵²

These specific negotiations of spatial capital, drawing in part on the original format but adapted to specific Canadian circumstances, eventually create a series that sells Canada to Canadians much as the U.S. version sells the world to Americans. None of the representations of Canadian provinces or territories on *The Amazing Race Canada* match the level of othering functioning on a global scale within other versions of the format, largely retaining the vaguely

⁵² "Grab a 'Nug,'" *The Amazing Race Canada*, Season 1, Episode 4, Aug. 5, 2013.

multicultural nationalism that has been dominant in the Canadian imaginary for decades.⁵³ However, the format's specific articulations toward the nation foreground the way hyperliminal rituals are centered on the simultaneous location and dislocation of spatial capital, in this instance the towns, cities, provinces, and territories of Canada, and the national fabric they constitute. Their capacity to locate depends on their capacity to dislocate, which the Canadian version of the format simulates through casting and challenges that allow them to retain a narrative of discovery without ever leaving the country.⁵⁴ Although *The Amazing Race Canada* features a greater articulation between the local, regional, and national than other versions of the format, it nonetheless relies on hyperliminal rituals that require the conscious limiting of place-identity in the interest of constructing a legible narrative of spatial capital. Although *The Amazing Race* offers a highly visible engagement with that spatial capital, and its hyperliminal rituals are at all times consciously articulated toward that spatial capital, the rituals themselves are limited to focus on representations of place-identity that eschew complex spatial articulations in favor of a worldview shaped by the format's limited conception of cultural geography.

The Hyperliminal and the Local

Thus far, this chapter has considered the way hyperliminal rituals embedded within reality formats limit representations of place-identity predominantly through textual analysis: one of the distinguishing features of hyperliminality is the way in which the ritual of production is visible

⁵³ See: Gerald Kernerman, *Multicultural Nationalism: Civilizing Difference, Constituting Community* (Vancouver: U. of British Columbia P., 2005); Eva Mackey, *The House of Difference: Cultural Politics and National Identity in Canada* (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 2002).

⁵⁴ This would shift in the series' second season, which took traveled outside of Canada to both Asia and Europe while retaining Canada as a home base, featured a team who speaks French as a first language, and included a team from Atlantic Canada. In this case, changes to the race structure allowed for shifts in casting, in the process retaining the hyperliminal rituals on which the format is based.

within the text itself, with the primary strategies for activating spatial capital evident in the structure of *The Amazing Race* embedded within the text itself rather than being obscured by it. In this way, analyzing hyperliminal ritual allows us to explore the spatial economy of television textuality and the spatial economy of television production simultaneously, as both are visible in thinking through the spatial economy of reality television.

When we move beyond this particular case study, however, we can begin to understand how some hyperliminal rituals central to reality television programming are less visible within the text than others. Whereas *The Amazing Race* largely negotiates spatial capital as an end in and of itself, other reality competition series like *American Idol* (2002-Present) use the structure of regional auditions to simulate a nationwide search, engaging spatial capital as a means to the end of connecting local communities with the national imaginary evoked in its title. Although these programs eventually end in television studios in media capitals like Los Angeles, they begin by crisscrossing the country in the interest of mapping the contestants onto the regional categories that make up the country in question.

The auditions on *American Idol* are never actually national: in its twelfth season in 2013, for example, *American Idol* visited only seven cities in six states. However, each audition draws people from a broad geographic area, turning these seven spaces into regional hubs as opposed to isolated urban spaces. While the audition site itself is rendered as a specific place, with the host visiting key landmarks like Milwaukee's statue of Arthur "The Fonz" Fonzarelli and the judges holding court in recognizable locations like the Milwaukee Art Museum during the series' tenth season, it is primarily a portal through which Americans from across a particular region—in the case of Milwaukee the Midwest—can congregate.⁵⁵ These regional identities are reinforced by

⁵⁵ "Milwaukee, Wisconsin Auditions," *American Idol*, Season 10, Episode 3, Jan. 26, 2011.

the use of hometown as a key characteristic through which the series differentiates between contestants. During the audition phase, contestants are identified using a chyron that indicates their name, their age, their occupation, and their hometown. Although the graphics have varied with each season, hometown has remained in a prominent position directly below the contestant's name. Everyone has a hometown, and David Morley has argued in *Home Territories: Media, Mobility and Identity* that home and neighborhood are key “spaces of belonging” which shape our understanding of space and place.⁵⁶ However, Morley also places the nation as a “space of belonging,” bridging the gap here between the regional identities being represented and the national identities being evoked by the series' title (and its other forms of direct evocation of the national within the format).

These auditions are a series of hyperliminal rituals in which *American Idol*, other American reality formats (*So You Think You Can Dance* [2005-Present], *X Factor* [2011-2013]), as well as international versions of these formats in countries including Canada and Australia, all lay claim to the local and the regional in order to articulate a relationship with the national. However, while these auditions work to map the series' contestants onto a given landscape within the text, we can also understand the auditions as a space where hyperliminal rituals are experienced and undertaken on a local level. Auditions represent one of the most heavily edited portions of a reality competition series, designed both as foreshadowing for future events and as an initial spectacle to capture audience attention. At the same time, however, these auditions also took place before there was anything to foreshadow, and the eventual television audience was preceded by—in the case of some series—a local audience. Such was the case for *Canada's Got Talent*, a 2012 reality series that ran for one season on CityTV, based on the successful *Britain's*

⁵⁶ David Morley, *Home Territories: Media, Mobility and Identity* (London: Routledge, 2000).

Got Talent format that continues to run in both Britain and the United States (as *America's Got Talent*). And although we could turn to the text itself to explore the series' negotiation of spatial capital, I turn here to participant observation as one of those in attendance during the series' audition stage in Halifax, Nova Scotia in January 2012. Those observations reveal the local dimensions of hyperliminal rituals, which are subsequently obscured in the text itself but demonstrate another space where spatial capital is negotiated in the production of reality programming.

Case Study: *Canada's Got Talent*

With actor Martin Short among the three judges, *Canada's Got Talent* embarked on a nationwide theatre audition tour in late 2011 and early 2012, with stops in six Canadian cities. This tour reveals the small distinctions between audition-based reality competition formats: whereas series like *American Idol* or *So You Think You Can Dance* hold closed auditions for the judges, formats like *Got Talent* and *X Factor* use initial open auditions run by producers to find talent for auditions held in theaters—or stadiums, in the case of *X Factor*—across the country with a live audience cheering them on. These auditions nonetheless function in similar ways to transition contestants from the local to the national, but they more directly create a connection to that local area through the presence of a local crowd and the promotional efforts tied to these audition tours. In the case of *Canada's Got Talent*, CityTV announced the tour in a press release “invit[ing] Canadians to join in on the action when the biggest talent search in the country rolls into town in a theatre near you!”⁵⁷ Tickets were made available free through the series' website,

⁵⁷ “Canada's Got Talent Takes The Stage: Nationwide CityTV Talent Search Continues With Live Theatre Audition Tour in Six Cities,” *Rogers Media TV*, 28 September 2011, http://rogersmediatv.ca/pr_detail.php?id=427

additional seats were made available to rush ticketers, and further tickets were distributed through local radio stations owned by Rogers (who also owns CityTV).

Within the text itself, the tour's visit to Halifax, Nova Scotia fits within the hyperliminal frameworks referenced previously. The series' credit sequence—to return to Chapter Two—crisscrosses Canada through regional landmarks, with Halifax represented by the historic Citadel Hill town clock located in its downtown. Halifax is introduced through an extensive collection of b-roll establishing shots filmed in January of 2012, utilizing highway signs and modes of transportation—like the ferry that travels from Halifax across the city's harbor to neighboring Dartmouth—to identify the location for national audiences. The choice of local artist Joel Plaskett's "Nowhere With You"—a song made nationally recognizable through its placement in an advertisement for defunct national retailer Zellers—further reinforces its construction of the nationalized local, and the hyperliminal ritual is acknowledged through the focus on the three judges' arrival to the city and the event's framing within the mechanism of the national audition tour selecting those who would travel to Toronto for the next round. While judge Measha Brueggergosman's local roots—the opera singer is from the neighboring province of New Brunswick—were mentioned as part of the broadcast, the level of local representation rarely went past the fact that this was the single Atlantic Canadian stop on the tour; the depth of representation was further limited by the fact that the auditions were truncated to only half of a one-hour episode of the series, sharing the hour with additional auditions from Vancouver.

However, these auditions were something closer to a local event in Halifax itself. The city's daily newspaper, *The Chronicle Herald*, covered the auditions with three separate stories: one covering October's initial closed auditions, an advance interview with Brueggergosman

promoting the January event, and a report from the theatre tour auditions.⁵⁸ In “It’s Showtime in Halifax,” focused on the closed auditions, the story of a junior high student skipping school to audition is tied to her local high school; in “East Coast Talent Touted By Judge,” Brueggergosman reflects on what types of talent she expects to find on the East Coast and where she intends to dine or get coffee while she’s in the city; in “Nova Scotia talent shines, wows judges,” Andrea Nemetz is unable to use the contestants’ names until the results are announced, but the article’s purpose is served by identifying them by age, gender, and place of residence. In Halifax, *Canada’s Got Talent* was not a half-hour of auditions, but rather the story of “a stay-at-home dad from Yarmouth who belted out a tune from Phantom of the Opera, a young jump-rope group from Porters Lake out to promote their sport and a saxophone player from Sydney who believes you’re never too old to embark on a musical career.”

Unlike when I stumbled upon *Dancing with the Stars* filming in Pacific Park, my attendance at the first day of the *Canada’s Got Talent* taping at Halifax’s Rebecca Cohn Auditorium was intentional. Similar to that experience, there was the legal warning on a placard at the entrance of the building, necessary given that the Rebecca Cohn is housed on Dalhousie University’s campus, and the university remained open during taping (which took place on a Friday afternoon). While waiting to enter the auditorium, attendees witnessed host Dina Pugliese filming a segment with a group of audience members that could be used to welcome viewers to Halifax coming out of a commercial break, and Tim Horton’s coffee was made available as part of a broader sponsorship agreement. Eventually, audience members were brought to their seats,

⁵⁸ Pat Lee, “It’s showtime in Halifax,” *The Chronicle Herald*, 12 October 2011, <http://thechronicleherald.ca/metro/20822-it%E2%80%99s-showtime-halifax>; Andrea Nemetz, “East Coast touted by talent judge,” *The Chronicle Herald*, 5 January 2012, <http://thechronicleherald.ca/artslife/48828-east-coast-touted-talent-judge>; Nemetz, “Nova Scotia talent shines, wows judges,” *The Chronicle Herald*, 7 January 2012, <http://thechronicleherald.ca/artslife/49690-nova-scotia-talent-shines-wows-judges>.

instructions were given, and then a series of acts performed for judges Short, Brueggergosman, and songwriter/producer Stephan Moccio. Some acts were sent off to Toronto; other acts were denied the same journey.

Given the hyperliminality of reality production, there was never a point during the auditions where one could be unaware of the television production happening around them. The audience was given strict instructions on how to applaud, and the producers even organized the performance of various types of applause/reaction in order to be able to edit them into the broadcast where necessary. Cameramen were consistently moving up and down the aisles to capture reaction shots, while the producer was in constant communication with the audience and the production crew over the loudspeaker between performances. Between the backdrop behind the stage—adorned with maple leafs and the *Canada's Got Talent* logo—and the camera crane consistently moving overhead, there was never any mistaking that the Rebecca Cohn Auditorium had been transformed into a ritual space of television production; it was so transformed, in fact, that the Cohn was never mentioned by name in the broadcast itself.

However, for those in attendance it would be difficult to claim that this was not a local event. While a nationalized view of the local dominated within the context of the aired program, the experience as an audience member was distinctly local. While I was speaking with a retired teacher from Sydney, Nova Scotia whose daughter would be auditioning later that day, the teacher recognized someone he knew from Sydney who was working as an usher at the Rebecca Cohn. Indeed, while the production is perceived as national in nature (with host Dina Pugliese, for example, originating from CityTV's morning show in Toronto), much of the staff were local: the individual overseeing the rush line was a local worker from nearby Lower Sackville, Nova Scotia, while the performances themselves were emceed not by Pugliese—who remained

backstage to record interviews with the contestants—but rather by two local radio personalities, Jamie Patterson and Lisa Blackburn from Halifax’s Lite 92.9. While their banter often reinforced the sense of national media ritual, emphasizing to the audience that “you are representing your city,” they also sought to emphasize the regional focus of this particular event, calling out each Atlantic province in order to gauge where everyone had come from to attend the day’s taping. There was also a small station where audience members could make signs, many of which—anecdotally—were used by audience members to “represent” their hometown in the “big city.”

This sense of the local is admittedly absent in the broadcast itself: there is no evidence of Patterson and Blackburn, and the only crew members present are Pugliese and the judges. In addition, the degree to which the contestants were identified based on their hometown is obscured within the broadcast. While every contestant at the taping I attended were asked for their hometown by the judges, often eliciting applause from those who hailed from the same location, the question was edited out from all but two of the auditions that aired from the two Halifax tapings held that day. In addition, unlike other reality shows like *American Idol*, the *Canada’s Got Talent* producers do not include hometown or place of residence among the information available on the chyron that identifies each contestant, choosing to limit it to age, occupation, and name. This is not to suggest that the local is entirely ignored: the fact that Brueggergosman is from New Brunswick is a topic of conversation based on her father’s presence at the taping, and she reacts with particular excitement when she discovers one group—a group of French-speaking Highland dancers used to represent the region’s Acadian heritage—is from her home province. However, in the auditorium itself, hometown became a defining characteristic for each performer, mapping out an extensive glimpse at the geographic space

being drawn from; within the program itself, it became an essentialized glimpse at the presence of geographic diversity rather than a complex expression of it.

In considering how spatial capital is negotiated through reality television's hyperliminal rituals, the experience of the *Canada's Got Talent* auditions reinforces that such rituals need to be understood both through how they are represented in the text and how they were experienced on a local level. A local singer-songwriter took his time on stage in Halifax to tell the audience about his show at a local bar later that evening—while neither his audition nor his plug made the broadcast, they reinforced that the people taking part in this ritual did not necessarily see it as being divorced from the local environment. This was further demonstrated when contestants who had failed their auditions and been denied passage to Toronto returned to play a different role in the ritual, cheering on fellow contestants from the cheap seats and reconnecting with their local roots.

Conclusion

The locality of *Canada's Got Talent* auditions is not present in every reality competition series: series like *American Idol* do not feature live audiences during the audition stage of the competition, while series like *The Amazing Race* trade its controlled, voluntary spectatorship for the transformation of public spaces into theaters in their own right. While the Halifax audience was given space in which to represent themselves, even if that space were to never make it to air, the limitations of *The Amazing Race's* structured challenges are less likely to offer the same space for representation.

However, this example foregrounds the importance of considering the hyperliminal rituals of reality programming as—much like television formatting—a process, rather than

simply as a product. Taken as a product, *Canada's Got Talent*—like most nationalized reality formats—flattens regional identities for the purpose of fitting them into the national imaginary, much as *The Amazing Race Canada* is designed to other those same regions; in both instances, spatial capital is integral to the narrative construction of the program in question, and best expressed through clearly outlined relationships between center and periphery. However, considered as a larger ritual of production, *Canada's Got Talent* is the negotiation between the local and the national, playing out in newspaper articles, radio promotions, live theatre shows, and in living rooms where the final product is compared with the local experience—or coverage of that local experience—months earlier (as evidenced by the above analysis).

And whereas CBS' *The Amazing Race* largely mediates global locations for American audiences, *The Amazing Race Canada*'s focus on portraying Canada to Canadians means that the full negotiation of spatial capital does not stop with the series itself, but extends into the discourse surrounding the series' debut. In a report entitled "Lunenburg's Amazing Cameo," *The Chronicle Herald* reported on "residents excited by evidence that *The Amazing Race Canada* came to town"; local resident Nancy Sexsmith, who witnessed the production crew's presence first hand, "was disappointed the show stopped by the historic town on a cold, wet holiday Monday," as it "did not make Lunenburg look as wonderful as we all think it is." Additionally, the report suggests "she and her friends have already made plans to have a party and watch the episode whenever it airs."⁵⁹

While we cannot confirm whether Sexsmith and her friends had their viewing party, the series' Facebook page functioned as a catch-all for audience response. As the show aired, the page was filled with posts from people from the locations being featured, who judged the

⁵⁹ Nemetz, "Lunenburg's Amazing cameo," 22 May 2013, <http://thechronicleherald.ca/artslife/1130907-lunenburg-s-amazing-cameo>

accuracy and success of the series' depiction of their regions in real time—one user was disappointed with the locations highlighted in Newfoundland, while others noted the series' mistake in arguing the ferry to Newfoundland left from Sydney, Nova Scotia as opposed to North Sydney, a separate if adjacent town on the province's Cape Breton Island. Toward the end of the series, the page was filled with residents of those provinces the series didn't visit, who used the site to express their disappointment of not being deemed worthy to be included in the purportedly national ritual: one user, citing the series skipping over both New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island, explains "We're just as important as the other Provinces!!! Not fair!!!" Another user also laments the absence of Prince Edward Island, which he identifies as "that little place that CANADA WAS BORN," in reference to the province being the location where Canadian Confederation was realized in 1867. Another user from Manitoba—the other province skipped—says "this show went from [sic] being awesome to being really terrible. Thanks canada for always forgetting manitoba."

Through the Facebook page, representatives from these different regions were able to voice their satisfaction or displeasure with how their area was represented, a privilege available to them through the fact that the regions being ritualized on *The Amazing Race Canada* have access to the program and access to spaces in which they make their voices heard. By comparison, in considering *The Amazing Race*'s construction of the global other, the same opportunities may not be available to them, and it is likely that many of them will never see the way they and their city/region/country were represented on the series. As a result, these voices of approval or disapproval are not equally weighted in considering the representative power of reality television programming, nor do they in any way justify or make up for the limiting, othered representations of distinct regions through these reality programs. The reality

competition series represented here, and other reality series that embrace hyperliminality, offer inherently dislocated negotiations of spatial capital that must be approached critically.

However, they must also be confronted as an ongoing process of location and dislocation, one happening both within the text itself, the space of production, and even the space of consumption. While it does not excuse the way in which a particular location is represented, how the ritual of television production—apparent in the text itself—was experienced locally nonetheless resonates in considering the meaning of that representation. While we have access to these examples based on their safe enclosure within developed Western nations like Canada, the cab drivers or bystanders who are othered on *The Amazing Race* nonetheless have their own stories they tell about the time a group of similarly-dressed Americans barreled through their home. They may even be having conversations about how limiting the representations were within the challenges. That we do not have access to these narratives is an inherent imbalance, one perpetuated through their absence within the text, but the hyperliminality of reality programming is a constant reminder that these narratives exist, and that they are central to any text that not only represents a real space but at one point occupied that space through rituals that fully announced its intention to mediate the space in question.

If we return to *Survivor*'s spatial subterfuge in light of these realities of the hyperliminal ritual, it is possible that its dislocation was disruptive not simply because the contestants were somewhere different than we expected, but rather because it was changing the rules of the ritual we had become accustomed to. Its dislocation was not between real and fake, the Sahara and the sound stage, but rather between a ritual of television production we understand and one that was purposefully hidden from the audience. Through production and post-production, reality television utilizes place-making activities comparable to the other televisual forms discussed in

this project, but it does so within specific rituals that more explicitly engage audiences to consider the relationship between the space being represented and the representation in question. This hyperliminality neither implies the presence of disciplined surveillance nor renders the real hyperreal, but instead foregrounds the location and dislocation central to the negotiation of spatial capital observed throughout television culture over the course of this project

Conclusion

The project began its exploration of television's spatial capital by noting two primary absences in scholarly consideration: while the role of place in media has been explored significantly as it relates to media tourism, with audiences exploring the spaces of media, significantly less attention has been paid to how texts which inspire media tourism are produced, and how formal qualities distinct to television frame a series' sense of place. The subsequent project has mapped out a more complex understanding of how spatial capital resonates throughout the process of production in the contemporary television industry, expanding well beyond writers and directors to location professionals, editors, production designers, challenge designers, and a range of other figures who work to locate, relocate, or dislocate a sense of place as the text commands of them. The resulting analysis unlocks a more rigorous framework for exploring how questions of place identity manifest in television programming, and how series' representations of place are shaped and reshaped by the negotiation of spatial capital happening throughout the course of production.

However, while the project tracks the impact of changes in where and how television is produced, there are other changes happening within the television industry that will prompt further analysis of how spatial capital is negotiated in the contemporary moment.

Distributing Spatial Capital

The first of these changes is the space of distribution, which has become an increased area of focus within media studies in recent years.¹ Beyond the fact that distribution is organized by

¹ See Chuck Tryon, *On-Demand Culture: Digital Delivery and the Future of Movies* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2013); Tim Havens, *Black Television Travels: Media*

territory, the goal of expanding distribution can often serve to reorder a series' spatial capital. Drama series *Orphan Black* (2013-), produced by independent Canadian production company Temple Street Productions, is shot in Toronto, Ontario, and its first season features a range of markers to indicate the show takes place in Canada, including Canada's colorful currency and references to the Toronto suburb of Scarborough. However, despite this, the show never actually admits to being set in Canada—it is, according to series co-creator Graeme Manson, “meant to be Generic. It's part of the price you pay for this kind of co-production.”² Not wanting to upset either its Canadian audiences on Space Channel, or its American audiences on BBC America, the show ends up set nowhere in particular.³

This is a common occurrence within Canadian programming in particular—while local production is incentivized by Canadian Content regulations, the goal of exporting that content to the United States incentivizes content that is either vague in its setting or set somewhere other than Canada. This is true for dramatic series like *Orphan Black*, comedies like CBC's *Schitt's Creek* (2015-), which airs on U.S. cable channel *Pop*, and in particular reality programming. A wide range of programming on U.S. cable channel HGTV comes from Canada, including *Property Brothers* (2011-Present), *Income Property* (2008-Present), and *Love It or List It* (2008-Present). However, despite the fact that all of these shows are focused on real estate, which is intensely tied to locality, these series consciously avoid mentioning where the house hunting is taking place so as to avoid alienating American and international audiences. In one episode of

Globalization and Contemporary Racial Discourse (New York: NYU Press, 2013); Issue 75 of *The Velvet Light Trap*, which is devoted to the topic.

² Marsha Lederman, “How Canada is becoming the sci-fi nation,” *The Globe and Mail*, 13 April 2013, <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/arts/television/how-canada-is-becoming-the-sci-fi-nation/article11157191/?page=2>

³ For more on *Orphan Black* and distribution, see Serra Tinic, “Where in the World is *Orphan Black*? Change and Continuity in Global Co-Production and Distribution,” *Media Industries Journal* 1.3 (2015): <http://www.mediaindustriesjournal.org/index.php/mij/article/view/106/151>

Income Property, a reference to the city of Toronto during a discussion of local ordinances was bleeped out in post-production for its American airing, replaced with the generic “this city”; *Love It or List It Vancouver* (2013-Present), a spinoff distinguished by its setting in its Canadian broadcast context, is exported to the United States as *Love It or List It Too*, with no mention of its British Columbia origins.

Distribution is another space where spatial capital matters, and where the right relationship with spatial capital could change a series’ financial value to its producers. *Crossing Lines* (2013-), an international co-production from French producer Tandem Communications and Sony Pictures Television, debuted on NBC in 2013, and followed a ragtag group of investigators solving crimes that cross international boundaries. While the series’ international cast and European settings failed to connect with American audiences, leading NBC to decline airing additional episodes, it connected in European territories, earning two additional seasons. Co-production deals more broadly offer a fruitful avenue for considering how spatial capital is negotiated between production partners, and the way the text itself bears the mark of its spatialized production circumstances.

However, we can also think about changes in distribution that are out of the studio’s hands. Nationalized reality formats like those discussed in Chapter Five are examples of programs that are designed for specific national audiences, containing representations designed for local broadcast as opposed to global distribution (given that the format itself has likely come from another country, which has its own version of the program in question). But what happens when nationalized reality formats are distributed through online torrents, expanding behind their intended market? What happens when clips from those reality formats show up on YouTube? What meta-data is associated with torrents that works to frame their representations of place

identity? How is the titling and subtitling of YouTube clips from German or Norwegian reality formats tied to spatial capital?

Spatial Capital in the Age of Social Media

It is here where it becomes important to acknowledge the other dimension missing from this project's engagement with spatial capital. Spatial capital may be shaped through the process of television production, and contained within television texts, but it is also negotiated by audiences. Media studies research into media tourism can be understood in the terms of this project as articulations of spatial capital, but the audience's relationship with spatial capital begins as soon as they start watching a series. Indeed, my own personal relationship to this topic was formed in the space of reception, as I watched shows set in locations I had visited, or locations I hadn't, and started asking questions that would come to be understood as questions of spatial capital as the project unfolded.

While my focus in this dissertation was always going to leave limited room for detailed analysis of spaces of reception, some informal engagement with the audience for these programs was undertaken over the course of its completion. Throughout the project, dating back to the Fall of 2011, I used the "favorite" function on Twitter to mark instances where the 500-700 people I follow on Twitter engaged with spatial capital in their tweets. This is obviously not a scientific study: these individuals are self-selected, many of them avid television viewers who spend their time on social media engaging with their favorite shows, and I did not capture every instance of this discussion. However, their engagement with questions of place was a continual affirmation of the importance of spatial capital, and in the need to explore these questions in greater detail.

There was the Portland native noting what building used in the production of NBC's *Grimm* (2012-)—shot and set in the city—are actually used for; the L.A.-based comedian posting emails warning of explosions in his neighborhood during upcoming filming for ABC's *Grey's Anatomy* (2005-), set in Seattle; the Toronto native mapping out local locations used in NBC's *Hannibal* (2013-) and trying to triangulate the studio the show is based out of; the New Zealand-native watching their own country on *The Amazing Race*, but not clarifying which version; the Washington D.C. local lamenting the depiction of their neighborhood on ABC's *Scandal* (2012-) ; someone joking that their upbringing was in Seattle but it was filmed in Vancouver; viewers trying to locate the neighborhoods where fictional families lived in 1990s sitcoms like *Family Matters* (1989-1998) and *Living Single* (1993-1998); New York City residents guessing which of a multitude of shows is filming on their street on a given day.⁴

This is only a small sampling, but these tweets served as a consistent reminder that the lens of spatial capital does not solely exist within the space of this project. It also reinforced that the lens of spatial capital is dependent on the viewer, whose relationship to spaces depicted in a series will shape their point of view on how space and place function in that series. One person I follow on Twitter is from Florida, and my informal archive contains numerous frustrated tweets at how poorly television understands what Florida looks like—they are tweets that I would never write, but I would have much more to say about depictions of my home province of Nova Scotia, or my current home in Wisconsin.

However, beyond articulating our own understandings of spatial capital, social media can also be a place where spatial capital can be interrogated, as evidenced in the response to *The Amazing Race Canada* in the previous chapter. It was on Twitter where I first became aware of

⁴ You can see these tweets and others like it in this Storify: <https://storify.com/Memles/television-s-spatial-capital-on-twitter>.

the case of *White Collar*'s representation of Cape Verde discussed at the beginning of this project—a Twitter user from Portugal tweeted about the show's use of Spanish as opposed to Portuguese, and given that I knew nothing about Cape Verde other than what was featured in the episode, the tweet gave me a reason to investigate further. It was one of a large number of tweets complaining about the show's depiction of Cape Verde when the episode aired: *Slate* critic June Thomas tweeted that she was “having a hard time with *White Collar* acting like Cape Verde is populated by white-ish Spanish-speaking people,” while viewer @rishia_ tweeted “Hey, #whitecollar, y'know how the new season is in Cape Verde? Y'know, off the cape of W. Africa? Where are all the black people?” And those tweets have continued: while the episode itself aired in July of 2012, there are also tweets from July 2013, February 2014, and March 2015, when a Twitter user watching the episode nearly three years after it aired tweeted in complaint to *White Collar* creator Jeff Eastin.

Eastin never replied to that tweet, and there has certainly been no response from the *White Collar* production regarding their misrepresentation of Cape Verde—ultimately, the show's negotiation of spatial capital in producing the episodes set in the country was in line with the series' priorities, in which financial and logistical realities were more important than verisimilitude or the representation of place identity. However, Twitter gave viewers the space to point out that the subsequent representation erased blackness from Cape Verde, and missed opportunities to explore the distinct dialects tied to the islands' history, while simultaneously allowing those who didn't see the episode in the same light to see tweets about these failures of representation alongside more traditional fan tweets excited about their favorite show.

The disruptive potential of these tweets may be minimal, but it is a reminder that social media is reshaping where we locate television culture in the contemporary moment. Many of the

case studies outlined in this chapter, which were observed through close analysis of trade discourse, are equally visible on social media. Twitter searches for *Hemlock Grove* and Pittsburgh reveal the timeline of events detailed in Chapter One, from the initial excitement—including a graduate from the city’s Point Park University hoping to get a job on the production—to the disappointment as the production moved to Toronto. You can also then track the production to Toronto, with fans posting YouTube videos of the show shooting on location, and actors and Gaumont executives tweeting from the set. You can also move forward to find Pittsburgh locals responding to the text upon its release: some have been convinced the show is actually filmed in Pittsburgh, while others lament that they chose not to produce the show there full time, with one Pittsburgh local concluding “Obviously we are not good enough for them.”

Social media extends the lifespan of spatial capital as it is negotiated in television culture. In cases like these, we are reminded that while the decisions made during production may have been made years earlier, the spatial implications are still felt by audiences in real time, and social media offers a space to work through the disparities between personal spatial capital and industrial spatial capital. However, social media also extends the negotiation of spatial capital earlier, with pre-production decisions circulating outside of industry trade discourse. When PBS announced they would be filming their first American drama series—later named *Mercy Street* (2016)—in over a decade in Virginia, Twitter lit up with local workers celebrating a victory for their film and television industry, while a local historian shared their perspective on the real-life hospital that would serve as the engine for the medical drama. Before a show even exists, spatial capital is being negotiated, and will continue to be negotiated over the course of that series’ existence.

The Future of Spatial Capital

The fact that a series that did not yet have a name can already be viewed through the lens of spatial capital reinforces that any study of spatial capital is an ongoing one. Although elements of this project seek to map out the place of spatial capital within contemporary television culture circa 2015, such a map—not unlike the two maps discussed in the Introduction—will be out of date soon after it is drafted. Much as there will be new shows mapped onto the “home of television,” and just as changes in production incentives will redraw the color-coded map of shooting locations, this project’s framework for understanding those maps and others will be forced to adapt in kind.

However, spatial capital is by its nature an adaptive framework, one that presumes no constant valuation of question of space and place within the context of television culture. There will be changes in incentive structures that push mobile productions from one location to another (and potentially back again), there will be new technological developments that enable different textual strategies for engaging spatial capital, there will be new ways that individual series across forms and genres engage with how stories of spatial capital are told, and there will be new ways that distribution and social media reshape how space and place fit into our understanding of television as a medium. A spatial capital approach does not look to map out a definitive understanding of television’s spatiality, but rather works to provide a legend with which the evolving map of location, relocation, and dislocation can be interpreted at any given moment from multiple different perspectives.

While some perspectives would argue that the collapse of traditional borders has eradicated place in the context of media, this project has sought to make the negotiations of spatial capital that result from those shifting borders visible, and tangible as related to the

individual laborers and intersections of place identity affected. As I write this conclusion, the film and television industry in my home province of Nova Scotia is facing a crisis, with the provincial government dramatically altering the film industry tax credit to cut down on productions with limited tax liability in the province benefitting from the rebate without contributing to provincial coffers. And while the cuts to the credit have been framed in political and economic terms by the government, the discourse around the cuts has been working to frame them as cultural. They are cultural for the industry workers on my Facebook feed expressing their concern over being forced to move out of province, and on the personal toll of industrial mobility.⁵ They are also cultural for fans of *Trailer Park Boys* (2001-), the Nova Scotia shot-and-set comedy series, who were called to action by the series' stars in a video retweeted by hundreds of the show's fans, including Snoop Dogg and Axl Rose.⁶ In situations like this one, the value of spatial capital spikes dramatically, with place identity holding significant value for industry workers and supporters of that industry in order to speak up for the value of local production as it is pitted against crucial health care costs by government official.

However, spatial capital is not only visible in cases where local production is threatened, or when a series makes a pilgrimage to a new location. While such extreme cases offer valuable case studies for understanding the place of place in television culture, this project ultimately makes the case that spatial capital is being perpetually negotiated with each new show, each new episode, and each new development in television more broadly. And rather than the subsequent representations of place identity being understood as postmodern erasures of place, we can rather

⁵ See Andrew Rankin, "Trailer Park Boys' hairstylist fears for job if tax credit cut," *The Chronicle Herald*, 8 April 2015, <http://thechronicleherald.ca/novascotia/1279497-trailer-park-boys-hairstylist-fears-for-job-if-tax-credit-cut>

⁶ "Public Service Announcement from Trailer Park Boys," *YouTube*, 2 April 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gt5c6hdcGfM>

understand them as specific negotiations of intersectional identity categories, negotiations shaped by fundamental realities of industrial and textual affinities with regards to spatial capital. While the value placed on spatial capital in our contemporary moment of spatial flux regarding television is produced may make this a particularly valuable time to see televisual place identity through this framework, it is a lens that can just as easily be applied historically, and will prove equally relevant as our understanding of space and place in television shifts in the future.

While the maps of television will always change, in other words, spatial capital gives us a timely and timeless legend for negotiating those maps, and for locating, relocating, and dislocating the place of place in the contemporary television landscape, and beyond.