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Roundtable

Citizenship and the Built Environment

In his seminal work on American landscapes, J. B. Jackson noted the "walls and boundaries and highways and monuments and public places" that comprised the "simplest and most visible elements" of what he termed the "political landscape." Jackson was, to be sure, more interested in capturing the vernacular landscape – the haphazard, ephemeral places created by the lived experience of everyday Americans rather than the regimented, seemingly eternal places conceived for Americans. And yet the political landscape nevertheless captured Jackson's imagination. It existed, he reasoned, "to ensure order and security and continuity and to give citizens a visible status." It served "to remind us of our rights and obligations and of our history."

Jackson was not alone in suggesting a connection between the built environment and identity, a connection between who "we" are as Americans and where "we" are (or are not) in America's vast and variegated landscape. Jackson's work was merely one instance of a newfound interest amongst Americanists in the early 1980s in what sustained analyses of the built environment could reveal about the cultural, political and economic histories of the United States. In the decades to follow, theories of the built environment would come to underpin some of the most important research in American studies: from Kenneth T. Jackson's exploration of the suburban fringe to Delores Hayden's feminist critique of the family split-level, John Howard's uncovering of queer desire in the rural south to Robert O. Self or Scott Kurashige's recasting of African American and Japanese American experience on the West Coast.

In examining farms and cities, cul-de-sacs and highways, public parks and parking lots, research in American studies has gone far in showing how the built environment both reflects and affects the prevailing attitudes, knowledges and belief systems of Americans over time. Even so, much less attention has been paid to the more particular connection suggested by Jackson above: the connection between the built environment and citizenship. The latter is arguably one of the most important constitutive elements of the American

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experience. It operates as a particularly powerful conduit for those prevailing attitudes, knowledges and belief systems that have been so well elaborated by Americansts; its resurgence within fields allied to American studies offers a new line of critical inquiry for our field as well as a new direction for the emergent field of "citizenship studies" that has tended to privilege the spaces of citizenship rather than the places or sites – "the visible elements" – of citizenship which punctuate the landscapes both real and imagined.

Indeed, current scholarship has focussed most intently on the space of the nation-state and how such spaces are being redefined in an era of accelerated globalization. Citizenship is becoming "disarticulated" from the nation-state, citizens "fragmented" across multiple borders as global flows of information and capital make it increasingly difficult (or even desirable) to contain the rights and responsibilities associated with citizen status. What is more, the discourse of citizenship itself is now becoming spatialized. We have become accustomed to thinking through the metaphorical spaces of citizenship "carved out," for instance, by liberalism's insistence on a freedom of negative liberty – that right to be "left alone" which has underpinned debates and American jurisprudence from *Roe* v. *Wade* to *Lawrence* v. *Texas*.

The spaces of citizenship are important. Their continued interrogation is crucial in understanding how such an important aspect of everyday life – namely the relationship between the individual and the state – is being altered during a time of rapid social and economic change. But so too are the places which comprise these spaces, the myriad sites which serve to remind us of who "we" are as citizens, or rather who we should be as citizens. Their interrogation promises to reveal how built environments have been and remain crucial elements in the construction and contestation of citizenship, both as an ideal and as an aspect of everyday life. In the political landscape described by Jackson, in other built environments both monumental and mundane, the story of citizenship in America is being told one brick and paving stone at a time.

In the discussion that follows, the contributors share their thoughts on the importance of built environments in explorations of American citizenship, considering along the way how analyses of America's physical landscapes have informed their own research and what this theoretical focus on placed-based analysis might mean for future trends within American studies. It's an open dialogue, bringing together cutting-edge projects from a number of fields within the American studies remit. And it's a provocative dialogue, a chance to pose some important questions on the future of citizenship in America.

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BLACK BODIES, WHITE SHEETS: CIVIL RIGHTS AND THE AMERICAN ROADSIDE

For many postwar white motel owners, the growing number of physically (and socially) mobile African Americans gave them a serious headache. Samuel J. Setta of Easton, Maryland owned a mom-and-pop motel and, as he told the US Senate hearings into the Civil Rights Bill in 1963, he opposed the legislation because he was a private businessman and his white clientele wanted a segregated motel. However, as his testimony went on, he added more overtly racist arguments to support his economic opposition. His assertion that blacks were more likely to be diseased than whites was challenged by Senator Munroney, "who pointed out that most fine dining establishments in the South relied on black cooks and servers." Setta admitted that, whilst he would not take black customers, all of his employees were African American. In defence of this he explained, "In my motel it is a lot more intimate for a man to jump in bed with his clothes off and sleep in it than it is for that maid to pick up those sheets and lay them on there."[1]

What is apparent from this exchange is that the anxiety about black and white bodily contact, especially between black men and white women, which had underpinned generations of racist arguments and abuse in the United States, remained powerful in the years after World War II. But what was it about the world of the roadside, and motels in particular, which both caused these racist arguments to flourish but also allowed these spaces to become a vital part of the fight for full citizenship for black Americans? The prominent place allotted to the free movement of peoples and their need for public accommodations in the Civil Rights Act (1964) suggests the powerful connection between space, its uses and citizenship. In this essay I will explore how meaning was generated at the roadside and in doing so illustrate the ways in which spatial theory can inform and deepen our understanding of quotidian experiences and highlight the political significance contained in both the space and the uses to which it is put.

Cultural historian William Lhamon has described the 1950s in terms of a "deliberately speeding culture," in which the American love affair with the car acted as a potent symbol of social, cultural and technological change.[2] For African Americans, "automobility's promise was one of escape from Jim Crow: upward through socioeconomic strata and outward across geographical

[1] Susan Sessions Rugh, *Are We There Yet? The Golden Age of American Family Vacations* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2008), 81.

[2] William T. Lhamon Jr., *Deliberate Speed: The Origins of a Cultural Style in the American 1950s* (Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1990), 16.

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space."[3] Yet, as Cotten Seiler notes, whilst Cold War liberalism may have embraced the ideal of the "republic of drivers," where each subject enters the democratic space of the road as an equal, in fact, "from the earliest days of automobility, overlapping and mutually sustaining racist laws, social codes, and commercial practices have attenuated the mobility of the black driver," access to roadside aid, shelter and food being very tangible examples.[4]

By far the most common example of roadside lodging in this period, the motel, whose numbers grew from around 20,000 in 1946 to 56,248 in 1957, had become a quotidian necessity catering for America's booming car culture.[5] Whereas in the Depression years immediately preceding the war, roadside lodgings had been the inexpensive option as compared to downtown hotels, the motels of the late 1940s and early 1950s were newly modernized and privatized spaces, catering to an increasingly discerning public. As architectural critics Geoffrey Baker and Bruno Funaro observed in their 1955 book *Motels*, the motel had become a "symbol of up-to-dateness, of informality and modern planning."[6] Whether following a horseshoe, L or two-storey pattern, motels were typically simple and egalitarian in their design. Outside resort areas such as Florida, there were rarely lavish communal areas and the rooms available did not range from expensive suites to meagre singles; instead, rooms or cabins followed identical layouts. If variation was required, larger units could sometimes be made by opening a connecting door in adjacent rooms. Whilst this uniformity owed much to keeping building and running costs down, it also hinted at the industry's humble origins in early twentieth-century autocamping, "an inexpensive, individualistic sport with antimodernist implications."[7] Whatever the democratic message conveyed spatially through mid-century motel design, in practice it was severely tested by the lived experience of black drivers.

Motels generated a particular anxiety, even from their earliest days. Perhaps owing to their development from the perceived carefree (and thus potentially licentious) world of camping, an activity which occurred in out-of-the-way rural or at least ex-urban spaces and which, so its advocates argued, led to a refreshing mingling of social classes, by the 1930s and 1940s public discourse exhibited the friction between motels as respectable, affordable, family-orientated institutions and the profitable "no-tell motel" culture which turned

[3] Cotten Seiler, "'So That We as a Race Might Have Something Authentic to Travel By': African-American Automobility and Cold-War Liberalism," *American Quarterly*, 58, 4 (Dec. 2006), 1091–1117, 1094.

[4] Ibid.

[5] John A. Jakle, Keith A. Sculle and Jefferson S. Rogers, *The Motel in America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 20.

[6] Geoffrey Baker and Bruno Funaro, *Motels* (New York: Reinhold, 1955), 2.

[7] Warren James Belasco, *Americans on the Road: From Autocamp to Motel, 1910–1945* (Cambridge, MA and London: MIT Press, 1981; first published 1979), ix.

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them into places of sexual assignation.[8] As motel historians Jakle, Sculle and Rogers have noted, motels provide the traveller with a "home on the road," but "let something go awry and the tensions inherent in the promise become apparent. Home symbolizes security; road, the underlying uncertainty of travel."[9] Thus, they assert, motels fundamentally reflect and indeed contribute to a changing America, since "the restless freedom implicit in transient mobility quite literally has resided in motels."[10]

Whilst increasing numbers of black Americans wanted to embrace the freedom of the road in the decades after the war and tap into the associations and promises that automobility and the roadside generated, such as personal freedom, upward mobility and consumer comfort, travel remained fraught with challenges. Detailed planning of any long journey was vital in order to avoid humiliation or even personal danger: as Senator Hubert H. Humphrey observed after hearing testimony before Congress, black travellers were forced to "draw up travel plans much as a general advancing across hostile territory."[11] In order to meet this need a niche publishing market for black travel guides blossomed in the 1940s and 1950s, when three competing series were produced: *The Negro Motorist Green Book* (1937–67), *Travelguide* (1947–63) and *Go Guide to Pleasant Motoring* (1952–59). As historical sources, the guides offer some access to the everyday lived experience of black travellers. By considering the textual as well as rhetorical strategies of the guidebooks, what emerges is a sense of the interplay between repression and opportunity which characterized the period, and also the strategies of resistance and accommodation to the dominant discourse of segregation which shaped the response of African Americans, determined to claim their rights as citizens to travel across their nation without aggravation, humiliation or personal risk.

Despite the existence of some small-circulation travel guides prior to the mid-1930s, the most famous travel guide for black Americans, *The Negro Motorist Green Book*, was founded by New York postal worker Victor Green in 1936.[12] Initially a small publication of sixteen pages covering only the

[8] For example, sociologist Elbert Hooker focussed on the deviant implications of motels in the greater Dallas area in his 1936 study "The Urban Tourist Camp." In 1940, FBI director J. Edgar Hoover claimed in an article for the *American Magazine* that camps and motels were "dens of vice and corruption," haunted by nomadic prostitutes, hardened criminals, white slavers and promiscuous college students. J. Edgar Hoover, with Courtney Ryley Cooper, "Camps of Crime," *American Magazine* (Feb. 1940), 14–15, 130–32, 14.

[9] Jakle, Sculle and Rogers, 325–27.

[10] Jakle, Sculle and Rogers, 18.

[11] Quoted in A. K. Sandoval-Strausz, *Hotel: An American History* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2007), 307.

[12] One previous guide series, aimed at upper-class black travellers (unlike the broader readership of the *Green Book*), was published in 1930 as *Hackley & Harrison's Hotel & Apartment Guide for Colored Travelers* (Philadelphia: Hackley & Harrison Publishing Company, 1930). It was revised and published the following year as *The Travelers Guide* (Philadelphia: Hackley &

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New York metropolitan area, after the war, in 1947, it had grown to eighty-four pages. The business success of the guide, which ultimately ran for three decades, offers a way of divining how serious the need was among black travellers for reliable information about accommodations. The *Green Book* listed not only guesthouses, and hotels in larger cities, but also supper clubs, nightspots and personal services such as hairdressers. Taken in total, the pages of the guide combine to give a powerful sense of the challenges of travelling within a world bounded so fiercely by prejudice. Whilst in their local neighbourhoods black Americans might know how to traverse the built environments and cultural nuances of segregation, on the road, negotiating these vagaries could be an experience fraught with tension, with regional variations often hard to comprehend.

In the years immediately after the war, the accommodation options available to black travellers in the East continued to follow patterns which had been in place for decades, with rooms in private "tourist homes" the main form of lodging beyond large city hotels (some of which would still not have taken black customers). As the motel boom got under way, the proportional lack of such businesses listed in the *Green Book* is noticeable: by 1955 the guide had introduced a separate motels section, yet despite this it continued to list many more hotels and tourist homes than motels; for example, that year the motel section listed five motels in Florida as compared to fourteen hotels and twelve tourist homes under the general Florida listing.[13] What is even more striking, of course, is that, in a state over 54,000 miles square with a successful tourist industry, the guide was only able to list thirty-one places of accommodation for black travellers. However, regional variations in racial attitudes and the accommodations business meant that, whilst motels willing to take black customers in the South were rare, in the West, the situation could be remarkably different.

Following a drive to improve regional coverage, in the 1948 edition of the *Green Book* the editors reprinted the responses they had received regarding the provisions for black travellers in western locales. What the western correspondents revealed was an apparent liberalism in the motels and motor courts of their immediate vicinities. Perhaps because these businesses were on the urban periphery and thus away from view, or because the businesses were newer and therefore both more in need of custom and less likely to have an existing white customer base that would be upset by offering accommodation to African Americans, the correspondents steered black travellers

Harrison Publishing Company, 1931). I have not been able to find any evidence of publication beyond 1930 and 1931, however.

[13] Listings, *Green Book* (1955), 4, 16–17.

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towards motels.[14] The correspondent from Gordon, Nebraska, for example, wrote, "No Negro families here" (thus precluding black "guest houses" or "tourist homes"), but continued, "likely could stay at Cabin camps. Do not know attitude of hotels. Yellow Cabins – Gordon, Neb., would take Negroes."[15] The double-sided quality of the motel space is partially revealed here. Whilst the liminality of the motel business allowed black visitors in the region an opportunity for tentative access into the fêted world of travel and tourism which might otherwise not have been present, the lack of formality also bred uncertainty for many travellers. The *Chicago Defender*'s regular columnist Fred Avendorph devoted an entire issue of his "Tips for Travelers" column to motels in April 1957 because "[m]any of our readers have been contacting us for information and advice concerning motels and how they can go about making advance reservations."[16] Avendorph explained to his readers, "Motel accommodations differ from the procedure used in making hotel reservations," and "motels throughout the country are independently controlled," unlike hotel chains. Given the particular character of the motel business, he explained, the "motel operator will not hold an advance reservation unless, perhaps it is for a friend, as he runs the risk of the motorist changing his mind and stopping elsewhere, or possible mechanical troubles being responsible for delay or not showing at all." Avendorph was obviously aware that the lack of reservations made his black readers nervous, accustomed as they were to the racist vagaries of white-owned public accommodations, but he encouraged them "to stop at the first clean motel you come to and ask for a reservation the same as any other American tourist." The interlinked sense of perseverance, entitlement and the acknowledgement of the realities of discrimination, especially in the South, which Avendorph's article expressed, neatly highlights the varied motivations and tensions which also shaped the approach of the travel guides for black travellers in the 1950s.

The *Green Book* was a staunch supporter of black-owned accommodations and facilities; however, both the later guide series *Travelguide* and *Go* were vehemently integrationist, insisting on only listing businesses open to all travellers. In *Travelguide* the rhetoric of interracial cooperation was mixed

[14] James Loewen also notes the importance of city limits in "sundown towns," where an African American family might settle outside this boundary and thus not technically compromise the all-white municipal area. A similar situation would have existed with motels and cabin camps on the legal periphery of whites-only towns in the postwar period. Loewen relates how a black social worker visiting Sheboygan, Wisconsin, as late as 1976, was required to stay at a motel outside the city limits because the main hotel would not take her. James Loewen, *Sundown Towns: A Hidden Dimension of American Racism* (New York: The New Press, 2005), 249–51, 278.

[15] "Replies from Our Correspondents," *Green Book* (1948), 3–5, 3.

[16] Fred Avendorph, "Tips for Travelers," *Chicago Defender*, 13 April 1957, 12.

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with economic claims to equal treatment, arguing that minority travellers' money was just as good as whites' and, thus, American capitalism should accept such travellers for their wealth, if not for their shared humanity. Further, both *Travelguide* and *Go* embraced the textual space of the travel guide to further the claims of black travellers to equal treatment at the roadside. For example, by using the traditional forms of the genre, such as including statistics about individual states but augmenting these with items such as black population data or places of black historical interest, these publications demanded a place for African Americans in the body politic.

Whilst "racial segregation and discrimination while travelling demonstrated the limits of citizenship and complicated the claims of African Americans to American identity," in the postwar period challenges to such exclusionary practices demonstrate how black travellers were able to harness the space of the roadside in their demands for full access to American citizenship.[17] Looking at the particular example of the motel highlights the ways in which the lived experience of travellers of all colours imbued these spaces with meaning, just as the motels in turn and all they symbolized (the homely, modern and egalitarian, as well as the potentially salacious or undesirable) inflected the character of the black traveller as an individual and an American. The Civil Rights Act marked a major legal victory in the fight against segregation but the physical campaign for equality of access had been going on long before the activism of the civil rights movement brought the struggle into sharp focus. During the previous decade, black Americans had seized on the competing meanings generated by interstitial spaces such as the motel to claim access to lived citizenship, one room at a time.

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CITIZENS *IN ABSENTIA*: SUBURBAN NOSTALGIA

If the recent critical success of *Mad Men* is any indication, suburban nostalgia is alive and well. The surprise hit television drama, which aired its first season on AMC in the summer of 2007, follows a group of 1960s advertising executives as they shuffle between their day jobs on Madison Avenue and their evenings and weekends in the suburbs of New York and New Jersey. The main character, Don Draper, is a mysterious, brilliant ad man who struggles to come to terms with his identity and life purpose over the course of each season, all the while juggling a secret history and city mistresses with his suburban domestic routine. As viewers learn more about Don (played by Jon Hamm) and his wife Betty (January Jones), in addition to members of the supporting

[17] Rugh, *Are We There Yet?*, 70.

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cast in early seasons, characters who initially appeared to be stock cutouts are revealed to be complexly driven, committed, questioning, and conflicted individuals who sense the ways in which their work and home lives define and constrict them even as they also obviously experience moments of desire, pleasure, happiness, love, and creative fulfillment in their drab offices and manicured suburban boxes. The fact that the rise of *Mad Men*'s cult following coincided with public conversations about the impending "death of suburbia" as a combined result of new urbanism and the "greening" of America, rising gas prices, the subprime mortgage crisis, and a tanking economy raises questions about the show's success, and more specifically about how so many people were able to embrace the 1960s aesthetic that *Mad Men* embodied at the same time that they decried the shells of communities that had been left to rot – or, worse, to be occupied by ethnic minorities and working-class families who suddenly could not afford to go anywhere else.[1]

In the last episode of Season 1, Don presents an ad campaign for a new Kodak slide projector, and his pitch takes on surprisingly personal overtones as he stocks the mechanism with slides of family photos. When the Kodak representatives ask if he has found a way to "work the wheel" into his ad, Don replies,

> Technology is a glittering lure, but there is the rare occasion when the public can be engaged on a level beyond flash – if they have a sentimental bond with the product. My first job – I was in-house at a fur company, with this old-pro copywriter, a Greek named Teddy. And Teddy told me the most important idea in advertising is "NEW" – it creates an itch. You simply put your product in there as a kind of calamine lotion. But he also talked about a deeper bond with the product: nostalgia. It's delicate, but potent. [Carousel starts up; photos of the Draper family appear, one after another, as Don continues speaking] Teddy told me that in Greek, nostalgia literally means "the pain from an old wound." It's a twinge in your heart, far more powerful than memory alone. This device isn't a spaceship; it's a time machine. It goes backwards, forwards, takes us to a place where we ache to go again. It's not called the wheel; it's called the carousel. It lets us travel the way a child travels, around and around and back home again to a place where we know we are loved.[2]

The clip ends with a mock-up for the "Kodak Carousel." While Don's presentation is intended to market a specific product, the juxtaposition of his words with candid snapshots from his suburban home life links nostalgia to the domestic sphere. As Don self-consciously voices his desire for a past that

[1] See, for example, Lara Farrar's article on CNN.com from 16 June 2008, "Is America's Suburban Dream Collapsing into Nightmare?", http://edition.cnn.com/2008/TECH/06/16/suburb.city/?iref=mpstoryview. Also relevant is Allison Arieff, "What Will Save the Suburbs?", from her *By Design* blog, *New York Times* online, 11 Jan. 2009, http://arieff.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/01/11/what-will-save-the-suburbs/?emc=eta1.

[2] My own transcription of a clip from Season 1, Episode 13 of *Mad Men*.

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never really was, he reflects on the decisions he has made and the paths he has taken. His presentation takes on the quality of metanarrative when viewers of the clip interrogate their own investment in a show that invites a similar sense of nostalgia through the invocation of a ritualized, historically situated suburban lifestyle.

Don never mentions citizenship in his monologue; on the surface, nothing appears to be further from his mind than concerns about nationhood – and yet his vision is inflected by this unvoiced, unrecognized referent. Indeed, his recognition of nostalgia as a powerful motivating impulse – one that can be harnessed by others, in turn, for their own purposes – has much to tell us about the nature of citizenship, the slippery way in which known – if imagined – geographic, historical, and ideological landscapes silently impress themselves on the memory, taxing its contents, informing its dreams, and determining its limits. Collectively imagined and enfranchised (in many instances through print culture), specific modes of thinking and doing are reborn and purified in the built environment, rights and privileges made manifest in the structures and objects that surround us in our everyday lives.

In *The Past Is a Foreign Country*, geographer David Lowenthal describes nostalgia as "the foreign country with the healthiest tourist trade of all."[3] If we apply this notion to the concept of suburbia on the one hand, as the "Carousel" clip from *Mad Men* overtly invites us to do, and citizenship on the other, which it does so less obviously but no less insistently, we gain a new perspective on a phenomenon that has transformed and defined the shape of the American built environment in important ways, leaving its imprint on ideas of home, family, work, leisure, class, and community. Even the earliest suburban developments around New York, Boston and Philadelphia in the middle decades of the nineteenth century were both forward- and backward-looking in orientation – fundamentally nostalgic attempts to infuse utopian visions of the past with the perspective of the present. By considering the ways in which suburbia reflects and creates nostalgia, and what any of this has to do with citizenship, we can begin to understand how landscapes that appear to be static, uninspired, unoriginal, and stale might be wrapped up with desires for the distance provided by travel to foreign countries and accompanying experiences of touristic play. We can then assess the acts of appropriation and exclusion that take place in the formation of suburbs, the groups of people who plan and enjoy these particular domestic vacations, and the ways in which the space between urban and rural America can simultaneously function as a place of escape and of embrace. As individuals dig and build, raze and reshape

[3] David Lowenthal, *The Past Is a Foreign Country* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988; first published 1985), 4.

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the land on which they and others reside, they hone, confirm, revise, and reject ideological beliefs. As J. B. Jackson implies in the quote cited by Jason Narlock in the introduction to this roundtable, visible and invisible boundary formation go hand in hand. We establish what it means to be a citizen and perform citizenship as we move through the built environment. Fascinatingly, it is this multivocal understanding of habitation – an echo that reconfirms an immutable boundary even when its identifying markers threaten to dissolve – that allows us to structure our own participation in its rites and ends as nothing more (or less) than a series of immersive visits to the sites we ostensibly value most.

In my recent work on the relationships between print culture and early suburban community formation, *Suburban Plots: Men at Home in Nineteenth-Century American Print Culture* (forthcoming from University of Massachusetts Press), I have found myself repeatedly drawn to the palpable ways in which narratives speak through various silences. As much as nineteenth-century authors from Washington Irving, Henry David Thoreau, and Nathaniel Hawthorne to Donald Grant Mitchell, Nathaniel Parker Willis, and William Dean Howells called readers' attention to new opportunities for self-definition and creative expression in cottages located outside but within reach of cities along the northeastern seaboard, it was only when I approached their articulations of domestic sovereignty with an eye to *what was not there* that I was able to understand the complexity of their mapping processes. Their novel plans (as manifested in fence and room as much as text and image) defined American citizenship in response to what, to their mind, should *not* constitute it, whether that be a type of individual, such as the newly arrived immigrant or rural laborer, or a mode of activity/behavior, such as obligatory labor, regimented spirituality, or warlike aggression. When these undesirable elements of landscape or nationhood *do* manifest themselves ideologically in these writers' accounts of relocation from urban to suburban environments, they frequently appear in transfigured form, hauntingly concretized through debates about invasive species of plant, concerns about air circulation, associations of certain paint colors with specific bodily states, and passions for particular building materials and organizational strategies.

In a very palpable sense, Don Draper and his *Mad Men* viewers acquiesce to the notion that the spaces we inhabit teach us how to be citizens *in absentia*. While we often start from the premise that the built environment seeks to house or protect known entities and freedoms, the detritus of our lives, landscapes, and histories suggests otherwise. We fashion gate or yard, wall or door, in order to keep something out, to define in distinction to an unknown or untamed threat. Marvellously, glitteringly, once "safe" we continually look out of our windows at the threat from a distance, defining ourselves and our rights in opposition to the supposed characteristics of an alien other. The

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mystery and unmappedness of what exists beyond the carefully constructed boundary haunts us, though, with the suggestion that it is *we* who are removed and disenfranchised, that somewhere along the path of industry we lost the essence of the dream that motivated it in the first place. We find ourselves, in other words, simultaneously hinged and unhinged. The violence (to land, to people, to self) that enabled our freedoms stubbornly refuses complete erasure; clean lines and orderly grids act, mockingly, as monuments to control and mastery gone awry. They are our birthright, but not in the sense we had originally imagined: we find ourselves bound together in a shared inheritance that doesn't require our presence, let alone assent or action, in order to stand and deliver. We are only de facto citizens, tourists to our own constitutions.

After all, what is the suburban landscape if not alien and infinitely unknowable? Popular movies like *The 'Burbs* and *American Beauty*; television series that include *Weeds*, *The Sopranos*, and *Desperate Housewives*; and books such as Sinclair Lewis's *Babbitt* and Don Delillo's *White Noise* testify to the weirdness of clipped lawns and prefab houses, not to mention the people who live in them. In the words of Thomas Harris in *The Silence of the Lambs*, "This was somebody's environment, chosen and created, a thousand light-years across the mind from the traffic crawling down Route 301."[4] Artist Sarah McKenzie's aerial paintings of suburbs similarly highlight the disembodied quality of suburban neighborhoods, the unnerving results of human efforts to dig patterns into the earth with economy, rapidity, precision, and consummate reproducibility. Nostalgia helps us make peace with the citizen's precondition: estrangement. At once our saving grace and Achilles heel, it promises a blueprint to something better in "the pain from an old wound," a path out of the wilderness and into it *at once* in an embrace of posthuman static. Even in the most banal, fake suburban communities, where every house looks staged and every family seems mass-produced from some mold that we can no longer locate, nostalgia assures us that serious work is afoot. Agency locates itself somewhere, after all. Long after its denizens are dead, its furnishings sold, and its appointments scattered, the structures housing mind and body remain as archive, pointing homeward. Perhaps, returning to David Lowenthal's association of nostalgia with tourism, we would do well to heed his warning that "like other tourists, those to the past imperil the object of their quest."[5] That's a truth we already know, though. One we love, even.

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[4] Thomas Harris, *The Silence of the Lambs* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989; first published 1988), 53.

[5] Lowenthal, 4.

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DESIGNED FOR DEVIANCE: WHAT LGBT HISTORY IN THE SUBURBS CAN TELL US ABOUT CITIZENSHIP IN THE UNITED STATES

One of the greatest strengths of American studies as a unit of scholarly analysis has been its rather unique capacity to trace the historical trajectory of American citizenship by looking at the spatial reconfiguration of the American landscape. Cultural geographers (especially of the Marxist variety) have long spoken of the ways in which social, political and cultural change – tied as it is to economic forces – is "written" into the built environment and how, in turn, scholars can expand understandings of America by explaining the built environments of the United States.[1]

In my own research, I've approached questions of citizenship and the built environment in the United States primarily from the perspectives of planning and design. On the one hand, I'm interested in the social, economic and political contexts from which politicians, planners, architects and others have conceived American's built landscapes in the twentieth century. On the other, I'm interested in how individuals, through their everyday actions, interacted with these spaces and how, as a consequence, such interactions informed future plans. It is, as Henri Lefebvre would remark, an interest in the difference between representations of space and representational spaces, between the spaces conceived by architects, planners and their political allies and the spaces created by the lived experience of individuals themselves.

It's a difference that has been at the centre of discussions over American citizenship from the start. Since the heady post-Revolution years, leaders have understood the power of built landscapes to project certain ideas, to normalize certain ideologies. At a time when ideas of a unified American identity were tenuous at best, leaders turned to the built environment to communicate a vision of republican citizenship, of Americanness, reflected in the radial thoroughfares and neoclassical architecture of Pierre L'Enfant's federal capital, in the spatial organization of Jefferson's ward system or the transplanted Lancasterian school.[2]

[1] David Harvey, *Rebel Cities: From the Right to the City to the Urban Revolution* (London: Verso, 2011). Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (London: Blackwell Publishing, 1991).

[2] Dell Upton, "Lancasterian Schools, Republican Citizenship and the Spatial Imagination in Early Nineteenth-Century America," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, 55, 3 (Sept. 1996), 238–53. Brian Walker, "Another Kind of Science: Christopher Alexander on Democratic Theory and the Built Environment," *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, 36, 5 (Dec. 2003), 1053–72.

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The American project has, in many respects, always been a spatial project. In the latter half of the twentieth century, the space in question was not necessarily that of L'Enfant's urban geometry but, rather, the curvilinear thoroughfares of Andrew Jackson Downing's bucolic suburb: atomized, individualized, romanticized and mass-produced for a growing middle class with the help of Fordist production processes and Keynesian monetary policies. The suburbanization of the United States after 1945 – a period of America's physical transformation characterized by subdivisions and split-levels, freeways and cul-de-sacs – signified a profound reconfiguration of political, economic and social life.

Academics and cultural critics have explored the exact characteristics of this reconfiguration since at least the 1960s. From "the problem that has no name" to the *Organization Man*, the spatial organization of the suburbs has been implicated in important changes in how Americans see themselves and each other – changes which, as Susan Bickford notes, directly impact our understanding of citizenship, of who counts as a citizen and what our collective responsibilities are towards those citizens.[3] Suburban space, with its design emphasis on the family unit and conspicuous consumption, privacy and private transport, has fundamentally altered American understandings of the various rights and responsibilities traditionally associated with citizenship.

Even at a time when urban migration is picking up pace, we're still a majority suburban nation. We have, for the better part of five decades, been *Bowling Alone*.[4] We're atomized, cut off from our fellow citizens by a lack of public space facilitated by a decentralized and highly privatized built environment. We've become a nation of NIMBYs, more concerned with self-preservation than with the common good.[5] It's not our fault. How we live, it seems, depends in part on where we live.

For all their emphasis on family, privacy and individuality, for all their indictments as a facilitator of gendered norms and racial segregation, heteronormativity and environmental degradation, the suburbs have always been a much more complex set of spaces than conventional wisdom suggests. The conceived space of the suburbs – that idealized space created by planners and politicians, romanticized by advertising agents and television characters – does

[3] Susan Bickford, "Constructing Inequality: City Spaces and the Architecture of Citizenship," *Political Theory*, 28, 3 (June 2000), 355–76.

[4] Robert Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2001).

[5] Adam Rome, *Bulldozer in the Countryside: Suburban Sprawl and the Rise of American Environmentalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

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exist and it has had important impacts on how Americans understand their relationships with each other as citizens.

But there is also the perceived space of the suburbs – that space created by the lived experience of inhabitants that can disrupt, amend and bring into question the underlying "logic" of a space created for individuals. The postwar suburb may have been conceived as a space of white privilege but, as Andrew Wiese has shown, it was also a space of opportunity for African Americans.[6] The suburbs may have sought to reinforce a highly controlled space – a safe place – for children and adolescents but, as Beth Bailey has pointed out, suburban space also provided opportunities for teenagers to use such design considerations to their libidinous advantage.[7]

Perhaps one of the last vestiges of the conceived space of the suburbs has been its assumed characteristic as the preeminent space of heterosexuality. It's not that the suburbs lack any lesbian or gay inhabitants. Rather it's just that in most instances those that start there often make their way someplace else and those that end up there often make sure their identity is muted.[8] As a matter of design, there simply isn't any place for lesbians or gays in the space of the suburbs.

Of course, such notions have been consistently challenged in scholarly research and popular culture, especially in the most recent decade. Nevertheless, lesbian and gay history is still generally understood as a predominantly urban phenomenon, a function of urban space that, as John D'Emilio argued in the early 1980s, allowed men to be men by being with men.[9]

As an American historian, I'm committed to further dismantling this persistent inaccuracy of lesbian and gay experience. "We" are, in fact, everywhere and always have been. But as a historian of the built environment, I'm more interested in understanding how the presence of lesbians and gays in the suburbs, and their attempts to construct meaningful communities outside the urban "gay ghetto," impacted the development and design of suburban space beginning in the 1970s, beginning at a time when lesbian and gay rights activism was gaining the political mass necessary to begin calling for the rights and responsibilities of citizenship. In other words, how was this political struggle for citizenship rights manifest in the built environment?

[6] Andrew Wiese, *Places of Their Own: African American Suburbanization in the 20th Century* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2004).
[7] Beth Bailey, *From Front Porch to Back Seat: A History of Courtship in Twentieth-Century America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989).
[8] Wayne Brekhus, *Peacocks, Chameleons, Centaurs: Gay Suburbia and the Grammar of Social Identity* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003).
[9] John D'Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities: The Making of a Homosexual Minority in the United States, 1940–1970* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1983).

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The two dozen or so communities that make up Orange County, California have been particularly useful in this regard. The spatial result of the immediate postwar suburban "boom" fuelled by the military–industrial complex, followed by a subsequent aftershock of master-planned suburbanization beginning in the late 1970s courtesy of global capital, Orange County is a reflection of the American landscape's transformation over the last fifty years. Taken as a whole, Orange County is one of the wealthiest counties in the United States, yet it is also home to some of the most impoverished communities in the nation. It lacks a discernible centre but it has nevertheless been at the centre of a political reconfiguration of the American right that has brought neoconservative and anti-statism, Christian evangelism and neoliberalism, together into a potent Republican Party.[10]

It also, for a time at least, boasted the largest concentration of lesbian and gay bars, clubs, community centres and other spaces in California outside San Francisco and Los Angeles. Looking at the development of this lesbian and gay community alongside the design and construction of Orange County's suburban communities has given a number of insights into the connection between the built environment and citizenship in twentieth-century America.

First, while the conceived space of the suburbs – that space imagined by planners and politicians – may have been firmly grounded in the image of the consumerist, middle-class heterosexual family, the reality of suburban life in Orange County and elsewhere meant that individuals were able to utilize these very spaces to very different ends. The suburban "boom" of the postwar era was just that: a poorly orchestrated reconfiguration of America's built environment ignited by massive government incentivization and little government oversight. Mistakes in planning and design were made. Freeways were built and land subdivided with little regard to the long-term sustainability of the communities that developed almost overnight. Suburban communities failed or stagnated, people and capital moved on, leaving behind spaces of opportunity. In the midst of a growing lesbian and gay rights movement, lesbian and gay Orange Countians appropriated the strip malls and main-street spaces of suburban communities such as Garden Grove and created meaningful lesbian and gay communities outside the more major metropolitan areas of Southern California.

Second, lesbian and gay Orange Countians actively utilized the suburban built environment of Orange County that they appropriated to make their claims for specific citizenship rights in the 1970s and early 1980s. Debates over the extension of citizenship rights to lesbians and gays in Orange County and

[10] Lisa McGirr, *Suburban Warriors: The Origins of the New American Right* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2001).

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throughout California were eminently spatial. When police began a series of orchestrated raids on Orange County's gay bars or adult bookstores, activists turned to the spatial characteristics of these rights, often enshrined or enumerated in legal doctrine. They argued for a right to be "left alone" – a liberal freedom of negative liberty that extended first to the bar and then to the bedroom and, later, to the public spaces of work and the classroom. They took to the streets – to the suburban streets that are so often understood as bereft of any public action – to protest against police harassment.

Third, and in a similar vein, Orange County leaders also utilized the suburban built environment in their multiple attempts to thwart lesbian and gay demands for citizenship rights, if not the right to exist in the first place. When faced with a growing "homosexual problem" in the early 1970s, community leaders in Garden Grove turned to their power of planning to regulate the sorts of activity legally permissible in their buildings. They sought to regulate the activities of lesbian and gay Orange Countians as a means to do away with them altogether. Such attempts often failed but they nevertheless impacted a lesbian and gay community conscious of the need to "act appropriately" in order to avoid being targeted.

Finally, the struggle over place in suburban space is an important element in the broader struggle for LGBTQ persons seeking formal rights and responsibilities as citizens. The history of these struggles is crucial to understanding the current trajectory of LGBT rights advocacy as well. LGBT activism was never confined to the urban "ghettos" of the Castro or West Hollywood because, in fact, LGBT people were never confined to those spaces to begin with. As LGBT rights became mainstreamed into American political consciousness, as Americans now see LGBT rights as an important element in national dialogues over citizenship, the voices of those LGBT persons from outside the gay epicentres are becoming louder.

Beyond the suburbs, beyond LGBT history, what role should the built environment play in American studies? How should Americanists wield this powerful analytic tool in our collective work? Even as a historian I think the answer lies somewhere in the future. The United States is once again at a critical moment in its spatial genesis. The suburban model which was so influential to the economic boom of the last half-century, so instrumental in the organization of political and social life for a majority of Americans, is giving way to something rather different. The Great Recession illustrated the failure of an economic system built solely on the back of capital investments in and through the built environment. Nothing can grow forever, even if it's securitized to the hilt. The suburban fringes of Atlanta and Phoenix, Las Vegas and San Bernardino are now the new "slums" of the twenty-first-century America: impoverished, abandoned and totally at odds with the sort of lifestyle they were designed to encourage. We are, at last, starting to see the suburbs for

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what they are – not what they should be. And that's a wonderful thing, both for American studies and for American citizenship more generally.

King's College London JASON NARLOCK

A VISIT TO FRANK CAPRA'S CHINESE RESTAURANT: CLASSICAL HOLLYWOOD AND CHINATOWN

Movies not only contain but also construct built environments. Whether filmed in the studio or on location, cinematic space is mediated by *mise en scène*, cinematography, and editing. The camera shows – or does not show – what the production team chooses, from expansive landscapes to claustrophobic framings. In other words, the representation of place on-screen is the built environment rebuilt. A study of cinematic New York City, for example, encompasses both the architecture and city planning of the real-life location and the reinterpretation or outright reimagining of the "reel" location.[1]

My research examines America's relationship with Asia as represented on-screen during the classical Hollywood period. While film was gradually maturing as an art form between 1917 and 1960, America's diverse immigrant groups attempted to coexist as a unified body of citizens with varying degrees of success. As increasing numbers of Chinese migrants led to mass panic about a perceived "Yellow Menace," popular discourses argued that, unlike European ethnic groups, the Chinese "were unassimilable and . . . a threat to the working class, to American democracy, and to other American institutions."[2] With the passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act (1882) and the Quota Act (1924), entry to the United States was barred on racial grounds for the first time in the nation's history, and any then-resident alien Chinese could not be naturalized. Yet, as Eugene Franklin Wong noted in his seminal study of Asian Americans in the media, these immigration measures also "gradually provided a psychological incentive and social climate given to the acceptance of an image of a non-villainous Asian."[3] Paradoxically, it was only when America's borders were closed to the Chinese that people of Chinese descent were tentatively welcomed in America's cinematic spaces.

While Hollywood's representations of the Chinese can be traced back to the silent period – most famously to *Broken Blossoms* (1919) – there was a

[1] See Scott Jordan Harris, ed., *World Film Locations: New York* (Bristol: Intellect, 2011).

[2] Joseph F. Healey, *Diversity and Society: Race, Ethnicity, and Gender*, 2nd edn (Thousand Oaks: Pine Forge, 2007), 215.

[3] Eugene Franklin Wong, "The Early Years: Asians in the American Films Prior to World War II," in Peter X. Feng, ed., *Screening Asian Americans* (London: Rutgers, 2002), 53–70, 53. Reprinted from Wong, *On Visual Media Racism* (New York: Arno, 1978).

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marked increase of fascination with Chinese culture on American screens during the late 1920s and the 1930s. The Limehouse district of East London came to life in adaptations of Sax Rohmer's stories: *The Mysterious Fu Manchu* (1929), *The Return of Fu Manchu* (1930), *Daughter of the Dragon* (1931), and *The Mask of Fu Manchu* (1932). Chinese culture within China itself was depicted in *Shanghai Express* (1932), *The Painted Veil* (1934), and *The Good Earth* (1937). Chinese populations within the United States were represented by key figures like Charlie Chan, a detective based on the stories of Earl Derr Biggers, who appeared in more than forty films including *The House without a Key* (1926), *The Chinese Parrot* (1927), *Behind That Curtain* (1929), and *Charlie Chan Carries On* (1931). However, before considering the way that cinematic Chinese American citizenship was negotiated through an interaction with the built environment, the status of American Chinatowns needs to be considered more broadly.

Even before New York City's Chinatown came into its own, New York was a port city, a "zone of intercultural contact, translation, and interaction" that was "not only ... key to the burgeoning international economy, it was also the communications hub, brokering representations of self and otherness for the emergent American culture."[4] Urban centers were places where cultures collided, but the very existence of sectors inhabited primarily by only one ethnic group also suggests the presence of segregation, whether voluntarily or involuntarily. Hollywood's Chinatowns in the late 1920s and 1930s were likewise places of both community and exclusion. While Chinatown on film often conjures images of shady alleys, creepy curio shops, and crime, those negative connotations largely developed with postwar film noir: "Chinatown became synonymous with all that is rotten in the sordid urban space of midcentury America, standing in abject contrast to the clean, white, suburban sprawls of *Leave It to Beaver* and *Father Knows Best*."[5] Hollywood's prewar Chinatown was a different place, a potential melting pot where the relationship between the citizen and the state could be negotiated.

Hollywood's Chinatowns appear in unexpected places, and perhaps one of the more surprising sightings is in *Ladies of Leisure* (1930). The film was directed by Frank Capra, a filmmaker who, as I explore in my forthcoming monograph,[6] was renowned for pairing citizenship and place: Capra sent

[4] John Kuo Wei Tchen, *New York before Chinatown: Orientalism and the Shaping of American Culture 1776–1882* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999).

[5] Yunte Huang, *Charlie Chan: The Untold Story of the Honorable Detective and His Rendezvous with American History* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2010), xviii.

[6] Elizabeth Rawitsch, *Frank Capra's Eastern Horizons: American Identity and the Cinema of International Relations, 1922–1961* (London: I. B. Tauris, forthcoming).

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idealistic junior Senator Jefferson Smith to the nation's capital to learn about the American political system in *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* (1939) and taught community-minded George Bailey how his idyllic hometown of Bedford Falls would have become the seedy nightspot of Pottersville without his intervention in *It's a Wonderful Life* (1946). Ian Scott has noted how presidential portraits, statues, and monuments abound in Capra's films as "guardians of an essential American spirit."[7] Indeed, the contemporary plots of Capra's films repeatedly put importance on iconography that celebrated American history – history that all citizens could supposedly claim as their own regardless of their place of birth.

The presence of ethnically specific rather than universal iconography in *Ladies of Leisure* is therefore perhaps unexpected. A silent attendant in a silk robe and skullcap puts a nickel in a player piano. The camera tracks right and follows a silent waiter – also wearing a silk robe and skullcap – as he intently carries two large bowls of food through a crowd of dancing white couples to a booth decorated with cherry blossoms, palm frond wallpaper, and a *chinoiserie* painting of two men at work. Self-proclaimed "party girls" Kay Arnold and Dot Lamar thank the waiter by name and proceed to eat their meal while discussing Kay's romantic woes. In less than two minutes, details in the production design identify the setting as a Chinese restaurant, one that – based on the film's New York location – is presumably in Chinatown.

To a degree, the scene is remarkable for its ordinariness. Dining at the Chinese restaurant appears to be part of Kay and Dot's everyday life. Neither the location nor the food elicits commentary from the women. They consume their meals with forks rather than chopsticks, but the consumption is still a tentative embrace of exotic cuisine and a symbolic meeting of cultures. However, the clientele at the restaurant appears to be exclusively white, suggesting that very little "melting" actually occurs there; instead, the Chinese wait staff are socially subservient to the working-class whites. And "working-class" has unsavory connotations within *Ladies of Leisure*. Kay and Dot earn their living by entertaining men, "entertaining" that may involve sexual favors. Kay's wealthy love interest Jerry never sets foot in the restaurant, but Kay's troubling extroverted sexuality is, by implication, at home in Chinatown. Is this a dive restaurant where the ladies feel comfortable as regulars? Or is it a dive restaurant *because* the ladies are regulars? Is Chinese culture tainting white culture or vice versa?

[7] Ian Scott, "Populism, Pragmatism, and Political Reinvention: The Presidential Motif in the Films of Frank Capra," in Peter C. Rollins and John E. O'Connor, eds., *Hollywood's White House: The American Presidency in Film and History* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2003), 180–92.

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There is no narrative need for Kay and Dot's conversation to take place in a Chinese restaurant; it is the only visit and/or reference to Chinatown that *Ladies of Leisure* makes. So why is it there at all? Few production records remain in the Frank Capra Collection in the Wesleyan Cinema Archive, making the reason for its inclusion difficult to establish conclusively, but the likeliest explanation is that Columbia Pictures, which was primarily making B-pictures at the time, encouraged the reuse of props from earlier films as a way to cut costs. And however the scene wound up in *Ladies of Leisure*, it has implications for the film as a whole. At a time when the law denied the Chinese the right to citizenship, the social makeup of Capra's America potentially included a space for them within New York and within the nation – albeit a space on a lower rung of the socioeconomic ladder.

The frequency with which Chinese characters make cameo-type appearances throughout Capra films – including *American Madness* (1932), *Broadway Bill* (1934), and *Arsenic and Old Lace* (1944) – suggests that Capra frequently used Asian ethnicity to test the boundaries of American citizenship. While Gina Marchetti suggests that "Hollywood used Asians, Asian Americans, and Pacific Islanders as signifiers of racial otherness to avoid the far more immediate racial tensions between blacks and whites or the ambivalent mixture of guilt and enduring hatred toward Native Americans and Hispanics,"[8] Hollywood and filmmakers like Capra – who was raised in Los Angeles – would have been aware of the Chinese and Chinatowns in a way that the rest of the country, which did not have such large Chinese populations, would not have been, and this could have led to an increased willingness to use Chinese nationals for their own sake rather than as metaphors for something else.

My newest research project, which is still in its early stages, examines one of American cinema's most famous fictional Chinese residents: the aforementioned Charlie Chan. Chan lives on the slopes of Punchbowl Hill, above Honolulu's Chinatown. Much like Capra's Chinese restaurant, Chan's home is described in Biggers's novels by a series of objects, all of which vaguely suggest *chinoiserie*:

> The room was a charming one, a rare old rug on the floor, crimson and gold Chinese lanterns hanging from the ceiling, many carved teakwood tables bearing Swatow bowls, porcelain wine jars, dwarfed trees. On the wall was a single picture, a bird on an apple bough, painted on silk.[9]

[8] Gina Marchetti, *Romance and the "Yellow Peril": Race, Sex, and Discursive Strategies in Hollywood* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993), 6.

[9] Earl Derr Biggers, *Charlie Chan Carries On* (Chicago: Academy Chicago Publishers, 2009; first published 1932), 206.

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Based on the contents of his house, Chan is a Chinese rather than Hawaiian character. Indeed, throughout all six novels, Chan consistently self-identifies as Chinese although he has lived in America for more than a decade.

Chan's investigations in the novels briefly take him into Chinatowns in Honolulu and San Francisco. However, following the end of original source material with Biggers's death in 1933, Hollywood's screenwriters sent the travel-reluctant Chan globetrotting: From 1934 onward, he would solve crimes in London, Paris, Egypt, Shanghai, Monte Carlo, and more. As I move forward with my research, I plan to investigate whether Hollywood's Chan becomes an example of citizenship divorced from a built environment. Does removing him from Hawaii increase rather than decrease his claim to citizenship given the problematic status of Hawaii itself (an American territory rather than a state)? Or is anxiety over Chan's Chinese heritage and his possible claims to American citizenship merely shifted to other environs?

Whatever the answer, there is a case to be made for the importance of examining Chinatowns in films without "Chinatown" in the title or the synopsis. These brief scenes of everyday life tell us much about how ethnic enclaves were perceived in 1920s and 1930s America. The takeaway message from Frank Capra's Chinese restaurant is that while these throwaway moments are, by their nature, difficult to locate – often relying on blind screening and luck – place-based analysis of these scenes can reveal much about how ethnic signifiers were gradually normalized and accepted into American popular culture.

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