

differentials between the person who produces *The Wire* with the person who connects wires. At the same time, as we have come to look at the expanding political economy of production and its capillary reach into more labor markets, new industries, and a greater number of places, production studies have implicitly become concerned with spaces outside of the Hollywood set, the BBC studio, or even the field site for indigenous video production. In this new economy for production I submit that we must reconceptualize not only where media production takes place generally but also whose labor there matters to us.

In my work the pursuit of producers, that is, people whose labor contribute to the production of audiovisual media, has taken me far afield of the locations we tend to associate with production: the studio set, the editing room, the corporate office, the location shoot. Instead, I spent several months living in Manaus, Brazil, which is the heart of the Amazon but also part of the circulatory system for the manufacture and distribution of virtually every electronics good and communication technology in the Americas. My argument has been that the economic power that U.S. media scholars locate in Hollywood and the political power that they locate in Washington, D.C., exist in, indeed rely on, the geographies of manufacturing, technology research and development, and distribution.

Industrial districts exist in virtually every urban area across the globe. In film and television not only does the production of digital technologies and electronics in these districts precede the financial investments in content elsewhere, but the two processes are mutually dependent. On the front end of production activities studio budgets depend on access to cheaper tools, from the high quality cameras that drive down the costs of content creation to the postproduction gadgets that make effects easy to outsource to workers on the other side of the world. On the back end of production activities producers pay attention to the release and marketing of consumer technologies. Advertisers invest heavily in creative content for World Cup Games, knowing that their consumers are more likely to be watching on their new television receivers purchased especially for the event. This is how I take Bruno Latour's insight into the embedding of technology in actor networks. It's not that manufacturing forms some point of origins for production studies but that media scholars need to consider how technology production abroad mediates relations between social actors at home.

A new cultural geography of production in media studies would not only expand our repertoire of locations but allow us to look at the location of production in relation to labor markets, capital flows, and global politics of enfranchisement. Beyond center and periphery models of global cultural production, we can see how each city fosters its own ecology of production with parallel and often mutually dependent sets of industrial districts, distribution chains, and content creation hubs. Each setting fosters its own social hierarchies but also contributes to the economic and symbolic capital of those possessive individuals who have been able to monopolize the moniker "producer" as their own. Ultimately, I believe it will be the place of citizens to reclaim their roles as producers—as contributors to these production activities in these various locations—that will make Hollywood less a metonym for media production and more a node in a larger map of struggles.

### Neoliberal Space and Race in Virtual Worlds

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In *World of Warcraft* race must be chosen from a limited range of options. Each race, such as Orc, Troll, Night Elf, or Gnome, comes with its own back story, body type, set of abilities, and skin color choices as well as a unique spatial relationship with the game. Each race is located within its own distinctive navigable space or discursive homeland or place of ancestral origin, such as The Den, Stranglethorn Vale, or Gnomeregan. As Alex Galloway writes, "One cannot 'play' race in *WoW*. One must accept it as such" (96). Though the races are fantastic, they possess unchangeable and distinctive traits and abilities, thus reifying the notion of race as instrumentally linked to the body. Tauren have better racial stats for health; Undead have better underwater breathing abilities; Dwarves are resistant to frost. Race is segmented into discrete categories that are balanced with each other so as not to provide advantages that would cause players to always choose one over another (Yee 3–4). Movement itself is racialized within the game, since each race starts out in a distinctive space, and experience points are awarded for "discovering" a new area of the virtual world by navigating to it successfully. And since quests are the primary way to advance in the game, the goal of resource and status accumulation must occur through this successful navigation through racialized and nationalized space. A player can only advance in a

manner consistent with his or her racial identity as scripted by Blizzard's arrangement of virtual space, space that must be moved through in real time. Indeed, many of a noob's tedious early days in the game are spent running around in circles, checking maps, or otherwise contending with the difficulties of navigation.

In contrast, race is composable in *Second Life*: all races have the same abilities, and one can create hybrid races, an impossibility in *World of Warcraft*. However, there are social advantages to being white in-game. As Destiny Welles writes in "My Big, Fat, Lily-White Second Life," "I almost never ran into a black person. Even in the 'urban contemporary' and Caribbean clubs, one has to search persistently for a glimpse at a suntan." She also notes being spoken to and "hit on" by other players significantly less when she started playing a black avatar rather than a white one. In the absence of in-game rewards or drawbacks to being one race or another in *Second Life*, players added them; they exercised their *individual social preferences* rather than their desire to "win" in shunning Welles. As Welles writes, "Second Life is perhaps the whitest environment I've ever experienced." Her choice of the word "environment" stresses the way that virtual space itself is shaped by racial relations. Importantly, Linden Labs continually asserts that *Second Life* is "not a game" but instead a "second life" and thus more real, more serious, and more responsible than other virtual worlds.

Though the only benefits that accrue to racial choice in *Second Life* are "aesthetic" ones (black avatars do not get, say, enhanced dancing, fighting, or athletic abilities along with their race, as occurs more or less in *World of Warcraft*), they must occupy a space of social interaction where race matters a great deal to other players. When players choose blackness, whiteness, or brownness they curtail the social spaces within which they can move. Thus, expanded race choices for avatars in *Second Life* articulate extremely closely to the racial logic of neoliberalism, "a market ideology that seeks to limit the scope and activity of governing," in this case, governance by the virtual world itself that would balance racial identity by incentivizing it (Ong 3).

Navigable space in *Second Life* isn't semiotically racialized by Linden Labs—the persistent shared topographies Linden supplies don't wham players over the head with Caribbean-style drum soundtracks and ambient sounds, thick Jamaican accents from NPC's (nonplayer characters), grass huts, wall hangings in earthy colors, and other strong signifiers of mythologized blackness the way *World*

*of Warcraft's* Sen'jin Village does. However, *Second Life's* deregulation of racialized space, permitting and indeed depending upon users to create their own environments, topographies, and virtual objects, creates a sense of composability in regard to race and racialized space that is deeply characteristic of neoliberalism. Thus, while *Second Life* may appear to racialize space less than does *World of Warcraft*, its emphasis on consumer choice (nobody is "forced" to choose a race or to occupy a particular space) highlights the ways in which users *voluntarily* create racialized space.

*Second Life's* navigable spaces exemplify the logic of neoliberalism or ungoverned "choice," while *World of Warcraft* composes and segments space into racialized homelands that are strongly articulated to older notions of race, particularly blackness (Trolls) and Native Americanness (Tauren). If your avatar is a Troll, having to listen to an NPC tell you in a broad Jamaican accent to "stay away from the voodoo" over the sound of drumbeats every time you buy or sell something can be a maddening experience, especially if you are an American media scholar with any sensitivity to the racialization of shared virtual space. On the other hand, if as a Troll you must endure this multi-mediated immersion within a mythologized, primitive, phantasmatic racial identity and continually contend with the thoroughgoing way that Blizzard has racialized your avatar, your diegetic musical soundtrack, and your navigable space, at least you get . . . increased expertise with Throwing and Bow Weapons and increased Regeneration! *World of Warcraft* rationalizes racialized space and balances avatars' racial characteristics to ensure racial diversity. Thus, occupying racialized space, even when it is reviled as belonging to a "brutal" race such as the Orcs, has player *benefits*, for it is equally possible to level up or advance in-game regardless of race. There is no in-game benefit to being black, Asian, or Latino in *Second Life*, which is perhaps its best claim to being like "life" rather than a game.

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