

**Agency and Women's Geographies:
Tracking Spaces and Mobilities in Progressive-Era Women's Writing**

by

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Abstract

This dissertation investigates dramatic changes in women's geographic experience as represented in key literary texts from the Progressive Era. Focusing on the intersection between literature and material spaces in the urban environment, the literature discussed here maps the evolution of women's expanding mobilities and occupation of urban space. I examine three specific spaces outside of the traditional domestic sphere in order to better understand how women in the Progressive Era contested normalized spatial boundaries and laid claim urban spaces that were not traditionally viewed as theirs. Through the application of feminist geography and space/place theory, I demonstrate how women during this period appropriated and reconstructed these spaces/places and, conversely, how these spaces/places transformed and influenced women's agency and mobility. The Progressive-era spaces that I analyze are the settlement house, the street, and the skyscraper. I examine texts written between 1890 and 1935 and argue that women reimagined and re-appropriated the built environment of the city and outright challenged the dominant gender ideologies of the time.

The first chapter concentrates extensively on the architectural, social, and cultural development of Chicago's Hull-House through a discussion of Jane Addams's *Twenty Years at Hull-House* (1910), *Hull-House Maps and Papers* (1895), and first-person accounts from immigrants associated with the settlement. The urban street is the subject of Chapter Two, which analyzes how modern architectural and social geographies of women's leisure and entertainment influenced Djuna Barnes's depictions of women's use of urban space in her early journalism. The skyscraper is the setting of Chapter Three, which focuses on the relationship between the

skyscraper and women's work and provides a trajectory of women's spaces in the skyscraper from Henry Blake Fuller's *The Cliff-Dwellers* (1893) to Faith Baldwin's *Skyscraper* (1931) and its 1932 film adaptation, *Skyscraper Souls*. The fourth and last chapter introduces a racial perspective on modernity in the United States by focusing on how Nella Larsen's two novellas, *Quicksand* (1928) and *Passing* (1929), expand our knowledge of mixed-race women's agency and mobility in urban spaces and how race plays a complicating and influential role in the ways her female characters move through and inhabit the spaces discussed in the previous chapters.

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Introduction:

Women and the Spaces of Modernity

The city has long been used by critics and scholars to create theoretical frameworks, especially in relation to modernity and the individual. These frameworks occupy a spectrum in their approaches to how the individual navigates modernity and the urban scene. Some theorists have developed negative interpretations of urban life and disorder, focusing on overstimulation and a loss of individuality in the midst of a crowd composed solely of strangers. They have given us tactics and strategies for dealing with the everyday encounters we come across on city streets.¹ Others have discussed the ways in which the city has altered social structures and human relations, ushering in a new type of human solidarity alongside the formation and development of modernity. The city has been seen as a place of freedom and innovation that influenced and fostered new ways of living, as well intellectual and artistic movements. It has primarily been theorized in relation to what it signifies and what it potentially offers its inhabitants, while other scholars and critics have theorized on how the city simultaneously affects and creates modern life.² Urban growth in the nineteenth-century altered how individuals related to one another socially and the spatial configurations of their lives. Perhaps the greatest example of this is Charles Baudelaire's *flâneur*, who has come to embody the individuality and modernity of city life. What these urban theories focus on, however, is the individual's grappling with urban modernity as opposed to how the individual inhabits specific places and spaces.

This project considers how the spaces and places in the turn-of-the-century American city shaped and were reshaped by the increased presence and mobility of women. I examine three specific spaces outside of the traditional domestic sphere in order to better understand how women in the Progressive Era contested normalized spatial boundaries and appropriated urban

spaces that were not traditionally viewed as theirs. Elizabeth Bohls writes that “places are what human societies make of the spaces they occupy. The project of place-making is collective and continuous and open-ended. At an individual level, the social and the spatial converge to generate each person’s sense of place” (7). Through the application of feminist geography and space/place theory, I demonstrate how women during this period appropriated and reconstructed these spaces/places and, conversely, how these spaces/places transformed and influenced women’s agency and mobility. The Progressive-era spaces that I analyze are the settlement house, the street, and the skyscraper. Viewed together, these spaces work as geographies for expanding women’s agency and mobility, and complicate the distinction between the public and private sphere. I aim to answer two key questions: how do women utilize, reformulate, and mold urban spaces based on their own needs and desires? In turn, how do urban spaces mold and influence the women who traverse them?

The transition from the nineteenth to the twentieth century marked a dramatic change in the ways women navigated and occupied public spaces/places in the American city. As a result, I examine texts written between 1890 and 1935 and argue that women reimagined and re-appropriated the built environment of the city and outright challenged the dominant gender ideologies of the time. The texts discussed here are marked by social and cultural changes that influenced women’s mobility and agency in urban spaces and bear an important role in aiding our understanding of how we imagine space/place and the implications that stem from their construction. The women authors and the female characters they create inhabit the intricate spaces that both defined femininity in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries but also allowed women to contest and reconstruct their prescribed roles and establish places that allowed for more agency and mobility. In his influential study on social space, Henri Lefebvre argues that

“groups, classes or fractions of classes cannot constitute themselves, or recognize one another, as ‘subjects’ unless they generate (or produce) a space” (416). Responding to the new urban situation, the women discussed in this study participate in the creation of new spaces/places that are commensurate with their needs and new social positions and demonstrate the disparate ways that women, experience, use, and organize space as opposed to men.

As more women began to assert their presence in public, the urban spaces women typically occupied expanded and re-formed. No longer limited to the domestic sphere, women began working and moving outside of the home in increasing numbers, with a significant amount moving to cities in search of work and economic opportunities. For example, this period witnessed a transformation of the characterization of women as “streetwalker,” epitomized in Stephen Crane’s *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets* (1893). Whereas before it was synonymous with prostitution, by the end of the century the distinction was no longer readily identifiable, especially in relation to the working girl (Deutsch 12). Growing industrialization and the subsequent expansion of cities led to never-before-seen changes in the places that women occupied in society. Between 1880 and 1930, the female workforce grew from 2.6 million to 10.8 million. Although not all of these women lived apart from their families while working, by 1900, “one in five urban wage-earning women lived ‘adrift.’” The rapid growth of office buildings and retailers created new work opportunities within cities and women were in high demand to fill these positions. The number of women working in Chicago increased from 35,600 in 1880 to 407,600 in 1930. By 1930, twenty-seven percent of adult women in major American cities worked in positions that were considered to be outside of the traditional scope of women’s labor (i.e., domestic service). Even though these women primarily belonged to the working and

newly-forming middle class, these changes were substantial in setting a precedent for the future place of women in society.³

Although the presence of women of all classes in the public sphere increased, critics and historians have largely focused their scholarship on women of the lower or working classes. Scholars that do study the position and role of women in American cities center their attention on working women without explicitly noting how these women navigated the urban spaces they inhabited. Their research is centered in the larger conversation of urban economic opportunities for working-class women, prostitution, and moral and social reform. The majority of scholarship also locates working-class women traversing public space well before the end of the century. Mary P. Ryan's *Women in Public*, one of the earliest studies that portrays the ways in which women contested their place in society and seclusion in the private sphere focuses on, quite literally, searching out women in public. She argues that women were already actively located in public spaces despite not being overtly prominent in the conversation, and her study aims to shed light on the public sphere in its ability to "accommodate the female gender in a time and in places of social diversity" (Ryan 13). However, Ryan's analysis of only the public sphere in general terms limits our understanding of which specific public spaces women were occupying and does not adequately discuss physical space or urban geography.

Additionally, few critics have explored the mobilities and agency exerted by women and their relationships with the spaces they occupy. Fewer still have examined the spaces that women have occupied in the city outside of the traditional domestic sphere. Those that have written about women and the urban environment center their efforts on working- and lower-class women. Christine Stansell, for example, discusses the laboring women who inhabited antebellum New York City and essentially functioned as a precursor to how the situation of women was to

develop post-Civil War.⁴ Whereas these scholars focus primarily on the economic and class-based influences women brought to urban spaces, this dissertation more explicitly concentrates on the affects and repercussions specific urban spaces had on women regardless of class and socioeconomic position. I examine the expanding geographies and spaces women have come to inhabit with the changing social and cultural norms surrounding work and leisure and how women came to view and understand these newly-accessible spaces.

Despite the importance of recognizing and writing about working-class women, these studies only spotlight how women influenced and changed society and normalized the presence of women working, living, and playing in the city. They do not adequately capture how women were affected and subsequently shaped the specific spaces they inhabited. It is worth noting that studies on women's mobility in public and the built environment have become more prominent within the last two decades. Scholars like Sarah Deutsch, Jessica Ellen Sewell, and Maureen Flanagan have all written about how Boston, San Francisco, and Chicago women at the turn-of-the-century experienced, shaped, and organized public spaces to their advantages.⁵ However, it is worth noting that the majority of studies that focus on middle- and upper-class women tend to do so through the lens of social work and reform, reinforcing the adage that the only proper way for a woman to move about the city is while engaged in reform efforts that are viewed as an extension of her domestic duties.⁶ My work builds upon these studies by expanding the conversation surrounding women in the urban public sphere and how the built environment influenced their mobility and agency. Specifically, my argument is centered on the commonalities, differences, and intersections in the ways that upper, middle, and working-class women created, reconfigured, and navigated the spaces of the settlement house, urban street, and skyscraper.

Additionally, few scholars or historians tackle the role literary women have played in cities.⁷ Women like Jane Addams and Djuna Barnes (discussed in this project) wrote extensively about their lives in Chicago and New York between 1890 and 1920, respectively, documenting the turn-of-the-century urban experience from the vantage point of women. Novelists like Edith Wharton and Nella Larsen set some of their most revolutionary texts against the backdrop of both American and European cities with the publication of novels such as *The Custom of the Country* (1913), *Quicksand* (1928), and *Passing* (1929), while writers like Faith Baldwin broadened our understanding of the spaces of women's work well into the twentieth century. Even though historians have expanded their knowledge on the historical and sociological position of women in cities, additional work is needed in order to understand how women saw themselves navigating the physical, social, and economic labyrinths of the city and how they grappled with and depicted the changing influences women exerted on their built environments.

The City Through a Spatial Lens

This project focuses on the ways women Progressive-Era women constructed places amidst the fluctuating spaces of the turn-of-the-century urban landscape. I draw my working definitions of “space” and “place” from a number of influential feminist geographers. Tim Cresswell defines place as “space invested with meaning in the context of power;” how individuals and societies make the spaces they occupy more meaningful through the reiteration of everyday practices (11-12). Doreen Massey argues that “what gives a place its specificity is not some long-internalized history but the fact that it is constructed out of a particular constellation of social relations, meeting and weaving together at a particular locus” (*Space, Place, and Gender* 154). Space, on the other hand, is a more abstract and undifferentiated concept than place. The only way that a space is transformed into a place is when it is invested

with meaning by those who inhabit it. Therefore, the process of place-making is oftentimes a fraught and contentious act that involves pooling the collective energies of all who inhabit that particular space. And as history has shown us, that is not always easy given the various social, racial, and economic makeups of the various groups who are usually found in the same spaces. As Linda McDowell posits: “social distance does not always imply geographical distance, and occupants of the same Cartesian spaces may live in very different ‘places’” (*Gender, Identity, and Place* 5). Perhaps the most evocative example of this is the settlement houses that infiltrated poor and working-class urban neighborhoods and brought college-educated young women to the working-class doorstep. Yet, while these poor neighborhoods were places of opportunity for young women to escape the domestic sphere, they were simultaneously grim daily realities for its inhabitants.

Feminist geography provides a useful framework with which to study not only how women created and utilized spaces and places at the turn-of-the-century, but also their mobility in and through those spaces. Doreen Massey, Linda McDowell, and Gillian Rose study the interplay between gender and space since the 1990s, focusing on how gendered identity is constituted through space and how places are imagined, constructed, and inhabited through gendered perspectives. They have expanded our understanding of how certain spaces are coded male versus female and how women have transgressed the cultural boundaries demarcating globalism and the nation-state, community and locality, the home and workplaces, and the body.

Doreen Massey echoes previous studies in her assertion that place has always been conceptualized through a masculine perspective. Challenging this definition, she argues that “spaces and places are not only themselves gendered but, in their being so, they both reflect and affect the ways in which gender is constructed and understood” (*Space, Place, and Gender* 179).

Linda McDowell examines the gendering of specific spaces in her study, discussing the ways in which feminist geography can provide for new interpretations of gender construction and the various ways in which women experience space and place differently as opposed to men.

McDowell writes that the goal of a feminist geographer is to:

investigate, make visible, and challenge the relationships between gender divisions and spatial divisions, to uncover their mutual constitution and problematize their apparent naturalness. Thus the purpose here is to examine the extent to which women and men experience spaces and places differently and to show how these differences themselves are part of the social constitution of gender as well as that of place. (*Gender, Identity, and Place* 12)

Gillian Rose, on the other hand, takes a more pedagogically philosophical approach in her work, and examines the status of geography as a field of study and its rather precarious (read nonexistent) relationship with feminist theory. Rose's central position, similar to Massey's, is that to think of geography is to automatically assume a masculine subject position (4). She argues that feminist geographers tend to view the contemporary city in ways that take into consideration the heterogeneity and fragmentation of social experiences and everyday life as opposed to a transparent and knowledgeable whole (133). Rose calls for studies that interpret women's urban lives not only through production and reproduction, but acknowledge the fact that women sometimes inhabit "spaces which [are] neither the masculine public nor the feminized private" but are paradoxical (like the settlement house, for example) in nature (136). Feminist geographers theorize non-binary analyses of gender and space that move beyond a simplistic categorization of which spaces women were and were not allowed to be present in. As

a theoretical lens, it is invaluable in its ability to broaden our understanding of how space functions and is created and inhabited in literary texts.

Place-making is an essential aspect of how Progressive Era women re-conceptualized the spaces that they occupied. Thus, the politics of place can additionally be seen as the politics of identity: these women chose not only to represent themselves but simultaneously to appropriate and subvert the identities imposed on them in these spaces. By applying feminist geography to the writing by and about Progressive-Era women, we gain a better understanding of how women are always shaped in some way by the built environment, the spaces they could/could not occupy, how this appropriation shaped the built environment, and the ways that it was different from male use of and occupation of space. The writers and texts included in this project portray women who are moving in and appropriating urban spaces and subsequently challenging our understanding of these spaces and the role of women within them. I analyze these spatial manipulations in order to shed light on women's expanding spatial mobilities within the turn-of-the-century city and demonstrate how women's experience, construction, and appropriation of space differed from men's.

Urban Growth and the Transformation of Women's Public Space

Theodore Dreiser's *Sister Carrie* (1900) provides a poignant description of Chicago's exponentially unlimited potential for growth and locates the city as a metaphor for American growth and industry, and the attainment of individual opportunity. Published a mere seven years after the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition took place in Chicago's Jackson Park, the novel puts forth a vision of the city on par with rapid urban growth and industrialization then taking place throughout the country. Yet Dreiser chooses to highlight this growth through the eyes of a young woman, underscoring the importance of women's roles in rapidly expanding urban spaces.

In *The Country and the City*, Raymond Williams writes that that image of an individual walking the city streets has always been that of a man (234). Despite this, the turn of the nineteenth-century witnessed a significant number of fictional texts centered in the city with women at their core. By the time Carrie Meeber set foot in Chicago and became entranced by a modernizing city filled with commodities and entertainment, women had already been traversing and transforming its built environment in increasingly greater numbers. One of the main questions Dreiser and his contemporaries attempted to answer was: how does one account for and reconcile the drastic increase of young, single, women flocking to American cities to work in its factories, shops, and offices while essentially rejecting traditional domestic roles? The majority of the nineteenth century was characterized by a strict separation of spheres that perpetuated a gendered ideology in regards to the types of spaces women could and could not occupy. The distinction between public and private was significantly more pronounced in cities, especially since they were not typically viewed as appropriate spaces for women to inhabit.⁸ The image of the woman at the turn of the century represents both the danger and the promise of the modern age.

The World's Columbian Exposition reflected that urban promise at the center of the American cultural imagination. Celebrating the four hundredth anniversary of Christopher Columbus's arrival on the American continent, the Fair aimed to demonstrate the great progress America had achieved over the course of the nineteenth-century and Chicago's role within that progress (Cronon 341-342). The Fair was viewed as an architectural beaux-arts wonder with its white plaster buildings (which earned it the nickname of the White City) dedicated to transportation, machinery, and agriculture, exemplifying the progress not only Chicago but the country had made in the past century and signaling to the world the progress still to come.⁹ What makes the Fair pertinent to my research (and a logical start to my project) is its pivotal role as a

marker of urban thought and development, which influenced a specific vision of not only Chicago but other cities.¹⁰

Despite the urban utopia envisioned by the Fair's planners and architects, the turn-of-the-century bore witness to a number of social, political, economic, and cultural changes that threatened to uproot and complicate this vision.¹¹ These changes can be marked by three specific and momentous demographic shifts: the shift from rural to urban centers (especially for individuals looking for work), the Great Migration of African Americans from the South to northern cities, and the influx of immigrants onto American shores. In 1850, the United States was still primarily an agrarian nation, evoking the Jeffersonian ideal of the yeoman farmer. Fifty years later, it had transformed into an urban-industrial nation with a strong agricultural component. Cities came to serve as the primary economic engines with millions of people migrating from rural and international places in hopes of benefiting from this economic boom. By 1900, the population of New York City alone was 3.4 million, which equaled the total urban population in 1850. Chicago's population during the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition had already reached the one million mark. In the first two decades of the twentieth-century, the populations of New York and Chicago grew by an additional 2.2 and one million souls, respectively, surpassing the fifty percent mark between rural and urban.¹² Adding to the influx, over eleven million immigrants arrived in the United States between 1870 and 1900, the majority of whom settled in cities. By 1900, sixty percent of America's largest cities were either foreign born or of recent foreign descent. These numbers almost doubled between 1900 and 1917, with over seventeen million immigrants arriving in the United States and by 1920, close to eighty percent of all immigrants arriving on American shores lived in cities.¹³ Commencing in 1915, the Great Migration resulted in one and a half million African Americans leaving the South and

moving to northern and western cities. Between 1910 and 1930, Chicago and New York's African American populations expanded by forty percent. All three migratory shifts heavily influenced the social, cultural, and economic development of cities and occurred within the first thirty years of the twentieth century.¹⁴ One of the most pivotal socioeconomic shifts occurred in the situation of women, their mobility and the spaces they occupied.

In British and American fiction, women in the city have often been represented as either prostitutes or as working class women.¹⁵ It was not until the turn-of-the-century when women's urban spaces began to expand that critics also began broadening their approaches to understanding how women comported themselves as actors on the urban stage. Prior to this shift, however, the streets were commonly associated with moral depravity and poverty, and numerous charitable and religious aid organizations attempted to address the issues through social and political reform (Stansell 194).¹⁶ Women who did choose to venture into the public sphere faced a double standard: they were viewed as both in danger and dangerous, assuming their most threatening form as that of the prostitute.¹⁷ Mary P. Ryan writes that "the politics of the public streets divided women by race and class, and between the dangerous and the endangered" (94), however, the distinction between the two depended heavily on class: the former was almost always low class, while the latter was middle or upper-class. Both men and women were warned of the dangers of public streets; however, these dangers were quite different for each sex. While men were more at risk of bodily harm, women were believed to hazard violations of their delicate sensibilities. Prostitutes were seen to hold the most danger to men because of their supposed ability to lure them into illicit acts. Because of this widely held belief, streets were actually seen as posing the greatest risk to men prior to 1880 and were consistently depicted with

the rhetoric of sexual danger, conjuring up images of so-called dangerous women preying on unsuspecting men (Ryan 69-73).¹⁸

The boundaries demarcating the public and private spheres became increasingly blurred by the end of the nineteenth century as more women began appropriating semi-public spaces like department stores and settlement houses. In 1890, there occurred the separation of public spaces into women-only spaces, however, this was true only for the middle and upper class in an effort to “shield them from the lower classes and unknown men” (Sewell xxiii). Despite some city reformers’ best efforts to regulate public spaces, urban residents were more likely than not to encounter an array of individuals in their daily encounters on city streets. Mary P. Ryan writes that “women were channeled into selective sectors of public space, where their movements were charted by both gender prescriptions and class distinctions. Public territory was divided into a patchwork of male and female, homosocial and heterosexual regions” (16). Despite the vastly differing urban experiences most women had based on their socioeconomic status, the 1890s proved to be a pivotal decade for the transformation of women’s public space with the rise of the New Woman and the ever-increasing presence of women of all social classes in cities.

This dissertation investigates dramatic changes in women’s geographic experience as represented in key literary texts from the Progressive Era. Focusing on the intersection between literature and material spaces in the urban environment, the literature discussed here maps the evolution of women’s expanding mobilities and occupation of urban space. Unlike the department store and the private spaces of women’s philanthropic and charitable societies, the settlement house, the urban street, and the skyscraper are spaces continuously in flux, refusing a simple and definitive categorization. These spaces are a cultural and physical dyad – their concreteness just as important as what they signify in terms of who occupies them and who is

able to exert power within them. They are products of densely-populated and transforming urban landscape that fundamentally influenced the way individuals perceived the world (Olson 12).

My first chapter analyzes the spaces of the settlement house and concentrates extensively on the architectural, social, and cultural development of Chicago's Hull-House. The settlement house movement is perhaps one of the most well-known sites of social reform efforts spearheaded by women at the turn-of-the-century. It was revolutionary not only in its goal of bettering the working-class conditions but also in its ability to allow women to participate in civic life without transgressing gender roles. Established during a time when women began appropriating public spaces in greater numbers, the settlement house flourished as a place devoted to both social reform and the (re)formation of both middle-class women's and immigrants' identities. Hull-House, a Chicago social improvement project aimed at working-class immigrants, serves as an important example of how new urban geographies shifted perceptions of domestic space across lines of class, religion, and national origin. Through a careful analysis of Jane Addams's *Twenty Years at Hull-House* (1910), *Hull-House Maps and Papers* (1895), and first-person accounts from immigrants associated with the settlement, I examine how the constant movement between spheres resulted in a blurring of boundaries and created new narratives surrounding women's place in the city. I argue that in constructing Hull-House as a place of refuge and reform in Chicago, residents redefined the domestic space of the settlement house to allow for new types of social relationships and interactions. The settlement house as a hybrid third space reworked the female reformer's image in the city by placing value on the importance of domesticity while simultaneously equipping women with the means to contest it. Additionally, the reform efforts championed by Hull-House emphasized the role of

working-class immigrant women and located them as integral members in the spaces and places of Chicago.

The urban street is the subject of Chapter 2, where I analyze how modern architectural and social geographies of women's leisure and entertainment influenced Djuna Barnes's depictions of women's use of urban space. Throughout much of her early journalism, Barnes reconstructs the roles that women hold in the modern city. I discuss Barnes's articles that focus on leisure and entertainment, where she reworks the conversation surrounding women's presence and mobility in public and normalizes the female urban experience. Barnes is subversive in her ability to locate women in new and emerging places of public mass entertainment and modern city life and her stories are grounded in the physically built environment, exposing the everyday scenes of the city to her readers. Barnes habitually appropriates a number of social and rhetorical positions that not only helped normalize the presence of women in new urban spaces but solidified the subject matter of the modern female urban journalist. She appropriated the male subject position and participated in the formation of a public gender identity directly related to the urban spaces she chronicled; she frequently positioned herself as a stranger and traveler in her home town in order to better understand the spaces/places she documented or to provide unique perspectives to her readers. Women's experience of the city is crucial to understanding how transformations associated with modernity occurred and reverberated across society and Barnes's portrayal of women's leisure and entertainment at the turn-of-the-century provides a rich account of the gendered aspects of modernity in urban settings.

The skyscraper is the setting of the third chapter which focuses on the relationship between the skyscraper and women's work and provides a trajectory of women's spaces in the skyscraper beginning with Henry Blake Fuller's *The Cliff-Dwellers* (1893) to Faith Baldwin's

Skyscraper (1931) and its 1932 film adaptation, *Skyscraper Souls*. The skyscraper as an architectural form proliferated through cities well into the twentieth century, altering the urban landscape, the relationship between the individual and the city, and cementing itself as the beacon of corporate workspaces. This chapter analyzes how space within the skyscraper is organized and set up, how women are able to move throughout the space, and how women's spaces and places of work developed and progressed. As a modern office building, the skyscraper was influential as a space of women's work and I demonstrate how over the course of forty years, women begin to inhabit these spaces and the ways in which they become more significant to women. Examined together, Fuller and Baldwin map the trajectory of the spaces of women's work and how they were influenced by the architectural forms of the skyscraper. Fuller's portrayal of the character Cornelia McNabb, who anticipates a number of these developments, demonstrates how these architectural forms become gendered. Baldwin expands upon this depiction by showcasing the varying disparities in women's work in the 1930s and how they have progressed since their initial location in the skyscraper offices of the 1890s. Through Baldwin's novel especially, we come to understand how skyscraper culture segregated space by gender, specifically how women occupied gendered spaces marked for their work that were separate from the spaces occupied by men. By analyzing the trajectory of women's work and the spaces of their employment, we gain a more concrete and all-encompassing understanding of how women came to inhabit the skyscraper and the ways that they aided in and influenced the development and transformation of its spaces.

The fourth and last chapter introduces a racial perspective on modernity in the United States by focusing on how Nella Larsen's two novellas, *Quicksand* (1928) and *Passing* (1929), in order to supplement our understanding of the spaces discussed in the previous chapters. I analyze

both how the Black female body is constituted as a space that reflects fears and desires and how this same body moves through modernist urban spaces and wishes for a separate hybrid space that is accepting of mixed-race identity. My argument centers on how Larsen expands our knowledge of Black women's agency and mobility in urban spaces and the ways that race plays a complicating and influential role in the ways her female characters move through and inhabit spaces of education and uplift (akin to the settlement house), the urban street, and the skyscraper. As a result, we gain a more comprehensive grasp of how Larsen portrays African American sensibility in relation to space/place and the ways that the same spaces/places posed different restrictions and opportunities for Larsen's Black female characters. Larsen depicts her characters attempting to establish and inhabit the spaces between Black and white, just as white women did with the spaces between public and private. In doing so, Larsen endeavors to create a separate space where her characters will be accepted as mixed-race. Such an approach continues my discussion of hybrid and paradoxical spaces and how Larsen attempts to rework notions of space to accommodate both Black and white identity. Ultimately, through Larsen's depiction of the spaces Black women occupy, I argue that the creation of a hybrid space or a space outside of race is not feasible. The spaces and places Larsen crafts in her novels play a significant role in the creation of characters' identities and their attempts at carving out a space separate from inflexible and monochromatic representations of race.

The female reformers, journalists, and authors discussed in this dissertation all demonstrate the importance and consequences of how we perceive, create, imagine, and inhabit space/place. Their work, both on the page and in the larger built environments of their cities, underscores the ways that Progressive-era women were challenging and reconfiguring traditional ideas of public space and who could and could not occupy and make them personal spaces. The

spaces discussed in the following chapters highlight the roles women held as significant and influential members of their urban communities and the ways they attempted to affect change and awareness of women's shifting social, economic, and cultural places within the spaces of turn-of-the-century cities.

Chapter One

“To Live in a Really Living World:”

Constructing Space and (Re)forming Identity in Chicago’s Hull-House Settlement

The popular view of Chicago established during the World’s Columbian Exposition in 1893 created a lasting impression regarding the past accomplishments and future directions of a growing urban metropolis. The Fair’s nickname, the White City (nicknamed because of the white plaster used to construct its buildings), came to be synonymous with an idealized vision of civilized urban life (Cronon 342), and represents the “expression of the American urban renaissance” (Hales 213). The Fair itself would become the “landmark international event that bridged the nineteenth century to the heavily industrialized twentieth century – ushering in some of the most dramatic changes in lifestyle, in the shortest period of time ever experienced by mankind” (Bolotin and Laing 8). The White City represented a utopian vision of what life in American cities could become. Nonetheless, this particular vision was not all-inclusive and left out those that did not easily fit the mold – namely, the poor and working class, people of color, and immigrants (Brown 15).¹ Hull-House, in Chicago’s Nineteenth Ward, was a mere ten miles away from the Exposition’s grounds on the shores of Lake Michigan. Yet the social and economic distance between the dirt and decay of South Halstead Street and the booming and teeming fairgrounds was exorbitant.

The settlement house movement arose as a direct challenge to this type of mentality, actively working toward mitigating the forgotten role of the less fortunate in American society. Chicago’s Hull-House, founded by Ellen Gates Starr and Jane Addams in 1889, is the earliest of such efforts and laid the groundwork for a new type of reform.² Coming from a wealthy and prominent Illinois family, Addams was acutely positioned to understand both social classes,

effectively straddling the divide between them for the majority of her life while working in the service of Hull-House. The settlement house movement is one of the most well-known sites of social reform efforts spearheaded by women at the turn-of-the-century. It was revolutionary not only in its goal of bettering working-class conditions but also in its ability to allow women to participate in civic life in new ways. Even though women feature at the center of the movement, criticism has not adequately covered how the settlement house allowed women to transgress their prescribed social roles. Established during a time when women began appropriating public spaces in greater numbers, the settlement house flourished as a place devoted to both social reform and the (re)formation of women's identities (Carson 27). The fact that the settlement movement developed and grew through the work of women speaks to the tenacity and persistence of female Progressive-era reformers as well as their collective desire to sidestep traditional social roles.

This chapter addresses how Hull-House used a domestic model to create a public institution (Deutsch 13), eliminating the distinction between spheres, while simultaneously allowing women to contest their positions in Chicago's public spaces. I examine how the constant movement between spheres resulted in a blurring of boundaries and created new narratives surrounding women's place in the city. By reworking the constrictions of traditional domestic life, settlement house reformers created a space that was on par with their new societal positions as college-educated, independent women (Vicinus 24). I draw my analysis from Jane Addams's *Twenty Years at Hull-House* (1910), *Hull-House Maps and Papers* (1895), original photographs of the Hull-House complex, and testimonies from working-class women who benefitted from Hull-House programs. I argue that in constructing Hull-House as a place of refuge and reform in Chicago, Addams and her cohort of residents redefined the domestic space

of the settlement house to allow for new types of social relationships and interactions.³ The notion of place-making was essential in allowing Hull-House residents to re-conceptualize the spaces they occupied for their own purposes. The settlement house as a hybrid third space reworked the female reformer's image in the city by placing value on the importance of domesticity while simultaneously equipping them with the means to contest it. Additionally, the reform efforts championed by Hull-House emphasized the role of working-class immigrant women and located them as integral members in the spaces and places of the Nineteenth Ward.

The Origins of Settlement Reform

The beginning of the Progressive Era was marked by stark economic, cultural, and social changes. American cities experienced increased urbanization with the exponential expansion of urban populations that occupied limited spaces. The growth of the upper and middle classes in wealth and property was paralleled by poverty and destitution in the working and immigrant classes. The reform movement arose as a direct result of these changes, creating an urgency for social change and addressing the societal ills that, for the first time, were readily visible to the public and seen as a direct consequence of expanding industrialization and capitalism.⁴ Even though charity organizations geared toward helping the urban poor had been around for generations, this period experienced a new sense of anxiety centered around the city itself, with reform-minded individuals believing that if something was not specifically done, all aspects of society would crumble. The heightened sense of urban menace led many reform organizations to amend their approach to social reform which caused them to not simply “fish out individuals floundering in the urban maelstrom but to keep society itself from crumbling into the swirling waters” (Boyer 131). Middle-class Americans involved in reform efforts believed that “only a comprehensive, systematic, and orchestrated effort could stave off moral decay and social

disintegration among the urban masses” (Boyer 144). The charity organization movement was a direct result of this belief and operated under the assumption that urban life in general had caused the lower classes to degenerate morally.

The work of charity organizations during this period stemmed from a long history of female benevolent organizations led by predominantly white Protestant women. Although these women worked in favor of a wide array of causes, they operated under what Lori D. Ginzberg calls an “ideology of benevolent femininity” – a vision of America that rejected the supposed corruption of working-class life in favor of middle-class values and practices (25). A significant number of these charitable efforts centered on exposing the lower classes to the influence of their so-called social and moral betters in an effort to have upper-class values rub off on them. Unlike the settlement house movement, benevolent work connected femininity with morality and advocated for work that was strictly within the private sphere.⁵

The settlement house movement was founded as a humanistic response to the deplorable social conditions plaguing the neighborhoods of the urban working classes and, as a result, posed a direct challenge to benevolent societies and charity organizations. The settlement movement originated with Samuel A. Barnett with the construction of Toynbee Hall in London’s East End in 1884. The residents were primarily (male) Oxford graduates in whom Barnett recognized a need to combat restlessness through their work with the poor. The settlement movement made its way to the United States in 1886 with the founding of Stanton Coit’s Neighborhood Guild in New York City (reorganized as University Settlement in 1891). American settlement house workers reworked the English model which believed that reform must begin with the individual and instead focused on the environment, believing that if the neighborhood were to be reformed, the benefit would then pass on to its inhabitants. Unlike charity organizations, settlement houses

were located directly in the poor and working-class neighborhoods and its founders were convinced that previous charitable efforts had failed because privileged reformers refused to cross the social and geographical boundaries separating the classes. Settlements, on the other hand, were homes purchased either by middle-class individuals or institutions within specific poor urban neighborhoods whose “founders’ intent was to settle well-educated, middle-class people among the working poor, both to study the poor and to uplift them by their example of clean living and neighborliness” (Deutsch 8). They worked to reform the conditions of poverty rather than the individuals themselves, arguing that the moral defects of the poor were a consequence of their poverty, rather than a cause.

Because of the deteriorating material state plaguing the urban poor, the settlement house emerged as the ideal vehicle that could supply a number of potential solutions. What many settlement workers, Addams among them, soon came to understand is that they needed to be willing to change their own lives if they were to be successful in changing the lives of the immigrants:

[The settlement] must be open to conviction and must have a deep and abiding sense of tolerance. It must be hospitable and ready for experiment. It should demand from its residents a scientific patience in the accumulation of facts and the steady holding of their sympathies as one of the best instruments for that accumulation. (Addams 95)

The notion of adapting to whatever circumstances the residents of Hull-House would encounter is a drastic step away from traditional Christian charity (Jackson 44). The fact that Addams celebrates rather than laments the settlement’s necessity to adapt to its environment also underscores that Hull-House was not in the business of assimilating or changing their immigrant neighbors but rather had to adapt their own methods at ensuring that they, the residents, were

able to help in the best way possible. Settlement houses operated under the belief that poverty had structural roots that could be solved through municipal reform. The studies of the poor and their living conditions was another primary difference between settlements and charity organizations. Unlike charity workers who were more prone to providing immediate assistance in the form of money or food, settlement efforts at social investigation would later be used as the impetus for changes in public policy and municipal reform. As a result, settlements were the first institutions that provided the type of services that would later be absorbed by the municipal, state, and federal governments and can be seen as precursors to the New Deal and the social reforms of the 1960s. Additionally, settlement workers tried to avoid the rhetoric of “moral uplift” that was frequently used by missionaries and charity organizations as legitimization for their activities. Instead, settlement workers frequently framed their work in reciprocal terms, meaning that both they and the individuals they were helping benefited from the settlement house.⁶

Addams makes the distinction between traditional charity and Hull-House’s envisioned mission early in her memoir, detailing the story of a Christmas party held at the settlement where the residents gave out candy to girls who worked in a candy factory. The girls refused the candy, stating that they “‘worked in a candy factory and could not bear the sight of it.’” We discovered that for six weeks they had worked from seven in the morning until nine at night...The sharp consciousness of stern economic conditions was thus thrust upon us in the midst of the season of good will” (Addams 122). This story functions as a crucial example of how Addams and the other residents realized that simple acts of charity would not be enough to ameliorate the conditions these girls worked in and illustrates the juxtaposition between traditional Christian charity and the hard reality of slum life (Herman 122). As a result, Hull-House residents refused

to dole out charity believing that the suffering and struggles of the poor would not necessarily be ended by giving.⁷ Rather, Hull-House adopted a place-based approach to reform, one that directly engaged the social and economic environment of the ward. This approach also allowed residents to advocate for broader municipal reforms that would benefit the entire city.

One of the first challenges Hull-House residents encountered was the state of the ward itself. Hilda Satt Polacheck, a young Jewish immigrant from Poland who lived just four blocks from Hull-House, paints a vivid picture of the state of her neighborhood in her autobiography, *I Came a Stranger*:

The sidewalks were wooden planks, which became slimy and slippery after a rain. The streets were paved with wooden blocks, and after a heavy rainfall the blocks would become loose and float about in the street. During the drying process the stench was nauseating. There were many places where the blocks did not return to their mooring and the smelly water would remain for days. (30)

Polacheck's description creates a powerful image of the physical state of the Nineteenth Ward and the types of environmental conditions she and other immigrants were exposed to. One way that the residents of Hull-House differed from previous charitable efforts was their recognition of the effect environment had on the individual. Addams writes that "during those first years on Halstead Street nothing was more painfully clear than the fact that pliable human nature is relentlessly pressed upon by its physical environment" (118). The built environment comes to play an integral role in the work performed at Hull-House. Residents quickly realized that immigrants' living conditions were out of their control and that their lives were not a moral failing, like previously believed, but rather a direct consequence of their environment. Yet space was not only an influential factor in working-class lives. The residents and volunteers that made

up Hull-House were also deeply affected by the surrounding built environment which, in turn, influences the construction of their identity as urban female reformers. Massey emphasizes the recursive relationship between space and gender, arguing one affects and is affected by the other (*Space, Place, and Gender* 186). The mutuality of this relationship allows us to understand how the formation of Hull-House as a space, through Addams's interior decorating and subsequent expansions, directly influenced the gender identities of its female residents and led to the creation of a new type of urban reformer.

Stemming from this realization and buffeted by the need to accumulate facts and express sympathy, residents undertook studies, investigations, and social visits that mapped the trajectories of their neighbors' lives and the types of work that they performed, while simultaneously fostering a relationship with the individuals they encountered. Hull-House's attempts at fostering a community of reformers and a relationship with its neighbors extended well beyond the falls of the settlement. Some of its earliest work centered upon simple acts of kindness to help their new neighbors and introduce themselves to the community (Sicherman 168). While easily interacting and meeting the needs of the various individuals who knocked on their door, residents attempted to make an equal contribution by visiting the tenements where these individuals lived. These visits functioned as an extension of the urban domesticity practiced at Hull-House and was made possible by the quasi-public nature of the settlement that allowed female residents to venture into the streets and homes located within the ward. Residents frequently called on and dined with families in their tenements and were less interested in challenging traditional nineteenth-century domesticity than in extending that domesticity into the public spaces of the city (Haar, "Location, Location" 154).⁸ Such visits directly contradicted previous charitable visits which focused more on deeming tenement residents worthy of aid

based on their conditions rather than acknowledging the role of the environment. Hull-House residents increased their knowledge of the city and its various programs to better their own homes and those of their neighbors. This increased knowledge of the city's municipal programs allowed residents to understand how they can best help the families that lived in surrounding tenements, even though the residents themselves had no reason to worry about municipal reform.

Despite the revolutionary social and cultural changes, the settlement movement enacted through its reform efforts, there remain a number of problematic aspects of its legacy. A number of houses championed paternalism and Americanization in their rhetoric and were more concerned with fitting immigrants into a mold that was white, Protestant, and decidedly middle class. Regardless of the social benevolence exercised by residents, the settlement house's "middle-class invasion itself was an admission of the segmented class and the ethnic geography of the city" (Deutsch 11). Even though working in the worst urban neighborhoods provided a new-found sense of freedom for the settlers, it did little to change the daily spatial realities of the working class. Mary P. Ryan argues that "even the most accomplished female trespassers into the public realm...still left traces of their private origins in their metaphors of social housekeeping; their promises to purify and clean up politics; and their persistent refusal to challenge sexual differences, especially the reproductive and domestic roles assigned to women" (8). Additionally, African Americans and other people of color were conspicuously absent from the dominant reform narrative and settlement house work was strictly divided along racial lines. Nowhere in her memoir, for example, does Addams discuss African Americans who could have also benefitted from the services Hull-House offered.

Settling's underlying notions, however, still rested on the idea of leading by example (the belief that the poor would get better by seeing the residents as a good example of proper

behavior/ways of living) regardless of how vastly different Hull-House's reform efforts were from traditional charities. Despite their efforts at moving away from noblesse oblige charity, the settlement house was still a complicated space when it came to negotiating the relationship between the female residents and the immigrants they came in contact with on a daily basis. The settlement house movement relied on spatial practices – physically moving into a neighborhood – to achieve its goals. As a result, it required its volunteers and residents to “make a spatial commitment, allowing all aspects of one's living, working, and leisure to be transformed and renegotiated” (Jackson 23). It is important to understand that the residents working at Hull-House and the immigrants throughout the neighborhood experienced space differently and, therefore, were the result of different spatial legacies. As previously discussed, both the female residents and the immigrants occupied essentially the same Cartesian space yet they lived in vastly different places. The settlement house movement provided middle-class women with the opportunity to step outside of their socially-prescribed roles and escape the domestic spheres. Yet, the neighborhoods in which these settlements were located were not always places of opportunity for the poor and immigrant classes.

Women's Shifting Roles

The Progressive Era was characterized by conscious efforts to investigate the realities of urban life. With the popularization of muckraking articles and realist fiction, the general public expressed a keen interest in witnessing and understanding life as it truly was. For these reasons, the settlement house as a space plays an important role in allowing individuals to understand the vagaries of the urban environment. In 1889, only six settlement houses operated within the United States. By the end of the decade, that number increased to seventy-four and by 1910, there were four hundred settlement houses established in almost every American city (Hales

371). The majority of settlement houses at the turn-of-the-century were located in the larger cities of the Northeast and Midwest.⁹ Over the course of the next three decades, settlements sprung up in almost every major American city, with some serving only immigrants or African Americans, while others providing only health care and food or education and political organizing. Regardless of its services, all settlement houses directly engaged the communities they were located in.

Twenty Years at Hull-House was published during a period that witnessed an explosion of reform-centered literature written by of Jacob Riis, Stephen Crane, Ida B. Wells, Ida M. Tarbell, Upton Sinclair, and others. Because Addams was heavily invested in the belief that democracy was a way of life and that one of the main purposes of settlements was to expand democracy within society (Stebner 33), many contemporary critics tend to focus on Addams's social and political reform work, especially what Hull-House has accomplished for the immigrant community of the Nineteenth Ward.¹⁰ Considered the pinnacle among settlement houses due both to its size and scope, Hull-House did not possess a single emphasis, unlike other settlement houses, and instead offered a plethora of programs and activities for the benefit of its neighborhood.¹¹ By the time Addams came to write her memoir, *Twenty Years at Hull-House* (1910), Hull-House offered a plethora of services to its neighborhood: childcare, cooking and sewing classes, organized sports, union meetings, lectures and talks, food assistance, and was the most well-known and influential settlement of the Progressive Era.

The urban built environment was a primary component of Hull-House's growth and development in its early years – a component that was strongly dependent upon the relationship of Hull-House and its residents with the surrounding neighborhood. In her essay, "Object Value

of a Social Settlement” (1893), Jane Addams gives the following description of Hull-House and the surrounding neighborhood:

Halsted Street is thirty-two miles long and one of the great thoroughfares of Chicago. Polk Street crosses Halsted midway between the stock-yards to the south and the ship-building yards on the north branch of the Chicago River...Polk Street, running west from Halsted Street, grows rapidly more respectable; running a mile east to State Street, it grows steadily worse...Hull House is an ample old residence, well built and somewhat ornately decorated after the manner of its time, 1856. It has been used for many purposes, and although battered by its vicissitudes, is essentially sound and has responded kindly to repairs and careful furnishing. Its wide hall and open fires always insure it a gracious aspect. It once stood in the suburbs, but the city has steadily grown up around it and its site now has corners on three or four more or less distinct foreign colonies. Between Halsted Street and the river live about ten thousand Italians - Neopolitans, Sicilians, and Calabrians, with an occasional Lombard or Venetian. To the south on Twelfth Street are many Germans, and side streets are given over almost entirely to Polish and Russian Jews. Still farther south, these Jewish colonies merge into a huge Bohemian colony, so vast that Chicago ranks as the third Bohemian city in the world. To the northwest are many Canadian-French, clannish in spite of their long residence in America, and to the north are many Irish and first-generation Americans. On the streets directly west and farther north are well-to-do English-speaking families, many of whom own their houses and have lived in the neighborhood for years. (29-30)

This example provides a history of the settlement’s main house and namesake and establishes the built environment in which the house is physically located, underscoring its importance in the

settlement's reform efforts.¹² Addams's portrayal of the house as ornate and gracious evokes images of a middle-class domesticity and hospitality, however, the description of urban growth around the house makes one believe that the guests are typical of the urban neighborhood. The emphasis on geography locates the settlement on a geographic axis of the city. The various ethnicities and nationalities spreading out from Hull-House in cardinal directions evokes an image of a compass with the settlement occupying the center. This description establishes the settlement as physically, socially, and culturally central to the Nineteenth Ward and mimics the colorful maps the residents created for *Hull-House Maps and Papers* in 1895.

Even though men were active in settlement work, the majority of the residents were young unmarried women who expressed a wish to put their college educations to better use and combat feelings of restlessness (Carson 52). Martha Vicinus writes that "slum life attracted overprotected women who wanted adventure and excitement away from their dull respectable homes. The experience women gained in hospitals, workhouses, and settlements prepared them to play a role in public affairs in a way that no school or college could" (213). Settlement work proved be vastly different from traditional charity work carried out by middle and upper-class women. The woman visiting the poor and needy as part of her work could participate in civic life without transgressing her gender role while simultaneously getting a glimpse of impoverished domestic life (Nord 210).¹³ Women joined for a variety of reasons: some wanted a sense of adventure before settling down to traditional domestic life, others were genuinely concerned with working-class conditions and wanted to make a difference, while others wanted to put their newly-acquired college educations to good use (Stebner 17). Even though middle-class young women were able to pursue higher levels of education at the end of the nineteenth century, their employment opportunities remained fairly limited and many experienced feelings of restlessness.

Jane Addams directly addresses this mentality in *Twenty Years at Hull-House* and uses it as justification for becoming involved in the settlement house movement. After graduating from the Rockford Female Seminary (later renamed Rockford College) in 1881, Addams spends the next eight years as a companion to her widowed stepmother, traveling to Europe twice and succumbing to an illness that left her an invalid for a number of months. Reflecting on that period in her life in *Twenty Years*, Addams writes: “During most of that time I was absolutely at sea so far as any moral purpose was concerned, clinging only to the desire to live in a really living world and refusing to be content with a shadowy intellectual or aesthetic reflection of it” (68). Women of Addams’s social class had their lives molded and laid out for them based on traditional Victorian standards, and they were expected to adhere to these expectations despite their college educations. Addams references a common occurrence during this period where young well-educated women would suffer a crisis in which they would not know how to reconcile their education with the leisure associated with their class and would, as a result, fall into a deep depression.¹⁴ The settlement house provided these women with a space to live the kind of life they were denied at home. The settlement house, and the larger urban space of Chicago, provided Addams with a space to pursue courses of action and establish a sense of empowerment outside of her traditional sphere.

Contemporaneous views of settlement work associated it with the domestic or woman’s sphere. Nearly ninety-percent of the female residents had attended college and possessed a high-quality education and women’s houses soon came to outnumber those run by men. Jane Addams and Ellen Gates Starr were both graduates of the Rockford Female Seminary. Florence Kelley, another prominent Hull-House resident and expert investigator who is credited with transforming Hull-House into a center for research and reform, earned degrees from Cornell University and

the University of Zurich. Kelley arrived at Hull-House in 1891 with three small children after divorcing her Russian husband and lived there until 1899 (Bryan and Davis 23). Describing her initial encounters in “Florence Kelley Comes to Stay” (1927), she states: “We were welcomed as though we had been invited” (23). Kathryn Kish Sklar argues that that women’s social power in instigating true reform stemmed from their membership in a community that supported their investigative efforts and that Hull-House provided Kelley ties to other women’s organizations and “cooperation with men reformers and their organizations, allowing her to draw on their support without submitting to their control” (660). The women who worked in Hull-House went on to hold careers as reformers, educators, researchers, writers, and administrators (Sklar et al.). Kelley was later appointed Chief Factory Inspector of Chicago in 1893. Her work for this position directly contributed statistics and research for a number of studies published in *Hull-House Maps and Papers* (Bryan and Davis 23).

Kelley was not the only prominent and educated woman to either take an interest in Hull-House’s mission or be intrigued by its work. Many of the women who became residents for however long, had strikingly similar backgrounds to Addams and all, without fail, discuss the value that living and working at Hull-House provided for them. Dr. Alice Hamilton, who graduated from the University of Michigan, the University of Leipzig, and earned a medical degree from John Hopkins University, came to Chicago in 1897 to take on a professorship at the Women’s Medical School at Northwestern University. She chose to live at Hull-House because she thought it would be exciting and ended up staying until 1919. She became the first woman ever to be appointed a professor at Harvard Medical School. Even though Hamilton only had the intention of living at Hull-House, she became an avid volunteer (Bryan and Davis 57-58). In “Hull-House Within and Without” (1943), Hamilton writes: “To me, life there satisfied every

longing, for companionship, for constant intellectual stimulation, and for the sense of being caught up in a big movement which enlisted my enthusiastic loyalty” (109). For Hamilton, Hull-House became more than just a place to live; it provided her with a community that fostered and encouraged her intellectual achievements and allowed her to be a member of a burgeoning social movement. For Kelley and Hamilton, Hull-House “provided membership with a lifelong substitute for family life. In that sense it resembled a religious order, supplying women with a radical degree of independence from the claims of family life and inviting them to commit their energies elsewhere” (Sklar 660). Polacheck’s autobiography is one of the first and only immigrant narratives to describe the reformed-minded women as a community who worked together to achieve the same goals (Weiner xvi). For Hamilton, living at Hull-House drastically altered her view on her education’s impact: “Life in a settlement does several things to you. Among others, it teaches you that education and culture have little to do with real wisdom, the wisdom that comes from life experience” (Hamilton 111). Hamilton underscores the inadequacy of the type of education women of her class were receiving in preparing them for a fulfilling life.

Using herself as a primary example of what an educated, yet unfulfilling life could lead to, Addams aimed to counter the societal assumption that “the sheltered, educated girl has nothing to do with the bitter poverty and social maladjustment which is all about her” (Addams 72-73). Instead, she argues that social work in a settlement house serves as an important cure for the depression and restlessness that many middle-class women experienced during this period, (Addams 77). Addams’s impetus to put her education to practical use came from observing the poor in London’s East End in November 1883. The moment occurred when she observed the poor participating in an auction for cheap food and had impressed upon her the memory of the “myriads of hands, empty, pathetic, nerveless, and workworn, showing white in the uncertain

light of the street, and clutching forward for food which was already unfit to eat” (Addams 69-70). What is original in Addams’s desire to help these individuals is her view that this type of work will also have benefits for those who perform it (Brown 9). Addams argues that settlement house work effectively balances education with the desire to makes their lives purposeful. In “Women’s Conscience and Social Amelioration” (1908), Addams argues that women’s suffrage is located between preservation of the home and preservation of the city (253), challenging the conventional view of femininity and establishing the location of women’s reform work somewhere between the two spheres. This hybridity of space manifests itself in the reform work made possible by the settlement house movement and by reworking traditional views of domesticity and women’s roles in the city.¹⁵

As a result, the settlement house occupies a paradoxical position because it incorporates elements of both the private and public spheres. The approach of feminist geographers such as Doreen Massey and Gillian Rose provides a novel theoretical framework through which we can understand the role that domesticity played in the architectural and social construction of the settlement house. Rose presents the theory of paradoxical space, namely the fact that mutually exclusive spaces (like the public and private sphere) can be simultaneously occupied (136). The space of the settlement house did not erase the private in favor of the public, rather it allowed women to negotiate their presence in both spheres, creating what Shannon Jackson calls a “third space.” Applying theories of locality and interspatiality to Hull-House, Jackson examines how the same spaces served multiple purposes with various “lines of activity” intersecting in the same room. She contends that “the multipurpose agendas, methods, and effects of Hull-House reform required an understanding of social space and of how to manipulate it” (23). As Sarah Deutsch maintains, the settlement house eliminated boundaries between public and private and allowed

workers to reconceive a vision of the city, one that led to the creation of a world where men met on women's territory, effectively making public spaces more feminine in the process (13). The constant movement between spheres results in a blurring of boundaries – it is no longer as easy or as simple to distinguish the private sphere from the public. The existence of a paradoxical or third space allows the women who inhabit it to reconceptualize the space from their own perspectives and for their own purposes, challenging their culturally prescribed roles in the private sphere. The paradoxical nature of the settlement house allowed women to exist in-between, effectively creating a new space in the process. By directly living in poor urban neighborhoods, women like Addams were able to not only perform acts of charity but also engage in systematic reform efforts that would last for years to come.

The settlement house, therefore, functions as a space that blends the private elements of the home with the public elements of the city. Nowhere is this exemplified more than in the physical spaces that made up the built environment of Hull-House. Sharon Haar correctly argues that much of the work undertaken by women in the settlement house movement has been overlooked by historians who have simply labeled it as domestic work (“Location, Location” 152). She looks to reclaim Hull-House as the “ambiguous space” it truly was in the initial decades of its existence (“At Home” 102). Through an analysis of its spaces, Haar demonstrates how Hull-House transformed from a home in the city to one way of “being at home in the city,” and how this in turn transformed the urban environment and the relationships that existed within it (“At Home” 101, 105). Maureen Flanagan aligns Addams's vision of democracy with how it manifested itself in the physical structures of Hull-House. She argues that “Hull House as a place and space substituted the communal for the familial for its residents. By that process, the home was opened to the city and the city to the home. Hull House broke down the barriers between

public and private by establishing a communal, open-to-all space” (20). Hull-House scholars who do focus on the settlement’s spaces tend to do so either through an architectural or cultural lens and are quick to label Hull-House as a hybrid space, one that blends elements of both the public and private spheres.¹⁶ They do not focus adequate attention on the physical spaces and the role they played in fostering Hull-House’s broader mission of reform. I, however, will demonstrate how the female residents navigated the spaces of the settlement house and how these spaces connected to their social work and their positions in the urban built environment more broadly.

More recently, critics have begun to focus on the cultural, artistic, and educational contributions of Hull-House and its intersections with the architecture of the settlement house and the larger built environment of the ward. Van E. Hillard examines the spaces of writing instruction at Hull-House and its connections to civic education, while Laura R. Fisher analyzes the intersection between literature and reform, focusing on the connection between settlement house décor, English literacy, and high culture. Barbara Sicherman expands upon the connection between reading and the settlement house by looking at Jane Addams’s literary legacy at Hull-House. She argues that what Addams read connected to and provided insight on the status of women during her time and demonstrates how books helped Addams negotiate her position as a woman by allowing her to step outside of her socially prescribed role (135-136).¹⁷ Because Addams was invested in the idea that everyone, regardless of class, should be exposed good art, scholars have also analyzed Hull-House as a cultural space that promotes a specific middle and upper-class aesthetic.¹⁸ L. Ryan Musgrave Bonomo provides a detailed analysis of Addams’s love of art, arguing that the reformer made frequent efforts to expose the immigrant and working classes to the arts and humanities. Although she does not focus extensively on the physical

spaces of Hull-House, Bonomo does stress that the settlement allocated additional space for the arts as it expanded. Viewed together, these studies are useful in illustrating how Hull-House functioned as a cultural space that simultaneously enriched the lives of its immigrant neighbors and allowed female residents to transcend their socially-prescribed roles. However, these studies do not fully take into account the residents' roles and how their work is influenced by the interior spaces of Hull-House and the exterior spaces of the ward. I argue that it is just as important to understand how Hull-House residents utilized the hybrid spaces of the settlement to enact lasting reform and the specific role physical space/place played in these efforts. Through my research, I underscore the relationship between Hull-House residents and the neighborhood they worked and lived in, how that relationship affected their social position as women in the larger urban environment, and how their work highlights the roles of immigrant and working-class women in the Nineteenth Ward.

Urban Domesticity and the Production of Hybrid Space

The confluence between domesticity and urbanity is a necessary component of modern space. Over the course of the nineteenth-century, the American home became the site of ever-increasing separation of public and private and set the stage for dramas of sexual politics and class warfare (Chandler 6). What was once considered to be a mixed space of private domesticity and public employment, the changing social and cultural paradigms of the nineteenth-century city led to the belief that the home should be a space of refuge from the activity and vices prevalent in the city. This begins to change by 1890, especially in cities like Chicago which underwent changes in domestic architecture after the Great Fire in 1871. These changes also coincided with the changing role of women in society, especially their place in the city (Wright, *Moralism and the Model Home* 16-17).

But what kind of a space exactly is the urban home on the cusp of the twentieth century? That depends on class. Middle and upper-class urban homes observed strict boundaries between public and private and were governed by traditional Victorian ideals. Each room served a specific purpose and followed strict rules on how spaces were arranged and who had access to them (Wright, *Building the Dream* 111). Discussions of domesticity during this time period invoke classic tropes of public versus private or interior versus exterior. Historically, by the time we reach the end of the nineteenth century, the house has been transformed into a site of interiority, away from civic life, becoming the locus of privacy and inwardness. The growth of cities at the end of the nineteenth century did little to change this paradigm as cities were traditionally planned and designed to exclude women, predicated on the belief they were not suitable or healthy for women and children (Watson 290). The settlement house emerged as a semi-public space, that like the department store, allowed women to escape the confines of domesticity; but only women of a certain class. On the opposite side of the spectrum remained the poor and working-class home which still retained its mixture of public and private, ultimately highlighting how the idea of home is defined based on class divisions (Kleinberg 142-143). Writing on life in antebellum tenements, Christine Stansell states that “to some degree, the working poor, especially immigrant women, were able to create urban communities in the context of massive transiency” (56). Unlike traditional middle-class homes, the tenement homes of the immigrants and working poor did not function as exclusively private spaces.

An understanding of domesticity and how it both changed and was influenced by the city is crucial in understanding the formation of modern urban spaces and the role of women within them. During the nineteenth century, women “justified their public work by casting it as an extension of their domestic duties, a fulfillment of private responsibilities in the public realm”

(Nord 209). As a result, there occurred a reorientation of values associated with the domestic sphere which led to the rise of civic housekeeping – the radical notion that in order to preserve the home, women must leave it. In “Women’s Conscience and Social Amelioration,” Jane Addams writes that “women are pushed out of the home so that they may preserve the home” (253), arguing that because the city formed a new type of domesticity, the city needed women; just as modern women needed the city and the new types of spaces that it afforded them.¹⁹ The women who took up residence in settlements across the United States chose to occupy very specific geographic spaces that placed them outside of their social milieus. On the surface, this action exemplifies Linda McDowell’s assertion that “social distance does not always imply geographical distance, and occupants of the same Cartesian spaces may live in very different ‘places’” (*Gender, Identity, and Place* 5). I argue that Addams and the other female reformers at Hull-House attempted to mitigate this social distance, while simultaneously altering the position of the modern female reformer in the city who engages in the cultural production of space through her settling and social work.

In describing their first days at Hull-House, Addams likens herself to a young matron who took immense pleasure in arranging the furnishings and decorations of her own house. She invokes traditional domestic rhetoric to describe the ways she and Starr first decorated the rented rooms:

We furnished the house as we would have furnished it were it in another part of the city, with the photographs and other impedimenta we had collected in Europe, and with a few bits of family mahogany. While all the new furniture which was bought was enduring in quality, we were careful to keep it in character with the fine old residence. (81)

Addams invokes the language of traditional domesticity in order to make what they are doing on South Halstead Street more familiar, similarly to how she invoked the Victorian ideal of women's duties as extending beyond the private sphere. Addams likens Hull-House to an old residence, connecting its familial history with its present purpose. The family mahogany alludes to a generational domesticity that would make the interior decorating on par with current standards. The parlor and its furnishings were arguably the most important descriptors of a family's socioeconomic and moral status (Domosh and Seager 8), and Addams takes great care to emphasize that a house in the Nineteenth Ward is decorated in the same way it would have been in another part of Chicago and that the new furniture was tasteful.

Even though Addams describes this action in traditionally feminine terms, it is important to view just how untraditional her and the settlement's actions truly are. Addams likens herself to a matron because only a married woman possessed the ability to arrange things in her own home according to her own tastes. Even though the house did belong to Addams and Starr, the house itself served a nontraditional purpose with its nontraditional owners and the nontraditional activities. The rhetoric that Addams uses to discuss the decoration evokes feminine domesticity and by lingering on these domestic details, Addams demonstrates her cognizance of how this endeavor would appear to the public. A photograph of the reception hall depicts uniform, plain wooden chairs arranged in clusters of two or three, while another photograph shows a piano on a raised platform near a wooden table with the same identical wooden chairs. Mina Domosh and Joni Seager write that "in most middle-class Victorian homes, the parlor was furnished with a suite that consisted of a sofa, a gentleman's chair, a lady's chair, and four small chairs, all unified by coordinated style and fabrics" (11). The gentleman's chair was the biggest and tallest, followed in stature by the lady's chair and the parlor chairs. These photographs of Hull-House's

parlor show a space that does not fully align with the period's way of decorating and arranging such rooms, which further separates the residents from traditional domesticity.²⁰ Yet this type of interior design is vital in transforming Hull-House from a space into a definitive place; one with a definitive meaning and reputation throughout the ward that is further reinforced by the social relationships established in this space.

This particular example also raises a number of class-based concerns pertaining to settling, especially in highlighting Addams's and Starr's class privilege. Addams's assertion that they furnished the house as they would have in "another part of the city" (i.e.: a wealthier part) or that the residents would be able to "scrupulously pay their own expenses" (Addams 79) if they were unable to secure funding, speaks to their inability to fully see their own class privilege. Their neighbors would not have had the same opportunities. Hull-House also employed a fulltime kitchen staff and maids to keep up the house, which raises additional concerns (Jackson 188-190). Jackson relates an anecdote of how Addams took down her own silver and expensive curtains, and replaced it with plain copper pots and pans (155). Conversely, this demonstrates how aware Addams was of her privilege and that she did not want to leverage class against her immigrant neighbors.

Jane Addams, Ellen Gates Starr, and the other women and men who made their homes in this space actively chose to participate in a social experiment that would alter the relationship between domesticity and the city and the role of women within it. Early photographs of the house show a stately residence that connotes middle-class values and domesticity.²¹ Dorothea Moore, a young Hull-House resident, begins her essay, "A Day at Hull-House" (1897), with a description of the appearance of Hull-House's front entrance:

The old house is almost submerged. With its hooded top story of fanciful brick, and its large flanking additions to right and left, there remain but long windows and wide doorway to hint of the aspect that was its own in the long-gone privacy of the estate...These additions are more intrinsic than external – growing out of growing needs – and therefore present in themselves a kind of rough estimate or history of them. (43)

The original main house has been overshadowed by additional buildings that embody the activities that went on inside. Moore's description plays with notions of public and private - noting the "long-gone privacy" that still remains in perpetual tension with the public nature of the additional buildings. It reaffirms the view of the settlement as an ambiguous space that responded to the needs of both its residents and its neighbors, both as a residence and a space for various programs and activities. Moore touches upon this need and likens the house to an organic being that is constantly growing and requiring additional room in order to be functionally useful.

Throughout the first two decades, Hull-House's built environment directly corresponded to the physical and social needs of the residents within it and vice versa. Jane Addams emphasizes the importance of acclimating to their new environment, writing that "the one thing to be dreaded in the Settlement is that it lose its flexibility, its power of quick adaptation, its readiness to change its methods as its environment may demand" (95). It was this ability and willingness to accommodate and change that, according to Shannon Jackson, allowed Hull-House to perform a new urban domesticity, one that actively resisted bourgeois notions of spatiality (66). Early photographs show the main house set back from the street with a picket fence that separates the front courtyard from the public street, emphasizing the physical separation between the private domesticity inside and the public neighborhood outside. The

hybridity of the settlement's exterior appearance parallels the alternative domestic space that reworked the relationship between public and private, inside and outside.

Hull-House quickly grew with the steady addition of buildings and annexes that were added improvisationally based on the settlement's needs. By 1907 Hull-House comprised a grand total of thirteen buildings, occupying a full city block, and expanded in a way "that articulated a series of changing relationships to its urban context, ultimately becoming part of the physical fabric of the neighborhood" and challenged the way "the domestic sphere was sited within the city" (Haar, "Location, Location" 155).²² Writing about the expansions in *Twenty Years at Hull-House*, Addams identifies the importance of space in the settlement, not only because it allowed the residents to better serve the community but also because it allowed them to form a community of reformers different from previous generations. Addams writes that the "first buildings were very precious to us and it afforded us the greatest pride and pleasure as one building after another was added to the Hull-House group. They clothed in brick and mortar and made visible to the world that which we were trying to do" (Addams 105). By equating space with reform, Addams underscores the true value the expansion held for the settlement and the surrounding neighborhood. The connection between the two ultimately represents a new vision of modern urban domesticity and reform, and the role of women within it.

One way in which Hull-House directly challenged the social distinctions between public and private was by resisting the architectural form of the quadrangle, ie: having all of the buildings face an inner courtyard. Instead, floorplans of the complex show buildings facing the public street, oriented toward the neighborhood, which underscores the settlement's openness and commitment to both the neighborhood and its mission. The original Hull-House building underwent a dramatic change from a single-family home in the suburbs to the cultural and social

center of a dense urban neighborhood. Its growth reflected the various needs that arose from the activities its residents implemented. By the time Addams came to write her memoir in 1910, each of the newly added buildings served a specific purpose. Allen Pond, the central architect behind the expansions, illustrates how despite their individual purposes, the various buildings that comprised Hull-House were still very much interconnected and interdependent. For example, the Butler Art Gallery only housed an art gallery on its second floor. The first floor was used as a lecture room or supplementary drawing room, and the third story built in 1896 was used as a male residence. The Gymnasium had a similar structure, with the Labor Museum occupying its first floor, art classes were held on the second floor, and the actual gymnasium was on the third floor (Pond 180-182). Such set-ups demonstrate how Hull-House created a network of reform that spread from the interconnectedness of its buildings to the surrounding neighborhood. Adding to the interconnectedness of buildings were the passageways that removed the need for residents to step foot onto the street to move from one building to the next, further reconstructing the boundaries between public and private through its built environment (Jackson 151).

The original Hull-House was a two-story structure and with limited space both for residents to live in and execute their mission.²³ As a result, residents appropriated existing space and created new ones in ways that allowed them to execute Hull-House's mission. In 1895, a third floor was added to the main house with seven single rooms and two bathrooms and in 1896, a third floor was added to the Butler Art Gallery next door which served as a male residential space. Until 1907, residents shared common living and dining areas with visitors and, although dining and reception rooms were added in 1895, a two-story dining hall was constructed in that year (Sklar et al.). By the time of its completion in 1907, every single building in the complex

housed some form of residential space, effectively blending the public and private aspects of the residents' lives. The hybridity of the settlement worked itself out over the course of these expansions with residents were actively choosing to live a public life. Save for their bedrooms, almost all of the other rooms in the house were open to the neighborhood and used for multiple purposes throughout the day.²⁴ Each of the public buildings that comprised the settlement had an entrance directly onto the street except for the residences which were accessed through an interior courtyard, demonstrating that Hull-House still attempted to keep the spheres separate to an extent (Haar, "At Home in the City" 108-109).

Hull-House's interior spaces came to closely mimic the tension between public and private that was exhibited by its exterior. Haar posits that "the architecture and urbanity of Hull-House shaped – or more specifically, reconfigured – the relationship between the public and the private spheres, allowing them to coexist yet protecting their distinctions" (Location, Location 155). Photographs of interior spaces show rooms that are tastefully decorated with plain sturdy-looking furniture, pictures on walls, and the occasional potted plant or vase of flowers, supporting the notion that "settlement workers drew on the Victorian convictions that décor helped create character, a notion that supported the institution's broader mandate of cultivation, assimilation, and reform" (Fisher 43-45). The interior space of the house often forced residents to utilize their "power of quick adaptation" in the early days of the settlement's work. Before the expansion, rooms served multiple purposes: weekly readings were held in the dining room, a kindergarten assembled in the drawing room in the mornings, which was then used as a meeting space for older children's clubs in the afternoons, and those in turn were used for the educational and social organizations of adults that met in the evenings (Addams 84, 104). Because Hull-House worked out of a traditional nineteenth-century middle-class home, residents had to

frequently adapt and reconfigure their methods based on the activities they were hosting and what room of the house they were utilizing, demonstrating how space is inherently fluid and dynamic; its development dependent upon social relations over time (Massey, *Space, Place, and Gender* 2-3). Rooms that are associated with traditional domesticity and private family life all of a sudden served a double purpose, one that was public in nature.

Despite the touches of traditional domesticity, Hull-House was still a porous, hybrid space. The stately mahogany furniture pictured in the photographs was there to welcome neighborhood visitors. It is important to note that all domestic activities taking place in Hull-House had a larger, public aspect to them. This is best exemplified by a photograph of the drawing room in the main house that shows clusters of chairs arranged in circles, no doubt to encourage visitors to sit together and converse during a meeting of a social club or other activity. The chairs could easily be moved and rearranged to accommodate differing social contexts dependent on the activity that was taking place at that given moment. The blend of middle-class domesticity with public life is further exemplified by a photograph that shows a young Hull-House resident surrounded by members of the community welcoming other visitors at the front door. Individuals entered the house through a vestibule and were almost always greeted by one of the female residents, sometimes Addams herself. This entrance into the private spaces of the house was meant to not only establish proper middle-class deportment but also distinguish the interior space of the house from the teeming city streets (Hillard 117). However, the fact that residents did not discriminate as to who was allowed inside was a testament to how Hull-House reworked traditional domesticity in a way that aided their reform efforts and altered the vision of the female urban reformer in the process.

Nevertheless, each room and interior space still adhered to a particular social code and rules that neighborhood visitors had to follow, which further immersed them within the middle-class value system. Early in her memoirs, Addams articulates their act of settling in the ward in colonizing terms, writing: “I think that time has also justified our early contention that the mere foothold of a house, easily accessible, ample in space, hospitable, and tolerant in spirit, situated in the midst of the large foreign colonies which so easily isolate themselves in American cities, would in itself a serviceable thing for Chicago” (Addams 79). Addams’s description positions her and Starr as colonizers piercing the veil of the immigrant enclaves that made up the Nineteenth Ward in Chicago. Despite the rhetoric of domesticity and reform that Addams employs in describing the ideal qualities of the house, the underlying tones of colonialism overshadow the novel work being done at Hull-House. Additionally, in 1905, Hull-House built a new front door that prevented visitors from entering through the drawing room of the main building and using it as an access point to other rooms and buildings throughout the settlement. Instead, visitors entered a hallway that functioned as a conduit to additional spaces beyond (Jackson 197-199). Through the lens of public/private this is a step backward into a stricter division of the two spheres and antithetical to the settlement’s position as a hybrid space.

Working-Class Voices and the Spatial Rhetoric of Reform

The Progressive Era witnessed a demographic shift in women’s roles in public and the types of associations they wished to be connected with, ultimately calling into question the gender difference of the time. The settlement house movement proved to be an opportunity to distance themselves from the strict gender roles and sexual repression of the Victorian period while simultaneously allowing women to exercise their new-found agency and mobility. The descriptions of the neighborhood surrounding Hull-House radiating outward from the settlement

raises questions about what exactly Addams and Starr were doing moving to a place like the Nineteenth Ward. The act of leaving the home and settling in an unfamiliar place is what allows for the creation of meaningful and long-lasting social reform. It also allows for the existence of new gender roles for women, ones not dependent upon traditional Victorian values. Because domestic spaces have traditionally been coded female, women have had to leave home to forge their own identities (Massey, *Space, Place, and Gender* 11). As we will see, residents of Hull-House actively partook in the cultural transformation of space through their reform work and were able to shape a new space that exerted lasting influence. Furthermore, space and place also exert influence on the sense of self, specifically dwelling and the home being key elements in individuals' developing a sense of self (McDowell, *Gender, Identity, and Place* 72). This is demonstrated by the type of reformers Hull-House residents became and the issues they were concerned with. I contend that through Hull-Houses spaces and activities, reform has taken on a new spatial form, one that directly involves the poor and working class and expands beyond the physical walls of the settlement.

Hull-House operated within this framework by utilizing its space to create a network of reform that stretched throughout the ward and into the rest of Chicago, establishing a new type of urban female reformer in the process. Dorothea Moore identifies a unique quality that allowed settlement residents to successfully operate: "It is the personality of the 'settlers' which determines the character of each group, and forms differ with their environment. The one necessary element is permanency" (44). Moore understands that each settlement house will function differently and have a different relationship with its neighborhood, yet the one enduring quality necessary for success is that the relationship between the settlement and its neighbors be permanent. What made Hull-House and other settlements so revolutionary was their commitment

to remaining in the neighborhood. Settlement workers were enthusiastic in their efforts because they were participating in a venture that had never before been undertaken. Their work with the surrounding community would set the example for future relationships between settlement residents, the community, and the larger city.

Many of the first forays into the neighborhood were aimed at helping working mothers with food, housing, and childcare (Hayden 164). From the beginning, residents “were ready to perform the humblest neighborhood services. [They] were asked to wash the newborn babies, and to prepare the dead for burial, to nurse the sick, and to ‘mind the children’” (Addams 88). One of the initial programs established was a daycare to ease the burden off of working mothers who often had no choice but to leave their children home alone. Dorothea Moore’s description of the nursery placed it in direct opposition to the type of environment the children had at home, writing that the day was spent “under wise supervision, with pictures and toys...So may these good hours of the waking day make all the others but a sleep and a forgetting,” while the older children played “at serious kindergarten” (44). These programs subsequently attracted other members of the family – fathers, older siblings, grandparents, etc. – those who might not have made contact with the settlement otherwise (Jackson 65). Through childcare, the residents of Hull-House were able to establish other programs for all members of the family, further cementing a relationship between the settlement and its neighbors. This relationship remained dynamic and fluid, subject to and dependent upon the transition of Hull-House from a private middle-class home to a place that would become representative of Progressive-era reform.

Hull-House’s use of civic housekeeping led to a reformation of public space that that was heavily dependent upon the relationship between neighbors and residents. This relationship, and the successful reforms that stemmed from it, allowed Hull-House to establish programs and

facilities that would later be absorbed by the city, but served a vital role in saving the immigrant population from the worst conditions of urban life and staving off social unrest (Spain, *How Women Saved the City* 12). Hilda Satt Polacheck, a Jewish immigrant from Poland, details how Hull-House began systematic reform efforts in repairing defective sewers, establishing public baths, and fixing defective drinking water pipes (72-73). She writes:

One evil condition after another was brought to the attention of city authorities, in a patient, simple, but resolute manner. The problems of the immigrants, who were to play a significant part in the pattern of American life, were brought to the surface, waking the conscience of Chicago. Hull-House became a laboratory for the experiments in human needs. These experiments were so ably demonstrated that the city fathers could not ignore them. (Polacheck 73-74)

The programs and facilities Hull-House established were an integral aspect of its place-based approach to urban reform. By focusing their efforts directly on the ward and the major issues that needed to be attended to, residents were able to pursue programs that drastically and systemically improved life in the ward. The impact was significant – Addams devotes an entire chapter in *Twenty Years* specifically to the settlement's public activities and investigations, which underscores their importance both to Hull-House and the neighborhood. From garbage collection and a public kitchen (later coffeehouse) that provided inexpensive ready-made meals, to studies on infant mortality rates and child labor, residents' efforts spread across all aspects of life in the ward. The results of these investigative efforts manifested directly into social programs and institutions and expanded into the places and spaces of the surrounding neighborhood. The project that best embodied the importance of space and environment to the settlement's reform work was the publication of *Hull-House Maps and Papers* (1895). Made possible through the

combined work of a number of Hull-House residents, *Maps and Papers* features a collection of essays and statistics on the most pressing issues facing the neighborhood.

One of the most significant breakthroughs of this publication was its focus on working-class and immigrant women and their roles within the urban fabric of their neighborhood. It is worth noting that five of the ten articles that comprise *Hull-House Maps and Papers* deal specifically with problems faced by immigrant and working-class women and highlights the importance of their positions in the city. The studies revealed previously ignored aspects of urban domestic life, especially as it related to women and children and explains why childcare became a cornerstone of Hull-House's mission. The work "uncovered a feminine aspect of the city that had previously gone unexplored. House residents brought legitimacy to the study of the urban life of cities, not just its monuments and institutions, by focusing on the quotidian as both unchanging and yet completely provisional" ("Location, Location" 152-153). No other work up to that point in time focused so extensively on the work of women and their contributions to urban life. Through the publication of *Hull-House Maps and Papers* residents underscored the importance of everyday life in Chicago's slums and placed value on the urban lived experiences of women, demonstrating how just as geography is implicated in the construction of gender, so is gender inherent in the construction of geography (Massey 180).

The project itself was unique and influential because of its combination of the settlement's activities with daily life in the ward (Haar, *City as Campus* 35). It not only changed the public's perception of life in the ward but also the role of residents as reformers. The need to collect information caused residents to venture out in public, often on their own, further unsettling the image of the female reformer in the city. In describing a legislative commission formed to research women and children employed in manufacturing jobs, Florence Kelley writes

that she and Marry Kenney volunteered as guides. She writes “*Because we knew our neighborhood*, we could and did show the commissioners sights that few legislators had then beheld” (Kelley 26, emphasis mine). Kelley’s statement underscores the familiarity she and other Hull-House residents had of their neighborhood because they actively ventured outside of the settlement’s walls. These activities rewrote the image of the female reformer who traditionally worked in the domestic sphere, only venturing out periodically to dole out charity. Instead, she was transformed into a new type of urban female reformer who subverted identities placed on women in public and countered what was expected of women in the urban built environment. Linda McDowell writes that “because of the strong associations between women and the home, those interior space of domesticity, feminist investigations of public spaces have often focused on the problems and dangers that women experience ‘outside’ compared with an assumption that men may take for granted their freedom in and dominance of these spaces” (*Gender, Identity, and Place* 148). The studies allowed the female residents to create a new relationship with the city streets that they traversed; one that was not based on traditional gender roles but reworked the place of women in the city. They allowed women to take center stage and no longer be relegated to the margins.

It also allowed residents to form long-lasting relationships with individual members of the community. Addams writes:

I have always objected to the phrase ‘sociological laboratory’ applied to us, because Settlements should be something much more human and spontaneous than such a phrase connotes, and yet it is inevitable that the residents should know their neighborhoods more thoroughly than any other, and that their experiences there should affect their convictions. (161)

It is a sentiment that Addams echoes again in the preface to *Maps and Papers*, stating that the subsequent publication is the result of many long acquaintances between Hull-House residents and the neighborhood (vii). Agnes Holbrook, who wrote the notes that accompanied the maps, made frequent mention of the domestic visits residents paid to tenement homes and other buildings in the ward (4-6). Her vivid descriptions of the physical state of city blocks that made up the eastern border of Hull-House is made possible through the revelatory information collected by residents on their daily walks through the neighborhood.

Perhaps the most interesting aspects of this publication are the color-coded pullout maps that charted all of the nationalities that made up the surrounding area of Hull-House. The maps are a cartographic representation of the urban space residents traversed on their surveys and investigations and provide a unique perspective on the social and geographic distribution of the various immigrant groups populating a culturally diverse ward. The maps also highlight the transitional quality of the neighborhood, with Holbrook admitting that families often floated amongst tenements based on their financial situations, creating a shifting scene in the maps that could not always be accurately documented (13). Despite this, the act of mapping the layout and boundaries of the neighborhood establishes this particular urban space as a community that holds Hull-House at its center. It creates an alternative to the purely municipal designations of the ward and imbues its residents with a deeper meaning and stronger relationship to one another and the female reformers. Writing about his work with Hull-House, Francis Hackett, and Irish immigrant who was also a Hull-House resident, emphasizes the valuable relationship that existed between the settlement and its immigrant neighbors: “Hull House was American because it was international, and because it perceived that the nationalism of each immigrant was a treasure, a talent, which gave him a special value for the United States” (70). The residents of Hull-House

are the gatekeepers, the explainers to the larger population on what life is like in the ward and the settlement's work. The pioneering work of *Maps and Papers* was both constructive and instructive, creating a framework for future sociological studies of urban neighborhoods. According to Victoria Bissel Brown, Hull-House "was certainly a vehicle through which its neighbors learned about the city beyond the Nineteenth Ward, but it was more vital as a medium for explaining the people of the ward to the wider community and rallying that community to action" (28). *Maps and Papers* showcased the importance of a neighborhood like the Nineteenth Ward to the larger city of Chicago despite its socioeconomic situation and simultaneously altered the public position of women in an urban space.

The color-coding in *Hull-House Maps and Papers* is paramount in its depictions of the various ethnicities and nationalities that composed the Nineteenth Ward. Even though the maps are crucial in understanding the spatial realities of the various groups living in the ward, they do little detailing specific ways Hull-House affected their lives. Philip Davis, a Russian immigrant who came to Hull-House for aid, describes his initial impressions of the settlement on South Halsted Street in "Jane Addams Invites Me In" (1952):

Upon making inquiries about it among the neighbors I found that everyone assessed it favorably, according to his needs and lights: The newsboy on the corner – "Oh yeah. Nice place. We play ball there" ...The old woman selling oranges on the sidewalk: "It's kind of a suspensory" (dispensary)...A working girl passing by: "Oh sure. I belong to the Choral Society. We sing there every Sunday" ...An Italian vegetable peddler: "Whole House? Sure – she is open to everyone!" ...The policeman on the beat: "It's O.K. Takes the kids off the street!" (129)

Davis, who later went on to become a settlement worker in Boston and write books on Americanization (Bryan and Davis 128), details individuals of different classes, ages, and nationalities and underscores the value Hull-House has to each. From basketball games and singing groups, to the policeman's assertion that it helps keep children occupied, Hull-House attempted to meet the various needs of all of its neighbors. Hilda Satt Polacheck corroborates the ways that Hull-House not only provided recreational activities through its various clubs but how the clubs functioned as a source of preoccupation for young boys and girls: "The gymnasium was like an oasis in a desert on Halsted Street. Hundreds of boys, who had no other means of recreation, could go to the gymnasium and play basketball till they were so worn out that they could only go home and go to bed" (77).²⁵ Polacheck's assertions reflect the statements made by the newsboy, the working girl, and the policeman in the responses to Davis's inquiry. In her autobiography, Polacheck recounts incidents where random women came to Hull-House looking for help if their sons were arrested and husbands were laid off or developed drinking problems (70). These women, many of whom had never set foot in the settlement before, heard from their neighbors that Hull-House was a place where they could get help (Polacheck 71). Hull-House residents helped all who came through its doors and "the most forlorn scrubwoman received the same warm welcome as the wealthy supporters of the house" (Polacheck 75). Unlike Maps and Papers that focused on Hull-House's reform efforts, Polacheck and Davis's testimonies underscore how Hull-House provided individuals in the ward with recreational activities that countered the dreariness and monotony of factory labor.

Polacheck devotes significant time in her autobiography to discuss the ways that Hull-House impacted her life and the types of benefits that she received through the settlement. On numerous occasions, Polacheck likens Hull-House to an oasis in the desert, a safe-haven from

the disease and monotony of the Nineteenth Ward (73). Specifically, Hull-House “became the university, the opera house, the theater, the concert and lecture hall, the gymnasium, the library, the clubhouse of the neighborhood. It was a place where one could become rejuvenated after a day of hard work in the factory” (97). Polacheck benefitted greatly from Hull-House: she received a semester-long scholarship to the University of Chicago and a small loan that would cover her income so she did not have to work. Afterwards, she was given a summer job answering the phone and front door at Hull-House, which then developed into a job where she taught English to fellow immigrants at the settlement (86-91). She profited both intellectually and culturally through the books, music, and arts and crafts and, more importantly, the ability to socialize with fellow immigrants her own age (Polacheck 68). Polacheck’s assertion reflects so many other immigrants’ views of how Hull-House made both life in the ward and factory work bearable but, more importantly, provided immigrants with a place to belong and find common cause with others just like them. Francis Hackett writes that “no newcomer could resist its ease, its tolerance, or its cordiality. The ferocious loneliness of Chicago in those thin-skinned days made [him] reluctant to consider Hull House quite real, at first sight, and then made [him] enter into its community with thirsty zeal” (67). For immigrants like Hilda Satt Polacheck, Philip Davis, and Francis Hackett Hull-House not only provided education, recreation, and social stimulus, it additionally helped foster a life-long commitment progressivism and its causes. Through these particular examples we see how the spaces of Hull-House mutually influenced the lives of both residents and neighbors, providing them with community and belonging, and the ability to engage in and benefit from systematic reform.

Another group that greatly benefited from Hull-House’s support was a group of young working girls that eventually became the Jane Club. Their organizer, Mary Kenney, was born in

Iowa to Irish immigrants and became the chief organizer of the Book Binder's Union for women in Chicago. She had long been involved with organized unions and been a strong advocate for increased wages and better working conditions for women (Bryan and Davis 21). Kenney's initial impression of Hull-House is filtered through the spaces that made up Hull-House: "When I went to Hull-House, I saw furnishings and large rooms different from anything I had ever seen before. With one look at the reception room, my first thought was, 'If the Union could only meet here'" (Kenney 21-22). Although skeptical of Addams and all privileged women in general, Kenney's opinion is reversed when Addams not only allows the union to meet in the reception room but insists on helping in other ways. Kenney writes: "When I saw there was someone who cared enough to help us and *help us in our way*, it was like having a new world opened up... Later, she asked me to come to Hull-House to live. Knowing Hull-House and what it stood for, I called it 'heaven.' My whole attitude toward life changed" (22, emphasis mine). Kenney's reaction to Hull-House and its benefits parallels that of Polacheck, Davis, and Hackett. However, the help provided by Addams and Hull-House is especially significant because it helps Kenney and other working girls in the way they want to be helped.

One of the primary obstacles that Kenney and the working girls in her union faced was the threat of eviction from boarding houses when they did not have enough money for rent because they were striking for better wages. Jane Addams's solution to this was to task Kenney with finding a nearby apartment. The idea stemmed from "a meeting of working girls held at Hull House during a strike in a large shoe factory, [where] the discussions made it clear that the strikers who had been most easily frightened, and therefore first to capitulate, were naturally those girls who were paying board" and were afraid of being evicted should they fall behind on their rent (Addams 100). Addams provided the furnishings and the first month's rent and the

working girls were provided with a sense of security that they would not become homeless when they chose to strike for better wages and working conditions (Kenney 23). Thus, the Jane Club was born in 1891 with only seven single working girls occupying the apartment on nearby Ewing Street (Hayden 167). When the Jane Club reached fifty members, the apartment building on Ewing Street proved to not be enough space, so Addams proposed constructing a building incorporated within the Hull-House complex, which was completed in 1896 (Jackson 135).

The fact that Hull-House agreed to financially support an institution like the Jane Club (fully aware of the cultural anxiety caused by and suspect social position occupied by unmarried women²⁶) is another example of how the reformers were different and made use of the physical spaces Hull-House occupied. The Jane Club allowed the women to unionize and strike without fear of not being able to pay their rent if they lose their income. The residents were autonomous and were able to manage their own household, from cooking meals to cleaning. Dolores Hayden writes that “The Jane Club’s cooperative housekeeping filled the needs of young, single, female factory workers living on meager wages, whose only alternatives were to live at home, find a cheap boardinghouse, or perhaps apply to a philanthropic home for women” (168). Through the model of civic housekeeping, the Jane Club remade social relations by restructuring social space into a model that also reworked traditional gender norms. It encouraged a new system of women navigating the city and exerting their own agency by creating a new type of domesticity that allowed these women to become self-sufficient while still being able to strike and advocate for improved working conditions. Additionally, the Janes (as they were known) disproved the social anxiety associated with single women living on their own in cities. By moving the Jane Club apartments into a building directly within the Hull-House’s complex, the settlement reaffirmed

its commitment to both bettering the lives of working-class women and changing their social position within the urban built environment.

For women of Mary Kenney's class, the Jane Club (and Hull-House by extension) provided the same opportunities and experiences that Hull-House did for women of Addams's social class and station. Writing in 1901, Jane Club member Eliza P. Whitcombe ends her article by stating: "I think we have one advantage which a club for nurses or for any set of people of the same occupation can never have: that is, we have all sorts and conditions of people, -I mean, people of all sorts and conditions of occupations. This must, I think, tend to broaden the interests, which, after all, is what makes for real living" (88). The emphasis on real life connects to Addams's assertion about wanting to live in a "really living world" discussed above and underscores how the Jane Club and Hull-House provided women access to broader horizons and opportunities. Additionally, Whitcombe's insistence on the Jane Club's advantage over other clubs' points to the diverse cosmopolitanism that is also a guiding feature of Hull-House's mission.

Creating Common Ground

Throughout Hull-House's reform efforts, residents worked hard to establish a common ground with the immigrant communities that surrounded the settlement and one of the ways they were able to accomplish this is through purposeful decoration of certain spaces. Addams used the various paraphernalia from her travels for another, larger purpose as well: to foster a stronger connection with the immigrant community surrounding Hull-House. Because objects create a connection to a larger socio-cultural sphere (Grier 8), the photographs and old family mahogany, discussed in greater detail above, reemphasize the settlement's broader connection to Chicago and exemplify its spatial hybridity. These spaces are the focus of Liane Malinowski's article,

who argues that Hull House functioned as a rhetorical space that allowed its residents to create both a domestic and cosmopolitan ethos. Malinowski examines how the female residents “circumvented constraints on ethos arising from the domestic-public spatial binary by integrating foreign geographies with domestic ones” (407), as a result, expanding the places where women might claim speaking authority (406). I would like to expand upon this assertion and posit that in addition to expanding their cosmopolitanism through ethos, they also accomplished this through interior decoration.

The display of photographs that Addams and Starr collected on their European travels marks them as both sophisticated and familiar with the immigrant cultures that they would later encounter during their settlement work. Immigrants who visited the settlement and saw these photographs viewed the residents as more relatable and familiar with their own cultures. Barbara Sicherman analyzes how the space and decoration of Hull-House’s interior functioned as a culturally enriching space for the working-class immigrant community with the ultimate goal of inculcating the native-born or immigrant into a framework of middle-class values (166). This common ground and familiarity allowed the residents to establish a relationship with their neighbors that then extended to the activities and programs and were a direct result of settling in the neighborhood. The art, lectures, and social clubs additionally helped connect the women to a larger cosmopolitan identity as well; one that goes beyond the expected domesticity of the period. Even though middle-class women travelled internationally, this travel was viewed as part of their finishing and it was generally assumed that women would eventually return to their traditional roles. Addams completely reworks this by utilizing the art she and Starr collected on their travels for a completely different purpose.

Hull-House's cosmopolitanism and attempts at creating common ground with its immigrant neighbors is articulated in great detail by Hilda Satt Polacheck, whose initial introduction to Hull-House was at its annual Christmas party. Invited by one of her neighbors, Polacheck was hesitant to attend due to misplaced fears that she will be killed because she is Jewish - something that happened if Jews were out on Christmas in Poland (51). Overcoming her initial fears and hesitations, Polacheck describes the party in culturally cosmopolitan terms:

People called to each other across the room. Then I noticed that I could not understand what they were saying. It dawned on me that the people in this room had come from other countries. Yet there was no tension... There were children and parents at this party from Russia, Poland, Italy, Germany, Ireland, England, and many other lands, but no one seemed to care where they had come from, or what religion they professed, or what clothes they wore, or what they thought... We were all poor. Some of us were underfed. Some of us had holes in our shoes. But we were not afraid of each other. What greater service can a human being give to her country than to banish fear from the heart of a child? Jane Addams did that for me at the party. (Polacheck 51-52)

Polacheck's description of the ease with which various cultural and ethnic groups socialized at the Christmas party reflected Hull-House's ethos in establishing a community of reformers that focused on environmental reforms rather than Americanizing immigrants. Philip Davis makes a similar observation, stating that "Jane Addams had the happy faculty of liking people of diverse backgrounds. Unlike critics of the immigrants of that day, she encouraged [immigrants] to build proudly on what was most valuable in our heritage" (129).

Despite efforts at creating common ground with neighbors, there were also a number of instances where residents appeared to be ignorant of cultural and religious customs. Polacheck

details an instance where she was invited to dine with one of the residents, Miss Hill. Upon expressing hesitation about never having eaten outside the home, Polacheck states she “‘would not know how to act’” (66). Miss Hill replies that Polacheck should “‘eat the way [she] eat[s] at home’” (66), not realizing that the former has dietary restrictions that are heavily influenced by her religion. Jackson posits how even though Polacheck was enthusiastic about the reforms and activities happening at Hull-House, she “‘still had difficulty participating in this space of bodily reform’” and the ways the Miss Hill’s assertion that she eat the way she does at home “rang hollow in the ears of a girl ‘terrified’ by the threat of transgressive ingestion” (131-132). Nevertheless, Polacheck accepts the invitation, despite spending the entire meal anxious that she was not eating food that was kosher. This particular episode demonstrates how even though residents attempted to foster an atmosphere of cosmopolitanism, there were occasions that they were unaware of specific religious and cultural observances that were a vital aspect of immigrants’ identities.

The emphasis on and appreciation of the diverse array of nationalities that surrounded Hull-House soon developed into another program – the Labor Museum – a space where immigrants could display and demonstrate traditional weaving, pottery, and textile-making from their native countries. Established in 1900 and housed in one of the newly-built adjacent buildings, the Labor Museum stemmed from Hull-House’s early emphasis on the importance of the arts. However, the simple display of art soon proved to not be enough as residents noticed the wide array of artistic capabilities possessed by their immigrant neighbors. The Labor Museum developed out of a desire to preserve the traditional artistic handicrafts of the various immigrant cultures. The Labor Museum housed six departments: book-binding, textiles, pottery, wood, metal, and grain. Of these, textile manufacture was the most popular and prominent (Jackson

261). The Museum aimed to show the history of these handicrafts and how they fit into and were altered by current industrialization and how this work looked different now that it was being done in factories and not in the home (Lee and Lopez 163-164). In order to accomplish this, residents created displays that showed the evolution of various textiles from raw materials to finished products, displayed the history of spinning, and incorporated live demonstrations (Polacheck 64).²⁷ Saturday nights at the museum were reserved for neighbors to dress up in their national costumes and demonstrate handicrafts to an audience made up of fellow immigrants and more affluent visitors (Polacheck 64). Viewed together, these represent the three goals outlined by a Museum program: “(1) to make industrial processes more picturesque (2) to give laborers a historical consciousness of the social value of their work, and (3) to give older people ‘the position in the community to which their previous life and training entitles them’” (Jackson 256).

The Labor Museum had another cultural role that was viewed as equally important: “to reveal the humble immigrant parents to their own children” (Addams 137). Specifically, immigrants’ children were embarrassed by their parents who did not speak English or refused to Americanize. Shannon Jackson writes that “while Hull-House residents rarely vocalized an assimilationist agenda, the acculturating curriculum of their classes, children’s groups, and young people’s clubs indirectly contributed to this intergenerational conflict” (256). Residents created the Museum as a space that would connect the younger Americanized generation with the older one and foster a sense of appreciation for the skills their parents possessed. Cognizant of the growing rift between immigrant parents and their Americanized children and the isolation often experienced by immigrant groups, the Labor Museum emerges as a space that both connects immigrants to a larger cosmopolitan identity and to one another through an appreciation of art and work. By demonstrating the importance and skill possessed by many immigrant

parents, the Labor Museum simultaneously emphasized the cultural and social value of an immigrant's heritage to their children. This reflects a larger mentality residents held on the importance of preserving and promoting cultural diversity. In "Immigrants at Hull-House" (1950), Edith Abbott details a story where her sister, Grace, was upset that immigrant children were having their names changed by their teachers in order to sound more Americanized (125). Hull-House as a place where immigrants' cultures were respected and cultivated and Addams did not believe that showcasing ethnic handicrafts was antithetical to becoming American (Lissak 6).

The Labor Museum undeniably functioned as a performative space and it was this quality that allowed both residents and immigrants to engage in a new type of reform – one that was cultural in nature and aimed at changing the prevailing view of immigrants. The performative aspect of the space lent itself well to fostering a close relationship with the residents of Chicago at-large. Just as the Labor Museum helped establish a new type of relationship between residents and their immigrant neighbors, it also helped alter the view and sociocultural position of immigrants in Chicago overall. On a larger scale, the Labor Museum created a symbiotic relationship between the immigrant community of the Nineteenth Ward and Chicago's wealthier classes. The museum functioned as a space where all classes stood to benefit from one another: the immigrants from the financial sponsorship of Hull-House and its programs, and the upper classes by being shown the values and pride of a way of life that was different from their but in a way that fostered appreciation and tolerance. Dorothea Moore expresses this sentiment well by writing that Hull-House "stands not so much for a solution of problems as a place of exchange" (49), one that understands the value of building reciprocal relationships as a vital part of social reform. Sarah E. Chinn argues that Addams's vision of the Labor Museum goes beyond the elitism and snobbery that has been launched at her by then-contemporaneous critics, and that by

“exposing her neighbors to the museum, Addams also wanted to make possible interethnic harmony based in a belief in the commonality of human experience” (235). During Saturday night demonstrations, residents shared authority with the immigrants; it was the immigrants who controlled the narrative of reform when it came to how they were viewed by the American upper classes. Ultimately, the goal of the museum was to showcase the aesthetic quality and complexity of these crafts, reworking an image of immigrants as backward or unintelligent (Lee and Lopez 166-167). The Labor Museum was also a gendered space, one that functioned as a public space for immigrant women to showcase their domestic talents. The private act of weaving, which would typically be considered a private domestic act, is put on public display. In this way, the Labor Museum is not only celebrating the crafts and skills of the immigrants’ home countries but the domestic duties of women in general.

Providing immigrants with the opportunity to participate in the creation of their native arts helps locate them in a larger cosmopolitanism that Addams viewed as an essential aspect of democracy (Bonomo 115-116). Before the creation of the Labor Museum, Hull-House had already established a close relationship with its surrounding neighborhood and joined forces in bettering the community through various civic reforms. Addams devotes a full chapter in her memoir on the various efforts at civic cooperation which underscore their importance to the betterment of the ward. “We also quickly discovered that nothing brought us so absolutely into comradeship with our neighbors as mutual and sustained effort such as the paving of a street, the closing of a gambling house, or the restoration of a veteran police sergeant” (Addams 164). In a way, the Labor Museum also speaks to the cosmopolitanism that Hull-House attempted to foster. Addams writes that Hull-House had long wished to “devise some educational enterprise, which should build a bridge between European and American experiences in such wise as to give them

both more meaning and a sense of relation” (137). Even though social and cultural gaps existed between the residents and neighbors, they worked together for the common good of their neighborhood furthering the cosmopolitan relationship between residents and the community.

As Hull-House grew in scope and expanded in activity, it also became a must-see stop of wealthier Chicagoans and visitors from other regions of the United States. Because the settlement was an establishment that had not existed before, many visitors frequently gawked at the residents and their activities. Beatrice Webb and her husband, leaders in the Fabian Socialist movement in England, visited Hull-House in 1898. An excerpt from her diary detailing the experience reads: “Hull-House itself is a spacious mansion, with all its rooms opening, American fashion, into each other. There are no doors, or, more exactly, there are no *shut* doors: the residents wander from room to room, visitors wander here, there and everywhere; the whole ground floor is, in fact, one continuous passage leading nowhere in particular” (61). Webb’s description emphasizes Hull-House’s hybridity, eschewing distinctions between private and public space. Residents were frequently tasked with accompanying curious visitors and providing them with a tour of the premises, called toting. Toting provided tours of both living and working spaces in Hull-House and “changed its existential status from a mode of habitation to a spectacle” (Jackson 194). Residents frequently felt to be on display and these actions further exacerbated the settlement’s division of public and private.

Not all visitors, however, were inquisitive spectators. In addition to members of the immediate neighborhood making use of Hull-House’s resources and activities, persons from all over Chicago frequently found themselves within the walls of the settlement. For example, women’s labor unions were organized at Hull-House and met once a month in its drawing room, attracting visitors from outside the direct neighborhood as well. The various union and club

meetings brought public activities directly into a private space and worked to further establish Hull-House as a quasi-public space. Many visitors were potential patrons, financial supporters, or intellectuals who were interested in participating in and observing the settlement's activities. The majority of these visitors were men: academics, clergymen, businessman, wealthy donors, city councilmen, and, most famously, W.E.B. DuBois. Even though these men contributed their time and support, it is vital to note that Hull-House was a female space, one that was run and organized by women.

The majority of settlement guests would meet over dinner, as Dorothea Moore describes in her essay: "The six o'clock dinner hour brings the household and its guests together in the beautiful dining room. This is the meeting ground of the day... Thus the social consciousness of the living house grows. There may be a very radical end or a very conservative middle at the long oval but there is always a fair field and fair play" (48). Moore underscores Hull-House's commitment to opinionated discussions even when such discussions did not reflect the opinions of the settlement's residents, something that Hilda Satt Polacheck underscores in her own autobiography: "Jane Addams was a firm believer in freedom of speech and freedom of the press. And people of all shades of opinion were allowed to speak at Hull-House" (70). Hull-House provided everyone with a platform express their viewpoints which resulted in the speakers' views to be often conflated with residents'. The most radical of these was the Social Sciences Club which often expressed radical viewpoints inconsistent with those of Hull-House and society at-large. Yet Moore writes that "speakers of every opinion and circumstance have come before this body, have had their say – not always undisputed, not always courteously received – ...for it seeks to make welcome not opinion but knowledge" (48). Hull-House was a community of diverse viewpoints as much as it was a community of diverse nationalities and

individuals (Herman 123-124). Because Hull-House allowed anyone to use its space as a platform, it was often publicly misconstrued that residents also believed these viewpoints, but I contend that this is what contributed to the paradoxical quality of Hull-House's space.

Conclusion

As we have seen, space played an essential role not only in the work residents performed but in the benefits a settlement house provided to its immediate neighborhood. Hilda Satt Polacheck asserts that "America has not yet awakened to the realization of what it owes to Jane Addams. No one will ever know how many young people were helped by her wise council, how many were kept out of jail, how many were started on careers in the arts, in music, in industry, in science, and above all in instilling in their hearts a true love of country – a love of service" (75). In addition to *Hull-House Maps and Papers*, organizations and programs like the Jane Club, the music school, the Labor Museum, women's and men's club activities, trade union activities, and education classes – all demonstrated the ways Hull-House responded to the needs of the community and worked toward lasting reform. It simultaneously altered the view and position of the female reformer in the city by proving to be a training-ground for social work, activism, public health, education, labor, and women's suffrage. The women who worked in Hull-House went on to hold careers that were considered rare achievements during that time. All in all, the settlement had a space that fulfilled all of the needs that arose from the neighborhood: educational needs of a school, social needs of a club, recreational needs of a gymnasium, and the cultural needs of a museum (Sklar et al.). The pioneering efforts of Hull-House residents drastically altered the position of women within the city, creating a new relationship with urban spaces and places that would make possible the work of future women to come.

The division between public and private remained an ongoing duality experienced not only by Hull-House but many other settlements during the Progressive Era. Hull-House's hybridity allowed female residents to be in-between and allowed the settlement to achieve its larger civic vision of Chicago. This is despite the fact that at no point during Addams's tenure as head resident, did the settlement bring on immigrants or working-class individuals to work as residents. That position was only filled by zealously reform-minded middle-class young women (Brown 30). Regardless, residents never viewed themselves as fully separate from the individuals and the neighborhood they were reforming. Space played an essential role not only in the work residents performed but in the benefits a settlement house provided to its immediate neighborhood: "Perhaps the greatest value of the Settlement to [the immigrants] was in placing large and pleasant rooms with musical facilities at their disposal, and in reviving their almost forgotten enthusiasm" (Addams 137). One of the settlement's numerous lasting legacies was the "casual contact enacted in the neighborhood's cafes, settlements, and sidewalks [which] laid the foundation for municipal, national, and even global political transformations" (Rowan 396). The pioneering efforts of Hull-House residents drastically altered the position of women within the city, creating a new relationship with urban spaces and places that would make possible the work of women like Djuna Barnes, Nella Larsen, and Faith Baldwin.

Chapter Two

Becoming Intimate with City Streets:

Djuna Barnes's Journalism and the Transformation of Women's Public Space

In 1917, Djuna Barnes found herself on a boat circling Manhattan with a group of “stiff-backed, Middle West schoolteachers and others” (Barnes 288). Writing for the *New York Morning Telegraph Sunday Magazine*, “The Hem of Manhattan” establishes what will become a dominating theme throughout much of Barnes's journalism: “to take a yacht trip around Manhattan Island is to find yourself in the awkward position of one who must become a stranger in his own house” (285). By becoming a stranger Barnes is able to present scenes of New York urban life that many of her readers would not have had ready access to either because of class differences or simply because certain spaces (particularly those of popular entertainment) were only just appearing across the metropolis.¹ She presents an image of New York City that most people do not adequately pay attention to or acknowledge exists: “for three hours and a half there pass misery, poverty, death, old age, and insanity,” as Barnes dutifully documents the prisons, hospitals, insane asylums, and garbage barges that float by the pleasure boat full of tourists (288). What Barnes documents is the hem of the city inhabited by the marginalized members of society. When some of the Midwestern schoolteachers, “[murmured] to themselves at times that they hoped the educational parts of New York and surrounding country would be visible to the naked eye” (290), Barnes exclaims: “Well, they were, but they didn't see it” (290) referring to the previously mentioned prisons, asylums, and hospitals. For these women, the educational aspects of the city rest in historical monuments that have been stripped of their immediate impact and bear little to no connection to their current states. Watching the women watch the city, Barnes criticizes the inherent belief that the only educational aspects are the pretty and pleasant

ones and derides the schoolteachers for not taking into consideration the complexity of urban life and for failing to realize the inherent value of its social infrastructure. To Barnes, every aspect of the city is educational if only one looked closely enough and she is irked by the schoolteachers' apathy toward the complexity and humanity of urban life that unfolds before them.

Barnes shifts focuses at the end of the article by taking readers away from the periphery and into the interior to highlight the multitudinous and teeming diversity of urban life. In an effort to show that life in New York is made up of complementing parts, Barnes provides a catalog of glimpses into scenes of everyday life and spaces that were slowly becoming more prevalent within the public imagination:

Somewhere, everywhere over there in that world that we had been around, and against which only one voice was raised – that of the megaphone man – actresses were getting their beauty sleep or were at school learning arduously a new dance. Somewhere a man was killing a gnat and somewhere else a man building a bomb. Someone was kissing, and someone was killing, someone was being born, and something was dying. Some were thinking, and others were not. Waiters moved about in the great hotels, dragging their servility with them like trains. Pompous gentlemen in fat rings discussed politics amid spittoons, and handsome women read yellow-backed novels and gave their hands to be kissed by gallants. (294)

This article sets the stage for much of Barnes's journalism and prefaces many of the nuances of urban life she catalogs throughout her career as a journalist. By imagining the variety of life in the city, Barnes creates a wider perspective that is then localized through her portrayal of more intimate, smaller-scale scenes and spaces in various other articles. At the conclusion of the trip, Barnes comments that the "city gave out only a faint sound of fabric being rent: one-half of the

mass pulling one way and the other half in an opposing direction” (294). The rending of fabric is synonymous with the existing tensions and anxieties that characterized this time period, not only with the changing economic and class norms, but with the position of women in society as well. By deriding the Midwest school teachers and their narrow views, Barnes is simultaneously criticizing the narrow position they hold in society. The schoolteachers, projecting outward conformity and conservatism with their gingham gowns, stiff backs, and reserved nature, represent an older form of femininity that Barnes views as too restricted and not forward-thinking enough. She works to remedy this particularly narrow view of womanhood by juxtaposing it alongside vibrant urban modernity of New York City’s diverse inhabitants.

This article also locates Barnes as a central observer of and participant in urban life through her role as a journalist. Journalism afforded women wide public exposure and familiarized them with varying aspects of modern city life, from the jails and tenements on the Lower East Side to the women’s clubs and department stores on Fifth Avenue. By the turn-of-the-century, the metropolitan female journalist was one of the most widely recognized images in the country. Metropolitan newspapers expanded greatly in scope and size within the last two decades of the nineteenth century, hoping to attract readership and satisfy advertising demands (Fahs 4). This allowed women to enter the profession in a variety of ways: purveyors of human-interest stories, interviews, advice columns, urban sketches and book reviews, in addition to the more traditional mainstays of fashion and cookery (Fahs 6).² Despite the stringent controversy surrounding their newfound public roles, “newspaperwomen renovated conventions of nineteenth-century sentimentality to suit the rapidly evolving mass media and developed controversial new models of self-reflexive authorship that involved not just reporting the news but *becoming* the news” (Lutes 5). Barnes herself was the center of a number of her own stories,

including volunteering to dangle from a window of a building and be rescued by firefighters and submitting herself to a forced feeding in order to understand the plight of British suffragettes.³ Barnes's journalism is broadly categorized as human interest, which at the time included anything from urban sketches to celebrity interviews and advice columns. More importantly, human interest journalism encouraged a number of freedoms for newspaper women not typically found in other types of journalism including the ability to experiment with style and reconfigure their relationship with public space (Fahs 94-99).

Djuna Barnes's journalism opens up scenes of urban life to a curious public and alters the perception of women's mobility in urban spaces. As a female metropolitan journalist, Barnes shaped new public spaces for women, not only within the physical pages of the newspaper, but also within the public imagination as the image of the genteel, middle-class woman on the street became more prominent. Throughout much of her work, Barnes constructs multiple authorial identities and appropriates a number of urban types, such as the slummer, the flâneuse, and the working-class pleasure seeker, that aid in her depictions of the various spaces she inhabits. The intersection of these identifies allows Barnes to reconstruct the roles that women hold in the modern city and place them at the forefront of her articles, while simultaneously establishing a woman's perspective as journalist, tourist, critic, and citizen. By reworking the conversation surrounding women's presence and mobility in public, Barnes is able to normalize the female urban experience for her audience and depict how women are integral agents in the fabric of urban life. By focusing on urban spaces/places, we gain a more succinct understanding of how Barnes remaps certain spaces/places as women's spaces through her journalistic work. The rhetoric of her style and the scope of her reportage is subversive in its ability to locate women in new and emerging places of public mass entertainment and modern city life. Women's

experience of the city is crucial to understanding how transformations associated with modernity occurred and reverberated across society and Barnes's journalism provides a rich account of the gendered aspects of modernity in urban settings.

A New Type of Journalism

Djuna Barnes began her journalistic career in the spring of 1913, when, at the age of twenty, she walked through the doors of the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, and reportedly told them they would be foolish not to hire her. Before becoming a renowned high modernist through the publication of *Nightwood* (1937), Barnes solidified her career as a New York City journalist, writing for a number of newspapers including the *New York Press*, *New York Sun Magazine*, and *New York World Magazine*. Barnes began her journalistic career out of a necessity to support her mother and three younger brothers after her parents' separation, but quickly gained prominence for her witty style and decadent drawings.⁴ Working as an illustrator, reporter, cartoonist, celebrity interviewer, and book reviewer, Barnes claims to have worked for every English-speaking newspaper in New York except the *Times*. Her career as a journalist spanned from 1913 until 1939, and allowed her to develop a unique and distinctive writing style dominated by dense prose, autobiographical elements, and explorations in sexuality, specifically women's sexuality. Barnes's earliest fiction, *Ryder* (1928) and *Ladies Almanack* (1928), "criticizes social values that narrowly define individual sensibility," while satirizing middle-class values and beliefs. Barnes's journalism was characterized by a satirical wit and a deliberate, tongue in cheek writing style that simultaneously explored serious social issues alongside depictions of recent developments in popular entertainment and celebrity interviews.⁵ Somewhat reminiscent of local color fiction and the urban sketch (if not outright tourist guides), Barnes's articles are infused with the types of details and perspectives that locate her within specific urban spaces and simultaneously function

as a social commentary on the radically changing urban landscape of New York City, especially in regards to women's place and mobility within that landscape.⁶

Venturing where few female journalists have before her, Barnes not only "explores the excitement and energy of a radically changing world," but also bravely enters spaces that were traditionally seen as male and reworks the position of women within them (Messerli 11). In "My Sisters and I at a New York Prizefight" (1914), Barnes investigates an assertion made in the very first line, that "'a large percentage of the spectators [at a prizefight] are women'" (168). She goes to an athletic club in Far Rockaway, buys a ticket from a man who "does not even raise his eyebrows," and joins "the others [to] watch the women come" (169). Throughout her narration, Barnes appropriates a male subject position in watching the women at the prizefight. Even though the match is the central point of entertainment, Barnes refuses to look at the men in the boxing ring and instead focuses her attention on the female spectators:

They do not appear self-conscious, nor is there anything in their behavior to indicate that the situation is unusual.

But the women who dared the ringside and the girls further back sit rigidly upright, balanced between wonder and apprehension, their faces still set in a fixed smile, as of a man beheaded while a joke hovered in his throat

And each one of us, meanwhile, sits motionless, scarce permitting a breath to pass our lips.

Was is it the sound of a snapping fan that I had heard? Was it a woman's voice that had murmured, "He has fine eyes?" A woman's hand that had gripped my arm in the dark? A woman's breath that had ceased so suddenly? (169-171, 173)

By characterizing the women at the match in a masculine light, Barnes effectively tears down any boundaries between the sexes in this particular space. By focusing on the female body that is already under spectatorship, and herself becoming a participant, Barnes not only questions the gender stereotyping surrounding women's presence at events like this but also re-appropriates and normalizes the position of women ringside at a prizefight. Because Barnes "remained intrigued by the ways people look at bodies, and she explored voyeurism, especially the female body as spectacle, in much of her work" (Lutes 147), this leads her to appropriate the predominantly male subject-position in observing the women gathered by the ringside. Barnes challenges the dominant view of the female body as an anomaly in this space by appropriating the male gaze and making the female body the center of attention, something she does in her other articles as well. Through this particular exploration of voyeurism, Barnes describes the reactions and body language of the women in a similar light to that of the men, not to mention the subversive gaze appropriated by the female spectators in gazing at the half-naked bodies of the male boxers. The women appear to be restraining themselves, breaking fans, catching their breaths, and gripping arms in an effort to control their excitement. Levine writes "the facts that mattered to [Barnes] were the marginal, concealed, but vital details that allowed her to respond to the atmosphere of an assignment, to what one might call its psychological environment" (31-32). These particular details demonstrate how attuned Barnes is to the situation of women in places of public entertainment and how she wants to convey this particularity to her audience.

What matters to Barnes in this article is not so much the increased presence of women at prizefights, although that does evoke some curiosity on her part, but the fact that the female spectators are acting in a commensurate way to their male counterparts, a theme found across a number of her other articles. This particular article also establishes Barnes as a chronicler of

urban life and entertainment, spotlighting popular and up-and-coming venues for an audience fixated upon pleasure, while simultaneously (and inconspicuously) directing our attention to the changing social positions of women within specific urban places. Barnes goes slumming and becomes a flâneuse through her observations of the female spectators and the result is an article that highlights and celebrates women's new-found avenues of entertainment. Her stories are grounded in the physically built environment, exposing the everyday scenes of the city to her readers. Kate Ridinger Smorul writes that "in Barnes's stories...the reader catches glimpses of a cacophonous and seething city characterized by its fast pace, diversity, and miscellany. On every street corner, an interesting and newsworthy event is occurring, and Barnes is there to report the extraordinary as well as the mundane" (56). Barnes's re-appropriation of public space for women in regards to leisure and entertainment is what Alice Fahs dubs as the continuing remaking of public space by newspaperwomen writing for sensationalist periodicals at the turn-of-the-century (9-10).

The history of newspaperwomen tends to place them in one of two roles, either as stunt reporters following the footsteps of Nellie Bly or as sob sisters, and neglects other women who contributed other types of news (Fahs 2).⁷ Because of this characterization, contemporary critics who write about Djuna Barnes tend to view her in her role as a stunt reporter, focusing (almost exclusively) on her performative journalism. Lutes centers her discussion of Barnes on how she transformed the role of the stunt reporter and sob sister, challenging the pervading view of the turn-of-the-century female reporter. She argues that Barnes inherited a contradictory legacy of female journalists, "one that upheld rigidly conventional views of womanhood even while it indulged in potentially subversive gender-bending" (147), but transforms this by "shedding the armor of the conventional white middle-class female body which protected the stunt reporters"

(153). Barbara Green adds to the conversation of how Barnes utilizes gender-bending by discussing the ways in which Barnes blurs the boundary between subject/object in “How it Feels to Be Forcibly Fed” to “comment upon the investigative woman’s desire in mass culture” (172).⁸ Speaking to the rapidly developing phenomenon of sensationalism within the newspaper industry, Katherine Biers places Barnes’s performative journalism in context with mass culture and the new mass reader’s desires for spectacles and vicarious experiences. Biers’s central argument is that in the process of writing about public spectacles, Barnes was equally attracted to the question of what draws a crowd in the first place and herself became a “producer of the very spectacles intended to grab the newspaper reading ‘mob’s’ attention” (“Djuna Barnes,” 246). While these remain invaluable critical approaches that help us better understand Djuna Barnes as a female journalist at the turn-of-the-century, they present a rather limited scope of Barnes’s journalistic work because they focus on the same handful of articles, namely Barnes’s stunt reporting. Through an analysis of her lesser-known articles, I expand on Barnes’s role as a female metropolitan journalist by focusing on how she underscores and reworks her own image as a journalist as well as the position of women in the city.

Djuna Barnes began writing journalism toward the end of a pivotal moment in American sociocultural history, especially as it pertains to women. However, in contemporary studies of female journalists of the nineteenth and twentieth-centuries, Barnes is markedly absent.⁹ Perhaps because Barnes did not make a career out of her stint in journalism but rather viewed it as a temporary position through which she could support her family or because she herself did not view her journalistic contributions seriously in retrospect, critics seem to focus more on her fiction and drama written after 1920.¹⁰ Another reason would be that Barnes’s early work appeared during a literary period that was dominated by realism and naturalism, categories that

she does not neatly fit into because of her subject matter and writing style (Plumb 13).

Regardless of the reasons, Barnes has left a lasting legacy on her depictions of various urban haunts while simultaneously normalizing the presence of women in these spaces and reconfiguring them to meet the changing social, cultural, and economic times.

A Woman's Cityscape

The city can be seen as a destabilizing force that rends apart gender divisions, especially those pertaining to space and place. The presence and absence of women out in public in city streets has been a widely discussed topic among feminist geographers and critics of architectural space. Changes in women's social status and their everyday lives were a prominent and defining feature of urbanization and modernity. Raymond Williams writes that the literary view of the city has always been a man walking in it alone (234). Writings on urban modernity tended to privilege the male point of view and ignored or discounted the female perspective, despite the fact that women have long been participants and active members on urban streets. What kind of space exactly is the urban street that the supposedly male figure traverses? The street is the place of chance encounters and anonymity. Historically, it is the space of political uprisings, revolutions, and labor strikes. By the 1910s, it is increasingly the site of suffrage and reform movements. More importantly, by the time we enter the twentieth century, the street as a space has gone through significant cultural and physical changes, with the rise of urban beautification and renewal movements that attempted to clean up the poverty and vice of so-called undesirable neighborhoods. The presence of women in cities has always been problematic, and it was not until the turn-of-the-century that this outlook began to shift.

The rules and codes of urban life prior to 1900 regulated the presence of women on city streets. Women of different classes were subject to different social rules on how to behave in

public, but it was generally assumed that a solitary woman loitering on a city street was a prostitute. Polite (i.e.: middle and upper-class) women were to be invisible in public, moving from one place to another with purpose and not stopping for any reason (Sewell 3). For them, the street existed only as a conduit and they were expected to limit their own sensory input while following rules laid out in etiquette books about where to look, what to pay attention to, and what to ignore (Sewell 4). Working-class women, however, have been a constant presence on city streets by the turn-of-the-century and their behavior was much-less regulated than that of their upper-class counterparts. City life for women was inextricably connected to the spaces they could and could not occupy, mapped by gendered spaces that ultimately limited women's agency and mobility. It was not until the turn-of-the-century that women's roles developed past such negative associations and women were able to exert more agency and move about public streets in greater numbers.

The way that the city has been imagined and planned and the role (or lack thereof) of women in it is evident by the various theories surrounding it that have conceptualized the central individual in the modern city as undoubtedly male. Chief among these is the image of the flâneur, arguably the most famous figure representative of urban modernity.¹¹ Contemporary studies of flânerie have moved beyond the traditional definition established by Baudelaire and further developed by Benjamin. Keith Tester argues that despite the popularization of flânerie in popular culture and literature, its exact definition remains elusive and describes the flâneur as simply “the secret spectator of the spectacle of the spaces and places of the city” (7) who “[illuminates] issues of city life irrespective of time and place” (16). More recently, several critics have extended the critical discussion of the flâneur to encapsulate newer understandings of spectatorship and the individual's relationship in the crowd within the modern city. Viewed

together, these studies demonstrate how the overarching definition of *flânerie* is not static and can come to encompass numerous positions and mobilities within the modern city. With the exponential growth of the newspaper business in the last few decades of the nineteenth century, many critics have considered the urban journalist as a *flâneur*.¹² Newspaper writing, according to Alice Fahs, “created a new engagement between women and public life, one centered around active participation and observation. Newspaper work, in fact, required new modes of seeing and observing – new modes of gaining and producing knowledge” (8).¹³ With the large number of women entering the newspaper business in the last two decades of the nineteenth century, we can safely say that the original characterization of the *flâneur* first developed by Baudelaire has been expanded to encapsulate the varying degrees of life and mobility within the modern city. The *flâneur*’s transcendence beyond a modernist, middle-class male identity creates room for new interpretations. These novel definitions provide new insights and inroads to meaning and new ways of seeing how individuals, especially women, navigated the modern city.

During a time when a woman of a certain class alone on the streets was still seen as a relative anomaly, Barnes’s writing helped reshape the position of women of all classes traversing the urban street. Unlike the female reformers of the settlement house movement discussed in the previous chapter, Barnes is not blurring the boundaries between public and private. Instead, she is taking public spaces that women are already in and altering the public conversation and perception of women within them. Through the utilization of both an objective and subjective approach to reporting, Barnes is taking on a double-role: she is locating herself, and through an extension of herself, the middle- and upper-class reader in the places and situations she writes about while simultaneously positioning herself as an objective observer of the events and individuals at the center of her reporting. Barnes frequently locates herself in lower-class spaces

and highlights the position of lower- and working-class women. Barnes's important contribution to journalism occurs when she begins centering her stories on spaces and events that have been newly accessible and available to women by depicting how women (herself included) navigated and reconstructed urban spaces (the majority of which were still traditionally male). Barnes borrows techniques from *flânerie* and slumming throughout her journalism to document the changing urban geographies that resulted in women's new agencies and mobilities within the modernist city.

The connection between Barnes and *flânerie* is not novel, although it has not been discussed extensively. Nancy Bombaci is the only critic who has adequately discussed Barnes in relation to *flânerie*, by arguing that Barnes is successful in appropriating the role of the *flâneur* through her use of phallic wit in addition to combining and blurring the distinction between subject and object (169). I want to take Bombaci's argument further by focusing on how Barnes's *flânerie* is gender and space specific. Rather than focusing on observations of the city as a whole and her as an observer within the larger context of the crowd, Barnes focuses specifically and extensively on women's urban experience by both depicting women, almost exclusively, moving through the built environment of New York City. By appropriating the male gaze, Barnes becomes a *flâneuse* while simultaneously opening up places of women's urban experience to a curious public who is increasingly female. This also allows Barnes to extend the role of *flâneuse* to her female readers in articles where women are featured as a way of allowing them to experience the city. Unlike the traditional *flâneuse*, however, Barnes is not interested in observations of the crowd as a whole but rather on its composing parts, emphasizing its heterogeneity and overturning gendered conventions of urban mobility. Feminist geographer Gillian Rose argues that "feminist explorations of the different spaces of the contemporary city

often reject the search for totality from a position of complete knowledge. Their work is more tentative, more grounded in the details of the everyday, and more likely to interpret social life and spaces in the city in terms of a radical heterogeneity” (133). I argue that Barnes challenges the presupposition that the urban street is a male domain by emphasizing her presence as a woman and designating certain spaces as women’s through this presence.

We see this in play in “Seeing New York With the Soldiers” where Barnes imbeds herself into a group of tourists in order to explore “the mysteries of New York” (325). Guided by matter-of-fact man pointing out various sights by shouting them into a megaphone, the reader appropriates Barnes’s gaze. Except for the soldiers and the tour guide, who are participating in the tour, the individuals making an appearance in this particular article are all women. Through Barnes’s perspective we see:

Women in white blouses and trailing skirts were left on the mind’s eye like a blur of fancy seen by Whistler. Ornate shops and heavy golden signs winked and spread thin in the memory like long wires holding together immense edifice after immense edifice.

Through the open door of Sherry’s, one caught a glimpse of small, smart women in white aprons pinching with long silver tongs the brown and placid sides of rotund Italian creams... (326).

The great doors [of a church] were ajar. A woman in a red skirt and a plume stood in its shadow (326).

As they pass Columbia University, “a young girl in white tennis shoes was running down the interminable, short steps leading to the street” (332). What we see is a city that is inextricably female both in its totality and its composing parts. It is important to note that these are not new spaces for women to be in; women have been shopping and working in stores for a number of

decades by this point. Barnes is underscoring the various ways that women are moving in public; ways that have not been adequately paid attention to. Her readers are becoming aware of just how pervasive the presence of women on public streets has become by this point in the 1910s. What is intriguing about this article as well is that Barnes is one of two women in a group of male soldiers, which speaks to how her own mobility and presence in public has been altered by the changing sociocultural position of all women in the modern city. The fact that she can do this seemingly without a problem underscores her own position as a *flâneuse* which she then extends to her female readers.

Barnes is resisting the dominant view of the city as primarily male by focusing her observations on the space and places inhabited by women. Her approach in this article is reminiscent of Michel de Certeau's theory of walking in the city in which he theorizes the concepts of strategy and tactic as aspects of everyday life (de Certeau xix). In thinking about the city, the strategy would be the way the city is organized into blocks and streets and presented as a unified whole, while a tactic represents an individual's experience of the city, the ways in which they can duck into alleys or take a shortcut that effectively undermines the established strategical layout of the city. Barnes's ride on the tour wagon is akin to a strategy – the wagon has a set route that does not deviate and the tour guide has specific sites and landmarks that he draws attention to. Barnes, however, refuses to detail these landmarks to her readers and instead focuses on the women present in the places the wagon drives past. Even though she is not walking through the city, Barnes's active choice to spotlight women is a form of resistance akin to de Certeau's which makes her position as a *flâneuse* doubly significant.

As demonstrated above, Barnes's *flânerie* is immersed in the fleeting everyday occurrence that others fail to notice. Mystery is inherent in Barnes's position as a *flâneuse* and

she blends in with the crowd to the point that she is barely noticed on more than one occasion. We see this in play, for example, in “Who’s the Last Squatter?” where Barnes inserts herself directly into the world she observes by venturing into a working-class neighborhood in Brooklyn dubbed “Pigtown,” supposedly in search of the last squatter. She immediately appropriates the role of the *flâneuse* and attributes it to her readers as well by inviting them to “...go out to [the squatters], stand beside the hut, and watch the line of cars twisting along, watch the hurry of people who work for their rent, and somehow there creeps into your heart a mad desire to place your foot on earth and claim it as yours by the inalienable right of birth” (119). The emphasis on watching people and subsequently claiming a space for their own speaks directly to the changing sociocultural position of women, where women are increasingly able to go out in public and lay claim to a space of their own. It also speaks to Barnes’s own position as spectator and her appropriation of the gaze. We never learn much about Barnes as narrator/observer in her stories. We don’t even know her gender, although we assume that she is female because her name is attached to her published articles. What we do know is that she frequently portrays the narrator of her articles looking at and observing women of varying classes in varying positions in the city. The gaze allows Barnes to solidify their position in the urban fabric regardless of class and underscore them as the centers of urban life.

What is especially interesting about “Who’s the Last Squatter?” is that the squatters are all female during a time when readers would view a woman squatting as scandalous to imagine. Barnes, however, negates this perspective by rendering visible women who might have no choice but to be squatters. Barnes’s *flânerie* attempts to observe and capture the kind of life that rarely made it to the forefront of popular magazines and newspapers of the time. Even though the perspective Barnes provides of this space is undeniably female, it falls into a category that

Gillian Rose describes as a space that “is neither the masculine public nor the feminized private” but rather depends on a different type of sociality (136). Her use of the second person locates the reader in the same space, experiencing meeting the two working-class women, squabbling over which one truly is the last squatter. Barnes ends the piece with a direct reference to her readers: “You give the ticket man your nickel and jump for the Park Row local, for you are due to get back to civilization” (122). Because newspapers and magazines were courting female readers more aggressively than ever during this period, we can deduce that Barnes’s audience is mostly, if not predominantly, female. Therefore, Barnes is directly participating in the formation of a public gender identity that directly relates to the urban spaces she is occupying and using on a daily basis through her journalism. By focusing on the female squatters, Barnes is locating and making them visible participants in the larger fabric of public space within the city. It is important not to forget that Barnes is traversing this very public (and potentially dangerous) space alone. Barnes reworks this by assuming the guise of a *flâneuse* and appropriating the male gaze in order to normalize the presence of women in these spaces. A woman looks at other women no longer as objects but as subjects who are all exerting the same agency and mobility in public spaces.

The male gaze oftentimes located Barnes as an outsider, especially in the articles where she goes slumming. As demonstrated in “Who’s the Last Squatter?” her position as an outsider is heavily dependent on class, yet she realizes the important position of women of all classes in the city. The remaining articles I discuss in this section all work to highlight not only Barnes’s role as a *flâneuse* but also how her observations of the crowd focus on marginalized neighborhoods and ethnic communities that were not at the forefront of the public imagination during this time.¹⁴ By focusing on these neighborhoods and the individuals located within them, Barnes is

effectively partaking in the popular activity of slumming. I have already discussed Barnes's focus on marginalized communities in "The Hem of Manhattan" where she criticizes her fellow female passengers for not noticing the hospitals, poor houses, and asylums as educational aspects of life in New York City. However, Barnes does not set foot into these communities and readers are not allowed a glimpse behind the social curtain. Justin D. Edwards presents a compelling argument of Barnes as a travel writer describing foreign places that just so happen to be within the boundaries of New York City. He argues that Barnes "urban sketches contest and redefine women's space by moving outside the domestic realm and into the mysterious pockets of New York...She turns a male generic literary practice [urban travel writing] into a vehicle for visions of the modern woman's city" (132). Barnes's travel sketches, according to Edwards, redefine women's domestic space in the city by focusing the lesser-known neighborhoods in New York.

Although slumming reached its zenith between 1880 and 1930, wealthy New Yorkers frequently visited impoverished parts of the city as early as the 1830s (Heap 2-3). In its earliest incarnations, slumming provided well-to-do white Americans with the ability to view socially marginalized neighborhoods that were inhabited primarily by Jewish, Chinese, and Italian immigrants and Blacks. Upper and middle-class members formed slumming parties made up of individuals of both sexes in an attempt to see how the other half lives. They visited restaurants, shops, bars and clubs, and sometimes even barged in unannounced into immigrants' tenement homes (Heap 18). The slumming that became so popular in the late decades of the nineteenth and early decades of the twentieth centuries had as its precursors "the evangelical Protestant moral reform movement and the more boisterous, class-integrated culture of urban men" (Heap 4-5). By the early – to mid – 1910s, caused in part by reform efforts to close red-light districts, slumming transitioned from being associated with a specific urban space into a social activity

(Heap 57). Slumming became less associated with ethnic immigrant communities and more focused on the urban spaces occupied by new and increasingly popular groups such as bohemian artists, Blacks, lesbians and gay men (Heap 9). Although these communities were not always and not necessarily impoverished, they were “considered morally depraved by society at large,” which in turn made them more interesting to outsiders (Dowling 15). This subsequently led to the association of certain groups with particular urban neighborhoods – Greenwich Village with the bohemian community of writers and artists, for example.

Barnes discusses slumming in great detail in “Becoming Intimate with the Bohemians” (1916), but from the perspective of someone who would typically be gawked at by slummers. She caricatures an upper-class “fur-trimmed woman, heavily laden with jewels” (237) dubbed “Madame Bronx” who stops Barnes to ask for directions to Greenwich Village. When faced with the response that she is already there and the seemingly ordinary neighborhood before her, she stammers:

‘I have heard of old houses and odd women and men who sit on the curb quoting poetry to the policemen or angling for buns as they floated down into the Battery with the rain. I have heard of little inns where women smoke and men make love and there is dancing and laughter and not too much light. I have heard of houses striped as are the zebras with gold and with silver and of gowns that – Quick, quick!’ she cried... ‘There’s one now!’

And so she left me in pursuit of a mere woman in a gingham gown with a portfolio under her arm (237-238).

Madame Bronx has clear expectations of the Village and is dumbfounded when she does not outwardly encounter it. To Barnes, the Village is not a place for outsiders to explore but is rather a home, a place where everyday life happens. Barnes satirizes Madam Bronx, and all slummers

by extension, by stereotyping both her physical appearance and her expectations of the neighborhood. Her descriptions and attitude underscore Barnes's contempt at having her community be at the center of upper-class amusement. She is protective of the Village from slummers looking to expose its secrets because she is a member of its marginalized community, stating that she will not give away those places people like Madame Bronx are hoping to find, but will instead "locate one of them for those of you who care to nose it out as book lovers nose out old editions" (Barnes 240). Thomas Heise argues that by purposely spotlighting life in Greenwich Village, Barnes simultaneously protects it by adopting "a tactic of coded signification" where she mentions but refuses to name specifically the sub-communities that interested slummers the most (289). This allows her to "rhetorically [safeguard] it against Enright and the slummers and sightseers who voyeuristically traipsed through what was then a new nighttime pleasure economy" (289). Despite this, Barnes has a complex and hypocritical relationship with slumming. She is protective of her own neighborhood because there is something personal at stake for her but she has no qualms slumming in other ethnic neighborhoods like Chinatown and parts of Brooklyn.

Slumming was especially popular among realist writers at the turn-of-the-century who were determined to capture the "real" essence of experiences and perspectives by venturing out to experience it themselves (Dowling 2). Writers occupied a precarious balance between positions as insiders and outsiders which "not only allowed [them] admittance into their subjects' worlds...but it also helped alleviate many of their audiences' fears while at the same time subversively revising conventional moral wisdom" (Dowling 8-9). The most famous of these is perhaps Jacob Riis's *How the Other Half Lives* (1890), which opened up tenements to the critical and discerning public but simultaneously helped revise the pervading narrative surrounding

immigrant communities and helped spur municipal reform efforts that became the crux of the Progressive Era. According to Alice Fahs, journalists justified their slumming as an extension of a larger reform agenda, although there were exceptions to the rule (178). Barnes has no reform agendas but rather uses slumming subversively to upend gender and class-based expectations of behavior. What makes Barnes different from the male journalists who also went slumming is that she belonged to a community that was frequently at the center of slumming adventures – the artists, bohemians and homosexuals who resided in Greenwich Village.

The two articles where Barnes explicitly partakes in slumming, “Chinatown’s Old Glories Crumbled to Dust” (1913) and “Why Go Abroad? – See Europe in Brooklyn!” (1913) both depict and take advantage of the Chinese and Italian immigrants that make up these communities. Barnes begins “Chinatown” by playing upon the cultural stereotypes and sensationalism prevalent during this time: “We were brave and faltered not; we were courageous and questioned not the other. But fear tagged behind and goaded [them] on with a sense of danger and of pitifully wicked things, which we must see and might not enter into” (123). Barnes is clearly taking on the role of both slummer and flâneuse here – playing into ethnic stereotypes and the danger that comes from exploring the space occupied by a different culture. She establishes herself and her readers as outsiders in this space but the act of slumming gives them the authority to be here. She also positions herself a flâneuse while walking the streets of Chinatown and taking in its various sites, sounds, and smells, all while trying to find the so-called real Chinatown depicted in the mainstream popular imagination. It is worth noting that this is the only piece of journalism where Barnes explicitly mentions race, yet she discusses Chinatown and the fruits of her slumming/flânerie with disappointment. She establishes the stereotypical view of Chinatown at the beginning but follows this by saying that “there is no

Chinatown” (124). She writes that “there are a few Chinamen – but not one carried a dangerous weapon; not one wore a pigtail; hardly one wore the Oriental costume. In the entire evening only one woman was seen besides Miss Florence, the mission worker. And from the hundred dark windows not one face peered” (124). Due to numerous reform efforts at the turn-of-the-century, the brothels, opium dens, and various other places of iniquity that Barnes was looking for were for the most part cleaned up and any intrepid slummer who went in search of an opium den would typically find a fake joint where everything was staged (Heap 34).

Through her slumming, Barnes is highlighting the cultural diversity of modern urban spaces while simultaneously locating the immigrants as permanent features in the urban fabric of New York. Barnes continues slumming in ethnic neighborhoods in “Why Go Abroad? – See Europe in Brooklyn!” where she once again misleads her readers. Barnes begins by enumerating the “splendor” and “charm” that awaits travelers to Europe and immediately negates these expectations by writing: “And yet we have opportunity, we stay-at-homes, to go down to it and see it for ourselves. How many of us have discovered it? Just how many know that Europe is in Brooklyn?” (131). When thinking about a trip to Europe, Barnes’s middle-class readers no-doubt imagine a European tour centered around museums, art galleries, and cultural landmarks. Yet Barnes toys with these notions by presenting an image of Europe (in Brooklyn) that is far from the cultural sophistication most readers would imagine:

“Life, bustle, color. Europe, barter, gain, loss, Wallabout, Wallabout, Wallabout, somebody, anybody – something is here to be learned. No trip to the foreign land is needed if it’s atmosphere you want. No need is there to stifle in the body of a ship for six or seven days if it’s accent you want. No need to count the money in the teapot if it’s

movement and music that you seek. The organ grinder with his tambourine-beating wife wedges between crowds and receives in the soul's metal a dime or an onion" (135).

In lieu of museums and cafes, Barnes focuses her attention on vendors and street performers. Yet she depicts these individuals and their surroundings in a way that is on par with the cultural enrichment one would find in Europe, and for a fraction of the cost. In addition to cultural expectations, Barnes's focus on women in "Chinatown" and "Why Go Abroad?" incorporates similar aspects of misrepresentation. Dowling likens slumming to colonialism (7) and indeed that is what we see Barnes's articles on Chinatown and Europe. But Barnes also colonizes these spaces to make them more acceptable for women to be in. The lack of women other than the mission worker in Chinatown, the "women in monstrously tucked skirts and enveloping shawls" (133) in Wallabout all fall short of the expectations her readers would have had, expectations that were based on cultural and class stereotypes. Barnes intentionally misleads her readers about the type of women they would perhaps expect to find in these spaces in an attempt to create a space that women can occupy without fear.

Dance Madness

Barnes's ability to negate her readers' expectations is particularly apparent in her articles depicting popular leisure and entertainment, specifically the ones centered on metropolitan dance halls and Coney Island's resorts. In "You Can Tango-A Little-at Arcadia Dance Hall," Barnes takes her readers on a tour of a dance hall, participating (and helping to perpetuate) the dance madness that pervaded New York City (and most of the country) between 1910 and 1920.¹⁵ The article itself works to expand women's public spaces in regards to leisure and recreation, underscoring their agency when it comes to entertainment. Even though the article is written from the perspective of a young man, the role of women within it is central. By positioning

women at the center of the story, Barnes remaps the dance hall as a woman's space and simultaneously tempers the negative reputation of dance halls by not only depicting the physical appearance in a positive light but also highlighting attempts at propriety and moral behavior.

When readers first glimpse the Arcadia it is "everything that a dance hall should be in every way" (14) – an ambiguous description through which Barnes sets up to thwart her readers' expectations of the unfavorable view of dance halls. This particular article is an example of what Cheryl Plumb dubs Barnes's "satirizing [of] middle-class values and beliefs. Using techniques of indirection, she achieves meaning by juxtaposing scenes or symbols with little authorial comment" (17). By juxtaposing male and female experiences within the dance hall, as well as her own impressions and observations, alongside what most of her readers would have imagined, Barnes unsettles her audience's expectations and forces them to challenge their views on social dancing. Readers are situated to experience the Arcadia through Reginald Delancey's perspective, an upper-class young man out on the town in search of entertainment. Barnes uses Reginald as the representative of traditional white upper-class society and, therefore, a subscriber to the same set of moral values that many social reformers held at this time as well.¹⁶ Even though the initial introduction to the dance hall is ambiguous and up to interpretation, Reginald (and readers along with him) was "agreeably surprised" (14) once he comes upon the Arcadia. There were "arc lights and electrics and even a respectable automobile chugging with satisfaction before the door" (14). It would seem, at first, that Reginald's surprise stems from how modern the dance hall appears compared to the "old-style dance hall with its flickering gaslights and furtive faces" (13), yet the keyword in this example is "respectable." The description of the car intimates a certain type of genteel clientele, one that would have greatly differed from the lower-class patrons of other types of dance halls during this time.¹⁷ The

Arcadia itself “was light and cool, the music was good, and best of all, the authorities were not too critical. One could even tango a little in a tame sort of way. The whole place was pervaded with an air of refinement and good behavior” (19). The name of the dance hall evokes a beacon of light, a utopia in the midst of so-called sexual vice and immoral behavior. The description presents itself as something separate from the typical association that existed between dance halls and immoral behavior. By challenging expected views of dance halls during this period, Barnes is setting this up as a space that women could be in freely without fear of impropriety or danger.

Dance halls during this time period were ubiquitous throughout New York City and constituted a major component of leisure culture for young, unmarried, working women.¹⁸ Going to a dance hall represented a sense of autonomy. After a hard day’s work, young women dressed in their best clothes and headed off to the dance halls, usually in the company of friends rather than young men, and most dance halls lacked chaperones or parents to monitor the type of dancing that went on (Thiel-Stern 25). Peiss makes a striking point in saying that dancing was one of the quintessential forms of leisure that “marked a particular stage in the life cycle” in the lives of these young women (89). By the turn-of-the-century, dancing as a form of leisure was something that appealed mostly to women, although men did actively participate (Nasaw 104-105). Not only did women significantly outnumber men at dance halls, women also tended to be better dancers. (Nott 162). Dance transcended class, with both upper- and lower-class individuals participating in dance madness by going out to dance halls, albeit not always the same ones (Mumford 29). The rise in popularity of social dancing among young women occurred within a larger socio-cultural framework of women’s increased economic and sexual independence (Studlar 25). Public dancing allowed women to challenge gendered expectations of behavior but

simultaneously caused social anxiety about how this could lead to women giving in to uncontrolled passion and sexuality.¹⁹ Barnes tempers these anxieties by presenting a dance hall that contradicts these expectations and works to alleviate the social anxieties of the day.

At the turn-of-the-century, the character and reputation of a particular dance hall depended heavily upon the type of hall and the social make up of its participants. However, there began to emerge a desire in hall owners to distance themselves from the reputation dance halls held as unsavory and vice-ridden. Barnes works against this depiction of the dance hall as a space by giving her seemingly more genteel audience a utopian description of the Arcadia and by clearly stating that the safety and decorum of the young women are the hall owner's utmost priority. Mr. Cohen, the hall manager, is "endeavoring to elevate the tone of dancing and to place the dance-hall business on a clean and wholesome basis. [He wants to] particularly to attract the girls from the dance halls where liquor is sold, evil acquaintances are met and bad habits are formed" (15-16). Mr. Cohen's statement, the fact that there was a pink pamphlet containing rules for proper dancing, and a censor on the dance floor reflect cultural anxieties about the changing relationship between both men and women and the public. Dance halls were so revolutionary in transforming not only leisure and entertainment for women but also their presence outside of the home. Linda McDowell highlights a key anxiety present during Barnes's time period: the fact that women encountered a very real and present danger in spaces considered not their traditional sphere. Interestingly enough however, "the public spaces of the city have been significant locations in women's escape from male dominance and from the bourgeois norms of modern society," while simultaneously also representing a potential danger (McDowell, *Gender, Identity, and Place* 149).

Gillian Rose's notion of paradoxical space best explains how women are viewed in this space. She defines paradoxical spaces as spaces "that would be mutually exclusive if charted on a two-dimensional map – centre and margin, inside and outside – as occupied simultaneously" (140). Throughout the majority of this article, Barnes' appropriates the male gaze but in a space that is undeniably female. The women in the dance hall are participating in the culture and leisure that is created specifically for them but it is still viewed as physically and morally dangerous for them to be located in these spaces. They oscillate between inside and outside; between being at the center of reform efforts to clean up public entertainment, yet still being marginalized when they choose to participate in that entertainment. The dance hall as a paradoxical space depends on a number of factors: the new vision of leisure that women were developing for themselves during this period, coupled with the built environment. It also depends on the notion that propriety is subjective and based on class definitions of what constitutes proper behavior for women (McDowell, *Gender, Identity, and Place* 7). Because the dance hall is a paradoxical space, Barnes is not interested in upholding middle-class standards of proper behavior, especially when it comes to women. Instead, she reaffirms the dance hall as a space that allows women to construct their own identities and claim public spaces as their own.

The dance hall as a space is important to discuss, especially in terms of how it allowed young working and middle-class women to express freedom and agency in regards to their positions in society. Jessica Ellen Sewell's idea of imagined, experienced, and built landscapes is useful here in helping us understand how the women in this story are appropriating the dance hall as their own space.²⁰ As an imagined and built landscape, the dance hall is fairly similar: it is presented as a place of proper leisure and entertainment that is free of vice and sexual temptation. As a built landscape, the dance hall reflects the desire for propriety: it "reflects the

beliefs, practices, and social structure of the culture that produced it” (Sewell xvi). In both of these respects, the dance hall as a space still subscribes to a gendered outlook of how men and women should act in public. As an experienced space, it functions quite differently, especially for the young women Reginald interacts with; it allows them to step outside their prescribed gender roles and gives them agency to actually craft the space of the dance hall to their own benefit. The young women depicted in “Arcadia” counter the prevalent assumption that working girls who attended dance halls were neither sophisticated nor intelligent enough to traverse public spaces on their own without succumbing to vices and temptations (Thiel-Stern 29). Working-class girls (of whom middle-class women disapproved) “sought to create a city that met their needs” (Deutsch 17); they appropriated the streets and dance halls and chose to live their lives in public.

For women, dance halls symbolized a newly-found freedom. As previously mentioned, dancing was a more popular activity among women and most women went to dance halls because they liked dancing and not for other reasons (Nott 166). Peiss writes that “women enjoyed dancing for the physical pleasure of movement, its romantic and sensual connotations, and the freedom it allowed them. The commercial dance halls were public spaces they could attend without escorts, choose companions for the evening, and express a range of personal desires” (106). Dancing was more about homosocial ties as opposed to establishing heterosocial relations. Women were also easily able to challenge conventional gender norms by passing over partners they deemed unfavorable (McBee 95). This is clearly enacted when Delia dances with Reginald. Their interaction follows the typical relations of young people arriving separately and only interacting with each other for drinks and dancing and then leaving separately. The two are

introduced by a common acquaintance and their relationship doesn't develop past the dance floor.

It is Delia who controls the pace and quality of their interaction, presenting herself as characteristically different from a vulnerable and impressionable young woman whom social reformers worried would fall prey to male sexual advances. She is not interested in Reginald's history of the word "dance" and haughtily tells him to "quit throwing them cashmere bouquets...and get to that two-step" (18). Delia defies the gender conventions of the period and is representative of girls who were not interested in establishing lasting romantic, looking for fun instead. Delia and the other women at the Arcadia lay claim to the public space of the dance hall. Leslie Gotfrit argues that dancing allowed women to challenge what she identifies as "patriarchal imperatives." She writes that "on the surface going out dancing may be viewed as a set of practices that subordinate women in a male-defined and controlled arena, where oppressive stereotypes of femininity and masculinity are enacted" (174). Connecting dancing with bodily pleasure, Gotfrit argues that the politics of pleasure are often contradictory and invested with multiple meanings. Therefore, the dance hall functioned as an inherent contradiction or paradox as well: just as it reinforced patriarchal imperatives, it simultaneously provided women a space where they could enjoy the "physical, sensual, sanctioned, and embodied pleasures of dancing" (177) and challenged societal expectations regarding proper behavior. In a reversal of gender expectations, Reginald is positioned as out of his depth in the space of the dance hall. By positioning the article through a male perspective and drawing attention to how it adheres to values and morals that would be embraced by the white Protestant upper class, Barnes is participating in the social reform conversation prevalent during this period. Upon closer examination, Barnes counters the narrative that popular dancing is dangerous and potentially

immoral and vice-ridden. Instead, she presents her genteel readers with a view of lower-class amusements that run counter to what they might have typically been exposed to.²¹ It is the women who get the last word in the article: walking home together, Delia tells Mabel about her experiences dancing with Reginald, noting that he “never once tried to get fresh” (19). This underscores a type of confidence in the women and the fact that they could frequent places of public entertainment without fear of impropriety.

Throughout this article, Barnes not only reworks the expectations surrounding how gender functions in this space, but class as well. Unlike the slumming articles discussed above, Barnes’s depiction of Reginald’s slumming places the upper and working classes on a level playing field. By juxtaposing Reginald and his father’s office boy, Barnes demonstrates the permeable boundary between the two in a paradoxical space like the dance hall. Reggie’s experience is markedly different in that he is an active participant rather than a passive observer. Barnes articulates the perspective of a fabricated upper-class young man because she knows that most of her readers will be of this background (Peiss 88). This allows her to reconstruct the conversation and the image of dance halls by assuaging the social and moral fears of her readers. When Reggie observes that “the dancing [at Arcadia] was far more polite and graceful than that done on the previous evening at a fashionable society dance by girls of [his] own sort” (17-18), Barnes is leveling the class distinctions between the two groups of women. She tempers the cultural anxiety of the day surrounding the popularity of dance halls and gender relations among attendees by juxtaposing their experiences with those in the upper classes. By essentially labeling the behavior in Arcadia as more well-mannered than at high-rolling society balls, Barnes is dismissing popular views of these particular spaces as inappropriate and vice-ridden.

Barnes additionally subverts class-based expectations for male behavior. As a man Reginald would be assumed to act in a particular way or to not particularly think that this is a space that holds great consequences or value for him. Reggie does not have to hide the fact that he knows how to turkey trot and tango and can revel in the entertainment and good company, regardless of the fact that they are not members of his own class (17). That he is able to freely express talent or interests that would otherwise be frowned upon in his own social class demonstrates how the dance hall reconstructed expectations of behavior and mobility for both men and women.²² It additionally challenged class expectations. Reggie is readily accepted by his father's office boy who, although surprised, accepts Reggie in this space and finds him a working-class girl to dance with.

Ceaseless Coney Island

Perhaps no other New York City neighborhoods have been so exhaustively covered by Barnes than Greenwich Village and Coney Island. Her portrayal of Coney Island presents an interesting perspective on the newly-developed dance craze and commercialized forms of entertainment, while speaking to the evolving agency and mobility of women within this space. Between 1913 and 1917, Djuna Barnes wrote four separate articles on Coney Island, two of which appeared within the same month: "The People and the Sea; How They Get Together" (1913), "The Tingling, Tangling Tango As 'Tis Tripped at Coney Isle" (1913), "If Noise Were Forbidden at Coney Island, a lot of People Would Lose Their Jobs" (1914), and finally "Surcease in Hurry and Whirl-On the Restless Surf at Coney" (1917). The fact that she writes four articles in such a relatively short period of time underscores the extent to which the theme parks, dance halls, and beaches of Coney revolutionized turn-of-the-century leisure, especially for women. Her writing on the amusement parks and entertainment of Coney Island can be seen as an

attempt to attract a more genteel readership to entertainment that has frequently been viewed as working-class. Barnes repeatedly questions the assumptions her readers make of what these spaces were like and of the kind of people who frequented them. By painting Coney Island through a woman's point of view, Barnes authorizes and validates the female gaze and therefore her agency in this space.

The female gaze plays an important role in the way Barnes crafts certain spaces of entertainment as female spaces. As in "My Sisters and I at a New York Prizefight," Barnes establishes the principle actor in "The Tingling, Tangling Tango as 'Tis Tripped at Coney Isle" (1913) to be a female spectator who, "with her chin upon her jeweled hand" (Barnes 43), watches everything that happens in the dance pavilion. Acting similarly to her sister in "Prizefight," Therese focuses her gaze on the bodies "gliding, twisting, losing grip, coming together, mocking gravity with jeering feet, caressing with slurring slide" about the dance floor (Barnes 44). Barnes once again appropriates the male gaze but uses it to observe both the men and women on the dance floor, subverting its original focus in a way that places both genders equally in this space. Coney Island (and other beachside resorts as well) altered gender relations, creating and allowing for a "license to stare, a prerogative of men in most settings, [which] could also be claimed by women seaside resorts" (Sterngass 250). Therese, along with the other women, engage in a stereotypically male activity of looking and observing in a public space. They look at the dancers, they look at the other women and the dresses they wear, fully appropriating the male gaze in their spectatorship. It is the women, young and old alike, who express a keen interest in the male dancers and who serve as Barnes's focus, highlighting the strong preference of the activity for women. By focusing on their spectatorship, Barnes

establishes the dancing pavilion as a female-dominated space where they exert the most agency in their attempts to attract the attention of and charm the male dancers.

From its early beginnings as a site of mass entertainment, Coney Island has repeatedly been at the center of debates and reform agendas focused on the middle and working classes, a reform agenda, as Daniela Caselli argues, that was “carried out by journalists, commentators, and impresarios alike” (109). Social reform once again becomes the cornerstone of Barnes’s journalism but not necessarily in a negative light. She is highlighting how the spaces of Coney Island are being changed by social reform, but she is simultaneously framing the reform within women’s social experience through their increased agency and mobility within these particular spaces of leisure. Dance and its socially transgressive qualities are centerstage once again in “The Tingling, Tangling Tango as ‘Tis Tripped at Coney Isle” (1913). Barnes continues to play with her readers’ expectations surrounding the propriety of popular dancing:

Semiprofessional, the dancers who specialize for the company are matched against dancers who may have had some experience before the public. They are daring, yet within the bounds of propriety because they are daring with averted head; they make the dip in gowns that are meant for strolling and, because they see nothing, are aware of nothing. (44)

Many dance halls on Coney Island banned the tango and turkey trot in an attempt to retain their familial and genteel clientele. These dances were instead demonstrated in a modified form that fit within the social confines of propriety (Cook 141-142). Interestingly, Barnes positions the men in the article as being more “aware that they are part of the changing life at Coney, the Coney which a few years ago tolerated nearly any kind of dance and which now tolerates nothing that borders on the sensational” (49). Yet Barnes plays with her readers’ expectations yet again

by framing the reform against what her readers might typically expect. If the men are lamenting the loss of a more scandalous seaside resort, it is the women who appear to be reveling in the changes that are occurring.

By the time Djuna Barnes meandered over to Coney Island looking for a story, the small barrier island on Brooklyn's southern shore was already home to three amusement parks, numerous bathing and dancing pavilions, a zoo, and a score of other activities sure to suffice in the ceaseless quest for leisure and entertainment. Since the mid-1800s, Coney Island has served as the "people's watering place," and visitors often "equated Coney Island with the ideal fete...a journey to a magical wonderland, shared public enjoyment in an urban world of strangers and suppression of class distinctions" (Sterngass 109). A trip to Coney Island allowed for a reprieve from normal routines and ways of life. The three amusement parks, Dreamland, Steeplechase, and Luna Park, boasted electric rides and lights to amuse the throngs of visitors.²³ The first pavilion was erected in 1845 and by 1888, there were seven dancing pavilions scattered across the barrier island. Considered a favorable distance from the hubbub of the city, Coney Island was seen as the ideal vacation spot and was patronized initially by the upper class. However, with the advent of the nickel trolley fare in the summer of 1895, Coney became accessible to even more people, the majority of whom were middle- and working-class urbanites. As a result, the upper class slowly deserted Coney in favor of more distant resorts. The changing demographic along with the changing socio-economic mores led to the commercialization of leisure, the epitome of which was Coney Island. Nancy Bombaci labels Coney Island a microcosm of American capitalism (176), and the "heady atmosphere of Coney Island concert halls in the waning years of the nineteenth century mirrored the demographic changes affecting American popular culture, which was steadily becoming more urban in character and ethnically more diverse" (Immerso

109). The patronage of the dance halls varied greatly across classes and races and reflected a larger social phenomenon occurring within cities.²⁴

Viewed together, Barnes's four articles on Coney Island demonstrate a progression of Barnes's own experiences visiting the people's playground in addition to documenting the ways in which Coney Island as a space witnessed the progression of public leisure and entertainment. One of the initial patterns that emerges is the particular perspective of Coney Island Barnes details in each article. Each one of the four articles centers on one of the many amusements and activities individuals were able to participate in: the beach, the dance pavilions, the boardwalk and its various attractions, and the side shows and amusement park rides. Over the course of the four articles, the perspective Barnes appropriates changes and develops. The perspective begins with a direct address to the reader utilizing second person, then moves on to third person perspective of an upper-class young woman. In the last two articles, ("If Noise Were Forbidden at Coney Island, a lot of People Would Lose Their Jobs" and "Surcease in Hurry and Whirl-On the Restless Surf at Coney") we finally get Barnes writing in the first person, directly placing herself in the spaces of Coney Island and admitting that she is a participant in the commercialized leisure the place affords. Caselli writes that Barnes becomes "one of the actors in this fairground play by plunging in their midst, losing her native tongue and her mobility, and merging with a crowd both exciting and disconcerting" (112). This progression of perspectives is interesting because it demonstrates how Barnes was attuned to the ways in which popular forms of entertainment would have been viewed by her readership.

"The People and the Sea; How They Get Together," is more traditionally sentimental in its focus on the family experience at Coney Island. Barnes narrates descriptions of families with "their dinners of fruit and impossible chunks of bread" (33) who are impatiently waiting in line

at a bathhouse. She encapsulates the multitude and diversity of the crowd, highlighting how Coney Island was a place frequented by people of various classes and nationalities. Throughout, Barnes is more interested in presenting Coney as a place of great and good fun to her. Once again, she plays with expectations by writing: “Very different is life along the beach of Coney from what you have imagined it. You haven’t seen it in pictures, you haven’t read about it, it is even doubtful if you have found out for yourself the basic idea of the modern life by the ocean at the people’s playground” (32). Barnes is aware of the changes occurring in regards to how Coney is depicted within the public imagination and that it is increasingly becoming a lower-class place of amusement. Yet she challenges this characterization but negating her readers’ expectations and directly connecting Coney Island to modernity, showing how it is moving away from older notions of leisure and public entertainment.

Barnes’s goal over the course of this article is to ensnare the reader into becoming a member of the crowd, which becomes a character that overtakes the narrative in the form of a “never-ending line of pleasure seekers-extending from the very edge of the sea in which they would bathe-heads down the street and around the corner” (32). The heads are nameless and unidentifiable, portraying an anonymous crowd. Barnes depicts the “shapeless, huddled forms with the morning paper over their faces” and the “thousands of souls [who] have dropped their individuality with their clothes” (34). The beach becomes an anomalous space, where identity is more fluid (McDowell, *Gender, Identity, and Place* 166) and different genders and classes intermingle with greater ease. Despite the anonymity, Barnes identifies working-class characteristics of the crowd as well: the mother in the “odd, homemade bathing suit, crouched under an improvised towel-tent” and the “heads of families, with their dinners of fruit and impossible chunks of bread, [who] stare about, clutching the hands of impatient children” (33).

The piece is accompanied by a number of line drawings typical of Barnes's newspaper illustrations that portray the various personalities she encounters. The drawings "emphasize [the figures'] draperies and musculature and clearly express their working-class identity (Goody 29). Barnes continuously draws the reader directly into to the maelstrom of immigrant and working-class bodies and voices, especially toward the end when she again switches to the second person pronoun on the subway ride home: "Tugging, pulling, pushing, you reach your destination; but it's no use-you are in the middle of the car, and you can't move" (36). Barnes locates her readers directly in the midst of the jostling, public crowd that exemplifies the urban modernity of the time. She gives the last words of the article to a working-class couple, underscoring the popularity of Coney Island with the working class but also giving voice to those who might otherwise not have a venue to express their opinions.

Perhaps the greatest sense of how Coney is epitomizing modern life is how Barnes portrays the role and position of the women, herself included, who visit the island in search of fun. In all four articles, Barnes positions herself as the observer in the crowd, carefully documenting everything surrounding her. However, it is not until "If Noise Were Forbidden at Coney Island," that Barnes identifies herself in the space by using first person. The article opens up with Barnes stating "I have seen" (143) a number of times, establishing both her agency within a public space and also her appropriation of the male gaze. The particular perspective demonstrates how Barnes's depiction of women in this space is progressing. As readers, we assume that she is touring Coney on her own since she uses the first person singular almost exclusively throughout the article. It is not until the last page, that we learn that she is actually there with a companion, however, that information is nonchalantly passed over it could have been easily added in as an afterthought. However, by mentioning that she is there with a male

companion, Barnes is subscribing to the popular image of young women who ventured to Coney Island either with male companions or found one there for the day. Barnes plays into these gendered expectations in her fourth, and final, article, “Surcease in Hurry and Whirl,” where the first person is substituted for the collective “us.” Barnes locates herself as part of the crowd and an active participant in the built environment of Coney Island’s leisure and amusement.

The built environment is coded with implicit and explicit rules about who has agency in which particular space and the social regulations that come to define interactions between individuals in these spaces. Coney Island’s built environment plays a significant role in how the women who venture there experience its boardwalks, beaches, and sideshows. McDowell argues that the beach, a place literally on the edge, is simultaneously a place that exaggerates gendered social relations but also permits the possibility of their transgression (*Gender, Identity, and Place* 166). The beach is a place of leisure, where people go on vacation and in pursuit of pleasure and get away from the routines and regulations that define their daily life. The beach, as a liminal space, blurs the boundary between land and sea and also between nature and culture (McDowell, *Gender, Identity, and Place* 166). In “If Noise Were Forbidden,” Barnes depicts Coney Island as a woman:

And so, though Coney is cringing in the glare of a broad day with the furtive eyes that a woman wears when she’s lost a hook...

...you catch the terrible, high-pitched, feline wail, growing louder as you listen to the indrawn, corset-hampered wail of sensation that a woman lets loose as the dip of death is taken.

The sound of articulate Coney is the voice of the female; the body of Coney is the man.

The municipal bathhouse stands on long, white legs knee-deep in the sand, like a patient, colorless woman. (143-144, 147)

The metaphor of womanhood persists into the last of the four articles, “Surcease in Hurry and Whirl,” where Barnes begins by retelling the story of a woman who criticized American society by arguing that it no longer knew how to properly amuse itself (275-277). By imbuing the built environment of Coney Island with feminine characteristics, Barnes is further associating one of the best-known, popular, and quintessential places of mass entertainment with womanhood. The metaphor of the sounds at Coney Island being the voice of a woman exemplifies how pervasive the role of women is in Coney. If Coney Island is imbued with feminine qualities, Barnes takes the comparison further in a description of a young girl who appears to embody Coney Island within herself: “she seems to be an outcome of past cries, curses, shouts, laughter, music, dancing, hubbub, and merry insolence. She is a little girl who has collected herself from the gutter and molded herself into this saucy, angular body from the refuse of great noises” (280). The various noises and sounds that characterized Coney as female in previous examples have finally become internalized in the body of a young girl. The body of Coney Island progressing from male to female establishes a clear gender fluidity that emphasizes the perpetually cyclical relationship between Coney and womanhood.

Beaches are places for looking, for breaking down and avoiding traditional cultural and social divisions that characterize human interactions (McDowell, *Gender, Identity, and Place* 167). Although Barnes does not solely focus on the beaches themselves in her four Coney Island articles, the dance pavilions, side shows, and amusement parks are an integral component of the Coney Island experience. Barnes’s portrayal and discussion of these spaces speaks to the changing societal and cultural norms surrounding women’s leisure and entertainment. Perhaps

the ending of “The Tingling, Tangling Tango” best evokes the atmosphere that surrounds Coney Island: “the old Coney is closing down; not stopping, mind you, but changing. We are tremendously interested to see what the evolution is going to be; we are interested to know how shocking society is going to become when it’s proper” (49). Barnes engages in the rhetoric of social change but simultaneously questions notions of propriety and presents them as potentially more scandalous and unrecognizable than what already exists. In a way, Barnes is lamenting the end of an older version of Coney Island that perhaps did not allow for women to express their agency and mobility freely, while simultaneously satirizing a society that yearns for greater propriety but also allows women to venture in public in greater numbers.

Conclusion

Djuna Barnes’s work as a New York City journalist establishes her as a chronicler of urban life and entertainment, spotlighting popular and up-and-coming venues for an audience fixated upon pleasure, while simultaneously (and inconspicuously) directing our attention to the changing social positions of women within specific urban places. The rhetoric of Barnes’s style and the scope of her reportage is revolutionary in its ability to locate women in new and emerging places of public mass entertainment and her journalism transformed the modernist literary aesthetic. Barnes was influential in expanding the representational sphere of women in print journalism. As we have seen, Barnes habitually appropriated a number of social and rhetorical positions that not only helped normalize the presence of women in new urban spaces but solidified the subject matter of the modern female urban journalist. She appropriated the male subject position and participated in the formation of a public gender identity directly related to the urban spaces she chronicled; she frequently positioned herself as a stranger and traveler in her home town in order to better understand the spaces/places she documented or to provide

unique perspectives to her readers. Because of Barnes's own rejection later on in life of her early journalistic endeavors and because she is more widely studied as a stunt journalist, much work remains to be done on Barnes's role in shaping the public's perception of the modern women in the city. Through Barnes's journalism, we see that women were always present in the public sphere and played an influential role in the formation and reception of popular modes of entertainment.

The presence of women in cities has always been problematic and it was not until the turn-of-the-century that this outlook began to shift. Through her articles on popular entertainment, Barnes joins a larger conversation on the position of women in turn-of-the-century American culture and society. Her discussion and portrayal of places of leisure directly relates to the creation of a female identity; specifically, how women chose to not only represent themselves but simultaneously appropriate and subvert the identities placed on them in particular spaces. My focus on leisure, entertainment, and women's geographic spaces in the city demonstrates how such a perspective is vital in understanding of how the sociocultural role and subsequent public perception of women began to shift in the early decades of the twentieth century. Exploring the particular way women experienced the city is crucial to our understanding of how transformations associated with modernity occurred and reverberated across society, which allows us to expand women's accounts of these experiences and consider them as equally important as male-dominated ones. Barnes subversively challenges the then-prevalent view of women through her journalism by reworking the conversation surrounding women's presence, behavior, identity, and perceptions in public, a topic that remains controversial to this day.

Chapter Three

The Soul of the Building:

Mapping the Spaces of Women's Work in the Modern Skyscraper

Behind the signs on the doors they work and the walls

tell nothing from room to room.

Ten-dollar-a-week stenographers take letters from

corporation officers, lawyers, efficiency engineers,

and tons of letters go bundled from the building to all

ends of the earth.

Smiles and tears of each office girl go into the soul of

the building just the same as the master-men who

rule the building.¹ (Carl Sandburg)

The exponential growth of cities in the last two decades of the nineteenth century was a direct result of the influx of people into urban centers coupled with the growth of commercial enterprise. As businesses grew, they required increasing amounts of space, which was finite in cities such as Chicago and New York. Architectural innovations, paired with the growing demand for more office space, led to the vertical growth of many urban centers and the birth of the skyscraper. The first skyscraper is considered by many architectural historians to be the Home Life Insurance Building in Chicago built by William LeBaron Jenney, completed in 1885 at only ten stories high (Schleier, *American Art* 5). It was followed, seven years later, by the Monadnock Building with twenty-two stories. The skyscraper as an architectural form proliferated through cities well into the twentieth century, altering the urban landscape, the relationship between the individual and the city, and cementing itself as the beacon of corporate

workspaces. Carl Sandburg's poem, "Skyscraper" (1916), depicts the ways the skyscraper permeated urban life by personifying the building and imbuing it with a soul composed of the multitudes of individuals associated with its construction and corporate life. Rather than focus on the skyscraper's architecture, Sandburg emphasizes its internal spaces and the work of female clerical workers juxtaposed against the men who tended to occupy higher positions. For Sandburg, both women and men occupied influential spaces within the skyscraper in the early decades of the twentieth century and his portrayal evokes the female/male dyads discussed later in this chapter.

But what kind of space is the skyscraper and how does it transform and develop in its first forty years of existence? Increasingly the site of mixed spaces (and not exclusively male ones), the skyscraper at the turn of the twentieth century came to symbolize the future potential of Americans, especially women. As downtown districts grew and increasingly became sites of business, the skyscraper became the ideal space in which to accommodate the multitudes of people who traversed these districts for work, business, and pleasure. Moreover, these districts were home to an impermanent and transient population made up of different classes and races, reinforcing the city's ability to bring disparate groups of people together, especially those who would otherwise have no contact with one another (Brown, *Black Skyscraper* 14-15). The expanding skylines of American cities coupled with local zoning ordinances, lot sizes, and grids resulted in a vernacular unique to each city (Willis 7). Despite the ubiquity of skyscrapers in today's cities, their initial inceptions radically altered the urban experience in the first four decades of their history. This is especially evident in the ways that skyscrapers were depicted by the first wave of writers to feature them in their works.

This chapter focuses on the relationship between the skyscraper and women's work, and provides a trajectory of women's spaces in the skyscraper from Henry Blake Fuller's *The Cliff-Dwellers* (1893) to Faith Baldwin's *Skyscraper* (1931) and its 1932 film adaptation, *Skyscraper Souls*. As a modern office building, the skyscraper was influential as a novel space of women's work and I analyze how women inhabited these spaces and how their significance developed from Fuller to Baldwin. Over the course of forty years, women began to inhabit the skyscraper in greater numbers and the spaces of the skyscraper became important sites for the expansion of women's work by facilitating the transition of clerical and administrative work into women's domain. Examined together, Fuller and Baldwin map the trajectory of the spaces of women's work and how they were influenced by the architectural forms of the skyscraper. Fuller's portrayal of the character Cornelia McNabb, who anticipates a number of these developments, demonstrates how these architectural forms become gendered. Baldwin expands upon this depiction by showcasing the varying disparities in women's work in the 1930s and how they have progressed since their initial location in the skyscraper offices of the 1890s. Through a comparative analysis of Baldwin's novel and its movie adaptation, I analyze how Baldwin inverts the traditional relationship between gender, sex, and the skyscraper by creating a heroine that does not fit neatly into the 1930's societal views of gender. Through an analysis of Baldwin's female characters, their varying relationships and views of marriage and career choices, I argue that Lynn is the only female character in the novel to not become a victim of traditional gender norms that the spaces of the skyscraper perpetuate and instead enlists these spaces in the pursuit of a career. By mapping the spaces of women's work in the modern skyscraper, I examine how the skyscraper not only becomes a symbol of capitalism and modernity but also a symbol of women's social and economic advancement.

The Inception of an Architectural and Cultural Phenomenon

Henry Blake Fuller was one of the first writers to immortalize the skyscraper in *The Cliff-Dwellers* and to integrate the architectural space of the skyscraper into realist fiction (Newcomb 101). Describing the fictional Clifton that was modeled on the real-life Monadnock Building, Fuller's novel provides a scathing social commentary on the role of skyscrapers within Chicago and their influence on culture and society. The opening pages of the novel juxtapose old Chicago with the expanding metropolis it was transforming into in the last decades of the nineteenth century: a metropolis whose progress is measured by the height of buildings that threaten to become "perpendicular precipices" (Fuller 58). The progressive height of each skyscraper points to the future of the building's architectural influence while simultaneously marking its progress and influence on the Chicago skyline through the various erosions and canyons that are created in its wake. Fuller's initial description of Chicago is analogous to elements found in nature – the skyscrapers are towering cliffs, the crowd on the street is a seething flood that erodes the ground it walks on (57-58), and can be seen as an attempt to ground the skyscraper in traditional architecture that places value on naturalist features. As the architectural development of skyscrapers progressed, however, these naturalist elements came to be increasingly displaced by more modern features which we are familiar with today (Dimuro 38). The building and architecture that came in the wake of the Great Fire of 1871 gave rise to the skyscraper and effectively modernized the city (Cronon 346). Chicago's natural growth does not come in the form of trees and towering cliffs but rather in steel and mortar.

Writing almost a century later from the top of what used to be the tallest buildings in New York City, Michel de Certeau describes the sprawling view of Manhattan from the 110th floor of the World Trade Center in similar terms:

Beneath the haze stirred up by the winds, the urban island, a sea in the middle of the sea, lifts up the skyscrapers over Wall Street, sinks down at Greenwich, then rises again to the crests of Midtown, quietly passes over Central Park and finally undulates off into the distance beyond Harlem. A wave of verticals. Its agitation is momentarily arrested by vision. The gigantic mass is immobilized before the eyes. It is transformed into a texturology in which extremes coincide – extremes of ambition and degradation, brutal oppositions of races and styles, contrasts between yesterday's buildings, already transformed into trash cans, and today's urban irruptions that block out its space. (92)

By appropriating descriptors and metaphors from the natural world, de Certeau attempts to make sense of what he sees by describing it in terms that would be familiar both to himself and his readers. However, describing the towering skyscrapers as an undulating wave imbues them with natural elements and, therefore, solidifies the towering buildings as a part of nature. By calling upon the natural elements, the towering skyline of Manhattan becomes a vision that can only be found in nature. His view of the city from the top of the World Trade Center is evocative for two reasons: the first is that he already describes what he sees in extreme oppositions, reflecting and anticipating the image and symbol of the skyscraper in American culture. Secondly, this creates a direct juxtaposition with Djuna Barnes and her journalistic work on New York's streets. His view of the city from the top of the World Trade Center is parallel to walking the city, "the dark space where crowds move back and forth, crowds that, though visible from on high, are themselves unable to see down below" (93).

The Cliff-Dwellers was written at a pivotal moment in Chicago's architectural history, which Fuller acknowledges with the creation of the Clifton, the tallest building in Chicago up to that point in history. With its eighteen stories, the Clifton comes to symbolize the hive of

industry and competition that would come to dominate American commercial endeavors in future decades. The opening pages of the novel establish a provocative comparison of Chicago in 1893 to the Native American culture it surmounted and displaced. The metaphor, according to John Timberman Newcomb, draws upon a fascination with the Anasazi people whose living spaces high up in the mesas of the Southwest were just beginning to be explored and meticulously documented in the last two decades of the nineteenth century. The 1893 Columbian Exposition brought this obsession to life and to the thousands of visitors in the form of an exhibit which was built to resemble the real-life living spaces of this Native American tribe (Newcomb 99-101). This simulated exhibit coupled with Fuller's aptly titled novel, published that same year, solidified the metaphor in the country's popular imagination, and "a great deal of writing on skyscrapers between 1890 and 1915 emphasized this incongruous mixture of hypertechnological urban space with the unknowable, uncanny, and hermetic landscape of the western desert" (Newcomb 102). The vast size of skyscrapers made it difficult to imagine or comprehend their more practical purpose, which caused people at the turn-of-the-century to imbue the buildings with mythic and exotic characteristics (Newcomb 99). Fuller's allusion to a culture based in nature that has been eclipsed by one based in industry helps to further his naturalistic metaphor and presents the idea that if this has happened once already, it is possible to happen again in the future.²

For Fuller, building up Chicago is inextricably connected to building up American civilization and the skyscraper becomes the central organizing theme around which all of the novel's characters and events revolve (Dimuro 32, 37). The Clifton becomes a microcosm of the city in which various classes come in contact and interact with one another. The alluring cast of characters represents individuals from various backgrounds and social classes and are indicative

of the skyscraper's cosmopolitanism: the Ingles who built the Clifton, George Ogden, a recent New England transplant, who must learn to navigate the Clifton's social and cultural intricacies, Jessie Bradley who aspires to social prominence, the Brainard family who own the bank located on the ground floor, and Cornelia McNabb, who moves to Chicago in search of work and incrementally works her way up the Clifton to the highest clerical position afforded to women during the 1890s. Out of all of these characters, it is Cornelia who internalizes the opportunities for work and social advancements perpetuated by the skyscraper.

We first meet Cornelia as a waitress at the Acme lunch counter located on the Clifton's lowest floor. Cornelia is representative of the hundreds of young working women who came to Chicago in search of work at the end of the nineteenth century. The measurement of the skyscraper's growth and progress, the story, is analogous to the progress of individuals in the city, especially in regards to their social mobility. Fuller exemplifies this idea of social progress and its relation to the skyscraper and the city best through Cornelia McNabb, who rises in position, as well as elevation, and ultimately becomes a secretary at Brainard's Bank and Trust and the Massachusetts Brass Company. Joseph Dimuro writes that "Cornelia's rise is the result of her education and ambition, qualities confirmed by her progressive emplacements within the Clifton...[Her] skill in managing people and mastering the typewriter represents the way in which the modern office building compartmentalizes and rewards different kinds of skilled labor" (36). Cornelia's ambitions for social mobility are realized in her attempts at altering her own destiny through work and not simply marriage. Although she does marry Burt Brainard at the end, she retains the qualities and virtues that are typically associated with the middle class. Through Cornelia McNabb, Fuller demonstrates how the architectural forms of the skyscraper

come to be gendered and provides one of the earliest literary examples of the intrinsic connection between women's work and the skyscraper.

Writing almost forty years after the publication of *The Cliff-Dwellers*, Faith Baldwin expands upon the connection between women's work and the skyscraper in her novel, *Skyscraper* (1931).³ Baldwin's text marks a shift in spatial and social arrangements from Chicago to New York City and underscores the more prominent and influential role skyscrapers played in New York than in Chicago. A native New Yorker, Baldwin spent her childhood living in Manhattan and then Brooklyn Heights. Her father owned land on Shelter Island, where she spent most of her summers as a child and young adult. As a result, Long Island figures heavily in her writing and most of her novels are set in places she was familiar with (Kessler 244-246). She became one of the highest-paid American writers during the Great Depression after her popularity peaked with the publication of her first bestseller, *The Office Wife*, in 1930. She subsequently produced two novels a year until her death in 1978 and became one of America's most prolific and successful writers for fifty years (Kessler 244, 247). Baldwin's novels depict the struggles faced by the growing number of white-collar women who work clerical jobs set in skyscraper offices as they attempt to negotiate the relationship between their careers and romantic interests (Brown, *Black Skyscraper* 181). Despite the Depression-era settings, Baldwin did not focus on economic and financial difficulties as some other writers did, but can be characterized as a "Depression-era escapist writer of happy endings to lighten the hearts of readers suffering from the money crunch rather than depicter of misery and despair" (Kessler 247). Over the years, Baldwin's work was frequently published in *Cosmopolitan* and *Ladies Home Journal*. Some of her novels were made into movies, like *Skyscraper* which was made into the film *Skyscraper Souls* in 1932.

In addition to their skyscraper settings, Baldwin's novels frequently portrayed ambitious young women who "engaged in exciting avocation or worked at stimulating occupations, the common denominator being that somehow they resolved their problems and soared to success" (Kessler 249). Lynn Harding, the heroine of *Skyscraper*, faces a number of such obstacles over the course of the novel, from navigating a thrilling workplace, to negotiating the romantic attachments of Tom Shephard, a young secretary at the bank, and David Dwight, an older lawyer whom Lynn is drawn to but ultimately rejects. Throughout, Lynn presents herself as a capable, modest, and hard-working young woman adept at performing her duties at the Seacoast Bank and Trust and who, more importantly, loves her job and aspires toward a career. Baldwin's heroine is a direct descendent of the business-girl novel from the first two decades of the twentieth century and made popular by writers such as Edna Ferber, Sinclair Lewis, and Booth Tarkington (Hapke 253). She is also the direct inheritor of a decades-long struggle by the first women, such as Cornelia McNabb, to have taken on clerical positions in male-dominated offices.

We first meet Lynn on the way to work at the Seacoast Building, then the highest skyscraper in Manhattan:

where, in the trust department of the Seacoast Bank and Trust Company, she was employed to do a job, impressively known as "sales research." She had held the position for a year, starting in the old offices of the company, moving with them two months previously to the new building. She was paid \$1900 a year, she lived uptown in a business club for girls, she liked her work, she looked forward to a bigger and better job some day, she was 22 years old. (7)

By the early years of the Depression, Lynn's real-life counterpart was a permanent figure on the white-collar job stage. A young woman in this position was no longer characterized as a

“sexually charged femme fatale but a demurely attired twentysomething woman in a lower-level position who can work her way up (Hapke 252-253). Lynn constantly demonstrates her excitement and competence in navigating the workplace while simultaneously partaking in the vibrant social life and amusements the city offers. By portraying Lynn as adept at navigating these spaces, Baldwin demonstrates how the city and the role of women within it have developed. The danger and social anxiety experienced by the women in Djuna Barnes’s articles is no longer present and Baldwin creates female characters who are able to take advantage of the city’s various opportunities. Yet the city also offers them something more than leisure and entertainment – the possibility of a long-lasting and fulfilling career. When asked by Tom Shepard how she can bear to “[slave] her life away in the toils of a soulless corporation,” Lynn laughingly answers that she likes her slavery (Baldwin 11), and demonstrates her commitment to work that provides her both economic security as well as excitement and fulfillment.

Gender and Verticality in the Modern Skyscraper

The invention of the internal steel framework removed the need for heavy masonry walls as support for a building’s height and propelled the exponential growth of the skyscraper in the last two decades of the nineteenth century.⁴ Architects in various parts of the country began experimenting with new materials and designs, but the Chicago School was the most influential and led the way in skyscraper design and construction. Chicago might have been where the skyscraper was invented, but it was in New York City where it reached its potential. Despite its early innovations, Chicago imposed a height ordinance in 1893 limiting buildings to 130 feet, causing Chicago to forego its rivalry with New York to get the most and tallest skyscrapers.⁵ Between 1890 and 1940, New York went through a period of rapid urban growth that witnessed both the merging of all five boroughs in 1898 to the building of skyscrapers.⁶ By the time the

city's first skyscraper outbreak reached its apex in the early 1930s, New York was home to hundreds of skyscrapers. By 1929, there were 377 urban buildings in America taller than twenty stories (fifteen of them more than five hundred feet high); 188 of them were in New York alone. That same year, New York and Chicago became home to sixty-eight percent of the country's buildings that were twenty stories or taller. By the time we reached the 1930s, the skyscraper had become a ubiquitous image in New York's skyline that evoked both wonder and awe.⁷

One of the main details that authors focused in great detail was the skyscraper's great height.⁸ Early in *The Cliff-Dwellers*, Fuller characterizes the energy that surrounds the Clifton:

From the beer-hall in its basement to the barber-shop just under its roof the Clifton stands full eighteen stories tall. Its hundreds of windows glitter with multitudinous letterings in gold and in silver, and on summer afternoons its awnings flutter score on score in the tepid breezes that sometimes come up from Indiana. Four ladder-like constructions which rise skyward stage by stage promote the agility of the clambering hordes that swarm within it, and ten elevators—devices unknown to the real, aboriginal inhabitants—ameliorate the daily cliff-climbing for the frail of physique and the pressed for time. (59-60)

Fuller's description parallels a calm and aesthetically pleasing exterior that attempts to blend in with its surroundings with a bustling, cacophonous interior that never ceases in movement and business. The Clifton's beauty with its glittering gold and silver lettering paired with the fluttering awnings is a characteristic of early skyscrapers that blended exterior aesthetics with interior functionality. Fuller articulates the Clifton's sheer mass and volume by describing the close to four thousand people it employs, among them "bankers, capitalists, lawyers, 'promoters'; brokers...real-estate people and railroad people and insurance people...a host of

principals, agents, middlemen, clerks, cashiers, stenographers, and errand-boys; and the necessary force of engineers, janitors, scrub-women, and elevator-hands” (59-60). And this does not include the contractors, workmen, and artisans that designed and built the Clifton. In “The Upward Movement in Chicago” (1897), Fuller writes that “for the first time in the rearing of a vast city, the high and the low have met together, the rich and the poor have *built* together: each with an astonishing freedom as to choice, taste, expenditure” (“Movement” 308). The clearest example of this is the Clifton itself which was envisioned by a rich man, built by poor ones, and on a daily basis witnessed the interaction between classes to an unprecedented degree. The skyscraper represents an image of the select few who are able to access and make use of this space juxtaposed with lower- and working-class base that is responsible for its foundation, eminent rise, and upkeep. By likening the individuals inhabiting the Clifton to the southwestern Native American tribe discussed earlier, Fuller reinforces the image of the skyscraper as the center of people’s lives.

By the time we reach the 1930s, height has become an innate aesthetic quality and the skyscraper had been appropriated as the beacon of corporate power (Bender 51, 53). Faith Baldwin’s characterization of the Seacoast Building is fairly similar to Fuller’s, yet instead of invoking nature in her description, Baldwin chooses to create a skyscraper that shocks and amazes the imagination, viewed as something not altogether probable:

Midtown in Manhattan, the Seacoast Building rose steadily in a series of sculpted setbacks for more than 800 feet, to challenge the imagination, to utter the most recent, but probably not the last, word in structural engineering. From the lowest caisson anchored on rock, to the tall tapering of the final soaring tower, incredible tons, impossible masses

of steel and stone had been shaped, shrieking their protest, into a pattern of progress, into a concrete expression of man's upward-striving. (1)

Detailing the grand scale and work that went into constructing the then-largest skyscraper in New York, Baldwin takes her characterization a step further by remarking on the sheer impossibility of engineering that would make something like the Seacoast Building even possible.⁹ She describes the Seacoast Building's rise going against nature, something that had to be shaped and molded with protests for the sake of upward progress that is equated with ambition and achievement. This same ambition and sense of achievement make their way into *Skyscraper Souls*, where David Dwight (there the owner and innovator of the skyscraper) describes the fictional Dwight Building as going "halfway to hell and right up to heaven" (1:26:40-1:26:43). The opening credits show a rush of people passing back and forth in front of a domineering entrance to the fictional Dwight Building. The next scene pans to a birds-eye-view of the New York City skyline with the Dwight Building towering over and dwarfing the Empire State Building, evoking the same improbability and fantastical elements as the novel.¹⁰ The building is likened to a tombstone which foretells the deaths that are associated with this space (Schleier, *Skyscraper Cinema* 65). Viewers are continuously reminded of the building's great height because the long shot is used to mark the passage of time in the movie: from day into night, from summer into winter.

Instead of listing the various occupations housed within the skyscraper, Baldwin speaks to the position of the workers within its walls and the role the skyscraper plays in their existence: "Monday begins the workers' week, and the Seacoast Building opens its doors of green bronze set in black marble and invites them within, to struggle, to attain, to fail, to succeed, to love and to hope, to laugh and to weep, to suffer and rejoice, to envy and wound, to hate and to pity" (4-

5). Baldwin's novel is representative of the large-scale growth of skyscrapers within cities during the 1920s and 1930s and how they appear to pervade every aspect of urban life, not just those which relate directly to it. Baldwin names clerks, architects, and historians who pass the Seacoast Building without any association and nonetheless find it invading their thoughts. Significantly, these are also the three professions that relate the most to the skyscraper's position in the American city: capitalism, architecture, and history. Yet Baldwin is equally aware that the Seacoast Building will be surpassed by a taller, grander one and "public wonder will concentrate on other miracles" (2). She does not hesitate to state that the tallest building in New York does not quite reach its potential, describing it as a "pinnacle falling leagues short of its arrogant endeavor...something small and aspiring, lifting itself above the striving of other buildings yet never attaining that blue height" (Baldwin 3). Unlike Fuller who creates the Clifton as the epitome of unrivaled architectural success, Baldwin marks the Seacoast Building as just another notch in the belt of future progress.

Although the skyscraper is undoubtedly a phallic symbol and the domain of scrupulous business men, it has an undeniable connection to femininity as well. A connection, according to Ann Douglas, that is easily missed since outwardly the skyscraper appears to bear no association with womanhood; no women were involved in planning, designing, or building them, and it was not until much later in the twentieth century that women came to make up a significant percentage of its occupants. Yet Douglas characterizes the skyscraper as "a historical mongrel, [one that offers] a cultural crux, a nexus of apparently contradictory ideas, a powerfully utopian and fully realized coalition of modern masculine technology and phallic style with old-fashioned subliminal and matriarchal impulses" (442). In other words, the skyscraper existed as a combination of popular modern architecture and art (the male), and repressed Victorian

matriarchy (the female) which together created a cultural and architectural hybrid in the form of the skyscraper. The example that best illustrates this notion is the conclusion to *The Cliff-Dwellers* where readers finally meet the enigmatic Cecilia Ingles who, though not introduced until the very last page of the novel, permeates the actions and decisions of the characters from the very beginning. Our first glimpse of Cecilia comes in the form of a drawing that serves as the frontispiece of the novel. Cecilia's portrayal in this drawing is demonstrative of upper middle class Chicago society in the 1890s. Her physical description comes at the very end of the novel, bracketing the novel's actions and further demonstrating her influence on the novel's characters and events: "a radiant, magnificent young creature, splendid like all her mates, with the new and eager splendor of a long-awaited opportunity. This new-comer had nodded smilingly to many people on entering...She seemed pleased to have so many persons to bow to so publicly" (Fuller 258). What is significant, however, about this introduction is Ogden's reaction to seeing Cecilia Ingles for the first time: "But he knew perfectly well who she was. He knew that she was Cecilia Ingles, and his heart was constricted by the sight of her. It is for such a woman that one man builds a Clifton and that a hundred others are martyred in it" (258). The construction of the Clifton consists of two parts: the masculine energies that went into its design and construction, and the feminine energies that initiated the desire and ambition to conceive of such an endeavor.

Baldwin establishes a similar duality in the opening pages of *Skyscraper* by including descriptions which Lauren Hapke posits are based on "male/female dyads" (264):

Here upon this site, not many months ago a group of brick buildings, irregular and dingy, had stood. Demolished, they had been, torn apart, vanishing into dust, then had come an ordered confusion, earth ripped open, earth in a long travail, earth in the preparatory throes of deliverance of a monster. Enamored of the antlike activities of swarming

workmen, the crowds had stood still...[gaped] dully at the exposed bowels, the torn womb of earth. (1)

The imagery of childbirth pervades both the novel and the film where David Dwight, fresh from the success of a merger and a stock scheme, revels in his monumental accomplishment in building and financing the skyscraper by equating the building with childbirth, stating that “nothing is achieved without pain and suffering” (1:27:23-1:27-25). Baldwin expands upon this duality even further by juxtaposing the construction and architecture done by men with the predominantly feminine description of the subway ride that brings the office workers to the completed skyscraper: “Men. Architects – engineers – contractors – job...two dozen workmen – a dozen languages...lean backs, broad backs squared against the wooden temporary structures, legs stretched negligently...cement and sand; hoists and derricks; here comes a foreman” (Baldwin 1-2). Unlike the men who Baldwin describes as a combination of their jobs and body parts, the women are described as a combination of their clothing and accessories: “Women; fat and thin, of all ages. Fur coats...sleazy thin coats...Stockings, silk, all grades. Shoes; oxfords, pumps, sandals; repressed but not conquered flesh flowing thickly over straps...Powder, paint, lipstick, permanents; perfume, hot, cheap, permeating” (Baldwin 5-6). What is compelling about Baldwin’s characterization of the Seacoast Building is how strikingly similar it is to Fuller’s. Men once again are responsible for the skyscraper’s inception and construction, while it is the women who appear to be the driving force behind it. While men are responsible for building the skyscraper, the number of women who are working in it is steadily increasing, which not only emphasizes the existence of this space as a dyad but its potential transformation into a fully feminine space.

Women and the Early Spaces of the Skyscraper

Even though the skyscraper was imagined and built by men and ultimately represented male power and success, women also benefited from the career opportunities provided by jobs that came to be increasingly located in skyscraper offices. Beginning in the 1880s, the majority of women who worked in offices held clerical and administrative positions. These positions date back to clerical jobs in the early and mid-nineteenth century that were almost exclusively performed by men and represented a small fraction of the work force. The men in these positions came from a variety of class and ethnic backgrounds; not all of them were necessarily young and new in the field. A fair amount were immigrants or the native-born children of immigrants. Because of the inherent separation of spheres, clerical work was viewed as primarily a male occupation and many employers believed that only men possessed the necessary skills to be successful in this type of a position. For young men starting out in any white-collar profession, clerical work was frequently seen as the initial entry-level stepping stone before advancing to higher positions. Tom Shepard in *Skyscraper*, for example, begins as the confidential secretary to the Seacoast Bank's vice president immediately after graduating from Yale. It is understood that this is to be a temporary entry-level position that will allow Tom to learn about banking before he is promoted. During this period, the office was considered to be a male-only, undifferentiated space, meaning that one large space was essentially used for all of the business's needs, with the exception of the leader who often had his own private space.¹¹

Beginning in 1870, however, a number of economic changes occurred that affected clerical jobs, who filled them, and number of available positions. In the second half of the century, many businesses and firms not only increased in size but also expanded in scope and function. It thus became necessary to hire more white-collar workers such as clerical help, accountants, and secretaries who were also educated. Because of the increasing number of

college-educated women during this time (as discussed in Chapter One), women began to enter the profession in increasing numbers. In 1880, less than five percent of clerical workers were women. That number spiked to thirty percent in 1900. The majority of women who took clerical positions between 1880 and 1910 worked as stenographer-typists, which soon became the first office position to be filled exclusively by women. The federal government, insurance companies, and banks were the first employers of female clerical workers at the turn of the century (Kwolek-Folland 30). The majority of these women were young, white, unmarried, and native born, and they were willing to work for less wages and possessed no expectations of upward advancement.¹² Nonetheless, the large influx of women into predominantly male spaces disrupted the Victorian ideology of separate spheres and it became necessary to feminize aspects of this newly developed workspace. Lisa M. Fine argues that one of the reasons women came to dominate the stenographer-typist positions, and how the space and work were ultimately feminized, is due to the invention of the typewriter. The typewriter was marketed as a machine that educated middle-class women supposedly had a natural affinity for because of their skills at playing the piano (21).¹³

The image of the female clerical worker propagated by popular culture at the beginning of the century characterized office girls as either seductresses out to ensnare their bosses and ruin good marriages, naïve and defenseless victims at the mercy of their bosses, or as morally strong-minded individuals capable of standing up for themselves. By the 1920s, these characterizations were either erased or revamped and female clerical workers could identify with the portrayal of office girls in the novels and movies of the time.¹⁴ For the first time, white middle-class women could see themselves in the popular fiction of the time, fiction that was previously dominated by either working- or upper-class women. One of the most popular of these was the young female

clerical worker who was able to successfully moralize the office while still retaining her feminine qualities. The mixing of sexes in the office provided the perfect setting for another enduring plot in popular fiction, that of the Cinderella story. Popular stories of the time depicted romantic relationships between male and female workers, especially the well-known trope of the female clerical worker and her male boss. Although this genre reached its peak and was solidified in the 1920s, examples of this exist prior, especially in the figure of Cornelia McNabb in Fuller's *The Cliff-Dwellers*. The character of Cornelia McNabb demonstrates how Fuller anticipated a number of the features that would come to categorize both the portrayal of female clerical workers and how pervasive women would become in office spaces.

Throughout her stay in Chicago, Cornelia steadily moves from one place of employment to another, each with a higher salary and a higher social standing. Cornelia's rise to another position and a higher place in the Clifton depends on her ability to master and succeed in the space she is already in. At the Acme, she purposely informs Ogden that she is "second in command" and often takes the cashier's place during busy times, comparing her workplace to that of a store rather than a restaurant (Fuller 100). Cornelia possesses a unique ability and consciousness of her own social position and how to advance it. This ambition leads her to not only persevere in the face of adversity when she is unable to find a job, saying that "[she] didn't s'pose [*sic*] it was going to be so awful hard to find something to do in a big place like this. But [she] made up [her] mind, all the same, that [she] wasn't going to cave in and go back to Wisconsin—not straight off, anyway" (Fuller 99). This also allows her to attain a higher level of employment that provides both increased leisure and social advancement. Cornelia's decision to leave the boardinghouse and work in a more prominent space reflects the notion that "most women need to (and want to) participate in the public sphere, and a substantial proportion of

women do now and have always worked for wages” (Domosh and Seager 39). Cornelia’s next appearance is in the spaces of Brainard’s Underground Bank, where she becomes part of the pool of secretaries and typists that circulate through various offices but do not hold a permanent position in any one company. Despite the connection between work and leisure, Cornelia is still exemplary of the overall position of women who initially took on clerical work during this time period. Once she reaches the upper floors of the Clifton and takes on more clerical duties, “such as pleased her fancy or promised advantage to her future...she made quite a succession of engagements, dropping here and picking up there, until she reached the point where, for as many hours of the day as she chose, her time was occupied, and occupied to her taste” (154-155). Yet Cornelia is still acutely aware of her clerical position within the Clifton stating: “I’m nobody; I can be easily replaced” (Fuller 178). This, in effect, speaks to the unstable position held by the first female clerical workers.

Above all, Cornelia’s advancement through the various floors of the Clifton exemplifies how “gendered identities are created and recreated at work, rather than individuals entering the labour market with their unchanging identity fixed firmly in place.” (McDowell, *Gender, Identity, and Place* 134). Cornelia displays an exemplary ability to forge a new identity with each successive story she scales. At the Acme lunch counter, she wore “a dark dress with a plain white collar. Her brows made two fine straight lines over the yellowish green of her eyes. She had a strong, decided face, yet there was a certain lurking delicacy in the outlines of nose and chin” (Fuller 99). Even though she is plainly dressed, her strength and ambition are clearly defined in the outlines of her face and the notion of a lurking delicacy forecasts her future rise through the ranks of Chicago high society. Cornelia is able to recreate her identity based on her current work and the space she is performing this work in. Once she becomes part of the

secretaries' pool, she is described as having the effect "of leisure finally and elegantly achieved" and had "contrived to express her rise by several subtle alterations to her dress" (Fuller 130-131). Cornelia exemplifies the opportunities that urban settings present for individuals and at the same time demonstrates a budding awareness of some of the characterizing aspects of the upper classes. Her rise in occupation and elevation is due to her ambition and, in part, to her ability to follow and copy social cues; to present herself as someone who is of a higher class. Cornelia, however, fulfills the common trope of most working girls who rise to the top of the corporate ladder: she marries the boss and retires from working at the Clifton. By making readers question whether Cornelia was truly career driven or only ambitious to the extent of landing a husband above her own social set, Fuller subsequently locates her in the private sphere and propagates social notions on the types of work middle-class women were allowed to perform.

The Skyscraper's Literary Void

Carl Sandburg's "Skyscraper" was published during a time when the skyscraper was entering popular consciousness on a greater scale, on its way to being solidified as a beacon of American modernity and progress. Up until this point, however, the skyscraper was viewed with negativity, described as ugly and unbecoming, and not an adequate subject for literature and the fine arts. Part of this reasoning rested on the belief that the skyscraper was a beacon of corporate and commercial enterprise and, therefore, antithetical to the elevated aesthetics of art and literature (Schleier, *American Art* 6-8). Traditionalists and realists such as Henry Blake Fuller disliked the architectural aesthetic of skyscrapers because of their assault on classical architectural traditions (Dimuro 39). He and other Chicago novelists, like Frank Norris, bemoaned the pollution and congestion of skyscraper cities, linking them with imagery associated with hell and war. Historian Harold L. Platt defines some industrial centers as "shock

centers” that elicit “the horror and wonder of contemporary society” (xiii), which can be applied to early skyscrapers and the severe reception they received from the public sphere (Brown, *Black Skyscraper* 4).

It was not until the 1910s that the skyscraper became accepted both in architectural and artistic circles, mostly due to the Progressive Era’s reformist mentality and the growing nationalism that expressed the desire for purely American art and literature, free from European influence. Many embraced the skyscraper as the symbol of American nationalism. Robert Henri, for example, called upon other artists to focus on American themes in their work, of which the skyscraper was the most prominent (Schleier, *American Art* 13-14).¹⁵ Photographer Alfred Stieglitz perhaps wielded the most influence in establishing the skyscraper as an accepted subject for fine art. His editorship of popular and influential photography magazines (such as *Camera Work*) removed the need for describing the skyscraper in “the language of nineteenth-century landscape painting, but celebrated [it] as a symbol of American business prosperity” (Schleier, *American Art* 44-45). Stieglitz, together with photographer Alvin Langdon Coburn and modernist painters John Marin, Max Weber, and Abraham Walkowitz, took the skyscraper as their subject in the early decades of the twentieth century and helped promote it as a building worthy of artistic attention. The building boom in the mid-1920s resulted in increased renditions of the skyscraper, with a number of exhibits presenting the skyscraper as the central organizing theme (Schleier, *American Art* 69).

Despite the skyscraper’s proliferation in art, photography, and poetry between 1890 and 1920, it was markedly absent from the literature produced during this period. Canonical realist and modernist literature refused to mention the skyscraper, which Adrienne Brown argues is “symptomatic of larger issues around spatial perception during the early twentieth century.

Regardless of the growing concreteness of the city as both a material landscape and an object of rationalization, Americans increasingly perceived urban space as unstable, elastic and verging on collapse” (“Mythic and Monstrous” 166). Even as skyscrapers were coming to dominate the skylines of major American cities, the architectural form was both reviled and purposely neglected by canonical fiction writers. Many writers, Realists especially, rarely mentioned the skyscraper or included it as a setting in their texts.¹⁶ Writers such as Henry James in *The American Scene* (1907) and William Dean Howells in his Editor’s Easy Chair columns, however, devoted significant pages in their nonfiction to criticize its existence. James especially laments the loss of aesthetic beauty and tradition that the skyscraper supplants as a beacon of commercial enterprise (60-61).

It was not until the 1920s that the skyscraper came to feature prominently in popular fiction with writers frequently setting their texts in skyscraper spaces or prominently featuring them as integral components of the urban skyline. Texts such as *Manhattan Transfer* (1924) by John Dos Passos, *Flamingo* (1927) by Mary Borden, *Nigger Heaven* (1926) by Carl Van Vechten, *Passing* (1929) by Nella Larsen, “Miss Cynthia” (1933) and “The City of Refuge” (1925) by Rudolph Fisher all incorporate aspects of the skyscraper and its influence on urban modernity. Writers quickly adopted the skyscraper as a narrative model that aided them in representing multi-perspective narratives “which better-reflected the shifting spatial, social and formal dimensions of the nation’s newly-steeled cities” (Brown, “Mythic and Monstrous” 167). The skyscraper’s prominent position and distinct architectural features quickly made it a mainstay of popular culture and became the modernist equivalent of nineteenth-century places like schoolhouses and small-town churches that were once the nexus of the American cultural and civic consciousness (Newcomb 105).

Notwithstanding, the skyscraper has been relatively neglected by contemporary literary criticism, while Henry Blake Fuller and Faith Baldwin have effectively fallen into obscurity despite the revolutionary ways they portrayed the changing socio-economic roles of women and their focus on the skyscraper. Although she focuses primarily on the relationship between race and the skyscraper, Adrienne Brown does devote some time to discussing Baldwin's literary corpus in relation to race, the skyscraper, and white-collar work. Brown analyzes Baldwin's novels through the lens of race, arguing that the "novels approach whiteness as a category that, just like gender and sexuality, needed recalibration to accommodate the new demands the white-collar economy was placing on the office girl's body and spirit" (*Black Skyscraper* 182). Brown's focus on the relationship between race and women's work in the skyscraper allows her to examine the juxtaposition between white office women and immigrant and black women who are frequently marginalized in Baldwin's fiction but are also more likely to resist the temptations of working in a skyscraper.¹⁷ Although valuable in their contributions to our understanding of the history of the workplace and the intersections of race and architecture, these studies do not adequately pay attention to the larger role that Baldwin plays in representing women's new and evolving workspaces in the corporate skyscraper. A critical gap exists in understanding how Baldwin depicts her heroines and how they navigate their ways through the skyscraper, view themselves in relation to their work, and negotiate the relationship between their careers and romantic entanglements. I posit that Baldwin expands our understanding of women's situations in the work place and subsequently demonstrates how women were able to appropriate previously male-dominated spaces within the skyscraper. Additionally, *Skyscraper* reflects Baldwin's understanding of how numerous women strived for satisfying careers and independent economic security during a time that expected them to place marriage and family first.

Interiors and Exteriors

About halfway through *Skyscraper*, Lynn Harding finds herself precariously alone with David Dwight on his apartment terrace during a party he throws in her honor. Looking over the towering skyscrapers that make up the Manhattan skyline in 1931, Dwight muses on the meaning of life and the role of the skyscraper within it:

Every day you go to one, are swallowed up by it, every day you work there, never thinking of the life teeming in the building, beating against the walls, unaware of the thousands of people, working, like yourself, passing in and out ceaselessly, through the doors, unaware that many of them spend most their waking hours under that impossibly high roof. A skyscraper is a little city, it is a little world, it is a strange planet, it is...a phallic symbol. Yet it is also a new pattern against the sky; it is all of ordered beauty and upward growth that many of the workers within it shall never know. And it must influence them, whether they are aware of it or not. (Baldwin 70)

Dwight's introspection is part of an attempt to seduce Lynn and gratify his own self-interests, yet his words reveal a striking reality that characterized office workspaces within skyscrapers, the type of work that was performed, and who performed that work. Dwight's contemplations bring up an important aspect of the skyscraper's ubiquitous role in the life of its workers. The ceaseless movement of bodies in and out of the building conjures up images of breath entering and leaving the body, which underscores Baldwin's description of the Seacoast Building's internal and external influence on its workers. The characterization of skyscrapers as new patterns across the sky points to both their ubiquity in urban areas but also their subconscious influence on those who inhabit them, none more so than women.

Dwight's words echo the novel's opening pages where teeming hordes of people struggle off the subway and make way their way to their places of work within the skyscrapers. These same people would not emerge from the skyscraper's shadow until the end of the workday, illustrating the consuming spatial practices inherent in working inside a skyscraper. This is reflected in the film adaptation where all of the scenes (except for two scenes in a nearby brokerage office) take place within the skyscraper. Viewers frequently see the expansive lobby with its black and white marble, imposing columns, and people rushing into cramped elevators that take them up to their offices. The lobby becomes "an ersatz egalitarian space" where workers of all classes and levels meet and mingle (Schleier, *Skyscraper Cinema* 66). The building houses a bank, a radio station, restaurants, a drugstore, a jewelry store, Turkish baths, and David Dwight's private apartment on the top floor. Lawrence Rainey argues that the skyscraper in the film "has been transformed from a site of work to an all-encompassing prison" (86). The only outside views available to us as viewers are the longshots of the building to mark the passage of time, fleeting glimpses of the New York skyline from windows, terraces, and rooftops, and the sidewalk in front of the building's main entrance. Similarly, throughout the entire novel, the only scenes set outside the Seacoast Building were the ones taking place at night or on the weekends. For all intents and purposes, workers did not have to leave the towering walls of the skyscraper at all during the workday. The Seacoast Building boasted three restaurants in its basement, a radio station on its top floors, the offices of the Seacoast Bank and Trust and other companies as well.

Corporations frequently encouraged their employees to view the spaces of their work as intimate spaces, mostly to encourage increased productivity (Brown, *Black Skyscraper* 189). Nowhere is this more apparent than the exclusively female spaces created within the skyscraper.

On the 30th floor, the “Seacoast Company maintained recreation and rest rooms, with a trained nurse in charge for all women workers in the entire building” (Baldwin 31). The creation of these rooms reflects the period’s assumption about the female sex and the view that female workers required separate rooms in which to rest and recuperate. McDowell identifies this separation as the binary division of labor, which is “implicated in the social production of space, in assumptions about ‘natural’ and built environments and in the sets of regulations which influence who should occupy which spaces and who should be excluded” (*Gender, Identity, and Place* 11). The rooms were specifically created to cater to female employees based on the erroneous opinion that women would need a quiet space in the middle or end of the work day in which to rest and unwind from a strenuous and taxing job. Baldwin writes that around lunchtime or at the end of the workday, “Lynn always found the rooms crowded, the radio going. Sometimes girls, bringing sandwiches with them, would make up a bridge table for their luncheon hour. Sometimes they danced. Always they employed their free time for anything but resting” (Baldwin 33).¹⁸ Yet the women in this space subvert its intended use and reconfigure it to their advantage, as a place of freedom that complements their clerical work at the bank.¹⁹ By creating a recreation room, Baldwin is subscribing to the time’s dominant view of sex and gender. However, she is simultaneously exposing the falsity of this assumption when she subverts the spaces intended purpose and instead makes it a site of resistance.

The feelings of liberation female clerical workers find in the offices and rest rooms of the Seacoast Building are directly juxtaposed with Lynn’s feelings of depression and claustrophobia at the Marlow Business Club for Girls where she boards at the novel’s beginning. Baldwin describes this space as having a “slightly institutional atmosphere, hedged about with rules and regulations, something about the pussy-faced, too, too sweet housemother or directress,

something about the heavy feminine aura of the place, against which [Lynn] rebelled” (8). Different spaces evoke different types of emotions and Baldwin draws a clear parallel between this space and feelings of melancholy and “caged femininity” (9). By equating the club’s spaces with feelings of restriction, Baldwin exemplifies how “the majority of women have more spatially restricted lives than men” and the reason why women spend “their unpaid time [stitching] together the patchwork of urban facilities is because the land-use patterns of western cities reflect the patriarchal assumptions of an earlier era” (McDowell, “Space, Place, and Gender Relations” 166). These patriarchal assumptions are Victorian remnants of women being the angels of the home, confined to their domesticity, while men are able to freely partake in everything the city has to offer. The club is also a remnant of an older time, reminiscent of the girls’ clubs that working-class women lived in during the last few decades of the nineteenth century. The Seacoast’s rest rooms are a vestige of this patriarchal ideology in how they are meant to convey a home-like atmosphere and function as a type of hearth that women can congregate at instead of exiting the skyscraper and moving about the city like men. The rest rooms and the girls’ club are ideologically designed to have the same function. While at work, the rest rooms are meant to ensure that the young women do not stray outside and potentially get into trouble, just like the club ensures that these same young women do not fall into temptations outside of work. Baldwin creates female characters that rebel against both of these spaces and, in the process, expands women’s agency, mobility, and provides them with the ability to create and mold their own spaces/places.

The arrangement and decoration of offices within the Seacoast Bank and Trust is also exemplary of a spatial division that reinforced the distinctions between the type of work that was performed and who performed it. Even though women have occupied clerical positions in

companies for a number of decades by this point, the spaces that defined their work were still strictly divided by sex.²⁰ Baldwin emphasizes this distinction in her description of Lynn's workroom, which she shares with a number of other women:

The room was filled with files. It was a strictly utilitarian room. There were no splendid draperies, no massive furniture, no murals, no inches-thick carpet in this room; nor were there any little quiet anterooms where tactful men and women interviewed, [sic] swathed, draped, and sometimes weeping widows or bewildered orphans. Yet in this room where Lynn worked were filed the futures of widows and orphans; row upon row of green metal files.

In a corner a girl was checking stock quotations with the help of another. Miss Marple, at a file, was looking up something relative to the estate of one Jonathan Smith. Someone else was filing carbons. Lynn, her outdoor things disposed of, sat down at her own desk by the window on the far side of one wall and looked over the work which was set aside for today. In her desk lay, and would lie, the not-so-private lives of many unsuspecting men, neatly docketed upon little blue cards. (13-14)

Lynn and the other female workers in the bank's trust department are segregated into their own spaces apart from the male workers. This reflects the era's solution to easing anxiety surrounding the entrance of women into the traditionally male-dominated office spaces; women could work in a male space but they would be kept separate (Domosh and Seager 86). The physical separation and utilitarian decorations demonstrate how "spatial divisions within workplaces exist at two general levels: the overt physical boundaries of wall, stairs, doors, and moveable objects; and the spatial articulations of social division, status, or position" (Kwolek-Folland 95). The lack of ornate draperies and decorations speaks to the fact that the room primarily functioned as a

workspace and not as a potential space of recreation and socialization like many male offices. Lynn and her female coworkers were surrounded by the files they worked with and were expected to focus solely on their work. Baldwin does as much as list the various occupations each of the women performed that ensured that the trust department ran smoothly, underscoring the fact that many corporations relied on work performed by women.

The strict and utilitarian arrangements of her workspace do not depersonalize Lynn but rather empowers her to do her work and do it well. Even though the workplace can often be described as alienating and oppressive, it is nonetheless a place where Baldwin's heroines "forge deep intimacy with peers, bosses, customers, and the abstract corporation at large" (Brown, *Black Skyscraper* 189). Lynn's job afforded her a great deal of power and stability, not only in the sense that her position "challenged the notion that the commercial city and the professional office were male spaces" (Domosh and Seager 86), but in giving her a power over the men whose files she had access to through her work. Baldwin additionally gives Lynn her own desk with the belief that Lynn would be able to personalize it and make it her own. Such an act indicates a transformation from a space into a place that is imbued with meaning. By providing Lynn with the ability to transform and dictate the spatial arrangement of her work, Baldwin is underscoring the importance work held for women during this period. Unlike Fuller's Cornelia, who only moved from one space to the next, Baldwin's depiction of Lynn is more transgressive and demonstrate the progression of women's occupation of skyscraper offices.

Nevertheless, the plain pragmatism of Lynn's workspace is starkly juxtaposed with the grand stateliness of the officer's room, where Lynn's supervisor and family friend Sarah Dennet works. The arrangement of this particular room illustrates how space is frequently used to

reinforce status differences between men and women (Spain, *Gendered Spaces* 201). Baldwin writes:

The room was enormous, it was pillared. Heavy velvet carpeting lay upon the floor. The walls were treated with costly and beautiful simplicity. The flat-topped desks, mahogany, were less businesslike in appearance than Lynn's own. There were perhaps twelve of them in the room, amply spaced. Down the middle of the room ran an equally well-spaced aisle of smaller desks, trademarked by typewriters; the desks of the secretaries to the trust officers. The room was subdued. People moved quietly, made little noise. (15)

Excluding the lack of noise, the orderly arrangement of desks mimics a factory floor assembly line where the work is streamlined and performed at maximum speed and efficiency.²¹ The efficiency of this space is still strictly divided and is exemplative of a space "full of power and symbolism, a complex web of relations of domination and subordination, of solidarity and cooperation" (Massey, "Space/Time" 81). The fact that the majority of trust officer positions during this time were occupied by men speaks to the ornately decorated room they inhabit, which is placed in stark contrast to the plain one that Lynn works in. Kwolek-Folland posits that "the relative size of allotted work space was a good indication of an individual's place in the hierarchy, but often as important were the objects or the degree of decorative articulation of a given place" (116). The arrangements and appearance of the desks themselves further reflect the spatial divisions of work for men and women. The officers' desks are simple and business-like but they are made of mahogany, which Nikil Saval dubs a status marker used to differentiate workers from each other (42).²² The secretaries to the trust officers are identified by the smaller size of their desks, their typewriters, and the fact that their desks are centrally located making it relatively difficult to avoid observation.

Sarah Dennet is also subjected to the same type of treatment. Although Sarah's position is not clearly stated, we can conclude that she holds the highest clerical position a woman could attain at the bank based solely on the space she occupies and the fact that she has her own secretary. It is, however, important to note that even though she occupies a high position, she does not have her own office and instead shares the same room with the trust officers. This highlights how she and other female employees were viewed and valued, regardless of their position in the bank's hierarchy. In *Skyscraper Souls*, however, Sarah's occupied space is modified and she is given her own office decorated with a desk, a few chests, and numerous plants and vases filled with flowers scattered throughout. Unlike Baldwin's depiction, the film gives Sarah more agency and locates her as a central actor within the skyscraper. The various vases and potted plants reflect her tastes and, once again, demonstrate her ability to decorate her office and turn a space into a place. By occupying her own personal workspace and having Lynn as her secretary, Sarah's position is higher in the movie than it is in the novel. Lynn's space is similarly furnished and decorated as well. However, when taking into account David Dwight's places within the skyscraper, we can see the role that sex and status play in the spaces certain individuals can and cannot occupy. Dwight's office is on a higher floor and occupies a much larger and grander space, even though it is only furnished with a desk and a few chairs. Furthermore, the opulent decorations of his skyscraper apartment and his ability to live in such a space speak to his position as the building's owner.

Despite these divisions, Baldwin clearly illustrates how the skyscraper provides her female characters with a newly-gained independence and outlooks on work that previous generations of women would not have been able to imagine. Brown writes that "despite the depersonalization of office architecture, Baldwin's protagonists experience their workplaces as

sites of intrigue, enthrallment, and even romance” (*Black Skyscraper* 186). Undeterred by the spatial divisions and constant surveillance, Lynn is successful at her job and believes that she would be able to attain a higher position. Reminiscent of David Dwight’s soliloquy on the skyscraper as a new pattern in the sky, the skyscraper and the work made possible through it, provide women with a new sense of liberation:

Here there was space, in comparison with what she had left behind her for eight hours or more. Here was air, tainted perhaps with carbon monoxide but by comparison, of a pristine freshness; cold and clear. Here was sunlight, slanting down from tall buildings, but not wholly conquered. Here were hurrying people like herself, and under her feet asphalt. (Baldwin 7)

The exhilaration Lynn feels while on her way to work manifests itself through the senses of touch, smell, and sight. It is doubly significant that Baldwin describes Lynn’s first sense of freedom in terms of space and juxtaposes with the confining and asphyxiating space of the girl’s club. Employing a somewhat wry tone, Baldwin asserts that despite being tainted with carbon monoxide, the air in the skyscraper is fresher and clearer than the suffocating atmosphere of the girls’ club. She creates a double comparison in this excerpt in order to emphasize the liberating qualities white-collar work holds for women in the 1930s. Lynn takes these negative qualities and, in spite of them, reconfigures her space and her ideas about her work into something new, something that allows her to transcend the socially-prescribed position and spaces of her work. To her, the work is redeeming despite the gendered qualities it possesses and despite the ways Lynn might be limited in her ambition because of her sex. This description also works to ground Lynn physically in the space she is occupying. In spite of the hurrying people around her and the sense of impermanence that comes to dominate her work, Lynn’s feet are firmly grounded in the

asphalt symbolizing her resoluteness in performing the duties associated with her job as well as working toward the advancement of her career.

Women's Work in the Modern Skyscraper

The entrance of women into predominantly male office spaces set off a series of events that would reconfigure the popular image of the office and office workers. Between 1890 and World War I, the number of office jobs available to women increased which directly resulted in an increase in the number of women in downtown business offices and illustrates the popularity of these types of jobs among women. In the 1910s, the number of women working in clerical positions grew 140 percent, reaching 1.4 million in 1920. This resulted in drastic changes to how female clerical workers were depicted and perceived by the general public. No longer a conspicuous anomaly, these women became a commonly recognizable presence in urban business districts. Between 1890 and World War I, “within the world of so-called scientific experts and the subjective world of symbols, that the process of ‘socially reconstructing’ clerical work as a female occupation occurred” (Fine 52). Because of the high number of women entering the office, clerical work needed to be reconstructed as women’s work and the skills and personalities needed to complete it had to be imbued with feminine qualities. Above all, these jobs needed to be reconstrued as jobs that provided women with the necessary training and skills they would need for their ultimate jobs as wives and mothers. Beginning in the 1920s, office work became the typical form of employment that defined women’s lives between childhood and marriage. Office work was deemed a respectable form of employment for many middle-class women in the 1920s and 1930s, and provided them with a new form of social and economic independence, just like the settlement house movement did for women a generation prior.

Despite this, the majority of women who held office positions were under the age of twenty-five and single, with many of them leaving the workforce once they did get married.²³

By the time we reach Lynn in the 1930s, the image of the office girl has changed and progressed significantly from its early incarnation in the form of Cornelia McNabb. From the beginning of the novel, Lynn has very strict views of her job, the company she works for, and her own future there. Baldwin instills Lynn with the ability to forge a new identity through her outlook on work which allows her “to look after [her]self – and live on [her] own salary – and fight [her] own battles” (Baldwin 17) and allows her to express an independence that was hard to imagine for women in previous generations. Lynn’s love of and commitment to her work leads her to step outside of her traditional gender roles regarding the relationship between a woman’s work and marriage. It was believed that once a woman is married, she would no longer have a need to work because she would be supported by her husband and her primary occupation would be the upkeep of her home and caring for children (McDowell, *Gender, Identity, and Place* 132). From the beginning, Lynn refuses to accept marriage as a viable path for herself: “It’s too much of a risk. And I’m just getting somewhere with my job...Men are complications” (Baldwin 39). Lynn works for the love of the job, and the space of the skyscraper “proves instrumental to [women’s] experience of the workplace as a place of mass intimacy where these women can imagine being specific versions of good and ambitious workers, while fantasizing about their more abstract roles as cogs within the engine of corporate enterprise” (Brown, *Black Skyscraper* 182). By creating an ambitious female character who is enraptured with her work, Baldwin negates assumptions and expands our understanding of women’s relationships with work.

Lynn’s love of the work is directly related to the space and the atmosphere it is performed in. When Tom questions her desire to keep working at the bank he is skeptical of Lynn’s love of

the business and treats her desire to keep working as a front. Lynn explains that she does not foresee herself always in her current position but stuns Tom when she says: “There are other jobs. Better ones. I’m mad about the work. I’m going to start courses at Columbia, nights, in February; going to learn all I can. I like the whole atmosphere of the place” (Baldwin 27). In a reversal of gender roles, Lynn finds Tom’s job exciting, “constructive, marvelous – necessary. A grand job... Your finger on the very pulse of the world” (Baldwin 27), while Tom instead wants to pursue a role as an engineer at the radio station located at the very top of the Seacoast Building. Baldwin portrays Tom as initially perplexed by Lynn’s ambition because she is supposed to be content with her current position, not expect to be promoted, and quit when she gets married. Tom’s reactions reflect how “gender, race, and class create different spatial experiences for people in the workplace, even in the same environment” (Domosh and Seager 62), especially when he thinks that “it’s a damned shame that pretty women have to work” (Baldwin 13). Tom treats Lynn this way because that is how he has been conditioned by society to view her as a working woman in this space. Lynn challenges this assumption by utilizing the space to her advantage and not conforming to social expectations regarding women in the workplace.

Despite the revolutionary way she portrays her female characters and their desires for a career, Baldwin is still acutely aware of the various pitfalls women face in the workplace and imbues Lynn with this same awareness. Similar to David Dwight’s meditations on skyscrapers, Lynn has her own thoughts on their role in and connection to the everyday people who inhabit them. On the same terrace during Dwight’s party, Lynn muses about skyscrapers, revealing her own impressions of what the buildings represent for working women in her position:

But she stopped for a moment on the threshold and turned toward the dreaming spires, with the golden squares that were their windows, of downtown New York. She forgot, if indeed she had ever remembered, that the golden squares meant people working, scrubwomen earning their musty daily bread, clerks doing overtime, harried people, housed together in the spring night for the purpose of wage earning. (70)

Unlike Dwight, Lynn's reflections are sexed and reveal anxiety about her career and position at work. Baldwin once again parallels the skyscraper's aestheticism with the sharp contrasts they make against the city skyline. The direct connection to and association with the hard work done at all hours of the day and night by the scrubwomen emphasizes the role of lower-class women who clean skyscraper offices during the night. The scrubwomen come to represent Lynn's own anxiety about her work and its future and serve as constant reminders of the instability of women's work opportunities.

This anxiety in the novel manifests itself in one of the most pivotal scenes in *Skyscraper Souls* where, in the middle of the night, Dwight is escorting a drunk Lynn from a party in his penthouse. The camera angle provides a panoramic view of the lobby with its pillars and marble floor (48:50). While Dwight and Lynn occupy the lobby's center, walking from the elevators to the front doors, they are surrounded by a dozen or so scrubwomen in various positions and locations. Although somewhat more understated than in the novel, the scrubwomen in the lobby represent both an anxiety about women's employment instability and a stark economic juxtaposition to the lavish excess of the previous scene's party that had everything from resplendent women in elaborate evening gowns and furs to numerous champagne bottles expertly procured at the height of Prohibition. The skyscraper is no longer as glamorous a place to work in as previously believed. The inclusion of the scrubwomen in both the novel and the film

implies that middle-class women hold precarious positions in the skyscraper and can easily become unemployed should anything go awry. In the novel, Lynn's fear of unemployment is greater than her fear of spinsterhood (Hapke 258) which demonstrates how attuned Baldwin was to the economic challenges facing young white-collar women working in the modern spaces of the corporate skyscraper.

Unlike the novel's anxieties which are more preoccupied with women in office settings, *Skyscraper Souls* reflects more general uncertainties about employment and income during the Great Depression. It is Lynn who brings up marriage to Tom, only to follow up that she "could never marry a poor man" (33:40-33:42) and emphasizes the need for practicality since Tom (as in the novel) expects her to not work once married. The connection between poverty and marriage is emphasized again when Lynn reiterates the same phrase after Dwight propositions her into becoming his mistress (47:40). However, Lynn rejects Dwight's proposal in favor of continuing to work honestly. The film adaptation aligns Lynn's fears and the desire to work with Depression-era anxieties and fears of economic instability. On the other hand, Baldwin refuses to make economic concerns be the driving force behind Lynn's career choices and instead creates a character that challenges the dominant view of working women in the 1930s. Lynn not only wants to work after marriage in order to have more money to live comfortably, but wants to keep a job that she enjoys.

Lynn's concerns stem from the fact that workplaces are constructed as gendered spaces whose layout, along with the city's more generally, "symbolizes male power and authority and men's legitimate occupation of these spaces" (McDowell, *Gender, Identity, and Place* 144-145). As a result of this spatial gendering, men and women are segregated into different forms of employment that reflect society's views of the type of work men and women could and should

perform. Linda McDowell writes that the positions women typically occupied reflected societal expectations about women's natures as nurturing and caring (*Gender, Identity, and Place* 126). Similar to how the typewriter was marketed to women because of their supposedly-natural affinity for playing the piano, "it is not the characteristics of jobs themselves that demand attributes or skills that are associated with supposedly masculine or feminine traits, but rather it seems that *who does a job* depends on how it is socially constructed, valued and concomitantly rewarded" (McDowell, *Gender, Identity, and Place* 127). It is important to remember that jobs, and the spaces they are performed in, are not gender-neutral, but are rather created based on societal expectations of the types of work men and women do. One of the common presumptions that we as a society tend to have about work is that "men are seen to have the primary prerogative (or 'need') to work; assumptions about women's "natural affinities" toward work and the type of work they can do (Domosh and Seager 37). Domosh and Seager argue that these disparities in where and the type of work men and women perform reveal a number of "complexities and contradictions about the social construction of work" (36). The disparity in the corporate office is directly related to the spatial structuring of the office itself.

Baldwin best exemplifies this with Tom, who is the confidential secretary to the vice president of the Seacoast Bank and Trust. Tom, who had graduated from Yale the previous year, was given this position in order to begin his career after his mother, his last remaining relative, passed away. Mr. Norton, the vice president, "thought he [had] better start in working. There is no surer way for a young man to learn the banking business, generally, than by becoming secretary to a banker" (Baldwin 19). For Tom, his secretarial work is akin to an entry-level position that he will use as a springboard for a career, but a female secretary to a banker is expected to remain a secretary. Daphne Spain writes that "workplaces are structured to provide

different spatial arrangements for the typical working woman and the typical working man and [these] arrangements contribute to gender stratification” (*Gendered Spaces* 206). Even though Tom had to take a secretarial course prior to beginning, he does not take dictation (Miss Mason does that) and his primary responsibilities include meeting people, keeping track of Mr. Norton’s appointments, and carrying confidential messages (Baldwin 19-20). Because he is a man, Tom’s work is more highly valued and he is paid ten dollars a week more than Lynn to do less than she does.

Marriage in the Skyscraper Office

Baldwin’s novels predominantly feature romance plots where the hero and heroine must overcome the various obstacles in their paths - careers, finances, an older man’s efforts to seduce the heroine away from the hero – before they are finally reconciled at the end. Yet, Baldwin’s heroines represent new types of women in romance plots, ones that have more choices and are in charge of their own lives (Regis 111). Through the four women in *Skyscraper*, Baldwin presents a wider set of choices women could make in their efforts at negotiating careers and romantic relationships. As a result, she challenges the predominant view of women during this time and imbues her female characters with the ability to make their own decisions and chart their own paths in life. Lynn, Sarah, Jennie, and Mara represent the various career opportunities, financial situations, and romantic/sexual relationships women in the 1930s had. Throughout the novel, Baldwin continuously emphasizes the question of marriage and its role in financially securing her female characters. Marriage, in addition to the skyscraper’s spatial arrangements, becomes one of the driving forces behind the decisions and actions Baldwin’s female characters make.

One of the primary points of contention that Baldwin creates between Tom and Lynn is the latter’s assertion to continue working once they are married. Even though Lynn expresses a

personal desire to keep her job, the decision is financial as well since the couple would not be able to have the same lifestyle on Tom's salary alone. This point of contention reflects a real social anxiety that pervaded the 1920s and 1930s workplace and highlights how "the relationship between 'women' and 'work' is more complex and controversial, and is often a flashpoint for personal and social conflict between women and men" (Domosh and Seager 36). Tom refuses to accept the idea that his wife would work: "He came of a generation of men whose wives had not worked. That is to say, they had kept houses and budgets, borne children, scrubbed and cooked...But they had not worked for money. Or had they? They had not, at any rate, worked for wages" (Baldwin 49-50). The distinction between money and earned wages is just one way that women's work is diminished, not to mention that housework is seen as an appropriate form of work but an office is not.²⁴ Yet the questioning that accompanies Tom's thought process points to the blurred boundary that exists between women's work in the home and outside of it. The uncertainty with which Tom approaches the ingrained belief that women did not work for money (or perhaps they did?) paves the way for his and Lynn's future reconciliation and allows him to ultimately accept that Lynn will keep her job once married.

Baldwin's novel speaks to the precarious position faced by numerous female clerical workers during the 1930s who oftentimes found themselves at the mercy of their jobs and without a support system. Throughout the novel, the hard times the bank is facing is only overtly felt and expressed by the women. For Jennie and Mara, who also work in the Seacoast Building, relationships with men are directly intertwined with financial stability. Mara and Jennie, who are disillusioned with marriage and its promises of love and security, spend their time attempting to secure themselves financially by striking up relationships with married men. Mara attempts to prevent her own firing from the bank by accepting and reciprocating the attentions of her boss's

married nephew; partly to spite her unemployed husband but mostly as a means of securing her job while all other married women are fired. Mara argues that “Frank’s got a drag. Nowadays, you need all the drag you can get. Well, why shouldn’t I stay on the right side of someone who has influence?” (Baldwin 128). Jennie remarks upon Mara’s decision unsympathetically by explaining to Lynn that “[Mara] thought she had to choose between losing her job or making a play for Frank...wait till Frank has to choose between his job and her” (Baldwin 125). Yet Jennie herself becomes Jake’s mistress, refuses a relationship with a man she loves because she knows that they will be financially unstable, and moves to Chicago on Jake’s insistence by the novel’s end.²⁵ While Mara did enjoy temporary economic security, she is ultimately fired after she and Frank are confronted by her husband, Bill, and is forced to follow Bill to California where he has been offered a new position.

The skyscraper plays an influential and omnipresent role in the midst of the decisions Baldwin’s characters makes, both in the novel and the films adaptation. When Mara is fired from her job, “she [rides] downstairs in the swiftly falling elevator. She [walks] into the street, and [stands] there irresolute. The shadow of the skyscraper loomed over her, cold, dark, save for the aspiring towers, which were hot with sunlight, and soared into the blue” (Baldwin 144). Baldwin makes Lynn unable to understand Jennie’s decision to become Jake’s mistress, she just understands that it has something to do “with the entire economic system” (Baldwin 182). Her despair on Jennie’s behalf is expressed through skyscraper imagery: “It seemed to her as she bent over her desk that the entire weight of the massive building was upon it, that she was oppressed, burned, hemmed in. The stone and steel closed about her, there was no air, no light, no way to get free, to get clear, to soar upward spiritually with the defiant and escaping towers” (Baldwin 182). The claustrophobic imagery directly opposes the sense of freedom Lynn experienced about

her work and the Seacoast Building at the novel's beginning. Lynn realizes that the freedom she believes working in a skyscraper provides is not that way for everyone and that, unlike her, other women in Jennie's and Mara's situations are neither liberated nor excited by their work but rather find it as a means to delay poverty and destitution. For Jennie and Mara, and Sarah to an extent as well, the skyscraper becomes a "tremendous [trap], opening and closing on time signals" (Baldwin 90). Baldwin uses this imagery as a way to comment on the lack of choices her female characters have in their jobs and the prospects of developing prospering careers in tandem with successful romantic relationships.

By having Jennie and Mara navigate these choices and make these decisions, Baldwin grants them more agency and freedom to choose how their lives develop and, as a result, instills this same idea in the minds of her female readers. Yet both Mara and Jennie end up unhappy with their decisions because they choose work/financial security over marriage rather than both. Baldwin has both women present realistic outlooks when it comes to negotiating between a career and marriage. Jennie makes her view clear when she says that "marriage, unless it means a bank account and no questions asked, is a flop" (Baldwin 125). Mara, reflecting on her own predicament informs Lynn that "a girl who marries and goes on working is a fool; and a man who agrees to the arrangement is a worse one" (Baldwin 131). Sarah represents the middle-aged woman who has forsaken marriage in the pursuit of a career. Out of the four women, she is the oldest and most successful financially and in her career. Baldwin reveals that Sarah and David Dwight were once in a relationship, but he married a richer woman who advanced and financed his own interests. Although Baldwin creates Sarah as the mediating character between Tom and Lynn who helps resolve the novel's largest point of contention, Sarah also functions as an example of a woman who sacrificed all notions of a companionate marriage in order to pursue a

career. Sarah, Mara, and Jennie all choose either careers or financial stability over marriage. Only Lynn insists that she deserves both and ultimately gets them.

Baldwin juxtaposes Mara, Jennie, and Sarah's realistic outlooks against Lynn's supposed inexperience naivete by making Lynn believe that she can have both a career and a husband who does not resent her for working. Lynn is the only one who is not disillusioned with marriage and believes that you can have both a satisfying career and a strong, equal-footed marriage: "if a woman's job means a lot to her, if she feels she can work it up into something big, absorbing, why shouldn't she go on with it? On a fifty-fifty basis, a partnership. Marriage ought to be that way!" (Baldwin 131). Yet Lynn's statement reveals the ways that Baldwin crafts her as a character that is ahead of her time in desiring a marriage based more on equal partnership rather than gender dynamics. In *A Natural History of the Romance Novel*, Pamela Regis counters the claim that "the romance novel straightjackets the heroine by making marriage the barometer of her success" and that "its ending destroys the independent, questing woman depicted in the rest of the story" (10-11). Baldwin creates Lynn and Tom as a couple that refuses to be straightjacketed by society's expectations about women's works and gender dynamics, and subsequently opens pathways for new definitions about women's roles in the public and corporate sphere. Because the romance was a genre primarily popular with women (Regis xii), Baldwin subsequently uses her work to comment on the position of women in the 1930s. By negating the assumption that married women should not work or have to choose between marriage and a career, Baldwin is opening new doors for her female readers. Lynn is the only woman by the novel's end who is in a happy marriage and has the prospect of a career, which Baldwin demonstrates is a possibility for other women as well, not just the ones in romance novels.

In both the novel and its film adaptation, the skyscraper functions as an impediment to marriage and romantic relationships. In the movie, this is presented rather comically on numerous occasions where Tom accosts Lynn in the lobby only to find themselves constantly bumped into and interrupted by people rushing to their offices (22:01). Or when they are in crowded elevators and Tom maneuvers around rotund businessmen, while stepping on their toes and poking their eyes, in order to get to Lynn. The elevator is portrayed as an extension of the lobby that not only propagates fraught romantic encounters but also facilitates the mixing of classes and genders (Schleier, *Skyscraper Cinema* 68-69). In the movie, Tom and Lynn's relationship exists exclusively in the spaces of the Dwight Building underscoring the roles that both the skyscraper and its symbolism as a corporate entity play in Tom and Lynn's romantic relationship. In the novel, Tom is eventually reconciled to the idea of Lynn working "because of his own dissatisfaction with his job and his longing, growing daily, to be somewhere he could feel perfectly at home, doing something he believed to be important and constructive, he was beginning to understand Lynn's attachment to her work" (148). However, the couple's plans are dashed when the bank, coming up on hard times, begins firing married women. McDowell writes that "places are made through power relations which construct the rules which define boundaries. These boundaries are both social and spatial – they define who belongs to a place and who may be excluded" (*Gender, Identity, and Place* 4). The bank is creating a space where married women are excluded based on gender and social position. This further reinforces the gendered division of labor but to a more specific extent where married women are systematically pushed out of the workplace based on the assumption that they have someone to take care of them. This further reinforces women's economic dependence on men and their spatial segregation to the domestic sphere.

The Dwight Building in *Skyscraper Souls* also holds significant sway over its inhabitants, yet to a much darker and sinister extent. The anticipated merger of the Seacoast and Manhattan Banks leads to a frenzy of stock activity with almost every character making an appearance at the brokerage office to purchase shares of the new stock. Unbeknownst to them, Dwight, in an act of corporate greed that allows him to ultimately become the sole owner of the building, manipulates and then shorts the stock. He is the only one to come out on top, literally and figuratively, and the scene of his final seduction of Lynn is juxtaposed against the ticker tape counting down the price of Seacoast-Manhattan shares as the camera takes turns panning on close ups of each character who is now destitute. The greed and desire espoused by the skyscraper takes a deadly turn, when Mara and Slim attempt to rob Jake's jewelry store and Slim gets locked in the self-closing safe and suffocates (1:19:20). Unfortunately, his death is not the only one that results from the capitalist greed represented by the skyscraper. In a fit of desperation, Sarah shoots Dwight over his refusal to leave Lynn alone. Dwight's last words comment on the beauty of the building and reflect the influence the building holds over him even in death. They also echo an earlier scene where Dwight's associate calls the skyscraper a "monument to [Dwight's] ego" (12:20). In the end, it has become a monument to his death. In one of the few scenes to take place outside the building, Sarah commits suicide by jumping off of the roof. The camera angle pans down in a special effects scene as we see her body fall down into the street at the bottom of a chasm created by skyscrapers on all sides. Lawrence Rainey rightly observes that Sarah and Slim, the two dead characters, are also the only two to be seen ever leaving the building (86). Sarah's position as a fallen woman and subsequent martyrdom and redemption, serves as a warning to both other women who would consider exchanging sex for upward mobility and to

working women like Lynn who would choose to stay at their jobs for too long (Schleier, *Skyscraper Cinema* 91).

The ending of *Skyscraper Souls* has darker and more negative undertones that deviate significantly from the more positive and progressive message of Baldwin's *Skyscraper*. For one, no one died at the end of the novel, even though David Dwight was forced into self-imposed exile in Europe. As his ship leaves New York harbor, Dwight's fellow passenger remarks on the receding skyscrapers as "just another monument to man's insatiable greed" (Baldwin 249). When Baldwin published *Skyscraper* in 1931, the stock market crash was only a year and a half old, "brief enough to permit the illusion, which the novel explicitly entertains, that things would get better soon...*Skyscraper Souls* is a reckoning with the Great Depression and what had caused it: unbridled desire, financial, and sexual, acting through a deception and fraud. Sarah Denet's final fall from the Seacoast Building is a restaging of the Great Crash of 1929" (Rainey 83-84). Even though Tom and Lynn are reconciled by the film's end and agree to marry (even on Tom's salary), viewers do not receive any inclination on whether or not Lynn will continue working and their happiness is overshadowed by the four deaths directly associated with the Dwight Building. The novel's ending, on the other hand, paints a picture of progress and triumph. As Lynn and Tom walk hand-in-hand and married into the Seacoast Building, they are filled with joy and anticipation at the future and Lynn's continuing career. In the last lines, the Seacoast Building rises as a positive monument to future progress: "Skyscraper. Roots embedded in earth, towers reaching to the far and azure empyrean. Symbol of man's need for stability, for endurance, for progress, for aspiration. *Skyscraper*..." (250). The novel's conclusion speaks to the skyscraper's permanence and stability both architecturally in the urban skyline but also as a space that fosters

new types of work and relationships. The skyscraper's stability is paired with the stability of Tom and Lynn's marriage where they are finally able to share and contribute equally.

Conclusion

The skyscraper became a significant space of women's work between 1880 and 1930. Its development during this period witnessed the changing situations, spaces, and types of work that women partook in. From its literary inception in Henry Blake Fuller's *The Cliff-Dwellers* to Faith Baldwin's portrayal of its swaying forces in *Skyscraper*, the corporate spaces of the skyscraper have come to both define women's work and solidify women's permanent positions within these spaces. By analyzing the trajectory of women's work and the spaces of their employment, we gain a more concrete and all-encompassing understanding of how women came to inhabit the skyscraper and the ways that they aided in and influenced the development and transformation of its spaces.

Henry Blake Fuller's depiction of Cornelia McNabb set the stage for women's presence in the skyscraper and worked to entrench the image of the working women in the public's imagination. It was Faith Baldwin, however, and her monumental literary corpus that created significant inroads on the ways women who chose to have careers were viewed by society. Baldwin was deeply aware of the women's situations in corporate space and that many women had to frequently choose between work and marriage. Baldwin attempts to transcend the traditional view of womanhood, work, and marriage by creating female characters who frequently express a desire to work. By creating heroines like Lynn Harding that not only demand but successfully acquire both, Baldwin challenges holdover traditional opinions about working women. The stratified and segregated spaces of the skyscraper provided a useful setting to illustrate how these spaces were uncondusive for women's progress. Yet by creating instances

where the intended use and decoration of certain spaces was upended, Baldwin creates new inroads for understanding how women's situations regarding work and the spaces of this work were expanding.

Chapter Four

Nella Larsen and the Urban Spaces of the Mixed-Race Female Body

In the final lines of Nella Larsen's *Quicksand* (1928), Helga Crane lies in bed recovering from an especially difficult pregnancy that almost kills her. On the pages that document her recovery and plans for the future, Larsen writes that "it was so easy and so pleasant to think about freedom and cities" (Q 135). After spending the majority of the novel wandering from one city to the next, Helga finally settles in a small Alabama town as the wife of the Reverend Mr. Pleasant Green and her life becomes a continuous succession of pregnancies – far from the space of liberation and acceptance she initially imaged. The freedom Helga Crane truly desires is closely intertwined with the modern city and its spaces. Larsen centers the novel on Helga's numerous migrations from the rural South, north to Chicago and Harlem, across the Atlantic to Copenhagen, and finally back to the South in an effort to locate a racially hybrid and accepting space. Nella Larsen was one of the first African American women writers to locate Black female subjectivity in urban spaces as opposed to Black rural folk communities (Scheper 680), and the connection between freedom and the city is especially poignant.

Throughout, Helga struggles with her mixed-race identity and her relocations are centered on finding a space where she will be accepted as a mixed-race woman. Similar to the women discussed in the previous chapters, Helga attempts to construct a hybrid space where she is able to live free from racial allegiances and constant movements across the color line. Her failure represents Larsen's assertions that these spaces do not exist or have yet to be created. Larsen continues this in her second novel, *Passing* (1929), by creating an inherent connection between the skyscraper and the passing body. This chapter specifically examines how white and mixed-race women's abilities to create hybrid identity spaces are not parallel. Whereas white

women can fabricate a hybrid space between public and private, Larsen continuously demonstrates the challenges and ultimate failures at creating a hybrid racialized space between Black and white. Ultimately, Larsen details the challenges mixed-race women faced in navigating the modern city and their subsequent inability to establish and occupy a hybrid identity space.

Both *Quicksand* and *Passing* explore the complications arising from a mixed-race identity and the difficulties “faced by persons alienated because of race and racial choice” (Dagbovie-Mullins 30). Larsen depicts heroines struggling to come to terms with their mixed-race identities and attempting to straddle the color line that divides them (Charles 132). Larsen’s literary career began in the 1920s, which is a pivotal decade in the representation of mixed-race identity. The year 1920 was the last time “mulatto” was available as an option on the US census and by 1930, it was no longer on the form (Dagbovie-Mullins 29).¹ She belonged to a group of Black writers who centered their work on the experiences of mixed-race individuals who were light enough to pass and created “mixed-race characters who lived ever on the cusp between two worlds, some of whom are undone by the enterprise of crossing into other worlds” (Charles 133). Texts such as James Weldon Johnson’s *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* (1912), Jessie Redmon Fauset’s *Plum Bun* (1928), Walter Francis White’s *Flight* (1926), and Wallace Thurman’s *The Blacker the Berry* (1929) all explore the psychological and social complexities faced by mixed-race individuals during this time period. Through her two novellas, Larsen demonstrates what it means to be caught in between worlds and between loyalties and creates “characters who reflect the anxiety inherent in racial performance” (Charles 151-153).

This chapter introduces a racial perspective on modernity in the United States and analyzes how Larsen supplements our understanding of the spaces discussed in the previous

chapters and how the mixed-race female body is viewed and represented in these spaces. By looking at spaces of education and uplift (akin to the settlement house discussed in Chapter One), the street and spaces of entertainment (Chapter Two), and the skyscraper (Chapter Three), we are able to gain a more comprehensive grasp of the ways that Larsen portrays African American sensibility in relation to space/place and the ways that the same spaces/places posed different restrictions and opportunities for Larsen's mixed-race characters. The spaces analyzed in the previous chapters were noteworthy in their role of fostering white women's agency and mobility. Similarly, Larsen's mixed-race female characters attempt to establish and inhabit the spaces between Black and white, just as white women did with the spaces between public and private. In doing so, Larsen endeavors to create a separate space where her characters' mixed-race identities will be accepted. Such an approach continues my discussion of hybrid and paradoxical spaces and how Larsen attempts to rework notions of space to accommodate both Black, mixed-race, and white identity. Ultimately, through Larsen's depiction of the spaces her mixed-race characters occupy, I argue that the creation of a hybrid space or a space outside of race is not feasible. Larsen's work demonstrates the racial limitations her female characters encountered in their attempts at occupying and appropriating urban spaces the same way the women in previous chapters did.

Race, gender, and class are the primary organizing and influencing factors that contribute to how the body is seen in these spaces and how it is able to inhabit them. Through the physicality and embodiment of mixed-race characters like Helga Crane, Nella Larsen investigates and comments upon the extent to which women can occupy the spaces of the modern city. The spaces and places Larsen crafts in her novels play a significant role in the creation of characters' identities and their attempts at carving out a space separate from inflexible

and monochromatic representations of race. As we have seen, women appropriated and reconfigured the spaces of settlement house, the urban street, and the skyscraper in a way that demonstrated their changing socioeconomic and cultural positions within an increasingly urban and developed world. Looking at the ways women created hybrid and paradoxical places out of existing spaces allows us to view these women and by extension, these spaces, as new locations of women's agency, mobility, and empowerment. However, up to this point in my project, I have only looked at the ways gender, sex, and class have influenced women's occupation and appropriation of these spaces. Nella Larsen's work provides a vital and influential perspective of life during this period through the points of view of mixed-race characters who construct and inhabit hybrid identity spaces; who are "able to see and experience both the Black and White worlds, and construct a separate world all their own in between – one that only they can navigate" (Charles 17). As a result, this chapter focuses on the larger implications racial identity plays in women's presence in these spaces.

This chapter deviates from a discussion of the formation of physical spaces to analyzing and understanding the formation of a hybrid identity space, an elsewhere. Yet the formation of this intangible space is still heavily dependent upon the individual's experience of and in tangible spaces and places. In other words, Larsen's portrayal of Helga's ability to create an elsewhere is dependent upon Helga's view of herself, how those she encounters view her, and her occupation of existing places. The connection between identity and space is inextricable and one ultimately affects and influences the other. The approach of feminist geographers such as Linda McDowell and Gillian Rose provides a novel theoretical framework through which we can understand how Larsen's female characters attempt to create or locate this hybrid space and the social and cultural forces that influence, hinder, and ultimately foil their efforts. Linda McDowell writes

that “places are created through power relations which construct the rules which define boundaries. These boundaries are both social and spatial (*Gender, Identity, and Place* 4). Helga’s identity is inextricably rooted in and dependent upon the spaces that she occupies. Her desire for a hybrid space is best evoked by Gillian Rose’s notion of paradoxical spaces. Although Rose’s theory centers on the space between public and private spheres, it can be applied to the creation of a space between white and Black that reflect Helga’s desires for stability and acceptance. Julia S. Charles asserts that race is heavily dependent on space and dubs this particular in between space as “That Middle World,” a space that borders the Black and white worlds but is undoubtedly separate. She argues that this third space “is a metaphysical space that is more permeable than the other two” (23). The occupation of a racially hybrid space blurs the distinctions between monochromatic racial identities and allows individuals to exist outside of traditional racial classifications. The existence of this hybrid space would allow Helga to appropriate a mixed-race subjectivity and feel accepted within the social circles that she moves through. By searching for and attempting to construct this type of space, Larsen depicts Helga as someone who possesses the agency to reconceptualize herself and how others view her and challenge normative markers of identity.

Helga’s numerous relocations and her occupation of various spaces, most of which are urban, demonstrate her desire to find a space of acceptance for her mixed-race identity. Over the course of the novel, Helga frequently had “the uneasy sense of being engaged with some formidable antagonist, nameless and ununderstood...There was something else, some other more ruthless force, a quality within herself, which was frustrating her, had always frustrated her, kept her from getting the things she had wanted” (Q 10-11). This antagonist is Helga’s mixed-race identity and her inability to be satisfied because one aspect of her race is always privileged over

the other. Society in the first few decades of the twentieth century placed significant importance on racial definitions and, for mixed-race individuals, it created “a sense of partial invisibility which could be simultaneously an affliction and a source of insight” (Hutchinson 25). When Helga reveals her history and racial background to Mrs. Hayes-Rore, the latter insisted on looking out the window and “it was almost as if they had slipped on masks...For amongst black people, as among white people, it is tacitly understood that these things are not mentioned – and therefore they do not exist” (Q 39).² Just like the spaces discussed in the previous chapters allowed white women to construct new identities and a space between public and private, Helga aspires to the same with her racial identity. Yet, in all of these spaces, her efforts are continuously thwarted and her inability to find a racially hybrid space is influenced by how those around her view her mixed-race body.

The creation or appropriation of spaces is also heavily dependent upon the body.³ The body as a space is filled with significance and influences the way that it is perceived by others and by its own subject. It affects the ways it is represented and viewed in certain spaces and how its own mobility is hindered or helped. Linda McDowell and Elizabeth Grosz have studied how the body can be understood as a space; a space that can be inscribed, presented as a surface that reflects both the individual’s desire and how others view the individual, and the spaces this body can occupy. Linda McDowell writes that “the body is not taken for granted as a fixed entity but is instead seen as having a plasticity or malleability which means that it can take different forms and shapes at different times, and so also have a geography” (*Gender, Identity, and Place* 39). Elizabeth Grosz expands our understanding of the body as space by linking its formation with the surrounding environment, specifically the city:

Neither the body nor its environment can be assumed to form an organically unified ecosystem...the body and its environment, rather, produce each other as forms of the hyperreal, as modes of simulation which have overtaken and transformed whatever reality each may have had into the image of the other: the city is made and made over into the simulacrum of the body, and the body, in its turn, is transformed, 'citified,' urbanized as a distinctly metropolitan body. ("Bodies-Cities" 237)

For this reason, it is important to understand what it means for mixed-race women to move through the modern urban landscape, the novel ways they occupy urban spaces/places, and how these experiences are transcribed onto their bodies.

Through Helga Crane, Irene Redfield, and Clare Kendry, Larsen demonstrates how the body functions as a space that reflects both internal and external desires and needs.⁴ But it is equally vital to examine the position of the body in a space/place to better understand the ways that race complicates its presence and its agency in these spaces/places. Perry L. Carter connects space with race and the body and examines the ways that these three characteristics intersect in *Passing*. He demonstrates "how space need not be a tether circumscribing subjects to preconstructed racial identities; showing simultaneously that space is neither Black nor White but penumbral – liminal rather than distinctly bound" (229). Steve Pile examines the ways Larsen depicts skin and color and the types of insights these provide regarding race and space (*Skin, Race and Space*" 30). He examines passing as a spatial practice and the ways that the varying gradations of skin color influence the types of spaces Larsen's characters inhabit and move through. Because the body is directly correlated with identity formation, I contend that it is important to analyze the ways Larsen depicts her characters and how they navigate the spaces of work, entertainment, and leisure. For them, as mixed-race women, these spaces signify different

opportunities and attempts at identity formation than they do for the white middle- and working-class women discussed previously. By focusing on these spaces and the role of the mixed-race body within them, we gain a clearer understanding of how Larsen inextricably links identity, race, and space. I argue that by factoring in racial difference in relation to these three spaces, we gain a comprehensive understanding of what these spaces look like for mixed-race women.

The Mixed-Race Body and Hybrid Spaces of Acceptance

Nella Larsen was born Nellie Walker on April 13, 1891 in Chicago.⁵ Her mother, Mary Hansen, was a Danish immigrant and her father, Peter Walker, was a Black man from the Danish West Indies. Larsen's father died when she was still relatively young and her mother remarried a white Danish immigrant, Peter Larsen, with whom she had a second daughter. Larsen supposedly had a difficult relationship with her stepfather and half-sister because of her race. Similar to her first protagonist, Larsen's life was composed by a number of movements and relocations. She spent some time living in Denmark as a child and at sixteen, spent a year at Fisk University (1907-1908), where she was expelled for refusing to adhere to the dress code. She subsequently returned to Denmark to live with her mother's family (1908-1912). She eventually moved back to the US and settled in New York City where she studied nursing at Lincoln Hospital and Home in the Bronx (1912-1915). This led to a job as head nurse at Tuskegee's nurse training school (1915-1916), but Larsen left after only one year and returned to New York where she worked for the city's Health Department in the predominantly white Bronx. In 1921, Larsen helped organize the first exhibit of African American art in New York, which marked the beginning of the Harlem Renaissance in visual arts. The exhibit's director, Ernestine Rose, encouraged Larsen to enroll in the library school at the New York Public Library (NYPL). Larsen became the first Black woman to graduate from library school and helped pave the way

for the integration of the NYPL. She later held a position at the 135th Street Branch, which hosted readings and served as a meeting place for aspiring and prominent writers of the Harlem Renaissance. In early 1930, Larsen was accused of plagiarizing her short story, “Sanctuary,” from Sheila Kaye-Smith’s short story, “Mrs. Adis” (1919), however, the accusations were never proved. That same year, Larsen became the first Black woman to receive the prestigious Guggenheim Fellowship which she used to travel in Europe. Despite this, by 1934 she had all but vanished from Harlem’s literary scene and fell into obscurity until her death in 1964.

Quicksand and *Passing*, focus on the duality and marginality of mixed-race identities. Specifically, through the figure of Helga Crane, Larsen comments upon and critiques Black female mobility not just in urban settings but in between locations as well. She comments on the roles that space/place and mobility play in gender, class, and racial identity formation. Hutchinson compares Helga’s journey in search of a place to belong to the myth of the Labyrinth, which “might well serve as a figure for the prison of race and gender from which Helga Crane is never able to emerge” (227), while Martyn Bone analyzes how *Quicksand* explores the ways in which “the nationalized master narrative or racial classification – reified in and as law – denies the very notion of *biracial* identity” (146). It is this denial that ultimately causes Helga to keep moving over the course of the novel and it is these laws regarding racial classification that Larsen discusses and attempts to upturn in the novel. Ericka Miller writes that *Quicksand* is “a text that attempts to imagine a self not yet articulated” (118). She argues that Helga’s movements reflect an individual that is uncomfortable with the means of expressions available to her and is in constant search for an environment that is not confining. I argue that by refusing to be categorized or bound by the racial laws of the time, Helga’s journey can be seen as an attempt to find an identity that has not yet been established. Her constant movements stem

from a desire to not allow herself to be prescribed by any sort of identifiable category and establish a hybrid space.⁶

Scholars who focus their attention on *Quicksand* especially, study how Larsen crafts her debut novel as an exploration of the connections between travel and identity by locating Helga Crane in the same geographic places she herself moved through (Kelley 96). As a result, critics who focus on space/place in the novel tend to do so through the lens of movement between broad geographic places rather than occupation of a single, narrower and more defined space. Joyce E. Kelley examines how Helga rejects Black and white racial categorizations in favor of Otherness and how she searches for a space that allows her to express this difference (92-93), while Laura E. Tanner connects Helga's mixed-race identity with her body and states that "Helga's mixed race background consistently forces her to inhabit a series of liminal spaces, including the space of her own body" (186). Other critics contend that Helga's constant relocations stem from her being mixed-race. Ann Hostetler claims that Helga's response to being trapped in particular social situations is always one of flight; she exhibits a desperation to find a place where she can live free of hypocrisy (37). Sika Dagbovie-Mullins argues that Helga's various geographic locations represent "her evolving self-formation" (34). Because *Quicksand* is set in numerous urban spaces, scholars have also analyzed Helga's occupation of urban space and its relation to her agency and identity. Mary Esteve expands our understanding of mixed-race subjectivity by focusing on instances of Helga mingling in urban crowds and the ways this affects her identity. Jeanne Scheper writes that Helga's movements throughout the course of the novel reflect historic population flows and likens Helga to a flâneuse, analyzing how Helga's flightiness "produces a strategy of resistance though mobility" (682). Viewed together, these studies provide valuable and influential analyses of how Larsen uses travel, mobility, and space influence Helga's views

of herself and her mixed-race identity. However, these scholars focus on broader, geographic places (the South, Europe, or cities like Chicago, Copenhagen, and New York) and not specific places. Additionally, critics have not adequately discussed the role that space plays in identity formation especially in relation to mixed-race bodies and identities.

I expand on the relationship between Helga's constant relocations and her identity by focusing on the smaller, more specific places/spaces that she occupies throughout her movements in the broader geographic spaces. I argue that in moving through and occupying these spaces, Helga attempts to either locate or transform them into a hybrid identity space. Over the course of the novel's events, Helga expresses a keen understanding of not belonging exclusively to either race and conspicuously demonstrates her ability to straddle the color line and understand both the white and black worlds that she is a part of. She comprehends "the grievous necessity" (Q 23) of her mother's second marriage as a means to provide for herself and her child, despite the apparent cruelty of her stepfather and stepsiblings. She comes to realize the reasons behind her father's desertion and "sympathize[s] with his facile surrender to the irresistible ties of race" (Q 92). Helga's ability to straddle the color line this way as well as her ability to appropriate the racial consciousness of both of her parents demonstrates her appropriation of a mixed-race subjectivity which ultimately causes her to search for a hybrid space of acceptance for this identity.

The Body in A Place of Uplift

Quicksand begins by locating Helga Crane in Naxos, a school near Atlanta where she is a teacher. In analyzing this space, I compare it to the space of the settlement house – both are places of work focused on uplift and bettering the lives of those inhabiting the space. Yet their specific methods differ radically as do the outcomes of this uplift. Whereas the spaces of Hull-

House welcomed cultural and individual difference and focused more specifically on educational, social, and economic uplift and reform, Larsen models Naxos on Black institutions (like Tuskegee and Fisk University) that coupled education with racial uplift. Despite both spaces working toward bettering the lives of its members, Larsen describes Naxos's uplift as preoccupied with molding its students into one distinct form. Instead of promoting itself as a space of racial uplift, Naxos is a place that subscribes to white notions of race and formulates itself as a space that facilitates the development of its Black students according to white racial standards. The school has become a knife "with cruelly sharp edges ruthlessly cutting all to a pattern, the white man's pattern." (Q 4). While Hull-House valued difference and encouraged immigrants to appreciate their cultural differences, Larsen describes Naxos as a space with an "air of self-righteousness and intolerant dislike of difference" (Q 5). Elizabeth Bohls writes that "places are what human societies make of the spaces they occupy. The project of place-making is collective and continuous and open-ended. At an individual level, the social and the spatial converge to generate each person's sense of place" (7). This allows us to understand how white society coupled with education and racial uplift at Naxos work together to create a specific type of place, one that Larsen portrays as stifling and hostile to difference, regardless of what that difference is.

Naxos's attempts at stamping out difference manifests itself in the social places its members can occupy and in the spaces of the body. A prominent preacher lauds Naxos and its efforts at uplift because "Naxos Negroes knew what was expected of them. They had good sense and they had *good taste*. They knew enough to stay in *their places* and that, said the preacher, showed *good taste*" (Q 4, emphasis mine). The sermon demonstrates the ways that education and uplift are connected to and dependent on space/place and has, as its ultimate goal, the ability to

prevent people from crossing boundaries, i.e., knowing and staying in their places. Erika Miller posits that “all of the energy exerted at Naxos to train young minds and create ladies of distinction seems to focus not on expanding the intellect but on teaching this next generation of black Americans how best to gain approval in a society that values whiteness and denigrates blackness” (120). Naxos students and faculty exhibited good taste because they knew how to stay in their socially prescribed places, unlike the immigrants at Hull-House who were able to cross social and economic boundaries through the resources and opportunity the settlement offered. Through this, Larsen demonstrates the ways race limits social aspirations and the ability to occupy new spaces.

The body in this place also manifests itself as a space of difference that Naxos attempts to control. Writing on the ways that the body is adorned, Larsen describes the myriad ways students’ bodies were controlled through clothing: “Fragments of a speech made by the dean of women floated through [Helga’s] thoughts – ‘Bright colors are vulgar’ – ‘Black, gray, brown, and navy blue are the most becoming colors for colored people’ – ‘Dark-complected people shouldn’t wear yellow, or green or red’” (Q 17-18). The focus on clothes connects to the white preacher’s claim that Naxos members had “good taste.” By juxtaposing the two, Larsen demonstrates how the Black body is simultaneously limited to the types of spaces/places it can occupy and how the body as a space of Black consciousness and individuality is made to conform to outside influence.

Through the emphasis on bodily control, Larsen depicts how Naxos transforms from a school into a machine, a transformation that reinforces the suffocating atmosphere and repression of individuality. Elizabeth Grosz argues that “different sociocultural environments actively produce the bodies of their inhabitants as particular and distinctive types of bodies, as bodies

with particular physiologies, affective lives, and concrete behaviors” (“Bodies-Cities,” 301-302). In this particular space, students are reduced to just their bodies which are expected to look and move a certain way. Larsen uses military imagery to describe the morning routine:

Here and there a male member of the faculty, important and resplendent in this regalia of an army officer, would pause in his prancing or strutting, to jerk a negligent or offending student into the proper attitude or place. The massed phalanxes increased in size and number, blotting out pavements, bare earth, and grass. And about it all was a depressing silence, a sullenness almost...the goosestep began. Left, right. Left, right. Forward!

March! The automatons moved. The squares disintegrated into fours. Into twos.

Disappeared into the gaping doors of Jones Hall. (Q 12)

Larsen’s emphasis on how Naxos controls the spatial consciousness of its students is underscored by the faculty members pushing straying students into their proper place and is indicative of how the school controls both the body and individual expression. The body is a signifying medium, a vehicle for expression and it is through the body that we internalize the outside world (Grosz, *Volatile Bodies* 9). Larsen’s description of the student body in military formation, all in their correct place marching synchronously to breakfast, demonstrates Naxos’s success at stripping its students of autonomy. In the effort of finding and knowing their place, students have been reduced to identical robots whose actions are continuously monitored and increasingly mechanical. By forcing its students to move this way, wear specific-colored clothing, and subscribe to white social standards, Larsen depicts Naxos as uncondusive to a mixed-race subjectivity like Helga’s and negates the possibility for the creation of a hybrid identity space.

During her tenure at Naxos, Helga becomes painfully aware of her own difference and how she is viewed by others. In the opening pages, she is described as possessing a “sharply cut face, with skin like yellow satin...Black, very broad brows over soft, yet penetrating, dark eyes, and a pretty mouth, whose sensitive and sensuous lips had a slight questioning petulance and a tiny dissatisfied droop...her nose was good, her ears delicately chiseled” (Q 2). Helga appears to be a composition of various body parts; a theme Larsen continues throughout the novel. Her physical appearance is marked by her composing body parts which, from the outset, locate Helga’s supposed dissatisfaction on the exterior of her body. This clearly marks her as mixed-race and sets the scene for how she is positioned in space and fits into certain places. Bodies can function as surfaces that locate on themselves the inscriptions of identity and interiority and Helga is always defined by her body and what it signifies to others. Helga’s room is filled with exotic and foreign furnishings that signify Helga as different from the other teachers at Naxos. These objects and the cultural inscriptions and representations both constitute and help “produce the body as a body of a determinate type (Grosz, *Volatile Bodies* x). The last pieces that solidify Helga’s corporeal identity is the vivid green negligee and brocaded slippers that locate her as an additional artifact within the space of her room. In this opening scene, Helga’s body is located under the light of a single lamp, “a small oasis in a desert of darkness (Q 1), which reflects Helga’s social, racial, and corporeal position at Naxos.

Helga is different in a number of ways, not simply because of her mixed race, but also because of her refusal to adhere to the social conventions, particularly the dress code, of the faculty culture at Naxos. Helga is expected to appear and act in a way that befits a teacher at the school. She self-identifies as a “despised mulatto” (Q 18) and is aware of how she is viewed by the people at Naxos who are preoccupied with racial uplift and do not take into account or

acknowledge those of mixed-race. Doreen Massey states that “we develop ways of incorporating a spatiality into our ways of being in the world, modes of coping with the challenge that the enormous reality of space throws up” (*For Space* 8). Helga’s way of coping with and reacting to the spatiality produced at Naxos is to rebel against its rules:

Helga...had never quite achieved the unmistakable Naxos mold, would never achieve it, in spite of much trying. She could neither conform, nor be happy in her unconformity. This she saw clearly now, and with cold anger at all the past futile effort. What a waste! How pathetically she had struggled in those first months and with what small success... Always she had considered it a lack of understanding on the part of the community, but in her present new revolt she realized that the fault had been partly hers...She hadn't really wanted to be made over. This thought bred a sense of shame, a feeling of ironical disillusion. Evidently there were parts of her she couldn't be proud of. (Q 7)

Nicolas Tredell argues that this sense of pride is embodied in the colorful, unorthodox clothes Helga chooses to wear, rebelling against the “monochrome existence” deemed more suitable for those with darker skin (159). However, Helga’s physicality is very much linked to her mixed-race identity, and the fact that she does not easily fit into exclusively black or white spaces is a testament to this. Helga’s view of her own identity throughout much of the novel is predicated upon her desire to construct a hybrid identity space that will neither deny nor underscore her difference. Jacquelyn McLendon argues that Helga’s natural instinct “is to balk at either externally imposed or self-imposed imitation,” which leads to the conclusion that for Helga, to be “naturalized” in society means to become “unnatural” (77). However, it is important to note that before Helga’s rebellion against Naxos’s standards of behavior and dress, she attempted to lay claim to the school’s spaces by fitting in and adhering to the same standards she now

despises. Ultimately, Larsen makes Helga unable to conform to these standards and her attempts at appropriating Naxos as a place of mixed-race acceptance become futile. Helga does not wish to be placed neatly into a category, which is what the society at Naxos is attempting to do both through education and the mandates surrounding dress. Helga could only become naturalized in a society if one aspect of her identity were to be denied. Therefore, being accepted as either Black or white denies her true identity, making her existence unnatural.

Helga's attempts at subverting the ways that her identity and body are controlled takes on a number of forms, the primary way is by wearing bright and bold colors that emphasize her difference. Yet, this, combined with the general intolerance surrounding her and the "process of repression, the stunting of intellectual growth and creativity" ultimately causes her to resign (Carby 168). Linda McDowell writes that "while bodies are undoubtedly material, possessing a range of characteristics such as shape and size and so inevitably taking up space, the ways in which bodies are presented to and seen by others vary according to the spaces and places in which they find themselves" (*Gender, Identity, and Place* 34). Because of her mixed-race identity and inability to neatly fit into either Black or white identity, Helga is frequently seen and used as a commodity or a piece of entertainment by those around her, usually for the purposes of enriching their lives in some way. One of her fellow teachers at Naxos, for example, calls her "a decoration to brighten [their] sad lives" (Q 14). If Naxos continuously insists on dictating how her body is viewed and presented, then she cannot occupy a hybrid space that is accepting of her mixed-race subjectivity.

Helga's insistence on expressing the full scope of her identity is further reinforced by the culmination of her conversation with Robert Anderson, the school's new director. Anderson urges Helga to remain at her position because she "is a lady" with "dignity and breeding" and

that she has “tendencies inherited from good stock” (Q 21) that would set a useful example to students and fellow teachers. He appears to be speaking specifically toward Helga’s white identity, an identity that he considers to be useful at a place such as Naxos and reasserts the comments made by the white preacher earlier in the text. This interaction, coupled with her fellow teachers comment, demonstrates how Helga’s true identity rests in the value she holds for others rather than her own individuality. What makes Helga even more outraged and determined to leave is that her work in Naxos is valued because she of a white background and her Black identity is essentially dismissed and cast down. Her conversation with Anderson underscores the way that external forces at Naxos shape and influence identity, agency, and belonging. Rather than acting out the identity imposed on her, Helga asserts her agency and individuality and chooses how she wants to be characterized (Dagbovie-Mullins 36). Even though Helga might have initially despised Naxos for its hypocrisy and inability to accept her as mixed race, her final decision to leave is underscored by the simple fact that she cannot easily exist as a mixed-race body in such a setting. This decision fully exemplifies Helga’s determination to search for a hybrid identity space

Throughout the novel, Helga is continuously trapped by how others view her body and what it signifies for them. Reflecting on her conversation with Anderson, Helga wonders “why has she lost her temper and given way to angry half-truths? – Angry half-truths – Angry half –” (Q 26). By ending the chapter this way, Larsen emphasizes the two halves of Helga’s identity and her constant vacillations between them. An individual’s interiority is heavily dependent on “the inscriptions and transformations of the subject’s corporeal surface (Grosz *Volatile Bodies* vii). Helga’s constant treatment by others who favor one race over the other causes her to have a fragmented and halved conception of herself. Dagbovie-Mullins posits that Helga’s struggle with

her identity stems from others' inability to view her as mixed-race (27), while Hazel Carby argues that Helga's "alienation was not just in her head but was produced by existing forms of social relations and therefore subject to elimination only by a change in those social relations" (169). Helga's ideal space is the convergence between societal expectations about race and her own views of her identity that piece together her two halves. The social and spatial atmosphere of Naxos coincide to create an unwelcoming space for people like Helga. By purposefully making Helga mixed-race, Larsen comments on how multiracial individuals were treated by and placed in a society that did not always know how to characterize them. Susan Friedman writes that "identity often requires some form of displacement – literal or figurative – to come to consciousness" (151). Larsen purposefully creates a heroine that is constantly mobile to not only come to terms with and accept herself as -mixed-race, but find a space/place that is conducive to such an identity.

Urban Routes and Places of Entertainment

After her resignation from Naxos, Helga makes her way to Chicago, then Harlem, and finally across the Atlantic to Copenhagen. The Great Migration was well underway by the end of the 1920s and Larsen's decision to mirror Helga's journey with the movement of millions of African Americans is poignant in showcasing the ways that mobility impacted Black women (Scheper 683). In the urban places Helga traverses, and especially the spaces of the streets, she attempts to create a hybrid space where her mixed-race identity can flourish. Similar to ways that Djuna Barnes reconceptualized public spaces in the city by bringing attention to how women were occupying, traversing, and becoming active participants in them, Larsen depicts the streets in Chicago as finally providing Helga with the space that she was unable to find in Naxos:

She stood intently looking down into the glimmering street, far below, swarming with people, merging into little eddies and disengaging themselves to pursue their own individual ways. A few minutes later she stood in the doorway, drawn by an uncontrollable desire to mingle with the crowd. The purple sky showed tremulous clouds piled up, drifting here and there with a sort of endless lack of purpose. Very like the myriad human beings pressing hurriedly on. Looking at these, Helga caught herself wondering who they were, what they did, and of what they thought. What was passing behind those dark molds of flesh. Did they really think at all? Yet, as she stepped out into the moving multi-colored crowd, there came to her a queer feeling of enthusiasm, as if she were tasting some agreeable, exotic food – sweetbreads, smothered with truffles and mushrooms—perhaps. And, oddly enough, she felt, too, that she had come home. She, Helga Crane, who had no home. (Q 30)

Helga's decision to mingle with the crowd stems from her desire to lay claim to the spaces of the streets, much the same way that Djuna Barnes does in her journalism. The streets function as a space that allows for the blending of genders, socioeconomic classes, and races represented by the "multi-colored crowd." This creates an opportunity for Helga to blend in with the crowd and potentially appropriate the street as a hybrid identity space. As stated earlier, bodies are mutable depending on the space that they inhabit; they are capable of taking on and appropriating new forms and outward perceptions of themselves based on their needs at any given time (McDowell, *Gender, Identity, and Place* 39). Because of her mixed-race body, Helga is able to easily blend into the unencumbered spaces of Chicago's streets where her body is able to shed the limitations imposed on it at Naxos. The sense of being at home that Helga feels is not only connected to the

fact that she was born and raised in Chicago but, more importantly, to the fact that she is at ease walking its streets.

Larsen situates Helga as a *flâneuse* on the streets of Chicago, similar to how Djuna Barnes located women on the streets of New York. Comparable to the *flâneuse*'s anonymity on urban streets, the street as a space fosters a type of racial erasure for Helga, in a sense blending two component parts of her identity into one. For the first time, she can walk freely and only be seen as a body rather than a Black or white body. Larsen's description of the crowd coming together and breaking apart reflects Barnes's depiction of and focus on the crowd's composing parts as a vital aspect of her *flânerie*. Unlike Barnes's *flânerie*, however, which directly challenges the dominant view of the city as male through its emphasis on women, Larsen uses it to underscore Helga's lack of place and racial acceptance. Part of the reason that Helga is able to blend in so well with the crowd is because her Black identity is unknown and not because this is a hybrid identity space. The heterogeneity and individuality of the crowd that is so vital for Barnes, does not help Helga. Instead, Larsen uses this characterization and the figure of the *flâneuse* to further underscore Helga's racial alienation. The emphasis on exotic foods that overwhelm Helga's senses and directly lead to her feeling at home underscore her difference and inability to belong in this space. Her incorporation into the crowd highlights the ways that urban spaces can be alienating and instead of finding a hybrid space that accepts her mixed-race identity, Helga has all aspects of her identity erased. Her feelings of home are a false sense of security because Helga's position as a *flâneuse* works to make her an anonymous member of the crowd with an unknown racial identity. As a result, the street fails to function as a hybrid identity space.

When Helga arrives in Harlem, she is taken aback by the ways the urban cultural center impacts her. Larsen describes this particular experience as “that magic sense of having come home. Harlem, teeming black Harlem, had welcomed her and lulled her into something that was, she was certain, peace and contentment... Any shreds of self-consciousness or apprehension which at first she may have felt vanished quickly, escaped in the keenness of her joy at seeming at last to belong somewhere” (Q 43-44). Once again, Larsen emphasizes the home in connection with Helga’s sense of self with the anticipation that Harlem is the place to craft/locate a hybrid identity space. For Helga Crane, the sense of belonging and having a home are directly related to both race and the body, specifically the ways in which Helga’s mixed-race body is viewed, accepted, and expresses agency in this particular urban space.⁷ Although a change occurs in how the crowd is characterized, moving from “multi-colored” to “teeming black,” Helga still manages to find solace and acceptance within the myriad of bodies that compose it (Scheper 690). Unlike Chicago, Harlem and its streets appear to be places where mixed-race identity is accepted and where Helga will be able to thrive outside of racial definitions.

Helga is enchanted with Harlem society and believes that it will be accepting of her mixed-race identity which fails to happen. Larsen initially locates Harlem as a place that fosters and elevates the myriads of Black identities that inhabit its spaces. In a poignant example, Larsen details the “sooty black, shiny black, taupe, mahogany, bronze, copper, gold, orange, yellow, peach, ivory, pinky white, pastry white” (Q 59) shades that compose the African American race. Elizabeth Grosz writes that the city’s structures and characteristics influence corporeality and subjectivity, affecting the way individuals see others as their own “understanding of, alignment with, and positioning in space. Different forms of lived spatiality (the verticality of the city, as opposed to the horizontality of landscape – at least our own) effect the ways we live space, and

thus our comportment and corporeal orientations” (“Bodies-Cities” 301). The streets of Harlem with their variegated shades of Black and brown appear welcoming and Helga’s uncontested occupation of this space makes her feel at home.

Since her time in Naxos, Larsen describes Helga expressing a clear aversion to being boxed up or placed in a particular category and she begins to view her life in Harlem in similar terms. Whereas the Chicago crowd was multi-colored, and therefore supposedly more accepting of racial difference, Larsen’s description of Harlem’s crowd as decidedly Black implies a potential constriction in how Helga is able to express her subjectivity. Even the various shades that Helga encounters still self-identify with a monoracial, as opposed to mixed-race, subjectivity. The streets no longer hold the promise of freedom, agency and mobility they do for Djuna Barnes and the women in her articles. Larsen characterizes Helga incessant and increasing dissatisfaction with Harlem in enclosing and claustrophobic terms: “Her existence was bound by Central Park, Fifth Avenue, St. Nicholas Park, and One Hundred and Forty-fifth street. Not at all a narrow life” (Q 46). Initially uninhibited by the borders that mark Helga’s existence, Larsen progressively depicts the streets akin to a prison shutting Helga in and limiting her racial expression. Unlike Barnes’s *flânerie* which allowed her to venture into various spaces regardless of boundaries, the streets become a geographical cage for Helga. Barnes was able to transform the streets into sites of resistance for white women and demonstrate their increasing presence on urban streets and subsequently use *flânerie* to change the conversation surrounding women in public spaces. For Helga, the streets of Harlem prove to be narrow identity spaces because her feelings of happiness and acceptance did not last: “her need of something, something vaguely familiar, but which she could not put a name to and hold for definite examination, became almost intolerable. She went through moments of overwhelming anguish. She felt shut in, trapped...

more and more she made lonely excursions to places outside of Harlem” (Q 47). As Helga becomes increasingly disenchanted with Harlem, her once-disdainful view of spaces/places outside of Harlem vanishes and she begins venturing outside Harlem more frequently. By locating Helga in the spaces of white New York, Larsen demonstrates Helga’s attempts at locating a hybrid identity space outside of Harlem and a desire to not only interact with people expressing a monochromatic racial identity.

Helga’s relationship and view of the street changes as she becomes more and more dissatisfied with her place in Harlem and the images of shut-in spaces and claustrophobia increase. Harlem’s streets closing in and confining Helga reflect her anxiety of being constrained to a single racial identity and the changes in Helga’s emotional and mental states reflect the ways Larsen depicts the streets:

It was a sulky, humid night, a thick furry night, through which the electric torches shone like silver fuzz—an atrocious night for cabareting...The night was far from quiet, the streets far from empty. Clanging trolley bells, quarreling cats, cackling phonographs, raucous laughter, complaining motor-horns, low singing, mingled in the familiar medley that is Harlem. Black figures, white figures, little forms, big forms, small groups, large groups, sauntered, or hurried by. It was gay, grotesque, and a little weird. Helga Crane felt singularly apart from it all. (Q 58)

The streets are no longer seen as hospitable and Larsen emphasizes Helga’s alienation from the crowd. The crowd itself is fragmented rather than a wholesome, composed entity. Unlike Barnes, Larsen once again utilizes the crowd’s fragmentation as a parallel to Helga’s inability to belong, while the sulkiness, humidity, and thickness of the night’s atmosphere serve as constricting factors that suffocate Helga’s mixed-race identity. No longer a space of sanctuary and acceptance

where Helga can easily belong, the crowd resembles the suffocating atmosphere of Naxos with its thick, furry, and fuzzy characteristics.

The spatiality of Harlem's streets, coupled with the ways that her body manifests itself in this particular space, contribute to Helga's inability to locate a hybrid identity space. Although not directly on a street, the cabaret strongly influences Helga's perception of her own body and subsequently, her perception of her own racial identity. The cabaret is described as a grotesque descent into hell where Helga encounters bodies of all shapes, sizes, and shades (Q 58-59). Helga is completely entranced by the scene and the music, "ambling lazily to a crooning melody, or violently twisting their bodies, like whirling leaves, to a sudden streaming rhythm, or shaking themselves ecstatically to a thumping of unseen tomtoms... The essence of life seemed bodily motion" (Q 59). Helga revels in the music and her own body's movements, however, when the music stops, "a shameful certainty that not only had she been in the jungle, but that she had enjoyed it, began to taunt her. She hardened her determination to get away. She wasn't, she told herself, a jungle creature" (Q 59). The way Larsen crafts Helga's mentality in this particular space is doubly important: first, it further solidifies Helga's alienation from Black Harlem and secondly, it reinforces her desire to belong in a place where her mixed racial identity can be easily expressed. The fact that Helga is moved by the music and the surroundings speaks to her Black identity and Maria Blashaw writes that "whilst she dances, Helga experiences herself as participating in an authentic sense of racial belonging, which is described as narcotic and ecstatic, a kind of primitive regression." (317). However, Helga's simultaneous association of ecstasy with the spaces of the jungle implies a problematic and negative connection between herself and her Black identity.

The hybrid space that Helga searches for manifests itself in the body of Audrey Denney, a light-skinned Black woman Helga encounters at the cabaret and whom Anne Grey unjustly vilifies for associating with both Blacks and whites and for living outside of Harlem. Anne calls her behavior “outrageous” and “treacherous” (Q 61), further reinforcing the boundaries of the color line. Helga is drawn to Audrey because she appears to live the kind of life that Helga wants for herself – where she is accepted by members of both races and as mixed-race: “She felt that it would be useless to tell them that what she felt for the beautiful, calm, cool girl who had the assurance, the courage, so placidly to ignore racial barriers and give her attention to people, was not contempt, but envious admiration” (Q 62). Unlike Audrey, however, Helga does not possess the courage or the fortitude to completely break free of racial expectations, resulting in the constant inability to find a hybrid identity space.

Similar to her experiences in Naxos, Helga’s failure to reconcile the two aspects of her racial identity and find a space of acceptance stems from others’ inability to consider the existence of a mixed-race subjectivity. On her arrival in Harlem, Mrs. Hayes-Rore tells Helga not to mention that her mother’s side of the family is white, resulting in a negation of Helga’s identity that comes to the forefront in the cabaret. Through Helga’s mixed-race status and ability to understand both sides of the color line, Larsen critiques the ways some African Americans were simultaneously preoccupied by racial issues and subjected to and exhibited racism themselves (Carby 171). This is best represented by Anne Grey who “hated white people with a deep and burning hatred...But she aped their clothes, their manners, and their gracious ways of living. While proclaiming loudly the undiluted good of all things Negro, yet she disliked the songs, the dances, and the softly blurred speech of the race” (Q 48). Helga “disparages the hypocrisy of the emerging black middle class. This class, she felt, condemned white racism

while imitating white middle-class behavior and adopting their values and moral code” (Carby 168). Helga is contemptuous of Anne for her closed minded and hypocritical views but does not challenge her on these beliefs nor does she do anything to change her own position within this social structure. What irks Anne about Audrey Denney is the latter’s ability to seamlessly belong to and be accepted by both races, a point Larsen echoes in *Passing* with Irene and Clare’s relationship. Anne is incapable of seeing Audrey as a member of both races but instead treats her as a traitor to her race. This type of thinking is strongly applicable to Helga because she herself is mixed race and the majority of her alienation in the places she goes to arises from others’ inability to see her as mixed race. Audrey Denney functions as a synecdoche for the color line (or for the more deep-seeded racial prejudices exhibited by both races) and for Helga’s own fears of how she would be treated if she were to present herself as mixed-race.

Throughout *Quicksand*, Larsen explores what it means for mixed-race women to occupy certain spaces/places, what they specifically look like, and how they influence mixed-race women’s agency and identity formation. By creating Helga as a mixed-race character, Larsen additionally comments on the role that race plays in the spaces that were available to mixed-race women. For Helga, space/place becomes inextricably tied to identity and agency and, as a result, influences the types of life she is able to craft for herself. Referring to the connection between life and race, Larsen writes:

But when mental doors were deliberately shut on those skeletons that stalked lively and full health through the consciousness of every person of Negro ancestry in America – conspicuous black, obvious brown, or indistinguishable white – life was intensely amusing, interesting, absorbing, and enjoyable; singularly lacking in that tone of anxiety which the insecurities of existence seemed to ferment in other people. (Q 96)

As we have seen, Helga frequently attempts to locate a hybrid space where her mixed-race identity will be accepted, which would make for a more bearable and even more interesting life. The various spaces that Helga occupies reflect her own experiences and emotions and force her to continue searching for a hybrid space. Michael Keith and Steve Pile correctly posit that “spatiality should simultaneously express people’s experiences of...displacement (a feeling of being out of place), dislocation (relating to alienation) and fragmentation (the jarring multiple identities). Spatialities represent both the spaces between multiple identities and the contradictions within identities” (225). Over the course of the novel, each space Helga occupies forces her to feel either displaced, fragmented, or alienated. Naxos, for example, was never a space that Helga felt that she could fit into well and led to feelings of displacement. While Harlem, with its emphasis on the boundaries of the color line, reinforced Helga’s fragmented view of her racial identity.

Ultimately, Helga is never able to reconcile these experiences with her spatiality, which prevents her from finding and occupying a hybrid space. Rather than coming into an identity and occupying a space based on that identity, Helga “passes between places and through communities” (Scheper 693). The primary reason Helga is unable to find a hybrid space is the lack of community, support, and acknowledgement she encounters in the various spaces/places she traverses and the people she encounters there. A number of critics have discussed the metaphor of quicksand and the ways it relates to Helga and her identity.⁸ What all of these critics emphasize is the ability to escape quicksand with outside help which, when applied to her struggles with identity and spatiality, Helga never receives because no one values or understands her mixed-race subjectivity. Unlike the previous spaces that fostered a sense of community and support, especially Hull-House, by providing members with resources and understanding, Helga

never experiences that type of a community. By having Helga fail in her attempts at creating a hybrid space, Larsen demonstrate how race and corporeality affect mixed-race women's agency and the ways that space influences mixed-race women differently from the white women discussed in the preceding chapters. By locating Helga in the rural South, Larsen demonstrates how the freedom and acceptance of identity promised by urban spaces (demonstrated by the women I discuss in the previous chapters) is out of reach for mixed-race women during this time.

The Passing Body and the Skyscraper

Larsen's second novel, *Passing*, deals more broadly with the passing body and the implications associated with the spaces it occupies, the most prominent of which is the skyscraper. In *Passing*, Larsen continues the trajectory she developed in *Quicksand* which underscores the connection between identity and space/place. However, unlike *Quicksand*, which focuses on the formation of a hybrid identity space that is social and psychological in nature, my analysis of *Passing* returns to a discussion of architectural spaces and their impact on race and identity formation. Larsen explores the issue through the relationship between two mixed-race women, Clare Kendry and Irene Redfield, who are light enough to pass, and frequently do for various reasons throughout the novel. Their passing is heavily dependent upon the built spaces they occupy and lay claim to, the most influential of which is the skyscraper. Unlike the white women discussed in the previous chapter for whom the skyscraper represented forward progress, career aspirations, and numerous other opportunities, I argue that in *Passing*, the skyscraper holds the potential to both create new facets of racial identity and simultaneously hinder the achievement of this new identity.

In the first three decades of the twentieth century, the skyscraper came to represent architectural progress and American modernity and became a prominent feature of urban

skylines during the 1920s (especially in New York and Chicago). Despite this, the advancement and innovation inherent in the skyscraper's growth rests upon "the national anxieties and exclusionary practices on which they were initially designed" (Shon 440), especially in regards to race. African Americans were involved in skyscraper construction, yet the downtown districts where skyscrapers were predominantly located were exclusionary spaces for many Black individuals during this time. Sue Shon writes that "architectural and urban aesthetics were designed to enforce de jure and de facto segregation" and that the "liberalism idealized in the skyscraper was conceptualized through the reality of racial exclusion. This tension yields yet another: the 'grandeur' of skyscraper aesthetics is not only complicit with racial unfreedom but also silences the racism of design" (440-441). Even though the skyscraper led to economic progress, there were also a number of social problems directly caused by and associated with its progress. The skyscraper as a symbol of modernity relegates these problems "further into the shadows, hidden, as it were, beneath artful yet deceptive images that have inspired pride in what in fact is the source of despair" (Abbott 70).

Because Larsen bookends her novel with two skyscraper spaces, the text lends itself well to a discussion of how Black and mixed-race bodies occupy the skyscraper's spaces. Although numerous critics have analyzed the novel's events that take place in the skyscraper, few have incorporated architectural and spatial elements of the skyscraper into their analysis. Scholars agree that passing is a spatial practice, however, similar to the broad geographic spaces focused on in *Quicksand*, they do not analyze the skyscraper as a space and the role it plays in both facilitating and hindering the act of passing.⁹ Although valuable in their contributions on the mutual relationship between race and the skyscraper's built environment, these studies do not adequately discuss the role that the body plays in influencing how Clare and Irene perceive the

spaces of the skyscraper. As a result, I analyze how Clare and Irene's bodies are analogous to the skyscraper which allows them to formulate new racialized subjectivities and agencies. In addition, I expand upon Shon's argument by including class, in addition to her discussion of race, among the specific exclusionary practices related to the skyscraper that manifest themselves in Irene's subjectivity.

Passing begins by locating Irene Redfield in the streets of Chicago on a blistering and humid day. Larsen describes Chicago as a city in heat, where "the very outlines of the buildings shuddered as if in protest at the heat. Quivering lines sprang up from baked pavements and wriggled along the shining car-tracks. The automobiles parked at the kerbs [sic] were a dancing blaze, and the glass of the shop-windows threw out a blinding radiance. Sharp particles of dust rose from the burning sidewalks, stinging the seared or dripping skins of wilting pedestrians" (*P* 146). Unable to stand the heat and on the brink of fainting, Irene hails a cab that takes her to the Drayton Hotel and the refreshing breezes on its rooftop. The sharp imagery of the downtown streets, its sensory difficulties, and the mass conglomeration of perspiring bodies is placed in stark contrast to the refreshingly cool atmosphere of the Drayton's roof. Alighting from the elevator, Irene is

led to a table just in front of a long window whose gently moving curtains suggested a cool breeze. It was, she thought, like being wafted upward on a magic carpet to another world, pleasant, quiet, and strangely remote from the sizzling one that she had left below...She surveyed the room about her or looked out over some lower buildings at the bright unstirred blue of the lake reaching away to an undetected horizon. (*P* 147-148)

The rooftop space is correctly described as a separate world, not only in temperature and ambiance, but also in terms of race and class. The quiet and coolness of the roof is directly

opposed to the sizzling cacophony Irene experienced on the street, and it provides her with the ability to not only survey the room but also the street below at a comfortable and remote distance. Larsen creates this as a space that only a select group of people can occupy and, by consciously passing, Irene is asserting her right to be in this space as well.

Yet this particular example also demonstrates the ways that being atop the skyscraper affects lines of sight and perception. Just as being atop the Drayton influences Irene's view of lower buildings and makes the horizon blurry and imperceptible, so does it influence the ways that race is perceived in this space. Brown argues that "*Passing* represents racial perception not as a single linear act but as a collection of sensations and calculations conditioned by the built environment" (*The Black Skyscraper* 100). As a result, the spaces of the skyscraper become conducive for the act of passing. Additionally, the spaces of the skyscraper lend themselves to a better understanding of how the body is viewed in this space. The skyscraper was a site that disoriented perceptions and, as a result, allowed Irene to pass actively and get a reprieve from the racial gaze she might be subjected to elsewhere and under different circumstances (Brown, *The Black Skyscraper* 113). Irene does not consciously pass while on the street, only when she is atop the Drayton. Passing and the ways her body is perceived by others plays a crucial role in allowing Irene to lay claim to the rooftop space.

Irene's presence atop the Drayton's roof depends upon the ways that her body is perceived as a whole. Irene's body, the aura it exudes, and "her passing [confirm] that the ambiance of the rooftop restaurant – its whiteness privileges appearances that are congruent with the visual order of the modern skyscraper" (Shon 452). Clare, on the other hand, is presented as an agglomeration of body parts and adornments. Larsen focuses on Clare's husky voice, her "fluttering dress of green chiffon...wide mouth like a scarlet flower against the ivory of her

skin,” and her dark, almost black, eyes (*P* 148). Unlike Irene, whose racial crossing depends on the way her body is viewed as a whole, Clare’s success depends on racial markers that have been historically used to determine race. Unlike Helga, who is neither white nor Black, Clare is both white and Black (Hutchinson 294). Clare grows up between spaces and identities and this influences her passing and the way that her body is viewed. Her Black identity is essentially consumed by her white one.

Larsen’s initial description of Clare preempts Irene’s dismissal of her true racial identity being discovered in the spaces of the Drayton: “Did that woman, could that woman, somehow know that here before her very eyes on the roof of the Drayton sat a Negro? ... White people were so stupid about such things” because they insisted that they could tell by looking at a variety of body parts such as “finger-nails, palms of hands, shapes of ears, teeth” (*P* 150). For the two women, their passing and occupation of this space depends on their bodies’ surfaces and how they are seen by others. Julia S. Charles writes that “characters employ specific strategies of performance in order to be (in)visible in specific spaces, making the mixed-race figure an effective vehicle for deconstructing the racial binary on which the entire American legal system hinges” (135). Irene’s specific performance is how her body, and by extension her race, are always perceived to be “an Italian, a Spaniard, a Mexican, a gypsy” (*P* 150), compounded by her refusal to correct these assumptions.

The body plays a definite role in racial identification in the skyscraper; however, it plays an equally important role in allowing individuals the possibility to straddle the color line. Unlike Helga’s attempts at creating a hybrid space for her mixed-race identity, Clare Kendry specifically wants to straddle the color line and occupy both Black and white spaces, which she does by appropriating the skyscraper’s descriptive architectural characteristics. Elizabeth Grosz identifies

a constitutive and mutually defining relationship between bodies and cities and argues that “the body (and not simply a disembodied consciousness) must be considered active in the production and transformation of the city” (Grosz “Bodies-Cities” 300). One affects the construction of the other and vice versa. I argue that in *Passing* Larsen creates the same relationship between bodies and the skyscraper which affects the way Irene and Clare conceive of their racial identities and influences their occupation not only of the skyscraper’s spaces but the spaces along the color line as well. Through the various cultural and racial representations of the skyscraper, I demonstrate how Clare wants to occupy the space outside of Black and white, or both spaces simultaneously, and how Irene hinders these attempts by policing Clare’s clothing and admittance into the Harlem community.

Throughout the novel, Clare’s body, attitudes, and clothes are frequently likened to the architectural characteristics of skyscrapers. Larsen describes Clare as catlike on numerous occasions and associates her with “something mysterious and slightly furtive” (*P* 143), someone who is “capable of heights and depths of feeling” (*P* 195). Hutchinson posits that “Clare’s catlike quality and association with ‘heights and depths,’ ‘unfathomable’ expressions, are part of an imagistic structure that features dangerous chasms, walls, and precipices – all classic tropes for the color line in American culture” (304). However, I argue that these same qualities establish an inextricable connection between Clare and the skyscraper. Connecting the cultural position of skyscrapers in the early 20th century with the body, Ann Anlin Cheng writes:

The skyscraper’s impenetrable surface (or, at least, it seemed so back at the dawn of twentieth-century America) and its anonymity were originally meant not to alienate the modern subject but to protect him or her from the onslaught of modern life...At once shelter and trap, the skyscraper is both a product of industrialization and an embodiment

of the subsequent anxiety about the illogics of that industrial society...The skyscraper thus aims to extend, or even serve as a prosthetic for, the frail and bounded human body. Indeed, the technological innovation and structural design of the skyscraper echo this bodily greed: a growable, self-carrying steel skeleton, covered over with curtains of concrete that are often described as 'skin.' (84)

Cheng's connection between the skyscraper's architecture and the body's exteriority is directly related to how Larsen's characters use skin and clothing to signify a specific type of outward appearance and help disguise a Black interiority in the skyscraper's white spaces. Larsen makes the association between Clare and the skyscraper more obvious through the types of clothes that Clare wears and how they function as a type of armor that helps her cross the color line. The breezy green chiffon dress Clare wears when we initially meet her parallels the breezy cool atmosphere of the Drayton roof, while in another example Clare wears "a thin floating dress of the same shade of blue [as the walls and draperies], which suited her and the rather difficult room to perfection" (P 165). In both of these instances, Larsen uses clothing to both mask Clare's racial identity and emphasize her belonging in a white space. Additionally, the green and blue clothing echoes Helga's view of color. The fact that Clare wears colors deemed inappropriate for African American women to wear further solidifies her presence in white spaces.

Over the course of the novel's events, race and the skyscraper play an influential role in the development of Clare and Irene's relationship and their views of their own and each other's situations. From the outset, Clare is determined to maintain the life she acquired while passing and simultaneously reestablish her Black roots, telling Irene: "You don't know, you can't realize how I want to see Negroes, to be with them again, to talk with them, to hear them laugh" (P 200). By likening Clare's body to the skyscraper, Larsen demonstrates how Clare attempts to

appropriate the space of the skyscraper where she could be outside of racial definitions, however, Irene intervenes in this attempt. Sue Shon argues that Irene perpetuates the racist divisions represented by the skyscraper and incorporates its characteristics; “she becomes complicit with norming vision through the final part of the novel, which fixates on aesthetic appearances and numbed senses” (455). I expand on Shon’s argument and posit that in addition to appropriating and perpetuating the racial divisions inherent in the skyscraper’s spaces, Irene also internalizes white, middle class (Victorian) values. Ultimately, Irene wants to push Clare back into the boundaries of both race and class – into conventional values that observe the racial binary, similar to the indoctrination Helga rebelled against at Naxos.

Larsen uses clothing once again to signify both the way that Irene and Clare disguise their interiorities, but also as a way to signify how they embody the two contrasting representations of the skyscraper’s architectural aesthetic. Similar to Cheng’s connections between the skyscraper’s surface and the human body, Larsen parallels Clare and Irene’s clothes on the night of the Negro Welfare League’s charity dance:

Clare, exquisite, golden, fragrant, flaunting, in a stately gown of shining black taffeta, whose long, full skirt lay in graceful folds about her slim golden feet; her glistening hair drawn smoothly back into a small twist at the nape of her neck; her eyes sparkling like dark jewels. Irene, with her new rose- coloured [sic] chiffon frock ending at the knees, and her cropped curls, felt dowdy and common- place. She regretted that she hadn't counselled Clare to wear something ordinary and inconspicuous. (*P* 203)

Larsen creates a clear juxtaposition between the two women which also exemplifies the differing ways they embody the architectural features of the skyscraper. Clare, once again, is aesthetically pleasing to look at and Larsen’s use of specific descriptors hearken to the skyscraper’s exterior

appearance and its grand presence that conspicuously draws attention. This is directly aligned with how Irene is dressed and Larsen emphasizes the modest garment with its drab color that is more appropriate for a dowdy, middle-class woman. The choice in attire for both women is significant because it represents their position relative to the skyscraper. For Irene, specifically, it evokes the need to bring Clare back into the fold of both racial and middle-class sensibilities.

Despite the numerous parallels Larsen creates between Clare and skyscrapers, in addition to bookending the novella with two skyscraper settings, the only time the skyscraper is mentioned by name is in reference to Irene. In that particular moment, Irene becomes adamant in preserving and continuing the type of life she had built for herself and ensuring that Clare has no part in destroying it. Providing a glimpse into Irene's psyche, Larsen writes that "she would not go to Brazil. She belonged in this land of rising towers. She was an American. She grew from this soil, and she would not be uprooted. Not even because of Clare Kendry, or a hundred Clare Kendrys" (235). Larsen equates skyscrapers with race and Americanness, which underscores Irene's assertion that she belongs in a land populated by skyscrapers and will do anything to ensure her place among them. As a result, Irene incorporates the cultural and aesthetic qualities of the skyscraper with the goal of controlling and subverting Clare into her proper racial and class-dependent place.

Race plays a prominent role in the spaces that Irene and Clare occupy and their attempts at creating or finding a space that allows them to transcend their racial identities. Over the course of the novella, Larsen depicts Clare as belonging to neither race, or to both races simultaneously, which is bolstered by Clare's embodiment of the skyscraper's spaces. It is Clare's apathy toward race and refusal to adhere to the spatial restrictions that are governed by race that infuriate Irene and ultimately lead to Clare's death. Larsen writes that "Clare Kendry cared nothing for the race.

She only belonged to it” (*P* 182) and that she held “no allegiance beyond her own immediate desire. She was selfish, and cold, and hard” (*P* 144). This desire to do only what pleases her without thought of others is one of the reasons Irene thinks so poorly of her. Joyce E. Kelley writes that it is “Clare’s power to navigate between spaces that Irene desires, and it is Clare’s successful movement within the space between Irene and Brian that Irene most detests” (101). Steve Pile expands this idea by arguing that “Irene also shores up the sense of where black people and white people are supposed to be: disguising one’s identity to live in the ‘wrong’ space is, for her, intolerable. Irene simply cannot live with Clare’s destabilization of the boundaries between white and black spaces: both by inhabiting them and by crossing them” (*Skin, Race and Space*” 36). By embodying the racial and class-based divisions inherent in skyscraper spaces, Irene attempts to force Clare back into her proper racial and class category and subsequently secure her own world and the life that she had built in it.

Unlike Clare, Irene is never able to forego her race and the spatial boundaries that are associated with it, and it is this inability that causes Irene’s growing resentment towards Clare and Clare’s subsequent death. Larsen depicts Irene wrestling with her racial identity:

She was caught between two allegiances, different, yet the same. Herself. Her race. Race! The thing that bound and suffocated her. Whatever steps she took, or if she took none at all, something would be crushed...Irene Redfield wished, for the first time in her life, that she had not been born a Negro. For the first time she suffered and rebelled because she was unable to disregard the burden of race. It was, she cried silently, enough to suffer as a woman, an individual, on one's own account, without having to suffer for the race as well. (*P* 225)

Larsen demonstrates how Irene's inability to cross both racial and class boundaries is inextricably tied up in her sense of self. Unlike Clare, who has been adeptly straddling boundaries for years, Irene's inability to do so causes a crisis of identity and leads to Clare's fall from the sixth floor of an apartment building. Although much debate exists on the ambiguity surrounding Clare's death, I contend that if we truly consider how Irene embodies the racist and classist aspects of the skyscraper and its rise, then it becomes clear that she plays a role in (if not directly causes) Clare's death. Charles writes that "characters of mixed status are always engaging in identity politics no matter how they choose to identify. Indeed, the mixed-race body often engages in resistance politics that reject certain prevailing racial discourses, which police boundaries of both identity and community" (135). Because of Irene's own crisis in relation to her racial identity, she polices the boundary and prevents Clare from crossing back and regaining her place in the African American community.

As a result, Larsen asserts that Clare cannot simultaneously occupy two identities or perpetually cross racial boundaries and that is why she dies. In the penultimate scene in the sixth-floor apartment, Clare is standing on a literal boundary, at the open window, as her husband barges in to confront her about her racial identity. Despite this, Clare "seemed unaware of any danger or uncaring. There was even a faint smile on her full, red lips, and in her shining eyes. It was that smile that maddened Irene. She ran across the room, her terror tinged with ferocity, and laid a hand on Clare's bare arm" (*P* 238-239). Susan Friedman writes that borders "erect categorical and material walls between identities. Identity is in fact unthinkable without some sort of imagined or literal boundary. But borders also specify the liminal space in between, the interstitial site of interaction, interconnection, and exchange" (Friedman 3). It is Clare's determination to live in and lay claim to the liminal spaces between Black and white identity and

Irene's policing of this border that ultimately leads to Clare's death. As a result, the boundaries between both race and class are secured and Larsen demonstrates that no matter how modern or aesthetically pleasing American skyscrapers could be, the racism and classicism inherent in their architectural spaces leave no room for individuals who attempt to cross boundaries into new spaces of identity. The spaces of the skyscraper work to control bodies and individual expression and fit them into socially, culturally, and racially prescribed molds. As a result, "Larsen's novel suggests, there is no building tall enough, no street dense enough to permanently decommission the desire for race or to dismantle the economic and social systems built on and maintained by racial hierarchies" (Brown, *The Black Skyscraper* 103-104).

Conclusion

In *Quicksand* and *Passing*, Nella Larsen explores and comments on the ways that space/place influences mixed-race women's subjectivity, mobility, and agency. Her plots and characters not only traverse two of the major cities responsible for igniting the growth of industry, art, culture, skyscrapers, and women's rights, but the smaller spaces and places whose singular influence forever marked the women who moved through these spaces and how the spaces/places themselves were marked by the women who reconfigured and restructured both their physical attributes and the public conversation to lay claim to them. Ultimately, Larsen is invaluable in expanding our understanding of how mixed-race women navigated the urban spaces of modernity. The spaces and places discussed in this chapter signify the changing social, cultural, and economic situations women faced at the turn of the twentieth century.

In addition to the ways Nella Larsen negotiated the relationship between race and space/place, the women writers I discuss in this project together mark the shifts and changes that occurred in women's ability to occupy and transform public spaces, locate existing spaces as

women's, and carve new and emerging spaces for women's work. The women of Hull-House have demonstrated how pooling their collective energies and resources results in lasting social and economic reform, and the creation of a new type of female urban reformer. Djuna Barnes's revolutionary work as a woman journalist helped uncover new and existing spaces/places of women's entertainment and aided in changing the public's perception of the relationship between working girls and leisure, while Faith Baldwin depicted the evolving spaces of women's work and solidified the notion that many women want to work and have the opportunity to establish successful careers. Above all else, this project demonstrates the ways that modernist-minded, bohemian, racially-conscious, middle-to-upper class women reshaped and re-imagined urban spaces with the goal of enriching, foregrounding, and legitimize women's experiences in the modern city. The social, cultural, economic, and literary work done by the women of Hull-House, Djuna Barnes, Faith Baldwin, and Nella Larsen underscores the importance of how space and place are perceived, created, imagined and inhabited. Although a fraction of the work undertaken by Progressive-era women, their contributions prove invaluable in challenging and reconfiguring turn-of-the-century ideas about public space and who occupies them.

Notes

Introduction

¹ See Georg Simmel, “The Metropolis and Mental Life” and Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*.

² See Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City*, and “Metropolitan Perceptions and the Emergence of Modernism;” Amy Kaplan, *The Social Construction of American Realism*; and Philip Fisher, *Hard Facts*. Williams is indispensable in his studies of the urban and rural divide, which record his own movements between the two spaces arguing that a key component of the modern experience is the back-and-forth movement between the country and the city. Kaplan writes that the city has long been viewed as a “spatial metonymy for the elusive process of social change” (44). Fisher’s identification of the city as a privileged setting in American fiction labels it a site of opportunity and possibility; of “‘about-to-be’ realized future states” (12).

³ The statistics in this paragraph are from Meyerowitz, *Women Adrift* (xvii-5).

⁴ Stansell argues that for working class women, agency on the city’s streets was inevitable and domesticity “became an element of bourgeois self-consciousness” (Stansell xii). Joanne Meyerowitz and Kathy Peiss write pivotal cultural studies about how working-class women at the turn-of-the-century challenged and transformed Victorian notions of female work and leisure. Focusing on single women who moved to Chicago in search of work between 1880 and 1930, Meyerowitz’s discussion of these so-called ‘women adrift’ provides insight into how they challenged the Victorian ethos of women as passionless angels in the home and how their presence in society influenced popular culture and inspired reform efforts. Peiss builds on Meyerowitz’s points by discussing how women’s shifts in employment allowed for increased autonomy and leisure. Her study is one of the first to take into consideration how women utilized the public spaces available to them and is one of the first to focus on place as a defining marker of women’s urban experience.

⁵ Deutsch, Sewell, and Flanagan concentrate their studies on middle- and upper-class women and the city but simultaneously expand our understanding of the relationship between women and the urban environment and the central role women have had in defining and influencing their urban geography. Deutsch argues that Boston women had an active role in shaping the city and its geography. Nevertheless, she primarily locates women’s labor in the home and their organizational efforts in reconceiving public space. Flanagan writes about Chicago women’s efforts for social and civic reform after the Great Fire in 1871. Flanagan’s study is one of the few to discuss how women of all classes, socioeconomic backgrounds, and races pooled their collective energies to worked toward not only social reform, but civic and municipal reform as well, transforming Chicago into a city that worked for the common good of all of its citizens. Jessica Sewell’s study explicitly locates San Francisco women of varying classes within built spaces and looks at how spaces were built in relation to the women in them. Sewell argues that “gender systems and the built environment are mutually constitutive;” one influences the other and vice-versa (xiii). She expands upon Henri Lefebvre’s imaginative and theoretical conceptualization of spaces adding a vital contribution on the built environment.

⁶ Flanagan and Sewell are the only two that detract from this idea and address the fact that women moved around in cities for other reasons. Another component that is missing is race. Only Deutsch and Flanagan discuss how African American women moved throughout cities and the urban spaces they occupied.

⁷ For a discussion of Victorian literary women's mobility in the city see Wendy Parkins, *Mobility and Modernity in Women's Novels* and Deborah Epstein Nord, *Walking the Victorian Streets: Women, Representation, and the City*.

⁸ See Susan Saegert, "Masculine Cities and Feminine Suburbs" and Ernest W. Burgess, "The Growth of the City."

⁹ The fact that Chicago was chosen as a symbol of that progress was critiqued by many at the time. The city itself was relatively new, having existed in its metropolitan capacity for only a few decades compared to cities like New York, Philadelphia, and Washington D.C. However, James Gilbert argues that this is precisely the characteristic that allowed Chicago to be the beacon of how far American progress had come and where it could still go (2). The Fair's organizers aimed to capitalize on this opportunity for Chicago (and subsequently, America) to prove its industrial and technological prowess.

¹⁰ The concept of the White City put forth by the planners and organizers of the World's Columbian Exposition marked a turning point in urban development. The White City stood as a "model for the apotheosis of the modern city," with its neoclassical exterior that overlay feats in modern construction and engineering (Hales 218-219). Organizers and planners clearly wanted to disseminate a utopian image of what an American city at the turn-of-the-century could look like and signal to future generations the place and role of urbanity in American progress. The White City represented the inspiration of what future cities could look like if they were reformed (Boyer 182-183), yet this vision came with its own set of unintended complications.

¹¹ The facts and figures in this paragraph are pulled from Lisa Krissoff Boehm and Steven H. Corey's *America's Urban History*, Norman Bolotin and Christine Laing's *The World's Columbian Exposition*, and Paul Boyer's *Urban Masses and Moral Order in America*.

¹² Boehm and Corey give four reasons for this exponential urban growth at the end of the century: (1) natural increase, (2) mass immigration, (3) migration from rural areas, and (4) the annexation of neighboring areas (144-145).

¹³ It is important to note that even though New York City served as the primary port of entry for the majority of immigrants coming to the United States, not all of them remained there. A fair amount moved to other major cities, transforming the primarily Protestant culture of the nation in the process.

¹⁴ Despite the apparent growth and progress, American cities at the turn of the twentieth-century were also sites of increasing unrest. The steady influx of immigrants resulted in the departure of higher-class residents that functioned as a precursor to the white flight into American suburbs in the 1950s. The increasing populations of foreign newcomers additionally bore witness to the continued deterioration of slums and tenements (Boyer 124). "In the parlors of middle-class America, these developments were the source of profound uneasiness," as general urban disorder increasingly gave way to labor unrest by the end of the century (Boyer 125).

¹⁵ See, for example, Stephen Crane's *Maggie*, Dreiser's *Sister Carrie*, Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle*, and Rebecca Harding Davis's *Life in the Iron Mills*. Nineteenth-century British authors have also dealt with this representation. See the work of Elizabeth Gaskell, Benjamin Disraeli, and Charles Dickens to only name a few.

¹⁶ Christine Stansell offers a compelling description and argument on how streets and working-class neighborhoods in nineteenth-century New York City were viewed both by the upper classes and the numerous social reform organization that operated within their borders. For additional information see, Boyer, Chapter 5 and Meyerowitz, Chapters 5 and 6, and Peiss, Chapter 7.

¹⁷ Nord provides another perspective, writing that “the figure of the fallen woman – the street prostitute and ultimately the bourgeois wife with a past – served as a means of representing first the novelty and buoyancy and then the danger and inevitability of urban experience” (13).

¹⁸ See also Elizabeth Wilson, *The Sphinx in the City* (1991), Ruth Rosen, *The Lost Sisterhood* (1982), Judith Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight* (1992), and George Chauncey, *Gay New York* (1994).

Chapter One

¹ Alan Trachtenberg writes that despite the promise of progressiveness and reform the image of the White City offered, it was still positioned as a direct opposite to the real city of Chicago just outside its gates (211). William Cronon makes a similar point by identifying a paradox of the Fair, a tension between the idealized “fairy city” of the Fair and the real Chicago (349). He writes that the White City “glorified Chicago’s past by seeming to offer a blueprint for its future...holding up a vision of what urban life could be if only the crowded and ugly parts of the city could be remade according to [middle class] genteel visions” (Cronon 348).

² For biographical information on Jane Addams and the founding of Hull-House see: Eleanor J. Stebner, *The Women of Hull House*; Victoria Bissell Brown, “Introduction” to *Twenty Years at Hull-House*; and Jean Bethke Elshtain, *Jane Addams and the Dream of American Democracy*.

³ Men and women who worked and lived at Hull-House were called residents. Immigrants and other members of the working class were referred to as neighbors by Addams and other residents. Jasmin Creed Rowan posits that settlement writers changed the narrative surrounding the people and places they were helping by referring to them as neighbors, “rather than as the deserving or undeserving” (395).

⁴ The facts and figures on the settlement house movement in this and the following paragraphs come from a number of influential sources: Allen F. Davis, *Spearheads of Reform*; Paul Boyer, *Urban Masses and Moral Order*; Mina Carson, *Settlement Folk*; Andrew Feffer, *Chicago Pragmatists and American Progressivism*; Sarah Deutsch, *Women and the City*; Peter Hales, *Silver Cities*; and Ruth Crocker, *Social Work and Social Order*.

⁵ The nineteenth century also witnessed the advent of the YMCA and YWCA which provided services for young men and women working in the city. Although both the YMCA and the settlement house movement provided services, lectures, and boarding, the YMCA and YWCA worked to help individuals become economically self-sufficient (Spain, *How Women Saved the City* 18). For more on the YMCA and its urban mission see Nina Mjagkij and Margaret Spratt, *Men and Women Adrift*; Jessica I. Elfenbein, *The Making of a Modern City*. For a comparative study of the YWCA and the College Settlement Association (CSA), see Daphne Spain, *How Women Saved the City*.

⁶ Regardless of this, some settlement houses were quite religious in their foundations and relations with the communities they were serving, while others remained explicitly secular. Hull-House did not actively engage in religious conversion or any religious activity but rather drew on a variety of differing religious principles in its work. For more information on religious practices in settlement houses as well as efforts at Americanization, see Ruth Crocker’s *Social Work and Social Order*, which focuses on the settlement house movement in Indianapolis and Gary, IN and Allen F. Davis’s *Spearheads for Reform*.

⁷ However, this did not mean that Hull-House did not provide aid, especially during difficult times like the Pullman Strike in 1894, which highlights the settlement's ability to change its direction based on the neighborhood's immediate needs.

⁸ There are two opposing viewpoints of these visits: they allowed residents to establish mutual trust with their neighbors and cede spatial authority. On the other hand, unsolicited visitations were a common practice in charity distribution during this time (Jackson 54-55).

⁹ There were a few located in the South, however the majority of them were nothing more than modified missions and did not exhibit an interest in true social reform that dominated much of the Progressive Era (Davis 23-27).

¹⁰ For discussions on the connection between Hull-House and democratic reform, see Dorothy Ross, "Gendered Social Knowledge: Domestic Discourse, Jane Addams, and the Possibilities of Social Science," Graham Culbertson, "Jane Addams's Progressive Democracy: Hull-House and the Ethics of Reform," Petra Munro, "'Widening the Circle': Jane Addams, Gender, at the Re/Definition of Democracy," and Jean Bethke Elshtain's biography, *Jane Addams and the Dream of American Democracy*, which frames Addams's life through the democratic ideals she espoused. For a discussion of Hull-House's role in immigrant reform, see Rivkah Shpak-Lisak, *Pluralism and Progressivism: Hull House and the New Immigrants, 1890-1919* and Sarah E. Chinn's "'To Reveal the Humble Immigrant Parents to Their Own Children': Immigrant Women, Their American Daughters, and the Hull -House Labor Museum."

¹¹ See Ruth Crocker, *Social Work and Social Order* for a discussion of specific missions and foci implemented by settlement houses during this period.

¹² The Hull-House Settlement was made possible partly through Helen Culver's donations. She not only donated the original house but the land that would eventually house the settlement's adjoining buildings. The name "Hull House" and its familial connotations hearkens back to the old homestead built by Charles Hull in 1856. Although Hull-House was not the only settlement to incorporate "house" in its name, doing so emphasized its close alignment with the traditional domesticity women challenged through their act of settling in poor neighborhoods. The settlement's choice to keep "house" in its name speaks to how cognizant Addams and Starr were of Hull-House's connections to domesticity and how their work would unsettle it.

¹³ It also provided unmarried women, who would otherwise be seen as a burden on society, a sanctioned outlet for their time and energy as well as a sanctuary against society's criticism for their unmarried status (Vicinus 32-33). Mina Carson corroborates this point and posits that the settlement movement soon became a vehicle through which women could break out of their socially prescribed roles and be a part of something larger that allowed them to be a benefit to society rather than a burden.

¹⁴ Commonly known as neurasthenia and famously depicted by Charlotte Perkins Gilman in "The Yellow Wall-Paper" (1892). Laura R. Fisher posits that Addams's diagnosis as a neurasthenic led to her view of reform work as an integral part of the recovery process (47).

¹⁵ The confluence between domesticity and urbanity is a necessary component of modern space. Over the course of the nineteenth-century, the American home became the site of ever-increasing separation of public and private and set the stage for dramas of sexual politics and class warfare. What was once considered to be a mixed space of private domesticity and public employment, the changing social and cultural paradigms of the nineteenth-century city led to the belief that the home should be a space of refuge from the activity and vices prevalent in the city.

¹⁶ See two additional articles by Sharon Haar, "At Home in Public: The Hull House Settlement and the Study of the City" and "Location, Location, Location: Gender and the Archaeology of

Urban Settlement.” For an in-depth architectural analysis of Hull-House and its public qualities in relation to women’s space see Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz, “Hull-House as Women’s Space.” For information on the restoration of the Jane Addams Hull-House mansion and subsequent creation of the Jane Addams Hull-House Museum in 1967 see Erin Cunningham, “Interiors, Histories, and the Preservation of Chicago’s Hull House Settlement.”

¹⁷ Many critics tend to focus their studies on the women of Hull-House, namely Jane Addams, Florence Kelley, Julia Lathrop, and Dr. Alice Hamilton and their efforts at promoting democracy and social reform while simultaneously creating a female-centered and female-led community of reformers. Petra Munro casts Addams in a central role in the creation of sociology as a woman’s field and illustrates how Addams used her background, education, and settlement work to “construct a gendered conception of social knowledge different from that of her university contemporaries” (236).

¹⁸ This belief manifested itself in the first building built for the settlement in 1890, the Butler Art Gallery, with a spacious studio on the second floor devoted to an art exhibit. Addams believed that “the harmony produced by beautiful pictures on the walls, the pleasures and benefits of exercising one’s mental faculties, the broadening of social outlook beyond self and family would provide solace and imaginative stimulus” (Sicherman 167). This belief stretched past the walls of the Butler Gallery into other buildings as well. A photograph of the nursery depicts cribs surrounded by classical Renaissance art, reaffirming Addams’s belief in the value of art as a form of cultural enrichment.

¹⁹ The city, therefore, becomes an extension of the domestic sphere and numerous women argued that increased political power and the ability to vote would allow them to be more successful in this endeavor. The growing feminist movement and the arrival of the New Woman at the turn-of-the-twentieth-century aimed to reduce the divide between domesticity and public life that resulted from capitalism and asserted that women should control the socialization of domestic work (Hayden 3-5).

²⁰ Permissions applied for.

²¹ See Sklar et al., “How Did Changes in the Built Environment at Hull-House Reflect the Settlement’s Interaction with Its Neighbors, 1889-1912?” All photographs discussed in this chapter can be found here. Permission to reproduce photographs has been applied for.

²² To view the evolution of Hull-House, see

<https://hullhouse.uic.edu/hull/urbanexp/geography/groundplans.html#>

²³ The floorplan of the original house depicts rooms that were traditionally designed and arranged to reflect an appropriate lifestyle for the middle-class American family. A courtyard that removed the house from the street led to a porch which then opened up onto a vestibule. To the right were two parlors, one larger than the other. On the left were a library, a dining room, and a small octagon-shaped room. The staircase led to the second floor where there was a bathroom and private bedrooms.

²⁴ But even the bedrooms themselves witnessed glimpses of their residents’ public lives. Shannon Jackson gives the example of Hull-House theater director Edith de Nancrede storing theater props in her bedroom, transforming her innermost private space into one with public qualities (165). Jackson’s interview with a former Hull-House child additionally highlights how residents had to frequently give up their rooms to overnight guests. Such fluctuations created living spaces that were continuously in flux and did not fit neatly into the mold of private domesticity.

²⁵ Laura R. Fisher identifies clubs as the nucleus of settlement life that were essential in traversing social and cultural boundaries. She posits that the club room as a space worked in instilling individuals with “right ideas” in an effort to help them become more well-rounded (46). Despite the inculturation, clubs and other social activities were invaluable in creating an accepting and tolerant atmosphere and fostering the relationship between residents and neighbors. Haar contends that “the distribution of the ‘programmes’ [sic] formalized the activities of the house, connecting it to the neighborhood and potential supporters. The house was an extension of the homes of its neighbors but it was also a forum for civic life paralleling that of the greater city” (“At Home” 106-107).

²⁶ Single young women working in cities who did not live with family members were known as women adrift and caused significant social and moral anxiety. The woman adrift is perhaps best exemplified by Theodore Dreiser’s *Carrie Meeber*. For more discussion, see Joanne Meyerowitz, *Women Adrift*.

²⁷ However, by arranging these techniques linearly on a timeline, it implies that some of the earlier techniques, that are still in use today, are inferior to those that come after it (Jackson 160).

Chapter Two

¹ Demographic information on newspaper readership during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth-centuries is difficult to come by. Contemporary studies on the state of the newspaper business during this period deal more closely with the gender divide in readership, never failing to note that with the advent of the department store in the 1880s and the increased prevalence of advertisements, newspapers began to increasingly cater to a female audience. Michael Schudson’s *Discovering the News* discusses a class divide in newspaper readership, stating that the educated middle class wanted to read newspapers that were information-based, while the middle and working classes tended to gravitate toward the story ideal (90-91). Regardless, we can conclude that Barnes constructs a specific type of imagined female reader for her journalism. Speaking specifically to Barnes’s stunt articles, Nancy Bombaci writes that Barnes’s ideal female reader is “intelligent and sophisticated enough to discern and admire her act” (165). Jean Marie Lutes writes that newspapers were courting women readers more aggressively than ever before at then turn-of-the-century (5). Because of this specific readership, I contend that Barnes’s stories speak directly to the changing sociocultural position of women in the urban landscape.

² It is important to note that newspaper men also wrote human interest pieces and used pathos as an acceptable tool in their own writing (Fahs 12). Nevertheless, newspaper women were more likely to spotlight women’s experiences and actively worked to increase their own relationship with public space as a way of bolstering their experience while simultaneously rejecting Victorian ideals of womanhood and sentimentalism (Fahs 10-14).

³ Karen Roggenkamp dubs this a type of “‘new journalism’ – an innovative, commercialized, sensationalistic, and above all dramatic style of reportage” that was characterized not by “inherently newsworthy content...but by an amalgamation of an ‘event, idea, and story or drama’” and was chiefly perpetuated by the *Sun*, the *World*, and the *New York Journal* in the last decades of the nineteenth century (*Narrating the News* xii-xiii). Alice Fahs posits that sensationalist stories featuring stunts increased readership exponentially, especially when it was women performing seemingly dangerous stunts and exposing their bodies to dangerous situations; situations and spaces that were typically off limits to women during this time (5-6).

⁴ Barnes grew up in a literary and artistic family. Her mother, Elizabeth, was a violinist and poet, and her father, Wald, dabbled in music, painting, and writing. Barnes's grandmother, Zadel Barnes, was an influential figure in the literary community and an early feminist, cultivating a friendship with Elizabeth Cady Stanton and participating in the suffragist movement. Sexual freedom was a dominant aspect of Barnes's young life: her father brought a mistress to live with the family and letters hint at a possible sexual relationship with her grandmother as well as a violent rape at age sixteen. Barnes would later live in Greenwich Village, a milieu characterized by its literary and artistic bohemian lifestyle where Barnes formed close friendships with a number of important literary figures, including Eugene O'Neill and Mina Loy, and had lovers of both sexes. Sexual experience would become a significant component of Barnes's fiction and drama, something that she was never ashamed of, and simultaneously points to her sensibility of being a new type of woman and writer.

⁵ Nancy J. Levine rightly states that Barnes "[attempted] to confound her readers' blunted expectations by mixing modes and forcing incongruous juxtapositions is an essential part of her style" (30). This is particularly reflective of the journalistic trends at the time where newspapers "depended for [their] success on the reporters' narrative skills and their ability to mold information – sometimes factual and sometimes not – into dramatic and skillfully told tales" (Roggenkamp, *Narrating the News* xiv).

⁶ I draw biographical information in this paragraph from Phillip Herring's *Djuna: The Life and Works of Djuna Barnes* and Andrew Field's *Djuna: The Formidable Miss Barnes*.

⁷ Stunt reporters regularly infiltrated tricky situations for a story. Oftentimes, their actions were the story itself and not necessarily what they uncovered. Sob sisters were nicknamed so because they provided the so-called woman's angle to news that centered on murders, train wrecks, political conflicts, etc. Rather than physically performing stunts, they were performing sympathy and the news reports mostly focused on their emotional reactions to the events they were covering (Lutes 2-4).

⁸ For additional information on how Barnes switches subject and object in her journalism, see Bombaci, "Well of Course." On gender-bending, see Bocking, "The Great War and Modern Gender Consciousness."

⁹ The field of criticism on nineteenth and twentieth-century female journalists is dominated by a handful of scholars, all of whom do not pay attention to or include Barnes in their studies. In *Narrating the News*, Karen Roggenkamp looks at the connection between newspaper writing and the development of a female literary tradition in the late nineteenth century. Sari Edelstein expands our understanding of the relationship between women's fiction and journalism in her work on female writers whose literary output was influenced by advances in journalism, from the penny press to "yellow" journalism. In *Sympathy, Madness, and Crime*, Roggenkamp analyzes how female journalists in the nineteenth century employed sympathy as a rhetorical tool to gain a foothold in a male-dominated profession. Alice Fahs analyzes how newspaperwomen shaped public space both in the periodicals they wrote for and the city itself. An exception is Jean Marie Lutes who discusses Barnes's flagrant flaunting of traditional gender norms in her role as a stunt reporter. Despite this, Lutes still discusses Barnes as a stunt reporter (ignoring her other journalistic contributions) and how her journalism left a lasting legacy on her later writing.

¹⁰ Writing to Dan Mahoney in 1950, Barnes stated that she considered her early journalistic prose "utterly wasteful." (Plumb 19). Phillip Herring writes that Barnes called that majority of her journalism "rubbish" and herself discouraged interest in it and that "success in journalism brought complications for Barnes. That which she valued little sold well; that into which she

poured her soul was often seen by editors as a less valuable commodity” (77-78). As a result, contemporary critics place significant value on her career as a journalist but only in regards to its influence on her later writing style. Cheryl Plumb states that Barnes’s journalism is dominated by two traditions that then manifest themselves in her later work: decadence and satire (19). For further discussion on how Barnes’s journalistic style influenced her later fiction, see: Carl Herzig, “Roots of Night,” Katherine Biers, *Virtual Modernism*, Alex Goody, “Djuna Barnes on the Page,” and Phillip Herring’s *Djuna*.

¹¹ Charles Baudelaire was the first to lay claim to the flâneur as a central figure of modernity and, subsequently, the city in *The Painter of Modern Life*. Walter Benjamin continued to utilize the flâneur in his own writings about Paris almost a century later, writing that the flâneur is someone who “goes botanizing on the asphalt.” (26). As a result, the flâneur has become the quintessential figure through which man’s role in the modernist city can best be explained. Yet the concept of the flâneur leaves out women’s urban experience and more recent debates have arisen as to the existence of a female urban stroller or flâneuse. Critics such as Elizabeth Wilson have posited that that prostitute is the nineteenth-century counterpart to the flâneur. More recently, critics have debated the existence of a female flâneur, or flâneuse altogether. See, for example, Griselda Pollock, “Modernity and the Spaces of Femininity,” Janet Wolff, “The Invisible Flâneuse,” Rita Felski, *The Gender of Modernity*, Deborah H. Parsons, *Streetwalking the Metropolis*, and Elizabeth Wilson’s chapter, “The Invisible Flâneur,” in *Contradictions of Culture*.

¹² Dana Brand writes that the flâneur, “through the medium of journalism, could impose order upon the potentially disorienting diversity of the city” (7), while Steve Pile defines the flâneur as a “spy, a tourist, a detective, a journalist, scrutinizing otherwise alien streets, reporting back” (*The Body and the City* 230). Priscilla Parkhurst Ferguson writes that the flâneur’s anonymity and indistinctive appearance in crowds “sounds very much like an author in search of characters and intrigue” (28). Nedra Reynolds adds that “the flâneur embodies the spatial practices of walking as writing, writing as walking; his main focus is to absorb and render the city through writing” (70).

¹³ Not all critics, however, are quick to label the female journalist with the characteristics akin to the flâneur, citing the paradoxical (and oftentimes problematic) position of women writers in public. Deborah Nord posits that given the position of women as spectacles and the eroticization of their presence on the street, women would never be able to achieve the type of anonymity required to become a flâneur or urban Rambler (4).

¹⁴ Christine Stansell writes that “by the 1830s, the enclaves of laboring people were coming to constitute separate territories, so extensive and distinct that they seemed to genteel observers something like a foreign domain” (41-42). However, it is also worth noting that a number of these neighborhoods were viewed as potentially dangerous and vice-ridden. By 1917, the ethnic neighborhoods of New York City have been “cleaned up” and “reformed” (Mumford 23).

¹⁵ Gaylyn Studlar writes that “dance madness was characterized by the popularity of new, social dance forms perceived as indecent” (25). These included the tango, turkey trot, and bunny hop and were set to ragtime music.

¹⁶ The Progressive Era witnessed increased efforts at regulating dance hall behavior especially by middle-class reformers who increasingly voiced concerns about protecting the innocence of young women who frequented dance halls. Susan C. Cook provides a useful overview of social dance and reformers’ efforts, stating that social dance has been viewed unfavorably at the turn-of-the-century mainly due to popular views of it as “irrational and unstable.” The dangers of social dance differed for women and men: seen as being able to unleash sexual desire in women,

whereas men were subject to fears of emasculation because dancing was seen as a primarily female social activity. With the advent of ragtime dancing in the 1910s, social reformers argued that such dancing, coupled with unchaperoned environments (as most dance halls were at the time) posed the danger of “compromising working-class women who already faced inequitable economic situations” (Cook 133-137). Peiss argues that the image of “flashily-dressed working women” who joked and flirted with men and enjoyed a new sense of social freedom “resonated uncomfortably within the middle-class public” (163). James Nott discusses how middle-class reformers believed that attending dance halls was a slippery slope toward prostitution and that social dancing was frequently equated with sex (219-220).

¹⁷ Barnes was publicizing lower-class amusements with her journalism to make them appear safe and appropriate for the middle-class audience (Biers, *Virtual Modernism* 139). Her journalism also incorporated a reform angle especially during a time that saw an increase in the “cleaning up” of vice, especially in relation to sexuality (Chauncey 138). Urban zoning laws and spatial regulations coincided with the unprecedented expansion of commercial leisure activities, causing, in turn, a significant cultural panic and becoming a subject Barnes wrote on quite frequently (Heise 291).

¹⁸ Kathy Peiss estimates that by the 1910s, there were over five hundred public dance halls in New York City alone. A significant number of them were located on the Lower East Side, between Houston and Grand Streets and the Bowery (89). In the early decades, dances were held in either saloons or multi-purpose neighborhood halls. However, by the 1910s, these spaces were inadequate in meeting the demand and large metropolitan halls and ballrooms made specifically for dancing began appearing throughout the city (Peiss 95). Some, like Roseland Ballroom and Webster Hall have survived well into the twenty-first century.

¹⁹ The pursuit of pleasure led many social reformers to bemoan that women were now ambivalent about their traditional roles within the domestic sphere, and that young working-class girls were led further down the road toward immorality (Studlar 27). Writing in 1911 about the dangers posed by dance halls, Chicago’s *Daily Tribune* quotes a Mrs. John B. Sherwood: “The commercialized dance hall caters to this desire for amusement, this longing for pleasure. They encourage it; they feed upon it, and by lax supervision, often fan it into a dangerous flame.”

²⁰ The imagined landscape is the landscape that is envisioned by a group of people who share similar cultural values who also have the currency to influence the creation of built spaces. The experienced landscape is the built space as it is used in everyday life, and the built landscape is the actual physical construction of a space (Sewell xiv-xv).

²¹ Cook’s article presents interesting points on how Irene and Vernon Castle established a veritable middle ground between the informality of working-class dance halls and the more constrained propriety of the Association of American Dancing Masters. Similar to what Barnes is doing in these particular articles, the Castles worked to counter arguments that dancing was dangerous to white women.

²² For more information on the relationship between dancing and masculinity/manliness and the controversial roles of male dancers in the popular culture of the time see, Mumford, *Interzones*, and Cook, “Passionless Dancing and Passionate Reform.”

²³ Steeplechase was the first true amusement park built in 1897 by George Tilyou. Dreamland burned to the ground in 1911 and was never rebuilt, although its smoldering ruin, aptly named Hell Gate, became an attraction in its own right.

²⁴ The information in this paragraph comes from a variety of influential sources: Michael Immerso, *Coney Island, The People's Playground*; David Nasaw, *Going Out*; Jon Sterngass, *First Resorts*; John F. Kasson, *Amusing the Million*; William J. Phalen, *Coney Island*.

Chapter Three

¹ Excerpted from Carl Sandburg's poem, "Skyscraper" (1916).

² Despite Fuller's role in locating the skyscraper in realist fiction, current scholars do not pay adequate attention to his work, with the majority of critics instead focusing on social and capitalist interpretations of his work. See, for example, scholarship by Michael Anesko, Kevin Massa, Ann Jett, and Kenneth Scambray.

³ Although Baldwin's novels deal extensively with working women in corporate offices, none (to my knowledge) other than *Skyscraper* are set so extensively and purposefully in a skyscraper. In addition, none have the skyscraper play such a prominent and influential role in the novel's events and characters' decisions. As we will see, almost everything is filtered through the image of the skyscraper. It is for this reason that I focus solely on *Skyscraper*, despite Baldwin's extensive literary corpus, which will be the focus of a future project.

⁴ The various technologies that were needed to make the skyscraper a viable and pleasant space, such as the elevator, the electric light, the telephone, and modern plumbing and heating, were overhauled and re-envisioned in order to suite the skyscraper's specific needs. Early skyscrapers still retained the traditional brick-and-mortar facades that characterized a number of architectural structures during the period and, as a result, evoked the era's precept that skyscrapers were meant to be architectural ornaments that helped decorate a city in addition to being practical commercial buildings.

⁵ It was not until after World War II that the skyscraper began to dominate the Chicago skyline. For additional historical context on the skyscraper rivalry and differences in architecture between Chicago and New York, see Carol Willis's *Form Follows Finance* and Rosemarie Haag Bletter's "The Invention of the Skyscraper: Notes on its Diverse Histories."

⁶ In 1883, the tallest structure in the city was the spire of Trinity Church on Broadway. By 1900, ten new buildings easily surpassed that height. The Flatiron Building was completed in 1902 at twenty-two stories and the Woolworth Building was finished in 1913 at fifty-seven stories and remained the world's tallest building from 1913 to 1930.

⁷ The factual information in the preceding two paragraphs comes from a wide variety of influential sources: Lisa Krissoff Boehm and Steven H. Corey, *America's Urban History*; Willian Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West*; Mona Domosh, *Invented Cities: The Creation of Landscape in Nineteenth-Century New York and Boston*; Ann Douglas, *Terrible Honesty: Mongrel Manhattan in the 1920s*; George H. Douglas, *Skyscrapers: A Social History of the Very Tall Building in America*; and Christopher Linder, *Imagining New York City: Literature, Urbanism, and the Visual Arts, 1890-1940*.

⁸ Meir Wigoder states that one of the ways writers attempted to make sense of skyscrapers' great heights was to describe them in horizontally spatial terms readers would be more familiar with. For example, explaining the height of the Singer Tower in Manhattan by writing that it had enough metal piping to reach Albany, 136 miles away (157).

⁹ The Seacoast Company Building is modeled on the newly constructed Chrysler Building in the novel, while in *Skyscraper Souls* it is the fictional Dwight Building that dwarfs the Empire State Building right next to it. Between 1929 and 1931, five major skyscrapers were either completed or in the process of being completed, the tallest among them being the Chrysler Building

completed in 1930 at 1,048 feet and the Empire State Building completed in 1931 at 1,454 feet. The 1920 census declared, for the first time, America an urban nation and New York its largest city (Boehm and Corey 198-199).

¹⁰ Merrill Schleier writes that many skyscraper films during the 1930s depicted the disparity between a skyscraper's exterior with its interior which was "frequently employed as a critique of claustrophobia and sexual predation" (*Skyscraper Cinema* 59). These films frequently focus on the skyscraper's entirety in an "effort to prescribe class-inflected and gendered identities in the service of a redeemed patriarchal capitalism fueled" by its workers (*Skyscraper Cinema* 60-61).

¹¹ The facts and figures in these paragraphs are pulled from a number of knowledgeable sources: Julie Berebitsky, *Sex and the Office*; Mona Domosh and Joni Seager, *Putting Women in Place*; Lisa M. Fine, *The Souls of the Skyscraper*; Joanne Meyerowitz, *Women Adrift*; Nikil Saval, *Cubed*; and Daphne Spain, *Gendered Spaces*.

¹² The working woman was not an invention of the late nineteenth century. Working-class, immigrant, and Black women have been working for centuries, mostly out of a necessity rather than a choice. For more on this, see Sarah Deutsch's *Women and the City*, Joanne Meyerowitz's *Women Adrift*, and Christine Stansell's *City of Women*.

¹³ For a more detailed discussion of how the typewriter and other machines became associated with femininity, see Ellen Lupton's *Mechanical Brides*.

¹⁴ The depiction of clerks and offices in literature were extremely rare prior to the early twentieth century because these occupations were considered unworthy and irrelevant. In the years preceding the Civil War, "clerks were a small but unusual phenomenon, a subject of anxious scrutiny; their workplaces were at once significant centers of American business and breeding grounds for a kind of work that nobody recognized as work (Saval 9-11). Herman Melville's "Bartleby, the Scrivener" (1853) is one of the earliest depictions of a white-collar office.

¹⁵ Even though many artists heeded Henri's call and focused on the skyscraper, they continued to view it as ugly and mundane. They continued to depict the skyscraper with traditional (i.e., European) aesthetic qualities, which Merrill Schleier argues, was a direct lasting influence of Henry James and William Dean Howells. She writes that "the tall building was viewed simultaneously as a symbol of national pride and as a mundane, commercial structure that required an infusion of poetry and picturesque vocabulary to counter its prosaic character" (*American Art* 16-17).

¹⁶ Brown argues that Realist writers viewed the skyscraper as a "destabilization of space" that proved "antithetical to Realism's novelistic investment in character, individual agency, and bourgeois mores." She posits that early writers who wrote about the skyscraper wrote about it in fantastical terms because they were more likely to perceive it as a technological innovation rather than a concrete and static place and space ("Mythic and Monstrous" 166-167).

¹⁷ In addition to Brown, only two other scholars discuss Baldwin's fiction and both focus on the role of gender in the development of the modern-day office. Julie Berebitsky's *Sex and the Office* maps the trajectory of women's clerical and administrative work from the mid-nineteenth century to present day. Berebitsky discusses Baldwin and her work in relation to romance within the office and presents Baldwin's literary corpus as a prototypical example. She writes that "*Skyscraper* was part of the outpouring of romance stories, novel, and films set in the office in the 1920s and 1930s, all of which left no doubt that this workplace was erotic space" (Berebitsky 117). Nikil Saval's *Cubed: A Secret History of the Workplace* focuses on the history of the office, more specifically workers' individual workspaces that eventually developed into the familiar form of the cubicle and, more importantly, how the office came to be the dominating

place of work for much of the country (8). In his discussion of Baldwin and her work, however, Saval does little more than use it as examples to illustrate some of his major points about the office's history and characterizes Baldwin similarly to Berebitsky (Saval 89, 106). Saval is also the only scholar to link the development of the office with the rise of skyscraper, rightly arguing that historical overviews of skyscrapers rarely focus on their interiors (98).

¹⁸ During the 1890s, female workers at Metropolitan Life Insurance were not allowed to leave the building for lunch and special lunchrooms were installed in 1893. By the early twentieth century, both men and women were eating lunch in the lunchrooms and restaurants located throughout their skyscraper workplaces (Kwolek-Folland 121-122).

¹⁹ It is worth noting that these rooms are conspicuously absent from the film adaptation. Instead, the movie includes Turkish baths that are patronized solely by male employees. This pace is reinforced as a male-only space because it is used as the site of Dwight's continuing seduction of Charles North into a merger that will eventually allow Dwight to gain full control of his building and financially ruin Norton and the other associates.

²⁰ Around 1900, employers began arranging spaces by the type of work performed and who performed it. For example, an office might separate female typists on one side of the room from the male bookkeepers on the other (Kwolek-Folland 36). Managers and supervisors manipulated office spaces in various ways in order to ensure efficiency and promote worker productivity. Separating workers discouraged fraternization and chance encounters with the opposite sex but also reflected distinctions in gendered work skills and salaries (Kwolek-Folland 108-113).

²¹ Frederick Taylor's ideas about factory optimization made their way into the manuals of office management in the early years of the twentieth century, which advocated for simpler, more utilitarian desks and doing away with private offices (Brown, *Black Skyscraper* 187).

²² Saval writes that while officers and executives got to keep the Second Empire furniture from the previous century, clerks and secretaries were given the Modern Efficiency Desk, the ancestor of the standard desk found in many of today's offices with a flat top and file drawer (42). Its key feature was that it left clerks exposed to managerial glances and constant observation.

²³ The information in this paragraph is from Berebitsky's *Sex and the Office*; Domosh and Seager's *Putting Women in Place*; Fine's *The Souls of the Skyscraper*; and Spain's *Gendered Spaces*.

²⁴ Domosh and Seager also state that "defining waged work as a temporary stage for women...defining the necessity to work as a misfortune, one that all women of all classes could aspire to overcome, and construing the nonworking wife as a sign of successful upward social and class mobility" are just some of the ways that women's contributions to the workforce are minimized and belittled (40).

²⁵ In the movie, Jennie's fate is more pleasant. After losing all of her money in the Manhattan-Seacoast stock scheme, Jennie accepts the attention of Jacob Sorenson, who, much to her shock, wants to marry her rather than have her as his mistress.

Chapter Four

¹ This period also witnessed an increase in legislation that centered on race and racial privilege. The 1896 Supreme Court case *Plessey v. Ferguson*, and its decision to uphold the doctrine of separate but equal, served as the foundation for a number of legislative decisions that aimed to control Black and mixed-race bodies. Julia S. Charles writes "that until mixed-race bodies began to use their skin as a springboard for evading the law, their government saw no significant need to address the legislation" (17).

² Sika A. Dagbovie-Mullins contends that miscegenation was a source of shame for both groups: “for whites because it exposes their immoral wrongdoing and for blacks because it painfully reminds them of their suffering” (37).

³ The Black female body has been a central preoccupation of race and African American scholars in recent years. See, Robyn Wiegman, *American Anatomies* (1995); Jennifer Putzi, *Identifying Marks: Race, Gender, and the Marked Body in Nineteenth-Century America* (2006); Kimberly Wallace-Sanders, *Skin Deep, Spirit Strong: The Black Female Body in American Culture* (2002). Although much work has been done in understanding the Black and mixed-race female body and its role in Larsen’s work, the body as a space of its own has not been adequately discussed. Studies of the body have made it intimately associated with sexuality in *Quicksand* and queer desire in *Passing*. See Judith Butler, “Passing, Queering: Nella Larsen’s Psychoanalytic Challenge;” Rafael Walker, “Nella Larsen Reconsidered: The Trouble with Desire in *Quicksand* and *Passing*;” Elizabeth Dean, “The Gaze, The Glance, The Mirror: Queer Desire and Panoptic Discipline in Nella Larsen’s *Passing*;” Ann DuCille, “Blues Notes on Black Sexuality;” and Claudia Tate, “Death and Desire in *Quicksand*.”

⁴ Although they do not specifically focus on the body, critics have also analyzed fashion in Larsen’s novels, looking at the connection between clothes and identity formation. See, Miriam Thaggert, *Images of Black Modernism*; Elizabeth Way, “Dressing to Pass during the Harlem Renaissance: Fashions in the Novels of Jessie Redmon Fauset and Nella Larsen;” Gregory Askew, “Envy, Ambivalence, and the Culture of Consumption in Nella Larsen’s *Passing*”; and Meredith Goldsmith, “Shopping to Pass, Passing to Shop: Consumer Self-Fashioning in the Fiction of Nella Larsen.”

⁵ All biographical information is pulled from George Hutchinson’s biography, *In Search of Nella Larsen: A Biography of the Color Line*.

⁶ Because the novel deals with a mixed-race character, critics has also attempted to read it through the traditional narrative of the “tragic mulatta”. These readings, however, are problematic and Hutchinson asserts that Larsen herself attempted to break free from such narrative conventions (225).

⁷ The Harlem that Helga encounters is the result of increasing numbers of African Americans who migrated to New York City in the first decades of the twentieth century during the Great Migration. Most of them settled in Harlem, which was becoming a predominantly Black neighborhood due to a lack of real estate investment and whites moving to the outer boroughs and the suburbs. Regardless of Harlem’s growth and its growing African American population, New York’s Black population in 1920 was just 2.7 percent of total residents. It increased to 4.7 percent a decade later (Boehm and Corey 193-194). By the 1920s, the black population in New York was at almost two hundred thousand. In 1890, one in seventy people in Manhattan was Black, by 1930, it was one in every nine (Douglas 73). Harlem quickly became the center of music and entertainment, especially jazz and the blues. By the mid-1920s, there were an estimated 125 nightclubs in Harlem, led by the Cotton Club and Connie’s Inn (Douglas 74).

⁸ For example, Hazel Carby writes that quicksand “is a condition where individual struggle and isolated effort are doomed to failure. Helga’s search led to the burial, not the discovery, of the self. The only way out of quicksand is with external help; isolated individual struggle ensured only what she would sink deeper into the quagmire” (173). Joyce Kelley states that quicksand “suggests a mixture of water and sand, two very different substances that can create a volatile combination, perhaps implying that two races in Helga which cannot seem to stably coexist in

1920s America. Helga spends the novel feeling as if she is on unstable ground, and thus keeps shifting geographically” (92).

⁹ Only Sue Shon and Adrienne Brown focus on the architectural spaces of the skyscraper in *Passing*. Shon argues that “*Passing* locates the skyscraper as site that receives and interprets heightened senses, including a ‘sixth sense’ that unravels the tautology of visual experience and counters the visual hegemony of US aesthetic culture” (449). Brown discusses the connection between race and the skyscraper and how race is an influential factor in the skyscraper’s architectural conception. In her discussion of *Passing*, Brown focuses on the link between miscegenation and perception, their connections to the skyscraper, and the ways that race is made difficult to discern in a space that distorts lines of sign. She argues that “this architecture’s most meaningful role in the novel is as a background catalyst of urban experience, shaping the physical and spatial conditions framing many of the novel’s foreground events. The skyscraper appears most forcefully in *Passing* as the sum of its effects on perceiving and feeling in the city” (*The Black Skyscraper* 104).

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