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Plotting Race: Narrative Form and Urban Racial Geographies

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Plotting Race: Narrative Form and Urban Racial Geographies

By

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation, "Plotting Race: Narrative Form and Urban Racial Geographies," contends that early twentieth-century racist lending policies like redlining and sociological theories of assimilation and urban growth did not exist in a vacuum apart from creative writing and popular fiction. Rather, I show how three narrative forms—the plot, the line, and the frame—function to simultaneously structure texts and map race onto the urban setting. These figures provided powerful modes of comprehending, upholding, and/or critiquing the spatial forms of racialization that enabled ethnic immigrants to assimilate into whiteness while materializing anti-Black discrimination in the built environment. My project intervenes in the discourse of critical race studies by emphasizing that racialization is produced not simply through clear demarcations, but also through deliberate rhetorical gray areas, which construct both narrative and spatial routes for immigrant mobility while cutting off and enclosing others.

Offering a formalist and spatial reading method rooted in Black feminist geography, I draw conceptual analogies between the textual construction of narrative forms and racist geographic structures, and I show how rhetorical reading practices highlight the possibility of alternative formations. In Chapter 1, I focus on turn-of-the-century naturalist city novels, specifically Henry Blake Fuller's *The Cliff-Dwellers* (1893) and Theodore Dresier's *Sister Carrie* (1900), which incorporate the value of real estate into the sequencing of their narratives and the routing of their protagonists' desired futures. I argue that they spatialize whiteness as a norm in the city's geography through the pairing of racialized real-estate investments and narratological investments. While reading Fuller's novel highlights how the text names different social types in order to subsequently neglect, dismiss, or sequester them from the narrative's

progression and urban geography, my approach to Dreiser's novel focuses on how descriptive, classificatory moments in the text direct Carrie's desires and introduce a distinctly racialized form of narrative causality based on comparative sequencing. Although Carrie's visions for the future open up alternatives to traditional domesticity for modern women, they link her achievement of those gendered futures with her performance of whiteness. I name these generic plot expectations "plots of whiteness," and at the end of the chapter I show how they made their way into the influential writings of the Chicago school sociologists, such as in Robert E. Park's "The City."

Yet just as Black sociologists like Horace Cayton and St. Clair Drake simultaneously built on and challenged the theories of their white mentors, Black authors including Marita Bonner and Richard Wright drew on and manipulated the discourses responsible for racializing space in order to call attention to and work against that process. If naturalist plots secured white city space, those plots were dependent on boundary lines that separated out and enclosed Blackness beyond their limits. Chapter 2 demonstrates how the presence of competing lines, from photographic sightlines to material clotheslines, works obsessively in Jacob Riis's *How the Other Half Lives* (1890) to map difference onto the city geography, paving the way for assimilation of certain ethnic others through anti-Blackness. Wright, in his own photo-text, *12 Million Black Voices* (1941), shows how this rhetorical function has sustained the anti-Blackness of the color line—a rhetoric established through interactions of visual and narrative perspectives. *Black Voices* includes white paradigms of looking—photography and sociology—that are in tension with, rather than in service of, the narrator's perspective. By acknowledging but refusing to integrate these paradigms into that perspective, the text offers possibilities for privileging the line as a contact zone rather than as a border.

Chapter 3 demonstrates how Marita Bonner's fiction (1926-1941) calls attention to the power of frames, from maps of segregated Black Belts to gender and class stereotypes, to entrap and determine Black lives. Her short stories' modernist forms require readers to thoughtfully navigate between and across different frames of perception, deconstructing the role of aesthetic and narrative framing in patterns of discrimination ranging from Jim Crow to domestic violence to mass incarceration. I read her stories in the context of the time and place where they were written: a period when restrictive covenants and redlining, bolstered by research and support from the University of Chicago, increasingly segregated Chicago's South Side, but also the moment of the Chicago Black Renaissance, when the Bronzeville community manifested a strong interest in understanding and documenting itself through both social science and art. I discuss how Cayton and Drake's *Black Metropolis* (1945) reframes Chicago school sociology from a perspective located within—rather than outside of—the Black Belt, while their turn to fictionalization in the chapter "Lower Class: Sex and Family" nevertheless reinforces racist, classist, and sexist stereotypes about lower-class Black women. Bonner's stories, in contrast, reframe the Black Belt through an intersectional feminist lens and interrogate discriminatory ideologies as aesthetic constructions that mutually reinforce one another.

In the coda, I introduce another form, the curve, which recurs throughout W. E. B. Du Bois's sociology and fiction. The curved lines and bars in his 1900 Paris Exposition graphs challenge the conventions of data visualization, and the "Great Curve" rendered visible through the fictional Black sociologist's "megascope" in the short story "The Princess Steel" (c.1908-10) renders history visible systemically, making Du Bois's curves an emblematic form of Black spatial critique. In sum, then, this dissertation considers both literary and visual rhetorics as integral to understanding the history of urban segregation in the United States.

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Menely, Elizabeth Miller, Margaret Ronda, Michael Ziser, Louis Warren, and others taught me to see myself as a fellow scholar. I appreciate the dialogue between faculty and graduate students in this department, and I was especially thankful when these conversations turned to teaching in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. I thoroughly enjoyed the conversations with Claire Waters, John Marx, and other regular participants in the Spring and Fall 2020 pedagogy Zooms. The English department is lucky to have as our subject librarian the delightful and truly resourceful Roberto Delgadillo, who ensured that I always had access to the sources I needed, even and especially when I was in Germany.

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When I was applying to graduate school in 2012-13, there was a flurry of think pieces about humanities PhDs, and two particular essays stayed with me. In the *New Yorker*, Joshua Rothman wrote that "grad school is a life-changing commitment" that "will shape your schedule, your interests, your reading, your values, your friends. Ultimately, it will shape your identity." In *Avidly*, Pete Coviello explained that "you may be startled to find that you have an extraordinary resource … in the people you loved there, … in the ways you learned to think there, and in the worlds that, by loving and thinking and talking and fighting in that same shared space, you

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researcher, teacher, and feminist. Her legacy highlights how words can incite great change in the world. Every word I write is in her memory.

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Introduction: On Race, City Space, and Form

> "You know where the white folks live?"
> "Yeah," Gus said, pointing eastward. "Over across the 'line'; over there on Cottage Grove Avenue."
> "Naw; they don't," Bigger said.
> "What you mean?" Gus asked, puzzled. "Then, where do they live?"
> Bigger doubled his fist and struck his solar plexus.
> "Right down here in my stomach," he said.
> Gus looked at Bigger searchingly, then away, as though ashamed.
> "Yeah; I know what you mean," he whispered.
> "Every time I think of 'em, I *feel* 'em," Bigger said.
> "It's like fire."
> "And sometimes you can't hardly breathe. . . ." (Wright 21-22)

In the early pages of *Native Son* (1940), Richard Wright maps city space onto the body. With a phrase that to our ears retrospectively echoes the last words of Eric Garner and George Floyd, Bigger Thomas locates his understanding of white power and control in the feeling that he "can't hardly breathe." These sensory reactions—a literal gut feeling, a loss of breath—register that the color line not only is produced and maintained by white people, but also is articulated in the bodies of those whom it excludes. As Bigger later reflects, realizing that Mr. Dalton's South Side Real Estate Company owns the kitchenette building that he lives in, "Mr. Dalton was somewhere far away, high and up, distant, like a god. He owned property all over the Black Belt, and he owned property where white folks lived, too. But Bigger could not live in a building across the 'line.' Even though Mr. Dalton gave millions of dollars for Negro education, he would rent houses to Negroes only in this prescribed area, this corner of the city tumbling down from rot" (Wright 174). The "line" is not a border that divides the city into two equal parts, but a form of control and enclosure of African Americans by white people with power, who are godlike and "distant." This is reflected in the colloquialism used by the police as they track and chase Bigger after he murders Mr. Dalton's daughter, Mary: "'Surround the block!' Bigger heard an

answering shout. 'You got a line on 'im?'" (Wright 264). The police know where Bigger is; in this knowledge, they have "a line on" him—and Bigger's general awareness that they control the line is what makes him unable to breathe when he thinks of white people. This racial surveillance and discipline, which continue to enable police brutality against Black people today, are at the foundation of U.S. spatial arrangements—such that the color line, as Bigger suggests, is much more than a territorial boundary. In the move from Cottage Grove Avenue to Bigger's stomach, Wright signals that geography is both physical and embodied, perceived using landmarks and senses. Race itself is articulated through and across these material and psychological spaces.

Half a century before *Native Son* was published, William Dean Howells's *A Hazard of New Fortunes* (1890) also considered how its protagonists come to their "sad knowledge of the line." Although theirs is described as "the line at which respectability distinguishes itself from shabbiness" (49), it is just as racialized as the color line in the pit of Bigger's stomach. Amy Kaplan offers an influential reading of this "knowledge of the line," arguing that it allows Basil and Isabel March, who have just moved to New York City, to "distinguish an unthreatening domestic space by excluding large segments of the city in the generalized perception of 'decay.' The 'knowledge of the line' has a double function: it frames a coherent picture of the city and relegates unassimilable fragments to the peripheral category of 'useless information'" (48). In other words, the "line" is a social convention rendered as a definable abstract entity—as we read about the Marches learning to see the line, we witness the same process that puts Mr. Dalton in his powerful "high and up" position, that allows the police to "g[e]t a line on" Bigger. While Kaplan, and Howells's narrator, focus most clearly on the class function of this line, when Kaplan asserts that "'[t]he line' divides the city into two separate but unequal camps and veils the antagonism between them so that the social nature of this division fades from view" (53), the

turn of phrase "separate but unequal" strongly alludes to the intersecting racial nature of "the line." This ideological line, examined in literature through the visual and emotional perceptions of protagonists, is foundational to the establishment and continued maintenance of racial segregation.

Yet while Kaplan emphasizes the line as a form that structures both *Hazard* as a text and ideologies about American cities, and while Bigger's response to Gus seemingly turns our attention away from Cottage Grove Avenue, the imagined lines in both novels indeed have strong resonances with the physical geographies of their respective cities. In learning to see "the line," for example, Isabel March identifies it in both the grid of the streets, "an east and west line beyond which they could not go if they wished to keep their self-respect," and in the exterior walls of buildings that "even in the midst of squalor … had been seized, painted a dull red as to its brickwork and a glossy black as to its woodwork, and with a bright brass bellpull and doorknob and a large brass plate for its keyhole escutcheon, had been endowed with an effect of purity and pride which removed its shabby neighborhood far from it" (Howells 50). The spatiality and materiality of "the line"—the avenues and bricks and doorknobs that render it locatable in the built environment—bolster and facilitate its ideological function, which confers upon the "respectable" a power over the "shabby." While this power of perception may start as merely a sense of superiority, in drawing attention toward some people and neighborhoods but away from others, it produces economic, political, and social power.

How do these ideologies and material spaces, each articulated through versatile forms like the line, racialize the space of the city? As Dean Franco asserts, race "materializes *at* intersections, as subjects move through space" (4). This dissertation attends to those moments of intersection in literature, as expressed through literary forms and narrative constructions. That is,

I ask not only how the feedback loops and resonances between physical and conceptual forms have shaped the geography of the modern American city, but also how written texts can shed light on those processes as they build and populate worlds on the page. I follow Colleen Lye, who suggests that "the problem of race … be reformulated as a question of the relationship between language … and other material processes—between race understood as representation and race as an agency of literary and other social formations" (98). Race, as this project defines it, is produced and given meaning in and through material spaces; Ruth Wilson Gilmore describes racism as "a death-dealing displacement of difference into hierarchies that organize [territorial] relations" (16). Racial geographies, which are places conceptually, economically, and socially linked to racial categories—like the Black Belt—are, at the same time, developed through the construction of narratives.

Which is to say, texts do not simply reflect or represent material conditions. I concur with Bo McMillan, who writes, "Cities are … narrativized in as much as they are planned, and raced space is the product of the stories we tell as much as the buildings we build and the places we plot" (659-60). My work builds on the idea that cultural productions "invisibly buttressed the ghetto's walls" (McMillan 655), as I argue that particular constellations of textual and social forms from the early twentieth century animate the racial meanings of narratives, sociological theories, and the physical environments of American cities. Focusing on three such constellations—the plot, the line, and the frame—I explore the rhetorical and material entanglements that are responsible for urban segregation that persists to this day and that have shaped the very meanings of the term "urban."[1] Specifically, how did "urban" come to mean

[1] A host of related terms, such as "ghetto" and "inner city," have also come to denote race through their spatial referents. Richard Rothstein asserts,

> Over the past few decades, we have developed euphemisms to help us forget how we, as a nation, have segregated African American citizens. We have become embarrassed about saying *ghetto*, a

Black? I trace a rhetorical history of how, in the early twentieth century, the meanings of ethnicity and race diverged, allowing the people who became ethnic whites to leverage anti-Blackness for the purposes of assimilation. This transformed "the inner city" and "the ghetto" into what Saidiya Hartman calls "a racial enclosure, an open-air prison" (89): sites of segregation, surveillance, and racial signification.

The Making of U.S. Racial Geographies

To understand the spatiality of turn-of-the-century U.S. racial ideologies, we must begin with a stop at the 1893 Chicago World's Fair, also known as the Columbian Exposition: a touchstone event for the racialization of American city space. The Fair, which was at the time deliberately and self-consciously presented as a celebration of American modernity, continues to serve scholars as an emblem of our national ideologies: a vision of progress that is thoroughly entwined with settler colonialism, racism, and white supremacy. (This is evident from the outset: an Exposition to commemorate Columbus's arrival in the New World.) The Columbian Exposition not only provided the occasion to introduce the Pledge of Allegiance to public schools across the nation and to hold the American Historical Association meeting where Frederick Jackson Turner first presented his frontier thesis; it also built racial ideologies into the Jackson Park fairgrounds on Chicago's South Side. The Exposition's influential design, with its

> word that accurately describes a neighborhood where government has not only concentrated a minority but established barriers to its exit. We don't hesitate to acknowledge that Jews in Eastern Europe were forced to live in ghettos where opportunity was limited and leaving was difficult or impossible. Yet when we encounter similar neighborhoods in this country, we now delicately refer to them as the *inner city*, yet everyone knows what we mean. (When affluent whites gentrify the same geographic areas, we don't characterize those whites as *inner city* families). (xvi)

Dean Franco makes the point that "it can be difficult to disambiguate a rhetoric of racial identity from a rhetoric of racial boundaries, as terms such as *hood*, and *wrong side of the tracks*, and the racial constraint at work in outlawed real estate practices make clear. To say a neighborhood was 'redlined' is to note simultaneously its boundaries and its racial character" (14).

neoclassical Beaux Arts White City fully electrified at night, was overseen by Daniel Burnham, the architect of some of Chicago and New York's early skyscrapers who would later go on to write the Plan of Chicago of 1909. The White City inspired the City Beautiful movement and shaped the expectations for modern city planning, and it did so by offering a "racial blueprint for building a utopia" (Rydell 40). As Henry Adams famously wrote, "Chicago asked in 1893 for the first time the question whether the American people knew where they were driving" (343). That question, and the proposed destination, was laid out in the map of the fairgrounds, which provided visitors with an itinerary through differentiated spaces that instructed them on the relationship between race and modernity.

The Columbian Exposition's spatial form achieved its racial impact through juxtaposition: specifically, juxtapositions of the Fair with Chicago at large and of the White City with the Midway Plaisance, the Fair's carnivalesque pleasure grounds. The "White City," Hélène Valance explains, "was frequently opposed to the 'Dark City' or 'Black City' of Chicago, the beauty and grandeur of its (smokeless) illuminations was contrasted with the soot of Chicago's industries, the stench and dirt of the Stockyards, the moral filth of the infamous 'Loop' neighborhood" (4).[2] The superiority of the well-ordered, electrified White City over the lived-in "Black City" beyond was replicated in the relationship between the White City and the Midway Plaisance, whose "carnival atmosphere … confirmed by contrast the dignity of the center" (Trachtenberg 213). The Midway combined entertainments such as the world's first Ferris Wheel with ethnographic exhibits and ethnic villages. Even within the Midway, the juxtaposition of European villages with displays of Asian, African, Native American, and Middle Eastern peoples

[2] Alan Trachtenberg emphasizes that, "[b]y design, the Fair set itself against what lay beyond its gates. It enforced its lessons by contrast" (211).

emphasized a social Darwinist hierarchy and an evolution toward white supremacy.[3] That is to say, the contrasts within the geography of the Fair emphasized inequivalences, and fairgoers were meant to take note: "the Rand-McNally guidebook to the fair suggested that people visit the Midway and view the exhibits … only after having seen the edifices of modern civilization in the White City" (Rydell 62). As the Exposition's spatial contrasts "promulgated its message of unity through subordination" (Trachtenberg 213), and as the Midway acted "as a bulwark of the utopian dream projected by the White City" (Rydell 64), they naturalized hierarchies by building them into the very geography and phenomenological experience of the Fair.

Space, as the field of critical geography describes, is not a value-neutral container. At the Columbian Exposition, space was differentiated ideologically: neoclassical buildings paired with modern wonders like electrification tied modernity and progress to white European traditions, while foreign and Indigenous people on display like specimens next to carnival rides signaled their function as entertainment and thus their less-than-humanness. These contrasts instructed fairgoers not only in Social Darwinism, but also in the perhaps more obscure yet just as impactful associations between technological progress and whiteness and temporary pleasure-seeking retreats and exotic otherness. One takeaway for turn-of-the-century Americans was that modernity hinged upon the racialization of space—the linking of forward- and backward-looking places to whiteness and people of color, respectively—a lesson that would shape the U.S. geographies of the long twentieth century through explicit Jim Crow laws as well as racially coded zoning and redlining policies.

[3] "Alternating between specimens and toys in the eyes of observers, the nonwhite people living in villages along the Midway not only were seen through the lens of America's material and presumed racial progress leading to future utopia, but were neatly categorized into the niches of a racial hierarchy" (Rydell 64). As Valance succinctly puts it, the "White City embodied white supremacy" (6).

Just as significant as the contrasts made explicit in the Exposition's design are those left implicit: the lack of space for African Americans. In their pamphlet *The Reason Why The Colored American Is Not in the World's Columbian Exposition*, Frederick Douglass and Ida B. Wells make a strong argument (avant la lettre) about racial capitalism—the ways in which capitalism relies on nonwhite bodies to generate value—and its linkages to slavery and imperialism. In the introduction, Douglass asserts that African Americans "have contributed a large share to American prosperity and civilization. … The first crédit this country had in its commerce with foreign nations was created by productions resulting from their labor. The wealth created by their industry has afforded to the white people of this country the leisure essential to their great progress in education, art, science, industry and invention" (*Reason Why*). But this labor is rendered invisible at the Fair, where, F. L. Barnett writes in his chapter, "the Exposition practically is, literally and figuratively, a 'White City,' in the building of which the Colored American was allowed no helping hand, and in its glorious success he has no share" (*Reason Why*). The unacknowledged and uncompensated labor of the African American is, moreover, mocked by the Black presence that is provided a space at the Exposition in order to bolster a social Darwinist hierarchy, the display of people from West Africa: "as if to shame the Negro, the Dahomians are also here to exhibit the Negro as a repulsive savage" (Douglass, *Reason Why*). This pamphlet, which also includes sections by Wells on "Class Legislation," "The Convict Lease System," and "Lynch Law," and a chapter titled "The Progress of the Afro-American Since Emancipation" by I. Garland Penn, critiques the utopian vision of the White City by resituating the Columbian Exposition within the social context it has attempted to distance itself from. The order of the Fair's design is not simply a contrast to the disorder of the post-Reconstruction, post–Haymarket Riot U.S.; it is an order produced through and in response

to the conflicts from which it attempts to divorce itself. Convict leasing and lynching are constitutive components of the social order that the White City reflects and epitomizes, rendering the Exposition "a white sepulcher" to African Americans (Douglass, *Reason Why*). That is, space is not only racialized by what it explicitly represents—e.g., Blackness as backward, foreign, and dirty; whiteness as modern and clean—but also by what it represses and obfuscates. In the words of Black feminist geographer Katherine McKittrick, "we produce space, we produce its meanings, and … we make concealment happen" (xi).

The racialization of space similarly relies on articulations of gender; the modern city was being defined not only by where people of different races and ethnicities belonged, but also by what role women would play in those spaces. As women secured new opportunities and freedoms in the early twentieth century, challenging traditional domestic roles—for example by entering the workforce, living alone, raising their hem lines, and more openly having affairs out of wedlock—they did so because of and in response to emerging urban geographies like furnished room districts, which, in the case of Chicago, "burgeoned … when migrants and visitors streamed to [the city] for the World's Columbian Exposition" (Meyerowitz 276). These women, in turn, came to symbolize modern urban-ness themselves. At first regarded, in the late nineteenth century, as a sign of "endangered womanhood," the "woman adrift" and the New Woman soon "pointed to [the] rewards" of "urban living" (Meyerowitz 283, 285). But as Joanne Meyerowitz explains about the conventional history of this sexual geography, "Historians remember the furnished room districts primarily for the articulate, 'emancipated' middle- and upper-class members of bohemian communities" when that was in fact "only one subculture among several" (279). Indeed, these middle- and upper-class women likely "learned of new sexual possibilities … from the 'lowbrow' behavior of their less intellectual neighbors"

(Meyerowitz 280). For example, the emergence of dating can be traced to working-class women who were barely subsisting on their incomes, suggesting that "economic need shaped sexual experimentation" (Meyerowitz 282).

Just as working-class women are often written out of this history, the presence and contributions of Black women in modern urban culture are ignored in the popular imagination. As I will take up in Chapter 1, the affordances of these new domestic arrangements were liberating for women who could perform whiteness in those spaces. But in Black communities, any deviations from conventional heteropatriarchal sexual, gender, or domestic roles have long been used to further police and surveil the neighborhood, an idea I will return to in more depth in Chapter 3. One of the most famous examples of this ideology is the controversial 1965 Moynihan Report, which popularized the idea that Black poverty is a result of the single-mother family structure.

But this racist concept reaches much further back—a point that Hortense Spillers makes powerfully in "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe," noting that "the human cargo of a slave vessel," a spatial enclosure historically linked to the redlined Black Belt, "contravenes notions of the domestic" (214)—and at the turn of the twentieth century, it shaped policy, policing, and cultural attitudes about race and urban space. As Rashad Shabazz argues in *Spatializing Blackness*, the "mechanisms of constraint built into architecture, urban planning, and systems of control [like policing] created a prison-like environment" and "informed Black men's performance of masculinity" (2), specifically "visible in performing macho or hyperaggressive forms of masculinity; through violence articulated on women and men; through anger and frustration; and through running away and disease" (8). Enclosure and surveillance likewise shaped the cultural meanings of Black womanhood; Saidiya Hartman emphasizes how this state violence aimed at

Black neighborhoods used gender to pathologize and racialize everyday behaviors. Black women were regularly arrested on charges of prostitution and vagrancy for "[b]eing too loud or loitering in the hallway of your building or on the front stoop … making a date with someone you met at the club, or arranging a casual hook up" (Hartman 241). Young Black women, including the future Billie Holiday, were sentenced to cruel reformatories and workhouses because of wayward minor laws, which treated "a style of comportment, a lapse in judgment, a failure of restraint, an excess of desire … [as] indications of impaired will and *future crime*" (Hartman 222), thus "marking blackness as disorderly and criminal" (Hartman 225). As emphasized by Hartman's method of critical fabulation—she extrapolates from legal and sociological records to imagine the "wayward lives" and "beautiful experiments" not legible in the archive—Black women "refused the terms of visibility imposed on them … impossible to force into the grid of naturalist description or the taxonomy of slum pictures" (18).

That is, even as the state produced racial geographies that criminalized Blackness and pathologized both Black men's and women's gender performances, the everyday practices of the people living in those spaces demonstrated that alternative perspectives for making sense of these geographies existed alongside those of the state. My understanding of these coexisting spatial perspectives is strongly informed by Black feminist geography, especially Hartman and McKittrick's work. They both emphasize that attention to the intersections of gender, race, and geography offers ways of seeing space that our hegemonic narratives conceal. McKittrick writes, "Black women's knowable sense of place is still often found … across the logic of white and patriarchal maps" (62). In this project, I turn to literary texts precisely to ask how we can look across that logic. Using formalist methods, I see narratives as spatial in ways that build, reflect, and critique social and material geographies, and this allows me to identify the layout of the

white patriarchal spatial logic—and, therefore, also to see what lies across it. I call this the plotting of race: the textual construction of narrative forms that produce our paradigms of seeing race spatially. In the following chapters, I identify the narrative and rhetorical subordinations, assimilations, and exclusions that have produced the racial geographies of modern U.S. cities—formal contradictions that also expose alternative possibilities for constructing space.

Not only the Columbian Exposition but also its host city of Chicago at large offers a prime location for tracing the rhetorical transit in spatial forms that cemented the racial geographies of the modern city. I focus my analyses on texts that emerged out of, theorized, and depicted the spaces of Chicago, the "Second City"—which turn-of-the-century Americans regarded as the first truly American city. Chicago has played a major role in the history of urban studies, sociology, and modernist literature—especially as each of those has shaped the meaning of race in the U.S. A formalist approach to the textual incarnations of its racial geographies illuminates how anti-Blackness was both materially and rhetorically engrained in the landscape.

Mapping Race in Chicago Literature and Sociology

Just as the Columbian Exposition exemplified ideologies of U.S. settler colonialism and imperialism, the city of Chicago, in its rapid evolution from frontier to metropolitan hub, "traveled the route of other American cities at twice the speed" (Cappetti 10) and celebrated its growth as what Liesl Olson aptly characterizes as "a local expression of manifest destiny" (2). "Incorporated in 1833 with just 350 inhabitants … Between 1870 and 1900, Chicago's population quintupled from about 300,000 to more than 1.5 million inhabitants" (Olson 3), reaching over 3 million by 1930 (Cappetti 11). Along with the transformation of swampland into city—and railroad hub and industrial center—came migrants from across the country and all

over the world. As Olson writes, "A city of arrivers from all backgrounds, a crossroads and nexus, and a place of endless possibility, Chicago was constantly negotiating the experience of the new" (xvii). Chicago was a prime site for defining the modern.

As a result, Chicago literature has a unique status: committed to realism and to reform, the critical tradition has tended to treat it as a minor or regional literature, yet both Olson and Carla Cappetti argue that its attachment to place—and specifically to a city so invested in the experience of modernity—makes it in fact representative of the American literary tradition at large. Cappetti, who is interested in the influence of sociology on Richard Wright, James Farrell, and Nelson Algren, argues against the traditionally negative connotations of the label naturalism to "suggest that the urban sociological tradition is a predominant and characteristic tradition in American literature" (6). In particular, "[s]ociologists and novelists contributed to and worked both within and against a well-established tradition: the representation of 'others' *within* the West" (Cappetti 16). For Olson, Chicago literary history exemplifies "competing pulls within literary modernism itself" (xvi) and calls attention to important modernist writers, editors, and critics, especially women, who were "devoted to promoting literature for the masses" (26). That is, Chicago's tendency toward social realism and proletarian fiction is not at odds with the dominant trends of modern(ist) American literature; in fact, Chicago literature demonstrates the vibrant presence of women, of African Americans, of the working class, of immigrants—of the masses—within the canon, but only if we look for it. And when we do look for that presence, we must attend to the fundamental role that literature itself has played in shaping how we register—or overlook—the heterogeneity of the masses.

The significance of Chicago literature comes even further into focus when exploring American urbanization, especially through the lens of racial geographies. A racial divide even

permeates Chicago's literary history. First came the Chicago Renaissance, which lasted from the late 1880s through the mid 1920s and included white authors such as Henry Blake Fuller, Hamlin Garland, Theodore Dreiser, Harriet Monroe, Willa Cather, and Carl Sandburg. Afterwards, and conventionally treated separately, was the Chicago Black Renaissance, which lasted from the 1930s through 1950s and involved, for example, artists ranging from writers Richard Wright, Margaret Walker, and Gwendolyn Brooks to the painter Eldzier Cortor, the dancer Katherine Dunham, and the musician Thomas A. Dorsey. But, as Olson suggests, both movements share aesthetic interests, such as the realistic depiction of the working class, and literary critics' segregation of white and Black Chicago authors leads to oversights of their mutual influences on one another, as in the case of Gertrude Stein and Richard Wright.[4] My project builds on Olson's endeavor to bridge this divide, as I begin with authors of the Chicago Renaissance (Fuller and Dreiser) and later turn to Black Chicago authors (Wright and Marita Bonner). I posit a distinction along racial lines: that the earlier white authors' texts developed a rhetorical framework that contributed to the assimilation of ethnic whites and the maintenance of the anti-Black color line, whereas Black modernists draw on and creatively transform similar narrative forms as a mode of critique that testifies to the violence of these spatial and aesthetic structures. Yet I do so in the service of understanding a rhetorical and formal dialogue that played out cross-racially over half a century of literary and social science texts.

The Chicago school of sociology, a cohort of researchers who studied and taught at the University of Chicago in the nation's first sociology department, is an important node in the

[4] Olson argues, "We lose something when we cordon off periods of literary history based on race. This is especially true in Chicago, where race has always sharply divided how people experience the city. Why replicate a system that literature often attempts to transcend?" (13). Moreover, "racial divisions during the first decades of the twentieth century were not easy to transcend—certainly, not in Chicago. But literature was a realm where it could happen" (Olson 14).

literary and geographic history of race in the city. As Cappetti's monograph *Writing Chicago* argues, "sociologists and novelists worked in close intellectual proximity. Before 'disciplinary' divisions separated them, personal, artistic and political ties joined the sociologist and the novelist" (16). Not only were writers like Richard Wright directly influenced by the theories of the Chicago school, which appear almost verbatim in their fiction and nonfiction, and by their personal relationships with the sociologists—Wright befriended Louis Wirth and Horace Cayton, among other sociologists[5]—but also, in the early years of the University of Chicago's sociology department, the discipline was itself informed by literature. The Chicago school sociologists, including W. I. Thomas, Robert E. Park, and Ernest Burgess, were inspired by and taught fiction, especially from the urban and naturalist traditions in Europe and the U.S. (Zola, Dickens, Dreiser, etc.). Before their discipline turned more strongly toward quantitative social-scientific methods, it blended the scientific with the humanistic, "emphasizing literary records as essential materials for the study of society" (Cappetti 23). And before English departments ever taught modern American authors, sociology departments did, in courses such as Burgess's "Study of the City Through Literature and Art."[6] Indeed, Cappetti makes the case that "Chicago sociologists were ahead of the literary critics in conceptualizing and constituting the literatures of immigrants, African-Americans, the city, and workers, even while their theories of urbanization and modernization created powerful ideologies against some of those same cultures" (31).

To consider Dreiser, Wright, and Chicago school sociology as I do, then, is not simply to compare the literary texts with the sociological, but to trace a history of rhetorical and narrative

[5] Upon meeting Richard Wright in 1941, Robert Park greeted him with the question "How in hell did you happen?" (Rowley 250).

[6] "Park, for example, used a great deal of 'Negro poetry.' Burgess routinely referred students to authors like Theodore Dreiser, Upton Sinclair, and Sherwood Anderson, and to 'literature that depicted family life or communities or crime delinquency.' Other authors whose work was used in sociology courses at Chicago include Ole E. Rolvaag, Edith Wharton, James Branch Cabell, Joseph Hergesheimer, H. L. Mencken, and James T. Farrell" (Cappetti 27-8).

forms that moved from turn-of-the-century fiction through sociology and back to the literature of the Chicago Black Renaissance. These Chicago literary movements, that is, are aligned not only in certain aesthetic goals, but also in their dialogue with sociology. At the same time, these varied texts do not all produce and depict racial geographies in the same ways. As my citation of Cappetti acknowledges above, the sociologists—despite their interest in texts by racial, ethnic, foreign, and working-class "others" whose writing was otherwise not taken seriously—developed and popularized theories that further marginalized some of those groups, especially Black and Asian communities. This problematic legacy is crystallized in their theories of urban space, particularly in their emphasis on the race relations cycle and concentric zones, which suggested that certain ethnic groups would naturally transition into white Americanness while denying that possibility for and naturalizing the unassimilability of African Americans and Asians.

Take, for example, Ernest Burgess's concentric zone diagram (Figure 1), an iconic image published in his and Park's 1925 collection *The City* and which I will return to throughout the dissertation. This diagram visually epitomizes the problematics of urban racial form that my project is concerned with.

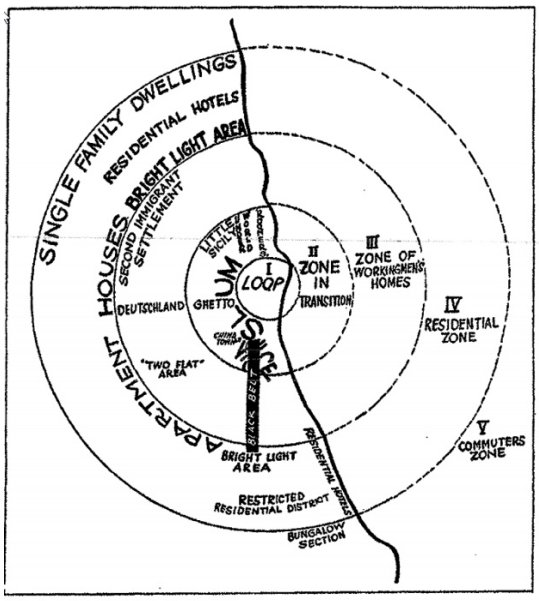

CHART II. Urban Areas

Figure 1: Ernest Burgess's concentric zone map
[image from Park, Burgess, and McKenzie, *The City*, p. 55]

For one, the visual is clearly based on the geography of Chicago, made especially evident by the long sliver of the Black Belt, which consisted of a seven-mile-long strip through the South Side, and by the squiggly line that divides the specific from the generalized sides of the diagram, which depicts the Lake Michigan coastline. Yet, as the right side indicates, this model is extrapolated to stand for a universal theory of urban growth. The Chicago school treated Chicago as its social "laboratory" (Park 612), but it removed local considerations or specificities from its resulting theories, and this approach in turn informed economic and housing policy decisions, such as redlining, that led to widespread segregation across U.S. cities. The concentric rings labeled with neighborhood names and transected by the Black Belt demonstrate the power of form to shape thinking about urban space: circles, rectangles, and lines are transportable across media and, in their repetition, accumulate the power, in this case, to reinforce segregation.

Mapping Inequality, a digital archive of the Home Owners Loan Coalition's (HOLC) redlining maps—redlining being the name now used to refer to the HOLC "residential security"

maps that assigned grades to neighborhoods based on their riskiness to loan givers, because "D," or "hazardous," graded areas were color-coded in red—has in multiple iterations utilized Burgess's concentric zones as a visual to show how redlining reflected, enacted, and, in hindsight exposes, the racist theory of geography embedded in this "most famous diagram in social science" (Nelson et al., accessed 2017). Originally, the concentric zones appeared as a paratext located in a sidebar, which users could interact with to access specific descriptions of neighborhoods according to their grade and to discover the percentage of each grade assigned to neighborhoods per zone (see Figures 2 and 3). According to the curators' explanatory note, which used to be accessible on the website, "Our adaptation of Burgess['s] diagrams is not meant to resuscitate his discredited theory. Rather, we aim to show just how profoundly segregationist practices of redlining actually shaped American cities … Through federal action and local manipulation, life was made to imitate art" (Nelson et al., accessed 2017).

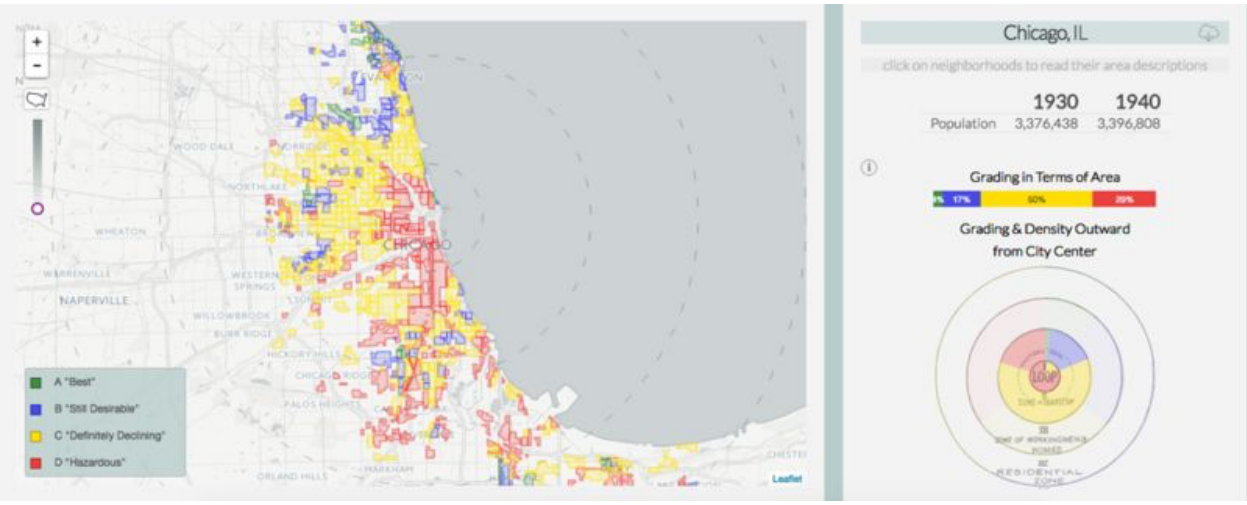

Figure 2: A screenshot of Chicago's HOLC maps from the *Mapping Inequality* website in October 2016, which shows how the percentages of each neighborhood grade are depicted through the concentric zone diagram in the right sidebar (Misra). The curators' explanation of how and why they are using the Burgess diagram would appear if a user clicked on the small (i) in the upper-left corner above the concentric zone model.

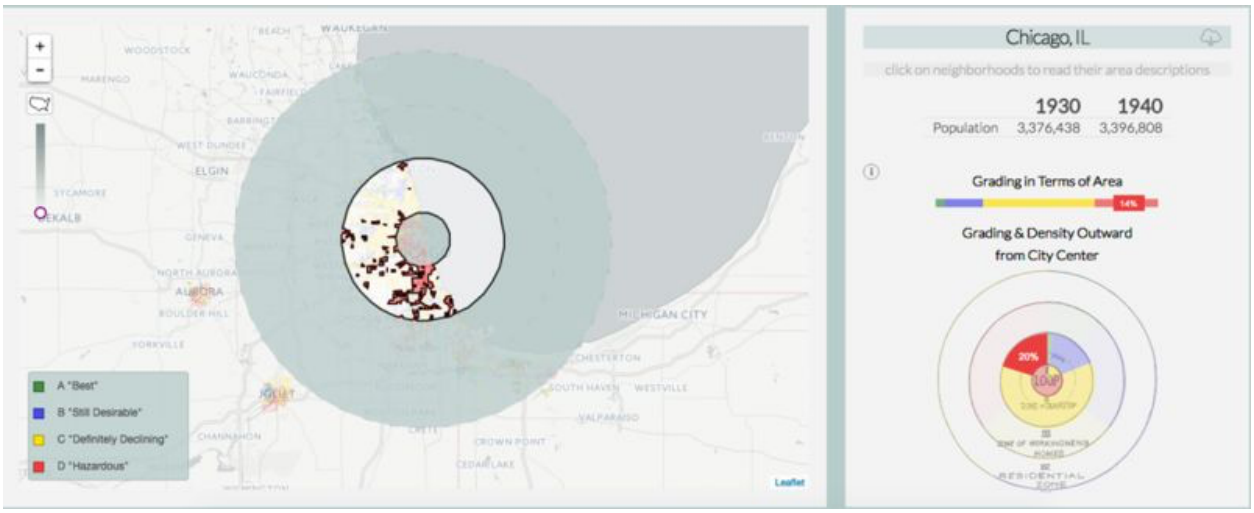

Figure 3: A screenshot of Chicago's HOLC maps from the *Mapping Inequality* website in October 2016 (Misra). The user has clicked on "hazardous"/red neighborhoods in Zone II, the "Zone in Transition," and the map of Chicago on the left spotlights only those neighborhoods.

A 2019 update of the website's design downplays the concentric zones—and does not explicate their presence in nearly as much depth—while nevertheless continuing to employ them as a visual expression of the segregated urban geographies produced by redlining. Now, the homepage, which shows all cities with available data, uses color-coded concentric circles to show the overall percentages of each neighborhood type in each city (see Figure 4).

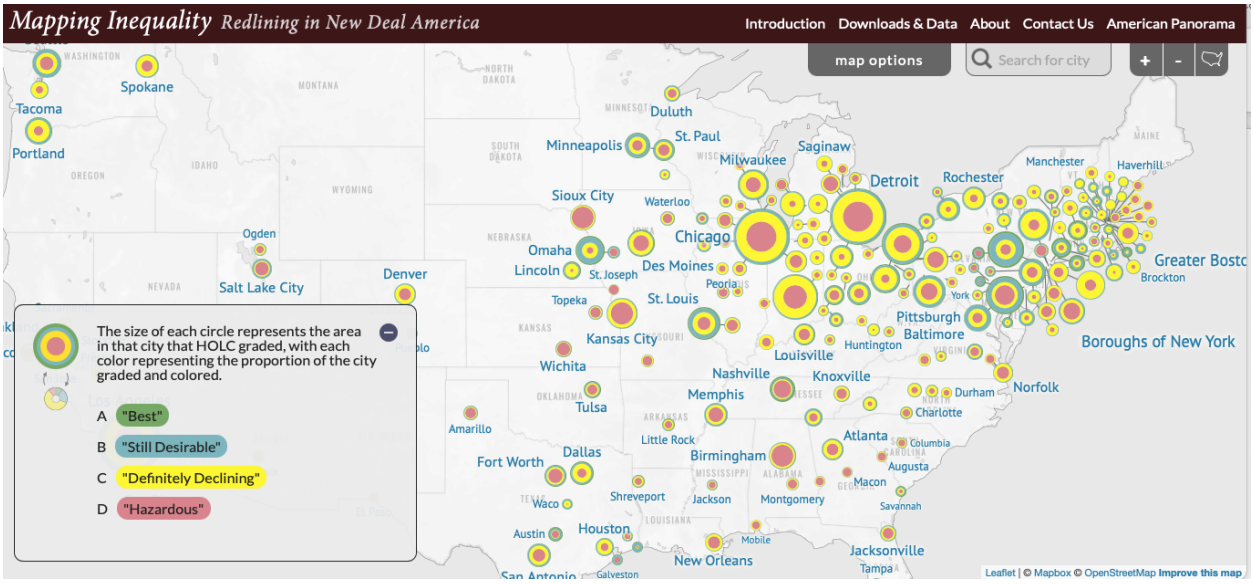

Figure 4: The homepage of *Mapping Inequality*, screenshot by Sophia Bamert, 30 Nov. 2020.

The site offers the opportunity to switch between the concentric zone representation and a "donut" representation, more like a pie chart (see Figure 5), explaining, "The default uses concentric circles with D grades in the center and A on the edge. It represents the typical spatial pattern of HOLC maps where lower graded areas tended to be near city centers and higher graded areas on the suburban periphery of cities (a pattern described by 20th-century sociologist Ernest Burgess's 'concentric city model'). The alternative donut charts [sic] is likely easier to read if you are interested in the percentage of area assigned to each grade" (Nelson et al., accessed 2020). This redesign relies less heavily on Burgess's original diagram—which no longer appears superimposed on the data—while nevertheless continuing to emphasize its role in producing and naturalizing the physical form of twentieth-century U.S. cities (without making that point explicitly, as it used to). The Chicago school sociologists were not simply describing their "social laboratory," the design of *Mapping Inequality* implies, but were actively shaping the racial geographies of modern cities across the nation.

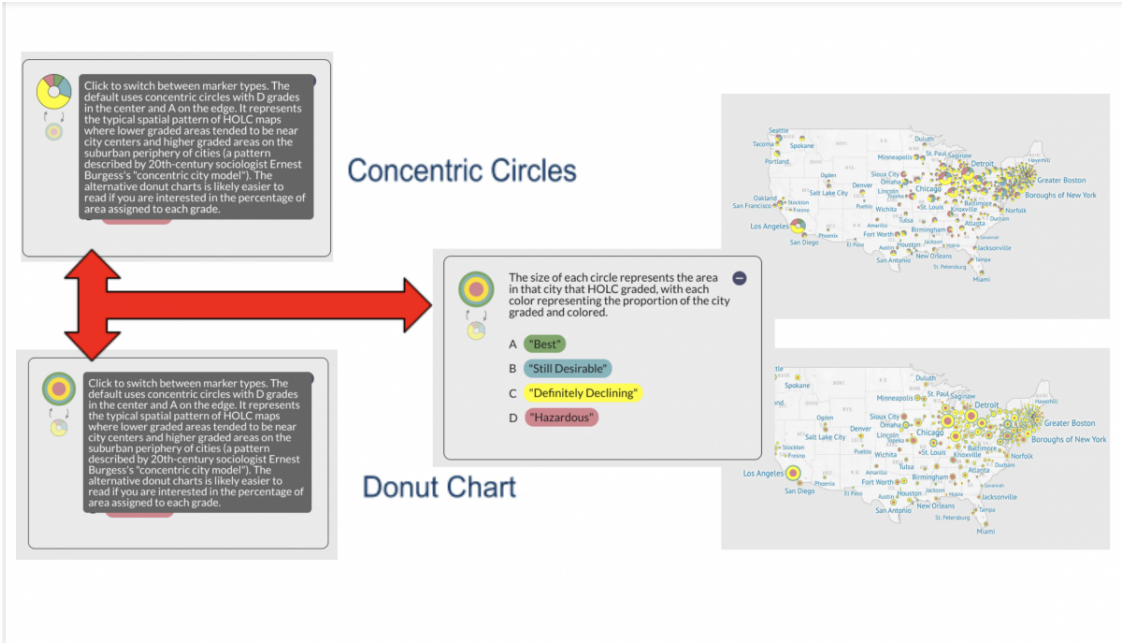

Figure 5: This image from the University of Richmond's New American History resources for educators shows how the "concentric circles" and "donut chart" markers function on the current version of the *Mapping Inequality* digital archive.

The power of these abstract forms to naturalize racism exemplifies a broader tendency of the Chicago school, whose goal of scientific objectivity was expressed as a search for natural, universal laws. As Aldon Morris's *The Scholar Denied* makes clear, however, this was not the only method of establishing sociology as a science. Indeed, Morris exposes "an intriguing, well-kept secret regarding the founding of scientific sociology in America" (1): that W. E. B. Du Bois, at the historically Black institution Atlanta University, founded the first school of American sociology and that his "distinctive contribution," ignored by the Chicago school, was precisely his "scientific methodology" (4). Du Bois "was satisfied with the more modest ambition of elucidating human action in ways that took into account both its patterned, lawlike character and its unpredictable rhythms produced by human agency," so he "discarded the straitjacket of grand theories, including social Darwinism, and replaced them with an inductive method seeking sociological knowledge based on clearly defined empirical research" (Morris 29). In contrast to the urban theories generated by the Chicago school decades later, Du Bois's detailed community studies, such as *The Philadelphia Negro* (1899), "documented racial configurations within city spaces as planned phenomena rather than as outgrowths of natural ecological processes: the locations of neighborhoods and businesses were products of those who possessed money and power" (Morris 49). Another sociological approach interested in empiricism came in 1944, with the publication of Gunnar Myrdal's *An American Dilemma*, but the Carnegie Corporation's choice of a Swedish economist to write this study of American race relations—at the expense of funding a different Du Bois project—highlights a skepticism about the ability of insiders to objectively represent data about themselves. I will later return more in depth to Du Bois's contrasting sociological approach to race, space, and form; for now, I introduce this corrective genealogy of U.S. sociology to emphasize how the dominant models of urban space utilized

abstraction and problematic assumptions about scientific objectivity to wield power and assert "cultural authority" (Morris 28) and how, despite purporting to be universal, they were in fact contingent and challengeable.

While this cohort of sociologists is often celebrated for making the liberal move away from biological definitions of race, their performance of objectivity did not remove them from the socio-political arena, from popularizing racist stereotypes of African American "cultural inferiority" (Ferguson 20), or from contributing to racial surveillance, regulation, and discipline. Specifically, the Chicago school's claims to natural, universal laws "oblige themselves to the regulatory and exclusionary imperatives of those claims," as Roderick Ferguson articulates in *Aberrations in Black: Toward a Queer of Color Critique* (22).[7] "As canonical sociology suppresses heterogeneity in the name of universality," he explains, invoking the centrality of gender and sexuality to racialization, "it becomes an epistemological counterpart to the state's enforcement of universality as the state suppresses nonheteronormative racial difference" (21). Or, in Davarian Baldwin's words, "[a]n honest history of the field makes clear that ethnographies and data do not just describe reality but, at best, mediate and[,] at worst, become reality" ("Black Belts" 435). This is particularly clear in their effect on predominantly Black spaces in the city:

[7] In this understanding of the writings of the Chicago school, I am guided by Ferguson and Morris, along with Denise Ferreira da Silva, Davarian Baldwin, and Henry Yu (whose work I take up in more detail in later chapters), scholars who have each explicated important critiques of the Chicago school's approach to race. Their critiques complicate approaches to the many Black sociologists who trained and worked at the University of Chicago, including E. Franklin Frazier, Charles Johnson, and Horace Cayton and St. Clair Drake—as opposed to the Black sociologists who comprise W. E. B. Du Bois's Atlanta school described by Morris. Ferguson explains, "While seemingly a progressive and democratic move, including African American sociologists within the definition of canonical sociology actually denies the regulatory and exclusionary practices of canonical formations and suggests the perfection of the discipline. … Rather than reifying the suppression of African American sociologists by not addressing them at all, I attempt to demonstrate the ways in which canonical sociology has usurped their intellectual work and banished them from the taken-for-granted and lived history of American sociology" (23). Similarly, Davarian Baldwin points out how "Black resistance throughout the first half of the twentieth century continued to puncture through the thin layer of cultural cohesion proposed by the white 'Chicago School' hegemony in ways that ironically opened the door to Black social scientists in the precarious position of 'native informants'" ("Black Belts" 432).

"The Chicago School's construction of African American neighborhoods as outside heteropatriarchal normalization underwrote municipal government's regulation of the South Side, making African American neighborhoods the point at which both a will to knowledge and a will to exclude intersected" (Ferguson 41). The twinned projects of knowledge production and exclusion were imagined and enacted formally. This dissertation is concerned with the narratives and images that shaped, communicated, and popularized, but also challenged and critiqued, those projects.

Although I am interested in how literary texts can complicate and even work against the racist effects of that sociological work, I focus on form as it structures both literature and sociology in order to avoid reproducing a binary that pits the two against one another. Unlike the long-familiar incorporation of Frankfurt School sociology into literary, political, and cultural analysis, this binary animates many discussions of American sociology and urban literature: readings that, for example, explore "how urban space has been read from the top down by sociologists and planners and how it has been written from the bottom up by writers who speak about the experience of social and spatial isolation, about the experience of being an object of scrutiny, suspicion, and fear" (Heise 6). Such approaches are valid, for literature certainly gives a voice to those at the "bottom" and their lived experiences, but they ignore the rhetorical power of popular texts and of genre conventions to potentially bolster hegemony. Indeed, as Ferguson asserts, "African American nonheteronormativity disrupts the idea that the literary and the sociological are discrete and discontinuous formations. Instead, we must assume that canonical sociology and canonical literature arise out of the same system of power, one that presents normativity and humanity as the gifts of state compliance and heteropatriarchal belonging" (72). I therefore treat all of the primary work that I read—fiction, photojournalism, sociology—as text,

first and foremost. By doing so, I move beyond and add nuance to the more typical approaches in literary criticism that either only describe lines of influence or assert that social science naturalizes the hegemonic representations that literature then critiques.

Focusing on textual form therefore allows me to reveal contradictions in both types of texts, contradictions that illuminate, recalling McKittrick's words, both "the logic of white and patriarchal maps" and the forms of knowledge that lie "across" them (62). As Sarah Wilson posits in *Melting Pot Modernism*, the early U.S. sociologists "left a body of work that demands literary interpretation" (25), particularly because, as we find when close reading their texts, "inconsistencies anathema to conventional social theory [were] tolerated through a kind of literary logic" (23). Because I apply the same formalist reading methods to all of my primary texts, I find moments in sociological writing that undermine the ideologies and supposedly natural laws that they popularized, and I trace how some fictional texts bolster the production of hegemonic and racist spatial structures. Rather than juxtaposing literature versus sociology, I locate the works in my archive on a spectrum that ranges from texts that contribute to the narrative project of building anti-Black forms to those that refashion those forms for critical ends—in the middle, I find texts that give structure to hegemonic narratives but nevertheless display and expose the contradictions that must be ignored in order to shape racialized narratives as coherently natural or "realistic."

In this approach, I situate literary and visual production squarely within the intellectual milieu in which these texts emerged, when "Chicago urban sociologists and novelists intellectually rubbed elbows, and conceptually and methodologically, aesthetically and thematically stood as primary reference points for one another. … While the critical practice of the last few decades has been fairly consistent in decreeing that when a literary text is

'sociological' it is not 'art,' the practice of Chicago sociologists and novelists points to a time when good sociology and good literature held hands" (Cappetti 32). As my discussions of the Chicago Black Renaissance—in particular, of the Cayton-Warner project that led to the publication of *Black Metropolis* (1945), as well as Richard Wright's repurposing of Chicago school theories—will make clear, the interaction and blending of art and sociology could serve a powerful anti-racist purpose, even as other interactions between the two reinforced exclusionary geographical arrangements.

I also emulate early twentieth century sociology in my treatment of Chicago as a case study that takes on a representative status, for this is not simply or even primarily a dissertation about Chicago during a particular time period but is also and more importantly about a narrative mode of producing urban space that is not tied to particular locations. Precisely because the sociologists' use of Chicago as social laboratory had the problematic effect of universalizing specific historical circumstances into supposedly natural laws— because the now-universal patterns of segregation across U.S. cities were produced by their brand of generalization—it is fruitful to return to the individual location where those narratives were crafted. That is, even if local solutions to urban segregation might be most effective at combatting the material effects of racism on the ground and in the short term, to address the larger problem we must understand how patterns and policies were applied (in)discriminately across the country, by way of ideologies transmitted through cultural forms. This involves combining the insights of critical race studies, cultural geography, and formalist methodologies, as I describe below.

Plotting Race: Bridging Critical Race Studies, New Formalism, and Cultural Geography

When I refer to the plotting of race, I mean the textual construction of narrative forms that produce paradigms of understanding race as spatial. I identify how textual patterns and arrangements construct racialized narratives that illuminate how spatial structures in the world are also racialized. My attention to narrative constructions of race ultimately highlights the contingency of material constructions of race: which modes of perception and narration support and produce the particular racialization of these material spaces and which could interrupt, redirect, or reframe that racialization. In doing so, I offer a formalist and spatial reading method that is rooted in critical race studies and Black feminist geography. My approach to form is in dialogue with the New Formalism, a critical approach that emphasizes how literary critics can contribute their training in close reading to broader historical, socio-political conversations. I am informed, in particular, by the work of Caroline Levine, Anna Kornbluh, and David Allworth, who each demonstrate the role of textual forms in representing and producing social space.

Levine's *Forms* offers a deliberately broad definition of form—"all shapes and configurations, all ordering principles, all patterns of repetition and difference" (3)—in order to emphasize the multiple arenas in which forms act in the world, both in text and in politics. Her intervention adopts the political stakes of Marxist criticism while disputing its "emphasis on aesthetic form as epiphenomenal" (Levine 14). This tradition, she argues, "prevents us from understanding politics as a matter of form, and … assumes that one kind of form—the political—is always the root or ground of the other—the aesthetic" (Levine 14). The way that Levine lays out her New Formalist method has justifiably been criticized for a number of reasons. Her definition of form can come to seem all-encompassing, transforming any- and everything into a form, while nevertheless leaving "shadows cast by those [weird] forms it cannot quite recognize"

(Serpell 1238). It also attributes agency to the fetishized forms themselves, such that "forms, not people, do things" (Hammer 1204). And despite Levine's interest in the collision of forms, their role in "social *dis*organization" and how they "may unsettle one another" (17), C. Namwali Serpell identifies a "latent conservatism"—at odds with Levine's progressive political aims—because "the thrust of her argument is that forms, though they may collide, endure" (1236).

Levine's most compelling claim—that form is a useful analytic for understanding artistic, political, and social organization and for making connections across these arenas—is therefore also one of her book's most fraught. If "[l]iterary forms and social formations are equally real in their capacity to organize materials, and equally *un*real in being artificial, contingent constraints" (Levine 14), it does not necessarily follow that the literary critic's close reading skills translate directly to the sociopolitical realm. I take from Levine a strong emphasis on the work that forms do, and on the influence that literary forms can have on sociopolitical forms, rather than treating literature as only ever a secondary, epiphenomenal reflection. Yet while I draw connections between forms that operate both in text and in social space, my focus is on understanding how the rhetorical power of particular narrative forms can alter readers' perspectives and thereby shape cultural ideologies.

Which is to say, I am interested in the power of forms to uphold unequal divisions of space and to envision different, more equitable ways of organizing space, but I treat that power as one that relies on people's and institutions' actions and engagement with those forms. Who produces new forms that become paradigmatic, and do they only become paradigmatic retrospectively, through repetition? Who takes up and repeats those paradigms without questioning their effects—or purposefully, knowing that their effects are uneven: excluding some while assimilating others? Who challenges those paradigms by showing that forms are

contingent, by repurposing and reforming them to create more just arrangements? With these questions always in mind, I am invested in the sociopolitical import of literary forms, and I draw parallels between textual and spatial forms—for human actors recognize those parallels and thereby give the forms their power. But I always turn back to the text, affirming that formalist literary analysis is most effective when focused on texts and their power to produce, repeat, and re-form both knowledge and space.

In this, I am aligned with the work of Anna Kornbluh, whose monograph *The Order of Forms* follows Levine in "revaloriz[ing] the aestheticization of politics" (Kornbluh 3), while turning sharply away from Levine's repetition of a longstanding trend in literary criticism: the "ubiquity of unsettling and unmaking" (Kornbluh 4). Kornbluh defines form as "composed relationality" and insists that "a formalism of the political avouches the constitution and agency of forms, underscoring that life itself essentially depends upon composed relations, institutions, states" (4). As a method of literary analysis, her formalism "embraces projects of building" and proposes to "study how to compose and to direct—rather than ceaselessly oppose—form, formalization, and forms of sociability" (4). *The Order of Forms* offers an incisive critique of the tendency to equate formlessness with progressive politics, contending that the "fantasy of formlessness … has proved debilitating for theory and for struggle. Far better to engage in the production of forms whose exclusions are more provisional, more rotational, more mediated" (Kornbluh 77).[8] This insight is key when it comes to racial geographies; there is no way to avoid the production of space, but cities can be arranged differently, and I read texts in order to

[8] In addition, Kornbluh provides a necessary reminder that if, as Levine concurs, formalist close reading "not only comprises the central proficiency of literary critics, but also funds their unique worldly purchase" (4). She asserts that artistic forms are worth study precisely because "questions of social configuration may be abstractly posed in art in ways that the concretude of experience blocks" (Kornbluh 6). I agree that we, as literary critics, ought to apply our formalist chops in the arena we know best: literature.

understand how alternative narratives and perspectives can both expose the forms of anti-Blackness and suggest anti-racist forms to replace them with.

I define form as a structure of relations, acknowledging that form is material, rhetorical, and social. Spatial forms, specifically, appear in a text as the structures that brings its elements—e.g., time, place, characters, events, narration, description—into relation with one another. In the world outside the text, spatial forms are physical and social structures—like borders, bridges, and streets, but also the color line, the gender gap, and the poverty line (note the metaphorical use of words that refer to physical forms in these common phrases)—that socially and geographically manifest the relations between place, space, people, cultural traditions, and the opportunities available or not available to those people. I attempt not to flatten the distinction between textual and real-world spatial forms or to treat them as direct equivalents; my interest is in exploring how the textual forms, both narrative and visual, make sense of those spatial forms that structure our socio-political worlds and experiences. Paying formal attention to texts can illuminate how the cultural imagination participates in the production, the reinforcement, and also the critique of the forms that regulate and define social and geographic space.

Social space is always produced imaginatively as well as materially and politically, and Henri Lefebvre's field-defining *The Production of Space* offers ways forward for literary critics interested in approaching parallel textual and worldly forms without collapsing their differences. "[A]s much as Lefebvre is describing a 'real' phenomenon, one cannot go inside social space as one would go inside a house," Kornbluh explains, and thus "methods for spatial analysis must not presume reified relations so much as attend to the principles of intercalation and combination, to the metaphoric and metonymic axes of composition" (12). That is, thinking

through literary forms opens up questions about formation and relationality per se—including sociopolitical relations and the construction of material formations or built environments.

David Allworth's approach to the relation between space and literary form is also routed through Lefebvre: he treats "sites (both imagined and real)" as Lefebvrian "concrete abstractions" that "render[] social relations … graspable as empirical objects" (18). While explicitly aligning himself with sociologists like Bruno Latour and Erving Goffman rather than with the New Formalism, Allworth's monograph *Site Reading: Fiction, Art, Social Form* suggests a similar investment in textual form as a model of sociopolitical relations. He proposes a method called "site reading," which approaches "the formal qualities of narrative prose fiction … with an eye toward how they effect something like a radically literary sociology" (Allworth 4). His approach, as he puts it, is "an experiment in literary criticism whose hypothesis is that writing a novel is a way of knowing about collective life" (Allworth 21). This hypothesis, as Cappetti's research has shown, would have come as second nature to the Chicago school sociologists—but Allworth's claim, in the context of contemporary literary criticism, is a helpful reminder of the sociopolitical import of narrative making and textual form itself.

Allworth's attention to the "site" suggests that fictional settings exist as part of a textual assemblage with characters, objects, and events, emphasizing that setting and space are not merely the background for understanding social relations—they are the ground through which social relations are produced. He asks, for example, "how do we distinguish character from setting?" (Allworth 17), and he turns to Edgar Allan Poe's "The Man of the Crowd" as "a metanarrative about how" this happens "through the sustained attention of a narrator" (Allworth 18). My own methodology similarly tracks narrative attention and sequencing as a means of understanding the production of space and of social relations. Recall Kaplan's discussion of the

Marches' "knowledge of the line" in *Hazard*, which registers an "escalating struggle … of drawing and redrawing the boundary line between the background and the foreground of the novel" (52): space and setting are made to structure social relations precisely through the articulation of specific forms. The stakes are high in my texts of study: not just inequitable social relations understood abstractly, but social relations and geography seen through the particular lens of racialization. Who and what gets our attention? And in what ways? How do narrative forms direct attention and structure separate *and* unequal relations?

My project thus focuses on a particular point of convergence between textual and social forms that is ripe for further study, the intersection of form with both space and race, and I therefore connect the methodological conversations of the New Formalism to important work in cultural geography and critical race studies. The emerging modern city at the turn of the twentieth century presents the ideal site at which to approach this convergence, because the extreme racial segregation of today's U.S. cities has its roots in the era after Reconstruction through World War II. As Richard Rothstein's *The Color of Law* makes clear, "the public policies of yesterday still shape the racial landscape of today" (178): active policy decisions made by the government, from zoning laws and home loan risk assessment to the siting of public housing projects, produced the segregated racial geographies that continue to constitute the form of U.S. cities. By reading formally, I explicate and interrogate how narratives paved the way for and naturalized those racist policy decisions, how texts called attention (whether intentionally or not) to the artificiality of those supposedly natural or self-evident modes of perception, and how literature both reflected and challenged the racial motivations that shaped urban spatial forms.

Yet although this dissertation centers on exclusionary forms that mapped and materialized anti-Blackness onto the landscape, my critical move is not simply or reductively to

point to texts that either construct or deconstruct them. Instead, I seek to investigate *how* those forms are built and *how* they might be rebuilt differently and more justly. I draw connections between the textual, metaphorical, conceptual, and material in order to see how the textual parallels to social and geographic forms theorize and mediate understandings of their worldly correlates. The forms I identify (the plot, the line, and the frame, and, in the coda, the curve) are not literally the same when textual versus spatial, but the linguistic and metaphorical connections between them—that we think of these formations using the same word—suggest that their textual versions mediate readers' perceptions of those forms in the world outside the text. The Black authors I study—Richard Wright, Marita Bonner, Horace Cayton and St. Clair Drake, and W. E. B. Du Bois—all highlight the transformative power of aesthetics to reimagine both narration and social space in radical, anti-racist ways.

My close readings in the following chapters show the decisions that formally produce and structure anti-Blackness; in each chapter I am attentive to the ways in which the forms I describe are constructed. In doing so—asking how writers' rhetorical and narrative choices build the social and structural relations of the text— I demonstrate how forms of oppression and racialization have been built to bolster white supremacy, anti-Blackness, sexism, classism, and the like. My attention to construction emphasizes both the structures, ideas, and descriptions that a text uses to build those forms as well as those that it ultimately does not incorporate or build on. Those unincorporated elements, then—contradictions latent within the form of the text—suggest that these narratives could have been built in other ways. As Levine and Kornbluh each assert, forms are not inherently oppressive or exclusionary; they may have affordances that promote equity, and they are capable of being reconstructed into alternate formations. Even Levine's seeming attraction to formlessness comes from a desire to build more just forms. She

has clarified that "collisions matter because they are the places where we can see where and how unjust structures are weak" ("Not Against" 257). Yet the temporality implied by her statement, that forms' weaknesses are best identified after they have been exposed through collision with other forms, disavows the possibility that those weaknesses might be immanent to the forms and therefore always potentially identifiable. My approach, in contrast, seeks out ever-present contradictions that can show us the way toward alternative, equitable arrangements.

My definition of contradiction comes from Lefebvre, whose Marxist account of the production of space asserts that "[s]pace has no power 'in itself', nor does space as such determine spatial contradictions. These are contradictions of society … that simply emerge in space, at the level of space, and so engender the contradictions of space" (358). There are always already "conflicts internal to what on the surface appears homogenous and coherent" (Lefebvre 352); without these contradictions, "the 'system' would have a legitimate claim to immortality" (Lefebvre 11). To regard social space as the homogenous, closed system it presents itself as would be to "bestow a cohesiveness it utterly lacks upon a totality which is in fact decidedly open — so open, indeed, that it must rely on violence to endure" (Lefebvre 11). That is, power works through the production and obfuscation of these contradictions: "Power – which is to say violence – divides, then keeps what it has divided in a state of separation; inversely, it reunites – yet keeps whatever it wants in a state of confusion" (Lefebvre 358). Literature offers a prime site for identifying these contradictions and the revolutionary possibilities that they signal—enabling acts of recognition that systems of power seek to forestall through their combined programs of violence, separation, confusion, and homogenization. Hsuan Hsu notes, "Even as [literary texts] fall short of transformatively reshaping the spaces they represent," they "express errant identifications and desires for global justice that ha[ve] yet to find expression in concrete spaces"

(24). For this reason, I focus on contradiction as constitutive of spatial and textual forms, locating contradictions in moments of form building, not collision. Instead of looking for weak spots that cause unravelling, I pay attention to building blocks: which elements in a text seem to support the intended function of the form (an intention either stated by the narrator or evident in the direction that the narrative takes), and which remain extraneous? Sometimes texts lay out foundations that they then do not build on, and those unused elements are evidence of other possible shapes the form could have taken.

Attending to form building rather than collision highlights the importance of pursuing social justice as a project of constructing and re-routing plans rather than only of fighting to destroy the systems already in place. (Certainly, these social justice tactics are both necessary, but as Kornbluh emphasizes, the singular goal of smashing forms apart offers no positive political vision of its own; its sole politics is one of formlessness.) Specifically, if we focus our attention on the narrative construction, rather than collision, of forms, we are more likely to notice the ways in which certain people and actions are denied sociality or access to space. Mark Jerng critiques Levine for "universaliz[ing] and abstract[ing] forms's [sic] coerciveness of all caught up in its ordering" ("Race" 264). A better method, he suggests, emerges in the writing of Du Bois, who depicts "a coerciveness based on being made not to act via the interaction of embodiments and conventions that constitute routes for some, but not all" (Jerng "Race" 264). A critical race studies perspective, that is, treats the social as "constitute[d] … not just through the making of linkages, but also through the refusal of linkages" (Jerng "Race" 262). I read texts closely to disentangle the narrative futures that they build or claim that they intend to build from what is actually there in the text: often, I find excess appearances of the forms that I am tracking that do not contribute to the construction of the narrative world, suggesting that certain

affordances and possible routes are rejected during the process of building. Other more critical texts, like Marita Bonner's stories, self-consciously show those processes of exclusion at work. The appearance of other possibilities suggests the contingency—and thus contest the inevitability—of forms that uphold racial segregation.

One common thread that emerges in my primary texts, both literary and sociological, is a preoccupation with "fronts," which register a "racial anxiety animating concerns about mixed-up façades and deceptive surfaces at the turn of the century" (Brown 99). This interest in fronts—which evokes both questions about collectivity (e.g., the Popular Front) and about social status—uses spatial language to consider ways of seeing. When a front, the way a person or place presents itself on the outside, is suspect, it undermines the viewer's certainty about what they are seeing and if they are able to accurately perceive the truth. On the one hand, the anxiety about fronts, as it emerged in discourse around racial passing, highlighted a "growing concern in the early twentieth century that skin, too, might be an 'imaginary construction' masking deeper racial truths" (Brown 99)—and as physiognomic definitions of race were unsettled, Adrienne Brown shows, race started to be materialized in a disembodied way, technocratically and spatially, through tactics like redlining. On the other hand, texts that self-consciously deconstruct the hegemonic power of the front find behind it foundations for a different politics: in Du Bois's genre fiction and data visualizations, for example, Black sociology exposes potential affiliations that challenge the legacies of settler colonialism and racial capitalism. What would happen if spaces were built from these oft neglected and deliberately refused foundations, rather than focusing on the production of fronts?

My emphasis on form building in this way follows from Jerng's insight, in *Racial Worldmaking*, that racism "is forward-looking, laying claim on our capacity to imagine the

future" (27). A reading method attuned to instances of denied sociality—of looking for those concealed and constructed foundations—can therefore elucidate how we "embed race into our expectations for how the world operates" (Jerng *RW* 2). Jerng reorients the discussion of race from the overemphasized "visual epistemology," which ascribes race to "the biological representation of bodies or the social categorization of persons," to the question of its "salience," or how "we are taught when, where, and how race is something to notice" (*RW* 2). He shows how "narrative and interpretive strategies … prompt us to notice race in unlikely sites and in unexpected ways. They locate race at the level of context, atmosphere, sequence, and narrative explanation" (Jerng *RW* 1-2). By looking for race—whether it is constructed as something to notice or not to notice—in the construction of the text, we can see how the building of social worlds relies on such narratives to render race salient in certain locations but not in others. Think, for example, of how the Burgess concentric zone map calls attention to ethnicity and race in its naming of ethnic enclaves ("Little Sicily," "Black Belt") but subsumes them in the names of the concentric zones themselves ("Zone in Transition," "Residential Zone"), or of the way that, through redlining, financial risk came to stand in for race. I use the term form—as opposed to Jerng's preferred analytic, genre—because of its correspondences with maps, diagrams, physical and social spaces, and architectural structures. Nevertheless, his explanation of "racial worldmaking" as a narratological process aligns with my approach and underscores the valuable role that formalist reading methods can play in critical race studies. The imperative to understand "how race is a part of the narrative structure of causality, its composition of space-time relations, its manipulation of what a reader knows, and its shifting of foreground and background" must inform literary geographers' discussions of race (Jerng *RW* 18). This understanding allows for two distinct but related projects that I identify in Black modernist texts: first, a focus on the

refusals and obfuscations required to produce forms of anti-Blackness; and second, a revision of those forms that proceeds from and builds on the foundations of those originally denied linkages.

Racial perception is produced not only narratologically but also architecturally, as a recent turn to the overlaps between architecture, race, and American literature makes clear. "[T]he built environment," William Gleason articulates, "is always shaped in some way by race whether such shaping is explicitly acknowledged or understood. … even structures appearing to have no racial inflection whatsoever cannot be understood apart from the racial circumstances that helped create them" (3). And just as architectural structures are designed and constructed within particular racial contexts, the converse is also true: they provide the setting for experiences of race, shaping its meanings. Adrienne Brown's *The Black Skyscraper* approaches the same postbellum, early twentieth century period as I do—a time when migration, immigration, and urbanization challenged prior biological and physiological racial typologies—through the lens of the perception-altering skyscraper. The height of the skyscraper reveals race to be "not only … a matter of skin or blood but of scale" (Brown 202): the supposedly visual signs of racial difference are no longer perceptible from a tall building. Her reading method expands on Gleason's claim by emphasizing that that "all architectures are, inevitably, racial architectures, producing and maintaining site-specific phenomenologies of race" (Brown 3). By registering these spatially inflected phenomenologies in the texts she reads, Brown shows how, both in texts that deal explicitly with skyscrapers and in those where the skyscraper makes a more subtle appearance in the setting, this modern structure ushered in a nonvisual, disembodied means of marking race, "the indirect and ongoing collection of data, records, deeds, and maps" (80). While I look less closely at specific architectures, Brown's scholarship is influential to my

thinking, particularly in how it traces connections between texts, physical spaces, and the modern data- and property-driven regulation and measurement of racial difference.

Architectural readings of race also inform my method by illuminating how textual forms can reflect and challenge spatial forms, as Gleason's *Sites Unseen* demonstrates. He identifies both "the narrative features of architectural space—the ways a floor plan, for example, can encode, as in the plot of a novel, the unfolding of a particular temporal and spatial experience" and "the architectural features of narrative space" (Gleason 26). For example, his compelling reading of Charles Chesnutt's conjure stories links "the plantation piazza—perhaps the chief architectural marker of southern white racial superiority" to Chesnutt's use of frame stories (Gleason 29), which "not only *depict[]* the porch of a plantation-era mansion but also *function[]* as the 'porch' of the story itself—a highly controlled and mediated social space where the inside and the outside of the story (and the house) meet" (Gleason 26). This method of identifying "homologies between narrative and architectural form" (Gleason 27) reveals the nuanced ways in which Chesnutt "shows powerfully how," in the face of social and spatial exclusion, African Americans "have been claiming ground, in their own ways, since the days of slavery" (Gleason 29). That is, by reading textual form and spatial form in conversation with one another, we can see how, although they sometimes reinforce one another, these interactions can also facilitate reflections on and critiques of how space is racialized in and through narrative.

The following chapters are therefore organized according to form: each chapter takes as its focus a single form around which its primary texts are oriented and that has played a significant role in the imagination and segregation of urban space. The chapters proceed chronologically, from the late nineteenth and turn of the twentieth century to the Great Migration and the Chicago Black Renaissance, with the middle chapter acting as a hinge between the two.

Chapter 2, on Jacob Riis and Richard Wright, similarly links my discussion of white authors with that of Black authors, all of whose approaches to urban space are animated by a naturalist impulse. And while in one sense the dissertation proceeds from texts that build hegemonic forms to those that reimagine those forms counterhegemonically—in contrast and in response to how, as the period progressed, racial divisions in cities actually became more entrenched—it is invested throughout in identifying spatial and narrative contradictions. That is, each chapter attends to the contingencies at work in the production of spatial forms, the possibilities demonstrated by each text for both hegemonic and counterhegemonic constructions.

In Chapter 1, "Plots of Whiteness: Naturalist Narrative and the Mapping of Racialized Futures," I explicate the concept of plotting race, which is foundational to the overarching argument of this dissertation. This chapter shows how turn-of-the-century naturalist city novels, focusing on Henry Blake Fuller's *The Cliff-Dwellers* (1893) and Theodore Dresier's *Sister Carrie* (1900), incorporate the value of real estate into the sequencing of their narratives and the routing of their protagonists' desired futures—thereby spatializing whiteness as a norm in the city's geography. While Fuller's novel highlights plot choices that result in the naming of different social types in order to subsequently neglect, dismiss, or sequester them from the narrative's progression and urban geography, my approach to Dreiser's novel focuses on how descriptive, classificatory moments in the text direct Carrie's desires and introduce a distinctly racialized form of narrative causality based on comparative sequencing. Although Carrie's visions for the future open up alternatives to traditional domesticity for modern women, they link her achievement of those gendered futures with her performance of whiteness. I name these generic plot expectations "plots of whiteness," and at the end of the chapter I discuss how they

made their way into the influential writings of the Chicago school sociologists, such as Robert Park's "The City."

Yet just as Black sociologists trained by the Chicago school simultaneously built on and challenged the theories of their white mentors, Black authors including Marita Bonner and Richard Wright drew on and manipulated the discourses responsible for racializing space in order to call attention to and work against that process. If naturalist plots secured white city space, those plots were dependent on boundary lines that separated out and enclosed Blackness beyond their limits. Chapter 2, "Crossing the Line: Documentary, Spectatorship, and Anti-Blackness," takes a brief detour to New York to demonstrate how the presence of competing lines, from photographic sightlines to material clotheslines, works obsessively in Jacob Riis's *How the Other Half Lives* (1890) to map racial difference onto the city geography, paving the way for assimilation of certain ethnic others through anti-Blackness. Wright, in his own photo-text, *12 Million Black Voices* (1941), shows how this rhetorical function has sustained the color line—a rhetoric established through interactions of visual and narrative perspectives. A half century after Riis's influential photojournalism, Wright draws on similar conventions but to different effect. By including but not integrating white paradigms of looking—photography and sociology—that are in tension with, rather than in service of, the narrator's perspective, *Black Voices* offers possibilities for privileging the line as a contact zone rather than as a boundary.

Chapter 3, "Framing the Black Belt: Redlining, *Black Metropolis*, and Marita Bonner's Aesthetics of Discrimination," demonstrates how Marita Bonner's fiction calls attention to the power of frames—from maps of segregated Black Belts to gender and class stereotypes—to entrap and determine Black lives. Her stories' modernist forms require readers to thoughtfully navigate between and across different frames of perception, deconstructing the role of aesthetic

and narrative framing in patterns of race, gender, and class discrimination ranging from Jim Crow to domestic violence to the origins of mass incarceration. I read her stories in the context of the time and place where they were written: a period when restrictive covenants and redlining, bolstered by research and support from the University of Chicago, increasingly segregated Chicago's South Side, but also the moment of the Chicago Black Renaissance, when the Bronzeville community manifested a strong interest in understanding and documenting itself through both social science and art. I discuss how Horace Cayton and St. Clair Drake's *Black Metropolis* reframes Chicago school sociology from a perspective located within—rather than outside of—the Black Belt, while their turn to fictionalizing nevertheless reinforces racist, classist, and sexist stereotypes about lower-class Black women. Bonner's stories, in contrast, reframe the Black Belt through an intersectional feminist lens and interrogate discriminatory ideologies as aesthetic constructions that mutually reinforce one another.

In the coda, "The Great Curve and Black Spatial Critique," I meditate on the recurrence of the curve in W. E. B. Du Bois's sociology and fiction: the curved lines and bars in his 1900 Paris Exposition graphs challenge the conventions of data visualization, and the "Great Curve" rendered visible through the Black sociologist's "megascope" in his short story "The Princess Steel" (c.1908-10) renders history visible systemically, making Du Bois's curves an emblematic form of Black critical knowledge production. But before we can interrogate the spatial affordances of the curve, we must lay out the dominant narrative of racialization that Du Bois and other Black modernists were challenging: the plot of whiteness.

Plots of Whiteness:
Naturalist Narrative and the Mapping of Racialized Futures

It is a critical commonplace to note that realist and naturalist city novels track their characters' changing fortunes by mapping their changes in residence.[9] But what narrative end do these textual itineraries serve? What effects do they have on the fictional worlds and their real-world corollaries? This chapter argues that they work to spatialize whiteness as a norm by integrating real estate plots into narrative plots. In a nation where racial inequity has been and continues to be upheld through disparities in home equity, its literature has integrated the value of real estate into its very narrative structure. Real estate speculation and purchases represent an investment in the future—a future of whiteness and generational wealth that immigrant ethnic groups leveraged for the purpose of assimilation and that deliberately excluded African Americans. In what follows, I will demonstrate how that investment in white futurity manifests in the plots of Henry Blake Fuller's *The Cliff-Dwellers* (1893) and Theodore Dreiser's *Sister Carrie* (1900) as an investment in particular forms of narrative movement and expectations. These plots of whiteness, as I name them, tied together character residences with the conventions of realist and naturalist narration and thereby provided a powerful cultural narrative for understanding urban racial geographies at the turn of the twentieth century, even becoming a

[9] In this chapter I deliberately group turn-of-the-century realism and naturalism together and use the terms interchangeably. The genres are sometimes treated as coextensive in American literary history and sometimes carefully distinguished from each other; although there are many valid and productive reasons to treat them as separate, for my purposes here I wish to highlight their shared intent of accurately and recognizably portraying to their readers what contemporary turn-of-the-century urban life was like. Moreover, I intend to blur the Lukácsian binary of narration in realism versus description in naturalism and follow Jennifer L. Fleissner in rejecting the definition of naturalism as only either "plot of triumph" or "plot of decline." Besides, the secondary literature that I deal with also dwells in the blurred boundary between the genres: Kaplan's *Social Construction of American Realism* discusses in depth two novels that are most often labeled naturalist (*The House of Mirth* and *Sister Carrie*), and both of the novels that I read in this chapter, *The Cliff-Dwellers* and *Sister Carrie*, have in turn been received at times as realist and at times as naturalist.

rhetorical resource for sociologists to communicate their theories of ethnic assimilation and urban growth.

As these turn-of-the-century novels map their characters' abodes across neighborhood and residence types (flats, furnished rooms, flophouses, etc.), their geographic catalogues play a role in stabilizing conventional signs of gender, class, ethnicity, and race by locating them in particular types of spaces. As Paul Groth's cultural history of "living downtown" explains, the period between 1880 and 1930 "marked the widest viable range of housing diversity in American urban history" (x). Moreover, "ranks of building types," from the palace hotel to the apartment hotel, from the rooming house to the SRO, not only "closely match social stratification" but were also material "tools for creating class distinction" (Groth 20, 26). It is therefore unsurprising that such residential rankings crop up in the fiction of the time as synecdoches for characters' social standings—this is how much of the critical literature on naturalism treats these novels' use of changing residential settings. While these synecdoches explicitly deal with class, they are often treated as deracialized, except in the case of the flophouse or other lower-class spaces. That does not mean that the middle- and upper-class dwellings have no racial connotations, however; indeed, the very conflation of race and class served to establish those spaces as fundamentally and normatively white.

The relationship between such real estate typologies and the racialization of urban space thus begs for emphasis. It is of particular importance because the process by which certain immigrant and ethnic groups were assimilated into a concept of "ethnic whiteness," to use Tyrone R. Simpson II's words, "was simultaneously racial and spatial" (21). As Simpson argues, the cultural imagination of the ghetto was of a "site[] of symbolic if not literal blackening" (6). Whereas he focuses attention on "the practice of ghetto escape" (Simpson 7)—that is, on

"geographic mobility and spatial reassignment" as a means of assuming the privileges of racial whiteness and becoming "more free" (Simpson 41)—I instead consider the narrative practices that normalize whiteness in and through space, shoring up the color line. Urban texts at the turn of the century, and description-heavy naturalist plots in particular, enlist their readers (and sometimes even literary critics) in cataloguing social types: a mode of perception that negotiates between identifying differences of many kinds—treating class, race, ethnicity, gender, religion, and so on as commensurate—and integrating only certain of those differences to produce plots of whiteness. In using the phrase "plots of whiteness," I invoke plots as material spaces, or real estate, that were treated as normative and/or aspirational—the dwellings in the spatial catalogues toward which characters strive or from which they fall—and that therefore denoted and shaped the meaning of whiteness, in addition to textual, narrative plots, which played an essential role in the production of such spaces.

The subsumption of ethnic whites into racial whiteness, making way for the binary "color-line" that W. E. B. Du Bois foresaw as the "problem of the Twentieth Century" (1), was articulated through real estate and urban geographies. Elaine Lewinnek convincingly locates the emergence of U.S. suburban sprawl in nineteenth-century Chicago, long before the post-WWII white flight with which suburban history is more typically associated. In contrast to the common assumption of a twentieth century "monolithic middle class living in a monolithic suburbia" (Lewinnek 76), she emphasizes that there was a variety of early suburbs and that "the relatively high rate of homeownership did not imply prosperity" (Lewinnek 89). Indeed, the growth of suburbia was facilitated by immigrants and workers: "The working man's reward was a working-class suburb that developed around assembly-line industries and immigrants eager to own their own homes" (Lewinnek 70). Yet this heterogeneous spatial form, especially by the early

twentieth century, did not accommodate African Americans, and suburban homeownership across ethnic and class differences became a means of securing what David Roediger via Du Bois calls the "wages of whiteness"—updated by Lewinnek to "the mortgages of whiteness" (172).

Repeated reassertions of the color line were central to the formation of race in the United States, as Noel Ignatiev explains in *How the Irish Became White*. Even in the antebellum U.S., he argues, "The truth [wa]s not … that slavery made it possible to extend to the Irish the privileges of citizenship, by providing another group for them to stand on, but the reverse, that the assimilation of the Irish into the white race made it possible to maintain slavery" (Ignatiev 69). In other words, the assimilation of ethnic immigrants into whiteness served to reinforce anti-Blackness. This required the challenging of nativist attitudes, which "lost out not to the vision of a nonracial society, but to a society polarized between white and black. Part of the project of defeating nativism was to establish an acceptable standard for 'white' behavior" (Ignatiev 76). Ethnicity "marked the spot" within the white race that various immigrants held (Ignatiev 186). As the then-flexible meanings of race and ethnicity began to crystallize, they did so to bolster anti-Blackness. Whereas Ignatiev and Roediger are interested in the formation of whiteness as a corrective to American labor history, I follow in Lewinnek's footsteps by paying attention to how space was racially inhabited. Suburban homeownership, in Lewinnek's analysis, was one more means by which ethnically and socioeconomically diverse Americans articulated their whiteness: it became a white "behavior," to borrow Ignatiev's word. As I elaborate, those real estate investments—even and especially when they were purely speculative, and counterintuitively also in rented rooms—depended, not just on behaviors, but on the whitening of certain kinds of space itself.

This linkage between space and whiteness, that is, hinged on the writing up and signing of a real estate deed or lease, a future-oriented relationship to a plot of land. I argue that it was also made possible and propagated by narratives that established spatiotemporal associations between social types and what I refer to as geographic types—thus not only by the "wages" and "mortgages" of whiteness, but also by its plots. In describing plots of whiteness, I follow Mark C. Jerng's definition of "racial worldmaking," which describes how texts can "locate race at the level of context, atmosphere, sequence, and narrative explanation—levels, that is, other than the biological representation of bodies or the social categorization of persons" (1-2). My readings show how obvious moments of "social categorization" in these naturalist novels are indeed abstracted to the forms of "sequence" and "narrative explanation"—that is, to the level of plotting. As H. Porter Abbot explains, "all stories move only in one direction, forward through time" (39), but a plot is the "artful *construction* of story" that "re-arranges, expands, contracts or repeats events of the story" (43). Plots, in other words, spatialize stories: they instruct readers on how to make connections between narrative action and where and when that action takes place, not taking for granted the relations expressed by sequence and adjacency.

I suggest that *The Cliff-Dwellers*' and *Sister Carrie*'s investment in plots of whiteness exemplifies a broader convention in naturalist narration. Discussions of *Sister Carrie* never fail to mention the succession of apartment types occupied by Carrie and Hurstwood,[10] and for Joseph Dimuro, in *The Cliff-Dwellers* "the diminished fortunes of the Walworth Floyds, like that of the George Ogdens, is registered by the way these characters are forced to downsize their living quarters" (Fuller 36). This narrative trend is evident in a range of other naturalist novels as

[10] See, for example, Philip Fisher's *Hard Facts* (1987), Elaine Lewinnek's *The Working Man's Reward* (2014), Betsy Klimasmith's *At Home in the City* (2005), and Caroline Field Levander and Matthew Pratt Guterl's *Hotel Life* (2015).

well. For example, Amy Kaplan describes how Edith Wharton's *The House of Mirth* "charts a social world in which class segmentation is highly spatialized, clearly marked ... by the spatial coordinates of Lily's descent, as she moves down the social scale through very different interiors, from her aunt's inherited mansion, to the country home of the Trenors, to the boardinghouse" (101). Similarly, both Roark Mulligan and Randee Dax Jennings note the correspondence between degeneration and a movement through "almost every imaginable urban residence" in Frank Norris's *Vandover and the Brute* (Mulligan 59).

While my study is therefore applicable to a range of texts within the genre—I wager that plots of whiteness are indeed one of naturalism's defining features—I narrow my focus to *The Cliff-Dwellers* and *Sister Carrie* because of their literary reputations and their specific overlaps with the Chicago school of sociology. *The Cliff-Dwellers* is widely regarded as the first American city novel, and although it no longer features prominently in the canon, it was an influence on Theodore Dreiser, who in 1932 called Fuller "the father of American realism" ("Great American Novel" 1). In turn, Dreiser's *Sister Carrie* remains a landmark of American realism and naturalism. We also know that *Sister Carrie* was read by the Chicago school sociologists, whose theoretical writing, as I show at the end of this chapter, employs narrative plots of whiteness.[11] Moreover, both novels engage the social and geographic landscapes of Chicago, where the sociologists based their own research.

Given this genealogy of influence, attention to the racialization of plotting in these novels offers valuable insight into the textual and rhetorical construction of the Chicago school's "race relations cycle," a model of assimilation whose exclusion of African Americans and Asians is

[11] As I have elaborated in the Introduction, Carla Cappetti attests that "it would be … a mistake to ignore the literary and, specifically, the novelistic influences that the Chicago sociologists themselves derive from the early European and American urban literary tradition" (20).

discussed by scholars including Denise Ferreira da Silva, Aldon Morris, Roderick Ferguson, Henry Yu, and Davarian Baldwin. Ferreira da Silva explains how sociologists like Robert Park implied that the concept of the racial was itself foreign to the United States: that those subaltern racial subjects who failed to assimilate into the cycle produced "race consciousness" on the part of white subjects who had previously seen their identities as universal, what she calls the "transparent I." But as she forcefully demonstrates, the scientific apparatus of sociology did not "acknowledge that the transparent I is also an effect of the arsenal of raciality" (Ferreira da Silva 168-9). For Ferreira da Silva, this sociologic "arsenal" is produced spatially: "the stranger as a spatial metaphor prefigures a strategy of intervention, the 'race relations cycle,' which predicates the obliteration of those who do not share in the spatial 'origins' of the *transparent 'I'* … [and conjures] an incessant wave of affectable 'strangers' coming from every corner of the globe to muddle an otherwise transparent social configuration" (153-4). But of course, since whiteness (implied by the "transparent 'I'") is itself an effect of this cycle and not a universal default, there is no real spatial origin from which to measure the distance or foreignness of the subaltern stranger.[12] This contradiction at the heart of the sociologists' metaphor of the stranger enabled the race relations cycle to incorporate ethnic immigrants, to offer them geographic and conceptual space in the modern city, while simultaneously denying it to others.

Plots of whiteness became a narrative resource for sociology precisely because of their ability to map out and normalize those contradictory and fictional origins. Novels defined by plots of whiteness can therefore serve as a critical resource for scholars because their stories show the spatialization of race as a process, not as a given. I look to these novels' depictions of the erasures that produce normative racial geographies, exposing that they are certainly not

[12] The idea of a spatial origin of course also erases the settler colonialism and genocide of Native Americans at the center of US history and geography.

originary. To do so, I counter the longstanding Lukácsian tradition that situates naturalism's descriptive tendency at odds with narration. I regard the spatial and residential catalogues recorded by critics of Dreiser, Fuller, Norris, and Wharton as more than just a use of setting to reflect the plot; I argue that geographic description catalyzes both the characters' physical traversals of the city and the narrative movement, or progression, of the plot. This effect establishes a normative feedback loop in which the spatialization of whiteness and so-called "deterministic" narratives beget one another. At the same time, with close critical attention paid to moments of description, we can discern the mechanisms by which such narrative associations of social and geographic types do come to seem like givens: descriptive passages note and catalogue difference in order to then put it aside, denying the marked and differentiated elements a role to play in the forward movement of the story. These mentions-without-incorporation, which leave conflict and difference in the present but foreclose their relevance to the future, remind us of the ways in which the aggregation of various ethnic groups into the racial category "white" necessitated the adoption of a contradictory stance toward perceiving difference. Only some categories of difference could be named, while others had to be ignored, conflated, or left behind.

As I propose, in the process whereby spatial descriptions initiate narrative movement or change, both the narrative and its setting become racialized. That is, narrative plots not only rely on the meanings of various plots of land as shorthand markers of difference. In the relation between narration and description, between plot and setting, the cultural narratives that Priscilla Wald calls "geographic fictions" are demarcated, iterated, and stabilized ("Communicable" 672). In making this claim I am guided by Susan Stanford Friedman's *Mappings*, which proposes "a spatialized approach to narrative poetics, one that fosters the significance of travel, movement,

setting, cultural difference, and intercultural contact zones for the generation of story" (149). In her model, the "spatial source of narrative energy—the engine that drives the story … arise[s] out of a dialectical or dialogic oscillation between sameness and difference in the ethnographic encounter" (143). We have already seen this "spatial source of narrative energy" at play in the sociological figure of the stranger that Ferreira da Silva unpacks as central to the formation of whiteness. In naturalist novels, it manifests in the characters' travels through the urban setting. As I describe the relationship between these characters' social types and their encounters with new geographic types, I call attention to how space not only propels the narrative, but how it does so in a particular direction, toward whiteness as a norm. Spatial encounters in these novels orient the characters' desires, an orientation toward the future that determines which differences are incorporated into the plot and which get left behind in the description.

Naturalist novels register and manage difference in their treatment of both social types and urban space, yet the scholarship has not thoroughly explored the connection between the two. For Susan L. Mizruchi, "the most distinctive aspect of realist fiction" is "its view of character as type" (199). This has a "particular historical resonance" in the late nineteenth century, when type categories in both literature and the emerging social science disciplines "invested individuals and social phenomena with the semblance of predictability and control" (Mizruchi 191). For Jennifer Fleissner, the social type "mediate[s] between the statistical 'average man' and the radically particular individual, allowing the realist novelist to offer up his or her narrative landscape as a representative glimpse at a recognizable social space" ("Vital" 14). Like its approach to social type, the genre's "impulse … toward mapping the social order" emerges in response to "extreme contrasts" and "discontinuity" (Howard 152). Kaplan discusses how, in the process of "construct[ing] a world in which their readers can feel at home" (12), "the

realist participates in drawing such boundaries in a way that exposes their tenuous yet ideological necessity. ... The social world of each novel is constituted as much by those outside the immediate range of representation as by those at the center" (11). Kaplan and June Howard, who focus on the geographic quality of naturalism, thus articulate, in spatial terms, the function of "establishing borders" that Mizruchi ascribes to the social type (199), and that Ferreira da Silva emphasizes is operative in the racial encounter between the "transparent 'I'" and the "stranger."

This naturalist boundary drawing is a response to the very fluidity, or even nonexistence, of those borders; it is an attempt at asserting narrative control over threateningly unstable categories. As Richard Dyer writes about stereotypes and social types more generally, "they … insist on boundaries exactly at those points where in reality there are none" (16). In the context of the naturalist novel, Priscilla Wald posits that the classification of "types" serves as a "strategy[y] of making invisibility visible" ("Dreiser's" 180). In the case of Carrie Meeber, whom Wald identifies as an instantiation of sociologist W. I. Thomas's "unattached woman," the social type category helps to name "the ability to disappear in plain view" ("Dreiser's" 179), or the inhabitation of "promiscuous spaces" ("Dreiser's" 182). The production of "cultural narratives" about social types (Wald, "Dreiser's" 178), especially when it comes to female types, is importantly also a racializing process, part of the struggle to maintain a hold on certain women's whiteness. Discussing both medical and sociological writing about the "fallen woman" and the "New Woman," Wald shows how these cultural narratives tended to focus on the women's sexuality: specifically, the threats of both venereal disease and "race suicide" that would come from modern white women marrying late or not at all ("Dreiser's" 181). This stems from a temporal fear of whiteness being unable to secure its future. The New Woman and

"woman adrift" are not only unattached to men, but also unattached to those men's real estate holdings: they are neither property nor property owners.[13]

The production of these type categories thus registers a desire to insulate white space from the contact with racial others that was undeniably taking place—and to secure a hold on that space into the future. The same impulse is evident in Hurstwood's storyline in *Sister Carrie*, whereby "the transformation of successful businessman into suicidal down and out," as Christopher Gair notes, "progresses via a series of markers that identify Hurstwood's behavioral patterns as 'black'" and that locate him in marginal urban spaces like the flophouse and the street (167). Plots of whiteness devote so much attention to classification of social and geographic types in order to name and isolate the nonwhite, or the potentially other, or the questionably nonnormative, and to establish that any spaces not thus demarcated are, by default, white.

Spatial and geographic types take on narrative force in plots of whiteness because they are able to project those norms into the future. They stand in for the narration of a story that is yet unknown—or, more likely, complex in a way that is threatening to the social order. In *Sister Carrie*, the type category is mobilized at the very moment where the narration confronts the open-endedness of historical change. Fleissner makes this point by analyzing the following moment, when Minnie considers the possible urban future in store for her newly arrived sister: "A shop girl was the destiny prefigured for the newcomer. … Things would go on, though, in a dim kind of way until the better thing would eventuate and Carrie would be rewarded for coming and toiling in the city. … In 1889 Chicago had the peculiar qualifications of growth which made such adventuresome pilgrimages, even on the part of young girls, plausible" (Dreiser 15). Fleissner discusses how the epithet "shop girl" stands in for the unknown possibilities in store for

[13] See my discussion of Joanne Meyerowitz's "Sexual Geography and Gender Economy: The Furnished Room Districts of Chicago, 1890-1930" in the Introduction.

a young woman in the modern city—it supplies a narrative and attempts to secure a future for Carrie.[14] The sentence where Fleissner cuts off her quotation is, however, hugely significant: it is precisely when the novel shows the role of the urban setting in producing and complicating—not merely reflecting—women's possible trajectories. That is, the narrator's evocation of a social type to fill in for an unknown future directly links to the unsecured meaning of the city's geography. The hope for a particular personal trajectory on Carrie's part is inextricable from the production of modern space.

In the two-page description of late-nineteenth-century Chicago that follows the "shop girl" passage, the narrator depicts a city already in flux but anticipating even more growth in the future. This passage depicts rural land populated with "streetcar lines," "miles and miles of streets and sewers," "blinking lines of gas lamps," and "board walks" (Dreiser 16)—and the new technology and infrastructure is personified as "a pioneer" (Dreiser 16), taking on a settler colonial role. The city consists of "regions, open to the sweeping winds and rain, which were yet lighted throughout the night," and extends to "the open prairie" (Dreiser 16). This space does not yet look urban—in contrast, its exposure to the elements emphasizes its connection to nature—yet it is already being called a city "in anticipation of rapid growth" (Dreiser 16). This extended description sheds light on the previous page's "shop girl" reference because it lays bare the shaky foundations of both Carrie and Chicago's narrative futures: you can call it a city without it really being one yet, just as Carrie may be a shop girl in name only.

The desire to plot that intended future is racially animated. As Lewinnek notes, Minnie and her husband "live drably pinched lives partly because they are saving to build a house on

[14] Fleissner writes, "For Carrie, as a girl of eighteen in 1889, to seek urban employment thus appears natural enough, able to be fitted into available slots ('shop-girl'), and yet the sense of a whole, of a clear-cut purpose or end to her choice, is lacking" (193). All Fleissner citations, unless otherwise noted, refer to the monograph *Women, Compulsion, Modernity*.

two lots that they own 'far out on the West Side,' on Chicago's suburban fringe" (27). That is, the Hansons' hoped-for plot outcome hinges upon real estate ownership and their intentions to build up a literal plot of land—in exactly the windswept, as-yet-uninhabited areas the novel describes—which will also secure a higher status for them, both in terms of class and nationality: Hanson is, the narrator points out, "American-born of a Swede father" (Dreiser 12). Minnie's hope for Carrie to become a "shop girl," as the narrative sequencing implies, expresses a similar desire, one that is likewise contingent on the transformation of both the urban landscape and urban society. The classification of social and spatial categories, in other words, is not merely parallel or adjacent. They work together to shape narrative expectations, determining what it will mean, in the future, to be white.

In what follows, I first look to Henry Blake Fuller's *The Cliff-Dwellers* (1893) to demonstrate the linkage between the realist impulse, spatial and typological catalogues of difference, and narrative contributions to hegemonic whiteness. That is, a close reading of Fuller's novel can highlight the plot choices that result in the naming of different types in order to subsequently neglect, dismiss, or sequester them from the narrative progression. I then turn to Theodore Dreiser's *Sister Carrie* (1900) with a reading that focuses on how descriptive, classificatory moments in the text direct Carrie's desires and thus introduce a distinctly racialized form of narrative causality based on comparative sequencing. Although Carrie's visions for the future open up alternatives to traditional domesticity for modern women, they link her achievement of those gendered futures with her performance of whiteness. Close reading of Dreiser's novel can highlight the perceptual elisions that are necessary for producing plots of whiteness, showing how these seemingly deterministic and culturally influential plots rely on rhetorical choices and are therefore not preordained. Finally, I show how the plots of whiteness

under construction in Fuller and Dreiser's naturalist novels were later taken up within academic studies of the modern city. I read Robert Park's 1916 essay "The City" to show the power of these plots to displace the historical and material contradictions at play in consolidating the spaces of whiteness.

Henry Blake Fuller and White Realist Form

Fuller, who had previously written two popular romances, turned to a new genre in 1893. *The Cliff-Dwellers* was received as prototypically realist, evidenced in particular by its depiction of "a range of human types … which cannot be ignored by the general visitor to the great gallery of the present-day world," as Laurence Hutton wrote in *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* (qtd. in Fuller 276). In *The Dial*, William Morton Payne noted that "Mr. Fuller's chief types—the banker, the banker's son, the real estate speculator, the Western representative of an Eastern house, and the young man whose fortunes most engage the reader—are absolutely truthful; the uncompromising actuality of their delineation will cause many a reader to wince, but he must at the same time confess to the accuracy of the portraiture" (qtd. in Fuller 270). The reception of his characters as social types demonstrates how categories like types always negotiate between specificity and generality of a geographic nature. On the one hand, Hjalmar Hjorth Boyesen stated in his *Cosmopolitan* review that "[w]e breathe, from the first chapter to the last, the atmosphere of Chicago; … we become aware of the vital connection between the city and the types which it produces" (qtd. in Fuller 277). William Dean Howells, writing in *Harper's Bazar*, likewise ties the success of Fuller's realism to his accurate depiction of Chicago: "If we would match him in his grasp of local conditions, ideals, characters, we must not stop short of Paris, where Zola has not dealt more epically with the facts of life about him" (qtd. in Fuller 271). Yet

later in the very same review, on the other hand, Howells suggests that Fuller's characters are more generically urban than Chicagoan, declaring that they "are such as human nature abandoned to mere business, and having no ideal but commercial success and social success, must be. In this they are of New York as much as they are of Chicago; perhaps nine-tenths of the whole city life of America can find itself glassed in this unflattering mirror" (qtd. in Fuller 273).

This tension between the local flavor versus widespread contemporary symbolism of urban social types is reflected by Fuller's turn to realism as a response to the 1893 Chicago World's Fair, or Columbian Exposition. The Fair was spatially divided into two zones: the neoclassical White City, with its exhibitions of technology and art, and the Midway Plaisance, a mix of ethnographic villages and carnival entertainments. Joseph A. Dimuro draws a connection between these two "cities" and Fuller's literary response:

> Fuller alluded to the way the intense atmosphere of creativity exacerbated his sense of Chicago's bifurcation into 'white' and 'black' cities. Fuller believed the national spotlight on Chicago revealed its potential contributions to civilized urban life at the same time it exposed the city's many problems. Going further, Fuller suggested [in a letter] to [Minna] Smith a correspondence between the designations of white and black and the literary genres of romance and realism. To explain what he was attempting to do in *The Cliff-Dwellers* Fuller equated the dualism of the city with his transition from a writer of charming travel narratives to that of a chronicler of contemporary Chicago. (Fuller 28-9)

The difference between the "'white' and 'black' cities" is quite obviously racialized, as the analogy to the Columbian Exposition, with its spatial divide between American civilization and ethnographic amusement, also makes clear. As Fuller wrote in 1897's "The Upward Movement

in Chicago," "The date of the Fair was the period at once of the city's greatest glory and of her deepest abasement" (qtd. in Fuller 306), referring to the success of the Fair amid conditions of poverty. The racial logic briefly suggested by Dimuro offers a tenuous binary—corresponding to the city's "glory" and "abasement"—that subsumes ethnic and class differences into the category of the racial nonwhite, but with the potential for social uplift that would allow lower-class and ethnic whites to assimilate. This perspective interestingly underlies Fuller's realist theory.

Fuller notably conceived of his literary form as architectural, evident in part from *The Cliff-Dwellers*' focus on a downtown office building, where the various characters' lives intersect. In his 1917 "A Plea for Shorter Novels," he asserts, "To prevent sprawl and formlessness I favor a division of the books into sections. This articulation and proportion will be secured, as in the case of an architectural order" (qtd. in Fuller 288). His interest in "architectural order," in defining "'Real art' … [as] largely a matter of form, of organism, of definition, of boundaries" (qtd. in Fuller 288-9), begins to seem like a program of homogenization—whether by segregation or assimilation—in the context of Fuller's writings on modern architecture. In the unpublished manuscript "Architecture in America," he asks, "broadly speaking, can it be said—in view of hundreds and thousands of vulgar and discordant street vistas—that we have yet learned to build together?" (qtd. in Fuller 326). Taking Fuller's essays on writing and architecture together, we can see how his realist novel assumes the responsibility of depicting Chicago's "abasement" and, in drawing new "boundaries," of (re)presenting the city in a more harmonious light. That is, Fuller's attempt at establishing an orderly realist form can, I argue, likewise be read as an attempt to negotiate the presence of racial, ethnic, and class differences that potentially compromise the hegemony of whiteness. The plot of whiteness offers realist novels an architectural plan and a textual order.

The Cliff-Dwellers begins architecturally, at a skyscraper in the Loop called the Clifton. George Ogden has recently moved to Chicago from the East to work at a bank, and he meets with a previous East Coast transplant, Walworth Floyd, who runs the office of the Massachusetts Brass Company also located in the Clifton. The characters—both important and more peripheral ones—are located in the world of the text by their neighborhood of residence, and, for those who work in the Clifton, by the location of their office. Narrative possibility comes from understanding the spatial relations between people. For example, the real estate agent McDowell's desire for upward mobility is rendered spatially: he works in the office next door to that of the Clifton's owner, but the door between their offices is forever locked shut. Or, the narrative movement of Cornelia McNabb, who rises to middle-class wifehood over the course of the novel, is expressed in her movement from waitressing in the ground-floor Acme Lunch Room to shuttling across the building to the offices of powerful businessmen in her work as a typist. While the plot initially focuses on these vertical networks of the Clifton, introducing a cast of characters who work on its many floors, eventually the focus of the story, driven by Ogden's possible romances with the daughter of the bank president and the young cousin of Floyd's wife, expands horizontally to residential neighborhoods, mapping the movement of the population out of the commercial city center. This plot structure in effect mimics the flow of capital from the city's commercial center to its investment in homes for white middle-class nuclear families, leaving behind the city's heterogenous mix of classes, races, and ethnicities in the ephemeral business hours of the Loop. What type of harmony, then, does this architectonic realist form in fact construct?

A brief aside by the narrator of *The Cliff-Dwellers* sarcastically works through the idealistic impulse behind Fuller's theories of realist form. The narrator teasingly invokes the

romance genre that made Fuller famous in order to poke fun at the unlikable McDowell, an aspiring but unsuccessful social climber and real estate speculator:

> McDowell sometimes joked about his customers, but never about his lands. He shed upon them the transfiguring light of the imagination, which is so useful and necessary in the environs of Chicago. Land generally—that is, subdivided and recorded land—he regarded as a serious thing, if not indeed as a high and holy thing, and his view of his own landed possessions—mortgaged though they might be, and so partly unpaid for—was not only serious but idealistic. He was able to ignore the pools whose rising and falling befouled the supports of his sidewalks with a green slime; and the tufts of reeds and rushes which appeared here and there spread themselves out before his gaze in the similitude of a turfy lawn. He was a poet—as every real-estate man should be.
>
> We of Chicago are sometimes made to bear the reproach that the conditions of our local life draw us towards the sordid and the materialistic. Now, the most vital and typical of our human products is the real-estate agent: is he commonly found tied down by earth-bound prose? (Fuller 125)

The joke of this passage revolves around the fact that in an era of speculation, that which gets called "materialistic" hinges on the immaterial: people who care only about profit are obsessed with imagined outcomes—and, specifically, imagined geographies. Fuller emphasizes that such materialism necessitates romantic thinking, for "earth-bound prose" (that is, realism) would, as this narrator does, need to account for the material reality on the ground. Despite McDowell's allegiance to "subdivided and recorded land," he cares little for any record besides that of the subdivision map, which has a purely abstract relation to the land. He does not wish to record the

swamp-like conditions that ruin the infrastructure and make construction difficult, and he likewise ignores the mortgage record that exposes his incomplete ownership.

To see a marshy subdivision as a plot (or series of plots) of land, the "real-estate man" enlists a particular plot device: speculation, as both future-oriented narrative, and as an investment in future wealth. But as highlighted by the contrast between the romantic "poet" realtor and the realist narrator who shows us readers what McDowell refuses to see, this speculative mode is premised on willful ignorance. Our narrator's "earth-bound prose" calls attention to "green slime" and "tufts of reeds and rushes" that McDowell's sales pitches cannot (for he would never find any buyers), while suggesting that McDowell himself comes to "ignore" the material features of his land. McDowell's willful ignorance seems inseparable from his poetic mode; the swamp grasses, in the subject position, "spread themselves out before his gaze in the similitude of a turfy lawn," organizing themselves for his passive "idealistic" viewing. The invoked binary of realism versus romance implies that the generic mode itself limits McDowell's perspectival and narrative options, making him "*able* to ignore" material reality in favor of an imagined outcome (emphasis added). Given the racial overtones of the genre binary that I have already discussed—along with the centrality of speculative investment to the actual production of white futures, white generational wealth, and white spaces—this reading of the passage aligns McDowell's romantic poetics with whiteness and the narrator's realism with the ability to accurately depict difference and, implicitly, nonwhite and lower-class others. Fuller's realist narrator exposes the mortgage as a fantasy.

In doing so, the narrator treats the reader as in on the joke: the tongue-in-cheek question "is he commonly found tied down by earth-bound prose?" emphasizes that both reader and narrator recognize McDowell's foolishness because they are realists who can perceive the truth.

But as stark as the contrast between Fuller's realist narrator and the poet realtor seems to be, it is destabilized by the allusions to their shared city. This passage ultimately demonstrates how realism itself produces a future-oriented structure for drawing the boundaries of whiteness by incorporating certain differences while turning away from others: a structure that bolsters Chicago's racial geographies and establishes whiteness as a norm in the modern city's commercial and residential spaces. Indeed, the "real-estate man" is "the most vital and typical of our human products." If this social type is defined by its association with two speculative plots, 1) the romance and 2) the expanding, but swampy, suburb, those associations may apply to the urban narrator and reader as well. After all, this type is one of "*our* human products" (emphasis added); as much as the realist implies his own superiority for his ability to discern the speculator's blind spots, he assumes some degree of ownership over or affinity with him.

The narrator may be willing to identify himself with Chicago—and thus with its "most ... typical" citizens—because the real-estate man is actually onto something: "the transfiguring light of the imagination ... is so useful and necessary in the environs of Chicago." There is something about the city that even the narrator will not name, despite his supposed penchant for realist comprehensiveness, and it makes romantic plots not only "useful" to someone like a real-estate man but also "necessary"—for potentially everyone with an interest in plots of whiteness. That which will not be named, what the narrator turns away from despite his allegiance to realism, is the "deep[] abasement" of the city: its poverty, its exploding populations of immigrants and racial others. The real-estate man, then, is metonymic of all Chicago writers, the in-development swampy subdivision synecdochic of the entire urban geography.[15] If the typical Chicago

[15] Even the White City's construction was hindered and delayed by complications from Chicago's swampy conditions: a spectacular space dedicated to Eurocentrism that was an illusion, a distraction from the reality of the ground below.

geography seems to necessitate a particular kind of plot, to be "transfigur[ed]" by the imagination, this suggests that we read the novel as occupying two simultaneous roles: in opposition to real-estate romance, it depicts the city-in-flux of the present; but also an extension of real-estate romance, it too makes choices about what differences it can and cannot ignore. As readers, we must be attuned to the idea of a modern Chicago that this text is actively constructing, aware of the details that it refuses to describe. To do so, we ought to pay attention to moments where the text exposes gaps that its own narrative maps fail to account for—places where the narrator organizes the text in ways that align with how his characters experience the city.

A stark social and geographic contrast emerges at the level of textual attention, in that characters who do enact a narrative role are those whose major actions occur in residential neighborhoods, whereas the figures confined to Chicago's downtown Loop district—for they cannot be termed characters—are relegated to the narrator's classificatory lists. The Clifton and the "restricted yet tumultuous territory" of the business district are comprised of series of physical divisions that separate groups of people (Fuller 57): offices, stories, buildings, streets. Yet those spaces are nevertheless defined by the movement of a "large and rather heterogeneous population" that crosses those divides (Fuller 59), enumerated catalogue-style: "that seething flood of carts, carriages, omnibuses, cabs, cars, messengers, shoppers, clerks, and capitalists" out on the streets (Fuller 57-8), and, in the Clifton alone, about "four thousand ... bankers, capitalists, lawyers, 'promoters'; brokers in bonds, stocks, pork, oil, mortgages; real-estate people and railroad people and insurance people—life, fire, marine, accident; a host of principals, agents, middlemen, clerks, cashiers, stenographers, and errand-boys; and the necessary force of engineers, janitors, scrub-women, and elevator-hands" (Fuller 59-60). These

catalogues register and name the presence of social difference in the Loop, but that racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic diversity is held at bay from narrative agency, restricted to the level of description. The narrative, instead, focuses on characters who inhabit better demarcated white middle-class neighborhoods and come to work in the Clifton. Here I do not intend to reinscribe the narration/description binary but instead to demonstrate how it operates in the service of plots of whiteness. This contrast highlights how the narrator can simultaneously act unlike McDowell (as the realist able to perceive and name disparate and potentially unwanted elements) yet very much like him (as the romantic focusing on a particular subset of stories that invest in the "mortgages of whiteness"). In other words, the juxtaposition of narrative and catalogue undergirds the hegemony of white space.

The narrator has the Floyds, East Coast transplants already established in Chicago, teach newcomer George Ogden how to perceive the city in much the same way, noticing but then disregarding the heterogeneous masses that come together in the Loop. They counsel him on how—and where—he ought to integrate into the appropriate white middle-class Chicago society, and in so doing they suggest that he need only pay attention to certain people and places. During Ogden's first encounter with the Floyds, shortly after his move to Chicago, they give the reader a first glimpse of Chicago geography outside the Loop, indicating that although various people come together during business hours, in their leisure they stay confined to their own residential neighborhood. Discussing Ogden's boarding house lodgings on the West Side, Walworth Floyd asks, "And how are you finding the West Side? ... I don't know much about it myself. This is a big town and awfully cut up. A man has to pick out his own quarter and stick to it. If you move from one side of the river to another, you bid good-by to all your old friends; you never see them again. You said you were somewhere near Union Park, I believe?" (Fuller 65-6). As a North Side

resident, Walworth refuses to believe that the West Side is the proper place for Ogden, especially because, as Mrs. Floyd later remarks, "Yes, most of *us* are on the North Side" (Fuller 68, emphasis in orig.). This is the first that the reader, who has been introduced to both the city and the novel while located in the Loop, learns of either the North or West Sides.

Ogden attempts to redeem his new neighborhood, and his own reputation, in the eyes of the Floyds:

> "Well. I have heard that there are some pretty good streets over there," is Walworth's vague response.
>
> "Ours is. We have trees—all of one sort and planted regularly, I mean. And ornamental lamp-posts. And I'm only a block away from the Park. Everything seems all right enough."
>
> "I dare say; but don't you find it rather far away from--?" queried Floyd, with a sort of insinuating intentness.
>
> However, I have no idea of reproducing Walworth's remarks on the local topography. They were voluminous, but he would be found prejudiced and but partly informed. (Fuller 66)

Ogden emphasizes qualities found lacking in the bustling commercial center: greenery, "ornamental lamp-posts," and evidence of planning—the trees being "all of one sort and planted regularly." But Walworth's comment about the presence of "some pretty good streets over there" proves to have been a formality—with "insinuating intentness" he suggests another reason the neighborhood is no good. Whether Union Park is too far away from the Clifton or from appropriate middle-class East Coast company is unclear; the narrator cuts him off in order to note that Walworth's opinions are "prejudiced and but partly informed." Here Fuller alerts the

reader to the fact that Chicago's being "awfully cut up" is not a geographic matter, but rather a social and psychological one. Walworth's ignorance of the West Side, and his insistence that friendships be bound within one's "own quarter," are products of his allegiance to his own social set. He therefore insists that Ogden "ought to be in our part of town—he ought to be one of our little circle" (Fuller 68). But although the narrator calls attention to Walworth's social—and hence geographic—biases, he does not in turn offer a more objective, better informed analysis of the "local topography."

Indeed, the narrator seems more interested in following those social geographies—in supplying them with narratives—than in offering a perspective that differs from that of the main characters. He might alert us to Walworth's "prejudice," but he begins to inhabit it. A reader keeping track of character residences will find that the city's supposedly "cut up" regions are quite socioeconomically heterogeneous: on the South Side is McDowell's shoddy subdivision but also the home of socialite Mrs. Granger Bates, and on the West Side Erastus Brainard lives in a well-established home but also owns tenements. But the social worlds that the narrative maps onto these areas are rather homogenous. Again, the difference between description and narration is mobilized in order to produce plots of whiteness. This is made evident especially as the novel relocates many characters to the North Side (and then has those characters attempt to build bigger and better houses or move to more stylish apartment buildings) in order to enter a more prestigious social milieu.

The characters' perspectives continue to overlap with the techniques that the narration uses to both notice and ignore difference. The next extended description of diversity in the Loop offers catalogues filtered specifically through Ogden's perspective—importantly, *after* he has relocated to a North Side boarding house recommended to him by Walworth. Here, as the

business district confronts him with its overwhelming heterogeneity, Ogden takes on the role of cataloguer previously enacted by the narrator himself. In this space it is a challenge to apply a social filter, impose order, and classify the groups making up "the confused cataract of conflicting nationalities" (Fuller 92):

> Ogden had now gone through a novitiate of five or six weeks. After his first wrench—from the East to the West—his second one—from the West Side to the North—seemed an unimportant matter. He had learned his new neighborhood, had made a few acquaintances there, had become familiar with his work at the bank; and the early coming of his own family, who had elected to swell the great westward movement by the contribution of themselves and all their worldly goods, helped him to the feeling of being tolerably well at home. From the vantage-ground of a secure present and a promising future he became an interested observer of the life that swept and swirled around him. ... The rumble of drays and the clang of street-car gongs became less disconcerting; the town's swarming hordes presently appeared less slovenly in their dress and less offensive in their manners than his startled sensibilities had found them at first; even their varied physiognomies began to take on a cast less comprehensively cosmopolitan. His walks through the streets and his journeyings in the public conveyances showed him a range of human types completely unknown to his past experience; yet it soon came to seem possible that all these different elements might be scheduled, classified, brought into a sort of *catalogue raisonné* which should give every feature its proper place. (Fuller 91-2)

Ogden's desire to catalogue and confidence in his ability to taxonomize the "range of human types completely unknown to his past experience" is tied to his mobility and also to his sense of belonging—facilitated by his move to the North Side, where he can enter the Floyds' social set, and by the transplantation of his own family from the East Coast. Thus, like Walworth's pronouncements on the inferiority of the West Side, Ogden's observations emerge from "the vantage-ground of a secure present and a promising future." They are necessarily marked by his own social standing, rendered by way of an investment in futurity and by geography. Even "the feeling of being … at home" renders the city "less comprehensively cosmopolitan": this contrast suggests that the city, and its inhabitants, can be domesticated.

Nothing about the "swarming hordes" who "presently appeared less slovenly in their dress and less offensive in their manners than his startled sensibilities had found them at first" has changed (Fuller 92). Ogden's confidence level, as regulated by his comfort in the city, has altered his perception. But he still confronts his inability to comprehensively classify everyone. Adrienne Brown posits that the skyscraper architecturally exposes "the limits of [Ogden's racial] reading comprehension in the dense and diverse city," for he encounters his lack of "both the skill and the sight lines needed to perceive these finer racial distinctions" (15). He imagines myriad distinct categories by which one might taxonomize "human types," but he discovers that he is unable to perceive and distinguish those types when confronted with the "human maelstrom" on the ground (Fuller 93):

> He disposed as readily of the Germans, Irish, and Swedes as of the negroes and the Chinese. But how to tell the Poles from the Bohemians? How to distinguish the Sicilians from the Greeks? How to catalogue the various grades of Jews? How

> to tabulate the Medes, and the Elamites, and the Cappadocians, and the dwellers from Mesopotamia? (Fuller 92)

Ogden's litany of questions has precisely to do with the slippage from race to ethnicity, emphasizing both the capaciousness of whiteness as a category but also a fear of insufficient differentiation within it—an anxiety about what it means to assimilate others into whiteness. Those whom he can "readily" "dispose of" belong to groups whose racial signification is, by the late nineteenth century, somewhat secure: just as Blacks and Asians represent other races, "the Germans, Irish, and Swedes," who immigrant populations are very large, already count as ethnic whites. In other words, Ogden does not need to bother himself with or worry about classifying those who, apparently, visually correspond to recognizable racial and ethnic types. But as his questions illustrate, he is preoccupied with a variety of people—all of whom were ultimately integrated into whiteness—who expose the flexible boundaries of racial typologies.

Ogden is overwhelmed by both the exhaustiveness of his "*catalogue raisonné*" and by its inadequacy. He therefore "retreats from the dense downtown skyscraper district to a private home in Union Park" (Brown 15). This "retreat," as Brown describes it, is more than just a move from public to private space, however; it is a return to a controlled mental map of the city: "In a human maelstrom, of which such a scene was but a simple transitory eddy, it was grateful to regain one's bearings in some degree, and to get an opportunity for meeting one or two familiar drops. It had pleased him, therefore, to find that Brainard's house was in the neighborhood of Union Park and in the immediate vicinity of his own first lodgings" (Fuller 93). What allows Ogden to "regain" his "bearings" is the revelation that his boss Erastus Brainard's house is located "in the *immediate vicinity*" of his first boarding house on the West Side (emphasis added). Having settled in on the North Side and begun to see the city in a new way, as described

above, Ogden is now also able to look back on the Union Park neighborhood as familiar territory. This gives him the sense that there he will encounter the comfort of "one or two familiar drops." He is certainly not the only middle-class Anglo-American in the "human maelstrom" of the city center, but without the stability of geographic control—knowing where he stands in relation to the neighborhood—he loses his taxonomic confidence and becomes again like the "disconcert[ed]," "offen[ded]," and "startled" newcomer he once was (Fuller 91). The opportunity to find his footing in a neighborhood he has already mapped out and felt membership in transforms the "maelstrom" into a "simple transitory eddy," despite the fact that the city's heterogeneity is anything but transitory. Instead, it is the selective cognitive map that works to domesticate public space.

The socially produced maps inhabited by Ogden and Walworth highlight how social and geographic types are formed simultaneously and in relation to one another. Categories of people and place reinforce one another: Ogden should live on the North Side because it is where the middle-class East Coasters are; the West Side is (apparently) white because it is where Ogden previously lived and where, he discovers, his boss's family resides. Yet the failure of classification constantly beckons. Just as Ogden reasserts his powers of perception by reframing his confusion as "temporary," the novel offers glimpses of the city's heterogeneity—the text, too, catalogues difference—but always locates its narrative action in the familiarly bounded spaces of the Clifton and its main characters' middle class homes. The narrator, like the "real-estate man" whom he selects as typical of the entire city, views Chicago's heterogeneity without fully registering it. The narrative action retreats from the Loop just as its characters do. This is a plot of whiteness; it can label social differences only insofar as they do not challenge the hegemony of white space and white narrative futures.

The Cliff-Dwellers' plot of whiteness is epitomized in the two appearances of the Floyds' daughter Claudia, who speaks in an unexpected vernacular; as Dimuro explains in an editorial footnote, "Fuller implies that the little girl is developing an Irish accent, due to being raised by her Irish nanny rather than by her parents" (Fuller 117). The text treats this accent as a superficial joke in need of no explanation, further evidence that there is a tension between the desire for typological (and ethnic) markers to convey a stable meaning and the reality that their referents exceed, contradict, and destabilize that meaning. Irish immigration to the U.S. has historiographically been treated as the exemplar of how working-class ethnic whiteness was produced. One challenge among many to their affiliation with whiteness was that the Irish "suffered an association with servile labor" (Roediger 146). Here Fuller's novel remarks upon the presence of an Irish immigrant in a white (Anglo-Saxon Protestant) middle-class home, Irish domestic workers being a well-known type by the late nineteenth century, given that the "prominence of Irish workers, especially women, in jobs involving service in households became especially pronounced" by the mid 1800s (Roediger 145). Claudia's accent registers the incorporation of the Irish into a concept of the white race, exposing the fluid boundaries of plots of whiteness. It also demonstrates the incommensurability of categories of difference like race, ethnicity, class, and gender, for even if by this point in time the Irish immigrant community had politically leveraged its "wages of whiteness," the discomfort that Claudia's speech elicits on the part of her parents is both classed and gendered:[16] it suggests that the child spends more time with her paid nanny than with her mother. Although the nanny herself does not appear in the text, her hidden labor refuses to remain invisible; the significance of her work—her contribution to the household, and to its white futurity—is made evident by her impact on Claudia's speech.

[16] And given its Irishness it also connotes not only ethnic, but also religious, difference.

The geographic nature of this textual joke is underscored by its linkage to the novel's architect character, Atwater, designer of the Clifton office building. Claudia's only appearances in the novel—and thus her accent's only irruptions as well—occur in Atwater's presence. Upon their first meeting, he offers to build her a doll house:

> "And—and—," she rolled her eyes around the group, as if wondering whether any important detail has been overlooked—"gas-fixtures? Would there be one in ivery room, with four globes on it?" …
>
> "And if I were to promise to put a nice little red chimney on the roof—what would you say?"
>
> ... "I shouldn't know whether to belave you," she said, shyly.
>
> There was a burst of laughter. ... Her father laughed loudest of all, but her mother contracted her eyebrows in distress.
>
> "That dreadful Norah!" whimpered the poor woman. "She must go."
>
> "Don't dismiss your *bonne*," laughed Atwater, thankful for the diversion; "she'll produce a beautiful accent in time." (Fuller 117-19)

Claudia's Irish pronunciations emerge along with her excitement about middle-class domestic comforts like gas-fixtures and chimneys, focusing attention on the invisible figure upon whom the upkeep of the home relies. It is notable that Atwater, the esteemed figure of upward mobility and control over modern urban space, is the one to confirm the necessary interrelation of ethnic female domestic labor and white middle-class spaces.

Later on, after the Floyds have commissioned him to design a new house for them (a house that they will ultimately not be able to build, as they run out of money), Atwater again calls attention to Claudia's accent: he "rolled up his sketches and threw them into a drawer. Then

he went to his cabinet and took out a few small strips and squares of encaustic tiling in yellow and gray. 'And now I wonder if our little Colleen wouldn't like to take some of these home to play with.' ... The child opened wide her brown eyes, in one of her sober little ecstasies. 'Oh plaze, mamma! Oh, lave me have them—do!'" (Fuller 195). Yet again Atwater enlists Claudia in the act of imaginary home construction while simultaneously acknowledging her presence as nonnormative. His reference to her as a "Colleen," the Irish word for "girl" that right around the turn of the twentieth century entered usage as a first name in the United States, likewise exhibits the imbrication of ethnic typologies and the production of plots of whiteness. If Atwater embodies the Floyds' desire for upward mobility—first expressed by Walworth's loyalty to the North Side and dismissed by the narrator as "prejudiced and but partly informed" (Fuller 68)—and for investing in and publicly and materially inscribing that upward movement on the landscape in the form of a house, Claudia, a product nurtured in the private space of their home, exposes its physical structure as a whitewashed façade. The maintenance of plots of whiteness, of a white future secured by property, is in fact *dependent* on the incorporation of the Irish and other ethnic whites. Although this act of assimilation tests the limits of whiteness—evoked, above, by Ogden's increasingly more fine-grained questions about categories of ethnic groups in the Loop—it ultimately shores up those futures by allowing for a reassertion of the anti-Black color line.

While *The Cliff-Dwellers* alludes to the ethnic others at the center of the white home, *Sister Carrie* explores the transformation of domesticity in the modern city made possible by newfound opportunities for women and a rise in rented apartment and hotel habitation across the class spectrum. It channels Carrie's domestic desires racially, showing how the production of plots of whiteness—of desires for and investments in a white future—links race not only to

financial success but also to gender performance. In the next section, I read *Sister Carrie* as a text that gives narrative form to racialized desires for upward mobility not, as in *The Cliff-Dwellers*, as visually (or aurally) recognizable and corresponding to type classifications, but instead as produced by a narrative logic and a particular interplay between description, comparison, and narrative progression.

Geography and Desire in Carrie Meeber's Plot of Whiteness

In the famous opening to *Sister Carrie*, the narrative propels Carrie and the reader into Chicago by train, and not only the drummer Charles Drouet begins to seduce Carrie, but also, and even more so, the city, which "has its cunning wiles no less than the infinitely smaller and more human tempter" (Dreiser 4). Although it is conventional for criticism of the novel (including my discussion right here) to begin with this canonical scene, the very first words that Drouet speaks to Carrie are less often remarked upon: "'That,' said a voice in her ear, 'is one of the prettiest little resorts in Wisconsin.' … 'Yes, that's a great resort for Chicago people. The hotels are swell'" (Dreiser 4-5). Both Drouet and Chicago begin to tempt Carrie before she has even arrived, and they do so by way of a particular geography of leisure space, in which the countryside, as a resort destination, has been made socially and financially contiguous with the city.

Especially given that the novel ends with Carrie living at the Waldorf-Astoria in New York—compensating the hotel through her presence as a famous actress, which acts as an advertisement for the hotel—I wish to highlight the specific plot introduced by the opening scene. It is a plot about real estate: in particular, about types of housing across the socioeconomic scale that are rented rather than owned, and about the concomitant transformation of modern

domesticity. However, as asserted previously, these forms of real estate play a more important role in the text than as mere markers of the characters' rising or falling fortunes. As Drouet's pointing to the "swell" resort town makes clear, the perception of such rental properties—plots of land condensed into the small space of an apartment or hotel room—not only crystallizes typological judgments about the people who inhabit them, but also works to redirect desire on the part of passersby outside.

My reading of *Sister Carrie* focuses on such moments of socio-geographic perception, which through their orchestration of desire demonstrate the narrative force that typologies can play. It is remarkable that Carrie's major life changes—the moments at which the novel's narrative advances—are not synched up with the diegetic passing of time; rather, the plot has a start-and-stop quality not unlike the back-and-forth compulsion Fleissner identifies in Carrie herself.[17] And as I seek to highlight, the novel's sudden jolts forward in time, which correspond to a reorientation or rekindling of Carrie's desire, are spatially catalyzed. As Carrie traverses the city—first Chicago and then New York—she recalibrates and finesses her methods of observation and classification. Specifically, when she is made aware of the ways in which other people might classify her—her social type—she necessarily also rethinks her location in space—the geographic type she inhabits.

This happens first in the furnished rooms at Ogden Place rented by Drouet, which I will analyze in detail later. After her other suitor, the married Hurstwood, abducts Carrie to New York, the pattern repeats itself multiple times. At first Carrie is content with the six-room flat

[17] Fleissner's argument in *Women, Compulsion, Modernity* emphasizes "the sense of a plotline that does not move up or down but ongoingly wavers in place—back and forth, around and around, on and on," which "can provide a crucial connection between what might otherwise seem two very different fin-de-siècle feminine types: the confirmed spinster ... driven by repression and compulsion; and the strangely problematic ingénue, unable to resist her impulses and desires" (25). Reading *Sister Carrie*, she calls attention to the compulsive back-and-forth movements of Carrie in her rocking chair, a motion linked to Carrie's unfulfilled desires.

that she and Hurstwood find on the Upper West Side, but when the narrative jumps a year forward and Carrie meets her neighbor Mrs. Vance, who takes her promenading along Broadway to the theater, she discovers that "the pretty little flat seemed a commonplace thing" (Dreiser 326). Later, after Carrie and Hurstwood have been struggling to make ends meet in their second, smaller, downtown flat, the narrator introduces the character of Lola Osborne, a chorus girl colleague of Carrie's whose furnished room Carrie has been visiting—these visits an act of "securing" her "liberty" (Dreiser 400). When Lola proposes that she and Carrie move into a new furnished room together, Carrie does not immediately agree, despite the fact that, due to her professional success, "[s]o changed was her state that the atmosphere of the flat was something she could not abide" (Dreiser 406). It takes Hurstwood suggesting that they move into a yet smaller apartment for her to make the decision; speculative and retrospective comparisons drive the change. As if by chance, Hurstwood happens to be out walking in their first New York neighborhood, now "very much improved" (Dreiser 438), on the afternoon that Carrie leaves him. The plot juxtaposes Hurstwood living "in a third-rate Bleecker Street hotel" (Dreiser 449), at the end of one chapter, with Carrie receiving the offer to come live at the Wellington Hotel for a nominal fee at the beginning of the next one. Carrie's final move of the novel, to the Waldorf-Astoria, is introduced in her backstage conversation with the surprise visitor Drouet, which reveals not only her new residence but also another jump in diegetic time: three years have passed since she first started acting. From her new position, Carrie recognizes that Drouet "expected to restore their old friendship at once and without modification" and knows "that it could not be. She understood him better now—understood the type" (Dreiser 473).

As Carrie observes and compares different social and geographic types, she arrives at new conclusions about where she belongs or might want to belong, and the appeal of modern

domestic comforts accompanies a growing desire to be free of traditional gendered domestic obligations—a possibility that becomes achievable for Carrie because of her conformity to plots of whiteness. Carrie's comparative reflections, which spur on her desires and thus her plot of whiteness, most often occur because she has physically traveled to a new neighborhood and then returned to her current dwelling. It is significant that her new desires ignite before she moves to a new abode, because this contradicts the idea that the apartments are merely signposts of her changing status.

By paying close attention to these comparative, descriptive moments, I suggest that the text simultaneously produces the deterministic-seeming plot action more typically ascribed to the novel and also the narrative open-endedness described by Fleissner. This is possible because Carrie's comparisons reveal the boundaries and definitions of geographic types to be unstable and contested, at the same time that they induce a desire oriented toward a better defined, idealized type. Whereas *The Cliff-Dwellers* relies upon a conventional distinction between description and narration to craft a plot at least superficially focused on hegemonic—that is, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant, upper-middle-class—whiteness, *Sister Carrie* allows description to take on a narrative role and influence the plot, thereby showing us the narrative mechanisms by which plots of whiteness are constructed. More important than whether the novel produces or confirms a socio-geographic typology is that it demonstrates how such typologies attain their power.

Despite its being a novel rarely read through the lens of race, and with only one brief appearance of a nonwhite character (the Black waiter who serves Drouet and Carrie when they first go out to lunch), Christopher Gair argues that "*Sister Carrie* manifests a return of the racial repressed that defines its fictional universe" (166). His reading of the novel's racial logic offers a

useful supplement to Fleissner's revision of the novel's plot of decline—which she shows belongs to the "Old Man" Hurstwood, in contrast to the historically plausible success that Carrie finds as a New Woman and an actress. For, as quoted earlier, Gair identifies metaphorical signs of blackness attributed to Hurstwood as he falls into unemployment, "lobby idleness" (Dreiser 359), flophouse living, and begging. He also shows how, in contrast, Carrie's commercial success depends on her progressively successful enactment, in both her personal life and theatrical roles, of restrained, virtuous, and chaste white womanhood: "*Sister Carrie* confirms … that to be successful is to be white" (Gair 174). His reading of the novel thus aligns with my approach to naturalist city novels as constructing and consolidating plots of whiteness: "Carrie's rise and Hurstwood's fall enable a mix of ethnic European groups in the novel and beyond to imaginatively assimilate … against the backdrop of an excluded racial otherness, and, with Hurstwood's death, to imaginatively contain the degeneracies identified with blackness" (Gair 175).

Yet Gair's analysis relies on the presence of metaphorical visual markers of race and well-known cultural stereotypes. His account of Carrie's rise fits nicely into a reading of the "wages of whiteness," and his attention to Hurstwood and Carrie's locations in urban space—specifically Hurstwood's fall from property ownership—suggests the resonance of Lewinnek's "mortgages of whiteness" to his argument. However, I argue that to approach a more complex understanding of the novel's *plots* of whiteness requires analysis of textual racialization produced by more than just qualities attributable to people, their actions, and their environments. Following Jerng's goal of identifying "racial modes of thought that have escaped our attention because they are not dependent on the biological or cultural visibility of bodily difference" (19), I too "think about how race is a part of the narrative structure of causality" (18). As Carrie's plot

of whiteness unfolds, *Sister Carrie* lays bare the functions of comparative description in determining the directionality and causality of a narrative that ultimately does rehearse the assimilation of ethnic and lower-class whites into the white success story. By revealing that there were indeed other directions in which the story could have gone, it attests to the role of narrative in constructing typologies and the plots to which they become attached.

Having already offered an overview of other moments that manifest this narrative pattern, I now focus my close reading on the first location where plot development is made to inhere in descriptions of geographic and social types. Before the text introduces Carrie's material change in lodgings when she has moved in with Drouet, it obliquely meditates on the question of her virtue and virginity; she asks herself, "what is it I have lost?" (Dreiser 88). Just as the narrator declares his "endeavor[]" to find "the true answer to what is right," he returns to showing how perspective will shape the assessment of Carrie's situation: "In the view of a certain stratum of society, Carrie was comfortably established—in the eyes of the starveling beaten by every wind and gusty sheet of rain, she was safe in a halcyon harbor" (Dreiser 88). Whether moving in with Drouet, and, by extension, giving herself to him unwed, connotes a loss or a gain depends on the "stratum" from which one makes the judgment.

This moral ambiguity immediately transitions into a geographic instability. Carrie's new neighborhood has located her in a higher stratum than where she came from, but her very presence therefore suggests the area's heterogeneity:

> Drouet had taken three rooms furnished, in Ogden Place, facing Union Park, on the West Side. That was a little, green-carpeted breathing spot, than which today there is nothing more beautiful in Chicago. It afforded a vista pleasant to contemplate. The best room looked out upon the lawn of the park, now sear and

> brown, where a little lake lay sheltered. Across the park were Ashland Boulevard and Warren Avenue, where stood rows of comfortable houses built and occupied by a middle class who were both respectable and moderately well-to-do. Over the bare limbs of the trees, which now swayed in the wintry wind, rose the steeple of the Union Park Congregational Church, and far off the towers of several others. No street cars went by the front door, but they were only a block away, at Madison Street, a thoroughfare which was then the most enlivened and prosperous store street of the West Side. (Dreiser 88)

On the surface, Ogden Place appears to be a far cry from the Hansons' flat, the "one-floor residence apartment[] ... in a part of West Van Buren Street which was inhabited by families of laborers and clerks" (Dreiser 12). Across the park live the "respectable and moderately well-to-do," who have "built," and don't just rent, their houses. Whereas the Hansons' window looks "down into the street where at night the lights of grocery stores were shining and children were playing about" (Dreiser 12)—that is, they live on a busy commercial street—here Union Park offers a "breathing spot" or respite from the chaos of the city. The benefits of urban living are nevertheless convenient, with "street cars ... only a block away" on the "enlivened" "thoroughfare," and the nearby commercial activity even seems more distinguished, as it is that of the "prosperous." This "vista pleasant to contemplate" appears at first glance to be that of the "halcyon harbor": a neighborhood occupied by virtuous, middle-class citizens.

But the description of Carrie's view here subtly mirrors Carrie's own contemplation of difference, and the passage ultimately presents not a comparison of Van Buren Street and Ogden Place but of the idealized portrait of a "comfortable" neighborhood and the details that bring that vision into doubt. Although the narrator sets up a "beautiful," "green-carpeted" view from the

window, he must then acknowledge that the diegetic season is winter, so Union Park is in fact "sear and brown," and those idyllic church steeples are only visible "[o]ver the bare limbs of the trees." Two pages later he expounds on the "subtle ... influence of a dreary atmosphere" (Dreiser 90), linking it to Carrie's continued vacillation about whether she has succumbed to weakness or made a smart choice to protect herself, and here the winter's incursion suggests that only choice features of the neighborhood are "pleasant to contemplate." But as Carrie's later musings about the "whistling wind" indicate (Dreiser 90), she is not only contemplating the good—in her mind there is a constant back and forth. And as readers, if we do the same, we might note that Carrie's very presence begins to undermine the "pleasant vista": even if Ashland Boulevard and Warren Avenue are peopled with middle-class homeowners, just across the park is a boarding house in which Drouet is renting these furnished rooms for Carrie. In case this passage does not make clear the instability of classifying Union Park as a middle-class haven, in the next chapter, after Drouet takes Carrie out to see the mansions on Prairie Avenue, he drives past the Hansons' flat on the way home. This is "like a slap in the face" for Carrie because it makes clear how close she still lives to Van Buren Street and indicates the socio-economic heterogeneity of the West Side (Dreiser 101).

Carrie's contemplation of this new neighborhood is tied by more than mere adjacency to her confusion about her own social type. As the narrator undermines his depiction of the idyllic neighborhood, Carrie's image of herself likewise fluctuates: "She looked into her glass and saw a prettier Carrie there than she had seen before; she looked into her mind, a mirror prepared of her own and the world's opinions, and saw a worse. Between these two images she wavered, hesitating which to believe" (Dreiser 89). As Wald discusses, this moment emphasizes "the force of competing narratives of equal strength. … But the important points are first, that Carrie is

governed by these narratives, and second, that neither one wins out. What she actually 'reflects,' then, is social change itself and how it works through (competing) narratives" ("Dreiser's" 188). My argument is that geography is doubly entwined with the social change that these cultural narratives work through: First, the narratives that might label Carrie a "shop girl," "unattached woman," "fallen woman," or "woman adrift" are spatial and racialized categories,[18] defining these social types through the places where they belong, do not belong, and nevertheless slip through. Second, because these cultural narratives rely on spatial reference points to make sense of changing social norms, they in turn create new geographic types, offering new perspectives on existent neighborhoods or even naming new ones, such as the "furnished room district."

This doubled effect becomes evident in the way that movement through the city simultaneously signals and begets plot development. On the one hand, each time Carrie is exposed to a new place, that is itself the next step in her plot. But on the other hand, each of those moments of travel out and back—and it is important that she does not immediately relocate herself, but instead returns, with a new perspective—generates the desire for change that had previously been stalling her plot. This might ultimately look like a clichéd version of naturalist determinism, but only if we ignore the way that shifting geographic narratives set the scene. For example, Hurstwood's first visit to Carrie when she is at home alone directly follows her first visit to the North Side. This visit is significant, for it establishes the power dynamic between the two that will ultimately lead to Carrie's abduction, and I posit that the visit proceeds as it does precisely because of Carrie's new spatial perspective, which has reoriented her desires.

In fact, right before her neighbor Mrs. Hale takes Carrie on a drive to see the mansions of North Shore Drive, a fascinating paragraph describes Hurstwood's own changing desires being

[18] For more on the "woman adrift," see Fleissner, *Women, Compulsion, Modernity*, and Joanne Meyerowitz, *Women Adrift: Independent Wage Earners in Chicago, 1880-1930*.

routed through narratives of social types. A disagreement between Hurstwood and his wife turns "the feeling of mutual antagonism ... 'on'" (Dreiser 114), and then: "On the other hand, his interest in Drouet's little shop girl increased in an almost evenly balanced proportion. That young lady, under the stress of her situation and the tutelage of her new friend, changed effectively. ... The glow of a more showy life was not lost upon her. She did not grow in knowledge so much as she awakened in the manner of desire" (Dreiser 115). The "evenly balanced proportion" holds two different subjects in relation to one another: the "mutual antagonism" in the Hurstwood household increases as Hurstwood's "interest in Drouet's little shop girl" increases. The assignment of social types is operative to this comparison: the wife versus the shop girl. In fact, Carrie is not referred to by name once in this paragraph, which contributes to its ambiguous effect.

Such ambiguity prepares the ground for typological narratives to take root: Just as the scene that introduces Ogden Place melds the comparison of two separate conditions (the poor immigrant working class and the comfortable, ethnically unmarked middle class) into a vacillation of perspectives on one object (the heterogeneous neighborhood), the "evenly balanced proportion" begins to refer to the unnamed Carrie alone—Mrs. Hurstwood is not mentioned, even by type, once in the paragraph. The "new friend" tutoring the "young lady" is presumably Mrs. Hale, whose name makes an appearance a few sentences later, teaching Carrie "to distinguish between degrees of wealth" (Dreiser 115), but the initial use of an epithet and not a proper name, immediately adjacent to the mention of Hurstwood's growing interest, also insinuates that the more Hurstwood exerts influence over Carrie, the more he likes her. In either case, here the narrator states outright that Hurstwood's interest in Carrie is directly correlated to her "awaken[ing] in the matter of desire." Of course, this causality is predicated upon her

classification as a “shop girl”; if Hurstwood sees her thus, he finds it appropriate for her to be desirous of wealth and to be striving toward a better appearance. In his wife, who later asks for season tickets to the races so that she and their daughter can cultivate social appearances, the “matter of desire” antagonizes Hurstwood.

Knowing that Hurstwood desires Carrie more the more desirous she is, we can identify the major impact of her ride with Mrs. Hale along North Shore Drive—narratively situated as it is between Hurstwood’s fight with his wife and his solo visit to Carrie. On the North Side, Carrie sees material evidence of a “degree[] of wealth” not visible from her window at Ogden Place, and she returns to her rooms with a new perspective against which to compare her situation, putting her in exactly the mood that Hurstwood can take advantage of:

> When she came to her own rooms Carrie saw their comparative insignificance. She was not so dull but that she could perceive that they were but three small rooms in a moderately well-furnished boarding house. She was not contrasting it now with what she had had, but what she had so recently seen. The glow of the palatial doors was still in her eye, the roll of cushioned carriages still in her ears. What, after all, was Drouet. What was she. At her window she thought it over, rocking to and fro and gazing out across the lamplit park toward the lamplit houses on Warren Avenue and Ashland Boulevard. (Dreiser 116)

Having beheld the mansions of the North Shore, Carrie notes the “comparative insignificance” of her furnished rooms, which, as she rocks at the window, begins to extend to the middle-class homes of Warren Avenue and Ashland Boulevard that she sees through the lamplight. Her travels to a higher-class neighborhood confirm to Carrie what the narration had previously only suggested to the reader: that Union Park is not as well-off as it at first seems. Although, as far as

the narrative lets on, this is Carrie's first trip to the North Side, it is not her first tour of an upper-class area; remember that shortly after their move, Drouet takes Carrie out to Prairie Avenue to see the homes of Chicago magnates Armour, Pullman, Field, and Palmer. But what distinguishes these city tours—and their effects on Carrie—is that Drouet drives by Van Buren Street on the way home, which redirects Carrie's act of comparison. The sight of poverty momentarily obliterates Carrie's desire for improvement by highlighting that she is already better off than she was before. This time, exposure to the environs of the wealthy is different because it remains the most recent point of comparison: "She was not contrasting it now with what she had had, but what she had so recently seen."

The places that Carrie sees—which she only ever classifies by way of comparison—again cause her to question her own social type: "What, after all, was Drouet. What was she" (Dreiser 116). In this moment of confusion, in which apparently stable geographic types have destabilized Carrie's performed identity, Hurstwood arrives. His ability to seduce her depends on his having "been here and there" and "seen so and so": "Somehow he made Carrie wish to see similar things, and all the while kept her aware of himself" (Dreiser 117). Unlike Carrie, whose identity has been thrown into disarray by travel, Hurstwood gathers all of the places he has seen into a performatively stable and therefore covetable persona. When by coincidence he asks if she has ever been to the North Side, and Carrie exclaims, "I wish I could live in such a place" (Dreiser 119), the text exposes the mechanics by which Hurstwood will seduce Carrie. He takes advantage of her newly discovered desires (and corresponding emotional struggles) and, only ever temporarily, reorients them towards himself: "The little shop girl was getting into deep water" (Dreiser 119). Hurstwood's exertions force Carrie back into a particular type category (to which she admittedly does not wholly belong) and allow him to take on a parallel label: "the

aroused manager" (Dreiser 120). However, the narrative does not only expose the geographic comparison of North Shore Drive and Ogden Place as the mechanism by which Hurstwood seduces Carrie; this mechanism is at the heart of the entire narrative logic. Plot development is made possible by narrative mapping—each new geographic type encountered by the character and/or the reader forces a recalibration of what was already known about the social and material landscape, and thus about the role of the character within it.

It may seem as though my discussion of desire here refers solely to the accumulation of wealth and property (or the inhabitation of desirable forms of commercial properties, like luxury hotels). But as Lewinnek and Gair's arguments highlight, this desire was also, in the late-nineteenth century, about securing one's whiteness. And as revealed by Carrie's discovery of new "liberty" in New York (Dreiser 400), it is likewise about the freedom to support herself financially and, in the text's application of the word, to choose how and with whom she spends her time. Fleissner examines "women's work as fantasy" in the novel (178), and Klimasmith proposes that the novel has a "radical vision of apartment-derived social justice" (12): the geographic plotting of desire, that is, is just as much about gender roles. Although Carrie's plot envisions the real possibility of freedom from domesticity and male breadwinners that new urban arrangements offered modern "women adrift," it can only do so through the conflation of gender, class, ethnicity, and race as they relate to and are inscribed on city spaces. The novel does not depict the possible plots awaiting nonwhite women adrift—for as Joanne Meyerowitz reminds us, this "did not comprise a homogenous group" (xvii)—who would have had more trouble extricating themselves from performing the domestic labor and/or escaping the legal woes that Carrie manages to avoid.[19]

[19] And while my reading has, in the interest of concision, neglected Hurstwood's likewise geographically tracked decline, I note that his brief stint working at the Broadway Central hotel toward the end of the novel highlights

Women of color, in contrast, had to envision their own possible futures out of "[a]ll of the details of the nothing special and the extraordinary brutality" that are left behind by hegemonic cultural narratives (Hartman 348). Saidiya Hartman conceptualizes Black women's "waywardness"—"the errant path taken by the leaderless swarm in search of a place better than here"—as a manifestation of desire outside of the boundaries of normative plots, both narrative and spatial (227). As opposed to determinism and individualism,[20] Black women, "an assembly sustaining dreams of the otherwise" (Hartman 348), produce radically open-ended narratives that engage the details normally ignored and circumscribed. With an eye toward "what has yet to come into view," waywardness "transforms the terms of the possible" and offers a "glimpse of the earth not owned by anyone" (Hartman 349). A wayward narratology veers off the map because it follows desire, rather than orienting narrative futures toward property relations that have already been mapped.

Reading *Sister Carrie* reveals the role of naturalist plotting in mapping futures in advance, both of white generational wealth and of Black criminality. Carrie Meeber, unfulfilled and rocking in her chair at novel's end, continues to follow these patterns of perception and routes of desire, at the same time that her dissatisfaction confirms their false, or at least limited, promises. The novel's narrative mechanisms of description, classification, and causation show the rhetorical slippages and acts of selection that lay out a future in advance: a future that racially restricts both class mobility and women's liberation from traditional gender roles and that excludes African Americans from full participation in the modern city. The forms of storytelling

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Fleissner's assertion of the sentimentality—rather than realism—of his story. His fall from property ownership to performing a version of domestic labor for hotel guests is sentimental precisely because it elides the real working-class, racially and ethnically marked holders of those jobs upon whom the functioning of luxury hotels, as a modern form of wealthy white property relation, depended, to say nothing of all of the other workers whose labor the construction and maintenance of the modern city depended on.

[20] Determinism being "the prophetic power of the police to predict the future" that inhered in vagrancy laws (Hartman 242); individualism "the hero occupying center stage, preening and sovereign" (Hartman 349).

that produced naturalism's plots of whiteness later appeared in the writings of the Chicago school of sociology, bringing with them the stereotypes and prefigured futures that would, now under the mantle of science, further segregate, pathologize, and criminalize the Black ghetto.

Plots of Whiteness in Chicago School Sociology

Our protagonists in this chapter, George Ogden and Carrie Meeber, are both strangers to the modern city. As we have seen, plotting functions in *The Cliff-Dwellers* and *Sister Carrie* to acclimate these strangers to the city, a process of shedding the role of the stranger by assimilating into white middle-class neighborhoods and distancing themselves from racial, ethnic, and class difference. This plot of whiteness—a form of travel narrative—also emerged in the work of the Chicago school of sociology. Chicago sociologists' writing relies on similar rhetorical moves and cultural narratives to enforce a boundary between the assimilable and the unassimilable that is naturalized and made legible by mapping it onto the urban geography.

In the early twentieth century, sociology was making a concerted effort to brand itself as scientific: borrowing terms from the natural sciences, offering taxonomies of social types, modeling abstract processes, and treating the city as "a laboratory or clinic in which human nature and social processes may be most conveniently and profitably studied" (Park 612). Their emphasis on analysis from a distance aligned their scientific modes of seeing, whether explicitly or more often not, with their favorite subject, the stranger or (to use Park's term) "marginal man." As Henry Yu notes, "The small-town, rural backgrounds of the sociologists became a descriptive metaphor for their strong sense of being outsiders to the phenomena they studied … [They] saw themselves as strangers to the urban community and thus could describe and explain it in a way only outsiders could" (33).

The sociologists' characterization of strangers emphasized correlations between mobility, relationship to the land, and empirical observation, not unlike the characteristics that allow George Ogden to make his "*catalogue raisonné*" (Fuller 92). In his foundational 1916 essay "The City: Suggestions for the Investigation of Human Behavior in the City Environment" (1916), Robert Park quotes at length from a text by his elder colleague W. I. Thomas, *Source Book for Social Origins* (1909), to suggest the affiliation of the stranger to the modern city:

> A large part of the peasant's efficacy as an agricultural laborer depends upon this intimate and personal acquaintance with the idiosyncrasies of a single plot of land to the care of which he has been bred. It is apparent that under conditions like these, very little of the peasant's practical knowledge will take the abstract form of scientific generalization. He thinks in concrete terms because he knows and needs no other.
>
> On the other hand, the intellectual characteristics of the Jew and his generally recognized interest in abstract and radical ideas are unquestionably connected with the fact that the Jews are, before all else, a city folk. ... His knowledge of the world is based upon identities and differences, that is to say, on analysis and classification. (qtd in Park 589-90)

The Jew is an urban archetype, and urbanity is defined by encounters with difference. Thomas describes how travel and the resulting encounter with difference create the conditions for classification. The need for generalization, that is, comes from the discovery that there are ways of living and thinking other than one's own. Sociologists, like the figure of the Jew, also constructed knowledge rooted in "identities and differences, … analysis and classification." As Yu's analysis makes clear, however, the sociologist's positioning of himself as a stranger was

not on equal footing with that of the immigrants he studied. “Almost every Chicago sociologist was from a small rural town, often in what was seen as the West (now the Midwest) of America, and the recurring three-word mantras of their names bespoke white Protestant family heritages” (Yu 32). They leveraged this positionality, of the educated white stranger, to “craft[] themselves as the knowing subject through which others became important” (Yu 10). This poses a problem for “scientific generalization”: recall Denise Fereirra da Silva’s argument that the discourse of the stranger introducing race consciousness in the sociologists’ “race relations cycle” conceals the fact that the racial itself is not foreign. In fact, the race relations cycle puts the similarities between the urban ethnic analytical thinker and the sociologist’s classificatory view in tension with the assumption that the stranger is “a subject of outer determination, … a consciousness always already immersed in affectability” (Ferreira da Silva 161).

Indeed, the raciality of the analytical position needed to be subsumed through rhetoric in order for sociological work to assume the mantle of objective science. Thomas’s passage draws on a long tradition of anti-Semitic stereotypes, which distract from the connections Jews’ analytic thinking and the methods of the sociologists.[21] Park similarly emphasized certain stereotypes to establish a contrast with modern, scientific rationality, for example in his “metaphor of ‘racial temperament,’” which “fixed the Negro as the negation of civilization” (Baldwin “Black Belts” 413). Moreover, as Davarian Baldwin has shown, Park’s vision of race relations was always inflected by the time he had spent working with Booker T. Washington in the Jim Crow South, in particular by his perception of segregated “Racial Peace” there (409). Sociological typologies actively reinforced distances and differences while purporting to

[21] The quote continues, “Reared in intimate association with the bustle and business of the market place, constantly intent on the shrewd and fascinating game of buying and selling in which he employs that most interesting of abstractions, money, he has neither opportunity nor inclination to cultivate that intimate attachment to places and persons which is characteristic of the immobile person” (Thomas qtd. in Park 590).

describe them, separating the assimilable strangers from the unassimilable.[22] No wonder the sociologists' early writing relies on plots of whiteness as a narrative resource: if the "peasant's efficacy" comes from his attachment to "a single plot of land," where do urban strangers belong? Plots of whiteness map a path forward for those with the potential to become modern—and white—while relegating others to segregated zones presented as natural features of the urban environment

Park's sociological theories of difference and assimilation were highly spatialized, relying on slippages between race, ethnicity, class, religion, vocation, and even leisure activity in order to map the diversity of the modern city. Indeed, Baldwin explains that "[t]he most common organizing principle for understanding social differences was 'race,'" a word that was used by the Chicago school sociologists "where we would now use 'ethnicity'" (404). Although, as Roediger, Ignatiev, and Lewinnek's work emphasizes, ethnic whites had by the early twentieth century already long been participants in the process of distinguishing what we now call ethnicity from race, "race" continued to serve as a catch-all term for social difference. This linguistic paucity perhaps lent urgency to the desire to establish that hegemonic space was by default white, the desire to draw boundaries around certain racialized spaces (the nonwhite) and to incorporate others (the ethnic, the potentially white). These twinned processes result in the constant tension in Park's essay "The City" between a vision of the city as a site of contact and intermixture and a vision of the city as a collection of segregated districts.

On the one hand, Park declares that "[g]reat cities have always been the melting-pots of races and of cultures" (607). In these declarations, Park's language evokes *The Cliff-Dwellers*' scenes of heterogeneous masses in the Loop, and it suggests the positive potential of contact:

[22] Ferreira da Silva writes, "race relations has produced racial subjection as an effect of the fundamental impossibility of certain strangers' becoming transparent, of being modern" (162).

assimilation and Americanization. Wald identifies this melting pot vision as the "activist impulse" of Chicago school sociology ("Communicable" 662):[23] "managing the processes of Americanization" and "control[ling] what was transmitted: a communicable Americanism" ("Communicable" 667-8).[24] This contact is spatially registered in the "meet[ing] and mingl[ing]" of "all sorts of people": "The anarchist and the club man, the priest and the Levite, the actor and the missionary … touch elbows on the street" (Park 595). The catalogue includes religious (and by association ethnic), vocational, and what Park terms "moral" types, exemplifying how fast and loose he plays with categories of difference, treating them as equivalent. Given Baldwin's clarification cited above, and the few references to race—as we would define it today—that do appear elsewhere in "The City," I suggest that we sit with Park's confusingly capacious use of the word "type" while, at the same time, understanding it as intimately tied to, and motivated by, concerns about race.[25] This is made all the more clear by Park's career-long preoccupation with the "Negro Problem" and the "Oriental Problem": "The danger that the Chicago sociologists needed to deny was the possibility that racial prejudice was not like other forms, that prejudice against Negroes and Orientals was somehow different" (Yu 42). In other words, the naming of types is inherently racializing; although the type categories are invoked as though they are all commensurate, it becomes clear that certain ones are more assimilable than others.

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[23] Although as Henry Yu notes, Park deliberately distinguished his work from that of social reformists and missionaries through its descriptive, not prescriptive, intentions, we can nevertheless identify the optimistic desire for social change that Wald is discussing: "For Park, sociology would not create reform programs but help those who built such programs do so more 'intelligently'" (Yu 28).

[24] Wald even identifies this motivation in Park's methods of mapping, which she writes "he had learned from the epidemiologists and criminologists" he worked with earlier as a journalist covering a diphtheria epidemic: "And inscribed in their maps was an activist impulse, an effort to solve a mystery: the cause of an illness, the perpetrator of a crime. From the lessons of his early career, Park inherited an understanding of social investigation that, try as he might, he could not dissociate from activism" ("Communicable" 662).

[25] My suggestion is supported by Adrienne Brown's reading of Park's essay in the context of "the obsession with passing engulfing urban centers in the early twentieth century" (101). She describes how Park "recapitulates growing discomfort with surfaces as the primary vehicles for knowing others in urban centers" and explains that "[s]uch concerns about deceitful surfaces [were] consistently shadowed by concerns about inadvertent racial intermixture" (Brown 101).

After all, this diversity of human types interacting and sharing a city gives rise to the competing vision of segregated urban space: "a mosaic of little worlds which touch but do not interpenetrate," a city of "contiguous, perhaps, but widely separated worlds" (Park 607-8). Park theorizes that it is precisely the "superficial and adventitious character" of the separate "moral regions," as he calls them, that "tends to … produce new and divergent individual types" (608), despite—or, indeed, perhaps because of—the physical proximity, the touching elbows, of different types "who never fully comprehend one another" (595). He notes that "where individuals of the same race or of the same vocation live together in segregated groups, neighborhood sentiment tends to fuse together with racial antagonisms and class interests" (Park 582), indicating that segregation may be the natural and logical outcome of superficial interactions among different types.

These antagonistic paradigms of how difference operates in urban space are produced through a particular mode of perception and, specifically, its spatial registers. The mobility of the urban population, who "live much as people do in some great hotel, meeting but not knowing one another" (Park 607), results in a society where "the individual's status is determined to a considerable degree by conventional signs—by fashion and 'front'" (Park 608). We can read this superficial mode of perception back on to the scene of touching elbows, as the potential catalyst for the "racial antagonisms and class interests," the experience that precludes particular types, who live in regions of their own kind, from wanting to "fully comprehend" the others whom they encounter in their urban travels. An overreliance on "fronts," that is, reinforces plots of whiteness, just as Sister Carrie's observations of new neighborhoods orients and prompts her racialized desires.[26]

[26] The following chapters will also take up the motif of the front, which recurs in both literary and sociological texts dealing with racial geographies.

At the same time, however, that mobility supposedly fosters the analytic perspective discussed above, emblematized by the Jew.[27] The Jew is a particularly interesting figure for parsing the contradictions inherent to the Chicago school's models of assimilation and urban space—contradictions that enabled only certain strangers to become white. Both visions of the city—the melting-pot and the segregated worlds—inhere in the ghetto, which transitions from the latter to the former. As Wald elaborates, "In his foreword to [Louis Wirth's 1928] *The Ghetto*, Park superimposes the experience of subsequent ethnic groups on the original experience of the Jews, and Jewish experience becomes, for him as for Wirth, a paradigm of ethnic experience" ("Communicable" 678). She describes how Park and his colleagues came to theorize the ghetto, a form of urban enclosure whose European origins emerged from anti-Semitism, "as a transitional geographical space and developmental stage between the tenement and the metropolis" ("Communicable" 668), a site receptive to Americanization and a spatial manifestation of a particular stage in the assimilation process. The earlier term, "*tenement* (or *slum*)," on the other hand, "became ever more distinct in their work" as the space where the unassimilable—that is, non-white—would remain (Wald "Communicable" 668, emphasis in orig.). This distinction between ghetto and slum finds its visual expression in Ernest Burgess's concentric zone diagram (as I discussed in the Introduction and will return to in depth in Chapters 2 and 3), which places the "zone of transition" in a concentric ring but relegates the "Black Belt" to a solid rectangle that cuts across the rings, clearly sequestered from the processes of transition and assimilation. Yet by the 1930s, Black Chicagoans would deliberately invoke the very non-transitional nature of the original ghettos to draw a comparison between the anti-

[27] Priscilla Wald notes, "Park followed Simmel, for whom the Jew was the archetypal stranger" ("Communicable" 678).

Semitic enclosures and the racially restricted Black Belt, relinking the terms ghetto and slum and emphasizing that they were always already racialized.

The Chicago school's subsumption of racial thinking into the production of social scientific knowledge rhetorically effects a link between social and geographic types, whereby people and places begin to substitute for one another as the subject of the sentence. According to Jacob Dickerson, what begins as "a strong metonymic relationship in which [a] neighborhood c[o]me[s] to be synonymous with the people who live[] there … can take on a more ontological character, allowing for a firmer, indexical link between objects and language. … In such an indexical relationship, descriptions of one object simultaneously act as descriptions of another" (406-7). This rhetorical move naturalizes what are actually political, economic, and sociohistorical processes of urban transformation. The opening of "The City" performs such a maneuver, drawing on narrativization—telling the story of urban growth—to fuse the representations of people and place into one.

That is, Park's essay relies on plots of whiteness that use descriptive language to produce and naturalize the contingent outcome of a temporal process. Its narrative of city development begins by acknowledging the actors that shape the production of urban space: "Physical geography, natural advantages, and the means of transportation determine in advance the general outlines of the urban plan. As the city increases in population, the subtler influences of sympathy, rivalry, and economic necessity tend to control the distribution of the population. Business and manufacturing seek advantageous locations and draw around them a certain portion of the population" (Park 579). These named actors—the subjects of the verb phrases "tend to control," "seek," and "draw around them"—are, however, not people: they are institutions and interest groups. The broad but agential competing categories of "sympathy, rivalry, and

economic necessity" soon recede into the background as the act of taxonomizing takes over. The passively constructed sentence "[t]here spring up fashionable residence quarters from which the poorer classes are excluded because of the increased value of the land" condenses the economic process by which the land acquires value into the intransitive verb "spring up" (Park 579). By the next sentence—"Then there grow up slums which are inhabited by great numbers of the poorer classes who are unable to defend themselves from association with the derelict and vicious" (Park 579)—the text indicates that the cause of the action is the character of certain people, "the derelict and vicious," who inexplicably happen to appear in certain parts of the city.

Whereas the verb phrases "spring up" and "grow up" obscure the subject and defer to the narrator, the associations between social and geographic types build to the point that, in summary, "each separate part of the city is inevitably stained with the peculiar sentiments of its population" (Park 579). Although Park declares that "the life of every locality moves on with a certain momentum of its own, more or less independent of the larger circle of life and interests about it" because "[t]he past imposes itself upon the present" (Park 579-80), his writing demonstrates that it takes wordplay to construct such a deterministic narrative and distract from questions of agency. We can see, in textual action, the lack of historical, political analysis that Davarian Baldwin has noted characterizes Park's work on the city.[28] Here Park's writing demonstrates how the spatiotemporal relation of past to present—a relation that is intertwined with race, class, gender—is perceived by means of storytelling. Whiteness is produced and maintained through the textual choices made when imprinting a narrative plot onto a plot of land.

[28] Park's writing "does not discuss the unequal access to residential spaces or the incidents of vice, crime etc. that existed in affluent moral zones. Instead he describes the slum and its naturally vicious environs, as simply one example of a diversity of places with spatially tailored 'moral codes' that had little to do with history, power or coercion" (Baldwin 415).

These plots would not function without the support of another form: the line. In the next chapter, I continue to explore how the assimilation of ethnic whites reinforced the anti-Black color line, not only through narrative plotting, but also through the drawing of lines in journalistic photo-texts.

Crossing the Line: Documentary, Spectatorship, and Mapping Anti-Blackness

If plots establish whiteness as a norm across two-dimensional areas of space and narrative sequences, then the one-dimensional line is the form that encloses and separates out Blackness from appearing in those plots. Drawing the color line is a visual, as well as a rhetorical, problem. As Shawn Michelle Smith argues, the color line is itself a visual rhetoric, a geography inextricable from networks of looking and spectatorship. More than just a name for the material borders produced by and for segregation, that is, the term "color line" names "a nexus of competing gazes in which racialization is understood as the effect of both intense scrutiny and obfuscation under a white supremacist gaze" (Smith 2). She insists that she does "not mean to reinforce a literal notion of 'color'" but rather seeks to "emphasize the ways in which racial identification and recognition are negotiated through, and even instigated by, racialized gazes in a racist culture" (Smith 11). In other words, our modes of perception are racialized, and white supremacist culture divides who is allowed to do—and to record—what kind of looking.

This is why, in order to explore the formal role of the line in producing racial geographies, I turn to a genre that explicitly directs its readers' gaze: the photo documentary. Jacob Riis's *How the Other Half Lives* (1890), a foundational Progressive Era documentary photo-text, bisects the urban population in its very title, and it situates the reader as an outsider to the neighborhood that Riis's photographs and narration documents, New York's Lower East Side. Riis's narration, explicitly intended "to tell the truth as I saw it" and thus "garner[] a harvest of justice" by exposing the need for tenement reform (229), is obsessed with clarifying lines that the dense and diverse urban environment obscures. For example, he explains "that pauperism grows in the tenements as naturally as weeds in a garden lot. … I speak of the *pauper*,

not of the honestly poor. There is a sharp line between the two; but athwart it stands the tenement, all the time blurring and blotting it out" (Riis 192). Although there is by definition "a sharp line" between the lifestyles of these two types, the tenement's "blurring" and "blotting" effect makes it difficult to *see* that line. Where sight (and, by extension, photography) fails, Riis turns to metaphor and personification, evoking the image of "weeds in a garden lot" to signify pauperism and faulting the tenement—the architecture he blames for the misery and immorality of the "other half"—for causing that lack of clarity. The muddling of clear lines is in this way central to Riis's argument: that tenements ought to be demolished and less crowded apartments designed to replace them precisely so that the "honestly poor" can become moral citizens—and the "pauper" rightfully excluded from society.

The entire text, that is, works to produce clear lines, and it does so by managing the interactions between (the lines dividing) text and image; statistical, visual, and ethnographic evidence; and narrative and photography. It combines and juxtaposes mixed media and forms of evidence to suggest that many members of the "other half," if only they lived in a better environment, would be able to cross the line between New York's halves. But, as with that line between the "pauper" and the "honestly poor," it also suggests that there are some who will always be inherently dangerous and unassimilable—and this contributes to the project of racialization. In other words, while his lines always demarcate difference, Riis draws two different kinds of lines: the crossable and the exclusive. In their very coexistence, these overlapping lines offer a path toward assimilation for ethnic whites while further entrenching the color line. That the text relies on the mixing of media only further reinforces this contradiction, as Riis's argument is built out of crossed lines.

Half a century later, Richard Wright's photo-text *12 Million Black Voices* (1941) situates the reader on the opposite side of the color line, juxtaposing its first-person plural narration—the "Black voices" of the title—with images taken by white FSA photographers. Wright's text emphasizes how visual and rhetorical attempts to map difference onto the city geography using lines, exemplified by *Other Half*, have been specifically deployed against African Americans with extreme material consequences. In "How Bigger Was Born," Wright explains that he "took these techniques [of white writers], these ways of seeing and feeling, and twisted them, bent them, adapted them, until they became *my* ways of apprehending the locked-in life of the Black Belt areas" (443). In "bend[ing]" and "twist[ing]" the rhetorical possibilities of the line, he recognizes that lines are simultaneously divisive and connective. In this chapter I do not, therefore, posit these texts in a simple contrasting or oppositional relationship. Instead, I show how they each orient themselves around the form of the boundary line, a form that is particularly prevalent and well-suited to the mixed-media rhetoric of documentary photo-texts.

The figure of the line evokes the divide between text and image that is ever-present in photo-texts, and I pay attention to Riis and Wright's differing approaches to the lines that separate and connect their mixed media.[29] Whereas the text and images in *Other Half* work together to produce "the truth as I saw it" (Riis 229), each placing the reader in Riis's perspective on one side of the line across from the "others," *Black Voices*—by locating Black spectatorship, or sightlines, in the textual and not in the photographic, and by integrating while also re-signifying the language, and the maps, of sociologists—demonstrates that photo-texts can offer

[29] In *Picture Theory*, W.J.T. Mitchell deploys a variety of typographic lines—the hyphen, the slash—to evoke the different forms of contact and separation created by the line between image and text: "image/text" referring to "a problematic gap, cleavage, or rupture in representation," "image-text" to "*relations* of the visual and the verbal," and "imagetext"—without a line marking difference—to "composite, synthetic works (or concepts) that combine image and text" (89n9).

their readers a variety of orientations to the color line. In recognizing both the rhetorical power of distinct lines and the contingency of their production, we learn that this photo-textual rhetoric has and continues to map racial difference in the service of white supremacy and anti-Blackness. Discovering alternative orientations to the line opens up a critical space that turns our attention back toward those who have actively produced and benefited from maintaining the color line in our lived spaces.

Lines produce perspective and selectively orient our attention by tracing a particular direction of looking, simultaneously separating and connecting, acting as boundaries and borders but also contact zones. "The spatial function of lines marks the edges of belonging," Sara Ahmed explains in her exploration of the phenomenology and "sociality of lines," and "[t]he direction of one's attention puts one in line with others" (119). The line, as a concept, phenomenologically manages populations, collectives, and imagined communities who "fac[e] the same way, such that only some things 'get our attention'" (Ahmed 15). This is why for Riis to name the boundaries that define the Lower East Side tenement district and its crowded set of inhabitants, he must direct his readers' sightlines. This chapter will show how narrative and photographic perspective actively produce the very boundaries that *Other Half* purports only to describe. At the same time, Riis's narrative continually contradicts itself and offers up a multiplicity of competing lines, challenging the stability—or reality—of any single boundary. Lines are a useful means of organizing and visualizing data, but their delineation always also reveals the rhetorical function of their production, which is achieved through repetition and distraction. Attending to the proliferation of competing lines exposes how, in bringing any particular line into focus, the viewer's sight is turned away from others.

This is why lines are therefore also racialized: "whiteness is … the absent center against which others appear only as deviants or as lines of deviation," which implicitly produces "whiteness as a straight line rather than whiteness as a characteristic of bodies" (Ahmed 121). As opposed to the hypervisibility of Black bodies subject to "a regime of image-ness" (Raengo 27), white bodies are unmarked because of their collective "orientations toward others" (Ahmed 121), which makes them forget what is behind them: the line that they are following and that has been "drawn in advance" (Ahmed 16). The form of the line—as both material divider and performative social action—is instrumental in the process of racialization in that it directs sightlines toward deviating non-white bodies, reproducing the logic of their superficial legibility. It is therefore no surprise that lines figure prominently in *Other Half* and *Black Voices*, for they direct their readers' vision and perspective, locating the supposed superficial legibility of othered bodies in the architectural and cartographic lines of the built environment.

The photo-texts on which I focus do not just reproduce lines at the level of their rhetorical address to their readers; they directly engage the subject matter of geographic divisions, a material form of racialized lines. Reading Ahmed and Smith together, we could say, then, that the straight line of whiteness materializes the color line. That act of production, or materialization, is temporal: it must be repeatedly performed over time, and it also establishes a difference between the temporality of those on either side of the color line. As Ahmed describes, lines follow a future-oriented temporality that begs to be reproduced: "they depend on the repetition of norms and conventions, … but they are also created as an effect of this repetition" (16).[30] It is only because of prior actions that one knows where to look or where to go, but that

[30] W. E. B. Du Bois's prophetic insight that "the color line" would be "the problem of the Twentieth Century" recognized the temporality of the line (1)—that it would persist throughout the century because of repetition—and now two decades into the twenty-first century we can see how the color line not only remains an urgent problem, but that our discussions of it are deeply rooted in its past, that it functions to hold Black Americans temporally behind.

direction "drawn in advance" necessarily does not look back (Ahmed 16). Although linearity tends to be associated with futurity and progress, it is in fact dependent on and always reiterating the past in order to move forward with upholding and reproducing conventions. This need for repetition and for having a line "drawn in advance" is one reason why it becomes so hard to produce new conventions, to draw new lines—the challenge that *12 Million Black Voices* grapples with as it engages, critiques, and updates the techniques of *How the Other Half Lives*.

These texts' photographic project is likewise about the binding of the past and the future through repetition and reproduction. Early photographs of the downtown ghetto, and specifically of the Lower East Side, contributed to "an emergent iconography of modern experience" because (*HOHL* 2), as Sara Blair argues, both the space of the ghetto and the new medium of photography negotiate "the compression and intensities of lived time" (*HOHL* 14).[31] To observe the "Old World" immigrants of the Lower East Side "as outside or behind the temporal reach of the city's modernity" was to hold them in a photographic relation of "instantaneous arrest" (Blair *HOHL* 13)—at the same time that those immigrants' very presence in the U.S. was a sign of modernity, their labor enabling and producing modernization.

It is notable that Riis's images of the Lower East Side came to symbolize the Jewish American experience writ large. In making those temporal claims about Old World immigrants, then, Riis's images also established the conditions for the plot of whiteness (defined in Chapter 1): As the representative site of Jewish Americanness, the Lower East Side became the narrative origin point for a major New York ethnic group that, through the early twentieth century, assimilated into whiteness. And as Blair notes, "the currency of 'Lower East Side' as a way of naming Jewish American experience during the era of peak immigration has had the effect of

[31] The cited texts by Sara Blair will be abbreviated thus: *Harlem Crossroads* as *HC*; *How the Other Half Looks* as *HOHL*.

making previous immigrations and social dynamics virtually invisible" (Blair *HOHL* 3). These representations coalesced what was a heterogeneous space of immigration and assimilation by myriad ethnic, national, and religious groups into a single dominant narrative. The wedding of images, through text, to boundary lines around a particular place obscured all those other presences and oriented viewers around a line that would draw a path to whiteness. Because of this focus in the popular imagination on that one story of Jewish American assimilation, Hasia Diner points out, "It is not even clear … where the boundaries of the neighborhood ought to be drawn, who lived there, how they defined themselves, and how they used space" (qtd. in Blair, *HOHL* 229n5). In this way, the documentary photo-text, beginning with *How the Other Half Lives*, negotiates rhetorical and visual lines that produce—and then repetitively reproduce—race in space and time, precisely by cleaving race from ethnicity. It demarcates who belongs *where* and *when*, managing the populations that do and do not sync up with modern time, who may or may not be able to join that timeline. And it does so through repetition that emphasizes the direction of looking, not the past work that makes that forward-facing gaze possible. Yet I also suggest that the very mutability of these unclear geographic boundaries gave the neighborhood its iconographic power: a ubiquity wrested from specificity, just like a clear line drawn where there is none. Throughout my readings below, we find that line drawing produces race by presenting and reiterating generalized portraits and images.

Reading *How the Other Half Lives* and *12 Million Black Voices* together demonstrates that even the most clearly defined and consistently reproduced lines—the lines that formalize anti-Blackness, locating difference on the body and in certain streets—are created and maintained by obfuscating the multitude of other lines that deviate from or intersect with them. Elizabeth Abel's reading of Jim Crow photographs notices "whites … mapped within" the

geography of segregation "and, however preferentially, required to traverse a social terrain that exhibited the irrationality, heterogeneity, historicity, and thus—despite all the legal and extralegal tactics devised to shore them up—the malleability of racial boundaries" (17). That is, the acts of looking that produce the color line focus on certain objects while ignoring both how whites themselves cross and contradict the divisions that they uphold and how modernity is produced and made possible by the Black population. It focuses on the general, that is, rather than the specific. In my reading of *Other Half*, especially, I focus on how the overlapping, blurring, and contradicting of many lines (visual, material, and rhetorical) that mark ethnic and class difference ultimately serve to bolster the color line: the confusion caused by competing lines allows for the assimilation of those who are harder to contain within clear, generalized boundaries that, in turn, hold the reader's attention.

At first glance, *Other Half* seems to separate all ethnic and racial groups indiscriminately, segregating them by chapter. And interestingly, Riis's chapter on African Americans, "The Color Line in New York," asserts that the color line "shows signs of wavering" and predicts its coming disappearance (115). That chapter, not unlike Wright 51 years later, admonishes landlords for maintaining segregated housing in order to profit from overcharging Black tenants. Taken together, these features of the text might suggest that it flattens race and ethnicity, not that it contributes to the project of distinguishing between them. But, of course, Riis's prediction about the end of the color line was wrong—W. E. B. Du Bois more accurately, just a decade later, called it "the problem of the Twentieth Century" (1)—and the particular phenomenon of restrictive housing benefitting predatory landlords became only more entrenched in U.S. cities throughout the following century. Moreover, as Saidiya Hartman declares, "Progressive reformers," like Riis, "were the architects and planners of racial segregation in northern cities"

(21). *How the Other Half Lives* directly contributed to segregation in its rhetorical engagement with, and anxious attempts to dismiss, unclear and overlapping boundary lines. *Black Voices*, in contrast, actively follows them to their logical conclusion, offering lines of sight that are more often ignored, especially by white viewers and readers. *Other Half* obsessively attempts to map difference onto the city's geography; *12 Million Black Voices* emphasizes how the visual and textual rhetorics that rely on lines to name and enforce difference have sustained anti-Blackness via the color line. Those rhetorics became powerful through the emergent genre of photo documentary, which, by formalizing modes of looking that purported to offer direct representations of the truth, actively constructed popular understandings of social and material geographies.

Photo-Texts, Race, and the Real

Critical literature on documentary photography, and in particular the genre of the photo-text—in which photographs and nonfiction narrative coexist side by side—grapples with the photograph's claim to realism. In the interactions between text and image, the genre acknowledges that truth, or the real, is always represented and communicated through a particular perspective: what Blair calls the "reality effect" of the photograph (*HOHL* 27). Whereas many traditions have regarded the use of photography in documentary photo-texts as "a merely instrumental source of evidence" (Blair, *HC* 13), critics of the photo-text in its New Deal–era heyday have shown how the interaction between text and image works to complicate "the realism-modernism divide" (Entin 140). As Joseph Entin discusses, "realism's effort to render the 'real' frequently breeds a narrative self-consciousness that we recognize as a hallmark of modernism" (140). Jeff Allred similarly identifies the ways in which reading text and image

together highlights the image's function as more than evidence. Instead, "the *relationship between* the real and representation becomes the primary object of contemplation" in the text (Allred 13). Allred describes how these texts "recruit[] readers in a shared project of thinking through plausible pasts, presents, and futures" (7), emphasizing that the modernist photo-text addresses its audience beyond "the scientific conceit of the disinterested observer producing objective truths" (15). The combination of nonfiction narrative and documentary photography together with the rhetorical awareness of a readership ultimately "foreground[s] the image's capacity to *arrest* the smooth transmission of sociological fact, sympathetic identification, and the like" (Allred 17). That is, the documentary photo-text genre has been firmly situated within the history of modernism because of how the crossing between text and image actually multiplies perspectives rather than cohering into a single perspective.[32] This is a genre self-consciously interested in the social construction of the real, which is why these texts are significant to the history of U.S. racial formation.

From its inception, the genre destabilizes the reality effect of the documentary photograph even as it rhetorically invokes it. Attending to "the copresence of halftone photographs and hand-wrought images"—two distinct forms of visual representation that to contemporary readers register a wide gulf between the realistic and the imaginative—in *Other Half*, Blair "reminds us how difficult it was for nineteenth-century readers to become responsive—to become subject—to the halftone's very different reality effect. Even as Riis insisted on the photograph as irrefutable evidence, he was well aware of the illusory character of

[32] Documentary and modernism developed in the same period, as Allred highlights, noting, "It is difficult to narrate the cultural history of the period in which modernist and documentary art both emerged without uncovering connections that obscure, if not completely efface, the difference between them"—for example, *How the Other Half Lives*, "often considered the first 'documentary book,' arose alongside Crane's *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets* (1893), with its proto-modernist use of ellipsis to capture the jaggedness of slum life" (12).

its realism" (*HOHL* 27). Not only did Riis need to convince readers that his photographs were representations of the real, and therefore pieces of evidence, but doing so also required that he employ rhetorical tropes that would be more recognizable to his audience. Natalia Cecire argues, for example, that the "contrasting lights and darks that characterized flash photography … signified the real precisely by pointing to" a visual rhetoric that predated flash photography: "lights and shadows" literature (66-7). This popular literary genre, which offered middle-class readers imaginative access to scenes of urban poverty and depravity, "safe versions of the 'gaslight tour'" (Cecire 66), thus shaped the possible uses and meanings of flash photography, for it produced "the conditions under which problematic scenes of social encounter could be rendered up as social knowledge" (Cecire 67).

For photography to become visual proof, it relied not just on this literary referent, but also on a particular social condition and urban geography. If "downtown sites of poverty and the inassimilable catalyzed a dominant visual logic of photo-realism," Blair argues, the crowded tenements then became "an urgent rationale for index-based representation, in which the power of visual conventions, print platforms, and the illustrator to shape social seeing was made invisible" (*HOHL* 28). In other words, what seems like a representational method—photography—in fact became "sutured" to its object of representation (Blair, *HOHL* 13). By recognizing this we can identify that photography's reality effect is not intrinsic but rather a conventional effect of its own active production.

Riis imbued Lower East Side geographies with particular meanings that were not obvious. For example, the juxtaposition between the photographs and their captions links previously unconnected visual referents with spatial landmarks. A large number of images in the original publication, both halftones and illustrations of Riis's photographs, depict interior scenes

yet are captioned according to the streets outside.[33] The photograph below, "'Knee-Pants' at Forty-Five Cents a Dozen—A Ludlow Street Sweater's Shop" (Figure 6), is representative of this category.[34] The figures in the image are deindividualized; we know them only as a general type: sweaters. The interior could conceivably be located anywhere in the neighborhood: no scenery, let alone a recognizable landmark, is visible through the windows; moreover, the assumption is that readers are unfamiliar with the neighborhood and would therefore not be able to recognize landmarks even if they were visible. Yet the caption insists on naming that this shop is on Ludlow Street. The reader or viewer is given no visible access to the connection between this room and the street outside. The disconnect between these images and their captions highlights that the text's performance of cartography relies on its author's rhetorical choices. The photograph does not depict a particular location on the map of the Lower East Side. Nevertheless, its captioner insists on its relation to the specificity of the grid outside. These captions tell the reader what to see in the image, which is in no way a direct reflection of the street names attached to them.

[33] I limit my close readings of Riis's photographs in this chapter to those that appeared, either as halftones or sketches, in the original publication of *How the Other Half Lives*, which is available through Project Gutenberg.
[34] The other images of interiors that are named for exterior locations (that were included in the original publication of *Other Half*) are: "Upstairs in Blindman's Alley"; "In the Home of an Italian Rag-picker, Jersey Street"; "Lodgers in a Crowded Bayard Street Tenement—'Five Cents a Spot'"; "An All-night Two-cent Restaurant, in 'The Bend'"; "Bunks in a Seven-cent Lodging-house, Pell Street"; "In Poverty Gap, West Twenty-eighth Street. An English Coal-heaver's Home"; "Sewing and Starving in an Elizabeth Street Attic"; and "A Flat in the Pauper Barracks, West Thirty-eighth Street, with all its Furniture."

Figure 6: "Knee-Pants" at Forty-Five Cents a Dozen—A Ludlow Street Sweater's Shop [image from the Project Gutenberg edition]

The captions' confidence in naming streets and even alleys "provide[s] a kind of geographical map," according to Cindy Weinstein, and, unlike the photographs' visually excessive crisscrossing laundry lines and bunk beds or the narrator's frustration "that the tenements make mapping almost impossible," these captions "suggest a sense of differentiated space" (214n17). That is, the metaphorically blurry lines that impede documentary narration, and the proliferation of lines visible in the photographs, are in tension with the singular, distinct lines—the street names—put forth by the image captions. This image-caption relationship is a distinctly racializing process. As Saidiya Hartman writes of this genre of reform pictures more broadly, "The captions transform the photographs into moral pictures, amplify the poverty, arrange and classify disorder. *Negro quarter*. The caption seems to replicate the image, to detail what resides within its frame, but instead the caption produces what appears. It subsumes the image to the text" (20). Her assertion that the caption "produces what appears" underscores that

no image can be presented as objectively real, but instead establishes reality through an ideological lens.

The illusion of the reality effect is central to racial formation and anti-Blackness. Alessandra Raengo argues that the "cultural logic of investment in the continuity between the world and photographic images" is consonant with the "investment in a certain idea of referentiality that the black body has historically delivered" (11). As Frantz Fanon's racial epidermal schema conceptualizes, the Black body itself materializes the stereotypes and meanings of racism through the color of the skin: it "brands the body with the marks of race" (Raengo 27). Photography as a medium, for Raengo, reiterates that racial logic, as "the photographic trace brands the real with a regime of image-ness that lays claims to an ontological connection between its surface existence as a visual object and the historical depth—the 'reality'—from which it was seized" (27). Reform photography in the late nineteenth century doubled the racial epidermal schema, reproducing the logic of bodily surface legibility through the image and deploying it for rhetorical effect; Hartman describes how reform photographs "coerced the black poor into visibility as a condition of policing and charity, making those *bound to appear* suffer the burden of representation" (21). As Riis draws a line of connection between caption and image, exterior and interior, he extends this racial logic to the streets, mapping race onto the city and naturalizing the idea that a street or a neighborhood can refer directly back to race (this remains the case with even more general descriptors like "inner city"). The photography in *Other Half*, that is, indexes the "how" that it purports to describe as, in fact, a *who* and a *where*.

By attending to the paratext, we see one way that documentary photography came to represent and signify sites of poverty, even as the contradictory content of the narrative text and

images has trouble defining and containing those sites. As *Other Half* generalizes the photographic subjects but uses their social types to index specific places, the text produces a documented reality that is supposedly locatable on a map. Cecire calls this an aesthetics of "flash," which has an "informatic quality" and a "confidence in the sufficiency and transparency of partial and nonverisimilar representation" (57). Texts deploy flash to represent the mass to the mass; drawing on Edgar Allan Poe's famous phrase, Cecire describes how flash—for example in Riis's photographs—"supplements the crowd's unreadability by giving the crowd a readable face" (74). The person in the photograph is not meant to be an individual, but a representative. In fact, flash can only be "apprehensible, if not producible, instantaneously" because humans are "functionally uncontainable except by surprise, in the briefest of instants" (Cecire 63, 56). Arranging an excess of information into an "intuitable" image that represents the real while not "mimetically *resembl[ing]*" it (Cecire 58), flash is the aesthetic strategy not just of documentary photography, but also of data visualization.[35]

Cecire's focus on flash as information "management" helps to contextualize the reality effect of Riis's photographs in relation to the statistics about overcrowding, illness, and crime in the tenements that he includes in the narration (50). Weinstein argues that Riis rhetorically draws on photography "to counter what he finds to be the unreliability of statistical analysis with what he imagines to be the indisputable, static realism of the photograph" (196). As she points out, "Almost every time he uses numbers, he points them out as erroneous" (Weinstein 199). But neither do the photographs offer up "indisputable" and legible truths. I suggest that we instead

[35] "Like the faces in the crowd, data visualizations aim to offer an intuitive sense of the whole at a glance. Data visualization is so common in contemporary media that it does not strike us as unusual that there is nothing about the image that mimetically *resembles* the thing it describes; in fact, the image is intuitable and informative insofar as irrelevant particulars have been stripped away" (Cecire 58). I discuss W. E. B. Du Bois data visualizations in the coda.

regard the text's navigation across three categories for presenting information: narrative, visuals, and numbers. Riis moves back and forth between these three, each in its own way insufficiently mimetic and uncomprehensive, seeking to produce a reality effect out of the constellation. In the movement between narrative, visuals, and numbers, the text simultaneously stabilizes generalized racist tropes while introducing "a confusion about the target of reform—is it a what or a who?" (Weinstein 211). Which is to say, the text's rhetorical production of truth, evidence, and facts—its construction of the reality effect, its aesthetics of flash—is intimately connected to its blurring of the line between people and place that ultimately distinguishes ethnicity and race. In the confusion between the "what" and the "who," the text establishes the conditions for assimilating ethnic whites while reinforcing racial divides.

Riis deploys the aesthetics of flash not only in images of human types, but also in his approach to captioning the landscapes of urban poverty. Take the photograph "Bottle Alley" (Figure 7), which shows an inner courtyard or alleyway that is visually defined by the large bags of rags and trash piled on the ground and by the linens hanging from clotheslines that are mostly cropped out of the frame. These items, as the other images in the book attest, are typical of this landscape, and not enough of the building's walls are visible to suggest that they could be identifiable landmarks. Yet again, the only element in the text that tethers this image to a specific location on the map is the caption—and even the moniker Bottle Alley may be more colloquial than legible on a street sign. The narration in this chapter, however, refers to Bottle Alley, naming it "a fair specimen of its kind" and locating it "around the corner [from the Mulberry Bend] in Baxter Street" (Riis 54).

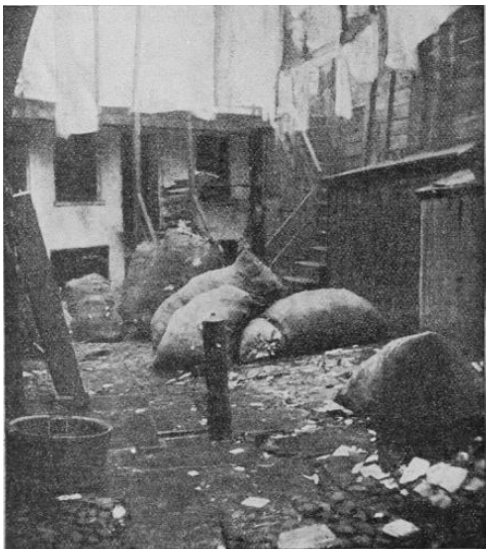

Figure 7: "Bottle Alley"
[image from the Project Gutenberg edition]

Bottle Alley is thus both geographically particular—assumedly, if one were to follow the directions and street names provided by the text, one would find the singular alley that goes by this name—and also abstractly representative. With no visual cues as to its specific whereabouts, Bottle Alley becomes the trope for *all* urban alleys, just as photographs of people labeled by their social type stand in for the face of the crowd. This photograph turns the site into a "specimen," a piece of evidence, but also one of its "kind," individual in its very ubiquity. It is the movement between text and image that tethers this visual rhetoric so tightly to the space of the Lower East Side, transforming the neighborhood into the ultimate site for imagining the American immigrant experience, which in turn exposes how extremely *un*tethered to that actual location it is.[36] The image of Bottle Alley takes on two possible meanings: as the historical origin point for assimilation, a narrative of uplift; or as a representation of the seemingly permanent poverty that marks much American racial discourse (i.e., this image does not look all too different from those of midcentury Black Belts in *Black Voices*).

[36] See Blair for more on the Lower East Side's centrality to "the image repertoire of modern America" (*HOHL* 1), its role in the "emergent iconography of modern experience" (*HOHL* 2).

My reading of *Other Half* calls attention to the process of line drawing that this foundational documentary photo-text constantly negotiates and struggles to perform. In the process, the text deconstructs racial geographies, revealing the heterogeneity of lived space—those specific and multitudinous uses of space by people across races, ethnicities, and classes—and the challenges to mapping it. Yet it also upholds racialized spatial divisions and formalizes a rhetoric for mapping them. Although contradictions abound—they attest to the acts of forgetting and misdirection required to enforce singular sightlines, and they offer glimpses of the agency of the racialized others being mapped onto the urban landscape—Riis's text ultimately uses lines to give form to difference as a visible, locatable category. In doing so, it maintains both the slipperiness of ethnic categories and the clarity of racial divisions.

"The real boundary line of the Other Half": Jacob Riis's Well-Trodden Path

The very first page of *How the Other Half Lives* declares that "the boundary line of the Other Half lies through the tenements" (1), and the subsequent text is obsessed with marking out boundaries and limits. As Cindy Weinstein declares, "Lines are everywhere in" this book (201). These lines are textual and narrative, representational and verbal. They are also visual, both in the sightlines that produce photographic perspective and in the intersecting lines of walls, streets, clotheslines, and fire escapes that give form to the iconic photographs. As Christopher Carter notes, "*How the Other Half Lives* capitalizes on the optical effects of linear perspective, a phenomenon whereby lines running parallel to each other and away from the viewer appear to close in on each other. The linearity that gives the image depth also creates its tightness" (123-4), which in turn evokes the cramped conditions of the rear tenements. Lines appear, in addition, as metaphors for geographic, class, ethnic, and racial divisions. Riis uses lines, in all their

manifestations, to aesthetically and narratively express an ideology, not simply as reflections or descriptions of the world outside the text.

As he locates and defines boundary lines, Riis is attempting to contain the "other half" as distinct from his upper- and middle-class white audience. But too much emphasis on rhetorically or geographically separating out that population runs at cross-purposes with his reform project—with Riis's desire to awaken his audience to the dangers that the tenement dwellers pose to the city. He expresses the urgency of this exigence by emphasizing the threat that the "other half" may very well overspill the Lower East Side's borders, and in fact already are, compromising the middle class's safety, hygiene, and morals with their distasteful and immoral behaviors. This is why, as Weinstein puts it, Riis struggles with "the continual construction of lines … and their inevitable deconstruction" (201): As much as he wants to stabilize the boundaries that mark the tenement dwellers as "other," he cannot. Riis's reform project is precisely about making certain members of New York's rapidly growing immigrant and migrant working class more moral, better citizens—less threatening to the social order—and thus able to be integrated into that white middle-class order. Deconstructing some lines so that ethnic immigrants could begin what sociologists would soon after name the "race relations cycle" would make it easier to reinforce a different boundary against just a subset of that tenement district population: the color line. In its perpetual drawing and deconstructing of lines, *Other Half* straddles these interrelated ideological projects.

In the first place, boundary lines function as a narrative device that establishes the relationship of the narrator to the reader, as well as to the subjects of the study, while also delimiting the conditions for documentary narration, which become literalized in the city's geography: "Leaving the Elevated Railroad where it dives under the Brooklyn Bridge at Franklin

Square, scarce a dozen steps will take us where we wish to go. With its rush and roar echoing yet in our ears, we have turned the corner from prosperity to poverty. We stand upon the domain of the tenement" (Riis 27). The tropes of the travel narrative are at play; this is, specifically and pointedly, a tale of slumming.[37] Riis's narration fluctuates between third-person reportage, first-person singular anecdote, and sometimes first-person plural present-tense narration—or even second-person imperative—bringing the reader into the scene with him. Here, the first-person plural identifies the reader with Riis as an outsider to the tenement district, not one of the "other half."

Arriving at the threshold of the tenement's "domain" marks a narrative act of line crossing that will then enable the observation and witnessing that Riis's reform argument relies on. In slumming more generally, and in this text in particular, the visitor experiences a thrill from crossing a boundary that, when the "other half" crosses it in the other direction, is regarded as a threat—and the unevenness of that boundary highlights that it is more ideological than material. In the above passage, the Franklin Square stop, a material landmark, serves to locate a metaphorical class and ethnic "corner" being "turned," and the disappearance of the Elevated underground, both a demarcation and a crossing of the line of pavement that separates above- and below-ground, is conflated with the division between "prosperity" and "poverty" that is also being crossed. This conflation of many intersecting and incommensurable boundaries is particularly evident in the referent-less "its" of the "rush and roar": Is it the Elevated, which would make sonic sense? Or the "prosperity" from which Riis and his audience are turning away? Loud noise is central to Riis's racialized characterization of the chaotic Lower East Side, so why is it here associated with the space that Riis is leaving as he enters the tenements?

[37] The use of this word to mean "the visitation of slums, esp. for charitable or philanthropic purposes" began in the 1880s (see OED, slumming, n. 2.a).

Turning away from the Elevated and the "rush and roar" may seem to enable more truthful documentation—a quieting of noise that will allow for clearer senses. Yet precisely because the passage makes the sound unlocatable, it demonstrates that the symbolism of "turn[ing] the corner" is just that: a spatial marker utilized as a rhetorical device. We have to wonder, is there really that clear a boundary between the city's halves?

This chapter of *Other Half*, "The Down Town Back-Alleys," continues to emphasize the physical lines that define the built environment of the rear tenements as the narrator leads the reader on a first-person plural tour. Enumerating the width of the alleys and the number of stories of the buildings, the narrator guides the reader both geographically, past landmarks and through named streets, and perceptually, directing their attention: "As we stroll from one narrow street to another the odd contrast between the low, old-looking houses in front and the towering tenements in the back yards grows even more striking, perhaps because we expect and are looking for it. Nobody who was not would suspect the presence of the rear houses, though they have been there long enough" (Riis 36). Physical facts go unnoticed unless one knows to "expect" and "look[] for" the "contrast." Yet, as with the corner where poverty and prosperity intersect, the line between the old and new tenements embodied in that "contrast" is not a line that speaks for itself; one's line of sight must be directed toward it.

The audience's sightline is narratively directed using exclamations and imperatives: "Be a little careful, please! The hall is dark and you might stumble over the children … Hear the pump squeak! … Here is a door. Listen! That short hacking cough, that tiny helpless wail—what do they mean? … The child is dying with measles. … That dark bedroom killed it" (Riis 38). These second-person addresses underscore the obstacles to perception in this environment, the darkness that only the flash of the camera—or, it turns out, a particular mode of narration—can

illuminate. On one level, Riis is describing what goes unnoticed from the street (the existence of the rear tenement) and from the alley (the interior of the rear tenement). But he goes even further, homing in on what the outsider's vision supposedly cannot access by turning to the tangible and audible dimensions of the tenement: the kids who might be "stumble[d] over" and the noises of the water pump and the sick baby. The scene culminates in his assignation of blame for the illness on the "dark bedroom" itself. This problem, he indicates, stems from the same feature of the building against which he and his reader have contended during their fact-finding tour. The narrator, that is, directs the reader's attention such that the darkness that emerges as an understandable hindrance to their sight is recognizable as a cause of the tenement-dwellers' ills, even though the relation between its cause and effect has been abstracted onto the reader's imagined embodied experience. The text thus complicates the boundary between reader and subject here, suggesting one way in which tenement reform, by brightening and widening hallways, could create a path toward assimilation.

During this slumming tour, the narrator and reader begin to emulate the "other half" in another way: in their disregard for privacy. Privacy is key to Riis's definition of the "real boundary line of the Other Half: the one that defines the 'flat'" (121). While "the law does not draw it at all, accounting all flats tenements," "[t]he health officer draws it from observation" and "judgment … and his way is, perhaps, on the whole, the surest and best" (Riis 121). Riis's documentary photography seems to support this method: "observation" and "judgment" as the only means to locating tenements and describing the characteristics of their inhabitants. There is, however, a problem with this method: "The outside of the building gives no valuable clew" (Riis 121). This distrust of surfaces—or recognition that facades can be deceptive[38]—justifies Riis's

[38] As discussed in the introduction, this theme is ubiquitous in the primary texts throughout this dissertation. See Chapters 1 and 3 for discussions of "fronts" in Henry Blake Fuller and Marita Bonner's texts, respectively.

breaking-and-entering approach to photography. For, ultimately, he declares that "the first attempt to enter helps draw the line with tolerable distinctness. A locked door is a strong point in favor of the flat. It argues that the first step has been taken to secure privacy, the absence of which is the chief curse of the tenement" (Riis 121). This statement belongs to a broader discourse of private versus public that has been central to liberalism since the eighteenth century. The line drawn between the public sphere of politics and commerce and the private sphere of the household has from the outset been racialized and embroiled in the histories of colonialism and slavery, as Lisa Lowe's *The Intimacies of Four Continents* argues. "Bourgeois intimacy," which she defines as "sexual and affective intimacy within the private sphere of the bourgeois household"—and which is implied by the split between the tenement, where it would not be possible, and the flat, which would enable it—"derived from the private and public split that was the socio-spatial medium for both metropolitan and colonial hegemony" and "was a regulating ideal through which the colonial powers administered the enslaved and colonized and sought to indoctrinate the newly freed into forms of Christian marriage and family" (Lowe 30).

Not only is liberalism's private/public division a means of enacting whiteness in contrast to forms of racial otherness that do not uphold that boundary, but the clear line between public and private, even in the white, liberal household, is also always already a fiction. Lowe attests that "[b]ourgeois intimacy was produced by the 'intimacies of four continents'—both in the sense that settler colonial appropriation with enslaved and indentured labor founded the formative wealth of the European bourgeoisie, and … in the sense that colonized workers produced the material comforts and commodities that furnished the bourgeois home" (30). Her argument shows how the drawing of boundaries to create "racial classifications in the archive"—often through attempts at spatial segregation of laborers and slaves of different origins—

"indicate[s] that colonial administrators imagined as dangerous the sexual, laboring, and intellectual contacts among enslaved and indentured nonwhite peoples," yet "while this emergent sense of intimacies … is not explicitly named in the documents, it is, paradoxically, everywhere present" (Lowe 35). As well as being an anxious response to the obvious existence of contacts among nonwhite slaves and laborers, white liberal subjects' boundary drawing was of course also a denial of their own nonadherence to those boundaries.[39]

By removing himself from the verb phrase, Riis disavows that his actions cross the line precisely in order to draw it: His active invasion of the tenants' privacy rhetorically situates him on the opposite side of the line from the "other half." Here we can see that Riis's first-person anecdotes about surprising sleeping boarders unawares with the flash of his camera—even accidentally setting their walls on fire—and his imagined second-person guided tours into buildings are working toward the same end as his more detached reportage: to depict, define, and thereby isolate and eradicate the social ills of the tenement. Showing that he is able to enter tenements so easily (and so could you: "Step carefully over this baby" [Riis 38]!) supports the argument that the tenement's "chief curse" is the "absence" of privacy. Riis actively initiates the invasion of privacy that bolsters his definition of the line, yet his word choice downplays his own agency and complicity in reproducing the tenement tenants' lack of privacy. Whereas "the law" and "health officer" are subjects of the verb phrase "to draw the line," Riis's narrator never is. Instead, the grammatical subject "the first attempt to enter" takes over the responsibility, and ultimately that depersonalized action is superseded by the flat's inanimate but agentic "locked

[39] Lowe writes, "in the colonial context, sexual relations were not limited to a 'private sphere' but included practices that disrespected such separations, ranging from rape, assault, domestic servitude, or concubinage, to 'consensual relations' between colonizers and colonized" (30).

door" that "argues" for its difference from the tenement (Riis 112).[40] Riis breaks the very line he is drawing, bringing the reader along with him.

The text similarly invokes and undercuts the status of Fourteenth Street as a geographic boundary. When treating it as a meaningful border, Riis does so as if it were a natural phenomenon: "With the gravitation of the Italian tramp landlord toward the old stronghold of the African on the West Side, a share of the stale-beer traffic has left 'the Bend'; but its headquarters will always remain there, the real home of trampdom, just as Fourteenth Street is its limit. No real tramp crosses that frontier after nightfall and in the daytime only to beg" (64). Here, despite movement of lower-class populations away from the Lower East Side, Riis presumes a future that looks similar to the recent past: the "always" tied to the "real[ness]" of the tramps who dwell there. Through the comparative "just as," this assumption is projected onto the "limit" of Fourteenth Street, an asynchronous, ahistorical given.

But if the references to a stable Fourteenth Street dividing line serve to contain the threat that "trampdom" poses to those who live north of it, Riis must denaturalize the boundary to convince readers that the threat, rather than its geographic containment, is real. The text directly contradicts itself, claiming that "Fourteenth Street … is erroneously supposed by some"—including, as we have seen, this same narrator in other chapters—"to fence off the good from the bad" (121). It is a mistake, Riis suggests, to envision the line of a street as a barrier or limit. Instead, the narrator turns to neighborhood names to describe "sore spots" all across Manhattan (121), implying that they can appear anywhere and that his uptown-dwelling audience is already living closer to them than they thought: "There is nothing below that line that can outdo in wickedness Hell's Kitchen, in the region of three-cent whiskey, or its counterpoise at the other

[40] "Indeed, much of Riis's text describes how the tenements themselves, as opposed to Riis himself, blur and often make invisible lines of distinction" (Weinstein 201).

end of Thirty-ninth Street, on the East River… The Mulberry Street Bend is scarce dirtier than Little Italy in Harlem" (121). Fourteenth Street is here more a mirror than a divider, reflecting counterparts above and below, and it even appears to magnify the "wickedness" of each "sore spot" above the line. By contrasting the "erroneous" assumption that Fourteenth Street is a natural border with the appearance of these "sore spots," the text suggests precisely their unnaturalness. That wrongness is transposed onto the proliferation of negative "social conditions" in the city writ large: "were I to draw a picture of them here as they are, the subject, I fear, would outgrow alike the limits of this book and the reader's patience" (Riis 121-2). The failure of Fourteenth Street is transposed onto the text's "limits," the geographic expansion of tenement life creating an unrepresentable excess of material to document. As the text contradicts itself, seeming to draw ever more lines whose clarity and impermeability is only ever contingent, it mimics the effect that, Riis claims, the tenement has: "all the time blurring and blotting … out" "sharp line[s]" (192). The line at once purports to offer useable data and meaningful definitions while also manifesting the difficulty of the effort to produce that information.

This takes noticeable effort because it is an active project of othering, defending, and producing white space. The boundary line is an important figure for articulating ethnic and racial difference within the text. Although "Riis at times depicts tenement sites of mixture[,]" Adrienne Brown emphasizes, "the variety of difference constituting these 'others' … never threatens to become unclassifiable" (11). Even at the level of the chapter breakdown, she notes, "the book is organized around such groupings" of differentiated racial and ethnic types (Brown 11). "Racial mixture," she argues, "does not devolve into racial confusion for Riis. In fact, the forced intimacy within these crammed spaces often makes these distinctions all the more visible" (Brown 13). But in comparing Riis's treatment of Chinatown, for example, with that of the

Italian Mulberry Bend, we find that his treatment of difference does change depending on race. Riis and the reader's experiences of being able to read race comprehensively are called into question with ethnic groups who may be assimilable through reform, but Asians and African Americans are always legible, their spaces more clearly defined.

In an extended passage, Riis uses prose to envision a "map of the city, colored to designate nationalities," wherein these lines emerge as "more stripes than on the skin of a zebra, and more colors than any rainbow" (20). Just as the chapter breaks and titles prevent the text from "devolv[ing] into racial confusion" (Brown 13), this imagined map, despite the unfathomable number of stripes and colors, presents more stable and prominent divisions: "The city on such a map would fall into two great halves, green for the Irish prevailing in the West Side tenement districts, and blue for the Germans on the East Side" (Riis 20-2). The ethnic borders that Riis seeks to draw must be articulated, almost ekphrastically, in words: this scale of representation is not feasible in a photograph. Yet Riis describes this color-coded map without providing any corresponding sketch or diagram. The visual rendering of "the city on such a map" is not only missing but also remains stuck at the level of the hypothetical, as emphasized by the word "such" and the subjunctive mood of the verb "would." This visual map seems conceivable only in text in part because the number of racial divisions—despite the initial German/Irish binary—begins to proliferate at a scale that is difficult to represent distinctly. The requisite scale both is too minuscule to capture in an image and requires a wider lens than the camera can provide: "intermingled with these ground colors would be an odd variety of tints that would give the whole appearance of an extraordinary crazy-quilt" (Riis 22). The map becomes both "odd" and "extraordinary" because of its "variety." And when it comes to locating these "dashes" and "mark[s]" (Riis 22), the static temporality of the map becomes impossible.

But if the city looks like a "quilt," who is stitching the differently colored and unevenly shaped pieces together? The extended mixed metaphor is Riis's attempt to do so. Even as the text seems to assert the mappability of race and ethnicity onto spatial borders, it also demonstrates how fungible those borders are—paving the way for assimilation. The invocation of the crazy quilt, defined by its lack of a pattern and the irregularity of its component pieces' shapes and sizes,[41] already gestures toward the dynamic heterogeneity of the city's ethnic mix. But even the quilt image cannot convey the mobile and progressive temporality that is at play:

> From down in the Sixth Ward, upon the site of the old Collect Pond that in the days of the fathers drained the hills which are no more, the red of the Italian would be seen forcing its way northward along the line of Mulberry Street to the quarter of the French purple on Bleecker Street and South Fifth Avenue, to lose itself and reappear, after a lapse of miles, in the 'Little Italy' of Harlem, east of Second Avenue. … On the West Side the red would be seen overrunning the old Africa of Thompson Street, pushing the black of the negro rapidly uptown … The negroes have made a stand at several points along Seventh and Eighth Avenues; but their main body, still pursued by the Italian foe, is on the march yet. (Riis 22)

This "map" attaches particular populations to geographical landmarks that have recognizable boundaries: "along the line of Mulberry Street," "on Bleecker Street and South Fifth Avenue," "at several points along Seventh and Eighth Avenues." But the actions that "would be seen" in

[41] Crazy quilts became a fad in the 1880s and 1890s, inspired by textile art seen in the Japanese Pavilion at Philadelphia's 1876 Centennial Exhibition and popularized by women's magazines. Patricia Cox Crews describes that they appealed to women because they allowed room for creativity and because their lack of structure "seemed fresh and 'modern'" (2). The OED shows figurative usage of the term dating back to 1888 (crazy, adj., C2), and notes that the definition of "crazy" to "denote a garden walk or pavement of irregular pieces of flat stone or tile" comes from the term crazy quilt (crazy, adj. 5).

the subjunctive mood are also in the progressive aspect, so those lines become contact zones and points of pressure rather than stable borders.

Riis repeatedly turns to a New York of the past as both temporal and spatial reference point. Recalling "the days of the fathers" and "the hills which are no more" evokes an imagined history that is both pastoral and centered on Western European colonists. This indicates that change over time always means the violent intrusion of others and the destruction or reconstruction of the landscape—note the militaristic violence of the incursions "forcing," "overrunning," and "pushing"—at least since the origin point of this history, which ignores that the first instantiation of this pattern was European settler colonialism. Even when a landmark that recalls "staid New Yorkers of the 'old stock'" is not fully destroyed, as with the "church in Mulberry Street that has stood for two generations as a sort of milestone of these migrations," it is physically deformed: first "engulfed by the colored tide" and then transformed by "the Italian onset" so that "today the arms of United Italy adorn its front" (Riis 22). This language transposes violence onto the moving, migrating others instead of attributing it to the capitalist greed and (infra)structural problems that Riis elsewhere blames for the other half's ill physical and moral health.

In doing so, Riis's verbal depiction of "the city on such a map" reverses the terms of photographic seeing premised on the mobility of the modern white middle-class tourist in contrast to the "Old World" immigrants immobilized by the tenements and the photographic flash. "Riis was able to imply … that his audience's mobile and 'colonial' position in relation to the slums it 'visited' was a natural one," according to Maren Stange, "[b]y conflating the language and perspective of geographical inventory and settlement with those of social surveillance and control" (293)—a technique that this verbal map initially appears to be utilizing.

In Riis's photographs, Blair argues, "[t]he spectator … is *animated* by a heightened sensory experience of the slum as a contact zone, even as—in part because—its visible figures are *arrested*, caught in iconic gestures or displays of the intransigence of their condition" (*HOHL* 33). But at the same time, and in contrast to the visual techniques described by Stange and Blair, here the reader's fixed narrative viewpoint from above begins to recognize the mobility of the racialized populations, a recognition that creates the impulse for but also the impossibility of the abstract map. The text puts its narrator and readers in a necessarily distanced and static position in order to emulate an omniscient perspective, and even so it can only approach omniscience in a subjunctive mood. The limits to that omniscience mark the spot where Riis's categorizing begins to differentiate race and ethnicity: the text always has an omniscient view of race, but its perspective proves inadequate when confronting ethnicity.

At the Mulberry Bend, for example, Riis's narrator discovers the impossibility of an omniscient view: "The whole district is a maze of narrow, often unsuspected passage-ways—necessarily, for there is scarce a lot that has not two, three, or four tenements upon it, swarming with unwholesome crowds. What a bird's-eye view of 'the Bend' would be like is a matter of bewildering conjecture. Its everyday appearance, as seen from the corner of Bayard Street on a sunny day, is one of the sights of New York" (Riis 49). The "conjecture" put forth by the color-coded "crazy-quilt" is no longer possible at the scale of this district of rear tenements; the "bird's-eye view" is so "bewildering" that Riis cannot attempt to describe it in words. Instead of the distanced, abstract perspective, only an on-the-ground "everyday" perception of "the Bend" is achievable. This puts the reader back into the subjectivity of the mobile tourist, who can discover "passage-ways" that are "unsuspected"—because their perspective moves at street

level—and who arrests the scene, turning it into an unchanging and atemporal "sight[]" for sightseeing.

The accompanying photograph (Figure 8), like the rhetoric of "animation and arrest" (Blair, *HOHL* 34), in part contradicts the message that this scene is "bewildering." Taken from above the street but not providing a bird's-eye view—perhaps from a second-story fire escape—the photograph exhibits what Brown calls "surprising orderliness" (12). She notes that "[t]he street itself is well defined by a line of buggies that create a boundary between the mostly empty street and the people contained to the sidewalk" and that we can see "a good deal of sky" (Brown 12). Unlike in the photos of the back alleys themselves, with their crisscrossing clotheslines, there are not many intersecting lines in "The Bend": the road, carriages, crowds on the sidewalk, and building facades all emphasize the curving directionality of Mulberry Street.

Figure 8: "The Bend"
[image from the Project Gutenberg edition]

However, when read in combination with the text, the building facades come to signify the impossibility of knowing what "unwholesome crowds" gather in the "unsuspected" "maze" behind them. The viewer of this perhaps orderly scene cannot know what both a bird's-eye view and a penetration of the crowd (avoided by the slightly elevated perspective) would reveal. Moreover, the linearity of the photo and the street is, as its name underscores, not straight but bent. What comes beyond the point of the curve where the street is no longer visible?

The curve of the Mulberry Bend, especially considered in relation to the history of the Manhattan grid, challenges the omniscient perspective and undercuts the power of line drawing. Whereas perpendicular and parallel lines, according to Euclidean geometry, will infinitely remain equidistant and retain their 90-degree angles, curved lines change in their relations to the space around them.[42] A rectilinear grid, then, allows viewers or users to predict and project the perspective beyond what is immediately visible. Roland Barthes famously wrote of the Manhattan grid, "This is the purpose of these numbered streets, inflexibly distributed according to distances: … to master the distances and orientations by the mind … . This is the purpose of New York's geometry: that each individual should be *poetically* the owner of the capital of the world" (160). The grid enables mastery or "poetic" ownership—not unlike the photographer's "'colonial' position" that Stange describes—because its regularity makes it possible for anyone on the ground to reliably conceive of the bird's-eye view without physically having access to it.

This aesthetic consideration was central to the Commissioners' Plan of 1811, which laid out the Manhattan grid, according to Reuben S. Rose-Redwood. For example, one of the planners, Simeon De Witt, was interested in how "Cartesian perspective could be used as an instrument to organize the chaos of human perception into the calculable order of gridded space"

[42] See Anna Kornbluh, *The Order of Forms*, for an interesting application of Euclidean versus non-Euclidean geometry and parallel lines to her reading of *Jude the Obscure* (pp. 127-130).

(Rose-Redwood 405). Because "it renders the techniques of calculation visible" (Rose-Redwood 407), the "calculative rationalities" of this perspective could be "a means of discipline that would serve as a remedy for what De Witt saw as the 'idleness and dissipation' that often resulted from the 'customs of cities'" (Rose-Redwood 408).

The aesthetic and rational ideals of the rectilinear grid, especially when projected onto urban form, are precisely what we see Riis striving for in his text—both because these straight lines would provide a clear and comprehensive perspective to onlookers and because they might morally discipline his subjects (i.e., bring them into line). Yet we have seen how Riis struggles to achieve that certainty or mastery: even when imagining the color-coded grid from above, the ethnic groups who are the objects of his gaze actively change and transform what he is seeing. The text grapples with the fact that the grid is "a 'mythic creature' teeming with social contradictions. … As Hannah Higgins argues, 'whatever the origin of each grid in establishing a social standard, the recurrent transformations of grids, the ways in which they break down, shatter, bend, and adapt to unanticipated purposes, suggest that the homogenizing dimension of the grid-myth begs for reversal'" (Rose-Redwood 412). Riis's attempt to represent the Mulberry Bend, which interrupts rectilinearity, confronts the clash between cartographic intentions and the heterogeneous lived uses of space.

The text has exposed a double bind: when the viewer is animated and arresting the sight/site, they cannot access all the information, but when they attempt to provide more complete evidence, they must arrest their own position; interpolating what they cannot see means that some of the information must come as "conjecture." When the viewer's perspective is arrested, they may also be able to acknowledge that the people of the other half are mobile and actively inhabiting and transforming space, that they are historical agents. Indeed, the text

embeds the immigrant-inhabited "Bend" in New York's historical time: "Long years ago the cows coming home from the pasture trod a path over this hill. Echoes of tinkling bells linger there still, but they do not call up memories of green meadows and summer fields; they proclaim the home-coming of the rag-picker's cart. In the memory of man the old cow-path has never been other than a vast human pig-sty" (Riis 49). The "tinkling bells" of the cows who "trod" this curved "path" live on in the noises of the "foul core of New York's slums" (Riis 49). On the one hand, this highlights a contrast between the pastoral "memories of green meadows and summer fields" and the anti-pastoral "human pig-sty"—recapitulating the discourse of the "hills which are no more" from the color-coded "crazy-quilt," whereby lost pastoralism is linked to the area's lost Dutch and Anglo populations. But on the other hand, the immigrant slum residents continue the tradition of "the old cow-path." The cows did not in fact create the curved path in a time before "the memory of man": the reason they would have been "coming home from the pasture" is because this is where their human owners lived—and the reason the street needed to curve is because of the former presence of Collect Pond, which became so contaminated that in 1811 it was filled in. Following this line of thought, I suggest that the text destabilizes its pastoral fantasy; even in the days of Old New York this area may have been a "human pig-sty." The curved line of the street yet again frustrates the desire to draw distinctions or hold apart the population's halves. As Sara Ahmed reflects on the phrase "a path well trodden"—a fitting descriptor for the Mulberry Bend—"we walk on the path as it is before us, but it is only before us as an effect of being walked upon" (16). The rag-pickers follow the line of the cows, participating in the making of New York's history, and in recreating the bend of the road, they hinder the narrator's attempts at omniscience. Nevertheless, the more these lines are trodden, the more real they seem to become.

Where the text refuses to accept confusion, it doubles down on constructing and upholding the color line. The chapter "Chinatown" stands out in contrast to the other chapters, as Riis demarcates this neighborhood as relentlessly "other" from the "other half": "Next-door neighbor to the Bend, it has little of its outdoor stir and life, none of its gaily-colored rags or picturesque filth and poverty. Mott Street is clean to distraction" (Riis 77). Applying a litany of racist stereotypes to the material spaces of Mott Street, Riis draws clear boundaries around Chinatown. He emphasizes the neighborhood's lack of those exact elements that, like in the Bend, exasperated and confused but also delighted him. Indeed, the very cleanliness he discovers in Chinatown—a visual absence of those messy signs of poverty that spur a desire to reform the "other half"—is treated as a negative quality. Riis claims to derive no pleasure from slumming in Chinatown, animating this contrast, which registers the racist anxieties at work in the chapter.

Whereas privacy, too, is a bourgeois liberal moral that Riis wants to teach ethnic whites in order to discipline them (recall the desirable locked door of the flat), he frames the privacy successfully enacted by Chinese immigrants as sinister: "in their very exclusiveness and reserve they are a constant and terrible menace to society" (83). Yet, of course, what Riis describes as a racial trait is in fact a product of his own perspective: He writes that the Chinese man's "business, as his domestic life, shuns the light, less because there is anything to conceal than because that is the way of the man. … the very doorways of his offices and shops are fenced off by queer, forbidding partitions suggestive of a continual state of siege" (Riis 78). Again personifying physical structures in the service of exclusion, Riis suggests here that these "doorways" reflect the nature of the people—unlike his discussion of the line between the tenement and the flat, which focused on how outsiders and regulators could recognize the distinction. If tenement dwellers might be assimilable when provided with a locked door, Riis

claims that because the Chinese are arriving in New York and already locking their doors, they are unassimilable.

It is clear that Riis actively wants to prevent the Chinese from mixing with other racial groups. Although he asserts "that all attempts to make an effective Christian of John Chinaman will remain abortive" because the Chinese "are governed by a code of their own, the very essence of which is rejection of all other authority except under compulsion" (Riis 77, 82), it is Riis himself who is building that racial barrier by deploying racist rhetoric. As if in anticipation of this critique, he writes, "This again may be set down as a harsh judgment. I may be accused of inciting persecution of an unoffending people. Far from it. … Rather than banish the Chinaman, I would have the door opened wider—for his wife; make it a condition of his coming or staying that he bring his wife with him" (Riis 83). Riis's proposed solution, of course, is motivated by a fear of Chinese assimilation; "opening the door" is a deceptive architectural metaphor that does not translate to the erasure of lines. The effect of his proposal, which encourages the settlement of entire families, would be to have the Chinese more closely enact the values of liberal Christian domesticity while preventing Chinese men from mixing with women of other races.[43]

Given his treatment of the Chinese, it might come as a surprise that in the chapter "The Color Line in New York," which deals explicitly with African Americans, the other non-white racial group in the text, Riis actually predicts that there is a "hopeful sign of an awakening

[43] See Lowe's *Intimacies of Four Continents* for a discussion of how British colonial administrators, like Riis, sought to import Chinese women to the colonies: "The Chinese woman was handmaiden to this colonial fantasy of assimilating the colonized to forms of bourgeois family and freedom at a time when the possession and determination of life or death was unavailable for both the enslaved and the indentured" (31). Lowe continues, "As a figure who promised social order, the Chinese woman was a *supplement* who appeared to complete the prospective future society of the colony; yet her absence, around which desire was reiterated, marked the limit of a social field whose coherence and closure depended on ideas of racial purity and distinction. … Throughout the nineteenth century, the racialized sexual differentiation of Africans and East and South Asians emerged as a normative taxonomy that managed and spatially distanced these groups from the spheres within which 'freedom' was established for European subjects" (34).

conscience under the stress of which the [color] line shows signs of wavering" (115). In a scathing critique that presages Richard Wright's writing half a century later, Riis emphasizes that "[t]he landlord does the drawing" of the color line (115), for his "own selfish ends … propping up a waning prejudice" (117); that is, landlords are able to charge more for worse-quality apartments by enforcing housing segregation. Riis applauds African Americans who have undergone their "second emancipation"—from the tenements—which "argues louder than theories or speeches the influence of vile surroundings in debasing the man. … There is no more clean and orderly community in New York than the new settlement of colored people that is growing up on the East Side from Yorkville to Harlem" (116). Precisely the qualities that Riis disparages in the Chinese, he treats in African Americans as signs of uplift and the potential for integration. Given the popularity of Riis's lantern slide lectures and the influence of his work on tenement reform, how did his prediction about the waning of the color line turn out to be so wrong? How did profiting from racial segregation become even more entrenched in U.S. cities over the coming decades, as Richard Wright's book will show? The answers, I propose, are already immanent to this chapter, which, like "Chinatown," is based on a logic of exclusion.

It is important to note that Riis emphasizes the cleanliness of both non-white races, whereas he is delighted by the picturesqueness—and the potential for reforming and disciplining—the filth and mess of the white ethnic immigrants. In the case of African Americans, cleanliness and orderliness serve as "evidence" of "improvement": a "burden of representation" that, as Hartman writes, itself "extend[s] an optic of visibility and surveillance that had its origins in slavery and the administered logic of the plantation" (21). African Americans who have escaped overpriced, overcrowded, and segregated tenements act as a rhetorical trope that proves Riis's argument about the moral effects of a safe and clean

environment. But they are only desirable as "clean" and "orderly" tenants or neighbors. Where racial mixing is concerned, at "[t]he border-land where the white and black races meet in common debauch, the aptly-named black-and-tan saloon," there "has never been debatable ground from a moral standpoint. It has always been the worst of the desperately bad. Than this commingling of the utterly depraved of both sexes, white and black, on such ground, there can be no greater abomination" (Riis 119). African Americans are useful rhetorically to back up Riis's argument, which, if tenement reform is enacted, will increase and strengthen the white population by admitting newly moral and socially upstanding ethnic whites. Riis's "wavering" color line is as much a metaphorical trick as the "door opened wider" for Chinese wives; inclusion in name only, it actually bolsters the racial divide.

"From this transition area we watch": Black Spectatorship and Sociology

Even though *Other Half* grapples with the instability of the lines of difference that it draws, *Black Voices* makes clear that those contradictory lines nevertheless define a white perspective that many of the ethnic immigrant groups of the "other half" were able to assume in the intervening years in order to become white. That is, the waffling between static, defined borders and mobile, porous contact zones that characterizes Riis's documentary narrative is exactly what enabled certain ethnic others to assimilate in the service of upholding racial difference. *Black Voices* makes explicit the stakes of this division between white and Black looking: stakes that are spatial, about who is allowed to map and who is allowed to move. At the same time, by giving the reader access to the perspective from the Black side of the line—and by incorporating but not integrating white paradigms of looking (photography and sociology) that are in tension with, rather than in service of, the narrator's perspective—Wright offers

possibilities for reconfiguring both white and Black relations to the color line, for privileging the line as a contact zone rather than as a border.

Published in 1941, *12 Million Black Voices* was a collaboration between writer Richard Wright and photo editor Edwin Rosskam that paired Wright's "folk history" of African Americans with FSA photographs, and many critics have looked at how it engages and challenges the tropes of the photo-text genre. The first two chapters focus on the experience of slavery and the post-Reconstruction era, with FSA images of the rural South reminiscent of those published in other landmark photo-texts of the era, such as Erskine Caldwell and Margaret Bourke-White's *You Have Seen Their Faces* (1937) and James Agee and Walker Evans's *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* (1941). In contrast, the second half of the book, which is focused on the Great Migration and the urbanization of African Americans, "flaunts its ancestry in the progressivist screeds of Jacob Riis," as Sara Blair writes of the text's extended passage on "the lived reality of the kitchenette" (*HC* 91). These later chapters include "one crowded tenement scene and one dangerous street-corner view after another" (Natanson 250), recalling Riis's iconic Lower East Side images.[44] Yet as much as its visual rhetoric adheres to the conventions of the documentary photo-text, *Black Voices* complicates the relationship between spectatorship and documentary through its first-person plural narration, presented as the collective voice of the Black community.

Wright situates the reader on a different side of the line than Riis does in *Other Half*. Here, the narrator is a collective "subject that simultaneously observes, bears witness, and

[44] As Natanson discusses, "Rosskam's manipulations" to the images "were also crucial" (250). He assesses how changes made to the original photographs—for instance, in an original image where a girl in a tenement family is sticking out her tongue, her tongue was erased through retouching for the book—"creat[ed] victims," working toward "a standard slum exposé" that would better "fit the desperate mood" of the narration (Natanson 250-1). This indicates that certain editorial choices brought the text in line with a more familiar reformist rhetoric.

remarks its own condition as an object of the documentary gaze" (Blair, *HC* 81). The narrator is looking at the construction of the line from the perspective of the subjects being looked at and hemmed in. In this context, the photographs, which "would seem to move within the grain of a racist gaze," are placed "within an ironic frame, forcing viewers to look at themselves looking at images of African Americans" (Allred 139). That is, this particular constellation of text and image directly calls attention to Black racial formation's "regime of image-ness" (Raengo 27).[45] I have argued that *Other Half* exposes the difficulty, for the white spectator, to shore up clear lines of difference—but that the uneven distribution of that effect actually bolsters the racial divide. Wright's text looks from the other side *at* white spectatorship, emphasizing the power and durability of lines that enforce white supremacy, lines that are both phenomenological orientations and spatial divisions. Wright's first-person plural "Black voices" call attention to their exclusion from the forms of white spectatorship that the text integrates: images by white

[45] A large body of scholarship explores how Wright's novel *Native Son* is deeply invested in and "permeate[d]" by a "vocabulary of vision" (Afflerbach 94). Rob McAlear describes this "at times overdetermined language of seeing in the novel—a constellation of terms such as 'perspective,' 'vision,' 'blind,' and 'sight,' that work to call attention to the inadequacy of any one ideological perspective for explaining or addressing America's complicated race and class oppressions" (2). The novel's representations of vision are complemented by its narrative perspective, which according to Joseph Entin "creates a deeply unstable position for the reader to inhabit, a narrative space in which he or she is aligned with Bigger's point of view, allowed access to his inner thoughts, and yet also granted critical distance from him, able to see Bigger and his circumstances in a way the character himself cannot. Wright calls this ambivalent space 'No Man's Land,' a terrain of existential and ontological liminality in which racial clichés are at once invoked and repudiated" (220).

Maurice O. Wallace argues that "*Native Son*'s most important revelation on black male visibility lies in the paradox that Bigger Thomas's overdetermined shadings in the novel obtain both because and in spite of the representative blindness of Mrs. Dalton" (35). Like Blair's discussion of how photography of the Lower East Side physically and temporally arrests its poor, immigrant subjects, Wallace's analysis hinges on the concept of "arrestation": "Bigger's burden of spectacularity does not require Mrs. Dalton to see him in any physical way at all. She has 'inner eyes' that photograph and enframe," a gaze that "arrests him in body and being well before the Chicago police take him into custody" (36-7). *Native Son*'s engagement with the color line as a form of visual culture reveals the white gaze to persist not only despite Mrs. Dalton's blindness, but because of a variety of media forms, including film and news media. "The newspaper," Wallace writes, "as ekphrastic text, arrests representation as surely as the racial gaze" (43). Kate Marshall demonstrates how "these image and message circulation mechanisms [cinematic and newspaper media] can also be read alongside architectural and urban circulation systems," understanding the infrastructures of the urban built environment as themselves media, such that "overspilling and overlapping circulation systems [like the clogged furnace] provide an index of the novel's media relations" (62).

photographers and paradigms from the Chicago school of sociology. That tension between the crossing of lines—juxtaposing white and Black spectatorship through the mixing of media and genres—and the encounter with their intractability is animated by the text's engagement with a rhetoric that invokes and ironizes Riis's.

Like in *Other Half*, geographic boundaries take on symbolic status in *Black Voices*. Instead of Fourteenth Street, it's the Ohio River that here, on the national scale, represents a psychological border: "The Ohio is more than a river. It is a symbol, a line that runs through our hearts, dividing hope from despair, just as once it bisected the nation, dividing freedom from slavery" (Wright 98). Yet this dividing line, also like Fourteenth Street, turns out not to be so stable. Instead of finding freedom north of the Ohio, Black migrants again find themselves in "marked-off areas of life" that they "are eager to escape" (Wright 115). Wright also depicts this process as violent, but here the perpetrators of the violence are clear and nameable. Explaining how restrictive covenants work and how the legal system has justified their supposed constitutionality, the narrator names "[n]ewspapers, radios, Protestant and Catholic churches, Jewish synagogues, clubs, civic groups, fraternities, sororities, leagues, and universities" as the specific actors violently drawing lines, "bring[ing] their moral precepts to bolster their locking-in of hundreds of thousands of us black folk in single, constricted areas" (Wright 113). Residential segregation is not a natural curiosity produced by the arrival of various ethnic groups competing for space, as in Riis's "city on such a map." Wright affirms that it is actively produced in order to "lock[] in" a particular population, and it is sustained by evoking "moral precepts."

The text demonstrates that this violence comes from the co-constitutive production of lines at both conceptual and material scales:

> Local boards of education twist the boundary lines of school districts in such fashion that our boys and girls are legally jim-crowed. The inventive Yankee Bosses of the Buildings … reduce the services of the city in our districts; many of our streets remain unlighted at night; violations of fire laws go unpunished; garbage piles up in our alleyways; pavements fall into disrepair; merchants dump tons of their stale and rotten food into the stores and shops of our Black Belts and exact prices as high for these damaged goods as first-rate and grade-A commodities sell for in other sections of the city. Even in times of peace some of the neighborhoods in which we live look as though they had been subjected to an intensive and prolonged aerial bombardment. (Wright 113-14)

Imagined lines are materialized as they produce physical discrepancies that in turn naturalize their status as boundaries. The passage moves from focusing on the people who choose to "twist the boundary lines" and "reduce the services … in our districts" to describing the effects of those actions. First, the emphasis is on negation and denial of services: "unlighted" "streets" and "unpunished" "violations." Then, instead of negation, the list turns to affirmation. The "garbage piles up"—because it is not being collected, but this clause makes the garbage itself the subject. Even the phrase "fall into disrepair," while describing another absence of services, uses the action-signifying verb "fall" as opposed to the unchanging "remain." The list ends with an impactful return to some of the perpetrators of this violence, the "merchants" who not only "dump ... damaged goods" into the "Black Belts" but also "exact" exorbitant "prices" for them.

The accumulation of waste and the withdrawal of services work together to produce the effect of "an intensive and prolonged aerial bombardment"—the emphasis not just on the disconnect between "times of peace" and the appearance of "bombardment," but also on its

"prolonged" or extended timescale, reflecting the catalogue of violence in the preceding sentence. The comparison between "our districts" and "other sections of the city" serves as a reminder throughout this passage that this environmental and financial harm is a form of boundary drawing. The physical manifestation of "twist[ed]" lines makes it clear that this is a form of racial warfare not unlike the racial ideologies and military tactics of the Nazis. This passage evokes the "Double V" campaign popularized by the Black newspapers *The Pittsburgh Courier* and *The Chicago Defender*, which explicitly linked fascism with Jim Crow and fought for victories both abroad and on the home front.[46]

Yet Wright does not simply invert the logic of violence found in Riis's advancing military lines. The military metaphors also apply to the Black community when it figures an entire civilian population as soldiers fighting for that double victory: "our kitchenettes comprise our barracks; the color of our skins constitutes our uniforms; the streets of our cities are our trenches; … the unions of white workers for a long time have formed the first line of resistance which we encounter. … We are always in battle, but the tidings of victory are few" (Wright 123). Indeed, the lines used to segregate and contain the Black population necessarily transform them into fighters, for these lines "set" them "apart from the civilian population" (Wright 123), militarizing their entire world. The quest to "find living space" is indeed a battle, in which "we force the whites back year by year until the tide of our black life, pushing irresistibly outward, reaches the border of some restricted middle-class neighborhood, and then the warfare begins

[46] Davarian Baldwin describes that the "political culture of Black anti-fascism" emerged from the "spatial conditions and housing policies" of Great Migration cities and points out that in the 1930s Black anti-fascist activists strategically applied the term "ghetto" to Black Belts in order to emphasize the "global context of segregation" ("The Making of *Black Metropolis*"). See my discussion of the 1936 *Defender* editorial "Building Ghettoes" in Chapter 3.

anew" (Wright 112). "Forc[ing] … back" and "pushing .. outward," here the migrants' movements map onto those described by Riis half a century earlier.

The difference is that, using single quotation marks, the text creates ironic distance from the image of "our black 'invasion'" (Wright 113), which produces a profit for "the Bosses of the Buildings" (Wright 112). The scare quotes repeat throughout this page, but now in reference to restrictive covenants, which are only quote-unquote "'legal' documents," "the 'solution,'" and "always 'constitutional'" (Wright 113). All of these single quotation marks signal that the narrator is momentarily assuming the white perspective, borrowing language from the white media and judicial system. By placing the concept of "invasion" in those same quotes, the text emphasizes that the same source that produces those legal dividing lines is responsible for the labeling of Black people as invaders as opposed to refugees from a fascist South.

The text emphasizes who has agency in producing, enacting, and upholding racist structures—in opposition to the Black community "lock[ed] in" and bombarded by those people and those structures—by itself erecting a boundary line between two perspectives: a singular white gaze defined by the language and tools of academia, the law, and photography; and the collective "we" of the Black voices that speak the narrative in unison. In doing so, *Black Voices* at once draws on and encounters the limits of photo-text genre conventions. It not only posits the color line—a form of segregation in the built environment and of visual culture, as in Smith's "nexus of competing gazes" (2)—as an impenetrable barrier, but it also reveals a racial split between media forms. Jason Puskar demonstrates that, although a mixed media text, *Black Voices* maintains a distance between its narration and its photographs. He notes that, first, all of the photos are by white photographers—except for the only one in the book taken by Wright himself, which was replaced in the 1988 reissue by an FSA-OWI photograph by Esther Bubley

(Abel 110-11).[47] Second, the narration never refers to the images—quite unlike Riis's narrator describing scenes of taking and/or staging the photographs that appear in the same chapter. Puskar argues, "Beneath its putative story of migration, segregation, and urbanization, *Black Voices* is also the story of how the genre of the photo-text could not mix its media any more successfully than American society could mix its racial groups" (168).[48] The book "reconstitutes racial segregation as media segregation" (Puskar 181), and, moreover, its title and narration's emphasis on Black *voices* reinforces that "words and pictures" are "racial entities in themselves" (Puskar 182).

Puskar's claim is a corrective to the scholarship on *Black Voices* that has neglected to explore this disconnect between the narration and the photography, and it emphasizes the need to think through how text-image relations are themselves racialized. Yet it overlooks scenes of Black looking that Wright depicts in words—textual descriptions of watching and witnessing that mirror the many "images featuring frontal gazes" that Blair calls attention to (*HC* 86). Indeed, Wright's text argues that the legal, spatial, and rhetorical lines drawn to circumscribe the Black community also work to undermine their acts of looking: "They solemnly assert that we seek to overthrow the government by violence when we say that we live in this manner because the Black Belt which cradles our lives is created by the hands and brains of men who have decreed that we must live differently. They brand us as revolutionists when we say that we are not allowed to react to life with an honest and frontal vision" (130). The text has made clear that the violent existence of African Americans is produced by those "hands and brains of men" and

[47] That a number of those photographers are Jewish underscores how the process of immigrant ethnic groups becoming white functioned within an anti-Black racial binary.

[48] Quite in contrast to Blair's assertion that the photo-text "genre itself … bears the weight of Wright's effort to sustain confidence in the possibility of cross-racial enterprise" (*HC* 93), Puskar is skeptical of claims about "the general compatibility of text and image" in Wright's work (170). My claim splits the difference, interrogating the marked split between photos and words that Puskar emphasizes but highlighting scenes of looking in the narrative that do evoke and ironize the affordances of the genre's conventions.

their "decree[s]." Yet Black people are labeled violent—"that we seek to overthrow the government" and are "revolutionists"—when they name what they see happening. One of the many lines drawn against them is precisely the one that disavows and punishes them for their "honest and frontal vision." This passage supports Smith's argument that the color line is a visual culture that determines, along racial lines, who is permitted to be a spectator, in what manner, and of whom.

The challenge of Wright's photo-text, then, is to offer that "honest and frontal vision" when it is not taken seriously by the hegemonic anti-Black culture.[49] The division between media forms that Puskar rightly urges us to take seriously is therefore, I argue, not a problematic symptom but instead an effective rhetorical expression of the visual culture of the color line. *Black Voices* stakes out dividing lines—text vs. image, white visuality vs. Black orality, distanced juridical and academic language vs. first-person narration grounded in subjectivity—that reassert the formal powers of line drawing to produce unequal, discriminatory spaces. Yet the ways in which the text crosses and complicates those perspectival lines, such as by integrating and scare-quoting the vocabulary of the white spectator and by speaking from a "we" that is unable to incorporate its heterogeneous Black subjects into a single body, demonstrate the capacity for lines to be de- and re-constructed.[50] Because *Black Voices* formally embodies both how violent and how entrenched the color line is, it renders all the more urgent the need to take advantage of the instability of lines and to rethink more equitable formations thereof.

[49] For a rich discussion of Black spectatorship during the Great Migration, and which examines the movie theater scene in *Native Son,* see Jacqueline Stewart, "Negroes Laughing at Themselves? Black Spectatorship and the Performance of Urban Modernity."

[50] My argument aligns more closely with that of Joseph Entin, who "suggest[s] that many of the oppositions that at first appear to organize the text … are delicately, productively destabilized" (222).

The text's reliance on words to stand in for Black sight emerges in an address to the reader that provides a telling contrast to Riis's guided tours of the tenements:

> If you want to see how crowdedly we live, if you want to know how our meager incomes force our families to 'double up' to save space, visit a kitchenette building in some Black Belt and look at the long list of American names under our mail boxes: Jackson, Jefferson, Harrison, Grant, Adams, Johnson, Wilson, Madison, Washington, Taylor. … So many of us are forced to live in one building that you would think you were reading a crude telephone directory or a clumsy census report when you see our names scrawled on the walls of a thousand dingy vestibules. (Wright 116)

Rather than describe the conditions inside the kitchenette, the narrator suggests that for "you" to "see how crowdedly we live," you need go no further than the mailboxes in the building's vestibule. Reading this "long list of American names"—a juxtaposition to the foreign names of ethnic families allowed to assimilate into the city, as I will discuss below—replaces the embodied experience of listening to unfamiliar noises and stepping over babies that Riis relies on to communicate the extent of the crowding. Comparing these "scrawled" "names" to "a crude telephone directory or a clumsy census report"—textual forms of population management and discipline, but here haphazardly documented—gets at the same problem that Riis encounters: How does one communicate this information comprehensively and convincingly when the environmental conditions at hand frustrate that possibility?

Black Voices turns to sociology—like the FSA photographs in the text, a form of white vision and information management—as a possible answer to that question: abstract social theories that can be verbally recontextualized from the Black perspective. What Blair locates as a

"dialectical play … between instrumental contexts and radical or experimental aims" in the photography is just as protracted in the text's integration of sociological language, which, taking Puskar's argument into account, perhaps more successfully than the photographs posits "black looking as the source of an alternative history of American modernity and of its coming-into-being" (Blair, *HC* 86). In Wright's hands, sociological language is flexible enough to describe Black sightlines from the subject position, whereas photography seems to immobilize the Black gaze from across the line. It is precisely in the disjunction between the textual and photographic encounters with the color line that *Black Voices* shows how lines of division and exclusion can be destabilized and redrawn as lines of affiliation and critique.

The book's third chapter, "Death on the City Pavements," moves north with the Great Migration and, in Wright's overview of urban residential geography, foregrounds a problem of vision. Hazy outlooks emphasize the environmental racism and structural violence that materialize a disparity between white and Black seeing: "Our defenseless eyes cloud with bewilderment when we learn that there are not enough houses for us to live in. … The only district we can live in is the area just beyond the business belt, a transition area where a sooty conglomeration of factories and mills belches smoke that stains our clothes and lungs" (Wright 100-1). Before learning that they will be restricted to living in the industrial neighborhood, the new migrants' confusion and surprise—what was supposed to be a land of opportunity instead presents a dearth of options—is figured by the "cloud[ing]" of their "eyes." That their eyes are "defenseless" raises the question of what from; the cause of the clouded vision is not within their own bodies. Instead, the later description of the "sooty … factories and mills" that "belch[] smoke" suggests that the structures limiting the amount of available housing are the same as

those forcing Black migrants into the least desirable, and least healthy, areas. The air pollution "stains" both "clothes and lungs"—the health problem is marked visually and aesthetically.

Just below this description of "the only district we can live in" is Arthur Rothstein's photograph credited in *Black Voices* as "Negro section, Pittsburgh, Pa." (Figure 9).

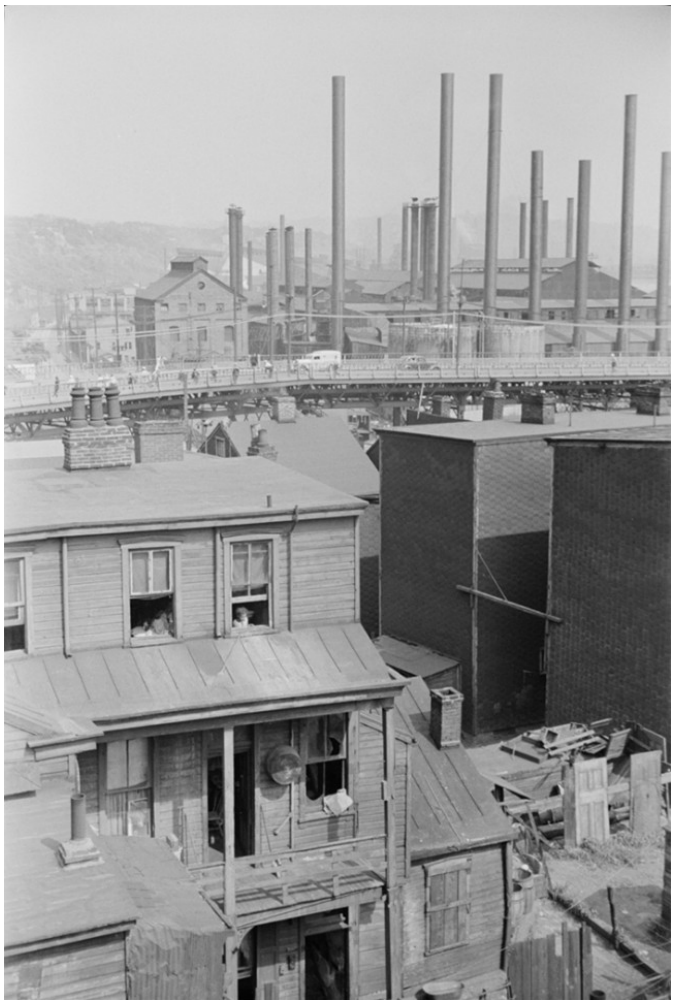

Figure 9: "Slums, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania," Arthur Rothstein, 1938
[image from The Phillips Collection]

Taken from a fourth-story lookout, perhaps a roof, this photo shows part of a wooden building in the bottom left foreground, with debris and dark buildings to its left. The upper right corner is dominated by a factory skyline with almost two dozen smokestacks. Just below, the image is horizontally bisected by an elevated road. Although the focus of the photo is predominantly

architectural, there are indeed human subjects in it. Along the road, where two cars drive, one in each direction, a number of people lean against the railing with their backs to the viewer. A person also stands in the top right window of the wooden apartment building, looking out and down. These people are difficult to notice because they are dwarfed by the scale of the architecture and infrastructure around them. Yet they refuse to be looked at even once the viewer finds them: their gaze is directed away from the viewer's eyes, and in the case of the head in the window, also in the opposite direction from the photographer's line of sight. The Black residents of this industrial area, which as the only neighborhood open to them has become the "Negro section" of the city, do not have the same outlook as the white photographer or viewer.

On this page, the scenes of looking and of clouded perception are somewhat in friction with the labels applied to the urban geography—"business belt" and "transition area"—which come directly from the theories of the Chicago school of sociology. In the remainder of this chapter, I highlight the text's adaptation of sociology's urban geography, transplanted through the use of terms from Ernest Burgess's concentric zone map. Burgess is not one of the sociologists whom Wright acknowledges in his preface, but as discussed in the introduction to this dissertation, his map was hugely influential, and Wright would have encountered these terms in use by the other sociologists he did work more closely with.[51] Jeff Allred describes how *Black*

[51] Richard Wright worked closely with Horace Cayton and later wrote the Introduction to Cayton and St. Clair Drake's *Black Metropolis* (1945), which I discuss in more depth in Chapter 3. Interestingly, whereas Cayton and Drake's important intervention is to show the existence of heterogeneity within the Black Belt, Wright's approach in *Black Voices* appears more faithful to the original Burgess map, which immobilizes and homogenizes the Black population. Natanson gets at this when he says, "Wright would have no part of the multi-tiered black reality presented by sociologists (including the black scholar Horace Cayton) whom, ironically, he credited in the foreword. Wright wanted his reality in strictly black and white terms" (245). Wright's less nuanced treatment of the Black Belt is problematic for the same reasons as that of the collective narration, which strains to accommodate all of the voices of the Black population. I am intrigued, however, by the way in which his relentless reproduction of these simple binaries—as I discussed in relation to the singular white and collective Black perspectives—in fact serves a larger critique that is very much in line with Cayton and Drake's: what Davarian Baldwin has described as their transformation of the "nothingness" of Burgess's "black box" into a specific and descriptive map from the Black perspective, "replac[ing] the idea of 'natural areas' with the idea of the neighborhood as a product of social struggle" ("The Making of *Black Metropolis*").

Voices "contests [sociology's] construction both of the relationship of the scientific observer to the experimental 'field' and, by extension, of the role of science in society at large" (155). It is surprising for the plural Black "we" of the narration to nonchalantly integrate the language of social science that has been generated in the ivory tower, but this very disjunction, Allred argues, allows the text to make its critique. The use of sociological rhetoric means that the text not only "adopts a pedagogical stance toward itself" and "figures readers as pupils" (Allred 134), but also "reframes scientific description" such that "Wright's 'we' begins to imagine a social science that is located, not in the transcendent 'universality' of elite corporate and educational institutions, but in the desires of masses who have historically been excluded from them" (Allred 157). Allred's discussion of social science in *Black Voices* focuses on Wright's engagement with Louis Wirth's "Urbanism as a Way of Life" and its narrative of a rural folk migrating to and being transformed by the city.[52] If we turn instead to Wright's citation of the abstract neighborhood labels from Burgess's concentric zone diagram (Figure 10), however, we find echoes of the conflicting sightlines staged by the photograph and the metaphor of clouded eyes. The interactions of the image, the collective narration, and the sociological vocabulary unsettle the "transition area," questioning who gets to call it that.

[52] It is surprising that Jeff Allred's discussion of how Wright adopts sociological theories ignores these particular references to the concentric zone diagram—especially given that Allred explains his own argument in terms of mapping, claiming that "as the text crosses the divide that splits it along so many different lines (rural/urban, South/North, folk/mass), it interweaves micro- and macroscopic views, such that the narrative combines embodied *itineraries* with abstract *maps*" (154). He specifies that his definitions of "'itinerary' and 'map' come[] from Michel de Certeau. An 'itinerary,' de Certeau argues, is rooted in an intersubjective and embodied exchange …; a 'map,' in contrast, 'speaks' from nowhere to everyone, thus relying on readers' grasp of abstractions such as compass points and lines of latitude" (Allred 232-3n39). That is, Allred's argument is specifically about the ways in which the subjective experience of inhabiting the city described by the Black "we" cites and integrates abstract, general terms originally assigned to those spaces by sociologists.

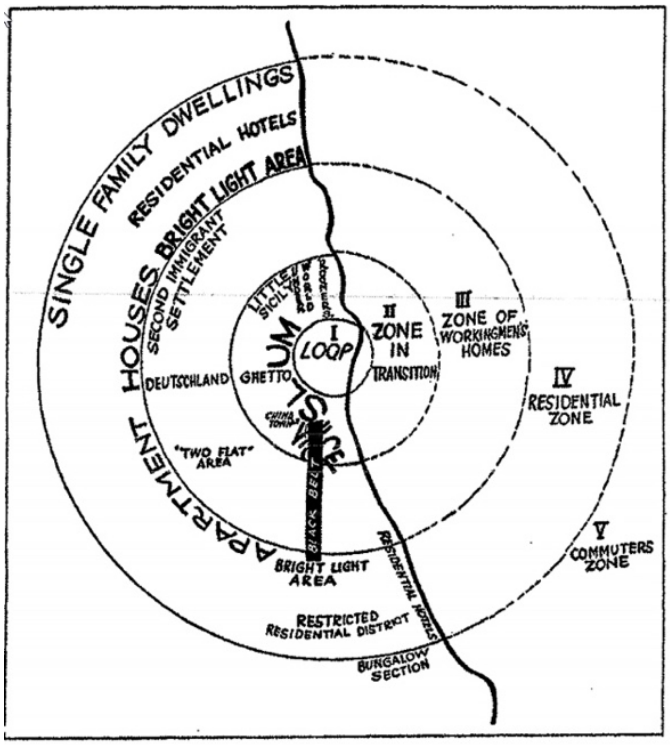

CHART II. Urban Areas

Figure 10: Ernest Burgess's concentric zone map
[image from Park, Burgess, and McKenzie, *The City*, p. 55]

The background visible in the upper left corner of Rothstein's photograph, which the bodies assembled on the elevated road might be looking out at, is hilly, green, and sparsely inhabited. From this industrial "transition area," that is, another environment is perceptible. The photograph attests that this is indeed a space of transition out of the inner city; unlike in Riis's tenement and alley photographs, or in photos reminiscent of Riis's that come in the kitchenette section a few pages after this, here the run-down buildings and smokestacks do not appear to go on forever. But while there may be an architectural and land-use transition evident in the geography, this is not a "transition area" for its Black residents.

On the next page, Wright's narration emphasizes the exclusion of those Black residents from the very term "transition area": "We black folk are not the only ones who move into this so-called transition area; it is the first port of call for that incoming horde of men who float

continuously into cities" (102). In the same breath as he introduces the people for whom this neighborhood can be a temporary home—foreign immigrants rather than migrants descended from slaves—Wright disavows the stable reference of the word "transition." Although on the previous page the narration unquestioningly named this a "transition area," here it is only "so-called." This highlights that the term does not belong to the Black "we";[53] it suggests that they have heard others call it that. These sociological words inserted into the text are, like the images by white photographers, forms of racial management in tension with the perspective offered by the Black voices.

The text proceeds to cite—sometimes verbatim and sometimes using synonyms, as italicized below—all of the major area names from the Burgess diagram without qualifying them. The prior use of "so-called" resounds as Black immobility is contrasted to the assimilating immigrants' trajectory outward through the concentric zones and into whiteness:

> From this transition area we watch many of the immigrants move on to *the rooming-house district* which almost always borders *the transition area* of the big industrial city; later many of them move from *the rooming-house area* into *the apartment-house district*. After that the only news we hear of them is what we read in the newspapers. … kids we once played with upon the slag piles—are now living in *the suburban areas*, having swum upstream through the American waters of opportunity into the professional classes. (Wright 102, emphasis added)

[53] This "we" is itself, of course, an unstable referent. Jeff Allred, following Michael Warner, shows how "Wright invokes th[e] subsuming national 'we' [of 'we the people'] but subjects it to sharp critique. Wright's 'we' is no less performative than that of the Constitution and no less problematic and paradoxical, but it is nearly opposite in effect … dramatically split[ting] writer from reader" (136). It is also very much structured by Wright's Communist politics, which would be interested in the "we" of Popular Front thinking: "the text situates ['folk' voices] within the subsuming frame of the evolution of a normative modern and modernizing voice, that which is embodied by the 'we' itself. The 'folk' voices within this text, in other words, serve as an index against which the emergence of black modernity can be measured" (Allred 149). The integration by the "we" of these sociological terms is part of the coming into modern consciousness that the narrative attempts to enable.

The sociologists' schema for understanding urban growth—focused on changing features in the built environment and ethnic labels—is here shown to be a spatialized narrative of "American … opportunity" from which Black Americans are excluded and that relies on a notion of ethnicity for which Riis's rhetoric paved the way.

The text makes this argument by simultaneously participating in and resituating those sociological terms. In contrast to the phrase "so-called," which highlights the narrator's distance from the naming of zones, this passage rehearses the abstract theorizing of social science. It lists the concentric zones in order moving outward, from "transition area" to "rooming-house district" to "apartment-house district" and finally to "suburban areas." Along the way, it makes confident statements about the broader applicability and generalizability of this map, signaled by the phrases "almost always" and "the big industrial city." Yet this performed scientific authority is relocated within a specific subject position. The subject who would never have chosen the name "transition area" for their neighborhood now authoritatively uses the sociologist's vocabulary—and it is, perhaps counterintuitively, their situated, static perspective that confers them with the authority to do so.

The paragraph's opening phrase, "[f]rom this transition area we watch," is key. As opposed to the removed perspective of Burgess's map, which depicts the concentric zones from a bird's-eye view, this prepositional phrase locates the scene of watching inside the "transition area." Doing so emphasizes that these onlookers, although they are situated within the zone whose very name implies a syllogism between its liminal land-use pattern and its inhabitants' temporary residence, remain fixed there. The sentence structure, with the prepositional phrase coming before the subject and verb, further emphasizes the directionality of the embodied sightline. Only after grounding the perspective does the text introduce the subjective "we" that is

"watch[ing]." This turn to the collective subject, along with the demonstrative pronoun "this," transforms the "transition area" from an abstract sociological category into a specifically situated location inhabited by Black subjects. Unlike the references to embodiment and phenomenology in Riis's slumming tour, which move the reader through tenement spaces, this collective narration immobilizes the reader with them in the transition area.

Here we find a subjectively produced and shared body of sociological knowledge, which is more typically imagined as the objective collation and interpretation of data. The partiality and necessarily embodied nature of this knowledge emerges as the source of knowledge itself becomes more distant. Because the viewer is stuck in the transition area, they can only indirectly learn that their former neighbors have made it to the suburbs. This knowledge emerges from happenstance, not omniscience. The imagined community evoked by the scene of newspaper reading is unbalanced, and it highlights more than geographical distance between Black migrants and (whitening) ethnic immigrants: "a Mr. and Mrs. Klein or Murphy or Potaci or Pierre or Cromwell or Stepanovich" are now written about as named individuals who are simultaneously metonymic (Wright 102), and the Black onlookers, who can no longer see their former neighbors, remain deindividualized, generalized readers. The narration similarly situates the reader in this perspective—where sociological information must be gleaned by reading rather than through phenomenological experience—when it later offers "the long list of American names under our mail boxes" as evidence of overcrowding (Wright 116). These acts of reading highlight the contrast between the flexible mobility of the ethnic immigrants and the forced immobility of the Black migrants—who, with their American last names, are the products of America.

The members of this community have sociological authority precisely because they have read and watched the pattern of immigrant assimilation—in contrast to their lived experience of exclusion—repeatedly: "Times without number our eyes witness this drama" (Wright 102). With similar syntax to the phrase "from this transition area we watch," here the subject and verb are delayed in order to emphasize the temporality, rather than the spatiality, of being left behind. The "eyes" that "witness this drama" recall the same community's "defenseless eyes" that "cloud[ed] with bewilderment" at their first exposure to the workings of Northern segregation. But after repeatedly watching the same "drama"—the color line as predictable genre, as a type of plot—the material conditions of the "transition area" are no longer a hindrance to vision. They make the racial implications and erasures of the concentric zone model all the more obvious. If we now to flip back to Rothstein's photograph, its disconnect from the Black perspective becomes more obvious. Like the logic of the syntax in "from this transition area we watch," the image that at first appears to be a landscape now surprises us with the hard-to-see people who inhabit it, who look askew, who observe something different. Lined up along the railing of the elevated road, framed by the window, these subjects evoke the boundary lines that actively prevent their movement and progress: "We remain to live in the clinging soot just beyond the factory areas, behind the railroad tracks, near the river banks, under the viaducts, by the steel and iron mills, on the edges of the coal and lumber yards" (Wright 103). This is not a "transition area," but rather a collection of borders, thresholds, "edges," and lines that Black subjects "remain" among and cannot cross.

At the book's conclusion, Wright's collective voice defiantly declares, "'We are crossing the line you dared us to cross, though we pay in coin of death!' … We stand at the crossroads. We watch each new procession" (147). The text ends with the paired image of line crossing and

Black spectatorship, tying the two together as the means to dismantle the very real color line. Yet, as Allred's work emphasizes, "The equation between Southern 'black folk' and false consciousness structures *Black Voices* at a deep level" (151). As exemplified by the text's integration of sociological theories, there is a persistent "split between the modern and wide-ranging voice that 'speaks' this text and the millions of more constricted and provincial voices from which it has emerged in a violent history" (Allred 134). That is, the Marxist teleology that structures *Black Voices* is founded on the assertion of lines to be crossed: from South to North, from "our old folk lives" to a modernized consciousness (Wright 144), from racial segregation to interracial class solidarity. I have argued that photo-texts such as *Other Half* and *Black Voices* rely on lines to demarcate who belongs *where* and *when*. While Riis's lines separate the out-of-time Old World immigrants from the modernity of the New World—seeking to thereby, through reform, pull them into modernity, excluding Blacks and Asians—Wright's text insists on the efficacy of that line drawing project, but it does so to encourage this ultimate crossing, to pull the Black "folk" into modern time.

Even as the ending reasserts these lines to be crossed—the Black voices have attested to the real, lived effects of the color line—it also demonstrates that those lines were initially a white ideological and rhetorical construct. If the message to Black readers is a directive to cross the line, the message to white readers is to reconceptualize the form of the line, and in doing so, to recognize that they have always been coeval with the racialized others whose labor produced American modernity: "We black folk, our history and our present being, are a mirror of all the manifold experiences of America. What we want, what we represent, what we endure is what America *is*. … Look at us and know us and you will know yourselves, for *we* are *you*, looking back at you from the dark mirror of our lives!" (Wright 146). Here the line and the look are

combined into the figure of a mirror: a line as reflection rather than division. Do not "look at us" in order to document *us*, the narration exclaims; you have this entire time been documenting "yourselves." The figure of the mirror asks white readers not only to acknowledge the reality of the color line, which the entire book has shown to be a material reality, but also to change the visual relations that whites harness to uphold the color line (recall, for example, Riis's racist Chinese stereotypes that deflect from his own active role in othering and excluding them). White viewers, if they see their reflection in the line, must look back at the well-trodden path and acknowledge the many choices of what to see and what to ignore that created these powerfully lasting and oppressive social structures. To understand the color line as a "dark mirror" is to confront the process, and the agents, of its construction.

Framing the Black Belt: Redlining, *Black Metropolis*, and Marita Bonner's Aesthetics of Discrimination

"And what has become of discrimination? Discrimination of the right sort. Discrimination that the best minds have told you weighs shadows and nuances and spiritual differences before it catalogues. The kind they have taught you all of your life was best: that looks clearly past generalization and past appearance to dissect, to dig down to the real heart of matters" (5).[54]
–Marita Bonner, "On Being Young— A Woman— And Colored"

In her first published essay, the *Crisis* essay prize–winning "On Being Young— A Woman— And Colored" (1925), Marita Bonner considers how, despite her personal experiences with and observations of both race and gender discrimination, the discriminatory act is itself not necessarily harmful. In the passage quoted above, she alludes to the original meaning of the word "discrimination"—"perceiving, noting or making a distinction between things" (*OED Online*)[55]—suggesting that a resurgence of this form of discrimination could help to combat the harmful form of discrimination evoked by the essay's context, title, and subject, which is to say, discrimination against people. Bonner emphasizes that the seemingly forgotten "right sort" of discrimination is an aesthetic act, a close reading of "nuances" and a "weigh[ing]" of multiple perspectives. In contrast, the ubiquitous prejudicial version of discrimination that Bonner and her Black and female readers endure—the *wrong* sort—is an uncritically adopted ideology that operates through "generalization" and superficial "appearance." And perhaps because of their experiences enduring double discrimination, Black women are specially equipped, Bonner suggests, "to find out and to discover just what is wrong. Just what can be done" (6). For, "being a woman—you can wait. … And you can gather, as [Life] passes, the essences, the overtones,

[54] Unless otherwise noted, all Bonner citations refer to the collection *Frye Street & Environs*.
[55] The OED dates this definition back to the seventeenth century, whereas the specifically American definitions of discrimination as "the treatment of goods, trading partners, etc., on a more or less favorable basis according to circumstances" and the "unjust or prejudicial treatment of a person or group, esp. on the grounds of race, gender, sexual orientation, etc." do not appear until the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, respectively ("Discrimination, n.").

the tints, the shadows; draw understanding to yourself" (Bonner 7). She is not advocating inaction; to the contrary, this careful, quiet observation will make it possible to stand up to harmful discrimination: "And then you can, when Time is ripe, swoop to your feet—at your full height—at a single gesture" (Bonner 8). Her use of the word "understanding," as Kevin Quashie notes, is "about people's capacity to experience each other not through categories of identity, but through paying attention" (147n8). In other words, Bonner encourages her readers to pay attention to the simultaneous linkage and opposition between the two meanings of discrimination: identity-based unequal treatment and neutral observation of distinctions.

While "On Being Young" is the best-known work by this insufficiently studied author, the implications of her claims about "discrimination of the right sort" are illuminated by her less-read Frye Street stories, published between 1926 and 1941 in *The Crisis* and *Opportunity*. In 1987, Joyce Flynn and Joyce Occomy Stricklin, Bonner's daughter, posthumously published all of Bonner's works—essays, plays, and short stories, including some previously unpublished stories—in the collection *Frye Street & Environs*. While some feminist critics then took up Bonner's work, a "discrepancy between [Bonner's] prolific and prize-winning career and the uneven critical attention it has received" remains, which Jennifer M. Wilks attributes "to the gender, political, and geographical typecasting of canonical African American modernism" (70). I build on Wilks's compelling claim that the 1925 essay offers "a blueprint for an alternative African American modernism" (73), arguing that Bonner's short stories enact an aesthetics of discrimination, a formal aesthetics that puts gender at the center of American racial geographies. The stories' social realist and naturalist narratives depict the lived reality of discrimination against working-class African Americans, and poor Black women in particular. At the same time, they deploy modernist formal techniques that defy the conventions of such third-person

omniscient realist narratives, frustrating the impulse toward "generalization" and disrupting hegemonic racial modes of perception (Bonner 5).

"Racial perception," to use Adrienne Brown's term, is not "a singular and instantaneous act," but rather "a complex series of procedures involving judgment, reading, rationalization, and conjecture … acquired through socialization and habit—functioning as an ideology rather than a skill—its operations tend to be concealed even from subjects themselves" (22-3). This chapter proceeds from the insight, articulated by Bonner at the outset of her literary career, that discrimination must be understood as an aesthetic act; I consider how her subsequent short stories formally enact and make visible discrimination as both a perceptual process and a lived reality. Specifically, their aesthetics of discrimination revolves around the concept of the frame, which organizes perception into paradigms of meaning. Her stories reveal the ideological frames that produce material ramifications: the frame as Black Belt border, as neighborhood grade outlined on a redlining map. But they also render visible the frames of perception that function to naturalize those ideologies, juxtaposing conventional narrative frames—like stereotypes and generalizations—with story structures, sometimes even literal "frame stories," that interrupt and undermine them. By calling attention to frames, these stories, to borrow Brown's words, develop discrimination as a skill rather than an ideology.

Ideological frames are site-specific (even in referring to generalized sites), which means that "discrimination of the right sort" must likewise involve paying attention to geography. Brown writes that "landscapes … are more than scenes onto which racial concepts are projected. Landscapes also help to determine which concepts of race become viable in certain contexts and less so in others" (35). This chapter therefore focuses on the spatialization of racial categories at both rhetorical and material scales. Considering the etymology of the word "discrimination,"

which comes from the Latin for distinguishing, separating, and dividing, I emphasize that it is concomitantly perceptual and spatial. To discriminate is not only to perceive difference, but also to locate it. In what follows, I establish the link between the racial valences of Chicago's Black Belt as a geographically segregated area and the literary forms used to call attention to and question the representation of Black neighborhoods. I will discuss, for example, how in the 1920s the language of ecology was used by sociologists as a frame for seeing and describing urban space, which naturalized racist restrictive covenants and lending policies and, ultimately, provided a language to justify urban renewal. The juxtaposition of frames in Bonner's stories directs formal attention to the correlations, intersections, and interactions between geographic boundaries and social categories, unsettling the givenness of any hegemonic perspective. In their use of titles and subheadings, the stories emphasize the spatiality of that process.

The story "Drab Rambles" (1927) explicitly demands readers be attuned to narrative framing: it was published in the December 1927 issue of *The Crisis* with the subtitle "There Are Two Portraits in Their Proper Frame" (*Crisis* vol. 34). Bonner's text seemingly subverts the respectability of the word "proper" by offering portraits of downtrodden, exploited African Americans and by highlighting white complicity to their suffering. The story begins with a prologue narrated in the first person. It includes frequent second-person address, a mode that Bonner employs across her fiction. Here, the second-person narration confronts the reader in their act of perception, calling attention to their assumptions of what a "proper frame" might be. The prologue proclaims, "I am hurt. There is blood on me. You do not care. You do not know me. … You do not care to know me, you say, because we are different. We are different you say" (Bonner 92). The repetition and chiasmus of the "you" and the "we" sets the implied white addressee apart from the black speaker and creates a linguistic frame around the central issues of

"knowing" and "difference"; yet this passage also vertiginously mixes the pronouns, coming to a crescendo with the assertion "But still, I am you—and all men" (Bonner 92). It then moves on to "The First Portrait," about ditch digger Peter Jackson who goes to the doctor with heart problems only to be scolded for working too strenuous a job, followed by "The Second Portrait," about domestic worker Madie Frye, who is raped by her white employers and finds it impossible to hold down a steady job when responsible for the resulting light-skinned baby.

The language of portraiture serves, on the one hand, to name the function of the two main story sections, which offer glimpses at individual lives. Yet, on the other hand, it highlights that Peter Jackson and Madie Frye are atypical portrait subjects, and the dizzying pronouns of the opening section serve as these portraits' "proper frame." The "proper frame" through which to understand the Black urban experience, according to Bonner's text, is a mode of perception that insists on the fundamental interrelations between white supremacy and "check-mated Hell seething in a brown body" (93). These portraits make visible how, as Katherine McKittrick writes, "[p]ractices of domination, sustained by a unitary vantage point, naturalize both identity and place, repetitively spatializing where nondominant groups 'naturally' belong" (xv). Instead of offering a single counter to the hegemonic vantage point, Bonner shatters the possibility of any "proper frame" being "unitary," often writing multi-part stories that proliferate portraits without unifying them into a single narrative. In her multi-part stories, different characters' potentially stand-alone narratives are told consecutively within the confines of the same text but separated by subheadings, and in certain cases published serially, which leaves the reader to infer connections between the parts, to question the reasons for their adjacency. The multi-part story thus inherently demands that the reader practice discrimination, highlighting the interrelations between hegemonic frames and Northern segregation.

I adopt Bonner's use of the term "frame" to analyze the ways in which her stories formally and rhetorically invite her readers to consider the processes by which certain modes of racial perception become hegemonic. Central to her texts' logic is the understanding that unitary frames facilitate domination because single views necessarily naturalize racist ideologies—and specifically, Bonner's texts demonstrate how racism operates through gender and class frames. Their titles and subheadings not only shatter hegemonic frames by introducing other ways of seeing, but they also highlight how the spatial and aesthetic conditions of racial perception are inflected via class and gender.

The story "Black Fronts" (1938), for example, emphasizes how attachments to superficial appearances foreclose genuine understanding and reproduce divisions within the Black community, especially among women and across class lines. Set in the midst of the Great Depression, the story emphasizes not only that those class distinctions have little to do with the women's actual wealth, but also that everyone is deceiving and using one another to keep up appearances. Playing on the meaning of "front," which in this context also evokes Popular Front politics, "Black Fronts" transforms the metaphorical concept of manners into a textual geometry: a text that presents itself as a collection of facades. The story is divided into two main sections, "Front A" and "Front B," with "Front B" further divided into "(The Top of the Design)" and "(The Bottom of the Design)" (Bonner 153, 156). "Front A" tells the story of the lawyer Big Brother and his wife Rinky Dew, who after the stock market crash continue to spend money that they do not have as they attempt to maintain their middle-class lifestyle, which they see as superior to their working-class backgrounds. The second section of the story, "Front B," is divided into two first-person monologues that show each side of an interaction between a Black domestic worker and the Black housewife who employs her; they make stereotypical

assumptions about one another as they work to perform the identities that they want their friends and families to see them as. That the story's sections are labeled "fronts"—which, it turns out, can also be separated into a "top" and "bottom"—implies an uncertainty as to whether the individual narratives are complete, for they are being looked at from a single perspective. Just as individuals who present a front to the world do indeed have motivations and inner lives behind that appearance, the juxtaposition of the story sections implies that back- or undersides to these textual fronts exist. What lies behind these textual fronts—and perhaps a solidarity rooted in the recognition of differences—can only be approached through careful reading.[56]

Bonner's stories elicit careful reading at the formal level, staging the intersection of different frames of perception and demonstrating how certain frames gather momentum and overtake the influence of others. They reveal that, during a time when discriminatory stereotypes were gaining traction and reinforcing or determining those narrative outcomes, alternative strategies for "proper" framing circulated—and, moreover, raised suspicion about any narrative not aware of its own role in modeling and popularizing those framing strategies. I posit framing as the textual form effected by the interaction of perspective (a representational image) and narrative (a sequence of actions). The Frye Street stories multiply frames, showing where they break and intersect, thereby throwing their naturalist outcomes into relief. That is, Bonner's stories reveal how unitary, hegemonic frames produce harmful discrimination—her characters' struggles and miserable fortunes—while also directing our attention toward the possibility of other ways of seeing.

This formal arrangement of intersecting frames reflects the social intersection of gender, class, and race identities that the narratives describe, and the correspondence between the formal

[56] See Introduction and Chapter 1 for additional discussions of "fronts."

and the thematic demonstrates how identity categories both produce and are produced by these aesthetic frames. In other words, these stories are imbued with a distinctly intersectional feminist perspective. I call upon the term "intersectionality" because it explicitly responds to a problem of discrimination: to counter the ways that "identity politics … frequently conflates or ignores intragroup differences" (1242), Kimberlé Crenshaw proposes a mode of analysis that, like Bonner's aesthetics and the modernism of many Black women writers, emphasizes the nuanced perception of distinctions.[57] "And so," Crenshaw continues, "when [feminist and antiracist] practices expound identity as woman or person of color as an either/or proposition, they relegate the identity of women of color to a location that resists telling" (1242). The very title "On Being Young— A Woman— And Colored" uses its em dashes to confront the fallacy of the "either/or" and to declare Bonner's different identities as distinct yet simultaneous. The em dash, as it both separates and brings into relation, stands as a visual signifier of intersection: it makes it impossible to conflate or ignore any one of these identities, at the same time that it declares Bonner's identity as a combination thereof. Bonner uses formal frames to cultivate an awareness of intersection that reveals the subjectivities of those relegated to "a location that resists telling."

In the next section, I survey theories of the frame from photography, design, cognitive science, and sociology, connecting the frame concept to discussions of racial and gender perception and to the production of space. Bringing these theories together with race studies and cultural geography allows me to highlight the narratological functions of framing in Bonner's fiction. A discussion of Bonner's use of punctuation demonstrates, for example, how her stories

[57] In her chapter "Remapping the Metropolis," Claire Oberon Garcia implies that a key feature of diasporic Black women's modernist writing is precisely that it "engaged and theorized intersectionality *avant la lettre*. As [these women] formed their black subjectivities they articulated the connections between imperialist, racist, and patriarchal ideologies" (216). For additional discussions of intersectionality in Bonner's work, see Lorraine Elena Roses and Ruth Elizabeth Randolph, Kevin Quashie, Maria Balshaw, Jennifer M. Wilks, and Cheryl Wall.

employ the smallest textual forms to reveal the ways in which assumptions about racialized geographies become ubiquitous.

The subsequent section looks specifically to Chicago's South Side at the time of Bonner's writing to introduce the sociological frames for understanding the neighboring "Black Belt" that were being popularized by the University of Chicago. Supposedly scientific perceptions of the Black Belt were materially reinforced through restrictive covenants and redlining; Bonner's stories describe, interrogate, and undermine the relationship between this material reality and its aesthetic complements. An extended discussion of Black sociologists St. Clair Drake and Horace Cayton's *Black Metropolis: A Study of Negro Life in a Northern City* (1945), which emerged from the Chicago school of sociology but also challenged it, suggests the importance of the Black community's active engagement with perceptions of its own geography. Moreover, Drake and Cayton's sociological study experiments with textual forms, many related to those found in Bonner's stories. I devote attention to *Black Metropolis* in order to contextualize Bonner's work as part of a broader search for alternative representations of Black urban life that was, I demonstrate, taking place within the Bronzeville community.

Finally, after considering the reception of Bonner's stories both by recent critics and by her contemporary readers, I read closely across her oeuvre to examine additional narrative strategies that highlight the intersection of frames: undermining the mapping impulse by fictionalizing Frye Street's geography; second-person address to implied readers; deploying archetypes and foils in order to trace their origins; and repeating images, phrases, and characters across the story cycle. These formal strategies prompt the reader, as this chapter argues, to practice "discrimination of the right sort."

The Racial Frame: Photographic, Cognitive, Geographic, Textual

Various disciplines have theorized the concept of the frame, which has applicability in photography and design as well as cognitive science and sociology. I draw on the insights from these fields, using the frame as a conceptual pivot that brings together race studies, geography, and literary criticism in order to describe the way in which Bonner's stories manifest intersecting frames.

The picture frame emblematizes the spatial cues that inform perception, and the spatiality of the frame is central to discussions of aesthetics, from photography to architecture. Architect Simon Unwin describes the frame's function of "defining space: creating demarcations and an ordered relationship between insides and outsides. A frame is a principle of organization. … setting something in its place" (108). This boundary setting goes beyond the mere organizing of elements, also establishing "a frame of reference, according to which one develops an understanding of where one is" (Unwin 108). There is thus an essential relationship between the positioning of the frame and its beholder. As Susan Sontag writes, "to photograph is to frame, and to frame is to exclude" (46).[58] The exclusionary vision facilitated by the frame suggests the relevance of the concept to the act of discrimination, especially to the workings of harmful discrimination. For, as Maurice O. Wallace explains, "the frame authorizes but a single, fixed angle of vision that, like any keyhole view, enacts distance between the present world of the spectator and the picture world, thus distorting the picture's reality" (9). In the act of demarcation and exclusion, the frame asserts its perspective as the sole or privileged one.

Cognitive approaches to framing expand on how these spatial functions of the frame organize perception and understanding, influencing our experience of the world through the

[58] For more on the relationship between geographic segregation and photographic perspective, see Chapter 2, on Jacob Riis's *How the Other Half Lives* and Richard Wright's *12 Million Black Voices*.

repetition of privileged, conventional frames. Erving Goffman attests, "Mere perceiving, then, is a much more active penetration of the world than at first might be thought" (38). Crucially, the active role played by framing in perception comes from the way it shapes the perceiver's perspective, from the fact that it is "metacommunicative" (Bateson 188). The inclusive and exclusive functions of the frame—its choice of what to include within or exclude without—are not equivalent, Gregory Bateson argues: "The frame around a picture, if we consider this frame as a message intended to order or organize the perception of the viewer, says, 'Attend to what is within and do not attend to what is outside.' … Perception of the ground must be positively inhibited and perception of the figure (in this case the picture) must be positively enhanced" (187). In other words, "The picture frame tells the viewer that he is not to use the same sort of thinking in interpreting the picture that he might use in interpreting the wallpaper outside the frame" (Bateson 187-8). We can thus see how framing as both aesthetic and cognitive act actively produces and organizes ideologies through its exclusionary and metacommunicative functions.

These functions of the frame operate on a level beyond just the imposition of a single perspective, however. George Lakoff's work shoes how "one cannot avoid framing. The only question is, whose frames are being activated—and hence strengthened—in the brains of the public" (72). The activation and strengthening, through repetition, of frames of understanding happens through narrative making. In order to introduce a new way of thinking or perceiving, Lakoff writes, "I have to provide you with a narrative that builds up an appropriate system of frames in your mind" (73). Frames are constructed via narrative; we might think of persistent cultural narratives, like the plot of whiteness discussed in Chapter 1, as frames, for they both orient the public's perspective—a default spatial outlook—and trigger the repetition of stock

stories—a default temporal and causal sequence. That is, particular images, places, and occurrences, like the appearance of a particular social or geographic type, activate frames that fix both the point of view and the development or outcome of the narrative. It is this process of frame activation—and its facilitation of harmful discrimination, exclusion, and stereotyping—that Bonner's literary output works to make visible. Her work shoes how hegemonic frames that determine the conditions of Black communities are produced, strengthened, and confirmed in the eyes of white onlookers, while also demonstrating the existence of other frames that would introduce new perspectives and new stories, i.e., that reveal the active exclusions and inclusions that underlie the frames through which we understand the world.

I am not the first to draw a connection between the cognitive and aesthetic functions of framing and the social formation of race. Sociologist Joe R. Feagin introduces the analytic of the "white racial frame" in order to direct sociology's gaze back on itself and critique his field's treatment of racism as "an abnormality in an otherwise healthy system … not as foundational to society" (5). He has sought to de-emphasize the social scientific treatment of individual acts of prejudice and bias, instead recognizing that "the socially inherited frame is a comprehensive orienting structure" that influences the formation of both collective memory and collective forgetting (Feagin 12).

W. J. T. Mitchell proposes that race more generally "is something we *see through*, like a frame, a window, a screen, or a lens, rather than something we *look at*" (Mitchell xii). Whereas Mitchell highlights how race itself comes to act as a frame, shaping perception, Wallace attends to the role of framing in racial formation. Specifically, he shows how framing, as a holding-in-place or arrestation—with etymological ties to surveillance and incarceration[59]—performs "the

[59] Wallace points out "a somewhat greater family of arrestive signifiers which share etymological roots in the Latin *specere* (to look or regard): *specimen, speculum, specious, suspect*" (30).

subtextual work of black male stereotype" (Wallace 21). Taking "*enframement* as the ur-trope of black male specularity" means seeing that racial perception (Wallace 8, italics in orig.), also in its gendered inflections and intersections, is constructed and enacted by means of framing, which in turn produces stereotypes that themselves serve as frames, further directing and thus reinforcing that perception. The ideological frame is, importantly, constituted by aesthetic acts of looking, such as in photography. That is, framing as a sociological, cognitive, ideological phenomenon must be understood through its rhetorical and aesthetic operations.

I wish to emphasize the resonance of the frame concept to discussions of racial geographies, especially in the work of geographers and race theorists Rashad Shabazz, Katherine McKittrick, George Lipsitz, David Theo Goldberg, and Saidiya Hartman. Shabazz, writing in *Spatializing Blackness* on Black masculinity as "a response to containment" (23), to the "prisonized landscape" of the Black Belt (2), offers a geographic parallel to Wallace's text-based argument. We can regard the "techniques and technologies of prison punishment" that he discusses—"policing, containment, surveillance and the establishment of territory, the creation of frontiers"—as technologies of framing (Shabazz 2). Similarly, McKittrick's catalogue of "seemingly predetermined stabilities" that organize racial geographies reads as a litany of material and imagined frames: "boundaries, color-lines, 'proper' places, fixed and settled infrastructures and streets, oceanic containers" (xi).

Feagin's "white racial frame" likewise has a geographic analog in George Lipsitz's "white spatial imaginary," which highlights the intrinsic relation between racial perception, racist institutions and social structures, and the production of space. The white spatial imaginary "structures feelings as well as social institutions," "idealizes 'pure' and homogeneous spaces, controlled environments, and predictable patterns of design and behavior," and treats space as "a

locus for the generation of exchange value" (Lipsitz 29-30). This white inhabitation and control of space is produced by a particular mode of seeing, he argues, "often rel[ying] on misdirection, on creating spectacles that attract attention—yet detract our gaze from the links that connect urban place and race" (Lipsitz 13). The creation of a spectacle requires framing as we have seen it described in Lakoff's work: the white spatial imaginary maintains its power by controlling both perspective—what gets seen—and narrative—in what sequence it gets seen.

The visual spectacles that obfuscate other available perspectival and narrative orientations are arranged in and through what David Theo Goldberg calls "periphractic space." This is space, like that of the public housing project, that "render[s] the center peripheral" (Goldberg 186): "'We' always know where the project is, if only to avoid it … Its external visibility serves at once as a form of panoptical discipline, vigilant boundary constraints upon its effects that might spill over to threaten the social fabric" (Goldberg 198). Hypervisibility and surveillance not only arrest Black men in what Wallace calls the "frame (-up)" (8), but also shape the physical and psychological architectures of the built environment. Geography and framing thus mutually reinforce one another, repeating and thereby cementing a single, selective mode of perception that relies on stereotypes.

Lipsitz's argument about the transformational potential of the "Black spatial imaginary" emphasizes its ability to offer new perspectives and directions for narrative: "burrowing in, building up, and branching out" (19). In my view, then, Lipsitz's "Black spatial imaginary," which "turn[s] segregation into congregation" (13), heralds the existence of alternative frames. Feagin similarly discusses how the African American community calls into question the authority of the "white racial frame," but in so doing he relegates the Black imaginary to the category of "counter-frame," implying that it only emerges in protest of "the racially

inegalitarian accumulation of many economic, political, and other societal resources" that validate and are validated by the "white racial frame" (16). My attention to textuality, to aesthetics and narrativity, allows for a more nuanced view of the persistence of the "white racial frame." For although certain frames may be more readily called upon than others, their ubiquity is premised upon the careful visual and temporal obscuring of other frames that already exist and circulate. Alternatives need not emerge as secondary reactions or "counters."

McKittrick's insistence that "[s]ubaltern lives are not marginal/other to regulatory classificatory systems, but instead integral to them" testifies to the coexistence of frames that remain to be drawn on as rhetorical options (xxv), although of course it takes more work to identify and learn to see through these alternatives. Bonner's short stories engage in this project, which I have shown to be at once aesthetic and geographic. Bonner invokes this project not only in the subtitle "Two Portraits in Their Proper Frame," but also in the subtitle to the story "A Possible Triad on Black Notes" (1933). She situates her work as an attempt to write against traditional maps—which render Black spatial practices illegible, refiguring them through the lens of criminality—and instead from the Black geographic perspective: the subtitle to the final installment of "Possible Triad" reads "*From 'The Black Map' (A book entirely unwritten)*" (Bonner 269).[60] As others have noted, this subtitle refers to Bonner's plan to publish a book of short stories inspired, she wrote to W. E. B. Du Bois, by "the impact of these Negro masses on a Brookline [Massachusetts] background" (Du Bois Papers, 1 Nov. 1935). Yet the idea of an as-yet-"entirely unwritten" "Black Map" is more than just a literal reference to the absence of a bound story collection. It highlights that black maps *seem* not to exist because hegemonic space is structured to cover up the work of racial discrimination, as well as to erase alternative modes

[60] This installment, "Corner Store," was published in the September 1933 issue of *Opportunity*.

of inhabitation. When Bonner refers to her own work as a "Black Map," she indicates her interest in portraying "domination as a visible spatial project that organizes, names, and sees social differences" (McKittrick xiv).

Precisely because anti-Black representations of space emphasize cohesion and containment, it would be insufficient to read Bonner's declaration that she is writing "The Black Map" as solely an announcement of her book project, of a plan to contain her stories within the pages of a cohesive volume. The subtitle "The Black Map" functions to theorize Bonner's aesthetics of discrimination as an inherently Black feminist geographic project, marking the stories as "respatializations" (McKittrick xix).[61] Black feminist scholars emphasize that Black women's spatial practices—which include the scale of the individual body, "the most intimately 'sovereign' scale" (Gilmore 16)—are enacted "across the logic of white and patriarchal maps" (McKittrick 62). That is, Black women have always found ways to "refuse[] the terms of visibility imposed on them," as Saidiya Hartman describes: they "eluded the frame and remained fugitives … impossible to force into the grid of naturalist description or the taxonomy of slum pictures" (18). It is with this understanding that I reject face-value interpretations of Bonner's

[61] McKittrick explains that "if practices of subjugation are also spatial acts, then the ways in which black women think, write, and negotiate their surroundings are intermingled with place-based critiques, or, respatializations" (xix). Bonner even described her motivation to write the "Black Map" as the result of new geographic experiences. The middle-class, New England–bred, Radcliffe-educated author wrote to Du Bois, "All my early life through high school days was lived in the town of Brookline (Massachusetts). The first contact I ever had with Negro masses was in Washington D.C. Chicago's Black Belt has stunned me. There are exactly fifty short stories floating in my mind from the impact of these Negro masses on a Brookline background" (Du Bois Papers, 1 Nov. 1935). An extended passage in "On Being Young" describes the first such encounter, upon moving to D.C.:

> If you have never lived among your own, you feel prodigal. Some warm untouched current flows through them—through you—and drags you out into the deep waters of a new sea of human foibles and mannerisms; of a peculiar psychology and prejudices. And one day you find yourself entangled—enmeshed—pinioned in the seaweed of a Black Ghetto.
>
> Not a Ghetto, placid like the Strasse that flows, outwardly unperturbed and calm in a stream of religious belief, but a peculiar group. Cut off, flung together, shoved aside in a bundle because of color and with no more in common.
>
> Unless color is, after all, the real bond. (Bonner 3-4)

The emphasis on the "peculiar[ity]" of the "Black Ghetto" highlights the disjunction between the two definitions of discrimination. Discrimination on the basis of color "entangle[s]" a "bundle" of different people together because it notices the only thing they have "in common" without making any other kinds of distinctions.

claim that "The Black Map" is "entirely unwritten," for a story purportedly "from" this "map" has indeed been written and even published. The paradoxical—and parenthetical—subtitle alludes to the Black woman's perspective that has been rendered illegible by the dominant racist and patriarchal culture. Bonner's stories formally inscribe that perspective as a reading practice; while their plots might seem to confirm conventional representations of Black Belt lives and geographies, their narration resists those naturalist outcomes. Because the stories formally insist on a discriminating reading of how those outcomes come to be, they show how Black geographies exist and persist outside of the normative frames of perception.

The parentheses around the assertion of unwritten-ness—a form of punctuation that recurs throughout Bonner's stories of "Frye Street (black)" (141)—are themselves a frame in miniature, on the scale of the typographical. Like Goldberg's "periphractic space," parentheses act as "circumscribing fences" (188). In visually framing a word or phrase, parentheses imply meaning: the almost-unspoken or almost-unwritten. They are thus marks not only of circum*scription*—of bounding within limits—but also of circum*locution*—of indirect expression.[62] This periphractic punctuation does both simultaneously, "laying down … the limits of meaning" by defining outside boundaries whose purpose is precisely to name the meaning within through indirection (OED "Circumscription"). The understated parenthetical interior likewise exposes what we already know about what lies underneath the superficial meaning of the sentence beyond: Frye Street *is* black because it *was made to be* through discrimination, just as the housing project is racialized through its "geographic concentration" and "external visibility" (Goldberg 197, 198). In fact, Bonner's 1926 story "Nothing New" narrates that process by which "Frye Street—black" (76)—with an em dash—became segregated. The em

[62] The Oxford English Dictionary defines circumscription as "the marking out of limits," and circumlocution as "speaking in a roundabout or indirect way."

dash is more explicit, less of a circumscription, than the parenthetical, signifying a sudden change or exclamation rather than the consistent undercurrent of reader knowledge that could be assumed by the 1936 publication of "A Sealed Pod," the story that takes place in the now-parenthetically "Frye Street (black)" (Bonner 141). In this way, the punctuation choices in Bonner's texts convey a nuanced sense of the social, geographic, and aesthetic impact of framing.

In committing to paper an "(unwritten)" Black map, Bonner's stories simultaneously make visible the power that normative frames had in shaping her community's geography while depicting that community through other frames. It is no surprise that, even before she had moved there, Bonner set the fictional Frye Street in Chicago. The history of that city's South Side between the 1920s and 1940s exemplifies how multiple frames—both "regulatory"/hegemonic and grassroots/community-based frames—coexisted, overlapped, and competed to describe and shape the future of urban Black geographies. I turn now to this neighborhood, Bronzeville, during the Chicago Black Renaissance, to show how the community there was at the time actively engaged with the problem of framing its own geography.

Community and Academy: Framing the Chicago Black Renaissance

In order to understand the cultural movement that they termed the Chicago Black Renaissance, Robert Bone and Richard Courage insist on attending to the "material base" of this "flowering of the arts" (3), marked by a "broad paradigmatic shift from the racially celebratory mood of the 1920s toward a new sensibility that was decidedly antiromantic, frequently militant, and fundamentally documentary realist in spirit" (7). This means more than superficially referencing the historical context of the Great Migration and the Great Depression; as Bone and

Courage show, intricate financial, intellectual, and personal connections established the "core cultural institutions" that cultivated Bronzeville's cultural renaissance (8). These connections take them out of Chicago and down South, to Booker T. Washington and the Tuskegee Institute. Robert E. Park, intellectual forefather of the movement's sociological, social realist tendencies, worked as Washington's publicist and ghostwriter before attaining a professorship in sociology at the University of Chicago—and, as Davarian Baldwin and Aldon Morris make clear, popularizing racially inflected theories he was exposed to during his time in the South. Julius Rosenwald, "chairman of the Sears & Roebuck mail-order empire and also a Tuskegee trustee" (Bone and Courage 5), sponsored many Black Chicago artists with Rosenwald Grants and funded a variety of Bronzeville institutions, including the local Urban League, library branch, and hospital. Bone and Courage's monograph *The Muse in Bronzeville* makes an unprecedented contribution to African American studies, especially because of its methodological focus on what the authors call "generational analysis" (6). Nevertheless, this generational analysis runs the risk of minimizing the significance of tensions between the local community and the powerful network of institutions as they shaped our nation's popular imaginary of Chicago's South Side. That is, with so many different interest groups interacting and participating in both cultivating and documenting the Bronzeville community, multiple frames of perception were being produced and utilized at the same time.

Arguably the most influential frame was sociologist Ernest Burgess's concentric zone map, which I have also discussed in the Introduction and Chapter 2 (Figure 11).

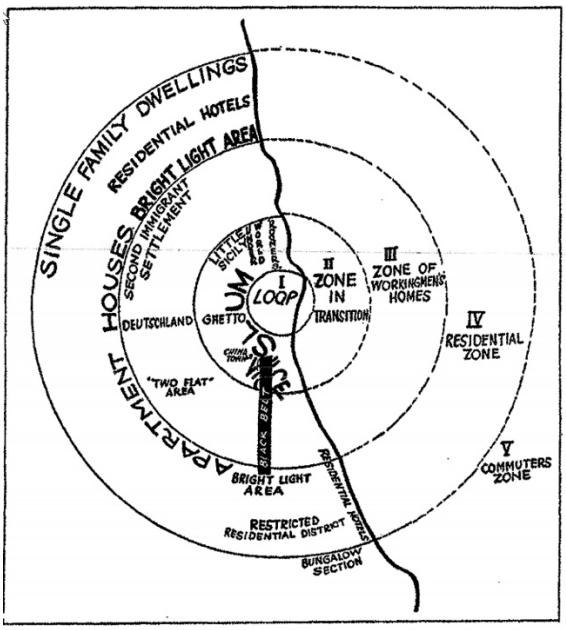

CHART II. Urban Areas

Figure 11: Ernest Burgess's concentric zone map
[image from Park, Burgess, and McKenzie, *The City*, p. 55]

Meant to theorize the process of urban growth and transition in all cities, the locations of the Black Belt and of the other ethnic neighborhood labels highlight how Burgess and his Chicago school colleagues were using Chicago as their social "laboratory" (Park, "The City" 612). The concentric rings were meant to illustrate a theoretical model of growth and change, whereby the rings successively spread outward as the city expands. Yet the apparent exception to prove the rule is the "Black Belt," depicted on Burgess's diagram as a solid rectangle bisecting multiple zones. The illustration of the Black Belt indicates that Burgess could not assimilate into his model the actual spatial organization of the city, the skinny seven-mile-long Black neighborhood, despite the fact that his colleague Robert Park's theory of assimilation supposedly accounted for the expansion of those economic/ethnic zones.[63]

[63] As has been extensively documented in the fields of whiteness studies and critical race studies, and as my previous chapters have elaborated, Park's theory of assimilation really only applied to ethnic groups who were able to leverage their difference from Blackness to position themselves as white.

What sort of frame for understanding cities in general and Bronzeville in particular does this diagram provide? The contrast of the curved concentric rings, and the negative space in between them, with the solid-colored, rectilinear Black Belt accentuates the inclusive and exclusive functions of framing, emphasizing difference—racial difference, spatial difference, and even difference in the progression of socio-historical processes. This diagrammatic Black Belt exemplifies Goldberg's "periphractic space" and is evoked by Bonner's "Frye Street (black)": it is bounded yet hypervisible, marginalized yet centrally located.

But through what framing, we must also ask, did Burgess arrive at such a representation? It is well documented that American sociologists turned to scientific models in an effort to legitimate their nascent discipline. According to Jennifer S. Light, the Chicago school initially envisioned the city as a laboratory akin to those used by chemists and physicists, but soon realized that "[s]cientific practice in the 'natural laboratory' of forests, fields, and other environments studied by plant and animal ecologists, where the behavior of living systems could be observed with minimal disturbance, was a much better fit" (10). Although their textbooks, such as Park and Burgess's "Green Bible," the *Introduction to the Science of Sociology* (1921), included texts from both their own field and from ecology, the centrality of these "informal appropriations of ecological thought" to sociology was more metaphorical and analogical than it was methodologically rigorous (Light 7). As Light makes clear, the technocratic underpinnings of "scientific" urban studies have gone underappreciated until recently. In addition to endowing descriptive social science with academic cachet, the use of ecological language made it possible for city planners and real estate boards to utilize those theoretical findings in the interest of producing their vision for an urban future. As natural resource management gained prestige in the 1930s, "associations between cities and nature suggested that urban resources might also be

scientifically managed and that within the ranks of the urban professions resided the necessary expertise" (Light 4). "For urban planners and other renewal advocates," Wendell Pritchett explains, "the theory of urban ecology became a means of reorganizing property rights within the city" (17). The "idealized model of invasion-succession and the city's predictable life cycle" derived from Burgess's map made its way into the "applied science" of real estate (Light 53)—and, most insidiously, into the formulas used for mortgage risk assessment.

Ecology became more than a metaphor or a buttress for racializing space; it acted as a frame that actively shaped the future of neighborhoods and their residents. The sense that ecological language is analogical in fact helps to conceal its real and material effects—it doubly naturalizes racial geographies, making both rhetorical and geographical assumptions disappear into the supposedly "natural" urban ecology. (This is emphasized by Richard Wright's ironic use of scare quotes in *12 Million Black Voices*, as discussed in Chapter 2.) And it does so by imposing a particular directionality onto the temporality of the space in question, which is to say, ecological analogies suggest that ethnic communities will grow and spread in a predictable manner, imbuing the ecological frame with a narrative expectation. For example, the metaphor of blight, "originally used to describe plant diseases," was first applied to urban spaces by the Chicago School sociologists (Pritchett 16). Then adopted by the real estate community, the "poorly defined" and thus rhetorically "useful" term could be used to "reorganize property ownership" (Pritchett 18). The scientific cachet of the ecological frame distracts from the fact that the chosen metaphors, like blight, might sound absurd if used to describe the distribution of the white community—the production of white geographies being a rhetorical task that relies, instead, on the sort of realist cataloging described in Chapter 1.

In addition to utilizing seemingly neutral scientific terms in order to racialize certain spaces, the ecological frame, with its emphasis on predicting patterns of movement, popularized a future-oriented narrative and concealed its power to shape the very geographies it was purportedly just describing. When, for example, the Home Owners' Loan Corporation assessed areas around Woodlawn, the South Side neighborhood adjacent to the University of Chicago, to be risky to loan givers because they were "definitely declining, and ultimately will become a rooming house district" (Nelson et al., Chicago C214), assessors were projecting Burgess's diagram onto the future of the neighborhood. This is especially evident in the report on area D78, graded "hazardous": "This is a semi-blighted area and while it is restricted to Whites, and the restriction having nine or ten years yet to run, there is a constantly increasing encroachment of Negroes from both the west and south" (Nelson et al., Chicago D78). In the redlining maps, blight invokes a familiar narrative and signifies the imagined, not actual, downfall of a neighborhood: an "encroachment" presaged by the "constant stream of Colored people to and from and through this district to Washington Park" (Nelson et al., Chicago D78). Residents of neighboring areas, who for at least the next decade will continue to be excluded from renting or owning property in Woodlawn because of restrictive covenants, are figured as invasive species and plant disease. According to this logic, the Black community's need for public green space, from which it has been deliberately spatially cut off, somehow signals the demise of a neighborhood whose covenants are still in effect—and will continue to be for another decade. A different frame might, on the one hand, present the restrictive covenant as an unnatural intrusion: it acts as an artificial barrier between Black neighborhoods and Washington Park. But the ecological frame, on the other, transposes its definition of blight, regarding invasion, like concentric zone expansion, as unidirectional and inherently racialized.

The veneer of race-neutral scientism allowed the ecological frame to propagate and impose future-oriented racialized narratives, but it also distracted from another problem: that the concept of objectivity requires holding the researcher and the research institution outside of the frame. The contradiction therein is striking in the case of Chicago school sociology, for the University of Chicago actively backed the restrictive covenants that were in place in the communities surrounding campus. The Bronzeville community was quite aware of this problem; an editorial in *The Chicago Defender* cheekily referred to the restrictive covenants as "'the University of Chicago Agreement to get rid of Negroes'" ("Building Ghettoes"). The editorial continues, "The University of Chicago should be brought to task and its role as humanitarian should be balanced against its vicious attack on the rights of American citizens. Its contribution to science, art and literature should be set against its contribution to the increase of crime, misery, and the demoralization of a people" ("Building Ghettoes"). This appeal to "balance" and "set" the positive and negative contributions of the university "against" one another recalls Bonner's vision of the "right sort" of "discrimination" as an act of "weighing." It is a call to reevaluate the institution's public image, and the mechanism by which to do so is to alter the frame through which one apprehends the university: to reframe what is relevant.

The Bronzeville community's interest in thus reframing the contributions of the University of Chicago is demonstrated by a letter forwarded by Horace Cayton to sociology professor Louis Wirth and now held in Wirth's papers. Cayton, who studied sociology at and later returned as a researcher to the University of Chicago, was co-leading a WPA research project on juvenile delinquency in the Black Belt with anthropology professor W. Lloyd Warner, the study whose data he and St. Clair Drake later used in writing *Black Metropolis*. He had spoken with the Black judge Wendell E. Green and other members of the local Big Brothers

Association, who were planning to send a letter to the university—the letter Cayton then forwarded to Wirth—in "most emphatic protest" of the research project (Wirth Papers). As the Big Brothers Association wrote, the study could be nothing "other than a fraud," since the university would certainly never acknowledge its own active role as "the most potent factor in the in the chain of circumstances which produce the environment that cause child or juvenile delinquency" (Wirth Papers). Any potential for scholarly objectivity would already be precluded by the university's stake in creating the conditions it hopes to research and describe; the university has rendered the Black community its object of abuse in order to then treat it as an object of study. "In consideration of the foregoing may we most sincerely and earnestly urge," the group concluded, "that this erstwhile liberal fountain of knowledge, from which now oozes a constant secretion of racial prejudice and intolerance, be not allowed to prey upon an almost defenseless minority by means of what would be a bias and useless survey of this character at public expense" (Wirth Papers). The depiction of the University of Chicago, situated just south of the Black Belt, "oozing secretions" that establish the conditions of the neighborhood to its north disrupts the centrifugal logic of Burgess's map. Yet this disruption is already present in the figure of the unassimilated Black Belt in the original concentric zone model: the university funding Burgess's research actively worked to produce the exception to his rule. In backing restrictive covenants, the University of Chicago concretized the dividing line between white, upper-middle-class Woodlawn and Black, mixed-income Bronzeville.

Of course, as Cayton pointed out to Wirth, "Our project … is not sponsored by the University so the complaint is unjustified" (Wirth Papers). Yet it is telling that Cayton nevertheless encouraged the committee to mail the letter to the university, for "this will put them on record at last as having objections to the University's [restrictive covenant] policy" (Wirth

Papers). Despite Green et al.'s misunderstanding of the WPA project's sponsorship, Cayton does not reject their proposed alternative frame, which brings the university into the picture. In fact, I would like to suggest that the Cayton-Warner research, which studied and documented all aspects of life in Bronzeville, not just juvenile delinquency, participated in the very same project of publicizing different frames of perception and of questioning the geography of the South Side. I emphasize, following Davarian Baldwin, Aldon Morris, and Alice O'Connor, that Cayton's, and other Chicago-trained Black sociologists', methodological debt to their white mentors, including Park, Burgess, and Wirth, did not prevent them from working to debunk their predecessors' racialized theories.

On January 10, 1939, over 500 Chicagoans flocked to the Church of the Good Shepherd to see an exhibit of maps and graphs from a research project on the neighborhood that had been conducted by over 200 local WPA workers: the Cayton-Warner research. The local Black newspaper, *The Chicago Defender*, dedicated much coverage to this event and the significance of the project. Prior to the public event, the research had "gone on, to a large extent, without the general knowledge of the community," an editorial noted, yet the effort had already had a large impact on the neighborhood: "It has furnished over the period of the past two years, work for approximately 225 white-collar workers who otherwise would have had no employment" ("Community Should Support"). And as for their salaries—a "payroll of nearly $30,000 a month"—"[t]his sum has done much to support Negro business and institutions, such as churches, lodges, clubs as well as the 255 families directly affected" ("Community Should Support").[64] Local women, including "Miss Vivian Harsh"— director of Bronzeville's George Cleveland Hall Branch Library and first Black branch library director in Chicago history—

[64] The inconsistency in the numbers 225 and 255 comes from the *Defender* article.

poured tea at the tea table, and "[b]ackground music was furnished by the Federal Music project [sic]" ("Community in Charts, Maps"). Bone and Courage note that the large attendance "suggests a community curious to learn the precise facts of its physical and social topography" (130). At the very least, it highlights that a cohort of community leaders was working to take these conversations out of the academy and into the adjacent Black neighborhood, and the *Defender*'s response frames the project's contribution to the community as more than just intellectual, but also economic. This major event also highlights that Black sociology and documentary realism—as I discussed in Chapter 2 with Wright's *Black Voices*—were simultaneously outgrowths and critiques of white sociology that developed beyond the isolation of a racist ivory tower, envisioning an audience of Black community members, of the very people whose lives were being documented. The 1939 public exhibition of the Cayton-Warner research thus attests to the fact that the cultural movement called the Chicago Black Renaissance was able to challenge normative perceptions of race and urban space while documenting the social and material conditions of life in Bronzeville precisely *because* it was differently aware of its method of framing, questioning the acts of mediation necessary to establish the conditions for documentary.

New Frames for Social Science: Drake and Cayton's *Black Metropolis*

The year before Drake and Cayton's *Black Metropolis* was published, another monumental study of race relations in the US came out: Gunnar Myrdal's *An American Dilemma* (1944). Covering the entire nation and based on the reports of dozens of both white and Black social scientists, many from the Chicago school,[65] the book's conclusions are integrated into

[65] While St. Clair Drake did contribute a report from his work on African American churches, "Cayton had been invited to work with Myrdal on the study, but refused because he felt that the Swede was basically requesting all of

Drake and Cayton's argument in their final chapter. Yet, when it comes to the framing of social science research, the studies provide a stark contrast. Myrdal, from Sweden, was deliberately chosen to write *An American Dilemma* because he was someone from "'a nonimperialistic country with no background of domination of one race over another' who, presumably 'would approach the situation with an entirely fresh mind'" (qtd. in Myrdal lx). As Aldon Morris details, the choice of Myrdal to head this Carnegie Foundation–funded project was made at the expense of funding W. E. B. Du Bois's proposed *Encyclopedia of the Negro*: "officials at the Carnegie Foundation fretted over Du Bois's alleged lack of objectivity and scholarly detachment. They worried that any American scholar, black or white, would be too emotional to produce a sufficiently scientific and objective study but considered Du Bois in particular, as a defiant political Negro, to be a liability in this regard" (201). Myrdal nevertheless includes detailed appendices exploring the production of facts and the process of scientific valuation, which highlight his own consideration of thoughtfully framing research findings and interrogating the meaning of objectivity. In an extended footnote in *Black Metropolis*, Drake and Cayton acknowledge that "the authors have been interested in judging their own work by Myrdal's criteria" for an "ideal study" of class in the "Negro community" (788). However, the one point on which they disagree with Myrdal highlights a major difference in their community-based and community-researched study: Drake and Cayton "are not entirely in agreement with his conclusion that 'our class concepts have no other reality than as a conceptual framework'… they have tried to define *those patterns of behavior and attributes that various segments of the community look upon as having high or low social status*" (788). That is, Drake and Cayton pay attention not only to their own academic framing of their object of study, but also to frames

Cayton's Chicago data, but offering nothing in return. As a result, Cayton's recent WPA Chicago data did not appear in the final Carnegie-funded study" (Jackson 128).

through which various community members perceive their own community. This attempt to "mediate the *ethos* of various groups within the community with all of the consequent dangers of falling into subjectivism" is evident in the study's celebrated mixed methods approach to its topic (Drake and Cayton 789), an approach that, I posit, reveals its interest in framing through textual and rhetorical means.

Black Metropolis thus, in both content and form, pushed the boundaries of sociology's research and writing methods, drawing attention to the field's active role in discrimination—discrimination as both a spatial, aesthetic act and as the material conditions that can result from and instigate that act. The introduction, "Midwest Metropolis," opens with an aerial map of Chicago (Figure 12). An inset box at the top right locates Chicago, along with the Mississippi River and Lake Michigan, on the otherwise blank map of the US. The key at the bottom left defines the three patterns that demarcate the spaces of "Midwest Metropolis": Chicago's corporate limits, the suburbs, and "Black Metropolis." To a reader familiar with Burgess's map, this looks familiar; the radial growth of the city and transition into the suburbs is more or less evidence of concentric expansion. But the five named zones are missing.

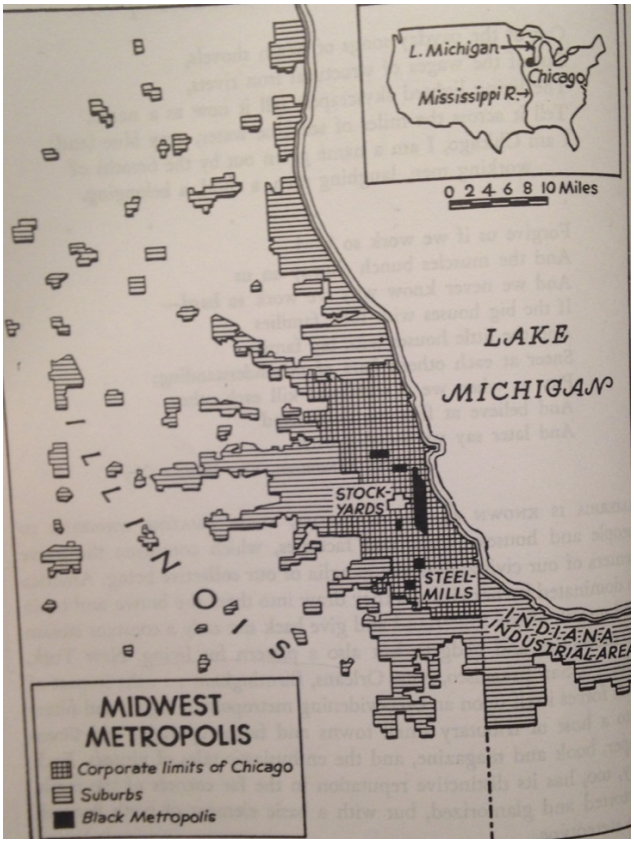

Figure 12: Midwest Metropolis, from *Black Metropolis* (p. 4)

The only carryover that we get from Burgess's map is the solid-black Black Belt—here with additional pockets of blackness on the West Side and further south, near the steel mills. There is also a clear emphasis on the industries of Midwest Metropolis. As opposed to centering on the commerce of Zone I, the Loop, the map draws attention to the "Stock-yards," the "Steel-mills," and the "Indiana Industrial Area." Of the utmost importance, this map indicates, is the "Black Metropolis" and its relationships to the South and to industrial labor. The rest of the city, from this perspective, blends together. In spite of the book's dedication to Robert Park, it clearly intends to revise his and his colleagues' spatial theories.

When Drake and Cayton do introduce the concentric zone map, "adapted" from Park and Burgess's *The City* (Drake and Cayton 16), they make a few changes (Figure 13). Rather than list the ethnic and lower-class communities who reside in particular zones, they spotlight—in

addition to the "areas over 50% Negro" and the industrial areas—only the "exclusive lakefront" areas, which notably, like the Black Belt, cut vertically across multiple zones. Not just lower-class Black neighborhoods fail to comply with the zonal model, they show, but also wealthy white ones. By bringing elements into focus that were rendered invisible by the original diagram, they raise different questions about the relationships between economics, political power, city growth, and race.

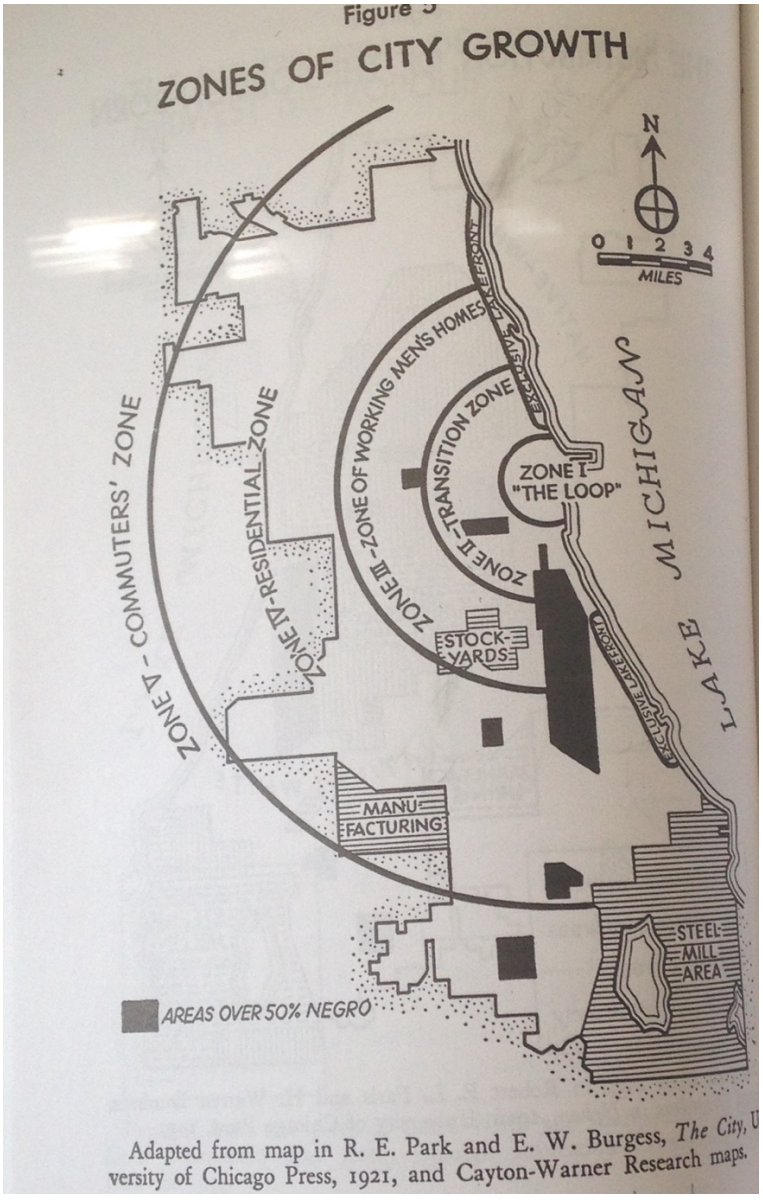

Figure 13: Zonal growth model in *Black Metropolis* (p. 16)

To compare these two maps from *Black Metropolis* with Burgess's original reveals what is novel about Drake and Cayton's mixed-methods approach, praised by Richard Wright in his introduction as the study's "dominant hallmark" (Drake and Cayton xx) and further elaborated by W. Lloyd Warner in his "Methodological Note." Warner's anthropological methods contributed the book's "caste and class" analysis, which "directly confronted the human ecology paradigm to expose the 'Chicago Tradition' as a social struggle and not some organic growth of the city" (Baldwin 429). By combining a more structural perspective from anthropology with the ecological narrative from sociology, *Black Metropolis* destabilizes the hegemony of the concentric zone map. Their maps evoke Burgess's well-known diagram, but their minor omissions and additions produce a striking change in frame.

Part I of the book tells the history of Chicago as the history of African Americans in Chicago; Part II is sociological, with statistics, maps, and graphs documenting the lived realities of the "Black Belt"; and Part III turns to anthropology, offering an ethnography of Bronzeville's ways of life. The book's multi-part structure allows it to make use of frames from multiple disciplines. Yet even the sociological analysis contradicts that field's accepted principles:

> contrary to assimilationist expectations, the analysis only highlighted the discrepancy between immigrants and blacks, with graphic illustrations of the 'job ceiling,' the 'color line' and the segregationist residential practices that kept blacks 'in their place.' When Drake and Cayton turned to anthropology, to observe the black ghetto in daily life, the barriers of race seemed more caste-like and impenetrable than ever. (O'Connor 131)

This hybrid form allowed them to portray the Black Metropolis from a variety of perspectives, all of which collaboratively transformed "the once impressionistic vision of the Black ghetto …

into detailed cultural geographies of the many faces of Chicago's Black community" (Baldwin 430). The moves from historical narrative to numerical, scientific data to a more personal, street-level ethnography juxtapose differing versions of objectivity and, correspondingly, treat different types of information as facts.

A comparison of one chapter from Part II with what Davarian Baldwin identifies as its parallel in Part III exemplifies the multiplicity of disciplinary frames that Drake and Cayton deploy. Chapter 8, "The Black Ghetto," opens with an emphasis on the statistical: "The strongest visual evidence of a color-line in Midwest Metropolis is the existence of a Black Belt. Of the city's 337,000 Negroes, over ninety out of every hundred live in areas predominantly Negro" (Drake and Cayton 174). This numerical statistic, of course, is not "*visual* evidence" (my emphasis). The scientific framing, established by pages of evidence from interviews, newspapers, charts, and maps, facilitates the slippage from census taking to racial perception that defines the Black Belt. Yet unlike their mentors' scholarship, which similarly used scientific methods to evoke the visual perception of race—as in the black coloring-in of the Black Belt in the concentric zone diagram, or the metaphor of spreading blight—here Drake and Cayton exploit the authority that comes from their data to make a point about what this frame more often serves to obscure: they explicitly declare that "[t]he persistence of a Black Belt … is no accident" (174). They even, throughout the book, refer to "blight" in quotation marks—a form of punctuation, like Bonner's parentheticals, that calls attention to and challenges the word's assumed, stable facticity. As with Wright's use of quotation marks in *Black Voices*, Drake and Cayton emphasize that "blight" is in the eye of the beholder: white sociology. It is never an objective assessment.

Whereas the chapter in Part II disguises its revision of what was then mainstream

sociological theory, Chapter 14, "Bronzeville," which appears in the ethnographic section, makes the reader complicit in a reframing of the Black Belt. Using the imperative mood and second-person address, the chapter opens: "Stand at the center of the Black Belt—at Chicago's 47th St. and South Parkway. Around you swirls a continuous eddy of faces—black, brown, olive, yellow, and white. Soon you will realize that this is not 'just another neighborhood' of Midwest Metropolis" (Drake and Cayton 379). Here the reader encounters an immersive ethnographic reading experience that not only emphasizes the heterogeneity of colors to be perceived in the supposedly homogenous Black Belt, but that also exceeds statistical representation. Interestingly, the "continuous eddy of faces" that "swirl" recalls Ogden's attempt to catalogue the "human maelstrom" in *The Cliff-Dwellers* (Fuller 93), as discussed in Chapter 1, as well as the "swarming … crowds" that lead Jacob Riis to declare in *How the Other Half Lives* that "[w]hat a bird's-eye view of 'the Bend' would be like is a matter of bewildering conjecture" (49), as discussed in Chapter 2. This familiar trope registers the fear that a visual catalogue of ethnic and racial types will never reach completeness; it likewise depicts the moment in which unmarked white bodies begin to feel unease moving through the city and confront a possible loss of geographic power, i.e. the ability to claim space as white and thus feel at home in it. This dramatizes, in effect, the onlookers' fear that they are losing control of the frame, for the distinction between who gets included within its boundaries (those who can be catalogued according to color or type) and those who remain without (the viewers themselves) begins to blur. Yet Drake and Cayton deploy the trope for different ends than Fuller or Riis: "this is not 'just another neighborhood' of Midwest Metropolis." Although reminiscent of those other literary moments where white men's encounters with ethnic, racial, and class diversity stage a struggle over geographic power, the "Bronzeville" version embraces, rather than retreats from,

the confusion. The "eddy of faces" serves as evidence itself, rather than as an obstacle to evidence gathering, in its very phenomenological excess. It suggests that Bronzeville is unique and that it merits consideration through frames other than the reader/viewer's default.

One understudied and highly literary passage in *Black Metropolis* stands out as an exemplar of the ways in which the text's creative use of mixed methods highlights alternative frames. The chapter "Lower Class: Sex and Family," in the anthropological Part III, opens with an anecdote about a Black doctor receiving an emergency call on Christmas. He has to run over to a kitchenette building, where a woman, "Baby Chile," has stabbed her partner, "Mr. Ben," with an ice pick. As Jonathan Scott Holloway notes, this is "the only moment in the nearly 800-page book where the researchers give themselves over to a fictionalized accounting of their study of black life" (36). He asks, "Beyond protecting the identity of the people involved—something that did not require such thorough fictionalizing—what inspired this fabrication? What were Drake and Cayton hoping to gain?" (Holloway 37). I dwell on this chapter of *Black Metropolis* not just because the fact of fictionalization makes it a formal anomaly within the book as a whole, but also because of the affordances of its specific literary choices, which highlight the potential of literary texts to both disrupt and reinforce normative frames.

The chapter opens with a straightforward beginning of a story, stating the time, setting, and main character: "It was Christmas Eve, 1938. Dr. Maguire had just finished a hard day" (Drake and Cayton 564). Yet this storytelling makes use of the modernist technique of indirect discourse, a means of mixing perspectives, first blending the narrator's voice with Dr. Maguire's inner thoughts and then later with those of Baby Chile, Mr. Ben, and other residents of their kitchenette. In a footnote to the chapter's first line, Drake and Cayton call attention to this anomalous narration, indicating how the fictionalization might have to do with their project, as I

see it, of multiplying and shifting frames:

> This account of a doctor's Christmas experience is based on an actual incident witnessed by one of the authors, when he was a participant-observer in a group of lower-class households for six months, and on interviews with the physician involved and his wife. The principal characters' inner thoughts are obviously fictionalized. But the other quoted material in this chapter, as throughout the book, has been selected from interview-documents gathered by trained interviewers and has not been subjected to imaginative recasting. (564)

This footnote alludes to the mixing of frames—fictional and academic—happening here, asserting that the dramatization of this incident does not compromise the objectivity or rigor of the findings being reported. That is, Drake and Cayton complicate the assumption that scientific rigor must necessary be communicated through omniscient third-person reportage, suggesting that dramatization and, moreover, free indirect discourse, can be means of expressing affective or experiential truths inaccessible through objective description.

Yet it is significant that this uncharacteristic fictionalization occurs in the chapter titled "Lower Class: Sex and Family" and that it is introduced through the perspective of a middle-class Black physician, rather than immediately beginning with Baby Chile and Mr. Ben. This suggests Drake and Cayton's attempt to frame the anecdote in a language more accessible to their intellectual readership: the well-educated Black man establishes the frame for viewing the kitchenette. The story could have begun within the kitchenette and nevertheless remained faithful to the scientific observer's perspective; as the footnote describes, source data for the chapter came from both participant-observation in a kitchenette and an interview with the doctor. The plotting of the story—the choice of where, when, and how it begins—privileges, or at least

foregrounds, the interview.

The opening also reaffirms the normative frame that registers the connotations of "lower class" via Black female sexuality. Hazel Carby notes this is a weak spot in the overall argument of *Black Metropolis*: even though Drake and Cayton describe how hypocritical the middle-class "race men" can be, they "fail to recognize … the extent to which the behavioral transformation of this lower class was thought to be about transforming the behavior of Black working-class women" (Carby 746-7). This linkage between deviant sexuality and the lower class is reinforced not only by the plotting of the drama—by locating its beginning in Dr. Maguire's home—but also by the content and diction of his thoughts, as rendered through free indirect discourse.

Firstly, Dr. Maguire's Christmas Eve thoughts revolve around his professional and domestic success: "Not so bad, not so bad. Three years out of med school, in the middle of a depression. A pretty wife with smooth olive skin and straight black hair. A sweet little girl, image of her mother. And buying a home" (Drake and Cayton 564). Every element of this reflection establishes a contrast between a Black middle-class ideal and the "sex and family" life of the Black lower class. Dr. Maguire is educated, in a respected profession, and wealthy enough to be on the brink of homeownership. All of this financial and professional privilege is in his mind linked to his familial status; not only does the doctor head a reproductive nuclear family, but his wife and daughter also have light brown skin and straight hair, visual signifiers of being closer to whiteness. Baby Chile and Mr. Ben are the opposite: a young woman supporting herself and her daughter with her relief check and by living for the last six months rent-free with the older janitor of their kitchenette, who is not the girl's father. Neither is described physically, but the existence of all the other contrasts reinforces harmful associations of African physiognomy with depravity. Given that the above passage is the reader's first glimpse at Dr. Maguire's inner

thoughts, I emphasize that the framing of "Lower Class: Sex and Family" relies not only on the sequencing by which the story's settings and characters are introduced, but also on a host of social signs implied by class status.

Secondly, it is significant that Dr. Maguire's indirect discourse utilizes the same Standard English diction as the third-person narration, for the many kitchenette residents' thoughts are rendered in their vernacular. This presents a jarring contrast to the seemingly objective narration, unlike the doctor's inner dialogue, which blends in. The inclusion of the vernacular does indeed, on the one hand, serve to center the lower-class perspective, treating it on an equal level as the position of academic authority (the narrator's voice) from which it is generally excluded. In this way, the chapter disrupts the academic frame that locates itself outside of the Black Belt, allowing Black Belt residents to participate in the text's perspective making. Dr. Maguire, Baby Chile, Mr. Ben, and the other kitchenette residents seemingly receive equal treatment; all of their voices intrude on the third-person narration. In contrast to the all-encompassing but impossible and aspirational "we" of Wright's *Black Voices*, Drake and Cayton make room for Black voices across education levels and class status. Yet, on the other hand, the effect of the switch to vernacular indirect discourse is decidedly different from what happens at the chapter's opening: "Baby Chile had come home near dark after a day of imbibing Christmas cheer. She must have been a little slug-happy. All she remembered was chasing her little girl outa Mamie's kitchenette next door, telling her to stay outa that whorehouse. … You just couldn't keep her outa that place listening to the vendor playing boogie-woogie and seein' things only grown folks oughta see" (Drake and Cayton 568). The contrast between the academic first sentence of the paragraph and the transition to the use of "outa," "oughta," and "seein'" reinforces to readers that the vernacular linguistic signifiers are inherently lower class, just as their referents are more explicitly

sexualized.

These textual elements—the plot sequence and the free indirect discourse—formally contribute to the production of a sociological typology: "Slick and Betty Lou—Baby Chile and Mr. Ben: there were hundreds of them in Bronzeville during the Lean Years" (576). The real people observed in the WPA study are written here *as characters* perhaps for the sake of ensuring anonymity, but also for the purpose of generalizability. These incidents are meant to be representative of how "an old southern pattern is intensified and strengthened in Bronzeville. Unstable common-law marriages of relatively short duration alternate with periods of bitter disillusionment on the women's part" (Drake and Cayton 584). The sociological urge to identify patterns—and, here, to expose the continuities between Southern and Northern caste systems, the institutional similarities between Jim Crow and restrictive covenants—finds an ideal vehicle of expression in the fictionalized "type." As I have shown in Chapter 1, the type is not a static entity, but is from the outset linked to a narrative plot that is both social and geographic. Unlike Fuller and Dreiser's texts, which use description to produce those plots, this passage foregoes description and instead relies on narration, on the transformation of real people into characters whose thoughts move the story forward, to depict the "variety of patterns" "beneath Bronzeville's surface" (Drake and Cayton 572). Unfortunately, those narrative choices serve to strengthen normative assumptions about class and sexuality even as they demonstrate their potential for unsettling hegemonic frames.

My intention here is not, based on this one chapter, to adjudicate on whether *Black Metropolis* is correctly or incorrectly, sufficiently or insufficiently, activist, or to decide to what degree of success its mixed-methods approach complicates and debunks racist stereotypes. Instead, I am intrigued by the affordances of this chapter's formal experiments, which suggest

Drake and Cayton's creative search for modes of expression that could offer alternative frames of perception and add nuance to the institutionalized process of knowledge production. In fact, given the huge risk that they took in thus fictionalizing a chapter of their academic text, it is all the more striking that the chapter, despite its large repertoire of perspectival shifts, ultimately does seem to reinforce hegemonic assumptions about race, class, and sexuality. My reading therefore emphasizes that literary techniques like plotting, diction, and indirect discourse are never inherently oppressive nor inherently subversive.[66] The concept of the frame as an interaction between perspective and narrative highlights how different combinations of those formal elements can produce frames with very different effects.

Finally, I view the convergence of this formal experiment with the topic of lower-class Black sexuality as symptomatic of the urgent need—in the 1940s and still today—for a reframing of the topic. Even though their formal choices do reinforce classist and sexist tropes, Drake and Cayton seem to have been reaching for a more empathetic, less alienating way to discuss nonnormative sex and family affiliations in the working-class Black community. I have discussed their work at length because it offers both a complement and contrast to Marita Bonner's short stories, which employ similar—sometimes the same—techniques, but to quite different effect. Bonner is invested in, on the one hand, skillful discrimination—in making visible and drawing connections between hidden structures of oppression—which produces stories that are representative. But, on the other hand, she problematizes the accuracy of such broad generalizations, for they can come to replace careful observation and obfuscate other perspectives. By directing our attention to acts of framing, Bonner engages, as Wilks puts it, "the

[66] In fact, Lawrence P. Jackson argues for the success of this experiment in narration in "recover[ing] the lost voice of the black poor": "The unusual opening of Chapter Twenty, 'Lower Class: Sex and Family,' indicated an invigorated sense of direction and constitutes one of the most sensitive chapters in the book. … Turning the raw data of black experience into a narrative was crucial" (129).

limits of exemplarity" (69). Racism operates "[t]hrough forcefully twinned processes of articulation and abstraction" (Gilmore 19), and the intersection of frames in Bonner's stories demands readers' constant attention to this oscillation between the unique and the typical.

Marita Bonner: Mapping Frye Street Through Intersecting Frames

Despite the valiant efforts of recovery projects that have appeared in fits and starts since the 1980s, Bonner's work too rarely receives mention, or adequate recognition, in discussions of the Chicago Black Renaissance. The few scholars who have written in depth about Bonner's literary output highlight her significant role within, as Maria Balshaw writes, "an alternative tradition of female social protest by African American writers: a model of protest more tentative and equivocal than those rather more strident voices (like Wright or Ellison) which have played such a significant role in defining the African American literary tradition" (13). For Joyce Flynn, Bonner "provides an urban and literary parallel to [Zora Neale] Hurston's preservation of the Black rural folk experience" (5), and for Balshaw "she provides the fullest engagement with the new conditions of city life by any African American woman writer before [Ann] Petry, and perhaps the only Renaissance example of writing about urban working-class women" (83). Jennifer M. Wilks highlights how she "critiques reductive expressions of intraracial solidarity, cracks facades assumed for the purpose of group preservation, and … problematizes the utopian spirit of the Talented Tenth and New Negrohood and maps in its stead an alternative African American modernism, one that turns on, rather than away from, the tension between individual concerns and communal solidarity" (69). When attention is paid to her body of work, critics agree on its crucial but oft-neglected role in the African American literary tradition.

Indeed, Bonner's stories demonstrate the "mastery of form" and "deformation of mastery" that Houston A. Baker, Jr. defines as the major "strategies" of African American modernism (15), which function to self-consciously subvert and reject racist representational politics. This rhetorical play calls forth a Black modernity that is rooted in the "mass, urban, national, and international" (Baker 83). Bonner's stories similarly draw broad connections on a national scale as they depict the effects of structural racism, at the same time that they deconstruct the givenness of the very forms that produce and uphold those structures. Emphasizing the sociopolitical power of form, the need to understand "extant forms" in order to "re-sound[]" them (Baker 101), Bonner's writing locates agency and resistance in the cultivation of a discriminating reading practice.

Bonner's modernist aesthetics emerges from a specifically gendered perspective: As "On Being Young" indicates, women are particularly well-suited to the practice of noticing "tints" and "shadows" that dominant ideologies ignore or conceal (Bonner 7). Her work belongs, therefore, in the specific genealogy of transatlantic Black women's modernism, a literary movement that fits within the rubric laid out by Baker, but which emphasizes "womanhood … not only as a site of representation but also as one of contestation" (Wilks 22). Whereas Baker's study derives its influential framework from examples by male authors, feminist scholars such as Cheryl Wall and T. Denean Sharpley-Whiting have recovered the foundational work of women writers in both the Harlem Renaissance and French Negritude movements. These women writers decentered the masculinist figures of the New Negro and the Negritude hero, figures of Black self-representation that were themselves generalizations, overlooking differences and prejudices within the Black community in the name of racial uplift.[67] Their attention to the intersections of

[67] Because "the evolution of race consciousness among women" emerged out of "black female circumscription in matters of race, sex, and class" (Sharpley-Whiting 77), African American and Francophone Caribbean women, such

race, gender, class, and nationality produced a modernism invested in taking apart dominant perspectives in order to "acknowledge[] … internal divisions" and draw new connections across a range of Black identities (Wilks 23). These sociopolitical critiques, as Claire Oberon Garcia explains, were narratively expressed through gendered experiences of "dislocation and translation" (31), as well as stories of "(mis)representation" (38). Bonner embeds those experiences in the very forms of her stories: for example, blending real locations into a fictional landscape, using parentheses and em dashes to emphasize the relations between words and appearances, and juxtaposing separate narratives within a single short story. These formal features dislocate readers' orienting frames, demanding that they translate between stereotypical representations and the realities that those stereotypes distract from.

Bonner's work exemplifies trends not only of Black women's modernism, but also of the Chicago Black Renaissance. Yet she has perhaps remained on the sidelines of the historiography of this movement because, unlike many of its major authors, she left no record of engaging with the broader sociology-oriented cultural and intellectual milieu. Bonner did not present at the Hall Branch Library's Book Review and Lecture Forum or leave an archive of correspondence with University of Chicago academics. She turned down a position in the Illinois Writers' Project after having been recommended for it by Howard University professor Sterling Brown (Dolinar xii). Her documented social life was more active in the 1920s in Washington, D.C., where she was a regular attendee at Georgia Douglas Johnson's S Street Salon[68] and volunteered as a secretary at Southeast Settlement House, "the first colored settlement house" (Plan of Work," Du

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as Jessie Fauset and the Nardal sisters, forged alternative diasporic alliances that foregrounded the need for "disarticulation" over "reifying racial essentialism" (Oberon Garcia 40). Unless otherwise noted, citations of Claire Oberon Garcia refer to her article "Black Women Writers, Modernism, and Paris."

[68] For Treva Lindsey, the S Street Salon exemplifies black women's attempt "to carve out a space for resistance that accounted for combatting [the] multiple oppressive forces" of "racism, sexism, and heteropatriarchy" (14). Viewing the women writers of the salon in this light, we can trace the socio-political lineage of Bonner's later fiction, which I argue participates in the same project.

Bois Papers). Although W. E. B. Du Bois, in his reference for Bonner's 1937 Rosenwald Grant application, admitted that "I have not known Mrs. Occomy personally for perhaps ten years" (Du Bois to Rosenwald fund, March 1937, Du Bois Papers), they did have an active correspondence throughout the 1920s. Du Bois was, in the early days of her career, Bonner's champion: when she wanted to publish under a pseudonym because of disapproval from the principal of the school at which she taught, Du Bois responded, "you must build up a reputation and not take refuge in pseudonyms" (Sept. 11, 1929, Du Bois Papers).

Significantly, Bonner's absence from the public eye after moving to Chicago in 1930 appears to be, as she herself admitted in a letter to Du Bois, particularly gendered: "Now that I am married and no longer teach and have two notable sons – aged four and fifteen months – I want to write more than ever" (Nov. 1935, Du Bois Papers). This raises pressing methodological questions about how we as literary critics understand the writing lives of authors when reading their work in its historical context. Throughout the late 1920s, as her letters to Du Bois reveal, Bonner published essays, plays, and her first few short stories while also teaching high school in Massachusetts and then D.C. After marrying William Occomy and moving to Chicago's South Side in 1930, she began raising children, and she continued to publish short fiction until 1941.[69] Scholars have speculated about but not been able to explain why she stopped publishing fiction then,[70] but it is certain that she returned to teaching in the 1940s until her retirement in 1963. The heavily gendered labor of mothering and public-school teaching almost certainly affected the purview of her literary output. The fact that in her lifetime she never published a book, and that

[69] Emily M. Hinnov notes, "For reasons still unclear, but most likely relating to her raising a family, Bonner stopped writing by 1941. In a July 20, 1968 letter to her daughter Joy, she writes: 'I went to D.C. to teach in 1924 and resigned when Billy was coming in 1931. I had five years to return to my job if I had wanted to but by July 1936 Gale was two years old and—*pfft!*'" (55).

[70] Joyce Flynn writes of Bonner's increasing devotion to Christian Science but can't explain why her religious observance would have prevented her from publishing fiction. This line of speculation may indeed be a red herring.

her stories remained scattered in the archives of *Opportunity* and *The Crisis* until 1987, has necessitated recovery projects that highlight the unique contribution of Bonner's fiction to the canon.

But what if we approach the relation between text and context, fictional Frye Street and historical Bronzeville, through the reception of Bonner's work by her contemporaries? If so, we find that her work was definitively contributing to a conversation about the sociology of Black urban neighborhoods. The Philadelphia branch of the National Urban League, for example, "wished to distribute ['Drab Rambles'] among people whom the association hoped to interest in the purpose of the League" because "the story gave an entirely true picture of economic conditions among colored working people in Philadelphia" even though, Bonner emphasized, "I had not studied conditions there" ("Plan of Work").[71] Elmer H. Carter, the editor of *Opportunity* after Charles S. Johnson, wrote to Bonner, "This city you wrote about is every city where Negro children are born and reared. There is no one in America who is writing who has such a grasp on this material as you" (qtd. in Bonner, "Plan of Work"). And when her story "A Sealed Pod" was published in *Opportunity* in 1936, it was framed by the magazine as sociological in essence. The editorial summary printed above the story contextualized Bonner's fiction: "A story of violence in the congested Negro quarter of an American city. Violence in the black belt is not an uncommon phenomenon and Miss Occomy, winner of an 'Opportunity' Literary Award, knows the black belt" ("Sealed Pod"). I therefore wish to emphasize that the texts written by Bonner—if not always Bonner herself—publicly circulated within a dialogue about social reform efforts and urban sociological knowledge. Interestingly, claims about the stories' wide-ranging applicability

[71] It is also notable that the very story that caught the Philadelphia Urban League's eye was the one that offered "Two Portraits in Their Proper Frame."

are not as simple as they first appear: the stories' fictional geography engages the very question of sociological generalizability.

Key to Bonner's reframing of that dialogue is the geography of Frye Street, the fictional multiethnic Chicago neighborhood in which many of her short stories are set. Most Bonner criticism leaves the description of the setting at that: fictional, multiethnic, but definitely located in Chicago. Wilks emphasizes that it is an "alternative modernist landscape" (106), and Balshaw notes its reference of "an actual city" while also "striv[ing] toward representation of a generalized racial space" (87). Importantly, this tension between geographic specificity and generality functions as a rhetorical strategy that demands readers question the assumptions about urban racial geographies that they bring to the text. Bonner's stories attest to the ways in which mapping is a predominant tool of racial discrimination, offering up literary maps that resist and subvert geographic domination.

As I have already discussed, new maps produced by sociologists and real estate assessors responded to the Great Migration in ideological ways that produced "the ghetto" as "a racial enclosure, an open-air prison" (Hartman 89). Bonner narrates the lived experiences of subjects trapped in these deliberately mapped urban Black Belts while showing that those maps must not be the only lens through which to view them; she challenges the assumed referentiality of maps, which naturalizes segregation and racism. The fictional Frye Street geography does so by provoking an experience of dislocation. The stories use very specific place names, building the expectation that they are mapping an existent world, only to frustrate those expectations for readers who research further. Even doing the work of comparing Frye Street's geography to contemporaneous maps of Chicago can lead to confusion. Judith Musser, one critic to do so, concludes, "The fact that these streets can be identified on contemporary maps demonstrates

Bonner's practice of developing a fictive geography very close to the actual black ghetto of Chicago" (57). Yet when she references real streets that are located on the South Side, she is citing stories that do not, in fact, name Frye Street at all such as the intersection of "31st and Federal" mentioned in the story "The Whipping" (1939) or "Tenth Street" in "Tin Can" (1934). While certain stories can indeed be linked to real locations—and, when compiled in a collection titled *Frye Street & Environs*, seem to exist in the Frye Street universe—Bonner's descriptions of Frye Street itself complicate the attempt to "approximate the location of this street in Chicago's 'Black Belt'" (Musser 56).[72] The imagined geography of Frye Street unsettles normative frames, I argue, precisely because of how it formally elicits this mapping impulse while continually thwarting the satisfaction of finding one-to-one correspondences between the fictional and real. In tricking careful scholars into thinking they have identified the setting's real-world location, Bonner's stories demonstrate how powerful the desire is to situate their narratives within a specific and recognizable geography—that is, to rely on pre-established identificatory categories rather than to allow connections and distinctions to emerge on their own terms through close reading.

The first story to describe Frye Street, "Nothing New" (1926), demarcates its terrain thus: "You have been down on Frye Street. You know how it runs from Grand Avenue and the L to a river" (Bonner 69). The preface to "A Possible Triad on Black Notes" (1933), repeats this almost verbatim: "*It runs from the river to Grand Avenue where the El is*" (Bonner 102). Although these landmarks correspond to places in Chicago, the geography, especially considering Frye Street's described ethnic and racial makeup, does not map onto 1920s and '30s Chicago. The Grand Avenue referred to could be the one on the Near North Side, which has El lines that cross it—but

[72] The very ambiguity of whether Frye Street exists in all or only some of her stories' fictional worlds adds further complexity to Bonner's approach to geography.

this avenue itself runs to the river (east-west) and does not have its own El line. It also has resonances of the El stop at the time called Grand Boulevard, which was in the Black Belt at 47th Street, but which is nowhere near the river. It is unclear if Frye Street even exists specifically in the Black Belt, on the South Side, given the emphasis on its ethnic mix: "from freckle-faced tow heads to yellow Orientals; from broad Italy to broad Georgia, from hooked nose to square black noses. How it lisps in French, how it babbles in Italian, how it gurgles in German, how it drawls and crawls through Black Belt dialects" (Bonner 69); "*All the World is there*" (Bonner 102). By the late 1920s this ethnic heterogeneity would not have been found in Bronzeville—it would have more likely applied to the Maxwell Street area on the West Side, along Halsted Street, near the river but near neither Grand Avenue nor Grand Boulevard.[73]

By rendering it impossible to locate Frye Street precisely, the stories link the experiences of dislocation and misrepresentation to practices of racial perception and mapmaking. For readers unfamiliar with Chicago's landscape who would not pick up on the fictionalized relations between the named landmarks, the Frye Street descriptions nevertheless produce a dislocating experience tied to geographic perception. Using second-person address, "Nothing New" invites readers to identify and even recognize the setting by insisting that "you have been down" there and "you know how it runs" (Bonner 69). This assumption of the reader's knowledge is a strong claim to the generalizability of the African American experience as produced by structural racism and nationwide policies. Yet the impossible statement that a reader already knows a fictional location that they are encountering for the first time, this being Bonner's first Frye Street story, unsettles the representational practices that produce generalizability. These vexed

[73] Thank you to Melissa Bradshaw for first pointing to the resonances of the Maxwell Street area, and to Liesl Olson and Bill Savage for sharing their expertise in our correspondence about the possible locations of Frye Street's landmarks.

assertions of recognition are reflected in the parallelism of the different ethnic, racial, and national groups' markers of difference that the narrator confidently assumes readers will recognize: each are represented by a visual stereotype—"freckle-faced tow heads," "yellow Orientals," "broad Italy to broad Georgia," "hooked nose to square black noses"—and a manner of speaking—"lisp[ing]," "babbl[ing,]" "gurgl[ing]," "drawl[ing]" and "crawl[ing]" (Bonner 69). In this way, the story's opening introduces a single perspectival frame as being obvious, while simultaneously emphasizing the discriminatory thinking that produces it. It challenges readers to pay attention to their practices of perception because, despite the narrator's insistence, they cannot know exactly where she is referring to.

The preface to "Possible Triad" further calls into question the stability of recognizable distinctions. The reader's careful observing and questioning of Frye Street is even staged, in the imperative, by the text:

> *you pause to flatten your nose against discreet windows of Chinese merchants; marvel at the beauty and tragic old age in the faces of the young Italian women; puzzle whether the muscular blond people are Swedes or Danes or both; pronounce odd consonant names in Greek characters on shops; wonder whether Russians are Jews, or Jews, Russians—and finally you will wonder how the Negroes there manage to look like all men of every other race and then have something left over for their own distinctive black-browns*. (Bonner 102)

The reader is commanded to navigate this multiethnic encounter through racial perception and discrimination. The verbs "puzzle" and "wonder," in particular, emphasize the uncertain production of knowledge about identity categories. Depending on how discriminating the reader is in parsing the list, it works either to conflate or to contrast incommensurate categories, which

emerge from the historical, political definitions of nation-states ("Chinese," "Italian," "Swedes," "Danes," "Russians"), religious and/or ethnic affiliation (the "Jews" who may or may not also count as "Russians"), language ("odd consonant names in Greek characters"), and a variety of physiognomic features influenced not only by genetics ("blond"), but also by affect ("beauty and tragic old age"). The "flatten[ing]" of the imagined reader's own nose evokes a racial stereotype that is typically the object of discrimination, yet here the physical feature is a temporary effect of the reader, as subject, observing and making discriminations. The world of Frye Street thus oscillates in a space between both the specific and the generalizable and the real and the fictional, and the mechanics of Bonner's storytelling ask readers to draw connections to what they already know but also to upend their assumptions. Showing the fungibility of these identity categories in the context of Frye Street's real-seeming but impossible location begins to problematize the associations between identity and place that instantiate and perpetuate racial discrimination. The fictional Frye Street thus fundamentally refuses to fit within a single frame. The stories set there require readers to question their assumptions while nevertheless aiming to communicate generalizable truths—that is, to be, as Bonner wrote in her Rosenwald Grant application, "sociologically revealing" ("Plan of Work").

The residents of Frye Street, like the "you" addressed above, understand their neighbors through tropes and types. Bonner's stories dramatize the violence produced by understanding people through such frames, and they demonstrate how racial discrimination is compounded when normative frames for understanding race, class, and gender roles intersect. As previously noted, many of her stories focus on young Black women who are often mothers and either sex or domestic workers, and those that center on young Black men are offering the flip side of the same narrative: about the gendered expectations that frame the Black working class. I posit

"Nothing New" and "Tin Can" as explorations of the cultural narrative of the pathologically violent Black man—a type popularized by Thomas Dixon's turn-of-the-century Ku Klux Klan fiction yet also utilized at the opposite end of the political spectrum by Richard Wright to highlight "How Bigger Was Born." Balshaw notes that *Native Son* presents "a monolithic representation of a racialised [sic] city space … achieved through the suppression of the complicating effect of gender and class identity on racial subjectivity" (116). Bonner, starting more than a decade before *Native Son* was published, illustrated a more complex, intersectional process by which her respective "Biggers," Denny and Jimmie Joe, are socially produced.

Both "Nothing New" and "Tin Can" involve the transformation of artistic young men into violent killers who, as punishment, are executed by the state (and, not unimportantly, grieved by their mothers). But although all three young men—including Bigger—are portrayed as emasculated and nonheteronormative, Bigger is, in Roderick Ferguson's reading, "the precursor of masculine agency" (52). *Native Son*, he argues, exemplifies Wright's adherence to the canonical sociological view that urbanization was a process of feminization and demonstrates the ways in which "liberal and revolutionary politics defined their tasks as the reappropriation of normativity" (Ferguson 53). Denny and Jimmie Joe, in contrast, meet the same end as Bigger precisely *because* they have been pushed by society's expectations of them—through the photographic and juridical "frame (-up)" (8), in Wallace's terms—toward heteronormativity.

Bonner's stories highlight that the production of racial geographies depends on the power of these intersecting race, class, and gender frames. "Nothing New" (1926), written before Bonner moved to Chicago, was her first story to introduce the world of Frye Street: a neighborhood clearly inspired by the South Side, especially given the story's preoccupation with

a Black boy crossing into "the white kids' side" (72).[74] The frame surrounding the narrative about Denny Jackson, the son of migrants from Georgia, emphasizes Frye Street's transition from being "like muddy water in a brook" to "unmix[ing] itself. Flow[ing] apart" (Bonner 69, 76). This frame uses the imagery of a "muddy brook" that "pooled in the clearest pool" to raise a central problem explored in Bonner's oeuvre (Bonner 69): the consequences of superficial observation. People see themselves in the clear water of the unmixed pool, but

> [i]f they had looked deeper—deeper than themselves—they might have seen God.
>
> But they did not.
>
> People do not do that—do they?
>
> They do not always understand. Do they? (Bonner 76-7).

This conclusion suggests that there is a more nuanced way of reading the separation of the multiethnic Frye Street into white and Black, but the question highlights the seeming unattainability of that level of understanding.

A sensitive child attracted to a purple flower "on the white kids' side" of the park, Denny goes to art school as a teenager, where he begins to date the white Pauline Hammond. When a white male student attacks him, accusing him Denny of "rushing after" Pauline and, preceded by a slur, commanding him to "[s]tay on your own side" (Bonner 75), Denny recognizes that this is again "[t]hat old fight—the flower, bending toward him. He'd move the white kid!" (Bonner 76). Bonner is drawing an obvious connection between the purple flower and Pauline Hammond

[74] This is an obvious reference, as Flynn, Balshaw, and Wilks concur, to the Red Summer of 1919—and specifically to the Chicago Race Riot, which started with attacks on a black boy who swam into the de facto white side of the lake, between the 25th and 29th Street beaches. As Janet Abu-Lughod describes, a combination of economic and spatial conflicts, especially the intersections of racial and labor unrest, created the conditions for the riot—"interethnic tensions at the workplace were often projected into residential space and vice versa" (57). But importantly, spatial segregation intensified *after* the riot: "The often-mentioned 'cure' for Chicago's race problem was to separate the races … The first 88 [racial restrictive] covenants signed in Chicago came in the peak five-year period between 1925 and 1929" (Abu-Lughod 64-5), exactly the period in which Bonner published "Nothing New."

(whom he first notices when splattered in purple paint): "when the childhood incident is replayed in Denny's adult life it is a battle over sexual as well as spatial relations, emphasising the intimate experience of larger (racialised) social structures" (Balshaw 91).

But Balshaw fails to note that the correspondence between spatial and sexual relations exposed by the story is produced by cultural narratives about gender roles—and this is what "Nothing New" so deftly demonstrates. Even before Denny gets into trouble with the white kids, his mannerisms concern his parents; Wilks similarly notes that "he upsets his father by troubling gender norms" (99). "'Stop that jigging, you Denny,' Bessie always cried," praying "'Don't let him be no dancing man … no toy-tin fool man'" (Bonner 70). With allusion to minstrelsy, Bessie's worries already highlight how racism operates through gendered frames. And his father Reuben's reaction illustrates "the limited outlets Denny will have for addressing future conflicts" (Wilks 99): "Denny looked too—well as Reuben thought no boy should look," so he tells Denny, "'Why don't you run and wrestle and race with the other boys? You must be a girl. Boys play rough and fight!" (Bonner 70). These early moments in the story highlight that Denny is dealing with more than just *racialized* "social structures" in his multiple crossings of the color-line. Those moments of racial crossing—and of fighting back—show Denny grappling with his ability to conform to gender norms: the conflict comes not just from Denny's socially unacceptable attraction to the *white* side, but also from his deviant, because feminized, sensibility.

It is significant that the white kid at the park taunts Denny, "Sissy nigger! Picking flowers!" (Bonner 71); the racial and gender slurs go hand in hand. The controversy surrounding Denny's relationship with fellow art student Pauline begins when a classmate spots them together at "a Sargent exhibit" (Bonner 75). And in contrast to the white classmate's socially scripted accusation that Denny is "rushing after" Pauline, the narrator describes Denny's

attraction coming from Pauline's ability to see beyond artificial facades and stereotypes: "She did not talk to people as if they were strange hard shells she had to crack open to get inside. She talked as if she were already in the shell. In their very shell" (Bonner 74). This language recalls that of "On Being Young," positing Pauline as a model of feminine understanding and "discrimination of the right sort." Like Pauline, Bessie—the only other prominent female character in Denny's life—refuses to fit her son into normative frames. When the neighborhood protests Bessie and Reuben's decision to send their son to art school—all for stereotypical reasons (the Italians think he should "marry a wife"; the Jews remark, "'He should earn money!' … through [their] hooked noses" [Bonner 73])—Bessie is the only one to take pride in her son's talent and believe that he might be able to make something of it: "'The teachers at the high school say he know how to paint special like'" (Bonner 73). Reuben, who earlier had accused his son of being too girlish, wants him "to go somewhere and do some real man's work" (Bonner 73).

Ultimately, then, when Denny "did move the white kid. Moved him so completely that doctors and doctors and running and wailing could not cause his body to stir again. Moved him so far that Denny was moved to the County Jail" (Bonner 76), Denny sets in motion the predetermined narrative that even his own father has been encouraging. By acting out the part of a strong man who fights back—an "emergent identity" that the narrative shows to have been "born not out of essence but out of necessity and force" (Wilks 100)—Denny is pathologized in the community's eyes:

> The judge moved the jury with pleas to see justice done for a man who had sacrificed his life for the beautiful and true. The jury moved that the old law held: one life taken, take another.

Denny—they took Denny.

Up at the school the trustees moved. 'Be it enacted this day—no Negro student shall enter within these doors—."

The newspapers moved their readers. Sent columns of descriptions of the "hypnotized frail flower under the spell of Black Art." (Bonner 76)

Whereas in *Native Son* acting out a variant of this narrative offers Bigger Thomas a first glimpse at his own potential agency, Denny has the opposite experience. Conforming to the stereotype ultimately undermines his agency; he may have strangled Allen with his own hands, but the repercussions go beyond that of his own execution. By enacting the role of the violent and sexualized Black man, Denny throws in motion a set of actions that work to segregate the school and the community and once again popularize the image of dangerous Black masculinity.

That popular image of Black masculinity, as Rashad Shabazz, as well as *Black Metropolis*, shows, is significantly tied to mobility, a connection evoked in this passage by the litany of "moves" that coalesce into the predetermined narrative. Each time the text repeats the word "move," it is with a difference: moving as physical displacement (and euphemism for murder), as affective performance, as legal act, as taking place. The affective moves impose a unitary perspective: viewing the white kid as interchangeable with the childhood white kid, viewing Denny as a dangerous murderer, viewing Pauline as the white damsel in distress. The administrative moves order the narrative: Denny will be executed, the school will be segregated. Through this repetition, the passage highlights how aesthetic actions build on one another to produce and stabilize the hegemonic frame. As the title "Nothing New" suggests, the consequences of crossing the color-line repeat themselves as each conflict mirrors the previous one. But, more importantly, this story offers the insight that those racial conflicts are never new

because repeated narratives about race, gender, and class perpetuate them.

Bonner returned to this theme in 1934 with "Tin Can," essentially a more developed version of the narrative played out in "Nothing New." Protagonist Jimmie Joe, a teenager who loves to dance and who steals money from his hard-working mom, is sentenced to electrocution for stabbing and killing a romantic rival at a social dance. Through its attentiveness to gender roles and the reality of working-class survival—in particular to Jimmie's attempts to perform masculinity as represented by pop culture and to his Ma's entrapment by her domestic work—the text emphasizes the imbrication of race-, gender-, and class-based discrimination.

"Tin Can" uses generalizations to evoke the conventional frames of perception upon which readers might rely to understand Jimmie's life. For example, his high school is described thus: "Situated as it was in the middle of the Black Belt of that big northern city, nobody called the school the colored high school, but everything in it from top to bottom, from janitor to principal was some one of the varieties of Negro" (Bonner 125). This story does not mention Frye Street by name, but it is also set in a Black Belt clearly meant to be in Chicago yet nevertheless generalizable, referring only to "that big northern city." The narrator emphasizes that this generalizability comes from the interplay between cultural narratives and material conditions, that it functions to maintain a stereotypical reality through economic and political discrimination. Because the "School Board" sees this school through the frame of the "Black Belt," they "sent all the colored children from every district there" and "appointed colored teachers with the proper qualifications to this one high school" (Bonner 125). That is, the actions that produce segregation are facilitated by the ideological frame that describes and defines Black Belts and the lives lived within them. This frame is portable: "You have seen Jimmie Joe's gang in every Negro section of every city of any size in the world" (Bonner 125). The narrator

implicates the reader, again with second-person present perfect address, in seeing the world through this transposable frame, and in doing so she draws on it herself. This phrasing likewise recalls the way in which the journal *Opportunity* presented Bonner's work to readers as representative of "not an uncommon phenomenon" ("A Sealed Pod").

Yet when the narrator evokes the ubiquitous frame for understanding Black Belts, she does so to complicate it—and also to undermine the adoption of that frame by some discourses of racial uplift. Echoing the title "Nothing New" and the rhetoric of "On Being Young," the narrator of "Tin Can" describes an assembly given by the unsympathetic school principal:

> The Black Bass Drum rapped out his usual monotonous roundel of so much palaver … There were no new arrangements of words. It was all so empty, so vacant, so useless, so futile. Nobody—nobody—nowhere by talking from a platform can make you really know things that need to be induced gently, firmly, carefully, steadily into the essence of you every moment of your life. It's too late when fourteen years or more of haphazard, slap-dash, hit-or-miss, grab-bag living has snatched you through the lowly life of poor colored homes in black sections. (Bonner 128)

This story expands the meaning of the "nothing new" motif from signifying the repetition of color-line conflicts to implicating the "arrangements of words" that make up all patterns of life in the Black Belt. In this case, the principal, whom Drake and Cayton might label a "Race Man," rehearses platitudes about respectability: "'Character is everything. I never forget my fellowman! It's easier to be good than to be bad!'" (Bonner 128). This message from the "Black Bass Drum" repeats a pattern so familiar and unhelpful as a steady beat; his advice uncritically accedes to negative stereotypes about the moral character of Black Belt inhabitants. What needs to be

"induced gently, firmly, carefully, steadily," according to the narrator, is more than "good" behavior—it's an understanding of the larger social structures and ideological frames that intersect to shape their lives. The contrast between the narrator and the "Black Bass Drum" is clearly gendered, articulating Harlem Renaissance and Negritude women writers' critiques of the masculinist rhetoric that dominated their movements.

The narrator's understanding of the problem caused by "haphazard, slap-dash, hit-or-miss, grab-bag living" is attentive to gender in ways that the principal's respectability politics ignores. The story suggests that Black Belt teenagers, searching for structure, gravitate toward popular narratives that offer models of what life looks like when not constrained by poverty and racism. But the normative gender roles encoded in those models only further entangle the characters in systems of oppression, trapping them in racist narratives about their behavior. Describing the dance where Jimmie Joe kills Dan Grey, the narrator explains that everyone

> patterned [their] every action … after the only examples of the niceties of living that any of them ever saw.
>
> The movies!
>
> Unconsciously, too, as [Caroline] mimed and copied, Jimmie puffed up in the role of the offended, jealous sweetheart. (Bonner 134)

And at Jimmie's court hearing, the gang members abide by codes of conduct disseminated by "'Crafty Detective Stories' and the movies—the sort of things all of them lived by," remaining silent about the evidence that might help Jimmie Joe: they confess neither that "those older Wild Cats had taken Dan's gun and unstrapped his knife from the leather band on his wrist before they called the police" (Bonner 137), nor that "it was George who snatched at his own hook-shaped knife and thrust it into Jimmie Joe's right hand" (Bonner 136). Jimmie's life and death are both

understood through narrative frames that long preceded him and will likewise outlast him.

The narrator also pays attention to the patterns that shape Jimmie's mother's life, dwelling on her movements back and forth in the family's apartment and across the city to the house of the white family she cleans for. She details Ma's embodied daily routine: cleaning the apartment from "five-thirty to seven" in the morning, "walking back and forth from her bedroom to the kitchen as she ate," "at work when the boys came back from school" and still "at work when they came home to supper," finally arriving home at eight with steps "slow by then and her breathing hard" (Bonner 121). Her life is dictated by repetition, and this is not lost on her children who only "saw her to talk to her on week days [at] the time in the morning when she was walking back and forth, drinking a sip of tea, putting her dress on, eating a fork full of grits, putting her hat on" (Bonner 121). In order to act out the masculine social role to which he aspires, Jimmie steals eighty-two cents from Ma, ultimately embarrassing her at Krönen's Bakery where she tries to buy a cake and discovers that she doesn't have the money to both pay for it and also take the streetcar to arrive at work on time. By the end of the story, as Ma thinks "[b]etter to scrub a million floors and plod back home on dog-tired feet to cook, clean and scrub there, if only there would be once more a slim black brown boy, dancing, jigging, joking, eating" (Bonner 138-9), she faints on the street in front of Krönen's, "flooded with a rush of bitter sorrow" (Bonner 139).

Ma is misread by white community members and taken to the police station: "Where the devil do you 'spose these nigger women go to get drunk so early in the morning?" (Bonner 139).[75] The patrol car driver's remark—like the white boy's racialized "sissy" taunt in "Nothing

[75] A later story of Bonner's, "The Whipping" (1939), repeats this motif. The protagonist Lizabeth is arrested at the relief station for being drunk and carrying a knife, when in reality she is just hungry, exhausted, and frustrated that no one is willing to help her. As with the detailed descriptions of Ma's movements in "Tin Can," the narrator of "The Whipping" emphasizes the distances that Lizabeth must walk to reach the relief station: the exhaustion that

New"—is so obviously erroneous, viewing her through the hegemonic frame that obfuscates what is really going on, which the story has shown its readers. Bonner's empathy for Ma is obvious given the character's embodiment of the silent female figure who waits and "draw[s] understanding" to herself in "On Being Young" (Bonner 7): "Ma—like all women—had her ear tuned to the melody that might be someday, somewhere" (Bonner 122). "Tin Can" demonstrates how Ma's poverty obstructs her capacity to act on the insights that she gathers, how powerful frames project drunkenness onto the collapsing figure and obfuscate the reality that she is hungry and exhausted. The determinism of the story comes from the social structures that confine Ma to a life of 12-hour-plus workdays and the stories upon which Jimmie and his friends "pattern" their lives. It is definitively not Ma's inability to spend time with Jimmie—as her white employer, who "somehow felt responsible" believes (Bonner 137)—that should be blamed for his delinquency, but rather the larger interaction of these cultural narratives, to which the story attunes its readers—implicating those readers in understanding and reading the Black Belt through the same harmful frames.

The Denny/Jimmie Joe parallel reveals the acts of misdirection and repetition that produce the archetype of the murderous Black man, emphasizing the material consequences of imagined patterns. Bonner's stories also play with juxtaposing opposing social types, which emphasizes the heterogeneity within the Black Belt obscured by the hegemonic frame's focus on singular stereotypes. In "Stones for Bread" (written in 1940 and published posthumously), the educated but financially challenged relief workers John and Lucy turn to John's Uncle Dan and

ultimately lands her in a women's reformatory results from the way she has been forced to inhabit the city's discriminatory geography. For more on "The Whipping," see Sophia Bamert and Hsuan L. Hsu, "The Spatial Turn and Critical Race Studies" in *The City in American Literature and Culture* (Cambridge UP, 2021).

Aunt Mary when they think Lucy is pregnant. John's "dicty" parents refuse to respect Dan and Mary because they both work as janitors:

> Uncle Dan was John's mother's brother. Margaret—John's mother—liked to think privately that all she and Dan had in common was parenthood. …
>
> Privately Margaret wished that John Senior had the ready money Dan always had and that she herself had inherited her brother's wavy hair.
>
> But if she talked down her *nose* about Dan's work, she talked further down it about Dan's wife.
>
> Who ever heard of a man with any get up to him marrying a wife who was content to live in white folks' basements full of white folks' cast-offs—a wife who got up at four o'clock in the morning and scrubbed and cleaned all day right beside her husband like a man? (Bonner 260)

The juxtaposition between Margaret and Mary highlights the centrality of public "fronts," especially as they relate to gendered class divisions within the Black community. The Black middle class strives to present itself according to a vision of sophistication that is particularly gendered (see also "Black Fronts," mentioned earlier). Lucy and John are struggling to make ends meet, after all, because of Lucy's expensive and "carefully cultivated mannerisms of dress and living" (Bonner 257). The Black middle class propagates discrimination against working-class Black women through a combination of its disavowal of physical labor and its financial recklessness: "Lucy could do her nails and keep them done and could have her hair waved and keep the wave in it a long time because she never held her face over a washtub of steaming water or put her hands in a dishpan either" (Bonner 257). The same self-consciousness about hair underlies Margaret's jealousy of her brother and sister-in-law and motivates her to sneer at their

jobs, which further racialize their appearance. Margaret disdains Mary's labor in particular because not only is it racialized (living and working underneath "white folks"), but also gendered masculine (she works "beside her husband" not in domestic spaces but in basements).

Yet Mary's job makes Margaret nervous precisely because of its hidden centrality: "Between them, [Dan and Mary] took care of twelve buildings. Between them they garnered three hundred dollars a month, working day and night for it" (Bonner 255). While middle-class Black women like Lucy and Margaret strive to present themselves as commercial and social equals to white women, Mary does not hide her position in the racial capitalist system. She may not appear to conform to social norms of femininity, but she is in fact more financially stable than Margaret, and she is responsible for the physical spaces in which white people live. The basement-dwelling Mary emblematizes how, as McKittrick writes, "Black women's knowable sense of place is often still found 'in the last place they thought of,' across the logic of white and patriarchal maps" (62). Her geographic role is concealed beneath the surface of the city, and this ultimately makes her "such a real woman" in John's eyes (Bonner 266).

Of course, this does not confer Mary with recognizable or effective power. But the juxtaposition of these women calls into question Margaret and Lucy's frame of perception, which is itself predicated on the white frame that values light skin and conspicuous consumption. Nevertheless, Mary gives John and Lucy money when John's parents refuse to; she can sympathize with the suffering that she identifies beneath Lucy's front—on the "bottom of the design" (Bonner 156), to borrow a phrase from "Black Fronts." While the juxtapositions in Bonner's fiction may appear to pit foils and frames against one another, they ultimately emphasize that interconnected social dynamics and ideological aesthetics contribute to the production of each of the seeming opposites. That is, Bonner's short stories compellingly

demonstrate the interaction and intersection of these frames, exposing their multiplicity while also accounting for the ways in which a single normative frame emerges, presenting itself as the only option.

The 1936 story "A Sealed Pod," with the interaction of its titular metaphor and its allusions to previous Frye Street stories, strikingly depicts the repercussions of framing in terms of stale tropes. The narrative revolves around an interracial affair, a murder, and the conviction of an innocent man, all on Frye Street, where

> everything and everybody in the case was side by side—like peas in the pod.
>
> But the pod was sealed.
>
> And the peas did not touch each other. (Bonner 148)

The story emphasizes that the street is a zone of contact where multiracial and multiethnic characters watch the dramas of the neighborhood unfold through their windows and doors. These physical frames proffer distance and allow the Frye Street residents to understand one another as social types enacting conventional narratives. The em dash that holds apart the phrases "side by side" and "like peas in the pod" reifies this separation on the page, while the simile emphasizes the fragility of those imagined divisions. These people, despite asserting their distance and difference from one another, are nevertheless "side by side"; as manifested by the em dash, segregation is its own form of contact. Their contact is exposed as explicitly physical and brought inside those windows and doors through the men who "flowed in and out" of house number nine, where the murdered Viollette Aurora had "entertained a varied assortment of men of every race every night" (Bonner 142). Precisely because the people think of themselves as though in a sealed pod, denying their interconnected lives, they are able to accuse an innocent

man of killing Viollette, a consensus that works to preserve each individual's selfish interest in the case rather than to interrogate what actually happened.

With her typical second-person address, Bonner implicates the reader in approaching Frye Street through the same assumptions that allow its residents to turn away from the facts in the murder case. This is effected through a reenactment of the description of the neighborhood first found in "Nothing New" and "A Possible Triad":

> Frye Street, as you know, runs from Grand Avenue where the 'L' is to the big river that skirts the city. It runs from Heaven to Hell (as I have already told you) with its little brick houses—too filled with every race on the earth.
>
> Strange things can happen there.
>
> Strange things. (Bonner 142)

The addition of "as you know" and its parenthetical repetition "(as I have already told you)" assumes that readers have read Bonner's previous Frye Street stories, indicating that they likely also recognize the numerous characters from other stories who reappear in "A Sealed Pod." Moreover, the asides imply that, even if the reader has not read Bonner's previous stories, they should nevertheless understand what this neighborhood is, for it is overdetermined through cultural narratives. It is worth noting that this is the same story I cited earlier for its naming of "Frye Street (black)" (Bonner 141), with the periphractic parenthetical that reminds us of what we already assume or know to be true. But even more striking about the repetitions and allusions of this passage—the narrator's bold insistence that "you" know Frye Street already—is its ironic staging of normative knowledge production and discrimination. Asserting her agency in building this world, the narrator demonstrates the power of repetition to establish a normative frame. This implicates more than just the white community (or the academic community, or the politically

influential community, etc.) for parroting harmful perspectives and narratives about Black neighborhoods. It implicates both the fictional Frye Street residents and Bonner's readers for having bought into them. And, as the reader recognizes this diegetic world because it is populated with familiar characters and described using close paraphrases of other stories' settings, it highlights the role of the author in also popularizing the image of segregated "Frye Street (black)." That "[s]trange things can happen there," the story shows, can be a self-fulfilling prophecy.

The trademark forms of Bonner's short stories, then, demonstrate the processes by which discriminatory stereotypes take root both ideologically and materially, while they simultaneously challenge readers to practice "discrimination of the right sort." Reading her work through the lens of the frame highlights how this process relies on both perspective—how one sees—and narrative—what one expects to see over time. Bonner's social realism is thus marked by its blend of naturalist narrative, which examines the strong influence of social structures on individuals' lives and enacts the effects of the hegemonic frame, and modernist form, which destabilizes that hegemonic frame and prompts readers to notice the other available frames of understanding being coopted and/or overpowered by the dominant one. Her work deserves attention for both this formal innovation and for its thus-far neglected centrality in the broader community project of the Black Chicago Renaissance, which was grappling with similar questions about the framing of racialized geographies. Reading Bonner's work in its contemporary context thereby demonstrates the value of linking the affordances of textual form to the politics and aesthetics of community action.

Coda: The Great Curve and Black Spatial Critique

"There will be no edges, but curves. / … we'll drift / In the haze of space, which will be, once / And for all, scrutable and safe." –Tracy K. Smith, "Sci-Fi"

In W. E. B. Du Bois's short story "The Princess Steel," which was written between 1908 and 1910 but remained unpublished until 2015, a white couple—recent graduates in sociology at the University of Chicago—visit the laboratory of sociologist Professor Hannibal Johnson on the top floor of the Whistler building in New York for a demonstration of "the results of his great experiments" (822). Much to their surprise and "disagreeabl[e] shock[]" (Du Bois 822), Professor Johnson is a Black man, and his approach to sociology is rather unconventional. Indeed, the encounter between these representatives of canonical Chicago school sociology and a Black alternative sociological tradition stages Du Bois's critique of "the empirical myopia" and "presentist empiricism" of the former, which make its approach unable to account for the material conditions produced by imperialism and racial capitalism (Brown and Rusert in Du Bois 820). The story "The Princess Steel" thus exemplifies an aesthetic tradition of Black spatial critique that went along with Du Bois's sociological method—an alternative aesthetic emerging simultaneously to the naturalism of Fuller, Dreiser, and Riis, and one that Bonner and Wright, in their own formal rearticulations and revisions, were building on.

The Black sociologist in "The Princess Steel" presents his visitors with a rather grand theory of sociology: his "megascope" will make visible the "Great Near," revealing how "the epic timescale of capitalism—and its global imperialist methods—shap[e] the conditions of the present," as Adrienne Brown and Britt Rusert explain in their introduction to the story (820). The

professor describes the problem he is trying to solve: "You know we can see the great that is far by means of the telescope and the small that is near by the means of the microscope. We can see the Far Great and the Near Small but not the Great Near" (Du Bois 823). Unlike the abstracting, universalizing theories of the Chicago school, the "Great Near" emerges from material histories—and Du Bois utilizes spatial forms to render it perceptible. In the story, he explores the critical affordances of the same form, the curve, that distinguishes the sociological data visualizations that he and his students produced for the 1900 Exposition Universelle in Paris.

I conclude this dissertation with a meditation on Du Bois's curves as an emblematic form of Black critical knowledge production and geographic perception. Throughout, I have been considering the relationship between sociology and textual and visual aesthetics as they make sense of and contribute to the production of racial geographies. My telling has focused, however, on conventionally rectilinear forms that naturalize specific expectations and ways of seeing: for example, the geographic plot as rectangular subdivision and the narrative plot as catalyst for linear progressions, or the line as both an aesthetic and spatial expression of supposedly clear, often binary boundaries. But as I have shown—and as the work of Black modernists like Wright and Bonner immanently theorizes—the very conventionality and transposability of those forms disguises all of the messy contradictions inherent to them. By ending with a jump back in time to Du Bois's early sociology and speculative fiction, I wish to highlight that he created an alternative genealogy of social science and aesthetics. Whereas my readings of Wright and Bonner focus on their critiques of spatial, narrative, and visual forms that have reified uneven, discriminatory racial geographies, I turn to Du Bois because he shows us the potential of a completely different kind of form, one that, his work suggests, explicitly requires that we adopt a

critical, relational view of data and difference. Wright's and Bonner's critiques were themselves made possible by this curvy mode of perception.

In "The Princess Steel," Du Bois fictionalizes the sociological questions that he was also investigating empirically, making Professor Johnson a stand-in for himself. As I discussed in the introduction, Du Bois's Atlanta school of sociology is defined by its "inductive method," which "took into account both [the] patterned, lawlike character and [the] unpredictable rhythms produced by human agency" (Morris 29). The couple in the story discovers that Professor Johnson has an extensive library, which he calls "the Great Chronicle" (Du Bois 822): "just the everyday facts of life but kept with surprising accuracy by a Silent Brotherhood for 200 years" (Du Bois 823). This vast archive of daily life allows Professor Johnson to see the Great Near through his megascope, "a vast solid crystal globe" (Du Bois 823). Showing the couple "a great frame over which was stretched a thin transparent film, covered with tiny rectangular lines, and pierced with tiny holes," he describes how the megascope works:

> A dot measured by height and breadth on a plane surface like this may measure a single human deed in two dimensions. Now place plane on plane, dot over dot and you have a history of these deeds in days and months and years; … but I go further: If now these planes be curved about one center and reflected to and fro we get a curve of infinite curvings which is … the Law of Life. … but when I would cast the great lines of this Curve I was continually hampered by curious counter-curves and shadows and crossings. (Du Bois 823)

That is, by plotting data in three dimensions, placing planes—and thus frames—on top of one another, Professor Johnson both discovers and represents a sociological law rooted in material history. But that history is not a simple or transparent one: in the "shadowing curves" he

discovers "a social Over-life—a life of Over-men, Super-men, … who today are guiding the world events and dominating the lives of men" (Du Bois 823). Observing the "counter-curves" that unaccountably emerge from the data, the fictional sociologist develops a world systems theory that links the present day to the mechanisms of racial capitalism.

This is an idea that Du Bois had explored in his own sociology a decade earlier. The graphs and charts that he and his Atlanta University students created for the American Negro Exhibit at the 1900 Exposition Universelle in Paris—before he wrote "The Princess Steel"—offer a visual template of the curve's critical possibility. These data visualizations are Du Bois's real-world vision through the megascope. Collectively, his two sets of data, *The Georgia Negro: A Social Study* and *A Series of Statistical Charts Illustrating the Condition of the Descendants of Former African Slaves Now in Residence in the United States of America*, undermined the prevailing social Darwinism of the era (and, specifically, of World's Fairs). These images highlighted to the world the rapid progress of African Americans in the few decades since emancipation—progress they had achieved "*in spite of* the machinery of white supremacist culture, policy, and law that surrounded them" (Battle-Baptiste and Rusert 22.). Using color and unconventional graphical representations, these graphs defamiliarize numerical relations that highlight the inequalities faced by African Americans in the U.S., and in Georgia in particular.[76] Sarah Wilson argues that Du Bois's writings return again and again to numerical figures as a means of "rendering both the artifice and the real promise of personhood" for African Americans post Reconstruction ("Quantification" 29), because "numbers," for Du Bois, "offer a means of

[76] Considering specifically the role of cartography in these data visualizations, Mabel O. Wilson asserts, "Du Bois and his team redeployed the Western methods of cartography that had been used to marginalize and exploit black life by inscribing the black world back into history and geography" (42).

analyzing existing orders and expressing alternative ones" ("Quantification" 42). But he not only evoked the quantitative in his rhetoric; his approach to sociology also treats data aesthetically.

Du Bois's approach to data visualization decenters the viewer's assumptions, exposing the aesthetic ideologies always implicit in the gathering, presenting, and interpreting of data in its transformation into information. If we regard his sociology through Wilson's lens, we find that he was "crossing and recrossing the quantification line" that had "sever[ed] the study of letters from that of numbers" in this work as well; his graphs and maps are likewise "pit[] … against the advance of social and intellectual segregation at the end of the nineteenth century" ("Quantification" 42). Whitney Battle-Baptiste and Britt Rusert, in their recently published anthology of these images, expand on the power of Du Bois's disciplinary crossings: "The cross-fertilization of visual art and social science here marks an important transitional moment in the history of the disciplines while offering alternative visions of how social scientific data might be made more accessible to the populations and people from whom such data is collected" (13). Moreover, "The collaborative nature of work that went into the construction of the images as well as their public exhibition illuminate Du Bois's investment in a truly public sociology" (Battle-Baptiste and Rusert 13). The innovative and artistic presentation of this sociological data highlights the radical possibilities of a collective, public sociology. But it also demands that data gatherers and viewers alike change their approach to viewing the data.

Du Bois's graphs pose the question: What is, to quote Bonner, the "proper frame" for sociological findings? By titling their collection *W. E. B. Du Bois's Data Portraits*, Battle-Baptiste and Rusert emphasize the need to view data otherwise, as both numeric and aesthetic. We can look to the material history of the exhibition to consider how these "data portraits" ought to be—and even were—framed: in an "elusive and fascinating detail," one of the charts was

displayed in Paris in a wooden frame carved by a former slave—highlighting "the ways that slavery continued to quite literally *frame* the present" (Battle-Baptiste and Rusert 19). But I suggest that we can look for an answer to this question within the images themselves. In their aesthetic engagement with the space of the page, we encounter a form that enables alternative modes of looking, understanding, and producing knowledge: the curve. The curves of Du Bois's graphs emphasize relationality and historicity, drawing attention to the interactions between the data and their surrounding contexts.

In some of the images, curves call attention to scale. In "Number of Negro Students Taking the Various Courses of Study Offered in Georgia Schools" (Figure 14), a curving bar next to the category "Industrial" emphasizes the huge disparity in educational and career tracks available to African Americans. Without the curves that allow the bar to snake back and forth, the number of Black students pursuing an industrial education would be, quite literally, off the charts. Rather than changing the frame—the scale of the page—to accommodate these numbers in a single line, and thus make the other categories appear even more insignificant in comparison, this approach creates space for those African Americans who have managed to pursue science, teaching,

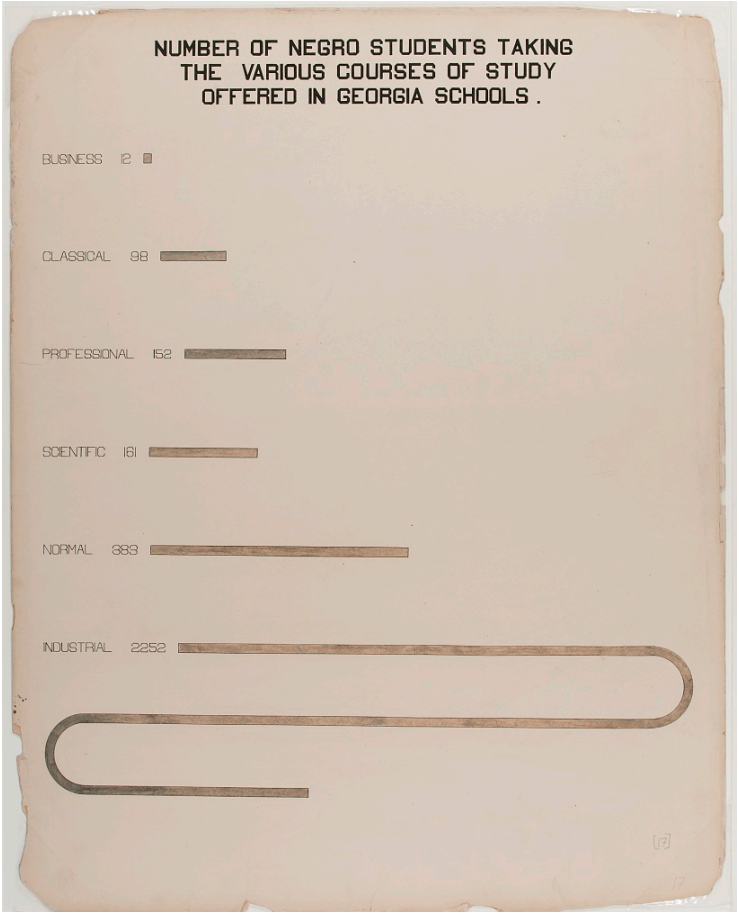

Figure 14 https://www.loc.gov/item/2013650436/

and professional degrees. At the same time, the unusual use of the curve causes the "dramatic ratio" of industrial students to stand out (Battle-Baptiste and Rusert, "Number"), highlighting the power of the systems in place to hold back African Americans in menial positions. Multiple horizontal bar graphs in the series make use of this approach, including the related "Occupations of Georgia Negroes." The curves in these images demand that viewers notice the edges of the frame, the dimensions of the scale.

The curve, as opposed to the straight line that divides one space from another, engages with the negative space on the page it is moving through. In "Valuation of Town and City Property Owned By Georgia Negroes" (Figure 15), which Battle-Baptiste and Rusert refer to as "one of the most overtly political charts in the Georgia study," the "undulating black line" marking fluctuations in Black property values is visually contrasted with two other

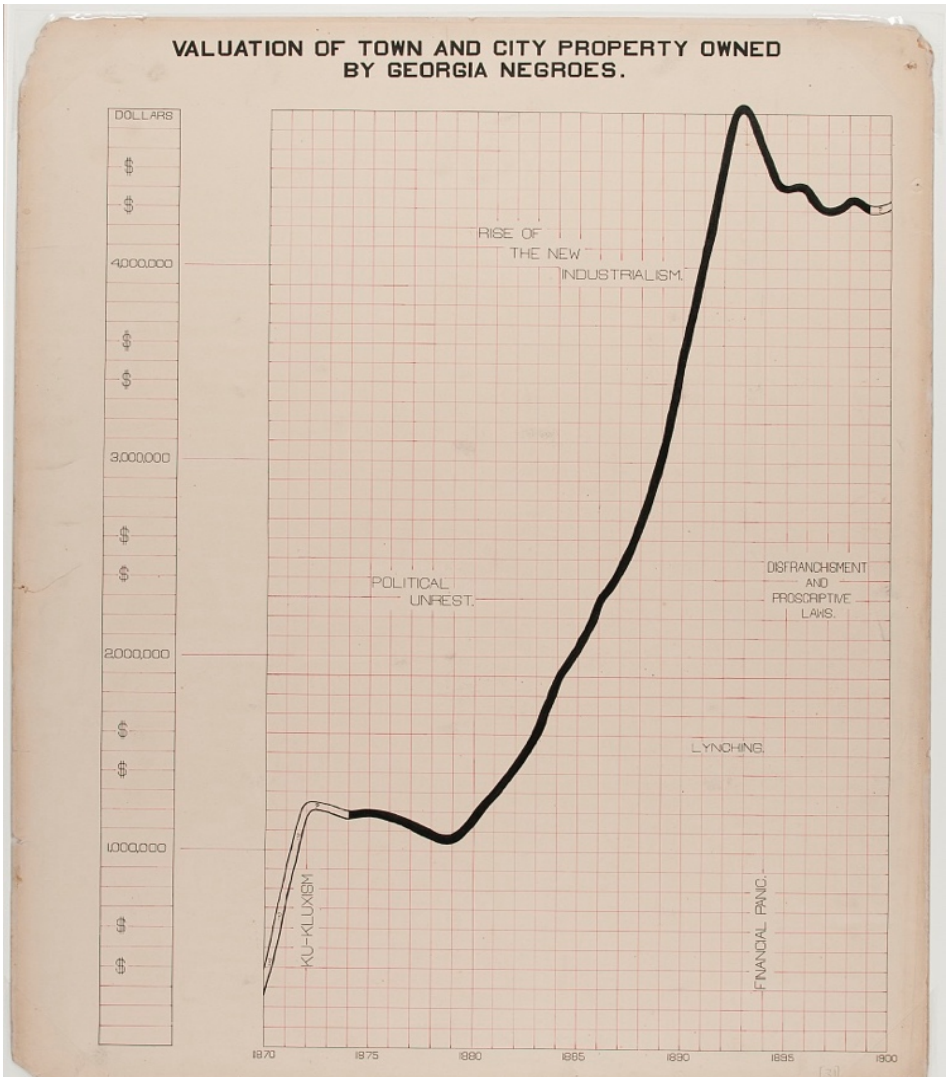

Figure 15 https://www.loc.gov/item/2013650441/

elements: a red rectilinear grid, and labels arranged both vertically and horizontally that describe sociopolitical contexts ("Rise of the New Industrialism," "Ku-Kluxism," "Financial Panic," "Lynching," etc.). The simple axes of value and time, this graph argues, are insufficient to explain both African Americans' significant financial progress and their more recent net losses. The curve carves through sociopolitical context that a conventional graph would leave out. The form of this graph transforms it into much more than a report on financial statistics: it becomes a meditation on the relations between Blackness and value.

A final iteration of the curve that appears in two graphs from the *Georgia Negro* series is perhaps the most innovative, and certainly the most artistic: the spiral. Curving lines morph into spirals in images that visually accentuate the force of progress in the face of systemic racism—the constant backward or downward tug against which newly freed Black Georgians are fighting in order to assert their value. In "Assessed Value of Household and Kitchen

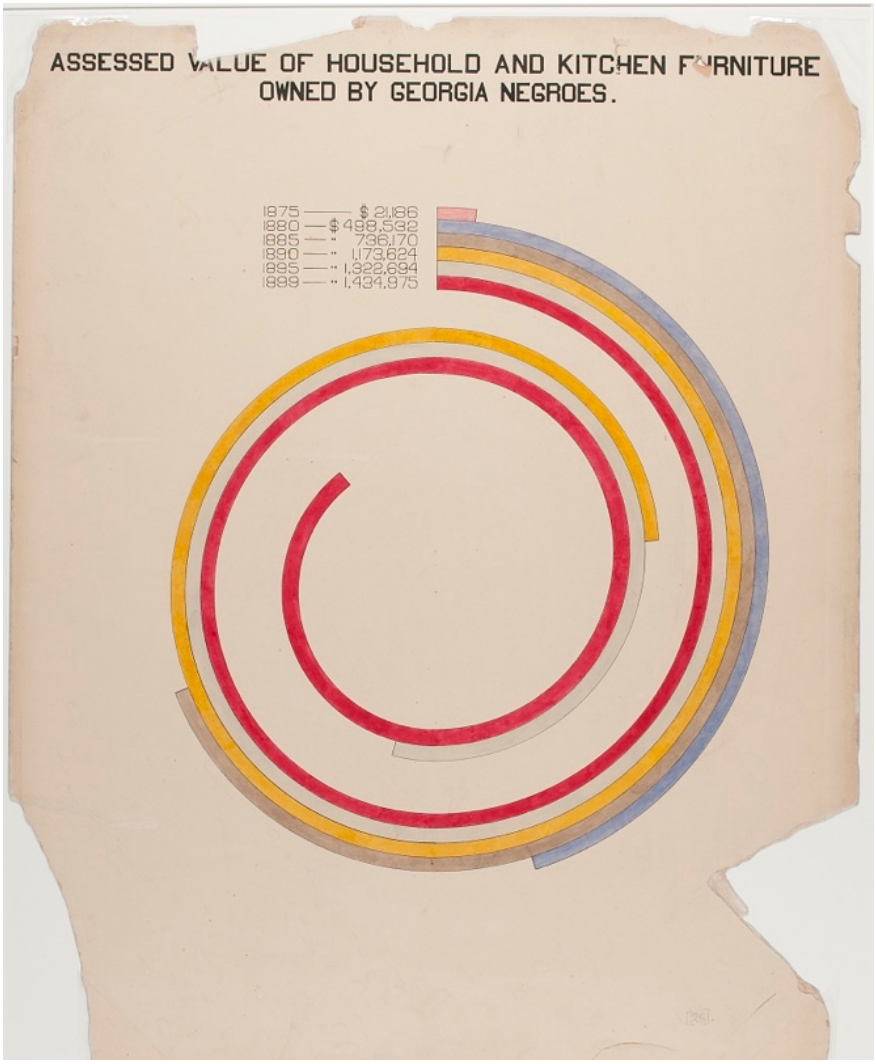

Figure 16 https://www.loc.gov/item/2013650445/

Furniture Owned by Georgia Negroes" (Figure 16), the adjacent bars touch and all curve inward, creating a spiral effect. Unlike with the back-and-forth snaking curve in Figure 14, which highlights a single stark contrast, this image shows relatively steady increases in furniture ownership in five-year increments after the first major increase from 1875 to 1880. Melding the curving bars into a single shape, this image tells a unified story of progress. Yet by placing the longer, more recent bars on the inside of the spiral—by placing the starting point at the top, rather than in the center, of the shape—the spiral draws the viewer's eye into the center, pulling inward. That hypnotic inward tug does not produce a liberatory affect—there is no sense of breaking free in this image. Instead, the direction of the curve creates an effect similar to that of Figure 15, with its reminders of sociopolitical distress and continued violence: the experience of freedom, of progress, is one of struggle. The long red curve that shows recently accumulated value is literally constrained by history in this image, forced to continue curling inwards by the shorter curves of the past.

One of the most striking images in the series, which also explores the affective and visual affordances of the spiral, extends the meditation on race and value to include geography. "City and Rural Population" (Figure 17) contrasts straight lines, which represent Georgia's Black urban populations, with a curving spiral that emphasizes the extent of the state's rural Black population. Here the spiral, situated underneath the horizontal line for large cities and the downward-angled lines for smaller cities, pulls the eye down the page. As Rusert notes in a *Smithsonian Magazine* article, this shape, reminiscent of a noose, "reminds [her] of lynching and forms of racist violence that were happening during the period," and "reflects something about just the surreal nature of segregation itself," a "regime that was wholly irrational and was also backward looking" (qtd. in Mansky). I would add that, while the contrast between linearity and

spiraling reinforces the urban-rural divide, the oversize pull of the rural spiral counterintuitively

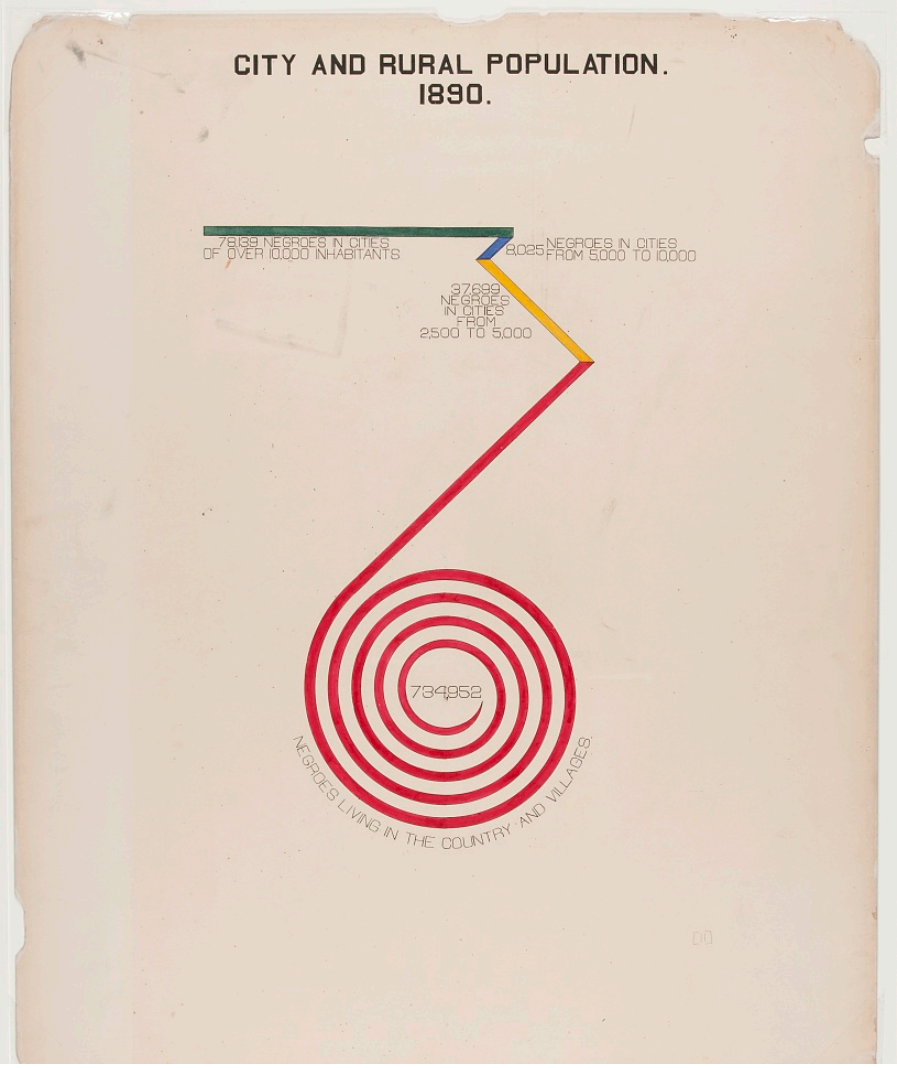

Figure 17 https://www.loc.gov/resource/ppmsca.33873/

emphasizes the linkages between the two. This visual juxtaposition suggests why Black Georgians are an overwhelmingly rural population: both because of the refusal to acknowledge African Americans as modern and urban—born from stereotypes that associate the rural with backwardness—and because of the material history of the slave trade, of the Black Belt across the South. The opening image of the *Georgia Negro* series depicts a world map that situates Georgia within the context of the slave trade and the Black Atlantic, and it is captioned with Du Bois's famous line, "The problem of the 20th century is the problem of the color-line" ("Georgia Negro"). Having introduced the color line as a global phenomenon, Du Bois proceeds to think through the relationality and historicity of the color line in "City and Rural Populations," bringing together the Black Belt of the U.S. South with the Black Belts of

segregated cities, suggesting that both are produced by the same system of racial and spatial violence. Du Bois visually make the case for understanding the color line not as straight, but instead in global, systemic, curvy context; as he wrote in 1906, "the color line belts the world" (Du Bois Papers).

The curved approach to space shatters the assumptions baked into the Cartesian grid.[77] The plot, the line, and the frame: these forms are not inherently rectilinear, but in the plan for a subdivision, in the streets of the Manhattan grid, or in the production of anti-Black binaries, they contribute to an ideology that treats straight lines as natural rather than conventional. Whereas the straight lines of the Cartesian grid repress and conceal—in order to bolster—the mechanisms of power, the curve lays them bare. As Sara Ahmed suggests, "What is astray does not lead us back to the straight line, but shows us what is lost by following that line" (79). By calling attention to curves and to the spatial relations they engender, Du Bois's graphs open the door for a reworking of form, for the possibility of perceiving oppression systemically and reimagining space equitably.

Imagining the fictional megascope in "The Princess Steel," Du Bois continued to work through the ways in which curves can reveal world-historical stories of domination. The short story's form registers possibilities for narrative curves, specifically. After Professor Johnson demonstrates the use of the megascope to his visitors—the narrator at this point deciding he is "dealing with a crank, not with a scientist"—he decides to show them the "Curve of Steel" (824). At this point, the readers discover we have thus far been in a frame story. Once in the world of the megascope, the genre suddenly changes into medieval romance—the author throws us a curveball, we might say—and we are told the story of knight-like Over-men battling for the

[77] See Chapter 2 for my discussion of rectilinearity in the Manhattan grid.

treasure of a kidnapped African princess: her maiden daughter's steel hair. Like Marita Bonner's work, "The Princess Steel" develops a Black modernist tradition that emphasizes the significance of framing. Even in the story's focus on steel, the metal that made both World War I armaments and skyscrapers possible, it registers this motif: skyscrapers are often architecturally defined by the fact that they have a *steel frame*, which is what allows them to be so tall.

The building's steel frame also makes Professor Johnson's sociological discoveries possible. As Adrienne Brown writes, "The skyscraper serves as the perch for this experimental and estranging vision connecting modern steel to centuries of primitive accumulation" (130). The critique enabled by the skyscraper's height, and by the narrative's frame story structure, is underscored at the end, when the narrator discovers that his wife has not seen the same thing through the megascope as he has—the sociologist explains that the instrument "was not tuned delicately enough for her" (Du Bois 829). Instead, she has been admiring the view of Broadway, and her tendency toward metaphorical language highlights how the legacy of primitive accumulation and settler colonialism is covered over, but not erased, by the modern architecture and urban geography of Manhattan: "'But the cliffs? Saw you not the cliffs and castles and the Lord[?]'—I hesitated. 'I only saw the great towering cliff-like buildings,' she said. 'Did you not hear the roar of the waters?' 'I heard the roar of passing wagons and the voices of men'" (Du Bois 829). While "The Princess Steel" upends its white characters'—and canonical literary and sociological—assumptions by "making the black man the keeper of modernity's prized view" (Brown 131), that "prized view," reminiscent of the opening lines of Fuller's *The Cliff-Dwellers*, is also turned on its head. From Professor Johnson's Black sociological perspective, the settler colonialism, imperialism, and racial capitalism that undergird the modern world are on full view—to those amenable to seeing it through a technology calibrated to their perceptive

apparatus. The "river and cliffs of Manhattan" (Du Bois 822), as the woman calls the view of Broadway from above, are revealed by the megascope to be linked to the island's original rivers and cliffs in a more complex, fraught power relation than the metaphor initially evokes. But one must learn how to perceive the curve and be receptive to the historical systems it exposes.

The height and vantage point that allow the Black sociologist to perceive the Great Near, enabled as they are by steel, exist within the racial capitalist system of domination. The story produces its estranged critical vision through the layering—and implosion—of frames upon frames. To render visible the Curve of Steel, whose existence provides the frame for the lofty structure on top of which the sociologist sits, Professor Johnson must layer his two-dimensional frames such that he can plot the Great Curve in three dimensions. This layering of frames reveals the shadow- and over-curves that "dominate" the world, including the Curve of Steel. The data, and its frames, seem to take us in a circle: a closed system of domination that structures everything. Yet this system's shadowy functioning also becomes perceptible through the emergence of "counter-curves." That is to say, the form of the curve both resists the frame, in its elusiveness, and underlies the very conditions for that framing.

This is why I end with Du Bois's curves, which prompt us to question the plots, lines, and frames that structure our stories and our geographies. His visual and textual curves remind us that rectilinearity need not be the default, and that such simple forms are likely covering over the complex undulations and spirals that begat them. As Ahmed emphasizes, we lose something when we follow the straight line. Curves, instead of pointing a way forward, ask viewers to engage form otherwise and sideways: to notice what is lost (and deliberately ignored) in the making of the color line, to produce knowledge out of interactions across scale and space and in the material links between past and present. Du Bois's Great Curves represent a genealogy of

Black spatial critique, a more just mode of knowledge production, that constructs out of edgeless and relational forms a vision for a world that is, in the words of poet Tracy K. Smith, “scrutable and safe.”

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