URBAN SYMPATHY:
RECONSTRUCTING AN AMERICAN LITERARY TRADITION

a dissertation

by

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Urban Sympathy:
Reconstructing an American Literary Tradition

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Addressing a gathering of social scientists at Boston’s Lowell Institute in 1870, Frederic Law Olmsted worried that the “restraining and confining conditions” of the American city compelled its inhabitants to “walk circumspectly, watchfully, jealously” and to “look closely upon others without sympathy.” Olmsted was telling his audience what many had already been saying, and would continue to say, about urban life: sympathy was hard to come by in the city. The urban intellectuals that I examine in this study view with greater optimism the affective possibilities of the city’s social landscape. Rather than describe the city as a place that necessarily precludes or interferes with the sympathetic process, late-nineteenth- and twentieth-century urban intellectuals such as Stephen Crane, Jane Addams, W. E. B. Du Bois, Joseph Mitchell, A. J. Liebling and Jane Jacobs attempt to redefine the nature of that process. Their descriptions of urban
relationships reconfigure the affective patterns that lay at the heart of a sentimental culture of sympathy—patterns that had remained, in many ways, deeply connected to those described by Adam Smith and other eighteenth-century moral philosophers.

This study traces the development of what I call “urban sympathy” by demonstrating how observers of city life translate received literary and nonliterary idioms into cultural forms that capture the everyday emotions and obligations arising in the city’s small-scale contact zones—its streets, sidewalks, front stoops, theaters, cafes and corner stores. *Urban Sympathy* calls attention to the ways in which urban intellectuals with different religious, racial, economic, scientific and professional commitments urbanize the social project of a nineteenth-century sentimental culture. Rather than view the sympathetic exchange as dependent upon access to another’s private feelings, these writers describe an affective process that deals in publicly traded emotions. Where many see the act of identification as sympathy’s inevitable product, these observers of city life tend to characterize an awareness and preservation of differences as urban sympathy’s outcome. While scholars traditionally criticize the sympathetic process for ignoring the larger social structures in which its participants are entangled, several of these writers cultivate a sympathetic style that attempts to account for individuals and the larger social, economic and political forces that shape them.
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On February 25, 1870, Frederick Law Olmsted addressed the American Social Science Association at Boston’s Lowell Institute. As a result of his leadership in the design, construction and ongoing operation of New York’s Central Park during the late 1850s and throughout the 1860s, Olmsted had become one of the nation’s most vocal interpreters of urban life. Although he would eventually try to persuade his Bostonian listeners of the civic value of building their own version of Central Park, he began his speech by telling them what they, no doubt, already knew—that the processes of urbanization that had radically reshaped their city would continue to transform the American landscape. “Of the fact of the general townward movement of the civilized world, and its comprehensiveness,” Olmsted prophesied, “there can be no doubt.” Rather than lament the inevitable disappearance of lifestyles rooted in the nation’s rural orders, Olmsted embraced the emerging forms of city life for sheltering greater democratic possibilities, educational opportunities, cultural accessibility and overall convenience. Confident that cities would play a critical role in the “further progress of civilization,” he informed his audience that it was up to them to decide what shape that this urban future would take.¹

Unlike many of his fellow urban intellectuals, Olmsted was only mildly troubled by the “amount of disease and misery and of vice and crime” to be found in cities, and assured his listeners that “modern Science” would quickly fix these problems. He expressed much more concern with the city’s corrosive effects upon the interactions
among its inhabitants. In what may be one of the earliest and most genteel descriptions of modern road rage, Olmsted explained that when he and those gathered to hear him walked “through the denser part of a town, to merely avoid collision with those we meet and pass upon the sidewalks, we have constantly to watch, to foresee, and to guard against their movements.” Such navigational cautiousness demanded a careful “consideration of [others’] intentions, a calculation of their strength and weakness, which is not so much for their benefit as our own.” On the city’s streets and sidewalks, Olmsted fretted, “[o]ur minds are thus brought into close dealings with other minds without any friendly flowing toward them, but rather a drawing from them.” The city’s built environment encouraged those who moved through it to regard each other “in a hard if not always hardening way.” For Olmsted, the social equation of the “street contact,” rather than the usual culprits of vice and disease, was the primary source of the city’s greatest social costs.² Olmsted was telling his audience what many had already been saying, and would continue to say, about urban life: sympathy was hard to come by in the city.

By the mid-nineteenth century, the concept of sympathy had become for most Americans the social ideal against which they could measure nearly every type of relationship—a standard of social measurement that abolitionism and Reconstruction had recently reinforced in places such as Boston. Closely informed by the writings of Scottish moral philosophers such as Adam Smith, Archibald Alison, and Hugh Blair, the American culture of sympathy had taken shape in a wide variety of political, religious, educational, and cultural settings since colonial times.³ In his efforts to assess the city’s social terrain, it is not surprising, then, that Olmsted chose to stand upon the broad
conceptual shoulders of sympathy. Invoking Adam Smith’s foundational description of the sympathetic exchange, he contended that those inhabiting the social calculus of the “street contact” typically failed to close sympathy’s affective circuit. In *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759), Smith had characterized sympathy as the “fellow-feeling” produced by the act of imagining what we would feel like if we were to occupy another’s position: “we enter as it were into his body, and become in some measure the same person with him, and thence form some idea of his sensations, and even feel something which, though weaker in degree, is not altogether unlike them.” Sympathy, according to Smith, hinges upon our ability to identify with others by imagining ourselves in their place. Olmsted worried that city dwellers, in making their way through the sidewalk’s human obstacle course, would be less interested in imagining themselves in another’s position than in defending their own. In his account, urban friction generated antagonism rather than fellow-feelings among city neighbors.

Olmsted also attributed the difficulty of achieving sympathy in urban venues to the rapidly growing presence of the strangers that occupied them. Because city dwellers typically “had no experience of anything in common” with those they encountered on the city’s streets and sidewalks, they were less willing to extend to them the “friendly flowing” feelings that constitute sympathetic engagement. Even among acquaintances, Smith had admitted, the most one could hope to achieve through an “imaginary change of situation” is a feeling “analogous” to that being experienced by the object of one’s sympathy, not an exact replica. Sympathy, at best, is an “extremely imperfect” and emotionally imprecise process. Among strangers, Smith had implied, the emotional margin of error increases exponentially. For these reasons, Olmsted worried about the
ability of city dwellers to make the sympathetic leap across the increasingly wide social, economic and ethnic chasms that separated them from each other. In the city’s slums, he pointed out, it was common to find groups of “young men in knots of perhaps half a dozen in lounging attitudes rudely obstructing the sidewalks.” Because the “men, women, or children” they saw “passing in the street” were usually individuals from another class or ethnic group “whom they do not know,” and, therefore, “for whom they have no respect or sympathy,” these young men continued to clog up the sidewalk, making insensitive remarks about those they had forced to take temporary detours around them.⁷ According to Olmsted, establishing a fellow-feeling in an urban setting is at least partially predicated upon prior fellowship.

Olmsted responded to the city’s social crisis by building parks. Unlike the crowded streets, sidewalks and slums, his parks provided city dwellers a place where their gregarious instincts could run free. With their “broad, open space[s] of clean greensward,” the city parks that Olmsted designed offered their users the “greatest possible contrast with the restraining and confining conditions of the town, those conditions which compel us to walk circumspectly, watchfully, jealously, which compel us to look closely upon others without sympathy.” With plenty of space and nowhere in particular to go, Olmsted theorized that urbanites would be more inclined to engage in the sympathetic process. By taking city dwellers out of the city and putting it as “far away from them” as possible, urban parks created a space in which even strangers could begin to sympathize with each other.⁸ In distancing them from their normal urban coordinates and responsibilities, the city park supplied those who had previously shared nothing in common the common ground upon which they might now build a fellow-feeling.
The scores of urban parks that Olmsted designed throughout the country materialized the much broader culture of sympathy of which he was a part. With their open meadows, meandering paths and secluded nooks, his parks offered city dwellers a variety of settings in which to enact—on both a private and public scale—his culture’s social ideals. Olmsted cited his two New York parks as evidence of the social advantages of urban parks. In Brooklyn’s Prospect Park, which was still under construction when he spoke to the American Social Science Association, Olmsted promised there would “be room enough [. . .] for several thousand little family and neighborly parties to bivouac at frequent intervals through the summer, without discommoding one another, or interfering with any other purpose.” In this way, the urban park served as an extension of the city’s domestic interiors, offering a space in which families and other intimate gatherings could strengthen their private bonds. At the same time, Olmsted informed his audience, a place such as Central Park created the conditions in which a much larger cross-section of the city could engage in the sympathetic process. Only in Central Park, he boasted, could one find a body of Christians coming together, and with an evident glee in the prospect of coming together, all classes largely represented, with a common purpose, not at all intellectual, competitive with none, disposing to jealousy and spiritual or intellectual pride toward none, each individual adding by his mere presence to the pleasure of all others, all helping to the greater happiness of each. You may thus often see vast numbers of persons brought closely together, poor and rich, young and old, Jew and Gentile.
As Olmsted saw it, Central Park provided the only space in Manhattan in which strangers could engage in the sympathetic process.

If Olmsted makes sympathy possible by removing city dwellers from the “restraining and confining conditions” in which they typically encounter each other, the urban intellectuals that I examine in this study view with greater optimism the affective possibilities of the street contact. In their efforts to understand and represent a city’s streets and sidewalks as sites where individuals can forge a fellow-feeling, these writers and thinkers question the adequacy of the social model upon which Olmsted had constructed his parks. Rather than see the city as a place that necessarily precludes or interferes with the sympathetic process, late-nineteenth- and twentieth-century urban intellectuals such as Stephen Crane, Jane Addams, W. E. B. Du Bois, Joseph Mitchell, A. J. Liebling and Jane Jacobs attempt to redefine the nature of that process. Their descriptions of urban life reconfigure the affective patterns that lay at the heart of an antebellum culture of sympathy—patterns that had remained, in many ways, deeply connected to those described by Smith and other eighteenth-century moral philosophers.

This study traces the development of what I call “urban sympathy” by demonstrating how observers of city life translate received literary and nonliterary idioms into cultural forms that capture the everyday emotions and obligations arising in the city’s small-scale contact zones—its streets, sidewalks, front stoops, theaters, cafes and corner stores. *Urban Sympathy* calls attention to the ways in which urban intellectuals with different religious, racial, economic, scientific and professional commitments urbanize the social project of a nineteenth-century sentimental culture. Rather than view the sympathetic exchange as dependent upon access to another’s private feelings, these
writers describe an affective process that deals in publicly traded emotions. Where many see the act of identification as sympathy’s inevitable product, these observers of city life tend to characterize an awareness and preservation of differences as urban sympathy’s outcome. While scholars traditionally criticize the sympathetic process for ignoring the larger social structures in which its participants are entangled, several of these writers cultivate a sympathetic style that attempts to account for individuals and the larger social, economic and political forces that shape them.

Excavating a few moments in the long and varied history of urban sympathy—a history buried beneath the loud and repetitive accusations of its impossibility—puts into conversation two fields of literary and cultural criticism that typically do not speak to one another: urban and sentimental studies. The latter constitutes an important part of this study’s critical dialogue primarily because it is the analytical field that privileges and theorizes the concept of sympathy most thoroughly. Glenn Hendler is just one of many recent critics to insist that we treat the “experience of sympathetic identification as the narrative and affective core of a sentimental structure of feeling.” Cindy Weinstein agrees, noting that sympathy is, “quite rightly, the starting point for many studies of sentimental fiction.” For Hendler, Weinstein and many other scholars of sentimental culture, sympathy is as much an object of study within the field as a particular set of texts or a discrete historical period.

Given sympathy’s critical home in sentimental studies, examinations of its affective operations cluster almost exclusively around a fairly small body of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century texts and artifacts. Very few scholars track the evolution of sympathy into the twentieth century. Suzanne Clark, one of the few critics of sentimental
culture to situate her subject matter firmly in the twentieth century, attributes the period specificity of sentimental studies to modernism’s proliferation of a “rationalized order,” which “tries to subject the order of emotional connections—sympathy—to its domination and obstructs the formation of social movements by its regulation of emotional appeals.”

Others, such as William Morgan, see sympathy as an outdated mode of relations incapable of accounting for an individual’s “relation to complex social networks” in a world that had been transformed by “incorporation, urbanization, and radical diversification.” These scholars recommend alternative concepts, such as complicity or altruism, as better suited to describing relationships cemented in an industrialized and urbanized landscape.

Perhaps this reluctance to examine the affective operations of sympathy in the eras that succeed the sentimental period is at least partially responsible for producing what Weinstein describes as the “monolithic and consistently pernicious account of sympathy” that pervades sentimental criticism. Arguing that the “identificatory structure of sympathy that underlies so many recent critiques of sympathy (the ‘I sympathize with you only to the extent that you are like me’ rule of thumb) is an insufficient description of how sympathy is generated and deployed,” Weinstein suggests that we complicate this critical consensus by recognizing that “sympathy is produced, dispensed, and received in a variety of contexts.” “Urban Sympathy” tries to overcome some of these conceptual deficiencies by taking up an examination of sympathy at the moment when most scholars of sentimental culture typically drop it. It seeks to understand how sympathy is “produced, dispensed, and received” in late-nineteenth- and twentieth-century urban contexts: How do various writers and thinkers reconstruct traditional understandings of
the sympathetic process so that the concept can be used as a meaningful description of urban relationships? What alternatives do these urban intellectuals offer to an “identificatory structure of sympathy”? And how might recognizing these alternative styles of sympathy move our analyses of that term beyond accusing it of producing cultural narcissism or political weakness?

If exporting sympathy to a new set of urban texts and contexts breaks up the “monolithic” account of sympathy that pervades the criticism of sentimental literature and culture, importing sympathy into urban studies can revitalize this field—which constitutes the other half of the dissertation’s critical dialogue—by constructing a different analytical platform from which to examine the nature of human relationships in cities. Particularly in urban literary studies, the figure of the flâneur has provided the primary critical angle into discussions about the affective dimensions of the urban street contact. As the figure is typically interpreted in this body of literary scholarship, the flâneur watches, but does not interact with, other urbanites during his leisurely strolls through the city; he sees them as commodities to be consumed rather than as individuals to whom he has emotional or ethical obligations. The flâneur “pursues a course,” Rob Shields suggests, “which alienates him from even the possibility of a deeper intersubjective exchange with the other members of the crowd scene.” Unfortunately, the critical parameters established by the figure of the flâneur have limited the scope of our interrogations into the nature of the street contact. When refracted through the prism of the flâneur, urban relationships tend to be seen as emotionally hollow.

These conclusions about the inherent emptiness of urban relationships have been reproduced across a number of discursive lines in urban studies. Georg Simmel’s
influential, turn-of-the-century philosophical assessment of modern urban life, for instance, posits the typical urbanite as an over-stimulated individual who responds to others with “his head instead of his heart” in order to preserve “his subjective life against the overwhelming power of metropolitan life.” Making Olmsted’s description of urban contact sound tame, Simmel theorizes that the need for “self-preservation in the face of the large city” generates within each city dweller an “aversion, a mutual strangeness and repulsion, which will break into hatred and fight at the moment of a closer contact, however caused.”

Robert Park, a leading figure in the Chicago School of Sociology during the first half of the twentieth century, echoes both Olmsted’s and Simmel’s characterizations of the city’s social landscape. He describes the city as a place increasingly dominated by “secondary” rather than “primary” relationships, the latter being the “most intimate and real relationships of life.” As he sees it, the city creates volatile social conditions by forcing individuals that are “widely removed in sympathy and understanding” to live together “under conditions of interdependence, if not of intimacy.”

As is the case with studies grounded in the figure of the flâneur, any assessment of urban relationships rooted in Simmel’s or Park’s influential descriptions of urban life inevitably leads to a similar conclusion: urban relationships are emotionally bankrupt.

While more recent urban intellectuals such as Jane Jacobs, William H. Whyte and Herbert Gans have been encouraging us to rethink our assumptions about the affective value of urban relationships for the past several decades, relatively few scholars of urban literature and culture seem to have heeded their invitation. Betsy Klimasmith bucks this trend by challenging the authentic/inauthentic binary ascribed to urban relationships. She
contends that the “urban homes of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century fiction were important connective and connecting spaces,” and that the “nominally separate” domestic and public spheres “were mutually constituted and inseparably linked through the physical and imaginative networks that made up the modern American city.” By calling into question the adequacy of the “separate sphere” model of culture—the notion that the home constitutes a private realm that isolates its inhabitants from the public realm—Klimasmith dissolves the grounds upon which critics typically distinguish authentic (domestic) relationships from inauthentic (public) ones. While Klimasmith’s work begins to challenge traditional ways of thinking about urban relationships, it stops short of interrogating the particular nature of those urban “connections.” Scholars of urban life that focus their work on non-literary material have also recently offered new ways to think about urban relationships. Lynn Lofland, a contemporary urban sociologist, claims that in order to better understand the kinds of human interactions that occur in the city’s “public realm,” we must begin by “jettisoning sociology’s traditional dyadic conception of human relationships”—the distinction between primary and secondary relationships with their corresponding moral evaluations. Lofland replaces Park’s dyad with a more nuanced vision of urban interactions. Such recent scholarship in urban studies provides the foundation for an inquiry into the ways that late-nineteenth- and twentieth-century urban intellectuals explore the complex affective topography of the street contact.

“Urban Sympathy” widens the parameters within which scholars typically discuss urban relationships by drawing upon the concept of sympathy. Analyzing the particular ways in which urban sympathy is “produced, dispensed, and received” brings critical complexity to a conversation about small-scale urban interactions that can, at times, be
intellectually flat. Because discussions of literature and sympathy frequently rely upon vague characterizations of the term, I try to be as historically precise as possible about each of the sympathetic idioms with which a given urban intellectual engages—all of which offer alternatives to Adam Smith’s influential account of the sympathetic process. Approached in this historically and contextually precise way, urban sympathy picks up religious, economic, political, racial and spatial accents. Its analytical versatility allows sympathy to interrogate a variety of social interactions in ways that other concepts that have been used to make sense of urban relationships—such as morality, contracts, liberalism, and tolerance—simply cannot. The concept of “urban sympathy” puts us in a position from which we can see new dimensions of well-studied texts and rediscover critically marginalized ones.

“Urban Sympathy” begins by looking at Stephen Crane’s representations of the city’s social landscape. Typically interpreted as a masculine rejection of piety and sentimentality, I suggest that Crane’s urban fiction and journalism reflect the social ideals articulated within Methodism’s liturgical events and forms. These ideals place shared personal experience, rather than imaginative identification, at the heart of the sympathetic process. Situating Crane’s work in relation to this particular strain of Methodism enables us to see that his quest to achieve and represent urban experience was, in fact, informed by a sympathetic ethos embedded in nineteenth-century Methodist practices. Like his father, Reverend Jonathan Townley Crane, and other nineteenth-century Methodists, Crane was highly skeptical of the imagination’s ability to help urbanites engage in the sympathetic process. In Crane’s work, sympathy arises not through speculating how another might feel from a distance, but by physically experiencing the city alongside
others. Though religious discourse was often the source of the most vehement anti-urbanism in the nineteenth-century, this chapter demonstrates how the period’s religious cultures also provided urbanites with habits of thinking and feeling through which they experienced and understood their interactions with other city dwellers.

The second chapter attends to the ways in which W. E. B. Du Bois articulated a model of interracial relations during the Progressive Era through the dialect of urban sympathy spoken by settlement workers. Like Crane, settlement workers questioned the adequacy of the sympathetic imagination and privileged the affective value of personal contact. Their style of urban sympathy, built upon the foundation of sustained contact, entailed an affective process that attended to both individual emotions and the flow of structural power that shaped those emotions. Given Du Bois’s investment in building a structure of interracial feeling that preserved the psychological integrity of black individuals and accounted for the social, cultural and political forces that moved through and around them, he embraced many of the settlement movement’s philosophical ideals, social practices and narrative habits. Attending to the settlement rhetoric that animates his sociological study, *The Philadelphia Negro* (1899), and his first novel, *The Quest of the Silver Fleece* (1911), helps us not only better understand Du Bois’s complicated attitudes about black-white sociality, but also enables us to perceive shape and size of the “new channels” into which settlement workers tried to cast the sympathetic process. Reckoning with Du Bois’s use of a settlement-inspired urban sympathy to reshape the city’s and the nation’s interracial structures of feeling invites us to reconsider our assumptions about interracial sympathy’s affective operations—assumptions that tend to
interpret its emotional processes as fundamentally dehumanizing and structurally inattentive.

The third chapter traces the emergence of a mid-century ecological discourse that began to shape thinking about urban relationships across disciplines and in startlingly different city venues. As urban intellectuals drew upon the authority of “community ecology” that had been popularized by writers such as Rachel Carson and institutions such as the American Museum of Natural History, they made more visible and valuable the social interdependencies crisscrossing the city that Joseph Mitchell, A. J. Liebling and other *New Yorker* writers had been describing since the 1930s. Offering scientific evidence of cooperation as a fundamental biological principle and defining diversity as a critical element of communal stability, community ecology served as an important medium through which writers, elected officials and activists both reassessed the city’s public social orders and defended them from the threats of urban renewal. As characterized by these ecological urbanisms, urban sympathy inheres less in an interpersonal emotion than in an acknowledgement of and a desire to preserve the proto-cooperative interconnections that prop up the city’s social orders. Maintaining the city’s social equilibrium replaces compassionate care as a social ideal.

The fourth chapter reads Jane Jacobs’s *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1961) as a text that synthesizes and repackages the representational and affective habits discussed in the preceding chapters. In her attempt to appraise the social value of the street contact and the publicly traded emotions in which urban communities traffic, Jacobs draws upon the habits of thinking, seeing and writing that city journalists, settlement workers and urban ecologists had been developing since the late-nineteenth
century. Jacobs’s account of urban sympathy refers not to the process of imagining oneself in another’s position, but of securing another’s position in the urban landscape by both using and protecting the city’s public spaces. City dwellers need not necessarily identify with one another, but instead with their urban habitat. Only as they build their daily routines upon the city’s sidewalks, parks and other public venues do they recognize the extent to which their ability to carry out their own plans ultimately depends upon the support of a variety of other urbanites, including those they may never see or contact. Reading *Death and Life* as a site through which older conversations about urban relationships flow illuminates Jacobs’s social ideals and lifts the intellectual and material legacies upon which they rest out of obscurity.
Chapter One

Stephen Crane and Methodism’s Realism: Translating Spiritual Sympathy into Urban Experience

In 1883, three years after her husband’s death, Helen Crane moved her family from Port Jervis, New York to Asbury Park, New Jersey—one of the many resort towns that had recently sprung up along the Jersey Coast. This section of the Jersey Shore was familiar territory for the Crane family; almost a decade before making Asbury Park their permanent home, the family had begun attending Methodist summer camp meetings in neighboring Ocean Grove. Established in 1869 by members of the National Camp Meeting Association for the Promotion of Holiness, Ocean Grove was part of a much larger movement within the Methodist Episcopal Church to revitalize a membership that some felt had lost its prior spiritual zeal and social unity. Adherents to the holiness movement advocated a return to turn-of-the-century evangelical preaching styles and to the community-based organizational forms—such as camp meetings and love feasts—that distinguished early Methodism from other Protestant denominations. Full of spontaneous preaching, signing, witnessing, and praying, the frontier-era camp meeting’s spiritual and social heart was the love feast—an event that, as John Wigger explains, traditionally centered upon the “eating of a small portion of bread and drinking of a little water in imitation, not of the sacrament, but of the communal fellowship of the early saints, and, most important, unrehearsed individual testimonies of struggles and triumphs in the faith, of what God had done in the lives of those present.”

Typical of many of Methodism’s small-scale liturgical events, the love feast facilitated spiritual uplift through social contact. As participants shared the spiritual
knowledge that they had accumulated through personal experience, they pushed one another to new spiritual heights by strengthening their social bonds. At the love feast and class meeting, explained Edmund S. Janes in 1862, Methodists came together not as “mere pupils or catechumens,” but as “fellow-Christians, met for the interchange of religious experience, congratulations, sympathies, and assistances in the way of life.” Only through these forms of interactive worship could one realize “such Christian intimacy, such stated seasons of fellowship, such familiar conversation on religious experience, such spiritual sympathy.” Methodism was, Janes explained, an “experimental religion” that offered its adherents a “social means of grace.”

While modifying the structure of frontier camp meetings, love feasts and other organizational forms in order to accommodate Methodists’ changing tastes and leisurely habits, the National Camp Meeting Association for the Promotion of Holiness hoped that a return to these liturgical practices in resort towns such as Ocean Grove would provide similar spiritual and social benefits for late-nineteenth-century campers. Working as a seaside correspondent in Ocean Grove and Asbury Park for the New York Tribune during the summers of the early 1890s, Helen Crane’s youngest son, Stephen, attested to the replication in Ocean Grove of antebellum Methodism’s socio-spiritual dynamics. Briefly sketching the activities of the most important day of Ocean Grove’s ten-day camp meeting, Crane wrote: “The usual 9 o’clock meetings were held an hour earlier to-day, as the camp-meeting love feast had the right of way at that hour. At the young people’s meeting a number were converted. The Rev. C. H. Yatman, the leader, possesses a strong-personality and magnetism which, with a graphic way of putting things, wins souls
to higher things. [...] Dr. Stokes asked the people to shake hands in token of brotherly love, which they did with shouts and tears.”

Taking for granted the confluence of religious conversion and interpersonal connection, Dr. Ellwood H. Stokes—first president of the Ocean Grove Camp Meeting Association—encouraged the young campers to consummate their spiritual experience by shaking hands with one another; in doing so, he initiated them into a ritual that they would regularly reenact at Ocean Grove. Describing the Sacrament service on the final day of the 1886 camp meeting, Dr. Stokes recalled that after experiencing the service’s “unutterable emotions” the campers immediately began to fear that they “should never all meet again.” Contemplating the “possibilities of eternal separation [...] some, so impressed, then and there gave their hearts to God,—while most of the congregated thousands lifted their hands to say they would meet us in heaven.” Following these last-minute conversions, which had been inspired by the social ties among the campers, Dr. Stokes noted that “[h]ands-shaking and farewell words were on every hand, while the people lingered or slowly passed away, with holy influences which will live forever.” In providing campers the space in which they could engage in the process of “spiritual sympathy,” Ocean Grove materialized one of sentimental culture’s particularly religious “fronts,” to borrow Lora Romero’s term.

The New York Tribune’s readers to whom Crane reported the goings-on of camp meetings and love feasts would have interpreted the spiritual and communal possibilities of Ocean Grove as being fundamentally rooted in its pastoral setting. It was this predominantly urban readership that, as Crane describes in another report, “fled from the hot, stifling air of the cities to enjoy the cool sea breezes” of Ocean Grove and nearby
In addition to its pleasant weather, Troy Messenger suggests that the camp meetings at Ocean Grove appealed to an “urban Methodist middle class” as a “safe haven from the demands of the city.” According to the founders of Ocean Grove and many of those who patronized it, the rapidly changing nature of American cities in the second half of the nineteenth century prevented urbanites from fully realizing their spiritual potential by keeping them from interacting sympathetically with one another. The Methodists who both founded and fled to Ocean Grove were, at the very least, implicitly admitting the difficulty of achieving “higher things” through “brotherly love” within the confines of the city.

The social and spiritual contours of this urban-resort topography had been shaped, in large part, by city journalists writing for dailies such as the Tribune, the New York Herald, and the New York Sun for over half of a century. As one of the most influential of these mid-century reporters, George G. Foster solidified the narrative conventions of American urban sensationalism that portrayed the city as a space that repeatedly failed to sustain sympathetic relationships. Writing for the Tribune in the 1840s, Foster cobbled together a distinct moral and affective map of the city. Each of his urban sketches uncovers a different locale—from Broadway and Wall Street to the Five Points and nondescript pawnbroker shops—only to find the same social logic at work. In both the city’s reputable businesses and its brothels, the urbanites that Foster encounters have had all their “affections and noble instincts, all honor and just ambition […] extinguished” by life in the city. His sketches conjure up a place peopled by sinners too consumed with the pursuit of their particular vice to interact humanely with one another. The “boundless horizon of sympathies and affections” that he had at one time hoped to discover in the
city, he reported, had been totally eclipsed by communities founded upon exploitation and self-interest.10

If Foster and other mid-century journalists generated a morally inflected appraisal of the city’s lack of humane relationships, the moral crusaders of the 1890s railed against a city that harbored too many of the wrong kind of interpersonal connections. In their attempt to overthrow Tammany Hall, for instance, Reverend Charles H. Parkhurst and his Society for the Prevention of Crime were more concerned about the type of relationships into which the police and other civic officials had entered than they were about the particular immoral activities occurring throughout the city. According to Rev. Parkhurst, New York City’s “rottenness” would be “absolutely impossible except by the connivance, not to say the purchased sympathy, of the men whose one obligation before God, men, and their own conscience is to shield virtue and make vice difficult.” The Society for the Prevention of Crime focused not on wiping out particular gambling dens or houses of ill repute, but on removing civic authorities “who are either themselves individually tainted, or who are in transparent and eminent sympathy with those who are so tainted.”11 The problem with the city, Rev. Parkhurst proposed, was that its inhabitants were indiscriminately sympathetic.

Given these persistent assessments of the city as a social and spiritual black hole, many have interpreted Stephen Crane’s decision to move to New York City in 1891 as an attempt to distance himself from the type of sentimental and pious community he left behind in Ocean Grove. By taking up residence in a cheap boarding house in New York’s East Side, Crane seemed to have rejected the culture of spiritual sympathy that was institutionally and materially grounded in the religious communities of the Jersey
Shore. While it is appropriate, in many ways, to connect Crane’s geographical relocation to his adoption of new habits of feelings and a corresponding literary style, critics mistakenly assume that his aesthetics operate in exclusive opposition to nineteenth-century religiosity and sentimentality. Keith Gandal is hardly alone in claiming that Crane’s ethos erases any trace of “Protestant morality,” or that the “absence of moralistic and social preaching and the acid rejection of Victorian sentimentalism” distinguish Crane’s writing from that of his literary predecessors.\textsuperscript{12} Drawing upon this familiar opposition between sentimental Protestantism and realism’s empiricism, Crane continues to be seen, as Alan Trachtenberg insists, as someone who opposed “converting the reader to social sympathy,” and instead favored “converting the sheer data into experience.”\textsuperscript{13}

Crane’s immersion in the new technologies, class divisions and polyglot linguistic communities of New York has seemed to many especially unrelated to his religious and emotional past—despite the fact that critics such as Bill Brown have reminded us that Crane’s experiences in the Methodist resort towns of New Jersey informed the literary work he did after leaving it.\textsuperscript{14} Even a revisionist like William Morgan—who largely rejects the critical consensus about realism’s rupture with nineteenth-century sentimentality and domesticity—nevertheless insists that Crane’s “alternative masculine ethos of care and community” necessarily entailed a rejection of “his family’s religious ethos.”\textsuperscript{15}

The reluctance to deepen our understanding of the connections between Crane’s literary realism and his family’s religiously inspired affective habits may suggest a methodological blind spot not only in Crane scholarship, but also in studies of American literary realism more generally. If, as Jenny Franchot once complained, Americanists
have often acted as if religion “has no significant role in the production and reception of literary texts,” this tendency has sometimes been exacerbated when we talk about realist or modernist texts that seem antithetical to religious doctrines, paradigms or impulses.\textsuperscript{16} At least some of our insensitivities to the religious resonances of many such texts reside in what Lawrence Buell describes as a lack of “critical idioms and analytical registers for talking about literature’s religious valences” in ways that move us beyond assumptions that a “text’s religious dimension must reside chiefly in some sort of thesis or idea structure.”\textsuperscript{17} Developing critical methodologies capable of articulating the full range of a text’s “religious valences” may require us not only to look at a text’s other formal features but also to reconsider how we think about religion. Rather than narrow our analytical focus to a text’s engagement with theology and doctrine, we might look within that text for traces of a religious “structure of feeling”—a concept that stretches the religious realm to include, as Raymond Williams described it, the “elements of social and material (physical or natural) experience” within which “meanings and values [. . .] are actively lived and felt.”\textsuperscript{18} This conceptual shift toward religious structures of feeling requires that we pay closer attention to the particular social and material conditions in which individuals practiced their religion and to the narrative patterns and affective habits grounded in them.\textsuperscript{19}

Situating Crane in this more expansive religious context helps us see that when he moved to the city at the end of the nineteenth century he did not entirely abandon a Methodist structure of feeling. Rather, the new ways of seeing and feeling that Crane encountered in the modern city altered how he lived and articulated some of Methodism’s “meanings and values.” This chapter traces some of the ways in which the sympathetic
processes practiced in Ocean Grove and embraced by Crane’s father, Reverend Jonathan Townley Crane, persist within Crane’s own urban writings. While Crane may have disregarded many of Methodism’s social mores and rejected specific doctrines, in his efforts to negotiate New York’s social landscape he drew upon the social and emotional dynamics at play in Ocean Grove’s liturgical events and explicated by Reverend Crane in his many writings—both of which placed physical contact and shared experience at the heart of a “spiritual sympathy.” Excavating the narrative and affective foundations of this particular strain of Methodism enables us to see that Crane’s quest to achieve and represent urban experience was, in fact, informed by his family’s faith.

Because Crane has so often been used to demarcate a secular and emotionally tough literary tradition from its religiously inflected sentimental antecedents, plotting the coordinates of the sympathetic structure of feeling that animates his work raises the problems and possibilities of urban sympathy that this study will explore. Crane may not be the founder of a literary and intellectual tradition that addresses the attempts of city dwellers to engage in the sympathetic process with one another, but his writings serve as an important intervention in it.20 His urban novellas and sketches provide a significant body of work through which we can both perceive more clearly and reevaluate the conceptual and critical frameworks that have prevented us from fully reckoning with the urban literary tradition of which they are a part. Discovering the narrative and affective patterns of Methodism in Crane’s representations of late-nineteenth-century urban life helps us begin to challenge and revise the critical assumptions that have monopolized our understandings of sympathy’s affective logic and its literary manifestations.
I. Jonathan Townley Crane: Replacing “Theoretical Commiseration” with “Spiritual Sympathy”

Reverend Crane has been something of a straw man in literary studies, a casting that draws upon Stephen’s own affectionate but ironic description of the patriarch as a “great, fine, simple mind.”21 Stephen’s father is, as Christopher Benfey notes, usually seen as “comic relief in the hero’s life, foils for his triumphs,” and is frequently “enlisted to define a conveniently narrow world for Crane to ‘rebel against.’”22 A closer reading of Reverend Crane’s writings, however, reveals a sophisticated mind frequently at odds with the “narrow world” that this patriarch supposedly represents. In fact, Reverend Crane repeatedly expressed his dissatisfaction with mid-nineteenth-century Protestant culture. In “Christ and the Painters,” an article he wrote for The Sunday School Times in 1877, Reverend Crane criticized the popular genre of Christian art that depicted Christ blessing a group of children. He informed his readers that the children to which Christ would have ministered were not the “rosy specimens of infantile innocence and grace” portrayed in these paintings, but were “perhaps just such a lot of little wretches as the modern traveler in that same region sees crawling out of their mud huts, dirty, unkempt, ragged, or without even a rag, to stare at him with their sore eyes.” Reverend Crane continued his reproof by noting that this biblical scene “was no exhibition like that of ‘Children’s Day’ in Brooklyn, but more like the groups that gather about the basement door of a tenement house in Baxter or Bedford Street, at which the sentimental philanthropist points from afar with cane or parasol, and wonders why the city missionary does not do something for them.”23 Reverend Crane accused these popular paintings of failing because they did not prepare their viewers to interact with the “genuine specimens of fallen humanity” that they might have encountered on their own city streets.24
Reverend Crane was increasingly troubled by Protestant culture’s adoption of literary sentimentalism’s narrative and affective patterns. Writing several decades prior to the publication of “Christ and the Painters” in *The Nassau Monthly*, he expressed dismay at what he perceived to be the “alarming literary inundation” of the marketplace with “[s]illy novels, puerile tales, and nineteenth-rate poems.” Sounding more like William Dean Howells’s Protestant minister, Mr. Sewell, than the mid-nineteenth-century clergy who had—in Ann Douglas’s estimation—capitulated to sentimental narrative conventions, Reverend Crane faulted sentimental literature for presenting readers with “imaginary sorrows” that desensitized them “to the actual sufferings of ordinary flesh and blood.” Real sorrows and suffering, he reasoned, were “too unromantic, too vulgar, forsooth, to excite the poetic compassion of a refined sentimentalist,” who had, as a result of reading too much, grown to assume that “no anguish can exist when the sufferer breaks out in no poetic soliloquies, no insane invocations of the placid heavens and bright stars.” Reverend Crane worried that, having become accustomed to identifying with fictional characters, readers would be unable to identify with actual people. Private reading practices, he argued, did not prepare individuals to interact with others in the public sphere. The “mental habits, superinduced by familiarity with the intense excitement of novel reading,” threatened not only to be “subversive of all rational sensibility,” but also to undermine the social cohesion that was such an integral part of Methodism. The type of “theoretical commiseration” nurtured by “silly novels” and Protestantism’s pop-culture aesthetics jeopardized what was for Reverend Crane a much more vital form of Christian commiseration.
Particularly critical of the “mistaken visionaries” who attempted to “unite Christian emotion with sentimental romance,” Reverend Crane was deeply invested in reclaiming and rehabilitating sympathy from popular literary and, in particular, religious sentimental cultures. His efforts to elevate the status of spiritual sympathy above the refined sentimentalist’s theoretical commiserations were, to a large degree, fueled by widening cracks in Methodism’s social solidarity during the postbellum period. Responding in particular to the divisive consequences of the Civil War within the Methodist Church, Reverend Crane’s last full-length book, *Methodism and its Methods* (1876), should be read as his attempt to reunite fellow worshippers upon more stable affective ground. Because the “poison of sectionalism,” as Richard Carwadine puts it, had “seeped along ecclesiastical channels” as well as political ones, the Methodist Church had divided itself into two separate churches almost two decades prior to the Civil War: the Methodist Episcopal Church and the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. When Reverend Crane published *Methodism and its Methods*, just over a decade after the Civil War had ended, both churches had been vigorously debating the possibility of reunification for several years, never settling upon a plan for reconciliation. At the same time, Reverend Crane worried about the implications of Methodism’s rapid growth and the changing tastes of an increasingly middle-class membership. He feared that larger clusters of worshipers and a growing preference for privacy among upward-striving members signaled the decline of Methodism’s unique, small-scale organizational structure—a feature that had made Methodists a “separate and distinct people.” Abandoning these traditional liturgical forms would, Reverend Crane reasoned, cause Methodism to resemble too closely “older organizations” (47)—many of
which, like the Episcopalians, had “no bond of union among them” and were “at a loss even for a plan of union” (67). Readily acknowledging the challenges of establishing unity in such an expansive organization, Reverend Crane fretted over what might and, in light of the legacy of divisions left over from the Civil War, what had become of the church: “The vastness of the area covered by our labors will furnish room for the gathering of sectional parties, formed for the acquisition of power and place. In the annual distributions of ministerial labor, self-seekers will find a place to employ their crooked devices; and brotherly love and confidence, without which we are even weaker than other men, will fail” (44-45).

In Methodism and its Methods Reverend Crane responded to these institutional crises not by asserting the need for individuals to adhere more closely to specific doctrines, but by highlighting the social assets embedded within the denomination’s “peculiar organization” (39). After offering a concise history of Methodism and expounding briefly upon a few of its central doctrines, Reverend Crane devoted almost all of his energy to explaining how Methodism’s organizational infrastructure worked to create an environment in which individuals could “unite in holy fellowship for mutual aid and sympathy” (60). Like the founders of Ocean Grove, Reverend Crane called attention to the communal and intensely local organization of turn-of-the-century Methodism. He reminded his readers that Methodism’s peculiar organizational forms—its class meetings and love feasts—possessed a singular ability to bind “new converts together in the bonds of tender Christian love” and to bring “to the help of each the strength of Christian friendship” (40). Unlike the typical congregational model, in which a preacher exhorts a group of worshipers seated in pews, Methodism’s liturgical practices rested primarily
upon physical contact and the exchange of personal experience among the laity within relatively small social settings.

Through this style of worship, Methodism encouraged its people not only to “seek high attainments and a deep experience” (24), but to then share those experiences with others. The process of attaining and sharing one’s own “deep experience,” as well as listening and responding to another’s, produced among Methodists a spiritual sympathy that lead not only to salvation but that would, Reverend Crane hoped, help Methodism repair its splintered condition and guard against future disunity. Where theoretical commiserations inevitably failed to enact social cohesion, Reverend Crane insisted that emotional habits grounded in a “deep and clear personal experience in divine things” would supply the “fervent brotherly love” (42) capable of nursing Methodism through its growing pains.

If Methodism’s liturgical style encouraged a sympathetic exchange between members that required social contact and was tethered to experience, it also limited these emotional dynamics to particular “social and material” configurations, to use Raymond Williams’s terminology. A class meeting or love feast had the power to unite members “in the bonds of tender Christian love,” but Reverend Crane implied that those same individuals might not achieve a fellow-feeling were they to interact with each other in a typical Protestant congregation or in a public setting. Practicing a “social means of grace” required an organization within which each member “shall stand in his lot and bear his share of the common responsibility” (103). For, Reverend Crane argued, if “one true child of God is at liberty to stand aloof from duty so may another, so may all, and thus the church itself dissolve and disappear. No, the Church of the living God is not a
loose association with which men may play fast and loose as their moods and caprices prompt, but a body *fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part*” (104). As Reverend Crane began to realize in *Methodism and its Methods*, the spatial and social arrangements that would turn an assortment of Methodists into a “body *fitly joined together*” were increasingly incompatible with the postbellum development of American cities—where bodies were more and more mobile.

Because the formation of a sympathetic community depended upon an individual’s willingness to “stand in his lot,” Reverend Crane feared that the mobility of an urban lifestyle would “dissolve” that community. For, when members stood “aloof from duty,” they were incapable of sharing with their fellow worshippers the deep experiences that made the realization of “mutual aid and sympathy” possible. Paradoxically, rather than strengthen emotional ties among church members, Reverend Crane claimed that urban density split them up into a “loose association.” Mobile Methodists were “useless in the Church to which they belong, and valueless every-where else” because, having “no root anywhere, they have no more chance for spiritual life and growth” (150). Urban members lacked the organizational context—the “feeling of local responsibility” (151)—within which they could engage in the type of social contact needed to establish sympathetic ties to one another. Mobility, Reverend Crane declared, was the “sin which doth so easily beset the Methodist Churches in the cities” (152).

Reverend Crane’s spiritually inspired social ideals encountered another significant challenge when mapped onto America’s late-nineteenth-century urban spaces, where waves of immigration had delivered new bodies with their accompanying cultural and
linguistic diversity. Reverend Crane only grudgingly managed to make room for other Christian denominations within his communal paradigm, arguing that “incidental differences of creed may exist among those who nevertheless bear worthily the name of Christ” (56). The rapidly changing demographics of America’s urban population following the Civil War, however, presented an insurmountable challenge to his social vision. Reverend Crane did not allow for the possibility of unity beyond Christianity’s borders. When reading Methodism and its Methods, it is difficult not to wonder what would have happened if, while walking the streets of New York, a Methodist were to encounter a Jewish immigrant who neither spoke English nor bore “worthily the name of Christ.” What then would have been the grounds for a sympathetic exchange? While Reverend Crane did not directly address such questions in Methodism and its Methods, he took up the issue of linguistic and cultural diversity in several of his political writings and speeches.

During the late 1860s and early 1870s, Reverend Crane traveled on the lecture circuit and frequently gave a speech entitled “A Talk About Talk, or the Art of Talking.” During the course of his oration, Reverend Crane repeatedly insisted that language ought to act as a “telegraphic wire that joins our own to other souls,” that it “is not only the public highway which thought travels, but is the path by which our tenderest emotions and deepest affections pass from heart to heart.” He thus implicitly excluded the possibility of there being sympathetic communities in an urban space increasingly populated by non-Christian and non-English-speaking immigrants; these newcomers, he claimed, transformed the American city into a “Babel of polyglot confusion.” In his assessments, Reverend Crane participated in a much larger cultural debate in which, as
Gavin Jones describes it, “ideological attempts to forge an ideal America—a nation conceived in linguistic unity—were constantly undermined by new and strange ways of talking.” Like many others, Reverend Crane conflated religious and political ideals of sympathetic unity with what he termed “plain-spoken men.”

“A Talk About Talk” drew upon much of the same discourse that Reverend Crane’s religious writings employed, blending religious and linguistic categories. Just as deep spiritual experiences made Methodists transparent to one another, Reverend Crane argued that a shared language “binds neighbors together in golden bonds” because it intimately informed and perfectly reflected the speaker’s and listener’s identity. “The Mystified Quaker,” a poem that served as a type of epilogue to “A Talk about Talk,” dramatically illustrates the conflation that Reverend Crane made between a linguistically and religiously grounded sympathy when faced with the task of connecting to individuals who share neither his language nor faith. The poem tries to humorously stage the confrontation of Reverend Crane’s sentimental Methodism with the emerging industrial city, full of individuals who do not share the language of the poem’s speaker; the initially good-natured humor, however, quickly turns sour. Getting off a train in an unnamed city, the speaker immediately encounters “an imp with smutty face” who asks him if he’d like a “Shine.” The speaker, pretending not to understand what the “young Turk” means by “shine,” replies: “Nay, I’ll not shine [. . .] except with inward grace.” Puzzled by the speaker’s response, the shoe-shine boy asks, “‘Is inward grace a liquor or a paste?’”

The linguistic confusion between the speaker and the shoeshine boy suggests a much deeper, spiritual distance between the two. The poem implies that the “young Turk” has not only failed to acquire an English vocabulary sufficient to converse with
individuals like the speaker, but that he is incapable of experiencing the spiritual operations of “grace”—a lack that, within Reverend Crane’s particular structure of feeling, precludes any possibility of sympathetic connection between the two. Sensing the futility of this conversation, the speaker continues on his walk through the city and encounters a “Jehu” with whom he cannot, or refuses to, communicate. The crisscrossed conversation ultimately ends in “blows, and curses,” after which the speaker concludes that “plain-spoken men, like me, / With such perverters of our tongue can have no unity.”

II. Stephen Crane and the Experience of Urban Sympathy

When Stephen Crane moved to New York City, he arrived, according to his father’s descriptions, in a place where people “can have no unity.” Reverend Crane’s Methodism naturally expressed skepticism about the more diverse environs of New York City and its “Babel of polyglot confusion.” And, with a few notable exceptions, literary studies have accentuated the social and material differences from Ocean Grove and Asbury Park that Stephen’s adopted city represented. But Stephen Crane actually carried within him a structure of feeling and the corresponding narrative forms that reflected and reconfigured the heart of his father’s framework of faith. Among other things, Stephen brought with him his father’s skepticism about the ability of theoretical commiserations to adequately connect urban dwellers and embraced Reverend Crane’s advocacy of affective habits that were rooted in social contact and shared personal experience. While there is much about Maggie—Stephen Crane’s first attempt to represent New York City—that may have unsettled his father, the novella reissues Reverend Crane’s
challenge to the “sentimental philanthropist” who sympathized with the urban poor “from afar.”

Much as Reverend Crane might have wanted, Maggie refuses to plot its characters on a moral grid with which many Christian readers would have been familiar. Echoing Reverend Crane’s arguments from “Christ and the Painters,” Maggie reveals the inability of a “vocabulary […] derived from mission churches” to humanely unite its possessors to individuals who inhabit places like the Bowery and who were far from the “rosy specimens of infantile innocence and grace” portrayed in many sentimental texts. In her “terrific . . . denunciation of [Maggie’s] wickedness,” Maggie’s mother, Mrs. Johnson, uses the language of Christian morality as a means of self-justification rather than as a way to express genuine concern for her “wicked” daughter. Similarly, Maggie’s brother is not really worried about the spiritual implications of Maggie’s sin, but is terrified by her behavior’s potential to “queer” him and the family; Jimmy “publicly damned his sister that he might appear on a higher social plane.” Maggie critiques the moral imagination and religious rhetoric of Mrs. Johnson, Jimmy and others for failing to connect them to Maggie in any meaningful and helpful way.

While Maggie rejects many of the aesthetic forms that carried sentimental structures of feeling, however, the novella does not necessarily abandon the project of nurturing sympathy for its protagonist. Refusing to employ an “established convention to evoke emotion” within a reader may not, as June Howard reminds, mean that an author has no desire to cultivate sentiment altogether. By presenting us with the emotional inadequacies of figures like Maggie’s mother and brother, the narrative forces us to find alternative ways to sympathize with the protagonist. When, for instance, Maggie
wanders the streets after being rejected by her family and her boyfriend, Pete, she seeks help from a clergyman whose “beaming, chubby face was a picture of benevolence and kind-heartedness” and whose “eyes shone good will.” Upon being “timidly accosted” by Maggie, the gentleman “gave a convulsive movement and saved his respectability by a vigorous sidestep. He did not risk it to save a soul. For how was he to know that there was a soul before him that needed saving?” While the encounter between Maggie and this clergyman demonstrates, once again, the moral imagination’s failure to generate a fellow-feeling with the urban poor, the narrator does not, therefore, suggest that Maggie needs no sympathy. The narrator’s rhetorical question about Maggie’s salvation, highlighted by its stylistic queerness, implies that Maggie’s soul does need saving, but locates the source of salvation beyond the scope of the novella’s portrayal of conventional Christianity. The narrative re-routes, rather than refuses, our emotional attachments to Maggie.

Like his father, in fact, Crane advocated a relocation of the operations of sympathy from the theoretical to the experiential realm. Crane’s widely acknowledged quest for intense urban experience can be seen as an extension of Reverend Crane’s Methodism. More thoroughly than his fictional accounts of the city in Maggie and George’s Mother (1896), Crane’s urban journalism redevelops the sympathetic project described in Methodism and Its Methods and carried out by Ocean Grove’s campers. As Crane investigates what Christopher Wilson calls the city’s “zones of urban friction,” he maintains his father’s commitment to social contact and shared experience as the grounds of sympathetic exchange. Originally published in the New York Press on April 22, 1894 and regarded by many as one of Crane’s best urban sketches, “An Experiment in
“Misery” translates into an urban idiom his father’s “experimental religion.” Following the basic narrative patterns of the urban sketch that had been developed by George G. Foster and other city journalists, “An Experiment in Misery” relates the experiences of a “youth” who journeys into the Bowery in order to spend a night in a boarding house and report his findings to the newspaper’s readership. Through Hamlin Garland and William Dean Howells, both of whom had favorably reviewed Maggie, Crane had received an assignment from the Bacheller & Johnson syndicate to investigate New York City’s lodging houses. Though its practitioners had pushed the literary form in several different directions, Crane saw the urban sketch as the ideal literary vessel for fulfilling his assignment and communicating a structure of feeling that emphasized the affective value of social contact and shared experience.

Although Michael Robertson is hardly alone in arguing that Crane’s sketch is “free of the moralizing, sentimentality, and proposals for reform that were common to other discussions of the contrast between misery and luxury,” its opening scene reveals the tale’s religious foundations. Standing with a friend while “regarding a tramp,” the youth reflects: “I wonder how he feels.” The friend responds: “You can tell nothing of it unless you are in that condition yourself. It is idle to speculate about it from this distance.” Immediately after his friend’s invitation to abolish the theoretical space between himself and the tramp, the youth sets out on his experiment to “eat as the wanderer may eat, and sleep as the homeless sleep.” Alluding to the Biblical passage in which Christ describes the kind of behavior that characterizes those who will eventually stand on his right hand—“For I was an hungered and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger and ye took me in”—the narrator’s language infuses
the youth’s experiment with religious meaning and places the sketch within the shadows of the Social Gospel movement. The youth’s friend encourages him to forego the traditional sentimental assumptions that one need only imagine what it might feel like to be in another’s place; he insists instead that only by physically experiencing the tramp’s “condition” could the youth discover the tramp’s “point of view or something near it” (34).

If Reverend Crane limited the opportunities of sharing deep experiences to fairly narrow sectarian and social locations—the love feast and the village—Crane’s urban sketches often realign those affective boundaries so that sympathy among urbanites might be attainable on New York City’s streets and sidewalks. “An Experiment in Misery” explores the possibility of occupying the “condition” of another beyond the perimeters of Methodism’s organizational forms. Soon after he embarks on his undercover investigation, the youth achieves an emotional equivalence with the city’s wanderers and homeless before actually encountering them; “completely plastered,” not with alcohol but with the “yells of ‘bum’ and ‘hobo’” that “small boys had applied to him at intervals,” the youth sinks into “a state of profound dejection” (34). He begins his experiment with a personal experience that establishes an emotional foundation upon which he might later create a fellow-feeling with the urban underclass. He searches for an “outcast of high degree” not to observe him and theorize about what he must be feeling, but “that the two might share miseries” (34).

The youth’s ability to commiserate with the tramps and outcasts does not depend upon a shared language or common religious affiliation but upon his physical senses. The youth engages in the sympathetic process when he sees, hears and smells the tramps
and when he sees, hears and smells with them. After singling out a particular tramp to follow “along a dark street” and through the “dusty door” of a lodging house, the youth is “assailed” by the “strange and unspeakable odors” within (37). When his “eyes became used to the darkness,” he “sat on his cot and peered about him. [. . .] He could see upon the cots that thickly littered the floor the forms of men sprawled out, lying in deathlike silence or heaving and snoring with tremendous effort, like stabbed fish” (38). Throughout the night, the youth listens to the lodgers’ “gutteral cries, grunts, oaths” and “shrieks” (38, 39). He never speaks with, nor is he spoken to by, the other boarders. The experience of sensing and sensing with the urban poor on their own turf, rather than imagining them from without, establishes the grounds for a more sympathetic union.

Although Crane’s sketch establishes the senses as the source of the emotional connections between two individuals, it simultaneously recognizes the existence of emotional gaps that can never be fully closed through physical contact—an acknowledgement that Reverend Crane was unwilling to make. While “An Experiment in Misery” frequently indicates that the youth’s experiences have enabled him to successfully “[align] himself” with the “aimless men strewn in front of saloons and lodging houses” (34), the sketch never allows the reader to forget that the youth is performing an experiment. Sensing and sensing with the “aimless men” certainly diminish the imaginative distance that the youth’s affections must travel, but the sketch regularly reveals the fundamental disparities between the youth and those sprawled around him in the boarding house “like stabbed fish”—a phrase whose peculiarity calls attention to the differences between them. Several other moments in the text mark these emotional distances. When, for instance, the youth wants to find a bed for the night, he
chooses to follow a man “whose wondrous seediness promised that he would have a
knowledge of cheap lodging houses” (35). The “wondrous” nature of the man’s
appearance in the youth’s eyes suggests that the youth sees him not as a fellow tramp but
as a spectacle. At this particular moment, the Bowery’s visual novelty mediates, to a
degree, the contact between the youth’s physical senses and the seedy tramp.

The constant intrusion of cable cars and elevated trains prior to the youth’s
spotting the “wondrous” man implicitly link the youth’s sensual and emotional habits to
these newly developed modes of urban travel. As essential technological developments
in the emerging industry of urban transportation and tourism, the streetcar and elevated
train sponsored a distinct point of view. Writing about Abraham Cahan’s Yekl (1896)
and some of the visual apparatuses through which New York’s middle classes viewed the
city’s lower classes in the 1890s, Sabine Haenni suggests that, as “apparatuses of visual
mediation,” these new forms of transportation “allowed the passenger to experience the
social complexity of the city in a nonthreatening way while promising ever changing
views and surprises.” The framed view out the train window invoked a “pictorial
mediation” by which the viewer perceived “only the picturesqueness of their intimate
life” while “remaining protected from the assault of poverty.”48 In “An Experiment in
Misery,” the youth’s silent assessment of the man’s “wondrous seediness” seems as if it
were made from within one of the passing trains or cable cars relegated to the narrative’s
margins. The youth’s observation manifests the degree to which he has internalized the
“distancing devices” of the streetcar so that even when walking through the Bowery he
can “transform the potentially chaotic ‘heterogeneity’ of the Bowery into a pleasing
‘cosmopolitanism.’”49 The youth’s physical senses may diminish the gap between
himself and the tramps, but they also preserve a degree of separation; his internalization of a visual culture built into the physical spaces of the city prevent him from fully identifying with the urban poor.

The youth’s ability to experience the tramp’s condition is similarly mediated by the literary forms that had been used by other writers to describe the urban poor. When, sitting upon his cot inside the lodging house, the youth spots a “gas jet in a distant part of the room that burned a small flickering orange hued flame” (38), “An Experiment in Misery” morphs briefly into the type of gaslight fiction and urban sensationalism that had been one of the dominant modes of representing the city’s mysteries and miseries during the second half of the nineteenth century. George G. Foster’s second batch of urban sketches, collected and published in New York By Gaslight (1850), exemplify the narrative conventions of the genre with which Crane’s own sketch momentarily flirts. In Foster’s attempt to “penetrate beneath the thick veil of night and lay bare the fearful mysteries of darkness in the metropolis,” his gaslight sketches push the distinct point of view that he had used in his earlier work to an extreme. Referring to the mythical demon that lifts off the roofs of houses in order to spy the evil deeds of their inhabitants, the narrator of these gaslight sketches adopts what he calls an “Asmodean privilege.” As if peering down upon his subject matter from above, the narrator repeatedly prefaces the scenes that he is about to describe with the phrase “let us look and listen.” Foster’s literary point of view is one that “An Experiment in Misery” had explicitly tried to avoid.

Despite his efforts to circumvent the “look and listen” model of understanding the urban poor, Crane’s youth finds himself occupying this literary habit of observation. Having tried to rely entirely upon his experiences with the urban poor to inform him of
how they feel, the youth now falls back upon the narrative patterns that others had used to describe them. The sounds, smells and sights of the lodging house begin “weaving into the young man’s brain and mingling with his views of these vast and somber shadows that like mighty black fingers curled around the naked bodies” of his fellow lodgers (39). In his semi-hallucinatory state, the room takes on the “strange effect of a graveyard” (39). Unable to sleep, the youth “lay carving biographies for these men” by supplementing his “meager experience” (39) with speculative details. Though the sketch does not provide the details of these biographies, the youth undoubtedly fashions them out of previous literary attempts to narrate the lives of the urban poor. The lodging-house cot becomes for the youth what Miles Orvell describes as the “epistemological intersection of experience and preconception.”

Rather than view the moments when these alternative visual and literary interpretive patterns intrude upon the youth’s experiment as signs of its ultimate failure, “An Experiment in Misery” suggests that the youth’s awareness of these internalized paradigms actually enables him to engage more sympathetically with the urban poor through his experiences. Following the gaslight scene, in which the ghosts of past literary genres haunt the youth’s vision, the nature of his experiment changes in fundamental ways. Having looked and listened to the other lodgers through the “distancing devices” of streetcar tourism and urban sensationalism, the youth recognizes that he can never fully experience their condition. This recognition does not prompt the youth to abandon his experiment as a pointless exercise, but instead alters the ways in which he experiences the “misery” of other urbanites. As the morning sunlight chases away the previous night’s shadows, the youth awakens to find that “daylight had made
the room comparatively commonplace and uninteresting” (40). He realizes that he had “forgotten all about” the “ unholy atmospheres” in which he had immersed himself, and he finds himself “breathing naturally and with no sensation of discomfort or distress” (40). Rather than signify the youth’s success in going native, his transformation suggests instead that he has arrived at a more honest awareness of his relationship to the tramps whose feelings he hopes to understand. If the youth had originally hoped to be one of them, he now tries to simply be near them.

Privileging a sensual sympathy, rather than a theoretical or imaginative one, may prevent the youth from identifying with the assassin, but it also inspires the youth to get physically close enough to hear the assassin articulate his own “point of view.” While eating breakfast together at a basement restaurant near the lodging house where they had slept, “[m]emories began to throng in on the assassin, and he brought forth long tales, intricate, incoherent, delivered with a chattering swiftness as from an old woman. ‘—
great job out’n Orange. Boss keep yeh hustlin’, though, all time. I was there three days, and then I went an’ ask’im t’ lend me a dollar. “G-g-go ter the devil,” he ses, an’ I lose me job’” (42). The assassin immediately follows up his rant about his “job out’n Orange” with a complaint that the “South no good. Damn niggers work for twenty-five an’ thirty cents a day. Run white man out. Good grub, though, Easy livin’” (42). Had Reverend Crane allowed the “imp with smutty face” that he encounters in the “Babel of polyglot confusion” to speak, the “young Turk” might have narrated similar stories of economic hardship; however, Reverend Crane’s particular structure of feeling forecloses this possibility.
In “An Experiment in Misery,” the youth’s sensual sympathies eventually allow the assassin to craft his own autobiography and thereby rise above the imagined biographies that the youth had carved for him and the other men who had slept in the lodging house. These tales from the assassin are unmediated by the youth and narrator, even when the assassin verbalizes a type of racism that Crane may not have personally condoned. Neither the youth nor the narrator editorializes the “incoherent” chatter by informing the reader what to make of the economic structures that have shaped the assassin’s life. The sketch doesn’t strip the representation of the assassin of complexity in order to evoke a “simple, clean emotional response of pity,” as Gregg Camfield suggests is typical of sentimental narratives. Instead of providing a narrative space during or following the assassin’s tales in which the sentimental conventions of establishing sympathetic identifications could unfold, the sketch cuts away from this scene as soon as the assassin utters his last word. Rather than give us the youth’s or narrator’s response to the assassin, the sketch shifts our perspective from an intimate to a distant one; we see the youth and the assassin emerge from the basement restaurant as if we were sitting in a passing cable car or walking down the opposite sidewalk. These formal and stylistic qualities reproduce within the reader the experience of being in the city.

Instead of reading these perspectival shifts as confirmation of Trachtenberg’s conclusion that Crane’s sketches always “end at the edge of sympathetic identification,” it is helpful to realize that identification may not always provide the litmus test of a sympathetic exchange. If Crane’s urban sketches repeatedly frustrate the project of identification among urbanites, they do not necessarily resist the formation of emotional
attachments that might also be described as sympathetic. When, for instance, the sketch zooms out to show the youth and assassin leaving the restaurant, they encounter “an old man who was trying to steal forth with a tiny package of food” (42). We, along with the youth, witness a “tall man with an indomitable mustache” accost the old man, who then “raise[s] a plaintive protest. ‘Ah, you always want to know what I take out, and you never see that I usually bring a package in here from my place of business’” (42). As in the previous scene, the sketch cuts away from this confrontation as soon as the old man voices his “plaintive protest.” The sketch produces yet another moment that, when evaluated in terms of “sympathetic identification,” seems to leave the youth and us at its emotive “edge.”

While this interaction between the “old man” and the “tall man” fits inside three sentences and revolves around two extremely minor figures, it is the affective moment for which the entire experiment has prepared the youth and us. Having listened to the assassin’s autobiography immediately prior to observing the interaction between the two men, we (and, we assume, the youth) connect with the old man in a more compassionate way than we might have before our experiment in misery. In this brief urban encounter, there is little time for the youth, and even less time for us, to imagine ourselves in the old man’s place. The sketch mimics urban experience by resisting the narrative urge to provide us with enough information about the old man’s “point of view” from which we might make the identificatory leap. If the sketch thwarts any type of identification with the old man, though, it simultaneously curbs a desire to see him punished for stealing. Surprisingly, we find ourselves emotionally attached to the old man. The very form of the text, with its constantly shifting perspectives characteristic of urban life, delineates
the dimensions of Crane’s reformulated sentimental structure of feeling. For Crane, sympathy emanates from an experiential oscillation between sensual contiguity and spectatorial distance. Through the accumulation of deep, urban experiences, the experiment outfits the youth and us with what the narrator describes earlier in the sketch as “benevolent spectacles” (37) through which we might acquire a fellow-feeling with the old man.

The sympathy “generated and deployed” from within the perceptual lines of these “benevolent spectacles” inspires a range of social practices that may not comply with nor subvert the city’s dominant power structures, but that can be plotted on a continuum between these two poles. After his experiment the youth might not be compelled to intervene in the lives of those with whom he came in contact during his experiment, but the sketch suggests that neither will he be satisfied with the acquisition of knowledge for its own sake. While Crane refrains from “preaching” specific social practices to his readers, we and the youth have, nevertheless, been affected by our “experiment in misery” in ways that other passersby, walking “in their good clothes as upon important missions” (42), may have not. Although the youth has not, as he admits in the sketch’s final lines, discovered the tramp’s “point of view,” he insists that his “own has undergone a considerable alteration” (43); and, having undergone an experiential conversion of sorts, the youth is able to sympathize with those around him. The narrator even hints, rather startingly, at the similarities between the youth’s conversion and those experienced by campers at Ocean Grove when he toys with the diction of love feasts and camp meetings near the end of the sketch. Describing the youth’s emotional condition as
the experiment concludes, the narrator informs us that he “felt a sudden awe,” “confessed himself,” and now held “certain convictions” (43).

III. Stephen Crane and the Arena

Just a week or two after the New York Press ran “An Experiment in Misery,” Crane published the first of two urban sketches to appear in the Arena. Started in 1889 by Benjamin Orange Flower, the Arena provided a radically different venue for Crane’s sketches than the penny presses in which urban sketchery had evolved. Flower hoped that his magazine would help usher in a “splendid awakening in which religion should be expressed in life rather than in dogma or creeds”—an awakening that would “bring earnest men and women into direct and sympathetic contact with the strugglers who are losing hope.” To this end, he dedicated his monthly magazine to promoting a wide variety of social reform movements: a public works program to relieve unemployment; municipal slum-clearance and low-income housing projects; prison reform; the eradication of child labor; and female suffrage, among many others. In their attempts to cultivate support for these and other causes, Flower and many of the Arena’s contributors presented readers with a blend of religious, scientific, sociological and political discourses. Though it may have lacked the Social Gospel movement’s strong teleological drive, the Arena’s religious overtones and affective habits illuminate the particular structure of feeling embedded in Crane’s work that this chapter has been examining.

Since its inception, the Arena had been incubating and championing the type of literary realism that accommodated Crane’s experiential ethos. As Nancy Glazener points out, the Arena branded a model of realism that “challenged [the] adequacy” of a “high realism” that had been marketed by the Atlantic Monthly and practiced by writers
such as William Dean Howells and Henry James. In the Arena’s first volume, Flower
denounces novels that, in their aspirations toward objectivity, refuse to enter the social
fray; he calls instead for a body of literature that “touches the heart, awakens the
emotional nature, and changes the masses from the mournful multitude oblivious to
impending evil.”

Flower and others perceived in realism a genre particularly well
suited to stimulating readers to express their religious convictions through outward acts
and inward feelings rather than through “dogma or creeds.”

In one of the many aesthetic manifestos printed by the Arena, Clarence Darrow
echoes Reverend Crane’s dismissal of “[s]illy novels, puerile tales, and nineteenth-rate
poems” and boldly announces the moral and ethical superiority of realism in relation to
other literary forms. Through no other genre, he explains, can readers see as clearly the
“beautiful and the ugly, and know what the world is and what it ought to be.” Darrow, in
fact, attributes to realism many of the qualities with which sentimental literature is
typically associated. More sensitive than even the most committed sentimentalist, the
realist “feels for every heart that beats, else he could not paint them as he does.” Given
the passionate process through which realist texts are fashioned, Darrow, like Reverend
Crane, reasons that they will better prepare their readers to “see and feel the social life”
of the “men and women and little children whom they meet upon the streets.” In
Darrow’s estimation, reading works of realism enables individuals to turn the street
contact into a site of sympathetic exchange. Though the Arena was less antagonistic
toward other genres than Darrow, it fully embraced his assessment of realism’s ability to
“stir the heart” of its readers and nudge them toward compassionate social contact.
Crane’s *Arena* publications may not meet all of Darrow’s expectations, but the affective functions of realism that he describes help us see important aspects of Crane’s texts that have been obscured by contemporary descriptions of the genre. Reading Crane through Amy Kaplan’s account of realism—as a mode of representation that was unconcerned with the “problem of social justice” and more interested in “effac[ing] and reinscrib[ing] social hierarchies”—slights the claim that the *Arena*’s brand of realism should have on our understandings of Crane’s work.\(^5^9\) Flower, in fact, saw Crane’s realism as the type of literature for which he had yearned in his magazine’s early days. When Flower published the first of Crane’s two *Arena* pieces, “An Ominous Baby,” the editor exhorted readers “to peruse with care the vivid sketch by Stephen Crane” and to seek out both its “literary merit” and its value as a “social study.” Crane, he predicted, would be a “much-talked-of-man long after many favorites of dilettanteism are forgotten.”\(^6^0\) Modeling for his readers the path from literature to social reform that he hoped they would travel, Flower used “An Ominous Baby” as an occasion to assail the “brutally unjust social conditions” that had deprived many citizens of work during the disastrous winter of 1893-94 and to advocate the government’s responsibility to create jobs for its citizens through public works projects.\(^6^1\) While Crane may not have intended “An Ominous Baby” to be interpreted in this particular way—he had, in fact, written it prior to the disastrous winter of 1893-94—the sketch emits the stylistic and affective signals to which the *Arena*’s brand of realism was attuned, enabling Flower to use it for his own purposes.

More thoroughly than “An Ominous Baby,” Crane’s second publication in the *Arena* answers the magazine’s call for a literature that would enable readers to “see and
feel the social life” of those they encountered on the city’s streets and sidewalks. Much like “An Experiment in Misery” and many of the other sketches that he wrote for the *New York Press*, “The Men in the Storm” explores the social dimensions of urban contact. Based on his experience of waiting in line with other men to gain admittance to a cheap lodging house during a particularly violent blizzard in late February 1894, the sketch represents the emotional experience of being in the city with other urbanites. His friend, Corwin Knapp Linson, would later recall seeing Crane the morning following the blizzard: “He had been all night at it, out in the storm in line with the hungry men, studying them; then inside, writing it.” Linson’s reminiscences highlight the connection between experience and literature toward which Crane aspired. Rather than convey this attempt to inhabit the “condition” of the homeless through a literary device as conspicuous as the “youth,” though, “The Men in the Storm” relies almost entirely upon subtle shifts in perspective to register the city’s social possibilities.

“The Men in the Storm” begins not in the street but in a variety of physically removed viewpoints from which the narrator surveys scenes of the snowy city. We first glimpse “scores of pedestrians and drivers, wretched with cold faces, necks and feet, speeding for scores of unknown doors and entrances” along one of the city’s busy thoroughfares as though we were passing through on an elevated train that “stretch[ed] over the avenue” or were “one who looked from a window” at the scene outside. From these coordinates, the narrator can only theorize about those rushing about in the cold. Standing behind a window or seated within the elevated train, the narrator can only “speculate upon the destination of those who came trooping” and, inspired by the “tales of childhood,” project the “suggestion of hot dinners [. . .] upon every hurrying face.”

48
Even when the narrative shifts its gaze from the busy avenue to the crowd gathered outside a lodging house, the sketch continues to exercise its Asmodean privilege. Looking at them “directly from above” (664), the narrator describes the homeless men as they emerge from their makeshift shelters to “mass in front of the doors of charity” (663). From this remote vantage point, the men are “all mixed in one mass so thoroughly that one could not have discerned the different elements” (664) among them. From this elevation, the narrator cannot distinguish one individual from another, much less access their feelings. Instead, he can only imagine how he might feel if he were in their position.

Without making an abrupt or conspicuous narrative transition, the sketch relocates the narrator from a position above the men to one right beside them. Lacking a figure comparable to the youth in “An Experiment in Misery,” the literary form of “The Men in the Storm” encodes the movement from a speculative position beyond the Bowery to an experiential site inside of it. The sketch invites readers to reenact another “experiment in misery” without the youth acting as their proxy. We find ourselves standing in line with the men, waiting for the charity house to open its doors, rather than looking at them from above. From this new perspective, we can “see how the snow lay upon the heads and shoulders of these men, in little ridges an inch thick perhaps in places, the flakes steadily adding drop and drop” (664). We are close enough not just to distinguish the individuality of the men, but to notice their “wet and cold” feet and feel their “wish to warm them” through their “slow, gentle, rhythmical motion” (664). Situated among them, we experience the collective anxiety for the charity house to open. With them, we are “crowded to the doors in an unspeakable crush, jamming and wedging in a way that it
seemed would crack bones” (665). We are surrounded not only by pressing bodies, but also by a “dull roar of rage” (665):

“Ah, git away f’m th’ door!”

“Git outa that!”

“Throw ‘em out!”

“Kill ‘em!”

“Say, fellers, now, what th’ ‘ell? Give ‘em a chanct t’ open th’ door!”

“Yeh damned pigs, give ‘em a chanct t’ open th’ door!” (665)

As in “An Experiment in Misery,” the narrator refuses to mediate the dialogue for us or to use any other narrative convention that might wall us off from the experience and emotions of those waiting in the storm.

The sketch enables us to engage in the sympathetic process with the men not because we identify with them, but because we experience the storm beside them. Although the narrative never compels us to forget the remote location from which we initially viewed the homeless, it makes a point to remind us of the physical and emotional distance we have traversed during the course of the sketch. Just before the lodging house opens its doors to the men waiting in the cold, the narrative cuts away to the “window of the huge dry-goods shop across the street” where there appeared a “rather stout and very well clothed” gentleman who “stood in an attitude of magnificent reflection” (666). The man occupies a relationship to the crowd that we had inhabited when we started reading the sketch. Perhaps only now, when we find ourselves looking up at this man “[f]rom below” and feel the physical and social distance that allows him to secure his pose of “supreme complacence” (666), do we fully recognize that we have vacated our own
positions behind the window. We are now with the men in the street, calling out to the smug spectator “in every manner, from familiar and cordial greetings to carefully-worded advice concerning changes in his personal appearance” (666). We may not be one of the homeless—a fact of which the sketch reminds us by ultimately denying us entrance to the charity house when it finally opens its doors—but we have stood with them long enough to physically and emotionally experience the storm with them. We do not have to point at them from afar with our canes or parasols, but can instead use our shared experience as the foundation of a more humane response to them.

Read in the context of the Arena, particularly its contemporary concerns with the problems of unemployment and homelessness during the winter of 1893-94, “The Men in the Storm” performs the function of what Flower describes as “true religion” by bringing readers into “direct and sympathetic contact with the strugglers who are losing hope.” The Arena’s religiously inspired social aspirations may not perfectly coincide with “meanings and values” of Methodism that Crane reworks in his representations of urban life, but situating Crane’s work in Flower’s magazine helps lift out of critical obscurity the particular structures of feeling embedded in it. When read alongside Flower’s editorials, Darrow’s description of realism, and Reverend Minot J. Savage’s regular attempts to recover the religious attitudes of writers such as James Russell Lowell and Walt Whitman, it becomes difficult to claim, as does Trachtenberg, that “The Men in the Storm” neither “excites compassion for the men nor induces social guilt in the reader for their plight.” Crane’s sketch might not specifically endorse any of the Arena’s pet reform projects, but it provides readers with the type of affective foundations upon which
Flower hoped to create a “new reformation” in which the “high manifestation of justice which has ever been the ideal of the world’s noblest prophets” might be expressed.66

IV. Conclusion

Crane’s aesthetic aims and social practices are not, then, as William Morgan and many others often suppose, “shaped by an original revolt against the moralizing genres and tropes for which ‘preaching’ stands.”67 Rather, Crane’s writing habits and urban tactics are informed by the particular liturgical events and social ideals articulated by Reverend Crane and rehearsed by Methodist practitioners on the Jersey Shore—religious practices and ideals that did not simply dissipate into a vague Victorian morality and its literary manifestations. Literary critics have been very helpful in delineating the formal and stylistic continuities between sentimental and realist novels, and the ways in which mid-century female authors paved the path for women writing in the realist vein.68 However, many still take for granted the discontinuities between religious meanings and values and the type of urban realism in which Crane worked. If Crane can be said to “stand” for other late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century writers in the way that he carries within him a religiously grounded sentimental structure of feeling, then we might benefit from rethinking the ways we connect or distance other seemingly secular and unsentimental writers to or from a sentimental culture that, as Min Song reminds, often “sprung from and remains connected to a Christian way of seeing.”69

Crane’s representations of New York City’s social landscape also encourage us to think of the city not as a place that inherently precludes sympathetic interactions among its inhabitants, but as a physical and social environment that requires them to reroute their emotional attachments to one another. Crane may not smooth the rough edges off his
subjects with biographical details in order that we might more easily imagine ourselves in their positions, but this does not mean that his texts deny us the possibility of achieving a fellow-feeling with them. Instead, his realist aesthetics reveal the affective possibilities of the urban street contact. Because Methodism’s “meanings and values” privilege social contact and shared experience as the material with which “spiritual sympathy” can be made, Crane perceives the possibility of crafting “urban sympathy” out of similar emotional building blocks. Rather than force us to regard others in a “hardening way,” as Olmsted feared, Crane suggests that the sidewalk encounter has the potential to jar us from a preconceived mode of relations and to reground that relationship in a shared physical experience.
Chapter Two

The Quest for “Cosmopolitan Affection”: W. E. B. Du Bois and the Settlement House Movement

In 1910, W. E. B. Du Bois addressed a group of settlement workers, volunteers and neighbors at Brooklyn’s Lincoln Settlement, which had recently been established to address the needs of the community’s growing black population. Du Bois began by describing for his listeners some of the forces that had been driving an increasingly large number of migrants from the rural South to the urban North, touching upon key elements of an evolving African-American migration narrative that attempted to make sense of this historical movement.¹ Given that the “country life of the Negro still savours of slavery”—simply repackaged in the form of a “crop lien system and contract labor laws”—Du Bois observed that blacks had been lured to northern cities by the promise of a “more interesting life and larger social opportunities, a greater economic return, a better chance for civilization and culture.” As in most African-American migration narratives, though, Du Bois informed his audience that when these migrants arrived in places such as Washington D. C., Philadelphia, New York and Chicago, they bumped up against a “line of demarcation and a line of discrimination” that prevented them from realizing their social, economic and cultural aspirations.²

Although Du Bois was concerned with the foreclosure of social and cultural opportunities for urban blacks, he considered the most worrisome “problem of the city Negro in the North” to be an economic one. City Negroes, he explained, had an awfully hard time “finding remunerative employment.” As southern migrants poured into the shallow and restricted job pool that the city economy had carved out for them, they and
established black urbanites found themselves in what Du Bois wryly described as a “peculiar situation.” Acknowledging that these migrants might find better jobs and make more money in their new homes than they had in the South, he reminded his listeners that, when they did manage to secure employment, the types of work employers hired them to perform and their wages for doing it were the table scraps of industrialism’s economic feast. Consequently, the black urbanite seeking employment in the city “not only finds the way difficult and the encouragement hesitating, but he always must face the fact, that no matter how high he may force himself by sheer ability and desert, he will in the judgment of his neighbors be continually classed with the worst of his fellows who happen to be of the same color.” The “line of discrimination” that had severely limited the participation of black laborers in the urban economy had, in turn, prevented them—especially the upward-striving individuals about whom Du Bois expressed most concern—from entering into the type of interracial relationships for which he longed. By shoving its entire black population into an undifferentiated low-income mass, the industrial economy placed them, as Du Bois had described it in *The Souls of Black Folk*, “beyond the pale of sympathy and race-brotherhood.”

If Du Bois’s observations reveal his well-documented elitism and personal frustration with being repeatedly “classed” alongside those he considered to be his social inferiors, they also offer a critique of interracial sympathy’s increasingly narrow affective boundaries. His remarks at the Lincoln Settlement call attention to the racial and class differences in the industrial city that were not currently being bridged by fellow-feelings. White urbanites were, he suggested, incapable of connecting emotionally to the “worst” sort of blacks; or, to be more precise, they were incapable of relating to poor urban blacks
in a way that produced meaningful and significant changes in their lives. At the same
time, Du Bois claimed that white urbanites lacked habits of feeling capacious enough to
account for blacks, like himself, who were involved in the project of racial uplift.

Du Bois’s observations about the city’s failure to cultivate within its white
inhabitants a fellow-feeling for the “city Negro” register in a specific urban context his
much broader dissatisfaction with America’s post-Reconstruction culture of interracial
sympathy—a culture about which he had been and would continue to be extremely
critical in other venues. Speaking on the Republican campaign trail in 1888, the former
abolitionist orator Anna Dickinson had described this new culture of sympathy as a “love
feast that is spread between old foes, till at last we of the North and they of the South are
doing what our forefathers did thirty years ago—grasping hands across the prostrate body
of the negro.” If writers and public intellectuals such as Dickinson, Lydia Maria Child,
Frances Harper, Frederick Douglass, Albion Tourgée, and others had tried to sustain a
radically transformed social order by spinning new affective and narrative patterns
capable of supporting an emotionally integrated society, their vision ultimately failed to
take hold. While radical Republicans attempted to facilitate affective alliances among
blacks and whites, many white northerners and southerners became increasingly invested
in forging an emotional reunion among themselves. Representational habits privileging
an interregional but *intra*-racial union among whites toppled the tentative structures of
interracial feeling that radical Republicans had begun to erect before and after the Civil
War. The affective arena within which the processes of sympathy operated had become
increasingly crowded with “pale” bodies.
By the time he addressed his audience at Lincoln Settlement—over two decades after Dickinson had flagged the initial onset of the culture of reconciliation—Du Bois feared that the emotional patterns she had characterized as merely fashionable had since saturated the nation’s social landscape. He blamed the rise in white solidarity and the corresponding evaporation of interracial sympathy, in part, on popular historical and fictional accounts of the Civil War and Reconstruction. He accused these reconciliationist narratives of generating “endless sympathy with the white South” while simultaneously inciting “ridicule, contempt or silence for the Negro.” Rather than facilitate emotional ties across racial lines, these narratives of *intra*-racial reunion arranged “mankind in ranks of mutual hatred and contempt.” Reconciliation novelists such as John W. De Forest, Thomas Dixon and Thomas Nelson Page had set in motion the affective logic upon which a reunion between white northerners and southerners would take place. Such “cheap and false myth[s]” might make for “pleasant reading” and “fine romance,” Du Bois admitted, but they were not “science.” Romances of reunion failed to communicate what Du Bois took to be a fundamental “truth”—that “[h]umanity is one and its vast variety is its glory and not its condemnation.”7 He would spend much of his career crafting narratives across different genres and disciplines that constructed alternative social myths and the affective pillars that held them up.

Although Du Bois vehemently criticized the pale turn that sympathy had taken in the post-Reconstruction period—in both the urban North and rural South—we lose sight of a crucial dimension of his work if we assume, as do Susan Mizruchi and others, that he thought of sympathy as a concept that no longer had any social significance, as a “sentimental remnant in a modern world.”8 Such assessments of Du Bois may have more
to do with the way contemporary readers interpret the affective operations of interracial sympathy than with his own deployment of the concept. Focusing almost exclusively on sympathetic structures of feeling exhibited in abolitionists texts, critics such as Jane Tompkins, Lauren Berlant, Karen Sánchez-Eppler, and Christopher Castiglia describe interracial sympathy as an affect that tends to marginalize the black individual’s identity and undermine an awareness of the larger social, economic and political conditions that surround them. Drawing heavily upon Adam Smith’s descriptions of the sympathetic process, Castiglia characterizes abolitionist sympathy as a “form of surveillant discipline”—what we might call sympathetic discipline—in which the black sufferer must imagine himself or herself always in the eyes of whites, becoming a body shaped by an idea of a body.” Like Sánchez-Eppler and Berlant, Castiglia points out that in order to gain abolitionists’ sympathy, slaves had to express their sufferings and emotions in a manner both legible and palatable to potential white friends. Abolitionism, then, made the production of a fellow-feeling contingent upon the slave’s ability to convey individual virtues—such as piety and conjugal fidelity—with which abolitionists could identify.

While this form of sympathy may have provided slaves and freedmen with individual liberties, Castiglia worries that it buried an awareness of the “social construction and distribution of structural power in a rhetoric of individual interiority.”

Du Bois, in fact, made similar critiques of an interracial affect that both induced within the black subject what he famously described as “double-consciousness”—the habit of “always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others, of measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity”—and failed to address the systemic causes of racial inequalities. Du Bois nevertheless continued to use the
concept of sympathy as the “tape” with which he measured the social health of his own society. He was hardly alone in doing so. The concept of sympathy, Molly Hiro reminds us, “persists as a central construct for working out questions of racial identity and community” well into the twentieth century.12 However, rather than navigate a radically reconfigured social terrain through the sympathetic abolitionism practiced by William Lloyd Garrison and others he admired, Du Bois updated the habits of feeling that he had inherited. Interracial sympathy may have had an identity crisis during the post-Reconstruction period, but Du Bois opted to reinvent rather than discard this concept as a social ideal. He was particularly invested in building a structure of interracial feeling that would enable the sympathetic process to account for both the psychological integrity of black individuals and the social, cultural and political forces that moved through and around them.

If the northern industrial city materialized aspects of a post-Reconstruction culture that placed blacks “beyond the pale of sympathy,” Du Bois also saw it as a site in which new affective patterns could emerge. More specifically, he attempted to rewire interracial sympathy’s emotional short circuit by using the tactical and ideological tools honed within the Progressive Era’s urban settlement movement. Perhaps no other group of urban intellectuals was as invested as settlement workers in revising the affective patterns commonly signified by the term “sympathy.” They were extremely vocal in differentiating their social ideals from those of their benevolent predecessors. Rather than visit the urban poor from distant locations, settlement workers stressed the value of living alongside those they wished to help; by residing in high-density immigrant neighborhoods, they hoped to establish the daily contact and constant companionship
upon which their social ideals rested. Through the informal and formal accumulation of repeated personal contact, settlement workers forged new social networks through which they intended to revolutionize not just individuals but also much larger social structures. While administering to individual needs by way of educational programs, visiting nurses and one-on-one conversations, settlement workers also used their first-hand knowledge of urban life and their extensive sociological investigations to collaborate with the urban poor to initiate citywide policy reform and to repair the industrial economy’s gaping structural flaws. The settlement movement attempted, as Mina Carson describes it, “to heal society by restoring social intercourse between artificially sundered classes” and by calling for “social justice, not charity.” Their style of urban sympathy entailed an affective process that accounted for both an individual’s personal experiences and the “distribution of structural power” that helped shape those experiences.

In his speech to Brooklyn’s Lincoln Settlement, Du Bois suggested that the settlement movement possessed the necessary means to solve the social and economic crises that he had just outlined for his audience. In order to make the type of financial progress upon which a true interracial democracy could rest, he insisted, the black community required “sympathy in its higher aims, cooperation and money to help in the work”—all of which he felt could be supplied through the affective and institutional channels that the American settlement movement had been carving out for twenty-plus years. Only through the kind of social work conducted at Lincoln Settlement, he confidently asserted, could the “efficiency of a community of white people and black people and their striving for the best social betterments be raised.” He claimed to know of “no more effective way to work for the social uplift, not simply of the Negro people
but the city of Brooklyn and the state of New York and indeed of the United States, than through efficient aid to an institution like the Lincoln Settlement.”

Though few scholars and biographers have had much to say about it, Du Bois was actively involved in this Progressive Era settlement movement. In 1896, he moved to Philadelphia to begin a sociological study of the city’s black community that had been commissioned by the University of Pennsylvania and the College Settlement of Philadelphia. While gathering information for what would become *The Philadelphia Negro* (1899), Du Bois and his wife occupied a room maintained by the settlement. As the first black resident of this particular outpost of the College Settlement Association, Du Bois collaborated with local settlement workers and used the recently published *Hull-House Maps and Papers* (1895)—the American settlement movement’s bible—as a model for his own study. After its publication, *The Philadelphia Negro* served, in turn, as a seminal text for other settlement workers interested in living among and collaborating with black urban communities. Although Du Bois did not reside at a settlement house again after leaving Philadelphia, he continued to operate within the movement’s institutional networks throughout the Progressive period: he corresponded with a number of well-known settlement leaders—Jane Addams, Florence Kelley and Mary White Ovington, among others—and frequently advised them about conducting social work among the city’s black population; he delivered several speeches at settlement houses, such as the Lincoln Settlement; and he even helped draft a proposal for the incorporation of a black settlement house in New York City.

This chapter attends to the ways in which Du Bois re-imagined a more satisfying model of interracial sympathy through the dialect of “urban sympathy” spoken by
settlement workers. Particularly in his early efforts to displace the fictions and romances that cultivated interracial contempt with narratives that facilitated interracial sympathy, Du Bois embraced a structure of feeling upon which the settlement movement hung its social ideals, scientific techniques and narrative forms. Developed and refined through *The Philadelphia Negro* and his other sociological studies, Du Bois’s racially and economically attuned settlement philosophy informed his approach to more popular literary genres. If the settlement movement’s fingerprints are all over the essays collected in *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), its grip nearly strangles his first novel, *The Quest of the Silver Fleece* (1911). Written as a direct response to the plantation novel and other popular fictions that eroded interracial sympathy at the turn of the century, Du Bois’s novel explicitly idealizes community through the language and logic of settlement work. When we attend to the settlement rhetoric that animates *The Quest of the Silver Fleece* and his prior nonfiction work, Du Bois’s complex attitudes about the country’s interracial landscape become much more legible. Reckoning with Du Bois’s use of a settlement-inspired concept of urban sympathy to reshape the city’s and the nation’s interracial structures of feeling forces us, in turn, to reconsider our conventional assumptions about interracial sympathy’s affective operations—assumptions that tend to interpret its emotional processes as fundamentally dehumanizing and structurally inattentive.

I. *The Quest of the Silver Fleece as Settlement House Novel*

In April 1907, Du Bois replied to a letter from Henry Lanier in which the editor from Doubleday, Page & Co. had inquired about publishing one of his future books. Lanier may not have been aware at the time that Du Bois had already rebuffed similar inquiries from Walter H. Page, expressing his hesitancy to publish with the “exploiters of
Regardless, Du Bois respectfully informed Lanier that he was currently at work on “four literary ventures”—among them a novel whose “first draught” he had already completed. Lanier responded enthusiastically to the idea of a novel, informing the author that he had felt “for some time that this was the way in which you might perhaps reach the widest public with what you have to say.” The novel Du Bois had just drafted, *The Quest of the Silver Fleece*, was eventually published by A.C. McClurg & Co. in 1911. However, contrary to Lanier’s speculations, it did not reach a very wide audience, and many have since argued that it doesn’t really have much to say. Critics agree that *Quest* undermines the plantation novels popularized by writers such as Thomas Dixon and Thomas Nelson Page, but they are less sure about what to make of the narrative that displaces these romances of reunion.

Given the conspicuous, though almost entirely ignored, role that a Progressive Era settlement philosophy plays in the novel, *Quest* offers a useful starting point for understanding the urban movement’s centrality in Du Bois’s efforts to resuscitate and reconfigure an endangered mode of interracial sympathy. Reading the novel as a text that coheres around the settlement movement’s sociological techniques, social ideals, and narrative styles—rather than as a novel that mixes romance and realism with varying degrees of success—helps us better understand its attempts to undermine the intellectual and emotional logic of reconciliation. The novel might best be described as two separate narratives that compete for the rights to prescribe the most appropriate mode of interracial relations. The first features a white northern protagonist, Mary Taylor, who moves to Alabama and is eventually absorbed into the narrative conventions and ideological commitments of the plantation novel. The second features a black southern
protagonist, Zora, who leaves Alabama to live in New York and Washington D.C., where she discovers the settlement movement, and then returns to the South to establish a social settlement in her rural community. The arcs of both plots intersect throughout the novel, but they harbor two very different visions of how to approach the nation’s post-Civil War social landscape.

The Mary Taylor plot line draws heavily upon the narrative conventions of the plantation novel—the aesthetic medium that perhaps best illustrates the affective mechanics of reconciliation. The genre’s focus on interregional romance and marriage, in particular, reveals the emotional logic that lay at the heart of a white North-South reunion. Recognizing the difficulty of reuniting the divided nation through political and economic rhetoric, writers often cast the process of national reconciliation in the domestic sphere—where true emotions belonged. The plantation novel’s trope of intersectional marriage, as Nina Silber points out, “possessed a special significance for a people imbued with sentimental notions of emotions and sincerity”; marital and familial relations, unlike political and economic ones, had the ability to “nurture and regenerate the type of emotional bonds that would truly and completely heal the national rift. Northerners and southerners, once joined like a family, would rebuild a domestic union, which would provide the truest and most sincere basis for national harmony.”

The plantation novel’s marriage tale—usually of a white northern man romantically drawn to a white southern woman—consummates a reconciliationist structure of feeling in which defeated and impoverished white southerners, rather than freed blacks, figure as the subjects most deserving of sympathy. The genre’s love plot directs readers’ attention away from the racial and political concerns of the Civil War and Reconstruction and
submerges them instead, according to David Blight, “in a flood of marriage metaphors” and “packaged sentiment.”

The plantation novel reconciles northern and southern hearts not only through the plot device of intersectional marriage, but also by reunifying freed slaves with their prior masters. Dixon’s *The Leopard’s Spots* (1902)—the text to which Du Bois most likely objected in his correspondence with Doubleday, Page & Co.—nearly abandons the genre’s central narrative convention altogether. A late incarnation of the plantation novel, *The Leopard’s Spots* takes the occurrence of intersectional marriages for granted and allows minor characters to consummate the obligatory interregional romance. Dixon’s novel seeks instead to solidify a reconciliation process already well under way at the time by establishing intersectional consensus about the black citizen’s place in the social order. The novel’s main narrative problem is, as the narrator puts it, the “complete alienation of the white and black races as compared with the old familiar trust of domestic life”—not the complete alienation of northern and southern whites. Relying upon the genre’s stock figure of the freed slave who longs for the old plantation regime, the novel blames Reconstruction policies and the radical Republicans who enforce them, rather than the outcome of the Civil War or southern prejudices, for creating a “gulf between the races as deep as hell.” The northern abolitionist-turned-philanthropist who attempts to catalyze interracial harmony only ends up “separat[ing] and alienat[ing] the negroes from their former masters who can be their only real friends and guardians.” The narrative claims to desire interracial harmony, but seeks it on the South’s antebellum terms. If the plantation novel’s primary plot device of intersectional marriage marginalizes the emancipationist legacy of the Civil War and ignores the interracial
possibilities sought during Reconstruction, novels such as *The Leopard’s Spots* reject these social ideals altogether.

*Quest* appropriates the narrative conventions of the plantation novel in order to expose the catastrophic social consequences of reconciliation. Du Bois’s first novel calls attention to its generic kinship with the plantation romance by featuring two intersectional marriages, the most prominent of which is Mary Taylor’s marriage to Harry Cresswell, the son of an influential plantation owner. Rather than closely track the emotional developments of these relationships, though, *Quest* presents them through a narrative centered in Miss Sarah Smith’s thirty-year-old school for black children. Established during the 1860s when, according to Edward Blum, “more than eight thousand northerners—men and women, black and white—streamed into the South to work with the freedpeople,” Miss Smith’s school embodies the interracial possibilities being sacrificed upon the altar of reconciliation romances. Although many have criticized these radical northerners for being paternalistic and condescending, Blum contends that their “educational crusade created unprecedented levels of interracial cooperation.”

Du Bois had characterized the Reconstruction education crusade in similarly idealistic terms. In *The Souls of Black Folk*, he describes the schools established by Miss Smith’s historical counterparts as “social settlements” where the “best of the sons of the freedmen came in close and sympathetic touch with the best traditions of New England.”

In *Quest*, Du Bois elaborates upon his praise for these schools, defining in more specific terms the nature of interracial sympathy realized within them. Miss Smith pursues a mix of Protestant religiosity and hardnosed politics. Informing a skeptical
philanthropist that her colored students represented “God’s sort” of folks, Miss Smith outlines the tenets of her radical Republicanism: “I don’t want us to be the only ones that count. I want to live in a world where every soul counts — white, black, and yellow — all. That’s what I’m teaching these children here — to count, and not to be like dumb, driven cattle.” Miss Smith hopes to impart quantifiable substance to her socially marginalized pupils, in part, by supplying them with the tools they’ll need to participate in society’s economic and cultural processes. Like Tourgeé and other radical Republicans, she sees education as the primary means by which freedpeople would seize their civil rights.

Miss Smith also attempts to make the souls of her school’s black folk “count” by incorporating them into a new affective economy. She creates a social environment in which she is able “to learn from those whose ideas of right do not agree with mine, to discover why they differ, and to let them learn of me” (87). Miss Smith’s “sympathetic touch” has a very different style than that of her abolitionist predecessors. As Karen Sanchéz-Eppler and others have shown, antislavery rhetoric often fosters sympathetic affections for slaves by separating their “blackness from the configuration of traits that in the bodily grammar of sentimental fiction signals revulsion”; in many abolitionist texts, the “very effort to depict goodness in black” in order to trigger a fellow-feeling for the slave tends to require the “obliteration of blackness.” Miss Smith is less interested in stripping her pupils of their differences in order to identify with them than in acknowledging and responding humanely to those differences. Anticipating the strategies of the settlement movement, her social theories place a premium on close social contact. Miss Smith allows her students to “count” by administering to them with a “sympathetic touch” that tries to preserve their blackness.
By routing Mary Taylor, the northern female partner in the novel’s most prominent intersectional coupling, to her southern groom, Harry Cresswell, by way of Miss Smith’s school, *Quest* highlights the dramatic social implications of her seemingly innocent romantic choices. Fancying herself a “discerning pioneer in philanthropy” (66) and hoping to finance a “post-graduate course at Bryn Mawr” (26), Mary moves to Toomsville, Alabama after graduating from Wellesley College to join Miss Smith’s faculty. She admires Miss Smith’s radical Republicanism and is intellectually committed to helping the country’s black citizens—she had, the narrator informs us, enthusiastically defended the Fifteenth Amendment in a college debate—but ultimately cannot engage in the type of interracial contact upon which Miss Smith’s educational mission depends. Unable to enact Miss Smith’s social theories, but not yet having “perfected in her own mind any theory of the world into which black folk fitted” (58), Mary turns to conservative northerners and former slaver owners for direction. Through her affiliation with Mrs. Vanderpool, an influential northern philanthropist, and the Cresswells, who still reside on their plantation and own a majority of the property in Toomsville, Mary forms her own “definite conclusions” about what the South’s new social landscape should look like. Echoing *The Leopard’s Spots*, Mary believes that blacks “should be servants and farmers, content to work under present conditions until those conditions could be changed; and she believed that the local white aristocracy, helped by Northern philanthropy, should take charge of such gradual changes” (130-31). Mary’s newly adopted social theories fulfill whatever obligation she might feel towards her black pupils while simultaneously “sav[ing] her the pleasure of Mr. Cresswell’s company” (131).
Only by distancing herself from Miss Smith’s radical Republicanism can Mary free herself to participate in the narrative conventions of the plantation romance.

Mary’s intersectional love affair blossoms in a climate that saps ideological and financial strength from the social ideals embodied by Miss Smith, nurturing instead the emerging economic conditions of the New South. By 1880, Heather Cox Richardson explains, “[r]ailroads were opening up the South’s interior to new markets; 161 cotton mills were operating in the South by that year, and the number would jump to 400 in the next twenty years.”

Contrary to popular conceptions, the New South’s economic landscape consisted less of the small farms run by upwardly mobile freedpeople than of the large corporate structures engineered and financed by northern businessmen such as Mary’s older brother, John. Having teamed up with John Taylor to corner the cotton market and construct a constellation of southern cotton mills, Harry Cresswell carefully explains to him the incompatibility between their business plans and the legacies of Reconstruction politics: “American cotton-spinning supremacy is built on cheap cotton; cheap cotton is built on cheap niggers. Educating, or rather trying to educate niggers, will make them restless and discontented—that is, scarce and dear as workers” (160). Miss Smith’s school and the social model it embraces interfere with the business venture upon which Cresswell and Taylor embark; the two endeavors are, Cresswell insists, “dead opposite, mutually contradictory, absolutely” (160). Building the New South’s economic infrastructure would require an antebellum approach to southern race relations.

In presenting Quest’s central romance as contingent upon this alternative form of philanthropy, Du Bois exposes the economic conditions and humanitarian compromises upon which narratives of romantic reconciliation ultimately depend. The novel’s
principal marriage reads less like a union of the heart than a product that, as Harry’s father observes, “savored grossly of bargain and sale” (213).

If *Quest* delineates the crisis of interracial sympathy through its appropriation of the plantation novel’s central trope of intersectional marriage, it attempts to rescue this endangered mode of relations by turning to literary genres that had taken shape around the industrial city: black migration stories, muckraking journalism and settlement narratives. Immediately after the marriage ceremony, *Quest* stops behaving like a novel by Dixon and begins to read like urban narratives written by Paul Laurence Dunbar and Lincoln Steffens. Trained in Miss Smith’s school, Zora and her close friend, Bles, are the principal victims of the plantation novel’s narrative conventions. Suffocated by the New South’s increasingly limited social and economic possibilities, signified by Mary Taylor’s marriage to Harry Cresswell, Zora and Bles migrate northward to find “The Way” (189). *Quest* narrates their arrivals in New York and Washington D.C. with language that echoes Dunbar’s account of the Hamilton family’s arrival in New York in *The Sport of the Gods* (1902).²⁷ Unlike Dunbar’s novel, though, *Quest* does not depict the city’s impact upon its black migrants strictly in pessimistic terms. While Du Bois traces the pernicious effects of the urban color line and exposes the deeply entrenched political corruption that manhandles honest individuals such as Bles, he also locates in these urban spaces the possibility of an interracial democracy. The novel suggests, much as Zora suspects, that many urbanites were, like herself, “searching for the Way” (247) and discovering numerous paths that would give them access to this mythical destination.

The novel’s migration narrative delivers Zora and Bles into an urban space that, at the turn of the century, inspired lively debates about the form and style that interracial
sympathy should assume. While the rhetoric of reconciliation increasingly dominated ideas about race relations on a national scale, the migration of freedpeople to cities instigated more localized conversations among black and white urban intellectuals about the most useful and appropriate ways to assist and assimilate black migrants. In 1905, the preeminent literary organ for Progressive Era social reformers, Charities, dedicated one of its weekly issues to “The Negro in the Cities of the North.” Aside from Booker T. Washington—who concludes in his contribution that he did “not believe the masses of colored people are yet fitted to survive and prosper in the great northern cities to which so many of them are crowding”—the writers who weigh in on the topic, including Du Bois, voice very different ideas about the best methods for carrying out social work and racial uplift among black urban communities.

Helen B. Pendleton, an agent for the Baltimore Charity Organization Society, relies upon sentimental vignettes of individual black city dwellers to reawaken in white urbanites the “need of giving the Negro a higher gift than cast-off clothing”; though Pendleton doesn’t specify the content of the “higher gift,” she casts her brand of social welfare in the traditional language of charitable giving. Others, such as J. H. N. Waring, ground the need for social justice in the religious logic and community resources of black urban churches. Waring prophesies that when “all the people accept the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man, and apply this doctrine to their every-day lives [. . .] there will then disappear from the earth those un-natural, un-Christian conditions which have produced these consequences among the colored people.” Fannie Williams, a Negro settlement worker at Chicago’s Frederick Douglass Center, takes a very different approach than either Pendleton or Waring. Reasoning that
when blacks “can be reduced to a position to be pitied, they will cease to be respected,”
Williams suggests that the Negro needs to be “generously included in all efforts to
promote civic righteousness among all the people.”
Gathering the opinions of school principals, visiting nurses, ministers, settlement workers, charity visitors, and probation officers into a single location, this Charities issue reveals the polyvocal nature of the attempts to assist and acclimate early-twentieth-century black migrants such as Zora and Bles.

While Bles’s pursuit of racial equality through Republican political channels bogs down in the type of corruption and conspiracy that Lincoln Steffens had chronicled in The Shame of the Cities (1904), Zora’s attempts to find the “Way” prove to be much more successful. After spending “[h]our after hour, day after day” (251) cooped up in her room reading classical literature, Zora takes to wandering Washington D.C.’s streets and stumbles upon a “little church” that was “full of her people” (293). The preacher’s message about the need to strive “not for your salvation, but the salvation of the world” (295) deeply affects her. Giving the social gospel a racial twist, the church’s charismatic preacher exhorts his congregants to “[g]ive up your pleasures; give up your wants; give up all to the weak and wretched of our people” (295). Blending scripture with the syntax of self-help, the preacher instructs worshippers to go “[g]o down to Pharaoh and smite him in God’s name. Go down to the South where we writhe. Strive—work—build—hew—lead—inspire! God calls. Will you hear? Come to Jesus. The harvest is waiting. Who will cry: ‘Here am I, send me!’” (295). Sitting in the back pew, Zora “rose and walked up the aisle” and, echoing the preacher’s allusion to Isaiah, “knelt before the altar and answered the call: ‘Here am I—send me’” (295).
Zora may have “found the Way” (296) in one of the city’s black churches, but her experiences in the its settlement movement supply her with the skills and techniques that she needs to bring her people social and economic salvation. Encouraged by her philanthropist-mistress, Mrs. Vanderpool, to familiarize herself with “settlement work and reform movements” (297), Zora gleans from these organizations the social ideals and tactical tools that enable her to challenge the affective structures built up by the plantation novel’s rhetoric of reconciliation. When Zora attends her first “meeting of the managers and workers of the Washington social settlements” (300), the novel’s urban migration narrative—of which she is the central protagonist—directly intersects with the plantation narrative headlined by Mary Taylor-Cresswell. In mapping the novel’s narrative crossroads quite literally onto an urban settlement house, Du Bois suggests the significance of the movement’s social ideals and strategies to Quest.

Since her marriage, Mary had grown increasingly dissatisfied with her relationship and had begun to question the social assumptions that it signified. Having moved to Washington D.C. to pursue Harry’s congressional career, she tries to pull herself out of the plantation novel into which she had married by reading “Jane Addams ‘Newer Ideals of Peace’” (284). Published just four years before Quest, Addams’s *Newer Ideals of Peace* (1907) sets forth the basic tenets of the settlement philosophy that she and others had been cultivating in America since the late 1880s. In her introduction to the book, Addams insists on the need to abandon the “eighteenth-century philosophy upon which so much of our present democratic theory and philanthropic activity depends.” In place of these outdated political and social philosophies, she hopes the settlement movement will continue to carve out “new channels through which [. . .]
sympathy may flow.” Creating a society that worked for the industrial city’s diverse population required new social theories. Philanthropists operating under the affective regimes of “imaginative pity” and “prudence,” she reasoned, were often unmotivated “to hold intercourse with aliens and to receive of what they bring”—they “loved the people without really knowing them.” According to Addams, previous modes of sympathetic interaction kept individuals from engaging as fully as they might across class and racial lines. The industrial city’s nationally, racially and economically diverse communities exposed this imaginative humanitarianism as increasingly inadequate and called for “sympathy in a larger measure and of a quality better adapted to the contemporaneous situation.” The city’s new social and spatial forms required the development of a “cosmopolitan affection”—a structure of feeling built upon “daily contact” and “constant companionship” between the urban poor and those who hoped to help them.

Mary attempts to enact Addams’s “cosmopolitan humanitarianism” by participating in Washington D.C.’s active settlement-house scene. At the settlement meeting that Zora attends, Mary mingles with “a business man, two fashionable ladies, three college girls, a gray-haired colored woman, and a young spectacled brown man” (300). The business meeting of the city’s white and colored settlements is the kind of interracial gathering from which Mary had shied away as a teacher at Miss Smith’s school. The social, political and economic reforms administered by the city’s settlement workers destabilize the ideological pillars of reconciliation and make Mary feel “so small and sordid and narrow, so trivial, that a sense of shame spread over her” (299). Despite her intense involvement in the settlement-based Civic Club’s efforts to pass Child Labor legislation, Mary fails to escape the limited social possibilities of the plantation novel into
the more meaningful realm of *Quest*’s settlement narrative. She opts to “give it all up” (311) in order to appease her husband’s supremacist politics and protect his economic interests.

II. Finding “Public Sympathy” in *The Philadelphia Negro*

Although *Quest* denies readers access to Zora’s experiences in Washington D.C.’s settlement community, she, like Mary, most likely “collected statistics,” “wrote letters,” “interviewed a few persons” (306), and carried out other responsibilities that inspired her subsequent settlement work in the South. Looking to Du Bois’s own attempts to engage in the type of “cosmopolitan humanitarianism” that Addams describes can supplement this particularly vague moment in the novel by helping us reconstruct the scope and substance of Zora’s settlement apprenticeship. Examining Du Bois’s investment in and contributions to the settlement movement allows us to excavate some of *Quest*’s historical and intellectual contexts, giving us back-door imaginative access to aspects of Zora’s character that remain somewhat obscure in the novel and that have, as a result, been overlooked by nearly all of its critics.37 Maria Farland’s recent analysis of *Quest*—the first to elaborate upon the text’s engagement with the settlement movement—demonstrates the critical possibilities of reading the novel in this historical context.38 She points to the ways in which *Quest* “closely mirrored Du Bois’s little-known scientific writings on domestic life and his scientific research in the domestically oriented settlement house movement.”39 While insightful, Farland’s focus on Du Bois’s engagement with the movement’s domestic dimensions minimizes, perhaps unintentionally, other aspects of settlement work that appealed to him.
Paying closer attention to Du Bois’s involvement in the settlement networks of northern cities such as Philadelphia and New York illuminates his attraction to the movement’s commitment to reorganizing the city’s economic orders. Though often characterized as operating exclusively within the conventionally gendered domestic realm, settlement workers spent much of their time gathering fistfuls of fiscal data from the city’s industrial landscape. They translated these sociological facts into studies that they hoped would generate a demand for social justice. Memoirs such as Addams’s *Twenty Years at Hull-House* (1910) and Lillian Wald’s *Windows on Henry Street* (1934) may be the genre through which many of us are now introduced to settlement work, but the narrative and affective workhorses of the movement are the sociological studies that expose the human costs of earning a living in the city. Du Bois found in the movement’s sociological methods and social ideals new tools for reconstructing interracial sympathy. When we place *Quest* in the shadows of *The Philadelphia Negro*—Du Bois’s settlement-sponsored study of the Seventh Ward’s black community—we see that Du Bois did more than simply mirror settlement strategies and domestic ideologies. He drew upon and reconfigured settlement workers’ public practices and socioeconomic arguments in his attempts to articulate a more satisfying approach to race relations in both cities and the nation.

In August 1896, Du Bois moved to Philadelphia with his new bride and “settled,” he later recalled, “in one room in the city over a cafeteria run by a College Settlement, in the worst part of the Seventh Ward.” Just a few months prior, Du Bois had accepted a position as an assistant professor in sociology at the University of Pennsylvania. The university did not hire Du Bois to teach any courses in its sociology department—a fact
that he later bemoaned—but recruited him instead to undertake a sociological survey of one of the city’s predominantly black neighborhoods. Susan P. Wharton, a member of the Executive Committee of the Philadelphia College Settlement, expressed the need for such a study in an 1895 letter to the university’s provost, C. C. Harrison: “We should like the co-operation of the University in a plan for the better understanding of the colored people, especially of their position in this city.” Harrison, an experienced philanthropist, responded enthusiastically to Wharton’s proposal. Needing to raise money to fund the proposed study, Harrison explained to prospective donors that their contributions would sponsor a “trained observer” to ascertain the “actual condition of the colored people;” among other things, he promised that the study would let reformers know “from what occupations colored people are excluded” so that they might “be able to endeavor to open new employments to colored people, both men and women.” Du Bois’s study would, in many ways, fulfill Harrison’s vision of the project as one that would attend to the black community’s economic circumstances.

The University of Pennsylvania may have issued Du Bois’s paycheck, but the task it hired him to perform came packaged in the rhetorical and technical trappings of settlement work. His arrival in Philadelphia initiated him, as Mary Jo Deegan puts it, into a “powerful new form of sociological practice” that had flourished within the young settlement movement. Blending his academic training in German economics with the techniques and ideals he encountered at the College Settlement of Philadelphia, Du Bois hit the streets of the Seventh Ward toting a valise full of blank schedules. While on his “house-to-house canvass of the Seventh Ward,” Du Bois reports that once admitted into each home he began asking questions from his sociological schedules, “using his
discretion as to the order in which they were put, and omitting or adding questions as the circumstances suggested.” During the “ten minutes to an hour” he spent in each home, conversation often veered off the official questionnaire into “[g]eneral discussions” about the “condition of the Negroes, which were instructive.”

In addition to sensitively walking residents through the formal surveys, Du Bois immersed himself in the daily life of the neighborhood—an activity enabled by the location of his living quarters and, no doubt, encouraged by other settlement workers. Du Bois taught American history to neighborhood boys on Wednesday evenings at the settlement house and regularly attended the black community’s formal and informal gatherings at their churches, schools, businesses and other institutions. In both methodology and theory, Du Bois approached his study of Philadelphia’s black community as a settlement worker.

Through the collection of sociological data and the accumulation of informal social contacts, Du Bois and other settlement workers ferreted out the kinds of facts that they hoped would help others feel right toward the urban poor. The information gathered by the street-sociologist, as he explained in an 1899 speech to Atlanta University’s sociology club, “replaced sentiment and theory” as the foundation of a more compassionate style of reform. Many people, he cautioned his students, “have a vague desire to right wrongs, help the needy, and reform the vicious,” but because they frequently “do not know the value and meaning of statistics [. . .] they often waste money and energy, or do absolute harm, either by antiquated or discredited methods.”

Du Bois’s view of the humane function of social science fit snugly within the mainstream settlement philosophy. He shared settlement workers’ antipathy to the traditional methods for solving urban problems. In the past, according to Addams, the terms upon
which the “charitable relation” operated had been dictated by moral codes that held the 
urban poor entirely responsible for their problems, resulting in an “unthinking, ill-
regulated kind-heartedness.”

Addams and Du Bois both advocated a type of social work that situated city 
dwellers in a much broader urban and historical context. Rather than respond strictly to 
an individual’s private condition, they argued that reformers ought to take into 
consideration what Du Bois describes as the urbanite’s “real condition” (6). Where 
previous reformers had defined the problems of the urban poor primarily as the outcome 
of inadequate domestic circumstances or individual moral failures, Du Bois sought to 
situate their struggles in the context of a much broader reality that had been shaped by 
both the “physical environment of city” and the “far mightier social environment—the 
surrounding world of custom, wish, whim, and thought” (5). Statistics, settlement 
workers argued, enabled a more sensitive response to the urban poor by providing access 
to the material and social forces acting upon them. When built upon the foundation of 
personal contact, sociological facts enabled settlement workers to respond to individuals 
in a way that accounted for their “real condition.” Settlement workers practiced a 
statistical style of sympathy that relied upon the ability of facts to generate feelings and 
guide actions.

Du Bois and other settlement workers were particularly interested in the affective 
tug exerted by economic facts. Settlement studies often defined urban subjects in terms 
of the labor that they performed in the city’s industrial economy, revealing the extent to 
which difficult working conditions, low wages and scarce employment opportunities 
molded the private dimensions of their lives. These sociological reports encouraged
readers to perceive a connection between the type of labor that urbanites performed beyond the home and their subjective experiences as mothers, fathers and children within it. *Hull-House Maps and Papers*, the earliest and most influential American settlement study, contains maps of a Chicago neighborhood that plot in color-coded blocks upon a residential grid not only the distribution of different ethnic groups throughout the neighborhood, but also the weekly income of each family ($5.00 and less, $5.00 to $10.00, etc.). Both ethnicity and income, these maps suggest, shape the private spaces in which urbanites conduct their personal lives. The study’s written reports second the maps’ visual message. Included as its first chapter, Florence Kelley’s investigation of individuals laboring within the textile industry’s sweating-system undermines the “ubiquitous argument that poverty is the result of crime, vice, intemperance, sloth, and unthrift,” proving instead that their personal condition is tied to much larger social and economic systems. Sympathetic engagement with the urban poor, such settlement studies assert, must take into consideration not only their domestic circumstances but also the economic structures into which they have been inserted. Acquiring a fellow-feeling for the city’s immigrants and working classes requires settlement workers to account for and respond to the larger economic and cultural forces that flow through and around them—their “real condition.”

Unfortunately, many Progressive Era settlement studies tended to slight the socioeconomic plight of the city’s black neighbors. Though the Hull-House residents register the presence of Chicago’s black population on their maps, they fail to report their lives in any substantial way in the study’s written portion. When settlement workers did make an effort to understand the condition of urban blacks, they often, according to
Elisabeth Lasch-Quinn, “blamed the perpetuation of poor economic and social conditions [. . .] primarily on what they considered the weakness of the black family, the degradation of the black individual’s psyche, and the annihilation of culture all resulting from the system of slavery.” Citing slavery as the overriding determinant of the urban black’s socioeconomic position made for a more humane approach than the one offered by popular theories of racial determinism, but it also “took attention away from more immediate conditions caused by ongoing exploitation and prejudice.” Rather than generate demands for economic reform, Lasch-Quinn argues, this backward-looking explanatory view tended to inspire a “paternalistic, moralistic style of reform.” Despite the persistence of these inadequate patterns of social diagnosis within the settlement movement, a handful of its early practitioners pursued the same analytical and affective angles in their studies of black urbanites as they did of white immigrants. A few contributors to *Hull-House Maps and Papers*, in fact, would later extend the book’s patterns of social and economic inquiry to black urban communities.

Isabel Eaton, who authored the fourth chapter of *Hull-House Maps and Papers*, brought to her examination of Philadelphia’s black domestic servants a rationale similar to the one that she had used to analyze the wages and living conditions of Chicago’s white ethnic garment workers. Sponsored by the Philadelphia College Settlement to work with Du Bois on his project, Eaton also investigated and authored her own study of the city’s Negro domestics. Her *Special Report on Negro Domestic Service* was co-published with Du Bois’s much lengthier work, but gets scant critical attention from contemporary readers. In her report, Eaton leverages the statistical discrepancies between colored domestics and their white counterparts into a narrative about the “real
condition” of the Philadelphia Negro. Observing that far fewer colored domestics look
for alternative employment than do whites, Eaton concludes that many occupationally
dissatisfied black servants do not seek new jobs because of the “well-known fact that so
many industries are closed against the race.” Her study illustrates with individual
examples the ill effects that these professional circumstances have on the personal lives
of the city’s black community. Eaton also uses the domain of domestic service to refute
the negative stereotypes that frequently disrupted sympathy’s affective mechanisms. She
reports that most white employers find their colored employees “‘industrious,’ and ‘good
workers,’ ‘splendid workers,’ ‘a great deal better workers and decidedly better cooks than
the whites.’” Although she acknowledges that the “opinions of employers have no
statistical value,” she hopes that they have a “practical value” and can “open the eyes of
the Philadelphia public, or even a small part of it, to the hitherto apparently unsuspected
fact” that colored servants are “just like other human beings.” When readers relate to
urban blacks as laborers, Eaton reasons, they are likely to find the qualities upon which
emotional connections could be established.

Like Eaton, Du Bois relies heavily on economic statistics to get at the real
condition of and produce a particular form of affection for the Philadelphia Negro.
Though he acknowledges the powerful influence of politics and education on urban
blacks, he regards the “question of economic survival” as the “most pressing of all
questions” (97). Du Bois understood that in the post-Reconstruction period, as Heather
Richardson notes, the “image of blacks as disaffected workers primed to take over
America” alienated many of the country’s white citizens. He counters this widespread
notion of blacks as lazy and reliant upon government handouts by persuading readers that
the Philadelphia Negro is “trying to better his condition” and “is seeking to rise” (145), but that black workers are frequently thwarted in their efforts to succeed by external challenges. Du Bois recognizes that several factors, such as the lack of industrial training and poor personal decisions, might dull the competitive edge of black laborers, but he typically opts to stress the social conditions that impede their economic progress. Although Du Bois readily admits that “one never knows when one sees a social outcast how far this failure to survive is due to the deficiencies of the individual, and how far to the accidents or injustice of his environment” (98), he repeatedly nudges his readers to inhabit a relational style based on an assumption of the latter.

More forcefully and thoroughly than Eaton, Du Bois shows that the black community’s “economic rise” had been curbed by a “widespread inclination to shut against them many doors of advancement open to the talented and efficient of other races” (98). Because of discrimination’s slippery nature and the settlement movement’s focus on empirical data, Progressive Era settlement workers often overlooked the role that intangibles such as prejudice played in the lives of their subjects. Du Bois patches up this disciplinary weak spot, in part, by reducing the “somewhat indefinite term” of prejudice into “something tangible” (322). By slightly altering the questions that appeared on the standard sociological schedule, Du Bois links the subjective experience of discrimination to the realm of economic fact. During his house-to-house visits, Du Bois would follow up his question about “[w]hen and where have attempts been made to find other employment” with an open-ended question that allowed black Philadelphians to school him in the real conditions of their urban lives: “Why was application refused?” (400). Based on these “instructive” discussions, Du Bois compiled a “list of
discriminations” (326) that he substantiated through further sociological investigation—turning human experience into hard data. In classic settlement style, he reanimates the boiled-down scientific information by providing brief, successive snapshots of individual urbanites: “C— is a shoemaker; he tried to get work in some of the large department stores. They ‘had no place’ for him” (329); “G— is an iron puddler, who belonged to a Pittsburg union. Here he was not recognized as a union man and could not get work except as a stevedore” (330); “H— was a cooper, but could get no work after repeated trials, and is now a common laborer” (330). In describing the interactions of these anonymous individuals with those who staff the city’s industrial economy, Du Bois draws attention to the personal level upon which prejudice’s economic consequences are felt while simultaneously pointing out the structural nature of racism in Philadelphia. The problem is not the individual employers who refuse black urbanites work, per se, but the “social environment” in which these interactions occur.

According to Du Bois, the best way to help C—, G—, and H— is not to subsidize their rent or build parks in their neighborhoods, but to address the problem of prejudice through broad social reform. Such changes, he suggests, require a “widespread public sympathy” (332) rather than a “mere altruistic interest in an alien people” (388). The concept of “public sympathy” calls for an affective process that involves the public identities of its participants—as shoemakers, iron puddlers, coopers and employers. In accounting for its participants’ roles in the public world of work, a “public sympathy” strives to ensure them an opportunity to take up any position they choose within the city’s economic, social, cultural and political grids. The concept of “public sympathy” also suggests an affective pattern that has become “widespread” enough to influence public
opinion; only when seemingly private habits of feeling have acquired this public status are they capable of transforming the city’s social landscape through which urbanites move. In contrast to “public sympathy,” the charitable Philadelphian who operates under the private affective structure of “charitable interest” might “contribute handsomely to relieve Negroes in poverty and distress” while refusing to “let a Negro work in his store or mill” (355). Those who push their altruism through private channels, Du Bois points out, often end up compromising their humane intentions.

In addition to exhibiting social naïveté, Du Bois accuses the private charitable transaction of limiting its effects to a very small segment of the population. Divulging his own class biases, Du Bois complains that while the city doles out plenty of “succor and sympathy” to “dishonest and lazy” blacks through “unsystematic and ill-directed” forms of charity (352, 355), it tends to fail the “educated and industrious young colored man who wants work and not platitudes, wages and not alms, just rewards and not sermons” (352). Unlike his fellow settlement workers, who sought to eliminate class distinctions, Du Bois advocated interracial “public sympathy” as the key to a mode of relations that would enable “educated and industrious” blacks to differentiate themselves from the “dishonest and lazy” of their race with whom they were regularly classed. Where the private mode of charity targeted the “worst” type of city Negro and supplied them with platitudes and alms, Du Bois understood “public sympathy” as an affective practice that would primarily benefit the black community’s upward-striving members by allowing them to climb the ladder of socioeconomic success and assert their class differences. Du Bois argued that making it possible for the “educated and industrious” to distinguish themselves from their peers would, in turn, kick-start a much larger process of
racial uplift. When white Philadelphians give black laborers jobs in their stores and mills, these economic gatekeepers begin to reform the “social environment of excuse, listless despair, careless indulgence and lack of inspiration to work [. . .] that turns black boys and girls into gamblers, prostitutes and rascals” (351). The cultivation of an interracial “public sympathy” would, he speculated, create a trickle-down affective economy from which the entire social spectrum of the black community would eventually benefit.

If Du Bois fashions a new style of interracial sympathy through the vernacular of the settlement movement, he authorizes and deepens these emotional habits by positioning them as the affective heirs of Pennsylvania abolitionism. The Philadelphia Negro transcribes the Pennsylvania Abolition Society’s (PAS) political and ideological commitments into forms of interracial sympathy better suited to his particular post-Reconstruction and urban moment. Rather than situate his work in the company of contemporary settlement studies, of which there were relatively few at the time, Du Bois describes his work as a continuation of the projects initiated by the PAS during the first half of the nineteenth century. Where many early settlement workers cite Charles Booth’s Life and Labour of the People of London—Eaton, for instance, constantly references Booth in her study—Du Bois informs readers that his study will “cull judiciously” from the surveys of Philadelphia’s black communities taken by the Pennsylvania Abolition Society (PAS) in 1837, 1847 and 1856, and “add to them specially collected data for the years 1896 and 1897” (44). Since the PAS’s last census, the city had undergone several physical and social transformations. Philadelphia is not, Du Bois explains, the “same place, has not the same spirit, as formerly” (44); “life is
larger, competition fiercer, and conditions of economic and social survival harder than formerly” (44). *The Philadelphia Negro* updates its predecessors’ statistical assessments of the city’s black population and, in doing so, gives what David Levering Lewis refers to as the PAS’s “Quaker humanitarianism” a cosmopolitan makeover.\(^{54}\)

Du Bois found in the PAS’s studies a proto-sociological ethos that resonated with his own forms of statistical sympathy more soundly than the emotionalism embraced by the Massachusetts Abolition Society and popularized by abolitionists such as William Lloyd Garrison. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, according to Richard Newman, Pennsylvania abolitionists practiced a “learned and dispassionate legal/political activism” that relied on “specialized legal tactics” and “learned legal briefs.” In contrast, Massachusetts’ abolitionists garnered political support through grassroots activism and literary strategies that “provoked citizens’ outrage” with “gripping accounts of bondage and emotional slave narratives.”\(^{55}\) The PAS’s mid-nineteenth-century censuses and reports pushed its relatively dispassionate abolitionism beyond the courtroom and into the streets of Philadelphia. In response to mounting efforts to disenfranchise Pennsylvania’s blacks at the 1838 convention to amend the state constitution, the PAS appointed a committee to “collect, as far as practicable, and preserve such statistical and other information as will show the present condition of the colored population of this city and districts.” Through these statistics, the committee explained in its follow-up report to the 1837 census, abolitionists hoped to cultivate a “feeling mind” capable of challenging the “false estimate which still prevails amongst the mass of our citizens, as to the value of the colored people as a component part of the community.”\(^{56}\)
The PAS committee calculated the social value of Philadelphia’s black residents, in part, by revealing the integral role they played in the local economy. While the committee contends that the city’s black individuals are, “in a moral sense, fully deserving of all the labor bestowed upon them,” it also portrays them from a “pecuniary point of view.” Based on the statistics gathered during its house-to-house investigation, the committee finds that although “some portion of them may live in idleness,” a much more significant “proportion of them are usefully and industriously employed.” Despite these relatively high levels of employment, the committee highlights the fragility of black workers’ economic health in a social climate that threatens their franchise. Foreshadowing Du Bois’s characterizations of the Philadelphia Negro’s socioeconomic circumstances at the turn of the century, the committee notes that, “owing to the feelings and prejudices of the community, the colored people are almost altogether deprived of the opportunity of bringing up their children to mechanical employments, to commercial business, or other more lucrative occupations, whereby so many of our white laborers are enabled to rise above the drudgery in which they commence their career in life.”

Having assessed the value of the colored population in precise economic terms—in addition to the typical moral ones—the committee tries to route the intellectual and emotional response to its statistical findings away from private affect and toward structural transformation. Rather than solicit pity and charity for black individuals, the committee encourages Philadelphians to ensure their job security and to open other occupational opportunities. Portraying the colored population as “fellow-laborers in the Society,” members of the PAS fashion themselves as “fast friends” literally working alongside blacks rather than as philanthropists bestowing gifts from above.
to using the language of brotherhood throughout in order to leverage Quakerism’s affective reservoirs into interracial bonds, the PAS reports also recast the mode of relations signified by friendship from the private, domestic sphere into an economic mold. Friends, according to their logic, give other friends jobs.

Like his abolitionist predecessors, Du Bois sees relationships forged in the city’s economic sphere as an ideal model for interracial relationship. The affective and economic dimensions of interracial relationships among “fellow-laborers” give blacks the kind of active role in their own uplift that Du Bois suggests is missing in previous modes of interracial engagement. If, as he argues, the “bulk of the work of raising the Negro must be done by the Negro himself,” then the best way to help him “will be not to hinder and curtail and discourage his efforts” (390). Those who truly comprehend the meaning of the statistics that he had presented, Du Bois reasons, will respond by expanding the realm in which blacks can exercise their own agency. In addition to widening the “narrow opportunities afforded Negroes for earning a decent living” (394), Philadelphia’s white residents must also “recognize the existence of the better class of Negroes” and “gain their active aid and co-operation” in the city’s efforts to address the black community’s social problems (396). Only when there exists a “[s]ocial sympathy” and “proper co-operation” between both races can Philadelphia “successfully cope with many phases of the Negro problems” (396). The task of the city’s whites, then, is to provide a “seconding” (397) of the black population’s efforts.

III. Building Real and Literary Settlements

If the settlement movement supplied the professional and intellectual environment in which Du Bois crafted The Philadelphia Negro’s social vision, it also proved to be a
vessel that would carry his ideas about interracial relationships throughout the Progressive Era. Du Bois’s confidence in a settlement-based solution to the Negro problem—not just in northern cities, but for the entire nation—continued to grow after he left Philadelphia in 1897. On January 4, 1903, Du Bois acted as secretary to a small, mixed-race conference among some of New York City’s leading humanitarians to “discuss means of bettering the condition of the Negroes of this city.” Responding to repeated murmurs about the challenges black urbanites faced in securing work and affordable housing, Du Bois proposed the “establishment of a kind of social settlement for Negroes.” When he pitched his idea, a settlement that catered to the city’s black urban communities was not necessarily a novelty. Harlem’s White Rose Mission and the New York Colored Mission in the Tenderloin had been operating on the settlement plan since the 1890s. As their names imply, these institutions were at least initially interested in performing social services that met their patrons’ spiritual and moral needs.

While the White Rose Mission and New York Colored Mission assisted individuals during times of economic crisis by lodging, feeding and helping them find work, Du Bois envisioned a settlement house that would be more comprehensive in its socioeconomic ambitions. He had in mind an institution that would serve as a “clearing house for the local race problem, acting as a directory and adviser in matters of almsgiving, education, religion, and work.” By establishing a “physical center for movements affecting the betterment of the Negro, for the gathering of careful information concerning his needs and condition, and for furthering effective cooperation among all established agencies which seek his good,” his hypothetical settlement would create a space in which an “adjustment between the life of the segregated Negro group and that of
the larger city” could be worked out. Although he recognized the need for more expansive operations than settlement houses could realistically shelter, Du Bois still clung to the social ideals that he had forged within the dimensions of the nineteenth-century settlement movement. He maintained that the urban Negro’s social “adjustment” hinged upon the settlement movement’s investment in small-scale social contact. “[P]ersonal friendship,” he counseled his fellow humanitarians, “is the main-spring of social help” and the means by which the settlement would best be able to “help the weak and unfortunate” and “find enlarged opportunity for Negroes of ability and desert.” These socially beneficial friendships would, he hoped, follow the pattern called for by the PAS and established by the settlement’s interracial leadership. He called for the work to be supervised by “educated Negroes of ability” that worked in “close cooperation with the white leaders in philanthropy.”

Increased economic opportunities required a foundation of interracial sympathy that could readily be forged within the walls of a settlement house.

Although the group that gathered at Mount Olivet opted not to act on Du Bois’s recommendations, other players in New York’s settlement scene heard of his proposal and attempted to translate his ideas into social practice and urban form. After learning about Du Bois’s suggestions from Mary Simkhovitch, founder of the Greenwich House, Mary White Ovington wrote him in the fall of 1904 to inform him that she had hoped to undertake the “work first spoken of in those resolutions” by doing “some work among the Negroes.” Using *The Philadelphia Negro* as her guide and frequently consulting its author—who, in her estimation, knew the “situation in the city pretty well” and was very familiar with “settlements and their forms of work”—Ovington commenced her own
settlement work with an exhausting research routine. Rather than start from scratch, she tapped into the sprawling structure of social work already in place among the city’s black community. Acknowledging the “social and educational and philanthropic work” performed by ministers and female congregants of the city’s black churches, she hoped to “learn more definitely from them what they undertake and how they go about it.” She sought advice from settlement workers at the New York Colored Mission, White Rose Mission, and Greenwich House. She shadowed Jessie Sleet, the city’s first black visiting nurse, on her rounds and assisted Sleet with her girls’ club at St. Philips Parish House. Ovington accompanied Jeannette Moffett, one of New York’s first female Tenement House Inspectors, for a week of inspections on the West Side. Through her repeated exposure to and contact with the black community’s real conditions, Ovington began to “formulate with their help schemes for the betterment of the poor among them.” Her approach embodied, on many levels, the collaborative nature of social reform espoused by the settlement movement. To paraphrase Addams, Ovington was more interested in doing good with New York’s black community than in doing good to them.

By early 1905, Ovington began to visualize the social and material forms that would best house her particular approach to settlement work. She envisioned a physical setup that departed from the typical spatial dimensions of settlement houses. Although she didn’t aspire to meet the extensive goals that Du Bois had proposed at Mount Olivet, Ovington agreed with him that the work had to be “carried on by colored and white alike”: “Every month I feel that the two races must work together in any philanthropic work in the city. It must be isolation that creates much of the difficulty in the South, and why should we try to produce unnecessary difficulties for ourselves in the North?”
Recognizing that the public might not approve of lodging white and black settlement workers together in a single domestic space, Ovington sought an alternative to the Hull-House model, in which a group of settlement workers occupied a Victorian mansion as if it were a “big boarding house.” Ovington hoped instead to “get a model tenement built in one of the crowded Negro quarters, preferably the Sixties, and to have room in it for settlement work.” She and her fellow black and white settlement workers would occupy a couple of self-contained flats in the tenement. Together they would conduct settlement work among the building’s tenants and neighbors in the tenement’s basement. She also convinced a neighboring kindergarten to run its programs out of a floor of tenement flats.

Du Bois fully backed Ovington’s proposal. The tenement form would begin to address the concerns he and others had voiced at the Mount Olivet conference about securing affordable housing for black urbanites. Ovington’s plans to base her settlement operations in a tenement also attempted to diminish the affective gap between the races by minimizing their physical isolation. Not only would a model tenement allow black and white settlement leaders to collaborate with one another in their social work, but it would also place them in even closer proximity to the community that they hoped to serve. Du Bois expressed his approval of Ovington’s approach in a personal letter to her, agreeing emphatically that having “white and colored management of your institutional work” is the “only sensible [. . .] method.” The social and spatial dimensions of the model tenement exemplified the settlement philosophy of daily contact, enabled a racially integrated approach to social work and provided substantial economic assistance to black urbanites.
Du Bois had in mind Ovington’s work among New York’s black communities, as well as his own experiences within the settlement movement, while drafting *The Quest of the Silver Fleece*. As if to prove Du Bois’s assertion at the Lincoln Settlement that settlement work contained the key to absolving racial tensions not just in northern cities, but throughout the nation, Zora returns to Alabama to conduct her own form of settlement work among the black rural community in which she was raised. She rewrites the plantation novel’s romance of white reunion with a settlement-inspired story of interracial engagement. Like many settlement narratives, in fact, *Quest* almost entirely sidelines the romantic plot, privileging instead the narrative patterns inspired by what Du Bois had referred to in *The Philadelphia Negro* as “public sympathy.” The novel implies that the affective foundations of an interracial society cannot be adequately illustrated by marriage metaphors and other domestic allegories. Although it retains the structural shell of a romance, the novel transforms Zora and Bles from potential lovers into “co-worker[s]” who establish their social vision of an interracial democracy on ground zero of the nation’s reconciliationist narratives: the southern plantation. In *Quest*, the Cresswell plantation gives way, quite literally, to Zora’s settlement house.

If Zora’s fictional settlement work is partially based on the Calhoun Colored School and Social Settlement in Alabama’s Lowndes County, as Maria Farland points out, it also synthesizes the various intellectual traditions that Du Bois had incorporated into his own evolving settlement style. In his efforts to adapt settlement work to the needs of blacks in both the urban North and rural South, Du Bois tweaked conventional approaches to settlement work. By grafting Zora’s settlement work onto Miss Smith’s school—the two become indistinguishable after Zora’s return—Du Bois imports the
interracial political commitments and affective habits of the Reconstruction-education crusade into a Progressive Era settlement movement that often overlooked black communities. Miss Smith and the host of missionary-educators that she represents left Du Bois with what Blum describes as a “heritage of memories.” Du Bois repeatedly reminds readers of this legacy throughout his writings. Miss Smith’s radical Republicanism serves as the practical and affective foundation for Zora’s settlement work in much the same way that the Pennsylvania Abolition Society is an ancestor to Du Bois’s study of Philadelphia’s black population.

Shortly after arriving in Toomsville, Zora begins her settlement work by making a “careful study” of the black community through the type of investigations that Du Bois and Ovington had carried out in Philadelphia and New York. In her efforts to understand local conditions, Zora “flitted” throughout the rural county “till gradually the black folk came to know her” (356). Though she may not use sociological schedules to guide her research, she learns about the “[c]ruelty, poverty, and crime” (359) that shape the real conditions of her subjects’ lives as she “sit[s] and listen[s]” (355) to them. Through her daily contact and constant companionship with Toomsville’s black sharecroppers, Zora acquires the statistical understandings and emotional attachments that lay the practical and ideological foundations of her settlement work. The “hurt” of their stories coupled with the facts that she acquires during her sociological survey of the neighborhood holds “her heart pinched and quivering” (358) and inspires her to establish a farm cooperative “to be the beginning of a free community” (362). With money given to her by Mrs. Vanderpool, Zora purchases two hundred acres of swampland from Colonel Cresswell and informs Toomsville’s black community with her “straight-forward
talk” of the “world’s newer ways of helping men and women” (369). She solicits their participation by telling them of “coöperation and refuges and other efforts” (369)—including, no doubt, the settlement movement—that she had learned about while living in New York and Washington D.C. Together, they begin to clear the swampland and build a “log cabin” that serves as the “centre for [Zora’s] settlement-work” (379). Much like Ovingtons’s settlement plans, Zora’s emerge through a process of communal collaboration.

Echoing Du Bois’s approach in *The Philadelphia Negro*, Zora frames her settlement work primarily in economic terms. Although the novel spells out her initial vision through conventional domestic and moral shorthand—Zora vows to make the “protection of womanhood” the “central thought” of her work (359)—she crowds out these early impulses with an economically-driven agenda. Perceiving the ways in which Toomsville’s new cotton mill generates common socioeconomic and political interests between the town’s white industrial and black agricultural work forces, Zora hopes to create a labor movement that will lay the foundation for a new interracial community. Before embarking on this cooperative project, however, Zora insists that the “Negro must strengthen himself and bring to the alliance as much independent economic strength as possible” (398). To this end, she dedicates herself and her settlement’s limited resources to initiatives that will invigorate the black community’s economic vitality. The log cabin and the two hundred acres of swampland upon which it sits will eventually support a wide variety of “agencies to make life better” (404) for Toomsville’s rural blacks: “a model farm”; “a little hospital with a resident physician and two or three nurses”; “a cooperative store for buying supplies”; and “a cotton-gin and saw-mill” (404). Zora
hopes that these and other programs improve local black people’s lives not only by offering them much-needed services, but also by supplying the economic foundations upon which to build a new set of social relations.

Although the labor movement that Zora had envisioned does not materialize within the timeframe of the novel, her settlement’s economic-minded programs carve out small spaces within which new forms of interracial sympathy cohere. When its infirmary admits several white children that had been injured while working in the cotton mill, the settlement becomes the staging ground for the interracial social ideals toward which the novel strives. After their rapid recovery, the white children venture “outdoors, playing with the little black children and even creeping into class-rooms and listening” (420). The patients’ mothers, who visit the settlement “at first with suspicious aloofness,” warm up to Zora as “they sat and talked with her and told their troubles and struggles” (420). Zora, in turn, recognizes “how human they were, and how like their problems were to hers” (420). These small-scale sympathetic engagements between blacks and whites rest upon the infirmary’s ability to materialize the settlement movement’s ethos of personal contact and to provide black individuals with respectable forms of work. The interactions between the patients’ mothers and Zora confirm her suspicion that white southerners are capable of responding to blacks in a “human way” when the latter are neither “scared” nor “blindly angry” (410), but are working to achieve economic and educational independence.

The moments of interracial sympathy that occur within the boundaries of Zora’s southern settlement mirror the novel’s most celebratory northern scene, which had taken place shortly before Zora’s return to Toomsville. After the business meeting of
Washington D.C.’s social settlements, Zora, Mary and a few others attend the inaugural ball hosted by Washington D.C.’s black community. What they observe at the ball replicates on a much larger scale the diverse milieu of the settlement meeting from which they have just come and foreshadows the social dimensions of Zora’s settlement society. Seated in a balcony above the dance floor, the small party surveys below “types of all nations and all lands” coming in contact with one another in “human brotherhood” (305). The northern urban ball and the southern rural infirmary create a social continuum that stretches along the axis of the settlement movement. Both give particular social and physical forms to the “cosmopolitan humanitarianism” about which Mary Taylor-Cresswell had just been reading in Addams’s *Newer Ideals of Peace*. *Quest* erects its settlement-inspired social vision of an interracial society quite literally upon the ground that had formerly sustained the plantation novel’s romance of reunion. When Colonel Cresswell dies at novel’s end, he bequeaths to Zora—whom he acknowledges as his granddaughter—a “legacy of two hundred thousand dollars together with the Cresswell house and plantation” (429-30). Colonel Cresswell’s final act epitomizes the type of “public sympathy” for which Du Bois had been calling since the publication of *The Philadelphia Negro*. *Quest* empties the narrative of reconciliation of its social capital and reinvests it in an urban settlement narrative that fosters the kind of interracial sympathy necessary to sustain the novel’s alternative social ideals.
Chapter Three
Hating “Bunk” and Being “Human”: The New Yorker, the American Museum of Natural History, and Urban Ecology

When the New Yorker published Joseph Mitchell’s Profile, “The Bottom of the Harbor,” in January 1951, it was becoming increasingly clear that the industrial city, like its maritime and mercantile predecessors, was going to drown. Mitchell prefaces his narrative about New York’s imminent industrial decline with a belated eulogy for a way of life built upon the city’s harbor industries. The “big showy wooden mansions” built by the city’s “principal [oyster] bedders” with capital they acquired during the oyster business’s boom years “between 1860 and 1890” are, Mitchell observes, now “empty”; their “fanlights are broken, their shutters swag and their yards are a tangle of weeds and vines and overturned birdbaths and dead pear trees.” Stranded in “a blighted neighborhood in Mariner’s Harbor, in among refineries and coal tipples and junk yards,” the mansions’ physical appearance matches their locale.¹ Prince’s Bay, which cultivated some of the world’s most sought after oysters, similarly registers the city’s transformation from an economy centered in the harbor to an industrial one that is less attuned to the city’s unique coastal geography; at mid-century, Mitchell reports, the area’s “chief source of income is a factory that makes tools for dentists” (48). Although the “old Prince’s Bay Lighthouse still stands on a bluff above the village,” reminding people of the location’s previous waterfront lifestyle, it is “now a part of Mount Loretto, a Catholic home for children” (48). Since the transfer of ownership, the light had “been taken down and supplanted by a life-size statue of the Virgin Mary,” whose “back is to the sea” (48).
Mitchell’s baseline narrative about the moment in 1916 when the Department of Health “condemned the [oyster] beds” (40) resonates with the city’s more recent and ongoing decisions to condemn some of its neighborhoods as slum areas in order to make room for the postindustrial city. His description of an artificial ledge in the harbor called the “New Grounds, or Doorknob Grounds, a stretch of bottom in the northwest corner of the Mud Hole that is used as a dump for slum-clearance projects” (47), gestures toward the processes of urban renewal that had been radically reshaping the city’s physical and social terrain in earnest since the 1930s. The “bricks and brownstone blocks and plaster and broken glass from hundreds upon hundreds of condemned tenements” that constituted the harbor’s New Grounds came from the “ruins of the somber old red-brick houses in the Lung Block, which were torn down to make way for Knickerbocker Village” (47). Completed in 1933, Knickerbocker Village consummated one of the city’s first forays into the cycle of slum clearance and middle-income housing construction that would be a keystone of urban renewal for the next several decades. Built by the short-lived Reconstruction Finance Corporation, Knickerbocker Village was one of the first urban housing complexes constructed with the use of federal funds and, as such, represented what Max Page describes as the “first tentative steps in the direction of public housing.” The introduction of these federal funds solidified a nexus of forces that would drive urban renewal for the foreseeable future. The money supplied by the government appeased several important players in the city’s real estate game: tenement landlords, who found themselves in the 1920s holding vacant properties in areas that had lost significant percentages of their tenants to the suburbs; reformers, who sought to tear down squalid tenements and erect parks or improved housing in their place; and private
developers, who were hired to build housing or commercial buildings upon the cleared land.⁴

In weaving together the decline narratives of the city’s harbor and its industrial villages, Mitchell infuses the Profile’s apocalyptic ending with contemporary resonances. Near the end of Mitchell’s lunch with two baymen at Lundy’s restaurant, one of them asks the other, “Seriously, Roy [. . .] don’t you think the water’s getting cleaner?” (52), to which Roy responds, “Of course it isn’t [. . .] It’s getting worse and worse. Everything is getting worse and worse everywhere” (52). Roy, the owner and adept captain of one of the harbor’s many party boats, follows up his initial, pessimistic response by recounting a recurring nightmare: “Sometimes I’m walking along the street [. . .] and I wonder why the people don’t just stand still and throw their heads back and open their mouths and howl” (52). We can perceive in these hypothetical howls the horror Mitchell felt when contemplating, to borrow Joel Schwartz’s phrase, the “social wounds” inflicted by urban renewal and signified by the rubble that had been dumped into the harbor.⁵ After all, many of Mitchell’s previous Profiles had featured individuals—and the communities to which they belonged—that were grounded in the neighborhoods and locales then being reshaped by urban renewal: Greenwich Village, the Lower East Side, the Fulton Fish Market, and Times Square.

The rise of the urban renewal order and the development of what Page calls the “intellectual framework and cultural attitudes that were crucial to supporting an ethic of demolition” threatened to literally uproot the urban relationships that had flourished within the industrial city’s physical spaces.⁶ Even when slum clearance was not involved in the city’s efforts to provide middle-income housing, revitalize downtown business
districts, or expand the transportation networks that facilitated access to the downtown core, Mitchell’s Profile points out that altering far-flung places such as the Staten Island tide marshes had hidden social costs as well. These marshes—where “old Italians come and get down on all fours and scrubble in the leaves and rot beneath the blackjack oaks, hunting for mushrooms” (48)—had already begun to be filled in with garbage by the city. Eventually, Mitchell prophesies, the city “will fill in the whole area, and then the Department of Parks”—directed by Robert Moses, one of the key figures in crafting New York City’s urban renewal policies and programs—“will undoubtedly build some proper parks out there, and put in some concrete highways and scatter some concrete benches about” (50). Having had their ways of life paved over by Moses and his municipal agencies, these European immigrants, who frequented the tide marshes and had fueled the industrial city’s economy, wouldn’t be able to do much but “sit on these benches and meditate and store up bile” (50).

Rather than respond to urban renewal’s “ethic of demolition” by storing up their “bile,” mid-century urban intellectuals struggled to give voice to it. In the postwar period, as Carlo Rotella explains, the “dramatically transformed American cities of fact presented a new set of formal and social problems to the people who considered it their business to write about urbanism.”7 One of those problems was figuring out how to write and talk about an urban social order in a way that made a persuasive case for its preservation. The threat of urban renewal to entire city communities compelled those who wanted to keep them intact to find new ways for describing the relationships that held them together. Given the size of post-War New York, traditional descriptors of communal relationships—such as brotherhood, friendship, and camaraderie—often failed
to accurately describe the social bonds that held modern urban neighborhoods together. As a result, urban intellectuals had to search for alternative ways to attribute emotional value to relationships that were not always backed by what writers such as Stephen Crane, W. E. B. Du Bois and Mary White Ovington had characterized as urban sympathy’s affective gold standard: personal contact.

In the decades leading up to urban renewal’s golden age, *New Yorker* writers had cultivated a new vocabulary for writing and talking about urban relationships that opponents of urban renewal found useful in their efforts to protect the city’s social landscape. In its attempts to fashion a “reflection in word and picture of metropolitan life,” as Harold Ross put it in a prospectus for his yet-to-be-published magazine, the *New Yorker* explicitly sought to distance itself from sentimental and sensational characterizations of city life and establish its own representational habits. Changes in the city’s physical, economic, cultural and social orders since the late-nineteenth century, Ross suggested, demanded a new approach to representing the city. He envisioned a magazine whose literary and artistic content would respond to what Lewis Erenberg describes as the shift in public life from “entertainment in a private, formal setting to a more informal, public arena.” The new “cabaret style and structure” of social mixing that occurred within the physical spaces of cabarets, theaters, restaurants and speakeasies, in turn, generated a structure of feeling that Ross felt was not being verbalized by magazines and newspapers stuck in sentimental and sensational ruts. Ross hoped that his magazine would replace their inadequate vocabularies with a discourse that was more “sophisticated”—a term that both the magazine and its readers have used to brand the institution, but whose meaning deserves further exploration. Articulating the
magazine’s sophistication required New Yorker writers to finesse literary forms and styles that would, as Ross professed in his prospectus, simultaneously “hate bunk” and “be human.”

While the New Yorker enjoined its editors and writers to abstain from nineteenth-century sentimental “bunk,” it also charged them with the difficult task of adhering to that rhetorical tradition’s affective yearnings—to be “human.” These conflicting demands called for a discourse that could be both hardboiled and sympathetic—a rhetoric that would, as one mid-century reader attested it had, display a “cozily human but never sentimental understanding of the doings of our time.” In their efforts to hit upon what Ross obsessively referred to as the right “‘formula’—that magical mix of words, pictures, and attitude that gives a magazine its identity”—New Yorker writers and editors constructed and recruited a variety of literary forms and styles to accommodate the magazine’s complex personality. The New Yorker packaged and sold this odd linguistic and affective mixture as “sophistication.” The cultural ascendance of the representational habits embodied by the New Yorker and echoed in genres such as the hardboiled novel had significantly undermined the authority of most nineteenth-century sentimental discourses to describe urban relationships. When the 1949 Housing Act accelerated the process of slum clearance and redevelopment by providing cities with federal funds to carry out large-scale projects, many urban intellectuals protested urban renewal by enlisting in their cause discourses that reverberated with the New Yorker’s literary and affective styles. The type of language used in the past to oppose social injustices had less cultural muscle to flex. Responding to urban renewal’s social and material consequences demanded a more metropolitan voice.
Many mid-century urbanists who opposed urban renewal discovered a rhetorical ally in the sophisticated language of ecology. First defined as a term by German zoologist Ernst Haeckel in 1866, ecology, according to Robert McIntosh, “became current in the 1890s” among American scientists and gained recognition as a legitimate science by the 1920s.\(^\text{14}\) Developed along several different scientific fronts during the first half of the twentieth century, the relatively young science accrued what Dana Phillips describes as a “slush fund of fact, value, and metaphor” from which intellectuals of varying stripes would withdraw cultural capital throughout the twentieth century.\(^\text{15}\)

Having become, as Neil Evernden points out, our culture’s “nature-explainer,” ecology also offered urban intellectuals a discourse with which they could explain city life.\(^\text{16}\) If by the 1950s the city had become what Sharon Kingsland labels the “‘new frontier’ of ecology,” urban intellectuals had already been using ecological concepts to explain urban life for several decades.\(^\text{17}\) Perhaps most famously, in the 1920s and 30s Robert Park and other sociologists from the Chicago School had borrowed metaphors of competition, dominance and succession from nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century plant and animal ecology to explain the evolution of Chicago’s neighborhoods—what Park referred to as the city’s “mosaic of little worlds which touch but do not interpenetrate.”\(^\text{18}\) The ecological urbanisms that began to materialize at mid-century, however, were rooted in theories of interdependence and cooperation; these new concepts had trumped notions of Darwinian struggle to become ecology’s trademark paradigms.

In the 1950s, urban institutions such as the *New Yorker* and the American Museum of Natural History (AMNH) embraced what historians Michael Barbour, Robert McIntosh and Gregg Mitman describe as “community” ecology.\(^\text{19}\) Rachel Carson’s
popular New Yorker Profiles—“The Sea” (1951) and “The Edge of the Sea” (1955)—and the AMNH’s first ecological exhibit—Warburg Hall (1951)—informed readers and patrons about the intricate and cooperative relationships that sustained the natural world. Because community ecology’s descriptions of the biological relationships found in a natural habitat resonated so soundly with the New Yorker’s sophisticated depictions of city relationships, postwar urban intellectuals found this particular ecological discourse to be a useful tool for responding to the dramatic physical and social transformations then being played out within New York City. Offering scientific evidence of cooperation as a fundamental biological principle and defining diversity as a critical element of communal stability, community ecology served as an important medium through which writers, elected officials and activists could both reassess the city’s public social orders and defend them from the threats of urban renewal.

This chapter examines some of the literary and cultural forms that paved the way for and signaled the emergence of a mid-century “urban ecology.” Understanding how Carson’s descriptions of the sea transpose the New Yorker’s metropolitan voice and why the AMNH rebuilt its institutional identity upon the foundation of community ecology helps explain why ecological urbanisms gained cultural, political and material traction in the postwar city. This chapter also shows how urban intellectuals infused endangered city communities that had previously been dismissed as emotionally bankrupt with new affective value by tapping into the authority of community ecology. Those who opposed urban renewal located the type of fellow-feelings worth fighting for not in acts of interpersonal exchange, but in the often-invisible social and physical interdependencies in which each urbanite’s life was inevitably embedded. For them, urban sympathy was not
necessarily an affective process that required personal contact or imaginative identification, but the act of recognizing and preserving these hard-to-perceive social interdependencies.

I. The New Yorker: Profiling the City

More fully than the pieces produced within the magazine’s fiction and humor departments, New Yorker fact writing—with its multiple rubrics for reportage—assumed the task of representing metropolitan life with a sophisticated slant. Finding most magazine content too sentimental or sensational, Ross stressed the need, according to biographer Thomas Kunkel, to “demarcate The New Yorker’s brand of journalism from the prosaic norm in the dailies.” Ross’s magazine differentiated itself from conventional journalism in newspapers and magazines, in part, by creating its own fact-writing rubrics. The writing appearing in the magazine’s Talk of the Town and Notes and Comment sections consisted primarily of short pieces of reportage that the staff referred to as “dope,” each of which was a small “collection of facts about a person, thing, process, or enterprise the reader may have been interested in or could be expected to be interested in.” The New Yorker’s lengthier fact-writing rubrics included Profiles, A Reporter at Large, Onward and Upward with the Arts, Annals of Crime, Our Footloose Correspondents and Letters—all of which were vehicles for delivering facts, often about some aspect of city life, to readers with as little editorializing as possible. Ross loved facts and, as William Shawn recalled, found them “an end in themselves; they were self-justifying.” In Ross’s estimation, the sentimental and sensational snuck in when reporters strayed too far from them.
While many of the *New Yorker*’s rubrics for reportage were equipped to convey its hatred for bunk and desire to be human, the Profiles section was more dedicated than its generic counterparts to covering the city’s social landscape with the magazine’s distinctive voice. Assigned the task of exposing readers to their fellow urbanites, Profiles self-consciously modeled the *New Yorker*’s version of appropriate metropolitan sociality. Margaret Case Harriman, who began writing Profiles for the *New Yorker* in 1933, distinguished the rubric from other similar forms by insisting that profilers “are not fan-magazine authors, they have not reached the full dignity of biographers, and they are definitely not interviewers.” Harriman suggested that where a typical “interviewer writes what he is permitted to write by the person he interviews,” *New Yorker* profilers instead “interview a number of (a) people who have long known and loved the subject, and (b) people who have long known and hated the subject.” While the differences between Profiles and its generic competitors may not have been as dramatic as Harriman portrays them to be, her descriptions shed light on the nature of the *New Yorker*’s affective machinery. Crafted out of such “contradictory material,” Profiles generated emotional attachments between readers and subjects that were neither fawning nor overly skeptical, informed by love but tempered by hate.23

In 1938, Clifton Fadiman suggested that the Profile rubric had already produced a “form of composition no less specific than the familiar essay, the sonnet, the one-act play”; much like these established literary forms, Profiles had evolved in many different directions over time, producing by the early forties a multifaceted genre.24 Many of the earliest Profiles attempted to conjure Ross’s magic formula by casting a psychoanalytical eye upon their subjects. Published in the magazine’s fourteenth issue and entitled “Funny
Legs,” Waldo Frank’s Profile of Charlie Chaplin typifies this Freudian approach in its depictions of Chaplin as an individual riddled with neuroses: “Charlie Chaplin’s secret is that he has created for himself a mask in which all this gamut lives. [. . .] It has failed in but a single way—a cruel one: for it has failed to satisfy its maker.”25 The Profile’s task, as Frank and other early profilers practiced it, was to give readers the key that would unlock the subject’s “secret” psyche. The “Psychoanalytic Age” had arrived, Frank announced in his Profile of Dr. Abraham Arden Brill—a New York City psychoanalyst and one of Freud’s earliest English translators—and New Yorker writers drew upon the young field’s concepts and techniques in their attempts to reveal to readers the “particularly dark and ominous secret” of a subject’s “soul.”26 If, as Ann Douglas suggests, this type of psychoanalytic discourse fueled the “terrible honesty” that many New Yorkers embraced in their efforts to reject “every form of ‘sentimentality,’” it often failed to cultivate within readers the emotional attachments to profiled subjects that the magazine secretly sought.27 Taken collectively, these initial Profiles sketched a metropolis populated by a number of successful individuals who, more or less, existed independently of each other and of the readers. This psychoanalytical reportage took subjects off the street and placed them in the publicly inaccessible analyst’s chair, producing a private bond rather than a metropolitan connection between reader and literary subject.28

As the Profile genre developed, some profilers continued to work the psychoanalytical angle, but others sought alternative approaches that would cater more explicitly to the institution’s affective demands. In a trio of 1927 Profiles, Niven Busch Jr. rejected the rubric’s early psychoanalytical leanings and pushed the form in a direction
that several subsequent profilers would pursue. In his Profile of Urbain Ledoux, a self-effacing philanthropist, Busch begins by declaring that all attempts to describe “what Ledoux is are silly against the simple fact of what he does”—and, Busch implies, where he does it. Busch is eager to share with readers the fact that in the previous year Ledoux “fed 250,000 hungry men,” but he is equally anxious about noting precisely where Ledoux fed most of them: in a “place called ‘The Tub,’ a canteen in the cellar under an old house in St. Mark’s place.” His Profile of Irving T. Bush, a successful New York City businessman, offers a similar resistance to psychoanalysis’s interest in an individual’s psyche and focuses instead on his subject’s location in the city. After rehearsing the details of Bush’s Terminal on the Brooklyn waterfront—with its “hundred and sixty thousand freight cars,” ships from “five continents and twenty-five nations,” “twenty-six million cubic feet of warehouse space,” and the biggest docks “in the world”—Busch concludes: “Such facts make you less interested in what Mr. Bush is than in what he has done until you remember that between being and doing, no line has ever been drawn; if the facts about the terminal belong anywhere they belong here—place-marks, chapter headings, in an American biography.” By collapsing the distinction between his subjects’ identities and the city’s built environment, Busch alters the affective paths through which readers access profiled individuals. While readers’ chances of actually encountering Ledoux or Bush on the streets of New York City are slim, Busch’s Profiles enable readers to form emotional attachments to these profiled individuals by fusing them to urban places with which readers may have been familiar. In doing so, Busch infuses an otherwise impersonal cityscape with human meaning.
Privileging place above psychology, his Profiles provided the magazine’s evolving rubric with an affective dimension missing in its previous articulations.

Following Busch’s lead, subsequent profilers such as Meyer Berger, Joseph Mitchell and A. J. Liebling deepened and extended the genre in the late thirties and early forties. Their Profiles of figures from New York City’s lower and working classes, in particular, reenacted for readers an exaggerated version of the cross-class mixing that occurred in cabarets—in both its mode of production (the journalist interviewing a lower-class subject) and its mode of consumption (the reader encountering the lower-class subject in the magazine’s pages). Writing about urban lowlife also allowed these profilers to clearly demarcate their urban journalism from the more traditional—and, in their estimation, sentimental—literary forms and styles for describing this particular segment of the urban population. Meyer Berger’s Profile of Sam Schultz—“the world’s champion grate-fisherman, the man who can haul up coins from subway gratings with more efficiency than anybody else in the business”—counters the narrative conventions exhibited in such nineteenth-century works as Charles Loring Brace’s *The Dangerous Classes of New York* (1872) and Henry Mayhew’s *London Labour and the London Poor* (1861). Unlike these texts, Berger’s Profile omits morality and physiognomy as meaningful categories for understanding Sam. Berger expresses interest instead in Sam’s trade and explicates for readers the technicalities of it: “Sam works with a few feet of light twine and a plummet of his own design—a piece of steel five inches long, an eighth of an inch thick, and about an inch and three-quarters wide, just right to lower through a grate slot. He lets it down endways until it gets to the bottom, and then lets it fall broadside on the coin.” Contrary to popular belief, Berger asserts, “[g]rate-angling
prickles with fine points that you’d never dream of if you hadn't put your mind to it as Sam has.”

Focusing on the mechanics of the profiled subject’s profession—rather than on his/her body, morality or psychology—opened up affective avenues between readers and subjects unavailable in other literary modes. In rerouting the paths along which the attachments between reader and subject were formed, *New Yorker* reporters did not necessarily rid those relationships of the class, gender and racial tensions at play in the more traditional forms that writers used to represent urban life. Instead, the magazine’s profilers offered readers a new range of emotions through which they might negotiate those tensions. Rather than engender pity for or desires to reform Sam, Berger’s Profile elicits an almost scientific interest in his complicated craft and an appreciation of him as a practitioner of it. If both Berger and his readers still maintained a sense of the class distinctions between them and someone like Sam, the Profile’s narrative conventions simultaneously enabled them to connect with its subject. Like Berger, many *New Yorker* profilers wrote with increasing frequency in the thirties and forties about urbanites who were capable of clarifying for readers the workings of particular—and often very obscure—cultural, political or economic processes. As they read about subway contractors, bookkeepers, cigar-store owners, nightclub entrepreneurs, hatcheck concessionaires and their respective crafts, *New Yorker* readers intuited an awareness of the cooperation that made their own and others’ urban lives possible. Profiles exposed and personalized the various interdependencies in which readers were inevitably, if unconsciously, enmeshed. Seen through the interpretive lens of the Profile, acts as oblivious as dropping coins into subway gratings acquired a social hue.
By wedding profiled individuals to specific urban places and processes, Profiles produced within readers an awareness of the social networks within which their urban lives operated and reinforced this sensibility by delineating the profiled subject’s public relationships. Proilers were often as interested in a subject’s particular community as they were in an individual life. In his Profile of Mazie P. Gordon—a woman that had “presided for twenty-one years over the ticket cage” of a Bowery movie house called the Venice—Joseph Mitchell locates his subject at the heart of a network of urban relationships. Unlike the “glass-topped Bowery and Chinatown rubberneck wagons [that] often park in front of the Venice” and unload a “band of sightseers [who] stand on the sidewalk and stare at Mazie” (23), Mitchell portrays Mazie not as an isolated spectacle to gawk at or a curiosity for readers to pity, but as a member of a particular urban community and locale. Mitchell reports that the people who stopped by to talk with [Mazie] between noon and 6 P.M. one Saturday this Fall included Monsignor Cashin, Fannie Hurst, two detectives from the Oak Street station, a flashily dressed Chinese gambler whom Mazie calls Fu Manchu [. . .] two nuns from Madonna House [. . .] a talkative girl from Atlanta, Georgia called Bingo [. . .] the bartender of a Chatham Square saloon [. . .] and the clerk of a flophouse. In addition to marrying Mazie to the city’s built environment—a tactic, after all, upon which many sentimental and sensational slumming narratives depend—Mitchell positions her at the center of one of the Bowery’s many social webs; she is, Mitchell informs, “undoubtedly acquainted with more [bums] than any other person in the city.” Unlike those touring the Bowery in “rubberneck wagons,” readers of Mitchell’s Profile see the
sprawling relationships that give meaning both to Mazie’s life and to the lives of those with whom she has contact. Mitchell’s literary form—which, in nesting-doll fashion, situates several mini-Profiles of other Bowery figures within the main Profile—implies that readers cannot understand Mazie without knowing about the individuals to whom she is connected, such as “a courtly old Irishman named Pop” and “an addled, sardonic little man who says he is a poet and whom Mazie calls Eddie Guest.”

Extending the genre’s narrative borders to include a subject’s urban relationships clarified for readers the kind of emotion in which the *New Yorker* trafficked. Many Profiles briefly broach their subjects’ genealogies, but they rarely dwell upon their domestic roles or personal lives. Like many other profiled subjects, Mazie “rarely says anything about her private life.” Privileging public rather than private relationships distanced the genre from the nineteenth-century literary forms eschewed by the magazine. By refusing to cast subjects primarily as fathers or mothers, husbands or wives, sons or daughters, Profiles failed to provide readers with the narrative patterns through which they customarily gained emotional access to individuals and gave the genre its hardboiled sheen. Rather than abandon the emotional connections that animated these earlier domestic narratives, though, Profiles shifted them to the public realm. In doing so, the nature of these emotional connections changed. Cooperation replaced compassion as the emotion that bound a community together. By picturing urbanites as members of a cooperative community, Profiles did not push readers to forge new cross-class and interracial friendships but left them comfortably situated in their current socioeconomic position. The *New Yorker* instead taught its readers to perceive and
recognize the value of the social interconnections in which they were already and
inevitably incorporated.

The formal and stylistic innovations initiated by early contributors such as Busch
and amplified by writers such as Berger and Mitchell pushed the boundaries of what
constituted acceptable and unacceptable material for a Profile. While most Profiles
continued to spotlight individuals, the magazine and the genre had matured enough by the
1940s to allow *New Yorker* writers and editors to manipulate and massage the genre
without violating its integrity. A. J. Liebling’s three-part Profile of the Jollity Building—
one of New York’s “dozen or so buildings in the upper stories of which the small-scale
amusement industry nests like a tramp pigeon”—clarifies the *New Yorker’s* distinct
vision of urban sociality and the sophisticated emotions upon which it rests. While
Liebling’s focus on the city’s built environment, rather than an individual, might initially
strike readers as a bizarre twist on one of the *New Yorker’s* longest-standing rubrics, his
Profile in fact synthesizes and recombines many of the genre’s ideological and formal
commitments. Where previous Profiles had been somewhat limited in their efforts to
depict a highly interconnected urban life by the genre’s inclination to single out
individuals from the crowd, Liebling’s unusual subject matter enabled him to fully
investigate what he calls the city’s “social structure.”

The three-part Profile of the Jollity Building consists almost entirely of
traditional, but miniature, interlocking profiles. In the first installment, a brief profile of
Hy Sky—the “senior tenant in the building” and the “proprietor of the Quick Art
Theatrical Sign Painting Company, on the sixth floor” (29)—naturally leads to mini-
profiles of various other occupants in the building. Among other individuals connected
to Sky are the Jollity’s bandleaders, who regularly hire him to paint their door signs and “cardboard back for music racks” (30). When one of the building’s bandleaders gets a gig and purchases this gear from Sky, he “hurries out to the curb on Seventh avenue in front of Charlie’s Bar & Grill, where there are always plenty of musicians, and picks up the number of fellows he requires, generally four” (30-31). After being chosen by the bandleader, these musicians, in turn, rush to reclaim their instruments from the pawnshop. If, however, one of them “lacks the money to redeem an instrument, he borrows the money from a Jollity Building six-for-fiver, a fellow who will lend you five dollars if you promise to pay him six dollars within twenty-four hours” (31). Liebling’s Profile shows readers how the “life cycle” (23) of a single urbanite intersects with the life cycles of several other city dwellers. Consisting of these intertwined relationships, the Jollity Building—and, by extension, New York—looks less like a standard corporate office building than an intricate ecosystem.

In the process of tracing the many social and economic interconnections that sustain the Jollity Building’s occupants, Liebling’s Profile dramatizes the nature of the emotional attachments that grow out of the interdependencies among the residents. Given the inability of most tenants to hold on to what little cash they generate, the building’s renting agent claims that he has to make “an average of fifteen calls to collect a month’s rent on an office” (26); as a result, he “acquires a much greater intimacy with the tenants than the agents of a place like Rockefeller Center or River House” (26). While Liebling’s syntax drains “intimacy” of its traditional domestic meanings, his use of the term isn’t entirely sarcastic either. Instead, Liebling stakes out a new set of emotional possibilities for intimacy by embedding it in the Jollity Building’s social spaces. The
Jollity’s residents, in turn, help Liebling sustain the tricky tone he grafts onto concept of intimacy. Jerry Rex, an agent who supplies acts for local cabarets and theaters, refuses to collect extra cash by emceeing the shows he books because, as he puts it, “When I get out on the stage and think of what a small buck the performers are going to get, I feel like crying.” Sounding as if he’d just stepped out of a hardboiled novel, Rex drains his diction of tenderness while maintaining the affective implications of such sentimental language; he may not really “feel like crying,” but readers are to understand that he does sympathize with the performer’s plight. In describing the kind of intimacy that exists among those who “wander through the grimy halls of the Jollity Building looking for work,” Liebling hopes to supply readers with a “clinical appreciation of meretricious types”—the affective pose achieved and proselytized by both Hy Sky and the New Yorker.

II. The Evolution of the Profile: Rachel Carson’s Ecology

Although Rachel Carson is perhaps best remembered for dramatizing the environmental risks of pesticide in Silent Spring (1962), many readers first encountered her through her writings about the sea—not DDT—in the New Yorker. Edith Oliver, a staff editor at the New Yorker, had recommended Carson’s manuscript for The Sea Around Us in 1950 to editor-in-chief, William Shawn. Shawn had been even more enthusiastic about this relatively unknown naturalist and offered to buy nine of the book’s fourteen chapters. He then condensed these chapters and published them, rather unusually, as a three-part series in June 1951 under the magazine’s famous “Profiles” rubric. While recognizing the significance of her New Yorker publications for her subsequent career, critics find it difficult to explain Carson’s appearance in a magazine.
targeted, according to founder Harold Ross, at “persons who have a metropolitan interest.” It seems strange, Harrison Smith noted in the Saturday Review of Literature, that the “New Yorker would print a great part of a book that is so alien to its normal purposes.” Smith could not fathom why Carson’s ecological lens had been placed within the metropolitan monocle of Eustace Tilley, the New Yorker’s sophisticated cover boy. But Carson’s scientific language and ideas were not at all alien to the New Yorker’s purposes. Rather, her ecological descriptions of the natural world illuminate how this quintessential urban magazine constructed its version of metropolitan sophistication. When it published Rachel Carson’s Profile of the Sea in 1951, the New Yorker had discovered a writer whose ecological discourse gave the social ideals implicit in Berger’s, Mitchell’s, and Liebling’s Profiles a more precise terminology. The formal and stylistic affinities between Carson’s work and what Ben Yagoda describes as the New Yorker’s “commitment to a rhetoric and even a poetry of facts” enabled her ecological subject matter to extend the magazine’s metropolitan sensibility—especially as it had been articulated within the magazine’s Profiles rubric. Carson’s own “poetry of facts” rendered more exactly the affective dimensions of the magazine’s cultural ambitions. Her ecology gave the New Yorker’s urban voice a new accent, crystallizing its sophisticated identity in a slightly different geometrical pattern. Carson’s placement in the New Yorker also signals a shift in how a new ecological discourse began to shape thinking about urban life across disciplines and in startlingly different New York venues at mid-century. Understanding how Carson’s ecology fits the New Yorker’s metropolitan ethos helps explain why ecological urbanisms proliferated at mid-century.
Oddly, Carson begins her Profile of the Sea with more poetry than facts. In her attempts to describe the sea’s “shadowy” “beginnings,” she constantly hedges her factual assertions with hesitant language. Though she admits that precisely in “what manner the sea produced the mysterious and wonderful stuff called protoplasm, we cannot say,” she nevertheless informs readers that the sea possessed the “certain conditions of pressure and saltiness [that] must have been the critical ones for the creation of life from non-life.” Carson bridges the epistemological distance between the “we cannot say” and the “must have been” with a “story” about “that great mother of life, the sea.” She tells that story in the language of domestic sentimentalism. Lacking solid scientific evidence, Carson litters her writing with kinship metaphors: “The new earth, freshly torn from its parent sun, was a ball of whirling gases”; “the moon was born of a great tidal wave of earthly substance”; “the sea’s first children lived on the organic substances in the ocean waters.”

Carson’s diction imports into her Profile of the Sea a model of interrelatedness more at home in nineteenth-century domestic literature than the *New Yorker*. Her Profile essentially rewrites the biblical creation story, casting the sea—rather than Eve—as the “mother of life.” As Carson tells it, the “unending stream of life” generated by the sea’s peculiar properties included “children” who ranged from “simple, one-celled creatures” to “creatures with separate organs for feeding, digesting, breathing, and reproducing” (33). Figuring the sea as an “all-providing, all-embracing mother” (33), Carson’s creation story crowds “[f]ish, amphibian, and reptile, warm-blooded bird and mammal” (36) into the same family tree. This extraordinarily inclusive genealogy offers readers a scientifically updated version of consanguinity—a concept that, as Kristin Boudreau
explains, many eighteenth- and nineteenth-century American intellectuals drew upon as they tried to ground the “possibility of a cohesive culture in the common sentiments that result from a common heritage.” Depicting social relationships as consanguineous ones, early American intellectuals such as Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Rush had “looked to natural human affections to provide the fundamental bond of political union.” 45 In Carson’s rendering of consanguinity, the “salty stream” that each creature “carries in its veins” (36) replaces blood as that which ties them not only to one another, but to all organic life. Relocating the source of natural affection from the domestic to the natural realm, Carson’s creation story evokes, as Vera Norwood points out, a “family feeling for the physical and biophysical landscape” and “promotes a unification of self and nature—that sense of being organically (as if by blood) related to the natural world.” 46

Onto this brief tale about the oceanic origins and interrelatedness of all living things, Carson layers much more scientifically sound observations about modern-day marine life. She drops the domestic rhetoric that sustains her creation story and replaces it with a scientifically confident discourse. Rather than read this shift from poetry to facts as a radical narrative break, the remainder of Carson’s Profile of the Sea—including the other two installments—might best be understood as an attempt to translate the opening section’s “family feeling” into a more analytically precise register. The seemingly anomalous introductory pages expose the affective impulse behind her work in particular and the New Yorker in general. Her prose quickly sloughs off its domestic scales, but it retains and revises the emotional energy that pulses through the Profile’s first few sections. To borrow the colorful language of Aldo Leopold, a contemporary ecologist
and author of *Sand Country Almanac* (1949), the “cold-potato mathematics” of what follows the creation story “confirms the sentimental promptings” that it activates.  

Carson’s stylistic transformation demands a different relational model and she promptly swaps out the notion of interrelatedness for concepts of interconnectedness and interdependency. Rather than represent the sea as home to a plethora of distant relatives, Carson delineates the “delicately adjusted interlocking relationships” (38) that make life in the sea possible. She proposes that what “happens to a diatom in an upper, sunlit stratum of the sea may well determine what happens to a cod lying on a ledge of some rocky canyon a hundred fathoms below, or to a bed of multicolored, gorgeously plumed sea worms carpeting a nearby shoal, or to a prawn creeping over the soft ooze of the sea floor in the blackness of mile-deep water” (38). Carson’s kinship metaphors give way to a much different social register as she discusses an “odd community of creatures” (38), explains that the ocean is “divided into definite zones” (38), and describes the “complex systems of vertical currents” that carry minerals from the bottom of the ocean to its surface (49). In borrowing relational models from the public rather than the domestic sphere, Carson’s Profile of the Sea resonates with Liebling’s descriptions of the Jollity Building’s social structure. Carson’s ecology explicitly maps the nature of interconnectedness implicit in many of the *New Yorker*’s Profiles—that “what happens to” one member of the city’s “odd community of creatures” “may well determine what happens” to another member of that community.

The communitarian rhetoric that rises from the domestic ashes of Carson’s Profile of the Sea is rooted in a particular moment of ecological history. Although historians of the science repeatedly remind us that ecology has developed along many different fronts,
most agree that the 1950s marked a fundamental turning point. Michael Barbour characterizes the transition as a movement from a “community-centered science to an ecosystem-centered one.” The community-centered approach, as Robert McIntosh points out, gives a fresh voice to “one of the oldest of concerns that may be reasonably identified as ecological” and that is primarily concerned with describing “organisms as members of multispecies aggregates”—a population category that poses “under a variety of pseudonyms: census, formations, coenoses, associations, societies, guilds, or more generally, communities.” Carson may have been, as Norwood observes, a “popularizer of ecology,” but the brand of ecology marketed through her in the New Yorker during the early- and mid-fifties looks and feels much different than the ecology on display in Silent Spring. Her early writings articulate the socially minded ethos of a community-centered ecology.

Carson’s juxtaposition of sentimental and scientific discourses in her Profile of the Sea stylistically encodes the type of ideological welding practiced by ecology’s community-centered practitioners in the first half of the twentieth century. In Principles of Animal Ecology (1949), the textual consummation of community ecology, W. C. Allee, Alfred E. Emerson, Orlando Park, Thomas Park and Karl P. Schmidt created for their field an intellectual genealogy that says much about the kind of cultural work that they felt ecology should perform. Sketching the “historical development of the basic ideas of ecology,” the authors open up the field’s historical vision to a “much longer range” and locate predecessors as far back as Empedocles in the “middle of the fifth century B.C.” Zeroing in on the historical development of the “basic idea” of “natural cooperation,” they note that the “positive philosophical emphasis on the nonegocentric
interpretation of nature began with Anthony Cooper, third earl of Shaftesbury,” around 1700 and persisted in Adam Smith, who “emphasized the same qualities in his *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759) under the heading of ‘sympathy’ or ‘fellow feeling.’”53

By grafting ecology onto moral philosophy and naming Shaftesbury and Smith as the field’s intellectual ancestors, the authors implicitly assign ecology the task of re-grounding sympathy and cooperation in new scientific evidence. The authors of *Principles of Animal Ecology* list thirteen generic articles of faith that form the foundation of their belief in the physiological fact of “natural cooperation.”54 Among other assertions, they claim that the “interdependence of organisms is shown by the repeated observation that all living things, from the simplest to the most complex, live in communities.” They also note that the “evolution of truly social animals [. . .] has occurred independently in widely separated divisions of the animal kingdom” and that such a pervasive trait “could hardly have arisen so many times and from such diverse sources if a strong substratum of generalized natural proto-cooperation—call it physiological facilitation, if you prefer—were not widespread among animals in nature.”55 In the process of inscribing moral philosophy’s social ideals onto an ecological register, the authors render the affective virtues of the former in less emotional terms. An instinctual “proto-cooperation” replaces love, friendship and brotherhood as the affective glue that binds individuals and communities together.

Introduced in her Profile of the Sea, Carson’s community-centered vision reaches its peak in the second installment of her Profile of the Edge of the Sea (1955). Here, Carson gives narrative form to the proto-cooperative relationships for which mid-century ecologists were anxious to provide scientific evidence. She details for readers the various
subsets of the intertidal zone’s “many-layered community of animals”; at sea’s edge, she explains, “life exists in layers—on other life, or under it, or around it, or within it.” In the low-water area of many rocky shores, Carson reports that she often finds “cities of mussels” (50) interspersed “with one of the red seaweeds—Gigartina” (55). The Gigartina’s stems, she points out, are “thickly overgrown with the bryozoan sea lace, Membranipora, and with another bryozoan of coarser growth, Flustrella” (55), which together “form a crust in which there are hundreds of small adjacent compartments, and from these the betentacled heads of resident creatures are thrust out” (55). Admitting that “nobody knows” exactly what “induces” the kind of “communal activity” (50) that occurs in the intertidal zone, Carson perceives in such activities varying degrees of cooperation. She informs readers that tube worm larvae, “before selecting a place in which to settle, try out many different possibilities” (46); in addition to demonstrating a preference for smooth surfaces over rough ones, these larvae exhibit a “strong instinct of gregariousness [that] leads them to where others of their kind are established” (46). Attributing these social instincts to the sea’s creatures transforms them from isolated specimens into communities of individuals living in “intimate association” (55) with one another, “neighbor against neighbor” (50). Carson’s diction throughout her Profiles constructs a conceptual bridge between ecology and the city across which subsequent urban intellectuals would travel. Framed by the New Yorker, her Profiles imply that the “cities of mussels” and other “resident creatures” are bound together by the same kinds of affections that connect the Jollity Building’s tenants to one another.

III. Exhibiting Ecology: Albert E. Parr and The American Museum of Natural History
The first installment of Carson’s Profile of the Sea contains a relatively lengthy description of the Sargasso Sea that briefs readers on the “long-standing controversy about the origin of the drifting weeds of the Sargasso Sea.” Carson stakes out her position in the debate, in part, by citing the work of fellow marine ecologist Albert E. Parr. Parr’s ecological writings on sargassum weed and other obscure marine species were part of what Carson referred to as that vast body of “dry and exceedingly technical papers of scientists” through which she had to slog in order to “weld together” her “profile of the sea.” Although few outside his field would have been familiar with Parr’s scholarly publications, his tenure as director of the American Museum of Natural History (AMNH) from 1942 to 1959 put him in a position to render ecology in a much more accessible medium. By restructuring the museum’s institutional identity and building new exhibits upon an ecological foundation, Parr and his colleagues hoped that the AMNH would give visitors “pleasures that do not end with the museum visit, but repeat themselves a million times in everyday life beyond its walls.” Through the built environment of the AMNH, Parr infused the city’s social landscape with an ecological set of meanings at a time when the significance of New York’s physical and social orders were being reformulated by urban renewal.

When the AMNH board of directors hired Parr away from his post as director of Yale’s Peabody Museum in 1942, the New York institution was failing in its self-appointed mission to educate the public. Parr attributed the museum’s struggles to its longstanding commitment to collecting and displaying a mind-boggling variety of exotic specimens. By focusing “their eyes on the great distances of time and space,” Parr explained in his first annual report as director, natural history museums had “lost their
most vital contacts with the real concerns of man” and, as a result, had been “reduced to functioning mainly as sources of sound and polite intellectual entertainment.” Natural history museums were, he fretted, becoming endangered species. The Akeley Hall of African Mammals, which opened in 1936, monumentalized the old version of a natural history museum from which Parr hoped to distance the AMNH. Consisting of twenty-eight dioramas featuring exotic African animals collected during three museum-sponsored expeditions, Akeley Hall perfected the house-exhibition style upon which the museum had been naturalizing its story about the world. Most dioramas in Akeley Hall foreground a small grouping (usually three to five specimens) of a single animal species positioned amidst exact reproductions of native African plants. Nearly every habitat group consists of a very recognizable father figure flanked by an equally discernable mother and their dutiful offspring. Cumulatively, Akeley Hall’s dioramas tell a story, as Donna Haraway points out, about “communities and families, peacefully and hierarchically ordered” along traditional gender lines. Rather than connect visitors to life beyond the museum’s walls, Akeley Hall insulated them from what Haraway describes as a “miscellaneous, incoherent urban public threatened with genetic and social decadence, threatened with the prolific bodies of the new immigrants.” The dioramas materialized nostalgia for a racially pure and hierarchically ordered society—a nostalgia that was becoming more and more tenuous in the face of the social transformations of World War II and an increasingly diverse urban public.

Akeley Hall’s standard sentimental narrative is the kind of story that the AMNH enlisted Parr to rewrite. Hoping to “bridge the gap between everyday experience and the more advanced or specialized museum subjects,” Parr established an ecologically
oriented “program for the future development of plant and activities.” By focusing on
the web of biological and environmental relationships in which all species are enmeshed,
Parr imagined exhibits that would implicate visitors in the interdependencies both on
display and beyond the museum’s walls. When it opened on May 15, 1951, the Felix M.
Warburg Memorial Hall represented what Parr described as the “first major result in
public exhibition” of the ecological “trend in the Museum’s activities [. . .] and in the
over-all concept of the Museum’s purposes.” Though it could not have known how
much the AMNH had riding on Warburg Hall, the New Yorker testified to the success of
Parr’s ecological overhaul of the institution when it reported Warburg Hall’s public debut
in its June 9, 1951 issue— which also featured the second installment of Carson’s Profile
of the Sea. While paying attention to the hoopla of the dedication ceremonies, the New
Yorker’s coverage of the event manages to capture some of Warburg Hall’s scientific
substance, informing readers that it “consists of some twenty exhibits illustrating the
ecology, or environmental interrelationship, of plant and animal life.” With the opening
of Warburg Hall, the AMNH had become sophisticated enough for the “Talk of the
Town” section to dedicate a relatively lengthy description to its opening ceremonies.
Ecology had made the AMNH matter again.

In their efforts to communicate Warburg Hall’s ecological content to visitors, Parr
and his colleagues developed what an AMNH press release described as “startling new
museum exhibition techniques.” These new aesthetic forms provide the structure upon
which Warburg Hall hangs its ecological story about the natural world. Entering
Warburg Hall from the Seventy-seventh Street lobby, visitors would not have walked into
an expansive room with exhibits lining the walls but would have been greeted by a large
diorama entitled “An October Afternoon Near Stissing Mountain.” The aesthetic deviations of “An October Afternoon” from previous dioramas in the AMNH entail a significant narrative departure from the sentimental story told by Akeley Hall. The enclosed showcase’s stunning, painted backdrop of Stissing Mountain (covered in vibrant fall foliage) and its foreground (populated by three-dimensional casts of a large canoe birch, several small sumac trees and other indigenous plants) might initially strike visitors as typical of other AMNH dioramas. However, unlike those in Akeley Hall, “An October Afternoon” lacks the prominent display of a central habitat group.

From afar, the exhibit looks like pure setting; the trunk of the large canoe birch tree, rather than an animal grouping, visually anchors the diorama. Only as visitors near the display do they begin to see tucked into and around the replicated landscape the diorama’s habitat group: a red fox, monarch butterfly, blue jay, woolly caterpillar, praying mantis, dragonfly, black duck and red-tailed hawk. The diorama’s animal specimens are not only relatively inconspicuous and physically dispersed, but represent a variety of species. “An October Afternoon” tells a story about the interdependencies among the different species and between the animal community and its environment. These relationships are social as opposed to consanguineous; rather than respond to the directions and depend upon the protection of a patriarch, the fox, butterfly, blue jay, caterpillar and praying mantis in “An October Afternoon” model community ecology’s principles of association and cooperation. “Here is true art,” an early visitor to Warburg Hall explained, “the representation of reality, and an important lesson on Life showing the similarity and interdependence of all living things.”
An exhibit around the corner from and directly behind “An October Afternoon” accentuates the first diorama’s cooperative note. One of the most popular and startling exhibits in Warburg Hall, “Life in the Soil” consists of four display cases—two that contain vertical cutaways of the soil strata beneath a farmer’s lawn and two that reveal the soil beneath the edge of a forest. In the “Edge of Woodland” dyad, the winter soil profile reveals a white-footed mouse’s nest near the surface, an ants’ nest slightly beneath it, and a chipmunk’s nest near the bottom of the display. The spring version, a structural replica of its winter counterpart, discloses a yellow jacket nest in the space formerly occupied by the white-footed mouse, and a small litter of baby chipmunks hunkering down in the nest previously inhabited by a single chipmunk. Like Carson’s descriptions of marine communities and Liebling’s portrayal of the Jollity Building’s social structure, “Life in the Soil” tells of a harmonious existence among a diverse number of species. In responding to a common environment, the mouse, chipmunk and yellow jacket unwittingly work together to ensure one another’s survival—just as urbanites profiled in the New Yorker benefit from the routines of fellow city dwellers. Unlike other habitat groups that impart a sense of social strength through homogeneity, “Life in the Soil” generates communal stability through the diversity of its species.

Because the cooperation among animals on display here is rooted in the physiological rather than the psychological, Warburg Hall’s ecological narrative displaces the interpersonal emotions on display elsewhere in the AMNH. While other habitat groups anthropomorphize familial love and respect, the animal communities exhibited in Warburg Hall materialize balance and cooperation. Though these catchwords of community ecology only appear occasionally on exhibit plaques, Warburg
Hall’s aesthetics reinforce these concepts at nearly every turn. “Life in the Soil” and several other exhibits articulate this concept of balance through their visual symmetry. Other exhibits communicate community ecology’s principles by incorporating cyclical patterns into their displays. Some reveal how various constituents of a particular organic community are linked to one another by mapping out those interconnections around the arc of a circle. In “Cycle of Nutrition and Decay in the Water,” arched arrows communicate visually the message verbalized in the exhibit’s explanatory plaque: “Plants are fed upon by some animals which, in turn, are eaten by predators. Dead or decaying matter is further broken down by scavenging organisms. And thus is formed the complete cycle from nutrition to decay and back again to nutrition.” Even when arrows have not been included in a diorama to point out the equilibrium of a particular community, exhibits frequently arrange their objects in a cyclical pattern. Many of the animal groupings in Warburg Hall tend to be loosely configured in a spherical order, implying the interconnections among plants, animals and their environment. The exhibits push visitors to articulate for themselves the kinds of connections signaled by the language used throughout Warburg Hall: “in turn,” “and thus,” and “further.” Parr’s exhibits create a distinct affective structure by substituting equilibrium for compassion as the social ideal.

In addition to teaching patrons to see and think ecologically by helping them perceive nature’s balance, Warburg Hall also teaches them to feel how precarious that balance really is. Warburg Hall verbally and visually implicates visitors in the disruption of ecological equilibrium. A plaque from “Life in the Soil” accuses onlookers of “upset[ing] the balance of nature by bringing a foreign organism, such as the Japanese
beetle, into an area where there are few natural enemies.” More often, though, the design and layout of the exhibits bear the burden of revealing to visitors their potentially unsettling interactions with nature. Populated almost entirely by individual representatives of relatively small species, habitat groups like the one displayed in the lower right corner of “From Field to Lake” remind visitors of the animal community’s fragility. Crowded by animal specimens that would have fit inside an onlooker’s palm—a giant water bug, water strider, bullfrog, red-winged blackbird, muskrat, painted turtle and yellow perch—“From Field to Lake” illustrates how easy it would be to wipe out a single specimen. Were any of these specimens to be removed, the diorama gives no indication that a replacement would step in to fill the empty spot in order to maintain equilibrium. The disappearance of any single creature, the display suggests, would leave a terminal social wound in the animal community.

If Warburg Hall convinces visitors to think of themselves as part of the natural world, it positions them primarily as preservationists of the balance inherent in nature. Unlike the habitat groups in Akeley Hall that overawe visitors, Warburg Hall inspires them to sense their own ability to destabilize these intricate communities. Parr’s exhibition techniques teach patrons not only to see and think ecologically, but also to feel ecologically. His displays suggest to visitors that they are most sympathetic when they leave these communities alone and prevent others from intruding upon them. The exhibits imply that their efforts to preserve the biological community’s balance are expressions of care rather than indifference. Ada Aroh, a resident of Pine Plains and an early visitor to Warburg Hall, took Warburg Hall’s ecological lessons to heart. Just a year after the new hall had opened, Aroh wrote to Dr. Parr requesting that the AMNH
help establish a nature trail in the Pine Plains area. Because, as she put it, “more people are becoming interested, thru the museum exhibit,” in the Pine Plains area, Aroh hoped that the AMNH could persuade the Warburg family to be “interested in preserving part of this property, seeing it is tied in with the museum memorial.” While some of the places portrayed in the exhibits, like Thompson Pond, were “still unspoiled,” she alerted Parr to the fact that “[d]evelopments are taking over” the locations depicted in two of the hall’s large murals, Stissing Lake and Twin Island. Echoing the emotional logic running through Warburg Hall, Aroh suggested that if Parr and the Warburg family really cared about Pine Plains’ natural habitats they would help thwart the imminent disruption of the area’s ecological equilibrium. Just as Parr had hoped, Warburg Hall gave visitors such as Aroh the intellectual and affective tools for encountering the world beyond the museum’s walls.

IV. The “Harmony of Diversity” and the West Side Urban Renewal Area

During the 1950s, then, urban institutions such as the AMNH and the New Yorker, along with many of the city’s educational and scientific organizations, gave ecological habits of thinking and feeling material purchase in the cityscape. These institutions provided a range of urbanists with a discourse through which they could voice their responses to urban renewal. Carson’s Profiles and Parr’s Warburg Hall infused words typically used to describe human relationships—“cooperation,” “association,” “community,” and even “neighbor”—with new layers of meaning and emotion. This ecological recasting of the social lexicon resonated conceptually and stylistically with representations of urban sociality then being circulated in the New Yorker, city newspapers and hardboiled novels. Reporters such as Busch, Berger, Mitchell and
Liebling may not have been closet ecologists, but their descriptions of the city’s social landscape paved the way for Carson’s inclusion in the *New Yorker* and, more generally, for others who would use ecology as a way to understand urban life. By emphasizing the interconnections between individuals and their built environment and by portraying the proto-cooperative interrelationships among city dwellers, mid-century urban writers prepared the discursive soil within which various iterations of a community-centered urban ecology would grow in the 1950s and 60s. Urban intellectuals were particularly drawn to the language and logic of community ecology for its ability to help them articulate the social consequences of urban renewal. Writers, elected officials and community activists deployed community ecology’s rhetorical and emotional resources in their efforts to protect the social landscape that *New Yorker* writers had been documenting for the past two decades.

While it is difficult to trace the “everyday life” applications of community ecology’s habits of thinking and feeling for individual AMNH patrons, Parr himself demonstrates some of the possibilities in his pursuit of what he calls “urbanology.”71 In taking his scientific training to the city streets, Parr was just one of many mid-century ecologists to explore the science’s new urban frontier. Near the end of his tenure at the AMNH, Parr leveraged his credentials as an ecologist and museum educator to establish himself professionally in the increasingly contested field of urban planning. Speaking at the 1955 International Design Conference in Aspen, Colorado while still the director of the AMNH, Parr lamented the “dreadful harmony of uniformity that has characterized so many city and suburban attempts to improve the accommodations rather than the life of man.” Deploying the vocabulary and values of community ecology on display in
Warburg Hall, Parr called for an alternative approach to urban design that would embrace a “harmony of diversity.” “We always hear of the beautiful harmony of nature,” he reminded his audience, “but usually tend to forget that it is based upon a far greater diversity of forms” than is typically found in our built environments. As Parr’s diction implies, his concerns about urban design are bound up with its effects upon urban relationships. Because he believed that urban planners could lay the foundation for harmonious urban communities by mimicking as closely as possible the “harmony of nature,” he was particularly disgusted with the unnatural design of most large-scale urban housing projects. Large residential buildings, he complained, “are now developing with no skyline at all.” Parr feared that the built environment was not diverse enough to shelter true harmony.

Although Parr spoke to his audience about diverse cityscapes and varied skylines in general, he no doubt formulated his ecologically inflected arguments about urban design as he responded over time to the particular processes of urban renewal pressing up against the AMNH and its Upper West Side neighborhood. In 1941, a year before Parr’s arrival at the AMNH, Robert Moses had accused New York City’s museums of being too “musty.” Singling out the AMNH and several other museums, Moses claimed that these institutions—much like the slums—needed to be physically and administratively “revitalized.” Responding to Moses’s demands, Parr and the museum’s board of trustees announced in January 1943 that they and the city would extensively remodel the AMNH following the war. With the AMNH’s approval, the city assigned the Park Department’s consulting architect, Aymar Embury II, to modernize the museum’s outdated structure. A longtime collaborator with Robert Moses, Embury called for a
radical scaling back and streamlining of the AMNH’s Romanesque exterior—including
the “removal of the corner towers that broke up the skyline and helped articulate the
façade.”

Despite widespread public opposition, Parr originally backed Embury’s
monotonous blueprint for the AMNH. He felt that the architect had “achieved a simple
and dignified treatment giving interest to all facades and a harmonious background for
the New York State Roosevelt Memorial.”

After the war, however, Parr remodeled his
ideas about urban design and revoked his support for the “dreadful harmony of
uniformity” embodied in Embury’s plans in favor of the “harmony of diversity” implicit
in Warburg Hall’s exhibits. Lacking sufficient funds and institutional support, the
AMNH permanently shelved Embury’s blueprints.

Following his retirement as the AMNH’s director in 1959, Parr wrote extensively
about the urban environment as a “human ecological niche.” In his efforts to convince
the public that a city’s architectural “diversity is actually good for us, perhaps even
essential,” Parr fashioned quasi-scientific arguments about the “relationship between the
human mind and its inanimate milieu.” For Parr, urban aesthetics mattered because
they had social consequences. Like many mid-century animal ecologists, Parr traced a
direct correlation between the built environment and social behavior. Perhaps
unsurprisingly, he frequently attributed the period’s escalation of juvenile delinquency
and street crime to urban renewal’s architectural legacies. Parr reasoned that the “denial
of opportunities for emotional attachments to the environs of the personal habitat,
brought about by the increasing blandness and homogenization of urban surroundings,”
enervated the emotional attachments among city dwellers. Urban renewal’s
superblocks, its distaste for ornamentation, and its tendency to level the skyline set off a
chain reaction that, in Parr’s mind, explained the period’s frequently cited scenario in which crimes were “committed in the street in full view of many witnesses who watched the incidents without doing anything to prevent the misdeeds from running their course.” Although Parr admitted that there were “undoubtedly many factors operating together to produce such apparently callous and cowardly indifference”—such as the “acute condition of slums and racial strife”—he insisted that a homogeneous citiescape played a crucial role in these social catastrophes. Those who did not feel attached to their neighborhood would not feel attached to their neighbors; and urbanites had difficulty, he reasoned, cultivating loyalty to an aesthetically bland and indistinguishable neighborhood. Unlike a “healthy organism [that] would add cells to maintain the texture and effectiveness of its organs, the cities of man grow mainly by bloating their parts, with destruction of the fibre that binds them all together into a functioning whole.” By preserving and building a diverse urban environment, Parr claimed that urban planners could turn a city divided by delinquency and crime into a harmonious community.

Parr’s urbanology and other ecological urbanisms gained traction in the political realm as the city’s approach to urban renewal shifted in the late 1950s and 60s. During this time, the AMNH’s Upper West Side neighborhood witnessed the initiation of several urban renewal projects—such as Columbus Circle, Lincoln Center and Manhattantown—but none were as ideologically or politically significant as the West Side Urban Renewal Area (WSURA). Responding to the increasingly controversial urban renewal tactics used by Moses’s Committee on Slum Clearance, the Citizens’ Housing and Planning Council proposed to Mayor Wagner in 1954 a “radically new approach to urban renewal” that would embrace a “policy of ‘neighborhood conservation’ rather than conventional,
cataclysmic urban renewal." Just a year later, Wagner presented a plan for the Upper West Side that he said would shy away from the “vast bulldozer operation” that had typified previous urban renewal projects; instead, he suggested an approach in which “[g]overnment and private enterprise will join in saving the good buildings, rehabilitating those consistent with that course, and erecting new buildings in the place of those that are too far gone.” Urban renewal, a 1958 preliminary study of the WSURA explained, should be “more like pruning a tree, resulting in a healthier and more fruitful organism.” Instead of razing the neighborhood, the city insisted in its Preliminary Plan that it would treat the WSURA as a “deteriorating, rather than a slum, area.”

While it is difficult to trace the origins of the terminology with which Wagner clothed the city’s new approach to urban renewal strictly to community ecology, casting the WSURA as endangered habitat rather than a neighborhood incapable of sustaining life provided emerging ecological urbanisms fertile ground in which to grow. After a year of surveying the WSURA, the Urban Renewal Board headed by James Felt reported that the “[t]wo striking sociological characteristics of the urban renewal area” were its “population of broad diversity” and its sizeable number of “low-income persons.” Instead of treating this eclectic community as inherently degraded, the Urban Renewal Board wrote about the “diversity in the area, both economic and ethnic,” as a “decided asset which the urban renewal plan will strive to maintain.”

Like many community ecologists, the Urban Renewal Board placed diversity at the heart of its revamped value system. Neighborhoods that had previously been disparaged for their lack of physical upkeep and inability to generate tax revenue for the city would now be praised for their varied social texture. Hoping to “retain” rather than remove the “traditional diversity of
the area,” the Urban Renewal Board embraced “[r]ehabilitation and conservation” and eschewed razing and rebuilding. Its new ethical code inspired, in turn, alternative renewal practices and techniques. Among other tactical objectives, the Preliminary Plan lists the following: “Provision for new residential development of various types and rental ranges to serve a broad cross section of the community, with appurtenant retail development”; “Preservation and improvement of community facilities, including the provision of additional open space for both active and passive recreation”; “Creation of an harmonious balance of high and low structures and of open space.” These standards would, the Urban Renewal Board hoped, ensure continuing vitality for the WSURA’s diverse population.

When the City of New York Housing and Redevelopment Board published the much glossier West Side Urban Renewal Area: A Summary of the Final Plan, the eco-friendly language that peppered the Urban Renewal Board’s Preliminary Plan had evolved into a more complete and coherent rhetorical force. Even more explicitly than its predecessor, the Final Plan posits an intimate relationship between the neighborhood’s “range of ethnic and economic groups” and the physical structures that housed them. The Housing and Redevelopment Board reasoned that significant changes to the neighborhood’s built environment would threaten the diverse makeup of its inhabitants. According to this rationale, the Housing and Redevelopment Board argued that preserving the WSURA’s architectural features was the best way to ensure what Elizabeth Wood referred to as a socially “balanced neighborhood.” In her 1960 study sponsored by the Citizens’ Housing and Planning Council, Wood decried the “human cost of demolition” and lamented the way in which the bulldozer approach to urban
renewal broke “up complexes of families and friends, attachments to churches and institutions, and the personal habits which have been built up over many years.” In its efforts to protect the neighborhood’s human infrastructure, the Housing and Redevelopment Board argued that they needed to preserve as many of its physical structures as possible. Representing the area’s “old tenements and brownstones” as “victims” that demanded protection, the Housing and Redevelopment Board ensured that the “key feature” of the WSURA plan would be the “preservation of most of the brownstones.” Downplaying the role that demolition and new construction would still play in the WSURA, the Final Plan focused on the endangered buildings that needed to be “rehabilitated” and the many others that would “not require rehabilitation at all but conservation.”

The Final Plan’s visual aesthetics underscore the indissoluble connection between the WSURA’s built environment and its social diversity. Its photographs, drawings and captions echo Parr’s exhibition techniques at the nearby AMNH. The document’s first page contains a fairly ordinary map of Manhattan’s Upper West Side, with the WSURA blacked-in and other features of the district—the AMNH, Columbia University, Central Park, and other urban renewal projects—color-coded. Supplementing this map on the facing page is an aerial photograph that covers a smaller section of the district and that highlights the twenty blocks of the WSURA in yellow. Together, the two views portray the WSURA as a distinct community rather than an arbitrary assemblage of streets and blocks. The rest of the Final Plan attempts to reveal that community’s unique identity through the inclusion of close up photographs and drawings of much smaller subsections of the WSURA. Like the booklet’s prose, its pictures depict
a diverse population inseparably connected to the neighborhood’s architectural features. The caption beneath a photograph of two individuals sitting on the front steps of one of several bow-fronted brownstones reads: “On West 90th Street, between Columbus Avenue and Central Park West, the bay windows of a row of brownstones—potentially excellent housing—parade proudly east in the afternoon sun.” The caption beneath a photograph of a black tailor at work in his storefront shop on the facing page explains: “On 88th Street, near Columbus Avenue, a tailor plies his needle in the kind of store that gives a neighborhood its warmth and character—a character this plan seeks to maintain.” The Final Plan’s photographs and captions personify the neighborhood’s built environment, attributing to it the qualities of the human community that it supports. The Housing and Redevelopment Board’s depictions of the WSURA aren’t exactly detailed Profiles, but much like Busch, Berger, Mitchell and Liebling they suggest a neighborhood composed of multiple, intricately interconnected parts. Removing any of these parts would, the booklet implies, set off a chain reaction resulting in an unstable and imbalanced neighborhood.

Although the sincerity and success of the city’s attempts to preserve the WSURA’s diverse community were, in the end, debatable, the rhetoric that sustained the project throughout signifies a significant transition in how the city represented its communities. The new ecological ways of thinking and talking about urban relationships embodied in Parr’s urbanology and other ecological urbanisms assumed built form on the Upper West Side and elsewhere in the city during the 1960s. The AMNH, in fact, benefited from the city’s efforts to concretize its rhetoric of conservation. In 1967, the museum’s Romanesque, Seventy-seventh Street Wing—which would have
been denuded by Embury’s proposed renovations—was designated a national landmark. The decision to preserve the wing that housed Warburg Hall ensured that at least one stretch of the Upper West Side would have the kind of diverse skyline for which Parr argued. Just one year later, the 9-G Cooperative was completed at the heart of the WSURA. Embodying many of the project’s key concepts, the 9-G Cooperative quickly became its poster child. Incorporated by thirty-four tenants, including Jackie Robinson and his wife Rachel, the 9-G Cooperative purchased nine brownstones from the city that had originally been slated for demolition and hired architects Edelman & Salzman to rehabilitate the structures. The architects preserved the brownstones’ nineteenth-century facades but knocked down the party walls that originally divided them in order to make room for thirty-four apartments. As the New York Times reported it, the renovated structure included apartments “ranging in size from efficiencies to five-bedroom duplexes” and containing “variations in floor plans to suit individual requirements.”

Constructed and priced for a variety of tenants, the 9-G Cooperative received New York City’s Bard Award—for excellence in civic architecture and urban design—in 1969. The award jury claimed that the rehabilitated brownstones articulated a new understanding of urban relationships characteristic of the 1960s and offered “proof [. . .] that the city can be saved as a fit habitat for a highly differentiated society, and that it is the architect who must do the saving.”
Chapter Four

Jane Jacobs and our Urban Myths

Shortly after Jane Jacobs published *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1961), Lewis Mumford reviewed it in his *New Yorker* “Sky Line” column, where he had been teaching readers how to think about cities since 1931. Mumford, one of the nation’s most vocal interpreters of urban life and form, had first encountered Jacobs’s iconoclastic ideas about cities in a speech she delivered at the 1956 Harvard Urban Design Conference—a gathering often characterized as her coming-out party. Over the next several years, Mumford encouraged Jacobs to translate her unique observations into book form. “There’s no one else who’s had so many fresh and sensible things to say about the city,” Mumford wrote Jacobs a couple of years after meeting her in Cambridge, “and it’s high time these things were said and discussed.”

Jacobs’s bold criticisms of the bulldozer and large-scale approach to city redevelopment resonated with the *New Yorker’s* sophisticated urbanism, and Mumford uses the occasion of his review to solidify both his own and the magazine’s critical take on urban renewal—a position that he claims to have been staking out in the *New Yorker* since the early 1940s and that Robert Caro would consummate during the mid-seventies in his four-part series on Robert Moses. Mumford praises *Death and Life* for giving “firm shape to a misgiving that many people had begun to express” about slum clearance and public housing projects. Jacobs’s book calls attention to the “plight of both those who were evicted” from condemned tenements and “those who came back to live in homogenized and sterilized barracks that had been conceived [. . .] without sufficient thought for the diverse needs of personal and family
life, thus producing a human void that matched the new architectural void.” Mumford
knights Jacobs a “new kind of ‘expert,’” one that “had used her eyes and, even more
admirably, her heart to assay the human result of large-scale housing.”

While Mumford praises Jacobs for exposing the social cost of urban renewal, he
complains that her alter ego sabotages *Death and Life* by reveling in urban crowds.
Jacobs, he laments, inexplicably exercises an “obstinate belief in high population
density” and an “unqualified adoration of metropolitan bigness and dynamism”—
principles that undermine Mumford’s own and what he perceives to be Jacobs’s
investment in an urban order that cultivates the “intimate values of neighborhood life.”
Like a long line of urban intellectuals before him, Mumford attributes the city’s most
pressing social ills to overcrowding. Echoing Olmsted’s social critiques of the Victorian
city’s crowded streets and sidewalks, Mumford contends that the “increasing pathology
of the whole mode of life in the great metropolis [. . .] is directly proportionate to its
overgrowth, its purposeless materialism, its congestion, and its insensate disorder.”
Mumford insists that communal intimacy and individual autonomy can only be realized
in small-scale physical settings. As an outspoken proponent of the regionalist planning
tradition, he would spend much of his career condemning any transformation in the city
that increased urban density and championing the creation of population-controlled New
Towns in greenbelts surrounding central cities. He advocated physical environments that
possessed the “special virtues of the village.” As Mumford saw it, a big city is
necessarily an inhumane one.

Mumford’s inability to reconcile Jacobs’s investment in both urban community
and population density has less to do with any inherent contradictions between these two
aspects of urban life than with Mumford’s and Jacobs’s differing notions about what kinds of relationships count in the city. Mumford accurately perceives Jacobs’s contention in *Death and Life* that “a neighborhood is not just a collection of buildings but a tissue of social relations.” However, like many since him, he mistakenly assumes that, for Jacobs, this social tissue consists exclusively of “a cluster of warm personal sentiments, associated with the familiar faces of the doctor and the priest, the butcher and the baker and the candle-stick maker.” Mumford’s critical misreading of *Death and Life* has helped to create a faulty interpretive legacy in which its author stands as a nostalgic defender of the urban village and its intimate habits of feeling—a post that Jacobs refuses to take up. Mumford’s flawed analysis has persisted in both the popular imagination and in more formal schools of thought, such as New Urbanism, that claim her as a guiding star. The exclusive coupling of Jacobs with what *New York Times* architecture critic Nicolai Ouroussoff has recently described as the “intimate neighborhood that is built—brick by brick, family by family—over a century” continues to limit the flow of meaning between *Death and Life* and the material cities it describes.

Though she gets little credit for doing so, Jacobs wrote *Death and Life* in an attempt to reconstruct the social ideals that urban intellectuals such as Mumford and Olmsted had been preaching for some time. Jacobs understands urban form and culture as what happens when social ideals get an income. “Private investment shapes cities, but,” she adds, “social ideas (and laws) shape private investment. First comes the image of what we want, then the machinery is adapted to turn out that image.” According to Jacobs, the problem with urban renewal is not fundamentally a matter of misguided architectural styles or wrong-headed designs, but the lack of adequate images upon which
developers, architects, planners and politicians could rebuild their cities. Shortly after the Rockefeller Foundation had decided to fund Jacobs’s study of urban life, she informed her institutional liaison, Chadbourne Gilpatric, that the book she hoped to write would challenge “two dominant and very compelling mental images of the city.” The first urban prototype that Death and Life would tackle had been inspiring urban reformers for decades: “the image of the city in trouble, an inhuman mass of masonry, a chaos of happenstance growth, a place starved of the simple decencies and amenities of life, beset with so many accumulated problems it makes your head swim.” Death and Life would also attempt to undercut the concept of the city toward which these same reformers so often aspired: the “rebuilt city, the antithesis of all that the unplanned city represents, a carefully planned panorama of projects and green spaces, a place where functions are sorted out instead of jumbled together, a place of light, air, sunshine, dignity and order for all.” Both of these images, Jacobs suggested, slowly strangled cities and had lead to their current demise.

Jacobs told Gilpatric that she intended to create an alternative image of the city that would enable readers to see that “within the seeming chaos and jumble of the city is a remarkable degree of order, in the form of relationships of all kinds that people have evolved and that are absolutely fundamental to city life.” The relationships that Jacobs locates at the center of the city’s social order are not—as Mumford, Ouroussoff and many others suppose them to be—those formed among “warmhearted neighbors.” Unlike these urbanists, she does not locate the “communal nucleus of the city” in the “primary association of families and neighbors.” Rather than continue thinking of community as a collection of intimate, private relationships, Jacobs contends that the social viability of
the city depends upon the opportunity for urbanites to have “casual, public contact” with one another—the type of interactions that often do not even require participants to know each other’s names. The relationships that matter most in cities are those that spring up in its public spaces and stay there. The bulk of the city’s “social capital,” Jacobs asserts, is not minted in the parlor but on its sidewalks.  

Despite the fact that Jacobs rejects traditional concepts of community, though, readers still conflate her social vision with Mumford’s because his Olmstedian social ideals persist in the interpretive paradigms that continue to shape assessments of her work. Mumford’s condescending nickname for Death and Life, “Mother Jacobs’ Home Remedies,” helped establish the domestic realm as the only one within which Jacobs operated. Like Mumford, many read Death and Life as a text fashioned by a housewife and amateur observer of the city—reading practices that implicitly limit the emotional possibilities signified by her work to smaller, more intimate social orders. Robert Weinberg, for instance, complains in his 1962 review of Death and Life that it is “written from the point of view of the homeowner, the housewife and the mother, living in the center of a large city, New York, in a community, Greenwich Village, one of whose neighborhoods, West Village, is the scene from which Mrs. Jacobs surveys what is happening around her.” The image of Jacobs as a provincial pedestrian and myopic mother who parlayed her front-stoop observations on Hudson Street into a meta-narrative of urban life obscures the intellectual, affective and geographic complexity of her work. Recent scholars such as Peter Laurence, Christopher Klemek and Jennifer Hock have begun to supplant these reductive depictions of Jacobs by situating her in conversations about city life that transcend the domestic and communal confines of the West Village.
Reading *Death and Life* as a text that intersects with other attempts to describe the city provides Jacobs enough distance from her Hudson Street home to enable us to perceive more clearly the publicly traded emotions in which urban communities traffic.

This chapter attempts to clarify the nature of urban sympathy that props up Jacobs’s new image of the city by documenting her participation in alternative traditions of writing and thinking about the industrial and emerging post-industrial city’s social landscape. In her correspondence with Gilpatric, Jacobs acknowledges these traditions without naming them, noting that there are “quite a number of people today looking at the city in the same way I am doing, and I intend to draw on the observations of many of them.” Many scholars, however, refer to *Death and Life* as the genesis of the paradigmatic shift in urban studies toward public space, ignoring the many urban intellectuals who had, for some time, been privileging the world of sidewalks and corner stores in order to distance themselves from representational habits rooted in the private realm. Since the nineteenth century, journalists, settlement workers, sociologists, community activists, ecologists and writers—all of whom Jacobs cites throughout *Death and Life*—had been searching for new ways to understand and represent the city’s social landscape. Jacobs may have, as Herbert Gans observes, “formulate[d] a badly needed urban myth for our now almost entirely urbanized society,” but that myth received its nourishment from roots that reach down into an urban past. Imagining *Death and Life* as a site through which these older conversations about urban sociality flow both clarifies Jacobs’s social ideals and lifts the intellectual and material legacies upon which they rest out of obscurity.

I. **A “Way of Seeing” the City: Jane Jacobs and the Settlement Tradition**
Early in *Death and Life*, Jacobs credits William Kirk—head worker at East Harlem’s Union Settlement from 1949 to 1971—for giving her a “way of seeing” and “understanding the intricate social and economic order under the seeming disorder of cities.” Though she singles out Kirk as the source of her urban vision, Jacobs cites various settlement workers throughout *Death and Life* as authoritative interpreters of city life: Mary Kingsbury Simkhovitch of Greenwich Village’s Greenwich House; Blake Hobbs and Ellen Lurie of East Harlem’s Union Settlement; Helen Hall of the Lower East Side’s Henry Street Settlement; Dora Tannenbaum of the Lower East Side’s Grand Street Settlement; Frank Havey of Boston’s North End Union; and several anonymous settlement workers in unnamed cities. Jacobs’s supposedly homespun vision of the city was shaped, in part, by post-Progressive Era developments among New York settlement houses. In their efforts to recast society’s social ideals, settlement workers had not only reconfigured what Jane Addams describes as the “charitable relation,” but had also attempted to reconceive the larger social categories—such as “neighborhood”—through which urban life had been understood. In addition to taking a fresh approach to interpersonal relations, establishing the new “social ethics” that inspired Addams required alternative patterns for imagining city society.

Perhaps no settlement leader was as invested in redefining the terms used to describe the city’s social organization as Mary Kingsbury Simkhovitch, the founder of Greenwich House in 1902. During her nearly fifty years at Greenwich House, Simkhovitch became increasingly vocal about the role that city neighborhoods ought to play in the lives of urbanites and in the ongoing attempts to rebuild the city. As early as 1915, Simkhovitch had plead for the “revival of neighborhood” in the national
conversation about city life. Rather than rely upon traditional notions of this social unit as a “self-contained, self-stimulated group,” Simkhovitch advocated a “new kind of neighborhood” that would “aerate, vivify and unite a cross-section” of the larger city of which it was an integral part. In this new type of urban community, neighborliness would be achieved not by what Mumford would later call the city’s idyllic “warmhearted neighbors,” but would instead “arise on the basis of associations.” Simkhovitch promoted neighborhoods that operated less like pre-industrial villages and more like open-air debates. In place of a harmonious consensus, these mixed neighborhoods would encourage residents to work through “countless struggles, even bitter conflicts” in order to achieve “integration through conflict.”

If the settlement’s primary purpose during the Progressive Era was to help the urban poor bring about social and economic change for themselves, Simkhovitch suggested that the settlement’s second life ought to be dedicated to cultivating these new kinds of neighborhoods. Not only should settlement houses serve as social centers where the neighborhood’s residents could hash out their differences, but, given their commitment to the communities in which they were situated, Simkhovitch reasoned that they would also make a “natural centre for the organization of neighborhood planning.”

By the 1940s, Simkhovitch had grown increasingly frustrated with New York’s inability to plan for and build the kind of neighborhood that she had been promoting for much of her career. Though she appreciated the recreational facilities that municipal officials such as Robert Moses had helped build in the city and beyond, she accused city leaders and planners of failing to account for the neighborhood’s central importance in New York’s success. Clearly alluding to Robert Moses’s massive road-building projects, she
contended that the “root of the matter is not the parkway that takes us out of the city, important as that also is, but the neighborhood itself, where people will be contented to stay.” Because attractive “neighborhoods are not a luxury to be pinned for, but a necessity, if the life blood of the cities is not to be drained out,” she insisted on an approach to urban planning that took the neighborhood as its starting point. A neighborhood-oriented city plan would, Simkhovitch insisted, “rebuild old neighborhoods from a social point of view, and hence in the end, from a financial point of view as well.”

Simkhovitch recognized that bringing to pass the “new kind of neighborhood” about which she had been evangelizing since 1915 would require the physical structures necessary to house a “cross-section” of the city. Rather than remake neighborhoods with “dull areas of expensive housing unrelieved by variety” or, equally damaging, blanket them with “housing on a very large scale for low rental families,” she explained that a neighborhood required “residential facilities for differing economic groups.”

Ironically, Simkhovitch and a number of her settlement contemporaries had helped lay the ideological and practical foundations for the kinds of government-funded housing projects whose social value she would later question. During the 1930s, she had actively campaigned for public housing on the local and national levels. On both fronts, she had insisted that the “[d]emolition of wholly unfit buildings is a basic part of the program of rehousing.” While acknowledging that “[s]ome rehabilitation may well be engaged in,” Simkhovitch had worried that the city’s working classes would interpret this conservative approach as simply a “façade of improvement with a high rental advance.” Rehabilitation would not, she had insisted, “present a substantial step in rehousing.”

By
the mid-1940s, however, Simkhovitch began to see the incongruities between
government housing as it had been carried out in New York City and her vision of a city
made up of strong neighborhoods. While she did not abandon the concept of public
housing altogether, she saw the need for the federal government and municipal housing
authorities to “secure greater variety in architectural design, to reduce as far as possible
the volume of project population, to promote a greater degree of self-management, and to
foster a greater amalgamation of tenant participation in neighborhood life.”\textsuperscript{30} Only by
changing their initial approach to urban redevelopment could cities support a “cross-
section” of the city.

In the 1940s, Simkhovitch took active steps to ensure that Greenwich Village
would be redeveloped from a “social point of view” and positioned Greenwich House as
the anchor of that process. As the chair of the Greenwich Village Association Housing
Committee, she planned a “Housing and Planning for our Community” conference in
February 1947—describing it as the “first time [. . .] that a neighborhood has had the
gumption to get up a report on its own housing and planning.”\textsuperscript{31} In addition to the
keynote speakers, the conference organizers hoped to present “to the people of the
Greenwich Village and Washington Square neighborhoods a comprehensive and concrete
plan of growth and development for their consideration and suggestions.”\textsuperscript{32} The
conference challenged the traditional top-heavy approach to urban redevelopment that
would only be further solidified with the passage of the 1949 Housing Act and offered
instead a grass-roots model of city planning that would become the norm in the 1960s
and 70s. When, a couple of years after the conference, the city proposed a slum-
clearance project in the West Village, Simkhovitch and other neighborhood organizations
such as the West Village Association protested the plans. Recognizing that the “question of Housing in Greenwich Village is a challenge,” Simkhovitch nevertheless feared that the proposed project would create a “segregated area of one-income families.” Wanting instead to create a neighborhood that made “living together in one region of all income, racial and creedal groups” possible, Simkhovitch advocated a “creative plan by which low-income, middle-income, and private holdings could be developed side by side.”

Jacobs, who lived just a block east of this contested West Village slum-clearance site, deserves to be read as part of the mid-century conversation about city neighborhoods that was being played out on her doorstep in the late forties and in which Simkhovitch and other settlement leaders had been extremely vocal participants. Jacobs takes up many of Simkhovitch’s ideas about city neighborhoods and relies upon the social ideals and institutional structures of settlement work to articulate her own vision of urban life. Like Simkhovitch, she questions the wisdom of trying to plug conventionally understood neighborhoods into the modern city grid. Noting that the “ideal of supposedly cozy, inward-turned city neighborhoods” had long been the “point of departure for nearly all neighborhood renewal plans” (115), Jacobs complains that the standard approach to city redevelopment inevitably ends up “warping city life into imitations of town or suburban life” (112). The neighborhood-as-island prototype, she quips in her best hardboiled voice, had turned “neighborhood” into “a word that has come to sound like a Valentine” (112). Rather than discard the concept of neighborhood as an obsolete term in the modern city, as did some of her contemporaries, Jacobs reconsiders the nature of the neighborhood’s social function. She praises the neighborhood not as a setting in which
neighbors pass love notes to one another, but as a necessary stimulant of public relationships.

Urban neighborhoods modeled upon village life malfunction because they lack the social and material conditions within which their idyllic counterparts operate. Given the relatively narrow physical “limits of a town or village,” Jacobs notes, “the connections among its people keep crossing and recrossing”; consequently, when villagers venture into public, they inevitably encounter people they know “at work, or went to school with, or see at church, […] or whom [they] know to be friends of [their] casual acquaintances” (115). This crosshatch social pattern produces “essentially cohesive communities” (115) by giving residents enough shared experience with which to fashion personal relationships. Even complete strangers quickly overcome differences by finding common ground upon which they can identify with one another. In a large city, however, a village-sized population lacks the “innate degree of natural cross-connections within itself” (115) necessary to achieve cohesion through commonality. When urbanites run errands, the majority of those they encounter are not people with whom they work or worship, but those whom they may have never seen before and may never see again. Given the social and physical disparities between the village and city neighborhood, urban planners and architects attempting to build upon the cozy concept of “togetherness” inevitably fail because cities lack the raw social material with which this affection might be constructed. “Togetherness,” Jacobs explains, is a “fittingly nauseating name for an old ideal” (62).35

To be more precise, Jacobs contends that most attempts to create cohesive and isolated urban communities fail primarily because they disregard the significance of
public relationships and, consequently, the public spaces in which those relationships are forged. Given the fact that cities are full of people “who do not know each other in an intimate, private social fashion and in most cases do not care to know each other in that fashion” (55), there needs to be spaces in which these people can interact. For, if “interesting, useful and significant contacts among the people of cities are confined to acquaintanceships suitable for private life, the city becomes stultified” (56).

Consequently, Jacobs insists that “[s]treets and their sidewalks, the main public places of a city, are its most vital organs” (29). Contrary to the wisdom passed down by urban intellectuals such as Jacob Riis and even many Progressive-era settlement workers, who construe a crowd gathered on a sidewalk or in an alley as a sign of moral depravity, Jacobs suggests that the success of a city neighborhood hangs almost entirely upon the sound “social structure of [its] sidewalk life” (68). Because “little sidewalk contacts” among urbanites “impl[y] no private commitments” (56), city dwellers can theoretically afford to interact with both neighbors and strangers with whom they have little in common. Urban neighborhoods, Jacobs insists, are held together not by “ties of kinship or close friendship or formal responsibility” (82)—or even by ethnicity—but through the accumulation of small public contacts.

These informal networks of public life create an emotional economy capable of invigorating city neighborhoods much more fully than the private social wealth accrued through kinships and close friendships. This public mode of interpersonal contact generates social capital through the cultivation of a “feeling for the public identity of people” (56). Where small-town cohesiveness relies upon the access that individuals have to one another’s private lives, Jacobs suggests that the formation of a successful
urban community depends, in large part, upon keeping the emotional interiority of neighbors inaccessible. When personal relationships are the only direction in which social interactions can travel, city dwellers typically “become exceedingly choosy as to who their neighbors are, or with whom they associate at all” (63). Because they usually lack a foundation of shared experience upon which they can build private relationships, urbanites tend to avoid those with different racial or class backgrounds when there are no public spaces in which to interact. Only when city dwellers have the option of maintaining relationships within the public realm of the sidewalk, local stores or parks, Jacobs explains in a different context, can they practice the “art of urbanity—which is the art of taking interest and pleasure in people different from oneself and in ways of life different from one’s own, rather than being automatically fearful, incurious or disapproving.” Without having to take on the “paraphernalia of obligations” that accompany private relationships, urbanites manage to be on “excellent sidewalk terms” with very different kinds of people. “Such relationships can and do endure for many years, for decades; they could never have formed, much less endured, without that public life.”36 Acquiring a “feeling for the public identity of people” enables urbanites to feel like they have something to do with one another, but not everything.

Settlement work, with its commitment to interpersonal contact and cultivating socially and economically diverse neighborhoods, provides Jacobs’s social vision a stable institutional backbone. Settlement workers are the type of urbanites that figure prominently in and prop up a neighborhood’s social structure of public life. Because they take it upon themselves to respond to a neighborhood’s constantly changing needs, settlement workers had to “depend on the street grapevine news systems that have their
ganglia in the stores,” sidewalks, and parks (68). Like other “public sidewalk characters” that are crucial to the vitality of a neighborhood’s public life, settlement workers “talked to lots of different people” and passed along news “that is of sidewalk interest” (68). Although firsthand contact between settlement workers and neighbors could engender the kind of “warm personal sentiments” for which Mumford yearned, these public interactions also carved out new channels in the public realm through which emotion and information could flow. In a passage that foreshadows Jacobs’s trademark descriptions of the city’s public spaces, Simkhovitch explains in her autobiography the process of setting up shop in turn-of-the-century Greenwich Village:

> From Mr. Zimmerman, the delicatessen-owner on Bleecker Street, from old Mr. Kelley, whose saloon on the north end of the street was a respectable center of local information, from Mrs. King across the way, an Irishwoman of great wit and charm and the mother of a large family, who hospitably took us in as genuine neighbors and to whom we turned for accurate knowledge of the street—from these friends and others we began to get the feel of the neighborhood.  

Getting the “feel of the neighborhood” did not require becoming as intimate with all the neighbors as Simkhovitch suggests she was with Mrs. King. Her firsthand contact with the delicatessen and saloon owners seems to have been limited to the kind of casual, public contact that Jacobs claims is an essential component of “a city neighborhood that works as a social unit” (138).

While Jacobs admired Simkhovitch as a “remarkable settlement-house director” (138) and was, no doubt, familiar with Greenwich House’s contributions to the public life
of her own neighborhood, Jacobs acquired most of her exposure to a settlement-inspired vision of city life from East Harlem’s Union Settlement. Her brief admission at the beginning of *Death and Life* that she learned a how to see and understand city neighborhoods from Union Settlement’s head worker, William Kirk, conceals the depth of her involvement with this particular settlement and the extent to which her experiences in its neighborhood inform her study of cities. Initially sent to East Harlem in the mid-fifties to cover the effects of urban renewal upon that corner of upper Manhattan for *Architectural Forum*, Jacobs sustained her interest in and involvement with the neighborhood via Union Settlement for the next decade. She served on Union Settlement’s Board of Directors before and after the publication of *Death and Life* and was actively involved in several committees and projects connected with the settlement. Although *Death and Life*’s most celebrated passages take place in the West Village, she turns to East Harlem much more often to illustrate her study’s core principles. Acknowledging Jacobs’s training in urbanism at Union Settlement undermines the image of her as a Village snob and challenges the frequent dismissals of *Death and Life* as a book whose conclusions are too narrowly tied to what many see as her atypical neighborhood.

By the time Jacobs arrived in East Harlem, urban renewal had already radically altered the contours of its social and physical landscapes. Given its status as one of the city’s worst slums at mid-century—largely the result of its growing Negro and Puerto Rican population, which overlapped with and edged out the neighborhood’s older Italian community—East Harlem became New York’s premier testing ground for public housing. In order to remain relevant to the community of which they had been a part
since 1895, Union Settlement recognized the pressing need “to find out what the coming of a modern housing project meant to the community.” Depending on what it discovered, Union Settlement realized it would inevitably have to “revamp its Agency program. If slum problems had really disappeared from the project area,” as many early advocates of public housing predicted they would, “then perhaps it was time for Union Settlement to close its doors.” However, if settlement leaders found that “these problems had not disappeared, but had altered or had taken on new forms, then Agency services would also have to be altered to meet these new needs.”

Union Settlement had already begun the process of adjusting its institutional mission and social services to address the neighborhood’s recent demographic upheaval, practicing the type of racially sensitive settlement work that W. E. B. Du Bois and Mary White Ovington had pioneered in New York during the early twentieth century. In the 1940s, Union Settlement initiated its “experimental work to keep down race tensions among the Negroes, Puerto Ricans, and Italians” primarily by offering programs that would bring together members of the neighborhood’s hostile communities on neutral ground. Union Settlement conducted much of its early “experimental work” within the cultural realm, assuming that the “common joy of music, pottery, drawing, painting or living and eating together at camp—or just playing together for fun—leaves no room for race feeling.”

In the 1950s, though, Union Settlement leaders expanded their efforts to address the systemic causes of the neighborhood’s racial tensions. Recognizing the need for its neighbors to have access to large sums of cash and the difficulty that many had in obtaining loans from mainstream commercial institutions, Union Settlement established its own Federal Credit Union in 1957. Its Neighborhood Vitality Program seconded
many of the Credit Union’s goals by attempting to “preserve and upgrade sound, well established blocks of homes and stores.”42 Given its ongoing commitment to meeting the neighborhood’s changing needs, Union Settlement was confident in its ability to calibrate itself to the new social demands created by the swarm of East Harlem’s housing projects.

In classic settlement fashion, Union Settlement began the process of addressing East Harlem’s shifting topography by conducting a sociological study of the area. In the tradition of Jane Addams’s Hull-House Maps and Papers, W. E. B. Du Bois’s The Philadelphia Negro, Isabella Eaton’s Special Report on Negro Domestic Service and Mary White Ovington’s Half A Man, Union Settlement conducted a thorough investigation of a single housing project, the George Washington Houses (1954). Lead by Ellen Lurie and based primarily upon “first-hand material gathered directly from the project tenants themselves” by settlement workers and trained volunteers, “A Study of George Washington Houses” provides the facts that enable Union Settlement to feel and act right toward those living in this and other nearby projects. The study also codifies the social vision of neighborhood life that Jacobs popularizes in Death and Life. She not only quotes extensively from the study—often without attribution—but also takes up many of its habits of observation. “A Study of George Washington Houses,” as much as her casual strolls around East Harlem with William Kirk, taught Jacobs how to see the city.

In addition to offering a straightforward statistical comparison between the pre-project community and the old neighborhood, “A Study of George Washington Houses” draws attention to the social effects of the housing project’s introduction into the neighborhood. The study reports that before the construction of the Washington Houses,
the “small storekeeper was the center of activity.” Like settlement workers and settlement houses, local proprietors and their stores played a vital role in supporting the neighborhood’s public life. In the process of constructing Washington Houses, the study laments, more than “1000 of these small stores” were demolished—wiping out the spaces through which the neighborhood’s informal social networks were routed.43 While public housing projects such as the Washington Houses may have included “[p]lanned centers” for tenants to socialize with one another, the study insists that the “strongest roots of community life will not stem from such formal, institutional programs,” but from the public interactions that casually occur in stores and sidewalks.44

The study also finds that Washington Houses’ lack of economic, age and ethnic diversity further enervates the community’s social vitality. Due to the “nature of eligibility requirements and the pressure of the private market,” the study observes, “the project community takes on an off-balance family composition pattern.” Populated primarily by young families with small children and a smattering of older people, even those programs intended to socialize the project community cannot do so because young parents lack a sufficiently large pool of teenage and elderly babysitters that would enable them to attend social events: “Many grandchildren; few grandparents.”45 The study’s counterintuitive logic implies that social diversity, rather than homogeneity, builds strong urban neighborhoods. A socially homogeneous neighborhood lacks residents who can attend to one another because they all have similar needs and expertise. Homogeneity demands self-sufficiency. The study faults the Washington Houses’ monotonous physical design, in part, for failing to house a sufficient cross-section of the community. Composed of “building after building” of “identical tall red brick rectangles,” East
Harlem’s projects attract an equally homogenous section of the population. By mingling “high impersonal houses” with “smaller cosier units,” the study proposes, planners and architects could allow for people with “different kinds of tastes” to live together. And, as Lurie and others at Union Settlement see it, a neighborhood capable of housing a diverse population will cultivate social stability by inviting residents to help each other fulfill one another’s particular needs.

In retrospect, the study’s conclusions read like prophetic forerunners of *Death and Life*’s guiding principles. Like Jacobs, the study urges those responsible for selecting housing project sites to revise their general approach and specific policies in order to place “greater emphasis [. . .] on more human considerations.” To achieve this paradigmatic and strategic shift, the study articulates the “need for neighborhood planning” that includes not just “architects and lawyers,” but “sociologists and psychologists and educators and planners—and community lay people—as well.”

Among other things, the study encourages this socially and professionally diverse group of urbanites to more carefully consider “[p]roject design and its influence on tenant relationships.” Specifically, it envisions housing projects that will “allow for a more flexible use of informal space areas.” Finally, in keeping with its vision of diversity as the bedrock of strong city neighborhoods, the study insists that “integration policies and their end-effects must be realistically tackled” in order to disrupt the increasingly strong trend toward “segregated projects.” If, the study concludes, “Public Housing is to be of lasting benefit to humanity, this is the time for its reappraisal.”

“A Study of George Washington Houses” put forth the ideological and strategic apparatus through which Union Settlement would adjust its institutional mission and
social programs in order to better serve a neighborhood that had been radically restructured by urban renewal. The Housing Committee of the East Harlem Council for Community Planning (EHCCP) heeded the exhortations of “A Study of George Washington Houses” perhaps more rigorously than any of Union Settlement’s other initiatives. Manned by William Kirk, Ellen Lurie, Mildred Zucker and Jane Jacobs, the EHCCP Housing Committee petitioned the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) in 1958 for time to generate alternative blueprints for the soon-to-be-built DeWitt Clinton Houses. Having received approval and some funding from the NYCHA, the committee met with Perkins & Will Architects in January 1959 to discuss innovative ways to rethink standard public housing architecture. During its initial consultation meeting, the committee spelled out the principles upon which it hoped to redesign the Clinton Houses. It informed the architects that the new project would ideally “duplicate and not change the manner of living” that East Harlem residents had been practicing for decades in their old neighborhood. To this end, it suggested that the project “[u]se streets as focal points” and create other spaces in which residents could maintain public relationships. The committee recommended that the project’s ground-level floors should not be used for residential purposes, but as a “social level” — with “congenial” lobbies, laundries, social services, and other similar spaces. It encouraged the architects to “[p]rovide niches and irregularities in building lines to accomplish ‘door step living’” — the type of social practice that had earned the neighborhood its reputation as a slum and that Jacobs would place at the center of her urbanism. Rather than build the kind of self-contained, cozy neighborhood that Mumford and others had been championing for decades, the committee wanted “[o]utside life to penetrate into project.” Hoping that Perkins & Will
would help them translate the findings of “A Study of George Washington Houses” into East Harlem’s built environment, the Housing Committee begged them to “[b]leed street life into our project.”

Acting as the spokesperson for the EHCCP Housing Committee, Jacobs presented its distinct social vision of urban community and alternative plans for the Clinton Houses to the NYCHA at a hearing on February 3, 1959. Jacobs opens her remarks by acknowledging the “great complex of reasons for East Harlem’s troubles, among them poverty, discrimination, [and] the vast and constant dislocation of families and shattering of existing neighborhoods which have been by-products of the rehousing.” However, she reports, the committee is “convinced that a great part of the poor social showing of East Harlem’s projects is owing to the physical design of the buildings themselves and their grounds.” Privileging “open space and “distance between buildings” above street life, housing projects typically consist of high-rise apartment buildings that have not only been set apart from one another but also from the surrounding neighborhood. According to Jacobs, these groupings of relatively isolated residential structures ignore the “social structure of city neighborhoods, particularly poor neighborhoods.” Rather than accommodate the “highly communal and cooperative society among families in the old slums,” housing projects tend to “sacrifice the constant, casual and varied human contacts which provided not only the controls, but also the interests and the avenues to most opportunity and mutual assistance in the old slum.” Jacobs accuses the NYCHA of imposing upon East Harlem a built environment that has been “designed for a kind of sophisticated family individualism.”
After poking holes in the NYCHA’s plan for the Clinton Houses in particular and its approach to public housing in general, Jacobs enumerates the architectural and design features of the Housing Committee’s proposal and explains how those features will bolster East Harlem’s existing “social structure.” Rather than repeat the standard project design of high-rise buildings clustered around open space, Jacobs recommends that the Clinton Houses mix low-rise, walk-up buildings with the more typical high-rises. These much smaller walk-ups would contain about thirty family-sized apartments built around an open courtyard. By eliminating “elevators, enclosed corridors and enclosed stairwells,” the large families occupying these smaller buildings would be better able to supervise children at play below “from the windows of apartments above;” the committee wanted “mothers of all good-sized families to be within easy calling distance to the ground.” The open corridors and courtyards of these walk-ups would also provide families with the kinds of public spaces that would “foster acquaintance and interdependence” without making them feel that they had been “unnaturally imposed on each other and all privacy or sense of choice lost.” By placing these smaller building units directly adjacent to the typical high-rise buildings, the committee hoped to fulfill the ideal articulated in “A Study of George Washington Houses”—residents with “different kinds of tastes” living together. This particular arrangement of buildings would further cultivate “acquaintance and interdependence” within the project community by placing individuals with different needs and expertise in a position to help one another: elderly couples in the high-rises available to baby-sit children in the low-rises.51

In addition to nurturing a “cooperative society” within the project community, the committee’s proposal centered around design features that would knit the Clinton Houses
into the old neighborhood. Given its location on Lexington Avenue—one of East Harlem’s busiest and most socially active streets—Jacobs demands that the project “enhance the surrounding streets” rather than turn its back on them. “Busy streets, filled with people,” she philosophizes, are “safe upon which to walk, are interesting for standing or strolling, and as can be seen in East Harlem are greatly used as casual meeting places and adult recreation grounds where dominoes are played, music enjoyed, television watched outdoors, snacks vended and the like.” A street-oriented project would also better support the neighborhood’s commercial establishments and strengthen the “vital community role” that they and their proprietors played. The community-building capabilities of the popular Spanish motion picture house nearby on Lexington Avenue, Jacobs points out, ought to be embraced rather than deadened by the Clinton Houses. Ensuring the survival of these social institutions and the public social networks of which they are important nodes requires the kind of neighborhood planning that Simkhovitch had been advocating for several decades. Jacobs concludes her presentation to the NYCHA by expressing the need for “community planning” in East Harlem. “Without this basic community planning, and without understanding of the community and its over-all needs,” Jacobs concludes, “New York’s experiment in rehousing is a high-rise, rootless jungle, built at fabulous expense, unplanned and indigestible, with built-in contradictions and instability.”

While it did not take long for the NYCHA to kill the EHCCP Housing Committee’s aspirations for more socially sensitive housing projects, Jacobs would resurrect the social vision and innovative design features at the heart of its Clinton Houses proposal in *Death and Life.* She most explicitly invokes the lessons she had
learned while serving on the Housing Committee in her discussion of “salvaging projects” near the end of her study.\textsuperscript{54} There, she reinscribes the committee’s proposals for the yet-to-be-built Clinton Houses into recommendations for how previously constructed projects might be saved from total social degradation. As in her speech before the NYCHA, Jacobs insists that the “root mistake” of housing projects is the belief that they ought to be “abstracted out of the ordinary city and set apart” (393). Taking this fundamental assumption as a starting point, the purpose of any improvement should be to reconnect isolated projects to the city that surrounds them. Although not much could be done to alter a project’s basic physical structures—doing so would be too expensive—finding ways to reinstate the “casual public characters, [and] lively, well-watched, continuously used public spaces” (394) would do much to reunite these projects with their neighborhoods. To this end, Jacobs suggests paving over some of the project’s vacuous open spaces with new streets; by providing the spaces upon which new commercial and other types of residential establishments could be constructed, these streets would supply the project community with some of the public spaces and characters that had been destroyed during project construction. Permitting street vendors to sell their wares within the project would produce similar effects. Both tactics would “get adults circulating around and spreading themselves through time in all public spaces at ground level” (397-98). And for Jacobs, cultivating a healthy public life is the key to successful urbanism.

While many have focused on Jacobs’s efforts to materialize Death and Life’s principles and concepts in both the West Village and Toronto following its publication, little, if any, criticism considers the extent to which her work on the EHCCP Housing
Committee and her longer-term involvement with Union Settlement shaped her influential study of cities. Jacobs not only revives some of the specific tactics and design features included in the Clinton Houses proposal, but also echoes the broader urban vision of Union Settlement that had inspired her committee’s efforts. Death and Life might be read as a settlement study that grew, in part, out of her experiences at Union Settlement—an expanded and more accessible version of Lurie’s “A Study of George Washington Houses.” In both content and form, Death and Life reflects Union Settlement’s fundamental belief that the heart of a city neighborhood lies in its public rather than its domestic spaces.

II. Jane Jacobs and Urban Journalism

The settlement “way of seeing” and writing about cities that Kirk, Lurie, Simkhovitch and others modeled for Jacobs coincides with the habits of observation and representation that had been practiced by urban journalists since the nineteenth century. Settlement workers were not the only urban intellectuals to center their understandings and representations of urban relationships in the streets. Journalists from Crane to Liebling had, by mid-century, produced a substantial body of urban literature attuned stylistically and substantively to the city’s public terrain. Most scholarship overlooks this journalistic tradition as a relevant genealogy for Jacobs, describing her instead as the literary offspring of nineteenth-century writers such as Harriet Beecher Stowe, Henry David Thoreau and Walt Whitman, or as part of a 1960s protest-literature cohort that includes Rachael Carson, Betty Friedan, Marshal McLuhan, Michael Harrington and Ralph Nader. While grouping Jacobs with such writers helps nudge Death and Life beyond the small city planning and architectural circles within which it is typically read
into the broader sphere of literature, reading it as an heir of urban journalism illuminates new literary and intellectual dimensions of her work. Charles Abrams was on the right track when, shortly after the publication of *Death and Life,* he remarked somewhat offhandedly that Jacobs had “come to the big city’s defense with an exposition that would make E. B. White, O. Henry, and Meyer Berger forever sing her praises.”57 Few have pursued Abrams’s insights.58 But, given her training in city journalism while writing for urban literary institutions such as *Vogue, Fortune* and the *New York Herald Tribune* (where Crane and Mitchell cut their journalistic teeth) and her personal reading habits (she cites the *New Yorker* and other newspapers and magazines extensively in *Death and Life*), it is not surprising that Jacobs shared an ideological and stylistic approach to describing urban life with her journalistic predecessors.

Although Crane, Ross, Mitchell, Liebling and others had tried to resist the sensationalist tendencies of urban journalism, this particular form of journalism persisted as an influential model for describing city life during the urban renewal era. As they had done in the past, though, many urban intellectuals continued to question the social consequences of urban sensationalism. William Kirk criticized journalists such as Pete Hamill for writing articles that, “while often perceptive,” were also “unnecessarily loaded with lurid and melodramatic overtones that fail to do justice to the very real steps being taken in East Harlem’s Spanish community.”59 Kirk blamed such sensationalist depictions of his neighborhood for perpetuating many of its social problems. He worried, in particular, about the increasing tendency of journalists to represent urban life through the narrow lens of juvenile delinquency. Though he readily acknowledged the “rough conditions” of East Harlem, he faulted the “impressionistic and superficial type of
reporting of teenage disturbance” exhibited in a July 1960 *New York Times* article by Richard Eder for marginalizing other features of the neighborhood’s social landscape. Asserting a causal relationship between the sensationalist coverage that East Harlem typically received and the community’s attempts to “achiev[e] further needed change,” Kirk pled with the *Times*’s editors to send Eder back to the neighborhood for a second look. Kirk trusted that Eder would discover—and, ideally, report—the kind of “growing vitalities” that a “keen student of the City, Jane Jacobs, an Associate Editor of the Architectural Forum,” had found and “heavily drawn on” in East Harlem. Jacobs’s brand of reportage, Kirk implied, both complemented and catalyzed the realization of Union Settlement’s vision of urban community.

Although Jacobs sometimes slips into the narrative patterns coalescing around juvenile delinquency and urban crime, and tends to exaggerate the shortcomings of city planners such as Ebenezer Howard, Le Corbusier and Robert Moses, her apprenticeship in an alternative tradition of urban journalism prepared her to both recognize and describe the “vitalities” of New York’s neighborhoods that Kirk and others would show her. In the mid-thirties, Jacobs published a series of four sketches in *Vogue* magazine, each of which focuses on one of the city’s distinct economic hubs: the fur, leather, diamond and flower districts. Written in the style of Crane’s Tenderloin sketches and early *New Yorker* Profiles, Jacobs’s *Vogue* pieces explicate for readers the economic and social mechanisms upon which each industry operates. These marketplaces are as responsible for shaping her vision of urban sociality as her experiences in East Harlem or life in the West Village. Describing the fur district’s chaotic activities in her first *Vogue* publication, Jacobs observes: “At every hour of the day, the sidewalks and gutters of the
district are crowded with groups of cigar-puffing fur merchants, dapper buyers, and salesmen from the adjoining garment district, who engage in loud and unrestrained dickering, as though they were anxious to advertise all the details of every transaction. Jacobs’s sketches uncover the humaneness of the seemingly impersonal business transactions that take place in these commercial communities. The dickering crowds that gather in the city’s “sidewalks and gutters” to do business practice what Jacobs would later describe as the “art of urbanity.”

The social and economic structures of the fur, leather, diamond and flower districts serve as early models for the kind public life that Jacobs would later champion. Her description of a day in the life of the flower district foreshadows her depictions of lively sidewalk scenes in Death and Life. Set beneath the “melodramatic roar of the ‘El,’ encircled by hash-houses and Turkish baths,” the flower market begins at five o’clock when “boxes and hampers of flowers are brought into the district” from Long Island, Connecticut, New Jersey, Florida, California, Canada, South America and Holland. Immediately put on display in the wholesale shops and on their sidewalks, most of the flowers are, by noon, “taken away by retail florists or peddlars, and, in the early afternoon, the rest are put in storage or sent to other markets.” The basket factories located near the wholesale storefronts and owned primarily by “Greeks, Italians, or Orientals” sell their products to the “florist accessories shops, which share the district with the wholesale flower houses and supply ribbons, pottery, terrariums, and even artificial flowers.” A diminutive forerunner of Liebling’s Profile of the Jollity Building, “Flowers Come to Town” traces the vast network of international, national and local interdependencies that prop up the flower district’s economy. By omitting the contractual details of these
economic interdependencies, Jacobs sets up the flower market as a social model capable of being reproduced in other urban settings. Like the neighborhoods that she idealizes in *Death and Life*, the commercial communities that she profiles for *Vogue* are not held together by “ties of kinship” nor “close friendship,” but seem to function through spontaneous public cooperation. Jacobs would continue to use the city’s economic realm to make sense of and explain the nature of its social sphere.

The strain of urban journalism that Jacobs took up in *Vogue* and the feature pages of the *Sunday Herald Tribune*—where she occasionally published feature stories during the forties—reached its apotheosis with the birth of the *Village Voice* on October 26, 1955. Started by Dan Wolf, Ed Fancher, and Norman Mailer, the *Voice* was—according to an editorial published on its first anniversary—an attempt to “give form” to Greenwich Village and other nearby neighborhoods as “both a community and a concept.”

Working to establish its institutional identity, the paper’s editors and correspondents wrapped mid-century settlement ideals of urban community in the sophisticated literary forms and styles that the *New Yorker* had been developing since the mid-twenties. More explicitly than its journalistic predecessors, though, the *Voice* concerned itself with defining and representing the city’s public realm. It was a particularly radical departure from its rival neighborhood newspaper, the *Villager*, which catered to and reported the goings-on of the community’s blue-blooded elite. By contrast, the *Voice* saw Greenwich Village as a “crystallization and intensification of almost every variety of urban life,” and crafted editorial policies and literary practices that would “give voice to all the many divergent factors, pressure groups, attitudes, and conflicting personalities of the Village.” The *Voice* strove to be a space in which this diverse mix of “people could
speak to people in a community that is one of the most vital and knowledgeable in the world.” This pluralistic—and fairly narcissistic—vision of urban community took shape within the seemingly uncensored “Letters to the Editor,” rubrics such as “The Village Square” and “People” (which closely resembled New Yorker Profiles), and a variety of other literary experiments and gimmicks.

In both its feature articles and regular columns, the Voice forged its “concept” of urban community, in large part, through its opposition to local urban renewal projects. Its editors, staff writers, guest contributors and vocal neighbors repeatedly positioned their understandings of the Village in direct opposition to what one editorial described as the “attitudes of Mr. Robert Moses toward the public and its supposed realm (Asphalt Is Good for You Division).” More specifically, the Voice articulated its social ideals in its sustained campaign against the city’s plans to construct a four-lane highway through Washington Square Park. In just its third issue, the Voice devoted its editorial column to publicizing its “view that any serious tampering with Washington Square Park will mark the true beginning of the end of Greenwich Village as a community.” Washington Square, the Voice proclaimed, is a “symbol of unity in diversity.” Within a single block of its iconic arch were “luxury apartments, cold-water flats, nineteenth-century mansions, a university, and a nest of small businesses.” The park provided one of the few public spaces in which all of these “Villagers of enormously varied interests and backgrounds” could casually mingle. The park helped city dwellers “appreciate the wonderful complexity of New York” while simultaneously reminding them of the “distance they have to cover in their relations with other people.” The Voice adopted Washington Park
as a type of mascot, repeatedly gesturing toward it as the material embodiment of the paper’s communal aspirations.

In addition to staking out its own position in the Washington Square crisis, the *Voice* became the self-appointed literary organ for community organizations opposed to the city’s road-building scheme. The paper alerted readers to upcoming public meetings at the Greenwich House, New School or Cooper Union in which park issues would be discussed, and provided readers with extensive coverage of these meetings. At times, this coverage came packaged in the traditional form of feature articles written by correspondents who embedded quotations from their subjects in their reports. Occasionally, though, the *Voice* included unedited transcripts of speeches delivered at these public meetings—a practice that underscores the paper’s attempt to serve as a public forum in which Villagers could speak to one another. For the first several years of the paper’s circulation, *Voice* readers heard neighbors and urban intellectuals—such as Lewis Mumford, Victor Gruen, William Whyte, Jr., Margaret Mead, and Charles Abrams—weigh in almost weekly on the Washington Square debate, public housing and other tenets of urban renewal. In its July 2, 1958 issue, for instance, the *Voice* reprinted in full a speech that Abrams—a Village resident and professor of city planning at Columbia University—delivered to a packed meeting at the New School, which was sponsored by the Joint Emergency Committee to Close Washington Square. Echoing the social ideals of the *Voice* and others who had spoken through its pages, Abrams exhorts his audience and readers to join the “revolt of the urban people against the destruction of their values; of the pedestrian against the automobile; the community against the project; the home against the soulless multiple dwelling; the neighborhood against the wrecking
crew; of human diversity against substandard standardization.” He characterizes the community’s attempt to defeat the city’s Washington Square plans as a much broader reaction “against conformity and for the preservation of diversity.” The American city, he proposes, is the “battleground for the preservation of diversity” and Greenwich Village stands as that battle’s “Bunker Hill.”

The Voice did its part to fight off “conformity” by developing journalistic forms and styles intended to include as many voices from the community as possible.

Although Jacobs never wrote feature articles for the Voice, she made several cameo appearances in its pages. Seeing her ideas about city life repeatedly and seamlessly inserted into her neighborhood newspaper calls attention to the substantive and stylistic qualities that her work shares with the type of city journalism magnified by the Voice. In its November 20, 1957 issue, a front-page Voice article covered a speech that Jacobs had delivered at the Cooper Union during the previous week. As head of the Greenwich Village Study’s housing committee, Jacobs had taken responsibility for updating the community on the committee’s findings. Channeling many of the conclusions of “A Study of George Washington Houses” into a Greenwich Village setting, Jacobs informs her audience that the “economic class segregation” inherent in the kinds of housing projects being built by both the NYCHA and private developers “is socially undesirable and retrogressive from the situation now being found in the Village.” Such segregation would, many Villagers understood by now, destroy the their community’s public sphere. Jacobs also reasons that the “mass displacement of present Villagers from the community” that would inevitably accompany project building “is too high a price—in both individual and community terms—to pay for improved housing.”
Even if retaining residents meant allowing some of them to continue living in cold-water flats, Jacobs contends that many would prefer maintaining their low rents and social networks over acquiring the “new amenities of housing.” In keeping with the definition of the Village community that the Voice had touted since its inception, Jacobs privileges a social view of the neighborhood that emphasizes the value of a public realm populated by a diverse range of urbanites. “It would be authoritarian, and a disservice to the community,” Jacobs concludes with her typical flourish, “to take the attitude that this sense of values is wrong.”

Just a few months prior, the Voice had reprinted in the space typically reserved for its strongest editorial declarations the complete transcript of a speech that Jacobs had delivered at the concluding Cooper Union Forum on the problems facing the Village. Reading the transcript of her address in the context of the Voice illuminates not only the similarities between Jacobs’s urbanism and that which had been circulated by her neighborhood newspaper since the mid-fifties, but also the extent to which her writing practices are rooted in the sidewalks and public gatherings that she and other city journalists had placed at the center of their reportage. Death and Life often feels as if Jacobs had transcribed entire passages from a political rally or street-corner sermon because, in fact, she had. Jacobs begins her speech at the Cooper Union Forum with the kind of—if not exact—analogy that she employs throughout Death and Life. She tells her audience a story about a man who, seeking a cure for his cold, is instructed by his doctor to “‘Go home, put up the window, lie down with your pajamas open, and let the wind run through.’ ‘But doctor,’ said the man, ‘I might get pneumonia!’ ‘Exactly,’ said the doctor, glancing at his aureomycin: ‘We know how to cure that!’” Jacobs then
quickly and straightforwardly transposes the story into a register that clarifies its relevance: “This is very much like the case of Greenwich Village. Here is the Village, conferring with Drs. Wiley and Moses. ‘I tell you what,’ says Dr. Wiley, ‘Go home, lay down your park, open it up and let the traffic rush through.’ ‘But doctor,’ says the Village, ‘I might get Blight!’ ‘Exactly,’ chimes in Dr. Moses, glancing at his bulldozer: ‘We know how to cure that!’” Building on the rhetorical foundation established by the analogy, Jacobs explains in very precise terms the moral of her tale—that the “outrageous plan for Washington Square” teaches “something we must understand and face: This city either is not interested, or does not know how, to preserve and improve old neighborhoods.”

Because Jacobs fashions her literary style in the city’s streets, parks and meeting halls, her writing reenacts for readers the experience of being in public with others whom they may not know. She refuses to rely on a specialized vocabulary that might exclude any listeners or readers, and she never strikes an intimate tone. Reading Jacobs is not like having a private, one-on-one conversation peppered with inside jokes, but more like joining an impromptu crowd to listen to a street preacher spreading his nondenominational message to as many different kinds of people as possible. Jacobs’s analogies, metaphors, folksy diction and penchant for alliteration provide intellectual and emotional access to a sizeable cross-section of the population. Her journalism creates the rhetorical space in which a diverse body of readers can gather without having to disclose personal matters. Listeners and readers become the “we” in Jacobs’s medical analogy not by staging a love feast but by agreeing to band together to protect their individual interests from encroaching outsiders such as Drs. Wiley and Moses.
Jacobs bridges her apprenticeships in city journalism and public speaking to *Death and Life* most clearly in an article she published in the April 1958 issue of *Fortune* magazine. Not only did “Downtown is for People” lead to the grant from the Rockefeller Foundation to write a book-length study of the city, but it also more closely resembles *Death and Life* in its scope and style than any of her previous publications. Written as the bookend of a multi-authored series on the effects of urban sprawl—later collected and published as a chapter of *The Exploding Metropolis* (1958)—Jacobs’s *Fortune* piece applies many of the rhetorical skills and habits of observation that she had acquired as a freelance journalist writing about New York to a number of other cities, from Boston to Kansas City to Fort Worth to San Francisco. Warning that “civic leaders and planners” throughout the country were “preparing a series of redevelopment projects that will set the character of the center of our cities for generations to come,” Jacobs opens her article as though she were initiating a casual conversation with her readers: “What will the projects look like?” Ascribing to these projects “all the attributes of a well-kept, dignified cemetery”—they will be “parklike,” “uncrowded,” “orderly” and “monumental”—Jacobs answers her own question by explaining that they will inevitably fail because they “work at cross-purposes to the city.”

In “Downtown is for People,” Jacobs connects the city’s purposes to its streets more explicitly than she had prior to that point, foreshadowing the centrality that these informal public spaces would assume in the social vision she articulates in *Death and Life*. The city’s pedestrian spaces are where urbanites reap the full benefits of city life. Streets, rather than private dwellings or high-rise office buildings, serve as the “major point of transaction and communication” among urbanites. Where previous urban
intellectuals had seen streets as the incidental, if unavoidable, means of getting from one meaningful place to another, Jacobs characterizes them as the city’s “nervous system.” They are the channels through which the city’s lifeblood flows. Given the vital functions that they perform, Jacobs insists that rather than “banish the street,” cities ought to push them to “work harder” by making them “more surprising, more compact, more variegated, and busier than before—not less so.” To this end, Jacobs calls upon her readers, as if at a political rally, to “get into the thick of the planning job” that had, in the past, been dominated by planners and architects: “Let the citizens decide what end results they want, and they can adapt the rebuilding machinery to suit them.”

In *Death and Life*, Jacobs uses the journalistic techniques that she had acquired while reading and writing for literary institutions such as *Vogue*, the *New York Herald Tribune*, the *Village Voice* and *Fortune* to help “citizens” decide what, exactly, they should want from their cities. *Death and Life* reenacts its definition of the city as a place of casual, public contact in the form and style of the text. Readers constantly see Jacobs “getting in on some talk” (9), but the talk almost always happens on the sidewalk, in bars, or even on public telephones, and is usually very brief. Jacobs’s study is anti-Jamesian and -Howellsian in its depiction of the city’s social landscape. It encourages readers to think of the city not as a backdrop for intimate relationships but as a stage for innumerable little “sidewalk contacts.” *Death and Life* entails in its form, style and content the consummation of the type of urban journalism practiced by Crane, Mitchell, Liebling and others.

**III. Jane Jacobs and the Nature of Diversity**
Like Albert Parr and other mid-century urban intellectuals, Jacobs drew upon the increasingly powerful authority of ecology to validate and voice a style of urbanism that had evolved through her experiences with settlement work and city journalism. Though she refers to herself in a 1940 article she wrote for *Cue* magazine as a “city naturalist,” the specific scientific soil in which she planted her urban vision would not become clear until the publication of *Death and Life*.\(^7\) In her book-length study of cities, Jacobs counters the “pseudoscience of city planning” that had been shaping American cities since the late-nineteenth century with “new strategies for thinking” about urban life that were deeply rooted in the “life sciences.”\(^7\) Because cities pose the same kinds of “problems in organized complexity” (433) that natural sciences such as ecology had been addressing for decades, Jacobs encourages her readers to take up ecological “habits of thought” (440) in order to generate alternative and more humane modes of understanding cities. Jacobs finds in ecology a persuasive rationale for describing and defending the type of social networks that she and other city journalists had been reporting and that settlement workers such as William Kirk had been nurturing for several decades. A “city ecosystem,” she explains in a “Foreword” to a later edition of *Death and Life*, consists of “complex interdependencies of components” that are “vulnerable and fragile, easily disrupted or destroyed.”\(^8\) Through the language and logic of ecology, Jacobs makes the vast networks of casual, public relationships that crisscross the city both visible and valuable.

*Death and Life* was just one of many significant works published in the 1960s to use ecology’s new discursive powers to legitimize a vision of city life. Along with Jacobs’s study, works such as Jean Gottman’s *Megalopolis* (1961), Lewis Mumford’s
"The City in History" (1961) and Ian McHarg’s *Design with Nature* (1969) “reinstated” what Michael Sorkin describes as the “conceptual centrality of ecology—first systematically introduced by the Chicago School decades earlier—in the production of urban models.” Each of these studies, however, mines very different veins within the vast field of ecology and puts the maturing science’s central terms and concepts to very different uses. Ironically, Mumford turns the ecological rationale he had cultivated in *The City in History* into a club with which he beats Jacobs for her investment in large, dense cities. His ecological urbanism pulls from both traditional climax ecology—the early twentieth century’s dominant form of ecology fathered by Frederic Clements—and an emerging ecosystem ecology, whose apocalyptic outlook pervades the modern environmental movement.

In his *New Yorker* review of *Death and Life*, Mumford criticizes Jacobs for committing two ecological sins. On the one hand, he censures her for overlooking what he takes to be the well-established ecological fact that every biological community “eventually reaches the ‘climax stage,’ beyond which growth without deterioration is not possible.” By naturalizing the connection between urban density and the city’s social pathologies, Mumford uses Clements’s outdated climax theory to simultaneously defraud Jacobs’s urbanism and reaffirm the principles that drive his own regionalist vision. On the other hand, he berates her for ignoring the environmental consequences of the “large-scale metropolitan congestion she advocates—the poisoning of the human system with carbon monoxide and the two hundred known cancer-producing substances usually in the air, the muffling of the vital ultraviolet rays by smog, the befouling of streams and Oceanside (once used for fishing and bathing) with human and industrial waste.”
Alluding to Rachel Carson’s most recent work in the *New Yorker*, Mumford reminds Jacobs that “‘Silent Spring,’” after all, “came to the big city long before it visited the countryside.”

While Mumford’s critiques—especially the latter one—deserve further consideration, they also draw attention to the radically different ecological register in which Jacobs speaks. The upstart urbanist may be less guilty of possessing what Mumford perceives to be an “inadequate appreciation of the ecological setting of cities and neighborhoods” than she is of tapping into a post-“climax” and pre-“ecosystem” ecology. Jacobs’s ecological urbanism shares much more in common with Carson’s early *New Yorker* Profiles and Albert Parr’s “urbanology” than with Mumford’s particular ecological blend. Jacobs takes up the basic principles and impulses of community ecology in an attempt to give her settlement-inspired vision of and journalistic take on urban life some scientific weight. She practices the kind of “comparative sociobiology” that W. C. Allee and other community ecologists rehearsed during the interwar years as they explored the ways in which their ecological “investigations bore directly on problems in human sociology.”

Jacobs’s ecological imagination was particularly prodded by Edgar Anderson’s arguments in *Landscape* magazine during the mid- to late-fifties that ecologists ought to turn their attention to cities. As director of the Missouri Botanical Garden, Anderson was intrigued by the study of urban plant life and began taking his botany students to the “dump heaps and alleys in St. Louis” instead of the Ozark Woodlands to examine plant communities. But he was also interested in approaching city life through a much broader ecological paradigm. Anderson blames American anti-urban sentiment, in part, on the
“professional naturalists of our culture” who have suggested that the “harmonious interaction of man and other organisms can only be achieved out in the country, that the average man is too noisy, to ugly, and too vile to be accepted as a close neighbor.”87 Only when we consider humans as an integral part of nature, Anderson suggests, will we begin to realize that city dwellers can be “quite as suitable and interesting objects for nature study as are Maine lobstermen or New Hampshire farmers (or even, for that matter, chipping sparrows and bluebirds).” Bringing an ecological habit of mind to the city enables us to become more “sympathetic observer[s]” of one another.88 Echoing community ecology’s fundamental belief in the social nature of all organisms, Anderson contends that when we take an ecological view of city life we “acquire a fellow feeling for these organisms with which we live” and are therefore more willing to “mold [cities] into the kind of communities in which a gregarious animal like man can be increasingly effective.”89

Though she does not do so in a very orthodox fashion, Jacobs heeds Anderson’s invitation to apply ecological principles to the study of city life. In *Death and Life*, she solidifies her rejection of the “cozy” neighborhood ideal by translating her urban vision into ecological terms. Clearly referencing the ecology’s well-traveled “web of life” analogy, Jacobs explains that every resident in a city neighborhood—slum dwellers and immigrants, as well as more established citizens—constitutes a “vital part of the web of casual public life” (282). Jacobs clarifies the nature of this urban web in *Death and Life*’s most frequently cited—and misunderstood—passage. Often read as a celebration of neighborhood intimacies, her description of the “Hudson Street ballet” more closely resembles a community ecologist’s account of a habitat group. Jacobs compares the daily
sidewalk scene outside her West Village home to an “intricate ballet in which the individual dancers and ensembles all have distinctive parts which miraculously reinforce each other and compose an orderly whole” (50). As she later points out, this urban dance is not performed by a cast of acquaintances, but by a mix of residents, workers and tourists who, for the most part, do not know one another. Like the animals in Parr’s “An October Afternoon” and the community of sea creatures that Carson describes at sea’s edge, the pedestrians on Hudson Street compose a deeply interconnected yet anonymous social web. Though they may never speak, they provide each other with what Jacobs—summoning another key concept from community ecology—describes as “intricate mutual support” (14). These urbanites do not attend compassionately to one another, but are instead “unconsciously cooperating” (153).

Jacobs appropriates the concept of sympathy to describe the type of “fellow feeling” that arises within these proto-cooperative urban bonds. In a presentation she delivered at the New School on April 20, 1958, she clarifies the affective qualities of these social interdependencies. Noting that the city “consists of an intricate, living network of relationships—made up of an enormously rich variety of people and activities”—Jacobs invites her audience to consider the “interdependence, the constant adjustment, and the mutual support of every kind which must work, and work well, in a city like ours.” Using the city’s commercial landscape as a way to map public interpersonal behavior—a technique that harkens back to her Vogue articles—Jacobs observes that the city’s “criss-cross of supporting relationships means, for instance, that a Russian tearoom and last year’s minks and a place to rent English sports cars bloom well near Carnegie Hall, or that on the same block the Advanced Metaphysicians and the
Dynamic Speakers and the Associates of Camp Moonbeam have all discovered they can fit sympathetically into the studios that do well for music too. Understanding Jacobs’s use of sympathy in this commercial context helps us perceive more clearly the structure of feeling supported by a “social structure of sidewalk life” (68). Jacobs is not interested in a social order that operates upon “harmonious consensus” (374), but in cities that facilitate the “freedom of countless numbers of people to make and carry out countless plans” (391). Her ideal urban scene is “different people, bent on different purposes, appearing at different times, but using the same streets” (183). Obtaining a “fellow feeling” for one’s urban neighbors may, at times, not even require verbal communication.

Rather than signify sympathy’s classic formulation of imagining oneself in another’s position, Jacobs’s ecologically inflected sympathy connotes the need to secure another’s position in the urban landscape by both using and protecting the city’s public spaces. City dwellers need not necessarily identify with one another, but instead with their urban habitat. Only as they build their daily routines upon the city’s sidewalks, parks and other public venues do they recognize the extent to which their ability to carry out their own plans ultimately depends upon the “mutual support” of a variety of other urbanites, including those they may never see. Foreshadowing aspects of Parr’s “urbanology,” Jacobs suggests that the only way to get urbanites to use and identify with the city’s public realm is to ensure the existence of “useful or interesting or convenient differences fairly near by”; nobody, she observes, “travels willingly from sameness to sameness and repetition to repetition, even if the physical effort required is trivial” (129). Jacobs poses a radically different notion of sympathy than the concept that has driven contemporary debates about the term—many of which tend to see the sympathetic
process as one that reduces differences. For Jacobs, a “fellow feeling” among urbanites depends upon physical, economic and social variety within the urban ecosystem. “Differences, not duplication,” she explains, “make for cross-use and hence for a person’s identification with an area greater than his immediate street network” (130).

Lacking the religious framework of Crane’s experiential urbanism and the social geometry of the settlement movement’s face-to-face ethics, Jacobs’s ecological ethos nevertheless entails an urban morality suited to the period’s particular urban crisis. By deploying the social rhetoric of community ecology, Jacobs illuminates the nature of the emotional reservoir that city dwellers can draw from in their efforts to curb the forces of urban renewal. Jacobs and other urbanites ought to oppose cataclysmic urban renewal not as militant preservationists—a role that Jacobs has too often been assigned by her readers—but as defenders of the city’s delicate human ecosystem. When one recognizes that the city’s “mutual supporting arrangements of various enterprises and people are living arrangements,” Jacobs explained shortly after the publication of Death and Life, one feels how “absolutely immoral” it would be to interfere with those arrangements through forced displacement of residents, businesses and other organizations. In a personal letter to Jacobs, Karl Fogel succinctly captures the affective logic of her ecological urbanism. Before reading Death and Life, he writes, “I had always thought of [cities] as organisms, but until now, they were organisms of whose biology I knew almost nothing, and whose health I took to be beyond the power of mere mortals (including politicians and city planners) to affect.” After reading Death and Life, Fogel implies, he better grasped the city’s biology and as a result knew how to feel and act in order to ensure the health of the city and those who occupied it.
As many critics have noted since the publication of *Death and Life*, Jacobs’s “urban myth” lacks the type of rights-based discourses embodied by contemporary and past social justice movements and, as a result, tends to overlook the specific historical and material challenges facing urban minorities and the urban poor. In fact, her ecological urbanism stimulates a very different set of ethical and affective practices than those fostered by the identity politics of the Civil Rights movement or the Popular Front’s proletarian paradigm. Rather than solicit the compassionate obligations of brotherhood or demand increased political and economic opportunities for the socially marginalized, Jacobs calls for city dwellers to secure places in the city in which others can “carry out [their] countless plans” because doing so enables those who intervene on behalf of others to carry out their own plans. Her ecological ethics mandate the preservation of urban diversity of all kinds—race and class included—without valuing the demands of any one constituency above another; she subsumes every category of urban identity under the broad banner of ecological diversity. “We ought to be wary of anything that tends to destroy human diversity,” Jacobs reasons, because we “surely need diversity in sizes and kinds of families just as much as we need diversity of talents, occupational preferences, and personalities.” In the moral calculus of Jacobs’s ecological urbanism, then, the exercise of eminent domain stands as the cardinal sin that leads to further social backsliding. The kind of cozy city communities towards which most city planners aspire become breeding grounds for what Jacobs claims are “our country’s most serious social problem—segregation and racial discrimination” (71).

**IV. *Death and Life* as Urban Literature**

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Read as part of a narrative and intellectual tradition that infuses the city’s social networks with emotional and social value, *Death and Life* sounds less like a nostalgic longing for close-knit communities than a culminating vision of city life that had been brewing for some time in places such as Union Settlement, the *Village Voice* and *Landscape* magazine. Placing Jacobs’s work in this context enables us to recover aspects of its radical social vision that have been, as Michael Sorkin has recently pointed out, “deracinated by its selective uptake by the far narrower, formally fixated concerns of preservationism, by an ongoing strain of behaviorist crime fighters [. . .] and by the spreading mine field of institutionalized urban design.”

Placing Jacobs at the heart of a much broader cultural formation that has explored the sympathetic possibilities of the “street contact” foregrounds a vision of the city as a place that depends upon casual, public contacts at a time when the logic of gentrification and privatization offer up very different visions of the city and endanger the spaces in which those interactions take place.

Reading *Death and Life* as a work of urban literature that engages with previous attempts to understand and represent the possibilities of urban sympathy illuminates dimensions of Jacobs’s text that give it the vitality and versatility necessary to speak to today’s urban communities. Reading *Death and Life* as urban literature also reminds us of the range of relational styles and ideals described by previous urbanists that can supplement Jacobs’s social ideals. We might think of *Death and Life* as a literary settlement house that shelters a matrix of various patterns of writing about the city’s social landscape. Jacobs gave these habits of understanding particular iterations in her writing and in her political battles in order to provide her neighborhood and city with the
services it needed at a particular moment—but these are not the only configurations that those literary traditions can assume. Like a good settlement house, *Death and Life* invites us to recombine and add to the conversations that it gathers in order to provide urbanites with “new strategies for thinking” (428) about their constantly changing cities.
Epilogue

When Robert Moses instructed the Random House editor who sent him a complimentary copy of *Death and Life* to “[s]ell this junk to someone else,” he could not have understood how thoroughly his wish would be granted.¹ Jacobs’s “junk” has, as Herbert Gans predicted it would, become the stuff with which our culture has constructed a new “urban myth.”² Although her account of the city’s social landscape has not entirely supplanted Olmsted’s myth of the city as a place that frustrates the sympathetic process, Jacobs’s urban vision has acquired a significant degree of explanatory power in our culture. Through *Death and Life*, the habits of thinking, seeing and writing about the “street contact” as a site of sympathetic exchange have gained a strong foothold in our popular imagination. Jacobs’s compilation of the traditions of urban sympathy has proven to be a particularly persuasive one. More than simply gather the various strands of this tradition under a single roof, though, Jacobs has provided models of how urban sympathy might be put to work in both the material and textual city. Using the image of the city that she had fused together in *Death and Life*, Jacobs attempted to both reshape the city’s built environment and make sense of its literary manifestations.

*Death and Life* may have become one of our culture’s most enduring urban myths, in part, because it resonated with the shifting discourses of New York’s particular urban renewal programs and, more generally, with the transformation of national housing policies during the mid-twentieth century. Driven in part by settlement workers, city journalists and a host of community organizations, New York’s shift away from cataclysmic urban renewal toward neighborhood conservation cleared a space in which
Jacobs’s eclectic urbanism acquired greater political and cultural legitimacy. *Death and Life* provided a model not only for describing city life, but also for shaping the city’s built environment. Although Jacobs has been caricatured in popular history as an archenemy of New York’s city officials—particularly Robert Moses—her urbanism, with its splintered genealogy, resonated with the city’s new “neighborhood conservation” approach to redevelopment. Jacobs had, in fact, praised the City Planning Commission’s West Side Urban Renewal study as the “first small portent” of an alternative to the “ruthless, raw-material approach to New York” that had been destroying the city’s “economic and social relationships just as swiftly and efficiently as rebuilding money can destroy them.”

When, immediately after the publication of *Death and Life*, the city’s Housing and Redevelopment Board recommended a traditional raze-and-reconstruct urban renewal project for Jacobs’s West Village neighborhood, she and other neighbors called the city’s new conservation rhetoric a bluff and earned the right to design a housing project that would transcribe Jacobs’s urban vision from the page onto the cityscape. With the assistance of the Perkins & Will architectural firm— with whom she had worked to create a design for the De Witt Clinton Homes—Jacobs and the West Village Committee developed the “West Village Plan for Housing” (1963) as an alternative to the city’s Title I redevelopment proposal. The city’s plan would have displaced many then living in the community, leveled excellent structures and wiped out local businesses. The West Village Plan intended to materialize Jacobs’s ideas about urbanism by adhering to several of her planning principles: integrating “new and older structures;” providing “apartments of varied size so that as family size changes over the years, residents need
not leave the neighborhood”; insuring “against ‘project’ monotony through variation in
site, outdoor spaces and building types”; providing a “variation in facades through
differing orientation of apartments”; and incorporating a “mixed income program.”
Ultimately, the realization of the West Village Plan was severely hampered by heavy red
tape, financial woes, and Jacobs’s migration to Toronto in 1968. Despite these
constraints, though, when the West Village Houses were finally completed in 1974, one
reporter cited them as “proof that old-style neighborhood-destroying urban renewal isn’t
the answer to center city decay.”

Though much less celebrated in urban folklore than her efforts to keep the
bulldozer out of the West Village, Jacobs continued to pursue the materialization of her
ideas about urbanism in East Harlem. Just as she was putting the finishing touches on
Death and Life, she requested a meeting with the Rockefeller Foundation’s Chadbourne
Gilpatric to pique the organization’s interest in funding a rehabilitation project in East
Harlem. Rather than seek design control of a yet-to-be-built project—as she had with the
De Witt Clinton Houses and the West Village Houses—Jacobs proposed “altering the use
of the three projects now under construction” from standard public housing into
cooperatives. By converting several contiguous housing projects into cooperative
buildings, Jacobs hoped to “create a running backbone north and south, which would
constitute a significant upgrading.” The cooperatives would, she hoped, bring residential
stability and economic diversity—if not physical variety—to an area that had been
homogenized during the urban renewal process. “What we are groping for,” she
informed Gilpatric, “is a realistic and sensible alternative to the present depressing
pattern.”
Jacobs had been brainstorming the cooperative alternative for several months with William Kirk and Albert Mayer, an architect who had been actively involved in the fight to save Washington Square Park. Together they had discussed several “important elements that should be considered” in their proposed cooperative program, all of which would ideally bolster the public relationships necessary to support an urban community. The cooperative community would need a “very skilled Director” and a “strong secretarial staff” housed in a “centrally located office” in order to provide accessible managerial “consultation” and “communication,” and to act informally as the kind of public figures that Jacobs describes in *Death and Life*. Jacobs, Kirk and Mayer had also discussed the “[p]rovision for a program for neighborhood communication possibly including establishment of a neighborhood newspaper—East Harlem being one of the few Manhattan communities without such a necessary and vital resource.”

Jacobs tried to persuade Gilpatric that if these and other changes could be realized in East Harlem, then “it ought to have a good deal larger meaning than for just East Harlem.” Although these East Harlem cooperatives would have given very different forms to Jacobs’s social ideals than the West Village Houses, she was confident that East Harlem would become just as effective in proselytizing her ideas about urbanism as her own neighborhood.

While many have followed Jacobs’s lead into the material city, fewer have used her ideas about urban life to analyze literary representations of it. At the end of her career, Jacobs enjoyed a brief but relatively prolific stint as a literary critic. Forty years after the publication of *Death and Life*, she began writing introductions to newly released editions of classic literary texts. From 2001 to 2003, she reintroduced readers to the Modern Library editions of Charles Dickens’s *Hard Times* (2001), Upton Sinclair’s *The
Jungle (2002), and Mark Twain’s The Innocents Abroad or, The New Pilgrims’ Progress (2003). In order to meet their generic obligations, Jacobs’s introductions highlight a number of different themes and concerns in each text. However, they do give Jacobs an opportunity to put the tradition of urban sympathy to analytical work—particularly her introductions to Hard Times and The Jungle. Though her analyses tend to deal somewhat crudely with each text—again, a function of the genre in which she was writing—they invite us to read in greater detail these and other novels through the lens of urban sympathy that she had crafted in Death and Life. Just as William Kirk and other settlement workers taught Jacobs how to see cities, so might Jacobs teach us something about how to read urban literature.

If Jacobs finds in Hard Times many themes and trends that “vex us still,” those about which she expresses most concern deal primarily with the novel’s specific urban setting. Predictably, Jacobs spends a significant amount of time highlighting Dickens’s well-known description of what she, summoning the most pejorative term in her vocabulary, calls “Coketown’s monotony.” According to the narrator,

You saw nothing in Coketown but what was severely workful. [. . .] The jail might have been the infirmary, the infirmary might have been the jail, the town-hall might have been either, or both, or anything else, for anything that appeared to the contrary in the graces of their construction.

Fact, fact, fact, everywhere in the material aspect of the town; fact, fact, fact, everywhere in the immaterial.

With its “several large streets all very like one another, and many small streets still more like one another, inhabited by people equally like one another, who all went in and out at
the same hours, with the same sound upon the same pavements, to do the same work,”

Coketown is *Death and Life*’s worst urban nightmare—the type of place that had born the
brunt of Jacobs’s pithy put-downs. Using *Death and Life* as a fairly blunt interpretive
instrument, Jacobs points out that the character most comfortable in Coketown, Thomas
Gradgrind, “had already made himself mentally and morally at home in a future where
departments of planning would devote themselves to deliberately making the built
environments of cities, towns, and suburbs monotonous in the name of virtue.”

Gradgrind’s single-minded embrace of the “eminently practical,” Jacobs suggests,
anticipates the “pioneers and purists of modern architecture” that she had skewered in the
introduction to *Death and Life*. Gradgrind, Jacobs speculates, “would have loved Le
Corbusier’s much later definition of a house as a machine for living.”

Coketown’s physically monotonous landscape closely informs the paths that the
novel’s different plots pursue. By setting its characters in motion in a city whose built
environment cannot sustain what Jacobs had called an “intricate, living network of
relationships,” *Hard Times* exposes them to a variety of social misfortunes. As Jacobs
notes, “[p]rivate life in *Hard Times* fares as badly as public life,” and no one is more
affected by Coketown’s weak social infrastructure than Stephen Blackpool. The center
of the novel’s most compelling and convoluted plotline, Blackpool spends his life
working at the heart of Coketown’s dark, industrial monotony as a factory hand. When
he refuses to join the United Aggregate Tribunal in a show of proletarian solidarity with
the rest of his coworkers, the local labor agitator, Slackbridge, punishes Blackpool with
what Jacobs describes as a “secular excommunication” that completely deprives him of
“cooperation and other human contact.” Slackbridge’s curse, Jacobs implies, could only
have been consummated in a place without any public life. Feigning an interest in assisting Blackpool during his social exile, Tom Gradgrind Jr. convinces the helpless factory hand to wait near a bank for further communication from him. Lingering in the deserted streets outside the bank as instructed, Blackpool “began to have an uncomfortable sensation upon him of being for the time a disreputable character.” In a city where “[s]ome purpose or other is so natural to every one, that a mere loiterer always looks and feels remarkable,” Blackpool becomes the sole suspect when a bank robbery—committed, of course, by Tom Gradgrind—is discovered the following day.

The novel’s most complex plot hinges not only upon Coketown’s rigid class structure, but also upon its nonexistent “social structure of sidewalk life,” to borrow Jacobs’s phrase. In a Jacobsean reading of *Hard Times*, the surface crime of the bank robbery points not only to the deeper crime of structural inequalities that uphold Coketown’s rigid class structure, but also shores up the deeper crime of Coketown’s built environment. Blackpool’s identity as an honest laborer could only be confused with that of a loitering bank robber in a place such as Coketown, where, to use another of Jacobs’s phrases, there is no “feeling for the public identity of people.” A city where all the pedestrians “went in and out at the same hours, with the same sound upon the same pavements, to do the same work” failed to generate the social capital needed to purchase the networks of intricate, mutual support for its inhabitants. Dickens could not have transplanted the plots of *Hard Times* onto the London streetscapes that he describes in his other novels; London’s teeming sidewalks and multiple street contacts would have frustrated *Hard Times*’ narrative drive. Jacobs’s reading of *Hard Times* is not an anti-
urban one, then, but instead draws attention to the social consequences of living in a city that embodies the wrong kind of urbanism.

If Coketown lacks the spaces in which urban sympathy can be enacted, Jacobs highlights Chicago’s Back-of-the-Yards neighborhood as possessing the ideal form of urbanism in her introduction to Sinclair’s *The Jungle*. While it once suffered similar physical and social deficiencies as Coketown—Sinclair describes the neighborhood as a place that “seemingly had been overlooked by the great sore of a city as it spread itself over the surface of the prairie”—Jacobs cites the post-*Jungle* development of the Back-of-the-Yards neighborhood (referred to as Packingtown in the novel) as textbook evidence of a neighborhood that had unslummed itself. If Sinclair does not permit Jurgis, the novel’s protagonist, and his fellow Socialists to see the realization of their rallying cry—that “CHICAGO WILL BE OURS!”—Jacobs locates the fulfillment of their promised revolution in a “neighborhood council” elected and staffed by Jurgis’s historical counterparts. Because the council both relied upon and cultivated a healthy public life, the neighborhood survived the gradual departure of the meatpacking firms for cheaper land and labor elsewhere. Responding to the people’s needs, in settlement-house fashion, Jacobs informs readers that the council eventually replaced the “emptied stockyards” with an “an industrial park, which by 2001 harbored a hundred and fifteen manufacturing, distributing, and business-service enterprises, employing eighteen thousand workers, nearly all of whom were living in the district.” Once populated by a diverse mix of “Germans, Bohemians, Poles, Lithuanians, and Slovaks,” the neighborhood was now home to “Latin Americans from Mexico, the Caribbean, and South America, along with African-Americans,” living alongside a small pocket of the
“descendants of the Irish of Sinclair’s time.” The neighborhood’s social, economic and ethnic diversity, Jacobs suggests, had supplied the neighborhood with the kind of intricate mutual support that it needed to thrive.  

Seeing Jacobs in action as a literary critic both validates this study’s attempt to begin mapping a new urban literary tradition and invites us to extend its boundaries beyond those that I have sketched out here. An exploration of the tradition of urban sympathy need not be limited to the particular texts I have analyzed, the narrative conventions that they adopt, the aesthetic mediums they assume, nor the particular cities that they describe. Other texts using a different set of literary devices would certainly illuminate alternative dimensions of the sympathetic processes in which urbanites engage. A study that focuses primarily on visual representations of the city, such as film, might find this medium particularly well equipped to capture other modes of sympathetic exchange. And, certainly, an exploration of texts that represent cities with very different spatial and social orders—such as Los Angeles, Tokyo, or Bombay—will discover alternative modes of urban relations operating upon their own affective logic.

Jacobs’s tentative steps to create a literary canon organized around the concept of urban sympathy also reinforce the social value of this study. If, as Jacobs proposes in Death and Life, the types of cities we build and rebuild ultimately depend upon our social desires, then the project of gathering and examining a body of texts that explore the humane dimensions of the city’s public spaces can powerfully shape those desires. Excavating a few moments in the long and varied history of urban sympathy not only restores to our awareness models for how we might inhabit our own cities in more
compassionate ways, but also encourages us to intervene in the material construction of those cities in order to protect the social orders that they shelter.
Notes

Introduction

2 Ibid., 179, 180.
5 Olmsted, “Public Parks,” 180.
6 Smith, Moral Sentiments, 27, 14.
7 Olmsted, “Public Parks,” 187.
8 Ibid., 189.
9 Ibid., 188.
10 Ibid., 186.
14 William M. Morgan, Questionable Charity: Gender, Humanitarianism, and Complicity in U.S. Literary Realism (Dartmouth: University of New England Press, 2004), 13, 12.
15 Morgan suggests that the “history of realist ethics might be entitled ‘From Sympathy to Complicity’” (Morgan, Questionable Charity, 12). For an account of altruism’s conceptual eclipse of sympathy, see Frank Christianson, Philanthropy in British and American Fiction: Dickens, Hawthorne, Eliot and Howells (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007).
16 Weinstein, Family, 3, 6.
Chapter One


3 For a discussion of the similarities and differences between frontier and resort camp meetings see Troy Messenger, Holy Leisure: Recreation and Religion in God’s Square Mile (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 11-12, 29-34.


8 Messenger, Holy Leisure, 11, 4.


11 Charles H. Parkhurst, Our Fight with Tammany (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1895), 74, 277-78.
17 Lawrence Buell, “Religion on the American Mind,” *American Literary History* 19 (2007): 35. Buell’s is one of four review essays covering recent religiocentric scholarship that lead the Spring 2007 issue of *American Literary History*—evidence that, as Buell suggests, “religion is showing some signs of making a comeback in literary studies” (ibid.). A special issue of *American Quarterly*, “Religion and Politics in Contemporary America” (Fall 2007) speaks to a similar trend in the field of American Studies.
Ibid., 135.


26 See William Dean Howells, The Rise of Silas Lapham (1885; repr., New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1982). Discussing the merits of “Tears, Idle Tears”—a fictitious sentimental novel—during the pivotal dinner scene in The Rise of Silas Lapham, Mr. Sewell complains to his fellow dinners that “novelists might be the greatest possible help to us if they painted life as it is, and human feelings in their true proportion and relation, but for the most part they have been and are altogether noxious” (175). Throughout the novel, Sewell articulates Howells’s own arguments in favor of literary realism. Also, see Ann Douglas, The Feminization of American Culture (1977; repr., New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1998), 10-11.


28 Ibid., 32.


30 During the general conference of 1876 in Baltimore, for instance, the Methodist Episcopal Church overturned its 1872 decision to officially adopt an anti-caste position in favor of divisionism, which essentially called for the separation of the Church into black and white congregations once again. See Reginald F. Hildebrand, The Times Were Strange and Stirring: Methodist Preachers and the Crisis of Emancipation (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995), 114-16.


32 The class meeting was, according to Wigger, the “basic building block of American Methodism” (Wigger, Taking Heaven, 81). Consisting of a small group of members, class meetings were lead by class leaders, who were “usually lay men and women chosen or approved by the itinerant preacher in charge of the circuit or city station” rather than a single preacher (ibid., 83). Typical class meetings began with a hymn and prayer, after which the class leader “would offer a confession of his or her own spiritual condition.” Following the class leader’s confession, the rest of the class members were invited to “reveal their troubles and triumphs” and pose questions for the group to address. Wigger points out that “[r]ather than stage another preaching occasion, the intent of the class meeting was to foster an atmosphere of communal fellowship” (ibid., 84).


34 Gavin Jones, Strange Talk: The Politics of Dialect Literature in Gilded Age America (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 12.


38 Ibid., 88.
40 Ibid., 55, 56.
41 See Katrina Irving, *Immigrant Mothers: Narratives of Race and Maternity, 1890-1925* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000). By describing Maggie and her mother as unwilling to “conform to the sentimental ideal of womanhood”—an unwillingness that Katrina Irving claims “racializes and demonizes” both women—Irving reads Crane as someone who rigidly conformed to sentimentalism’s prescriptions about gender roles in order to alienate the reader from these female characters (ibid., 46). While Irving’s analysis of the way that nativist and sentimental discourses function in *Maggie* is very insightful, her account of the novella overlooks the ways by which Crane generates sympathy for Maggie.
46 Stephen Crane, “An Experiment in Misery,” in *The New York City Sketches of Stephen Crane and Related Pieces*, eds. R. W. Stallman and E. R. Hagemann (1894; repr., New York: New York University Press, 1966), 33, 34; hereafter cited in parentheses in the text. The sketch was most likely based on Crane’s four-day exploration of the Bowery in early March, 1894. Dressed as tramps, Crane set out with his friend, William W. Carroll, to spend a few days in the Bowery. Carroll recalls their experience: “We went as hoboes with about thirty cents each, endured much misery for four days and three nights [. . .] . His stories of these days and nights were strings of words that made one see flaring gas jets and dark interiors, where one could smell crude disinfectants mingled with exhalations from many human bodies” (William W. Carroll, quoted in *The Crane Log: A Documentary Life of Stephen Crane, 1871-1900*, eds. Paul Sorrentino and Stanley Wertheim [New York: G.K. Hall & Co., 1994], 97).
47 Matthew 25:35. This particular passage served as the Social Gospel’s scriptural foundation. See Jackson, “‘What Would Jesus Do,’” 648-49.
49 Ibid., 502.
The use of the word “preaching” here glosses Crane’s well-known letter to John Northern Hilliard about “[p]reaching” being “fatal to art in literature.” Crane claimed that he preferred instead to “give the readers a slice out of life; and if there is any moral or lesson in it, I do not try to point it out. I let the reader find it for himself.” Stephen Crane to John Northern Hilliard, [1897?], in Correspondence, 322, 323.

54 Benjamin O. Flower, “Jesus or Caesar,” Arena 9 (March 1894): 528.


64 Flower, “Jesus or Caesar,” 522, 533.


66 Flower, “Jesus or Caesar,” 528, 522.

67 Morgan, Questionable Charity, 98.


Chapter Two


3 Ibid., 4, 5, 7, 9.

Writing in 1884, for instance, Tourgée observed that the “black, as a man, is further away from the white than he was at the close of the war. The separateness of feeling, sentiment, and interest is greater than it was upon the day when emancipation took effect” (Albion W. Tourgée, An Appeal to Caesar [New York: Fords, Howard, & Hulbert, 1884], 203). For extended studies of writers who attempted to narrate an racially integrated society, see John Moran Gonzalez, “In the Wake of Reconstruction: National Allegory and Narrative Form, 1877-1907” (PhD diss., Stanford University, 1998); and Alice Rutkowski, “Imagined Equality: Fictional Solutions to the Problem of Race in Early Reconstruction” (PhD diss., University of Virginia, 2004).


Du Bois, Souls, 102.


In the Fourth Annual Report of the College Settlement Association, Helena Dudley stressed the importance of being “a neighbor among neighbors; to hear day by day the stolid, terrible gossip of the street; to take, as one insensibly comes to take, the point of view on matters moral and physical of people sleeping seven in a room. It is no longer the ‘problem of the masses’ that confronts one, but the suffering of the individual man or woman of like passions with ourselves” (Helena Dudley, quoted in Michael B. Katz and Thomas J. Sugrue, introduction to W.E.B. Du Bois, Race, and the City: The Philadelphia Negro and Its Legacy, eds. Michael B. Katz and Thomas J. Sugrue [Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998], 13).


Influence, Black Spirit, and The Quest of the Silver Fleece,” African American Review 33 (1999): 389-400. Rampersad suggests that Quest “vividly illustrates the conflict between realism and romance common in so much serious writing at the turn of the century” (127). Lee points out the ways in which Du Bois “plays with” the narrative conventions of both realism and romance in order to “oppose conventional views of race” (390).

19 Silber, Romance of Reunion, 63.
23 Du Bois, Souls, 152.
25 Sánchez-Eppler, Touching Liberty, 30, 31.
32 Keith Byerman, noting the novel’s affinities with a progressivist, muckraking tradition, observes that the narrative “assumes that all those engaged in politics are interested in nothing other than money and power. Every figure involved in such activity in the novel is corrupt and self-serving” (Keith Byerman, Seizing the Word: History, Art, and Self in the Work of W. E. B. Du Bois [Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1994], 1180).
34 Ibid., 3, 4, 41, 29.
36 Ibid., 76.
Autobiographical Portraits,” in *Critical Essays on W. E. B. Du Bois*, ed. William L. Andrews (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1985), 230-52. Lemons points to an “African mythological framework” as the “source and informing base” of Zora’s “development as a black woman and feminist leader” (191). McKay locates Zora’s ancestors in fictional heroines such as Frances Watkins Harper’s Iola Leroy and suggests that “Zora’s awakening, like Iola’s, leads to positive action in work for the social, political, and economic advancement of black people” (239).


40 W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Autobiography of W. E. B. Du Bois: A Soliloquy on Viewing My Life from the Last Decade of Its First Century* (New York: International Publishers, 1968), 195. In the September 1896 issue of the *College Settlement News*, published by the Philadelphia College Settlement, is the following announcement of Du Bois’s arrival: “Among the residents of the Coffee House building are Dr. W. E. B. DuBois and wife. Doctor DuBois is a Harvard Ph.D., and has accepted a fellowship at the University of Pennsylvania. His work will be an investigation of the status of the colored race in Philadelphia. At present he is studying the conditions in the Seventh ward, which certainly affords a varied field. Doctor DuBois is himself a colored man, and, although young, has already proved his fitness for the work in economics and sociology to which he proposes to devote himself” (“Neighborhood Notes,” *College Settlement News*, September 1896, 5).


42 C. C. Harrison, quoted in Lindsay, introduction to *Philadelphia Negro*, ix. Du Bois would later speculate that Wharton and Harrison had ulterior motives in commissioning the study; see Du Bois, *Autobiography*, 194-95.

43 Mary Jo Deegan, “W. E. B. Du Bois and the Women of Hull-House, 1895-1899,” *American Sociologist* 19 (1988): 302. Deegan claims that several factors contributed to Du Bois’s turn away from “mainstream academic sociology” in the mid-1890s toward an “alternate professional infrastructure” (301) housed in the settlement movement: “discrimination by white men against his full acceptance; his vision of a more community-based, applied and scholarly profession; his passionate commitment to eliminating social injustice; and his recruitment to a viable network of applied, largely white, female sociologists” (302).

44 Settlement workers were, of course, not the only reformers in the nineteenth century to use such schedules. As Herbert Aptheker points out, groups such as the Evangelical Alliance “conducted house-to-house surveys among the working class” (Herbert Aptheker, introduction to *The Philadelphia Negro*, by W. E. B. Du Bois [Millwood, NY: Kraus-Thomson Organization Limited, 1973] 15). Aptheker also notes that the data for Lucy Maynard Salmon’s *Domestic Service* “were obtained as the result of questionnaires mailed in 1889 and 1890” (ibid., 17). Several scholars also suggest that Du Bois’s

45 W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Philadelphia Negro: A Social Study* (1899, repr., Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996), 1, 63; hereafter cited in parentheses in the text. Du Bois recounts that the “colored people of Philadelphia received me with no open arms. They had a natural dislike to being studied like a strange species. I met again and in different guise those curious cross-currents and inner social whirlings. They set me to groping. I concluded that I did not know so much as I might about my own people.” In the process of interviewing and living among thousands of black urbanites, Du Bois achieves settlement nirvana, learning “far more from Philadelphia Negroes than I had taught them concerning the Negro Problem” (Du Bois, *Autobiography* 198).

46 The September 1896 issue of *College Settlement News* announced that one of the settlement’s clubs, the Dudley Pioneer Corps, “will meet hereafter on Wednesday evening, and will be in charge of Dr. DuBois, whose experience as a teacher will enable him to be specially helpful to the boys” (“The Dudley Pioneer Corps,” *College Settlement News*, September 1896, 3). For other brief descriptions of Du Bois’s activities while living at the Philadelphia College Settlement, see Rosina McAvoy Ryan, “‘A graduate school in life’: The College Settlement of Philadelphia and its Role in Providing Post-Baccalaureate Education for Women,” (PhD diss., Temple University, 2006), 261-62; and Lindsay, introduction to *Philadelphia Negro*, vii.


53 In a footnote to Chapter Sixteen, Du Bois reports that one of the “questions on the schedule was: ‘Have you had any difficulty in getting work?’ another: ‘Have you had any difficulty in renting houses?’” (Du Bois, *Philadelphia Negro*, 326). Though neither of these questions appears on the schedules that appear in “Appendix A,” they represent some of the small but significant differences between Du Bois’s schedules and those used
by other settlement workers. Question thirty-nine on the family schedule attached to *Hull-House Maps and Papers*, for instance, reads: “Weeks employed at any other profession, trade, or occupation during the year?” The follow-up question—“Name of such other profession, trade, or occupation?”—assumes that those being questioned had little difficulty finding employment and leaves little room for them to talk about the difficulties they might have encountered in their search for employment.


57 Ibid., 15, 9. The PAS’s committee gathered statistics in five principal areas, four of which are intended to demonstrate the fiscal health of the Philadelphia Negro: “To the Number of the Colored Population”; “Real Estate and Personal Property”; “Taxes”; “House Rents, &c.”; and “Of the Employment of the Colored Population and Views Connected with their Labor and Support.”

58 Ibid., 12.


65 Ovington to Du Bois, 7 October 1904, 3.
Ovington persuaded philanthropist Henry Phipps to build the model tenement in which she had hoped to locate her settlement work. After many delays, Ovington moved into the Tuskegee Apartments at 233 West Sixty-third Street in the San Juan Hill neighborhood in February 1908. Despite Henry Phipps’s insistence that there be no settlement work carried out in the model tenement, Ovington continued to live there for eight months and did what little settlement work she could. According to Carolyn Wedin, Ovington gave “her rooms over to children and mothers in the daytime, Negro and white men and women eager to discuss ‘the race problem’ at night” (Wedin, Inheritors, 93). Shortly after leaving the model tenement, Ovington helped found Brooklyn’s Lincoln Settlement, where Du Bois would speak in 1910, with Dr. Velma Morton Jones.

Du Bois was deeply involved in writing Quest at the time that he was corresponding with Ovington; in the Fall of 1905 he submitted the first complete draft of his novel to his editor, F. G. Browne, at A. C. McClurg & Co

Founded in 1892 by Mabel Wilhelmina Dillingham from Boston and Charlotte R. Thorn from New Haven, the Calhoun Colored School and Social Settlement, as Elisabeth Lasch-Quinn describes it, “entailed a unique combination of serious elementary and secondary education, a version of industrial training, and social settlement work” (Lasch-Quinn, Black Neighbors, 84). In addition to serving as a school and a community center, the Calhoun School initiated a radical cooperative land buying plan that enabled local freedpeople to buy “new homes built on plots of land ranging from ten to sixty acres, thus freeing them from the share-cropping system” (Farland, “W. E. B. Du Bois,” 1025).

Maria Farland points to Du Bois’s “Negro Labor in Lowndes County”—a study the predominantly black Alabama County that he completed for the U.S. Census Bureau a few years before the publication of Quest—as the sociological project that most closely informs his first novel. In Lowndes County, Du Bois spearheaded a “house-to-house canvassing of more than twenty-five thousand homes underrepresented in the 1900 census, collecting data on thirty-five thousand printed schedules concerning Negro schools, homes, landownership, and mortality” (Farland, “W. E. B. Du Bois,” 1017). Given the similar nature of the work that Du Bois performed in both Philadelphia and Alabama, it is unclear why Farland disregards the possibility that The Philadelphia Negro also served as a useful model for understanding Zora’s settlement work.

**Chapter Three**

Mitchell reports that oyster bedding “was most prosperous between 1860 and 1890” (38), but that “[a]fter 1900, as more and more of the harbor became polluted, people began to grow suspicious of harbor oysters, and the bedding business declined” (39). When, in 1916, “a number of cases of typhoid fever were traced beyond all doubt to the eating of oysters” (39) that had been locally harvested and it was discovered that “sewage from a huge New Jersey trunk sewer [. . .] was being swept through the Narrows and over the beds by the tides” (39), the Department of Health “condemned the beds and banned the business” (40).


Mary Corey and Louis Menand have recently articulated the nature of the *New Yorker*’s sophistication, focusing primarily upon its class dimensions. Corey argues that the magazine’s sophistication derived from its “uncommon capacity to present overlapping and contradictory cultural ideas without apology. In its pages elitism coexisted with egalitarianism, conspicuous consumption commingled with anticommunism, materialism with idealism, and sexism with gender equality” (Mary Corey, *The World through a Monocle: The New Yorker at Midcentury* [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000], 17). Similarly, Menand suggests that the magazine’s sophisticated style rested upon its ability to appease a targeted market “made possible [. . .] by the spectacularly successful commercialization of American life in the twentieth century,” but whose tastes and values “were all anticommmercial” (Louis Menand, *American Studies* [New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2002], 143).


Constance Moremus to *New Yorker*, 5 May 1951, New Yorker Records, Box 952, Letters to the Editor (Praise), 1950-1959, New York Public Library Special Collections.


Clifton Fadiman, preface to *Profiles from The New Yorker*, ed. Clifton Fadiman (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1938), vi. Most critics measure the development of the Profile by its increasing length—a relatively poor index of its stylistic and formal developments. Theodore Peterson maps the evolution of Profiles from “offhand impressions of the subject which an author could report and write in a few days” to “increasingly long and complex” pieces to which a “reporter sometimes devoted five months” (Theodore Peterson, *Magazines in the Twentieth Century*, 2nd ed. [Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1964], 251). Thomas Kunkel follows suit, noting that the first Profiles “truly were what the name implies—subjects sketched quickly, in outline” (Kunkel, *Genius*, 106). Ben Yagoda similarly observes that Profiles were originally written as somewhat brief pieces, consisting primarily of “anecdote and attitude,” and taking a “sidelong rather than a direct view” of the subject (Yagoda, *About Town*, 133).


These psychoanalytically inclined profilers usually offered an anecdote or two and then extrapolated from them conclusions about their subject’s true identity. Robert Hale, in an early Profile, confidently informs his readers that the two scenes that he would share...
from his subject’s life explained “a great deal about Margaret Sanger, not merely in profile, but all around and through and through” (Robert Hale, “Profiles: The Child Who Was Mother to a Woman” *New Yorker*, 11 April 1925, 11). Another profiler, after sharing a brief story about a meeting that never happened between Alfred Stieglitz and Bernard Shaw (the former cancelled the appointment upon losing his voice), comments that this “anecdote reveals much of Alfred Stieglitz, and of his ruthless self-direction” (Search-Light, “Profiles: 291,” *New Yorker*, 18 April 1925, 9).

29 Interestingly, Busch had been one of the *New Yorker*’s earliest critics. Working for *Time* when the first issue of the *New Yorker* was published, Busch accused the editors of the startup magazine of being “members of a literary clique” and urged them to “learn that there is no provincialism so blatant as that of the metropolitan who lacks urbanity” (Niven Busch, Jr., quoted in Kunkel, *Genius*, 101).


32 These writers saw themselves building upon a tradition of urban journalism practiced by not only by previous *New Yorker* writers, but also by journalists like Stephen Crane. In his 1961 review of several pieces of Crane criticism, Liebling contends that while Crane had been “discovered” and “forgotten” a number of times by “professionals,” he was “posthumously teaching a number of young men who found him on the shelves of public libraries to write”—Liebling being one of them. Referring to Crane at one point as “The reporter,” Liebling insinuates himself into Crane’s literary lineage; he claims that when he “was a beginning reporter, the city had plenty of newspapermen who had worked with Crane and of senior detectives who hated his memory” (A. J. Liebling, “Books: The Dollars Damned Him,” *New Yorker*, 5 Aug. 1961, 60, 66, 70). More recently, Kunkel has reinscribed the line of authority traced by Liebling; Kunkel claims that *New Yorker* reporters “didn’t exactly invent the form,” but had a “godfather in New York’s own Stephen Crane” (Kunkel, *Genius*, 300).


35 Ibid., 28.

36 Ibid., 22, 26.

37 Ibid., 23.


40 Ibid., 22, 29.


Although the Principles of Animal Ecology went through several printings, Gregg Mitman notes that it quickly became outdated. While it was published in a “period when the organismic, cooperationist ideal had been a mainstay of ecological discourse,” by the end of the 1950s “that discourse had shifted considerably away from cooperation to competition as a fundamental organizing principle and from an organicist to a cybernetics language of energy and information flow.” Ecosystem ecology displaced community ecology as the science’s dominant front and Eugene Odum’s Fundamentals of Ecology (1953) became the “manual of ecosystem ecology” (Mitman, State of Nature, 137).


Rachel Carson, quoted in Brooks, House of Life, 111. Parr authored ecological manuscripts that are as obscure and inaccessible as they sound: A Geographic-Ecological Analysis of the Seasonal Changes in Temperature Conditions in Shallow Water Along the Atlantic Coast of the United States (1933), “Deepsea Berycomorphi and Percomorphi from the Waters around the Bahama and Bermuda Islands” (1933), and “On the Functions and Morphology of the Postclavicular Apparatus in Spheroides and Chilomycterus” (1927).


Donna Haraway, “Teddy Bear Patriarchy: Taxidermy in the Garden of Eden, New York City, 1908-1936,” Social Text 11 (Winter 1984): 24, 23. An early review in Time magazine spells out the domestic narrative animating these habitat groups. Describing several of the dioramas as if they were one continuous scene, the reviewer observes: “In the damp uplands of the Belgian Congo a glowing male gorilla beats his breast, while the female leans placidly against a tree, watching her baby eat wild celery. At a waterhole a mother giraffe with widespread forelegs is bending down to drink. Beside her are the male, keeping watch, and the calf. Nearby a young Grévy’s zebra is suckling its mother” (“Africa Transplanted,” Time, 1 June 1936).

Parr, “Year’s Work,” 17, 14. Imagining what tangible forms this program might take from the vantage point of the early 1940s—a moment he described as a “critical stage in
the development of [natural history museums’] functions and their services to society” (ibid., 14)—Parr envisioned a hall that would survey “briefly the structure, contents, and active forces of a typical landscape from the natural environment of our own community” (ibid., 17).


64 Talk of the Town, “Ecological Exhibit,” New Yorker, 9 June 1951, 22.

65 The AMNH’s dramatic increase in attendance during the 1950s—when it surged to between 1.6 and 2.1 annual visits—attests to the institution’s cultural renaissance implicit in the New Yorker’s coverage of Warburg Hall. While it is impossible to know exactly how many of those visitors passed through Warburg Hall, according to several accounts it was one of the AMNH’s principal attractions during the fifties. In his January 1952 report for the Meeting of the Board of Trustees, Clarence L. Hay, secretary of the AMNH, informed the Board that the “opening of the Warburg Memorial Hall is largely responsible for the impressive attendance figure of over 1,018,000 people for the first half of the fiscal year” (Clarence L. Hay, “Report of the Secretary: Meeting of the Board of Trustees,” 30 April 1951, American Museum of Natural History, Central Archives, 1158.1).


67 In an internal memo written around July 1942, in the beginning stages of planning Warburg Hall, it was most likely Parr who explained to AMNH employees: “In planning a hall the first question should be—not what objects do we want to place in the hall—but what STORY DO WE WANT THE HALL TO TELL. The objects should be used to drive home the salient points of the story and should (exceptions of course) no longer, except for study purposes, be regarded as sufficient unto themselves” (Albert E. Parr, quoted in Ann Reynolds, “Visual Stories,” in Visual Display: Culture Beyond Appearances, eds. Lynne Cooke and Peter Wollen [Seattle: Bay Press, 1995], 93).


69 In a survey conducted by William Schwarting in June 1951, visitors to Warburg Hall listed “Life in the Soil” as a favorite exhibit more frequently than any other exhibit (ibid., 2). In my own visits to Warburg Hall, I observed that “Life in the Soil” is one of the few exhibits that still has the ability to capture visitors’ interest.

70 Ada Grant Aroh to Albert E. Parr, 4 May 1952, American Museum of Natural History, Central Archives, 1222.


72 Parr, Mostly About Museums, 102, 107.


Ibid., 185, 187.


Stern et al., *New York 1960*, 726. As Hillary Ballon notes, the city’s embrace of conservation and rehabilitation was made possible, in part, by an amendment to the 1949 Housing Act. The original law “had funded only advanced planning and clearance,” but a 1954 amendment “authorized funding for rehabilitation and conservation to broaden the range of renewal strategies” (Hillary Ballon, “Robert Moses and Urban Renewal: The Title I Program,” in *Robert Moses and the Modern City: The Transformation of New York*, eds. Hilary Ballon and Kenneth T. Jackson [New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2007], 112).


Ibid., 12.

Ibid., 13.

Ibid., 13, 5.

Ibid., 15, 16.


City of New York, *Final Plan*, 3, 8.

Ibid., 6, 7.

See James Trager, *West of Fifth: The Rise and Fall and Rise of Manhattan’s West Side* (New York: Atheneum, 1987). Members of the WSURA’s Black and Puerto Rican communities both praised and criticized the WSURA. Jack Wood, housing secretary for the NAACP, lauded the WSURA at a public community hearing in 1962 for encouraging the “development of a community characterized by racial and economic balance” (ibid., 105). Aramis Gomez, a local Puerto Rican activist, argued at the same hearing that the WSURA’s principal aim was to “get rid of the Negroes and Puerto Ricans and low income families from the area” (ibid., 105). The *New York Times* reported another public hearing, held a month later, in which “seventy-five speakers had voiced their opinion,
most of them in favor of the project” (“Board Hears Pleas on West Side Plan,” *New York Times* 23 June 1962). Regarding the aesthetic outcome of the WSURA, Stern et al. conclude that “by and large the new construction was ordinary and distinctly at odds with the traditional character of the neighborhood” (Stern et al., *New York 1960*, 730).


Chapter Four

1 Lewis Mumford to Jane Jacobs, 18 June 1958, Jane Jacobs Papers, MS95-29, Box 13, Folder 11, Burns Library, Boston College.

2 In a “Sky Line” column written two decades prior to his review of Jacobs, Mumford criticizes the “various public bodies in the slum-clearance program” for building public-housing projects that are “obsolete in conception. No one can possibly look at the usual run of slum-clearance projects that are now scattered all over the country and say, ‘This is the form of a better kind of urban community’” (Lewis Mumford, “The Sky Line: War and Peace,” *New Yorker*, 23 May 1942, 56). Caro’s multi-series piece on Moses appeared under the “Annals of Politics” rubric from July 22 to August 19, 1974 and was adapted from the manuscript for his Pulitzer Prize-winning biography, *The Power Broker: Robert Moses and the Fall of New York* (1974).


4 Ibid., 163, 164.


7 Ibid., 152.

8 Paul Goldberger notes that Jacobs “didn’t even have much patience with the New Urbanists, whose philosophy of returning to pedestrian-oriented cities would seem to owe a lot to Jacobs. But she found the New Urbanists hopelessly suburban, and once said to me, with a rhyming cadence worthy of Muhammad Ali, ‘They only create what they say they hate’” (Paul Goldberger, “Uncommon Sense: Remembering Jane Jacobs, the 20th Century’s Most Influential City Critic,” *American Scholar* 75.4 [2006]: 126).


11 Jane Jacobs to Chadbourne Gilpatric, 1 July 1958, Jane Jacobs Papers, MS95-29, Box 13, Folder 4, Burns Library, Boston College.

12 Ibid., 2.

13 Mumford, “Mother Jacobs’,” 152, 168.
Jacobs, *Death and Life*, 56, 138. See also Jane Jacobs, “The Missing Link in City Redevelopment,” *Architectural Forum* 104 (June 1956): 132-33. In this article, adapted from her talk at the 1956 Harvard Urban Design Conference, Jacobs explains that the “living room is not a substitute” for city sidewalks, but is an entirely “different facility” (132).

15 Robert C. Weinberg, review of Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* and *The Future of Our Cities*, *AIA Journal* (March 1962): 71. See also Edward J. Logue, “The View from the Village,” *Architectural Forum* 116 (March 1962): 89-90. Logue, the mind behind several mid-century urban renewal schemes, similarly accuses Jacobs of practicing a provincial urbanism: “Jane Jacobs’ window on the world of cities is Hudson Street” (89). Logue admits that “Greenwich Village has always had its fans,” but he sarcastically cites Jacobs as the “first one to propose that we use its street life as the model for city life everywhere. It is in the image of the Village that she would recast our slum-stricken cities” (89).


17 Jacobs to Gilpatric, 1 July 1958.


20 Jacobs, *Death and Life*, 16, 15.


See Joel Schwartz, The New York Approach: Robert Moses, Urban Liberals, and Redevelopment of the Inner City (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1993), chapters 1-2. Schwartz points out that by the 1920s, settlement workers and other Progressive reformers had provided the “social analysis of lower-class communities [that] established norms for residential decency, while their economic research showed the subsidies needed to make standard housing available to the poor” (2). In the 1930s, Simkhovitch and others organized the “Public Housing Conference, with branches in settlements throughout Manhattan and Brooklyn, to campaign for public involvement” in the process of slum clearance and low-rent housing (33).

Simkhovitch was appointed as the first vice-chairman of the New York City Housing Authority in 1934 by Mayor La Guardia and was particularly instrumental in crafting New York’s initial approach to urban redevelopment. She was also an active participant in the first national public housing conferences in Washington D.C. While attending the third conference in January 1936, she delivered a radio broadcast in which she informed her listeners that the “fight for slum clearance and low-rent housing must be tackled with renewed energy by the American community” because “slum conditions tend to breed crime.” “Every patriot,” she contends, “must work for the elimination of these evil conditions” (Mary Kingsbury Simkhovitch, “Radio Address of Mary Kingsbury Simkhovitch,” January 1936, Greenwich House Records, Box 23, Folder 1, 2, New York University Tamiment Library and Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives).


Simkhovitch, God’s Plenty, 46.

Mary Kingsbury Simkhovitch to Mayor William O’Dwyer, 4 February 1947, Mary Kingsbury Simkhovitch Papers, Box 3, Folder 49, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University.

Greenwich Village Association Housing Committee, Press Release, 5 February 1947, Mary Kingsbury Simkhovitch Papers, Box 3, Folder 49, 2, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University.

Mary Kingsbury Simkhovitch, “West Side Housing Project,” [1949?], Mary Kingsbury Simkhovitch Papers, Box 2, Folder 35, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University.

Jacobs, Death and Life, 138; hereafter cited in parentheses in the text.

In drawing such a stark contrast between the social landscapes of villages and cities, Jacobs (perhaps knowingly) oversimplifies the distinction between the two. Herbert Gans’s The Urban Villagers (1962) and Oscar Lewis’s La Vida (1966) would articulate substantial challenges to the folk/urban-society binary upon which Jacobs relies. See Ulf...

36 Jane Jacobs, “Public Life—At Sidewalk Scale,” Undated, Jane Jacobs Papers, MS95-29, Box 25, Folder 8, 2, 6, Burns Library, Boston College.


40 “Some Pertinent Facts About Settlements in General and Union Settlement in Particular,” 17 March 1945, Union Settlement Association Papers, Box 1, Folder 6, 2, Columbia University Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

41 “The American Way—and what it means to us,” Union Settlement Association Papers, Box 1, Folder 6, Columbia University Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

42 “Union Settlement: ‘70 Years of Concern for Human Needs,’” 1965, Union Settlement Association Papers, Box 9, Folder 15, 10, Columbia University Rare Book and Manuscript Library.


44 Ibid., IV-4.


46 Ibid., III-10-11

47 Ibid., V-5-8.

48 Originally founded in 1921, the EHCCP consisted of committees staffed by settlement workers and lay residents that addressed specific neighborhood problems, such as aging, day care, health, narcotics and housing. These committees met monthly to correlate their efforts, but also acted independently to advocate their causes with municipal organizations.

49 Perkins & Will Architects, “DeWitt Clinton Housing Study,” 8 January 1959, Union Settlement Association Papers, Box 35, Folder 8, 1-2, Columbia University Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

50 Jane Jacobs, Untitled Manuscript, 3 February 1959, Union Settlement Association Papers, Box 35, Folder 8, 2-4, Columbia University Rare Book and Manuscript Library. Ellen Lurie describes this untitled manuscript in another document as “Jane Jacobs’ Presentation to the Housing Authority on DeWitt Clinton.”

51 Ibid., 7-8.

52 Ibid., 8-13, 16-17.

53 William Reid, the Chairman of the NYCHA, informs Kirk that the Housing Committee’s proposals were rejected because they “violated the Multiple Dwelling Law of New York State and the Building Code and the Zoning Resolution of New York City. [. . . ] These legal and other defects went to the very heart of the proposals made by
Perkins and Will, so that the adoption of their plan was impossible (William Reid to William Kirk, 17 March 1961, Union Settlement Association Papers, Box 36, Folder 10, 1-2, Columbia University Rare Book and Manuscript Library). Kirk responds by reminding Reid that Jacobs had acknowledged the possibility that “their plan permitted modifications to achieve full compliance”—modifications that the NYCHA, apparently, refused to consider (William Kirk to William Reid, 4 April 1961, Union Settlement Association Papers, Box 36, Folder 10, 1, Columbia University Rare Book and Manuscript Library).

54 See “Chapter 20: Salvaging Projects.”

58 Robert Fulford is one of the few critics to follow Abrams lead, encouraging readers thirty years after its publication to pay more attention to the ways in which Death and Life “draws from and significantly adds to several powerful traditions in literature and journalism, quite outside its own specific subject matter” (Fulford, “Abattoir,” 7). Fulford, unfortunately, stops short of elaborating further upon his observation.
59 William Kirk to New York Post, 11 June 1962, Union Settlement Association Papers, Box 28, Folder 8, Columbia University Rare Book and Manuscript Library.
60 William Kirk to New York Times, 28 July 1960, Union Settlement Association Papers, Box 36, Folder 12, 3, 5, Columbia University Rare Book and Manuscript Library.
64 The Voice feels like an uncanny fulfillment of Simkhovitch’s wish two decades prior to its publication for a community newspaper that not only “acquaints us one with another, week by week,” but that also provides a forum in which “more serious aspects of the neighborhood could be discussed at length” (Mary Simkhovitch, Untitled Manuscript, 16 April 1936, Greenwich House Records, Box 23, Folder 6, 1, New York University Tamiment Library and Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives). Many of its early readers saw the Voice as an attempt—often a failed one—to produce a neighborhood-newspaper
version of the New Yorker. Frances Beamis, for instance, complained that the first issue of the Voice was “too obvious an attempt to be original and entertaining,” and tried to put its editors in their place by informing them that their fledgling weekly was “not a Village newspaper, nor is it a Cue or New Yorker” (Frances Beamis, “Not Wanted,” Village Voice, 2 Nov. 1955, 4). Another reader warned the Voice of “forcing a pseudo-sophistication that your writers are not clever enough to carry through” (New Reader, “Pseudo-Sophisticated Imitators?” Village Voice, 2 Nov. 1955, 4).


68 See McAluliffe, Great American Newspaper, 91-111.

74 Jane Jacobs, “Downtown is for People,” Fortune (April 1958), 133.
75 Ibid., 134.
76 Ibid., 134, 137-38.
77 Ibid., 242.
80 Jane Jacobs, foreword to The Death and Life of Great American Cities (New York: Modern Library, 1993), xvii.


Jane Jacobs, Untitled Manuscript, 20 April 1958, Jane Jacobs Papers, MS95-29, Box 25, Folder 8, 1-2, Burns Library, Boston College.


Karl Fogel to Jane Jacobs, 9 August 1997, Jane Jacobs Papers, MS02-13, Box 1, Folder 1, Burns Library, Boston College.

In his review of *Death and Life* for the *Village Voice*, I.D. Robbins becomes the first of many to criticize Jacobs for not paying “attention to the matters of class, race, and intercultural relationships and their effect on where and how people live. When it suits her purpose, she ignores historical movements and the economic facts about the real-estate market” (I.D. Robbins, review of Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, *Village Voice*, 16 Nov. 1961, 16). More recently, William Saunders has worried that by turning a blind eye to issues of race and class Jacobs’s urban vision has produced what he dubs the “comfortable passive pleasures of cappuccino urbanism” (William Saunders, “Cappuccino Urbanism, and Beyond,” *Harvard Design Magazine* 25 [2006/2007]): 3).

Jacobs would later explain that with its “mania for the total neighborhood” and the corresponding “worship of its rules and regulations and standardizations,” traditional forms of urban redevelopment instigate the “economic colonialism to which the people of the slums are subjected when the improvement of their own housing is concerned.” Jacobs warns that there “is mounting anger of this in the Negro slums” (Jane Jacobs, “The Failure and Future of American Housing Programs,” January 1967, Jane Jacobs Papers, MS95-29, Box 25, Folder 2, 1, Burns Library, Boston College).

Sorkin, “End(s) of Urban Design,” 6.

**Conclusion**

1 Robert Moses to Bennett Cerf, 15 November 1961, Jane Jacobs Papers, MS95-29, Box 13, Folder 11, Burns Library, Boston College.


3 Jane Jacobs, Untitled Manuscript, 20 April 1958, Jane Jacobs Papers, MS95-29, Box 25, Folder 8, 8, 3, Burns Library, Boston College. Christopher Klemek also notes that Mayor Robert Wagner and City Planning Commission Chairman James Felt had staked out a “position with some striking similarities to Jacobs’s own,” but that the “polarization engendered between the city’s West Village renewal plan and Jacobs’s opposition to it”
Unfortunately kept them from working together to realize common goals for the city. Christopher Klemek, “Jane Jacobs’s Urban Village: Well Preserved or Cast Adrift?”, *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 66 (March 2007): 20, 22.


7 Jane Jacobs to Chadbourne Gilpatric, 8 March 1961, Jane Jacobs Papers, MS95-29, Box 13, Folder 13, 5, Burns Library, Boston College. It is unclear if Jacobs actually sent this letter to Gilpatric—there are two different letters addressed to Gilpatric on the same date in her papers. Regardless of whether or not this was the letter that she sent, she undoubtedly communicated these ideas to Gilpatric during their meeting.

8 William Kirk to Albert Mayer, 21 February 1961, Union Settlement Association Papers, Box 28, Folder 8, 2-3, Columbia University Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

9 Jacobs to Gilpatric, 8 March 1961, 1.


12 Ibid., 26-27.


14 Jane Jacobs, Untitled Manuscript, 20 April 1958, Jane Jacobs Papers, MS95-29, Box 25, Folder 8, 1-2, Burns Library, Boston College.


16 Dickens, *Hard Times*, 181.


18 Ibid., 56.


