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At Home in the City: Urban Domesticity in American Literature and Culture, 1850-1930, by Betsy Klimasmith

Cara Erdheim

Sacred Heart University, erdheimc@sacredheart.edu

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Recommended Citation

Erdheim, Cara, "At Home in the City: Urban Domesticity in American Literature and Culture, 1850-1930, by Betsy Klimasmith" (2006). *English Faculty Publications*. Paper 13.

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individual darkness of these two men leads us to question if they were capable of friendship at all. Lingeman assumes a melodramatic tone that undermines any potential emotional effect of the tragic story: “Scott was through with playing the eternal patsy in a sadomasochistic duo.” The final chapter provides no relief. It is a tale of sex and drugs; incidental to the tale are the relationships of Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg, and Neal Cassady. Here Lingeman replaces the melodramatic phrasings of the previous chapter with a species of hipster-speak. Phrases like “every man’s jailbait fantasy” will likely lead the reader to double check the cover. When he declares in closing, “Thus it was demonstrated once again how sex can kill a friendship,” one wonders if this was perhaps the purpose of the entire book—to demonstrate how sex can kill a good thing. Perhaps the disunity within the book that is created by the undue emphasis on the sexual activities of the writers mimics the disunity within the friendships of the writers themselves when sex is needlessly introduced. As all but chapters three, five, and six demonstrate, this may indeed be the case.

—Andrea Harris, Wright State University

At Home in the City: Urban Domesticity in American Literature and Culture, 1850-1930, by Betsy Klimasmith. Durham, New Hampshire: University of New Hampshire Press, 2005. xv + 293 pp. Paper, \$26.00.

Betsy Klimasmith begins *At Home in the City* with the valuable goal of mapping out an evolving American literary landscape whereupon urban and domestic spaces become increasingly blurred. Not only does she succeed in this ambitious attempt but, in so doing, subtly introduces a third thematic thread that enriches her claim about emerging patterns of urban domesticity. Using literary and historical examples to illustrate how homes have altered in relation to nature (from the mid-nineteenth-century rural cottage to a manufactured recreation of the pastoral within the city), Klimasmith demonstrates how aesthetic depictions of the American home both respond to and influence changing conceptions of natural and urban terrain.

At Home in the City is an innovative contribution to a critical discourse on realism and naturalism that, until recently, has limited its focus to the urban realm as detached from the “separate spheres” of the rural and the domestic. Analyzing characters in American fiction ranging

from the mid-nineteenth (Nathaniel Hawthorne's *Miles Coverdale* and Fanny Fern's *Ruth Hall*) to the early-twentieth century (Theodore Dreiser's *Carrie Meeber* and Edith Wharton's *Undine Spragg*), Klimasmith claims that the architectural atmospheres of home and city do not always determine human destinies, desires, and behaviors. Rather, these characters shape their surroundings through the art of self-invention, as their increasingly modern subjectivities emerge within those settings that they choose to inhabit. Such malleability is at play in Wharton's *The Age of Innocence* where Ellen Olenska's decision to relocate to a downtown Bohemian neighborhood foreshadows her "ostracism" from New York's High Society.

By situating fictional and non-fictional narratives in the aesthetic and cultural contexts of architectural determinism, Klimasmith emphasizes the changing conceptions of privacy and exposure in relation to homes and their surrounding cityscapes. No longer relegated to the closed territory of the cottage, intimate activities and "romantic rendezvous" became familiar displays when parks opened themselves up to the public during the late 1800s. As private and public places became more interdependent and interconnected, Klimasmith argues, so also did the correlation between domesticity and urbanity become visible.

Through vivid visual representations (ranging from numerous paintings of Central Park and Frederick Law Olmsted's architectural plans to portraits of domestic labor and Jacob Riis's tenement photographs), Klimasmith does not merely tell a tale about an increasingly domestic urban America; she also shows readers how intricately linked these two spaces become. Through depictions of household labor, Klimasmith argues that industry and work extend beyond city streets into the family home, while urban architecture begins to resemble (and perhaps model itself upon) the interior structure of a "drawing-room." Indeed, this study contributes to a critical discourse on the aesthetics of place in nineteenth and twentieth-century literature, culture, and art.

Klimasmith's six chapters operate according to a historical and geographical chronology that enables readers to observe transforming patterns of domesticity from one century to the next. Moving from the mid-nineteenth-century utopian colony of *Bliethedale* to the early-twentieth-century Harlem of Larsen's *Quicksand*, this book traces the shift from romanticized rural homes to racially segregated urban housing centers. Mapping the transition from countryside cottages to the tenement home, or from urban drawing-room to the utopian apartment, Klimasmith guides us both spatially and temporally through the United

States' compelling domestic history.

Rather than conclude her study with an analysis of utopian domesticity, Klimasmith highlights its limitations in a socio-economically and culturally diverse modern American city. Thus, after associating the financial successes of Ruth Hall, Carrie Meeber, and Undine Spragg with the ability to adapt to and profit from their rented, borrowed, owned, and shared spaces, Klimasmith acknowledges that these new social and economic opportunities have their racial limitations. Unlike Henry James's Verena Tarrant, whose class mobility affords her the privilege of performing various roles and inhabiting numerous homes in *The Bostonians*, Helga Crane's mulatto identity prevents her from accessing such freedom in Larsen's *Quicksand*. Klimasmith makes clear to her audience that a racially segregated twentieth-century domestic cityscape allows for neither sentimentalized familiarity nor perpetually positive self-creation.

At Home in the City is most persuasive in chapters two and three: the former links "Spatial Practice in *The Bostonians* and Central Park," while the latter explores a "utopian" aspect of apartment living. After using her first chapter to depart from a rural pastoral model of the countryside cottage as a morally didactic separate domestic sphere, Klimasmith draws our attention to post-Civil War metropolitan park projects. Implicitly invoking an urban pastoral discourse by alluding to environmental scholars like Leo Marx, Klimasmith declares that the designs of Olmsted and Calvert Vaux sought to provide urban inhabitants with a pristine escape from the chaos of cosmopolitan life.

By identifying these parks as utopian landscapes, Klimasmith suggests that they perpetuate the fictional myth that city-dwellers can return freely to a concept of home existing purely in nature and apart from the metropolitan masses. Rather than dismiss these projects as sentimental and nostalgic, though, Klimasmith effectively argues for a new sort of home emerging alongside an altering urban geography. They cannot provide permanent escapes from the increasingly industrial city, but places like Central Park satisfy the desire for a communal home that offers its cosmopolitan crowds simultaneous privacy and exposure: "The city's most open space becomes an intimate domestic one." Collapsing boundaries between wealth and poverty, private and public, rural solitude and urban community, as well as nature and culture, these expansive metropolitan territories provide an environmental context through which we can understand naturalist narratives in potentially new and challenging ways.

Klimasmith's greatest contribution to the field surfaces through her

analysis of *Sister Carrie*, which I would describe as urban pastoral. Naturalist critics like Donald Pizer have explored the nature-based metaphors of Dreiser's "Society-Sea," but fewer scholars have sought to locate actual representations of the natural within the cityscapes that Carrie traverses. After associating Central Park with performance, Klimasmith asserts in her next chapter that Carrie's assumption of multiple identities influences her inhabitation of numerous homes, and vice versa. Instead of resorting to the common claim about Carrie's urban habits of conspicuous consumption, Klimasmith persuasively points out that such performative self-fashioning occurs within a wide array of domestic spaces ranging from the stage to her rocking chair. By identifying Carrie Meeber's apartment as a "middle ground between the urban and the natural worlds," Klimasmith argues convincingly for an innovative model of domesticity that makes Dreiser's heroine equally *at home in the city* and the country.

At Home in the City could benefit from a more explicit acknowledgment of the intersections between rural and urban territories, as well as a closer look at the role that nature plays in forming American ideas about domesticity. Readers may wish to learn more about how modern subjectivities, which Klimasmith relates so clearly to city and home, inform a turn-of-the-century natural environment that is becoming increasingly industrial. Although a more overt eco-critical consideration may have filled this minor gap, Klimasmith successfully guides readers through a literary and artistic terrain that enables us all to become more *At Home in the City*.

—Cara Elana Erdheim, Fordham University

Pleasing to the "I": The Culture of Personality and Its Representations in Theodore Dreiser and F. Scott Fitzgerald, by Uwe Juras.
Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2006. xiv + 440 pp. Paper, \$83.85

While deploring the lack of treatment so far accorded the concept of personality, Uwe Juras in a wide-ranging study traces the impact of this idea in the works of nineteen authors before and after the turn of the 20th century, foremost among them Dreiser and Fitzgerald. Taking as his starting point Warren I. Susman's 1979 essay on "Personality and the Making of Twentieth-Century Culture," Juras endorses the theory and the methodology of the new historicists by studying the newly develop-

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