

BODIES on the **EDGE**

**REPRESENTING URBAN NIGHTLIFE and
CORPOREALITY in NEW YORK'S CONEY
ISLAND, 1900-1945**

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May 1, 2015



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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines cultural representations of nightlife in the iconic oceanfront New York City neighborhood Coney Island, produced between the turn of the twentieth century and World War II. By looking at the night in an environment that has historically been ubiquitous with its position on city's farthest southern periphery, and with the possibilities both valued and feared that such peripherality entails, I aim to develop a critical understanding of the links between modern constructions of urban space and time. My analysis rests on a select group of visual images, and is supplemented throughout by textual representations and other components of cultural discourse. By closely examining a 1912 commercial postcard, I argue that bourgeois imaginings of Coney Island at night constituted the spatio-temporal periphery as mutually a *frontier* and a *margin*; as a site upon which owning class interests that structured core spaces and times could be extended, and coessentially a site where seedy prospects lurked which could interrupt those interests if they were not carefully appropriated. Looking, then, at representations from the 1920s and 1930s, I question whether interwar Coney Island nightlife might have democratically liberated working class New Yorkers from the constraints of their normally regulated lives. I specifically assess the way bodies and corporealities are depicted in paintings of working class night leisure by American artist Reginald Marsh and in a few other illustrations, to contend that no such reversal occurred. These images reveal a pervasive differentiation between bodies whose material composition signified them to be economically productive, mobile, "fit" participants in a spatio-temporal frontier; and bodies whose material composition signified them to be economically unproductive markers of a seedy, stagnant, spatio-temporal margin. This differentiation – and the complicated spectrum of productivity and humanness I show it contained – fundamentally maintained, entrenched, and reproduced owning class interests despite the veneer of proletariat freedom. Coney Island nightlife during the first half of the twentieth century manifested the profound capacity of hegemonic capitalism to reorient space, time, and bodies toward its ends; and enfold even the most threatening perpendicularities on its edges.

This thesis is dedicated to my father
Harvey Robert Goldman
and my aunt
Rhoda Anne Goldman Greenstein
in loving memory.

Your stories are what first compelled me to take a closer look at Coney; I hope I hold a light here
to even a fraction of the joy those stories – and their characters – have given me.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis bears my name and my words, but in reality it reflects the efforts of a truly unlimited cadre of people from every corner of my world. I cannot adequately thank them all, or thank them enough, but will give my best effort.

I am firstly and most thoroughly grateful to all in the Swarthmore College community who have given this thesis, and its author, life – beginning with my advisor, mentor, and friend Dr. Farha Ghannam. From our extremely brief conversation in her office three years ago which turned me on to sociocultural anthropology irrevocably, to the myriad conversations in the same space that guided me through my academic life at the college, to delicious seminar dinners and charades with Lena; Farha has personified the life of the mind and the conscience of character I aspire to. Her encouragement has unfailingly strengthened my work. The ideas I engage in this thesis, as in everything I will ever work on, reflect what she has given me.

I am grateful, as well, to the entire faculty and staff of the Swarthmore Sociology-Anthropology Department who have cultivated my intellectual commitment to this discipline – and, more importantly, cultivated my character as a member of this institution. They have supported every facet of my growth here, bracing me through rough patches and encouraging my successes. Special thanks go to Maya Nadkarni; Lee Smithey; Mike Reay; Sarah Willie-LeBreton; and Rose Maio. In addition, countless faculty and staff members across the college – even beyond the college – have guided me academically and personally: Shane Minkin; Shervin Malekzadeh; Min Kyung Lee; Sara Hiebert Burch; Lynne Schofield; Khaled al-Masri; Aman Attieh; Brahim El Guabli; Tariq al-Jamil; Elizabeth Stevens; Jen Moore; Joyce Glackin; Eleanore Baginsky; Sharon Hartley; Margaret Kingham; Andrea Pien; and, the man who helped

grant me the enormous gift of access to this school before becoming my role model and one of my best friends, David A. Thompson.

I am eternally thankful for the support I have been given, on this thesis and in absolutely all things, by too many friends to list in full. I beg forgiveness for anyone who I absentmindedly have left out, but please know that if I've ever spoken to you, you've likely shaped me. With specific regard to the thesis, my heart's worth of appreciation goes to: Nathan Siegel for opening my eyes every single day; Lily Jamison-Cash for her poignant insights and unconstrained love; Damella Dotan for being the human I always strive to be; Haydn Welch for guiding me constantly toward greater social cognizance; Anushka Mehta for telling me her life story, and for being my second half ever since/ever more; Samantha Pellegrino for being, now and forever, my academic soulmate; Benjamin Goloff for being my soulmate in all ways; Stephanie Braziel for an energy and brightness that I look up to all the time; Andrew Karas for being my partner in all things urban and also an unparalleled friend; Aileen Eisenberg for always challenging me to think more crisply; Kassandra Sparks for shaping and sharpening my theoretical lenses, and helping me take those lenses off once and a while too; Sara Morell for unquantifiable inspiration, laughter, and support, and for becoming only more outstanding with time; Raisa Reyes and Rachel Stein for recalibrating my world every Sunday (and other days); Alis Anasal for being by my side for twenty years and counting; and all 2014-2015 Sociology-Anthropology thesis writers. My personal wellbeing and happiness throughout this process are thanks, in addition to those already mentioned, to Audrey Edelstein; Martin Mathay; Isabel Sacks; "Parrish"; Alexandra Willingham; and countless others.

I wish to thank my entire cohort of friends, peers, and tutors from Hertford College, University of Oxford. Their consistent academic insights during our semester together in 2014

proved an unending source of inspiration. Special thanks are due to Laura Merrell for showing me how to live a genuinely full life; Kari-Elle Brown for doing the most, in all things all the time; and David Walchack for pondering, questioning, and reimagining the world with me whether I was wearing a dress or a bro tank. I am indebted above all to Lydia Shahan, without whom this thesis would never have been imagined let alone executed. During one of our many conversations over hall lunch, she casually suggested that I consider the spaces of sexuality in a future paper. Motivated by her comment, but moreover by her own extraordinary love for learning and for living, I have been able to turn that topic into a passion.

Many of the friends whom I have known the longest, and who live far from my Swarthmore bubble even in a digital age, have been the most important to the completion of this project. I owe thanks to innumerable members of the Bard High School Early College community who invigorated my love for scholarship, navigated me to Swarthmore, and permanently reoriented my worldview toward critical social engagement. In particular, to the friends and faculty who helped me learn how to really think and question: Kate Gibbel; Emma Gerstenzang; Elena Seeley; Nick Gumas; Sasha Jason; Steven Mazie; Benjamin Rubenstein; Michael Lerner; Kyung Cho; Denise Gamper; Elizabeth Poreba; David Bally; and Rene Marion. Looking back even further, I hold especially deep gratitude to Lucie Prather. My ally in life since elementary school, Lucie's presence from Brooklyn backyards to late night phone calls to Oxford tutorials has directly enriched both my mind and my heart. Moreover, her support for this thesis has been immeasurable. The books and articles Lucie gave me and conversations she was always excited to have about this work, even as she was working on her own academic projects, made the product possible.

More than anything, this thesis and all else in my life would not be possible without my family. My mother, Judith, is the most important person in my world. Without her always-impressive intellect, her support through every good and bad moment, and her absolutely unflinching and unlimited love, I would not be the human being I am today. I am also eternally grateful for the love of my sister Elizabeth; my aunt Elaine; my many beloved cousins; and my uncle Dr. George Kateb who inspired me toward academia from an extremely early age. Finally, my thanks go to the loved ones who I lost before having the chance to share this project with them: Jeanette, Rhoda, Jerry, Robert, Victoria, and my father Harvey.

Finally, this thesis was generously supported by the Swarthmore College Joel Dean Summer Research Fellowship for the Social Sciences.

INTRODUCTION

Modern Age Coney Island in Space, Time, and Embodied Figure

Coney Island, the oceanfront New York City neighborhood famous for its colorful history as an amusement haven, has deep personal significance for me. It is where both my parents spent summer days growing up and, in manners and rituals as distinct as they are themselves, they made a point to share it with me during my turn at Brooklyn childhood. Coney Island's architectural monumentality, cultural vibrancy, and relationship to urban transportation networks helped frame my passion for studying cities at a very early age. These characteristics, along with many more, continue to inspire that passion today.

A peninsular outcropping rather than an island proper on the southernmost end of Brooklyn, where New York Harbor's streamlined currents flow into the Atlantic Ocean, Coney Island has always been a boundary zone, a borderland, a space on – and emblematic of – the American metropolitan periphery. Early in the New World colonial era, Coney Island's edge position made it strategic both defensively and commercially as it bridged the wide ocean's naval/trade networks with the European settler communities forming further inland. Many of the first Dutch to arrive in what is now greater New York during the sixteenth century, eviscerating land that belonged to Algonquin Indians while building one of world's the most "successful" commercial centers, resided on western Coney Island (Denson 2011). These New Netherlanders are often credited with naming the area although it has seen widely varied nomenclature. Uncertainty in fact surrounds the origin of "Coney." Possibilities include *konijn*, the Dutch word for rabbits; the *Konoh* or "Bear" tribe that lived there; a memorial to explorer Henry Hudson's companion John Coleman; and the surname Conyn belonging to a Dutch Brooklyn family. Other names altogether included Pine Island and Pelican Island ("Coney Island Gets its Name,"

American Experience, Public Broadcasting System). As labels that are meant to define and concretize geographic space within historically specific terms, place names instrumentalize the broader process by which power discourses use space to create knowledge. By this metric, we can see that Coney Island has long been subject to power's uneven exercise and its contested formations of what is un/known.

“Coney Island” as such did not appear formally or regularly on maps until around 1815 (“Coney Island Gets its Name,” *American Experience*, Public Broadcasting System). By then, Coney had become – and would remain for a half century – a territory on the fringes not only of the physical city but also of the legal, economic, and social systems which were so robustly shaping that city into a global capitalist epicenter. Urban development transformed Manhattan island during the early nineteenth century, crystallized by a major 1811 plan to grid its streets (Ballon 2011), while Brooklyn – its own incorporated city and already one of America's largest – was divided roughly into an industrial, residential, port-based northern section and a coastal-agricultural southern section. Coney Island at the farthest southern reach was known as a refuge for outlaws, bandits, criminals, and deviants who for any number of reasons needed to flee those spaces more fully embedded in the regulable metropolitan core. Its peripherality enabled the area to accept, hide, and truly indulge the persons and activities that mainstream quarters most prohibited, making it synonymous in the elite's eyes with seediness and vice (Peiss 1986; Denson 2011; Frank ed. 2015; Burrows and Wallace 1999). The gilded age consumerism emergent in the century's later half at once targeted and embraced, dismembered and capitalized upon, this counter-normative reputation. Large scale amusement parks rose where saloons and shanties once stood, yet these parks thrived on cheapness and turned the specter of deviance into a commercial spectacle; neither strategy quite shaking the grittiness from Coney. Industrial

capitalism, with its new material technologies and economic, political, cultural ideologies thus produced often contradictory and shifting characterizations of this neighborhood on the edge. Yet indisputably through all changes, it ushered Coney Island's reconfiguration into the rambunctious, crowded, technicolored, theatrical, and consumerist day resort that has since been simultaneously celebrated and derided. This thesis enters Coney Island during the formative period between (roughly) 1900 and 1945, and enters as well into the ongoing tension between different cultural understandings of the neighborhood – particularly between celebratory and solicitous feelings.

Most broadly, my work aims to understand through representational studies how the construction of a “honky-tonk” leisure landscape on New York's periphery engaged with the construction of modern American capitalist power – especially its economic, spatial, temporal, and embodied logics. The cultural narrative that appears most regularly in primary, historical secondary, and contemporary literature describing Coney Island after 1890 is a patently modernistic one, steeped in the notion that public transportation combined with entrepreneurial creativity produced there a “playground for the masses.” Consider this eloquent selection from Burrows and Wallace's excellent tome *Gotham: A History of New York City to 1898*, treating turn-of-the-century Coney, which folds even inequality and social struggle into a romantic cast:

On Sunday ethnic groups that during the week were segregated by work or neighborhood mixed and mingled at the shore. At Coney's rides and beaches, diverse peoples swam, ate, played, and rode together, encouraging development of an interethnic – albeit white – “New York” sensibility, an eclectic camaraderie...the city's upper classes tried to suppress plebian ways of having fun that appeared to undermine established authority, but...unions, Catholics, ethnic nationalists, and new immigrants – the very people gamboling and gambling at West Brighton [Coney Island] – were boldly challenging the city's political, economic, and religious status quo”

(Burrows and Wallace 1999: 1136)

This is how scores of New Yorkers who spent time at Coney Island growing up have perceived the neighborhood. It is how they are most enthusiastic to portray it to this day. It is what makes both of my parents and many others close to me smile when Coney comes to mind, as they remember such mixing and mingling during their much later childhood visits. It is therefore inherently valid, and it is also unquestionably accurate to some historical extent. However, I aim here to move beyond this mythic and frankly overplayed story. It is equally unquestionable that mixing and mingling toward an “interethnic sensibility” or “camaraderie” was, where occurring at all, operating against the same enormous centrifugal processes that underpinned regular formations of an American empire and its Gotham beyond Coney: class inequality; racism; gendered subordination; sexual differentiation, and more. In fact, I argue, these processes were augmented at Coney Island precisely because the neighborhood’s edginess posed the genuine *possibility* of unprecedented access and inter-group entanglement. By examining more closely some of the specific relations of power that constitute the “exuberant” Coney Island, I hope to more critically situate this trope. The framework I use to do so is oriented around the juxtaposition between a Coney Island of promise and a Coney Island of anxiety. I follow the idea that throughout its history (and still today), Coney as literal and metaphorical fringe has been given oppositional cultural significations: A. An exciting place ripe for experimentation, imagination, and creativity – a *frontier*; and B. An unsavory, seedy corner of the city that needs to be target, remolded, and reappropriated – a *margin*.

More narrowly, the thesis seeks to understand the significance of the *night* in the cultural discourses that framed, and in so doing forged, consumerist Coney Island. That is, the relationship capitalist projections inhere between peripheral space and peripheral time. The night figured centrally in industrial age perspectives on urban life. It also greatly intensified the duality

between promise and anxiety ascribed to peripheral city spaces. Both the night's perceived joys and its perceived dangers, in offbeat spots like Coney, tended to capture public imagination. Industrialization, in particular, shaped understandings of the outer-city night by integrating them with normative capitalist structures. Some of the most important of these structures were electric lighting, fast transportation, the working day and working week, and the necessarily productive body. Night, as the opposite of work time for most, was more than instrumental to capitalist experiences. Examining representations of night space with regard to capitalist urbanism would therefore be a fruitful study no matter the context. Because it examines night at Coney Island, however, the stakes of my work are especially high. Coney was the most popular recreation site in one of the world's most populated and increasingly stratified cities; a testing ground for capitalist implementations large and small, especially those targeting the new working and middle classes; and a site to which possibility was perpetually ascribed. Many keystones of modern night leisure as well as those of modern night fear, ranging from the electric streetlight and the dance hall to the one-night hotel and the cheap return ticket, had their start in this seaside "Sodom" perpetually associated with dreamy masquerade (Peiss 1986: 123; Burrows and Wallace 1999; Denson 2011; Register 2011). Understanding the representation of urban nightscapes at Coney Island therefore is a crucial foundry for understanding the cultural evolution of twentieth century urban American nightlife itself.

Most specifically and purposefully, my project is interested in how competing frontier/margin projections of Coney Island night space used and in turn created representations of *human corporeality* in this milieu. A 1901 piece in *Munsey's Magazine*, "Marvelous Coney Island," ends its account of an evening at Coney Island with this lyrical postscript:

Oh, the voice of Coney Island as alighting from
the trolley,
You find her, and remind her that your deed
should be excused!
With what bombilation jolly she replies to this,
your folly!
She reckons you, then beckons you! Your suit
is not refused!
She's a siren that a Byron might have lavished
all his fire on,
She's a sorceress that spells you, that attracts you,
that repels you,
And ah, me! What things she tells you when
you want to be amused!

(Carryl 1901: 817)

In reading this, it is immediately clear that representations of embodiment attended period representations of the simultaneously liberating and entrapping Coney Island evening. Moreover, I argue, they are crucial to it. In visual representations of Coney Island night during the period from 1900 until World War II, I argue, space/time/corporeality were inextricable from one another. Understandings of each relied directly upon understandings of the others, and in fact formed understandings of the others. Only in their active combination did complete cultural imaginings of the urban edge take shape, from both upper class and lower class perspectives. Specifically, the urban edge was imagined by both class groups as the intersection of spatial, temporal, and embodied *boundaries* – it jointly and necessarily comprised the space at the margin/frontier of the city; the time at the margin/frontier of the day; and the corporeal configurations at the margin/frontier of normative, productive “fit”ness.

Studying Urban space, Time, and Corporeality through Cultural Representations

My methodological approach to this thesis is, most generally speaking, representation analysis. I look at textual and visual representations together to form a sociocultural assessment

of how the intersection of space, time, and body was understood within certain historical contexts. I emphasize my focus on representations to stress that this thesis is not strictly couched in any one disciplinary methodology. It is not neatly “history” or “art history” or “anthropology,” but bridges these by using anthropological theory and thinking to decipher the information in visual images and written texts produced at a particular moment in modern American history.

I take some inspiration from feminist Elizabeth Grosz (1995), who articulates with regard to her discourse analysis methods, “by ‘texts’ I mean the products of any kind of discursive practice, whether poetic, literary, philosophical, scientific, visual tactile, or performative – that is, any tangible network of signs...” (Grosz 1995: 11). While I use the term “text” more specifically than Grosz, to mean “written representation,” I use the general term *representation* in a similar vein as her “text,” to mean any articulation that makes particular signs tangible and meaningful and thusly reflects the discourses that create, invest in, and circulate those signs. I believe, additionally, that representations or texts demonstrate a profound capacity to produce discourses in addition to merely reflecting them. Representations may at once express and help to create the particular discourses and power relationships that they display as their content.

I am also compelled, along these lines, by Nelkin and Lindee’s (2007 [2004]) approach to cultural texts. Our specific sources obviously differ, given that they are interested in depictions of genetics in late twentieth century print media, but I find particular salience in their discussion of images. “One of the assumptions driving our approach,” they explain, “has been that images appearing in the sources we examine have consequences that are difficult to measure, difficult to track, but important nonetheless” (Nelkin and Lindee 2007 [2004]: xxvi). Indeed, both tracking and analyzing visual representation is daunting because there may always be alternate interpretations possible with contradictory evidence resting therein. But visual analysis still bears

wonderful intellectual fruit because images carry key, often visceral messages and therefore a unique potential to shape social reality. As these authors say so well, “People act on the basis of images, sometimes without necessarily making the connection themselves between the image and the action” (Nelkin and Lindee 2007 [2004]: xxvi). I take from this principally that images, along with all sorts of representations, contribute to the imbrication of specific subjectivities. This vital notion remains crucial to my entire thesis argument.

The analytical work I advance in this thesis centers around a selection of visual images. The principal set are: One 1912 postcard image with caption text, composed by Irving Underhill; the illustrations in a 1938 *Fortune* magazine feature about Coney Island, illustrated by Robert Riggs; and two works by acclaimed American painter Reginald Marsh. Reproductions of the postcard and one Marsh painting, *Pip and Flip* (1930), are included in my text. For copyright purposes the others were unavailable for proper reproduction. The Underhill postcard, along with a wealth of other primary source materials that have fundamentally shaped my arguments in this thesis, came from archival research in 2014 at several New York City history institutions. At the Brooklyn Historical Society’s Ortner Library in particular, several weeks of searching through both digital and traditional collections led me to an outstanding array of cultural representations depicting night at Coney Island between 1900 and 1945. Further troves of material came from digital archives available online, belonging to institutions around the country I was unable to visit. I have chosen explicitly to focus on small group of sources, mainly three images and a couple of textual pieces, because I believe that as an anthropologist dealing with visual and historical analysis I gain more from the closest possible look at less. By assessing in fine detail a small set of images, I will draw sharper, richer understandings of how these images make particular claims and how their claims illustrate broader sociocultural patterns.

My analysis also constitutes a sort of meta-discourse analysis, meaning that, in the very work of analyzing my chosen primary sources, I also interrogate certain claims advanced by the secondary literature I use to approach them. I elaborate more on this in the literature review, where it becomes clear that my own discourse analysis will contest assumptions of hyper-democratic opportunity and eventual proletariat liberty that immutably underlie mainstream academic writing on twentieth century Coney Island.

The Project Ahead: A Roadmap

In this thesis, I firstly establish how urban space, time, and embodiment were all central to the formation of industrial capitalist power relations; I then show how those power relations served, through representation, to configure Coney's newly electrified night space as something liberatory and tried to erase what made power brokers anxious about night from the literal picture; and finally, I situate the body in this story.

The thesis begins with a literature review that emphasizes the connections and contradictions between Marxist, Foucaultian, and Feminist conceptions of the space-time relationship. Beginning the thesis by exploring scholarship on space-time provides a necessary launching point for analyzing projections of the urban night, a site so fundamentally temporal *and* spatial. These three bands of thought differ considerably but also build in very useful ways upon one another. In aggregate, they show that space and time have often been jointly mobilized tools for the production and reproduction of modern liberal power; power as class, power as relational fields, and especially power as embodied action/manipulation. The power logics of industrial capitalism are fundamentally rooted in the cultivation and management of time-space and the production of specific embodied subjectivities.

In my second chapter, “Lights Up: Picturing Power in the Urban Night through a Postcard,” I take a close look at one 1912 postcard of Coney Island’s Surf Avenue and iconic Luna Park at night. I begin by establishing that, during their apotheosis, mass-produced visual images pictured and commoditized the ordinary. In so doing they conditioned capitalist subjects to understand themselves as pictures and picture-makers, a subjecthood intrinsically reified through the urban night landscape that is electrically lit. In the postcard I examine, I argue that Coney Island nighttime was represented as an extension of daytime. Electric light meant the forms of movement, consumption, and sovereignty that modern industrial nation states had already entrenched in their major cities’ daytime landscapes could be instituted at night. Therefore the spatial-temporal site of the urban night on New York’s edge was projected as one of liberation. Yet, I show, this liberation projection embedded a contrasting projection of fear, articulated by absence and aversion. Precisely by illuminating capitalist daytime comforts in the nighttime, center-city mores on the urban edge, the image asserts that the new American city can – must – erode what makes the urban night dangerous: encroachment of the low class, unfit, and deviant. It is with this postcard, therefore, that I highlight the operation of a crucial dichotomy between Coney nighttime as spatio-temporal frontier and spatio-temporal margin.

In the third chapter, “Bodies on the Edge: Representing Class, Control, and Corporeality in Coney Island Nights,” I explore how spatio-temporal margin/frontier projections affected Coney Island’s transition into a working class night resort during the 1920s and 30s. I begin by questioning whether the rise of a working class clientele in Coney nightlife constituted a paradigm shift in dynamics of power; that is, whether it dramatically changed the nature of the industrial capitalist power relationships I have shown in earlier bourgeois representations. This question is not so much about individual-level opportunities or about the existence of liberatory

sites for working New Yorkers on the spatio-temporal edge, but about how those liberation opportunities related to modern economic and labor logics structurally. I argue that, between Foucault's emphasis on the potentiality of perpetual resistance to power and Gramsci's elaboration of strategic enfoldment *by* power, the latter best defines how Coney's working class nighttime "frontier" became constituted during and after the jazz age. Looking closely at a selection of visual images, mainly by American painter Reginald Marsh, it becomes clear that a differentiation between "fit" and "unfit" bodies underpinned the working class cultural expression, consumption, and access that gave 1930s Coney Island nightlife its status as a frontier. This differentiation not only situated the material of the body centrally in cultural conceptions of the spatio-temporal periphery, but also linked this periphery to imaginings of humanness itself that squarely supported rather than resisted owning class interests.

1. SPACE, TIME, BODY, POWER: EXPLORING THE LITERATURE

Introduction

Examining the significance of night in an American city, especially with regard to bodies, provides an excellent avenue for considering how the very organization of space and time changed after the industrial revolution. It allows us to conceptualize how embodied social experiences of urban space became fundamentally tied to time; and how time became understood just as fundamentally in terms of space. Mobility, an entity's passage through space over time, is but one of many geographic concepts central to questions of modernity that glue space and time to one another. Production, consumption, transaction, migration, representation, and bodily encounter (among others) are each best understood by excavating their spatio-temporal dimensions. It is my aim with this chapter to broadly discuss theories of modern space-time and embodiment that help situate the projection of embodied promise and anxiety onto Coney Island's nightscape.

Night – as a time within the day, an aesthetic landscape, and an embodied experience – became integral to American urban culture during the twentieth century as it became woven into (and possibly out of) capitalist regulatory structures. A meshwork of different ideas, policies, projections, and material conditions, these structures fashioned *everyday* life around the free market economy. The night was no exception, in fact largely an instrument, to capitalist modernity's articulation of space and time. This stance will impact my opening chapter in two ways. Firstly, my analysis will begin with, and remain based in, Marxist understandings of spatio-temporality as a function of economic order. To elaborate on both the strengths and the shortcomings of the Marxist approach, I will then place some of its key points into dialogue with Foucaultian and feminist interpretations. Secondly, I will ground the distinctions between these

approaches to space and time in their contrasting assumptions about *power*. To study the ways in which any neighborhood has been understood, treated, shaped, and destroyed is to study the mechanisms of power – and resistance to it – that literally inform urban territory. Whether viewed as class conflict, relational resistance, or intersectional corporeal regulation, competing conceptions of power undoubtedly beget competing understandings of how space, time, and bodies have related to one another in the formation of twentieth century cities.

Marxist Approaches: Bourgeoisie Power and Proletarian Resistance *Harness Space/Time*

Capitalist Power as Hegemony

Mapping Marxist conceptions of space necessitates looking at their associated conceptions of power. Marxist approaches to power emphasize inequalities harnessed and reproduced by the industrial owning class, and the perpetual possibility these inequalities condition for revolt by workers. Marx writes in the Communist Manifesto, “Society is more and more splitting up into two great hostile camps, two great classes, directly facing each other: Bourgeoisie and Proletariat” (Marx 2006 [1848]: 5). Rather crudely, power here is class domination. It is, in the world Marx saw unfolding if not in the world he envisioned, the bourgeoisie’s “naked, shameless, direct, brutal exploitation” of the laboring proletariat by its ownership of the means of production and, therefore, of labor itself (Marx 2006 [1848]: 5). The historical-material approach that characterizes Marxist philosophy nuances this idea some (Harvey, in Lefebvre 1991 [1974]: 426). Capitalist power is not “natural” but remains fundamentally tied to material conditions of industry, technology, and labor – even as they change. Marx asserts that the bourgeoisie maintains power specifically by adapting to such material shifts, and ultimately designing those shifts to suit it – “it cannot exist without

constantly revolutionizing the instruments of production, and thereby the relations of production” (Marx 2006 [1848]: 5). It is upon this foundation that Marxist scholars have advanced a more complex notion of power as hegemony – not merely technical, visible, grandiose control of the many by the few, but a much more thorough and *flexible* saturation.

In his influential prison notebooks, Marxist interpreter Antonio Gramsci (2007) developed a theory of cultural hegemony while he was imprisoned in fascist Italy. Distinct from “rule,” which constitutes the directly political coercions that are manifest in crisis, and distinct even from manipulation and indoctrination, Gramscian hegemony is power expressed over everyday life (Williams 1977). It is “a whole body of practices and expectations, over the whole of living” that naturalize the ruling class’ specific economic, political, and cultural systems so they seem the only ones possible (Williams 1977: 110). Most importantly, as Raymond Williams articulates, hegemony can adapt to and triumph over even radical change. As dynamic, reactive complexes of relationships, hegemonies must “*incorporate* ... the many forms of opposition and struggle ... the alternatives and opposition which question or threaten its dominance” (Williams 1977: 113, emphasis mine). Cultural changes, even when they appear to contradict or resist the hegemonic order, become enfolded by it. If, as Marx initially suggested, capitalist power is always and *only* maintained by the material conditions it is situated within, it must absorb the changes that occur to those conditions. It must write material change into its exercise.

Space as Power / Time as Resistance

The notion that hegemonic capitalism captures and sterilizes dynamic resistance, or at least the potential thereof, bears extreme importance in Marxist geographic thought. Many authors have argued that space is indispensable to hegemonic capitalism, identifying urban landscapes in particular as active tools and products of class hierarchization (Harvey 1990, 2003,

2006; Lefebvre 1991 [1974]; Benjamin 1969). The thrust of this argument is that physical space, in service to capitalism, freezes anything dynamic or revolutionary within a regulable enclosure and ranks such enclosures unequally according to class. Laclau (1990) articulates that the very process of spatialization is equivalent to the process of hegemonization – they are one in the same (Massey 1994). To spatialize anything is to enclose, render static, depoliticize, and contain that thing within the operational limits of capitalist logic (Lukacs 1923; Laclau 1990; Massey 1994). “Any system of representation,” Harvey goes so far as to say, “is a spatialization of sorts which automatically freezes the flow of experience” (1992: 206). Space marks the edification, the imbrication, of a given system’s control such that even resistive movement inside it can be regulated by it. The hegemonic enfoldment Williams describes thus entails building real spaces for capitalist experiences – and, importantly, spaces for ostensible resistance to capitalism – across the quotidian landscape. By the late nineteenth century this was apparent not only to theorists but also proletariat activists on the ground. In one of several rich takes on the Paris Commune, Benjamin (1969 [1935]) narrates how authorities seized the revolutionaries’ barricades for their own counter-revolutionary purposes to contain and dismantle whatever they could – and remake the bourgeoisie city that Paris so fundamentally was. Space, by all these accounts, operationalizes hegemonic power.

The corollary to this notion of space as power is the notion that *time* is its foil: a dynamic and resistive force which space arrests (Laclau 1990). Doreen Massey writes that “In contrast to the closed and self-determining systems of the spatial, time (or temporality) for Laclau takes the form of dislocation, a dynamic which disrupts the predefined terms of any system of causality” (Massey 1994: 68). And according to philosopher Karsten Harries, architecture is a defense against “the terror of time” (Harvey 1992: 206). While movement in space is endemically

constrained by the prevailing system which built the space, it is through time that Laclau and others believe trans-systemic and ultimately counter-systemic movement can occur. Lefebvre (1991 [1974]) clarifies that for Marx himself, just as space may be coterminous with hegemony, time is coterminous with the process of class revolution. In his words, Marx led a “vigorous reinstatement of historical time as *revolutionary time*” (Lefebvre 1991 [1974]: 21, emphasis mine). Time in the Marxian long view is the motile progression of industry, labor, and revolutionary sentiment – “relations of production” – toward a definite endpoint: the worker’s revolt. Time is the process of revolution, and space is the hegemonic effect that tries to contain revolution.

Yet many Marxists, while still believing space to be a hegemonic effect, contest the idea that it so phobically opposes time – or that either of these categories can even exist in isolation (Benjamin 1969 [1935]; Lefebvre 1991 [1974]; Massey 1994; Harvey 1992, 2003, 2006). Furthermore, it is clear within many streams of Marxist thought, including Marx’ own writing, that time – even if it measures progress toward a revolution – has been crucial to capitalist reorganizations of social life in tandem with space (Harvey 1992). The most compelling arguments point to space and time’s *mutual constitution* as tools of power and resistance. Space and time’s close interaction in capitalist procedures and in the hands of human agents, rather than their objective separation, is what makes them both instrumental forces. They work precisely by acting on and shaping one another (Massey 1994; Harvey 1992, 2006). Those authors who direct Marxist thought at the entanglement of time with space are thus able to elucidate some of the most fruitful critiques of capitalism – and possible alternatives to it.

Interaction Effects: Space and Time in Productive Corroboration

One of the most basic Marxian conceptions of the interaction between space and time is that time, in a capitalist system, overcomes or “annihilates” space. Put more precisely, capitalist interests merge space *into* time. The two do not oppose one another so much as become one another. This is what David Harvey calls “the first law of capitalist accumulation” (Harvey 2006: 100). Material technologies, especially transport technologies, assign spatial distance in terms of the time it takes to move between two points. When these technologies become faster, the *market distance* between the two points – the transition that commodities (and sometimes their producers and consumers) must undergo to get from production point to consumption – shortens even as the literal distance does not. Distance becomes a measure of duration, not space. We can recognize this easily in everyday practice: Very often we describe how far someplace is by saying how long it takes to get there. Philadelphia is twenty-five minutes away, London is just a six-hour flight with good wind. Capitalism and its machinery, in this view, subordinate the physical to the temporal in accord with its core interest in efficient accumulation. Time annihilating space is not, however, the only way Marxists have conceptualized space-time interactions.

An extremely compelling approach, championed by Lukacs (1971 [1923]), argues quite the opposite: Capitalist power “annihilates” or, to use my earlier language, merges time into a kind of space. Through the “effacement” of the laborer first by his own exploited labor and then by the labor that machines do in his stead, time becomes a measure solely of what can be done within it – productivity. No longer a continuum or a flow corresponding to organic life, time turns into a series of discrete, delimited, enclosed values corresponding to industrial output. Time now takes on the quality of space, as we have defined it thus far: a specific confinement of production within boundaries that don’t just hold it but also quantify it, manage it, and enable its

reproduction. The natural day becomes the working day, the working hour, the hourly wage; and as such the day becomes functionally analogous to the factory wall (Lukacs 1971 [1923]; See also Antonio ed. 2003). What can be done *outside* the industrial workplace, too, becomes quantified in its own discrete form of time-as-space: night. The notion of time being measured as pockets of production – both within and beyond the hours that comprise the work shift – will be essential to my later points.

Both these approaches underline the ways capitalist owners retool space and time vis-à-vis the other in order to produce class divisions and proliferate their own wealth at workers' expense. They underline the joint importance of space and time to Marxist geographies of power – not as perpendicular opposites but as parallel dimensions of the same regime. They exist in a tension that is ultimately, in the capitalist sense, productive; it produces capital. By rendering space something “temporal” and rendering time something “spatial,” capitalism creates each category to its own ends. This is not, though, the extent of Marxist opinion on space and time. For Marxists, who believe in resistance as much as in class domination, there is a lot more to the story.

Just as they act upon one another in dynamic interaction and intervention to manifest hegemonic capitalist power, space and time can also act dynamically with one another as means of revolt. I wish to highlight here the tension between Lefebvre's (1991 [1974]) “moments” and Debord's “situationism,” the latter being exemplary of space-time's role in resistance. Lefebvre takes an interest in *moments*, at which a person ephemerally experiences sublime and extreme sensations that open a “radical recognition of possibilities” (Harvey, in Lefebvre 1991 [1974]: 429). The situationists, whom Lefebvre distances himself from, claim that “moments” are purely passive and purely temporal; they argue that instead of experiencing moments, actors create

situations for radical possibility. This denotes a more active revolutionary process, and encompasses more fully that process' intersecting uses of space and time. In the situationist perspective, as in many of David Harvey's (1990, 1992, 2003, 2006), it is very specifically the convergence of temporal and spatial action that creates successful revolution.

What makes these interaction effects of time and space particularly useful, when trying to understand temporally mediated experiences (whether powerful or resistive) in an urban space, is their relative meanings to different actors (Harvey 1992). Lest it appear that Marxist scholars believe space and time are definite categories, arguing between themselves simply over the precise definitions, Harvey (1992) reminds us that "positionality" matters. Space and time can clearly be considered relational, understood based upon position and orientation. It is now smart to couple that idea with understandings of how space-time shapes *the subject* – in so doing we set up the best platform for threading Marxist perspectives of geography into their Foucauldian alternatives. Foucault's understandings of power, space, and time build well upon the dual foundations of relationality and subjectivity. His arguments privilege the notions of positionality and flexibility, but also emphasize the way modern structures create manipulable subjects particularly by acting on the body.

Foucaultian Approaches: Power Relationships *Embody* Space/Time

For most Marxists, thinking creatively but still exclusively within a logic of bourgeoisie domination and proletariat revolution, power is something recognizable and delimited that one group possesses while another group fights for it. Space can then be an instrument of either the dominating group's power or the suppressed group's struggle. Philosopher Michel Foucault's extensive writing on the exercises and effects of modern power presents conceptual similarities

to Marxist thought – and fundamental differences. One of the trickiest but most important of these differences lies in their contrasting understandings of what power is in the first place. For Foucault (1995 [1977], 1982), rather than ever belonging to a given actor or group of actors and then held over a given population, power exists as a *perpetually shifting relationship between* perpetually shifting actors, institutions, structures, and sites. Power is an “economy of relations” manifest in the fluid, dynamic, and constantly re-signified social space that connects equally dynamic subjects (Foucault 1982: 779, 786-7).

Indeed, “sites” and “space” are key to this understanding of power on numerous levels. The idea that spatial forms are forms of power does not here mean that space necessarily delivers power from a ruling group to a subordinate group and resistance in the reverse direction from a subordinate group to a ruling group. Space does more than instrumentalize (inform, facilitate, etc.) forces external to it called power/resistance. Contra to Marxist notions that they somehow immobilize and “freeze” dynamic processes, Foucault’s approach emphasizes that spaces do not have fixed roles or functions. As different actors give them different meanings, spaces form multiple changing relationships of power at any moment. Foucaultian thought then draws upon a much more flexible, integrated, and constitutive sense of space. Space *is* the interstitia that situates and adjusts all actors in relation to one another; space *is* the relationship between entities that for Foucault constitutes power itself and spatial forms are *formations of power* (see Massey 1994: 20-22). Foucault is particularly keen to apply this spatial thinking in analyses of disciplinary power – the way power relationships can manipulate individuals around dominant interests. It is in such discussions of power, space, and discipline that time most robustly enters Foucaultian geography, along with another theme most central to my thesis: the body.

Given that post-enlightenment/industrial power logics engage space and time together to form new modes of human productivity as Laclau, Lukacz, Harvey and others state, Foucault (1982; 1995 [1977]) importantly demonstrates that these space-time dynamics act most formatively on *bodies* – the materializations of the human being. Disciplinary spaces organize bodies into particular relations with one another and with the passage of time, which “structure the field of...possible actions” in order to maximize their usefulness – their ability to reproduce governing principles as efficiently as possible (Foucault 1982: 791; Foucault 1995 [1977]: 137, 140, 150). The disciplinary spaces of modern (particularly Western and Western-shaped) societies are those whose embedded power relationships help to configure the most economically productive, politically obedient bodies possible; those spaces whose arrangements reproduce capitalist institutions and norms, and naturalize the nation-state as the singular mode of political authority (Foucault 1995 [1977]). Some of Foucault’s key examples include clinics, schools, and famously prisons. In these sites, the body is “manipulated, shaped, trained” in such a way that it “becomes skillful and increases its forces” (Foucault 1995 [1977]: 136). And it is most specifically by corroborating space and time through instruments of “detail” like assembly lines, schedules, maps, and tables (Foucault 1995 [1977]: 140) that spatial power arrangements render bodies *docile* (Foucault 1995 [1977]: 138). The relationship between space, time, and embodiment in this way becomes the fundamental structuring principle of disciplinary power.

In disciplinary space-time, “docile bodies” are key. They are the most intimate iterations of the *modern subject* – the distinct, autonomous actor with a clear sense of self who is at the same time trained to embody a homogenous set of beliefs, ideals, and truths (Foucault 1982; Foucault 1995 [1977]). Hagerstrand expands on the centrality of space and time to such subjecthood, explaining that subjects are both purposefully made (by structures) and reflexively

understood (by themselves) to take up time through space. Their routines, the morning order and the lifelong trajectory alike, inscribe them onto particular spatio-temporal tracks that in turn become their biographies – their selfhood narratives (Harvey 1992: 211). The category of “the subject” thus materializes most completely the productive union of body, space, and time in serial modernity (Grosz 1995: 103; Foucault 1995 [1977]: 150).

Not only do space and time structure bodies in relationships of power that benefit particular orders, but simultaneously the body becomes a space and a time in itself that can produce – and contest – such order. According to Harvey, “Foucault treats the *space* of the body as the irreducible element in our social scheme of things, for it is upon that space that the forces of repression, socialization, disciplining, and punishing are inflicted” (Harvey 1992: 213, emphasis mine). And as an object of relational power exercise, embodied space is also by Foucault’s terms inherently an agent of relational resistance. This is because, while in the Marxist tradition power and resistance are mutually exclusive foils to one another engaged to overcome the other, Foucault sees them as internal and inclusive to one another; their relationship is constantly made and remade, can be adjusted, and the very entities that exercise either can shift too (Foucault 1990 [1978]). An entity which exerts power in one relation may exert resistance in another, etc. In many Foucauldian analyses, it is the body that can best perform resistance. As the most basic object of power relations, the body is uniquely positioned to rewrite the terms of those relations – to reshape the field of possible actions and re-designate what actions become expressed within it (Foucault 1982: 793) – in ways that benefit *non-dominant* actors and ideas (Harvey 1992: 213). The importance Foucault gives bodies as sites for subjectivity cultivation within complex power and resistance relationships provides an

exemplary point of departure for considering the final spatio-temporal approach I will look at here – feminism.

Feminist Approaches: Looking more Closely at Embodied Power Relationships

Late twentieth and early twenty-first century feminist approaches to geography have saliently considered the interconnected significance of urban space, time, sexuality, gender, and the body in the reproduction of capitalist cultural logic. Feminist critics within, as well as outside, “geographic” disciplines have worked especially hard to tie those interconnections into the questions Marx and Foucault (and myriad others) began asking – questions of production, exchange, power, and resistance. Gender, in particular, emerges from their work as a key issue. Many feminists importantly emphasize that capitalist space-time is gendered, exploring in depth how this specific modern axis of bodily differentiation shapes and is shaped by space-time. Not all do this well. For instance, when Spain (2014) suggests that a space’s clientele is what most genders it, explaining “the nineteenth-century department store was clearly a women’s place, for example, and the saloon a place for men” and claiming engagement with spaces like these was “voluntarily,” she eschews important nuances that help explain the spaces she references (Spain 2014: 582-3). She undermines the fact that early department stores were literally owned by men and structured for men’s objectification of women, as well as the degree to which economic, social, and moral codes compelled women to participate in that space regardless of their “voluntary” interests.

Spain does, however, lay some helpful groundwork for understanding how gender and space has been understood. She articulates well that gender roles in early twentieth century America – the context in which I will base my substantive exploration of Coney Island nightlife

– were highly scripted for middle and upper class subjects while lower class subjects at times experienced sex and space in ways that deviated from bourgeois Victorian scripts (Spain 2014: 583). She also frames an interesting discussion of how anti-Black sentiment, Cold War anxiety, and automobile preferentiality together edified an era of “high patriarchy” after World War II that matched architectural “high modernism” of the same period (Spain 2014: 585-7). This notion of a high patriarchy or masculinism provides a baseline upon which other, deeper scholarly considerations develop concerning the gendered twentieth century American city. Massey (1994) adds to a Foucaultian understanding of space as the flexible constitution of power relationships, when she articulates that spaces maintain fluid, evolving, unfixed links to gender rather than ever being categorically “gendered” in a certain fashion. The terms, ideas, images, and signs that associate them with gender shift according to shifting economic systems (43-7); divisions of labor (86-112); and different regimes of bodily discrimination (221-224). One key context she offers in which a given space can have such different meanings for gender relations is the transformation of times of day, between daylight and nighttime. The same exact space can include or exclude women, and different types of women at that, in remarkably different ways between the working daytime and the playing nighttime.

The strongest feminist conceptualizations astutely recognize, as Massey begins to, that there is more than just gender operating – being operated on, being formed – in capitalism’s intertwining of space-time and embodiment. Grosz does an especially good job linking space-time to the entire, multiply defined body. The body cannot cause or reflect the city as common models of urban embodiment stipulate, Grosz elucidates, because the two entities would need to be functionally separate and in many cases are not (Grosz 1995: 109). Urban space-time takes over, directs, represents, resituates, and can even replace multiple elements of individual bodies.

She thinks, for instance, of the effects public advertisement has on corporeal senses and the consumer choices they incite; or the displacing, often discombobulating way in which transportation technologies contain and distribute bodies across space-time based on an ultimately economic planning logic. At the same time – and simultaneity is crucial here – bodies’ movements, needs, desires, pursuits, and arrangements literally consume as well as create urban environments and temporalities that suit them. Cities must constantly develop around human bodies’ habitation, eating/drinking, excretion, reproduction, and other dynamic body processes.

Because capitalist space-time is related to complex facets of complex, whole bodies, it is related to multiple intersecting axes of bodily *differentiation*; these include gender for sure, but also class, race, age, shape, ability, mobility, and laboring occupation. Each of these axes bears a crucial material dimension, and an equally crucial cultural dimension. Far less clear are the boundaries between such material and cultural dimensions, in part because they are cooperatively engaged rather than mutually exclusive. If capitalist logic renders bodies the materialization of productive subjecthood, implying both an ontological constitution and a culturally signified meaning, what does this say about the body’s material-cultural nexus? If those bodies are created in the interactivity of space and time, what space-time arrangement does the body itself take on? Is that arrangement limited to the time and space in which it is immediately visibly “present”? These questions are the anchorages of a recent debate in feminist anthropology between two camps, standard post-structuralists and new materialists. I will not seek here to resolve their tensions. I will merely highlight the discussion as background for my own consideration, in Chapter 3, of how certain bodies engaging with Coney Island nightlife were materially represented and culturally materialized as capitalist subjects.

Recent inquiries on embodiment reflect broader endeavors to critically situate and smartly move on from post-structuralist frameworks. They focus in particular on understanding the relationship between culture and material in the formation of “the body.” I take a productive middle position bridging orthodox post-structuralist thinking, generally crystallized by Judith Butler and her interlocutors, with hardline neo-materialist conceptions that remove too much of culture’s importance from the picture. In this thesis I treat the body as a dynamic, active material, which becomes represented and known through equally dynamic cultural significations; it remains simultaneously, “intra-actively” (Jagger 2015), inextricable from both ontological form and historically specific sociocultural meaning. The foundation for my thinking rests in the culture-centric sphere, specifically in Judith Butler’s prolific work on gender as embodied performativity, so this is where I will begin.

Butler (1988) complicates traditional phenomenological approaches to the constitution of the embodied social actor. Examining phenomenology’s precedent convention that actors’ repeated acts over time creates social reality (actors → acts → social worlds), she argues such logic misguidedly assumes the actor to be already constituted as a stable self, with neat identities, worldviews, interests, and capacities lined up to inform their ensuing actions (Butler 1988: 519). More favorable to her is the argument for which she and myriad post-structural feminists are best known: The social actor, and most importantly its body, is not the subject producing reality but rather the object that “reality” produces, where reality means – in notably Gramscian terms – the dominant power relations naturalized as social life itself (Butler 1988: 519). Embodied actions both constitute and reproduce the conditions, such as “gender,” which they claim only to reference (Butler 1988: 521). In this reformulation (social worlds → acts → actors), the material of the body and/as the substance of the person has only the meanings that it is culturally given

through its re-performance of normative acts. Material forms and motions are merely “a performative accomplishment which the mundane social audience, including the actors themselves, come to believe and to perform in the mode of belief” (Butler 1988: 520).

The body’s material specificity vis-à-vis its cultural specificity thus lies at the center of Butler’s work. Drawing from Simone de Beauvoir’s canon text *The Second Sex* alongside Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s more radical phenomenology, Butler asserts that “the existence and facticity of the material or natural dimensions of the body are not denied, but reconceived as *distinct* from the process by which the body comes to bear cultural meanings” (Butler 1988: 520, emphasis mine). While Butler’s framework renders material a fundamentally cultural constitution insofar as it marks the adoption of cultural significations, this passage makes clear that she does not think material and culture are the same thing. It is both this single-directional argument of constitution and this assumption of a dichotomy in the first place between material and culture, which a very recent intellectual project calling itself “new materialism” rejects. Jill Jagger (2015) offers an excellent, if dense, roadmap of major nodes in new materialist thought while also advancing her own original ideas that will guide my analysis of bodies. According to Jagger, new materialists write against the division they identify in Butlerian conceptions, between the bodies being signified and the signification process placed upon bodies; they question the post-structuralist axiom that cultural discourse is something “distinct” from, yet something fully constituting, material ontology such that all material formations occur at some sort of remove from the material itself. They do recognize that ontological reality is perceptible only through socially and discursively constructed ways of experiencing the world; but “there is [still] a world that we know” (325) – we still do perceive ontologically, too. Body discourses in Jagger’s view are thus linked intimately with body materiality, epistemology with ontology. The

key difference with regard to Butler is, one does not *constitute* the other for new materialists. One only *reveals* or *discloses* the other (324-5). These “intra-actions,” the logic goes, show ultimately that the real(ized) ontological body – though constantly engaged with social and cultural shapings – is a substance very much active in its own constitution (329, 240).

This debate over the related functions of ontology and discourse in creating the body mirrors an analogous tension over whether the body – especially in industrial capitalism – should be considered a bounded, encapsulated, and single site or a fluid, flexible entity that traverses planes beyond its typically determined flesh “boundary.” A question of fixity/fluidity thus aligns with that of realness/signification. The fluidity notion is compelling for sociocultural thinkers, for the same reasons Butler’s thesis is. It is well understood that in an advanced capitalist landscape, what we call “the body” exists quite necessarily through its engagements in a whole field of relations that operate well beyond its ontological exterior. Take, for example, an American diabetic patient using an insulin supplement to help stay alive. The patient places within her body, in order to sustain it, a solution that was produced in a Swedish factory by dozens of research scientists and assembly line laboring bodies who synthesize otherwise unrelated substances according to a procedure; packaged by Japanese-built machinery, and loaded onto aircraft by black North African migrant workers at Stockholm’s airport; flown across the Atlantic Ocean in a jet powered by fuel oil extracted in Iraq; distributed and priced by a multinational drug corporation in the United States; negotiated to a retail price by a multinational insurance corporation; presented to diabetics through television commercials and radio ads that join these two companies’ market interests; and purchased in a single transaction one afternoon at the chain drugstore.

My emphasis on mobilities here should not seem a coincidental or tangential one. Such a narrative should show that “the body” is patently greater than its flesh-bounded form, more multiply situated and materially diffused than the basic material of its skin, organs, and bones, even if it appears to be standing still and bounded in one location. The “basic” body, itself, is constantly growing, shrinking, adding, detracting, morphing, shedding, and reconstituting itself through the linked activities of biological development and individual body work. Certainly, then, the body in motion is by definition not only mobile within its environment but shifting its basic constitutions in relation to shifting environments around it.

Yet, this does not mean that we should eschew embodied materiality and boundedness altogether, as the new materialists could remind us. The act of touching helps uphold the case. Touching is certainly not the only way to feel; but given that it is an important ontological capacity, touching entails the contact of embodied flesh. It entails placing the extremity or boundary of one’s immediate physical form onto the boundary of another object, possibly another embodied person. If fleshy corporeal boundaries are the site at which the embodied self is differentiated from the world (Flusser 2014: 108-9, Asad 2011: 658, Turner 1995: 146), then two bodies touching encompasses two selves pairing with one another while reducing the “world” between them. Two bodies sharing the same general space but with distance between their corporeal boundaries, in turn, would demonstrate the naturalization of a “world” between them and the sharpening of distinctions not only between two selves and world but also between each embodied self and the other. Therefore, when understanding the mixing of people that made Coney Island night a seedy margin for some or a site of freedom for others, and especially a capitalized landscape within the logic of modern industrial capitalism, understanding bodies’ fleshy forms and their literal interactions *matters*. It matters in tandem with, not antagonism to,

the stories of flexibility and signification that also characterized the nighttime leisure experience at Coney. As does understanding the physical ontological relation of manual labor to bodies, and the materiality of American modernity's racial, ethnic, classed, sexualized, and gendered differentiations underpinning the specter of body contact. I hope myself to move past both Butler's insistence on distinguishing biomaterial from culture and new materialists' tendency to overstate biomaterial's inherent importance. To borrow Jagger's term, I believe the material and the cultural *reveal* one another. They work together toward the creation of the body, and locating one helps make sense of the other.

Holes in the Sand: Writings on Coney Island and their Shortcomings

It is no surprise that the neighborhood of Coney Island itself, so brimming with meaning in New York City's cultural history and so closely held by millions including this writer, has long been a subject of study. From historians to poets to locals interested in documenting area change, many have flocked to Brooklyn's shores in order to compile something new about such a complicated slice of the city. Edo McCullough (2000 [1957]) wrote the first widely circulated, "comprehensive" volume about Coney Island history. In "Good Old Coney Island," he enters the neighborhood as it is on the cusp of major changes including the construction of a flagship city aquarium and scores of new public housing although these take less focus in his analysis. His ideas are crystallized with the proclamation that by the early twentieth century, when Americans were only concerned with work, religious restfulness, and moral uprightness, Coney Island taught them how to play (McCullough 2000 [1957]: 4-5). "Good Old Coney Island," with its somewhat populist bent, received enormous popular attention. John Kasson (1978) draws upon some similar sentiments in "Amusing the Millions," but also offers the first notable analytical

approach to Coney Island. He works to situate Coney Island's commercial rise in a social-historical context emblemized by genteel class interests and popular consumption. This focus on class, and astuteness to the dynamics of power and resistance that formed it during the early twentieth century, makes Kasson's work important. As my own argument develops, however, it will be clear that I diverge from the assertions he and McCullough share about Coney Island "fun" – especially that of lower classes – operating somehow outside normative genteel demands.

As Coney Island's amusement landscape celebrated its centennial in the early twenty-first century, new writing rich with historical analysis entered the scene. Michael Immerso (2002) covers those hundred years with attention to the key shifts in class, race, economic logic, and cultural signification that defined Coney Island again and again. His understanding of the area's shift from a bourgeois paradise to a workingman's one matters tremendously to my thesis. Yet, again, this text itself is part of a cultural discourse that signifies Coney Island, and especially its potential class shift, as necessarily liberating for all people. Like most other writers on Coney, he equates co-existence with integration. I will use Immerso's beliefs on this matter to directly launch my case to the contrary, in Chapter 3. Woody Register (2003) smartly clears some of this up in his historical-biographical account of amusement park entrepreneur Fred Thompson, a strong case study highlighting the interactions of politics, economy, and personal ambition in the formation of Coney's iconic landscape. Surely still, Register's work could intervene using more critical discourses concerning discrimination and modernity.

The 2010s have brought new, sharper interest to the study of Coney Island. American art curator Robin Jaffee Frank (2015) helps get at some of my pushback to Immerso in the comprehensive "Coney Island: Visions of an American Dreamland 1861-2008." It is the

accompanying text to an eponymous exhibit at The Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art in Hartford, CT, the first exhibit of its kind on visual representations of Coney Island. Its art historical lens significantly frames and assists my assessment of images in both the late gilded period and the early modernist period. My analysis of Marsh's paintings comes quite literally from their reproductions in this text. Nonetheless, some of my critiques of earlier texts manifest themselves in Frank's work. Its baseline assumption of a singular dreamland colors its approach, and I hope to weave a new thread of thought that both utilizes and resists that approach. Finally, I must recognize the stellar volume of primary documents compiled and edited by brothers Louis and John Parascandola (2015). Amid the myriad outstanding materials they have reproduced in this text, some of the most insightful include an 1883 essay on Coney by Cuban political activist José Martí; poetry by E. E. Cummings; letters by notorious city planner Robert Moses; and articles by some of the early twentieth century's foremost equality advocates including Belle Israels. Together they show the many moments, twists, and changes in Coney Island's twentieth century history. The book is organized chronologically for the most part, but in its arrangement of sources it also emphasizes connections across themes and ideas where possible, at times construing more of a Foucaultian genealogy than a standard history – and is stronger for it.

Most urgently evident and relevant to this thesis, the Coney Island literature doesn't focus enough on bodies and their differentiation – a flaw directly reflective of their broader shortcomings. Their lack of focus on bodies reflects that they are not quite critical enough generally. To craft an academic analysis of Coney Island without strong considerations of embodiment is to deny the roles that race, gender, sexuality, class, and ethnicity played as potent *bodily markers* – as social significations of the human flesh – in this “diverse” playground by the sea. They do not see, and therefore do not say, enough about the ways Coney Island nightlife – in

all its historically complex, rich, genuine openness and exuberance – may have strengthened the sorts of power structures it gets credit for weakening.

Above all, my review of all these domains within scholarly literature brings to light the enormous importance of *intersectionalities* between class, gender, race, sexual identification, and other embodied materiality. These are each fruitful to examine specifically and closely, but as I addressed in considerations of feminist writings, they are most strongly conceptualized in direct relation to one another. Modernist imaginings of a classed environment on New York's edge worked necessarily through imaginings of how class could impact and be impacted by myriad additional conditions. This is especially evident in the cultural narratives and images I will be exploring, especially those that highlight social class and the body, because intersections between class and such materialities as strength, physical mobility, and race anchor their projections of the urban spatio-temporal periphery.

2. LIGHTS UP: PICTURING BOURGEOIS POWER AND THE FRONTIER-MARGIN IN A POSTCARD (1890-1915)

Harvey / Luna

Seawater lapping between his body and his sister's, he pitched himself slightly eastward across the current. Many, many times in later decades – at the end of the century that was then less than halfway complete – he would make similar motions, directing his son back toward the same section of the same beach where their belongings laid. He would crisscross the tide, and with his speckled arms and smoke-stained lips try to teach me the art of overpowering an ocean.

But not yet. At this moment, he was just a child. Arms faintly marked by blond hairs like those he was so proud of in his portrait with the street pony six years earlier, and lips unfettered by destructive desires. A proud, recent matriculant to the life of the nine-year-old.

It was all but religion – and even a little bit of that too – that structured his family's ritual journeys to the beach on hot summer days during the 1940s. When the sunrise alone count plant dewy veins of sweat through the long sunken asphalt between road and sidewalk; When ceiling fans adhered smog from the upper reaches of the Brooklyn bedroom, and circulated it toward the ground and the window and the floor and the cracks in crusted herringbone, replacing heat with heat; When thick afternoon clouds amalgamated moisture and whipped thunderstorms to life, promising respite but nearly always guaranteeing turmoil: That was when there was no question. Coney Island.

On this August day, 1944, Brooklyn was particularly aflame. He lurched among the waves watching flames lurch from Luna Park, spires on a cathedral of cheap pleasure that had over the years christened a new America. Tall wood firmaments, a few hours earlier the palaces that housed exotic fire-eaters and suspended firefighting aircraft from their canopies and set the

borough's evening sky aglow with electric light, were now consumed by the fire they commoditized. One cedar frame downed upon the next. In quick succession, the nation's most beloved amusement park fell to the ground as he watched from the sea.

*

In the early twenty-first century, my father Harvey lived a life of uncertainty and disease that he himself brought on. Though he was closely knit with friends – friends whose unflinching adoration even beyond his dying breath I resented because my adoration was so very flinching – he had no work; no community; no extended family; no religion; no polity, of which he was a contributing part. Contribution, on the whole, never his strong suit. But my father did have me. He was my daytime caretaker, for lack of anything else to do and – lest I be too uncharitable to the man whose family name and nose and convex gut and intelligence and wit and curiosity and surprising capacity for care I have inherited – because he loved me. Because he wanted to share life with me. In the early twenty-first century, my father Harvey took me places I had never been in order to show me what my City was made of. Some of these places have not seen me since, while others are so engrained in my adult experience that my body can readily take their shapes and perhaps even his can too. In the early twenty-first century, my father Harvey and I explored.

One of the many places we explored more than once was the iconic Brooklyn Heights Promenade. Just six subway stations away on the northwestern border of our borough, sandwiched above a messy highway, adjacent to a necklace of mansion homes, it dangled precipitously upon abandoned freight peers; massive skylines; coursing waterways; liberating statues; take-off patterns; the West. This promenade has from a young age enframed my urban gaze. One cloudy day in the fifth or sixth grade, we went to the promenade with my red Razor scooter because we did not want to go all the way to Manhattan. I scooted, as he stood fixed on

the north end. I barely noticed the old mansion, now a history museum, towering in front of me, although my father probably did, and in later years I would as well.

*

A decade later, a college student in skinny jeans, I entered the Brooklyn Historical Society. I did this many days, for several weeks. Research there was one of the most overwhelming and yet exciting processes I had ever undertaken, and one that never – even still – really finished. This work was punctuated by moments of pure joy, of finding a treasure that brought the history of everything I cared about into focus. At the end of July, on a day whose cloud ceiling felt lower than the triumphant gridwork capping the library above my head much like the day I scooted past here with my father, I felt such a moment. I found the postcard that this chapter – and this thesis – shall work from: “Luna Park, Surf Avenue, By Night” (1912).

Irving Underhill, one of twentieth century America’s most prominent commercial photographers, composed the postcard image. Although it looks like an illustration or watercolor to twenty-first century eyes, this image is essentially a photograph that Underhill produced using a popular contemporary method called “dry plate” and then colored in. The postcard portrays Luna Park’s grandiose entrance gate, setting it amid myriad intersecting contexts: its spatial context, marked by its surrounding dance halls and shops as well as the sweeping Surf Avenue that ties them all together; its temporal context, including both the nighttime (vis-à-vis the twenty-four hour day) and 1912 (vis-à-vis the longer *fin de siècle* timeline); its architectural context, as we see a distinct heterogeneity of styles flank it; even its political context as a uniquely American venue. In my analysis of the postcard I focus mainly on its visual elements, but the item also includes a textual caption that is crucial to its overall message – I have

transcribed it beneath the image copy below. Millions of customers passed through the Luna Park gate between its opening ceremony, just a few years prior to the postcard image, and its fiery demise nearly four decades later. While my father watched the amusement park burn to the ground in 1944, I hope to begin bringing some of it back to life.



“Surf Avenue at night is illuminated by 1,000,000 electric lights and it is the most brilliantly lighted thoroughfare in the world. It is crowded with merry-makers and revelers until midnight.”¹

¹ This text, and all future references to the 1912 Luna Park and Surf Avenue postcard, refer to: Underhill, Irving.

It is my intention in this chapter to dissect the 1912 postcard of Surf Avenue at night. I will look most closely at the specific relationships, claims, and ideals it attaches to nighttime in a newly electrified urban leisure landscape. Yet reading a postcard must entail more than just describing or even analyzing what is visibly present in it. I aim to ground my considerations of the postcard in two important analytical threads that qualify it. First, this postcard is a “cultural artifact” (Mellinger 1992) with particular material significance situated in a particular, classed moment amid a particular set of historical processes. Everything it “says” carries both a positionality and a purpose which are integral to its messages. Second, any cultural artifact that expresses the optimism of a dominant social class, as I think this one does, also expresses the social anxieties that inform and make possible such optimism. That is, even as we read what the postcard “says” with full attention to its positionality and interests, we must also examine what it means but does not say – what its imagery expresses, without explicitly or literally picturing.

I believe the postcard of Surf Avenue brilliantly exemplifies how consumer-driven, capitalistic, mass-cultural representations of Coney Island at the turn of the twentieth century pair space and time to project the urban night as a site (and sight) of liberation. In this chapter, I will specifically study how the image treats electric lighting to outline the three most meaningful liberation claims it makes: 1. Light means greater movement and mobility in space at night; 2. Light increases the consumer spending and thereby individual pleasure space can generate at night; 3. By the combination of (1) and (2), light makes night a space for *freedom* in coessentially capital and political forms – Freedom that does not merely mirror but materially constructs the twentieth century American nation itself. Together, these projections capitalize the budding modern nightscape by conditioning it as a space of unprecedented opportunity – a *frontier*. I ultimately contend, however, that this image of the nocturnal urban frontier is

constituted by and maintains a perpetual dialogue with a more anxious imagining of Coney Island's nightscape as *marginal* or unsavory territory. As I examine each of the postcard's frontier claims with detail, I will draw attention to the worries, exclusions, and marginalizations that oppose – that create – its every rendering of urban freedom. I show that at the height of the gilded age and the dawn of working class night culture in mainstream city spaces, these exclusions work especially robustly around class segregation.

Power and the Postcard: Discipline by Visualization

What makes the postcard a significant medium when dealing with early twentieth century representation of the urban landscape? Countless cultural and historical essays have been written about postcards, but even some of the most insightful (Miller 2013; Mellinger 1992; Morn 1999) do not sufficiently flesh this out. Walter Benjamin (1969 [1935]) offers a cogent perspective on photography in his landmark essay “Paris: Capital of the Nineteenth Century,” which shall be my launching point for understanding the postcard as a medium and cultural artifact not only because I believe it is inherently applicable but also because the specific postcard I am studying, like so many, is itself a modified photograph. Benjamin writes,

Photography ... extended enormously the sphere of the market-society, for it offered on the market, in limitless quantities, figures, landscapes, events which had previously been utilizable either not at all, or only as a picture for one customer”

Benjamin 1969 [1935]: 167

Like countless forms of visual representation before it, the photographic postcard envisioned and enframed its chosen landscape for view. But it is clear in Benjamin's zestful writing that this medium exemplifies unique means of production and consumption, which set it apart from any prior representation. The industrial revolution intervened remarkably in the centuries-old artistic paradigm – dynamic, to be sure, but stable in principle – of individual artists creating visual

works for individual clients. Benjamin associates photographic imagery with two characteristics that derive from industrialization and operate coessentially to support a proliferating global capitalism: In the technical field, its mass production, its “limitless quantities”; and in the economic field its mass marketization, its offering on a cash-based global market to a limitless customer count.

While the material-technological and economic systems that generated the picture postcard between 1850 and 1915 are fundamentally inextricable from one another, it is useful to highlight each separately beginning with the former. An array of industrial age inventions transformed how urban visual images were made and distributed. Photographic technologies in particular reoriented the public’s expectations of visual imagery to fit imaginings of the “objective” (Benjamin 1969 [1935]: 166-7) and, moreover, corresponded to the dramatic rise of mass reproduction. Localized in steam- and coal-powered factories that filled the landscape from Britain’s Birmingham to colonial South Asia to the Appalachian Mountains of America, apparatuses like the conveyor belt and the division of labor could make truly limitless quantities of any visual image as Benjamin suggests. The picture postcard explicitly owes itself to such mass production. At the turn of the twentieth century it was already considered the most prominent type of “serial image...that ordered the modernity of the times. The photograph first, and the postcard later, inaugurated the era of the mechanical reproduction of art” (Osorio 2007: 141). At the height of the Euro-American postcard craze in 1906, six years before the postcard I will analyze was created, 700 million were sold in the United States alone – a figure which underlines the medium’s “[dependence] upon the mass production or reproduction of graphic images ... products of late 19th-century technological advances” (Mellinger 1992: 415). Additionally, the spread of picture postcards depended not only on technologies that could

produce so many copies but also technologies that could cheaply ship them over long distances, namely railroads and steamships; often these very same transport technologies facilitated the colonial projects, tourism, spatial othering, and *capitalism* that helped postcards thrive.

The postcard – spun in a concert effort between so many engines and factories, buttons and boilers – was far from neutral in the broader economic transformations unfolding around it. The intense new mechanical apparatuses that produced it were intimately tied to industrial capitalism. Inventions that could create multiples of the same item without overtly showing a composer’s hand corroborated scientific discourses of objectivity, which in turn glorified machinery and eroded the human worker. In so doing, these technologies strategically made the products they produced not only replicable but also marketable, cheap, and profitable. Marx (1867, in Schwartz and Przyblyski eds. 2004) illustrates this cogently. Factory environments and mechanical mass production, in which identical versions of an object appear no matter who the machine operator happens to be, alienate the laborer from the valuation, sale, and consumption of their products. This alienation is strategic for industrial capitalism, because it is how products gain *exchange* value based on a universal cash system – making them easily transferable commodities – instead of a value based on the human cost of their materialization (Marx 1867, in Schwartz and Przyblyski eds. 2004). In addition, progressively fast transportation extended commodities’ geographic fields, opened new markets, and swallowed increasingly more communities around the world into the marketplace where products like a postcard were bought and sold. Returning, then, to the coupling Benjamin introduces in his remark about photography, the physical means of mass-production that generated early picture postcards directly fueled and were fueled by an economic logic of mass-consumption that circulated and commoditized them. The picture postcard thus derives doubly from capitalism’s strategic technologies; technologies

that serve, facilitate, organize, and uphold capitalist power relationships to make them perpetually necessary; technologies which, in a loose reading of Foucault (1995 [1977]; 1990 [1978]), could be called *technologies of power*.

It is worth excavating that concept more closely, however, to make it as useful as possible. Its nuanced meanings can help us better understand the postcard medium, and our Coney Island postcard in particular, with regard to power. A technology of power is not, per se, a single device that facilitates certain power relations. Foucault's "technology" is not defined the way it is in popular computer age discourse, as "gadget." The term instead refers to the very design – not the material instruments – of a power apparatus. "Technology" for Foucault means a specific mechanical or automated *technique, modality, or strategy* by which power is exercised; is exchanged between actors; comes to constitute a field of flexible relationships; and reproduces itself. In his review of Foucault's writings on technology, M. C. Behrent explains that the philosopher "uses the term technology to describe exertions of power that are based less on overt violence than on the subtle manipulation of human behavior – in which bodies are prodded in certain directions, molded according to particular norms, and forced to act in coordination with one another" (Behrent 2013: 84). These exertions of power are total, comprehensive, and relational; they are exertions of power that *discipline* subjects to be economically productive and politically obedient (Foucault 1995 [1977]: 194).

Building from Behrent, I find that three characteristics together comprise the type of power exercise Foucault calls technological: 1) Technologies of power give authoritative legitimacy to a function that can be enacted by, upon, and between individuals i.e. writing a text, rather than authorizing specific persons; 2) That function then gets normalized as a tool for interpersonal – what Graham (2011) calls "omnoptic" – regulation; 3) That function also

manipulates relations of time, space, and embodiment, to ultimately create specific types of people – “individuals” whose specific subjectivity makes them vehicles for the operation of power. In mapping these characteristics to the representation technique of the photographic postcard, it becomes clear that postcards are more than reflections or results of power. They also actively generate power. Specifically, they help animate a capitalist technology of power based on visibility – a disciplinary exercise with *visualization* as its central function.

Authorizing the Function

In the lecture series *Psychiatric Power*, Foucault asserts that a technological exercise of power “is made so that it works by itself, and [what] is in charge of it, or its director, is not so much an individual as a *function* that is exercised by this and that person and could be equally exercised by someone else” (Foucault 1973-4: 50, in Behrent 2013, emphasis mine). Thus emerges the first element of technological power: It places authority with certain actions, rather than actors. I contend that photographic postcards are integral to a technology of power that places authority with the act of visualization; that renders visualization its “director,” or primary organizing force. Lynda Nead’s work on shop windows in turn-of-the-century London argues that visualization reified the constant accessibility and tenability of objects on market – and as such legitimized the broader relations of consumer/consumed, owner/worker that Marx was interested in. She writes, “the visual...produces a [great] dissolution of the boundaries between the viewer and the viewed object...it, alone among the new forms of commercial culture, moves between interior and exterior” (Nead 2000: 156). Like the illustrated anthologies of urban Paris that became popular in the second half of the nineteenth century, postcards “responded to the public’s desire to see its social space as a set or gallery whose intelligibility was *guaranteed*...by its visibility as an image” (Marcus 1999: 32, emphasis mine). Charles Baudelaire articulates this

guarantee most forcefully when he asserts that visual pictures capture the “other” and therefore unequivocally explain modern urban life: “... an ‘I’ with an insatiable appetite for the ‘non-I,’ at every moment rendering and explaining it in pictures more living than life itself” (Baudelaire 1863, in Schwartz and Przyblyski eds. 2004: 40).

Between these reflections it is evident that visualization in the Victorian era could enhance the real value of a commodity, ensure the intelligibility of social roles in urban space, and represent the urban “other” more “truthfully” than any other mode of knowing. While I will elaborate more in the coming thoughts about how these capacities formed regulatory structures, and eventually types of individuals, most immediately essential is the legitimacy they conferred. In an industrial capitalism characterized by the mass reproduction of objects and the unprecedented ability to move literally or affectively between faraway spaces, the postcard’s act of visualizing city space gained tremendous authority. Irving Underhill’s name and other identifying information do not appear on our subject image, and very little is credited on its reverse (text) side. Nothing is known – and nothing really matters to the consumer – about where exactly the image was produced, put on postcard paper, and transported. It was the act of visualization itself that authorized postcards as legitimate representations and exchangeable objects – more than it was the artist, laborer, salesperson or any such persona behind it. And through these objects, spaces and their occupants became literally viewed as most real – meaning most available for valuation, consumption, and exchange – once they were rendered visually to the public.

Omnoptic Regulation

As items like the photographic postcard bestowed authority to the act of visualization during the Victorian era, this act also became vital to a system of interpersonal regulation. Here

is the second facet in the triadic formation of techniques of power – an authoritative function becomes used by everyday subjects to manage one another. The formation of capitalist discipline is largely attributed to the intensification, in this period, of visual controls; of the *gaze* as a means by which any person could ascertain, assess, and correct themselves and any other person to fit dominant norms (Foucault 1977; Marcus 1999; Nead 2000; Schorske 1980; Wolff 2008). New orientations of space, class, and capital created an urban world in which visibility allowed – compelled – individuals to constantly monitor one another, a process crystallized in Baudelaire’s figure of the *flaneur*. Marcus elaborates that the fluid movements of bourgeois men through late nineteenth century Paris made both interior and exterior spaces “open to effortless visual penetration” (Marcus 1999: 38). This “penetration” largely meant male European society members’ visual violation of other individuals’ (women’s) choices, freedoms, behaviors, expressions, and bodies (Wolff 2008). Regardless of citizen-level power imbalances of gender, race, etc. that characterized these visual managements – and that remain mightily important to this thesis – the function of visualization triumphed as a regulatory device during the industrial age precisely because it became naturalized on a relatively horizontal interpersonal level. The gaze was how people evaluated and quite literally, financially, valued one another’s worth. It was not just about some overt regime figure visualizing their subjects to control them (Foucault 1995 [1977]), but about subjects perpetually managing their own peers through visual scrutiny (Graham 2011).

Subjectivities Created

In my view, Foucaultian disciplinary power’s most important characteristic is its production of particular subjects who are, themselves, productive. Foucault writes, “We must cease once and for all to describe the effects of power in negative terms: it ‘excludes,’ it

‘represses,’ it ‘censors,’ it ‘abstracts,’ it ‘masks,’ it ‘conceals.’ In fact, power *produces*; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth. The individual and the knowledge that may be gained of him belong to this production” (Foucault 1995 [1977]: 194, emphasis mine). Behrent adds, “Steeped in the works of Friedrich Nietzsche, Foucault maintained that power was also (and perhaps primarily) a productive force: Far from limiting and denying, power also shaped...and even created new ways of being a self.” The individual with her reality, the knowable and useful person, and the “self” emerge saliently here; among all the things disciplinary power produces, certain “ways of being a self” are extremely key. By making visualization firstly an authoritative function and secondly a tool for horizontal regulation, the photographic postcard ultimately created subjects whose very way of being a self was tied to the visualizing act; *subjects who perpetually saw and perpetually felt seen*. It formed subjects who understood themselves based upon the visual pictures they were capable of constructing and the visual pictures they imagined others constructing of them, while, crucially, being unable to discern exactly who or what “others” were visualizing them at any given moment. Along with other tools that co-operated the same disciplinary technique (i.e. electric lighting, below), postcards manifested the seeing strategies Foucault describes when he says, “It is the fact of constantly being seen, of being always able to be seen, that maintains the disciplined individual in his subjection” (Foucault 1995 [1977]: 187). The observer became invisible in order for the observed to feel – to *be* – most visible; to feel the fact of their observation irrespective of its particular operatives; and thereby to become a complete productive person.

Working through a limited but fruitful slice of Foucaultian theory, it becomes clear that the picture postcard during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was fundamentally linked to the material, economic, cultural, and personal machinery of industrial capitalism. From

its mode of production to, most crucially, the type of individuals it helped to form as it moved between millions of households worldwide, this representational form brought capitalist power logic into the realm of the everyday (Mellinger 1992; Osorio 2007). What is shown in a postcard depicting nightlife in a recreation neighborhood on the outskirts of New York City, therefore, should be conceptualized as a picture with a particular position; a picture that represents the ideas and ideals, the projections and preferences, of the bourgeoisie. The fact that citizens from all class positions enjoyed postcards in 1912 only intensifies and explains rather than mitigates the elite lens with which postcard images were framed – they so effectively and compositely shaped individual subjects around the world precisely because they were so massively consumed. The potential *enfolding* of lower class consumers into subject constructions that benefit the upper class (Williams 1977) will remain central throughout this thesis.

Electrifying Power: The 1912 Postcard, Illumination, and Night Space in the Edison Age

I think there is no more appropriate way to begin understanding power and the postcard than by conceptualizing a technology of power. However, it would be an extreme error to suggest that turn-of-the-century capitalist power and the postcard's role therein operated *so* automatically as to eschew positional differences. That is, visualization – as the disciplinary function organizing a technology of capitalist power – did not act uniformly on all subjects. Visualization did not legitimize *everything*, only certain things strategic for capitalist power relationships; Visualization did not form horizontal judgments that were equal in intensity and direction between people but rather, as I began to illustrate earlier, enforced particular inequalities through the gaze; Especially, visualization did not create subjects the world over who saw the same things and felt seen by the same entities, but subjects who saw and were seen

in deeply divided ways depending on their various positions and uses in a larger order. Therefore postcards did more than rote visualize – they visualized specific subjects over others. Who and what postcards visualized tells us a lot. To understand who and what our 1912 postcard strategically chooses to visualize in the Coney Island night, who and what it renders visible and invisible there, it is necessary to trace who and what it associates with electric lighting.

Foucault saliently draws artificial lighting into his discussion of the visibility that constitutes disciplined subjects, when he claims that discipline is a matter of strategic, controlled illumination. He expresses, “The perfect disciplinary apparatus would make it possible for a single gaze to see everything constantly. A central point would be both the source of light illuminating everything, and a locus of convergence for everything that must be known: a perfect eye that nothing would escape and a center toward which all gazes would be turned” (Foucault 1995 [1977]: 173). What is under light, like what is pictured in a postcard, is known; what is under light is coterminous with, is the aggregation of, all things that must be known to create social order. It makes sense, then, that street lighting has for centuries been a vital tool in power exercises targeting the edge of urban time – night – especially on the edges of urban space. Schivelbusch uses period documentation to demonstrate especially well that well before electricity was even involved, street lighting crystallized state policing and citizen resistance strategies. In pre-revolutionary France, “lanterns showed who lit the streets and who ruled them” (Schivelbusch 1983: 87). By the mid 1700s, street lighting received the largest discrete portion of Paris’ police budget, demonstrating its relative essence to state control during the ancient regime; Schivelbusch asserts that at this point the regime’s monopoly on weapons combined with its monopoly on public lighting created the modern security state (Schivelbusch 1983: 97). Street lanterns became both real and symbolic instruments in the violent French Revolution of 1789.

During the uprising's first few weeks, citizens hanged several key regime figures from lanterns; as lanterns symbolized the old order and served to illuminate the power of Louis XIV, death upon them symbolized a bloody re-appropriation of that order.

By the First World War, electricity had irrevocably affected the lit landscape and intensified its entanglements with disciplinary power. Electric lighting is absolutely integral to the social meaning that the 1912 postcard conveys. Subjects under electric lights in particular, which operate automatically upon a fixed space throughout the dark night, can be relentlessly known by the managerial forces controlling the light such as the state and police yet be unable to identify in those forces any specific viewer. Electric streetlights thus perfected the disciplinary strategy we traced earlier in postcards, by producing ways of being a self – subjecthood – around the dual capacities of seeing and feeling seen under the ceaseless gaze of an indiscernible authority. These lighting modalities were one of urban history's finest examples of state-capitalist power operating as a *panopticon* (Foucault 1995 [1977]: 200-03), the disciplinary structure Foucault develops from Jeremy Bentham's writing. Through panoptic regulation, individuals internalize visibility as knowledge and render themselves subject to its functioning upon their bodies. "He who is subjected to a field of visibility, and who knows it," in Foucault's words, "assumes responsibility for the constraints of power; he makes them play spontaneously upon himself; he inscribes in himself the power relation in which he simultaneously plays both roles; he becomes the principal of his own subjection" (Foucault 1995 [1977]: 202-3).

'Subject matter' that gets placed outside the sources of light, however – outside the electric bulb's delimited pool and outside the bounds of a postcard itself – is just as instrumental to the creation of disciplinary power. Darkness also facilitates panopticism and produces subjects. When lights go up, their automatic gaze allows more traditional forms of enforcement

such as police officers to hold themselves back in darkness understanding that lit spaces will either prevent or highlight for them any infractions of their imposed norms (Elias 1935). Darkness becomes both a target of power and its *source* (Douglas 2003 [1966]). It gives a literal site as well as an operational advantage to the agents of control. Mary Douglas writes about the way ritual exercises engage with margins, in a manner that is helpful for us toward understanding the potential inherent in the darkened margin vis-à-vis the lit frontier. “To have been in the margins,” she says, “is to have been in contact with danger, to have been at a source of power (Douglas 2003 [1966]: 96-97). Margins, in this view, become a site where danger and uncertainty create, inform, and fuel power; where lack of certain knowledge and the potential for certain risk together constitute what power needs to manage, and thereby form the shape of power exercise itself.

Moreover, accepting but adding to Foucault’s notion that disciplinary apparatuses place all they need to control under light, removal from light does not necessarily make something untouched or unmanaged by dominant forces. I think management occurs just as often by rendering certain matter – people, ideas, etc. – dark; by crafting the subject that is aware they are not and cannot be under the light. Those who are placed in darkness may know that by existing there, they too are under constant scrutiny; not manifesting themselves in the light, or being intentionally left out of the light as in the case I will make through this chapter, they are made to feel that their movements and actions are necessarily incorrect so necessarily worth rooting out. Both light space and dark space in the urban night, in different but equally serious ways, fall under this technique of power.

The question then is: Who and what gets managed by being placed *under the light*, and who and what gets managed by being placed *in the darkness*? Which subjects of the late gilded

age city are given over to constant visibility, such that their behaviors are easily regulable and their overall sense of self becomes increasingly obedient to political/economic norms; which are placed elsewhere, in hopes that they too will grow obedient to the order precisely by continuing to stay in a marginalized territory outside the light? What, through electric illumination, is associated with the urban nighttime as frontier; and what, through relegation to the shadows or off the page, comes to signify the urban nighttime as margin?

1. The Trolley Car: Electric Night and Urban Mobility

Our postcard draws an especially overt relationship between electricity and human movement at Coney Island. In highlighting the way electricity powers public transportation during the night hours, the image fundamentally ties the brightening of the nighttime to greater mobility. The postcard's text emphasizes that Surf Avenue, "is crowded with merry-makers and revelers until midnight." To understand the role these merry-makers had in forging the twentieth century night landscape at Coney Island, and their role in the messaging about that landscape which the postcard deploys, it is both necessary and exciting to consider what the postcard says about how they *arrived* in the neighborhood. One of the most prominent features in this image is a trolley car traveling down Surf Avenue toward the viewer on a set of in-ground electric rails. A few private automobiles mark the foreground as well, though the volume of pedestrians walking casually across the street in various spots suggests that car traffic was still relatively thin. I shall focus on the trolley car for one obvious reason: The fact that it was powered by electricity made it fundamentally different from previous means of transport to/from Brooklyn's beach peripheries, and in this difference it emblemizes at once the thrill and the anxiety surrounding nighttime access to Coney Island in the 1910s. Our image depicts electric lighting in a way that

highlights the trolley car, marking it as a symbol of bourgeois urban freedom. It says electric lighting made certain folks more physically free within the city. But by so doing, the image also strategically obscures from its visualization the routes – both physical and economic – trolleys opened for other, lower class citizens to reach Coney Island.

Pre-electric Mobility and Night Space at Coney Island

In the late nineteenth century, Coney Island – especially its easternmost beaches known as Manhattan Beach and Brighton Beach – was an exclusive resort for upper class New Yorkers. Its remove on the periphery of the city, which of course is the geographic and analytic focus of my analysis throughout this thesis, made it appealing to those with money and time to escape a rapidly growing and rapidly messy urban core (Denson 2011; Register 2003; Baldock 2004; Immerso 2002). This distance was very important. It was not merely an elite leisure culture and class-targeted marketing (Peiss 1986) that made Coney Island a destination for the rich, but the very fact that to reach it required an investment of time and money that only certain New Yorkers could afford. Before the turn of the century, steam-powered railroad trains were the primary means of travel to the beaches at Coney Island. Several train companies competed to bring passengers from Manhattan's wealthy upper reaches to the south end of that borough, across the East River via either ferry or the newly constructed suspension bridges, and down the length of Brooklyn to its southern shore. Such a trip took nearly a full day (Denson 2011). Their fares varied, but in virtually all cases made the trip primarily accessible to those with disposable wealth.

Maps these companies created as promotional materials illustrate best the way that the transport technology shaped spatial form, function, and economy in pre- and early-electrified Coney Island (Denson 2011). Rail companies tended to have strategic partnerships, and in many

cases partial ownership or investment contracts, with two key types of physical establishments by the beach: hotels and restaurants (Denson 2011; Immerso 2002; Register 2003). The hotels of gilded age Coney Island had enormous prestige, each known for their particular perks and amenities perpetually updated as tools of their competitive game; grand, capitalist establishments for society's grand capitalists. Postcards from the period give much attention to the Oriental Hotel, the Brighton Beach Hotel, and the Manhattan Beach Hotel (Armbruster, "Manhattan Beach Bathing," 1894; Armbruster, "Bathing by Night," 1984; Denson 2011). The Brighton was so popular it was physically uprooted and moved several dozen meters back from the waterfront when erosion threatened to overcome it in the 1890s (Denson 2011).

What the volume, opulence, and clear cultural cache of these hotels convey most importantly is that before 1900, Coney Island's nighttime spaces were primarily fixed and enclosed, designed for long visits in accord with upper class Victorian leisure sensibilities. The hotels were "fixed" in more ways than their mere occupation of a clear delineated plot. Their dramatic architectures were inextricable from their cultural image and their popularity, and as such the physical construction of the hotel building itself *was* the experience of utilizing it or staying in it. Beholden to their literal beams and mortar, Coney Island hotels were physically and socially bounded structures. They were also bounded in that they were designed for action to take place within them rather than far outside of them. They were usually not resting points for guests spending the day elsewhere, but in the manner still seen at major destination resorts today they were intended for almost full-time patronage – sleeping, eating, swimming, relaxing, could all be done on property (Denson 2011). They were, as such, self-contained. Finally, their interiors comprised space very clearly delineated between "public" and "private." Grand entry lobbies designed for social seeing, gazing, public spectacle and consumption gave way to (in

most cases) at least one hundred private rooms (Denson 2011). Whatever was done at night could be done in these, atomized within relatively secret zones.²

There was very evidently a functional relationship in Victorian era Coney Island between the prevailing transportation technology and the prevailing layout of nighttime spaces. Slow, expensive, steam-powered train travel made it only possible to visit Coney for an extended time, and thus crafted relatively discrete, controlled, bourgeoisie night spaces. Electricity intervened transformatively in that pattern. The trolley car at the heart of our postcard image represents precisely this transformation.

The Electric Trolley Car “Opens Up” the Night

The commercialization of electric utilities during the 1910s, exemplified by the Edison Company’s rise and its competition with firms like Westinghouse, redesigned the way people moved through North American urban space. Myriad cities offer rich examples; some of the most successful streetcar systems in early twentieth century America were built in Cleveland, Boston, Philadelphia, Chicago and San Francisco. It will benefit me to focus on New York not because its transit electrification was inherently more remarkable but because it is the site of my study. In October 1904, America’s first underground subway train traveled beneath Manhattan from City Hall to 125th Street in East Harlem – a journey of nearly two hundred blocks, powered entirely by electric rails. Above ground, horse carts and trolleys pulled by animals or steam were replaced with electric streetcars, enabling much faster journey times while also significantly reducing the clutter of livestock, smoke, and rubble in city streets. These new electric transport

² Disbelieving in most binaries, I am happy to believe this was not always true; that, for instance, the private rooms of these grand hotels may have hardly been soundproof and that from the very start divisions of public and private were blurred in these bourgeoisie establishments. For my purposes right now, however, it is worth highlighting these haute Victorian design principles, which encouraged public/private division and self-contained leisure space, as a general foil to the more fluid forms of night space that I shall show electric power wrought.

technologies were also believed to make streets healthier by reducing airborne causes of disease. Naturally, the very notion that streets were *cluttered* before electricity streamlined and quieted streetcar operations is an especially positional one, which privileges rationalized and regulable orthogony by diminishing less neat forms of human movement. And this is the position our postcard takes.

Moving on an electrified track, this trolley glimmers in the middle of Surf Avenue. A close inspection reveals that the lighting emanating from within it overcomes the literal architecture of the carriage. The spacing between windows on its outer edges, typically comprising full beams of wood,³ becomes in this image almost entirely eliminated by the radiating glow. Very miniscule separations appear instead of broad divisions, creating the appearance of a singular lighted façade spanning the length of the carriage. At the trolley's front, thick white beams project into the night air as a beacon as well as a warning, trumped only by the vigor of the electric lights on the extremely novel Ford model car directly ahead of it. Overhead street lighting clarifies the moving trolley within its space, and the vehicle is positioned in just such a way that the extraordinary lighting filling Luna Park's entry frames it. These artistic maneuvers, however small, go great lengths to associate electric power with clean, bright, linear, efficient mobility in the evening. They literally spotlight the trolley car as an exemplar par excellence of the sort of movement between spaces and between worlds that the electrically generated urban nighttime enables, and that in turn enable it. The electric trolley in contrast to the steam train is presented to make night space at Coney Island more fluid, unbounded, and motile.

³ This style predates the steel beam structure which allowed later rail cars as well as skyscrapers to truly diminish the spaces between glass windows. More detail can be seen in the active collection of the New York Transit Museum.

Published seven years prior to this postcard's printing, an article in the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* already provides a strong textual example of this discourse, representing a Coney Island night gloriously liberated by greater mobility. It focuses on the record-breaking crowds (~70,000) that arrived by trolley at Coney's beaches and, importantly, its nightclubs due to azure weather on Sunday, June 17, 1905. Still early in the season, these throngs pushed streetcar companies to the limit – and the article is amazed at the level of use that indeed the streetcars sustained.

The board walk...was a delightful place to promenade and up to a late hour last night it was crowded with people who seemed loathe to leave it ... There was a rush for the beaches from the Bedford and up-town districts last night, and as a result the trolley cars were overcrowded. At almost anytime between 8 and 9 o'clock, crowds could be seen standing on street corners waiting an opportunity to get on cars ... All the Brighton cars went loaded and many passengers were pleased to find standing room on the run boards. Many extra cars were run on the Gates Avenue and Nostrand Avenue lines to Brighton and all lines going to Coney Island had twice the usual service.

Brooklyn Daily Eagle, "Throngs at the Beaches," 18 Jun 1905

This article points clearly to the volume of passengers that the electric trolley lines carried well into the night. It was in the evening between 8:00 and 9:00 that the longest waits were observed, denoting that fun did not stop at sundown – while 9:00 is not the middle of the night, it was certainly later than throngs of people would ordinarily have been moving around ten years earlier. And they were certainly moving around. What the text most colorfully demonstrates is the density and the reach of streetcar networks that brought people to Coney in the evening. Brighton cars, Gates Avenue lines, and Nostrand Avenue lines are all routes that connect Coney Island with neighborhoods across central Brooklyn. They literally would have traveled into the heart of rapidly growing, largely middle and working class neighborhoods, and with one fare on one vehicle brought these standing crowds to the beach. And at the end of the night, these same cars would have brought passengers back home. In highlighting the capacity of

electric streetcars to transport myriad New Yorkers to Coney Island and home (or their need for greater capacity, as it were), the article demonstrates that these new transit options opened the night for short visits in contrast to earlier options that closed the night to all but long-term visitors. It is, however, in exactly this circular connectivity between Coney Island and New York's other neighborhoods that *anxieties* also came to underline and constitute such a robust discourse of nighttime liberty.

Opens Up the Night for Whom?

In this image, respectable middle and upper class people's movement into/out of Coney Island on electric rails signifies that the urban night landscape on the edge of the city is a frontier. Yet, as I established at the start of my image analysis, upper class representations of the spatio-temporal frontier necessarily embedded concerns. Imagining the peripheral urban nightscape as a frontier signified by bourgeois mobility was a project reliant upon its creation and maintenance of a contrasting imagining, which set that same nightscape as a margin; a place that less acceptable people could just as easily enter and soil. In a narrative typical throughout the twentieth century and persistent today, residents of Sea Gate, Coney Island's wealthiest residential enclave, became enraged by a 1909 rumor that the Brooklyn Rapid Transit Company was expanding service to their neighborhood (*Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, "Sea Gate Residents will Fight B.R.T." 14 Jan 1909). Such sentiments exemplify middle and upper class fears that open access to Coney Island, especially at night, was a threat to civic order and more broadly class order, demanding stricter regulation. The forms of mobility privileged in the 1912 postcard correspond with trenchant forms of exclusion, inflexibility, and immobilization. These were required in order to constitute mobility in the first place.

It is important to recall that the postcard image situates the trolley car directly in front of Luna Park's "electric eden" entryway, which bathes the vehicle in extra light and expressly articulates a connection between the mobility it represents and the promise or joy found inside the park. It suggests that the trolley can bring people in and out of that pleasure landscape seamlessly, facilitated by a sort of continuous electric current. Furthermore, several *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* articles emphasize the sheer numbers of visitors Luna Park received in its first decade, adding formatively to a discourse of access and free movement. But movement in New York's expanding urban spaces during this period might have been anything but free. It is certainly the case that a burgeoning urban middle class, comprised of those working newly evolved occupations ranging from secretaries to clerks to bureaucratic managers, gained tremendous mobility in the years before World War I (Nasaw 1999; Register 2003; Peiss 1986). It is also the case that urban amusement parks around the country and the world, taking explicitly after Luna Park, targeted exactly this class; its members had some money to spend perhaps for the first time in their lives, and the pleasure economy appealed not only to their economic abilities but also to their unique optimism (Register 2003: 95). By appealing so concertedly to this demographic, parks like Luna also made a very clear decision to shut other types of folks out.

Luna Park was not designed for the poor. It was not designed for those who had recently arrived in the United States and were largely associated with griminess. It did not welcome people of color, people deemed sexually transgressive, or any person who could not pay its market rate admission fees (Nassaw 1999; Register 2003). It, and amusements like it, literally rendered people with disabilities into "freaks" and exploited them as spectacles – resulting in a

“freak show” culture that pervades at Coney Island to this day.⁴ The matter of mobility and access was a centerpiece of Coney Island class exclusions beyond the amusement park as well.

By showing only middle class men and women in austere clothing strolling gently on Surf Avenue’s clean sidewalks, I believe the 1912 postcard does more than merely “exclude” from its projection the people that sites like Luna Park excluded. The exclusion thesis suggests a positional, intentional choice to represent certain people’s freedom and mobility at the expense of or while ignoring the different im/mobilities of others. I think the representation of those with access is actually inseparable from the representation of those without. Rather than merely privileging one “over” the other, this postcard *creates* the one through the other. The postcard can only show, can only constitute, a glorious urban freedom and mobility by failing to credit middle class folks’ worst fears about what that mobility can entail – riff raff. It is principally in failing to representing people who do not look normative by middle class standards moving in Coney Island’s space at night, that the image naturalizes for its middle class audiences the very fact that they can now move around in Coney Island at night. Such freedom would not be meaningful were it not in opposition to, were it not made possible by, the immobility of others.

2. Lighted Facades: Electric Night and Urban Consumption

The distinction our postcard embeds between a mutually constitutive “high class” and “low class” at Coney Island moves well beyond its representation of mobility. It is seriously, perhaps most strongly, pronounced in the image’s treatment of consumption and spending on

⁴ Cultural institutions claiming to represent and share Coney Island’s history, such as the Coney Island USA Museum, trade extensively in imagery pertaining to physically bizarre performers and clowns without problematizing much. When I shared my project idea with friends, family members, and interested adults, a staggering amount assumed I would be writing about the freak shows given my proposed focus on embodiment. Notions of Coney and the freak show remain very strong. Freaks are also crucial to constitutions of the body at Coney Island. In Chapter 3, I will emphasize the role their bodies played in activating a retooled bourgeois management logic for Coney Island night during the interwar period.

Surf Avenue at night. The postcard places white middle class consumption literally in its spotlight. It emphasizes the way electric light makes the night more fun for those who can afford it, opening up more opportunities to *spend* on leisure. The lights illuminating Luna Park's gate were a novelty specifically designed to draw paying customers inward. The fact that its electric lighting and signage factored centrally in the worldwide fame that Luna quickly garnered – exemplified in the duplicate Luna Parks built as far afield from the original as Melbourne, Australia – demonstrates well that such illumination contributed to its bottom line (Register 2011). The postcard itself places these dazzling electric signs at its formal and substantive center, calling the viewer in as they would call consumers in. The avenue beyond Luna as well is also lined with establishments, which are clearly commercial in nature and brightly lit to attract crowds. The building to Luna's right features a radiant second level and a vertical sign advertising it in the fashion typical of theaters and restaurants. Stretching further, the image's perspective presents these buildings clustered more tightly together so they form a warm yellow mass of bodies and lights. Most importantly, men's and women's figures dressed in characteristic bourgeois clothing line both sides of Surf Avenue spectating and ostensibly buying into each establishment. In all these ways the image claims that electric lighting brighten and open the urban night for freedom of a situated economic sort – the freedom, for those who already have money, to spend more of it and the freedom to find increasingly greater happiness in consumer establishments.

Of course, by presenting electric light as a signifier and catalyst of middle class consumption the image writes against and submerges the possibility that lower class New Yorkers may also be able or entitled to consume within the nighttime leisure landscape. In my previous discussion about trolley cars, I began to illustrate that Coney Island's major amusement

parks systematically excluded the poor from their gates, a mechanism I emphasized with regard to physical access. But this exclusion was also extremely rampant in the commercial sphere once visitors from a wide array of class backgrounds did ultimately make their way to Coney Island. Anxieties that poor individuals would taint newly opened night spaces, with some inherent cultural disposition or vice, underlie and help produce this postcard's glorification of rationalized, electrically lit night consumption. The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries saw several notable attempts to regulate Coney Island nighttime consumption in ways that would exclude or limit working class leisure, even as transportation and other shifts slowly made the neighborhood more popular among those without much money.

One of the most notable included the Raines Law of 1896, a citywide legislation which aimed to curtail debauchery in and around cheap saloons by declaring that only establishments with 10 or more sleeping rooms could serve alcohol on Sundays beginning at midnight. The logic behind this law was ostensibly that hotels – as I have mentioned, the anchorages of Coney Island's "respectable" commercial life prior to electric transport – could interiorize, shield, and disassemble the inevitable incivility that inexpensive establishments fostered on the worker's one free night of the week. Shortly after Raines passed, one police superintendent remarked that "[now] workingmen stay home on Sundays, and their families benefit by their presence. They can't stay out all the preceding night drinking" (*Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, "To Fight the Raines Law," 13 April 1896). In beachfront Brooklyn particularly, where Raines Law was overtly enforced and where dozens of clandestine saloon-hotels emerged to resist it, it sought to limit nighttime alcohol consumption as a means of class control. Pushing against the possibility our postcard also subdues, that cheaper and more efficient transport could bring poorer New Yorkers to Coney Island for short nighttime visits, Raines Law equated the workingman's leisure with the

bourgeoisie's disruption. It stripped working class consumers of their full ability to consume, not in a way that liberated them from a capitalist system set against them but in a way that simply pushed them further into the malignance said system inscribed for them.

3. The body politic: Electric night and nationhood

The third claim our 1912 postcard makes about the new urban night, which I believe pairs the claim that electric lighting enhances physical freedom with the claim that electric lighting enhances spending freedom, is that electric lighting demonstrates political freedom. The significance of street lighting in this postcard is explicitly tied to its projections of an American polity, represented by an extremely local scene but manifest in a continental country and indeed a global empire. That link is made most directly through the placement of American flags in the image. An American flag banner hangs on each light post, on both sides of Surf Avenue; upon the same infrastructure that French revolutionaries intentionally used to slaughter representatives of an oppressive monarchy, here we see the chief visual representation of a liberal state. The stringing streetlights which cross the road literally illuminate these flags, especially the largest ones directly in front of Luna Park. Down the length of the avenue there is also a flag hanging tall on top of every building, with an especially dense cluster in the background. These flags, in sum, are made extremely obvious. And they comport interestingly with the postcard's textual caption that Surf Avenue is "the most brilliantly lighted street in the world." What we see on Surf Avenue framed decadently by American symbols, the logic suggests, does not exist anywhere else in the world; it is distinctly *American*.

In addition to such earnest illumination of flags, the postcard advances a distinct political claim in its associated text. Surf Avenue is not the brightest street in the city, or the state, or the

country, but “the most brilliantly lit” in the entire world. The electric lighting that illuminates this single street on the city’s edge reflects and in fact creates the whole American nation’s superiority on a wholly global scale. To say it is the brightest street in the world, and show this with such beautifully lit American flags saturating the visual image, is to say that electric lighting does a lot more than free individual middle class citizens to consume at night. It is to say that electric lighting frees the world; it marks American democratic freedom as the emblem of liberation. Liberty along electric rails streets and liberty to spend *are* liberties of life itself in the discursive construction of a liberal American polity. These freedoms I’ve discussed in detail are inextricable from a freedom that is overtly political.

Of course, the ways I have shown that freedom to move and freedom to consume were distributed unequally so as to suppress the mobile consumption of unwanted people, rear themselves tremendously in this discourse of the lit Coney night as the free nation. Just as the poor and immigrants were treated with anxiety-by-absence in the postcard image, so they were treated with anxiety-by-exclusion at the level of the state. More than ever, during the period we are addressing here, concepts of the nation as an empire fell into tense but ultimately productive relation with concepts of the nation as a container allowing certain people in and keeping many people out (Ngo 2014). Projections of the spatio-temporal edge as a middle class frontier on the grounds of Americanness thus directly implicated projections of that edge as a margin on the grounds of fear – fear around what mixing and muddling the American nation could possibly become. In a single postcard, then, a political project constructing the ethnically respectable nation was advanced at the confluence of corollary projects to represent peripheral urban night space as liberating for middle class movement and liberating for middle class spending.

Conclusion

In this 1912 postcard, electric light mediates and manages bourgeois anxieties about the potential mixing of various subordinated groups in New York's peripheral neighborhood of Coney Island at night. As its principal strategy for so mediating, the postcard depicts light as a tool that transformed urban night to veritable urban day. In turning night to day, light illuminated what middle and upper class capitalist interests sought to reproduce and hid what these interests were anxious to keep at bay. In the hands of the owning classes, light was thusly harnessed in an attempt to change the social meaning of time itself. Perpetual day meant perpetual control over matters of class, race, and embodiment central to hegemonic capitalism. In light/dark, visibility/invisibility, rested a mutual construction of a frontier/margin, the latter always forming the former's contents as the former always attempts to eradicate the latter.

But, was there a limit to bourgeois power as such? Was it possible, and was the possibility ever successful, to contest the differentiating effects that industrial power logic set in motion in the Coney Island nightscape? When my father watched Luna Park burn in 1944, was he witnessing not only the sudden demise of an American amusement landmark but also the culmination of a decades-long process in which the monopolizing laurels it rested on had crumbled? A process in which owning class dreams gave way to working class reappropriations and upward trajectories? It is certainly compelling to think so. I will argue, however, that such a projection is diametrically different than the reality.

3. BODIES ON THE EDGE: REPRESENTING CLASS, CONTROL, AND CORPOREALITY in CONEY ISLAND NIGHTS (1915-1940)

Our contrasting 1910s imaginings of Coney Island at night, as an edgy site where consumer promise abounded or a wayside site where certain dangers lurked, gave cultural value to a pattern already well established in rapidly changing New York. With an expansion of public transit networks, a growth of class and labor divisions, and an influx of immigrants all reshaping mobilities into and within the city, Coney Island was becoming popular with the city's new marginalized (Peiss 1986: 122-7). The lowly 'vice' anchoring its mid-nineteenth century reputation, which gilded age institutions sought to codify within new terms and technologies of control, and remove from the neighborhood, only strengthened throughout the 1910s, 20s, and 30s. In the decades following the Surf Avenue postcard scene, Coney Island and especially its night landscape became ubiquitous with working and lower-middle class rather than gentry class urban recreation. The neighborhood's growth relied upon "the commercial *transformation* of popular amusements, including those of a *new* middle class that gloried in the midway and rejected genteel culture" (Peiss 1986: 138, emphases mine) – and that, crucially, labored during most weekdays so sought leisure primarily at night (Peiss 1986; D'Emilio and Freedman 1997; Frank ed. 2015; Parascandola and Parascandola eds. 2015). The honky-tonk, rough-edged, and low-class characteristics that representations such as the postcard aimed to obscure were not so easily exterminated.

The feature article in *Fortune* magazine's August 1938 issue, "To Heaven by Subway," elaborates upon exactly this proliferation of density, social mixing, and anti-gentry sentiment which pre-World War I middle class representations of Coney nighttime anxiously apprehended. One of the richest representations of interwar Coney Island available on record, its text and

illustrations retrospectively locate the neighborhoods classed transformation with a rise in affordable access and low entertainment costs. By 1920, when our earlier trolley network had become three separate subway routes terminating at Coney's Stillwell Avenue, a single BMT⁵ ticket and 45-minute ride could bring a customer all the way from the upper reaches of The Bronx. The article's text asserts that Coney Island "might have emphasized its tonier restaurants and exclusive bathhouses...or it might have followed the frankfurter and the roller coaster and the public beach and become the playground of the masses...the subway in 1920 forced a decision. Coney Island became the empire of the nickel" ("To Heaven," *Fortune*, August 1938: 64). This is to say, 1920s Coney Island may have gone the way of the gentry's respectable frontier as our postcard outlined it or the way of that same image's seedy and feared margin – and it demonstrated the latter. Instead of becoming an expensive place for the bourgeoisie and the prosperous middle classes, it became a cheap place for those who earned wage labors and were now able to visit after work using just the nickels in their pockets. The neighborhood and its night in particular became, by most standard accounts, a domain that not merely included but *belonged to* the poor who were subordinated in mainstream daytime publics at the urban core (Frank ed. 2015: 43-5, 79). The potential reorienting of classed power interests implicit here raises new questions about the nature of spatio-temporal frontiers and margins amid industrial capitalism. Most notably – did the upper class margin become the lower class frontier?

Coney Island's "Nickel Empire": Playground for the Masses, Managed by the Masters

To begin answering that, it is necessary to frame the question more clearly and critically. Discursive representations in finance-oriented magazines – as well as in art historical

⁵ Brooklyn-Manhattan Transit Company

conversations, history volumes, and even individual Americans' memories – of any New York neighborhood as a heavenly melting pot for the working masses during the 1920s-30s (“To Heaven,” *Fortune*, August 1938: 60) should make us skeptical. “Despite such declarations of faith,” Masteller entreats with regard to depression-era images of an American people, “economic crises continued to plague the country – political extremists of all persuasions, both here and abroad, gave evidence not of solidarity but of continued conflict – and the appropriate metaphor for social change seemed not so much a march of progress as a roller-coaster ride of peaks and valleys with momentary truces quickly degenerating into violent strikes (Masteller 1989: 23). The issue is not that urban neighborhoods of this era failed to include, serve, or even uplift those whose class positions subordinated them in the capitalist system; Coney Island may well have been one of the city’s and the nation’s best examples of precisely such a thing. The key question is not about whether working class “playgrounds” or “frontiers” existed. It is about what exactly constituted them as exciting, and how their constitutions related back to the owning class structures that set up the frontier/margin scheme – not to mention created the category “working class” – in the first place. In particular, we need to be asking whether the shift toward working class fulfillment in Coney – for our purposes, Coney’s nighttime – marked a *resistance to* or an *overall entrenchment of* hegemonic capitalist power.

Working Class “Frontier” as Contestation or Concretization? Foucault’s Resistance and Gramsci’s Hegemony in the Coney Island Nightscape

It is compelling to consider, in light of innumerable testimonies saying nickel empire Coney nightlife opened a “democratic” “paradise” for the urban proletariat (Frank, in Frank ed. 2015: 79), one of Michel Foucault’s most important theories of resistance to power. I will begin to do this by reiterating and building from the exact wording I used when framing Foucaultian

power in my literature review: Power is an “economy of relations” (Foucault 1982: 779) manifest in the fluid, dynamic, and constantly re-signified social space that connects equally dynamic subjects (Foucault 1982: 786-7). Perhaps the strongest single exposition Foucault offers for this concept, and the meaning of resistance it entails, can be found in *The History of Sexuality*:

Power must be understood in the first instance as the multiplicity of force relations imminent in the sphere in which they operate and which constitute their own organization; as the process which, through ceaseless struggles and confrontations, transforms, strengthens, or reverses [these relations]; as the support which these force relations find in one another, thus forming a chain or a system...and lastly, as the strategies in which they take effect.

Foucault 1990 [1978]: 92-3

The idea of “struggles and confrontations” is especially important to his formulation of power. Power exercised in such relational channels, where the possibility is always eminent for the activity of those channels to change, fundamentally produces; encounters; and contends with exercises of resistance. “Where there is power, there is resistance,” Foucault famously dictates, “and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power” (Foucault 1990 [1978]: 95). Moreover, resistances are not “only a reaction or rebound, forming with respect to the basic domination an underside that is in the end always passive, doomed to perpetual defeat...they are the odd term in relations of power; they are inscribed in the latter as irreducible opposites” (Foucault 1990 [1978]: 96). This is to say two things. First, power and resistance do more than just oppose one another; they substantively form one another, and are irreducibly internal to one another. Second, within this mutual inclusion, resistance is an active form of relational exercise instead of something perpetually beaten down; just as power is productive, so can resistance actively produce social effects.

This model, of resistance perpetually acting upon and contesting normative power exercises, could appear congruent with the case of Coney Island nightlife as a site of working class leisure. To fulfill such an argument requires accepting that working class expressions, attitudes, appearances, and other modes of acting and being in the Coney night manifested a contestation of the power structures that regulated them in more mainstream spaces at more mainstream hours. It requires accepting that, by simply existing there with the robustness they did, working class and other marginalized people pushed against upper class efforts to define and control them; that they acted in ways that did not merely contradict normative order but exposed and *dented* its efficacy. Such reasoning may be especially convincing if we choose to understand “frontier” and “margin” as conceptual pawns in the power/resistance contest – if we can say that the bourgeois “margin” previously constituted through a visual association of badness with darkness worked favorably for later working class people who, while literally reveling in light, may have fallen outside the visible sphere of owning class agents. Thus it would follow that the working classes *actively re-appropriated* both the darkened margin the bourgeoisie ascribed to them and the dazzling lights integral to bourgeoisie control, turning these into the substance of their new frontier – in the resistive manner Scott (1990) outlines, *mocking* (D’Emilio and Freedman 2007: 196) what the bourgeoisie had established as frontier/margin order.

The possibility that one group’s frontier could resistively refashion another’s margin, whether or not it is accurate, is vital because it reveals the fundamental instability of the categories “Coney Island night as frontier” and “Coney Island night as margin.” The reality becomes acutely evident that these categories were unfixed; tied to specific class positions; and as such, significantly more fluid than we have so far been assuming. It is less immediately evident, however, that these categories’ flexibility and contingency in a class-determined

framework went so far as to truly abrogate their upper class determination. That is, it is unclear if the instability of one iteration of the gentry's frontier and margin ultimately weakened these designations on the whole – ultimately weakened upper class power broadly speaking – or merely rewrote them in a more strategic form. If even what is placed in a margin can be rendered productive of dominant power ideals (see Chapter 2), it is unclear whether Kathy Peiss is correct in boldly claiming that the 1920s working class alteration of Coney Island's night entertainment formed “the decline of a genteel middle-class hegemony” (Peiss 1986: 137). While it may be unusual to defer from a post-structuralist such as Foucault back to a structuralist take on power like Marxism, it is not altogether illogical and in this case it is crucial. Arguing that lower class constituents necessarily reclaimed or reconstituted Coney Island night as their own/ed landscape does not address adequately the degree to which capitalism's deleterious subjugations shaped even landscapes that seemingly overrode them. To see this entails a more dedicated consideration of the meaning of *hegemony* than Peiss is willing to give, as she shares with the twentieth century sociologist Norbert Elias and others a rather diluted stance on Antonio Gramsci's concept when using it.

Again I shall invoke and elaborate upon groundwork I established in the literature review. Gramsci, a Marxist intellectual writing during the exact period currently under consideration while he was imprisoned in fascist Italy, tried to understand how power favoring such a minority owning class maintained itself over such a majority laboring class. His well-known theory of hegemony is born from this inquiry. Hegemony means an exercise of power, by any group but most specifically by the capital-owning class for Gramsci⁶, in *soft*, *invisible*, and *total* cultural saturation as opposed to merely direct rule. Consciousness in his view cannot be reduced to what

⁶ Gramsci writes in a tradition that emphasizes class distinctions and he concertedly focuses on them, but is also astutely aware of the tensions that exist *within* classes. Rather than categorically defining classes, he tends toward Bourdieu's model of class as a social field (Riley 2011) – something we can all do well to employ more.

regimes make visible and articulate, but is created through unseen, informal, often-inchoate naturalization processes (Williams 1977: 110). It is nearly impossible to identify one definition in Gramsci's own words, though a particularly rich entry in the eighth notebook emphasizes the importance of hegemonic power's naturalization process:

One must look at the technical relations of production, at a specific mode of production that, in order to be kept up and developed, requires a specific way of life and hence specific rules of conduct. One must be persuaded that not only is a certain apparatus "objective" and necessary but also a certain mode of behavior, a certain education, a certain civilization.

Gramsci ~1930, in Buttigieg ed. 2007: 321

We can locate here multiple of the essential points Williams (1977) elaborates in his outstanding chapter on Gramscian hegemony. First, that it is intrinsically related to the capitalist means of production and the efforts of those who control them to maintain them. Second, that it institutes specific practices and norms which write existing power logics into everyday practice. And third, most critically, that such institutionalization thoroughly entrenches it in the form of culture – inscribing culture *as* power – to the point that subjects believe existing power logics are necessary, unavoidable, and irreplaceable by any other viable alternative. Williams draws these threads together more elegantly than Gramsci himself when he describes the hegemonic as,

A saturation of the whole process of living – not only of political and economic activity, nor only of manifest social activity, but of the whole substance of lived identities and relationships, to such a depth that the pressures and limits of what can ultimately be seen as [the given] specific economic, political, and cultural system seem to most of us the pressures and limits of simple experience and common sense.

Williams 1977: 110

In a hegemonic power field, one experiences and understands the specific realities they live – realities substantiated only upon specific relationships and actors etc. – as the very extent

of reality itself. In all these ways, nothing differs too dramatically from many of Foucault's theories. But for these conditions to exist, Gramsci specifies that hegemonic power has an entirely different relationship to resistance than Foucaultian power. Williams explains,

...To the extent that [oppositions] are significant the decisive, hegemonic function is to control or transform or even incorporate them. In this active process...any hegemonic process must be especially alert and responsive to the alternatives and oppositions which question or threaten its dominance. The reality of cultural process must then always include the efforts and contributions of those who are in one way or another outside or at the edge of the terms of the specific hegemony.

Williams 1977: 113

In contrast to Foucault's thesis that power always creates resistance opportunities, making power and resistance internal to one another in a way that perpetually exposes the former to the latter's buffeting, Gramsci's hegemonic power strategically *incorporates* resistance. It identifies resistance, makes room for resistance, weaves resistance into its exercise, and uses resistance as a means to become ultimately stronger. While clearly this view also places power and resistance internal to one another, the idea is that dominant power relations literally *internalize* potential opposition so as to neutralize it rather than remaining in constant tension with it – while leading subjects likewise to internalize their condition as one without possible alternatives.

Working Class "Frontier" is Owning Class "Frontier," Too

Examined through a Gramscian lens, the abilities, opportunities, materials, experiences, and styles that made Coney Island nightlife a site of working class "freedom" did not necessarily render it a site of working class resistance. I contend that the buoyant interwar rise of the working class in Coney Island's nightscape ultimately manifested hegemonic enfoldment rather than perpetual resistance. The enfoldment model prevails because what came to constitute this

context as a frontier among working class New Yorkers fundamentally facilitated, more than it dismantled, industrial capitalist power relations and the owning class interests that managed them. Gramsci helps us recognize that industrial capitalism's alert, dynamic cultural hegemony naturalized itself amid destabilizing change in depression-era American cities, largely by providing and managing opportunities for the urban proletariat to feel liberated; and by folding this liberty, however seemingly resistive, into its flexion of control.

Williams' language in the statement above helps demonstrate just how important Coney Island night would have been to hegemonic power exercises during this time. Particularly salient is the notion that a hegemonic power structure must incorporate into its domain those elements "on the *edge*" of its terms; those elements not quite outside it, which straddle on the outer rings of its reach. Coney Island at night as we have been considering it – and the general concept of a joint spatial-temporal periphery that has guided this entire thesis – exemplifies this outlying yet incorporable edge to a tee. The tactic demonstrated by the 1912 postcard as well as by the modern history of artificial lightning (Schivelbusch 1995), of turning darkness to consumption-enabling light, already shows that dominant social forces took particular interest in bringing the peripheral urban night under their own terms. Its distance from mainstream space and time made it an essential target of control. This would be even *more* true, rather than suddenly nullified, when it came to encompass what such dominant forces feared – when what took place there inked more than ever into the edges of what dominant forces could control.

Peiss herself describes this, though just as when she first references hegemony her overall narrative of the broadly equalizing Coney Island limits her critical capacity. The business decisions rooting Coney's working class transformation, especially the gender relations it brought, point to "Entrepreneurs like [George C.] Tilyou [who] encouraged working-class

women's participation...at the same time that they sought to *tame* and *contain* it for a middle-class clientele" (Peiss 1986: 136, emphasis mine). Men like Tilyou were, furthermore, agents of an enormous land speculation and property ownership game. They propelled Coney Island through the American depression by generating fortunes from the spare change that working class residents spent on a few hours of leisure while away from work (Denson 2011; Register 2003; Parascandola and Parascandola eds. 2015). While some Coney entrepreneurs started poor themselves and are commonly associated with the "American dream" of financial mobility (Register 2003), the very backbone of their enterprises remained intrinsically capitalistic and intrinsically linked to the economic use of working class citizens. Laborers' leisure formed owners' holdings.

And at a level even deeper than this, the working class *desire* for leisure, itself, was a function of owning class interests. Edward F. Tilyou's article about his Steeplechase Park asks why a prim schoolteacher would go running into the ocean at Coney Island. The gist of his answer is, "Those of us who run amusement parks see human nature with the breaks off, day after day, from May to September. People out for a good time...cut loose from repressions and restrictions, and act pretty much as they feel like acting" (Tilyou 1922, in Parascandola eds. 2015). Reading this begs another *why* question: Why did people look for such an experience in the first place? I believe, as perhaps Tilyou does too, that the constraints and conditions of working life created – necessitated – desires for controlled liberation. Turning to Gramscian logic, these desires instrumentalized the proper functioning of capitalist labor conditions far more than they posed threat to them. Building time for leisure into the unending schedule of day/night/week/month/life that defined working life by the 1930s strategically wrote recreation into, not out of, the overall hegemonic logic of production. It offered space and time for "play,"

which had a necessary end point at the space and time of the next work shift. This actively trained and disciplined workers to be more productive when they returned. “Play,” meant fun on the bounded iron tracks laid out by capitalist designers with a definitive circulation pattern and restorative limit – a literal re-volution contra to class revolution. Sociologist John Urry (1994) writes,

I take clock time to consist of the following characteristics...that organizations of industry are structured around clock-time, around efforts to extend or contract the working day, week, and year; that leisure as well as work is organized and regulated by the clock, producing so-called ‘rational recreation.’

Urry 1994: 133-4

Bourgeoisie ownership of labor itself (Marx 2006 [1948]) necessitated ownership of recreation itself as well. Coney Island’s “irrational” topsy-turvy was rational in that its irrationality formed a strategy of capital accumulation and re/production. The very existence of recreation on the spatio-temporal urban edge thereby manifested the transformation of potential working class deviation – experience outside work – into direct owning class gain. It *was* the enfoldment of possible resistance. Whatever revision or rewriting of normativity existed on that edge, remained operational fully and only under the terms of capitalist power relations.

Bodies on the Edge: Who is Fit, and Who Fits, in the Masses’ “Frontier”?

Situating Bodies in Capitalist Hegemony

The concretization of owning class power logic that defined 1930s Coney Island working class nightlife is richly evident in period representations of the human body. In the remainder of this chapter, I will argue that the body fundamentally rooted the spatio-temporal imaginings that ensured working class night leisure at Coney would continue supporting exploitative capitalist norms. We could follow dozens of other paths showing the same phenomenon, but examining

visualized bodies shall prove uniquely fruitful. This is in no small part because the body is crucial to both major theories of power I have set in dialogue. Foucault understands power with deep and meaningful relation to human embodiment, an association that pervades his work and is most famously articulated in his writing on the *docile body*. For Foucault, the disciplinary power that modern regimes exercise takes the body as its chief tool; disciplinary power manipulates and trains bodies that will be as economically and politically useful as possible (Foucault 1995 [1977]: 160). While the most crucial operation of Foucaultian power is its capacity to form *subjects*, humans with the sense of autonomous rational subjectivity bound up in regulatory norms, his work compellingly suggests that the subject is formed largely through their body; that to be and to know *is* to embody; and therefore that power as knowledge-creation means power as body-creation. Gramsci deals less explicitly in bodies but the Marxian tradition he works from views bodies seriously. Art historian Boris Groys elaborates,

Alienated industrial work cannot be understood solely in terms of its external productivity—it must necessarily take into account the fact that this work also produces the worker’s own body as a reliable gadget, as an “objectified” instrument of alienated, industrialized work. And this can even be seen as the main achievement of modernity.

Groys 2010

Workers’ bodies are producer-products, mutually implicit but structurally divorced with the commodities they make, in a process of estranged labor (Marx 2006 [1848]). Bourdieu (1984) adds formatively to the notion that working bodies both produce and are produced by their exertions as I discuss below.

In the introduction to his “Coney Island: The People’s Playground,” Michael Immerso (2002) makes a simple but striking claim about the body in 1930s Coney Island. “Coney was transformed,” Immerso writes, “into an empire of the body, celebrating the human form in all its diversity. Reginald Marsh liked Coney’s crowd to ‘the great compositions of Michelangelo and

Rubens’” (Immerso 2002: 8). This perspective on the body is doubly worth intervening upon. First, while it is true that Coney Island’s Nickel Empire can be best understood by thinking about bodies, it is not so true that all bodies were “celebrated.” Such conflation of different bodies’ side-by-side existence and their through-and-through integration, let alone their mutual celebration, leaves major holes. Secondly, I wish to spotlight Immerso’s reference to American painter Reginald Marsh, known for his depictions of 1930s Coney Island. Indeed Marsh was drawn to Coney Island for its colorful character, which he analogized with the diversity of human forms found in Italian renaissance paintings; but it is difficult to say this artist from an upper class background, a Coney Island “slummer” (Heap 2009), necessarily celebrated all difference. More importantly, even if he did, I believe his paintings reveal quite complex and stratified realities. He positioned different types of bodies in very specific arrangements within his scenes, which help us recognize how fundamentally unequal and constraining New York’s beachfront eden could be for many of them.

Painting Bodies, Painting Power

When considering the body in Coney Island’s nickel empire nightlife through visual representation, choices of material are nearly limitless. The neighborhood and its visiting publics were portrayed with veritable obsession by some of the most respected artists of this period including Frank Stella, Milton Avery, Harry Roseland, Paul Cadmus, and Reginald Marsh. I take a strong interest in works by American artist Reginald Marsh (1898, Paris – 1954), and works by some of his peers, who approached depression-era metropolitan life with a combination of colorful exuberance and deep cynicism (Masteller 1989). I focus on two well-regarded Marsh paintings of Coney Island nightlife, which I believe are indicative of larger patterns. In *Pip and Flip* (1932, in Frank ed. 2015: 97), Marsh depicts a throng outside the World Circus Side Show

on a summer night. At the center of the image and its narrative is Jenny Lee Snow, a microcephalic (triangular-headed) woman who with her twin sister was a Coney Island sideshow act called “Pip and Flip.” And in *Adults 10 Cents, Children 5 Cents* (1936, in Frank ed. 2015: 100), Marsh portrays another thick crowd this time on Surf Avenue not far from the 1912 postcard site, amassing around two “hucksters” who hawk patrons to come watch the famous little person (dwarf) Jimmy Sullivan in a boxing match. I will also refer to some other works, such as drawings by Robert Riggs found in the aforementioned 1938 *Fortune* magazine article “To Heaven By Subway.” All these images seem at first glance to show the hodgepodge boundary-blurring Coney Island. But on a closer look they reveal extraordinarily more than that.

1. Bodies That Fit

The exciting, liberatory, and fulfilling nature of Coney Island’s working class-oriented nightscape during the 1930s is visually signified – most generally speaking – by bodies intentionally distant from the constraints of wage labor. That is, by bodies on the geographic and temporal limits of their laboring lives: Bodies located as far as possible from the geographic spaces where they work, which during this period would have been mostly Brooklyn and Manhattan’s commercial zones and inner industrial ports; and bodies positioned, concurrently, as far as possible from the temporal hours when they work, predominantly the daytime as divided into pay hours. At Coney, such distance implies particular arrangements worth emphasizing. Because the neighborhood lies at the border of city and sea, distance from labor site implies bodies that are as far at the edge of New York City as they could be without being in the Atlantic Ocean. In fact, given that Coney’s beach is historically ubiquitous with its leisure landscape, even the shallow parts of the shore were within reach; so we can go further and say these were bodies as far from work as they could be without actually drowning. Spatial distance also means

it took time for bodies to travel to Coney after work and then back home – and of course, folks needed to consider sleeping. Temporally, then, bodies far from their labor hours imply bodies as far removed from their work shifts as possible while still being awake. In both these domains, the spatial and the temporal, the body itself therefore constrained the extent to which experience outside or at the limit of wage labor was even possible. A body’s ability to uphold itself in terrain and to sustain itself without sleep in fact *formed* the phenomenal boundaries of space and time that were to be teased when laborers sought leisure after work. This constraining character helps reveal the crucial fact that not all bodies had equal access to an equal edge; not all bodies on the edge were considered equal, or were equally associated with the edge’s promise. Certain bodies were designated more *fit* than others to partake in the so-called democratic working class frontier.

I contend that my selected images of the proletariat Coney Island night depict a prevailing cultural distinction between “fit” bodies and “unfit” bodies. It is in the relationships that emerge between these bodies, just as with the 1912 postcard it was in an implicit relationship between visibility and invisibility, that spatio-temporal projections of “frontier” and “margin” become truly operational. And most importantly, the logic that determines the “fit” bodies from the “unfit,” the frontier from the margin, fundamentally advances industrial capitalism’s core virtues. The specific bodies depicted taking full part in the edge as a frontier, are: Strong, young, laboring bodies that are materially fit to exert themselves at such limits of livable space and time after already exerting their normal daily labor; Bodies with clear gender presentations and sexual desires, which make them immediately “knowable” as subjects; White-skinned bodies, which, however entangled in ethnicity politics that transcend a white/black binary, are the most enfranchised in this 1930s American milieu. What I believe binds these

body types together along intersecting axes of ability, gender presentation, and race, and makes them “fit” for the frontier, is that they are all *bodies deemed economically productive in non-peripheral urban spaces and times* – teetering here on the edge of their normative productivity but only for a liminal moment before returning. In contrast are other bodies, whose very presence in the images might suggest diverse mingling yet whose visible relations to the former set should assuage such interpretations. These are the bodies that the former set take space from, domineer, and consume – bodies that do not partake the same way in the working class frontier, but rather form its seedy underside. Along the same axes, these are: Bodies with physical abnormalities, termed “freaks,” which undeniably possessed agency in this specific context but were maligned on the basis of their overall “lack” of productivity; Bodies without clear gender and sexual dispositions; Black-skinned bodies that are shown coexisting with other bodies but in ways underlining their relational subjugation. In opposition to the normatively productive bodies signifying frontier excitement, I believe the second set are *bodies deemed economically unproductive in mainstream domains*, unable to similarly return to anything other than their marginalized positions on the periphery. Visual imagery thus makes clear that the specter of a working class urban frontier, where hegemonic inequality might be overturned, was constructed through the activation of patently unequal power relationships between unequal embodied types; relationships that reified corporeal productivity, mobility, and humanness itself in the (literal) image of bourgeois production interests.

Prominently featured at the center of a wide crowd congregating outside the World Circus Sideshow in *Pip and Flip*, we find four women moving together from right to left whose bodily features emphasize their leanness, strength, and vitality. Their clothing is generally sheer, light in color, and cut short revealing much of their skin and muscle; three of the four women

wear high-waist shorts that show their left legs from heel to just below the rear. Legs such as those shown thrust forward in unison here, long and well defined, are characteristic of Marsh's feminine subjects known among critics as "Marsh girls" (Frank ed. 2015: 99). As they support the women's robust motion, their toned muscular formations are evident. Even the one woman wearing a full-length dress is portrayed so her left leg appears in tandem with the other three, its contours equally discernable even through fabric. The women hold one another for propulsion, more than for support, and must hold tightly to grasp one another's markedly slender frames; the rightmost subject's yellow belt, linking her tight dark shorts and fitted top, draws particular attention to her and her cohort's taught core midsections. Youth is especially key to this image. Every body participating in the street scene is relatively young, in addition to being lean. The four women's forms are strongly privileged on this canvas as the *most* youthful and poised, but all bodies comprising the teeming crowd appear able to uphold themselves without evident issue in a tumultuous field of other bodies. Based on all these markers, they are almost certainly working bodies, bodies clocking daily into and out of some occupation that tunes them in the first place. Their honed forms and features, essentialized in the four women, disclose their daytime urban labor even as attempts to soften or sexualize them temper it some. These are the bodies whose materiality has been literally shaped through repeated motion on factory lines and presentation on department store floors, whose concomitant strength enables them to dance for hours or whirl on a roller coaster, and whose very ability to participate in a leisure world far outside work therefore remains tethered to that work's corporeal effects (Bourdieu 1984: 190).

Bourdieu (1984) helps explain more fully how working bodies' material abilities were fundamentally coded in and made to constitute – structured by and structuring – capitalist sociocultural meaning. He writes, "the body is the most indisputable materialization of class

taste, which it manifests in several ways...first in the seemingly natural features of the body, the dimensions (volume, height, weight) and shapes (round or square, stiff or supple, straight or curved) of its visible forms, which express in countless ways a whole relation to the bodies” (Bourdieu 1984: 190). In addition to class taste, he argues that the divisions of labor that create “class” itself produce specific body materiality with social meanings (Bourdieu 1984: 190). The bodies I have identified that most prominently signify the working class frontier are, in Bourdieu’s framework, bodies whose visible structures and modes of self presentation signify their distinct lower class habitus, i.e. the bearing of exceedingly short attire and unbound “natural” hair (Frank ed. 2015: 102); and by doing so signify their prescribed roles as laborers in an economic field managed by upper class owners i.e. their supple, toned, young forms, and rigorous, even disciplined, expressions. In terms of physique and ability, the bodies shown to be most immediately active in Coney Island’s cheap off-kilter alleys during the 1930s night are the bodies most structured by and most structuring of hard work along the city’s main avenues during the day.

 Laboring leanness, conventional youthfulness, and in particular femininity, intersect importantly with what the image says about gender and sex. In *Pip and Flip*, bodies on the frontier are explicitly marked with woman/man gender identities and heterosexual desires. The image suggests that bodies with these specific gender and sexual subjectivities were privileged in the constitution of the working class frontier at Coney Island night. The image’s clearest social interactions are notably “homosocial” – the most visible bodies are represented as female, and the four starlets in front embody mutual social intimacy as they link arms and move as a unit. This predominance may have been due to Marsh’s keen interest in female forms. But their intra-feminine sociality is exercised in such a way that it directly speaks to and creates heterosexual

desire (a corollary to Marsh's interest, then, being his own heterosexual fantasies). The overtly constituted "woman" finds herself embodied apart from, but perpetually *a part of* the gaze of, male-bodied attention toward which she is ostensibly going. This is especially notable when considering the blurrier swath of men's bodies, or at least heads, Marsh renders in formation behind the parade of women. Many of them stare directly at the women's bodies around them, and one figure just to the right of the four main girls is seen sharing a kiss with a woman. Not quite central, but certainly not part of the background, these men's dispositions ultimately place the promise and excitement of an urban night frontier in association with heterosexual virtues. Embodied symbols of women's gendered and heterosexual stability include their breasts – especially apparent on the leftmost and second-from-right of the four leading women but equally delineated on a young female form who seductively eats an ice cream cone near the image's left edge, on the woman who reaches out toward her, and on a woman near the right edge bent almost so as to touch another's rear. In addition to sculpted breasts, Marsh uses high-heeled shoes to categorize female-bodied subjects as stably and recognizably "woman"; all of the female bodies visible in the crowd's front tier sport heel shoes, and especially on the four anchoring figures these visibly accentuate the length, definition, and physical-sexual utility of their bare legs.

Coney Island night was imagined as a distinctly heterosexual land/timescape, as Peiss (1986) and D'Emilio and Freedman (1997) both persuasively write in their volumes on New York's working class gender history. But neither text delves deeply enough into the complexity that such sexual categorization entails, or how its eminence in the history of working class recreation denotes entrenched power inequities rather than overt progress or liberation. Ensuring that working class bodies had immediately recognizable genders and normative sexual desires,

which linked subjects to a concrete category of like-identified bodies (“women”) as well as to a particular scripted and naturalized desire for differently identified bodies (“heterosexuals”), made liberal capitalism more effective. The very pretense of a “sexuality” such as “heterosexual” developed as a sociocultural elaboration of the sex act, which assigned fixed “orientations” toward the world based upon sexual desires within a finite and hierarchic rubric of orientations possible (Sedgwick 1992; Wittig 1992). Similarly “gender” as elaboration of one’s birth anatomy assigned and delimited the complete modes of being that were possible for a person to – performatively – embody, and the roles they were to play in a laboring world (Butler 1990). In effect, discourses of heterosexuality and masculinity/femininity crystallized Victorian normalizing mechanisms that served to make individual subjects more socially controllable and their labor more economically useful (Foucault 1990 [1978]; Floyd 2009).

Foundational works by Engels (2010 [1884]), Marx (2006 [1848]), and more recently Floyd (2009) establish that industrial capitalism codified the nuclear heterosexual family in particular, with its clearly defined sexual bodies, as the chief vehicle for “natural” labor divisions within and beyond the household. Each body type had specific tasks necessary for the sustenance of the whole system (Engels 2010 [1884]). And of course the central kernel of this logic was that the heterosexual couple, setting in motion all other divisions and reproductions, could literally reproduce dominant economic institutions by bearing future workers (Urry 1994; Mills 2014). The body became a projection site for new ideals, through which necessary capitalist functions could be best compartmentalized and regenerated. When approaching images of Brooklyn working class nightlife, it is therefore key to understand that although heterosexualization may have “freed” young, attractive men and women from the personal expectations of their late Victorian parents, it only elaborated their participation in the corresponding norms; the norms

making them productive “men” and “women” in the first place. Their prevalence and participation within Marsh’s painting underlines that the Coney Island nighttime frontier offered liberty specifically to fitly gendered, sexualized bodies that were most useful to the economic system signifying them as such.

It is unsurprising that the physically able and sexually oriented bodies shown taking active part in the frontier are also almost exclusively white. As Gary Gerstle (2002) excellently discusses, the constitution of whiteness in America involves a complex history, rooted in the struggle of myriad immigrant groups with many ethnic and phenotypic traits to gain acceptance in pre-WWII United States. I cannot adequately cover this history, save to remain cognizant that in period Coney Island nightlife images white skin does not necessarily mean its beholders held full equity or dominance within Anglo Saxon-oriented American culture. That being acknowledged, cultural significations almost always gave white skin higher value than black skin, and immigrant groups vying for legal or social rights often worked within this dichotomy to prove themselves “white” (Gerstle 2002). White skin, whatever its qualification, dominates the canvas in every image I am considering.

White bodies take the most space, make the sharpest movements and expressions, and are most active. In a colorful Robert Riggs *Fortune* illustration of the Steeplechase Park wooden whirlpool, which flung bodies around in a circular manner, every bit of skin visible is white on every one of the revelers dizzily landing atop one another (“To Heaven,” *Fortune*, August 1938: 63). All of Riggs’ smaller, black and white sketches in the magazine article demonstrate the glory of Coney Island’s nickel empire – spinning couples in a tilt-a-whirl grabbing each other, strong men throwing balls at a bottle to showboat their strength and release energy, three young guys racing go carts – with exclusively light-skinned figures. In Marsh’s *Pip and Flip*, nearly

every of the dozens of discernable bodies are Caucasian and the four front women glow as such. In his *Adults 10 Cents, Children 5 Cents*, the analogously central feminine figures have such white complexions that under the electric lighting around them they glow almost unnaturally; their skin tones melt into the light colors of their clothing and blonde hair. While given some darker shading for contrast, the majority of spectators enjoying a warm Coney evening in this image are also white-skinned. In Marsh's work generally, electric lights literally illuminate and charge white-skinned bodies. Particularly in *Pip and Flip*, electrically lit skin then acts back upon the bulbs that brighten it, rendering these bulbs even whiter. Bodies' lightness becomes directly instrumental to the aesthetic of electricity that signifies excitement.

The question then is: Most bodies are fit, young, able, gendered, heterosexually active, and white; but, if not *all*, then where are the unfit bodies? What types of bodies are they, and how do they relate to this first set? I will focus on the representation of freak bodies in the same images, maintaining a similar focus on Marsh's *Pip and Flip* but also including others. I hope to show the sharp contrast between body types that engaged in an exciting working class night frontier and body types that, although present in and integral to configurations of that frontier, made it "seedy" and "grotesque."

2. Bodies Unfit

The Marsh painting *Adults 10 Cents, Children 5 Cents* is constructed around the depiction of a 63-year-old little person, or dwarf, performer who was famous in Coney Island circus shows named Jimmy Sullivan (Frank ed. 2015: 101). A "freak," Sullivan would not have been easily employable outside the show bearing his name because his body was overtly "unable" to perform the tasks that an industrial economy reified as legitimate mainstream work. On a hot Coney night, he is a spectacle. Hucksters call loudly over the dense Surf Avenue

nighttime crowd behind this microscopic scene, entreating them to pay – ten cents per adult, five per child – to watch Sullivan in a boxing match. Sullivan stands wearing boxing gloves in the lower left portion of the image, his height and stance mirroring a male child standing before him, with three slender attractive blonde women standing over him. The top of his head reaches only to the waistline of the tallest of these women. His stomach arches outward, he has lost his hair, and his face is shriveled with wrinkles. He is an old, fat dwarf. But his corporeal features in themselves mean little without the cultural significance they are given. His positioning vis-à-vis the women and the child, and the relationship that Marsh builds between them, is what underlines the subordinate role that these disabled bodies were given; and the broader differentiation on a basis of capitalist embodied normalcy that undergirded New York's working class leisure world.

The three women towering above him gawk at him, chief among them the tallest in the center, who looks straight down on him with unmistakable bemusement and condescension. Her right hand delicately covers her mouth in the manner common of individuals looking to suppress a snide comment, as if ready to say *look at this poor creature* but posturing herself to be or appear more restrained. Her batted eyelids drop low and her look toward him is direct, saying with expression what she does not utter in words. The dwarf's body is vertically belittled not merely in material but in social expression. The woman on the left appears to be paying the huckster the admission fee to watch Sullivan fight. As she performs this transaction, she is looking over her shoulder as if to catch whatever the midget is doing currently but her gaze is too high and she does not quite look right at him. In this exchange, then, the dwarf's body is both visually and materially consumed by more fit bodies looking for entertainment in Coney. And as this is all going on, Sullivan is having a sort of standoff with a child who seems to mock his

stature and who is in fact slightly taller than the dwarf and expresses bewildered confidence. Sullivan's body is made analogous to that of the child. It is important when approaching this likeness to a child, to recognize the information given in the image title – adults cost 10 cents, children 5 cents. To pay a child's entry here is cheaper, as a child's body takes up less room and is worth less. The money is going to Sullivan's performance, but will likely not all go to him. Even so, it may not be a question of his actual worth in this specific transaction, but the symbolism generated. When spectators pay to watch him, at prices undoubtedly evaluated by the entrepreneurs running the show rather than the circus act himself, his own body corresponds to an embodied value that is lesser. In his less developed and less productive physical form, the sextogeneraian is a little kid; the "freak" is rendered *human minor*.

We can trace such diminutive de-humanization further upon returning to Marsh's *Pip and Flip*. Here, contrasting the fit bodies I focused on as emblems of the liberating Coney Island night, are the bodies of more circus freaks. At the center of the images but in a darker tone that is overshadowed by the white girls, Jenny Lee Snow stands on spectacle. She and her twin sister were born in Georgia with a condition called microcephaly that gave them unusually more triangular heads and craning necks. Together they were a Coney Island circus act called "Pip and Flip: Twins from the Yucatan" (sometimes "from Peru") branded as two strange curios from a faraway land. In this painting, Snow's emphasized breast, erect neck, and enticing outward gaze coupled with her pointed head and little hair bow give her simultaneous, diametric projections as: A) a hypersexualized monster, the negative or overdeveloped extreme of the strong appealing feminine figures; and B) a child, like Jimmy, the manifestation of reduced or incomplete development. Likewise in a Riggs *Fortune* illustration depicting them, the two appear as uncontrolled, deformed creatures with unwieldy bent necks and highly exaggerated torso

proportions; at the same time, their relatively docile, confused, and consternating expressions along with the hair bow make them appear infantile. A visitor can capture their own presumably fit body next to such corporeal strangeness in a “souvenir photo” for five cents – the same cost as a child’s entry to see the petit Jimmy. Frank (2015) articulates that this monster/child dichotomy was highly prevalent (Frank ed. 2015: 98). The explicit assumption in these combined projections is that the “pinheaded” girl is not a normal, productive body in the society beyond Coney Island – and that she comes from a place so far beyond this American landscape as to be *naturally* odd and unproductive (although she was from the American south). Implicit, moreover, and quite potent is the assumption that because of her body type; its exotic un-American abnormality; and its blatant unfit for regular social-economic participation, she is less human.

The freak body’s lesser humanness is signified in visual representation not only by its lack of normative productivity, but also by its intrinsically related lack of normative mobility. *Pip and Flip* makes this remarkably evident. In the painting, freak bodies are given two distinct, gradated, and coessential immobilities: Firstly, these bodies are corporeally present amid the urban scene taking shape but vis-à-vis normatively productive bodies around them they remain relatively stagnant; Secondly, freak bodies are also represented on fixed commoditizing billboards *within* the scene – still-lives inside Marsh’s ‘mobile-life’ – that doubly bind them in place. In both immobile positions simultaneously, they are rendered up to be viewed by more active – fit – subjects moving through. In the primary case, as a living character on view on this street, Jenny Snow the “pinhead” pinhead stands relatively still on her perch above the intensely mobile street crowd. Two racially ambiguous, “exotic” dancers are clearly moving their hips and arms seductively to draw attention toward Snow, and Snow’s own posture suggests she may be

swaying as well, but the three figures are mobile within a designated stillness. They stay locked in their specific locations within the larger picture. For freak bodies useless in core space-time to be made productive, thereby managed, at all *requires* their concrete mooring to the spatio-temporal edge where their regular inabilities are intensely spotlighted; and their mooring specifically to that edge-as-margin, a refraction site that draws spectators toward/away from their repulsive oddity. The spectators, contrastingly, move around the scene with relative vigor while they gawk at the relatively fixed Snow. Many men in the crowd's back tier closest to her have heads turned, brims facing the viewer, watching her as they wait for an acceptable girl and get pushed through the mass; The two centermost women of the principal four have their heads positioned directly toward where the freak sits, their focus fixed on her even though their churning figures will soon to be long past this spot; A blond toddler, sitting atop one man's head, is craning forward toward her against the motion of his carrier headed the opposite way; A young boy ducks under the outstretched arm of a woman grabbing another's attention, perhaps en route to collide with the brisk ladies hulking toward him.

All this occurs before the backdrop of Pip and Flip and Major Mite's (the smallest man on Earth) exaggerated corporeal forms painted in gigantic advertisements. In these most static, commoditized reproductions of their already immobilized bodies, freaks' fixity reflects and refracts the mobilities of the bodies that consume them. Pip and Flip's thighs, adorned with short fringed garments, almost mirror the four central women's in shape and sexual presentation – yet their coy awkward stances reaffirm their bodily insufficiency/grotesqueness compared to normative forms and restrict their appendages, while the eight legs carrying our foursome push their bodies across space and time. Even spectating bodies shown to be less robustly motile than the four women are mobile bodies, circulating through the streetside show but paused

momentarily to consume the unfit bodies emplaced in one spot. The reason for such pause is precisely the freak's emplacement, which forces them to temporarily emplace their own bodies, whisper amongst one another in awe, and consider paying for a full show – a longer stop (Frank ed. 2015: 96).

Fit bodies' mobility is important to consider even, or especially, when they do not all seem pleased with their circumstances. It is not plausible to say with certainty that they are discontented, but they are frazzled and highly stimulated for sure. The curious dissonance between the crowd's mobility and its tense mood may in fact highlight a key distinction between leisure and pleasure. Leisure in the space and time that makes up the city edge does not necessarily entail pleasure or joy (Urry 1994: 132). The working class spatio-temporal frontier, itself, even when evinced as a "playground," need not necessarily have entailed constant pleasure. But that frontier, as a site of – potentially quite anxious – *retreat* before return, does entail the ability to move agilely in the city's local and regional space-time flows. What is indisputable about the taunted, youthful, visiting figures is that, however their affect, they are moving; they are moving directly against the stillness, both lived and represented, that ossifies freak bodies as products. They either hurriedly rush past or voyeuristically consume the abnormal bodies whose inability to be appealing and useful in any space/time outside this one tethers them to larger-than-life parody on an electrically framed Coney Island circus billboard.

3. Intersections: Complicating Fitness, Productivity, and Humanness

The visual analysis I have executed here, to better critically understand embodied inequalities on the edge of New York's normative space and time, relies on Foucaultian theories of subject formation. Recalling my analysis in Chapter 2, the illumination of certain bodies at night manifests a particular power exercise and renders those it visualizes more economically

productive subjects (Foucault 1995 [1977]: 173; 187' 200-3). In addition to using these theories as a framework, I also take a critical departure from them. Examining cultural representations of working class night leisure during a specific historical moment, I show that a) bodies can be rendered productive by being placed in darkness as well as in light, meaning visibility works with rather than against invisibility to instrument a technique of power; b) not all bodies that do become rendered visible are rendered *equally* productive – or productive at all – as with freak bodies; and c) therefore, the very categories of the productive body and the unproductive body are structured in a way that is more complex than a simple binary or set of binaries. The generic Foucaultian “subject” is not so generic after all. I have already recognized that among the bodies sharing electric illumination at Coney Island in 1930s paintings, especially Marsh’s, we find a fundamental inequality between normatively “fit” bodies and normatively “unfit,” unproductive bodies. But we can go further still. We can recognize that even among the bodies deemed visibly “fit” to participate in a working class night frontier, hierarchies and differentiations persist which further entrench owning class ideals. It is necessary to debunk the possibility that all materially productive laboring bodies share equal cultural status within capitalist power relations – or, importantly, equal ascriptions of humanity.

The development of modernist spatial, temporal, and embodied imaginings in pre-World War II New York City coincided with significant changes in the demographic constitution of the city – a relationship I articulated at the start of this chapter to contextualize Coney Island’s classed transformation. Class, however, was certainly not alone in the story. As my analysis of Marsh’s paintings demonstrates, such imaginings played upon attitudes toward various *intersecting* body materialities. Class, race, gender, sexual presentation, and other embodied axes of difference structured cultural projections in tandem with one another, and the subjugation of

certain bodies along these axes likewise functioned by acting upon the axes' entwinements rather than upon each separately. Amid new migration and mobility patterns as well as new transnational political-economic circumstances, oppressions with an intersectional basis crystallized a logic of body differentiation that had developed with the industrial American nation-state-empire for well over a century (Ngo 2014). Not every working class body that was productive in normal work space/time received the same degree of appreciation as such, because the sub-characteristics intersecting with their class-based productivity tempered and redefined it. Laboring bodies that were also black-skinned, for instance, were given specific – and specifically diminished – positions in a value-laden matrix of productivities.

Building upon Charles C. Mills' (2014) assertion that race is an embodied materiality which has intersected with class in particular ways throughout capitalist history, it makes sense to consider black bodies in the 1930s images as exemplars of intersectional subordination. Black men and women's able bodies appear as part of the swirling crowds that consume white-skinned freak bodies. They do participate in the spatio-temporal frontier, and they are able to because they are economically productive laborers in core space-time such as factories and neo-plantations. Yet, because they are laborers with black skin, they are segregated in this frontier environment not merely from the freaks but also from non-black laborers as the *Fortune* article ("To Heaven," August 1938: 64) confirms. They take up profoundly less space in the crowds, which I have already noted are nearly exclusively white; Reginald Marsh, in his works, places them on the literal peripheries of the image almost unnoticeable; when considering their expressions alongside those of white bodies, they show either overtly greater consternation and confusion or overtly greater sexual intent and pride than other bodies, analogously to the freaks described. Intersections of race and gender further augment this marginalizing portrayal of black

bodies, with black women in both *Pip and Flip* and *Adults 10 Cents* taking on proportionally more of the over-sexualization than black masculine forms already marred by such projections. Black-skinned bodies participating in the working class night frontier are depicted overall to matter less – to be less useful matter – vis-a-vis white bodies around them. While I have argued that normative economic productivity, as a single characterization, determined whether bodies were considered fully human and welcome in that frontier, it becomes clear that racist significations reduced the productivity – the humanness – associated with working bodies that were black. Their productivity itself was valued less than that of whites in the same “productive” cohort of spectators, even though it was as extremely real and extremely *valuable*.⁷

Mills reintroduces, tightens, and complicates the role of humanness in this intersectional mode of subjugation. Capitalist logic, he cogently articulates, creates and uses the category of lesser- or non-humanness- to define certain bodies – not only bodies that are less normatively productive, which I have already shown, but certain bodies that are normatively productive too. He highlights in his argument the extent to which black bodies have been deemed lesser human bodies while at the same time have been extremely instrumental material tools for the re/production of capitalist systems (Mills 2014: 31). His most compelling case is in fact that, within industrial capitalism, racial differentiation has so thoroughly determined who becomes granted or denied personhood in the first place that race necessarily lies at the base of the system. Realizations of black bodies’ productivity become obscured by their designation a priori as less

⁷ Similar subjugations within the general realm of fit productive bodies may easily have operated upon other intersections such as that of classed and gendered bodies. Laboring male bodies that were productive in normative space/time, for instance, could in the Coney Island night consume laboring women’s bodies whose parallel labor in factories and shops was valued less and which therefore relied on men’s objectification to afford their excursion in the first place (Israels 1909, in Parascandolas eds. 2015). Both male and female laboring bodies comprised the normatively productive, able to work in ways that directly fed capitalist interests in accordant space-time and then move to-through-out of Coney Island nighttime while ensuring unfit disabled bodies would remain stuck in that world for consumption; but were still not equal to one another inside their own shared category.

human. Only when it is determined who is and is not a fully-fledged human being, in this logic, can all else take shape (Mills 2014: 33-4).

That idea raises questions about the exact relationship between economic productivity and humanness. On one hand is what I have been advancing: Both blacks' and freaks' embodied capacities were mangled into an image of insufficiency and/or monstrosity; as such, unproductivity; as such, lesser humanity. On the other hand, the debasement I have outlined to situate how normatively productive black bodies were deemed unproductive could, itself, destabilize my claim that the productive body always constituted the capitalist human. If we recognize dehumanization to be inherent in the initial process of casting black and freak bodies less useful in the first place, not on grounds of economic productivity but some other metric such as color or size, then an alternate causality suddenly emerges; It would not be that the economically productive body is crowned human, but rather that any body needs to be crowned human first to be considered economically productive. A body in this scheme must be considered a human before all else. Either way, however, economic productivity and humanness itself actively link with one another in industrial capitalist projections of the body. And either way, a body's economic un/productivity did determine whether it was associated with Coney Island as working class New York's spatio-temporal frontier or Coney Island as working class New York's ugly spatio-temporal margin. By this corporeal management strategy, the famously proletariat leisure landscape on the city's and the workday's boundary became written into hegemonic owning class interests, needs, values, and desires necessary for capitalist expansion and reproduction.



Reginald Marsh, *Pip and Flip*, 1932. Tempera on paper mounted on canvas, 48 ¼ x 48 ¼ in. Terra Foundation for American Art, Chicago. Daniel J. Terra Collection, 1999.96. Printed in Frank ed. 2015: 97. Digital image courtesy of Terra Foundation for American Art 2015, all rights reserved.

CONCLUSION

This project has explored how the spatial and the temporal were jointly imagined, redefined, and represented in modern cultural images of night leisure at New York's iconic Coney Island. It has paid particular attention to Coney Island's night as a site that joined the edge of usable city space with the edge of waking standardized time; a "peripheral" site crucial to the production of an overarching liberal capitalist logic of the city. In this work I have, further, elaborated on the specific meanings that representations gave to the mutual peripheries of space and time. Drawing on Foucaultian, feminist, and Marxist approaches and using visual images along with other elements of discourse, I demonstrated that understandings of space-time on the edge moved between two cultural projections: peripheral space-time as frontier; peripheral space-time as margin. I argued ultimately, based upon the represented relationships between distinct types of bodies, that these two projections were managed by the ownership interests of industrial capitalism – the individuals and more commonly whole discursive systems that controlled production means – even when convention writes that the "frontier" was overtaken by everyday working class New Yorkers. Representing Coney Island at night between the late nineteenth century and World War II thereby involved three mutual constructions: That of edge space and edge time; That of edges as promise and edges as danger; And that of bodies on these edges that "worked" when away from them and bodies on these edges that could not "work" in such accordance with normative capitalist expectations. Coney Island during this time period proves an extremely fruitful case study, upon which much more widely reaching understandings about the construction of a capitalist urbanity can be developed.

To best round out considerations of the spatio-temporal edge as a frontier/margin, and illustrate what they most robustly reveal about capitalism more broadly, I think it is useful to

return to Mary Douglas' writing on marginality. She understands margins in a way that helps to situate their place in my analysis of the logic of capitalism, and their relationship therein to the body. She articulates,

All margins are dangerous. If they are pulled this way or that, the shape of fundamental experience is altered. Any structure of ideas is vulnerable at its margins. We should expect the orifices of the body to symbolize its specifically vulnerable points...The mistake is to treat bodily margins in isolation from all other margins.

Douglas 2002 [1966]: 150

Douglas is not writing exclusively about capitalism here, and she herself would not limit the discussion of manageability, power, and danger to a capitalist context. For this thesis, however, I believe it is possible and meaningful to apply her theoretical arguments to the very specific delimited realm of industrial capitalist space-time. In such a reading, I find Douglas adds to what Marx, Gramsci, and Williams have offered us concerning how hegemonic capitalism works. The hegemonic system latches with perhaps its utmost care onto the ideas, places, peoples, institutions, circulations, and cultural meanings, which occur so far on its edges that they could potentially exit, or threaten, its reach. Hegemonic capitalism constantly seeks new margins to enter into, appropriate, and rework to its needs. By strategically folding into its operation what existed in the spatio-temporal margins of its domain, the forces that guided New York City's growth leading to World War II turned such margins into their own frontiers. To work from Douglas' language, these forces pulled their what they initially designated "margin" in such a direction that it could fundamentally *produce* per changing systemic needs: Could produce raw capital on-site in the form of low value but high volume recreational spending; Could produce more capital in the daytime factories, offices, and workplaces at the urban core by enabling and controlling workers' rejuvenating experiences "off" of work; And could produce a more disciplined economic system overall by naturalizing norms of the economically "fit" and "unfit,"

human and non-human, body. This was rather the opposite of enabling lower class people to seize upon owning class anxieties, and use peripheral space-time against the forces that controlled their labor in non-peripheral space-time.

It is now possible to expand further upon Douglas, to realize that capitalist expansion logic does more than merely seek margins to pull one way or the other. It is possible to recognize that capitalism, as an economic and cultural ideology rooted in limitless accumulation, does not merely enfold into itself the activities it initially identifies to be its seedy margins and reproduce itself through management of these (Douglas 2003 [1966]: 96-7); it also *creates* such margins in the first place. Taking a phrase from Judith Butler (1990), it produces what it claims to simply name and react to. By establishing itself throughout an ever totalizing and complete range of everyday experiences, this ideology constantly determines the “edges” of its own operation. It can in this way carve specific spaces and times that appear undomesticated, into which potentially perpendicular realities may originate, in order to then know, keep track of, and render those realities useful to it. Hegemonic capitalism creates the very category of the seedy space-time at the trolley line’s terminus, in order to ultimately re-appropriate what is dangerous there and tailor that into what is productive.

Furthermore, Douglas underlines that bodily margins do not exist in isolation. It is this point which my own analysis utilizes to highlight the boundless growth logic of capitalism described. The possibilities that are conceived and enforced upon bodies – upon the spaces between them, upon the real or signified specter of their contact and copulation, and upon the material colors, shapes, sizes, and fleshy edges of their corporeal frames – ground projections of spatial and temporal possibilities. Where different bodies begin and end; how, with which other bodies, and against which other bodies they move; and what other bodies they touch on the urban

edge in particular, all constitute the very basis of historical – and contemporary – imaginings of that edge. To truly ascertain these linkages, I believe the approach I have taken is necessary. By threading Marxist, Foucaultian, and feminist perspectives together in dialogue, this thesis was able to excavate how class inequalities central to Marx and his interlocutors bear themselves in fundamentally relational ways through space-time upon power-inscribed, power-invested bodies; whose material components, im/mobilities, and dis/abilities are constantly being culturally constituted under the pretense of reference or recollection. With regard to academic specialty, although this work is quite trans-disciplinary, anthropological sensibilities have been uniquely important. I took a few visual images as my focal materials and, through thick reading and contextualization, showed their extraordinary layering and depth. Like all representations I have investigated, these images told stories that were not immediately evident and were certainly not one-dimensional. The most crucial narratives they spun may have been located in their absent content, in what they left out, as with the 1912 postcard. Or, as in Marsh's *Pip and Flip*, representations may have composed certain bodies in a way that created and utilized literal layers i.e. a mobile foreground and progressively more fixed background. To grasp such images' meanings required specific modalities of analysis that were abidingly focused on fine-scale information while committed to applying this information toward conceptualizing broader sociocultural life.

Anthropological frameworks therefore enabled me to portray the thickness, depth, connectivity, and power-informed complexity that characterize one outstanding case example in such a way that explains broader patterns. From Coney Island at night, I hope we can more clearly trace how the material and cultural creation of modern North American cities entailed the highly mutual reconfiguration of space, time, and bodies.

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