

This Third Space: Real-and-Imagined Spaces in Turn-of-the-Century American Settlement Fiction.

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"This Third Space":
Real-and-Imagined Spaces in Turn-of-the-Century
American Settlement Fiction

by

Melissa Pound

A thesis
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Abstract

This thesis is a literary analysis of American settlement fiction, using a spatially-informed cultural historicist approach. The settlement movement in the U.S. was both a Progressive Era reform movement and a precursor to modern-day social welfare systems. As such, it has typically been viewed in either laudatory or censorious terms -- as an innovative force for social good, or as a negative source of social control. Drawing on Edward Soja's concept of Thirdspace as a uniquely generative and semiotically rich cultural site, and focusing on Hull House as an example of Thirdspace, I argue that the settlement movement was in fact an extraordinarily multivalent phenomenon. Hull House (and the many settlement houses modeled after it) instantiated issues of gender, class, and race in complex ways that both reflected and refracted larger patterns in American culture.

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