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UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA
GRADUATE COLLEGE

THE SPATIAL DISCOURSE OF REALISM AND MODERNISM IN AMERICAN
FICTION, PHOTOGRAPHY, AND POETRY

A Dissertation
SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

by
Richard Scott Kelley
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THE SPATIAL DISCOURSE OF REALISM AND MODERNISM
IN AMERICAN FICTION, PHOTOGRAPHY, AND POETRY

A Dissertation APPROVED FOR THE
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

I.  Introduction: Crane's Maggie and the Place of Everyday Life in Realism and Modernity...........................1

II. The Spatial Practice of William Dean Howells's A Hazard of New Fortunes.......................................38

III. Consuming the Social Space of "The Other Half": Realism and the Production of Consensual Knowledge in Jacob Riis's Tenement Studies.........................................................85

IV. "To Look and Yet Go Beyond That Look": Dissonant Realism in the Ellis Island Portraits of Lewis Hine..........143

V. Reforming Realism, Forming Modernism: The Supreme Fiction of Space in Wallace Stevens..........................192

WORKS CITED..........................................257
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Fig. 1. Jacob A. Riis, "The Mulberry Bend." The Jacob A. Riis Collection # 114. Museum of the City of New York ......................................................... 86

Fig. 2. Jacob A. Riis, "Thompson Street 'Black and Tan Dive.'" The Jacob A. Riis Collection # 162. Museum of the City of New York .............................. 115

Fig. 3. Jacob A. Riis, "Poverty Gap Family." The Jacob A. Riis Collection # 154. Museum of the City of New York ........................................... 116

Fig. 4. Jacob A. Riis, "Italian Mother and Her Baby in Jersey Street." The Jacob A. Riis Collection # 157. Museum of the City of New York .............................. 118

Fig. 5. Jacob A. Riis, "Lodgers in a Crowded Bayard Street Tenement—'Five Cents a Spot.'" The Jacob A. Riis Collection # 155. Museum of the City of New York ........................................... 127

Fig. 6. Jacob A. Riis, "An All-Night Two-Cent Restaurant in 'The Bend.'" Also titled "Bandit’s Roost, In a Stale-Beer Dive in Cellar." The Jacob A. Riis Collection # 104. Museum of the City of New York ........................................... 128

Fig. 7. Jacob A. Riis, "Mulberry Park Bend, 1900." The Jacob A. Riis Collection # 457. Museum of the City of New York ........................................... 135

Fig. 8. "Types of Immigrants." Charities 12.6 (February 6, 1904) ........................................... 161

Fig. 9. Lewis W. Hine, "Jews at Ellis Island." Collection of Walter and Naomi Rosenblum. Reproduced courtesy Walter Rosenblum by George Eastman House, International Museum of Photography ........................................... 167

Fig. 10. Lewis W. Hine, "Joys and Sorrows of Ellis Island, 1905." Gelatin silver print. Courtesy George Eastman House, International Museum of Photography ........................................... 172

Fig. 11. Lewis W. Hine, "Albanian Woman, Ellis Island, 1905." Gelatin silver print. Gelatin Silver Print. Courtesy George Eastman House, International Museum of Photography ........................................... 178

Fig. 12. Lewis W. Hine, "Elderly Jewish Immigrant, Ellis Island, 1905." Gelatin silver print. Gelatin silver print. Courtesy George Eastman House, International Museum of Photography ........................................... 184

Fig. 13. Lewis W. Hine, "Young Russian Jewess, Ellis Island, 1905." Gelatin silver print. Courtesy George Eastman House, International Museum of Photography ........................................... 185
This study establishes a discursive framework for reading a continuity in how realist fiction, social documentary photography, and modernist poetry represent social space. The work of French social theorist Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, provides the basis for spatially-informed readings of the fiction of Stephen Crane, the social documentary photography of Jacob Riis and Lewis Hine, and the modernist poetry of Wallace Stevens. Lefebvre’s analysis of the spatial subtext of modern urban social reality, in particular its conceptual, perceptual, and communal spheres of influence, helps reveal a pattern that cuts across the realist and modernist text’s representations of space: the attempt to create or discover a cohesive spatial environment at a time of great social, cultural, and technological transformation in America.

The first three chapters establish the principles and methods underlying the spatial practice of realism. In Crane’s *Maggie, A Girl of the Streets*, Howells’s *A Hazard of New Fortunes*, and Riis’s *How the Other Half Lives*, social environment is comprehensible only insofar as its ideational substructure (conceived space) corresponds to that which can be visually represented (perceived space). Chapter four reads the “cognitive dissonance” in Hine’s Ellis Island photographic portraits as a transition to modernism seen through Hine’s practice of drawing the viewer into the traditionally transient social space of southern and eastern European immigrants. Chapter five charts, in Stevens’s “Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction” and other poems, the emergence of a modernist poetics of social space. Abstraction and change, as the social conditions of realism, become for Stevens the ineluctable first and second principles of modernism. Abstraction, change, and pleasure thus inform the aesthetic principles of Stevens’s modernism as social fields able to re-articulate the discourse and daily life practice of space.
Chapter One

Introduction: Crane's Maggie and the Place of Everyday Life in Realism and Modernity

When Stephen Crane, a little more than a century ago, embarked on what would be a fruitless search for a publisher for his first major work of fiction, Maggie, A Girl of the Streets (1893), the author soon found himself living out the fate of his heroine: wandering the streets in search of a "buyer" for his wares, betrayed by an establishment that had formed him yet cruelly turned against him, and outcast because of his (novel’s) overindulgence in sensory experience. That Maggie's rejection by the major New York publishing houses mirrors its protagonist’s rejection by the culture of the Bowery is more than a case of art becoming life; it suggests the consequences of the failure to meet the expectations of established codes of conduct. While Crane was able to keep Maggie alive by adopting a pseudonym, excising the novel’s profanity, and raising the funds to publish it privately, Maggie is unable to rewrite her tarnished past or to find financial sanctuary, and throws herself into the East River in despair.

What codes of conduct did the two Maggies violate that caused them to be ostracized by and exorcised from the culture that produced them? As Forum editor John D. Barry wrote to Crane upon seeing the manuscript, the novel
closely approaches the morbid and the morbid is always dangerous. . . . One ought always to bear in mind that literature is an art, that effect, the effect upon the reader, must always be kept in view by the artist and as soon as that effect approaches the morbid, the unhealthful, the art becomes diseased. It is the taint in the peach. (2-3)

In effect, Barry charged Crane with the sin of ignoring the interests of his audience, of drawing readers into the slum and then failing to offer evidence of their presence and positive influence once within it. "I presume you wish to make people think about the horrible things you describe," Barry continues. "But of what avail is their thought unless it leads them to work? It would be better for them not to think about these things at all. . . ." The irony here, which reverberates throughout Maggie, is that the tribunal is guilty of its own charge, that while Barry (and others) accuse Crane of failing to acknowledge the sensibilities of a middle-class readership, that same class of readers is guilty of a greater sin of omission: that of ignoring the underclass and of failing to perceive their own agency in perpetuating the "taint in the peach."

What the troubled publishing history of Maggie reveals, troubles which the character Maggie unsuccessfully confronts in the novel, is the breakdown between cultural values and cultural practices, a symptom of the utter incompatibility between the class norms and standards imposed on individuals
and everyday life as it is culturally experienced. Between the abstract, consensual nature of ideological values and the concrete, heterogeneous realm of human experience grows an ever-widening division—one that realism and naturalism bring uncomfortably into the foreground. No wonder that Barry could not recommend that Maggie be published in its present form, nor could Richard W. Gilder publish it in Century; the novel reveals the tragic disconnection between belief and actions, a result not only of a middle-class ideology's inability to contain experience, but of its own agency in crushing it as a corrective response. More than the indelicate theme of a prostitute-protagonist, the overindulgence of profanity (the incessant "go teh hell"s and "damn yeh"s of the 1893 text) or the narrator's cool detachment in the face of tragedy, the novel's rejection owes to its implicit indictment of middle-class values, a wholly misplaced, inappropriate, and ineffectual ideological superstructure that extinguished Maggie, a "most rare and wonderful production of a tenement district" (16).¹

While realism has traditionally been understood, in its narrative and pictorial forms, as a mimetically faithful representation (i.e., reflection) of everyday life that posits a common ground between classes, less well understood are its divisive characteristics, the fact overcoming class and ethnic difference requires the mixture of unlike elements, the result of which pits one social group against another. The first paragraph of Maggie provides such a
frame, one that establishes the opposed cultural forces which realism brings into focus. Significantly, the novel opens with a battle:

A very little boy stood upon a heap of gravel for the honor of Rum Alley. He was throwing stones at howling urchins from Devil's Row who were circling madly about the heap and pelting at him. (3)

The fact that little Jimmie is fighting for honor, rather than for some more tangible object, should give us reason to pause. For a battle conducted in the name of honor represents, above all else, a struggle for recognition, for visibility, respect, public esteem—in short, all the trappings of polite culture that are absent in the slum. Jimmie's perch atop the rock pile is a place that offers just such a position of supreme visibility, but its only reward are cuts and bruises, a bloody lip, a kick from his father, and a beating from his mother. The novel's opening scene establishes the place of violence in the clash between cultural values and social space and represents the keynote on which events turn. Furthermore, violence signifies the turf over which this battle is divided: on the one hand an abstract set of beliefs, wholly inappropriate to the class and culture of the Bowery, by which cultural value is obtained, and on the other the concrete, immediate, and experiential plenitude of everyday life.

The incompatibility the novel brings to light between an the abstract apprehension and the concrete experience of
everyday life in the slum are cruelly brought home in Maggie’s misreading of her lover Pete and the melodramas which they take in. Her response to the “culture and refinement she had seen imitated on the stage” was to wonder whether such a life “could be acquired by a girl who lived in a tenement house and worked in a shirt factory” (28). Furthermore, her captivation by “swaggering Pete” who “loomed like a golden sun to Maggie” (26) with “all his elegance and all his knowledge of high-class customs” (23) leads her to imagine a future wholly out of line with her prospects, “a future, rose-tinted, because of its distance from all that she previously had experienced” (39). The clash here runs deeper than that suggested by the disparity between dream and reality and reaches to the foundation of ideological values: one’s perception of socio-spatial environment. From Crane’s famous inscription in several copies of Maggie that the novel “tries to show that environment is a tremendous thing in the world and frequently shapes life regardless” (1960: 14), we can complete the thought by saying “regardless of belief.” If environment is “a tremendous thing,” a force that overpowers belief in “high-class customs” and images of “rose-tinted” futures, the supreme irony in the novel rests in the fact that such beliefs and images deceive Maggie and are used as weapons against her by her mother and brother, leading her to the tragic realization that the two cannot be reconciled.
In terms that I borrow from French social theorist Henri Lefebvre, both the 1893 Maggie and the character Maggie are casualties of a broken continuity between "conceived" and "lived" experience. Lefebvre's discourse on social space, developed in The Production of Space, provides useful tools for studying the purpose and methods of narrative and photographic realism at a time of significant social and cultural change in turn-of-the-century America. Lefebvre defines social space not merely as the geography of place but as a product of cultural interaction and social intercourse, a sphere of contest in which it is possible to register the convergence of ideological beliefs, socio-cultural habits, and representational practices in constituting what we know more broadly as social relations.

This study conducts a reading of newly emerging awareness of the place of social space in everyday life in the realist fiction of William Dean Howells, the social documentary photography of Jacob Riis and Lewis Hine, and the modernist poetry of Wallace Stevens. I read these works in the context of an emerging awareness of social space, a consciousness that spatial relations form and inform ideological values and social practices to the effect that one's "personal" space could be contested, manipulated, and consumed. Modern society experienced the passing of a time when an inviolable social space was taken for granted, and its presence largely unacknowledged, to a time when the industrialization of modern society and the rising influence
of the middle-class exploded into centered networks of commercial, municipal, and governmental spatial management. Thus I treat spatial relationships in everyday life as commodities subject to manipulation, contest, and appropriation precisely because public and private values are embodied in their emerging (and changing) structures. I look for evidence of this contest in representational forms across pictorial, narrative, and poetic expressions of modern urban-industrial and social change around the turn of the twentieth century.

Because Lefebvre’s most pointed examination of the sociology of modernity, *The Production of Space* (1974), has only recently been translated into English (1991), my use of his ideas represents a preliminary attempt to open a discourse between theoretical concepts (realism, modernism) and the atheoretical sphere of everyday life. Specifically, my adoption of Lefebvre’s sociological method to the study of fiction, photography, and poetry helps identify the turf over which these very different methods of representation struggle in turn-of-the-century America: the everyday life of the individual. By heightening differences between classes, setting at odds the beliefs and practices that define them, and representing the triumph of abstract beliefs over lived practices, the realist and modernist text, as I argue, collapse and extinguish differences and suggests that the inevitable consequence of modernity is the destruction of lived space. As evidence of this inevitability, realist
Dramatic increases in America's urban population during what is called the "second wave" of immigration (1850-1890), which I will discuss below in chapter 4, along with the rise in commercial and industrial activity, altered the nature, structure, and appearance of urban life. These changes in how the city appeared, experienced, and was represented, alongside the permanent installation of a heterogeneous mixture of lower class immigrants, paupers, and working poor, converged to produce what Jacob Riis called a "social conscience" in nativist reformers, a social awakening that resulted a flood of critical discourse on improving the conditions of daily life in America's cities. As my analysis shows, the awakening Riis not only called for but helped engineer produced changes in representational practices: poverty could no longer be distanced as the picturesque indication of social concord it had been but increasingly became a source of tension in novels, society periodicals, and photographic exposes. In restricting this study to a close analysis of a small number of literary and photographic texts, I argue for a pattern that has remained largely unnoticed in the critical discourse on realism and modernism: an increased awareness on the part of realists that social space is a visually representable (and thus consumable) commodity, and the subsequent discovery by modernists that
visual representations are a powerful tool in modernism's attempted re-appropriation of social space. It was precisely the task of realism, which enlisted visual representations as a mode and tool of social critique, to homogenize social space for the purpose of resolving contest over its "ownership." Thus I argue that modernism is best defined, in its historical context, as a kind of "post-realism" that does not so much impose consensus visually as discover a new consensual order of things by changing the view, by making ideas rather than things the subject of perceptions.

A theory of social space, such as that proposed by Lefebvre in *The Production of Space*, provides a more inclusive critical framework than semiotic, Marxist, historicist, post-structuralist, and deconstructive approaches offer. Such approaches often assume and capitalize on the notion of a radical break, coupure, or rupture between apparently isolated fields of textual analysis without examining the forces that articulate such divisions. As I argue here, there emerged in the late Guilded Age an awareness that spatial environment, ideological beliefs, and socio-cultural practices had become uncoupled, an awareness that lies buried within the realist text and that ultimately resurfaces in the modernist text. By failing critically to examine the discontinuous discourses inherent in social space, notes Lefebvre, culture critics and literary theorists alike reduce space to an intellectual phenomenon whereby "the philosophico-epistemological notion
of space is fetishized and the mental realm comes to envelop the social and physical ones" (1991: 5). The lack of dialogue between today’s even more highly specialized theoretical/critical discourses owes to the lack of any common vocabulary among what have been defined as exclusive fields of textual analysis which, consequently, require equally specialized vocabularies and methods to decode. Social space provides one such mediating discourse and, as Lefebvre notes, is able to “discover or construct a theoretical unity between ‘fields’ which are apprehended separately” (1991: 11).

In order to take the best possible advantage of social space as a concept to illuminate the source of conflicting social forces at work in society, it is necessary to consider social space not as a preexisting plenitude or void but as a product of such cultural and social forces themselves. “Every society produces its own space,” writes Lefebvre (1991: 21), and the space produced can be acknowledged in three related forms: space as conceived in the mind, space as perceived by the senses, and space as “lived” or experienced in community with others.

Conceived space, as the name implies, is a product of abstract and conceptual thought; as such it is the space, Lefebvre writes, “of scientists, planners, urbanists, technocratic subdividers and social engineers” (1991: 38). Conceived space both produces and mobilizes ideological values and beliefs. Conceived space appears as a logically
consistent and cohesive conceptual structure because it points outside itself to other abstract and conceptual totalities. For example, a cathedral is a conceived space that unifies the multiple social spaces of its structure, nave, apse, altar, chapels, etc., into an abstract site of religious values. Likewise, Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon similarly achieved (in blueprint form) the logically cohesive unification of spectatorial (perceived) and penal (lived) space as a supposed means of projecting the bourgeois values of the viewer onto the viewed. The producers of such spaces, urban planners, social engineers, architects, and even utopianists, are able to bring about the appearance of spatial coherency because, Lefebvre writes, they "all . . . identify what is lived and what is perceived with what is conceived" (1991: 38). The Renaissance development of single-point perspective, as Lefebvre points out, is an example of one of the most noteworthy conceptual homogenizations of space, since it constructs a space that unites "lived" and "perceived" realms within a two-dimensional abstract form.

Perceived space and lived space share so close an affinity in realism that I will consider them as one. For Maggie, as for Howells's protagonists in *A Hazard of New Fortunes* and Riis's immigrant subjects in "How the Other Half Lives," perceived space equals lived space, and the social space individuals occupy in the realist text, as it is chiefly informed by an admixture of sensory perception and
social intercourse, prevents characters (and viewers in Riis's case) from distinguishing between appearances and everyday life experiences. Thus Crane's narrator informs us that Maggie "contemplated Pete's man-subduing eyes" at the theater one night and immediately "noted that wealth and prosperity was indicated by his clothes" (39). In a similar way, perceived and conceived space share so close an affinity in modernism that they become similarly indistinct. As Stevens's first line of "Description without Place" claims, "It is possible that to seem—it is to be" (Collected Poems 339), by which he means that being, as a conceptual construction by which we grant the status of "reality" to things, is in fact indistinguishable from the "seemings" we perceive. "Such seemings," writes Stevens, "are the actual ones."

For the above reasons, I adapt Lefebvre's tripartite theory of social space to the study of realism and modernism in the following way. In order for realists to represent social space as the cohesive whole it was believed to be, the text must overcome the inherent distinctions between conceived, perceived and lived spaces. This leads to what I call, after Lefebvre, the "spatial practice" of realism: a condition in which the unconscious everyday activity of navigating, decoding, and traversing space is restricted to what can be, in the texts I examine, visually represented. Thus when spatial practice becomes nothing more than mimesis, as it did under the conditions of realism, daily life must be
reconciled to what is visually perceived, and the realist text accomplishes this reconciliation by homogenizing perceived and conceived space.

In the case of a modernist like Stevens, "spatial practice" is acknowledged as a complex process of discovery, of finding pleasurable relationships between the continually changing nature of perceived space ("what we see") and the abstract nature of conceived space ("what we think"). Thus, for Stevens, "spatial practice," since realists revealed it to be a site of contest between our perceptions and conceptions, cannot be homogenized, much less represented visually. Rather than homogenize perceived and conceived space, Stevens foregrounds the search for alternate configurations of space amid changing spatial relations. In this way, Stevens defines social space as something that is rooted in visually perceived space but that, ultimately, transcends perception and can cohere only in the idea, in conceived space. Thus we can, with the above qualifications, read Maggie's suicide as the product of a misperception, her seeing, "In all [the] unhandy places" of the Bowery (6), "a future, rose-tinted" by "dim thoughts . . . searching for far away lands" (39, 19). Likewise, we can read Stevens's "Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction" as foregrounding such a search, one that begins by "perceiving the idea," of seeing the world as an "invention," as informed by the unresolved tension between visual "ravishments of truth" and "the strong exhilaration/
Of what we feel from what we think" (CP 382), a simultaneous "seeing and unseeing in the eye" (CP 385).

Such a reformulation is necessary, I believe, for two reasons: to provide a common vocabulary for reading across narrative, photographic, and poetic texts, and to distinguish between perceptual (realist) and conceptual (modernist) representations of space. What is most important to keep in mind regarding the above distinctions of social space (conceived/perceived/lived) is that they do not exist in isolation but in relation to one another, and that the "users" of space are always involved in an attempt to navigate among and mediate different spatial frames of reference: among conceived spaces (abstract and ideologically informed by beliefs), perceived spaces (sense-informed and largely shaped by visual representations) and lived spaces (culturally "produced" through social intercourse). As Lefebvre says of the subject's ability to maintain a sense of balance and relation between these spaces,

the lived, conceived, and perceived realms should be interconnected, so that the "subject," the individual member of a given social group, may move from one to the other without confusion. . . .

Whether they [realms] constitute a coherent whole is another matter. They probably do so only in favourable circumstances, when a common language, a consensus and a code can be established. (1991: 40)
Realism and modernism, as I argue, represent just such an attempt to establish "a common language" and "consensus" in light of the individual’s inability to navigate the changing structures of everyday life, a dramatically modernizing social space, "without confusion." Moreover, it is precisely the case that when realists elided the distinction between perceptions and daily life experiences, they discovered that representations could be used as a tool (as Howells proclaims throughout his criticism) to reconcile quite immobilizing changes in the structure of modern urban society. Thus modernism’s characterization as an aesthetic activity divorced from social practice can be contextualized as an attempt to redress realism’s forced homogenization of perception and everyday life experiences.

The pattern I will highlight, and to which this study will frequently return, is the encroachment on and consumption of lived/perceived space by abstract conceptions of space. Largely manifested and projected in the form of middle-class values, conceived space displaces lived and perceived space when it is made coextensive to the cultural habits and every day life practices of individuals, subjects who mostly in this study are composed of disenfranchised immigrants and the working class poor. As Crane’s Maggie so clearly illustrates, Maggie’s inability to reconcile, or to strike a meaningful relationship between, the middle-class values to which she aspires and the lower-class culture in which she is bound is symptomatic of a much larger truth in
American society at the century's turn: the conquest of the individual's sanctuary of private lived space by social forces seeking to consume space and, in doing so, establish a middle-class hegemony over social space.

Abstract space can best be described as a product of conceptual thought; as such, it is the intangible sphere to which Maggie aspires and to which she tragically entrusts her future. Lefebvre says that abstract space "functions 'objectally'" (1991: 49), by which he means that it maintains an objective in view: in Maggie's case conceived space consistently presents a (seeming) means of escape to a better future while it repeatedly immobilizes her in her present surroundings. Abstract space lures those within its grasp into an imaginary association with "the centers of wealth and power" that offer the illusion of one's agency in and control over lived space. Because, writes Lefebvre, abstract space "endeavours to mould the space it dominates . . . and it seeks, often by violent means, to reduce the obstacles and resistances it encounters there" (1991: 49), individuals who attempt, like Maggie, to bring about a confluence between everyday life and abstract space become no more than "obstacles and resistances" to be overcome. Maggie's attempt to reconcile abstract knowledge and social practice ends in tragedy because of the incompatibility between social space as it is lived in the Bowery and social space as it is conceived outside it, abstractly, as a homogenous, conceptual totality. As Donald Pizer expresses this point, Maggie
is essentially about man's use of conventional but inapplicable abstract values (such as justice, honor, duty, love, and respectability) as weapons or disguises. The novel is not so much about the slums as a physical reality as about what people believe in the slums and how their beliefs are both false to their experience and yet function as operative forces in their lives. (1993: 125)

The abstract social values which Maggie's lover Pete so persuasively mimics (and which the girl so wholeheartedly embraces) are wholly inappropriate to the environment in which she attempts to employ them. Consequently, Maggie sets herself an impossible task, to live in abstract space, a space in which she finds, as Lefebvre tells us of this space, "lived experience . . . crushed, vanquished by what is 'conceived of'" (1991: 51).

There is no "room" (to extend the spatial metaphor) in abstract space for "affectivity" or "the sensory/sensual realm" in which Maggie indulges because abstract space "tends toward homogeneity, towards the elimination of existing differences or peculiarities" (Lefebvre 1991: 52). Certainly Maggie is one such peculiarity, a "most rare and wonderful production" who "blossomed in a mud puddle," one that represents not only an exception to the rule of the "tenement district" in which she was raised but who also threatens to pollute the abstract realm of middle-class social values with her sensory and sensual excesses. "We're queered!" Jimmie
explodes to his mother upon learning of Maggie's sexual awakening, "dis t'ing queers us! See?" (40). Appalled at the possibility that the family name will be sullied along with that of his sister, Jimmie resolves to distance himself by publicly damning her "that he might appear on a higher social plane" (42). Likewise, Pete, in fear of compromising the "eminent respectability" of his workplace, slams the door on his prior relationship with Maggie: "What deh hell do yeh wanna hang aroun' here fer? Do yeh wanna git me inteh trouble?" (50).

Maggie's tragic flaw, then, resides in the fact that she confuses experience-as-conceived and experience-as-lived. The source of this flaw resides not in her character ("None of the dirt of Rum Alley seemed to be in her veins" [16]), and not wholly in Bowery culture, but in the fact that "the dirt of Rum Alley" did not flow in her veins, that she was not a product of her environment. Had she been a true "production of a tenement district" (16), she would have been able to keep her dreams of ascent at bay and confined to the fictional space of the stage—the minstrels and melodramas which served up "phantasies of the aristocratic theatre-going public" (23) she frequently took in with Pete. The theater, rather than inciting the quite harmless public participation in which the gallery so wildly indulges, the "hooting" and hissing of vice and the applause of virtue, instead "made her think," caused her to reach out for the nearest approximation of "the culture and refinement she had seen imitated . . . on
the stage" (28) and the "elegance" and "adornments of person which she saw every day on the street" (25): her pseudo-aristocratic lover, Pete.

Maggie's unsuccessful attempt to bring about a confluence between the evidence of refinement displayed by actors on the stage (of which Pete is a chief player) and her experience of life in the street suggests not only the incompatibility of conceived and lived experience, but the conquest and neutralization of the latter by the former. This fact points to the violent and homogenizing force inherent in abstract space, a space which Lefebvre claims is "instrumental (i.e. manipulated by all kinds of 'authorities' of which it is the locus and milieu)" (1991: 51). The "authorities," the impractical middle-class values, function largely in representational forms that Maggie misperceives (at the theater and in Pete) and through which she attempts to create a middle-class identity for herself. Lefebvre accounts for the instrumental character of abstract space in a way that helps us understand not only Maggie's misreading of social space but also helps identify the framework within which realism dramatizes the continually evolving nature of social space:

Perhaps it would be true to say that the place of social space as a whole has been usurped by a part of that space endowed with an illusory special status—namely, the part which is concerned with writing and imagery, underpinned by the written
text (journalism, literature), and broadcast by the media; a part, in short, that amounts to abstraction wielding awesome reductionistic force vis-à-vis "lived" experience. (1991: 52)

Thus Maggie’s preoccupation with visual performances of "status" on the stage, on the street, and in Pete ultimately betray her. In the same way that Crane demonstrates Maggie’s inability to bring the separate spheres of social space (conceived and lived) into meaningful relation, choosing instead to make her a casualty of their irreconcilability and causing her to commit suicide rather than lead a divided life, realism (and its sub-genre naturalism) reveals the futility of maintaining “social space as a whole,” a unified structure, in the face of abstract, divisive, deterministic social forces, class-informed interests that, in the realist text, homogenize space into a representation that appears tactile, uniform, and thus lifelike.

In much the same way that industrialization during the last half of the nineteenth century consumed the landscape, social abstractions appropriated the lived space of everyday life. When such abstractions take on institutional form (such as the popular press, or the U.S. Bureau of Immigration), they can encroach on and consume lived space, rendering social space a contestable commodity: an object that can be bought, sold, manipulated, accumulated, ruled over, traded, and disposed when no longer useful. Thus what Alan Trachtenberg calls "the incorporation of America," the
"expansion of an industrial capitalist system across the continent," the "tightening systems of transportation and communication, [and] the spread of a market economy into all regions of . . . society" (1982: 3), can be understood as the Guilded Age's conquest and homogenization of social space, a "victory of elites in business, politics, and culture over dissident but divided voices of labor, farmers, immigrants, blacks and women" (1982: 231). Likewise, Stephen Kern recounts a comparable intrusion on personal space by late nineteenth-century technological advances:

The invention of the microphone around 1877 made it possible for outsiders to listen to private conversations within rooms. . . . The perfection of dry-plate, fixed focus photography by Kodak in the 1880s [ushering in the hand camera] enabled amateurs and journalists to take instantaneous candid snapshots of people anywhere outside of studios without their consent. (187)

In addition, the telephone, electric light, newspapers, electric streetcars, and x-ray technology—all invented within a half-century of each other—had the effect of penetrating "the outer shell of privacy," as Kern calls it (187), of individuals in tangible as well as intangible ways. In their histories of social, cultural, technological, and industrial transformation, Trachtenberg and Kern search out and help document the intangible (spatial) effects of quite tangible (social) influences of change on daily life
practices. As Trachtenberg writes, "The deepest changes in these decades of swift and thorough industrialization and urbanization lay at the level of culture, difficult for contemporaries to recognize, and baffling for historians" (1982: 7). The movement from tangible and concrete causes to intangible and abstract effects in these two historical analyses can be understood as attempts to decode what the age of realism has encoded: the encroachment, manipulation, accumulation, and consumption of lived space (tangible and concrete) by conceived space (intangible and abstract). From the perspective of the subjects (or "users") of space, that is from the viewpoint of the individual whose social space is being consumed by newly developed and intrusive technologies, the encroachment of conceived space is indeed "difficult for contemporaries to recognize." Realism, then, attempts to bring the intangible realm of conceptual knowledge to the practice of everyday life (the "baffling" subject of historical excavation), revealing the effects of those largely invisible and consistently invasive social forces by coding them in characters' experiences of inhospitable urban environments.

Of all the characters in the novel Maggie, it is Maggie herself who comes closest to mediating between conceived space and lived experience, and she pays the ultimate price for the knowledge that they are irreconcilable: death. On the other hand, it is Maggie's mother who is perhaps the most ill-informed and hypocritical character in the novel, yet she
comes to occupy the highest position of visibility and authority of any other individual by the novel's end, sitting in final judgment over her daughter's actions while failing to distinguish between suicide and sexual promiscuity: "Oh, yes, I'll forgive her! I'll forgive her!" (58). Thus as the novel ends in the acquittal of Maggie, conceptual knowledge—the abstract authority of pardon—protects her mother from blame and guilt by association with life in the streets. The triumph of a fixed ideology over the protean sphere of social practice is less significant as evidence of the realist text's social and philosophical determinism than as evidence of the homogenous nature of social space under realism. George Becker's "Introduction: Modern Realism as a Literary Movement," a dated yet influential essays on the literary characteristics of realism, articulates a position to which realism's critics and theorists have generally assented: that the realist novel's philosophical determinism, the fact that characters are "conditioned and controlled by environment, heredity, instinct, or chance" (Pizer 1993: 87), an environment against which characters struggle for identity and existence, constitutes realist fiction's dominant yet unexplained chief feature. Whether the realist novel is understood as principally deterministic in nature or whether it is considered, as more socially-minded critics do, as an open field in which the tension between determinism and free will is played out, the common thread remains the characters' loss of lived space and the narrator's homogenization of
historical consciousness into a roving, almost photographic immediacy that can only conceive of time and space in disconnected fragments and sees while maintaining anonymity within the scene.

The fact that Maggie's mother, blind to her own agency in her daughter's downfall, ultimately utters the words that both pose and answer the question of Maggie's demise, "Wid a home like dis an' a mudder like me, she went teh deh bad" (40), this fact marks the loss of history and the capacity for historical thought that accompanies the triumph of conceived over lived space. While realism points to the inevitable sacrifice of lived space and its history, it also demonstrates the utter futility of attempting to recuperate either. Realism's narrators thus tend to display a profound lack of awareness of the past events they so painstakingly delineate. Almost as if the present moment is the only viable "reality" that registers in consciousness, the narrator maintains a position of insubstantiality, of transparency, detached omnipotence, and self-effacement: in spite of the fact that the narrator sees all, it refuses to know all. Becker characterizes realism's narrators in much the same terms, revealing its limits not of vision but of knowledge: "At best," he writes, the narrator serves no interest save that of the truth; he has no preconceived view of how things should be; he observes and he states. Granting the impossibility of absolute objectivity, the essential thing is
that such a principle eschews fancy and intuition. . . . (29)

The realist novel's debilitation of historical consciousness, the elevation of an autonomous and momentary "truth"-as-observed over any contextualized knowledge of how things were or "should be," as Becker claims, is a consequence of three important and inter-related phenomenon which realist texts both document and bring to bear on the lives of their subjects: the triumph of the visual over all other senses, the elevation of abstract conceptions of space over lived experience, and the conquest of concrete by abstract space. All three are related by a nostalgia for, but an inability to formulate a relationship to, past experience.

Lefebvre helps us contextualize these three spatial characteristics of realism as consequences of the triumph of visual over other forms of knowledge. Associating the homogenization of social space and the reduction of lived experience to the increasing hegemony of vision, Lefebvre writes that

In the course of the process whereby the visual gains the upper hand over the other senses, all impressions derived from taste, smell, touch and even hearing first lose clarity, then fade away altogether, leaving the field to line, colour, and light. In this way a part of the object and what it offers comes to be taken for the whole. (1991: 286)
Far more than merely colonizing the other senses, however, realism's predominantly visual discourse inscribes the limits of knowledge as well. The predominance of visual description in realism, and the ability of the visual image to serve as the common point from which all knowledge issues, creates in realism what Elizabeth Ermarth calls a "buried affinity" between what can be seen and what remains hidden, or between perceptions and conceptions. Because, as Ermarth points out, realism draws on the same principles of single-point perspective (the idea that objects in space appear to possess "an invariant structure . . . that does not change with position" [21]), we can consider realism as a reformulation of this principle in narrative terms, one which allows the "realistic artist," as Ermarth writes, to project from a limited number of cases to general laws of relationship or sequence. . . . [laws based on] the faith that what cannot be seen will be much like what can, in terms of the fundamental laws of [visual perception]. (21)

In other words, realism's "general laws" determine that conceptions, or "what cannot be seen," correspond to perceptions, or "what can" be seen, by reconciling the former to the latter. The lived space of everyday life, as that which cannot be homogenized into this amalgam of perceived-conceived space, becomes an aberration, an abstraction that must either be assimilated or expelled in order that social space appear cohesive.
The principal negative consequence of the homogenizing force of realism, as I stated earlier, is the loss of a common sense of historical identity. Lefebvre links the loss of lived space and history when he writes that, in a predominantly visually culture such as that in which realism emerged, "everything is openly declared: everything is said or written. Save for the fact that there is very little to be said—and even less to be 'lived,' for lived experience is crushed, vanquished by what is 'conceived of.'" As a general consequence, Lefebvre continues, and for realism in an acute sense, "History is experienced as nostalgia, and nature as regret—as a horizon fast disappearing behind us" (1991: 51). This point is consistently addressed in Maggie by the fact that it is Maggie who must escape her history in order to survive, a point that is dramatically driven home in the novel's final scene involving Maggie's boots.

Maggie's mother, having learned of her daughter's death, becomes somewhat perplexingly fixated on the shoes her daughter wore as an infant: "I kin remember," she says, "when she weared worsted boots an' her two feets was no bigger dan yer t'umb. . . ."

The mourner arose and staggered into the other room. In a moment she emerged with a pair of faded baby shoes she held in the hollow of her hand.

"I kin remember when she used to wear dem," cried she. The women burst anew into cries as if they had all been stabbed. . . .
"Jimmie, boy, go git yer sister! Go git yer sister an’ we’ll put deh boots on her feets!" (58)

As the confused mother’s attempt to turn back history illustrates, the belated attempt to rewrite the past crystallizes realism’s view of history as both “nostalgia” and “regret.” History is certainly a commodified and fetishized object here, symbolized by the boots that no longer fit, a history for which the mother longs but which she herself has corrupted and made wholly inaccessible. In the same way that Maggie’s mother is unable to reconcile the knowledge of her daughter’s downfall with the evidence of the good upbringing which she believes she gave the child, Maggie herself is unable to reconcile the unrealistic visions of the future she obtains with the limited prospects of her present situation. Realism forces readers to draw that line for characters and narrators alike, to attempt to restore the violated boundaries between conceived and lived space and to recapture the lost awareness of time and history that follows that violation.

The result of this crushing of lived experience by an idealized image of either the future (in Maggie’s case), or the past (in her mother’s case), is the loss of what it is to be human, “fancy and intuition” as Becker claims (29), along with the capacity to distinguish perceptual from conceptual experiences. History, as a record of past events arranged in (apparently) meaningful segments, is what Lefebvre considers the “most essential part of lived experience” that has become
"no longer visible" under the triumph of abstract space. Furthermore, time (and by association history) is no longer intelligible. It cannot be constructed. It is consumed, exhausted, and that is all. It leaves no traces. It is concealed in space, hidden under a pile of debris to be disposed of as soon as possible. . . . (1991: 95-96)

Realism attempts to conceal the individual's inability to construct an intelligible history by reducing history to a "pile of debris," a pair of boots that no longer fit. While characters suffer the effects of that failure, readers do not share the narrator's ignorance of its causes but are made to reconstruct that causal chain in the text. The reader's obligation to recuperate narrative evidence of the past into the spatial experience of everyday life marks realism's attempt to restore, in a wider scope, the field and structure of lived space that have been crushed, swept aside, "consumed, exhausted. . . . [or] disposed of" by the homogenizing and consensual forces of abstract space.

As I show throughout this study, and as Ermarth claims, "realism in no way signals the death of abstraction" (27) but rather, as I argue, illustrates the unfortunate consequences of its triumph. By establishing the consensus that lived space is subject to commodification and that nature, identity, and history are "as a horizon fast disappearing behind us," realists utilize consensus and abstraction as tools both to expose in an ironic way (as in Crane) or oppose
in an instrumental way (as in Riis) the forces that threaten to consume everyday life. Of all the writers and photographers I examine in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the journalist-photographer-reformer Jacob Riis presents the clearest example of how consensus and abstraction can be employed within the framework of realism to appropriate and commodify lived space. Suggesting that the tenement slums and their inhabitants had overtaken the middle-class social space of the city, Riis used the instrumental capacities of realism to homogenize and help destroy an entire New York tenement neighborhood, Mulberry Bend. The cultural history of this event remains largely unexamined since the benign objective of improving living conditions has outshone its more malignant mechanism whereby the lived space of the tenement was literally destroyed and inhabitants displaced without being relocated. Finding a heterogeneous space of ethnic diversity, Riis employed methods of literary realism to homogenize difference into the specter of otherness—social deviancy, social decay, and moral corruption—arguing that the assimilation and Americanization of immigrants was an issue of space and whose most expedient and effective solution rested in the complete demolition of the tenement and exile of the tenant.

William Dean Howells, by campaigning for a realism that "adjusts the proportions" and "preserves the balances" between social classes, likewise attempted to restore the lost place of everyday life to a position of visibility.
"The pride of caste is becoming the pride of taste," Howells wrote; "it is averse to the mass of men; it consents to know them only in some conventionalized and artificial guise" (Criticism vol. 2: 62). In effect, Howells perceived that the sense of community and respect for difference that issues from one's association and intercourse with various class and ethnic groups had been undercut by false and debilitating standards of an insular and over-discriminating upper-class respectability. A Hazard of New Fortunes charts the arrival of just such an over-discriminating family, Basil and Isabel March, into the culturally diverse space of New York. Their trials in the early house-hunting scenes of the novel, the attempt to shed their preconceived notions of taste, and their confrontation with the entire spectrum of social and ethnic caste in their new home illustrate how hazardous (and yet how crucial) the confrontation of and entry into social space is to gain one's sense of individual identity in modern society.

Howells foregrounds the success of the cooperative literary venture Basil March has come to New York to edit, Every Other Week, as evidence of this need to tolerate, and even promote, the coexistence of divergent social, political, aesthetic, and class interests. However, what cuts against the grain of the couple's troubling period of assimilation is the loss of identity as rooted in their Bostonian past. While the couple learns to shed many stereotypes and negative preconceptions about "the other half" they encounter in the
they have also lost touch with a part of their past, leaving them somewhat immobilized and marginalized in New York. As a way to underscore the loss of a desirable portion of their past, two casualties present themselves in the novel as indications that history does not pass away without a price. The deaths of the German anarchist and Civil War veteran Lindau and the young social reformer Corey Dryfoos illustrate the irreconcilability in Howells's mind between the past and future on the one hand and the demands of the present on the other. Thus Lindau, as the personification of diversity in language, dress, and manners, and as the character with the longest-standing relationship to March that predates that of all other characters in the novel, finally comes to be killed because of his involvement in and support of revolutionary forces that threaten the homogeneity, the "balance" and "proportion" between extremes that March has worked so hard to engineer (on a much smaller scale) in his editorial duties, forces that, ironically, Lindau has already paid for in the form of a war wound. Howells's sacrifice of his most marginalized and historical character, often considered a flaw in the novel, comes to represent the price paid for realism's establishment of a homogenized "middle ground."

Lewis Hine is a photographer and social worker unwilling to compromise the diversity of his subjects for a homogenized view of culture and society. Hine is perhaps the first of his post-Civil War generation to produce consensual knowledge
of his subjects, newly arriving immigrants to America, without sacrificing the ethnic diversity and social history of the individual. The consensual knowledge that Hine produced in his Ellis Island photographs is based in the tension between conceived and lived space rather than perceived space, suggesting a much more historically-inclusive basis from which consensus can emerge. By invoking and re-stressing the theme of arrival, social mobility, and ascent in his subjects, Hine resurrects the nations' cultural history as the struggle for an individual lived space and identity, the communal bond that unites past and present, immigrant and nativist alike. By giving difference a face, by asking his subjects to confront the camera and participate in the making of the view, Hine used photography to provide a virtual meeting place, a common ground on which the viewer could confront the lived space of the viewed subject independent of the hierarchical subject-object relationships Riis's images produced.

One can detect, in Hine's early work, a developing aesthetic sensibility that, as I argue, is germane to twentieth century modernist abstraction. In Hine, abstraction surfaces through the attribution of beauty, dignity, sensitivity, and emotion to quite undignified and even base subject material, what Nelson A. Miles in a North American Review essay of 1890 called

that unfortunate class of people who have sought this country either for a place of refuge or an
asylum, crowding our cities and towns, inhabiting the alleys, breathing foul air, and living upon limited and unwholesome food, their idea of life contaminated even beneath its natural sphere by the association and influences constantly before them and surrounding them. (371)

Hine worked within the principles literary realism established, principles that require a consensus of perception and conception, to recover a lived space for his subjects. By introducing abstraction in a conceptual sense, Hine immobilized his viewers’ preconceptions and forced a reconsideration of many culturally-embedded stereotypes regarding immigrants’ appearance, desirability in, and capacities for assimilation to American society. Hine’s practice of isolating his subjects from the unhealthful “associations and influences” projected upon them, and his habit of photographing individuals in the context of their own lived (ethnic) space, used abstraction to reveal a “buried affinity,” that between the nation’s collective struggle for identity since its founding and the particular instances of that struggle as manifested by individual immigrants.

Peter Angeles defines abstraction as a process whereby new knowledge is produced by an unexpected juxtaposition in the subject encounters something known apart from reference to any particular object or event and which represents symbolically,
conceptually, or imaginatively something not directly or concretely perceivable in experience.

(2)

Abstraction, in other words, produces new knowledge in much the same way Ermarth says realism produces new knowledge, by removing "the important meaning to a hidden place where it must be sought. Both the hidden truth and the methods for discovering it thus become abstract" (36). Since realism, Ermarth continues, "moves to higher levels of generalization," and since abstraction, as Angeles states, "is also the process of deriving a universal" from the examination of particulars, we can see in Hine the important linking of "realistic" subject material and a mode of representation that functions apart from what is directly perceived. Hine accomplishes this by aestheticizing abstraction, a practice that focuses on the particular details of the view—the faces, gestures, and everyday life activities of immigrants—and argues for a "higher level . . . of generalization": their aesthetic as well as cultural value.

I believe the work of Hine represents one of the earliest attempts to bring about the coexistence of conceived and lived space. Implicitly arguing, unlike Crane, Riis, and Howells, that the conjunction of abstract (conceived) and concrete (lived) space does not necessarily end in the consumption and destruction of the latter by the former, Hine initiates what modernism achieves in the poetry of Wallace
Stevens: the domestication of abstraction into the everyday life of the individual. For Stevens, abstraction becomes the key feature of everyday life, and the speakers of his poems encounter abstraction by “perceiving the idea,” by allowing a place for abstraction in the world of sensual experience, giving abstraction form not in objects as such but as objects perceived. The linking of pleasure and abstraction, the great contribution of Hine to modernism, becomes a fully articulated philosophy of art and life in Stevens. In “Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction,” for example, both the objective world and the reader’s experience of that world share in a relationship that “must be abstract . . . must change . . . [and] must give pleasure.”

Through the process of extracting, or “decreating” (a word Stevens borrows from Simone Weil) lived experience from its basis in conceptual thought, the individual, Stevens writes in “Notes,”

... must become an ignorant man again
And see the sun again with an ignorant eye
And see it clearly in the idea of it

(CP 380)

The process of un-seeing in order to re-see a thing “clearly in the idea of it” represents the embrace of abstraction, a gesture necessitated by Stevens’s realization that “we live in a place/ That is not our own and, much more, not ourselves” (CP 383). Granting this state of exile from the world of sense and appearances, a space that Stevens and
modernism alike pronounce defunct, the only possibility for a lived space in modern society lies through the mind and imagination. "The imagination is the liberty of the mind," announced Stevens in a speech to the English Institute. "It is intrepid and eager and the extreme of its achievement lies in abstraction" (1951: 138, 139). Thus Stevens's contribution to modernism can be considered as an attempt to acknowledge abstraction as the inescapable condition of modernity, a form of perception and consequently—as he learned from realism—the basis for common experience. Like Paul Klee who, as Lefebvre writes, helped usher in a period in history when "space opened up to perception, to conceptualization, just as it did to practical action" (1991: 125), Stevens has a place in that history as one who brought a spatial awareness to poetry.

I thus examine Stevens in the context of an emerging consciousness of space, a space "alive with its own seemings" (CP 346) that is contingent on the viewer's perceptions. Stevens creates such a space in which perceived objects are made "alive" by the self-reflexive "seemings" that the reader brings to experiences, "Like rubies reddened by rubies reddening," as Stevens says in "Description without Place" (CP 346). In other words, Stevens abstracts and, in doing so, domesticates Guilded Age encroachments on lived space, effectively reframing social crisis in spatial terms with the tools and methods by which realists identified and broadcast that crisis.
Chapter Two

The Spatial Practice of William Dean Howells's *A Hazard of New Fortunes*

In January 1886, as a way to introduce himself and the "Editor's Study" he was to write for *Harper's Monthly* over the next six years, William Dean Howells wrote:

There are few words so sympathetically compliant with a varied need as the word used to conceal the real character of this new department of the *New Monthly*. (Criticism vol. 2: 3)

The word Howells refers to that is so "sympathetically compliant" with the slippery nature of language is the word "study," a term that calls up in the mind a place charmingly imagined by the architect and prettily equipped by the domestic powers, where the master of the house lounges away his leisure, scanty or abundant, and nobody apparently studies. (Criticism vol. 2: 3)

In what follows, Howells distinguishes the genteel associations of the "unreal study" that, "from a very early time," have distorted and concealed the "real character" of the study as he would define and interpret it.

As a way to distinguish the "real" from the "unreal" study, and consequently the "real" from the "unreal" editor, Howells introduces his readers to the space of both. In the study of the unreal editor, which issues from a period in
which "the whole race began to put on airs of intellectual refinement," "heavy rugs silence the foot upon his floor; nothing but the costliest masterpieces gleam from his walls; the best of the old literatures . . . make music to the eye from his shelves." In the "real" editor's study, by contrast, situated in "a narrow den at the top of the house . . . piled about with books and proofs and manuscripts," the editor is a figure "before whom contributors tremble." Furthermore, while the unreal editor looks out "vast windows of flawless plate" on "the vanishing-point of the delicious perspective" they provide, the real editor "darkles in a cloud blown from his own cigar." In short, the unreal editor is master of his space in a room with a commanding view of the world while the real editor appears consumed in a sea of papers and cigar smoke.

In which setting did Howells prefer his readers to find him? Surprisingly enough, "the editor of [this] Study proposes to sit at fine ease" in the unreal study, a polite setting in which "the reader will not be allowed to interrupt the editor while he is talking." Why would Howells, who in these very pages would campaign for the "simple, honest, and direct" in literature, and praise everything "real" and condemn everything "unreal" in fiction, advance such a view of himself? A clue to this oddity, I believe, can be found in the position his fiction takes—a position in which it is necessary to strike a balance between the two opposed types of social space, conceived and lived, he introduces in the
‘Editor’s Study.’ As a way to balance those opposites, Howells paints himself as one who must be able to maintain two identities, an ideal and a ‘real’ self. When the general reader is present, the editor’s preconceptions of what gentility signifies predominates: ‘the editor will try to keep his temper, and to be as inconclusive as possible’; yet the ‘real editor’ who inhabits the ‘real’ lived space of the study, indulges his ‘prejudices and grudges’ behind the scene in a cloud of tobacco smoke, acting out in a way that may not be appropriate to reveal in the general reader’s presence.

In a larger sense, the two roles Howells sees himself balancing represent the separate discursive spaces of producers and consumers in the literary marketplace. On the one hand, Howells as a public figure has an image to maintain for his readership, one rooted in high or genteel culture, that conforms to the conceptual model of an ideal editor, one who looks out “vast windows of flawless plate” [my emphasis]. On the other hand, however, Howells as an individual lives the everyday life of a writer and editor whose “prejudices” and “grudges” anchor him in a world of experience in which he “can never be impartial.” Howells is unwilling to cast off the polite, public, and firmly authoritative role of the “unreal editor” because it is necessary that he balance these two seemingly opposed editorial roles. In Howells’s view, the editor of the study has a duty not far removed from the writer of realist fiction itself: both attempt to identify largely silent and underrepresented masses of society.
(readers and the working class) and draw them into a relationship with those who produce (writers), judge (editors) and own (capitalists). "The Editor's Study" and realist fiction alike attempt to juggle the different class and economic interests that had not before been entertained in relation to each other in society.\(^\text{10}\)

Howells's words regarding the "Editor's Study" further reveal the kinds of social space that his fiction would address and attempt to juxtapose. In the study of the "unreal editor," discourse is suppressed for the sake of spectacle: the "heavy rugs" of the study and the editor himself command "silence," and the "costliest masterpieces" of cultural and "intellectual refinement" have the effect of leaving the visitor (reader) in speechless awe. Since the "unreal study" elevates spectacle over speech, and since it is a space hierarchically organized and made cohesive by a single point of view, that of editor as "master of the house," it can be considered a conceived space. As a space defined by the "airs of intellectual refinement" borrowed from an earlier era, the unreal study, a stage on which Howells was to stand before his public, is a totality and not a space that is open to negotiation; nor is it a space made "alive" with the power of speech that characterizes lived space (Lefebvre 1991: 42). In the unreal editor's study, as Lefebvre tells us of conceived space, "established relations between objects and people," and in Howells's case between literature and its consumers, "are subordinate to a logic
which will sooner or later break them up because of their lack of consistency” (1991: 41). The unreal editor, as arbiter of taste and ultimate figure of authority, relishes the right to exercise his own brand of logic unopposed in a space Howells himself describes as “a symposium of one” (Criticism vol. 2: 4).

The “real editor,” by contrast, encourages the open exchange of ideas and looks favorably on the opportunity to express “prejudices,” grudges,” and “opinions,” since he has “no opportunity to exchange them with others” (1993: 4). Furthermore, we learn that in the real study “impartiality is to be feared” for “a man who likes or dislikes can never be impartial” (Criticism vol. 2: : 4). The openly subjective nature of the real study, then, and the fact that it does not subordinate speech (discourse) to the consistency or impartiality offered by a single-point perspective, gives it the characteristics of lived space. Providing a role that, as Howells says of language, is “compliant with a varied need” to shift between public and private discourses, the new “Editor’s Study” is a social space that attempts to mediate conceived and lived space, one that “embraces the loci of passion, of action and of lived situations” (Lefebvre 1991: 42) and, at the same time, one that is codified by middle-class values of polite culture.

By juxtaposing apparently incompatible ways that language functions (and that the word “study” evokes), one that works visually to “conceal” and “suppress” and another
that works verbally "to indulge" partisan debate, Howells suggests in a larger sense that writers have less control over the uses to which their words are put than they may have thought. By allowing the real and the unreal to overlap, Howells conceives of language in a distinctly modern way, and in the same terms that Terry Eagleton posits the aesthetic: as "an eminently contradictory phenomenon" (3). The "contradictory phenomenon" of the aesthetic, writes Eagleton, is that "while preserving a foot in this realm of everyday experience, it also raises and elaborates . . . supposedly natural, spontaneous expression to the status of an intricate intellectual discipline" (2). Fiction, for Howells, similarly attempts to bridge a contradiction, that between "everyday experience" and literature as an "intellectual discipline." Howells writes in "Novel-Reading and Writing" that

Fiction is the chief intellectual stimulus of our time . . . , and taking it in the broad sense if not the deep sense, it is the chief intellectual influence. I should say moral influence too. . . .

(Criticism vol. 3: 227)

While Eagleton is concerned with examining "the theoretical persistence of the aesthetic," its "lofty status" in modern European thought (2), Howells, we might say, is attempting to establish just such "lofty status" for realism in America by attempting to mediate the gap that threatens to divide America as an apparently homogenous, classless society. As
Alan Trachtenberg puts it, realism did in fact represent a "threat" to a Guilded Age gentry that "had strengthened its hold on institutions of education and art, publishing and philanthropy" yet was failing to "protect itself from common life" (1982: 182).

Howells embraced "common" or everyday life through its "simple, natural, and honest" representation, not as a substitute for the overly conceptual and discriminating culture of the day, but as a corrective supplement to what Howells perceived as a lack of an American socio-spatial awareness. Howells writes that the American public, both its readers and writers alike, "have been taught to compare what they see and what they read, not with the things that they have observed and known, but with the things that some other artist or writer has done" (Criticism vol. 2: 73). Howells well understood the "deeply incorporated" nature of American society (qtd. in Trachtenberg 1982: 185), the fact that the everyday life of the masses was under siege not only by the so-called "captains of industry" of the Guilded Age but also by a rising middle class. In a private letter (February 1887) to Harper's Monthly editor George W. Curtis, Howells complained that

What really depresses and disheartens me in the outburst against having "commonplace people" in fiction is that the very, very little culture and elegance with which our refined people have overlaid themselves seems to have hardened their
hearts against the common people: they seem to despise and hate them. (Letters 183)

The “refined people” Howells singles out as “hardened” and emotionally detached from everyday life bear the hallmark of the producers of abstract space who, Lefebvre says, “all . . . identify what is lived and what is perceived with what is conceived” (1991: 38). As a consequence, readers of society periodicals like Harper’s could complain that the daily life of workers and immigrants was a mere “commonplace” to be swept aside since their lived experiences (as represented) did not reflect the nation’s more “refined” values and social practices.

Two years after his letter to Curtis, Howells would be at work on a story that would have as its protagonists two such “refined people,” Isabel and Basil March, with hearts that had been “hardened” in ignorance rather than hatred of the other half. In A Hazard of New Fortunes, by thus taking the purveyors of middle-class cultural values as his subject, Howells sought to illustrate not how those values are formulated and perpetuated, nor how they lead individuals to have hardened hearts, but rather how such hearts might be softened to accommodate genteel preconceptions of self to the heterogeneity of urban experience.

A Hazard of New Fortunes narrates just such a reconciliation of conceived and lived space. From the novel’s opening chapters on the couple’s house hunting adventures in New York, to its conclusion in March’s and
Fulkerson's purchase of the literary venture, *Every Other Week*, from its owner, the pitfalls and rewards of attempting to reconcile established values to existing social realities are kept in the foreground. "Does anything from without change us?" March asks his wife in the novel's closing pages. Wondering what their experiences in New York have taught them, March concludes,

I suppose I should have to say that we didn't change at all. We develop. There's the making of several characters in each of us; we are each several characters, and sometimes this character has the lead in us, and sometimes that. (485-86)

March's comment at the end of the novel suggests that individual identity is continually shifting and evolving, a product of the continual contest between social forces of the present and the past values we bring into the present. Howells attempted to forge a link between these multiple selves, to maintain a relationship, as he attempted in the Editor's Study, between the "real" and "unreal," between lived and conceived experience. Howells's fiction, from the middle 1880s onward, including *The Minister's Charge* (1886), *Annie Kilburn* (1888), *The World of Chance* (1893), and *A Traveler from Altruria* (1894) characteristically confronts and attempts to contain the conflict between the consensual nature of established beliefs and the shifting, irruptive forces of social experience. 11

46
A Hazard of New Fortunes, perhaps more clearly than his other novels from this period, explicitly examines what Eagleton calls the (much earlier) emergence of "a whole new form of human subjectivity" (3). In this novel, Howells acknowledges the late nineteenth-century manifestation of this new subjectivity, one that is bifurcated into "real" and "unreal" selves, "commonplace" and "genteel" culture, and advances realism as a means to mediate that opposition. Through what Howells called the realist novel's "fidelity to life," two different orders of experience, conceived and lived, might be reconciled. Using realism as a pedagogical device to test and illustrate his belief that a relationship between abstract and concrete knowledge was possible, Howells wrote in "Novel-Writing and Reading,"

Let no reader, and let no intending novelist suppose that this fidelity to life can be carried too far. After all, and when the artist has given his whole might to the realization of his ideal, he will have only an effect of life. I think the effect is like that in those cycloramas where up to a certain point there is real ground and real grass, and then carried indivisibly on to the canvass the best that the painter can do is to imitate real ground and real grass. We start in our novels with something we have known of life . . . and then we go on and imitate what we have known
of life. If we are very skillful and very patient we can hide the joint. But the joint is always there. . . . (Criticism vol. 3: 222)

By beginning with "something we have known of life . . . life itself," Howells urges writers to reveal something unknown, an imitation, as a way to cross the boundary between lived experience and the conceptual realm of art and the imagination.

In order that the boundary between opposed social spaces can be crossed, it must first be veiled. Thus Howells stresses that realism must "hide the joint" between abstract conceptual and concrete experiential realms in order to maintain what Elizabeth Ermarth calls a "buried affinity" between actuality and appearance (24), or between experience and imitation. Since, as Ermarth claims, "form and position are relative in realism, not absolute" (16), Basil March can claim that "there's the making of several characters in each of us" (486), that no single viewpoint or identity maintains a privileged position of authority over another but that multiple views and selves all contribute to a unified world view. This "equality of viewpoints," as Ermarth calls it, is a signal feature of realism and constitutes the source of its homogenizing power.

Homogeneity of experience and consensual knowledge represent the "realization of [the artist's] ideal" to Howells and are the conditions under which A Hazard of New Fortunes works to establish consensus, a condition of
agreement is when individuals 'may be all humbled and strengthened with a sense of their own frailty' as Howells said (op. cit. vol. 1: 31). In my analysis of Howells's novel, I focus closely on the early house-hunting scenes as an instance of how the Marches are both 'humbled and strengthened' by their encounter with the lived space of New York street life. The couple's inability to break out of the confines of conceived space that imprisons them until they shed genteel preconceptions of their prior life in Boston illustrates Howells's continuing belief. Despite his statements to the contrary, that a class-defined conceived space and an ethnically-defined lived space are irreconcilable. It is not until the Marches displace their genteel preconceptions of New York with perceptions of daily life on the street that they assimilate to the city, and Howells illustrates the consequences of the couple's homogenization of lived and perceived space: the loss of history.

Indeed, as Ernath writes, 'the key to defining realism . . . is history' (25). Through an analysis of how the city is perceived by the Marches on their house-hunting venture, I show that history takes the shape of the couple's past life in Boston, a history that they must reconcile to their present perceptions of New York as a precondition of their assimilation.
I. Mapping the City from an Elevated Position: The "Superb Spectacle" of Conceived Space

A Hazard of New Fortunes narrates the migration of an upper middle class family, Basil and Isabel March and their children, from Boston to New York. Basil has been convinced by his friend Fulkerson, who has secured the financial backing to begin publishing a new society periodical, Twice a Week, to come to New York to serve as literary editor. The novel charts the Marches' arrival and assimilation in New York, their attempt to enter the completely foreign social world of the city, and the trials of realizing the broadly cooperative venture of publishing a national magazine.

When the Marches arrive in New York, their first objective is to find suitable living space, and Howells devotes considerable attention to what he called the "long stretches of carpentry" (letter to Thomas W. Higginson, Letters 304) that constitutes their exploration for a flat. Their attempt to find just the right place to live becomes a long and drawn out process of surveying, measuring, and attempting to fit themselves into the city. Yet their apparently tangential explorations of the city do more than merely provide an introduction to it and displace the superficial view of New York they had formed during past visits; and while Howells claims in the letter to Higginson that "little or nothing of the real edifice" emerged from the early chapters, the Marches' perambulations nonetheless have a value that criticism of the novel has improperly
understood: their attempt to map the urban social and ethnic geography of New York and make of it a domestic space with the quite ineffectual tools of conceptual thought.\textsuperscript{13}

Maps are conceptual representations, a condensation of three-dimensional geographical space into a two-dimensional copy. The activity of mapping imposes spatial order on uncharted space, and the use of maps helps orient the users of space. However, in the hands of the Marches, the map proves to be a wholly ineffectual tool. In assimilating to their new environment, the Marches are made to endure the quite painful process of altering their thoughts and actions as they become thrown from the stable social world they knew in Boston into a space in which they have had all their social and cultural references erased. The Marches, once in New York, must begin life anew, and the most revealing issue concerning their assimilation is the fact that it is governed by their ability to decode the social spaces of their urban environment. In a sense, the task that the novel sets for the Marches is the identification of the line (or "joint") separating the city as a conceived and as a lived space. Encountering sharp divisions between the city's intellectual and social geography, the Marches learn to navigate between two types of space that the city presents to them: the city as an abstraction, and the city as a "fluid and dynamic" realm of experience, a space which Lefebvre says embodies the "loci of passion, of action and of lived situations" (1991: 42). The novel, in short, charts the education of the
Marches in a visual and spatial sense: first through their ability to distinguish the city's two-dimensional appearance from its embedded and embodied social structures, and later through their ability to see beyond their own established social boundaries.

The Marches discover, upon their arrival in New York, the difficulty of penetrating the city as a perceived space and of finding a place for themselves in the existing social order. Howells draws the reader's attention in chapters 7-12 to two opposed means of constructing urban space: one from the detached position of the elevated rail and horse-drawn carriage, and the other from street level, that of the pedestrian. Interestingly, these two modes of travel correspond to the two "editor's studies" and to two of the three types of social space Lefebvre distinguishes. While the Marches travel through New York's urban landscape in a carriage or on rail, they find the city mystifying, picturesque, and impenetrable: in effect, they see the city as an ideal space. The moment they step down, however, and lose their visual perspective and enter the world at street level, they encounter the spatial practice urban life and experience New York as a "lived space," a hazard quite unsafe to inhabit.

These two opposed ways of experiencing the city (one primarily visual, the other primarily social) can further be characterized by the degree of social discourse (or interaction) each position allows subjects to produce (or
experience). As the scene in which the Marches ride an elevated train at night reveals, the detached perspective of "the elevated" literally raises them above the rabble of spatial practice of the city below and onto a plane in which the urban world exists solely as a representation. Mrs. March, as the couple is about to climb aboard, confesses that elevated rail travel is "the most ideal way of getting about in the world" and discovers that

the fleeting intimacy you formed with people in second and third floor interiors, while all the usual street life went on underneath, had a domestic intensity mixed with a perfect repose that was the last effect of good society, with all its security and exclusiveness. (76)

This is a mode of travel that provides a view of the city insulated from what goes on "underneath" and divides her perception of space into halves: one above, one below; one in which what is seen ("domestic intensity") can be experienced apart from what is felt ("perfect repose"). While the elevated rail provides its passengers with a voyeuristic "intimacy," as Isabel March believes, it is a "fleeting intimacy," which is actually the absence of intimacy altogether, or a most superficial type of intimacy. In responding to the city as a representation, Mrs. March is unable to identify or reflect on her own relationship to the view. Her response to seeing the city in this way further removes her from the scene: she experiences the physical "security" of being isolated and at a safe distance from the
spatial practice of "the usual street life" and revels in the economic "exclusiveness" of being able to afford such an expensive mode of travel.

Basil March, for his part, finds riding the elevated rail "better than the theatre," since it animates the everyday activities of

a family party of work-folk at a late tea, some of the men in their shirt sleeves; a woman sewing by a lamp; a mother laying her child in its cradle; a man with his head fallen on his hands upon a table; a girl and her lover leaning over the window-sill together (76)

into a "superb spectacle" for his own private consumption. Like Whitman's characteristic catalogue of viewed objects, March's view into the apartments issues from a high place and for an audience of one. Unlike the Marches, however, Whitman's speaker is able to image himself bodily into the view, making it a lived space. In "Song of Myself," when a "runaway slave" appears in the poem, the speaker

. . . heard his motions crackling the twigs of the woodpile,

Through the swung half-door of the kitchen I saw him limpsey and weak,

And went where he sat on a log, and led him in and assured him. . . . (10.189-92)
In another part of the poem, when seeing the day's harvest about to roll into the barn, its "big doors" "open and ready," the speaker can claim

I am there . . . . I help . . . . I came stretched atop of the load,
I felt its soft jolts . . . . one leg reclined on the other,
I jump from the crossbeams, and seize the clover and timothy,
And roll head over heels, and tangle my hair full of wisps. (9.171-74)

Thus while Whitman allows the speaker to image himself bodily into the space created by the poem, the narrator of Hazard can only allow the Marches to perceive the city as a representation, an image which elicits from March the somewhat hollow exclamations, "What suggestion! what drama! what infinite interest!" (76). The Marches appear quite limited in their experience of the city, in comparison to the free ranging mobility of Whitman's speaker, because social space is experienced by the Marches as a conceived space.

Suffused with a greater number and more visible boundaries than Whitman perceived, the discontinuous social geography of late nineteenth-century America demands the March's silence. It is thus significant that the Marches do not exchange any words in the two long paragraphs that comprise this scene. This fact further reveals the nature of conceived of space: such spaces, like the "unreal study,"
suppress discourse for the sake of spectacle. While the narrator tells us that the Marches "often talked afterward of the superb spectacle" of their rail journey, they were "for the present . . . mostly inarticulate before it." The couple is only able to experience the scene, as the narrator further informs us on this point, as "another moment of rich silence" separately added to their individual experiences but not shared collectively (77).

The above scene reveals significant qualities about conceived space, particularly abstract representations of urban space, as space mapped and repackaged in instrumental form. Howells's characters appear connected in a strictly passive way—as consumers—to their visual world because it has been perceived as a purely visual artifact. As representations are impossible to enter, so is the city as composed in this manner by the Marches. This is because conceived space, when visually represented, is in thrall to both knowledge and power, [and] leaves only the narrowest leeway to representational spaces, which are limited to works, images and memories whose content, whether sensory, sensual or sexual, is so far displaced that it barely achieves symbolic form. (Lefebvre 1991: 50)

The scene the Marches perceive exists solely as image and memory, as spectacle and longing; and while it is made available to them by the "[technological] knowledge and [economic] power" of a doubly-removed viewpoint, in a self-
contradictory way that view imprisons them within its space and prevents them from perceiving the city as a lived space in which social relations "predominate," or are in any way possible at all.

In this scene, I believe Howells presents a vision into the future that leads directly to the discontinuous spaces that Crane's Maggie encounters in the Bowery. It is a future in which abstract space predominates and has consumed and reduced the world of spatial practice into a representation, a spectacle in which individuals become silenced by and imprisoned within purely instrumental reproductions of space.

In a passage that concludes the scene we have been discussing, Howells's narrator comments on the appearance of the "great night trains" (as they must have appeared to the Marches) in a way that unmistakably looks forward to Dreiser. "What forces, what fates," writes Howells,

slept in these bulks which would soon be hurling themselves north and east and west through the night! Now they waited there like fabled monsters of Arab story ready for the magician's touch, tractable, reckless, will-less—organized lifelessness full of a strange semblance of life.

(77)

The "strange semblance of life" that the Marches perceive, in a larger sense, is characteristic of representations of space, that is, conceived space with an autonomy, cohesiveness, and technical rationality all its own.
Lefebvre comments on the abstract quality of such spaces and says that they are "not in fact defined on the basis of what is perceived" (1991: 50). Conceived space, we recall, is "the space of scientists, planners, urbanists, technocratic subdividers" and the like (1991: 38). The abstract nature of the space engineers create, Lefebvre writes, "functions positively vis-a-vis its own implications: technology, applied sciences, and knowledge bound to power" (1991: 50). The Marches, drawing both knowledge and power, attended by a sense of superiority, from the applied technology of the elevated rail, come to inhabit—for a brief moment—the representation of space that technology has created. What do their actions betray about this space while they are within it? They are reduced to silence, transfixed by the flare and tremor of the innumerable lights; the moony sheen of the electrics mixing with the reddish points and blots of gas far and near; the architectural shapes of houses and churches and towers, rescued by the obscurity from all that was ignoble in them. (76-77)

In sum, this is a view of the rail system of which the Metropolitan Transit Authority would rightly be proud: the "ignoble" side of technology "rescued by the obscurity" of night and bathed in the picturesque glow of electricity. The Marches are left speechless because, as Lefebvre tells us of the abstract quality of representations of space, "everything is said or written, save for the fact that there is very
little to be said—and even less to be 'lived,' for lived experience is crushed, vanquished by what is 'conceived of'” (1991: 51). The confrontation of representations of space, and the inability of characters to respond to the abstractions that such spaces present, signals a trend that, as we shall see, will become more firmly established and characterize representational practices as realism's mode of social commentary matures into naturalism and modernism.

II. New York On Foot: Lived Space and the Challenge to "Self-Respect"

It is not difficult to understand why Howells was drawn to the representation of life in the streets of the city. As a backdrop for the chapters treating the March's assimilation to New York, city streets represent spaces where an urban community comes into contact with itself and where, as sociologist Peter Wolf believes, "urban life for the individual is generally considered its most intense and special" (189). City streets, especially those which provide for foot traffic, allow for something less tangible than routes of commercial activity and express, in Marshall Berman's words, "the freedom of the city, an order that exists in a state of perpetual motion and change," a "medium in which the totality of modern material and spiritual forces could meet, clash, interfere and work out their ultimate meanings and fates" (318, 316). As a space of contest, then, between imaginative and material forces, or between ideas and
things, city streets mediate between conceptual and lived space. They are spaces, Wolf states, in which "the demands generally asserted by transportation technology and planning are often in conflict with optimum experience of the individual served by such transportation" (189).

Technological advancements such as streetcars, automobiles, and elevated trains, Thomas V. Czarnowski notes, were in part developed for the purpose of relieving the congestion of streets associated with foot traffic. Yet with the reduction of foot traffic, social intercourse, as the Marches' experiences demonstrate, atrophies.

The city street, then, has a "preeminently public" role to fill in society, as Czarnowski observes, and serves as the "principal place of public contact and public passage, a place of exchange of ideas, goods, and services, a place of play and fight, of carnival and funeral, of protest and celebration": a place, in short, "in the web of associations that have sustained human society" (207). If, as Czarnowski believes, city streets with their human traffic "have sustained human society," then any effort to limit social intercourse on city streets can, even in a limited sense, be interpreted as a threat to the perpetuation of, or at least the intercourse necessary for, human society. What this amounts to, in the terminology that this study has established, is that conceptual space, the space of "modern material" production, is opposed to and works against lived space. One kind of space tends, as Lefebvre observes, to work
to the exclusion of the other. If “lived experience is crushed, vanquished by what is ‘conceived of,’” then the Marches’ success in constructing a domestic space for themselves out of the “long stretches of carpentry” must be determined by their ability to navigate between the opposed kinds of space they encounter in the street.

While the Marches’ excursions through the city as a conceptual space inform the early part of the novel to a great degree, it is not the only type of space they encounter. Lefebvre notes that a history of space “must account for both representational [lived] spaces and representations of space [conceptual], but above all for their interrelationships and their links with social practice” (1991: 116). The novel’s chronological and thematic foregrounding of social space, its focus on ventures (domestic, commercial, political) that frequently lead into dead ends, reveals the importance of mapping to Howells’s design. As Daniel Borus notes, writers of realist fiction “brought to literature the same concern [as intellectual historians] for the mapping of society and its behavioral rules and the same method of observing the concrete rather than replicating the abstract” (14). Eric Sundquist agrees with this view and states that realist fiction “shows America’s psychological space, like its open range and developing city space, being mapped and marketed” (503). In showing space being mapped, realists in effect contributed to
that project by attempting to establish a relationship among society's concrete and abstract spaces.

Borus notes an important quality of realist fiction when he writes that

one of the tasks that realists set for themselves was the construction of a common culture in which all classes could partake. This culture would serve . . . to reforge bonds that national growth had rent. . . . Realists took empirical observation with unprecedented enthusiasm because they felt that through such activities [as writing about everyday life] they could transcend the divisions and fragmentations that had accompanied capitalist development. (4)

The mapping of space, then, should serve a unifying end for those so engaged. If this is in fact the case, how can we explain the heightened anxiety with which the Marches approach and experience this activity?

If we pause for a moment to consider the map, with attention to both its production and use, we can gain a better appreciation for how the March's over-reliance on maps—as abstract representations of space—prevents them from entering the city's lived space. French cultural historian Louis Marin characterizes the map as

the totalization of an ensemble of elements that are simply possible; it neutralizes their real formation into an itinerary. The routes within the
Itineraries are reduced to their text [a representation], and only to their text. In other words, they are reduced to an ensemble of elements defined by the possible positions they could occupy within the different routes. The map is thus a textual system lacking any specific process; or rather its processes are composed outside of it in a pragmatic use it always presupposes at its source and specific end. (205-6)

Seen in this way, maps have a dual function: on the one hand, they plot and organize space, providing a relationship (or exchange value) between geographical space and analogically-reproduced space by substituting the latter for the former; on the other hand, maps provide a "pragmatic" value of sorts by creating "possible positions" or paths that, when occupied or traversed by pedestrians, allow a practical use value to emerge. Maps, then, facilitate a discursive relationship between geographical space and user. By putting the map into service—that is, by not only conceptualizing space but by "practicing" it, moving through space—individuals participate in defining what Lefebvre calls the "'values' assigned to particular routes: danger, safety, waiting, promise" (1991: 118).

Mrs. March produces just such a map of her own for the couple's first house hunting excursion into New York. Shortly after arriving at their hotel, Isabel draws "a long strip of paper out of her hand-bag with minute advertisements pinned
transversely upon it, and forming the effect of some glittering nondescript vertebrate" (42). This itinerary provides the March's urban ventures with a logical structure and purpose, yet, as they find in following the path on which it leads them, it fails to perform to their expectations. The "vertebrate," like the "long stretches of carpentry" the narrative lays, and like the nightmare Isabel has of "a hideous thing with two square eyes and a series of sections growing darker and lighter" which, as her husband interprets it, "was nothing but a harmless New York Flat—seven rooms and a bath" (62-63), leads them to closed doors and dead ends: "Mrs. March refused to stop at any door where there were more than six bell-ratchets and speaking tubes on either hand. Before the middle of the afternoon she decided against ratchets altogether..." (58).

The failure of the narrative to advance beyond this point, from approximately chapters 7-13 until the Marches close on an apartment deal, requires us to pause at this juncture. The failure of the narrative corresponds to that of the map, and the ability of characters to maintain a reference to both space and time reveals a "joint" the novel becomes unable to conceal: the disparity between a conceptual mode of representing space and the social experience or "practice" of space. By calling attention to this joint which stalls the Marches' progress, Howells not only foregrounds the contest of space, but also literally foregrounds social space within the novel as "carpentry."
It is not only the line between appearance and reality that the Marches must cross, but more specifically, a line that grounds their self-image and identity. When they approach that line, as we shall see, characters experience what Simone Weil calls "decreation"—the dissociation of the self from one's environment through the renunciation of what is false, a "reversal of the objective and the subjective" that results in a greater knowledge of self. (80-81). "Decreated" subjects (as we shall see in the poetry of Wallace Stevens) become able to assimilate to their environment and, in the social space of modernism, achieve a presence in it.

In the "decreated" or immobilized space of this realist novel, however, that crossover can not yet be attained, and the Marches become conscious of one type of reversal that has occurred: they become aware of the city mapping and constructing them rather than they it. This experience displaces the secure position of authority they occupied on the elevated train, a security that the narrator associates with the "intense identification of their Boston life," and substitutes an isolating anonymity, the "touch-and-go quality" of New York, which feels like a "loss of individuality at times" (296-97). The Marches lose a sense of their own history, identify, and individuality, yet this loss is not associated with the technologically removed or financially superior position, as the earlier "night trains" scene suggests, but with their direct confrontation with "the line" (as Isabel March calls it) that exposes the "joint"
between their past and present self-images. The Marches' attempts to come up against the line that separates the city's conceived and lived spaces also represents a threat to the image of middle-class mobility that was so important a component of their outer identity in Boston. Thus while their confrontation with the line serves initially to disorient, and later to facilitate, their desire to locate themselves within the city, both encounters reveal that their sense of identity and personal history have become the currency that they must surrender in order to assimilate.

The city, as the first hazard for the Marches to overcome, proves to be the wild space whose uncharted social geography, and whose shifting class and ethnic boundaries, frustrate their attempts to enter a social milieu comparable to that which they knew in Boston. Several times during the Marches' inspection and subsequent rejection of an apartment or flat, the couple become anxious over the impression they leave on the host of porters and janitors they encounter. Because their own identity has been shaken by these encounters, they often depart uneasy over how well they have masked their ability or inability to afford the high rents. For instance, after seeing Mrs. Grosvenor Green's apartment and determining that it is too expensive, Mrs. March asks, "Oh, Basil, do you think we really made [the porter] think it was the smallness and not the dearness?" March admits that they had not fooled the porter but that by rejecting the apartment, March says, "we saved our self-respect in the
attempt; and that’s a great deal" (50). After having learned that another place on the well-to-do north side of Washington Square was beyond their means (in a neighborhood where the firm boundaries between “the old-fashioned American respectability” and “the international shabbiness which has invaded the southern border” were clearly marked; (55-56), March announces to the porter, “It won’t do,” and left him to divide the responsibility between the paucity of the rooms and the enormity of the rent as he best might. But their self-love had received a wound, and they questioned each other what it was in their appearance that made him doubt their ability to pay so much. (56)

This brush with a line above them in the social hierarchy has resulted in a bruise that quickly heals; and although March says that he “can never recover from this blow,” the vertebrate’s “glittering ribs” continue to provide the delusion of escape from their quickly dwindling finances and social position, and offer to repair their crumbling sense of identity (56, 57).

The mutually exclusive nature of the viewpoints from which the Marches attempt to “read” the city marks Howells’s attempt to achieve what he called “fidelity to life” and also constitutes what Ermarth calls realism’s “realistic effect”: “consistency within a single visual horizon” (19). The consistency of Hazard’s urban horizon is guaranteed by the juxtaposition of conflicting viewpoints, a practice that
gives visual representations the semblance of completeness that, says Ermarth, "homogenizes the medium of perception and unifies the field perceived" (21). The Marches’ travels throughout the city, and their association of safety with distance and of danger with closeness and congestion, mark them as the producers of their own social space. As producers, Basil and Isabel enjoy a certain "privilege" that detachment grants: the ability to make order out of chaos, to bring conceived and lived space into a meaningful relation, one that, says Ermarth,

depends not upon qualitative distinctions between "better" and "worse" points of view, but rather on quantitative distinctions, between more and less distance. It is a privilege available to anyone willing to travel. (21)

The Marches’ travels, and their use of the map, however, frequently lead them into congested spaces that they qualitatively identify as beneath their means and social standing. It is not until the couple abandons the map and forgoes their position of "privilege" as detached observers that they enter the lived space of the city. Hence their immobilizing preoccupation over the quality of the neighborhoods they visit parallels their equally disorienting concern over the amount of living space and rent they can afford. It is not until they cross the "line of respectability," as they do in the scene with the homeless immigrant I discuss below, that they can assemble the
disparate fragments of their perceptions of the city and experience it as a lived space.

As becomes quite clear, the March's house hunting anxieties signal qualities of the street that can not be perceived from a distance but must be experienced first hand. Moving through the city on foot, the couple soon discovers "that there was an east and west line beyond which they could not go if they wished to keep their self-respect" (58). This lower limit of "self-respect" represents the boundary into a social space they are both unprepared and unwilling to enter. When one enters the social space of the street, as Czarnowski notes, one encounters "a sense of ownership" or identity that characterizes the domestic neighborhood; and since the street can be owned, it can also be "transgressed upon by an outsider" (209). The Marches, while working hard to steer clear of that border, become drawn into what Czarnowski calls the street's "patterns of use." While the "patterns" comprise the paths and routes of spatial practice that are daily traversed, the use of those pathways draws pedestrians into social intercourse with and by which lived space is infused. Czarnowski helps us understand how the limits and boundaries that characterize city streets as lived spaces become produced through use:

When such patterns of use have crystallized sufficiently to enter into a realm of social convention, they are made conscious and are
deliberately expressed as social taboo, codes of conduct, or informal rule systems. (209).

The traversal of lived space, and the use of pathways that lead across realms of "social convention" and "social taboo, codes of conduct, or informal rule systems," produce space in a way that makes it comprehensible and navigable, as a pattern brings order to a random phenomenon. These "patterns," then, correspondingly absorb social practice and re-direct it back in a recursive way to the street’s pedestrians and users. Basil’s and Isabel’s inability to find a social space that reflects them (as they want to be seen) is evidence of the loss of their historically defined identities.

Yet that loss is also a prerequisite of their assimilation to New York. As the Marches’ qualitative knowledge of the city erodes and ultimately gives way to a quantitative consensus of experience, they become aware of what Ermarth calls the "objective laws of relationship that do not change, even though the position of the viewer does" (20). Thus Basil and Isabel find, on an excursion that takes place mid-point in the novel well after they have settled themselves, that New York “gave its particular stamp” to experience:

the adventurers were amused to find One-hundred-and-twenty-fifth Street incoherately like Twenty-third Street and Fourteenth Street in its shops and shoppers. The butchers’ shops and milliners’ shops
on the avenue might as well have been at Tenth as at One-hundredth Street. (305)

Before New York can be perceived as a consensual totality, and before it can be domesticated into something that both bears and imparts its "particular stamp" to objects and experience, the Marches must cross a spatial and temporal barrier, one that critics have largely failed to recognize.

Criticism of *A Hazard of New Fortunes* has tended to ignore the recursive nature of the Marches' spatial experience of the city, the fact that they both construct and are constructed by the city before they assimilate to it. The reason for this oversight, I believe, is because the novel's early chapters have been passed over, as Howells himself characterized them, as mere "carpentery."17 This failure to account for the circuitous paths the Marches' travels inscribe enables Miles Orvell, for one, to write that the Marches "assimilate the shocking poverty of the city to their comfortable perceptions, which remain, for the most part, unchallenged" (110). Furthermore, in a chapter on *Hazard*, Amy Kaplan interprets the March's navigation through the "unreal city" of New York in terms of the class lines the Marches draw to insulate themselves from the other half, to "combat otherness" and to organize the city's "protean changes within a coherent narrative form" (44). While Kaplan offers a plausible explanation for understanding how the Marches learn to manage the (wild) urban space of New York, she fails to acknowledge the nature of the social space that
"the line" divides. The Marches' discovery of what Isabel calls "the line beyond which they could not go if they wished to keep their self-respect" (58), Kaplan believes, allows them to "distinguish an unthreatening domestic space" by displacing the city's threatening other half into the background (48). Paradoxically, however, it is the line that continually relegates the Marches to the margin, sending them a countless number of times back to the conceptual space of the map where they look upon the city from a protective distance. Their efforts to emerge from this space, as I illustrate, become frustrated rather than facilitated by their knowledge and use of the line.

The line contains a double edge and, as it is tested, becomes a tool that proves sharper and more dangerous to wield than its users expected. While the line is intended to serve a "double-function" as Kaplan states, one that should help the Marches "form . . . a coherent picture of the city" and allow them to "relegate . . . unassimilable fragments to the peripheral category of 'useless information'" (48), in practice, this can only be accomplished from the detached positions offered by the horse-drawn carriage and elevated rail. Their encounter with the line at street level tends, rather, to fragment their sense of autonomy and self-identity as it organizes space.

Consider, for example, the March's thoughts after another brush up against the line of respectability in a lower class neighborhood:

72
The Marches tried to make out why it was that these flats were so much more repulsive than the apartments which every one lived in abroad; but they could to so only upon the supposition that in their European days they were too young, too happy, too full of the future, to notice whether rooms were inside or outside, light or dark, big or little, high or low. "Now we're imprisoned in the present," [March] said, "and we have to make the worst of it." (59-60)

The Marches experience here one of the hallmarks of realist space: to be "imprisoned in the present" and unable to comprehend its relation to past or future experience. As one continuity breaks down, that of the history of "their European days," they find that another one has arisen in its place, yet instead of liberating it imprisons them. The movement from temporal continuity to spatial consensus may appear a subtle shift, but in the consensual social space of realism, as in the conquest of lived by conceived space, "history is experienced as nostalgia, and nature as regret," as Lefebvre reminds us (1991: 51). That nostalgia and regret is present in this scene is evidenced by the narrator who can recount history only as a series of incomplete conditions, as a longing for what has inexplicably vanished. Significantly, the statement appears as a sentence fragment:

The time had been when the Marches would have taken a purely aesthetic view of the facts as they
glimpsed them in this street of tenement-houses; when the would have contented themselves with saying that it was a picturesque as a street in Naples or Florence, and with wondering why nobody came to paint it; they would have thought they were sufficiently serious about it in blaming the artists for their failure to appreciate it, and going abroad for the picturesque when they had it here under their noses. (65; emphasis added)

The line the Marches must cross, then, is not only between respectable and shabby urban neighborhoods, nor only between conceived and lived space, but between past and present as well. Having recognized that the past is a series of “would haves” and that it has precious little bearing on or relationship to their present predicaments, the Marches abandon it and, in a gesture that points not only to the belief in the indigenous value of American culture but also to a modernist notion of space, find that what they sought was “right here under their noses.”

The March’s contact with that line’s lower limit, which occurs immediately following this scene, signals the turning point of the novel. The Marches’ realization that the past is irreparably severed from the present marks the beginning of their liberation from the idealized view of New York that, as a residue of that past, has kept them immobilized up to this point in the novel. Their approach to and ultimate transcendence of that line, however, does not come about, as
Kaplan says, because they learn to "relegate... unassimilable fragments to the peripheral category of "useless information." but rather because they finally cross that line and find meaning in what merely appear as "unassimilable fragments." The "fragment" that presents itself to the couple comes in the form of an unassimilated French immigrant whom they encounter on what would be their final house hunting excursion. It is from this scene that the narrative, up to this point arrested by the house hunt, begins to recover its forward momentum again.

When the Marches approach the "decently dressed" man wandering through the gutter in search of food, they are first drawn after him by "the fascination of the sight" (87) and pursue him from behind at a safe distance. Yet when Mrs. March sees the man "pick up a dirty bit of cracker and cram it into his mouth" (96), she recoils in horror. As a way to console his wife, March approaches the man and asks him

"Are you in want—hungry?" he asked the man.

The man said he could not speak English, monsieur.

March asked his question in French.

The man shrugged a pitiful, desperate shrug. "Mais, monsieur—"

March put a coin in his hand, and then suddenly the man's face twisted up; he caught the hand of this alms-giver in both of his, and clung to it. "Monsieur! monsieur!" he gasped, and the tears rained down his face. (70)
At this point, having accosted the line and having seen her husband cross it, Isabel experiences an awakening of sorts—to which she recoils in horror: "I can't bear [the thought of such poverty] and I shall not come to a place where such things are possible." Despite her husband's reassurance that "such things are possible everywhere" and that they "must go to the theatre and forget them," his wife maintains "we must change the conditions" (71). Thoroughly distraught, however, over her present dislocation, she flees New York for Boston that evening, threatening to renounce her husband if he rents the cramped and cluttered apartment Mrs. Grosvenor Green has offered.

We can say, with the evidence here, that it is Mrs. March who is displaced in this scene, and that her return to Boston is, even if temporarily, a signal of her defeat. Yet with this evidence, Kaplan concludes: "Guided by the line, they can distinguish an unthreatening domestic space by excluding large segments of the city in the generalized perception of decay" (48). Isabel's brush up against the line excludes her as one such "segment" who, like the homeless immigrant, has been displaced. The exchange in subject positions, an exchange in which the immigrant's (immediate) needs are accommodated and those of the Marches are frustrated, signals the turning point of the novel and allows the narrative to continue its forward momentum.
For evidence of the importance of this exchange in subject positions, consider a comment Isabel makes to Basil immediately before they accosted the Frenchman.

I don’t believe there’s any real suffering—not real suffering—among those people; that is, it would be suffering from our point of view, but they’ve been used to it all their lives, and they don’t feel their discomfort so much. (69)

The change in emphasis between real suffering and real suffering reveals Isabel’s awareness of a more complex awareness of social space than we have seen: the former emphasizes the suffering as defined by the observer and viewed at a distance, with its undertone of skepticism and implicit denial of the fact, while real suffering, on the other hand, emphasizes suffering from the observed (sufferer’s) viewpoint and suggests a greater degree of empathy and familiarity. Despite the fact that Mrs. March quickly follows this comment with a denial of what has just suggested (“they don’t feel their discomfort so much”), it serves as a preparation for the experience that immediately follows in the street.

It is an important preparation because the momentary shift in subject position and the change in her conception of suffering is followed by a direct observation of how suffering is experienced. Thus conceptual and lived space overlap in a picture of life that contradicts all she has ever known or believed about poverty: “Ah, but it’s the
possibility of his needing the help so badly as that.

That's what I can't bear" (71; my emphasis), she answered in reply to her husband's feeble attempt to console her. It is the conceptual possibility of suffering to which Isabel awakens. Linking the possibility to the certainty, she runs back to her past, attempting to recuperate something lost, something that existed back before those two incompatible dimensions of social space were brought together: her personal identity as embedded in history.

Interestingly enough, Isabel's return to her past history in Boston corresponds to Basil's encounter with his own history in the form of Lindau, the German Socialist and Civil War veteran whom he first met in Indianapolis 25 years ago. History, however, in the form of a past that may or may not accord with the present, represents a challenge to the consensus that realism is committed to building. Mrs. March's return to Boston, and her threat to Basil upon leaving, "If you take it, Basil," referring to the "gimcrackery" (as her husband had called it), "I shall simply renounce you. I wouldn't live in that junk shop if you gave it to me" (74), represents the irruptive potential of history's intrusion into the present. As Ermarth states this point,

The very force of memory that unifies the personal consciousness helps to fragment the social world and threatens the creation of that homogenous
temporal medium and of that uniform horizon requisite for the realistic effect. (45)

The possibility of a consensus of poverty causes Isabel to issue her own warning, a threat not only to the couple's marriage, but to the literary venture and the forward movement of the narrative as well.

Likewise, Basil's re-acquaintance with Lindau eventually comes to threaten the tenuous relationship among the writers, staff, and owner of Every Other Week, the literary venture March has come to New York to edit. When the magazine's financial backer, Conrad Dryfoos—the natural gas tycoon and union-busting capitalist—discovers that Lindau, a "red-mouthed labor-agitator" (in Dryfoos's words), has been contributing translations to the magazine, Dryfoos won't stand for it: "I won't have him round. He can't have any more work from this office. I want you to stop it. I want you to turn him off" (347). March is presented with the moral dilemma of having to choose between the employment and support of his family and his long-standing friendship with Lindau. "It was an unlucky day when you met him," March's wife tells him, referring to Lindau. "And just when we had got used to New York, and began to like it" (355).

Thus, history again threatens other continuities, that of March's personal, professional, and married life. As a way to preserve those continuities, the diversified space of everyday life must be brought to order. Thus it is Lindau, the most marginalized character in terms of language,
appearance, and social standing, who becomes the casualty of the novel's homogenizing consensual forces.

In a strange reversal of the earlier financial transaction between March and the French immigrant, Lindau, after learning of Dryfoos's own history as a union-buster, renounces all ties to the magazine: "Gif him his mawney pack!" he says to March in rough English. "I voark to myself, and when I don't voark, I sdarfe to myself. But I geep my handts glean, voark or sdarfe" (363). Thus it appears that history in any form—be it in Isabel's idealized view of the couple's prior life in Boston, March's past association with Lindau, Dryfoos's discovery of Lindau's history, and Lindau's discovery of that of Dryfoos—threatens the homogenizing forces of realism, presenting a challenge to the uniformity of experience. Realism brings those forces to the fore, yet it always comes down on the side of consensus. As Ermarth states this point,

The centrifugal forces of multiplicity, variety, disparity, ambiguity always exist in tension with centripetal forces of the centering, rationalizing, synchronizing motive. Concordable differences always exist to be overcome. (47)

The homogenizing force of realism owes to the fact that it privileges conceptual space over lived space. In each case of a conflict between forces that attempt to disrupt the forward movement of the narrative, lived space is always the space of difference that is "concordable" and must be
collapsed, swept aside, and forgotten in the interest of consensus.

Consensus is also a feature of abstract space, as Lefebvre writes, and lends abstract space an instrumental quality, a "tool of domination [that] asphyxiates whatever is conceived within it" (1991: 370). As what we can call one of the most powerful "tools" of Howells' novel, the "line of respectability" the Marches confront presents the semblance of two homogenous orders of lived experience, middle class and lower class, whereby "balance" and "proportion" can be held up, as Howells so frequently wrote, as evidence of "the equality of things and the unity of men" and as proof that "men are more alike than unlike one another" (Criticism vol. 2: 21, 62). Yet the method whereby "unlike" is brought into accord with "like," as the novel makes clear, is the production of a space of "domination," an "instrumental space" as Lefebvre calls it, with quite a explicit target: "the removal of every obstacle in the way of the total elimination of what is different" (1991: 371).

At the same time that Howells called for "the equality of things and the unity of men" in his criticism, in his fictional representations of daily life he acknowledged the cultural differences of American society. Only a month after Howells began A Hazard of New Fortunes, he wrote in a November 1888 Study that

In most American novels, vivid and graphic as the best of them are, the people are segregated if not
sequestered, and the scene is sparsely populated. The effect may be an instinctive response to the vacancy of our social life, and I shall not make haste to blame it. There are few places, few occasions among us, in which a novelist can get a large number of polite people together, or at least keep them together. Unless he carries a snap-camera his picture of them has no probability; they affect one like the figures perfunctorily associated in such deadly old engravings. . . . Our grasp of more urbane life is feeble; most attempts to assemble it in our pictures are failures, possibly because it is too transitory, too intangible in its nature with us, to be truthfully represented as really existent.

(Criticism vol. 2: 336-37)

After he had completed *Hazard*, in an 1891 "Editor's Study," Howells echoes much the same sentiment above, writing that "the American people are not a nation but a condition" (Criticism vol. 2: 189). In other words, Howells believed that Americans shared not only a political/ideological fraternity but a set of common social circumstances as well. *Hazard*'s position between these comments seems to have taught him that the experience of a common history, culture, and identity is less common than the experience of change, of the necessity to mediate among disparate spheres of social space as an acknowledgment that, as Basil March proclaims at the
end of *Hazard*, "we are each several characters, and sometimes this character has the lead in us, and sometimes that" (485-86).

In his fiction, Howells seems to have discovered a more practical basis for the common ground which he sought and for which he campaigned in his criticism. Realism's mode of achieving consensus tended to mask the two points of weakness Howells perceived in American society, its cultural "vacancy" and its transitory nature. It is by exploiting those weaknesses, and by representing American society as a field of hazards to be navigated, that Howells uses realism's homogenizing force to fill the perceived "vacancy" of everyday life with a more dynamic sense of spatial environment than has been acknowledged.19

Howells's comments in the "Editor's Study" also provide further insight into his method of representing space in relation to that of photography. The "snap" or detective camera (as it was first called) had recently been introduced into the photographic marketplace and provided more spontaneous and "natural" views of subjects. Yet this was a mode of composing subjects in space Howells was opposed to since photographers had not yet adapted to the newly mobilized viewpoints their medium allowed. The hand camera (Kodak's appeared the same year as Howells's words above) facilitated the photographer's ability to capture more "realistic" views, since in earlier days photographers were forced to carry bulky view cameras and tripods. But along
with this newly mobilized viewpoint came the effect of dividing the space of subjects.

As I show in the following chapter, abstract, conceptual space is a "lethal one" as Lefebvre says, "which destroys the historical conditions that give rise to it . . . in order to impose an abstract homogeneity" (1991: 370). Jacob Riis was one such figure who used the camera as an instrument and "tool of domination" whereby social space could be made abstract, razed, and cleared away: the Mulberry Bend tenements in New York and the largely immigrant population they housed.
When you operate in an overbuilt metropolis, you have to hack your way with a meat ax. . . . There are more houses in the way . . . more people in the way—that's all.

---Robert Moses

Chapter Three

Consuming the Social Space of "The Other Half": Realism and the Production of Consensual Knowledge in Jacob Riis's Tenement Studies

A little over a century ago, shortly after the demolition of Mulberry Bend (Fig. 1), one of New York City's most overcrowded and impoverished immigrant neighborhoods, Danish-born reporter/photographer Jacob A. Riis wrote a retrospective essay in which he attempted to reconstruct the history of the 2.7 acre area of tenements he had only recently helped to destroy. In Riis's attempt to "tell the whole story of the degradation of poverty by [the] irresponsible wealth"-seeking of absentee landlords (1895: 172), the most significant omission proves to be the "story" of those who were displaced: "It is not where they shall go," he writes, referring to the Bend's former inhabitants, "but that they shall not go there at any rate, that is the important thing" (1895: 177). Where did they go? Riis's history fails to yield the answer, as have other contemporary and current (twentieth-century) accounts, not only because
history is a casualty of modernization but—more importantly—because the present, as recorded and represented in the photographs Riis took of the slums, was shown to be a disposable commodity, one incompatible with America’s past and future vision of itself.

In this chapter I recover a knowledge and a history of a different type: that of how the boundary line between cultures and halves was redrawn in a way that resulted in a mobilization of popular opinion and official legislation that eventually crushed the social space, the space of everyday life, of a heterogeneous immigrant community. It is not my intent to recover the history of displaced tenants (which is irrecoverably lost) nor to revive the history of the Bend’s clearing (which is quite well preserved by Riis). My subject, rather, is the history of how public opinion was shaped by the camera, how photography was used to divide and conquer a community of immigrants, and how Riis employed the techniques of literary realism to homogenize the heterogeneity of the “other half” into a threatening Other so that it could be cleared away. Through an analysis of Riis’s photographs and the narrative essays accompanying them, we can witness the destruction of both social space and history: social space by the homogenizing force of the camera, and history by realism’s ability to reconcile the past and future into a homogenous representation of the present.
I. Drawing Viewers into the View: Producing "Civic Conscience"

In a pair of essays published shortly before his groundbreaking study of tenement life, "How the Other Half Lives" (Scribner's, December 1889), Jacob Riis unveiled an approach to urban social analysis that significantly altered the frame and direction of tenement housing reform efforts. Writing in the May 1889 Christian Union, Riis argued for greater public participation in tenement reform. At a time when relief efforts were largely a product of statistical analysis and the managed allocation of resources to state and federal institutions, Riis's solution was to provide a means for all citizens, and not just those associated with public and private relief organs, to join the fight through what he later defined as "eternal vigilance." In these early essays we can gain insight into how he would later energize the base of public opinion not only by making the slum more visible, but by using the techniques of literary realism to break down its borders and homogenize the everyday life within its space.

Riis addressed his attention not to the origins of poverty and destitution in the tenement, but rather their perpetuation: the lack of social pressures from outside to compel its mostly immigrant population to adopt the habits and values of American culture. That the slums housed a largely unassimilated underclass of hucksters, tramps, swindlers, and beggars was, by the late nineteenth century,
relatively common knowledge. What remained largely unarticulated, however, and what Riis provided, was a role for the general public in bringing about positive change. How could the public be expected to contribute to the resolution of a problem of which they had little knowledge and not a little fear? Riis takes the reader on a walking tour of some half-dozen tenements in these two early essays to demonstrate the utterly ineffectual presence of the uninformed individual in the slum, portraying the reader as a blind visitor for whom all sensory data must be interpreted. In the first installment, "The Tenement-House Question: The Question Stated," Riis began his escort thus:

Come, let us go in. Take care! Do not stumble over the children pitching pennies in the hall. Not that it would hurt them. Kicks and cuffs are their daily diet; they have little else. But you might hurt yourself. Here, where the hall turns and dives into utter darkness, is a step, and another, another. A flight of stairs. You can feel your way if you cannot see it.

(1889a: 590)

Implicit in the tour is not only the reader's inability to navigate this space, but the unseen elements working to the detriment of cultural values. A place which breeds children who absorb "kicks and cuffs" without harm, where "the child's place is usurped by a lodger who performs the service of the Irishman's pig—pays the rent" (1889a: 591), and in which the
everyday citizen is prevented from intervening are all pointers to the breakdown of cultural values within and beyond the tenement.

Riis's solution, advanced in the second installment of "The Tenement-House Question" titled "The Remedy," was first of all to encourage readers to discover "the truth" first hand:

Do not take it on trust from anyone. Put yourself, if you would do the Master's work, en rapport with his cause. Get into personal contact and sympathy with those you would help. One need not live in a tenement or next door to one to do this. (1889a: 624)

Indeed, to be en rapport with "the Master's work" and "cause" meant being in all places at all times, sharing the power and omniscience implicit in a spiritual transcendence of space and time. To obtain such a perspective, an open door not in a literal sense, but in a metaphorical sense was called for, a virtual frame through which the reader might enter the slum and gain the "personal contact" that was otherwise impossible to attain and absent from institutional relief efforts.

The second essay presents just such a frame. In the first column of text, the copy wraps around a sketch of "An Open Door" (the caption), metaphorically beckoning the reader across its well-lit threshold. Once in, we learn of the many opportunities for offering help, such as the public missions and aid societies. Yet such efforts, as Riis warns, run the
risk of becoming what he calls "misplaced charity": "Ill-
considered almsgiving is the worst of all mistakes. More
tramps and idlers are made that way than in any other. It is
the royal road to pauperism" (1889b: 624). Neither can the
law offer any solution that addresses the continuation of the
problem: cultural habits. Riis writes that

   Enough will be left which the law cannot do. It
cannot teach men and women who were brought up in
squalor that there is any moral virtue in soap and
water. It cannot make degraded homes cheerful, or
make men and women self-respecting. (1889b: 624)

In light of the failure of the kinds of concrete and direct
responses to poverty outlined here, Riis suggests a more
abstract means of approach: the gathering and dissemination
of knowledge. Not merely knowledge of the slum, or knowledge
of how to wash or "make degraded homes cheerful," but
knowledge installed within the slum that someone else is
watching:

   The best way of doing that is to give them proof
that, no matter if it was true once that the world
without did not know, and did not care to find out,
how they lived, in this generation it does care.
(1889b: 624)

"Care," no longer defined as charity or empathy (in fact Riis
advises against the former and fails to mention the latter),
is redefined as surveillance, a prevailing vigilance over how
space is used by its inhabitants. A year later, Riis re-

It is in this context that the role of photography in providing a substitute for “public conscience” defines itself. Photography provides not only knowledge in a concrete and instrumental sense (*savoir*), but also the awareness that an observer is on hand, presiding over the view (a *connaissance* of sorts). Although Riis does not openly distinguish between the two, the distinction is implicit in the dual roles he assigned to photography. *Connaissance*, from the verb *connaitre* (to be aware, to share in a relation) is “an idea, a notion,” the “means by which feelings and impressions are gathered.” Riis produced these two types of knowledge through photography in a broadly cooperative way, using the medium as *savoir* to extract information from his subject and as *connaissance* to serve as a renewable and reproducible substitute for and reminder of the viewer’s presence. Riis demonstrated how photographic vigilance might achieve what he called the “truest charity”: “to encourage self-help” (1889b: 624) through public conscience.

Riis’s career can be read, from these early essays forward, as an attempt to educate the public conscience on its civic duty to march down the pathways into the slum he had opened. His use of photography and realistic narrative
prose were apt tools for such objectives. Yet his methods open a passage into the slum while closing off all access out of it, producing a viewpoint that sees all but is seen by none. Standing on the dividing line between nativist and immigrant culture without crossing it, Riis directed his efforts toward two important and mutually supportive goals: (1) the relief of urban squalor, overcrowding, and sub-standard living conditions; and (2) the Americanization of the immigrant. So much had already been said about the evils of the slum that facts had little value in themselves. And the fact that the largely immigrant population of the tenement concentrated in protective ethnic enclaves exacerbated the problem of breaking through its tough outer shell:

The tenement-house has come to stay. From a fact grudgingly enough avowed as the evil offspring of public neglect and private greed, it has become a serious factor in our social and political life. . . (1889a: 590)

Riis focused his energies on the need to see beyond "fact" into the "factors" or conditions that might be changed. The consequences of this shift, from the concrete to the abstract use of knowledge, from savoir to connaissance, issued from Riis's conviction "that the boundary line of the Other Half must be drawn on this side of the tenements" (1889a: 590).

Imposing new boundaries in social space alters social relations in two ways that are important for this study. At
the same time that boundaries define what Lefebvre calls a "space for normal use" through "rules and practical procedures," boundaries also mark off "forbidden territories—spaces to which access is prohibited . . ." (1991: 193). It is by first defining a middle-class conceived space of "rules," and then by showing how those rules are not reflected in the slum's lived space of "practical procedures" that Riis produces the notion of "forbidden territories" in his photographs. In this way, boundaries mark difference and call out for consensus, pitting the lived space on one side of the divide against those of the other. What are the consequences of redrawing the boundaries of American culture "on this side of the tenement"? Differences exist, this reform strategy suggests, in order that they can be overcome; and in order to Americanize the slum its ethnically diverse space needed to be homogenized. My analysis of Riis's essay in Scribner's Magazine, "How the Other Half Lives," charts the process of that homogenization, helping us can put in historical context one of the most significant redefinitions of social space in late nineteenth-century New York: the destruction of the Mulberry Bend tenements and the subsequent construction of Mulberry Park.

Within this context, I specifically consider photography's role in erecting barriers between social classes and in homogenizing social space on the other side of the line. In order to understand how the domestic use value of social space might be redefined in ideological/aesthetic
terms as a place of leisured exchange, it will first be
necessary to examine how photography can be said to transform
space by recasting its boundaries. Lefebvre’s work on social
space provides a theoretical framework for analyzing how an
institutional apparatus such as the camera can transform the
appearance of social space with an aim toward its
accumulation and re-dissemination. In developing a
photographic discourse of space, I will argue that Riis’s use
of the photographic medium, along with the help of realistic
narrative prose, extracted his subjects, the tenement and its
inhabitants, from their social context in order that social
space could be transformed into an object of middle-class use
value. For this transformation to occur, images of
disenfranchised immigrants had to be detached from the social
conditions that produced their exclusion. Once the social
causes of the tenement house problem were dissociated from
the immigrant, the relatively minor step of sweeping the
fragments away in slum clearing could quite logically follow.

As an analysis of Riis’s photographs and their
accompanying narratives reveals, the boundaries of social
space were evoked (and redrawn) by manipulating the viewpoint
from which objects are described and events narrated. In the
case of Riis, the viewer’s and reader’s presence remains
consistently insulated from direct contact with the human
subjects represented. Indeed, the power of Riis’s
photography is predicated on the separation of viewer and
subject: “The beauty of looking into these places,” Riis
writes, "without actually being present there . . . is that the excursionist is spared the vulgar sounds and odious scents and repulsive exhibitions attendant upon such a personal examination." This hiding or veiling of the observer in relation to the observed, or what Elizabeth Ermarth has identified as the chief rhetorical technique of realism in which "the narrator is nobody," produces homogenous space that accords with the values, habits, and cultural standards of the viewing/narrating authority. The result is a hierarchical space of domination/submission in which one set of values, those from which the view originates, come to supplant those on which the viewer gazes.

II. Homogenizing Space with the Camera: Realism and the Transformation of Evidence into Experience

Both literary and pictorial realism can be said to achieve, as Ermarth points out, a consensus of perception and experience. The premise of this claim rests on the idea that the perspective from which the realist text (both literary and pictorial) narrates events and describes objects originates from a position equal in authority to other viewing positions. Ermarth's thesis that realism mediates consciousness by homogenizing difference has important consequences for the study of social space. For realism unifies space, creating what she calls a "consensus among possible views," one that "unifies the field perceived; it literally creates a common horizon" (21). The visual
metaphor well describes the production of space as practiced by Riis, since the "consensus" that realism produces in spatial terms is not only a consensus of the way objects are seen but also a consensual experience that everyday life is or should somehow be uniform. Pointing out difference, in other words, represents a call for sameness.

Realism, by establishing a sharable principle of experience, brings about a consensus on knowledge between what can be known as fact from direct observation and what can only be known indirectly through a representation. This conflation of knowledge-as-documented and knowledge-as-experienced, as the conflation of savoir and connaissance, makes "reality" a uniform "text" which, in order to be comprehended, must be put into representational form. "Why complete the sketch?" Riis writes, "It is drearily familiar already" (1957: 122). Realistic modes of representation establish this principle of incompleteness, substituting part for whole and setting up a singular consciousness as the arbiter and homogenizing force of all experience. If we can extend this line of thinking to photography, as John Tagg has suggested, we can see that the realist consensus on knowledge, when achieved by photography, encourages us to "live the space of the picture, its 'reality,' its ideological field" (139). How, we might rightly ask, is it possible for a viewer to take up a "reality" different from one's own and vicariously "live the space" of a representation, one whose expression of the otherness of fact
is irresistible? If Tagg's and Ermarth's formulation can be linked, if photography as a realistic mode of representation can be shown to bring about a consensus between the objective realm of evidence and the subjective realm of experience in what Lefebvre calls "lived space," we have gained an important insight for understanding how social space can be homogenized by the camera. Since Tagg does not elaborate this point, it is necessary to consult Walter Benjamin's analysis of how reproductive technologies establish new historical and spatial contexts for the objects they reproduce.

Benjamin begins his famous critique of photography, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," with a short preface on Marx. Marx provides Benjamin a means to link changes in the mode of material production to the production of art under capitalism. In both cases, in the mass production of commodities and the mass-reproduction of art, the relationship between product and consumer is no longer continuous but has been fragmented and made abstract by an economy based on exchange. In the same way that the capitalist market economy sunders the relationship between producer and consumer, the photographic medium detaches objects from the conditions by and through which they are produced and consumed. This detachment of objects from their original historical and geographical contexts results in what Benjamin calls the loss of the object's "aura" of authenticity and authority, its grounding in space and time.

98
In the prehistory of reproductive technologies, Benjamin explains,

The uniqueness of a work of art is inseparable from its being imbedded in the fabric of tradition. . . . Originally the contextual integration of art in tradition found its expression in the cult. We know that the earliest art works originated in the service of a ritual—first the magical, then the religious kind. . . . In other words, the unique value of the "authentic" work of art has its basis in ritual, the location of its original use value. (1968: 225-26)

As long as the connection between the condition of art's production and its use are preserved, the "fabric of tradition" remains continuous.

With the multiple and instantaneous reproduction perfected by the camera, however, that fabric becomes torn in a violent way, and the reproduced object loses its "aura" of uniqueness:

To pry an object from its shell, to destroy its aura, is the mark of a perception whose 'sense of the universal equality of things' has increased to such a degree that it extracts it even from a unique object by means of reproduction. (1968: 225)

If we follow Tagg's earlier suggestion that viewers can "live the space of the picture," it appears that photography does not so much destroy as transport the aura from an objective
to a subjective context. In other words, while the presence of an object in space cannot be altogether done away with, it certainly may be altered; and this is precisely what photography accomplishes by extracting objects from one context and putting them on display in another. That new context, one that Benjamin says is based on politics rather than on ritual (1968: 226), is one that works (like all political activity) toward consensus. The consensus achieved by photography, as by realistic narrative representation, is a curious conflation of what occurs in two dissimilar spatial and temporal frames: on the one hand the instant of production and the duration of consumption, and on the other the documentation of an object in one space and the experience of it in another. Object and observer become equally fragmented by the process of reproduction, a spatial and temporal dissociation that the representation both creates and appears to resolve. Thus "to pry an object from its shell" is the necessary prerequisite to establishing consensus in a visual sense, the breaking apart of one continuity to bring about another in which the "universal equality" of things becomes the measure of authentic experience.

Benjamin helps us understand how photography facilitates the political uses of representation by freeing the work of art from its original context and by putting it on display in a wholly contrived and manipulable context. Documentary photography—with its ostensive devaluation of "art" and its
elevation of the human and social "document"—is able to bring about this transformation in a seamless way by extracting subjects from their social contexts and simultaneously substituting a representational context. Tagg writes that this comes about, that documentary transforms the "flat rhetoric of evidence into an emotionalized drama of experience," through an "imaginary identification of viewer and image, reader and representation," an identification able to "suppress difference and seal [viewer and subject] into the paternalistic relations of domination and subordination" (12). Riis's representation of immigrants and tenement life is predicated on just such a paternalistic relationship between a dominant American culture and a subordinate immigrant culture, between an open and a closed space, and between ideology and cultural practice.

III. Learning Surveillance: Photography and Police Reporting

During the decade between 1887 and 1897, Riis photographed and wrote about the tenement in order to educate the middle class on just how to carry out their task as vigilant observers. During this time, Riis assembled a body of photographic and prose work sufficient to bring about one of the most significant redefinitions of the ownership and use of space in late nineteenth century New York: the clearing of Mulberry Bend and the building of Mulberry Park. The razing of the Mulberry Bend tenements in 1895 and the construction of the park a year later on that site presents a
fascinating opportunity for examining how urban space was redefined and fitted with a new social role, reflecting a new consensus in the perceived and conceived use of space.

The redefinition of Mulberry Bend from domestic to leisure space has a history that reaches beyond the legislative acts and municipal directives that officially document its transformation. The genesis of this change reaches back to Riis's first use of photography as an instrument of social representation. Photography supplies, above all else, detailed knowledge of its subject; and when that knowledge does not accord with the ideological beliefs and cultural practices of its viewers, as it failed to do in the work of Riis, we are justified in suspecting that a new social space is being produced and a new use defined.

Interestingly enough, immediately after he immigrated from Denmark to New York in 1870, Riis began life as one of the city's tramps on which he would later fix his camera. Louise Ware, Riis's first biographer, writes that he often found himself sleeping in police lodging houses and freight yards before he could afford lodging. Eventually, after various jobs as a carpenter and laborer, Riis got on at a syndicated news agency and, in 1874, landed his first job as a reporter with the South Brooklyn News. He continued to move from job to job, mostly reporting on human interest stories, until he was hired by the New York Tribune in 1887 where he was soon appointed staff writer at the Mulberry Street Police Headquarters. Situated in an office directly
across from the station, Riis covered "all the news that means trouble to some one: the murders, fires, suicides, robberies, and all that sort, before it gets into court" (1929: 131). Riis bought a camera the first year of his work with the Tribune, and thus was able to travel alongside law enforcement and city government officials to a rarely-seen side of life from which he had not so long ago emerged.

The fact that Riis’s early associations with the law correspond to his introduction to photography is a point that should not be overlooked. His work with municipal authorities not only provided an education of sorts for his visual sensibilities but, more importantly, it linked power to photographic vision, enabling Riis to combine the invasive practices of law enforcement methods to the spectatorial power of photographic technology.

About the time that he got his first camera, revolutionary changes were sweeping the photographic medium and marketplace. Riis took advantage of recent technological developments including the hand camera (Kodak’s first appeared in 1888), faster film speeds, the dry-plate negative (appearing in the 1870s and allowing film to be sensitized well in advance of exposure), and flash powder (1887). Thus the 1870s and 1880s were probably the two most important decades for the transformation of photography from an expensive, cumbersome, and labor-intensive professional enterprise to a portable, relatively simple, and affordable means of reproduction.
The discovery of flash powder for low light exposure in the late 1880s provided even greater freedom to photograph indoors and under the cover of darkness. Freed from technical constraints, including light itself, the photographer could easily became an almost omnipotent force. Such developments had the effect of freeing the photographer from having to attend to a plethora of technical concerns, and correspondingly freed the fixed viewpoint of the camera itself. The effects of liberating the viewpoint of the camera from a fixed to a mobile point of observation provided unlimited opportunities to homogenize space and to produce objectivity. No longer tied to obtrusive equipment like heavy lenses, large cameras, and unwieldy tripods, and no longer dependent on the cooperation of the subject to be photographed, photographers ranged far and wide virtually undetected to construct a notion of everyday life on the basis of spontaneity. What was most common about the world that Riis photographed was its unconscious nature, and unconsciousness became evidence of a lack of cultural value in his immigrant subjects. And because documentary photography functions as much as a mirror as an index, Riis could use the unconsciousness of his subjects as a call to "conscience" in his viewers. Awakening a "civic conscience" that "slumbered eight long years" during the early tenement house reform days, Riis tells us, the photographs of sleeping and stuporous tramps served as a wake-up call for the
community to "assert . . . its right to destroy tenements that destroy life" (Ten Year's War 305, 311).

With the ultimate portability of photography achieved in less than 20 years, the influence on its use fully transformed the nature and practice of the medium. What concerns us here is the photographer's increased mobility and the medium's newfound spontaneity, both of which worked to insulate the photographic act from its reliance on the subject's conscious cooperation. Thus the new conditions of stealth and instantaneity under which "realistic" views could be obtained, while expanding the field of view, condensed meaning into spectacle, into the consensual knowledge of otherness and the experience of forbidden territories. This consensual knowledge, what Riis calls "civic consciousness," corrals and collapses all evidence in its path into a visual experience that is uniform because all meaning is reduced to the affect of poverty on the viewer's eyes.

Yet the eye, as Lefebvre reminds us, "tends to relegate objects to the distance, to render them passive. That which is merely seen is reduced to an image—to an icy coldness" (1991: 286). And because realism establishes the consensus that, as Ermarth claims, "the same conditions hold everywhere in space" (21), the viewer's perception of poverty, rather than the subject's experience of it, at once removes and replaces lived experience with conceptual knowledge.

IV. (Im)mobilizing Poverty: "How the Other Half" Slumbers
In order to produce conceptual knowledge, and in order to awaken a "civic conscience" in his viewers, Riis had to reveal an underlying lack or absence of social structure in his views, to make "conscience join ... forces with fear" (Ten Year's War 301). Such an alliance, however, between conscience and fear, required Riis to present his subjects within the context of larger social issues not apparent to the naked eye. As Newhall explains, "before a photograph can be accepted as a document, it must itself be documented—placed in time and space. This may effectively be done by context, by including the familiar with the unfamiliar" (1984: 246). Ermarth describes the metonomy of literary realism in much the same terms, showing how the realist text uses a socialized notion of visual perception (single-point perspective) to reveal what it is impossible to see in terms of what is already known. This homogenization and synthesis of knowledge and visual perception can best be achieved in documentary photography through the cooperation of image and supporting textual apparatus: the text suggests, and the image confirms, a homogenous representation of experience. In this way, the "alien" nature of the tenement slums and its inhabitants, long acknowledged to represent an unfathomed source of overcrowding, poverty, and vice, became domesticated, used to support the quite alarming claim that urban space was being made familiar by foreign standards of use. "Upon the home," Riis writes,
rests our moral character; our civic and political liberties are grounded there; virtue, manhood, citizenship grow there. We forget it to our peril. For American citizenship in the long run, will be, must be, what the American home is. (1903: 24)

Riis thus combined the familiar with the unfamiliar to produce consensual knowledge in two important ways: by providing a spatial homogeneity between viewer and viewed, and by suggesting a temporal continuity between past and present. In other words, by providing an unfamiliar, stealthily-obtained view of the tenement slums, and by historicizing the present state of decay as an outgrowth of the past, Riis conflated the domestic space of the tenement and that of his middle-audience, offering the uncomfortable substitute of the former for the latter.

In the text of "How the Other Half Lives," Riis informs readers that the tenements were the once-proud structures inhabited by viewers' more well-off (if not aristocratic) ancestors in once-proud neighborhoods. The photographs and accompanying narrative link two distinct worlds and two distinct ways of seeing: they contextualize the anonymous and culturally isolated nature of immigrant life while historicizing the cultural history and geography of New York. Speaking to the reader's sense of a noble (if distant) past, the text of the essay provides a frame of reference by which the images' sensationalistic and exceptional appeal could be moderated. Riis establishes this frame in the essay's
opening sentences: "New York alone, of the great cities of the world, has grown up with the century. The village of a hundred years ago is the metropolis of to-day" (1889c: 643).27

Thus situated within their historical and social context, the photographs heighten anxiety in a subtle way, by redrawing the tenement's boundary lines.28 Rather than simply produce anxiety, as we might expect, the text of the essay brought home to middle-class readers not only that large sectors of the city's present structure had been appropriated by immigrants but (what outstripped the sensationalism of the photographs) that a chapter of the past was drawing to a close as well. In other words, while the images tended to take subjects out of their social contexts, the written text functioned as a way to impose another ("nativist") context. Writing on the way that images decontextualize subjects, J. Hillis Miller notes that

The power of a picture is to detach a moment from its temporal sequence and make it hang there in a perpetual non-present representational present, without past or future. The power of representation in an illustration is so strong that it suspends all memory and anticipation inscribed in words [and suspends], for the moment at least, any attempt to tell a story through time. (66)

Illustrations detach the subject not only from time, as Miller says of images in general, but—for photography in particular—from space as well, so that the photographer must
Riis establishes a historical context in the opening pages of the essay and dramatizes the exodus of a genteel class from a more respectable and romantic (if absent) urban history:

Like ghosts of a departed day, the old houses linger; but their glory is gone. This one, with its shabby front and poorly patched roof, who shall tell what glowing firesides, what happy children it once owned? Heavy feet, often with unsteady step, for the pot-house is next door, have worn away the brown-stone steps since; the broken columns at the door have rotted away at the base. Of the handsome cornice barely a trace is left. Dirt and desolation reign in the wide hallway, and danger lurks on the rickety stairs. (1889c: 644)

The inner city, Riis suggests, has undergone a transition from genteel past to impoverished present and, along with this change, the transformation of urban America into a vibrant social field defined by the practice of and contest for space and identity.

Riis takes full advantage of the spectacle of an immigrant population on the move, heightening the reader's anxiety by focusing on absence and displacement:

The one thing you shall vainly ask for in the chief city of America is a distinctly American community.
There is none; certainly not among the tenements. No need of asking here on the east side where we are. (1889c: 656).

As Riis would expand on this point in his book, How the Other Half Lives, writing that in the place of a homogenous "American community" has come "this queer conglomerate mass of heterogeneous elements, ever striving and working like whiskey and water in one glass, and with like result: final union and a prevailing taint of whiskey" (1957: 16).

Riis here plays on the familiar fear of "heterogeneous elements" that has its origin in the second (late nineteenth-century) migration of Southern and Eastern Europeans to America. However, his suggestion that a "final union" of any sort might result threatened middle-class autonomy and offered new and pejorative associations to the keyword "union" in its political and social senses. To engage in a battle with the slum, then, meant to ensure that union of "heterogeneous elements" within the slum and union between nativist and immigrant culture would never be achieved.

During the late nineteenth century, a heterogeneous lower social order was not only populating the city in unprecedented numbers, but it was also displacing the middle classes from their long-established residence in the inner city. David Wood notes that

During the 1880s, only the extremely affluent were able to maintain their original inner-city precincts. Since the late eighteenth century this
stratum had pioneered the development of exclusive residential quarters on desirable sites, but as the suburban movement became more inclusive, these earlier ventures were often left embedded within the inner city. (47)

With the middle class pushed further into the suburbs, the city became peopled by social groups who, Riis says, betray their race at every step. Men with queer skull-caps, venerable beard, and the outlandish long-skirted kaftan of the Russian Jew, elbow the ugliest and the handsomest women in the land. The contrast is startling. (1889c: 656)

While the absence of a "distinctly American community" was evidence that the inner city had become a no man's land, the presence of those who "betray their race at every step" signaled a transformation of everyday life from an abstract idea to a concrete reality. Thus not only was the contrast between void and plenitude "startling," but because a void cannot be represented, the views came to fill that void with something more startling, an "outlandish" population that could neither be wholly seen or accurately counted.

How might the space of everyday life represent a threat to the middle-class urban inhabitant and viewer? Lefebvre helps account for this anxiety over space, its contents and use, by distinguishing between the qualities of conceived and perceived space. Conceived space is defined by a singular authority, a "fixed observer" within an "immobile perceptual
field" who gazes, for the most part, on "a stable visual world" (1991: 361). The autonomy of conceived space, like Howells's Editor's Study, precludes it from critical analysis, since it appears "above" the practice of space and its socially-informed contexts. By collapsing the differences between conceived and perceived space Lefebvre calls attention to, Riis gave his representations of daily life the force of a revolutionary rather than a reassuring ideology, one capable of displacing any notion of lived space as it had been known. In other words, Riis represented the daily life of the slum in conceptual terms by charging viewers with the task of reconciling its seen and unseen elements. When part of the perception is made to stand for the whole, we witness, as Lefebvre notes, the emergence of conceived space, a space in which "all questions relating to what is too close or too distant, relating to the surroundings or 'environment,' and relating to the relationship between private and public" are "set aside or downplayed" (1991: 362). Private space thus becomes a public commodity, and the heterogeneous spheres of daily life, along with the notion of a "stable visual world," become the subject of critical public discourse. It is in this way that perceived space becomes public property, and is no longer defined by the activities of its users but rather by the sensibility of viewers. Riis's photographs, then, as documents, no longer signify what Lefebvre would call the "private realm" of perceived space, but instead raise all too
easily answerable questions as to the "ownership" of space, positioning themselves "more or less vigorously, and always in a conflictual way, against the public" realm (1991: 362).

Thus the conflictual nature of knowledge as conceived (savoir) and knowledge as perceived (connaissance) grows out of a conflict between a host of binary oppositions: abstraction vs. concretion; homogeneity vs. heterogeneity; consensus vs. disensus; objectivity vs. subjectivity; and evidence vs. experience. Realism can resolve or mediate between these oppositions in a number of ways: it can attempt to strike a balance between opposites (as in the realism of Howells); it can attempt to empower the users of space (as we shall see in the photography of Hine); or it can attempt to strengthen the administrative and instrumental control over space (as is the case for Riis). In all these instances, the mediation of difference and the establishment of consensual knowledge is the common objective of realism. The type of knowledge that realism brings to consensus, however, determines whether realism functions in a transparent way to merely tolerate difference (Howells), or whether it functions in a proscriptive way to foster (Hine) or preclude (Riis) difference.

As a way to preclude difference, Riis first of all had to establish that it exists. Difference, of course, was not particularly difficult to establish within the tenement, but in order to prevent difference from becoming mere spectacle, Riis needed a moderating force within the essay to anchor the
images in a space and time that was familiar to his audience. The link between viewer and the subjects on view, and between the past and the present, was established and maintained through an alliance between the essay's illustrations and its narrative. Wherever the photographs open a new space into the city, the text is always on hand to preside over the view and limit possible meanings with an editorial comment. For instance, in the photograph titled "Thompson Street 'Black and Tan Dive,'" (Fig. 2), several men congregate in one of the infamous "stale beer dives" that Riis frequently targets as breaking apart the community. Yet the photograph conveys the close atmosphere of a clandestine meeting, and its subjects, organized into a semi-circle, appear engaged in a discussion of some significance. Interestingly enough, the text appearing on the same page contradicts this evidence, and we read of two cases in which a family was unable to meet domestic expenses due to a husband's absence or irresponsibility. On another page, where we find a photograph of an "honest English coal-heaver" and his family cramped into what appears the end of a narrow hallway ("Poverty Gap Family," Fig. 3), we read that "under the pressure of the Italian influx of the last few years the standard of breathing space required ... has been cut down from six to four hundred cubic feet" (1889c: 648). Furthermore, where find two photographs of young children slumped into (frequently) feigned stupors, we read of the Chinese who live in "dens of vice" with "their infernal drug
Fig. 2. Jacob A. Riis, "Thompson Street 'Black and Tan Dive.'" The Jacob A. Riis Collection # 162. Museum of the City of New York
Fig. 3. Jacob A. Riis, "Poverty Gap Family." The Jacob A. Riis Collection # 154.
Museum of the City of New York
As a narrative emerges that contains, categorizes, and anchors the photographs' meaning, an apparently seamless alliance is formed between image and text. And if we consider how the photographs map the social space of the city, we will see that, by and large, they depict a world at rest. This tendency, which runs throughout Riis's work, has the effect of fixing subjects in space in a way that complements the shutter's immobilization of them in time. In one of Riis's most often reproduced images, "Italian Mother and Her Baby in Jersey Street" (Fig. 4), a weary and somewhat despondent-looking mother is shown holding a tightly wrapped infant against a backdrop of rags, buckets, dirty bedding, and wooden barrels. To her left is a bucket and a ladder; to her right is another bucket, an open door, and another barrel of rags atop an old stove. Below this photograph, in the text of the essay, we learn that "the policeman [is] always on duty in Gotham Court, half a stone's throw away."

Within the apparently policed boundary of the beat, however, lives "a larger population than that of many a thriving country town" (1889c: 646). The text, although it does not comment directly on the photograph above it, nonetheless directs the reader's attention away from any concern we might have for the Italian mother and onto the failure of "police surveillance" to serve its function. In this way, the image presents not a plea to emotion but a call
Fig. 4. Jacob A. Riis, "Italian Mother and Her Baby in Jersey Street." The Jacob A. Riis Collection # 157. Museum of the City of New York
to public vigil for the enforcement of laws. If properly policed, Riis seems to suggest, spaces such as that shown above might not exist. Ultimately, a lack of enforcement rather than a lack of accommodation is to blame for the present conditions, proscribed by the juxtaposition of text and image. Riis's placement of the mother between the two means of egress in the photo—between ladder and open door—is a further call for enforcement, and suggests the fugitive nature of the immigrant—attested by the fact that, as Riis says later in the essay, "they cannot be corralled in one place long enough to be counted" (1889c: 651) except, of course, by the all-seeing perspicacity of the camera.

We should note that the English home, in contrast to that of the Italian, is represented quite differently by Riis. In the "Poverty Gap Family" photograph (Fig. 3), titled "Poverty in a West Twenty-eighth Street Tenement—An English Coal-heaver's Home" in the Scribner's Essay, father and mother sit around a table with their children, and the family unit meets the gaze of photographer and viewer. The atmosphere, though sparse and humble, is more a "home" than that of the Italian: an oil-lamp and eating utensils (more easily distinguishable in the photograph than the engraving) sit atop the table, and a decorative wooden basket rests on the floor before the husband. This photograph presents a more stable picture of domestic life than that presented by the stark image of the Italian mother defensively clutching her child. Where she is violated and appears on the verge of
fleeing the scene, the sanctity of the English family's home is respected; they even appear to welcome the camera, humbly though forthrightly meeting its gaze. Attached to the title of the English family's photograph is a footnote that further establishes a social context for the viewer. Though it is somewhat long, the text of this note bears full quotation:

Suspicions of murder, in the case of a woman who was found dead, covered with bruises, after a day's running fight with her husband, in which the beer-jug had been the bone of contention, brought me to this house, a ramshackle tenement on the tail-end of a lot over near the North River docks. The family in the picture lived above the rooms where the dead woman lay on a bed of straw, overrun by rats, and had been uninterested witnesses of the affray that was an every-day occurrence in the house. A patched and shaky stairway led up to their one bare and miserable room, in comparison with which a white-washed prison-cell seemed a real palace. A heap of old rags, in which the baby slept serenely, served as the common sleeping-bunk of father, mother, and children—two bright and pretty girls, singularly out of keeping even in their clean, if coarse, dresses, with their surroundings. The father, a slow-going, honest English coal-heaver, earned on the average five dollars a week, "when work was fairly brisk," at
the docks. But there were long seasons when it was very "slack," he said doubtfully. Yet the prospect did not seem to discourage them. The mother, a pleasant-faced woman, was cheerful, even light-hearted. Her smile seemed the most sadly hopeless of all in the utter wretchedness of the place, cheery though it was meant to be, and really was. It seemed doomed to certain disappointment—the one thing there that was yet to know a greater depth of misery. (1889c: 648)

Riis’s commentary here serves to extend the frame of the picture beyond what is visually present to moderate the sensationalism of the image and to inform the viewer of the family’s stern resolve in their unfortunate circumstances. In this case, the text openly contradicts the visual information presented in the image: the little girls’ tattered appearance, we learn, is “singularly out of keeping” with their surroundings; the presence of the father, an "honest English” worker who appears somewhat out of place in this domestic scene, can be explained more by fluctuations in the demand for labor than his own lack of initiative; and the mother, in the face of “utter wretchedness,” maintains in the text a "cheerful, even light-hearted” disposition. Thus what we cannot see in the image, the family’s future prospects, are brought into accord with what we can see: their stalwart and upright self-image. Poverty, in the case of a northern European family, does not preclude the possibility of
assimilation. Despite the odds that mount against this family's relief from misery, they maintain their dignity because, while the image may suggest that their hopes are "doomed to certain disappointment," the text refuses to allow such a conclusion to be reached.

These two images, then, that of the Italian mother and English family, present conflicting prospects for the immigrant's assimilation to American culture and illustrate Riis's ambivalence over different ethnic group's prospects for assimilation. That he was well aware of the fact that the image cannot stand alone as a document without contextual apparatus can not seriously be doubted, despite the fact that theorists on documentary identify this awareness with much later documentary practices, in America principally with the work of Lewis Hine. If we return to the photograph of the Italian mother and child, however, we will find that Riis made a much more direct commentary on this image than appears in the essay, yet the contextual apparatus provided by him remains, in the five years between the image's first publication and his subsequent commentary, essentially unchanged.

In a lecture illustrated by lantern slides that Riis gave in 1894, most likely to raise funds for the construction of new schools, parks, and play areas for children, Riis uses the Italian mother and child photograph as an example of the continuing violation of American cultural habits by immigrants. As an implicit call for the necessary funding to
stamp out the cultural practice pictured, Riis is reported to have said to his group:

Here is one of them, an Italian baby in its swaddling clothes. You have seen how they wrap them around and around until you can almost stand them on either end, and they won’t bend, so tightly are they bound. It is only a year ago that the Italian missionary down there wrote to the city mission that he did not know what to do with these Italian children in the hot summer days. . . .
(qtd. in Alland 128)

If the Italian missionaries cannot put an end to what, in the minds of nativists, surely constituted child abuse, what can be done? As Riis himself urges, where laws fail or are inadequate, “private enterprise—conscience, to put it in the category of duties, where it belongs—must do the lion’s share” of the work. Yet “private enterprise,” in this case not government assistance but the investment of capital to build new “model tenements” (1957: 216), seemed ultimately to exacerbate the problem such efforts were intended to remedy. As Lane notes in his biography, Riis’s attempt to generate private funds for public welfare was ultimately ineffectual. Although Riis had a hand in forming the City and Suburban Homes Company, a private philanthropic organization backed by investors who agreed to limit profits, the model tenements they built, notes Lane, “had no appreciable effect on alleviating New York’s population density. The poor could
not afford the few new buildings which the philanthropists erected . . .” (96). “Private enterprise,” then, meant the investment of “conscience” rather than capital, a much more malleable and easily accumulated commodity.

The lack of what French sociologist and social theorist Pierre Bourdieu calls “frontality” in composing subjects before a camera provided Riis with a means to elicit the conscience of his viewers by suppressing it in his represented subjects. Functioning like a document, the photos presented facts; yet functioning as a mirror, they suggested the collective public slumber of society. As the homogenizing agent behind Riis’s work, the consistent lack of frontality evokes the viewer’s presence by absenting it, a strategy that elevates the need for the viewer’s presence in space over that of the subject. Once this exchange of subject positions is achieved, the photographed subject becomes stripped of cultural value. As Bourdieu writes, the importance attached to frontality in photographic compositions is a social convention that lends cultural value to individuals:

Honor demands that one pose for the photograph as one would stand before a man whom one respects and from whom one expects respect, face on, one’s forehead held high and one’s head straight. (82)

The conspicuous lack of frontality in Riis’s immigrant and tenement “studies” is not only a result of the spontaneity of composition but a manifestation of power and control over the
subject-as-viewed. "By means of obeying the principle of frontality and adopting the most conventional posture," Bourdieu continues, one can "control the objectification of one’s image" (83). When that principle is ignored or "disobeyed," a certain violation and violent rupture results as the "objectification" of the view is made into an affective personal response, as the evidence revealed by the camera is replaced by the experience of looking itself:

Looking without being seen, without being seen looking and without being looked at, or candidly, so to speak, and, to an even greater extent, taking photographs in this way, amounts to the theft of the images of other people. (83)

Frontality is one way of preserving the relationship between a subject and its social context. A "frontal" approach to photographing subjects preserves gestures within a particular social context. Lefebvre characterizes the importance of gestures in allowing an individual to "situate . . . his body in its own space and apprehend . . . the space around the body":

The accomplishment of gestures . . . implies the existence of affiliations, of groups (family, tribe, village, city, etc.) and of activity. . . . The chief material employed by social gestures, then consists of articulated movements. . . . gestural systems embody ideology and bind it to practice. Through gestures, ideology escapes from
By denying his subjects the "articulated movements" of gesture, Riis suppresses an integral component of social space: its basis in everyday life. Two images reproduced the Scribner's essay illustrate how an image's meaning can be detached from social context by the lack of a viewer's acknowledged presence.

On facing pages in the essay, both private and public space is on display: on the left, "Lodgers in a Crowded Bayard Street Tenement—'Five cents a spot'" (Fig. 5) and on the right, "An All-night Two-cent Restaurant in 'The Bend'" (Fig. 6, also titled "Bandit's Roost, In a Stale-Beer dive in Cellar"). In the "Lodgers" photo, six men sleeping in tattered bedding in a cluttered corner attempt to rouse themselves in response to the camera. Caught off-guard, the subjects are prevented from meeting the gaze of camera. As Riis describes this practice:

It is not too much to say that our party carried terror wherever it went. The flashlight of those days was contained in cartridges fired from a revolver. The spectacle of half a dozen strange men invading a house in the midnight hour armed with big pistols which they shot off recklessly was hardly reassuring, however sugary our speech.

(1929: 268)
Fig. 5. Jacob A. Riis, "Lodgers in a Crowded Bayard Street Tenement—'Five Cents a Spot.'" The Jacob A. Riis Collection # 155. Museum of the City of New York
Fig. 6. Jacob A. Riis, “An All-Night Two-Cent Restaurant in 'The Bend.'” Also titled “Bandit's Roost, In a Stale-Beer Dive in Cellar.” The Jacob A. Riis Collection # 104. Museum of the City of New York
Carrying terror into the home in the form of flash powder, camera, and raiding party, Riis makes the viewer into a silent witness of the scene of a crime. This two-fold detachment, that of the viewer from the subject and the subject from the larger social context of poverty and overcrowding, produces a consensus of one from a plurality of meanings: evidence that laws and standards are in violation. As Benjamin claims, the links between violence, violation, and law are intimately related. The purpose of violence, writes Benjamin, 
is not to punish the infringement of law but to establish new law. . . . For if violence, violence crowned by fate, is the origin of law, then it may be supposed that where the highest violence . . . occurs in the legal system, the origins of law jut manifestly and fearsomely into existence. (1978: 286)

Needless to say, these images pointed to the violation in housing laws, and the response was to establish more stringent means of surveillance and enforcement. The overcrowded conditions, as those pictured here, Riis informs us, owe chiefly to the “Italian influx of the last few years,” forcing the health department to adjust the “standard of breathing space . . . down from six to four hundred cubic feet” per adult occupant (1889c: 648). These images argue for a significantly lower number, with the goal set (and ultimately attained) at zero.
On the facing page, the subject is a group of men slumped over a table either in a drunken stupor and/or hiding their faces from the camera. Unlike the lodgers photo, the viewer's presence in this space is provided by a table which extends from the bottom of the frame, and the view is shared by an observer on the right who looks on. Yet the lack of eye contact, in this public space, signifies open defiance on the part of the subjects, a blatant disregard for the presence of others. In effect, the subjects have transformed a public space into a private one, making an objective, conceived space into a subjective, lived space, a concrete and experiential plenitude. Sealing themselves off from outside interference, huddling together in a protective enclave, the subjects offer a performance of poverty, enacting the evidence of their own rejection by society into drama, experience.

As Daile Kaplan notes on photographs of the poor which appeared in middle-class gentleman's magazines such as Scribner's, "the inclusion of such photographs . . . was seen as an invasion of privacy—not that of the people shown but of those who had to look at them" (34). Thus it appears unlikely that such views could be perused with complete detachment. Both images, as juxtaposed in the essay, lead to a singular conclusion: that the immigrant is not able and refuses to be Americanized. Behind the refusal and inability to assimilate lies the indifference to public vigilance and a disregard for the most sacred and personal of values: human
dignity. From living in unhealthy concentrations to flaunting an open disregard for public codes of propriety, the entire spectrum of private and public destitution is here on view. While the camera has effectively penetrated space, immovable objects remain:

Perhaps of all the disheartening experiences of those who have devoted lives of unselfish thought and effort, and their number is not so small as often supposed, to the lifting of this great load, the indifference of those they would help is the most puzzling. They will not be helped. (1889c: 661)

"Indifference" is the consensus and leitmotif of these images, a construction and projection of the camera and its newly developed modes of use. These subjects, homogenized into stuporous poses, equally blind to the outside world, have in effect given themselves up to the observer. Unable or unwilling to respond to their own social destitution, these subjects call out for an awakened "public conscience" which could minister to conditions of which the slum appeared insensible.

By revealing that his own earlier solution advanced in "The Tenement-House Question," public vigil, had failed, Riis inculpates the viewer in the crime on view. Yet because the "principle of frontality" has been replaced by one of stealth, and because subjects' gestures are suppressed, Riis effectively preempts the solution he earlier advanced and, in
the process, destroyed any possibility for a common social
ground. As Benjamin warns of this practice under Fascism, as
one that offers "the masses a chance to express themselves"
while denying the right and means "to change property
relations," surveillance photography can become a corollary
of fascism, a tool that offers the illusion that the viewer
presides over space while foreclosing the possibility of
changing or mediating social relations in space. The
"violation of the masses" as viewers goes hand-in-hand with
the violation of the reproduced subject's space, both of
which, Benjamin says, become "pressed into the production of
ritual values" (1968: 243). Thus the viewer is freed from
the view, as the artwork is freed from its dependence on
social context, in order that a consensus can be achieved
between ritual value (non-assimilation) and political subtext
(slum clearing).

The consensual knowledge that realism establishes, it
should now be clear, comes as a consequence of the
abstraction of social space: the forced separation of the
viewer's and reproduced subject's social context alongside
the institution of a rational and hierarchical relationship
between viewer and subject space. Abstract space, as
Lefebvre shows us, shares in all the duplicity, power, and
homogenizing force associated with conceiving space as both
map and plan. "As a product of violence and war," he writes,
abstract space
is political; instituted by a state, it is institutional. On first inspection it appears homogenous; and indeed it serves those forces which make a *tabula rasa* of whatever stands in their way, of whatever threatens them—in short, of differences. These forces seem to grind down and crush everything before them, with space performing the function of a plane, a bulldozer, or a tank. (1991: 285)

Ultimately, it would take the nineteenth-century equivalent of tanks and bulldozers to enforce the homogeneity for which Riis’s images provided the blueprint. Ethnically diverse space is condensed into a homogeneous totality, that of unassimilated and unassimilable immigrants, in order that it can be replaced by another homogenous space, one of leisure and the public display of middle-class hegemony, or what Raymond Williams calls the “necessary limits” established by “specific dominant meanings and values” (108-9).

One of the most striking examples of the hegemony of public over private space can be found half a decade after the publication of Riis’s *Scribner’s* essay and his book, *How the Other Half Lives* (1890). In 1883, before Riis had picked up his first camera, he was drawn to the spectacle of Mulberry Bend, a multiple-block neighborhood of the poorest slums along Mulberry Street and the center of New York’s immigrant population. One of the city’s worst areas in crime, homelessness, tenement overcrowding and health code
violations, this was the very neighborhood where he first landed in America, and we might expect him to take an interest in its improvement. Beginning in 1884, a series of attempts were made to combat the city's rampant growth of impoverished immigrant neighborhoods. That same year, the Drexell Committee was formed to study the problem, and three years later the Small Parks Act was passed into law, establishing $1 million annually for the transformation of domestic space into city parks and playgrounds.

Little progress on the city's tenement problems followed, however, until 1888 when, with help from Riis in the form of journalistic exposés and lantern slide lectures (the latter of which he had been conducting for at least a year), plans were filed for the demolition of "the Bend" and its replacement by Mulberry Park (fig. 7). For six years, however, the city stalled on this project, and not until 1894 would any "progress" be realized. That year, the State Tenement House Committee was formed under the chairmanship of Riis's friend and *Century* managing editor Richard W. Gilder. A year later, in 1895, the tenants were expelled and the Bend razed. Riis's role in the transformation of the Bend into a park was considerable. Beyond his lectures, books, newspaper exposés, and friendship with Roosevelt, Riis served as an "unofficial advisor" on the Gilder committee (Lane 95). Less than a week after the committee's first meeting, in May of 1894, Riis penned a somewhat long and rambling letter to Gilder with the following recommendations to be carried out
Fig. 7. Jacob A. Riis, "Mulberry Park Bend, 1900." The Jacob A. Riis Collection #457. Museum of the City of New York.
before the Bend's destruction:

I would have a colored map of nationalities made

... I would select competent men, one for each tribe
(East Side Jews, Bohemians, Italians, Negroes, etc.) to make as exhaustive a study of them as possible. . . . I would make it my duty to find out in what way the tenement, which received them here, affects their lives—what it makes of them and how much of a hand it has in making them what they become. (qtd. in Ware 103-104)^^

As if his years photographing the slums had taught him little or nothing of its inhabitants, Riis requested all the information that his camera and writings had already confirmed. His request, however, can be read as evidence for the insatiable appetite of power for knowledge, for its accumulation and, in this case, its abstraction in a project of ethnic mapping followed by the destruction of space. The map's ability to totalize geographical space from an impossible perspective, one which is everywhere and nowhere and not subject to the limitations of perspectival vision, is only one of the more tangible manifestations of the camera's hegemony of vision. Users of these abstract spaces, as Riis's words in this letter further reveal (and as Lyotard claims), transform knowledge into a commodity that serves no apparent purpose other than further exchange and abstraction.
Riis's authoritative tone in the letter to Gilder is remarkable for its insistence on not only a systematic but a tactical approach to the gathering of data and the exercise of a plan:

The brief time allowed suggests taking the list of overcrowded houses . . . for a starting point. . . . Consult with the Trades Unions . . . as to their attitude and possible help in the way of suggestion and facts. . . . Have the corps of investigators guided by one man of wide scope and of system. . . . (qtd. in Ware 104-105)

It is unclear how such information could have helped the Gilder commission construct a park, but that is precisely the point: statistics, like the data his photographs provided, serve to empower the legislators over and the producers of space in multiform ways toward a singular purpose: its homogenization. And homogeneity, as Lefebvre points out, when it is sought in a political context, cloaks the antithesis between "liberal" theories of the state, which define [themselves] as the embodiment of the "common good" of its citizens[,] and the arbiter of . . . "authoritarian" theories, which invoke the "general will" and a unifying rationality as justification for the centralization of power. (1991: 282)

How was Riis able to justify such violence? By cloaking it in the desire for order: "the place that had been redolent of
crime and murder became the most orderly in the city. . . . The Bend had become decent and orderly because the sunlight was let in" (1929: 181). The production of a "decent and orderly" space, as the outward manifestation of middle-class hegemony, is not only, as Williams tells us, a means of "manipulation" or "indoctrination" (the latter of which is especially relevant to the argument for assimilation), but it is the projection of "a whole body of practices and expectations . . . over the whole of living. . . ., a lived system of meanings and values" (110).

V. Concluding Remarks

Clearly, the fate of Mulberry Bend is the fate of all diversity under the production of abstract space. Terry Eagleton helps define the concept of abstract space when he considers the emergence of public conscience in the Enlightenment and, in particular, in the democratic forms of government it has brought. Eagleton claims that the Enlightenment instituted "an entirely new kind of human subject," one who has "appropriated the law as the very principle of its own autonomy." If, Eagleton continues, under a bourgeois social order, "to consent to the law is thus to consent to one's own inward being" (19), then the absence of any appearance of law and order through the representation of social disorder, chaos, and the breakdown of civil society must embody a profound threat to that "inward being" itself.
The denial of the reciprocal link between subject and viewer constitutes the distinguishing characteristic of Riis’s documentary project. For Riis, such a mode of representation tended to empower viewers with the full force of the law, placing the ideological power of the state within the subjective reach of the viewer. As Eagleton notes on this transference of power,

Political power . . . must implant itself in subjectivity itself, if its dominance is to be secure; and this process requires the production of a citizen whose ethico-political duty has been internalized as spontaneous inclination. (114)

Riis used a realistic narrative and photographic mode of reproduction to internalize the “ethico-political” responsibility of his viewers as the engine of change. With all other avenues to reform having been closed and pronounced ineffectual, slum clearing was the consensus toward which realism directed that responsibility.

Riis employed realism in a visual way in much the same way as Howells employed it in a narrative sense, that is to “get into personal contact and sympathy” with the other half. Howells’s approach to realism, as we saw in the last chapter, foregrounds the novel’s ability to dissolve, or at least temporarily suspend, the boundary lines between subjectivity and everyday life. The important difference between Howells’s and Riis’s respective use of realism lies in their treatment of boundaries between differences in class and
ethnicity. While Howells provides a means to cross lines of
difference, presenting a representational space which can be
navigated by a reader, Riis employs the resources of literary
realism in a new way: to prevent viewers from moving in and
through the space he represents. In other words, because the
observer in Riis, unlike in Howells, is denied the experience
of an “authentic” lived space, a space of “passion, of action
and of lived situations” (Lefebvre 1991: 42), the possibility
of crossing the line is not a hazard that viewers can
venture; as a consequence, to “come into contact” with the
other half the line and its beyond must be utterly abolished.

The text and photos of “How the Other Half Lives” bring
new and instrumental force to the theory and practice of
realism and suggest that if new urban relations are to be
produced (or existing relations transformed), social space
must first be put in the hands of the masses as a consumable
and manipulable commodity. The practice of combining and
manipulating viewer and subject space in the production of
consensual knowledge prefigures what Lyotard considers the
decisive transition in the “status of knowledge” from use to
exchange value. For Riis, exchange becomes inseparable from
use, and evidence indecipherable from experience. The
conflation of use and exchange suggest a reappropriation and
redirection of artistic activity at its most fundamental
level—art is no longer simply a commodity to be traded in
the literary marketplace but a product with a particular
social and political use value.
Riis also employed the techniques of literary realism, exposing the unfamiliar quality of tenement life to the light of common day, to produce consensual knowledge, what Lyotard calls the "exteriorization" of knowledge,\textsuperscript{32} to collapse ethnicity as a process into a product, a message easy to read and decode. Implicit in the images is the suggestion that immigrant poverty is not merely statistical evidence confined to the other half but an emerging cultural value, a transgression against what the experience of America is and stands for. Riis provided, for the first time on a large scale, quantitative evidence that generated qualitative impact: concrete, visually verifiable evidence made abstract because it did not fit into previously established categories of knowledge.\textsuperscript{33}

It is in the work of an emergent documentary project like that developed by Riis that we can most clearly see, at this time in history, a realistic mode of representation used to heighten for the more effective purpose of erasing distinctions between classes and social groups. Yet because the views that Riis produced of "the other half" foregrounded dangerously "alien" cultural values and social habits, those distinctions could not be mediated but instead called out for more effective (i.e. institutional) methods of reaching a consensus of space. Through the objective nature of photographic representation, Riis documented the misuse of urban space, intensifying an already well-established anxiety over the conflation of immigrant and nativist social space.
In effect, challenging the middle-class viewer’s long-established (yet increasingly tenuous) hegemony over urban space, Riis re-established hegemony in abstract terms.

By replacing the viewer’s fixed and largely public orientation in space with multiple, heterogeneous, and private spatial positions, Riis exploited the consensual nature of realistic representation, bringing marginalized subjects to the fore as presiding over urban space. Yet because any evidence of middle-class social space has been preempted, anxiety, rather than empathy, was the popular response to this project. Riis was in this way able, despite visual evidence to the contrary, to characterize his subjects as active producers rather than passive consumers of social space, representing the lower classes as empowered within and by social space and not, as the late twentieth-century view commonly holds, as occupying a marginalized position.

Thus the most effective way to reclaim and transform late nineteenth-century social space, Riis discovered, is to invert the established hierarchy between social classes, a dialectic that informed progressive reform efforts. Yet because the social space he brought to the fore shared no likeness, semblance, or connection to the middle-class vision of everyday life from which such efforts issued, his images threatened middle-class autonomy, implicitly charging its newly-displaced members to destroy and reconstruct space to reflect the cultural values that were so glaringly absent.
My own conception is that realism (or veritism) is the truthful statement of an individual impression corrected by reference to the fact (78).
---Hamlin Garland, "Productive Conditions of American Literature"

Chapter Four

"To Look and Yet Go Beyond That Look": Dissonant Realism in the Ellis Island Portraits of Lewis Hine

So far in this study, the primary figures I have considered have, in one way or another, taken up the subject of the immigrant and immigration in American culture. Jimmie, while fighting against the Devil's Row gang on the first page of Maggie, says to his compatriots after they urge him to flee: "'Naw,' responded Jimmie with a violent roar, 'dese micks can't make me run'" (3). Joseph Katz has pointed out that, in using the word "micks" (which was later changed to "mugs" in the 1896 edition), Jimmie was "using the language of prejudice directed against the Irish of the 'old immigration' by the community outside [it]" (204). The threat from a community of immigrant outsiders is also articulated by Howells in A Hazard of New Fortunes, quite openly by the character Lindau but also in the fact that March, while he perceived "nothing menacing" in the "swarthy" Italians, nonetheless detected "the presence of a race of
sturdier strength than theirs" (299). In ways that should now be quite obvious, Riis heightened xenophobic fears, fears that triggered reams of anti-immigrant legislation and the reappropriation of urban space, by revealing that immigrants were not only sharing, but consuming and corrupting the lived space of his largely nativist, middle-class readers and viewers.

In each of the above instances in which anxiety was generated over immigrants and immigration, realism was instrumental, as we saw, in eliding the distinction between perception and experience to break down the (often necessary) barriers between what we see or read in representations and what we know as everyday life. Realism brings about a consensus between familiar and unfamiliar in order that the represented subject (the unfamiliar) may be conveyed in a way more convincingly lifelike and "real" to the individual's own personal lived experience. Lewis Hine, as this chapter will reveal, also used the homogenizing powers of realism to bring about a consensus between familiar and unfamiliar, known and unknown, lived and perceived dimensions of social space. Yet we cannot avoid the conclusion that, after viewing Hine's photographs, what was familiar to him (the pride, dignity, courage, resilience, and moral strength of his immigrant subjects) was radically unfamiliar—even preposterous—to his audience and to American society at large.

It is in this process of defamiliarizing the all too familiar negative preconceptions of immigrants, of
representing southern and eastern Europeans in dignified, human poses, that Hine presents what I consider a link between realism and modernism. For in Hine we find for the first time evidence of a discourse relation between perceived, conceived, and lived space that is wholly absent in earlier realist texts and that, as I show in my next chapter on Stevens, becomes in modernism the source and subject material of meaning itself. Before turning to an analysis of Hine’s work at Ellis Island (work that, for the most part did not assuage many fears and anxieties because of its lack of public display), it is necessary to characterize more specifically the nature and origin of the pejorative associations against which Hine positions his work and out of which his modernism emerges.

The decade between 1880-1890 witnessed one of the most vigorous periods of immigration in American history. During that time, over five million immigrants arrived on U.S. shores, a number that was over one-third the total immigration from the preceding 70 years (1820-1890). Knowledge of such statistics resulted in an avalanche of public discourse on what soon became known as the “immigrant problem,” a social issue that articulated anxiety over two distinct yet related phenomena: the physical encroachment of America’s geographical (urban) space by a vast army of outsiders, and the subsequent threat to and upheaval of established cultural values and practices by the influx of a truly “alien” race and class of foreigners.
Popular magazines and charitable journals focused attention on the "immigrant problem" as evidence that America was undergoing a formidable and unwelcome transformation of ideological values and cultural practices. The response to that increased attention was the formulation of an entirely new attitudes and new institutional structures hostile to immigrants and immigration. During the "first wave" of immigration, running roughly from the initial settlement through the middle 1850s, a remarkably homogenous and easily assimilable class and race of northern and western Europeans were welcomed with open arms to "be fruitful and multiply," as Genesis commands, to populate and build the nation into an a world power.

However, what is known as the "second wave" represented a dramatic contrast to and departure from what the first wave offered: beginning in mid-century and extending into the next, a more truly "foreign" population began to arrive on the shores of America.\textsuperscript{35} Because of the new availability of steamships for trans-Atlantic travel (which lowered both the price and the time required for passage), urban overcrowding, poverty, political and religious persecution, and an unstable economic market in Europe, a great new wave of Italians, Spanish, Poles, Russians, and Jews all came in unprecedented numbers beginning in the 1850s. The composition of this second wave presented a daunting challenge to American society, culture, and its existing institutional structure to absorb a non-Anglo-Saxon population and to initiate it to the
values, habits, morals, and social norms of a largely homogenous “nativist” American culture. Fear, anxiety, anger, and even panic over the changing class and racial composition of late nineteenth-century America were both widespread and mutually sustaining. As a brief sampling of contemporary accounts demonstrates, immigrants provided a ready-made cause for histrionics. In 1890, a writer in the Boston Post calls attention to America’s increasing contamination by an unwholesome class of immigrants by comparing the 1889 and 1890 census figures. In addition to the fact that immigration was up, there had been “a marked falling off in the immigrants from the United Kingdom, Germany, Switzerland, and the Scandinavian countries.” These are countries, the writer continues, which in the past “have sent us the most desirable class of immigrants.” The decrease in this “desirable class of immigrants” has been aggravated by the arrival of “Hungarians, Italians, Poles, and Russians [who] are seeking our shores in greater swarms than ever.” Doubtless the dramatically unfamiliar appearance, cultural habits, language, and dress of the “new” immigrant Signified unhealthy change: “It is clear,” the writer concludes, “that the immigrants who are coming in such great numbers now are not, in the main, desirable citizens. It has even been shown on more than one occasion that they might easily constitute elements of danger to our Government and society” (“Change in Immigration”).36
As a measure of that danger to "Government and society," the first federal immigration legislation in history made its appearance in the early 1880s. Written in 1882, this first act of restrictive legislation barred "lunatics, idiots, convicts, and those likely to become public charges" from coming to America. The Chinese Exclusion Act soon followed that same year and banned Chinese immigration in California altogether (it would be renewed in 1892).

Only a year after Riis expanded his Scribner's essay, "How the Other Half Lives," into a book of the same title, the first institutional government superstructure, the U.S. Bureau of Immigration, was created (1891) in order to regulate (i.e. restrict) immigration through physiological and psychological examinations. This new focus on the physical and mental health of the immigrant worked alongside realist representational forms to enforce cultural, social, and ideological homogeneity by rejecting those who are perceived to be different and unlikely to adapt to American society.

The establishment of the Bureau of Immigration also came on the brink of the nation's quadricentennial. On that anniversary, Thomas Bailey Aldrich published a poem that articulated "nativist" anxieties over the growing influx of new immigrants to America. In the July Atlantic Monthly, Aldrich's "Unguarded Gates" focuses this issue as a violation of America's borders; yet the poem also suggests an unhealthy crossing of the boundary between perceived and lived space:
Wide open and unguarded stand our gates,
Named of the four winds, North, South, East, and West;
Portals that lead to an enchanted land
Of cities, forests, fields of living gold,
Vast prairies, lordly summits touched with snow,
Majestic rivers sweeping proudly past
The Arab's date-palm and the Norseman's pine—
A realm wherein are fruits of every zone,
Airs of all climes, for lo! throughout the year
The red rose blossoms somewhere—a rich land,
A later Eden planted in the wilds,
With not an inch of earth within its bound
But if a slave's foot press it sets him free.
Here, it is written, toil shall have its wage,
And Honor honor, and the humblest man
Stand level with the highest in the law.
Of such a land have men in dungeons dreamed,
And with the vision brightening in their eyes
Gone smiling to the fagot and the sword.

Wide open and unguarded stand our gates,
And through them presses a wild motley throng—
Men from the Volga and the Tartar steppes,
Featureless figures of the Hoang-Ho,
Malayan, Scythian, Teuton, Kelt, and Slav,
Flying the Old World's poverty and scorn;
These bringing with them unknown gods and rites,
Those, tiger passions, here to stretch their claws.
In street and alley what strange tongues are loud,
Accents of menace alien to our air,
Voices that once the Tower of Babel knew!
O Liberty, white Goddess! is it well
To leave the gates unguarded? On thy breast
Fold Sorrow's children, soothe the hurts of fate,
Lift the down-trodden, but with hand of steel
Stay those who to thy sacred portals come
To waste the gifts of freedom. Have a care
Lest from thy brow the clustered stars be torn
And trampled in the dust. For so of old
The thronging Goth and Vandal trampled Rome,
And where the temples of the Caesar stood
The lean wolf unmolested made her lair.
(15-17)

The poem demonstrates just how far the country has
degenerated from its genesis and suggests that “honor” as
well as visual and historical perspective have all been lost
and “trampled in the dust.” As an explicit indictment of the
nation’s immigration policy, the poem implicitly articulates
the conflict between lived space as practice and
perceived/conceived space as visual construction. In the
first stanza, social space is ideally (and ideologically)
represented: as a conceived space, the world appears
rationally ordered, spiritually guided, and hierarchically
structured; furthermore, as a perceived space, the landscape opens to a perspectival view of the future anchored by its singular vanishing point and objective: a world of unlimited sameness.

As a field of practice, however, social space in the second stanza comes under outside attack and is being consumed in unknown quantities by unknown elements, "a wild motley throng" with all the attendant evils of "unknown gods," "tiger passions," and "strange tongues." What are needed, the poem implies, are values, standards, and laws—all conceptual structures— which might manage, contain, and restrict what was perceived to be a dangerous influx of unharnessed and unhamessable human energies. In this poem, as in the case of Riis, the harness was made to fit over the individual in a visual way to represent cultural difference as a negative value. The unlimited vistas of conceived space, as Aldrich suggests, have become obstructed by life in the street; and as an idealized vision in the first stanza is crushed by social practice in the second, power migrates down and mixes with an unhealthy stream of humanity.

Aldrich's poem clearly draws its energy from the struggle over power and the changing terms of ownership over social space. As the conceived space of a mythic past gave way to the contest over lived space in the streets, perception becomes a social activity. Terry Eagleton notes a comparable migration of power into lived space a century earlier in which a rising middle-class wrested political
rights and individual liberties from an institutionalized aristocracy. Power migrated and consequently liberated human subjects in both cases and, once in the hands of the masses, empowered a "universal order of free, equal, autonomous human subjects" willing to obey "no laws but those which they gave to themselves" (19). While Eagleton writes specifically of a much earlier shift in power coincident to the birth of modern society, the pattern is unmistakable. Thus as the outgrowth and final harvest of what Marx called the "swamp-flower of the peasant lumpenproletariat" (613), the immigrant masses likewise came crashing through the gates of a New Eden in late nineteenth-century America. Popular and institutional response was quick, and by the middle of 1890, a few short years after Riis's first tenement studies, a full-scale war on life in the streets was well underway.

This last decade of the nineteenth century bristled with hostile rhetoric on the negative influence of immigrants: immigrants were frequently blamed for everything from disease, lower wages, poverty, urban crime, and high infant mortality rates. But immigration as a "problem" was manifesting itself in intangible as well as tangible ways, working its way into the imagination, the conceived space of the mind and consciousness, as well as in the lived space of daily life. A writer for The Baltimore Sun reminds readers of the "Social Microbes" (the article's title) that individuals live alongside yet often do not detect. One must resist, warns the writer, the "baneful influence" of "moral
contagion" just as one avoids other infectious diseases. Yet while science has taught us to "recognize the germs of certain diseases," we have no means of identifying them in the social context within which they fester and reproduce. The fact that "a thoroughly healthy man may breathe or swallow millions of these germs of disease without being infected," leads the writer to the conclusion that an individual should avoid evil communications and bad associates as he would the plague, but should also fit himself to resist their influence. There are social microbes no less potent and mischievous than those with which Pasteur deals. . . . Some of them get put away in pest-houses or prisons; many more walk the streets, jostle us in the cars or in places of public meeting, or even visit us at our homes. They scatter about us as they go the invisible germs of moral disease that, when they find congenial soil, flourish and grow. . . . ("Social Microbes" 151)

The analogy is instructive, and reveals a national ethos suspicious of external, particularly foreign, contamination. 40 While the above writer notes that scientific advances have helped guard against physiological corruption, "the [psychological] influences that go to make character" represent a more dangerous threat because, like germs, they are "in great part unseen." It becomes necessary, therefore,
to make those morally corruptive elements visible, and a large part of that task involved subjecting immigrants to a battery of physical examinations and mental interrogations in an attempt to discover what was not readily discernible to the eye: evidence of hidden moral, political, social, or constitutional difference.

As a way to extend the government’s ability to inspect, examine, scrutinize, and ultimately limit incoming immigrants, the federal government again intervened: in 1892, Castle Island, the state-managed port of entry for immigrants since 1855, was closed and replaced by Ellis Island, the first federally-operated inspection station established by the Bureau of Immigration. Within such a climate of renewed hostility, uncertainty, and anxiety over immigrants and immigration, Hine’s career as a photographer began. These first years of the twentieth century experienced an increase in immigration that threatened to eclipse all prior records, including the insurgence of the great second wave in the 1890s. Between 1900 and 1903, immigration nearly doubled, rising from over 448,000 in 1900 to over 850,000 in 1903. Statistics like these caused a renewal in immigration anxieties and a redoubled focus on “the immigrant problem” as a topic of national concern early in the century. Immigration was a particular source of anxiety for reformers and workers in charitable relief organizations (with which Hine soon became associated), since such organs not only came
into direct contact with immigrants but were best suited through that affinity to engineer a solution. While Riis was largely responsible for defining, codifying, and institutionalizing many of the negative attitudes toward second wave immigrants in a visual way, it was Hine who first presented visual evidence to the contrary. Using the same tools which a realist mode of representation offered Riis to produce a consensus of immigrant social space in the city, Hine used the homogenizing nature of photographic realism to establish a historical continuity (and therefore consensus) between the nation's cultural history and its social contemporaneity. Working in much the same spirit as Frederick Jackson Turner in his frontier thesis (1893), Hine attempted to recuperate the nation's past into its present by suggesting that the continuity between first and second wave immigration (a continuity that immigration polemicists and government legislators alike were pronouncing irreparably severed) was in fact intact. Like Turner who argued that, while the 1890 census may have pronounced the frontier "closed," the frontier spirit was far from exhausted, Hine confronted evidence that immigration was a blight on society and contradicted it, arguing in a visual way that the same pioneer spirit the nation's first settlers brought to America was still a strong feature of today's immigrant.

As we have seen in earlier portions of this study, realist modes of narrative and visual representation produce
consensus for the purpose of critiquing an existing consensus or of breaking it down and introducing a differently structured consensus (or continuity) in its place. Thus Crane, calling attention to Maggie’s doomed attempt to create a consensus of intellect and experience, reconciles her aberrant behavior (in a highly ironic way) by crushing it with the conceptual (and consensual) knowledge that she has sinned. Howells likewise demonstrates the immobilizing futility of attempting to reconcile one’s long lost cultural bearings and identity to the present moment, choosing instead to sacrifice, destroy, and consume history in order to accommodate capital and preserve social and political order. Riis, in his efforts to restore the slum to a genteel and racially-homogenous view of the past, like his fellow realists, resorted to consensual knowledge as both force and remedy: a heterogeneous immigrant social space was made homogenous by the camera so that it could be crushed by greater homogenizing forces—those of the state. In each case, lived space, the everyday life of individuals, is crushed by conceived space, a homogenizing and abstract consensual totality.

Hine presents a quite different use of the consensual powers of realism. Hine utilized the modus operandi of realism, confronting one consensus and supplanting it with another, but he changed the structure on which consensus traditionally rested (in conceived space) and anchored consensus in lived space. Instead of confronting a consensus
of lived space and replacing it with a homogenously conceived space (a form of negative critique), Hine did the opposite: encountering consensual knowledge in the form of negative stereotypes and preconceptions biased against immigrants, he replaced it with a culturally- and historically-based consensus (a continuity) that posited the struggle for identity and lived space in America as the common ground on which the nation's ideology and ethos was and is still founded. Hine's realism refuses to sacrifice history, ethnicity, class difference, or individual identity—the most salient components of lived space and all casualties in Crane, Howells, and Riis—in his configuration of social space. Homogeneity remains an important feature of Hine's realism, but it is a homogeneity that lowers rather than raises boundaries. He achieved this by accentuating history, by linking the past to the present and showing that the present, like Turner, was not a blight on but rather a flower of the past.

Hine brings about a homogeneity of lived space by thus establishing a social and cultural continuity between history and present experience. By photographing immigrants upon their moment of arrival in America, Hine acknowledges and celebrates his subjects' ties to the old world and to their ethnicity, both of which they bring wholly intact into America and the photograph's frame. As the restrictionist rhetoric on the subject of immigration explicitly reveals, the immigrant's history, culture, and ethnicity were believed
to be the source of the “immigration problem” and represented all that was undesirable in a new citizen. In order to illustrate the incompatibility of the collective history of the nation and that of the individual immigrant, anti-immigration polemicists found it necessary to heighten the distinction between the first and second waves' past and present appearance, assimilative capacity, and cultural contributions. This distinction, as we shall see, was a necessary precondition from which Hine worked to produce dissonance, a practice that I argue is the mark of modernism.

Early in 1904, a series of articles appeared in Charities that signifies an important shift in how the "immigrant problem" was conceived that undoubtedly caught Hine's attention. The essays suggested that immigrants as a whole were an outdated resource and thus an unneeded burden on American progress and prosperity. The introductory editorial of the February 6, 1904 issue of Charities prefaces the essays that follow by citing the immigrant's burdensome dependence on American charitable institutions. The editorial essay explicitly asks whether America any longer need depend on immigrant labor:

It may be that without the immigrants—without these "lower, dependent-producing grades" of labor, we could not have an industrial organization. For ourselves we are not inclined to agree that it is purely a matter of conjecture whether our industrial organizations could be maintained.
without them. There is plenty of experience and ample warrantable analogy for believing that if it were necessary for American communities to get on without a large element of illiterate, unskilled and low-priced labor, they would succeed in doing so; and would leave no work of vital importance unperformed. In a nutshell if the American workman, accustomed to a high standard of living, is confronted with a disagreeable task, he will invent a machine to do it for him (Charities 119).

The editorial raises doubts over the historically beneficial relationship between American progress and immigration and suggests that rather than contribute to the future, as immigrants did in the past, they are undermining that future, bringing with them the seeds of moral and social corruption and slowing the nation's technological advance. The editorial serves as an introduction and preview of ideas presented within the pages of the current number and prefaces an anti-immigration essay written by Charities editor and head of the Charity Organization Society of New York City, Edward T. Devine.43

In "Immigration as a Relief Problem," Devine differentiates the characteristics of the contemporary immigrant from the "colonist of the early the republic." Devine writes that while "the colonist was establishing new outposts of civilization. . . . [T]he immigrant is one who follows in a path already made easy"; whereas the colonist
was "influenced by some strong religious or political or economic motive," the immigrant "goes where his friends and relatives have gone"; the colonist furthermore possessed "a daring and strength of character to overcome the dangers, the loneliness, and the privations of the frontier," while the immigrant "yields to the artifices of transportation agents" and is coerced "by the public authorities of his own community to emigrate for his country's good" (129).

Embedded in this historical argument that distinguishes between past and present, colonist and immigrant, is a racial distinction between the largely desirable northern European immigration of the early republic and the highly undesirable immigration of southern and eastern Europeans of the present. The more recent wave of immigrants is represented by Devine as a class of victims (either of family, steamship, or state coercion) without a clear motive for coming to America who, rather than contribute to America's improvement, "as a matter of fact ... become public charges, either in their own person or through the commitment of their children to public institutions" (129).

Devine quite persuasively portrays the spatial and temporal immobilization of the immigrant once arrived in America in a photograph that illustrates his essay. In a photograph from the Report of the Director General of Immigration titled "Types of Immigrants" (Fig. 8), eight women of different national origin are shown in a police-style lineup against a stark background. The picture is
Fig. 8. Types of Immigrants. From Report of the Director General of Immigration.
composed from a distance and prevents the viewer from gaining a view into the individual character of each, an effect reinforced by the keyword "types" in the title. Furthermore, while the frame is filled to its lateral edges with figures dressed in each her native costume, the gestures and facial expressions of these figures are remarkably uniform: each appears immobilized and transfixed by the camera and await its release. The realism of this view homogenizes subjects, as did the realism of Riis, into objects that are not only consumable, but have already been consumed and cast up as driftwood on America's shores. The light-skinned and (apparently) northern European figures on the right contrast sharply with the dark-skinned, more foreign-looking figures on the left, a placement that, while it may not have been intended, nonetheless suggests an unhealthy mixture and unnatural homogenization of East and West, North and South.

The "types" on view here become collapsed into a single "type," the final product of which, as Riis said, is a "queer conglomerate mass of heterogeneous elements, ever striving and working like whiskey and water in one glass, and with like result: final union and a prevailing taint of whiskey" (1957: 16). What will be the final "result" of releasing these burdensome charges into society, the viewer is lead to wonder? As Ermarth stresses the point, realism encourages us to ask such questions, by establishing a "mutual informativeness" between the "implied consciousness" of the reader (or viewer) and the narrator (or photographer), an
informativeness that "coordinates all moments into a single temporal series from a stance outside, in the 'future' of the story" or the image (42).

Thus a viewer, looking at the "types" on view here, is able to perceive a quite malignant temporal continuity between past, present, and future, a result of the fact that in realism, as Ermarth states, the implicit presence of future possibility guarantees the universality, the projective extensions of those basic relationships [between] memory [and observation] . . . in comparing past and present. . . Futurity provides that horizon and that vanishing-point which at once mark the (arbitrary) limits of our perception and guarantee the extension beyond those limits. . . . Futurity insures that, in a different time and place, the same familiar system will operate. (42)
The immigrant's past on view here, their idiosyncrasies of dress, is brought into the present. That past, however, is represented as a blight on the present, symbolized by the excess baggage each figure brings into a society that has little or place for the past itself. In this way Devine could clinch his argument against immigrants by writing that, in a future without them, progress and "industrial organizations could be maintained," an idea that leads to his conclusion that the immigrant's absence "would leave no work of vital importance unperformed." If we return to the image,
we can see that, while eye-to-eye contact is maintained between viewer and viewed, the consensus that these subjects are incompatible with the present and future of America is nonetheless achieved by breaking the temporal continuity between past and present (rather than breaking the spatial continuity between viewer and viewed as in Riis). Thus the photograph helps differentiate what is perceived from what is conceived because the photograph, as Bourdieu discovered, "far from being . . . signifying itself and nothing else, is always examined as a sign of something that is not" (92).

Hine used photography precisely in the way Bourdieu indicates it functions, "as a sign of something that is not" actually present or believed true: the idea that "new" immigrants are a culturally valuable asset and resource. In planting that idea, even though it would be challenged and ultimately rejected, Hine perhaps brought it to bear on the middle-class viewer's consciousness for the first time. Hine's Ellis Island portraits thus attempt to reverse all that the above photo (and its supporting rhetoric) signify and accomplish. In contrast to the way that the photograph in Devine's essay represents immigrants, Hine characteristically chose to show his subjects not as anonymous charges of the state, as figures transfixed in homogenous spaces and poses, or as individuals bearing the burden of a dated and anachronistic social history, but rather as individuals with distinct personal histories and with noble aspirations: aspirations that, as Alexis de
Tocqueville observed, were not founded solely on the immigrants' desire "to better their positions or accumulate wealth," but were also the expression of "a purely intellectual craving; in facing the inevitable sufferings of exile they hoped for the triumph of an idea" (30). Hine accomplished the "triumph of an idea" in his photographs by establishing an ideological consensus between host and immigrant conceived space and a historical continuity between past and present lived space. Equality of desire—not similarity of appearance—is the consensus Hine's work establishes for immigrants in light of legislation and popular opinion designed break that historical continuity and thus deny social equality.

Hine emphasized the equality, individuality, and dignity of his subjects not only by frontally composing them (as Bourdieu would say) but also through a combination of background selection, use of lighting, eye contact and, most importantly, by allowing hand, eye, body, and facial gestures to perform to their fullest expressive capacities. Gestures, Lefebvre tells us, are expressive signifiers that "constitute a language in which expressiveness (that of the body) and signification . . . are no farther apart than nature from culture, than the abstract from the practical" (1991: 214). A gesture, in other words, is never only itself but is more significantly a pointer to some beyond, to some other meaning that lies outside the social context of its articulation.

Further, gestures help blur the distinction between
"abstract" and "practical" meaning, and thus between conceived and lived space, a distinction Hine's realism used gestures to elide.

The human hands are one of the most expressive vehicles for communicating emotion in visual art and are important signifiers in Hine. As Bourdieu discovered upon showing a photograph of an old woman's hands to a group of respondents in a sociological study, "what is perceived, understood and appreciated" by the viewers "is not the old woman's hands but old age, work and honesty" (93). Hand gestures are also one of the subjects of Hine's "Jews at Ellis Island" (Fig. 9), an image thematically related to the above "Types of Immigrants" photograph and among the first he took as an ECS teacher in 1904. In the photograph, four men wait to be processed by immigration authorities. While many of Hine's images of workers and immigrants show subjects in less contemplative poses, this image simply shows four men seated, immobilized by the immigration processing procedure. However, despite the apparently documentary quality of the image, several important details in the picture signify in non-documentary ways and represent a departure from the "realism" of the Devine essay photo. First of all, the subjects each manifest a different facial expression, hand gestures, and body posture. Reading the faces from right to left, the emotions present might be classed as patience, detachment, anguish, and curiosity. The hands of the first three figures (respectively) contribute to what the faces signify: hands
Fig. 9. Lewis W. Hine, "Jews at Ellis Island." Collection of Walter and Naomi Rosenblum. Reproduced courtesy Walter Rosenblum by George Eastman House, International Museum of Photography.
clasped; hands playing with an inanimate object; and hand wiping the brow. In this way, by establishing an emotional or affective continuity between facial and hand gestures, the subject’s ability to serve a strictly documentary function, the making of an alarming spectacle, is hampered. Rather, like the figure craning his neck in the background, the viewer is invited to ponder what lies outside the frame, suspending judgment in a conceived space Hine quite unobtrusively introduces by this figure’s gaze into the photograph.

The four faces could well represent a continuum of possible responses to the immigration processing experience, and suggest that the mechanism of that process is not uniformly experienced but one that works on and affects individuals in quite individual ways. Thus the consensus on view her is not, as it is in Riis (or the Devine essay photo) that immigrants are immobilized and inert statistical objects, but rather that they are each living, breathing, thinking, and feeling human subjects. In an image remarkably uniform in its composition (four figures dressed in dark clothing and seated in a line), and in a space made homogenous by a perspectival grid of metal bars and railings, Hine produces a lived space for each of his subjects, refusing to allow them to be homogenized into their space by the conceptual, abstracting, dehumanizing apparatus of a state institutional structure.
The immigrant subjects in "Jews at Ellis Island" are almost impossible to collapse into "types" as did the earlier image: each figure writes its own narrative, each hand–face gesture combination offers a separate comment on and interpretation of the administrative process, and each figure occupies an inviolable, personal lived space. It is paradoxically the viewers, rather than the viewed subjects, whose social space appears violated in the photograph. As well as reducing the spatial distance from and emotional detachment with which such marginalized figures are viewed, the photograph uses the iron bars in a symbolic way to intrude on the viewer's space. This formal strategy suggests that the viewer must modify or move from one's own stable viewpoint in order to meet the viewed. Thus the viewer is drawn, like the photographer, into the composition of the view and cannot avoid acknowledging one's own presence therein. Perhaps also wanting to avoid the controlling and authoritative viewpoint created by looking down on subjects from above, Hine dropped the camera to the subjects' eye level, making it appear as if the viewer him or herself is looking out of the iron bars of a different type, those of an insular and ultimately imprisoning predisposition toward immigrants.

Such reversals in subject position are common in the photography of Hine and help further the consensual knowledge that his work suggests: that viewer and viewed share the same social space, and that space is predominantly a lived space,
the "loci of passions, of action and of lived situations" as Lefebvre says (1991: 42). The effect of this strategy is to cause viewers not only to engage on a personal level with photographed subjects, but also to question the autonomy and inviolability of one's own social space. Other commentators on the work of Hine have interpreted the ability of his work to unite viewer and viewed in terms of the tensions and oppositions between image and text. Maren Stange, for example, shows how the tension between Hine's photographs and the captions that accompanied them worked together to produce "a concatenation of social and human meaning" (86); Trachtenberg likewise shows how contradictions between the "rhetoric [of reform ideology] and [the] reality" of American life (1989: 166), and oppositions between the "scientific exactitude" of a sociologically-grounded notion of social work and "'sociality' as a process of consciousness" were resolved by Hine's juxtapositions of image and text (1989: 205). While many of these observations are made in relation to his later child labor and work portraits, I believe that this tension can be detected as well in the early photographs. And while Hine frequently joined images and text in his labor broadsides, posters, flyers, and artwork for Charities and the Commons and Survey, his early work at Ellis Island does not rely on the intervention of text to raise questions about the authority of the view and the possible responses of viewers. Having little opportunity for much creative control outside that which could be exercised
in the moment of exposure itself, Hine worked to invest the photograph with the tension he thought necessary to encourage viewers to explore the image as a story and thereby limit its potential to shock.

Another of Hine's early photographs, "Joys and Sorrows at Ellis Island, 1905" (Fig. 10), like "Jews at Ellis Island," uses hand gestures and facial expressions to display the entire spectrum of emotions associated with beginning life anew. At least seventeen faces crowd the frame, and seventeen different responses to both the experience of immigration and the presence of the photographer are on view. The photographer (and by association viewer) are integral components to the representation of lived space in the photo, and the photographer's presence is not only openly acknowledged but is (along with the viewer) made to share the subject's social space. It is quite obvious that Hine "worked" this crowd for the portrait he obtained, a fact that brings about, on the one hand, a reconciliation between immigrant and nativist social space and, on the other, an exchange of subject positions between viewer and viewed. This exchange, suggested by the two small children in the lower right corner of the frame, suggests that, as Ermarth says of the conditions realism produces, "what cannot be seen will be much like what can" (21). Realism, then, like the child on its mother's lap, plays a game of "peekaboo" with the viewer, at times hiding its face, and at others revealing it, a practice that, as it is used here, establishes a
Fig. 10. Lewis W. Hine, "Joys and Sorrows of Ellis Island, 1905." Gelatin silver print. Courtesy George Eastman House, International Museum of Photography.
likeness and consensual relationship between what can be seen (the photographed subject) and what cannot (the viewer). "Like rubies reddened by rubies reddening," as I quoted Stevens earlier, the viewer is here made a perceiving subject not by his or her own agency but rather by the perceiving process itself, as the division between conceptual and perceptual space becomes interchangeable and ultimately collapses.

Thus the "joys and sorrows" of the picture become communicated across the boundary lines of race, age, and gender alike, yet the precise emotional meaning experienced and expressed by these subjects remains indistinct and refuses to collapse into a rubric or typology for what immigration signifies. Central to this refusal is the presence of the photographer and, by association, the viewer. Hine's viewers look into the subjects' lives and, as those lives are looked into, they become subjects who look back out. Hine achieves this not through the "transparency" of the photographic image but rather by making the view appear contingent on the acknowledged presence and participation of an audience. Once acknowledged and placed on view, viewers are unable to make a private experience of the encounter but instead are encouraged to acknowledge the social context of viewing, a practice that emphasizes social space as a shared continuum, helping point viewers away from Riis's divisive rhetoric of "this half . . . other half." Hine challenges such barriers between class, ethnic, and social space, openly
crossing them in a way similar to that experienced by the Marches when they cross "the line of respectability." We saw that, on approaching the line, they first became immobilized; in crossing it, however, they found their own socio-spatial frames of reference altered, an experience that marks the beginning of their social mobility in New York.

Hine’s use of the camera, in a similar way, alters once-stable frames of socio-spatial reference in order to break the hierarchical relationship between viewer and viewed. The photographs thus appear to relinquish their semantic content to a dialectic, a recursive experience of simultaneously viewing and being viewed by a subject. Trachtenberg calls the effect of this practice by Hine "participatory viewing," one that represents "one of the most overlooked aspects of his work" (1989: 197). Central to the idea that subjects be allowed to express themselves is "communication," writes Trachtenberg, a recursive, dialogical process at the heart of "the social act" that Hine conceived and practiced as reform photography. Reform is a "social act," Trachtenberg continues, and its potential is rooted not in the thing communicated but in the act of communication itself:

Hine developed methods of presenting his pictures as mute monuments seeking a voice in the viewer’s imagination, a voice in dialogue. He enlarged the reformist idea of the social survey to embrace the process of communication itself, inventing presentational forms through which social
information might become the viewer's own concrete experience. (1989: 203)

The transition from "social information" or evidence to "concrete experience," then (and not a private but the public experience of lived space), describes the process by which Hine achieves consensus in realism. Unlike a consensus of either lived space (as in Crane) or of conceived space (as in Howells and Riis), Hine achieves a dynamic consensus between conceived, perceived, and lived space, a homogenization of a host of traditionally irreconcilable oppositions between objective knowledge and affective experience, surface appearance and inner depth, intellect and sensation, thinking and being. By using the homogenizing powers of realism to establish a discourse and recursive coexistence of these oppositions, Hine shows us how and why modernism came to embrace abstraction, the representation of dissonance, as a mode of bringing the space of artwork, artist, and viewer together.

As I pointed out earlier, Hine's abstraction does not manifest itself in a stylistic sense as it traditionally applies to modernist expression but rather in what I termed the rational sensibility of his viewers. If we recall Peter Angeles's statement that abstraction is experienced in the individual subject (as viewer or reader) when something known "is regarded apart from reference to any object or event . . . not directly perceivable in experience" (2), Hine's attribution of cultural, historical, ethnic, and human value
to his subjects represents the association of a known quantity (or entity), the festering immigrant masses, with an unknown quality (or value), human dignity, results in abstraction, what Angeles says is the "process of deriving .. universal" knowledge from a limited and particular (viewing) experience. Thus Hine extends the realism’s powers of consensus to juxtapose social space (conceived, perceived, lived) in ways that earlier realists could not. By forcing the viewer to confront like alongside unlike in the view, and by drawing the viewer as an active agent into the conception, perception, and "experience" of the view, Hine bridges the philosophical divide between what Eagleton calls the "things and thoughts, sensations and ideas, that which is bound up with our creaturely life" and "that which conducts some shadowy existence in the recesses of the mind" (13). Hine aestheticizes abstraction by using a visual experience to contradict and, in doing so, to question the viewer’s conceptual framework as "evidence" from which negative assessments of the immigrant issue and to which they refer. Realism, as Ermarth reminds us, "in no way signals a death of abstraction" (27); and Hine, by humanizing the abstract and instrumental autonomy of which conceived space is chiefly composed, adapts, accommodates, and domesticates conceptual thought to the lived experience of the viewing/perceiving subject.

As an example of how abstraction might be thus aestheticized, consider Hine’s "Albanian Woman, Ellis Island,
1905" (Fig. 11). In this photograph, which resembles the portrait bust form in sculpture, Hine makes a monument of his subject in strong light before a dark and indistinct background. The subject brings her history and ethnicity intact into the frame, a history and ethnicity that, as a southern European, was anything but a welcome sight to nativists at this time. In an almost uncanny mixture of defiance and humility, the woman's gaze resists easy classification: will she be a malleable and tractable addition to society, one able and willing to adapt to the demands of hard work and perseverance needed to avoid becoming a public charge? Her cracked lip and steady gaze, evidence of toil and determination, seem to answer in the affirmative.

The greatest fear associated with immigrants was, of course, the possibility that they would not assimilate, that (especially in the case of southern and eastern Europeans) they would be inclined "to live in a way utterly incompatible with American habits and character," as Robert DeC. Ward warned a short year ago in a Charities essay (138). The woman's headdress, resembling an eighteenth-century calash, certainly helps to support such a conclusion, especially when linked to the focused determination of her gaze. The point is that such questions remain unanswered, and that the readings and judgments suggested above remain inconclusive, owing to the fact that these opposed readings and views coexist and discursively play off each other. Is she one of
us or one of them? Hine suggests that she is both, that
while she brings her own inviolable and individual past into
the view (and the country), she is also young and strong and
possesses (and perhaps has even gained a momentary insight
into) her own future. New knowledge is produced here, and it
is produced abstractly. Because realism, as Ermarth has
shown, allows viewers and readers to construct a continuity
between past evidence and "future possibility," the
"projective extension of those [temporal] relationships" (42)
institutes in Hine’s photograph a continuity between past and
present (what is known) and future (what is unknown).

Abstraction, then, results from the fact that a southern
European past has, by and large, only rarely been associated
or linked to an American future that is anything but corrupt,
diseased, overcrowded, divided, and ultimately conquered by
the immigrant’s presence. Thus what is conceived of and
rooted in a popular collective consciousness ruled by
pejorative preconceptions ultimately clashes with what is
concretely perceived in the representation, resulting in the
new knowledge (and new consensus) that not only are
conceived, perceived, and lived space coextensive, but that
their coming together leads not to a violent, debilitating,
and ultimately tragic end (as it does in Crane, Howells, and
Riis), but rather that the admixture of nativist and
immigrant space is a pleasing, life-affirming, and even
beautiful experience.
I earlier noted that Hine aestheticized abstraction through his use of the portrait form. Portraiture is a genre that, in painting, photography, and sculpture, had historically been employed for two distinct purposes: to record the likeness of family members and loved ones, and to "capture" and communicate the noble qualities of a (usually illustrious) sitter for public inspection and emulation. Marcus Aurelius Root, the prominent nineteenth-century Philadelphia studio photographer, notes the ameliorative effect of gazing on portrait photographs of the great and the good, the heroes, saints, and sages of all lands and all eras. . . . The pure, the high, the noble traits beaming from these faces and forms,—who shall measure the greatness of their effect on the impressionable minds of those who catch sight of them at every turn? (26-27)

Portrait photography, as Trachtenberg points out, referring to the work of Root and others, had a "social mission" in nineteenth-century America: "to stimulate a desire to identify with the qualities represented by the sitter, to emulate, as Roman portrait busts inspired their viewers to do, an exemplary life" (1989: 32). Growing out of this tradition, early twentieth-century portraiture in photography carried forward these two purposes (of immortalizing loved ones and memorializing public figures). Since photographs for the masses became much more affordable (after the introduction of the dry-plate process in the 1880s) and since
photographers remained in competition with painters for commissioned likenesses of artistic, intellectual, political, and military elites, portrait photography remained a distinctive genre that inherently signified nobility and granted cultural value.

Hine was, alongside his contemporary August Sander, largely responsible for transforming the portrait genre in photography from its familial and its culturally-elevated origins to form that memorialized the lives and individual histories of wholly unknown and undistinguished subjects. In Hine's redefinition of the portrait genre, we can see a pattern emerge that accords with what his other immigrant photographs accomplished and that this study discussed earlier: in conferring status and social prestige to his subjects normally reserved for the cultural nobility, and in bringing the viewer into a close, almost fraternal affinity with "low" subjects, Hine—as he did by celebrating the maligned culture and history of his subjects—again forced an abstraction on his viewers. Unable to conceive of the possible reason why such subjects should deserve the immortality and public confirmation that portraits confer, viewers are forced to look beyond the frame and into their own private thoughts and observations, their own preconceptions and past encounters with immigrants, in order to reconcile the known and the unknown, the fact and the suggestion, the past moment of exposure and the future beyond
the photographic "fact." In short, Hine forced a consensus between evidence and experience with abstraction as a tool.

In an interesting illustration of the idea that abstraction (in the sense defined here) produces new knowledge, Bourdieu discovered that when viewers are presented with photographs whose reason for being taken is not clearly evident, those viewers attempt to construct a possible use for the images. His sociological study revealed that the viewing subjects frequently projected a function onto images to which they expressed indifference. As a way to "understand" the photographs, his viewers created an explanatory contextual apparatus outside the frame, one that supports my use of Ermarth's formulation of narrative realism in photographic realism. Summing up this point about his findings, Bourdieu writes that the viewer's act of

Discerning, for each photograph, its possible uses and audiences, or more precisely its possible use for each audience, subordinating appreciation to several conditional hypotheses, is a way of understanding, or, rather, of appropriating an impersonal and anonymous photograph, deprived of the obvious function which gives commonplace photography its meaning and value. (87)

Unable to determine an apparent meaning in the signifier, viewers look outside the frame and construct "conditional hypotheses" as possible signifieds. Any aesthetic "appreciation" becomes subordinate to the viewer's search for
that meaning, a reconciling consensus between what the photograph presents, why it was taken, and what its possible future uses might be. In Hine, the apparent disparity between the subject, the photographer’s purpose, and the photograph’s social function is reconciled imaginatively, and a consensus is reached, by the viewer rather than being already achieved and placed on view in the photograph (as it is in Riis).

A great disparity between what an image shows and what its possible uses might be can be seen throughout Hine’s immigrant photographs and is particularly evident in two portraits he took in the great rail-lined passages of the Ellis Island assembly hall. In “Elderly Jewish Immigrant, Ellis Island, 1905” (Fig. 12) and in “Young Russian Jewess, Ellis Island, 1905” (Fig. 13), Hine presents two figures who have reached the final stage of the indoctrination and inspection process and await the calling of their numbers. As in Mathew Brady’s photographs of the cultural nobility in Charles Edwards Lester’s *Gallery of Illustrious Americans* (1850), neither figure in Hine’s photographs faces the camera frontally, an effect which suggests the lofty detachment of a subject deep in contemplative thought. As Trachtenberg writes of this practice, “Unawareness is precisely the mode befitting the illustrious performing as American icons.” Indifference, in other words, as “an effect achieved by looking anywhere but into the lens[,] is the way of eminence should be seen—apprehended, as it were, in a moment of

Apprehending the "eminence" of such cultural icons as Brady placed on view is a quite simple matter of connecting an individual's works to a dignified appearance; making that connection in Hine's portraits, however, is not possible, at least not from the evidence outside the picture frame (which is non-existent). Rather, in Hine's portraits, it is the lack of evidence to support the view that, as Bourdieu discovered, causes viewers to invent or "hypothesize" an experience, a social context in lived space, that might conform to what is shown. Thus, by causing viewers to cross the barrier between evidence and experience, by blurring that distinction and allowing one to flow into and influence the other, Hine achieves a consensus whereby, as Ermarth again helps us illustrate, "what cannot be seen will be much like what can" (21).

The "eminence" suggested by the three-quarter angle view of the male figure, and the slightly averted gaze of the female, appears wholly at odds with contemporary cultural assessments of Jewish immigrants. Yet in that great disparity between history, present image, and future lies the possibility—even the necessity—of the viewer's agency in reconciling this dichotomy. Bourdieu states that this process of (or attempt at) reconciliation forms the basis from which "the judgment of taste" issues, a reconciliation forced by the viewer's "appraisal of a disparity between the
realization, the signifier, and a transcendent signified, a real idea or model” (93). The realistic vision of photography, in other words, leads viewers to “expect” as Bourdieu states, “a narrative symbolism, and ... a sign, or, more precisely, an allegory, unequivocally to express a transcendental meaning...” (91). When that “transcendental meaning” is absent, as it is in Hine’s portraits, the viewer is compelled to supply an explanation, a story or “allegory” on which the photograph’s legitimacy can be based. Thus a high degree of disparity between image and intent correspondingly calls for a high degree of viewer participation, a process, Bourdieu claims, that “actually means refusing photography as an endless finality” (92). The dissonance between evidence and experience in Hine’s portraits is a guarantee that the subject will not become a “meaningless object” (94) but rather that new knowledge and new meaning will be produced, a viewer-generated conceptual solution to the riddle that Hine’s realism presents but, in a proto-modernist way, does not resolve: How can perceived and conceived space correlate, or at least coexist, in everyday life? The answer is not to be found in an object (the text) but rather in a process, a dialogic relation that recursively crosses formal boundaries, a discursive intertext between human subject and (art)work, viewer and viewed.

The search for that intertext is irrepressible in realism and becomes, in modernism, the location of meaning itself. Unlike the photography of Riis in which meaning is
clearly and indisputably spelled out for the viewer, for Hine
meaning is a matter of bringing disparate spaces and
discontinuous histories together rather that imaging them as
such and then sweeping them away. Riis’s images accord with
what we (the collective “we” of the middle class) know to be
ture: that immigrants are the lowly rabble of humanity, the
jetsam and flotsam of Europe who have wrecked on our shores.
By thus imaging a foregone conclusion, Riis’s images preclude
viewer participation and reinterpretation, lending his
photographs the quality of “finality” because of the lack of
disparity, tension, or disagreement between the quite hostile
popular conceptions of (second wave) immigrants and his
equally hostile representation of them. Thus when the viewer
is precluded from reinterpreting or constructing a meaning
beyond that offered within the frame, the subject
photographed (as a signifier) loses its capacity to carry or
point to a meaning (signified), a failure that results in the
production of what Bourdieu calls a “meaningless object”
(94). Although, Bourdieu writes, “the picture of a
meaningless object is refused with [considerable] force,”
when meaningless cannot be refused, when it is represented as
a foregone conclusion, the photograph “provokes” in the
viewer “a feeling of outrage, because abstracting [or
precluding] reinterpretation is seen as a technique of
exclusion and an attempt at mystification, but also and
particularly a gratuitous attack on the thing represented”
(94). Riis, in marking “The Clearing of Mulberry Bend” (the
essay's title) as "the triumph of conscience and common sense" (1895: 172), homogenized and consensualized conceived and perceived space, and crushed lived space in the process: referring to the displaced tenants, he said, "It is not where they shall go, but that they shall not go there at any rate, that is the important thing" (1895: 177).

The "important thing" for Hine was to use photography "to keep the present and future in touch with the past" (qtd. in Trachtenberg 1977: 136). Yet the successful photograph was also for Hine, as was "ultimate poem" for Stevens, abstract: both preclude pre-formulated answers and, instead, pose questions that reverberate but are never quite resolved between what we think and what we see. Stevens expressed this point in the section headings of "Notes toward a Supreme Fiction" ("It must be abstract, it must change, it must give pleasure"), as he does in the "The Ultimate Poem is Abstract":

This day writhes with what? The lecturer
On This Beautiful World Of Ours composes himself
And hems the planet rose and haws it ripe,

And red, and right. The particular question—here
The particular answer to the particular question
Is not in point—the question is in point.

If the day writhes, it is not with revelations.
One goes on asking questions. That, then, is one Of the categories. So said, this placid space

Is changed. It is not so blue as we thought. To be blue,

There must be no questions. It is an intellect Of windings round and dodges to and fro,

Writhings in wrong obliques and distances,
Not an intellect in which we are fleet: present
Everywhere in space at once, cloud-pole

Of communication. It would be enough
If we were ever, just once, at the middle, fixed
In This Beautiful World Of Ours and not as now,

Helplessly at the edge, enough to be
Complete, because at the middle, if only in sense,
And in that enormous sense, merely enjoy.

(CP 429-30)

Hine and (as I will show in the following chapter) Stevens both inhabit a world that is "not so blue as we thought," not so dark as it was made out to be. Although the "placid space" of everyday life "has changed" for both, has become consumed and absorbed into one or another "Of the categories" of experience (conceived or perceived), this fact does not prevent poet or photographer from venturing into the
"windings round and dodges to and fro" of the intellect in search of a point of mediation. While Hine can conceive of mediation in a way that preserves historical continuities, Stevens can only indulge what modernity offers, the expansion of perception into an "enormous sense" and "merely enjoy" the momentary confluence between conceived and perceived space, between "Reality as a thing seen by the mind" (CP 468) and a space where "The objects tingle and the spectator moves/ With the objects" (CP 470).
In the first four chapters of this study, the subject of immigration has surfaced in one form or another to structure and inform the realist text’s representation of space. Immigration and migration, as social phenomena, allow Crane, Howells, Riis, and Hine to explore how individuals might adapt or assimilate to the changed social environment of late-nineteenth and early twentieth-century American culture. One of the most prevalent manifestations of America’s changing cultural and social conditions during this time is reflected in realism’s preoccupation with the process of adapting to change itself. Assimilation, as the individual’s attempt to accommodate one’s daily life to existing social, cultural, and ideological conditions, might well serve as a keynote for realism in one form or another.

Because social environment plays a significant role in the assimilation process, realists pay special attention to how the world appears—how it is perceived, whether one’s perceptions are able to reflect the world as “real,” and whether the world is in fact knowable. For late nineteenth-century progressives, we can say, assimilation is a social phenomenon governed almost entirely by environment, and realism brings that conviction to bear on individual’s attempts to assimilate to a changing urban world in which, as
Cornel West writes of realism’s “basic [philosophical] claims,”
objects, things, states of affairs or the world
exist externally to us and independently of our
sense experience; and . . . these objects, things,
states of affairs or this world, in some
fundamental way, determine what is true, objective
and real. (243)

Crane and Riis exemplified this formula in placing their
subjects, Maggie and the immigrant “other half,” in a world
that is wholly inaccessible to them and that judges them
against established codes of middle-class conduct and belief.
While Howells and Hine take a more optimistic view toward the
subject’s prospects for adjustment to a changing social
fabric, they likewise assume or project an urban reality that
resists one’s attempts to enter it.

Realism, then, appears to embody a contradictory
formulation. For on the one hand, while realists assume that
correspondence between “ideas and objects, words and things”
should be attainable, on the other they discover, in moments
of crisis, that such correspondences are impossible to
attain. Correspondences between individuals and their
environments are as rare in fiction as they are in daily life
because, as West argues, “something other than human social
practice” informs identity and belief under the social
conditions which produced realism. It is the deterministic
social environment of both the realist novel and documentary
realism in general to which, we recall, the human subjects in this study awaken. Human social practice, as Lefebvre helped us establish, is the signal feature of lived space. As such, it not only lacks place and value in realism, but it also comes under direct attack by the same forces that bring it to light. For example, after Pete had awakened unrealistic conceptions of a better life in Maggie, he just as quickly rejected her. She "seemed to have a struggle within herself," the narrator tells us in their last meeting, and as a consequence Maggie lost both her sense of place and identity in the Bowery.

She was apparently bewildered and could not find speech. Finally she asked in a low voice: "But where kin I go?"

"Oh, go teh hell," cried he. He slammed the door furiously and returned, with an air of relief, to his respectability.

Maggie went away.

She wandered aimlessly for several blocks.

She stopped once and asked aloud a question of herself: "Who?" (50)

Maggie cannot "find speech" because "ideas and objects, words and things," as West's definition of realism suggests, no longer correspond to one another. And with that lack of correspondence, lived experience becomes, predictably in realism, an expendable commodity: Maggie drowns herself.
Isabel March, finding the idea of poverty intolerable, flees to Boston; the German socialist Lindau suffers an accidental execution in practicing his "principles"; and Mulberry Bend went "by the way" because its social practice contradicted the middle-class ideology of urban American life. In each case of these classically realist texts, perceptions are the engine driving the subject’s inability to assimilate to an established, chiefly middle-class vision of social life. When perceptions do not correspond to an established and institutionally sanctioned conceived space, the realist text, as Elizabeth Ermarth helped us see, forces a consensus among all possible views in which visual perceptions come to govern and provide the answers to such questions as "Where kin I go?" and "Who?"

Realism established the fact that an individual’s perceptions play a significant role, and perhaps a more significant role than environment itself, in gaining a sense of place and identity in society. This is also the conclusion reached by Lewis Hine who, in employing the principles of realism, worked to change the common perception of immigrants as a way to improve their prospects for assimilation to American culture. Although Hine’s work, like that of Crane, Howells, and Riis analyzed here, attempts to establish a correspondence between social environment and ideas about subjects within particular environments, we can note a new principle at work within the typology of realism. For apparently the first time with the work of Hine, the
subject, as "realistically" represented, has no basis in and
does not refer to existing social relations. Rather than
link southern and eastern European immigrants, as did Riis
and Howells, to the well-established sub-human living
conditions of the slum, Hine created a new space for his
subjects, representing them as future participants in the
making of the idea of America.

The difference between Hine's realism and that of Crane,
Howells, and Riis, then, is a difference in that to which
perceptions and, by association representations, refer. We
can readily see this difference in the fact that Hine's
photographs have no clear, identifiable antecedents: that
southern and eastern Europeans could be an asset, rather than
a liability, to American culture and society had no precedent
in the nation's social history. This lack of easy
correspondence between image and idea, sign and referent, is
the guiding condition of realism, and Hine brought forward
that condition in ways that foreshadow the emergence of
modernism. Hine, as both post-realist and proto-modernist,
places the burden of reconciling thoughts and things, ideas
and objects, on the viewer. This is a practice that provided
not only for what Trachtenberg called Hine's "participatory
viewing" but also advances ideas as the common currency of
lived space, a space whose currency is social discourse and
interaction.

To state the distinction I am identifying within realism
in the simplest possible terms, we can say that all forms of
realism attempt to secure a link between objects and ideas, perceptions and conceptions; and where classical or "high" realism refers objects and perceptions to pre-existing ideas, "later" realism like that of Hine refers perceptions to new ideas, to ideas that have not yet gained currency in society. Hine's innovation of realism, then, lies in the new way correspondences between images and ideas come about, not in perceived space but in conceived space. By deferring meaning to the open-ended search for, rather than the forced homogenization of, differences between perceptions and conceptions, Hine adapts realism's method of critiquing social relations in ways that inform modernism's critique and representation of social space—its critique of perceptions, of conceptions, and of the discursive intertext between these by which language and representations function. Thus what Clement Greenberg identifies as modernism's founding principle, its "self-critical tendency," can be considered an early mark of modernism in Hine, since his photographs, as we saw, critique both social relations (classically the subject matter of realism) and the referential function of language (classically the subject matter of modernism). Modernism, as this chapter argues, critiques realism's discovery that perceptions govern ideas (whereby image becomes idea and part stands for whole) and brings that discovery to bear on the social conditions of twentieth-century modernity, conditions under which any positive correspondence between ideas and objects, words and things, is a fiction.
For Wallace Stevens, any such correspondences were necessary fictions, and it is through the "supreme fiction" of a poetry of ideas, a poetics of conceived space, that Stevens as a modernist finds a way for social space to cohere. Stevens discovers the ineluctable condition of realism, the fact, as Friedrich Nietzsche claims, that "truth" is nothing more than

A movable host of metaphors, metonymies, and anthropomorphisms: in short, a sum of human relations which have been poetically and rhetorically intensified, transferred, and embellished, and which, after long usage, seem to a people to be fixed, canonical, and binding. Truths are illusions which we have forgotten are illusions; they are metaphors that have become worn out and have been drained of sensuous force. . . .

(1979: 84)

Stevens brings this condition to bear on perception to found a modernist poetics in which "nothing solid is its solid self" (CP 345). It was nineteenth-century positivism in general, and the practice of realism in particular, that helped convince Stevens that, as he wrote in "Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction," "we live in a place/ That is not our own and, much more, not ourselves" (CP 383). For to a realist, as we saw, the world is "not our own" because perception encompasses only objects and not ideas, only an indifferent and positivistically perceived environment which, above all
else, as Crane wrote, “shapes life regardless” (1960: 14). For Stevens, perceptions are likewise a “tremendous thing in the world,” yet they are things that never quite match up with what he at times called “the actual world.” “It is a world of words to the end of it,” wrote Stevens (CP 345), a “Theatre/ Of Trope” (CP 397), an invented world in which what we think is never stable but always the product of decayed and decaying perceptions.

Acknowledging this most ineluctable condition of realist perception, Stevens discovered a way to make what we think more closely correspond to and reflect what we see as our immediate environment by “perceiving the idea,” by making thoughts rather than things the object of our perceptions. Since realism established that perceptions, even if imperfectly, flow into and inform ideas, Stevens shows us that if we are to change ideas, we must first change the nature of what and how we perceive. In his most famous long poem about his theory of poetry, Stevens explicitly states the criteria by which a poetry of ideas might emerge from the conditions out of which realism established the philosophical nature of perception. The three canto headings of “Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction,” “it must be abstract; it must change; it must give pleasure,” provide a tripartite formula for acknowledging the ineluctable condition of realism (abstraction), the first principle of twentieth-century modernity (change), and the product of our newly awakened understanding that the world is a supreme fiction, a
constructed reflection of ourselves that is, indeed, dependent on us, on our changing sense perceptions and our abstract mental figurations (pleasure).

This chapter offers evidence of a continuity between realism and modernism that can be identified in how each mode of representation achieves correspondence between images and ideas, actions and thoughts, perceptions and conceptions. While it is quite clear that realism is predicated on the necessity of perceiving things rather than thoughts, the fact remains that, under the conditions of realism, perceptions lead ineluctably to a breakdown in the conceptual order of things. Whether perceptions of, say, immigrants calls up in the viewer ideas that are already ideologically rooted, as Maggie, the Marches, and Riis's viewers discovered, or whether perceptions point to new ideas, as Hine's work helps us to do, the fact remains that there is no such thing as a fixed perceptual field and an autonomous conceived space. Despite this fact, realists classically assume that perceptions are things in themselves and that language functions metonymically. In other words, realism is predicated on an untruth, the mistaken belief that representations can and do render reliable information about the world, since the viewing and narrating consciousness informing realism purges all that is unknown, abstract, and conceptual from a representation. This faith in the possibility of purely perceptual experiences led, as we saw, to the belief that the world is immanently knowable and that,
even though the subject is excluded from that knowledge, the very fact that the world is an unknowable thing is a guarantee that it is "real." A late realist like Hine and a high modernist like Stevens both discovered what realism implicitly established but could not openly acknowledge, that our perceptions (and the vehicles of perceptions, human vision and language) function in a suggestive, metaphoric way and describe only a half-truth, a partial and incomplete knowledge of the world to which the viewer and reader add the finishing touches in the imagination, in conceived space.

Nietzsche characterizes the ethos of realism in a quite suggestive way, one that enables me to claim that the birth of modernism emerged from the spirit of realism. Nietzsche conducts a critique of the most perplexing phenomenon of his day, the source of the "drive for truth" that seeks to know the "essence of things" with tools that are continually destroying the essences it seeks. Commenting on his own European contemporaries, Nietzsche adumbrates the ethos of realism when he writes that

As a rational being, he [the positivist] places his behavior under the control of abstractions. He will no longer tolerate being carried away by sudden impressions, by intuitions. First he universalizes all these impressions into less colorful, cooler concepts, so that he can entrust the guidance of his life and conduct to them. Everything which distinguishes man from the animals
depends upon this ability to volatize perceptual metaphors in a schema, and thus to dissolve an image into a concept. (1979: 84)

Realists consistently, as we saw, place "behavior under the control of abstractions" because thoughts and "intuitions" do not correspond with the seen world. What I am calling the spirit of realism, then, is its practice of "volatizing," of collapsing perceptions (which Nietzsche quite suggestively terms "perceptual metaphors") into a schema, a conceptual/ideological structure that provides an order by which objects and ideas can be rendered meaningful. The realist, we can also say, similarly attempts to adjust "life and conduct" to what is perceived; yet because images continuously dissolve into concepts, no solid foundation for "life and conduct" can be ever be established. Stevens, as a modernist, founds his poetics on the volatile nature of perception, on the fact that perceptions quite fortunately do decay into concepts, into the fictional space of the imagination, where change can be the source of pleasure rather than the cause of crisis.

It is the conceived space of "schema" and ideas, both Nietzsche and Stevens believe, and ultimately not the world of perceived objects, in which lived experience, our sense of "life and conduct," is rooted. Thus modernism can be seen as an outgrowth of realism through its practice of seeking, as Ermarth says realism seeks, a "buried affinity" between the partial information provided by sense perceptions and the
deeper-rooted, more autonomous and ordered realm of concepts. “Form and position,” writes Ermarth, referring to perceived space,

are relative in realism, not absolute, so that invariant identity [or conceptual structure] of anything cannot be discovered at once, but only eventually, through a series where similitudes or recurrent elements can be distinguished among the differences. (16)

In putting this principle in which the iterative correspondence of particulars leads to universals, realists discovered, as Ermarth continues, that

The details that formerly were understood as discrete cases now came to be understood as partial expressions of hidden wholes: wholes, or identities, which are independent of any form of visual apprehension or, as in the novel, of apprehension by a single consciousness in a single moment. (16)

A modernist like Stevens, as I show, draws on just such a formula for making correspondences cohere between things and ideas. Stevens acknowledges, more openly than Crane, Howells, and Riis, the partial nature of perception (particularly of visual perception) and posits, as does Hine, meaning in the abstract space of unarticulated ideas.

Like his high realist predecessors, Stevens understands that objects have what Ermarth calls “an invariant structure
that does not change with position" (21); however, like Hine, Stevens believes that changes in position (and thus changes in perceived space) lead to changes in what we think (conceived space), and that this condition is what prevents objects from ever being fully apprehended by an observer. Stevens works within this realization, what he calls "later reason" in "Notes toward a Supreme Fiction," to found a modernist poetics. He thus appears more closely aligned to the ethos of realism even while he distances himself from its practice of homogenizing space. Stevens's poetry demonstrates an accommodation of what realism discovered, the fact that, as Ermarth writes,

No single expression of identity can ever be more than partial, and it cannot be interpreted except by comparison with other similar expressions. What can be seen is always an aspect, what is essentially there has receded to an abstract realm of conceptualization that we might call depth and that is inaccessible to direct experience at the same time as it entirely informs it. (24)

As evidence of Stevens's tie to realism, and as a demonstration of his belief that an "expression of identity" (a perception) can never be more than partial, we must look for his acknowledgment of the conditions of realism—the desired but impossible correspondence between conceptions and perceptions, ideas and things—in his poetry.
Stevens provides such evidence of that acknowledgment in a late poem titled “What We See is What We Think.” In this poem, Stevens openly acknowledges the nature of perception under realism, the fact that there should be a correspondence between what we see and what we think. However, as the poem demonstrates, and as realism could not abide, that correspondence can only be fictitiously achieved in the conceived space of the imagination.

WHAT WE SEE IS WHAT WE THINK

At twelve, the disintegration of afternoon
Began, the return to phantomerei, if not
To phantoms. Till then, it had been the other way:

One imagined the violet trees but the trees stood green,
At twelve, as green as ever they would be.
The sky was blue beyond the vaultiest phrase.

Twelve meant as much as: the end of normal time,
Straight up, an élan without harrowing,
The imprescriptible zenith, free of harangue,

Twelve and the first gray second after, a kind
Of violet gray, a green violet, a thread
To weave a shadow’s leg or sleeve, a scrawl
On the pedestal, an ambitious page dog-eared
At the upper right, a pyramid with one side
Like a spectral cut in its perception, a tilt
And its tawny caricature and tawny life,
Another thought, the paramount ado . . .
Since what we think is never what we see.

As the first stanza describes the conditions of realist vision, one has a perception and then, as the perception disintegrates, so do thoughts, leaving them mere apparitions, "phantoms" of an afterimage. Before realism established the ineluctable modality of the visual, however, "it had been the other way" around, that is, a discontinuity was always present between the way "One imagined" things to look and how they actually "stood" in the world. Thus the poem begins with an acknowledgment of the conditions under which realism equates what we see and what we think; it concludes, however, not by contradicting that principle but by demonstrating that it is rooted in conceived space. Correspondence, in other words, is merely an expectation, an "idea of order" (CP 128), that we project onto experience to make the world knowable. Stevens thus identifies what we see as only partial, only a "spectral cut . . . in perception," that serves as a merely crude "caricature" or outline of "the paramount ado," the vast and changing disorder we know as experience.
This disorder, which realism articulated but could not abide or acknowledge, manifests itself in the fact that, as the first stanza claims, perceptions decay into thoughts that have little or no relation to things perceived. Rather than deny or work against this most ineluctable condition of perception, and rather than reconcile ideas back to things, Stevens turns this principle “the other way” around, posits ideas as things themselves. By openly acknowledging that we have thoughts that do not match up with their referents, Stevens creates a space for thoughts to exist as a thing apart, independent of the “harangue” of speech and the “phantomerei” of visual perception. It is in this way, by elevating thoughts to the status of perceptions, that this and other poems provide new perceptions and new ways of conceiving objects in space. Yet the space in which Stevens anchors objects is only provisionally tied to the visual world of perceptions.

Stevens here takes note of realism’s principle contribution to our visual knowledge, the ineluctable modality of perceived space (what we see) in presiding over conceived space (what we think), and redefines the order of perceived space. In Stevens’s poetics, as realism established, perceptions never match conceptions because the former are always in a state of change, always decaying into and misinforming what we think. While Stevens acknowledges what realism discovered but could not abide, the fact that “what we think is never what we see,” he builds on that
condition as a way to achieve what, as Amy Kaplan notes, eluded realists: the sense of "solidity" and "weightiness" that the world-as-represented inherently lacks. Stevens achieves this solidity, as he says in "Notes toward a Supreme Fiction," by "perceiving the idea," by making ideas rather than things the object of perceptions. Essentially changing the view from perceived to conceived space, Stevens's poetry frees representation from its dependence on viewed objects. As a consequence, he builds a language of social environment that has as its index not visual but spatial perception. Accepting the principle (established by realism) on which human perception functions, Stevens takes the ineluctable modality of the visual as a point of departure rather than a point of arrival, offering the perception of ideas as the most rooted foundation of experience.

I. Why "It Must Be Abstract": Realism and the Ineluctable Modality of Perceived Space

My reading of Stevens in the context of realism finds him engaging its philosophical and representational discourse, adapting realism's mode of representing objects as a way to produce a space for ideas, to elevate ideas to the status of objects in ways that form and inform our awareness of social space. As a way to "learn the speech of the place," the spatial discourse of realism, and to "face the men of the time and . . . meet/ The women of the time" (CP 240), Stevens begins many of his poems with an assessment of
how realists perceive and represent social space. Stevens was well aware of the fact that, late in his career, many readers considered him a rehabilitated Romantic, a view that he explicitly addressed in his most famous poem on the theory of poetry, "Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction":

The romantic intoning, the declaimed clairvoyance
Are parts of apotheosis, appropriate
And of its nature, the idiom thereof.

They differ from reason's click-clack, its applied
Enflashings. But apotheosis is not
The origin of the major man. He comes,

Compact in invincible foils, from reason,
Lighted at midnight by the studious eye,
Swaddled in revery, the object of

The hum of thoughts evaded in the mind,
Hidden from other thoughts, he that reposes
On a breast forever precious for that touch. . . .

(Stevens, "Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction", 387-388)

Stevens, as "major man," does not seek the "declaimed clairvoyance," the infinite perspective of a Whitman who, in his knowledge of the cosmos, nonetheless cannot generate poetic discourse without the aid of perceived objects. Rather than attempt to probe space to its furthest extremes, Stevens adapts the "studious eye" of the reasoning realist,
using it to critique the limits of perception itself. This particular critique of realism offered by Stevens is directed, as we will see, toward increasing the subject's agency in assimilating to a changed and changing environment. As a rehabilitated realist, Stevens adapts the tools of realism, the ineluctable modality of the reasoning eye, but adds the condition that such an eye and reason alike be "Swaddled in revery," in the conceived space of "thoughts evaded."

Stevens has principally been canonized within a romantic heritage that reaches looks to Emerson and Whitman in America and to Wordsworth, Shelley, Keats, and Coleridge in England. It is not my intention to dismantle what has become the institutionalization of Stevens in this tradition. Nor is it my intent to study Stevens within the aesthetic framework of modernism. Such attempts either to romanticize Stevens or to align him with modernist art fail to acknowledge the importance of social environment in Stevens and, in doing so, overlook his major contribution to our understanding and practice of social space. The reason Stevens has not been examined in this context, I believe, is because Harold Bloom, Helen Vendler, and others, in an overdetermined effort to historicize him, pass over the more immediate framework within which Stevens matured as a poet: late nineteenth-century realism.

Stevens in fact openly acknowledged what Crane's Maggie established 20 years earlier, "the theory," Stevens wrote,
that people are affected by what is around them. This is an old idea, insofar as it relates to environment in a general sense. But the idea is just as valid if applied to the minutiae of one’s surroundings. Take, for example, (instead of a mountain or of a morgue), a single candle. If this is true of a single candle, then it is possible to trace variations of effect by varying the number of candles. It is largely a matter of association of ideas. (Letters 210 n4)

If it is true, in other words, that “people are affected” by the “number of candles” in a room, it is because people are affected by the awareness of space that lighted candles produce. The above comment from Stevens’s Letters is in reference to his 1917 play, Carlos Among the Candles. The first lines of this one-scene, one-character play, spoken by Carlos, present space in a new way, as something that is both visually and conceptually perceivable:

How the solitude of this candle penetrates me! I light a candle in the darkness. It fills the darkness with solitude, which becomes my own. I become a part of the solitude of the candle . . . of the darkness flowing over the house and into it . . . This room . . . and the profound room outside . . . (Stevens’s ellipses; Opus Posthumous49 163)

The perception of the candle "penetrates" this character to the point that he perceives the candle as an idea, as
"solitude" and as "mood." Through the lighting and extinguishing of 24 candles, the play explores the interrelationship between thoughts and objects and shows how objects perceived "in a general sense" take their place in ideas, in spatially defined social environments that change as the number of perceived objects changes. The "general sense" of space as "what is around" one, then, on closer inspection, is composed of the permutation of visual and nonvisual elements, an exchange that, in effect, grounds the subject in multiple positions in space.

Contemporary visual artists were exploring, alongside Stevens, the nature and appearance of objects in space, worked in to overcome the limitations of the observer's fixed position in space. Once this fixed position, which realism helped institutionalize, was subjected to critique by visual artists, what Lefebvre calls the "history of space" as a concept emerged. It was the "Bauhaus people," he writes, who first understood that things could not be created independently of each other in space . . . without taking into account their interrelationships and their relationships to the whole. It was impossible simply to accumulate them as a mass, aggregate of collection of items. (1991: 124)

This group of early twentieth-century painters, architects, and sculptors realized that the fixed position of the observer in space privileged the façade at the expense of
other, unseen surfaces. The limitation of such a mode of representation is not only that, as Ermarth established, one view becomes the index for all other possible views, but that the view itself is one that cannot be shared and is valid for only one observer in one place at one time.

Stevens, like his contemporaries working in the visual arts, realized that, as Lefebvre writes of Paul Klee, “an observer could move around any object in social space... and in so doing go beyond scrutinizing or studying it under a single or special aspect. Space [thus] opened up to perception, to conceptualization, just as it did to practical action” (1991: 125). As a way to test this theory in a spatial context, Stevens wrote a short Harmonium poem about a jar in a landscape to see how a perceived object might simultaneously decay and develop into something other than itself, might become transformed from a thing into an idea, from a passively perceived object to active agency in space.

ANECDOTE OF THE JAR

I placed a jar in Tennessee,
And round it was, upon a hill.
It made the slovenly wilderness
Surround that hill.

The wilderness rose up to it,
And sprawled around, no longer wild.
The jar was round upon the ground
And tall and of a port in air.
It took dominion everywhere.
The jar was gray and bare.
It did not give of bird or bush,
Like nothing else in Tennessee.

As an anecdote, the poem tells the story of the jar, its placement in and ultimate "dominion everywhere" in space to make a larger point: the fact that perceived objects introduce invariant structures by which ideas are created. As an object, the jar produces an impression on the landscape; as an idea, however, it changes space, making the "slovenly wilderness" pleasurable to perceive because that space now corresponds to that of the jar, "tall, and of a port in air." As that "slovenly wilderness" becomes ordered and rises up to "surround" the jar as something other than itself, it loses its original (perceived) qualities and becomes a space that has attained a conceptual value, a space ordered and "no longer wild." The jar also consumes space, however, and as the jar draws the landscape into it, sucking up space as a black hole, a new space is produced—abstract space—"Like nothing else in Tennessee." Abstraction permits an equivalence to emerge, a spatial intertext, between the perception and conception of objects in space, and it is in this new space of juxtaposed abstractions that the jar (like the candles in Stevens's play) raises the subject's awareness of space by changing the perception of space into an idea, by
making the idea of the jar, as well as the jar's image, the subject of perception.

Stevens draws on the abstract nature of visual perception that realism established, the fact that objects decay into ideas and thus are different orders of one's perceived social environment, and shows that these two opposed orders are indeed different from yet continuous with one another. Thus abstraction, as the process of transporting qualities associated with one object or action to other objects and actions, in Stevens becomes as two sides of the same coin—each separate yet a vital part of the whole. Yet once abstraction can be acknowledged as a necessary condition of visual perception, as Stevens acknowledges it, the realist's practice of homogenizing social space into what is visually perceived no longer has currency. Stevens avoids this most disabling characteristic of realism, its tendency (even necessity) to homogenize social space, by grounding his poetics in what Lefebvre considers "One of the most glaring paradoxes about abstract space": the fact that it can be at once the whole set of locations where contradictions are generated, the medium in which those contradictions evolve and which they tear apart, and, lastly, the means whereby they are smothered and replaced by an appearance of consistency. (1991: 363)
If we understand abstract space as simultaneously a space of incongruity, of reformation, and of resolution, we can see that "Anecdote of the Jar" presents perceived space as only one of "a whole set of locations" where what appears as a spatial contest between jar and landscape takes place. From the jar's physical placement on the hill, an aura extends that, much like a lighted candle, articulates space in three ways: as a perception, as a conception, and as a lived environment. From its fixed geographical position in space, the jar orders the landscape in an abstract way, using its qualities (roundness, tallness) to impose a new perceptual order onto the hill. Out of this perceptual order, the jar produces a conceived space of "dominion," a space that can appear pleasurable because the jar has introduced an abstract order into its environment and has changed the contours of space to reflect its own (foreign) shape. Thus the poem's juxtaposition of perceived, conceived, and lived space represents what Lefebvre calls "the seeds of a new space," the idea of social environment as a simultaneous visual, cognitive, and tactile experience.

As I pointed out above, Stevens recognizes the tripartite qualities of social space, its conceived, perceived, and lived spheres, in the three canto headings of "Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction": "It must be abstract"; "It must change"; "It must give pleasure." The coextensive presence of abstraction, change, and pleasure comes about, as
the first lines of this poem claim, if one can acknowledge abstraction as the precondition of perception:

Begin, ephebe, by perceiving the idea
Of this invention, this invented world,
The inconceivable idea of the sun. (CP 380)

Stevens here claims that what we know as the world through our perceptions is really our own "invention," a conception that we experience as received but which we in fact construct, as do realists, on the basis of perceptions. Although realism draws heavily on visual perceptions to represent social reality, the space it produces is nonetheless abstract. Social space appears abstract in realism because ideas are displaced and rendered insubstantial by perceptions and because such ideas as "human social values," as West pointed out above, have little or no place in realism. Stevens accepts this condition, the abstract nature of perception and the abstract space it produces, and creates a sphere of "human social values" by perceiving the displaced source of those values: ideas.

It would be "inconceivable" for realists to perceive something as insubstantial as the "idea of the sun," or to see the world "as invented," since realism perceives only objects. Stevens suggests that ideas can be equally as tangible (and representable) as objects once one's environment is considered as "invented" or produced by individual perceptions rather than passively received by pre-formatted conceptions. Perceiving the idea of the sun or of
any other object, in other words, is to perceive the agency of the self producing space and creating itself in space. This becomes a pleasurable experience for Stevens because, even if provisionally, we experience a correspondence between a changing sense of self in a changing social environment.

As a poet not so much discovering as rehabilitating social space, Stevens offers a substantial revision of realism’s faith in the ineluctable modality of perceived space by conducting an extended critique of realism’s mode of representing space. The first step toward that critique is a full accounting of how the subject perceives space under the conditions of realism. It is thus significant that the first poem in Stevens’s first volume of poetry, *Harmonium* (1923) addresses the ineluctable modality of perceived space and creates a point of departure for the volume’s analysis of space as a whole.

**EARTHY ANECDOTE**

Every time the bucks went clattering
Over Oklahoma
A firecat bristled in the way.

Wherever they went,
They went clattering,
Until they swerved
In a swift, circular line
To the right,
Because of the firecat.

Or until they swerved
In a swift, circular line
To the left,
Because of the firecat.

The bucks clattered.
The firecat went leaping,
To the right, to the left,
And
Bristled in the way.

Later, the firecat closed his bright eyes
And slept.

"Earthy Anecdote" sets the stage for what Joseph Riddel calls Harmonium's "examinations of the expenses of living in a physical world" (69). In particular, the poem explores one of the most costly of those expenses, the spatial prison into which the ineluctable modality of the visual leads. For Stevens as a poet, the physical world is predominantly visual, and the visual world, as realism established, serves as both the foundation and frame of consensual knowledge. The above poem thus does not so much critique space as it attempts an unbiased and "realistic" assessment of it. As the poem's conjunctions string together repeating events, and
as the poem's end leads back to its beginning, a consensus of social space, pleasing to the eye and ear, cloaks an antagonistic social relationship in lived space. The antagonistic relationship between firecat and bucks, as it occurs in nature, is not exceptional; yet "Nature," as Riddel points out, referring to the "physical" world in Harmonium, "is not reality, but an aspect of reality" (69). The bucks and firecat, as creatures of nature, partake of that one "aspect of reality" they are best equipped to know, its sensuous manifestations, and compile experiences in endlessly repeating patterns of pursuit and avoidance.

Perception in this manner, in fact, served a quite useful function from the beginnings of modernity through the mid-nineteenth century. As Eagleton writes of post-Enlightenment attempts to transcend positivism,

> When science contemplates the world, what it knows is an impersonal space of causes and processes quite independent of the subject, and so alarmingly indifferent to value. But the fact that we can know the world at all . . . must surely entail some fundamental harmony between ourselves and it. For there to be knowledge in the first place, our faculties must be somehow marvelously adjusted to material reality. . . . (65)

While realists achieved that "fundamental harmony" by adjusting our cognitive faculties to the world as visually perceived, modernists "adjust" the visual world to cognitive
space. The fact that a "fundamental harmony" cannot be visually achieved is evidence in itself that our faculties are working correctly and are "marvelously adjusted" to the unknowable nature of "material reality." It is for this reason that "Earthy Anecdote"'s discourse resembles journalistic reportage; and in using a documentary language to describe a socio-spatial experience, Stevens suggests that the viewer is in effect being deceived as to the actual nature of space, how bodies move in and appear in space. "We are the mimics," writes Stevens in Canto 1 of "Notes."

Clouds are pedagogues
The air is not a mirror but bare board,
Coulisse bright-dark, tragic chiaroscuro
And comic color of the rose, in which
Abysmal instruments make sounds like pips
Of the sweeping meanings that we add to them.

(CP 384)
The documentary language of the poem attempts to mimic the scene, yet even its highly formal mode of discourse cannot prevent the perception from taking on some "sweeping meanings," suggested by the "swift, circular line[s]," we add as image becomes idea.

Stevens, in his assessment and critique of the stable foundation on which realism built its knowledge of self and environment, discovers that foundation to be nothing more than a decaying edifice under the conditions of twentieth-
century modernity. Stevens defined the most relevant of those conditions in relation to realism and modernism in a 1951 lecture titled "A Collect of Philosophy."

The material world, for all the assurances of the eye, has become immaterial. It has become an image in the mind. . . . What we see is not an external world but an image of it and hence an internal world. (QP 272)

Since we in fact live in a world in which "nothing solid is its solid self" (CP 345) and in which "There is so little that is close and warm" (CP 338), Stevens's assessment and critique of realism is founded on his belief that the visual perception of objects is only

As a part, but part, but tenacious particle,
Of the skeleton of the ether, the total
Of letters, prophecies, perceptions, clods
Of color, the giant of nothingness, each one
And the giant ever changing, living in change.

(CP 443)

Human sense perception is that part of our total experience to which we hold fast but, because we live in an "ever changing" space of "letters, prophecies, perceptions," we are mere "giant[s] of nothingness," masters of ephemera. These most "tenacious particle[s]" of perception to which we (and our perceptions) cling (as flesh clings to a "skeleton") are in effect nothing more substantial than the air itself.
This is a condition, the ineluctable necessity of change, that realists could not abide in their documentary fictions because visual perceptions wholly inform one’s identity and sense of place. Visual description, as Amy Kaplan has noted, prevails as the hallmark of realism because it helped writers to “pin down the objects of an unfamiliar world to make it real” (9). For Stevens, the world is forever an unfamiliar place and cannot be made “real” in the way realists sought to make it real because it and our perceptions are “ever changing, living in change.” Thus the acknowledgment of the fact that “it must change” represents an important departure on Stevens’s part from the ethos and practice of realism. As Stevens expresses this acknowledgment in “Notes,” we live in a world in which what we perceive as

the constant

Violets, doves, girls, bees and hyacinths
Are inconstant objects of inconstant cause
In a universe of inconstancy. (CP 389)

Perception, in other words, is nothing more than the process of continually attempting to mediate between evaporating perceptions and solidifying conceptions. Thus perceived and conceived space, like

Two things of opposite natures seem to depend
On one another, as a man depends
On a woman, day on night, the imagined
On the real. This is the origin of change.

(CE 392)

Out of realism’s intolerance for change, Stevens establishes the first principle of modernism: the fact that what we think (conceived space), what we see (perceived space), and what is (lived space) compose a spatial continuum that can only be represented in continuous states of change. By perceiving the idea of space as a field of change rather than as a container for objects, Stevens discovered a way out of the spatial prison “Earthy Anecdote” presents. With the evidence so clearly before him that “the spirit sees and is aggrieved” (CP 108), Stevens turned away from the exclusively visual mode of apprehending social reality realism practiced and, in turning away from the fixed definition of truth it defines, probed beneath its uniform facade to discover a lived space, a “spaciousness and light/ In which the body walks” (CP 108).

II. The First Principle of Modernism: “It Must Change”

“Earthy Anecdote,” as I pointed out above, represents social space in a way that is clearly inadequate for Stevens’s poetics. For Stevens, social space is not a representable entity but a dynamic field of perceived abstractions, lived changes, and pleasurable correspondences between objects and ideas, words and things. Social space, in other words, is the “supreme fiction” of seeing our social
reality as such, an invented reflection of ourselves. Abstraction, change, and pleasure are not qualities of social space as represented in "Earthy Anecdote" because visual perception has become the blueprint, a stimulus that generates a singular response, for all thought and action. Stevens returns to this idea in "Notes" and characterizes what we can consider the realist's mode of representing social reality by attempting to reconcile perceptions to an ever-changing social space:

He imposes order as he thinks of them,
As the fox and snake do. It is a brave affair.
Next he builds capitols and in their corridors,

Whiter than wax, sonorous, fame as it is,
He establishes statues of reasonable men,
Who surpassed the most literate owl, the most erudite

Of elephants. But to impose is not
To discover. To discover an order as of
A season, to discover summer and know it,

To discover winter and know it well, to find,
Not to impose, not to have reasoned at all,
Out of nothing to have come on major weather,

It is possible, possible, possible. It must
Be possible. It must be that in time
The real will from its crude compoundings come... 

(CP 403-404)

The realists in this study might be heard to cry a collective "It must be possible" but, lacking a mechanism by which any correspondence between perceptions, thoughts, and actions could be realized, they can only compose order on the basis of what is perceived. Such rational thinkers look to the evidence of rational thought, the "statues of reasonable men," in the hope that, out of these "crude compoundings" some revelation of the truth, something real, will emerge. To discover order, on the other hand, is to define the possible as that which does not yet exist, to entertain the possibility of finding what is not always already given in representations.

It is at this point that we can note a second important correlation between Stevens and Nietzsche on the subject of how the representation of space informs both realism and modernism. Nietzsche identifies, in the process whereby realism imposes order and then claims it as a discovery, the same rational method at work that brought us the coincident triumph of "Socratic man" and the end of Greek Tragedy:

As a genius of construction man raises himself far above the bee in the following way: whereas the bee builds with wax that he gathers from nature, man builds with the far more delicate conceptual
material which he first has to manufacture from
himself. . . . When someone hides something behind
a bush and looks for it again in the same place and
finds it there as well, there is not much praise in
such seeking and finding. (1979: 85)

Stevens acknowledged, in a way a realist could not, the
inescapable necessity of constructing one’s sense of identity
and place with the “far more delicate conceptual material” of
our ideas, that which we ourselves manufacture. Because, in
other words, we are not only self-made individuals but
inhabit a self-made social environment, the idea that
multiple realities are possible—and indeed necessary to
comprehend without homogenizing social space—appears as a
first principle of modernism. This principle is dependent on
change for its execution, and relies on a lowering of the
(predominantly visual) threshold of perceptions. What must
be sought and discovered, in Stevens’s poetry, is that which
is neither given nor imposed but rather a discursive
intertext between thoughts and things, evidence of an ever-
changing alternation between what Nietzsche in *The Birth of
Tragedy* called visual (Apollonian) and musical (Dionysiac)
forces.

Change, we can now see, is the precondition of the first
principle of multiple realities in modernism. In such a
social reality, objects are not fixed and thoughts are
continually becoming something other than they were. “Why
should a poem," asked Stevens in a 1951 Mount Holyoke lecture,
not change in sense when there is a fluctuation of the whole of appearance? Or why should it not change when we realize that the indifferent experience of life is the unique experience, the item of ecstasy which we have been isolating and reserving for another time and place, loftier and more secluded. (QE 265)

A poetry that is continually adjusting itself to appearance rather than reality, in other words, must resist final conclusions as a self-preservative. For once a perception reveals a final truth, both perceptions and truths become homogenous and no longer carry meaning, a condition that leads to an immobilizing relativism. The following idea is what we might call the supreme fiction of Stevens's poetry: the possibility that the world most distant, the world of decayed and decaying perceptions, might actually be the one we are best fitted to see, comprehend, experience, and act within. It is in this way and for this reason that Stevens adapted the spirit of realism to his own poetics: to turn what was the ineluctable and immobilizing condition of change in realism into a method for achieving what he calls the "revelation of reality" (QE 265). "The most provocative of all realities," says Stevens in the 1951 address titled "Two or Three Ideas,"
is that reality of which we never lose sight of but never see solely as it is. The revelation of that particular reality or of that particular category of realities is like a series of paintings of some natural object affected, as the appearance of any natural object is affected, by the passage of time, and the changes that ensue, not least in the painter. (OP 265)

That "most provocative of all realities" is the one constantly before us in perceived space. Yet it is only a "particle," we recall, of the vast "category of realities" that are in effect unknowable. What we do know appears to us as uniform because, as Ermarth pointed out in realism and as Stevens here confirms, the "invariant identity of anything cannot be discovered at once, but only eventually, through a series where similitudes or recurrent elements can be distinguished among the differences" (Ermarth 16). The fact that the "invariant identity" of a thing can only be discovered through the juxtaposition of conceived, perceived, and lived space corresponds here to what Stevens calls the "revelation of reality" that comes about through the juxtaposition of abstraction, change, and pleasure. Thus correspondence comes about in modernism through a permutation or palimpsest of all possible views, "like a series of paintings of some natural object [as] affected," as Stevens wrote, by temporal and spatial change themselves.
As the first principle of Steven’s modernism, change appears central to what he calls the “essential poem at the centre of things” in “A Primitive Like an Orb.” This is a poem in which Stevens characterizes, in a more direct way than he does in “Notes,” the necessarily ephemeral nature of perceptions. Because perceptions are decayed and continuously decaying things, we live with the sense that “There is so little that is close and warm” (CP 338); and while “The physical world is meaningless tonight,” it remains difficult for us to escape the conclusion that “there is no other” (CP 337). For Stevens, the physical world is not meaningless in itself but made meaningless by the attempt to fix and study it in representations. The insubstantiality of the physical world of objects, then, becomes for Stevens an enabling (rather than disabling) quality of social space and serves as evidence that modernist poetry and daily life in the twentieth century share the only acknowledged quality of social space, change.

The first change that Stevens introduces in “A Primitive Like an Orb” is a change in the status of poetic conceptions. In the poem’s first stanza, Stevens claims for poetry the same ineluctable capacity to direct our lives that realism gave to visual perceptions. Poems, writes Stevens, as

The arias that spiritual fiddlings make,
Have gorged the cast-iron of our lives with good
And the cast-iron of our works. (CP 440)
In other words, while realism is based on the beliefs and practice that the "cast-iron" of our lives, the perceived object, has "gorged our lives" with something less than "good," Stevens brings the principle underlying this belief to the conceived space out of which poetic conceptions arise. It is a difficult intellectual maneuver, Stevens acknowledges in the next line, to assume that something as insubstantial as "spiritual fiddlings" can affect, much less "gorge," our daily lives.

But it is, dear sirs,

A difficult apperception, this gorging good,

Fetched by such slick-eyed nymphs, this essential gold,

This fortune's finding, disposed and re-disposed

By such slight genii in such pale air. (CP 440)

To apperceive, Webster's Unabridged Dictionary tells us, is "to comprehend (a new idea) by assimilation with the sum of one's previous knowledge and experience." Stevens suggests that in order to bring about and sustain change, there must by a cyclic movement—and not a stasis—informing the perception of objects and the apperception (conception) of ideas. The difference between perception and apperception is crucial for our understanding of this recurring alternation which informs Stevens's notion of "the essential poem," for we should "Never suppose," Stevens counsels in "Notes," the "inventing mind as source/ Of this idea" (CP 381); nor should we assume that "the centre of things" issues, as it issues in
realism, from our perceptions. It is not possible, Stevens suggests here, to reduce social space to its conceived or perceived qualities. Rather, we move within an unstable spatio-temporal continuum of decayed perceptions and crystallized conceptions, a lived space in which we continuously navigate among possible meanings and attempt to assimilate one type of fiction (as given by perceptions) to that of another (as given by conceptions).

The young poet ephebe, in "Notes," attempts to move through such a social space of contrary realities and, in confronting the division between conceived and perceived space, asks himself, "What am I to believe?" (££ 404). This question quite necessarily follows the poet’s encounter of the spherical limits of social space. The poet first considers perceived space, and it is significant that sleep is the metaphorical point of entry into perceived space, since it describes the process whereby images decay into unconscious thought:

When at long midnight the Canon came to sleep
And normal things had yawned themselves away,
The nothingness was a nakedness, a point,

Beyond which fact could not progress as fact.
Thereon the learning of the man conceived
Once more night’s pale illuminations, gold
Beneath, far underneath, the surface of His eye and audible in the mountain of His ear, the very material of his mind.

(EP 402-403)

As "normal things" decay into conceptions ("the very material of his mind"), the poet discovers social space as perceived by the realist, a space in which "fact" comes up against its limits and no longer performs as such. Crossing this barrier, as all poets must, between perceived and conceived space, the Canon next finds himself on "ascending wings," cruising the celestial order of the "outer stars... Straight to the utmost crown of night." Once in this apparently boundless and free-floating conceptual state, however, the poet discovers another stop: "The nothingness was a nakedness, a point// Beyond which thought could not progress as thought." Both fact and thought, and both perceived and conceived space, appear to offer two different paths to the same end: change, the point beyond which thoughts and things no longer possess their given content and form and come to share the discovery of the "nothingness" and "nakedness" of a new space.

It is at this point that we can now return to the unanswered question in "Notes," "What am I to believe?" Faced with the decision of whether to believe in fact or in thought, in things or ideas, the poet, we learn, had to choose. But it was not a choice Between excluding things. It was not a choice
Between but of. He chose to include the things
That in each other are included, the whole,
The complicate, the amassing harmony. (CP 403)
The young poet in "Notes" achieves the "difficult
apperception" called for in "A Primitive Like an Orb" by
recognizing that these two ineluctably opposed ways of
apprehending social reality are part of a continually
"amassing harmony" that is never quite revealed to us in its
totality. Because, in other words, things and thoughts "in
each other are included," they cannot be separated, a fact
that prevents us from ever perceiving a fact or conceiving a
thought in isolation and without the agency of the other.
"We do not prove the existence of the poem," continues
Stevens in "A Primitive Like an Orb," because

One poem proves another and the whole,
For the clairvoyant men that need no proof:
The lover, the believer and the poet.
Their words are chosen out of their desire,
The joy of language, when it is themselves [. . .
. .]

[. . .] these men, and earth and sky, inform
Each other by sharp informations, sharp,
Free knowledges, secreted until then,
Breaches of that which held them fast. It is
As if the central poem became the world,
And the world the central poem, each one the mate
Of the other. . . .

Like the series of "similitudes or recurrent elements" (16) which Ermarth says disclose the identity of a thing, and like the "series of paintings of some natural object" which become for Stevens the "revelations of reality," one space proves the other and at the same time the "complicate, the amassing harmony" of a contiguous lived space.

The idea that conceptions grow out of the truth value or "proof" offered by perceptions, we recall, is a distinct formulation of realism. Stevens inverts this formulation, but with the notable refusal to contradict it. In other words, realists reconciled what we think to what we see with the proof offered by visual perceptions. While Stevens does not believe conceptions can "prove" perceptions in the way that realism defines proof, (since "what we think is never what we see"), he does allow our "free knowledges" to exist in a way realism could not allow, as "Breaches of that which held them fast," as breaches of our perceptions. It is thus by discovering correspondences between such free knowledge that we conceive and such fixed knowledge that we perceive that pleasure emerges. Such correspondences "must give pleasure" because social space is no longer only a blueprint of what we see but is also a space of thought and human social action, a space in which the individual perceives the self perceiving ideas.
III. "It Must Give Pleasure": Discovering "A Place Dependent on Ourselves"

We have seen that Stevens's first imperative for modernism in "Notes," "it must be abstract," grows out of an acknowledgment of what realism established: the fact that perceptions both inform and decay into conceptions. When perceptions invest social reality and social relations with meaning and just as quickly withdraw that investment, the perceiving subject must confront an abstraction, a drawing apart of image and idea, thing and thought, social environment and social practice. The abstractions Stevens confronts in his poetry, however, are not the product of a hostile social environment, as in realism, but the product of perceiving ideas. By perceiving ideas, Stevens uses abstraction as a means to critique social space, to see beyond the surfaces of realism and into the nature of perception itself. It is the abstract nature of how we perceive, rather than what we perceive, Stevens suggests, that is responsible for the fact that we live in a world that "is not our own and, much more not ourselves" (CP 383). As a way to discover a sense of place and identity for individuals, Stevens perceives ideas and, in the process, finds that social space coheres only when the subject catches the self in the act of perceiving.

This "difficult apperception," seeing ideas as objects that not only reflect but inform our social environment,
establishes a new space in which what we see and what we think are, as the title of a poem in Transport to Summer claims, "Two Versions of the Same Poem" (CP 353-55). Our attempt to fix in representations "that which cannot be fixed," our changing social environment, represents an open acknowledgment of the contested nature of social space, since

The human ocean beats against this rock
Of earth, rises against it, tide by tide,

Continually. (CP 354)
As the first of the poem's "Two Versions" illustrates, visual representations of what we see produce only "The difficult images of possible shapes,/ That cannot now be fixed." As these images and shapes decay, however, and out of their residue, a second version of the initial perception emerges,

A beating and a beating in the centre of
The sea, a strength that tumbles everywhere,

Like more and more becoming less and less,
Like space dividing its blue and by division

Being changed from space to the sailor's metier,
Or say from that which was conceived to that

Which was realized, like reason's constant ruin. (CP 354)
The change from space to "metier," like the change from wilderness to "dominion" in "Anecdote of the Jar," is the result of objects becoming ideas and the subsequent transformation of ideas into the past tense and no longer concrete, "that/Which was realized."

Social space, as "Two Versions" claims and as other poems suggest, is "not an undivided whole" (CP 355), not a homogenous sphere of images, ideas, or objects but rather a space we negotiate between forces: "an ocean of watery images/And shapes of fire, and wind that bears them down" (CP 355). Lived space functions much like a third term in a dialectic and, as Lefebvre writes, mediates between perceived and conceived space. "The first thing such a code would do," writes Lefebvre, assuming ideal social conditions, is recapture the unity of dissociated elements, breaking down such barriers as that between private and public, and identifying both confluences and oppositions in space that are at present indiscernible. It would thus bring together levels and terms which are isolated by existing spatial practice and by the ideologies underpinning it... (1991: 64)

Stevens attempts to bring the "dissociated elements" of perceived space (the spatial practice of realism) and conceived space (the locus of the "ideologies" that underpin that practice) into relation by re-coding what we know as "reality."
"Reality is not an external scene," writes Stevens in "The Noble Rider and the Sound of Words," "but the life that is lived in it" (Necessary Angel 25). Realism, as we saw, treated our visually perceived environment as an ineluctably "external scene," as the locus of all lived experience and as the blueprint for truth. "We have been a little insane about the truth," Stevens continues in "The Noble Rider,"

We have had an obsession. In its ultimate extension, the truth about which we have been insane will lead us to look beyond the truth to something which the imagination will be the dominant complement. It is not only that the imagination adheres to reality, but, also, that reality adheres to the imagination and that the interdependence is essential. (NA 33)

The interdependence of perceptions and conceptions is essential because, as realism established, without that interdependence one must be homogenized into the other.

Both Stevens's major and minor poetry builds on realism's discovery of how perceptions function (or fail to function) as the founding condition of modernism. For Stevens, realism ultimately reveals more about ourselves and our perceptions than it reveals about the nature of reality or of our social environment. Stevens brings the spirit of realism into the twentieth century in order to critique, as a realist, social space. Because his attention is focused as much on our local environment as on the conditions of
perception, his poetry is a poetry of ideas socialized by a tension between the way things are and the way they appear. Thus the self-critical tendency of modernism manifests itself in Stevens through his repeated suggestions that it is our perceptions themselves, and not only the objects we perceive, that are the chief players in the "theatre of trope" we experience as consciousness, identity, and social reality. In Stevens's modernization of the spirit of realism, he finds that social space fails to cohere not so much because the world "out there" is unknowable but rather because our perceptions render it so.

If our perceptions in fact render the world unknowable, then it must be possible that a different use of that faculty will help reacquaint us with our surroundings, if not ourselves. Stevens pursued this line of thinking quite explicitly in "Notes" and discovered that by changing the objects of our perceptions, by perceiving ideas alongside things, we can gain a more comprehensive awareness of our environment and our place in that environment than realism offered. By "perceiving the idea/ Of this invention," the invented nature of social space, of our conceived, perceived, and lived environments, Stevens finds that the difficulty of realizing correspondences between ideas and objects, thoughts and things, evaporates because it is merely

A difficulty that we predicate:
The difficulty of the visible  

(CP 474)
The source of this difficulty, as Stevens discovered, lies in the fact that what we see (and thus what we think) is nothing more than what Nietzsche called a “movable host of metaphors, metonymies, and anthropomorphisms.” For realists, then, the “difficulty of the visible” is the difficulty that change presented to the perceiving subject who could only realize a stable sense of place and identity from representations of a stable world of objects.

For Stevens, however, there is no such thing as a stable world of objects but only a continuously becoming and decaying space of contingent correspondences. By identifying the “difficulty of the visible”—the changing nature and structure of perceptions—as a “difficulty that we predicate,” Stevens domesticates the deterministic social environment of the realist text by creating a space for ideas in that environment. If, in other words, once the difficulty we encounter in assimilating or adjusting to our environment is discovered as due to us, then it is one we can overcome. Stevens overcomes this difficulty not by burying it beneath a consensus but rather by introducing another difficulty, change, as the ineluctable condition of perception. Opening up an abstract space between perception and thought, Stevens creates a lived space that must be abstract because perception, as realism teaches us, is nothing more and nothing less than the continuous revision of thought.
NOTES

1 I have chosen the anonymously published 1893 text of Maggie (reprinted in the 1979 Norton Critical Edition) over the 1896 Appleton text because the former preserves the frequent outbursts of violence and profanity, later excised, that appear necessary to the novel’s dramatization of conflicting class and social tensions within the bowery. For an important argument on the importance of the novel’s "linguistic brutality" to its social critique, see Joseph Katz.

2 For evidence of the magnitude of this issue, see the April 1892 Scribner’s in which a series of nine articles on "The Poor in Great Cities" is announced. The essays, focused on relieving suffering and improving the conditions of daily life, acknowledge that "an awakening is not needed." "What we need to know is what is doing, here and elsewhere, in the general and efficient activity that has been the growth of the last few years; and especially, what are the facts with which our own efforts are to deal, and how facts elsewhere compare with them ([my emphasis]; 400). The writer, of course, means the comparison of statistics, for "facts" in themselves do not differ, yet the slip represents the newly perceived manipulable and measurable nature of socio-spatial relationships.

3 For a good example of the latter, see Jesse Lynch Williams, "The Walk Uptown," Scribner’s (January 1900).
4 For example, see Maurice Blanchot, *The Space of Literature*. Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1982.

5 Subsequent references to Stevens's *Collected Poems* will be abbreviated *CP*.

6 Furthermore, to Lars Ahnebrink, "naturalist man" is "fundamentally an animal without free will" (vi); to V. L. Parrington, the "two postulates" of realism are: "that men are physical beings who can do no other than obey the laws of a physical universe; and that in the vast indifferentism of nature they are inconsequential pawns in a game that to human reason has no meaning or rules" (318).

7 Pizer and June Howard, for example, assent to the theory of the novel as advanced by Charles Child Walcutt, that "all 'naturalistic' novels exist in a tension between determinism and its antithesis" (29). Howard agrees that the "antinomy between fate and hope, between determinism and free will, is not only implicit in the program of naturalism but it is repeatedly dramatized in the action of novels" (39). Pizer likewise believes that "even the least significant human being can feel and strive powerfully and can suffer the extraordinary consequences of his emotions" in the naturalist novel (1993: 87).

8 For an analysis of the influence of Brahmin cultural values on Howells as editor, see Lionel Trilling, "William Dean Howells and the Roots of Modern Taste," *Partisan Review* 18 (1951): 516-36; Edwin H. Cady, *The Road to Realism: The

9See Howells's essay, "The Politics of American Authors," in which Howells traces the debilitating specialization of American life to the fact that "Business to the businessman, law to the lawyer, medicine to the physician, politics to the politician, and letters to the literary man; that's the rule. One is not expected to transcend his function, and commonly does not" (1902: 293). For an excellent discussion of the realist's role as "conciliator," see Borus 172-182.

10In "The Man of Letters as a Man of Business," Howells offers a way for authors to transcend the divisive interests they are drawn into by editors and their reading public. There should be, writes Howells, a solidarity that functions "not as a galling chain, but as a mystical bond." The writer, although "he is really of the masses... [the masses] do not know it, and what is worse, they do not know him." Howells is reacting against the common assumption, widely espoused and later articulated by Andrew Carnegie in The Empire of Business (New York: Doubleday and Page, 1902) that intellectual and practical realms were and should be kept apart.

11This mid-career shift in Howells's fiction has been interpreted in the light of the Haymarket Riot of 1886, which
embittered him about the possibilities for social justice in America. See Everett Carter (210-211); Kaplan 20-21; and C. and R. Kirk, "Howells, Curtis, and the 'Haymarket Affair,'" *American Literature* 40 (1969): 487-98. For an expanded sense of Howells's own response to and reflection on Haymarket, see his letter written to the editor of the New York *World* on 12 November 1887 (though either never mailed by Howells or suppressed by the editor; *Letters* 201-204) and a letter to George W. Curtis of 18 August 1887 (*Letters* 193).

12 Cycloramas pictorially represented historical events (such as military battles) or landscapes by combining objects and images on a convex wall. With the aid of stage props and the imitation of perspective, viewers could "experience" the scene in its panoramic totality. This appears to be an area largely unexplored in relation to other modes of representation, such as photography, film, and painting, and deserves critical analysis. See A. J. Donnelle, *Cyclorama of Custer's Last Battle, or The Battle of the Little Big Horn*, New York: Argonaut P, 1966.

13 See Carter's comments on this point in *Howells and the Age of Realism*. Carter believes that the opening sections represent an exception to the novel's otherwise "successful transformation of the palpable" into fictional form. While the house hunting scenes function "adequately, if not admirable" for Carter in enabling readers to experience New York first-hand, he nonetheless thought them merely a


detached from that of the viewer, see Carolyin Porter, *Seeing and Being: The Plight of the Participant Observer in Emerson, James, Adams, and Faulkner* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan UP, 1981).


18 Pizer, "Introduction" in Howells Criticism vol. 2: xi.

19 For evidence of the spatial dialectic between cultural vacancy and social migration, consider the popular "walking tour" of the city in text and photographs: Jesse Lynch Williams, "The Walk Uptown" *Scribner's* (January 1900) and John Corbin, "The Twentieth Century City" *Scribner's* 33 (March 1903): 259-271.

20 Robert Moses, Cross-Bronx Expressway architect, helped modernize New York in countless ways in the 1950s and 1960s.
from his design for roads, bridges, and parkways, to housing developments, parks, and Kennedy Airport. "Everything big that got built in or around New York," Berman writes, "seemed somehow to be his work" (291). The epigraph is from Moses's memoir, Public Works: A Dangerous Trade (McGraw-Hill, 1970), qtd. in Berman 293-94.

21 See his A Ten Year's War: An Account of the Battle with the Slum in New York, originally published in 1900 (New York: Houghton Mifflin) and reproduced in Jacob Riis Revisited, pp. 301-416.


23 Riis, qtd. in Goldberg 39.


25 Because of the increased sensitivity of photographic plates, which required less light to expose film, lens
manufacturers could make smaller, lighter, and more portable lenses.

26 For nineteenth-century accounts of the tenement slums, see G. G. Foster's *New York by Gas-Light: With Here and There a Streak of Sunshine* (1850), Matthew Hale Smith's *Sunshine and Shadow in New York* (1868), Charles Loring Brace's *The Dangerous Classes of New York* (1872), and J. W. Buel's *Metropolitan Life Unveiled: Or the Mysteries and Miseries of America's Great Cities* (1882).

27 All references to Riis's "How the Other Half Lives: Studies among the Tenements," are taken from the December 1889 *Scriber's Magazine* essay (1889c: 643-662).

28 Indeed, this is generally the context in which Riis's work is seen, that of a yellow journalist sensationalizing his material to create a sensation among viewers. This may owe to the fact that Riis himself makes much of the sensationalistic aspects of his work in his biography, but much work remains to be done, nonetheless, on the intertext between his essays and photographs.

29 See Riis's characterization of the Italian influence in *A Ten Years' War*, pp. 361-67.

30 The intertext between images and narratives within the "photo essay" as a genre has been insufficiently studied in the work of Riis, with most attention in this respect being paid to Hine. See Trachtenberg (1989: 190-209) and Daile Kaplan, (1988: 32-34, 44).
The original letter, dated May 18, 1894, resides in the Gilder Papers, American Academy of Arts and Letters.

Changes resulting from the late nineteenth century rise of science and technology, and the resulting “hegemony of computers” transforming contemporary methods of gathering, processing, and transmitting information, have tended, Lyotard says, to redefine the “value” of knowledge. Since in a changing society “the nature of knowledge cannot survive unchanged” (4), knowledge under postmodernity has value only insofar as it can be exchanged, and only for the purpose of exchange itself. “Knowledge,” Lyotard explains, “is and will be produced in order to be sold, it is and will be consumed in order to be valorized in a new production: in both cases, the goal is exchange. Knowledge ceases to be an end in itself, it loses its ‘use value’” (4-5). That this is true under capitalism in general, and in the age of the commodification of information in particular, is suggested by Lyotard’s comment that for knowledge to “fit into new channels, and become operational,” learning must be “translated into quantities of information” as “messages . . . easy to decode” (4, 5). And when learning becomes a mere sign to be decoded, Lyotard warns, “we may thus expect a thorough exteriorization of knowledge” (4).

Riis’s role in contributing to the visualization of knowledge appears insufficiently studied and merits closer inspection than it has received. For example, in Suren
Lalvani's *Photography, Vision, and the Production of Modern Bodies* (1996), only passing note is made of Riis, although one of the book's central themes is the visualization of knowledge in Western culture from Plato to Foucault.

34 The quotation in my title is from Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy*, trans. Francis Golfin (New York: Doubleday, 1956) 143.


36 This newspaper article was culled from a recent (undated) edition of *The Boston Post* by *Public Opinion*, a weekly summary of the nation's news.

37 For the text of this legislation, see 22 Stat. 214 (1882).


39 Popular journals not only heightened the alarmist tone but shaped the terms of the immigration debate as well. Articles in such middle-class society periodicals as *Century,*

Even in organs of progressivist and reformist thinking such as Charities and World's Work, the call for greater restrictions on immigration persist. For example, the Charities' assistant editor, Arthur P. Kellogg, brother of future Survey editor Paul U. Kellogg, writes of "The Backwater of Immigration" caused by steamship-assisted immigration and claims that "the inefficients are seldom able to pay the thirty dollars or more required for passage home" and remain in America to become public charges (128). Furthermore, we read in consecutive numbers of Charities of the burden of immigrants on hospitals, especially as deficits, overcrowding, and lack of resources are concerned. See Frank Tucker, "The Financial Problem of New York's Hospitals," 27-32 and [Anonymous], "What the Managers of the Hospitals Have to Say about their Financial Problem, 32-46 in Charities vol. 12 no. 1 (January 2, 1904). See especially
the January 30, 1904 Charities (vol. 12 no. 5), which devotes all but one of its essays to health reform issues.

40 For a recent study of immigrants as an invisible and infectious influence at this time in American culture, see Alan M. Kraut, Silent Travelers : Germs, Genes, and the "Immigrant Menace" (New York: Basic Books, 1994).

41 Castle Island, built in 1808 as a military fortress against attack from the sea, was taken over by the State of New York in 1855 to serve as a landing station for immigrants. Its function, unlike that of its successor Ellis Island, was to protect new arrivals from swindlers and opportunists who would prey on unsuspecting "greenhorns." For a history of Castle Garden as immigrant depot, see George J. Svejda, Castle Garden as an Immigrant Depot, 1855-1890 (Washington, D.C.: Division of History, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation, 1968) and Ann Novotny, Strangers at the Door: Ellis Island, Castle Garden, and the Great Migration to America (Toronto: Bantam, 1974).

42 The Immigration Restriction League, first formed in 1894 by a group of wealthy, pro-Darwinian Bostonians, represents the first organized attempt to encourage restriction by heightening the distinction between the "old" and "new" immigrant. The League believed that America's racial stock would be corrupted by the so-called "inferior" races from southern and eastern Europe and would, as senator Henry Cabot Lodge claimed, threaten the "very fabric of our

Ironically, a large part of the opposition Hine worked to oppose and the ideas he attempted to dispel in his photographs were articulated in the very pages of the journal Charities for which he later worked. Charities would, in 1905, merge with The Commons to become Charities and the Commons. In 1907, the name would change again to The Survey and, later again, to the Survey Graphic, the two latter journals to which Hine would contribute most of his child labor and work portraits.

This difference between Riis and Hine suggests the need for a study of how photographers use space geometrically and how that difference signifies in social space. For example, Riis's frequent dead-center placement of the camera imposes order, uniformity, and perspectively anchors objects in space. Space in Hine's photographs, on the other hand, is frequently skewed and indeterminate. He achieves this by disabling perspectival vision, either blurring the background (as in his portraits) or by filling it with figures. This difference suggests how a photograph's formal characteristics (camera angle, subject placement, depth of field) suggest the
need for a spatial rhetoric or discourse of the photographic image.

45 Whether or not this is a conscious feature of his work will always remain a point of conjecture. See Stange’s discussion of the use of Hine’s photos in the Homestead PA series of the Pittsburgh Survey in *Symbols of Ideal Life* and Trachtenberg’s chapter on Hine, "Camera Work-Social Work," in *Reading American Photographs*.

46 While Hine is perhaps most famous for his child labor reform work with the National Child Labor Committee (NCLC), very few studies have conducted an exclusive examination of his most formative period of work, that he conducted at Ellis Island. An interest in the immigrant framed Hine’s career, from his first project as a photographer documenting immigrants at Ellis Island while working for the Ethical Culture School in New York to the Guggenheim grant he unsuccessfully proposed shortly before his death. See his "Plans for Work" in Daile Kaplan (1992: 174-176) in which Hine proposed "making a series of photo-studies dealing with the life of representative individuals of foreign extraction to show their reactions to and influence upon our American democracy." The project, wrote Hine, proposed to show "the kinds of strength we have to build upon as a nation" (175).

47 See the most influential works in this context by Harold Bloom *Wallace Stevens: The Poems of Our Climate*; Helen Vendler, *On Extended Wings: Wallace Stevens’ Longer Poems*.
(Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1969); and Frank Lentricchia, 
Modernist Quartet (New York: Cambridge UP, 1994), pp. 124-
179.

48 See Charles Altieri’s Painterly Abstraction in 
321-358; Wallace Stevens: The Poetics of Modernism, ed.
Albert Gelpi (New York: Cambridge UP, 1985); and Glen 
MacLeod, Wallace Stevens and Modern Art: From the Armory Show 

49 Subsequent references to Opus Posthumous will be 
abbreviated OP.

50 Subsequent references to The Necessary Angel will be 
abbreviated NA.


*Charities* 12.6 (February 6, 1904): 119-173.


Czarnowski, Thomas V. "The Street as a Communications Artifact." *Anderson* 207-12.


Devine, Edward T. "Immigration as a Relief Problem." *Charities*: 129-133.


261


