INFORMATION TO USERS

This manuscript has been reproduced from the microfilm master. UMI films the text directly from the original or copy submitted. Thus, some thesis and dissertation copies are in typewriter face, while others may be from any type of computer printer.

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleedthrough, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send UMI a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

Oversize materials (e.g., maps, drawings, charts) are reproduced by sectioning the original, beginning at the upper left-hand corner and continuing from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps. Each original is also photographed in one exposure and is included in reduced form at the back of the book.

Photographs included in the original manuscript have been reproduced xerographically in this copy. Higher quality 6" x 9" black and white photographic prints are available for any photographs or illustrations appearing in this copy for an additional charge. Contact UMI directly to order.

UMI

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

Norman, Oklahoma

1997

UMI Number: 9728707

UMI

THE SPATIAL DISCOURSE OF REALISM AND MODERNISM

IN AMERICAN FICTION, PHOTOGRAPHY, AND POETRY

A Dissertation APPROVED FOR THE

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

BY

_____
Ronald Schleifer

_____
Robert Con Davis

_____
Henry McDonald

_____
Nancy M. West

_____
David Levy

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

ABSTRACT

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 <u>Maggie</u> 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, <u>Maggie, A Girl of the Streets</u> (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 <u>Maggie</u>'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 <u>Maggie</u> 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 <u>Forum</u> editor John D. Barry wrote to Crane upon seeing the manuscript, the novel

closely approaches the morbid and the morbid is

always dangerous. . . . [O]ne 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

3

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

7

representational forms fetishize, and modernist forms

institute, an abstract and conceptual homogenization of

knowledge and experience.

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, an social awakening that

resulted a flood of critical discourse on improving the

conditions of daily life in America's cities.[2] 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.[3] 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).[4] 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)[5], 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 <u>Maggie</u> 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 fergive her! I'll fergive 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.[6] 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,[7] 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 in ability
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. . . .

27

"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

street, 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

36

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 <u>A Hazard of New Fortunes</u>

In January 1886, as a way to introduce himself and the "Editor's Study" he was to write for <u>Harper's Monthly</u> 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 <u>New
> Monthly</u>. (<u>Criticism</u> 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. (<u>Criticism</u>
> 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."[8] 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 <u>flawless</u> 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.[9] 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.[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

41

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. (<u>Letters</u> 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 <u>Harper's</u> 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 <u>A Hazard of New Fortunes</u>, 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.

<u>A Hazard of New Fortunes</u> 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

45

Fulkerson's purchase of the literary venture, <u>Every Other Week</u>, 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 <u>are</u> 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 <u>The Minister's Charge</u> (1886), <u>Annie Kilburn</u> (1888), <u>The World of Chance</u> (1893), and <u>A Traveler from Altruria</u> (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]

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[12] 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 in which individuals "may be all humbled and
strengthened with a sense of their own instability," as
Howells said (Criticism vol. 1: 62). 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 Ermarth writes, "the key to defining realism
. . . is history" (26). 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 carpentery" (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

50

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.[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.[14] 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)

54

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

59

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).[15] 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.[16] 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. . . . [R]ealists 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 "carpentery."

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 <u>Hazard</u>'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

69

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 incohately 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 "carpentry."[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

71

"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:

> 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 your 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's 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,[18] 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

82

end of <u>Hazard</u>, "we <u>are</u> 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[20]

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

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

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).[21] 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 provided 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-

stressed this remedy in his book, How the Other Half Lives:
"The remedy that shall be an effective answer to the coming
appeal for justice must proceed from the public conscience"
(1957: 4).

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 connaître (to be aware, to share
in a relation) is "an idea, a notion," the "means by which
feelings and impressions are gathered."[22] 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

92

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

94

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

95

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."[23] 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 incompletion, 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.

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),[24] faster film speeds,[25] 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

105

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,[26] 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

reestablish both dimensions when the "causal links to before and after" become broken (65-6).

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

112

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

113

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

[opium]" in a "misery that is particularly fond of company" (1889c: 655).

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.[29] 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.[30] 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

123

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

pure abstraction and performs actions. . . . (213, 215)

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.

129

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 <u>nationalities</u> made
>
> . . .
>
> I would select competent men, <u>one</u> for <u>each</u> <u>tribe</u>
> (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)[31]

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.

136

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

137

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 say: 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,[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.[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[34]

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

144

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.[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]

147

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.[37] The Chinese Exclusion Act soon followed that same year and banned Chinese immigration in California altogether (it would be renewed in 1892).[38]

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 unharnessable 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.[39] 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 an 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,[41] 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 homogenous 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.[42] 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,[44] 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.[45] 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.[46] 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
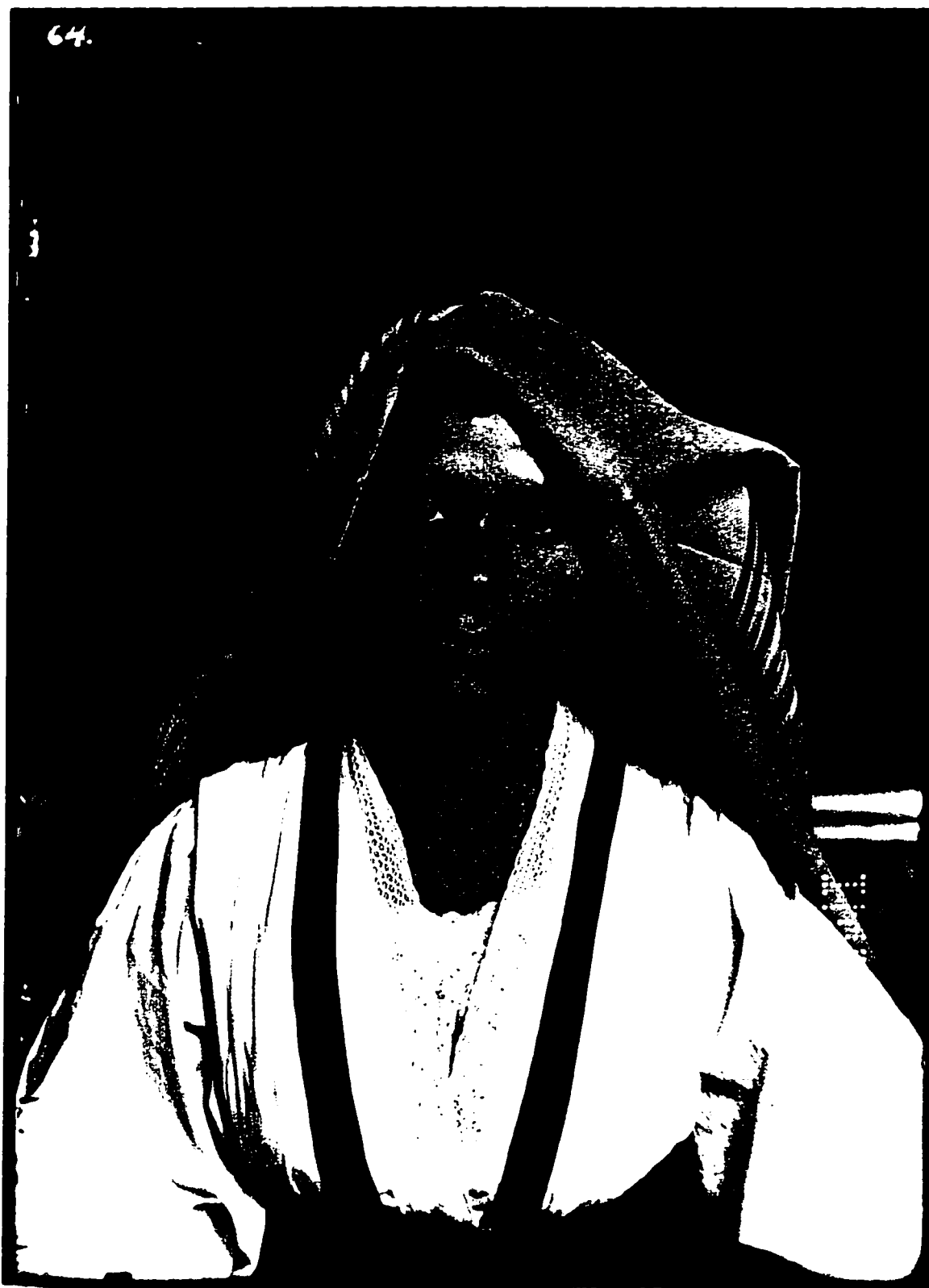coexist and discursively play off each other. Is she one of

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

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.

179

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

180

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

181

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

Fig. 12. Lewis W. Hine, "Elderly Jewish Immigrant, Ellis Island, 1905." Gelatin silver print. Courtesy George Eastman House, International Museum of Photography.
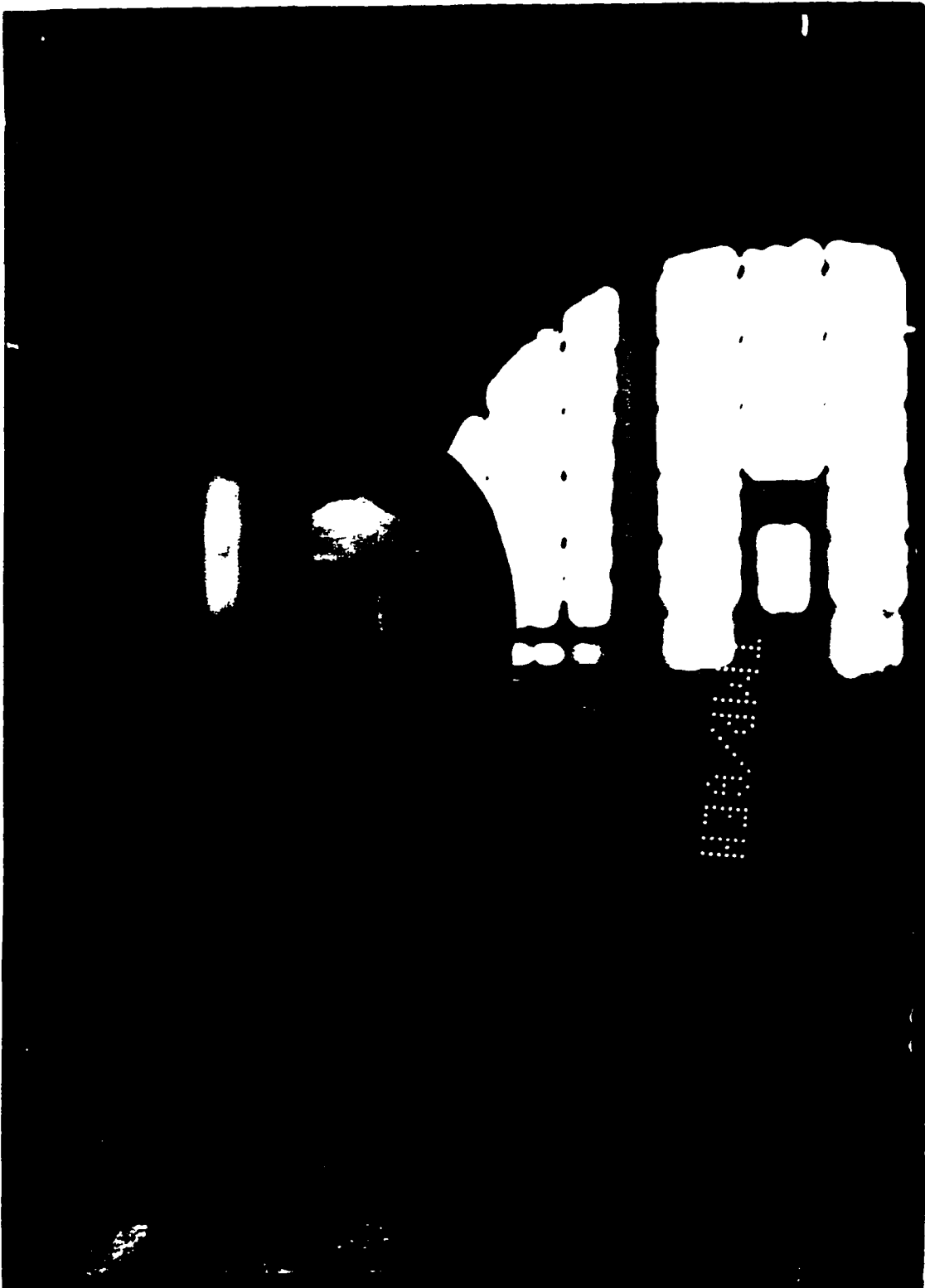
Fig. 13. Lewis W. Hine, "Young Russian Jewess, Ellis Island, 1905." Gelatin silver
print. Courtesy George Eastman House, International Museum of Photography.

pretended timelessness. . . . [An] intimate gaze into the eyes of a viewer [would] be unseemly. . ." (1989: 46). 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

true: 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.

189

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).

Chapter Five: Reforming Realism, Forming Modernism: The Supreme Fiction of Space in Wallace Stevens

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 "brinciples"; 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.
>
> <div align="right">(<u>CP</u> 459-60)</div>

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" (<u>CP</u> 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 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. . . .
>
> (CP 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,

209

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.[47] 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[48] 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 Posthumous[49] 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 non

visual 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.

213

It took dominion everywhere.

The jar was gray and bare.

It did not give of bird or bush,

Like nothing else in Tennessee.

<div align="right">(<u>CP</u> 76)</div>

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

217

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.

                                                                    (CP 3)

"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

220

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-

221

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. (OP 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

223

On the real. This is the origin of change.

<div align="right">(<u>CP</u> 392)</div>

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"
(<u>CP</u> 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" (<u>CP</u> 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

<div align="center">224</div>

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. . .
>
>   .
>

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. (OP 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" (OP 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 councils 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

231

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?" (CP 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.

<div align="right">(<u>CP</u> 402-403)</div>

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

<div align="center">233</div>

>   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. . . .   (CP 441)

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).[50] 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_

Early Years (Syracuse: Syracuse UP, 1956), pp. 127-98; and

Michael Davitt Bell, "The Sin of Art and the Problem of

American Realism," Prospects 9 (1984): 115-42.

[9]See 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.

[10]In "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.

[11]This 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

245

"dramatic contrivance" that distracted readers from the novel's more central issues (203-205). See further criticism of the novel's early chapters in Larzer Ziff, The American 1890s: Life and Times of a Lost Generation (New York: Viking, 1966), pp. 38-9; Blanche Housman Gelfant, The American City Novel (Norman: U of Oklahoma P, 1954), pp. 44ff.; David R. Weimer, The City as Metaphor (New York: Random House, 1966), pp. 53-55; and Cady, The Realist at War (Syracuse: Syracuse UP, 1958), pp. 100-102. For a broader survey of the polemics surrounding Howells's theory of realism, see Cady and David L. Frasier, eds., The War of the Critics over William Dean Howells (Evanston, IL: Row, Peterson, 1962), pp. 113-78.

[14]See "Walkers in the Street: American Writers and the Modern City" in Prospects vol. 6 (1981): 281-311 for a historical discussion of the evolving role of the American flaneur in romantic, realist, and modern fiction.

[15]On the relationship between street walkers and urban social relationships, see Raymond Williams, The Country and the City (London: Paladin, 1973), pp. 280-296 and Walter Benjamin, "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire," in Illuminations, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken, 1969), pp. 166-76. For a collection of essays focusing more broadly on the walker's interactions with urban space, see David Lewis, ed., The Pedestrian in the City (Princeton, NJ: D. Van Nostrand, 1966). For an excellent history of the myth of the "detached observer" in constructing the viewed world as a space

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).

[16]For an analysis of the conflicting relationships
between pedestrian and automated street travel, see William
J. Dean, The Pedestrian Revolution: Streets without Cars (New
York: Random House, 1975); Bernard Rudofsky, Streets for
People: A Primer for Americans (Garden City, NY: Doubleday,
1969); and Roberto Bramilla and Danni Longo, For Pedestrians
Only: Planning, Design, and Management of Traffic Zones (New
York: Watson-Guptill, 1977).

[17]See, for a favorable view of Howells's early chapters
of the novel, Higginson's The New World and the New Book: An
Address Delivered Before the Nineteenth Century Club of New
York City, Jan. 15, 1891 with Kindred Essays (1892), pp. 1-
18.

[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.

[22]Larousse de poche. Paris: Larousse, 1954.

[23]Riis, qtd. in Goldberg 39.

[24]The hand camera was initially rejected, then embraced, by photographers for this, along with other reasons. For the politics of this debate, see essays by Alfred Stieglitz, "The Hand Camera: Its Present Importance," The American Annual of Photography and Photographic Times Almanac for 1897, 19-27 (rpt. in Sunlight and Shadow, W.I.L. Adams, ed. [New York: Baker and Taylor, 1897]: 69-78); H.P. Robinson, "The Hand-Camera Taken Seriously," Amateur Photographer 23 (27 March 1896): 270-271; and J. Craig Annan, "Picture Making with the Hand-Camera," Amateur Photographer 23 (27 March 1896): 275-77.

[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 Scribner'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).

[31]The original letter, dated May 18, 1894, resides in the Gilder Papers, American Academy of Arts and Letters.

[32]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).

[33]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

250

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 Golfing (New York: Doubleday, 1956) 143.

[35]For an essay on contemporary responses to first and second wave immigrants in comparison, see Ewa Morawska, "The Sociology and Historiography of Immigration" in _Immigration Reconsidered: History, Sociology, and Politics_, ed. Virginia Yans-McLaughlin (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990) 187-238. See also John J. Appel, _The New Immigration_ (New York: Pitman, 1971).

[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).

[38]For the text of the Chinese Exclusion Act, see 22 Stat. 58 (1882). For an essay on the contemporary political and social context of its writing, see Mary R. Coolidge, _Chinese Immigration_ (New York: Holt, 1909).

[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_,

International Quarterly, _Popular Science Monthly_, and _Scribner's_ all attest to the desire for greater restriction and offer mechanisms for achieving it. In _Century_ see "A Million Immigrants a Year: I. Efforts to Restrict Undesirable Immigration," Henry Cabot Lodge and "II. The Need of Closer Inspection and Greater Inspection of Immigrants," Frank P. Sargent, January 1904. In _Charities_ see the February 6, 1904 issue and the May 7, 1904, a "special number" devoted to Italian immigration, in particular F. H. Ainsworth, "Are We Shouldering Europe's Burden?" 134-135.

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, Aurthur 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 <u>Charities</u> (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, <u>Silent Travelers : Germs, Genes, and the "Immigrant Menace"</u> (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, <u>Castle Garden as an Immigrant Depot, 1855-1890</u> (Washington, D.C.: Division of History, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation, 1968) and Ann Novotny, <u>Strangers at the Door: Ellis Island, Castle Garden, and the Great Migration to America</u> (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

race" (qtd. in _Ellis Island_, 102). See also Rivka Shpak

Lissak, _Liberal Progressives and Immigration: 1896-1917_

(Jerusalem: American Jewish Archives, 1992) and Morris Melvin

Sherman, "Immigration Restriction, 1890-1921 and the

Immigration Restriction League," MA thesis, Harvard U, 1957.

[43]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.

[44]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 perspectivally 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 <u>Symbols of Ideal Life</u> and Trachtenberg's chapter on Hine, "Camera Work-Social Work," in <u>Reading American Photographs</u>.

[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 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 <u>Wallace Stevens: The Poems of Our Climate</u>; Helen Vendler, <u>On Extended Wings: Wallace Stevens' Longer Poems</u>

255

(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 Modernist American Poetry_ (New York: Cambridge UP, 1989), pp. 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 to Abstract Expressionism_ (New Haven: Yale UP, 1993).

[49]Subsequent references to _Opus Posthumous_ will be abbreviated _OP_.

[50]Subsequent references to _The Necessary Angel_ will be abbreviated _NA_.

WORKS CITED

Ahnebrink, Lars. 1961. The Beginnings of Naturalism in
American Fiction: A Study of the Works of Hamlin
Garland, Stephen Crane, and Frank Norris with Special
reference to Some European Influences, 1891-1903. New
York: Russell and Russell.

Aldrich, Thomas Bailey. 1895. "Unguarded Gates." Atlantic
Monthly 70 (July 1892), p. 57. Unguarded Gates and
Other Poems. Boston. 15-17.

Alland, Alexander, Sr. 1974. Jacob A. Riis, Photographer &
Citizen. Millerton, NY: Aperture.

America and Lewis Hine: Photographs 1904-1940. 1977.
Foreword by Walter Rosenblum, Biographical Notes by
Naomi Rosenblum, Essay by Allen Trachtenberg. New
York: Aperture.

Anderson, Stanford, ed. 1986. On Streets. Cambridge, MA:
MIT P.

Angeles, Peter A. 1981. Dictionary of Philosophy. New
York: Harper and Row.

Barry, John D. March 24, 1893. "John Daniel Barry to
Stephen Crane: A New Letter." Stephen Crane Newsletter
II (Fall 1967): 1-3. Rpt. in Wertheim 2-3.

Becker, George J. 1963. "Introduction: Modern Realism as a
Literary Movement." Ed. George J. Becker. Documents
of Modern Literary Realism. Princeton: Princeton UP.

Benjamin, Walter. 1968. "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction." Illuminations. Trans. Harry Zohn. New York: Harcourt. 219-253.

Benjamin, Walter. 1978. "Critique of Violence." Reflections: Essays, Aphorisms, Autobiographical Writings. Ed. Peter Demetz. New York: Harcourt. 277-300.

Berman, Marshall. 1982. All that is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity. New York: Simon and Schuster.

Borus, Daniel H. 1989. Writing Realism: Howells, James, and Norris in the Mass Market. Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P.

Bourdieu, Pierre. 1990. Photography: A Middle-Brow Art. Trans. Shaun Whiteside. Sanford, CA: Sanford UP.

Burgin, Victor, ed. 1982. Thinking Photography. London: Macmillan.

Cady, Edwin H. 1971. The Light of Common Day: Realism in American Fiction. Bloomington: Indiana UP.

Carter, Everett. 1954. Howells and the Age of Realism. Philadelphia: Lippincott.

"The Change in Immigration." Boston Post n.d. Rpt. in Public Opinion 9.22 (September 6, 1890): 504-05.

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

Crane, Stephen. 1893. Maggie: A Girl of the Streets (A Story of New York). New York: Norton, 1979.

Crane, Stephen. 1960. <u>Stephen Crane: Letters</u>. Eds. R. W.

    Stallman and Lillian Gilkes. New York: New York UP.

Czarnowski, Thomas V. "The Street as a Communications

    Artifact." Anderson 207-12.

de Tocqueville, Alexis. 1966. <u>Democracy in America</u>.

    Trans. George Lawrence. New York: Harper & Row.

Devine, Edward T. "Immigration as a Relief Problem."

    <u>Charities</u>: 129-133.

Eagleton, Terry. 1990. <u>The Ideology of the Aesthetic</u>.

    Cambridge, MA: Basil Blackwell.

<u>Ellis Island: An Illustrated History of the Immigrant</u>

    <u>Experience</u>. New York: Macmillan, 1991.

Ermarth, Elizabeth Deeds. 1983. <u>Realism and Consensus in</u>

    <u>the English Novel</u>. Princeton: Princeton UP.

Featherstone, David, ed. 1984. <u>Observations: Essays on</u>

    <u>Documentary Photography</u>. Carmel, CA: Friends of

    Photography.

Garland, Hamlin. 1972. "Productive Conditions of American

    Literature." <u>Forum</u> 17 (August 1894): 690-98. <u>American</u>

    <u>Thought and Writing: The 1890s</u>. Ed. Donald Pizer.

    New York: Houghton Mifflin. 78-86.

Goldberg, Vicki. 1995. "Looking at the Poor in a Gilded

    Frame." <u>New York Times</u>, April 9: 38-39.

Howard, June. 1985. <u>Form and History in American Literary</u>

    <u>Naturalism</u>. Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P.

Howells, William Dean. 1902. "The Man of Letters as a Man

    of Business." <u>Literature and Life</u>, 1-35.

Howells, William Dean. 1902. <u>Literature and Life</u>. New York: Harper and Brothers.

Howells, William Dean. 1902. "The Politics of American Authors." <u>Scribner's</u> (October 1893). <u>Literature and Life</u>, 290-97.

Howells, William Dean. 1976. <u>A Hazard of New Fortunes</u>. Bloomington: Indiana UP.

Howells, William Dean. 1980. <u>Selected Letters: 1882-1891</u>. Vol. 1. Boston: Twayne. 4 vols.

Howells, William Dean. 1993. <u>Selected Literary Criticism: 1886-1897</u>. Vol. 2. Bloomington: Indiana UP. 3 vols.

Howells, William Dean. 1993. <u>Selected Literary Criticism: 1898-1920</u>. Vol. 3. Bloomington: Indiana UP. 3 vols.

Kaplan, Amy. 1988. <u>The Social Construction of American Realism</u>. Chicago: U of Chicago P.

Kaplan, Daile, ed. 1992. <u>Photo Story: Selected Letters and Photographs of Lewis W. Hine</u>. Washington: Smithsonian Institution P.

Kaplan, Daile. 1988. <u>Lewis Hine in Europe: The Lost Photographs</u>. New York: Abbeville.

Katz, Joseph. 1966. "The Maggie Nobody Knows." <u>Modern Fiction Studies</u> 12.2 (Summer): 200-212.

Kern, Stephen. 1983. <u>The Culture of Time and Space: 1880-1920</u>. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP.

Lane, James B. 1974. <u>Jacob A. Riis and the American City</u>. Port Washington, NY: Kennikat.

Lefebvre, Henri. 1991. The Production of Space. Trans.

Donald Nicholson-Smith. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell.

Lyotard, Jean-François. 1984. The Postmodern Condition: A

Report on Knowledge. Trans. Geoff Bennington and

Brian Massumi. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P.

Marin, Louis. 1984. Utopics: The Semiological Play of

Textual Spaces. Trans. Robert A. Vollrath. Atlantic

Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press International.

Marx, Carl. 1978. "The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis

Bonaparte." 1852. The Marx-Engels Reader. Ed. Robert

C. Tucker. New York: Norton. 594-617.

Miles, Nelson A. 1890. "Our Unwatered Empire." The North

American Review 150.40 (March): 370-379.

Miller, J. Hillis. 1992. Illustration. Cambridge, MA:

Harvard UP.

Newhall, Beaumont, ed. 1980. Photography, Essays and

Images. Illustrated Readings in the History of

Photography. New York: Museum of Modern Art.

Newhall, Beaumont. "A Backward Glance at Documentary."

Featherstone 1-6.

Nietzsche, Freidrich. 1979. "On Truth and Lies in a

Nonmoral Sense." Philosophy and Truth: Selections from

Nietzsche's Notebooks of the Early 1870s. Ed and

trans. Daniel Breazeale. Atlantic Highlands, NJ:

Humanities Press.

Orvell, Miles. 1989. *The Real Thing: Imitation and Authenticity in American Culture*, 1880-1940. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina P.

Parrington, V.L. 1987. *Main Currents in American Thought: The Beginnings of Critical Realism in America, 1860-1920*, Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma P.

Pizer, Donald. "Introduction." Howells, *Criticism* vol. 2. xiii-xxi.

Pizer, Donald. 1993. *The Theory and Practice of American Literary Naturalism*. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois UP.

Riddel, Joseph. 1965. *The Clairvoyant Eye: The Poetry and Poetics of Wallace Stevens*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP.

Riis, Jacob. 1889a. "The Tenement-House Question: The Question Stated." *The Christian Union* 39.19 (May 9): 590-91.

Riis, Jacob. 1889b. "The Tenement-House Question: The Remedy." *The Christian Union* 39.20 (May 16): 624.

Riis, Jacob. 1889c. "How the Other Half Lives: Studies among the Tenements." *Scribner's Magazine* Dec.: 643-662.

Riis, Jacob. 1890. *How the Other Half Lives: Studies Among the Tenements of New York*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1957.

Riis, Jacob. 1895. "The Clearing of Mulberry Bend." *Review of Reviews* (August): 172-178.

Riis, Jacob. 1903. The Peril and the Preservation of the Home: Being the William L. Bull Lectures for the Year 1903. Philadelphia: George W. Jacobs.

Riis, Jacob. 1968. A Ten Year's War: An Account of the Battle with the Slum in New York. Jacob Riis Revisited: Poverty and the Slum in Another Era. Ed. Francesco Cordasco. Garden City, NY: Doubleday.

Riis, Jacob. 1929. The Making of an American. 1901. New York: Macmillan.

Root, Marcus Aurelius. 1864. The Camera and the Pencil, or, The Heliographic Art. Philadelphia.

"Social Microbes." 1890. The Baltimore Sun n.d. Public Opinion 9.7 (May 24): 151.

Stange, Maren. 1989. Symbols of Ideal Life: Social Documentary Photography in America, 1890-1950. New York: Cambridge UP.

Stevens, Wallace. 1951. The Necessary Angel: Essays on Reality and the Imagination. London: Faber and Faber.

Stevens, Wallace. 1972. Letters of Wallace Stevens. Ed. Holly Stevens. New York: Knopf.

Stevens, Wallace. 1982. The Collected Poems of Wallace Stevens. New York: Random House.

Stevens, Wallace. 1990. Opus Posthumous. Ed. Milton J. Bates. New York: Random House.

Sundquist, Eric. 1988. "Realism and Regionalism." Columbia Literary History of the United States. Ed. Emory Elliott. New York: Columbia UP.

Tagg, John. 1988. The Burden of Representation: Essays on

    Photographies and Histories. Amherst, MA: U of

    Massachusetts P.

Trachtenberg, Alan. 1977. "Ever-the Human Document."

    America and Lewis Hine. 118-137.

Trachtenberg, Alan. 1982. The Incorporation of America:

    Culture and Society in the Guilded Age. New York:

    Hill and Wang.

Trachtenberg, Alan. 1989. Reading American Photographs:

    Images as History Mathew Brady to Walker Evans. New

    York: Hill and Wang.

Ward, Robert DeC. 1904. "The Immigration Problem: Its

    Present Status and its Relation to the American Race

    of the Future." Charities 12 no. 6 (Feb. 6): 138-151.

Ware, Louise. 1938. Jacob A. Riis: Police Reporter,

    Reformer, Useful Citizen. New York: Appleton-Century.

Weil, Simone. 1952. Gravity and Grace. Trans. Aurthur

    Wills. New York: Putnam.

Wertheim, Stanley, ed. 1970. The Merrill Studies in Maggie

    and George's Mother. Columbus, OH: Charles E.

    Merrill.

West, Cornel. 1985. "Nietzsche's Prefiguration of

    Postmodern American Philosophy." Why Nietzsche Now?

    Ed. Daniel O'Hara. Bloomington: Indiana UP. 241-269.

Walcutt, Charles Child. 1973. American Literary

    Naturalism: A Divided Stream, Westport, CT: Greenwood.

Whitman, Walt. 1980. _Leaves of Grass: A Textual Variorum of the Printed Poems_. Eds. Sculley Bradley, Harold W. Blodgett, Arthur Golden, William White. Vol. 1. New York: New York UP. 3 vols.

Williams, Raymond. 1977. _Marxism and Literature_. New York: Oxford UP.

Wolf, Peter. "Toward an Evaluation of Transportation Potentials for the Urban Street." Anderson 190-203.

Wood, David. 1989. _Poverty, Ethnicity, and the American City: Changing Conceptions of the Slum and Ghetto_. Madison: U of Wisconsin P.

-