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GREGORY S. JACKSON

Cultivating Spiritual Sight: Jacob Riis's Virtual-Tour Narrative and the Visual Modernization of Protestant Homiletics

On scores of occasions between 1888 and 1915, hundreds, sometimes thousands of Americans gathered in churches, guild halls, theaters, and other venues to see progressive reformer Jacob Riis expose the misery of urban poverty. Projecting images on wide screens in darkened halls, Riis recreated New York tenement neighborhoods for his rapt audiences in ways that allowed them to explore urban despair and translate social knowledge into personal experience liberated from their fear of crime, contagion, and other perceived ghetto hazards.[1] In his most popular "magic-lantern"—or stereopticon—presentation, Riis introduced Tony, a first generation Italian boy born in New York's eastside Bowery district. Using photographic images and speaking in the present tense and first-person plural form of address, Riis created the illusion that Tony himself stood before them. While Tony always began life as a "lad of promise," the subsequent details varied. Riis offered divergent narratives to provoke his audience's empathy and outrage, sometimes depicting Tony as having been orphaned at birth, while at other times, as having been abandoned on the street at age two by his mother's death. In more distressing versions, five-year-old Tony was said to have fled a crowded, one-room apartment to escape his drunken father's daily beatings.

Of the many Progressive Era reformers who fought poverty and urban despair, Riis's legacy endures because of his powerful 1890 study, *How the Other Half Lives.* This illustrated text compiled and distilled his stereopticon lectures, offering readers today a hint of what his turn-of-the-century performances must have been like. But while Riis's text and photographs endure, modern readers have largely lost

ABSTRACT While Jacob Riis has long been situated in the secular wing of turn-of-the-century reform, this study locates the aesthetic and narrative devices of his work within a neglected tradition of Protestant homiletics. Linking his stereopticon presentations to the allegories and interactive strategies of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century sermons, Jackson demonstrates how Riis used modern technology to make traditional modes of religious pedagogy newly relevant to Progressive Era campaigns for social reform. Rather than distancing viewers from the plight of the indigent, as many critics have argued, Riis's photographs sought to convert audiences to the cause of reform by offering new means of spiritual and social identification. / Representations 83. Summer 2003 © The Regents of the University of California. ISSN 0734-6018 pages 126–66. All rights reserved. Send requests for permission to reprint to Rights and Permissions, University of California Press, Journals Division, 2000 Center St., Ste. 303, Berkeley, CA 94704-1223.

sight of their visual strategies and narrative forms, and the modes of reception through which his audiences gleaned their meaning. Understanding Jacob Riis's deep appeal for late-nineteenth-century audiences requires that we expand on the questions of race, class, and politics that are of concern to recent critics, to include the dynamics of sentimentalism in American religious history. Riis emerged as a product of, and catalyst for, late-nineteenth-century Social Gospel activism, and his lectures, delivered across the nation, drew directly on longstanding pedagogies of Protestant homiletics. Born in Denmark in 1849, Riis immigrated in 1870 to the United States, where, after a period of indigence, he began a career as a police reporter. By the 1880s he had become a passionate critic of urban neglect. His upbringing—within Scandinavian Protestant traditions that date back to the Reformation—often overlooked in his biography—aided his seamless immersion into America's largely Calvinist tradition. Until his death, he attended Protestant churches throughout New York, including Brooklyn's Plymouth Church, where the renowned Henry Ward Beecher preached for nearly half a century.

From his first forays into social activism, Riis's approach to progressive reform drew on Social Gospel ideology's central thesis, which questioned Christians' indifference to poverty and despair in their midst. This "practical Christianity," as the larger fusion of Social Gospel efforts with pragmatic philosophy has been termed, had antecedents in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Congregationalism, where Puritan divines like Jonathan Edwards shaped homiletic pedagogy as a defense against a perceived declension in moral vigilance and the worldly encroachment it presaged. Coincident with pervasive socialist efforts and labor strife in the later nineteenth century, "Christian Socialists," first in New York and then in Boston and Chicago, retooled homiletic pedagogy as an offensive strategy against the socially enervating diseases of poverty, ignorance, and middle-class complacency. As practical Christianity merged conventional tenets of Protestantism with a new ethos of active reform, and as the movement grew, it drew together the energies of both lay and religious reform organizations. Such renowned Social Gospel ministers as Lyman Abbott, W. D. P. Bliss, Richard Ely, Washington Gladden, Walter Rauschenbusch, Charles Sheldon, and Graham Taylor ranked among its religious leaders, and such visionary reformers as Jane Addams, Helen Campbell, John Dewey, Benjamin Flower, Ellen Starr, George Vincent, and Lillian Wald were among its prominent lay activists. The Social Gospel phenomenon would reach its apogee in the late 1890s and flourish up until the First World War.[2]

Jacob Riis, of course, has stood as one of the most significant exemplars of the social reform movement's secular wing, and the close parallels between his work and that of Henry Ward Beecher significantly underscore the shared ideologies and narrative strategies between both religious and secular social reformers. What I call Jacob Riis's "virtual-tour narratives" of New York tenements mark a transformative moment in the development of Christian social activism. In an era preceding the rise of modern cinema, drawing on the new and dazzling technology of slide

projection, Riis modernized Protestant homiletics, a religious pedagogical tradition in which eighteenth- and nineteenth-century preachers summoned vivid imagery to crystallize moral issues, illustrated metaphysical abstractions through allegory, and employed spatialized logic and mnemonic organization to help audiences conceptualize and engage a kind of virtual experience. Breaking with pedagogical conventions based on the clerical imparting of moral knowledge, homiletic practitioners sought not just to educate but to motivate. The midcentury sermons of Jacob Abbott; Lyman Beecher; his sons, Henry Ward and Edward; Horace Bushnell; and Charles Finney, among others, transported congregants into detailed hypothetical encounters with moral dilemmas and sin itself. Inspired by this forensic tradition, Riis's lectures combined the still novel technology of photographic projection with vision-oriented homiletic pedagogy to stimulate and direct audience engagement.

Riis forced Christian audiences to confront the dangers and moral challenges of their rapidly urbanizing world. Wedding the sermonic allegory to both the stereopticon's three-dimensional projection and the perceived autoptic realism of preturn-of-the-century photography—the correlation between image and reality that John Dewey mocked as the "kodak fixation"[3]—Riis simulated the physical spaces and metaphysical contours of what reformers referred to as the nation's "social cellar."[4] Drawing middle-class audiences into this social cellar, Riis sought to evoke their concern, making "their hearts 'burn within,'" as *Wesley Magazine* assessed one audience's reaction, by awakening them to their own culpability in human misery.[5] He illuminated the social questions at stake and surveyed the opportunities for Christians to alter not only his specific subject's world but also that of the poor everywhere. Tony, for instance, became an allegorical figure of youth's possibility and the implicit social promise that childhood signified during the Progressive Era.[6] Riis thus used Tony's story, like those of other orphans in his "underworld" pantheon, to emblematize the social rewards of charitable intervention timely met and the dire consequences when ignored.[7] With each plot twist, he underscored how tragedy might have been averted, deploring the part that "we" have played in Tony's plight by "our" indifference to the conditions in which he lived. Tony became a talisman of the momentous task standing between the faithful and the approaching millennium, which many believed their labor would occasion. The Social Gospel promise of a utopian period of social regeneration that would culminate in the world's salvation generated an optimism that flowed generously into the broader culture, replenishing Christian hope even in humanism's secular currents.

Riis's lantern lectures, often described as a new tool of social reform, in fact modernized similar virtual-tour experiences that the Beechers and other evangelical Calvinists had cultivated earlier in the century. Deploying the homiletic conventions of visual language, allegorical tropes, religious tableaux, and first- and second-person plural narration to invoke the immediacy of the audience's senses—heightened by anxiety, suspense, surprise, and the power of suggestion—Riis simulated excursions into New York's tenement slums. In darkened rooms loomed large-

as-life images of poverty, vice, and the destitute that introduced a new dimension to the exhibition space. In conjunction with narratives that, according to the *Brooklyn Eagle* (30 April 1895), combined "knowledge and imagination surcharged with feeling," Riis's photographic images, drawn from his personal archive, created a spatial dimension in which allegory and reality merged.[8] This virtual world was allegorical for the double narrative it provided: while it offered a literal presentation of tenement life, a journalistic report featuring stark images, demographic analysis, and statistical facts, it also possessed an alternative narrative embedded within a tradition of Christian hermeneutics, and invoked by such themes as awakening, atonement, redemption, nativity, and hell's harrowing. Additionally, viewing-auditors familiar with homiletic practice recognized and developed the parallels between the tenement life depicted in the lantern lectures and Riis's repeated allusions to biblical parables or the popular Christian allegories of Dante, Edmund Spenser, John Bunyan, and John Milton, among others.[9] In this allegorical space, Riis engaged audiences in the virtual immediacy of temporal experiences with spiritual consequences. He directed them along prescribed paths, through confining corridors, windowless rooms, crowded dives, and refuse-strewn streets. Introducing sights and sounds of suffering, he also evoked the fetid stench of tenement environs, intoxicating fumes that enervated mental and physical health. While literal, the landscape was also metaphysical: its contagion the cause of moral decay, its baffling contours the snares encumbering the spiritual journey, and its suffering denizens lost members of Christ's fold. For those stuck in the literal, Riis rhetorically prodded the slippage between the literal and allegorical: as he narrated his audience's descent down steep stairs into damp, verminous cellars, among families crowded into single rooms, he announced in the immediacy of the first-person plural, "we've descended into the underworld."

In taking up the particular strategies by which Riis engaged audiences in the reality of urban poverty, I propose an alternative genealogy for the formal and thematic conventions that have come to define literary realism and its generic offshoot, naturalism. Recent critics tend to view realism in the 1890s as an urban style focused less on mimetic representation than on a close-up perspective (primarily the narrator's) that, though experimental, remained deeply committed to the empiricism and immediacy of personal experience.[10] These critics have further defined literary realism against the pervasive conventions of sentimentalism. In his study of Stephen Crane, for instance, Alan Trachtenberg qualifies the realism of Crane's urban tales in contrast to Riis's sentimental strategies, which, in his view, were largely "devices to preserve distance—devices of picturesque perspective or sentimental plot that protected the reader from the danger of a true exchange of point of view with the 'other half' " (*American Realism*, 144). Such devices, I argue, produce distance from a modern perspective, according to an increasingly secular and skeptical epistemology. Because it overlooks a religious tradition grounded not in a sense-based psychology, but in an idealist epistemology that still credited the fac-

ulties of intuition, empathy, instinct, and revelation, Trachtenberg's representative criticism is a historical retrojection of a modern epistemological hegemony onto a past in which the struggle between idealism and "realism" still evenly galvanized ideological partisanship over the nature of reality in religion, psychology, philosophy, and science.

Taking metaphysical capacities (what Josiah Royce called "apperception" and "insight") for granted, Christian Socialists defied the limits to perception as understood within Cartesian dualism and the Lockean legacy of scientific empiricism and, thus, defied the existentialism toward which the "sociological" works of Crane, Jack London, and Frank Norris tended. While literary realism anatomized the experience of *reality*—what Royce, referring to the naturalists, called the "pretended literary wisdom . . . that patiently and lucratively prowls amidst ghastly facts, not for the sake of . . . real truth, but merely for the sake of emphasizing its own weak-minded bewilderment"—Social Gospel advocates focused on the reality of *experience*.[11] Naturalist's definition of realism, for instance, assumed that reality exists apart from experience—at least a single individual's experience—such that the authenticity and accuracy of an individual's perception must be evaluated in relation to a body of perceiving individuals (narrator, author, or reader), or measured against an implied omniscience. By contrast, anchored in a post-Reformation emphasis on individual volition and spiritual self-evaluation, religious adherents of homiletics assumed personal experience to be the measure of reality. Seen from this perspective, Riis's "realism" requires modern critics to reassess the values that underlie conventional definitions of realism: the disdain for spiritual faith and teleological worldviews, cynicism toward Progressive Era faith in social intervention, and a "scientific" determinism that naturalizes social constructivism as ontological certainty. I argue that the aesthetic innovations of literary realism emerged not only from a cosmopolitan embrace of scientific empiricism but also from a home-grown, indeed parochial, sentimental tradition of Protestant homiletics.

Riis's audience brought to the virtual-tour narrative specific Protestant strategies for engaging visual, oral, and literary texts—a particular way of seeing and narrating social reality—that I call an "aesthetics of immediacy." Three components define this Protestant homiletic aesthetic. First, homiletic texts employed allegorical frames to create social environments immediately present to viewing auditors in which individuals imagined possibilities for personal intervention. Readers of homiletic narrative understood Riis's stories of Tony and others not to be just tales particular to a time and place but representative of universal experiences—religious metanarratives and biblical typologies—with realities and consequences both within and outside historical time. Homiletic allegories transformed individuals into communities of action expected to engage with religious material as experiential templates or moral scripts for their own lives. As Tony's plight came to represent the plight of suffering children, the audience's feelings of sympathy and outrage evoked by his misery came to encompass larger questions about social despair and

want, and moral standards for social intervention. Through Tony's story, audiences began to wrestle with the tragedy of alcoholism, starvation, pathogenic infection, the oppression of Gilded Age capital, the despair of sweatshop labor, and the horrors of tenement life.

Second, homiletic texts denied readers the role of passive onlooker, presenting instead a virtual reality that demanded their narrative participation and volition in moral choices. These texts required the viewing-auditor to identify with the subjects, to engage in a dialogue about not only his or her decisions and choices but also their implications for personal experience and social obligation. Riis presented photographs in his virtual-tour narratives not as illustrations of social reality to be taken at face value, but as religious tableaux for audiences that yet believed in representation as a kind of second sight, an unmediated access to the divine. Progressive Era audiences saw the plight of the urban poor only as it became personal through virtual representation: experience, as both Ralph Waldo Emerson and Dewey defined it, that transformed knowledge into action. The tableaux of urban despair Riis staged were the shadows cast by the union of allegory and new visual technologies, to which only the sympathetic identification of middle-class Christians could lend substance. In this act of identification, the cleavages between audiences' lives and the blighted tenement landscapes gave way to what Lauren Berlant, in a secular context, calls "pain alliances" in which one person accepts another's suffering as their own.[12] In the projected images of Tony and his world, for instance, the suffering of photographic ghosts was taken on by the feeling flesh of middle-class spectators. Constructing his virtual-tour narratives around images of widowed mothers, dying fathers, homeless children, and the like, Riis elicited his viewers' emotions in a manner unavailable to the more rational, disenchanted political texts of Progressive Era reform. In exposing such personal, familial, and emotionally saturated imagery, Riis transformed his audience's most intimate feelings into a ritualized expression of community demanding the deeply personalized intervention he referred to as reform by "vital touch."[13]

In no instance did Riis press his audience to greater participation in the experiences of tenement life than in his effort to promote their identification with Tony's and others' suffering. Identification with personal tragedy had become central to the Social Gospel's strategy for reinvigorating Pauline scripture in Protestant life. By declaring with Paul that all are "crucified on the cross with Christ" (Rom. 6:6), and embracing the immediacy of his injunction that the faithful make their "bodies a living sacrifice" (Rom. 12:1), Social Gospel reformers placed the themes of ongoing sacrifice and suffering at the core of Christian activism. Through the narrator in his bestselling homiletic novel *In His Steps* (1896), drawn from Riis's virtual-tour lectures, Charles Sheldon dramatized the desire to build soul-sustaining alliances by making the body a living testament to another's pain: "There had sprung up in them [the Social Gospel protagonists] a longing that amounted to a passion, to get nearer the great physical poverty and the spiritual destitution of the mighty city. . . .

How could they do this except as they became a part of it, as nearly as one man can become a part of another's misery? Where was the suffering to come in, unless there was an actual self-denial apparent to themselves . . . unless it took this concrete, actual, personal form of trying to share the deepest suffering and sin of the city?"[14]

Mainstays of Social Gospel literature, Sheldon's novels illustrate the injunction that the faithful become Christlike by becoming a "living sacrifice" for the social world, the homiletic catechism of muscular Christianity's interventionist creed. Pauline theology not only made suffering the mechanism of identification, the epistemological bridge between subject and object made "concrete," "actual," and "personal" in the visceral experience of another's pain, but it also underscored the stakes between worldly and spiritual priorities by contrasting the insignificance of the individual's historical localization with the universal and eternal significance of Christ's sacrifice on the cross. By then collapsing this difference, homiletic allegory helped Christians cultivate a double vision that allowed them to perceive themselves forever in a transhistorical present, or eschatalogical time, bearing the cross *with* their suffering Savior.[15] Christian Socialists came to see ghetto existence as an allegory of the larger Manichean struggle between good and evil. Far from reducing the poor to abstractions in a moral lesson, diminishing their dignity, or denying their misery, this view made the measure of humanity more than the sum of its materiality—its perishable body and limbs. Imperiled bodies bespoke imperiled souls, a condition exacting the highest price of all: eternal death. In the service of second sight, homiletic instruction attacked the middle class's abject fetishization—its captivation with filth, disease, poverty, and the external markers of otherness—to promote instead sympathy and engagement with material instances of suffering.

The cultivation of this double vision became the third component in the homiletic aesthetics of immediacy. Homiletic narratives drew on readers' sentimental perceptions to invoke a spiritual world, affording those who engaged the narratives with a glimpse of their part in God's design. Protestant readers in this tradition brought to and took from the texts they encountered visions of a spiritual world through second sight. This double vision fostered a weak sense of anachronism, demanding that disciples recognize, if not achieve, an Archimedean perspective outside their historical localization—to see both history and its causality as shadow shows in a cave whose debasement of eternal realities required an epistemological reorientation and a renewed faith in humanity to correct. The earliest homiletic frames reveal the tie between double vision and spiritual growth, even as they alert us to the iconographic conventions at play in Riis's atavistic use of photography. Such a vision motivated medieval art patrons to have their likenesses inserted into the sacred scenes illuminating their psalters, and informs the Protestant practice of including deceased loved ones in family portraits, or still later, the practice of daguerreotyping lifeless children in their parents' arms—acts symbolizing the family's triumph over death at the end of time. Resurrection ultimately became synony-

mous with reunion, a homiletic precept that predisposed Riis's audiences to see the eternal nature of the social emblematized in his photography.[16]

Infused with the aesthetics of immediacy, homiletic narratives immersed audiences into the contemporary world's social concerns, declaring that challenges of their world corresponded with those of the spiritual realm. Social Gospel homiletics demanded that the religiously committed draw on their spiritual vision—their second sight—to address human need. Riis's inclusion of new visual technologies enriched the core structure of homiletic pedagogy by literally adding sight to the tools used to cultivate spiritual vision. With photographs of dark interiors, saloons, street scenes located in or near the infamous Five-Points district, and haunting family portraits, Riis drew his audience into Tony's world. They witnessed his struggle against poverty, hunger, sickness, freezing winters, and violence at the hands of hobos, Tammany Hall policemen, and profiteers. They followed him into beer dives where "inhuman brutes" tempted him to drink and "kicked and cuffed" him, passed into narrow airshafts where he played with other "street Arabs," and toured rat-infested rooms filled with the "fumes of death," the noxious air to which reformers attributed high mortality rates. The virtual tour Riis provided was an exploration not simply of tenement conditions in the material world but also of the allegorical perils that impeded the poor's progress toward salvation. As they followed Tony through his daily trials, audiences experienced through the tableaux of narrative and image, not the stations along the winding path to Calvary, but those along the broad way to destruction. Using photographs to chronicle Tony's childhood struggle, Riis would conclude by describing how he died suddenly by violence, wasted away body and soul from alcoholism, or lingered on the edge of death for days before succumbing to consumption, typhus, scarlet fever, or cholera. On rare occasions, much to audiences' delight, Tony would rise in Algeresque triumph from a youth of indigence and crime to the status of "redeemed citizen."[17]

When located within the multimedia format of the Social Gospel homiletic, Riis's virtual tours become more complex and dynamic than scholarship has generally suggested. Because he employed racial taxonomies rooted in turn-of-the-century ethnography, and his photography seems to reflect the objectification that comprised middle-class identity formation, for instance, many scholars have treated his work solely as sociological exposé. They have typically situated Riis within secular reform, largely analyzing his photographs in *How the Other Half Lives* as prurient exercises that rendered tenement life as exotic spectacle.[18] Such interpretations, however, shear Riis's book from the rich web of extratextual meaning that linked it to the more ephemeral pedagogy of his stereopticon lectures. Disengaged from the homiletic context and religious reform, Riis's images become open registers of sentimentality, icons of alien suffering, and ripe sources of class identification vulnerable to misinterpretation.

Departing from critical consensus, I read *How the Other Half Lives* in the context of homiletic technologies of sentiment and a particular religious vision of social

activism. In demonstrating how Riis's images drew upon a specific Protestant tradition of aesthetics and, in particular, how they modernized a homiletic practice honed by Henry Ward Beecher, we can gain valuable insight into how Protestant reformers galvanized humanist ideals to bridge fears and facts of social difference for their audiences. Riis's virtual-tour narratives helped viewers surmount fears of tenement districts by disrupting their middle-class habit of viewing poverty as the result of either biology or moral stigma rather than environment. As he guided them to organize the indistinct features of poverty and depravity into systematic categories understandable through cause-and-effect and ripe for social analysis, his audience began to see individuals like Tony as sojourners in the faith and as members of the national family and broader humanity. In modernizing homiletic instruction, Riis intended to bridge the epistemological and geographical gaps that separated middle-class reformers from the individuals they sought to know and help.[19] His virtual tour became muscular Christianity's most technologically advanced reconnaissance into previously frightening corridors, and the analysis embedded in his texts trained Protestant ground troops for what he proclaimed a "battle with the slums."[20]

Homiletic Allegory and the Architectural Frame

Describing his magic-lantern lectures and 1890 tenement study as "fit topics for any sermon," Riis acknowledged his debt to the homiletic tradition as it was revitalized by his intellectual and religious mentors, Henry Ward Beecher and Lyman Abbott, Beecher's protégé.[21] He drew directly on this heuristic tradition and, in particular, on its use of allegory. The narrative structure of allegory shaped most homiletic texts, for the double vision it afforded, like the synthesis of the stereopticon's plates, offered a medium through which ministers could unify the material and spiritual realms. Every anecdote, parable, and plot within homiletic texts allegorized deeper religious values, experiences, and histories.

The narrative structure of homiletic allegory profoundly differed from its successor, the novel. Nineteenth-century Protestant reformers asked audiences to engage in a form of reading different from the one that had emerged with the rise of novelized narrative. Novels lay out the fictive landscape in a linear path commensurate with secular readers' perceptions of life and historical and homogenous time and space. Readers' identification with allegory, on the other hand, reorients their lives according to a typological script whose action unfolds inside and outside historical time simultaneously. For an example of this contrast, we might think back to urban satire of the swelling rural revivalism that would later emerge as the Second Great Awakening, exemplified in Royall Tyler's novel, *The Algerine Captive* (1797). At an important juncture in the American literary tradition, when the di-

dactic medium of allegory was giving way to novelistic realism, Tyler mocked homiletic discourse's interactive dimension in his portrayal of the exemplary devotion of his story's hero, Updike Underhill. While reading *Pilgrim's Progress*, Underhill takes a penknife to an illustration in the text, gouging out the eyes of the heroic Christian's fiendish antagonist, the monster Apollyon, in order to "help Christian beat him."[22] Tyler's introduction further lampooned the homiletic epistemology of those ministers like Timothy Dwight, Joseph Bellamy, and Nathanael Emmons, the Edwardsian mentors of Lyman Beecher and Finney—a worldview that not only still flourished in Henry Ward's sermonic allegories half a century later, but remained vibrant through the end of the century. Tyler suggests the depth of the reader's literal identification with and expiation through interactive allegory when he observes: "They wore themselves out fighting Apollyon," or wearied themselves "trudging up the 'hill of difficulty' or through the 'slough of despond' " (vi)—an allegorical cue Riis borrowed from the still popular *Pilgrim's Progress* to alert Christian readers to the metaphysical meaning behind the material reality of tenement misery.[23] To "read" allegories in this way is to see oneself as a historically grounded subject with transhistorical agency. It is also to recover the older, interventionist gloss on "vicarious" living: "to substitute" oneself "in place of" another (*OED*), a paraphrase of John 15:13, another mantra of Christian socialism.

While allegory gave way in secular culture to narrative realism, it remained a central component of homiletic realism. The allegorical frame had long provided an effective way to address one of homiletic pedagogy's key concerns: how to forearm Christians against sin through experience. In his virtual-tour narratives, Riis sought to provide controlled experiences that, while protecting audiences from the hyped perils of the slum, generated authentic social knowledge.[24] So too, in the century before, Jonathan Edwards had endeavored to make children feel the consequences of sin through simulation: to know by doing.[25] Edwards bequeathed to his theological descendents the mandate to provide a visceral knowledge of sin without endangering the spiritual pilgrim's moral purity. Like Milton, he reiterated for his heirs of "New Divinity" the belief that a fugitive and cloistered virtue, unexercised and unbreathed, could never compete for the immortal garland any more than knowledge untried by experience could navigate the perilous landscape that impeded a pilgrim's progress.[26]

Edwardsians like the Beechers experimented broadly in the homiletic tradition to perfect an empirical pedagogy that would give congregations a firsthand experience of the wages of sin, while sparing them its steep price—that they might, as Beecher put it, "see the *end* of vice before they see the beginning."[27] As a homiletic theorist in the Edwardsian camp, Jacob Abbott summed up the problem in his 1836 homiletic manual, *The Way to Do Good, or The Christian Character Mature.* An elder contemporary of Henry Ward and the father of Lyman, Riis's Plymouth Church minister, Abbott rebuffed the practice of countenancing sin for the sake of experience: "It is often said that the young must be exposed to the temptations and bad

influences of the world, in order to know what they are, by experience, and learn how to resist them. 'They must be exposed to them,' say these advocates of early temptation, 'at some time or other, and they may as well begin in season, so as to get the mastery over them the sooner.' "[28] Like the Beechers, Abbott believed that true knowledge was born of experience, not admonition or precept, but he also believed that the act of sinning dangerously habituated the innocent to a "vicious" life. The homiletic tradition was meant to help the young experience the ailment born of sin without actually contracting a disease that led to moral death. In a metaphor suitable to the experiential tenet of his regenerative pedagogy, Beecher wished to use a preventive medicine to "inoculate" his parishioners against a lethal disease. Without a controlled infection, they could never develop immunity to moral contagion.

Few texts better depict the homiletics' use of allegory to simulate virtual experience than Beecher's famous children's sermon "The Strange Woman's House." Based on a homily taken from Proverbs, he initially delivered the sermon on Christmas Eve 1843 but revised the text in 1847. The sermon begins with a small boy encountering a beautiful cottage amidst a pastoral landscape. Despite repeated parental admonitions about the danger of this particular house, and its sole occupant, the "strange woman," the surrounding garden's beauty and the home's alluring domestic felicity beckon the child. He suppresses his mother's warning to avoid the house, convinced he could turn back. Pausing briefly to reflect on the safety of his home, he enters the house, from whence, Beecher ominously declares, "there is no return."[29]

Beecher's use of architecture as a mnemonic device was even then atavistic, part of a heuristic tradition descending from seventeenth-century New England, and circuitously from older medieval heuristic traditions, such as the memory theaters made familiar by the work of Frances Yates and, more recently, Mary Carruthers.[30] In the New England method of Ramistic logic, the Puritan divines used the figure of the house to illustrate the discrete categories of knowledge. In this memory system, students learned to use floor plans as schematic figures to separate, classify, and regulate the seven arts of learning. As an elaborate forensic and mnemonic figure, each room of the house embodied a particular order of knowledge, and each part of each room with a particular piece of information that seventeenth-century divinity students could retrieve by mentally touring the space.[31] In Beecher's sermon, the house's structure provides a heuristic schema for the various ontological categories of sin, each room depicting the various stages of a child's moral fall.[32]

Beecher began his moral instruction by inviting his audience into the house's allegorical frame. He beckoned: "Enter with me, in imagination, the strange woman's House, where God grant you may never enter in any other way" (199). As he led his listeners deeper into the house of hell, he directed their attention to their surroundings: "The floors are bare, the naked walls drip filth, the air is poisonous with sickly fumes, and echoes . . . with misery. . . . On your right hand, as you enter,

close by the door, is a group of felons . . . with swollen faces . . . bloated lips" (201–2). Beecher added sound and smell, filling out the sensual reality of his audience's experience. He imitated groaning doors, "wretches gasping for breath," and creaking floors. "Its air represses every sense," he would tell his audience. "Its sights confound our thoughts, its sounds pierce our ear and its stench repels us; it is full of diseases" (203). Attuned to the homiletic's Lockean imperative of teaching through experience rather than by precept—marked in Abbott's reminder that the senses are "the great avenues to knowledge" (*Way*, 299)—Beecher's allegory suggests the lengths to which religious pedagogy went in training the child's imagination for the reception of virtual experience. As a heuristic, the house figure allowed young listeners to recall the various categories of sin and their spiritual consequences.

By the nineteenth century, the architectural frame that had once provided a deep structure for memory systems had come to lighter service. While older mnemonic systems required memory repetition and elaborate spatial organization, its structural descendent provided a simpler allegorical scaffolding for moral hierarchy, a spatially oriented catechism. Beecher, for instance, anchors a moral hierarchy in each "ward" of the house (or city), giving a vertical dimension to the narrative structure that resembles Dante's descending spiral through the fixed circles of morality. Touring listeners through "the house of licentiousness," he warns that because sin initiates moral decline, the Strange Woman's "house is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death," disease, and destitution (199). His repetition of the phrase a "metropolis of base stories" puns on "story": in an idiom familiar to his audience, the word signifies each ward's narrative and the house's vertical dimension.[33] Among an audience familiar with homiletic practices, it was descriptive shorthand for an allegorical structure.

Riis's *How the Other Half Lives* closely parallels Beecher's virtual-tour narrative and his own lantern-slide tours in its transposition of the audience into an allegorical frame. Riis invites his audience to join him on a tour of the tenement slum. "Suppose we look into one?" he asks.

> Be a little careful, please! The hall is dark and you might stumble over the children pitching pennies back there. Not that it would hurt them; kicks and cuffs are their daily diet. . . . 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. . . . Here is a door. Listen! that short hacking cough, that tiny, helpless wail—what do they mean? . . . The child is dying of measles.[34]

Like Beecher, Riis calls our attention to sounds and smells, fostering the sensual reality initiated by the stereopticon images. Similarly exploiting the nineteenth century's fear that poor ventilation spawned disease, Riis asks, "Is it close? Yes! What would you have? All the fresh air that ever enters these stairs comes from the windows of dark bedrooms that in turn receive from the stairs their sole supply of the elements" (38). Appeals to touch and sound sharpen the verisimilitude of Riis's

own virtual tour: "That was a woman filling her pail by the hydrant you just bumped against," he explains as his audience encounters unfamiliar obstacles and sounds along the tour. Later he invokes other odors as his audience descends with him into "the bowels" of the tenement: "The spice of hot soapsuds is added to the air," he tells us, "already tainted with the smell of boiling cabbage, of rags and uncleanliness all about" (41). Riis's attention to how the full range of senses flesh out visual experience recalls the fulsome descriptions of Beecher's hellish house, even as it emphasizes the reality of experience as something shaped by each agent's engagement.[35] The architectural city's lowest level, like the icy bottom of Dante's inferno, is Blackwell's Island Asylum for insane women—another name strangely evocative of moral allegory. Here the inmates' "incessant, senseless chatter betrays the darkened mind" (202), for Riis, *the* black well of human existence.[36]

For Beecher's Calvinist ancestors, the house operated as an encyclopedia—or *technologia* as the divines called it—a unifying frame for the seven arts comprising the circle of knowledge. What Perry Miller and Walter Ong term the Puritans' "noetic system," is still visible in Abbott's 1836 homiletic manual. Using the architectural frame as a mnemonic device, Abbott instructed Sunday School teachers in the method of organizing moral knowledge:

> The true principle [is] to lead the pupil over the ground in the natural track, acquiring knowledge first in detail, and arranging and classifying it, as he proceeds. The worth and utility of what he learns, will depend upon the fulness [*sic*], and freshness, and vitality of his individual acquisitions, and scientific system should be gradually developed as the apartments of it can be occupied. The building is beautiful in itself . . . but it is valuable, chiefly as a means of securing and preserving from derangement and loss, the valuables it contains. (304–5)[37]

While Abbott cautioned against allowing too much unregulated freedom by "making every pupil an independent investigator and discoverer" (305), he nonetheless advocated an immediacy in which the student followed a "natural track"—a predesigned and guided, interactive course—in order to discover and sort a range of information. While received wisdom disembodied information, creating abstractions that severed knowledge from activity, the homiletic revealed knowledge to be the byproduct of action.[38] Process rather than knowledge was the objective of homiletic pedagogy. If, for Abbott, received knowledge was the fish that fed the hungry for a day, the homiletic process taught the hungry to fish that they might eat for life.

Beecher's sermon demonstrates the house's heuristic function as an allegory of the categories of sin, a technology for imposing order upon chaos. Having conceptualized the moral pitfalls awaiting them, young Christians could safely navigate what for Beecher had become a more dangerous landscape than the allegorical bogs, fens, sloughs, and snares that threatened the spiritual progress of Bunyan's seventeenth-century pilgrim. Freighted with moral meaning, Beecher's "wards"

form a blueprint of the evils that result in a Christian's demise. Each room's interior becomes a microallegory of the sin contained within the allegory's larger frame. In the ward associated with the sin of inebriation, for instance, the walls "ooze" blood, a symptom of the stomach ulcers from which alcoholics were believed to suffer, and the "bloody expectorant" that these ulcers occasioned. The ward associated with fornication is crowded with people covered with festering sores, venereal disease's most visible symptom.

If Beecher's house of hell took the form of a city, Riis's underworld city was designed as a house. Like Beecher, Riis breaks New York down by its preexisting wards, repeatedly drawing attention to existing spatial divisions, including "Hell's Kitchen," "The Bowery," "Hell's Basement," and the "Homestead." Similar to Beecher's five wards depicting the phases of a child's moral decline, Riis's wards accrue social meaning identified with the particular ethnic populations inhabiting them. While using contemporary racial constructions, he frames the space not so much to codify putative ethnographic stereotypes as to push his audience to question them, a strategy that would intensify over the course of his career. As Riis himself increasingly broke down ethnic categorizations in his own mind, he also provided his audience with a firsthand account with which to reevaluate the very suppositions that had guided his early work. By stratifying the urban occupants into the separate floors of a house, from the parlor's social elite down to the "social cellar's" desperately poor, reformers like Riis used the architectural frame to help their readers not only to see the topography of urban poverty and racial and class hierarchies but also to question and overturn these hierarchies by mapping the inverse relation between earthly success and spiritual redemption.[39] It was a relation that gave teeth to the disquieting biblical and homiletic edicts: "the first shall be last and the last shall be first," and "the poor shall inherit the kingdom of heaven."

In this context, Riis inoculated his audience against the irrational fears of tenement visitation. The continual influx of immigrants, Riis wrote in *The Children of the Poor*—his 1892 sequel to *How the Other Half Lives*—"forces layer after layer of this population up to make room for the new crowds coming in at the bottom, and thus a circulation is kept up that does more than any sanitary law to render the slums harmless to the outside" (126). By dividing the city into "stories," and allowing the viewing-auditor to see humanity from multiple angles, Riis rescued his audience from their own social limitations. The allegory's architectural frame and Riis's hauntingly emblematic and holographic slides produced intimations that the sensible world—space itself—merely veiled eternal dimensions. Rather than externalizing perspective, the kind of sociospiritual "cubism" that the virtual tour offered encouraged viewing-auditors to see social evaluation, judgment, empirical data—even sense-based epistemology—as a flattening out or "materializing" of reality's double dimension.

The Interactive Text

Riis's virtual-tour narrative aimed to do more than introduce middle-class audiences to human misery from a safe vantage: it sought to motivate their active engagement with urban social problems. In doing so, it joined the Social Gospel to contend with two prevailing social ideologies of noninterference, one religious and one secular. In the former, a strain of salvation through grace, for which social standing was a portent, resigned the impoverished to their own fallen nature and God's inscrutable design to justify social indolence in the presence of need—a theological hand-washing that William James shamed as the Christian's "moral holiday."[40] In the latter, liberal Spencerians attached capitalism's "free market" mechanism to the theory of social evolution to advance an ideology of "laissez-faire" determinism, in which society, like nature, evolved through an undisturbed cycle of natural regulation and selection. In this view, success, failure, struggle, death, and renewal were the touted engines of social progress.

By the time Riis began his presentations, the homiletic had fused with reform to advocate individuals' capacity to effect change, and to reverse the social entropy and political torpor produced by providential and scientific fatalism. The homiletic's interventionist ethic answered a renewed emphasis among nineteenth-century Edwardsians on individual volition and positive freedom.[41] The revived focus on human agency gave credence to the formerly heretical salvation-through-works doctrine, exposing predestinarianism's overweening presumption that privileged a social and spiritual elect. Volitional agency, and thus a person's capacity for social mediation, made individual redemption inseparable from social salvation. By advocating individuals' moral musculature, Christian Socialists like Riis liberalized Protestant humanism, transforming a belief that spiritual aptitude developed selectively in and among the young to a faith that endowed all individuals with a lifelong capacity for moral growth and spiritual maturation.[42]

Henry Ward Beecher's sermons in the generation before Riis had initiated a growing pattern among Civil War–era evangelical reformers to stimulate individual forays into social activism. Beecher staged numerous theatrical spectacles designed to provoke action as much as to impart insight. On 8 February 1860, for instance, he held a memorable Sunday service where, following an impassioned sermon, he led a nine-year-old African American girl onto the platform. His voice cracking with emotion, Beecher identified the child as a fugitive slave, stunning his congregation of largely well-heeled urban whites. In the graphic language that had secured his reputation as the golden-throated orator, Beecher wrenchingly surveyed the brutality awaiting the fugitive should she be returned. He painted for his congregants scenes of frothing hounds lunging at panting fugitives, the overseer's cracking whip, and the captive's bleeding lacerations. The visual power of the narrative and, no doubt, the righteous indignation evoked by their moral defiance of federal law stirred the congregation to a pitch of impassioned fury and resolve. Beecher then

simulated a slave auction in which congregants purchased the child's freedom. As he did so, his parishioners jumped to their feet and by turns cried out and sobbed as one after another bid on the fugitive, adding money to the freedom fund.[43]

Beecher's drama illuminates clearly the transition in Protestant pedagogy from an emphasis on social charity toward a new aesthetics of immediacy designed to stimulate active engagement with social problems. If freeing a fugitive slave were his only concern, Beecher simply had to request money discreetly from his wealthiest patrons, or to take a collection from a congregation known for charity. Instead, Beecher sought not just to fix a problem, but to immerse his audience in the personal trauma of a larger social ill—to connect his congregants to another's suffering, their agency to social relief. He believed that once his parishioners personally encountered human pain they would be transformed from social observers to activists. In the idiom of his homiletic pedagogy, Beecher was teaching his congregation not only to fish, but to be fishers of men.

Riis joined Beecher in using the pulpit and lectern for sociopolitical reform. Though each used this method toward different ends, the highlighting and mapping of social and demographic conditions became a primary tool for both in helping their audiences engage contemporary urban challenges. Beecher emphasizes demographic shifts as he leads his audience from room to room in the hellish house. From the vestibule through which the child passes as he crosses into the First Ward, subsequent rooms become dirtier and more crowded, each possessing greater suffering, noise and confusion. What becomes apparent is that Beecher's vision of hell is distinctly urban, poor, ethnic, and uneducated—immigrant, one might say. This is not surprising, however, when we recall that in 1847—the year he revises "The Strange Woman's House"—he relocated from Indiana to Brooklyn as pastor of Plymouth Church, to the very ward Riis would call home less than twenty–five years later, to the very church in which Riis would on many occasions present his own virtual-tour narratives. Beecher's fear of urban space and dense populations of the poor is present in his warnings to the young not to "make [their] heads a metropolis of base stories, the ear and tongue a highway of immodest words" (208). New York's verticality, with its submerged layers of corruption, and uncataloged, unregulated vices, sins, and diseases, provided the structure for Beecher's vision of hell.

A generation later, Riis's earliest tours followed the social and demographic emphases of Beecher's schematic topography. By drawing so closely on the form and content of homiletic structure, Riis immersed his virtual-tour narratives in prevailing moral constructions of race. Ethnically labeled photographs form the central narrative structure. The Italians of the fourth ward, for instance, live under the worst sanitary conditions. Photographed in prone positions, theirs is the disorder of idle resignation that "afflicts" Mediterranean cultures. The Irish of the "bloody sixth" and twenty-first wards are quick to wrath. Relaxing their inhibitions, excessive drinking renders them difficult to assimilate. Located near "the Bend," the Jews of "Jewtown" suffer from cupidity, a symptom, Riis tells the reader,

of their "commercial instinct." The German, though "order-loving," lives a life reduced in meaning by the "monotony" of his surroundings. The African American embodies the moral failing captured in photographs of "Black and Tan Saloons," liminal spaces blurring racial boundaries. The Chinese, for Riis the most vulnerable to slipping on the ontological chain of being, are "stealthful like the cat" in their social evasion. What for Beecher's generation was the tenement's refusal of moral closure—with its labyrinthine architecture—was for its Social Gospel heirs simply the social disorder that homiletic schematization sought to contain and organize in the name of civic reform. For Beecher, the tenement's gothic space had allegorized the sins of religious and legal equivocation, the false routes of logic, the blind alleys of reason, the microdivisions whose excess of sign defied the very order that homiletic architecture would impose. Evacuated of much of its moral freight, for Riis it simply symbolized a disruption in the order that promoted meaningful self-regulation. It had become an allegory of domestic disarray, in which Christian duty obligated intervention through the reformer's role of what he called the national "housekeeper."

How the Other Half Lives bears vestiges of the moral typology of mid-nineteenth-century racial taxonomies that Riis's magic lantern projected onto the urban demography. The fear of social chaos created by masses who went unaccounted required ordering for what in Beecher's sermons was a zoology of the "vicious": imported "serpents from Africa," "lions from Asia," "lizards and scorpions and black tarantulas from the Indies" (211). Beecher's xenophobia took the form of a transmogrified chain of being, by which the city became civilization's urban jungle. Merging with Social Darwinism and Louis Agassiz's legacy of late-century Lamarckian determinism, this zoology informs Riis's own fear, not of the immigrant socialized and integrated, but of those left to tenement environs, where, he writes, "the latent possibilities for evil that lie hidden within" transforms man into a brute (*Other Half*, 138).[44] As Riis writes of orphans like Tony, "Home, the greatest factor of all in training of the young, means nothing to him but a pigeonhole in a coop along with so many other human animals." Tenement slums contain the "packs," "herds," "flocks," "clutches," and "swarms" that inhabit "rookeries," "colonies," "coops," and "dens," a categorical nomenclature he revises to describe, not individuals, but the dangers of debased environments ill suited for helping humans achieve their social and spiritual possibility. Riis turns Beecher's judgment back upon the middle class for their complacency toward, if not agency in, humanity's bestialization.

Because Riis's descriptions unfold on the sensational side of sentimentalism and sometimes employ ethnic labels in seemingly rigid ways, recent criticism often dismisses his work as sentimentalism that, in June Howard's assessment, represents the "poor only in the most cliched terms" (*Form and History*, 132). Riis's work certainly risks presenting the "other's" suffering not as an object for intervention, but as an object inviting self-reflexivity, the difference, as Howard puts it, "between empathy and observation, between treating an other . . . as a producer of signs and as a sign"

(105). While Riis's earliest work rises out of distinctive Progressive Era processes of social formation, the political project that emerged from his ethnic cartography departed sharply from that of many of his contemporaries.

In the emerging social sciences, in many progressive reform leagues, and in state and local legislative corridors, ethnic demography had become a tool of both description and analysis, as racial and class traits became explanatory factors for poverty, crime, and other components of urban despair. The gradual shift in social and political sentiments that shaped his work from his first lectures to his final essays reveals the homiletic narrative's power to initiate self-reflection and transform one's own social awareness and political engagements. Whereas the labels Beecher used to categorize sin provided middle-class audiences with a clear portrait of good and evil, merit and sloth, grace and judgment, Riis intended his ethnography to expose the "realities" of tenement life so that listeners, armed with an understanding of pain and suffering, could act to alleviate such despair. His demographic tour drew on familiar schema that were intended more to stabilize and control the spin of allegory by giving structure and meaning to the horrifying depths of human suffering in already racialized ghettos than to naturalize ethnic difference. Ultimately he drew on ethnic taxonomies not as static categories for social critique, but, rather, to question the divisions instilled by difference. Only by providing a structured portrait of poverty, sorrow, and need could he spur his readers to engage social problems they would otherwise encounter only in the abstract.

Using his press coverage to excoriate the city for "interring" the sick and homeless on Blackwell's Island, Riis accused the city of a policy of "dealing with the poor that simply looked at getting them out of the sight of their happier fellows whom their misery offended."[45] "On these islands," he tells his audience, "there are no flexible twigs, only gnarled, blasted, blighted trunks, insensible of moral or social influence."[46] Alluding to the suicides' judgment in Dante's inferno—in which they are imprisoned in a tree—Riis uses the example of the Blackwell's inmates, "patients inflicted with suicidal mania" (*Other Half*, 203), to impress upon his audience the need for immediate intervention in poverty, before despair renders sufferers' minds inflexible and necessity their vices habitual. Like Beecher's, Riis's aesthetics of immediacy gave viewing auditors the perception of an authentic experience, making them feel the irresistible gravity of hopelessness and habituation.

Riis's virtual-tour narratives struck a nerve within Progressive Era audiences and, particularly, among Beecher's generation; the era's flurry of social reform activities confirms that many Americans accepted and engaged homiletic blueprints for civic engagement. Upon reading *How the Other Half Lives*, for example, the elderly James Russell Lowell—whose poetic allegory about Christ as a modern beggar who finds no Christian aid prefaces Riis's book—wrote to Riis, "I have read your book with deep and painful interest. I felt as Dante must when he looked over the edge of the Abyss at the bottom of which Gergon lay in ambush. . . . I found it hard to get asleep the night after I had been reading it."[47] Writing for the same audience, Flower

would name his virtual-tour narrative after Dante's allegory, *Civilization's Inferno* (1893). More than a metaphor, his title indexes the hermeneutic tradition to which Lowell referred. Flower tells his reader that "there is no need to wander into other worlds for hells of God's creating," for "Man has made an under-world, before which the most daring imagination of poet or seer staggers. Over its portals," he intones, "might well be blazoned the soul-freezing inscription which Dante beheld as he entered the under-world" (*Inferno*, 101). Sharing Beecher's Calvinist training, Lowell, like Flower, recognized in Riis's work the homiletic paradigm, which Riis fashioned after the visual and narrative realism of Beecher's heuristic allegory. Lowell's sleepless night and "pained conscience" activated by reading Riis's book demonstrate the "readerly" interaction to which Royall Tyler referred when he satirized Bunyan's reader for wading through the slough of despond alongside Christian. If Bunyan's Christian is a struggling Everyman on a quest for personal redemption, so is Riis's impoverished immigrant, with whom readers like Lowell identified. By approaching *How the Other Half Lives* from within the ascending materialist epistemology, against which turn-of-the-century Christian idealists like Dewey and Josiah Royce vainly labored, modern readers have lost sight of the homiletic's allegorical structure, its spiritual dimension. From inside this religious hermeneutic, however, these comments suggest how Riis's aesthetics of immediacy inculcated readers in the salvation or destruction of all. Lowell's testimony illustrates the virtual tour's homiletic potential to overcome social barriers by collapsing the reformer and poor into a single perceiving, suffering body.

Unlike Beecher and his contemporaries in secular reform, Riis learned to separate the individual from the "masses," viewing slums not as a glimpse into a metaphysical hell, but, as he taught Flower to see them, a hell made by man. While campaigning against Spencerian and religious hereditary doctrines with the slogan that "no children were bad by nature; there was no such thing as total depravity," he modified Beecher's Calvinist eugenics—in which moral degradation is not racially fixed or gendered but bequeathed to children through the moral defects of their parents—to account only for environmental effects.[48] In so doing, he attached a temporal imperative to the rescue of tenement inhabitants. Because for Riis the effect of "bad environment," not morality, "becomes the heredity of the next generation," dirt and darkness were, for him, the malevolent forces imperiling the nation.[49] "[I] naturally want to let in the light," Riis recorded in *How the Other Half Lives*. "I will have no dark corners in my own cellar; it must be whitewashed clean." For Riis, the burst of magnesium that brought the "underworld" to view became a metaphor for the new century's enlightenment: a synthesis of the lights of science and spiritualism. Armed with new technologies and the shield of faith, he set out to harrow the tenement underworld, saving the as-yet-unhardened from a tragic end, from the lowest level of the urban hell, the "darkened mind." Or as Flower diagnosed the spiritual consequences, the "extinguished soul," a phrase loaded with recrimination for those failing in their Christian stewardship.

Riis's virtual tour departed from its precursor by realigning the Puritan forensic arts (*technologia*) with new "arts" of visual technology. This technology transformed and clarified the images of urban life, revealing not the pattern of good and evil seen in homiletic sermons, but a disorganized world of daily life rife with possibilities for social action. After touring Chicago slums, John Dewey expressed the same optimism about urban distress that captivated Riis's audiences. In the tenor of Social Gospel humanism, Dewey wrote to his wife: "Think of the city as 'hell turned loose' and yet not hell any longer, but simply material for a new creation."[50]

The Timeless Flash of Light

American Protestants raised in the homiletic tradition learned to interact with religious texts in a manner that is difficult for more skeptical modern readers to understand. Particularly lost to posthomiletic audiences is the second sight that nineteenth-century Christian audiences claimed. Elizabeth Cady Stanton, for instance, grew up in the "flock" of the famed revivalist Charles Finney and recalled in her 1897 autobiography his religious training's lasting impact. Like his evangelical cohorts, Finney sought to produce piety on a mass scale by drawing upon the visually oriented homiletic tradition. In the context of massive revival meetings, faith became a matter of sight: awakening in piety meant seeing the reality their sermons verbalized. Garnering second sight thus fulfilled the homiletic injunction whose intent Abbott had digested in the slogan: "present everything in such a way as to convey vivid pictures to the mind" (*Way*, 279).

Stanton recalled how on a "memorable occasion" Finney seemed to summon Satan to frighten backsliding parishioners into renouncing their sin and renewing their faith. Sixty-five years later she described the event as still "indelibly impressed on my mind":

> One evening he described hell and the devil and the long procession of sinners being swept down the rapids, about to make the awful plunge in the burning depths of liquid fire below, and the rejoicing hosts in the inferno coming up to meet them with the shouts of the devils echoing through the vaulted arches. He suddenly halted, and, pointing his index finger at the supposed procession, he exclaimed: "There, do you not see them!"
>
> I was wrought up to such a pitch that I actually jumped up and gazed in the direction to which he pointed, while the picture glowed before my eyes and remained with me for months afterward. . . . Fear of the judgment seized my soul. Visions of the lost haunted my dreams. Mental anguish prostrated my health. Dethronement of my reason was apprehended by my friends. . . . Returning home, I often at night roused my father from his slumbers to pray for me, lest I should be cast into the bottomless pit before morning.[51]

Stanton's memory illuminates how the gap between what the viewer sees and what is "present" becomes the imaginative space in which texts become interactive. As with Beecher's and Riis's narratives, the aesthetics of immediacy furnished that space within a narrative framework designed to secure the viewing-auditor's identi-

fication with an allegorical sequence of rooms and with a progressive story of moral decline or redemption.[52] By effecting a somatic identification between reform agents and the destitute, the repetition of suffering produced by homiletic simulation generated the most authentic social knowledge—personal experience. Summing up the Edwardsian imperative to teach by experience, Perry Miller wrote that, "if a sermon was to work an effect, it had to impart the sensible idea in all immediacy; in the new [Lockean] psychology, it must become, not a traveler's report nor an astrologer's prediction, but an actual descent into hell" (*Jonathan Edwards*, 156). If Stanton did not descend into hell, she stood on its brink. Finney's sermon was consummated in her prostrate health, unthroned reason, and the anxiety that led her to wake her father. Her visceral reaction and, in turn, her father's response make visible the sermon's interactive dimension, the affective strategies by which the narrative elicits identification and motivates action.

In its emphasis on experiencing both the literal and the divine through the acquisition of second sight, homiletic pedagogy cultivated a double vision among Protestants who encountered life as a religious narrative. The homiletic had prepared Stanton's mind to translate verbal imagery into visual reality, not as metaphor, but as a realization of the immutable world that lay beyond the sensible. Only by seeing perishing souls fall into the chasm of the eternal deep, only by experiencing the terror of Satan's presence as a personal reality, could Stanton locate herself within the allegorical frame of Finney's regenerative narrative.

It is the occult nature of religious faith to see things that are not empirically present. The Platonic roots of Anglo-American Protestantism had long nurtured the belief that only a veil divided the sensible world from the spiritual. What Puritan scholars have identified as the seventeenth-century transmission of Neoplatonism shaped American Protestant occultism. The Puritan division between the Visible and Invisible Church and the soul's unrequited, earthly desire for its perfect completion in Christ prepared the need and way for new epistemological explanations of the divine in the face of John Locke's limiting epistemology.[53] The extraordinarily saintly, those with second sight, and those with a tentative hold on this world—children, the dying, spiritualists—were afforded glimpses behind the veil. Faith, then, was a measure of the believer's extrasensory perception. As Abbott admonished his audience,

> Make it your aim, not merely to see what is visible to the eye, but to read its hidden meaning, and take pleasure, not in novelty and strangeness, but in the clearness with which you understand and appreciate every common phenomenon. Be intimately conversant thus with a moral and spiritual world, to which the external one around you will be the medium of access. He who does this, will find his mind filled with a thousand recollections and associations that, by means of a power which is neither imagination or memory, but something between, will furnish him with illustrations of all which he wishes to teach;—illustrations true in spirit, though imaginary in form. (*Way*, 319)

In the homiletic, the visual attributes of verbal illustration specified the process between "imagination and memory" by which the external world became a "medium of access" to the spiritual's hidden meaning.

The chiliastic enthusiasm attached to the terminus of both century and millennium and the syncretism of what Louis Menand has called an age in which "psychic phenomenon, religious belief, and science" (*Metaphysical Club*, 90) were inextricably entwined made the 1890s an auspicious time for spiritualism. As Robert Taft demonstrated in *Photography and the American Scene* (1938), the camera had been associated with the occult since its invention. The ability to capture images, the daguerreotype's hologrammatic quality, the ghosting patterns produced by movement during exposure, and the palimpsestic depth and nuances of photographic chiaroscuro together supported claims about the camera's ability to register spiritual presences invisible to the naked eye. In *Reading American Photography*, Alan Trachtenberg traces the late-nineteenth-century perception that the camera could capture authentic essences, that it sees beneath the subject's mask, beneath the assumptions and prejudices that we impose on others.[54] Unlike the human mind, the camera was not, Riis believed, temporally and spatially conditioned; it was not susceptible to the habituated illusion of relational order.

The homiletic's use of allegorical tableaux made photography an ideal tool for Social Gospel reform. Riis's audience came prepared to see the fluctuating superimposition of the material and spiritual worlds. Photography thus provided an ideal second fundamental strategy for engaging the imaginative space of faith: the visualization of spiritual reality. As Abbott described the appropriately trained "seer" in his homiletic manual, "the ordinary exhibitions of human action, though opaque . . . and spiritless to others, are bright and transparent to him. He sees a spiritual world through the external one, and the spectacle which thus exhibits itself all around him, is clothed thus with a double interest and splendor" (*Way*, 317). Hailing the camera as the "greatest of human triumphs over earthly conditions," Oliver Wendell Holmes described the photograph in precisely the language conventional to the description of things spiritual, "the divorce of form and substance."[55] With its ability to freeze movement and whitewash darkness, Riis used the still-new technology of photography to wage war with what he called the "principles of darkness," to make the misery of the urban reality "bright and transparent," as Abbott had put it, with "the double interest and splendor" of spiritual resonance. The magnesium's blinding burst illuminated the degradation of tenement life, just as its light became Riis's metaphor of salvation in the urban house. By situating each image within the virtual-tour frame, Riis did not just capture, he actively reshaped a sordid social reality in the service of specific pedagogical ends.

Photography offered Riis a medium suited to capturing the palimpsestic correspondence between visible and spiritual realms. In his photographs of children, for example, the mother often appears a "spectral presence." In "Minding the Baby"

FIGURE 1. Jacob A. Riis, *Minding the Baby—Scene in Gotham Court*, c. 1890. By courtesy of the Museum of the City of New York.

(fig. 1), she seems to be reaching out to catch her child as it slides from an older sibling's lap. The image's fuzzy resolution signals the woman's motion, a quality associated with Riis's candid shots, in which he surreptitiously entered homes, capturing occupants unaware. But this photograph is hardly candid. Riis deliberately captured the mother in motion, using the technology's more primitive features to create a supernatural realism. Gifted with a camera and possessing hundreds of photographs from which to select his published prints, Riis staged the scene. Requiring a fraction of a second for exposure, "taking a picture" had advanced dramatically from the daguerreotype phase, when, depending on light availability, exposure required from twenty seconds to three minutes. In this photograph, Riis set the woman in motion, opening the shutter at precisely the moment she entered the lens' frame. An "accident" referred to as "ghosting," the result creates a spectralized image and gives a transparent quality to objects in motion. Enabling his audience to see "the spiritual world through the external one," the image spectralizes the mother to remind us that her children are orphans, practically speaking, if not in

reality. She is missing: she died in childbirth, fell to prostitution, or succumbed to sweatshop labor. Her spectral image links material poverty to its spiritual consequence. Applying the religious hermeneutic to a virtual-tour narrative, Flower illustrates the proper way to read these images within the homiletic frame: inductively, from a seemingly implicit meaning backward in time to an explicit one, to reveal the viewers' culpability in the causal chain of suffering, despair, and death: "they seem of another world; they are of another world; driven into the darkness of hopeless existence" ("Society's Exiles," 37).

Images throughout Riis's stereopticon tours trade in the visual conventions of sentimental domesticity, inviting viewers to draw quick conclusions from the cultural resonances they evoke. Affect-saturated tropes such as destitute orphans, childhood disease and starvation, and sacrificing mothers engage viewers' empathy in the politico-aesthetic tradition of sentimentality. This tradition is all the more affecting when the sentimental gives way through spiritual sight to the authenticity of experiencing another's pain as an expiating sacrifice commensurate with Christ's atonement for the world. Riis's visual texts are interactive for what they require from the audience: a recognition of sentimental tropes that in turn invite a creative act of misrecognition, or second sight. Through the aesthetics of immediacy Riis framed these familiar images, using sentimental conventions to destabilize the semiotic production of realism—making the social world newly visible to audiences through an optics of the divine. As with the photograph above, the childhood mortality and poverty Riis portrays suggest the temporal limits of the sensible world. So too for his audience, suffering resonates with a chiasmic typology, where, in the popular parable of rich man and beggar, eternal Life rewards the suffering poverty of a Lazarus and eternal Death the selfish luxury of a Dives.

For Beecher, the city as house comprises "volumes of monster-galleries in which the inhabitants of old *Sodom* would have felt at home" (210). His hell, strikingly cast in the mould of a tenement slum, is synonymous with New York's ghettos, with "stacked houses, burning streets, reeking gutters, everlasting din of wheels, and outcry of voices . . . of life in the city."[56] The contagion threatening middle-class culture is for Beecher the "common sewer of society, into which drain the concentrated filth of the worst passions, of the worst creatures, of the worst cities" ("Strange Woman," 210). His allegorical cityscape verifies the fallen state of those within, a Calvinist remnant of social status as a sign of election or reprobation. In Beecher's tableau of urban outcasts, God passes judgment on Sodom and Gomorrah. Riis's cityscape by contrast casts the reformer in the role of Abraham, who, upon learning of the cities' fate, bargained with God for its salvation if ten innocents might be found. " 'Were they all bad, those dens I hated?' " Riis admonishes himself in his 1901 autobiography, *The Making of an American*. " 'Yes, hated,' " he muses, " 'with all the shame and the sorrow and the hopeless surrender they stood for? Was there not one glimpse of mercy that dwells in the memory with redeeming touch?' " In the breath with which he raises the question, he answers it: " 'Yes, one. Let it stand

FIGURE 2. Jacob A. Riis, *In the Home of an Italian Ragpicker, Jersey Street*, c. 1890. By courtesy of the Museum of the City of New York.

as testimony that on the brink of hell itself human nature is not wholly lost. There is still the spark of His [God's] image, however overlaid by the slum (169–70).'" Unlike Abraham's nephew Lot, who found none worthy of salvation, Riis finds many: "It is not an uncommon thing to find sweet and innocent girls," he writes in *How the Other Half Lives*, "singularly untouched by the evil around them, true wives and faithful mothers, literally 'like jewels in a swine's snout,' in the worst of the infamous barracks" (122). In his photograph entitled, "In the Home of an Italian Ragpicker, Jersey Street" (fig. 2), Riis portrays one such jewel, a mother and child.

This image of a mother cradling a swaddled infant is Riis's version of the New World nativity. With doleful gaze drifting upward, his Madonna strikes a pose of spiritual reflection, a pose at odds with the filth that surrounds her. Near at hand are the instruments that tie her to a base existence, to a close affinity with dirt, disease, and destitution. This living tableau demonstrates another side to homiletic allegory's "realism." The galvanized washing tubs, bundles of dirty rags, even the dustpan, signal the toiling life of a washerwoman—details that stand in contrast

to the religious iconography and the mother's distant, heavenward gaze. High overhead, the straw hat is the only reminder of the natural world, the pastoral setting of nativity, the green world from which urban depravity seduced Beecher's rural youth. Daylight and its absence are invoked both by the straw from which the hat has been woven, and the hat's function to protect its wearer from the sun. The high walls and cropped ceiling, and the ladder standing near the mother, as though she must ascend from a great depth to reach the light, increase the illusion of depth, the feeling of entombment. Riis's city inverts Beecher's image of rural innocence swallowed up by urban abomination. Read through the appropriate hermeneutic lens, the photograph overturns its implicit sentimentalism to become a visual metaphor of spiritual reality—a deferred transcendence, a purgatory awaiting a social harrowing. The tableau of spiritual realism is the more apparent for the extremity of the suffering it exposes, and the repetition—the Gilded Age's *memento mori*—implied by life's generational cycle (mother/child), and, as the broom, dustpan, and rags imply, by the futility of placing one's store in earthly things. First and last, the image appeals to spiritual rather than social justice where moth and rust doth corrupt.

Riis's photography engaged viewers in the invisible world that lay beyond the apparent reality of projected images. Riis accomplished this engagement through a technical manipulation of the photographic medium, by ghosting. But he did so through a manipulation of the image's content and iconography as well that I call "sentimental ghosting." Through an ironic juxtaposition of visual and spiritual realities, sentimental ghosting creates hermeneutic space for the occult apprehension of truth. Riis imports sentimental tropes into his picture story, while at the same time shifting these familiar tropes to disrupt their implicit meaning. Essentially, he places a modern notion of *seeing* as an implicit act against an older hermeneutic practice of seeing as *reading*, an explicit act manipulated by carefully crafted tableaux. As in his image of mother and child, sentimental ghosting disrupts the gestalt effect by which we immediately take in the whole of the photographic image. In this alien environment—a nativity set in an inverted pastoral scene—the familiar trope becomes unstable: flashing (like slide projection itself) between the familiar and the distorted, a disjuncture between the beautiful and damned, a process of proto-Brechtian audience alienation that, in modern psychological parlance, we might think of as cognitive dissonance. Unlike the irony associated with the critical hermeneutics of secular postmodernism, however, sentimental irony creates this dissonance *in the service of* a sincere recommitment to humanism, in order to elicit and secure our commitment to spiritual truths that defy the apparent facts of social difference.

If, as Riis informs us in the accompanying text, the room is windowless and without natural light, what is the source of its artificial light? There is no indication of a lantern or fire. Riis's "flash light" has seemingly caught the mother and child in total darkness, illuminating momentarily a virtue buried in this underworld, a

virtue identified by the photograph's emblematic presentation. As a contemporary reviewer observed, the "rayless vault" and other images in Riis's magic-lantern lecture frame the virtual-tour narrative as a mission to harrow hell. Writing for *The Critic* on 18 December 1892, this reviewer praised Riis's tour for "strengthening faith in God," and Riis for having "gone down into the depths of humanity, and into the homes where sunlight is but little known, and [having] come back, to call out the rest of humanity, to tell them how their brothers and sisters live."[57] From this perspective, Riis's poor are suspended in a liminal world, between damnation of perpetual darkness and the salvation of light. The mother's look of forbearance belies her peril, a spiritual resignation that to all appearances must outlive her mortal form. Twentieth-century critics have claimed that Riis's photographs were unmediated. But despite his claims of having burst unannounced into darkened rooms in the dead of night, Riis designed many of his photographs as religious emblems.[58]

The images in Riis's virtual-tour narrative pursue yet another strategy of ironic ghosting, borrowing from the homiletic tradition even as they adapt it to photographic technology. Unlike Beecher's visual language of excess, Riis relies on photography's claim to represent reality. In fact, his occasional graphic descriptions stand in contrast to the restraint shown in his photographs. He occasionally writes of alcohol sold in saloons as so toxic to the body that he refers to it as "blood baths" and of little children so inebriated that, while unconscious, they are "killed and half-eaten by rats" (169), yet his photographs never reveal such lurid scenes, much less the equivalent of Beecher's visual language. Nor do they advance the clinical "realism" prized by turn-of-the-century sociology, such as Robert W. DeForest and Lawrence Veiller's report for the New York State Tenement House Commission, which, in the name of scientific objectivity, exhibits such images as the indigent stripped naked in baths or awaiting examination, or photographs of fouled tenement apartments.[59] To do so would be to ground his viewing-auditors in the sensible world—in the copiousness of sensual, rather than spiritual, detail. Against Abbott's admonition, it would be to invite "pleasure in novelty and strangeness," to which photography was already susceptible. Through sentimental ghosting Riis redirects his audience's gaze inward upon an erstwhile invisible truth.

Riis's strategy of sentimental ghosting was inspired by a homiletic convention that embedded irony within sentimentalism to produce a discordant jolt resulting from the friction between two familiarly paired representations, in which one representation has been slightly skewed or shifted. Beecher's sermon offers several instances of this ironic sentimentalism. In the Third Ward, for example, an adolescent girl, dressed in rags and covered in festering sores, "cries out to her sweet and virtuous mother," who, Beecher tell us, has but lately been translated into a "glorious angel." Viewed against the popular conception of the mother as "angel of the hearth" and spiritual guardian of her young, the child's moral condition is the more surprising. But the narrative holds still another twist. In contrast to the youth's eternal suffering emerges the irony of a mother whose salvation has been occasioned

by her death from a grief brought about by knowledge of her child's damnation. As with the photographs above, Riis continually ironizes the sentimental tropes of motherhood, the earthly legislator of divine law. In "A Home Nurse" (fig. 3), for example, he inverts the trope of mothers nursing dying children. Here the baby nurses a dying mother. Who then, the photograph implies, will guide, guard, and cherish the child?

In these various ways, Riis restages or inverts romantic tropes, appealing to an incongruity of image and language to alienate his audience from the comforting stasis of a prescripted sentimentalism. "Street Arabs in Night Quarters" (fig. 4) depicts three orphans posed in sleep against an exterior tenement staircase. Their sentimentalized postures—like satyr infants of a Veronesean green world—gradually reveal a tension with the urban environment, the cold pavement and brutal city streets, a juxtaposition Riis crystallizes by his reference to "street Arabs" like Tony as urban "Huck Finns." Embedded within the implicit, autoptic epistemology of the photograph—the image's power to narrate itself—lies a subliminal pattern, which gradually reorients our vision of the photograph against sentimental convention. The audience's hermeneutic training gradually renders the epistemology explicit, initiating a homiletic tradition that, as Lowell's response to Riis's book suggests, turn-of-the-century audiences could still take for granted. As with the lantern-slide show from which it drew its aesthetic strategies, Riis's book engaged audiences by appealing to the affective conventions of faith.

By incorporating photography into the virtual-tour structure, Riis reinvigorated an older heuristic for shaping perception, innovating upon Abbott's cognitive track by which audience's imaginations were regulated and directed, their emotions modulated and focused. No act of free association could initiate the communal realism required for second sight or conversion to the cause of social reform. Riis's virtual-tour narrative had to enact a reality of experience so authentic that the audience would, through a kind of visceral exchange, experience a repetition of the poor's suffering. Only through alliances of suffering promoted by the Social Gospel's Pauline creed could reformers and the impoverished be united in the assurance of social redemption. We will "close the gap in the social body, between rich and poor," Riis counseled, "only when we have learned . . . to weep with the poor" ("RHT," 753).

In his photograph entitled "Prayer-time in the Nursery—Five Points House of Industry" (fig. 5), Riis stages a prayer circle of children in white nightgowns, gracefully arced for the camera, each kneeling in prayer. He draws on the Victorian cult of children, emphasizing their vulnerability in relation to the barnlike environs. But in jarring discord with the Victorian belief in heaven-protected innocence, the photograph reveals a startling contradiction. Riis describes the children kneeling in a prayer he titles (in capital letters): "now I lay me down to sleep, I pray the Lord my soul to keep." His abrupt midverse break compels the reader to complete the well-known prayer. Ventriloquized through the mouths of affluent adults, the

FIGURE 3. Jacob A. Riis, *A Home Nurse*, c. 1890. By courtesy of the Museum of the City of New York.

FIGURE 4. Jacob A. Riis, *Street Arabs in Night Quarters*, c. 1890. By courtesy of the Museum of the City of New York.

prayer's provision for a child's sudden death adds poignancy to an already absurd irony: "If I should die before I wake, I pray the Lord my soul to take." Although disturbing, the prayer still seems at one with the photographic sentimentalism, until one sees the turn the homiletic trope takes.

Should any miss the contradiction of youth and death, of helpless innocents and brutal suffering, of angelic essence and hellish existence, Riis reveals a devastating detail. "Too often," he announces, "their white night-gowns hide tortured little bodies and limbs cruelly bruised by inhuman hands" (151). It was a message made familiar in the concurrent lectures of T. Dewitt Talmadge, whose revised homiletic trope marked the shift from Calvinism's punitive moralism (Finney's sinners swept over the brink of hell's chasm) to Riis's innocents destroyed by social complacency: "Look at the pale cheek, who bleached it? Look at the gash across the forehead, a drunken father struck it there. . . . The death-knell has already begun to toll, and the angels of God fly like birds over the plunge of a cataract. While such children are on the brink they halt, and throw out their hands, and cry: 'Help! Help!' "[60] The

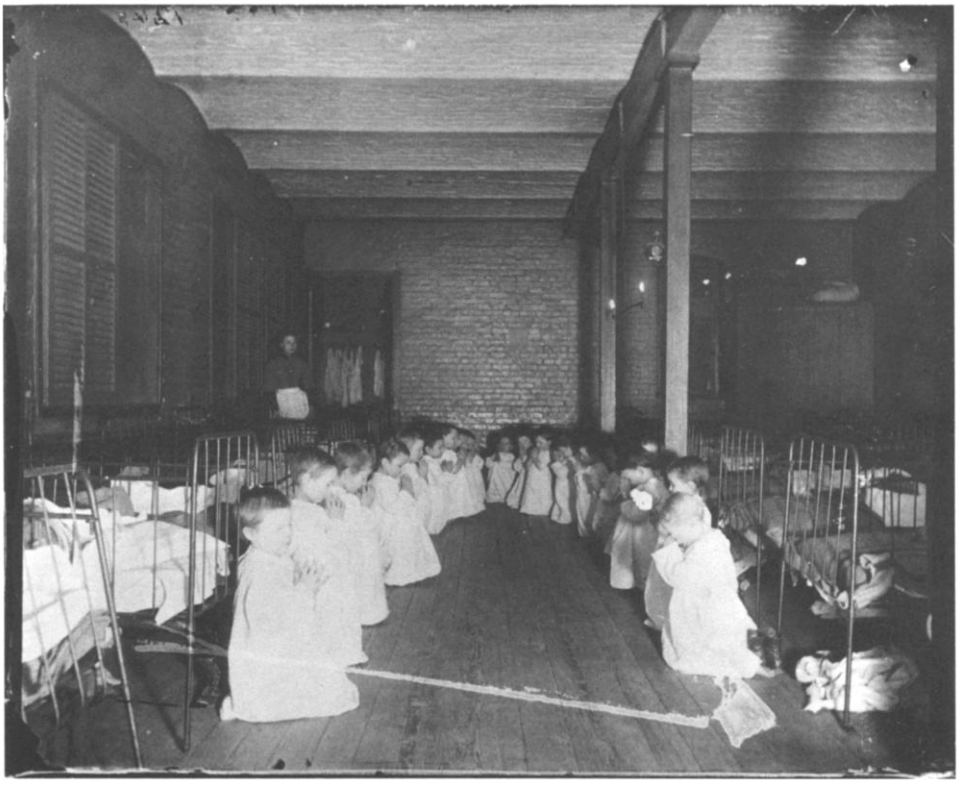

FIGURE 5. Jacob A. Riis, *Prayer-time in the Nursery—Five Points House of Industry*, c. 1890. By courtesy of the Museum of the City of New York.

numerous descriptions of children's plight magnified the effect of Riis's sentimental ghosting. Everett Burr, another Social Gospel minister, opined: "The children are everywhere, . . . in the gutters, beneath the horses' feet on the street, children in the alley ways, on the stairs, everywhere, mowed down" ("Social Salvation," 263). With Burr, Walter Swaffield warned of the "multitudinous little lives swept into the struggling, seething world of social night as driftwood borne to shore by storm-lashed ocean waves" ("Tenement Curse," 674)—a premature harvest of the progressive hope that children signified.[61] In a burst of light, the photograph, like the irony of Beecher's child in hell, is transformed from a sentimental depiction of children kneeling before a loving God—an image resonant of Victorian productions of angelic guardians drawing lost children back from the chasm's verge—to its ghost, an ironic sentimentalism rendered stunning in contrast to what it seems to be, but is not.

Because the hermeneutic process of translating pictorial language into a visual realism presupposed a trained imagination, the Calvinist homiletic was ripe for

the verisimilitude of photography. Like Beecher's step-by-step frames of the youth's damnation, Riis's virtual-tour narrative chronicled the allegory of Tony's moral fall. The "Regeneration of 'Our Tony,'" printed in the *Buffalo Evening News* on 18 November 1898, reported that "talking for two hours, Riis described Tony 'in all his phases of degraded development, from the ragged infant to the old tout in the prison cell.'" Even newspaper reports of Riis's presentations relied on a prephotography vocabulary that registered language's possibility to body forth images. Still indebted to the traditions of *ars rhetorica* and *ut pictura poesis*, these contemporary descriptions referred to photography's "drawing," "depicting," "painting," or "sketching" the truth. The semantic ambiguity at play in these terms underscores the interpretive shift and epistemological watershed separating recent assessments of Riis's work as exposé and the traditional homiletic understanding of it as a medium for second sight.[62] Such language of representation demonstrates a structure of meaning—a visually oriented hermeneutic—that had prepared listeners and readers for photographic realism long before its appearance.[63]

In the present day, a photograph generally operates as a discrete unit of knowledge, even when its interpretive possibility is limitless. Yet the moral sources of subjectivity do not reside outside history any more than the processes of identity formation remain constant across class, culture, and time. Although recent criticism persists in viewing Riis's photographs as part of the voyeuristic process of class identity formation, Karen Halttunen has shown that nineteenth-century humanitarians as often saw in both suffering and representations of suffering a threat to values integral to middle-class identity. Reformers worried that exposure to pain and suffering might deaden the very humanist impulses that prompted them to aid the impoverished.[64] Riis defended the intervention in poverty from both these contemporary views, arguing tirelessly for a moral duty to confront destitution, even as he boldly denounced those whose gaze was unsympathetic: "We did not gloat over the misfortunes of those we described," he writes in his autobiography of fellow "housekeepers." "We were reporters, not ghouls" (134). For Riis the distinction could not be clearer: the appropriate study of poverty through any medium was linked to social action. If his photographs seem to us to stabilize cultural markers of difference through a technological medium that privileges visual distinction, the homiletic frame, like that unfolding Tony's life, turned a judgment predicated on visual difference back upon the spectator, indicting him or her for failing to recognize humanity—God's image stamped—beneath the ephemerality of appearance. The failure to see beneath the surface announced an absence of spiritual sight. In the homiletic context, Riis's images subordinated rather than heightened visual difference—the transient markers of race, class, and culture—to suffering, the authentic index of the humanity experienced by rich and poor alike.

If his photographic tours seem to us today alien spectacles for middle-class consumption, an affirmation of what is moral, decent, and "American" in the face of all who are not, they were also, for countless of Riis's contemporaries heuristic

guides for action, ways of conceptualizing change. Through the aesthetics of immediacy, the second sight of the social acquired on virtual tours of urban slums effected one's conversion to the cause of social reform. Riis's innovative use of photography to modernize homiletics offered a practical means of interpersonal engagement across social barriers: it was a technology for remaking social contract. Audiences believed "Our Tony" to be an actual child, many seeking to adopt him. They believed Tony to be real not from a passive suspension of disbelief but from their awakened faith in his spiritual reality. Their faith in Tony's spectral kinship was a function not of photography's mimetic power but, on the contrary, of its occult power to render the invisible web of religious obligation that united all Christians in the new covenant of the urban community, or what Riis would call the "new tenement neighborhood." Riis's virtual-tour narratives created the possibility for actual social reform: new homes were built, education promoted, relief funds initiated, parks and playgrounds established, labor laws passed, and an informed and armed citizenry actualized, all for the sake of Tony and other illusions by which Riis made urban poverty not only visible, but intolerable.

Notes

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1. Walter J. Swaffield quotes Riis's assessment of tenement dangers: "The investigations reveal a state of affairs for which nothing more horrible can be imagined, and which, although perhaps equalled [*sic*] cannot be surpassed in any European city. To get into these pestilential human rookeries you have to penetrate courts and alleys reeking with poisonous and malodorous gases arising from accumulations of sewage and refuse scattered in all directions and often flowing beneath your feet. You have to ascend rotten staircases which threaten to give way beneath every step, which in some cases have already broken down, leaving gaps that imperil the limbs and lives of the unwary. Walls and ceilings are black with the accretions of filth which have gathered upon them through long years of neglect. It exudes through cracks in the boards overhead and runs down the walls; it is everywhere"; Walter J. Swaffield, "Round Table: 'The Tenement House Curse,'" *The Arena* 9, no. 53 (April 1894): 659–83; 677. Subsequent citations will appear as "Tenement Curse."
2. The best general study of the Social Gospel is still Charles Howard Hopkins, *The Rise of the Social Gospel in American Protestantism* (New Haven, 1940). Hopkins's tendency to treat the Social Gospel movement strictly as a reform ideology rather than as a theology has, I think, led to misconceptions about its transitional role in the history of American Protestantism.

3. John Dewey, "Introduction to Essays in Experimental Logic," in Jo Ann Boydston, ed., *John Dewey: Middle Works* (Carbondale, Ill., 1977), 4:129–42; 129.
4. Blending the moral imperatives of Christian Socialism with the reform-through-education premise of secular socialism, Riis's virtual tours created in the name of ethical reform an emotional and cognitive dissonance similar to the alienation effect Bertolt Brecht sought to induce in playgoers less than three decades later. But while Brecht inundated his audience with sensory stimulus to produce a gradual reorientation to social change, Riis used it to bring about immediate action, to create a pragmatic pedagogy whereby knowledge was the product of doing.
5. *Wesley Magazine*, May 1893.
6. The principle ethos linking secular, progressive reform with Christian Socialism was the perceived need to intervene in childhood poverty. As Robert Wiebe observes, if "humanitarian progressivism has a central theme it was the child"; *The Search for Order, 1877–1920* (New York, 1967), 169.
7. Among Riis's pantheon of children whose biographies emblematized the need for intervention are "Little Nisby," "Mike of Poverty Gap," "Jacob Beresheim," and "Katie."
8. "A Golden Opportunity," *Brooklyn Eagle*, 30 April 1895.
9. As late as 1912, Walter Rauschenbusch could still count on his audience's familiarity with both John Bunyan's and Dante's epic allegories, which he incorporated into his homiletic allegory of social reform, *Christianizing the Social Order* (New York, 1912). After placing readers in the role of Bunyan's pilgrim, Rauschenbusch invokes Dante's verse to encourage them to view self-sacrifice as the highest calling of Christian love: "I call on the old to make a great act of expatiation and love before they go hence. / Why will they descend to join 'the melancholy souls of those / Who lived withouten infamy or praise? / Commingled are they with the caififf [Caiaphas] choir / Of Angels, who have not rebellious been / Nor faithful were to God, but were to self' " (474).
10. See especially June Howard, *Form and History in American Literary Naturalism* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1985); Amy Kaplan, *The Social Construction of American Realism* (Chicago, 1988); Donald Pizer, *The Theory and Practice of American Literary Naturalism: Selected Essays and Reviews* (Carbondale, Ill., 1993); and Eric J. Sundquist, ed., *American Realism: New Essays* (Baltimore, 1982). For an insightful discussion of the role of photography in realism and naturalism, see Alan Trachtenberg, "Experiments in Another Country," in Sundquist, *American Realism*, 138–54.
11. Josiah Royce quoted in John Clendenning, *The Life and Thought of Josiah Royce* (Madison, Wisc. 1985), 252.
12. Lauren Berlant, "Poor Eliza," *American Literature* 70, no. 3 (September 1998): 635–68; 638. See also, Gregory S. Jackson, "A Dowry of Suffering: Consent, Contract, and Political Coverture in John W. De Forest's Reconstruction Romance," *American Literary History* 15, no. 2 (Summer 2003): 277–310.
13. Jacob Riis, "Reform by Humane Touch," *Atlantic Monthly* 84, no. 506, December 1899, 745–53; 752. Further citations will appear as "RHT."
14. Charles Sheldon, *In His Steps: "What Would Jesus Do?"* (Chicago, 1897), 223. I refer to this little-known genre of "sermon novels" as the "homiletic novel," a phrase that best captures the complex and innovative homiletic pedagogy that distinguishes these novels from conventional sermons.
15. For a discussion of the spiritual construction of this transhistorical vision of the self in conceptions of American history and in the individual's agency in manifest destiny, see J. G. A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition* (Princeton, 1975), part 1.

16. For the best treatment of the pictorial tradition in American Protestantism, see David Morgan, *Protestants and Pictures: Religion, Visual Culture, and the Age of American Mass Production* (Oxford, 1999), esp. chaps. 2–3.
17. Riis's reform, like Christian Socialism generally, was deeply connected with nationalism and what he called "Christian citizenship"; "RHT," 745. Riis writes that the problem New York must solve "is the problem . . . of a people's fitness for self-government that is on trial among us. We shall solve it by the world-old formula of human sympathy, of humane touch" (753). In his stereopticon lecture "Children of the Poor," Riis equated homes with citizenship. For an account of this Carnegie Library lecture, see *Pittsburgh Dispatch*, 16 February 1900. (Riis also published a book under the same title: *The Children of the Poor* [New York, 1892].) As part of his tenement reform, Riis promoted clubs, where occupants would be encouraged "to discuss there the current topics of the day," so that "when election-time came around politics would naturally come up on top. Young men so trained would, when their time to vote came, be sure to give good account of themselves"; "Special Needs of the Poor in New York," *Forum* 14, no. 4 (December 1892): 492–502; 497 (subsequent citations will appear as "Special Needs"). Finally, Riis repeatedly connects the "decent and orderly citizen" to salvation of poor children. For instance, see "The Genesis of the Gang," *Atlantic Monthly* 84, no. 503, September 1899, 301–5.
18. Following the work of Michel Foucault and Guy Debord, scholars in the last two decades have demonstrated, as Eric Schocket recently argues, "how the lower classes have been both distanced and contained within the discursive structure of 'the spectacle' "; see "Undercover Explorations of the 'Other Half,' Or the Writer as Class Transvestite," *Representations* 64 (Fall 1998): 109–27; 111. Recent studies of Riis, Stephen Crane, Jack London, and Theodore Dreiser, among others, for example, focus on depictions of poverty and vice. In various ways, they show how the advent of social realism enabled the middle class to affirm and codify its own sense of economic and social identity through the consumption of poverty, vice, and depravity. Unhappily, even Riis's title, "the Other half," lifted from Arthur Pember's *The Mysteries and Miseries of the Great Metropolis* (1874), lends itself to a simple dialectical reading, serving, in Riis's language of photography, as a "negative" from which the middle class is rendered fully visible in the form of a "positive."
19. Largely in reference to Riis, Benjamin Flower expressed the new epistemological orientation and commitment to personal agency at the heart of emerging Social Gospel reform: "There is no way in which people can be so thoroughly aroused to the urgent necessity of radical economic changes as by bringing them into such intimate relations with the submerged millions that they hear the throbbing of misery's heart. The lethargy of the moral instincts of the people is unquestionably due to lack of knowledge. . . . The people do not begin to realize the true condition of life in the ever-widening field of abject want. *When they know and are sufficiently interested to personally investigate the problem and aid the suffering*, they will appreciate . . . the absolute necessity for radical economic changes" (italics added); Benjamin Flower, "Society's Exiles," *The Arena* 4, no. 1 (June 1891): 37–54; 49. A year later William T. Elsing promoted Social Gospel's interventionist creed: "In our cities there is too much isolation between the rich and the poor. . . . If the mother of every well-to-do home in our large cities would regularly visit, once a month, a needy family, a vast amount of good would be accomplished among the worthy poor. . . . If . . . wealthier ladies . . . would seek . . . to come into direct personal contact with the recipients of their charity, they would experience a deeper happiness and . . . a new day would dawn for many a poor, heartbroken mother who is now hope-

less and longing for death to end her misery. . . . The first visit to a tenement-house might be made in the company of a city missionary, after which the most timid could go alone"; William T. Elsing, "Life in New York Tenement-Houses, as Seen by a City Missionary," *Scribner's Magazine* 40, no. 73, June 1892, 697–721; 714.

20. Riis developed this metaphor in *The Battle with the Slum* (New York, 1902).
21. Not only did Riis liberally quote Henry Ward Beecher and attend Plymouth Church, but he also wrote articles early in his career that took up Beecher's reform agenda; see, for instance, Riis, "RHT," 745–47.
22. Royall Tyler, *The Algerine Captive* (Hartford, 1816), 26.
23. By way of promoting self-help charity rather than "alms," Riis argues for helping the poor to work themselves out of the "slough of despon' "; "Special Needs," 495.
24. The immediacy of personal experience that Riis's virtual tours produced and the fear the slums held for the middle class merges in Social Gospel advocate Hjalmar Hjorth Boyesen's 1893 homiletic novel based on Riis's virtual-tour narrative. (Boyesen and Riis often shared the lectern on the Chautauqua circuit.) After taking a virtual tour, one character declared: "I had no idea the slums were as bad as this. I feel as if I were inhaling typhus and smallpox and diphtheria in every breath I draw"; Hjalmar Hjorth Boyesen, *Social Strugglers* (New York, 1893), 267.
25. Describing the importance Jonathan Edwards assigned to the will in the act of learning, Perry Miller observed that Edwards forced "the Lockean sensationalism as far as possible away from a blank naturalistic passivity toward a creative destiny. He was making the nature of man—a creature of experience—a participant in the cosmic design, which is not static, which is not merely an object of contemplation, but a design in time, requiring for its consummation struggle and anxiety, triumph and repeated failure"; Perry Miller, *Jonathan Edwards* (New York, 1959), 329.
26. For a brief discussion of the epistemological principles and pedagogies of New Divinity followers, see Mark A. Noll, *America's God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln* (Oxford, 2002), chap. 7, esp. 134–35.
27. Henry Ward Beecher, "The Strange Woman's House," in *Lectures to Young Men, on Various Important Subjects* (New York, 1851), 170–214; 206. All citations come from this edition.
28. Jacob Abbott, *The Way to Do Good, or The Christian Character Mature* (Boston, 1836), 298–99.
29. Beecher, "Strange Woman's House," 199. Helen Campbell's virtual tours resonate with Beecher's homiletic sermon. Speaking of the seduction of despair in the tenements, she writes, "'Darkness means the devil's deeds, and [children] never get a breath except from the rooms into which they open. You sleep in one once, and there is a band around your head when you wake, and a sinking and craving at your stomach. You don't want to eat, there is nothing answers it but whiskey, and in the basement of the building you may find a smiling fiend in immaculate white apron ready to pour the bubbling glass full and usher you into the anteroom of hell' "; quoted in Everett D. Burr, "Social Salvation: What the Church Can do to Abolish the Slums," *The Coming Age* 2, no. 3 (September 1899): 254–65; 261–62. Subsequent citations will appear as "Social Salvation."
30. See Mary Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture* (Cambridge, Mass., 1990); and Frances Yates, *The Art of Memory* (Chicago, 1966).
31. The house figure was repeatedly used in Harvard senior disputations to organize and analyze arguments through dialectical reasoning. Peter Ramus joined the utility of architecture as a mnemonic system (based on Solon's building codes) with its use for organizing and compartmentalizing knowledge categories. On the relation between space,

architecture, and memory in Ramism, see Walter Ong's discussion of "Solon's Law" in his *Ramus: Method and the Decay of Dialogue; From the Art of Discourse to the Art of Reason* (Cambridge, Mass.: 1958), 280–82. Ong's study of memory in the classical rhetorical tradition is particularly salient for understanding the role of the architectural system of mnemonics in Protestant homiletics: "But the real reason why Ramus can dispense with memory is that his whole scheme of arts, based on the topically conceived logic, is a system of local memory. Memory is everywhere, its 'places' or 'rooms' being the mental space which Ramus' arts all fill" (280). In his explanation of the transmission of Ramism at Harvard, Perry Miller defers to the very architectural trope at the core of Ramus's system of logic: A standard diagram or "blueprint" accompanied "Ramistic teaching; it show[ed] at a glance how this logic was built up as an architectural unit, all its parts fitting together, represented on this chart exactly as a house may be represented in the architect's plan. No such design could be discerned until the categories were broken up"; Perry Miller, *The New England Mind: The Seventeenth Century* (Boston, Mass., 1954), 125. For the preponderance of the house figure in Harvard theses, see 111–206; and Samuel Eliot Morison, *Harvard College in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge, Mass., 1936), part 1, esp. 139–222. For examples of the division of hell into compartments, see Gerhard T. Alexis, "Wigglesworth's 'Easiest Room,'" *New England Quarterly* 42, no. 4 (December 1969): 573–82.

32. In part, Riis's virtual tour worked against the spectacleized demography of the "city as mystery" genre, initiated by Eugene Sue's *Le Mystères de Paris* (1842–43), and taken up by American urban writers, such as George Foster, Solon Robinson, and John B. Gough, the last of which was a temperance evangelical whose own sermons drew upon the homiletic traditions of his Plymouth Church ministers, Beecher and Lyman Abbott. Gough's interaction with homiletic pedagogy, like Robinson's, no doubt shaped the construction of his own urban narratives.

    Focused largely on New York City, this American genre promoted the city's urban doppelgänger, a dark twin hidden in subterranean layers beneath the streets. Karen Halttunen observes that the city-as-mystery genre borrowed the "spatial sensibility" of the eighteenth-century gothic novel, in which heroines navigated underground vaults and labyrinthine corridors while preserving their virtue and lives to escape licentious clerics, monstrous stepfathers, and assassins. I argue that the seventeenth-century Calvinist sermon tradition presupposed this use of spatial sensibility, initially drawing on the architectural metaphors in the Book of Proverbs. Halttunen points out that both the perspective and purpose of the city-as-mystery merge in the genre's celebration of its "Asmodean privilege." A puckish demon, Asmodeus's particular pleasure was to lift the roofs off buildings in order to peer down upon the exposed wickedness of the occupants within. In both its authorial function and readerly perspective, the city-as-mystery genre's sensationalist and didactic nature paralleled the virtual-tour narrative's design, but sharply contrasted in its purpose. City-as-mystery narratives presented not the structured allegory of religious homiletics, but rather, an aimless secular allegorical form that gave free play to readers' imaginative and associative capabilities. Like its late-nineteenth-century descendent, the "class-transvestite narratives" of Crane, London, and Josiah Flynt, in which narrators dress down to pass as poor or working class in order to report ventures among the "lowest strata" of humanity, the city-as-mystery genre exploited the prurient appetites of readers who sought voyeuristic titillation. Its literary structure, allowing readers to gaze down upon the wickedness secreted within urban slums, belonged to a prophylactic pedagogy that, like the homiletic, emerged from the early Calvinist sermons, but that, unlike the homiletic, distanced readers from

the objects of their gaze. For an excellent treatment of class transvestism, see Schocket, "Undercover." For a useful discussion of the city-as-mystery genre, see Halttunen, *Murder Most Foul*, 124. For examples, see John B. Gough, *Sunlight and Shadow* (1881), and *Platform Echoes, or, Living Truths for Head and Heart* (1886); Solon Robinson, *Hot Corn: Life Scenes in New York Illustrated* (1854); and George Foster, *Celio, or, New York Above and Under-ground* (1850).

33. Like the structure of allegory, the tenement fabric conceals stories within. Flower, for instance, writes of Boston, "If the passer-by could see what the brick walls which front Hanover and other streets of the North End hide from view": if one passes into "scores of alley-ways, through the narrow corridors, or down through the cellar-like passages which line the streets," he or she enters the "courtyards of the democracy of night" ("Society's Exiles," 208). Evoking the same chapter of Proverbs as Beecher, Walter Swaffield, Flower's friend, ascribes a sinister intent: "This is a large brick block, which from the outside presents a fair appearance, but as you enter you find that the place is like the tombs of the prophets, whitewashed without, but within full of rottenness and death. The sanitary provisions are the cheapest and poorest kind; poisonous gases enough to stifle one are met on every floor. . . . Here sickness, weakness and destitution abound"; Swaffield, "Tenement Curse," 670.
34. All quotes from Riis's *How the Other Half Lives* are taken from the Dover edition: Jacob A. Riis, *How the Other Half Lives: Studies Among the Tenements of New York* (New York, 1971), 38. While this edition adds photographs from the Riis collection not originally published in Riis's book and replaces the original ink etchings with the photographs from which they were drawn, it best represents the magic-lantern format.
35. In the same tradition, Flower similarly describes a tenement's interior in his own virtual-tour narrative: The "halls [were] dark as midnight in a dungeon; air heavy with foul odors, and seemingly devoid of oxygen; the banisters greasy and the stairs much worn, as we could feel rather than see"; Benjamin Flower, "Two Hours in the Social Cellar," *The Arena* 5, no. 5 (April 1892): 646–53.
36. Reminiscent of the ironic punishments of Classical Hades—that of Tantalus or Sisyphus—Riis describes the task of a group of inmates: "Beyond, on the side lawn, moves another still stranger procession, a file of women in the asylum dress of dull gray, hitched to a queer little wagon that, with its gaudy adornments, suggests a cross between a baby-carriage and a circus-chariot. One crazy woman is strapped in the seat; forty tug at the rope to which they are securely bound. . . . These are the patients afflicted with suicidal mania, who cannot be trusted at large for a moment with the river in sight"; Riis, *Other Half*, 203.
37. John Dewey's adaptation of this homiletic feature is visible in his spatial theory used to organize classrooms at the Laboratory School of the University of Chicago. In what he calls Dewey's "Social Gospel" phase, Robert B. Westbrook writes of Dewey's spatialized pedagogy, "Dewey was calling upon teachers to artfully arrange things in the classroom so that 'the right social growth' could be assured"; *John Dewey and American Democracy* (Ithaca, 1991), 109.
38. In *Jonathan Edwards*, Miller examines how Edwards broke with traditional faculty psychology (and traditional American Puritanism) to embrace in Lockean terms a notion of the integrated thinking human. Because I think Miller puts his finger on the most influential and lasting Edwardsian innovation, it is worth quoting directly here: "The process from the form of the perception to the act of the will thus became, for the Edwardsian psychology, not what it had been in the scholastic physics of his predecessors. . . . it became an instantaneous and single moment. To perceive became to do. A

man's act is not the result of a meshing of gears, but the expression . . . of the whole man. 'This evidence that they that are spiritually enlightened have of the things of religion, is a kind of intuitive and immediate evidence' " (65–66). In taking that epistemological route, Edwards introduced the vital need for perception over understanding, elevating the passions or "feelings" as the highest order of knowing. "By maintaining a sharp distinction between 'mere notional understanding,' and the sense of the heart," Miller explains, "Edwards fully intended to subordinate understanding to feeling. When a man knows the stench or sweetness of a thing, he has a more accurate knowledge than that 'by which he knows what a triangle is' " (184).

39. In *Civilization's Inferno, or Studies in the Social Cellar* (Boston, 1893), for instance, Benjamin Flower prefaces his study of poverty—designed after Riis's *How the Other Half Lives*—with an illustration of the class tiers contained within the frame of a house. On the highest level of the house the picture depicts a social ball, below it a middle-class depiction of working opportunity, and still lower the "social cellar," in which a widow sits with her hungry children. On the final level beneath the social cellar, "where uninvited poverty holds sway, is a darker zone: a subterranean, rayless vault—the commonwealth of the double night": the darkness of poverty that "extinguished the human soul" (99–100).
40. William James, "Philosophical Conceptions and Practical Results," in *Pragmatism*, (Cambridge, Mass., 1975), Appendix ix: 257–70; 267. James delivered this address, in which he first used C. S. Peirce's term "pragmatism," before the Philosophical Union at the University of California, Berkeley, 26 August 1898.
41. Joseph Haroutunian, *Piety Versus Moralism: The Passing of the New England Theology* (New York, 1970); Donald H. Meyer, *Democratic Enlightenment* (New York, 1976), chap. 3; Henry F. May, *Enlightenment in America* (Oxford, 1976), chap. 3; and Noll, *America's God*, 230–31; 278–83; 299–307.
42. For a discussion of Calvinism's shift toward modern Humanism, see Noll, *America's God*, 139–40.
43. Beecher had "ransomed" a fugitive slave in 1856. For details see "Ransom of a Slave-girl at Plymouth Church," *Independent*, 9 February 1860. See also, Stefan Saltar, *A Church in History: The Story of Plymouth's First Hundred Years Under Beecher, Abbott, Hillis, Durkee, and Fifield* (Brooklyn, 1949).
44. For a useful explanation of the enduring prevalence of Lamarckian evolution—"the theory that species progress by the cultivation of good habits transmitted genetically from one generation to the next"—see Louis Menand, *The Metaphysical Club* (New York, 2001), 382.
45. Riis, "Special Needs," 495.
46. Riis, *Other Half*, 203. Riis continues: By the time women arrive at Blackwell's Island, or men arrive at Ward Island, they cannot be redeemed. "No man or woman . . . who is 'sent up' to these colonies ever returns to the city scotfree. There is a lien, visible or hidden, upon his or her present or future, which too often proves stronger than the best purposes and fairest opportunities of social rehabilitation. The under world holds in rigorous bondage every unfortunate or miscreant who has once 'served time' " (203).
47. James Russell Lowell. Riis reproduces the letter in his autobiography; Jacob A. Riis, *The Making of an American* (New York, 1901), 308.
48. This slogan is in "The Children of the Poor," *Charities* 5 (1 December 1900): 20–21; 20.
49. Jacob A. Riis, "The Battle with the Slum," *Atlantic Monthly* 83, May 1899, 626–34; 626. Helen Campbell, for whose book, *Darkness and Daylight; or, Lights and Shadows of New York Life* (Hartford, Conn., 1895), Riis supplied the photographs, exhibits this Larmarkian

belief: Of a drunkard's children, Campbell writes, "Eleven of these came into the world, each a little more aburdened than the last with the inheritance of evil tendency. Five died before they were three weeks old, from . . . vitiated blood. Two were born idiots, and are in an asylum" (675).

50. Dewey quoted in Westbrook, *Dewey and American Democracy*, 89.
51. Elizabeth Cady Stanton, *Eighty Years and More, 1815–1897* (New York, 1898), 42–43.
52. Sermons in the homiletic tradition often relied on a step system—usually linked to a spatial paradigm—a system that marks their roots in older memory systems: for instance, see T. S. Arthur, *Ten Nights in a Bar-Room* (1854), Charles Sheldon, *Robert Hardy's Seven Days* (1898), or even the double meaning conveyed by *In His Steps* (1896), and Lyman Beecher, *Six Sermons on the Nature, Occasions, Signs, Evils, and Remedy of Intemperance* (1827).
53. Ewardsian Platonism, the Scottish Common Sense School's "sixth sense," Coleridgean Platonism, Swedenborgianism, Mesmerism, transcendentalism, Universalism, and the homiletic tradition, to name but a few, were, broadly speaking, ideas and movements anchored in a belief in an *ontic* and corresponding universe and marshaled against the advancing skepticism of the rational Enlightenment. American Protestant ministers assured their followers of the gossamer-thin veil that separated the earthly realm from the divine, through which the energies of heavenly guardians or their demonic counterparts might intercede in worldly cause and effect.
54. Alan Trachtenberg, *Reading American Photography: Images as History, Matthew Brady to Walker Evans* (New York, 1989), esp. 21–46.
55. Oliver Wendell Holmes, "The Stereoscope and the Stereograph," *Atlantic Monthly* 3, June 1859, 748.
56. Beecher's works are peppered with contrasts between the "deep and strange joy" of the rural and the perilous moral "contradictions and burdens" of the city; see for instance, Henry Ward Beecher, *Star Papers; or, Experiences of Art and Nature* (New York, 1855), 112.
57. Quoted from an anonymous review of Riis's lecture, "The Children of the Poor," *The Critic* 18 (17 December 1892): 340–41.
58. While acknowledging recent theories in the relational—and thus narrative—nature of photography, many scholars remain uncritical of Riis's claims to candid photography. Ansel Adams and Alexander Alland epitomize this credulousness by their insistence that "Riis used the camera to record, not to create" Alexander Alland, *Jacob A. Riis: Photographer and Citizen* (Millerton, N.Y., 1974), xiii.
59. Robert W. DeForest and Lawrence Veiller, *The Tenement House Problem: Including the Report of the New York State Tenement House Commission of 1900*, 2 vols. (New York, 1903).
60. In Rosetta Otwell Cross, *The Suffering Millions* (Ann Arbor, 1890), 3.
61. Often cited in relation to children in New York institutions was Amos G. Warner's famous study, *American Charities* (New York, 1894), which put the mortality rate for institutionalized children under three at "97 per cent per annum." "Of course," Warner writes, "this high death-rate comes in part from the bad condition of the children when received. They are often marasmic, rachitic, syphilitic, half dead from drugging or neglect, or from ante-natal and post-natal abuse. Yet this does not explain entirely the high death-rate common to institutions, as is shown by the fact that strong, thriving babies droop and die in them. . . . The death-rate where children are cared for in institutions often results from positive neglect" (266–67).
62. As the reviewer of Riis's magic-lantern lecture titled "Children of the Slums" described Riis's talk on " 'Tony's Hardships,' " "Riis *painted* the 'little incidents of child life,' showing how they were cared for and how, through wicked surroundings, evil associates and

the neglect of Christians in better circumstances, they grew up in evil ways" (emphasis mine); "Children of the Slums," *Indianapolis Journal*, 19 February 1900. On occasion, reviewers characterized the realism of Riis's virtual tour over mere language, as when a reviewer of a magic-lantern slide lecture of "How the Other Half Lives," for *Coup d'Etat* (April 1892) wrote: "Riis's stereopticon views were certainly more realistic than any words could be." While this reviewer's statement signals a distinct break from an older allegorical epistemology that viewed images and language as similar in their representative capacities, other reviewers continued to use the older vocabulary to describe Riis's photographic tours, making it difficult to separate the affect produced by photography from that produced by language. The contemporary criticism again reveals the way in which the visually oriented homiletic tradition seamlessly absorbs the photograph. For one viewer of Riis's talk at the Vendôme on "Squalid Abodes," printed in the *Boston Traveler* on 19 April 1891, Riis's talk "was a realistic picture of life in the New York slums," a characterization that denies the photograph's discrete meaning or visual authority apart from the lecture's larger production of "a realistic picture." In an article titled "Millions of Babies," printed in the *New York Tribune* on 18 December 1896, the writer claimed that Riis "urged the need of caring for the poor, and gave graphic pictures, both pathetic and amusing, of his experience with the waifs and wanderers of all ages and sizes in this great city." While Riis used the stereopticon projection in his talk, "graphic pictures" blends the photographic referent with the verbal, suggested by the term "experience."

63. When, for instance, Henry Cabot Lodge used Riis's magic-lantern lectures to defend his immigration restrictions based on their "vivid picture" of "the degrading effect" of the "importation of the lowest forms of labor," he drew equally upon the authority of the lectures' visually oriented heuristic and its photographic realism.
64. Karen Halttunen, "Humanitarianism and the Pornography of Pain in Anglo-American Culture," *American Historical Review* 100, no. 2 (April 1995): 303–34; 325–26.