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URBAN EMERGENCE AND THE PASTORAL IDEAL:
A STUDY OF THREE RELATED WORKS BY WILLIAM DEAN HOWELLS

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In Partial Fulfillment
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ABSTRACT

This essay is a study of the reactions in the fiction of William Dean Howells to the shift in prominence of American life from the country to the city in the late nineteenth century.

The study concentrates specifically on three related novels by Howells, A Modern Instance, The Rise of Silas Lapham, and The Minister's Charge: or, The Apprenticeship of Lemuel Barker, each of which deals with the specific relationship between the growing urban center of Boston and the declining rural lands of New England.

Drawing upon prominent critical works, the essay presents a description of the actual sociological and economic changes taking place in America in the 1880's and 1890's. It then discusses the ways in which the three novels portray those changes.

The thesis is that these three novels, in addition to revealing their author's personal ambivalence on a social issue, likewise, and on a wider scale, present realistic portrayals of America's urban growth in the late nineteenth century and of the effect of this growth upon small-town life, and upon the country's "agrarian myth" — America's self-identification as a land founded upon a great pastoral ideal.

At the end of the nineteenth century, America found itself in the midst of monumentally significant changes in its economic and social structure. Some of these changes had already begun in the North prior to the Civil war, but in the 1870's, 1880's, and 1890's, the trend spread to much of the nation as a whole. The country was changing from a nation of farmers and frontiersmen to a rapidly-growing industrial power. Farming and small-town life by no means ceased to be important, but they were quickly becoming supplanted in prominence by the demands of the Industrial Revolution, and by the increasing growth and dominance of major urban areas. As a result, the Jeffersonian ideal of an agrarian nation all but disappeared. As Leo Marx states, "the once-dominant image of an undefiled, green republic, a quiet land of forests, villages, and farms dedicated to the pursuit of happiness," was being eroded.¹ In its stead arose the new American success myth, founded upon the principles of free enterprise and capitalistic gain. As Marx's image suggests, the machine was invading the garden.²

In a manner consistent with this trend, Americans for their livelihood were abandoning the family-oriented, simple life of rural areas and small towns, and turning

toward the expanding cultural opportunities offered by the cities. And, as the cities grew in population and importance, and exerted their secular values, the heretofore unquestioned, traditional religious values of the agrarian past lost much of their meaning, as Americans placed their hopes on production rather than salvation.

Many historically-important changes were taking place. Warner Berthoff provides a significant list in The Ferment of Realism:

. . . the rise of the industrial city and the mass society; the accelerating material complication and the impersonality of civil life; the cycles of financial and agricultural depression and of labor unrest, coinciding with what was understood by contemporaries as the closing of the frontier and the filling out of the national domain; the continual displacement of population from country to city . . . incursions of capitalist enterprise, competitive and unrestricted, upon the organism of society and upon the continuities³. . . of social behavior and expectation.

To this list, Jay Martin adds the intrusion of cities' influence upon small towns, and the usurpation by cities of small towns' importance in economic and social spheres of American life.⁴ Martin, in his comprehensive study, Harvests of Change, describes the "rural slums"⁵ which dotted the countryside as a haunting expression of America's changing identity, of its shift in emphasis from rural to urban life. And Marx concurs that the power of increasing technology was not confined to city boundaries.⁶

These changes, extremely significant in American history, had a noted effect upon fiction writers of the time, and provided them with a wealth of material for their work. In fact, Berthoff goes so far as to see the result of the changes described above as being "a crisis in the consciousness and civil commitment that is of the first importance to any understanding of the literature of the period."⁷ One major writer of the time whose works deal extensively with this crisis of increasing urbanization is William Dean Howells. No doubt motivated by a personal ambivalence about city and country life, Howells presents, in some of his most important novels, poignantly realistic portrayals of the very pains and doubts felt by many Americans as the nation underwent the significant changes described above.

The serious reader of Howells will with much reason point to A Hazard of New Fortunes (1890) as Howells's most complex and complete presentation of the issue of increasing urbanization in America. In this novel, written after his move to New York City (after roughly twenty-four years in Boston), Howells seems almost urgent about the city, as he presents the necessity of America's acceptance of urban life as the inevitable way of the present and future. But Howells also gave this theme of urban emergence extensive treatment in

three novels written while he was still a prominent citizen of Boston, a veritable small town when Basil March contrasts it with New York in A Hazard, but which nevertheless stood as a great metropolitan contrast to the small towns of rural New England. These three novels, A Modern Instance (1882), The Rise of Silas Lapham (1885), and The Minister's Charge (1887), all reveal Howells's own ambivalence about city and country life during the question-filled but productive Boston period of his career. But while focusing specifically on Boston and rural New England, these works speak as well to the issue of the city's encroachment upon rural values associated with the popular national myth of an idealized agrarian past. More than concerning themselves with a strictly regional problem, and beyond revealing their author's personal ambivalence on a social issue, these three novels, related in theme and setting, present a fictional but realistic portrayal of the effects of urban growth in the late nineteenth century upon the ideals and attitudes of America as a whole.

While his own novels clearly present ambivalence rather than partiality, Howells, while editor of The Atlantic, had lent support and encouragement to regionalist writers (most notably Sarah Orne Jewett) who responded to the decay of small-town life by creating idealized visions of past greatness. As one who embraced

in varying degrees at different periods of his life both Swedenborgian Christianity and Tolstoi's vision of social equality, Howells could not avoid seeing (and writing about) the negative aspects of urban life, and of the cities' influence upon small towns. However, as a man of cosmopolitan tastes who as a youth had longed to escape the Ohio small towns in which he was raised, and who, as an adult, lived in Venice as well as in Boston and New York, Howells could scarcely be viewed as an agrarian voice crying in the New England wilderness. Thus moved in two directions, Howells, in much of his writing, and especially in the three novels under discussion here, presents an ambivalent view of both small-town ideals and of the growing urban reality.

It is probably impossible to pinpoint the exact nature of Howells's feelings about urban and rural life. Evidence from his own life only seems to underscore further the very ambivalence alluded to above. For example, in 1860 he wrote, in a letter to James T. Fields, publisher of The Atlantic, "The truth is, there is no place quite so good as Boston — God bless it! And I look forward to living there some day — being possibly the linchpin in the hub."⁸ Yet the author of those words was the same man who greatly admired the rustic simplicity of the Shakers, to the point of even spending the greater part of the summer of 1875 living

with his family in the Massachusetts Shaker Colony. While Howells continued to feel an affinity for Boston even after moving to New York, nevertheless, especially towards the latter part of his Boston tenure, he became increasingly critical of the social injustices prevalent in city life. In fact, in the latter half of the 1880's, Howells became a strong proponent of Tolstoi's "gospel" of social equality and complicity among social classes.⁹ This influence of Tolstoi is clearly evident in The Minister's Charge, and yet, even this last of the Boston novels can in no way be viewed as an anti-urban novel.

Quite naturally, then, Howells gave this question of the rise of the city and the decline of the country a prominent place in his fiction. The three novels with which this essay concerns itself depict the specific relationship between Boston and rural New England. In each of the three novels, Boston represents advancement in economic and social spheres, but also drastic, threatening change from older, traditional American values and modes of living. Conversely, rural New England, although shackled by ignorance, narrow-mindedness and stagnancy, is portrayed as the last vestige of the simple values and clear ideals of an agrarian past. However, neither the city nor the country is idealized in these three works. And, although each of the novels' protagonists returns to the country after having lived

in Boston, Howells is not simply choosing country life over city life. In actuality, each of these three novels is a realistic portrayal of the increasing disparity between urban and rural life in the late nineteenth century, and of Howells's own ambivalence on the question of city vs. country. America's opportunity for growth lay in its cities; its long-standing ideals remained with its small-town tradition. Some sort of reconciliation would ultimately be necessary. However, as Howells shows in these works, and as America itself was learning through experience, such a reconciliation was a long way from becoming reality.

The first of these three novels, A Modern Instance, presents this issue of urban growth and rural decline mainly by depicting the values, lack of values, and conflicts over values, of the several main characters. The story begins in the ironically-named town of Equity, Maine. In stark contrast to the small-town ideal, Equity is but the shadow of a town, where tradition has given way to modern social conventions, and where the stern Puritan identity of the past has melted into an ill-defined collection of attitudes and opinions. Howells graphically presents the situation in Equity by focusing on the nature of religion in the town.

Howells uses the theme of religion as a means of displaying social and moral, rather than theological

issues. In what a community-minded individual might normally view as a healthy situation, the churches of Equity have become strongly involved in social affairs. However, in so doing, they seem to have lost touch with their basic reason for existence — the spiritual well-being of their members. In noting that modern ideas had caused religious sentiment in Equity to fall into a "chaotic liberality,"¹⁰ Howells's narrator states:

Religion there had largely ceased to be a fact of spiritual experience, and the visible church flourished on condition of providing for the social needs of the community. It was practically held that the salvation of one's soul must not be made too depressing, or the young people would have nothing to do with it. Professors of the sternest creeds temporized with sinners, and did what might be done to win them to heaven by helping them to have a good time here. The church embraced and included the world. (p.27)

Attacking this modern liberality is the stern voice of tradition presented by old Squire Gaylord. The Squire, who suffers a "loss of identity" in the city and feels "cramped" (p.273) there, is a throwback to the so-called glory days of small-town life. William Gibson calls the Squire "a kind of Puritan atheist,"¹¹ a description which is, for the most part, accurate. For the Squire does not belong to any church, and yet, his attitude is closely associated with the strictest of Puritan views:

For liberal Christianity he had nothing but contempt, and refuted it with a scorn which spared none of the worldly tendencies of the church in Equity. The idea that souls were to be saved by church sociables

filled him with inappeasable rancor; and he maintained the superiority of the old Puritanic discipline against them with a fervor which nothing but its re-establishment could have abated.(pp.36-7)

Admittedly the Squire is self-righteous and intolerant (and certainly not to be equated with the voice of Howells), but he nevertheless represents the well-defined, established Puritan values of hard work, resolute conviction, and acceptance of suffering — values which were being more than compromised in the "liberalizing" of Equity's churches. The Squire in his taciturnity is the farthest thing from a "gay lord," but he is one of a vanishing breed of strong-willed individuals, and embodies the qualities which Howells described in writing about Rutherford B. Hayes:

Work, faith, duty, self-sacrifice, continual self-abasement in the presence of the Divine perfection are the . . . old New England ideal. It was a stern and unlovely thing often in its realization; it must have made gloomy weeks and terrible Sabbaths; but out of the true stuff it shaped character, of unsurpassable uprightness and strength.¹²

In contrast to the tradition-laden Squire is the ambitious, iconoclastic editor of the Equity Free Press, who becomes the Squire's son-in-law, Bartley Hubbard. As the Squire represents the morally-aware, though limited vision of rural New England tradition, Bartley is the perfect example of the city's influence upon the country. Bartley still has some "country" in him, as evidenced by his attraction to the purely bucolic

Marcia Gaylord. But for the most part he is a representation of "city values," to which he received his introduction during a summer stay in Cambridge and Boston. Bartley desires financial success and professional status, and brings a cynical air to his job as editor of the small-town newspaper. In an absolute contrast to the Squire's rejection of Equity's churches, Bartley attends church regularly (though not religiously) as a means of enhancing his professional reputation. Moreover, he attends a different church each week!

At first, Bartley's brashness is, for the reader, a welcome contrast to the gloominess of the Gaylord household. But as the novel progresses, Bartley becomes an increasingly corrupt example of the success myth of the city. He rejects tradition, and minimizes all other concerns and relationships in his quest for journalistic renown. Abandoning Marcia's parents, and her own imperfect sense of tradition, he leads the unprotesting Marcia into a hasty marriage and an equally abrupt elopement, taking her into the confusingly foreign world of Boston, since his plans of success involve living in that city.

Despite Bartley's self-centeredness, the couple enjoys a very romantic introduction to Boston life. There is the romantic's hope for them in the way they struggle together in budgeting for meals and looking for an apartment. However, as the Boston scenes develop,

Hubbard becomes less concerned with his family responsibility, and more concerned with succeeding in Boston. Having no strong moral background on which to fall back, he succumbs to the temptations which Boston offers. Abandoning loyalty for money, he writes stories for one newspaper while being employed by another; upon discovering his employer's questionable financial practices, he uses the knowledge for his own benefit in a blackmail threat; he grows increasingly cynical in his reporting; he steals a story from his backwoods Maine acquaintance, Kinney, and, just as unethically, tricks his best friend in Boston, Ricker, into publishing the story, all in an effort to make money. This last scheme loses him the friendship of Ricker, as well as his job.

While Bartley falls prey to temptation in pursuing his "career," his personal habits and appearance deteriorate as well. He gambles away money and ultimately has to borrow money from an ex-friend-turned-cold acquaintance, Ben Halleck (whose secret infatuation for Marcia keeps him interested in the Hubbards). Howells makes several remarks about Bartley's beer drinking and increasing obesity, thus symbolizing Bartley's moral collapse in a physical condition. And Bartley's continued refusals to return in the summer to Equity with Marcia and their daughter, Flavia, for any length of time, coupled with his inability to communicate with Squire Gaylord, suggests how far he has drifted from any

semblance of simple, country values. Bartley's eventual demise — being shot and killed in Arizona after printing a scandalous story about one of the town's inhabitants — is a fittingly senseless death, as Bartley, forever detached spiritually from the pastoral world, is destroyed by his own corrupted ambitions.

All in all, Bartley Hubbard is the American success story gone awry. As Gibson notes, "Given a chance at the bar, enough money, a few friends, Hubbard might have prospered and lived out his life, however stormily, with his wife and child — so Howells seems to imply."¹³ But the fact is that, despite his so-called convictions in that direction, Bartley never really intends to study "the Law." Deluded by visions of grandeur, and lacking the moral fiber to recognize and admit his errors, Bartley hopelessly pursues the American success myth, which for him is decorated in the splendor of Boston. Howells is not necessarily suggesting that Bartley should have stayed "down on the farm" in Equity. Had Bartley done so, he would have been no happier, although his story might have been less tragic than the actual story. As it is, having shrugged aside all traditional values, he is unable to separate the city's temptations from the city's opportunities. As the country boy who is destroyed by the lure of the city, Bartley Hubbard represents symbolically, on a grander scale, the harmful effects of metropolitanism on American country life.

While Bartley falls prey to the temptations of city life, his old college friend, Ben Halleck, struggles dramatically with the whole conflict between urban and rural values. And again, Howells develops the idea through the themes of religion and social duty.

To begin with, Halleck's family is really an example of country values living within the city. Residing in Boston, Mr. and Mrs. Halleck are yet strict, orthodox Congregationalists who have not been swayed by the rising tide of liberal Unitarianism popularized by Harvard. Their house, while richly decorated, is unfashionable according to Boston society standards. They attend church regularly, and entertain friends, but do not go to the theatre, "for the sake of the example" (p.30). They are "rich people, devout in their way and benevolent after a fashion of their own" (p.29); but they are not "spiritually" a part of the growing metropolis rising around them.

The question of religion is again the focus of the country and city conflict for the Hallecks, as it is in *Equity*. One of the Hallecks' daughters, Olive, is a Unitarian, and as such looks upon her parents' orthodoxy as old-fashioned and limited. At the other extreme, the elder two daughters are almost nauseating in their total acceptance of their parents' religion, and in their intolerance of Olive's beliefs. But it is through Ben that the conflict for the Hallecks is most clearly

presented.

Skeptical of his parents' religious beliefs, and eager to take advantage of Boston's opportunities, Ben had wished to pursue his studies at Harvard. However, his family "diverted him from the natural destiny of a Boston man at Harvard, and sent him" (p.29) instead to a "Down East" college (probably Bowdoin) where his orthodox faith might be strengthened. Thus Ben Halleck enters the story already struggling between the solid religious foundation but limited outlook of the country life (as evidenced by his parents' religion and his own education in Maine), and the liberal values but unlimited secular opportunity of city life (seen in his own desires to be a "Boston man").

Until the end of the novel Ben cannot simply accept orthodox teachings. He constantly explores moral questions, and avoids hypocrisy by refusing to attend his parents' church when he doesn't believe. Like Hubbard, he wishes to be successful in the city; but Ben accurately perceives that Bartley has "no more moral nature than a base-ball" (p.243), whereas Halleck's own very sense of traditional ethicality, if not theological beliefs, saves him from the same fate as Bartley's.

Halleck is, in fact, extremely ethical throughout the book. Although he realizes his own deep attraction for Marcia, he takes pains to avoid disrupting the already-shaky marriage of the Hubbards. In the very

important debates with his lawyer friend, Atherton, Halleck tries to convince Atherton (and himself) that, after Bartley has deserted Marcia, he (Halleck) is free to profess his love for Marcia, despite the uncertainty of Bartley's whereabouts or condition. Halleck's reasoning is self-seeking logic that an isolated action in the face of the large mass of society bears no reflection upon, or consequences for, society itself, and that, in short, morality is subjective and to be interpreted individually. But Halleck cannot make his conscience hide from Atherton's moralistic cautions. In fact, Ben ultimately decides to take upon himself the burden of locating Hubbard for Marcia.

It must be mentioned here that the figure of Atherton, in his role of "teacher" to Halleck, foils any attempt at neatly categorizing the book as presenting the country as "moral" and the city as "immoral." For Atherton is undeniably a "city man," and, just as undeniably, a moral man. Despite Cady's description of the lawyer as "stuffy,"¹⁴ Atherton nevertheless serves as a moral guidepost for Ben Halleck, and as an important if not sole moral spokesman in the novel. Atherton's philosophy, which is Swedenborg-like in its emphasis on social rather than theological concerns, clearly undercuts Halleck's temptation to "hide" under the guise of an individualized, relative morality. For Ben can never totally reject Atherton's reminder of individual

commitment to social duty. In their own way, Atherton's moral demands are as idealized, and as stringent, as those of the old Puritan order. Atherton serves as a clear example of an urban moral vision, and his philosophy destroys the notion of Howells as having simply equated urbanism and immorality. The city itself is not immoral, but because of emphasis on material success and assimilation of various values within an urban center, the possibilities for moral corruption are more extensive in the city than in the sheltered world of the rural town.

Thus, Ben Halleck, like Bartley Hubbard, is in one sense representative of America, leaving a background of simple but well-established traditions, and struggling within a fast-paced, complex, urban world. However, rather than falling prey to self-seeking expediency as Hubbard does, Halleck, with Atherton's help, acts out of a moral awareness more acute, because more fully tested, than that of Squire Gaylord himself. In hiding his own feelings for Marcia and instead helping her to locate Bartley, Halleck chooses what both he and Atherton view as the moral decision, and what is also clearly the choice in agreement with his parents' "traditional" religious values.

In a decision related to this in its concession to traditional values, Halleck chooses, however undemonstra-

tively, to enter the ministry in his parents' religion. Having abandoned with this latter choice his own dreams of a happy life with Marcia in Boston, Halleck forsakes entirely the city and its promise of opportunity, and chooses instead the spiritual and emotional security of country life. Significantly, he is assigned to "a backwoods church down in Arøostook County" (p.509) in Maine, thus clearly connecting Halleck with the rural world. However, it must again be pointed out that the country is not presented by Howells as a paradise alternative to metropolitan corruption. For Howells emphasizes that Halleck has not had a grand revelation; Ben is sufficiently resigned, not joyfully convinced, in his choice of occupation. Abandoning the call of secular opportunity, he opts for the security of "rest[ing] in his inherited belief" (p.510):

In entering the ministry he had returned to the faith which had been taught him almost before he could speak. He did not defend or justify this course on the part of a man who had once thrown off allegiance to all creeds; he said simply that for him there was no other course. He freely granted that he had not reasoned back to his old faith; he had fled to it as to a city of refuge. (p.510)

While Squire Gaylord, Bartley Hubbard and Ben Halleck all must deal with the conflict between urban and rural values, the issue is most clearly illustrated through Howells's portrayal of the effects of Boston life on the novel's true protagonist, Marcia Gaylord.

In fact, Marcia's unwillingness to adjust to city life and her loyalty to the secure, though stagnant small-town world of Equity, represent America's own struggles concerning the increasing dominance of the city in American life.

Marcia is, in spirit as much as in fact, her father's daughter, possessing the Squire's same narrow vision of one's ambitions in life. (Kermit Vanderbilt even sees definite Electra overtones in Marcia's attachment to her father.¹⁵) She, in effect, projects her ideal vision of Bartley as a reincarnation of the old Squire. She never does "think his occupation [of journalist] comparable to the law in dignity" (p.204), and she holds out hope that some day Bartley will agree to return to Equity and carry on her father's law practice. (Indeed, several of their quarrels revolve around this very issue.¹⁶) In truth, Marcia's dream prevents her from ever totally embracing Boston life.

In some respects, Marcia actually likes Boston. Although ignorant of what is considered vulgar and what tasteful by Boston society's standards, Marcia enjoys walking through the Common and admiring the bridge and statues in the Public Garden (p.204). She frequents the Museum of Fine Arts and the Public Library, and is captivated by the Great Organ at the Music Hall. And she enjoys Boston's various fine restaurants. In fact, Howells presents for Marcia (and for the reader) a

positive view of Boston's social outlets and opportunities. But all of Boston's finery cannot sway the small-town consciousness which Marcia has inherited from her father. The narrator says that a few months after their arrival in Boston, Bartley and Marcia "were still country people" (p.204), but this statement is true of Marcia throughout the novel. While Bartley "can't understand how any one can want to go back to Equity when he has the privilege of staying in Boston" (p.273), Marcia returns to her small-town world whenever she can. Like her father, she "can't seem to find" herself in Boston (p.273).

While Bartley's increasing corruption is the main factor, Marcia certainly does help cause much of the couple's unhappiness in Boston by her inability to adjust to urban life. Aside from her constant consternation over money, and her exaggerated jealousy over other women, she simply cannot see Bartley's whole Boston-based dream as being "dignified." Her attitude adds much to the couple's inability to adapt fully to city life. Yet, with her attitude, Marcia is a perfect example of the difficult transition of America itself from country to city life in the late nineteenth century.

However, Marcia is not a voice of moral awareness, and her return to Equity at the novel's end is by no means an affirmation by Howells of the moral superiority

of small-town life. For Marcia is simply a confused, country romantic, trying to live out a father-centered dream, and unable to cope with the reality of life outside of the limited world of Equity. And she returns to a broken-down version of her dream village, where the rats still smell in the wainscot (p.6), where "winter is full half the year" (p.3), where, as Vanderbilt says, "bored villagers liv[e] monotonous, spiritless lives."¹⁷ She herself will resume her broken life within the grim security of the "dim old house at the end of the village street" (p.508). Marcia has escaped the confusion of the city, but to what grim alternative?

Through the lives of the characters herein described, Howells presents in A Modern Instance a complex and realistic picture of the issue of city and country, a picture which clearly portrays the ambivalence permeating America at the time. There is no choice here for one life over the other. Instead, the characters are placed between the challenge of the new (Boston) and the security of the old (for the Squire and the Hubbards, the world of Equity; for Ben Halleck, his parents' religion). However, as was the case in America at the time, Howells's characters are forced to realize that the old has also changed, and, influenced by the new, is now only a shadow of what it used to be. Thus, there is no triumph for the main characters. Bartley

and the Squire both die, Halleck and Marcia both return to secure but limited lives in Maine, and even the lawyer Atherton is left questioning his heretofore unquestioned sense of right and wrong. Howells thus pronounces no judgment, no active, clear preference. What he does present, in a complex work, is a powerful statement of ambivalence regarding complex, monumental changes in the framework of American life.

In The Rise of Silas Lapham (1885), Howells again presents a conflict of city and country, but with clearer moral implications than in A Modern Instance. In Silas Lapham, Boston is shown as a direct contrast to the rural setting, which this time is placed in Vermont. The pastoral world is presented as a source of moral awareness, in spite of the changes taking place in America. Despite Edwin Cady's feeling that the "vitality of cultural relevance is gone"¹⁸ from the traditional country values presented in the novel, and despite the town's having been "painted over" by the city (Lapham's business), nevertheless Lapham's Vermont farm, with its symbolically-abundant paint mine, is a good deal stronger as a symbol of moral awareness than is Equity in the earlier novel.

As the title suggests, the novel deals with the "rise" of Silas Lapham. More correctly, it deals with two rises — and two simultaneous falls — of this son

of hard-scrabble Vermont stock. In his social and economic rise, Lapham suffers an accompanying fall in his moral condition; likewise, as Silas rises to a moral awareness of his situation (what Howells surely sees as his real rise), he does so at the expense of his social and economic status. This pattern may be viewed symbolically as the respective rise of emergent and traditional values, with Silas as a symbol for America itself. (Howells's narrator even remarks in one place that ". . . risen Americans are all pathetically alike in their narrow circumstances, their sufferings, and their aspirations."¹⁹) However, the analogy is not totally accurate, and one must not stretch this symbolic view too far, for Silas is, first and foremost, a specific character, despite possible interpretation of him as an American small-town "everyman." And in Lapham's ultimate return to his Vermont roots upon attaining his moral rise, Howells is not suggesting a mass exodus from the city back to the idyllic country life.

What Howells is doing here, as he did in A Modern Instance, is exhibiting America's shift in emphasis toward material success, social status, and urban and industrial growth, while he also recognizes the decline of traditional values which was accompanying that shift. He presents the irrevocable intrusion of new, urban values into America's pastoral ideal, and voices what Leo Marx would later describe as uneasiness over

technology's expansion beyond the cities into the country, a development which Marx calls an "imposition of the city upon the country."²⁰ (Marx cites Thoreau's description of a train whistle disturbing the quiet of the woods near Walden Pond as a landmark symbol of "the growth of the city's dominion"²¹. Howells achieves the same effect in this work with Lapham's blatant paint advertisements splashed upon the rocks and barnboards of the Vermont countryside.) However, rather than a condemnation of the city, Howells again draws a literary portrait of ambivalence concerning America's changing emphasis.

This ambivalence is seen no more clearly than in the life of Silas Lapham himself. Perhaps John E. Hart is correct when he claims that Lapham is, by the book's end, a negation of the whole concept of the self-made man.²² Nevertheless, Howells applauds the personal drive and assertiveness which enable Lapham to build a fortune out of an old paint mine. Lapham's dedication to hard work, and to producing results out of that hard work, is a result of his sternly moralistic, Puritan background, hewn out of the rigid rockiness of rural New England. Lapham is, in fact, a classic example of the courage and conviction of the founders of a land where those qualities were once necessary for survival itself. Lapham himself is, in his own semi-vulgar

way of expressing the fact, justifiably proud of his self-made fortune. But accompanying Lapham's self-drive is a self-centeredness which clouds his moral vision and allows him to fall prey to what Cady calls "the immoral requirements of competitive success in the business world of the Gilded Age."²³ While Howells may not be so harsh as to see immorality as a "requirement" for economic success, it most certainly is a large factor in the otherwise commendable accomplishments of Silas Lapham.

Lapham's main immoral act is his ungrateful treatment and rejection of his business partner, Rogers, whose financial backing had actually helped give Lapham a solid start on his road to fortune. After Lapham's own business initiative gradually reduces Rogers to the role of "silent partner," Silas finally forces Rogers out of the partnership, precisely when the business is about to double in value. This unethical action undercuts much of Lapham's success, and thus the very foundation of Lapham's wealth is set in corruption. In what is a sad comment on the American success myth, Lapham's material rise depends upon his ability to convince himself of having committed no wrong against Rogers. (He tells his wife that his treatment of Rogers was "a business chance" [p.45].) Conversely, Lapham's moral rise will begin with his recognition of

his guilt.

Howells tells us the details of Lapham's early life by the clever device of having Lapham be interviewed by a young reporter, Bartley Hubbard (the same Bartley Hubbard who himself falls to the temptations of the city in A Modern Instance, although here he is portrayed in the early stage of his own Boston experience). Being already well-established in Boston business circles (if not social circles), Lapham looks back upon his "rise" with subjective pride and defensiveness. While he warns Hubbard metaphorically that one must keep from painting over one's conscience (p.14), the fact is that Lapham himself has glossed over the moral lapse in his own personal success story. His wife, who is a constant reminder to Lapham of his moral roots, tells him that his paint has become his God (p.45), but Silas does not realize the full implications of this charge.

Lapham's paint does become his God, and he devotes himself to the success of his venture with the zeal of a religious fanatic.²⁴ (An immediate comparison can be made to the self-centered devotion of Bartley Hubbard to his career in A Modern Instance.) In a symbolic covering over of his rural background, Silas effects his own "handwriting on the wall" which bears the message of doom for the simple country life at the hands of a growing industrial phenomenon. As Lapham spreads three-colored paint samples announcing "Lapham's

advantage of these opportunities, than is Marcia Gaylord. Lapham's speech and manners, his tastes and his very nature show him to be ever the Vermont yeoman, regardless of his wealth or place of residence. As his humiliating misadventure at the Coreys' party exhibits, Lapham is as ill-fitted to Boston society as the aristocratic Bromfield Corey would be to a Grange Hall meeting in rural Vermont. What gives Silas any status at all in Boston is his money. Yet, as he discovers after much embarrassment, that is not enough. There are social demarcation lines based not only on wealth, but on birth, manners, and customs. As Howells notes toward the end of the book, ". . . it is certain that our manners and customs go for more in life than our qualities. The price that we pay for civilization is the fine yet impassable differentiation of these" (p.333). Thus, it is as difficult for Lapham to cross the threshold of Boston Brahminhood as it is for him to fit his huge hands into the gloves he is to wear to the Coreys' party.

As alien as is Boston's society to Lapham's rustic awareness, nevertheless Silas is so involved in his own scheme of success that he wants to add social conquest to his economic fortune. Thus Lapham drifts further from his once-satisfying feeling that "Vermont was good enough for me" (p.11). As several critics

Mineral Paint — Specimen" on every board, fence, bridge, girder, dead wall, barn and face of rock in the countryside around the Lapham farm, he announces the gospel of big business and commercial exploitation, and symbolically imposes urban commercialism upon rural tranquility by, in effect, turning the landscape into a billboard. And it is superbly ironic that the paint, which, like Silas, has arisen out of the good earth of the country, and which Silas views as being like his own blood, should become, like Silas, representative of those same forces which threaten the very existence of rural life.

In Boston, in his recounting and justifying of these actions to Hubbard in the interview, Lapham reveals just how far spiritually, as well as geographically, he has ventured from the country:

"So long as the people that own the barns and fences don't object, I don't see what the public has got to do with it. And I never saw anything so very sacred about a big rock, along a river or in a pasture, that it wouldn't do to put mineral paint on it in three colors . . . I say the landscape was made for man, and not man for the landscape.(p.16)"

While mentally preoccupied with his own success, and spiritually committed to his paint, Silas Lapham is confronted by the fascinating but uncomfortable social world of Boston. Here Howells presents a Boston similar to the city in A Modern Instance. But Silas Lapham is no more suited to city life, nor able to take

point out, the major symbol of Lapham's hopeless social climbing is the mansion which he is having built on the water side of Beacon Street.²⁵ In its construction is an apt analogy to Lapham's attempted entrance into the aristocracy. Symbolically, there is much difficulty in laying the foundation in the marshy land. Moreover, as Gibson points out, the house "is the product of an architect's taste, chiefly: Lapham contributes only money."²⁶ Similarly, Lapham's only connection with the Brahmin class is due to his wealth. Far removed from Vermont, Silas hopelessly puts his faith in the only value system he has left — that of his wealth. In trying, in effect, to "buy his way" into Boston's aristocracy, Lapham has become a strikingly hopeless example of materialistic business ethics.

Lapham's house on Beacon Street also connects him with an even grimmer reality of city life — extreme economic inequality. While wealth and poverty are and were by no means exclusively urban conditions, the fact remains that Howells's socially-conscious mind could never really reconcile itself to the squalor of Boston's slums, in the light of the great wealth existent elsewhere in the city. Although he himself had just moved to Beacon Street, Howells wrote to his father in late summer of 1884:

There are miles of empty houses all round
me . . . And how unequally things are divided

in this world. While these beautiful, airy, wholesome houses are uninhabited, thousands upon thousands of poor creatures are stifling in wretched barracks in the city here, whole families in one room. I wonder that men are so patient with society as they are.²⁷

While he would be even more outspoken on this issue in later years, after his reading of Tolstoi, Howells does in this novel present glimpses of the implied immorality of such economic inequality. (Clearly, for example, there is great contrast between the dwelling of Zerilla and her mother, and the opulent mansion of the Back Bay.) Ironically, it is the dilettante Bromfield Corey who voices sympathy for the lower economic classes. In commenting on the upper class homes of Beacon Street being left unused in the summer while the owners vacation at the sea, Corey says, in words resembling those of Howells's letter:

I spend my summers in town, and I occupy my own house, so that I can speak impartially and intelligently; and I tell you that in some of my walks on the Hill and down on the Back Bay, nothing but the surveillance of the local policeman prevents my offering personal violence to those long rows of close-shuttered, handsome, brutally insensible houses. If I were a poor man, with a sick child pining in some garret or cellar at the North End, I should break into one of them and camp out on the grand piano. (p.180)

Thus, despite his personal sense of responsibility to provide for Zerilla (Millon) Dewey and her mother, Lapham, in his quest to establish the House of Lapham in Proper Boston,²⁸ becomes mired in the morass of

urban inequality, in both the social and economic spheres. But Howells provides Lapham with a chance to redeem himself, to reclaim his soul from this urban hell. Lapham, in a reversal of his reasoning in the earlier deal with Rogers, avoids a similar unethical choice (this time suggested by Rogers), centered solely on self-gain. The magnitude of the situation further underscores its importance, for Silas is fully aware that to swindle the Englishmen in the land deal is his last real hope of saving his own faltering business. But, although Silas actually does not make a definite choice — his indecisiveness allows the passage of time to prevent the closing of the deal — Howells clearly shows that Lapham has come to realize the falseness of his new "God." While not spectacular or clearly decisive, Lapham is nevertheless heroic. As he tells the Reverend Mr. Sewell at the end of the novel, "Seems as if it was a hole opened for me, and I crept out of it" (p.336-7).

Accompanying Lapham's moral rise is the loss of his economic and social status. Howells signifies this by an almost unbelievable, but totally appropriate, symbol of the destruction by fire (accidentally started by Silas) of Lapham's great house on Beacon Street. As Lapham had not paid the insurance premium, the loss of the house brings about the Laphams' financial ruin.

The house symbolized all that Lapham was trying to be in Boston. The hollow shell which remains after the fire is symbolic of the hollowness of the values which Silas had been adopting, and also becomes the symbolic hole out of which Lapham climbs.

If Lapham's rise from the ashes is not as triumphant as that of the phoenix, he nevertheless has saved himself from further immersion in the questionable ethics of the business world, and regained much of his former self. And yet his return to the country is not a total rejection of the city. The Laphams do not leave Boston until the fire leaves them without financial means to continue there. They return to the country as had both Ben Halleck and Marcia Hubbard, out of a desire for security more than out of any philosophical conclusion about city and country life. And Lapham, although feeling that he made the right choice, still hints that the shadow of the city looms over his thoughts. Sewell can "see that the loss of his fortune had been a terrible trial to Lapham" (p.336), and when he asks Silas if he ever has any regrets, Lapham replies: "I don't know as I should always say it paid; but if I done it, and the thing was to do over again, right in the same way, I guess I should have to do it" (p.337, emphasis mine).

As Lapham does not condemn the city, neither is Howells condemning urban life itself, despite Silas's

return to the country. For Lapham's moral decline and ultimate rise are part of a personal struggle, and, once again, not a flat association of morality with the country, immorality with the city. (The fact remains that Lapham's moral decline begins before he ever gets to Boston.) As with Bartley Hubbard in A Modern Instance, Lapham falls prey to the existing temptations of corruption. The city itself does not corrupt him.

As noted, Howells does present the great economic and social inequality existent in the city's "class structure," and the suggestion seems to be that the situation is far from ideal. However, the aristocrats, as evidenced most clearly by the Coreys, are certainly not evil. In fact, although he is far from an active social reformer, Bromfield Corey, as noted earlier, does sense the injustice in the existing structure of wealth distribution. While not as philosophical or intellectual as Atherton, Corey can yet be compared with the lawyer of A Modern Instance, if one recalls that, despite his abstract notions of social morality, Atherton does not feel uncomfortable with his own wealth and high social status. This is not to equate Corey with Atherton in terms of being a moral voice. But although Corey is not a strong moral voice, neither is he (or his social class) a representation of immorality. Rather, the corruption is an active process within Silas Lapham himself, who, placed in an

environment totally foreign to his own identity, succumbs to his own proud drives and desires.

Nevertheless, Howells does have Lapham return to the country, to yet another symbolic house. After the House of Lapham in Boston has burned to an empty shell, the Laphams return to the farm house in Vermont. If the Beacon Street house symbolizes the hollowness of urban values in regards to Lapham's Boston experience, then the farm house represents the solidity of Silas's rural upbringing, referred to by Hart as "a native innocence, an honesty and uprightness."²⁹ And yet even returning to his solid roots, Lapham must live with the knowledge of a lost fortune and missed opportunities. Howells thus again presents a basic dilemma of city and country, with opportunity on one side and security on the other. And again, the seeming incompatibility of the two worlds (despite the cities' influence upon the towns) is brought out. For even in the symbolic attempted union of city and country, the marriage of Tom Corey and Penelope Lapham, there is a flaw — the couple will live in Mexico for a few years. The dilemma would continue in Howells's mind, and in America itself.

In 1887, Howells for a third time published a novel which depicted the relationship of Boston and

rural New England. The Minister's Charge: or, the Apprenticeship of Lemuel Barker, while not as comprehensive in scope as either A Modern Instance or The Rise of Silas Lapham, is nonetheless as revealing in its presentation of both urban Boston and rural countryside. In fact, in this novel, Howells presents an even more extensive view of Boston's varied atmosphere than in either of the other two works discussed. For the book's major theme is the doctrine of social complicity, or the responsibility of all people for the evils of society.

This idea of complicity was actually an attack on Boston's upper classes who felt themselves above and apart from the crime and poverty of the slums. This lesson is discovered by, and later delivered as a sermon by, the Reverend David Sewell, one of the two major figures in the novel, and the same minister who had already appeared in The Rise of Silas Lapham. Sewell's words cut right through the artificiality of social class distinctions, in what is actually an application of traditional Christian values to the secular society of the city:

. . .no one for good or for evil, for sorrow or joy, for sickness or health, stood apart from his fellows, but each was bound to the highest and lowest by ties that centered in the hand of God. No man, Sewell said, sinned or suffered to himself alone; his error and his pain darkened and afflicted men who never heard his name. If a community was corrupt, if an age was immoral, it was not

because of the vicious, but the virtuous who fancied themselves indifferent spectators.³⁰

As the novel reveals, Mr. Sewell's theory is developed out of his own personal experience with young Lemuel Barker. As the book's double title suggests, the drama of the novel revolves not only around Lemuel Barker's initiation into city life, but, more importantly, around Sewell's inability to apply his very doctrine of complicity totally to his own relationship with Barker. It is because of Sewell's praise of Barker's artless poetry (so as to avoid hurting the country lad's feelings) that Barker, an uninitiated country lad, comes to Boston with great delusions of getting his poems published and of launching a literary career. Sewell does accept the responsibility for having caused Barker to come to Boston, and he helps the young man to gain employment in a couple of instances. Much to Mrs. Sewell's dismay, the minister takes on Barker as his moral charge, and feels obligated to assist in Barker's Boston "apprenticeship" in whatever way he can. But he is unable really to help Barker with either his complicated problem concerning love and marriage, or with his attempt to make something of himself, to be the country boy who succeeds in the city.

Sewell's strongest advice, repeated often, is that Barker return to his mother's small farm at Willoughby Pastures and take up again the simple,

agrarian life which he left. The minster "regret[s] this tendency to the cities of the young men from the country" (p.20), and cites many examples for Barker of "great originals" (p.22) who achieved greatness while not forsaking their places among common folk. But, having been exposed to the city, Lemuel (who might also be seen in this aspect as a symbol of America) cannot easily dismiss its influence upon him. Howells rejects any ideal vision of country life through Barker's recurring mental image of his unsophisticated mother wearing her outdated, ridiculous bloomers and going about her everyday chores in total ignorance of, or lack of interest in, the outside world. When weighed in Lemuel's mind against the realization of all that Boston has to offer, the image of his mother on the farm symbolizes the ignorance and poverty of the "rural slums" to which Martin refers; or, to use Marx and Engels's scornful phrase, Lemuel senses in his own way the "idiocy of rural life."³¹ Having been led to Boston by false pretenses, Barker nevertheless becomes attracted to the city's grandeur. Like Silas Lapham in a way, he cannot return to the country until he has conquered the city (or at least tried to).

Barker's first attempts to "conquer" are abortive indeed. And it is in these scenes that Howells introduces the reader to the sordid, ugly aspects of Boston, in much more detail than ever before. The slum life,

crime, poverty and wretchedness of which he had shown only glimpses in both Silas Lapham, and A Modern Instance, are here presented first hand as Lemuel is given as rude an introduction to the American city as ever an innocent country boy received. Edwin Cady succinctly summarizes Barker's plight:

In a swift but excellently detailed and well-articulated succession of scenes, he [Howells] had Lem swindled by a pair of counterfeiters on the Common, wandering homeless and starved among the dregs of Boston, arrested, discharged, and rescued from the streets by a charity flophouse before Sewell could catch up with him.³²

In short, Lemuel is forced to swallow a veritable overdose of urban injustice after barely leaving the dirt paths of the country and setting foot on Boston's stony streets. Swindled out of his money, not wanting to borrow from Sewell, and trying to avoid the embarrassment of going home disappointed and penniless, Barker decides to stay in the city and fend for himself. Despite his own misfortunes, he is quickly attracted to Boston, and realizes the city's many advantages, regarding opportunities for social exposure and personal growth, over his native rural life. When he goes home for a short visit, he cannot wait to return to Boston and resume his new life. And even at the end of the book, after being partially crippled in a streetcar accident, Barker tells Sewell that Boston had made him (Barker) "think the world's a good deal better

than [he] used to" (p.450); he also tells the minister, ". . . if I were to do nothing but pass along the good that's been done me since I came here, I'd keep busy the rest of my life" (p.450). Barker does not specifically define that "good," but he seems again to be referring to the widened opportunity for personal growth, provided by the city and not by the country. Thus, Lemuel Barker's "apprenticeship" definitely has a good side, as Barker has truly gained valuable knowledge — of himself and of the world, and has also broadened his outlook on mankind itself. He has, to use his friend Berry's phrase, "deepened and heightened" his experience in life.

Despite this "deepening and heightening" of Barker's experience, however, Lemuel's sense of traditional morality is much less altered by life in Boston than is Silas Lapham's. (Bartley Hubbard doesn't have much of this quality to begin with.) Lemuel views his swindling mishap and the subsequent misfortunes as punishment for his having tried to make a profit on the swindler's (pretended) need. Howells says, "He was still on those terms of personal understanding with the eternal spirit of right which most of us lose later in life" (p.86). Barker refuses to accept gratuities for his hotel work because the sums represent "money he hasn't earned." And he also senses the injustice in

Boston's aristocratic social class system, as he contrasts it with the social equality in the country towns (p.250). Yet despite Barker's retaining of the fundamentals of his country values, and despite the good which Lemuel finds in Boston, he nonetheless becomes enmeshed in a web of confusion over urban values.

Various forces spin this web. While sensing the injustice of the class system, Barker nevertheless becomes caught up in the idea of maintaining "dignity" in his job, and not being simply a "servant." He himself begins to assume aristocrat-like airs and Bromfield Corey, who reappears in this novel as a temporary benefactor of Barker's, calls Lemuel "the ancestry of the future élite of Boston" (p.446), and sees in him the potential "to found one of [Boston's] first families" (pp.446-7). Because of his increasing class consciousness, Lem begins to look down upon the common ways of Statira Dudley, a very dependent girl whom Barker had been courting. With Lem's romantic attraction for Miss Jessie Carver, a young art student, a complex love triangle evolves. And finally, in order to keep hidden the truth about his first-night misfortunes in Boston (and what they would associate him with in people's minds, despite Lem's innocence), Barker is forced to lie and say that "the mate," Williams, is a friend of his when the ex-convict arrives at the hotel seeking employment, and again when Williams is accused by

Berry of theft.

All of these instances of value struggles create an indelible impression upon Lem (symbolized by his injury suffered in the accident) which prevents him from ever fully returning to his former state of rural contentment. Bromfield Corey remarks that the farm would be "poison to Barker, now that he's once tasted town" (p.447). For while Boston life taxes Lemuel's ability to respond with the clarity of his older values, the city certainly shows him that the world is much larger than the rustic confines of Willoughby Pastures, and that life's problems and solutions are far more complex than he had ever imagined.

Barker does manage to solve his most pressing problem, that of his involvement with both Statira Dudley and Jessie Carver. As was the case with Silas Lapham, Lemuel is able to draw upon his remaining sense of human compassion when he most needs to. And, as he has never truly lost his older values, he makes his decision with firmer conviction than does Lapham.

In finally choosing Statira over Jessie, Barker is choosing responsibility over romance. If he was in love with anyone, it was with Miss Carver. But Statira, he ultimately realizes, needs him more than does Jessie. In a way ironically similar to that in which Sewell had deceived him because of sympathy for him, Lemuel has

prolonged a relationship with Statira long after he has stopped being seriously interested in her. Thus he feels responsible for her strong feelings for him, and, as she becomes ill with consumption, Lemuel forsakes his city dreams and personal interest in Jessie, and decides to marry Statira and move back to the "better air" of the country for the sake of Statira's health. (It should be noted that Sewell feels the proposed marriage to be a mistake, since Barker does not love Statira. But the moral issue is a complex one, and Barker chooses what he feels to be his moral duty in providing for Statira.)

Thus, like Marcia Hubbard and Silas Lapham, Lem Barker returns to the country after an "apprenticeship" in Boston. As with the others, Barker's return is not triumphant; rather, he returns, as they do, out of necessity. Also like Marcia and Silas, Lemuel returns "wounded": Marcia is a widow, Silas is divested of his fortune, and Lemuel is partially crippled. Finally, like Marcia and Silas, Lem Barker returns to a rural setting which is only a shadow of the American rural ideal. The farmhouse, as Sewell recalls early in the novel, is "a tumbledown, unpainted wooden house ' . . . [with] milk cans scattered round the door-yard, and . . . a poverty-stricken wash flapp[ing] across it'"(p.33). The house is inhabited by an old-fashioned mother and a rheumatic brother-in-law, while Lemuel, himself a

cripple, will add a sickly wife to this collection of human remnants living in a remnant of a house. The picture is hardly one of pastoral bliss, and indeed rivals the bleakness of Marcia's return to seclusion in Equity.

But all turns out well for Lem Barker. The reader learns in rapid fashion: that Statira chooses after all to go to Philadelphia with her dominating friend, 'Manda Grier, instead of marrying Lem; that Lem does marry happily — with the seeming implication being that he marries Jessie Carver, although Cady claims that Howells's deliberately vague statement actually refers to Sybil Vane, "that girl" who had treated Lem as an inferior when he worked for Sybil's aunt;³³ and that Lem acquires a teaching position at a country school, where he will try quietly, by example, to give his students a sense of the expanding horizons beyond their rural world.

Thus, like Silas Lapham, Lem Barker fails in his attempt to be the self-made man of the city, but, like Silas, he finds serenity, if not triumph, in returning to his country roots and traditions. Moreover, in the semi-optimistic notion that Lemuel will try in a small way, by example rather than by preaching, to bring some of his urban consciousness to the country, there is a hint of what for Howells would have been an ideal state: a balance of modern, urban opportunity and traditional,

country values. But Lem knows that his people of Willoughby Pastures would deride any widescale attempt to change their country notions of life and how it should be lived. Thus, Barker does not set out to effect any great social or cultural awakening in Willoughby Pastures. The positive union of the best aspects of both urban and rural life remains for Howells an ideal, and not a foreseeable possibility.

The Minister's Charge, then, like A Modern Instance and The Rise of Silas Lapham, presents Howells's own ambivalent views of both city and country life, by focusing upon the nineteenth-century Boston which Howells knew so well, and upon the ancestral villages or rural New England. Not a pastoral romanticist, nor an urban idealist, Howells draws in these novels neither the image of an ancient, rustic paradise, nor the picture of a modern, metropolitan Mecca. Rather, with a realist's vision, he observes the great changes taking place in America and molds his observations into art which is both realistic and meaningful.

For as its economy turned from an agrarian to an industrial basis, as its people moved from the rural towns to the great cities, and as its very traditional, small-town life and values became altered by the spirit of urbanization, America found itself, like Howells's characters, faced with the demise of the great agrarian

myth. The powerful emergence of industrialization undercut the validity and the relevance of America's long-standing, sentimental, pastoral ideal. Like Bartley Hubbard, Silas Lapham, and Lemuel Barker, America was feeling the great lure of the city; yet, like the latter two, and like Marcia Hubbard, America also had deep roots in the ancient soil of its farms and small towns.

While both the city and the country had their pitfalls and their inadequacies, the task for America was to achieve somehow a working balance between the best aspects of both. Yet, in these novels, this hoped-for ideal is shown as being just that — an ideal, desirable but not probable.

A century before, on the verge of America's great political Revolution, de Crèvecoeur asked, "What, then, is this American, this new man?"³⁴ Now, in the throes of a sweeping urban and industrial revolution, Howells was essentially asking the same question. Was America to become solely an urbanized, industrial giant, forsaking its agrarian ideals and traditional small-town values? Did Emerson's "embattled farmers"³⁵ fight in a Revolution over a century before, so that America itself should lay waste to its own small farms a hundred years later? Howells shuddered at the thought. Yet America could not move backwards, and Howells was not advocating that the nation deny itself opportunities

for national growth which lay in America's cities. Wanting to explore the limitless potential of the future while not rejecting the embedded traditions of the past, Howells presents the uneasiness, the disjointedness, as the nation underwent its "harvest of change" in the late nineteenth century. Where America was going, Howells was not sure. Solutions were not evident. But where America was, Howells felt all too keenly. And by focusing upon Boston and rural New England as being representative of the entire nation, Howells presents not answers, but a truly poignant statement of the complexities of the questions.

Endnotes

¹Leo Marx, The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), p.6.

²Marx, p.319.

³Warner Berthoff, The Ferment of Realism (New York: The Free Press, 1965), pp. 11-12.

⁴Jay Martin, Harvests of Change: American Literature 1865-1914 (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1967), pp. 81-164.

⁵Martin, p.83.

⁶Marx, p.32.

⁷Berthoff, p. 12.

⁸William Dean Howells to James T. Fields, Life in Letters of William Dean Howells, ed. Mildred Howells (New York, 1970), I, 29.

⁹See Morton and Lucia White, "The Ambivalent Urbanite: William Dean Howells," in The Intellectual Versus the City (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press and M.I.T. Press, 1962), pp. 95-116.

¹⁰William Dean Howells, A Modern Instance (Boston: James R. Osgood and Company, 1882), p. 27. Future references will be cited as page numbers in parentheses within the text of the essay.

¹¹William M. Gibson, quoted in William J. McMurray, The Literary Realism of William Dean Howells, Crosscurrents Modern Critiques, Gen. Ed. Harry T. Moore (Carbondale, Ill.: Southern Illinois University Press, 1967), p.38.

¹²William Dean Howells, quoted in Edward Wagenknecht, William Dean Howells: The Friendly Eye (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969), p.184.

¹³William M. Gibson, William D. Howells, University of Minnesota Pamphlets on American Writers, Number 63 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1967), p.27.

³¹See White, p. 100.

³²Edwin Cady, The Realist at War (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1958), p. 4.

³³Cady, The Realist at War, p. 5.

³⁴Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur, "What Is An American," in his Letters from an American Farmer (New York: New American Library, 1975), p. 52.

³⁵See Ralph Waldo Emerson's poem, "Concord Hymn."

¹⁴Edwin Cady, The Road to Realism (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1956), p. 211.

¹⁵Kermit Vanderbilt, The Achievement of William Dean Howells (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1968), p.50.

¹⁶See Vanderbilt, pp. 69-70.

¹⁷Vanderbilt, p. 95.

¹⁸Cady, The Road to Realism, p. 237.

¹⁹William Dean Howells, The Rise of Silas Lapham (New York: New American Library, 1963), p.7. All subsequent references will be cited as page numbers in parentheses within the text of the essay.

²⁰Marx, pp. 31-2.

²¹Marx, pp. 31-2.

²²John E. Hart, "The Commonplace as Heroic in The Rise of Silas Lapham." Modern Fiction Studies, 8 Winter/1962-3, No. 4, p. 376.

²³Cady, The Road to Realism, p. 231.

²⁴Note Howells's use of religious terms in describing Lapham's thoughts of his paint. For ex., "reverent satisfaction" (p.12), "Faith" (p. 19), "virtues" (p.21).

²⁵For example, Gibson (p. 30), Vanderbilt (p.98), Hart (p. 376), and Everett Carter, Howells and the Age of Realism (Hamden, Conn.: Anchor Books, 1966), p.169.

²⁶Gibson, p. 30.

²⁷Letter, William Dean Howells to his father, Aug. 10, 1884, in Life and Letters, I, 363.

²⁸Vanderbilt, p. 98.

²⁹Hart, p. 376.

³⁰William Dean Howells, The Minister's Charge; or, The Apprenticeship of Lemuel Barker (Boston: Ticknor and Company, 1887), p. 458. Future references will be cited as page numbers in parentheses within the text of the essay.

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