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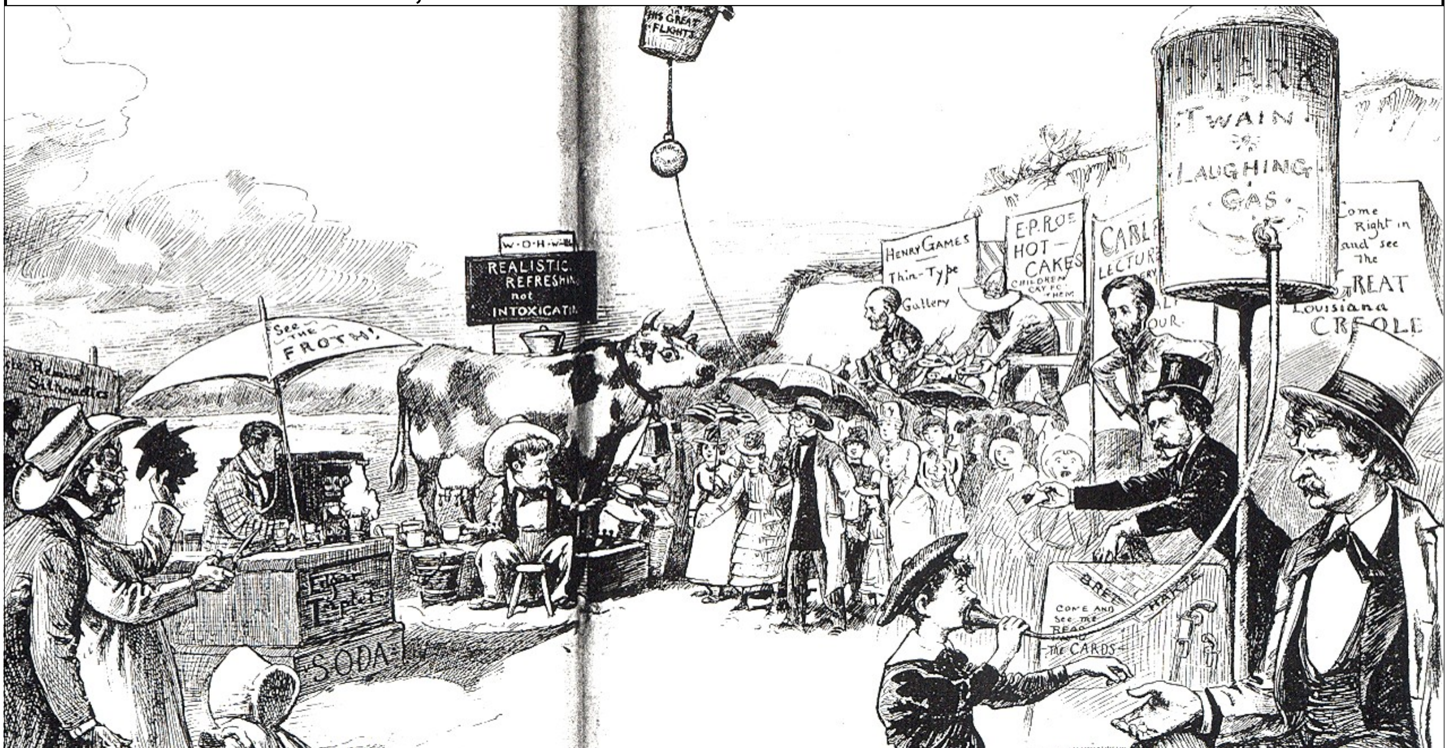

Detail from "Literature at Low Tide" by W.A. Rogers, *Life* magazine, vol. 8 (7 Sep. 1886), 148-9. Howells is seated at rear -left, with his cow and a sign advertising his literary wares: "Realistic, Refreshing, not Intoxicating."

Abstracts—
Howells Papers Presented at the 2009 ALA Conference, Boston, May 2009

Panel: Howells & His Contemporaries

1. "'The Exploitation of History': Howells, Neo-Romanticism, and the Failure of Local Color," Nathaniel Cadle, Florida International University

Much of the criticism William Dean Howells wrote between 1892 and 1900—between his two tenures at *Harper's*—displays a marked and growing disenchantment with the tastes of the American reading public. Part of Howells' disappointment was clearly due to the enormous popularity of such "vulgar literature" as the historical romances of Charles Major, Winston Churchill, and George Barr McCutcheon, whose work Howells derided as "neo-romanticism" and tied explicitly to the spread of U.S. imperialism abroad. Recent literary scholars, such as Amy Kaplan, Nancy Glazener, and Andrew Hebard, have followed Howells' lead and examined the cultural-imperial work that these historical romances performed. Simultaneously, however, Howells repeatedly acknowledged the failure of the techniques of realism, especially the use of dialect and other features of local color writing, to reach an appreciative general audience. Howells himself seems to have recognized that the rise of neo-romanticism and the fall of local color were linked, and he posed them as oppositional modes or forces in American literature, an assumption that continues to drive many readings of Howells, the historical romances he deplored, and the realists he promoted. Thus for both Howells and, more recently, John Carlos Rowe, Mark Twain's *Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* serves, with certain caveats, as a progressive and "realistic" response to—or pastiche of—the imperialist impulses of neo-romanticism.

What I argue in this paper, however, is that the opposition posed by Howells was not sustainable and that his frustration was also due to a suppressed recognition of the interpenetration of real and neo-romanticist modes of American fiction. Indeed, several major works of the local color movement—George Washington Cable's *The Grandissimes*, Lafcadio Hearn's *Youma*, Sarah Orne Jewett's *The Tory Lover*, and Helen Hunt Jackson's *Ramona*, among others—were also historical romances in some form or another, and even Twain's *Connecticut Yankee* was as much a continuation of his own cycle of historical romances as it was a reaction to neo-romanticism. I contend not only that these works of local color exploited the emerging demand for historical romances but that, in championing them, Howells helped pave the way for the later ascendancy of the neo-romanticists. In a sense, then, the staunchly anti-imperial Howells inadvertently set the stage for what he called "the exploitation of history" by the pro-imperial neo-romanticists; what Howells originally envisioned as the use of regional history to unite the nation after the Civil War became an abuse of history to underwrite the spread of American empire. I examine how, in his criticism during this period, Howells sought to redefine "realism" and "romance" in political as well as aesthetic terms, and I close by evaluating both the possibilities and limitations of Howells' argument through a brief analysis of the novel Howells himself identified as the exemplary challenge to the neo-romanticists' brand of historical fiction: Edward Bellamy's *Duke of Stockbridge*.

2. "Seeing with a New Lens: The Influence of William James on *London Films*," Owen Clayton, University of Leeds

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, one of William Dean Howells' avid readers, finally meeting him in the flesh, expressed surprise that the famed writer was not dead. Although he had not actually departed from the world, it was true that by this time the venerable 'Dean' was at a low ebb. While writers such as Frank Norris were taking the novel in directions about which he was, at the least, ambivalent, he was aware that his own best work was behind him. Yet, throughout his career, he maintained a desire to test different literary approaches. In 1890, he wrote that 'I find it more and more difficult to satisfy myself with my work; I seem to be always experimenting, always exploring a new field.' This desire had not vanished by the early years of the twentieth century. In 1904, he travelled to England to collect material for a book of travel writing. In a letter to his wife, Elinor, he exclaimed 'What a book I could make of England!' What animated Howells was the chance to try out a conceit that would allow him to keep pace with the literary movements of the day. This consisted of an extended photographic metaphor: an association of himself with the Kodak camera. He was to use this new figuration to move beyond the philosophical foundations of his previous work. Twenty and twenty-first century criticism has largely overlooked this endeavour, which he buried away in the somewhat obscure travelogue *London Films* (1905).

The inspiration behind this literary experiment was William James. The two men knew each other well; they corresponded frequently on professional and philosophical matters, usually in glowing terms, and regularly exchanged copies of their most recent publications. In the early years of the twentieth century, James' influence on Howells' thinking was far greater than previous analysis has suggested. In his *Essays in Radical Empiricism*, James wrote

that positivism, which Howells broadly subscribed to, was overly dualistic because it presupposed that the concepts subject and object were irreducible. In contrast, James claimed that inner and outer existence were inseparable, and that 'Reality is apperception itself...Subject and object are merged'. He described reality as an encounter between the world and subjectivity, just as a point on a graph is the meeting place for two separate axes. This is significant because it blurs the positivistic dualism of theoretic cognition versus material extension and, in turn, alters the traditional relationship between the observer and that which is observed. For Howells, it also has useful similarities to how consumers used the new Kodak cameras. This paper will demonstrate that *London Films* used its photographic metaphor to question positivistic observational assumptions, the way in which this was a response to James' theory of Radical Empiricism and, finally, why Howells ultimately went back on his attempt to create a 'Kodak school in fiction'.

3. "The American Joke," Marcella Frydman, Harvard University

> "Joke of a people great, gay, bold, and free,
> I type their master-mood. *Mark Twain made me*."

At a birthday dinner for Mark Twain in 1905, William Dean Howells credited Twain with the invention of the "American Joke." In an honorary poem, Howells personified Twain's humor in the form of a "Colossus," whose "one eye winked in perpetual eclipse," while "in the other a huge tear of pity stood." Lending Twain's "joke" a body and emotions, Howells also endowed it with a moral voice. In the poem, the American Joke becomes a spokesperson for social justice.

> "I am the joke that laughs the proud to scorn;
> I mock at cruelty, I banish care,
> I cheer the lowly, chipper the forlorn,
> I bid the oppressor and hypocrite beware."

Howells construed the American Joke as an instrument of truth, a source of pleasure that was also, more importantly, a moral arbiter. Delivered as a birthday paean to Twain, perhaps half-joking in its very tone, "The American Joke" is nonetheless one of Howells' most explicit treatments of humor and its salutary potential.

I argue that "The American Joke" is a particularly explicit metaphor for Howells' larger conception of humor as a tool of social criticism in literature. The first section of my paper elaborates Howells' definition of humor through his precise construction and championing of Twain. Using examples from Howells' criticism, especially "Reviews of an Italian's Views of Mark Twain," I show how Howells' notion of humor emerges from his descriptions and admiration of Twain's work. The second half of my paper examines the implications of Howells' understanding of humor for his own work. Reading *The Rise of Silas Lapham*, and in particular the Corey-Lapham dinner party scene, I argue that humor is an indirect mode of social critique for Howells.

In the figure of Silas Lapham, Howells shows that jokes reveal the social scaffolding that makes them possible. When Lapham arrives at the Coreys' home, he finds that he is the only man wearing gloves, and he pulls them off, though only after having been glimpsed by Mr. Corey. The detail is so small as to be insignificant, except that it reveals the vast social distance between Corey and Lapham:

> Lapham, pallid with anxiety lest he should somehow disgrace himself, giving thanks to God that he should have been spared the shame of wearing gloves where no one else did, but at the same time despairing that Corey should have seen him in them, had an unwonted aspect of almost pathetic refinement.

The collision of registers in "the shame of wearing gloves," the overlay of the dramatic and the trivial, and Lapham's "almost pathetic refinement" lend a slapstick quality to this moment. But, the joke here is more serious: if the reader laughs, she acknowledges the deep consequences of the social game that Lapham is forced to play. She comes face to face with that "Colossus," that American Joke, whose "measureless bulk" terrifies as much as it amuses.

Panel: William Dean Howells

1. "Howells in Bohemia," Joanna Levin, Chapman University

This paper charts Howells' ambivalent, but increasingly tolerant attitude towards *la vie bohème*. Occupying an ever shifting middle ground between the romantic and the real, Howells' "Bohemia" alternately represents a bastion of cultural dissolution or neo-Arcadian site of modern possibility.

In his early career, Howells had been suspicious of "Bohemia," viewing it as a dangerous site of cosmopolitan excess and an open affront to the values of an earlier "Arcadian" America. A symptom of urban modernity, Howells' Bohemia fostered irresponsibility and decadent individualism. In his retrospective account of his pre-Civil War visit to the Bohemians at Pfaff's, for example, Howells questioned Henry Clapp's attachment to the "freedom" of anonymity (contrasting the New York Bohemians with the more "responsible" Bostonian literati). Similarly, while charting the breakdown of traditional cultural authorities, Howells' *A Modern Instance* (1882) identifies the moral lapses of modernity with the "phantasmagoria" of *la vie bo-*

hème, a generalized version of which characterizes the early married life of the Hubbards.

By the time he wrote *A Hazard of New Fortunes*, however, Howells had begun to reconcile himself to the cosmopolis in general and to Bohemian life in particular. In this novel, Howells' fictional surrogates, the Marches, move from Boston to New York, reluctantly renouncing what Mrs. March views as her "provincial narrowness." To this end, the Marches go "bohemianizing" within the cosmopolis. Used as a verb, "to bohemianize" signifies, for Howells, the stuff of metropolitan living: "They really enjoyed bohemianizing in that harmless way … The whole family went to the theater a good deal and enjoyed themselves together in their desultory explorations of the city" (258). In *A Modern Instance*, Bohemian life is clouded by moral uncertainty; in *Hazard*, it is potentially benign, "harmless," and even a source of familial togetherness instead of dispersal. Howells thus domesticates the anti-domestic, and recovers Bohemia for the social values he once insisted it corrupted.

In making Bohemia safe for realism, Howells even goes so far as to reimport "Arcadia." Indeed, if *Hazard* has a utopian moment, it is the democratic "common ground" encountered at one New York reception for "clever literary, artistic, clerical, even theatrical people." So refreshingly unpretentious is this reception that Howells wonders if it was "Arcadia rather than Bohemia." Similarly, in *The Coast of Bohemia* (1893), the neo-Arcadian sites are the studio, the art school, and, once again, the Bourgeois-Bohemian reception. Though satirized in the text, this Bohemian seacoast is also cause for celebration: Charmian Maybourgh's studio is described as "a kind of Arcadia"; the art school is a "little republic," and a "natural condition." Arcadia also reconstitutes itself at the Bourgeois-Bohemian dinner table. When the painter Ludlow returns from Ohio to New York, he dines with "painters ... literary men, lawyers, doctors and their several wives," appreciating all the while "that the time had been with them when they lived closer to the ground, in the simple country towns." Providing a metonymic link between an earlier, rural existence based on regional identities and a more contemporary, centralized, and metropolitan culture, this Bohemian party projects a democratic synthesis of past and present Americas. Tracing Howells' changing attitudes towards "Bohemia," this paper argues, provides a crucial measure for his evolving response to the urban and the cosmopolitan.

2. "'Absorbing the Colored Race': Heterosexual Cross-Racial Desire and the Value of Black Womanhood in William Dean Howells's *An Imperative Duty*," Kerstin Rudolph, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

William Dean Howells's *An Imperative Duty* (1892) inextricably relates national identity to black womanhood. In this paper, I take the novel's linkage of national identity and heterosexual cross-racial desire as point of departure for analyzing protagonist Dr. Edward Olney's fascination with black womanhood, embodied through Rhoda Aldgate's intermingled black and white ancestry. Starting out as a largely theoretical discourse on the demise of white Puritan roots in the face of two new emerging social groups – immigrants, particularly the Irish, and African Americans – protagonist Dr. Edward Olney sees the future of American identity lie in black Americans rather than Irish immigrants since the former group embodies the old ideal of white leisure class ethics better and more accurately than the rough, proletarian nature of the Irish. Yet the novel quickly puts Olney's tolerance of social equality to the test: faced with the discovery that his lovely acquaintance Rhoda is partly black, Olney has to weigh his attraction towards her beauty against his initial repulsion of her blackness, striking a balance of national and moral duty with social-scientific progress necessary in a postbellum cultural climate of racial segregation. I argue that the 'acquisition' of Rhoda as Olney's wife becomes valuable to him only after he knows of her African American ancestry. Olney's desire for black womanhood thus serves in the novel on two levels. First, to defuse the danger of black social dominance by 'absorbing the colored race' into the body of white, middle-class America. On a second level, Howells's race novel also suggests that unlike the sexual-psychic abuse white masters imposed on their enslaved women in order to show power and superiority, consuming black female bodies in the postbellum era of the 1880s and 1890s enriches the white race differently. Rhoda's blackness symbolizes value, innocence, and truth needed to fortify the future generation of the American bourgeoisie, qualities lacking in the white American stock to date and, as ethnic-racial cultural capital, largely comparable to the nobility of Old World Europe.

In general, Howells's novel about postbellum American race relations joins Howells's oeuvre rather uncomfortably. With a paternalistic tone and a narrow representation of African American characters, the novel continues to leave a bad taste in the mouth of current critics as it did already with some of Howells's contemporaries, such as Victoria Earle Matthews, for instance, who dismissed the novel as reinforcing damaging stereotypes in her essay "The Value of Race Literature" (1895). Despite, or maybe because of, its stylistic clumsiness, Howells's novel about the possibility of interracial relationships during the heyday of American literary realism in the 1880s and 1890s remains indispensable for adding to the recent scholarly focus on race and blackness in a genre dominated by stories about the white middle class. As such, I particularly explore Howells's use of black womanhood as a counterpoint to the white, female consciousness often used by Howells, James, or other important realist writers as expressing the story's center of truth and realness. As the reception of the book now and then suggests, Howells representation may remain unsatisfactory but the nexus of cross-racial social relations through heterosexual desire shows us another facet of American literary realism: the symbolic value of black womanhood for the task of representing 'the real.'

3. "'Talking Horse' and 'House' in *The Rise of Silas Lapham*," Frederick Wegener, California State University, Long Beach

The element of "talk" has long been discussed as one of William Dean Howells' leading motifs in *The Rise of Silas Lapham* (1886). From Bartley Hubbard's opening interview with the protagonist, to Pen's much-admired conversational abilities, to the talk around which the Coreys' famous dinner party revolves, to all of the business talk occurring throughout the novel, talking becomes one of the narrative's most frequently noted activities, and a significant marker of social differentiation. In particular, the protagonist repeatedly indulges in two favorite topics of conversation, other than his successful business enterprise: horses, about which Lapham learned a great deal as an ostler before becoming a paint manufacturer, and the house that he is in the process of building in the newly fashionable Back Bay area of Boston. As his prospective business partner, Tom Corey quickly becomes familiar with Lapham's consuming interest in both subjects. Taken out, "now and then, for a spin out over the Milldam," where Silas is fond of driving his mare and of discussing his own expert horsemanship, Tom "understood something about horses, though in a passionless way, and he would have preferred to talk business when obliged to talk horse. But he deferred to his business superior. . . . He talked horse with him, and when the Colonel wished he talked house" (102).

My paper will be the first to explore the conspicuous intersection of these two subjects in Lapham's private world. His excursion with Corey represents far from the only moment in the novel when Lapham's horses and his house are conjoined in this way, or when each is mentioned in the text in close proximity to the other. Lapham, for one thing, is continually driving his buggy to stop at the house at various stages in its construction; his mare, whose breeding he discusses with authority now and then in the novel, and his Back Bay house together represent, after his paint, Lapham's two principal claims to social standing and recognition in Boston. (It is no coincidence that Lapham remarks, "No, no; I couldn't ride," and "walked home in silence" [289], rather than driving his horse, after discovering that his unfinished house has burned down.) Why Howells should have linked Lapham's house, through Corey, with such a common colloquialism in nineteenth-century American English reflects an unexamined aspect of the novel, and my paper will trace its implications through an analysis of the circulation of the two terms throughout the narrative. The extent to which Howells's protagonist, and the novel itself, "talks horse" and "talks house" will place Lapham's fortunes and his plight in a fresh light, opening a new perspective onto the depiction of Bostonian society in *The Rise of Silas Lapham*.

Panel: Family Experience & Public Literary Identity

1. "Friendship's Limits: Clemens, Howells, and the Deaths of Susy and Winny," Peter Messent, University of Nottingham

This paper explores Howells's and Clemens's (Mark Twain's) reactions to the deaths of their young daughters to reflect both on the changing mourning practices of the late Victorian period and a lessening in intensity in close male friendships in these years. It examines the status of father-daughter relationships in the period, and the sometimes claustrophobic protectiveness they reveal - focusing, in part, on the difficulties Winny and Susy had in realising their female identities and potential. It then discusses core cultural changes in mourning practice in the period: a decline of 'sentimentalism' and an increasing secularisation which resulted in a greater 'privatisation' of grief. It looks in close detail at Howells's and Clemens's reactions to their daughters' deaths as evidence of such changes and briefly charts how this related to male friendship in the period, where a retreat to family and to interior thought and feeling appears to have replaced the closer personal intimacies of a previous generation. This paper is taken from the book, *Mark Twain and Male Friendship: The Twichell, Howells, and Rogers Friendships*, Oxford University Press, October 2009.

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All members are encouraged to join the Howells-L email discussion list. Subscribe to receive news about events, calls for papers, and queries, and to participate in discussions about W.D. Howells. Subscription instructions are available on the Howells Society website: **www.howellssociety.org**

REVIEW
William Dean Howells and the American Memory Crisis. By Lance Rubin. Amherst, NY: Cambria, 2008. 326 pp. $114.95

In the final two decades of his career, William Dean Howells poured forth a bevy of novels, essays, memoirs, and poetry. He also wrote short fiction—some two dozen short stories and novellas, including "Editha," his most widely anthologized tale. Relatively few scholars have addressed the short fiction. When it is addressed, analysis is often tied to certain predictable biographical and psychological questions, most notably the trauma surrounding the death of Howells's daughter, Winifred.

How wonderful it is, then, to find Lance Rubin's *William Dean Howells and the American Memory Crisis* added to the ranks. While not negating the usefulness of reading Howells's short fiction biographically, Rubin demonstrates that there is more at stake. Many of these stories center around the cultural question of memory, or, as Rubin puts it, the American "memory crisis": a "fixation with the significance and uses of memory in an era… characterized by feelings of fragmentation, isolation, and dislocation that followed… rapid cultural changes" (3). In essence, the "crisis" centered around the question of how America conceptualized itself and its history in the wake of the Civil War. With its volatile economic swings, rapid industrialization, growing immigration, burgeoning urban centers, and labor unrest, America didn't quite seem to recognize itself. The rush to memorialize the war—with statues, monuments, and the creation of Memorial Day itself—was, in part, an attempt at self-definition. Howells, who abhorred the idealized and the sentimental in fiction, worried that America was constructing a gilded version of its history, and, as Rubin explains, he used his short fiction in the early twentieth century to address these issues.

One of Rubin's more thorough explications concerns the fascinating longer story "A Sleep and a Forgetting," collected in *Between the Dark and the Daylight* (1907). The thrust of Rubin's analysis concerns two conjoined manifestations of memory: the personal and the collective. In the story, Nannie Gerald suffers severe amnesia after witnessing her mother's death. Her physician, Dr. Matthew Lanfear, is naturally intrigued by her condition; despite her memory loss, Nannie seems to possess a beautiful character and temperament. "He had always said to himself that there could be no persistence of personality, of character, of identity, of consciousness, except through memory," Howells writes. Yet, as Lanfear studies his charge, "A feeling… possessed him, and brought, in its contradiction of an accepted theory, a suggestion that was destined to become conviction." Namely, that "the soul [can pass] in its integrity through time without the helps, the crutches, of remembrance by which his own personality supported itself."[1] Rubin reads this meditation on the role of memory in the constitution of the self as an aesthetic portent of things to come: "Nannie challenges the prevailing discourse which Lanfear—indeed, most of us—takes for granted: the Enlightenment assumption of a unified, rational, integrated self and consciousness." In so doing, Howells anticipates "how postmodern fiction challenges Enlightenment assumptions of a unified self and identity" (101). It is an intriguing claim, and one to which I shall return, below.

"A Sleep and a Forgetting" also addresses the question of collective memory. One afternoon, Nannie and Lanfear walk amongst the ruins of Possana, an Italian village decimated by a recent earthquake. Lanfear, who had visited the ruins the day before, becomes hopelessly lost in the rubble. Yet Nannie seems, oddly, to know her way around, and guides the two of them out. Lanfear wonders if, in some curious way, Nannie hasn't used his memory to guide them. Just who owns memory, and how is it distributed?

The scene is rich in connotation. As Rubin explains, there is an implicit connection between Nannie's personal situation and the larger, collective experience of the postbellum United States: "Nannie's exploration of the ruins is a metaphorical trip through her personal and collective past. Her voluntary tour through the ruins of a once-intact city is analogous to the tough work that

Howells believes must be done by turn-of-the-century America in order to come to terms with its unpleasant and often brutal past, as well as the destruction of some of its foundational ideals" (110). Upon leaving the ruins, Nannie and Lanfear witness a violent act, triggering Nannie's recovery. Rubin sees much in this: "'A Sleep' contends that postbellum America is an amnesiac culture because socially constructed versions of the collective memory routinely omit the brutal, painful, and destructive aspects of memory that Nannie is forced to recognize before she is 'cured.' Ultimately, this story calls for a reconceptualization of memory, an implicit questioning of its ultimate value for living in the present" (113). Like so much of Howells's later work, "A Sleep and a Forgetting" has garnered scant attention from scholars; Rubin's thoughtful, convincing explication is both welcome and overdue.

Rubin approaches the question of memory from an impressive range of angles in *William Dean Howells and the American Memory Crisis*. He devotes a chapter to Howells's ghost stories, focusing principally on "His Apparition" and "The Angel of the Lord," two stories from *Questionable Shapes* (1903). The specters in these stories, Rubin argues, point to larger cultural and historical concerns. Another chapter focuses on the role of monuments in the novels *Annie Kilburn* (1888) and *The Son of Royal Langbrith* (1904), a fascinating pairing.

Chapter Three is devoted to Howells's Turkish Room stories, a series of some nine tales noteworthy for their structure and form. All but one of the stories are narrated by Acton, a novelist. As Ruth Bardon explains, Acton "repeats the stories as they were told to him by other characters, along with the questions, digressions, and arguments that interrupted the storytelling. These interruptions serve to distance the reader from the content of the stories, and to focus attention instead on questions of interpretation."[2] Rubin discusses the stories in a variety of contexts, mostly centered around questions related to the "memory crisis," though he also focuses on Howells's narrative strategy: "Anticipating aspects of postmodernism, the self-consciously open-ended, fragmentary nature of the Turkish Room stories requires active and critical intervention of a collective audience, reinforcing Howells's notion that history and memory are fundamentally unstable…. Historical closure or objectivity, these stories suggest, though comforting, is a myth" (134).

Howells as proto-postmodernist? (Unfortunate pairing of prefixes, that.) It is a fascinating suggestion, to say the least, and it is one Rubin makes repeatedly throughout his book. Yet he never pushes this branch of his analysis terribly far, probably because he knows it is a doorway to another, different room. And herein lies the only fault in this otherwise strong study: Rubin tries to do too many things. The most significant mis-step comes in the lengthy conclusion, which moves away from Howells to touch briefly upon Jewett, Chesnutt, and Cahan. The point is clear: there is more useful work to be done on the role of memory in late-nineteenth century American authors. Rubin is no doubt correct. Yet, the brief treatments here seem tangential, underdeveloped, and, apart from the shared theme, unrelated to the book's larger focus, which is so clearly the work of Howells. A leaner conclusion would have wrapped up the work more convincingly.

That said, Lance Rubin's *William Dean Howells and the American Memory Crisis* is a valuable addition to the field. Rubin not only addresses Howells's late short fiction, he does so in a novel way, simultaneously introducing the work to a new group of readers—memory is a popular field of inquiry in the humanities and social sciences—and putting it in a fresh interpretive light for Howellsians and others interested in the period.

Rob Davidson
California State University, Chico

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[1] William Dean Howells, *Between the Dark and the Daylight*: Romances. New York: Harper, 1907, 28.
[2] Ruth Bardon, ed., *Selected Stories of William Dean Howells*. Athens: Ohio UP, 1997, 123.

REVIEW

"William Dean Howells." By Sarah B. Daugherty. In *Prospects for the Study of American Literature II*. Eds. Richard Copley and Barbara Cantalupo. New York: AMS Press, 2009. 119-36. $122.50.

Editors Richard Kopley and Barbara Cantalupo have updated and "blended" their essays from *Prospects for the Study of American Literature I* and those of this new second volume, which also includes new authors and more updated critical terminology reflecting the shifts in literary criticism and cultural studies. The concept of the series is to provide an overview of critical reception, highlighting unanswered questions, gaps, and work left to be done on various American authors; however, *Prospects I* did not contain a chapter on William Dean Howells, a figure crucial to any study of American men and women of letters. Thankfully, Sarah B. Daugherty's contribution to *Volume II* restores the American writer to his much deserved place in a text that Kopley calls a "reference book series . . . intended to inform and to provoke, and thus to move the field of American literary study ahead" (xv).

Daugherty's chapter begins with her claim that "despite his image as a Victorian gentleman in a straw hat, William Dean Howells presents a formidable challenge to scholars and analysts," and indeed her essay attempts to reveal exactly where critical work is needed to complicate that Victorian image in the straw hat. While sweeping in its scope, Daugherty achieves focus by breaking her chapter into two parts: "Editions, Bibliography, and Collections" and "Biography and Criticism." The first part suggests there is still a need for

"more analytical study of the connections between Howells's dramatic efforts and his more subtle fiction" because, like Henry James, Howells "modified his ethical conception of character in response to his theatrical experience" (120). Also needed are updates to Howells's bibliography and more modern critical editions of his novels. Included on Daugherty's list for those critical editions are *Private Theatricals* (1875-76), *Annie Kilburn* (1889), *The World of Chance* (1893), *The Landlord at Lion's Head* (1897), and *New Leaf Mills: A Chronicle*. Daugherty further suggests that large research projects conducted on Howells materials housed in the Houghton Library at Harvard could potentially produce important discoveries about both Howells's personal and his intellectual life.

In the second part, Daugherty makes her claim that there is a lack of "more extended analyses of the complex relationships between Howells's life and his fiction" (125). Howells's stance on historical and cultural issues is studied yet needs more extensive and accurate analysis that focuses on how his personal stance is related to his literary one. To pinpoint a reason for this particular lack of analysis, Daugherty argues that "if Freud helped to revive Howells, other theorists threatened to extinguish him. Poststructuralists had little interest in an author who championed 'truth,' at least in the statements best known to general readers" (126). In order to combat this problem, Dougherty argues that "we should unite criticism and scholarship instead of regarding them as separate activities" in order to situate Howells's work in its context through cultural analysis and close reading (126). By situating Howells more accurately in his critical, social, historical, and biographical place, Daugherty states, "a comprehensive study might establish the causal connections between Howells's personal motives and his aesthetic ones" (128). Such a comprehensive study suggests fruitful work to be done in analyzing race, gender, class, and psychology in Howells's personal, critical, and literary texts. Possibly most suggestive for current scholarship on William Dean Howells and the Realism he championed is Daugherty's claim that "as we write the history of the twentieth-century literature, we need to learn more about the reading habits of authors who at times dissented from modernist orthodoxy" because "despite the development of experimental styles, realistic representation has continued to attract both popular and elite audiences" (130). This series, and certainly Daugherty's chapter, would be particularly valuable in classrooms, for both undergraduates and graduate students, as beginning points of reference to then explore critical exigencies on this ever-shifting critical ground of recent years.

Margaret Jay Jessee
University of Arizona

From the Editor

Comments about this issue of *The Howellsian* and suggestions for future issues are always welcome, as are contributions of Howells-related news items, photographs, queries, notes, reviews, and so on. Contact me via email: petriep1@southernct.edu or mail: English Department, Southern Connecticut State University, 501 Crescent St, New Haven, CT 06515.

Paul R. Petrie

Call for Papers—Howells Society Panels at the 2010 ALA Conference, San Francisco

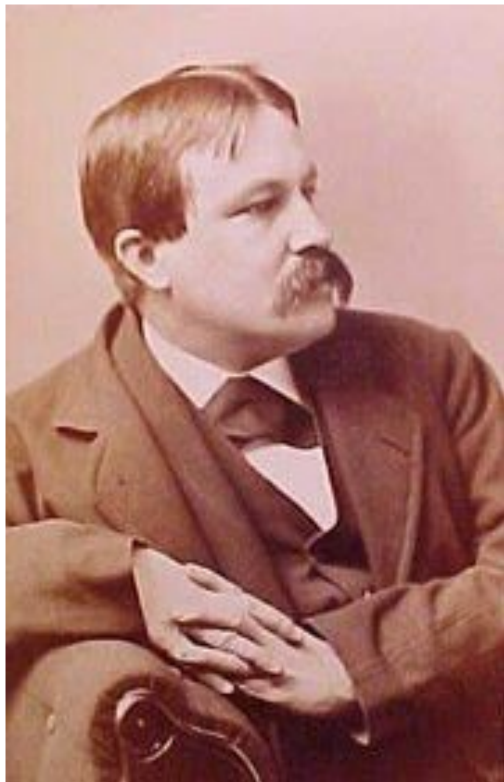
The Howells Society will once again sponsor two panels at the American Literature Association annual conference. The ALA's 21st annual conference will meet at the Hyatt Regency San Francisco in Embarcadero Center on May 27-30, 2010 (Thursday through Sunday of Memorial Day weekend).

I. Howells and Capitalism: As the American economy struggles to regain its footing, we are interested in papers on any aspect of Howells's work that touches on his ideas and attitudes toward capitalism, which became more contentions in his later years.

II. Open Topic: We are interested in papers that touch upon any topic in Howells's work. We are especially keen to hear about new directions in Howells scholarship and/or texts that often get overlooked.

For either panel, please send a 500-word abstract and a brief c.v. (separate MS Word attachments) by January 10th, 2010 to Dr. Lance Rubin at lance.rubin@arapahoe.edu or by mail to Lance Rubin, Department of Humanities, Arapahoe Community College, 5900 S. Santa Fe Drive, Littleton, CO 80160.

For further information about the conference, please consult the ALA website at www.americanliterature.org or contact the conference director, Professor Alfred Bendixen of Texas A&M University at abendixen@tamu.edu.



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Howells Society Membership or Renewal—Dues Notice

The dues for 2010 will remain $10, which we all know is a bargain. Our membership dues remain among the lowest of all single-figure societies in the American Literature Association, and we shall attempt to keep them that way. To do this, however, requires that they be paid in a timely manner. ***If you have not yet paid your 2009 dues, please do so right away.*** Payment in advance for 2010 dues is also welcome.

Dues money helps cover the cost of printing and distributing *The Howellsian* and such other documents as publicity brochures and announcements; it also funds the annual Howells Essay Prize, awarded for the best paper on Howells presented at the ALA conference; also, the Society has been discussing methods of using accrued dues to strengthen the Society and expand its membership by promoting the reading and study of Howells's work regionally as well as at the ALA meetings.

Please help make your Society a stronger, larger, more effective one by sending your check for $10 promptly. Thank you! And thanks, too, for your continuing interest and support of W. D. Howells scholarship, and the William Dean Howells Society. We depend on it!

New Membership ☐ **Renewal** ☐

Name: ______________________

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Please make your check out to the ***William Dean Howells Society***, and send it to:
Dr. Elsa Nettles, 211 Indian Spring Road, Williamsburg, VA 23185

The Howellsian

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THE HOWELLSIAN
PROF. PAUL R. PETRIE
ENGLISH DEPARTMENT
SOUTHERN CONNECTICUT STATE UNIVERSITY
501 CRESCENT STREET
NEW HAVEN, CT 06515