

# The Howellsian

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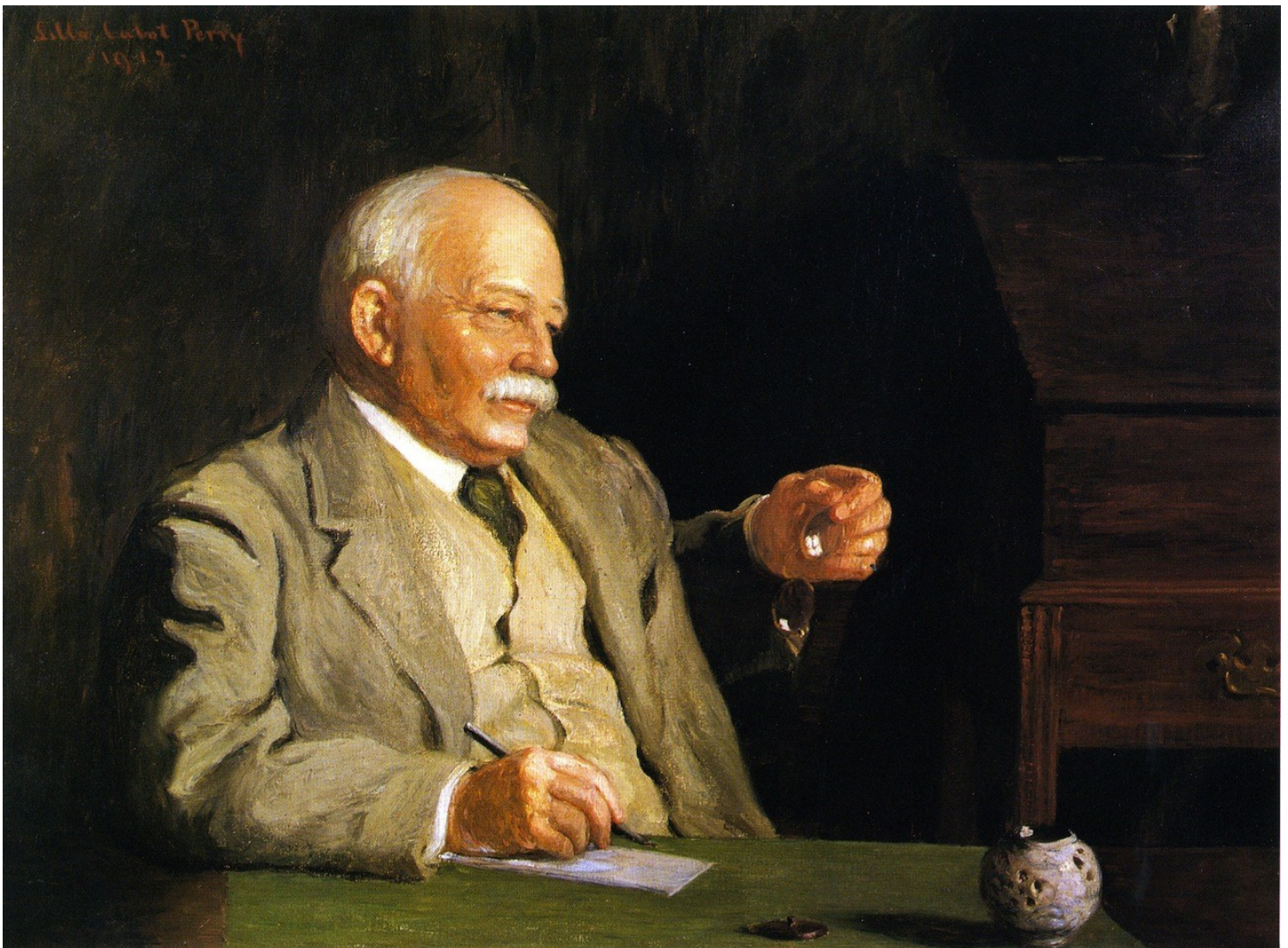
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William Dean Howells (1912, oil on canvas) by Lilla Cabot Perry (1848-1933). Colby College Museum of Art. Image from the-athenaeum.org.

## Howells, Julian Hawthorne, and the Realism War

Gary Scharnhorst  
University of New Mexico

On August 14, 1860, the day W. D. Howells first visited Concord, the door of the Wayside was opened to his ring by the “tall” and “handsome” thirteen-year-old son of Nathaniel Hawthorne.<sup>1</sup> Neither of the two young men could have guessed the extent to which their paths would cross over the next half-century. In 1871, Julian Hawthorne (1846–1934) began a literary career that would last sixty-plus years. More to the point, the younger Hawthorne became an influential book critic and a champion of the Ideal school of fiction, particularly the tales of his father, Robert Louis Stevenson, Rider Haggard, and Rudyard Kipling. His *bête noir* was Zola, whose novels he considered “a mixture of the police gazette and the medical reporter.”<sup>2</sup> At the apex of his career in the late 1880s, Julian Hawthorne also decried the realism of Howells and enlisted on the side of Howells’ opponents in the so-called Realism War.

Early in his career, to be sure, Hawthorne tried to curry favor with Howells. In the spring of 1873 he submitted a manuscript to the *Atlantic* that the editor gently rejected. “I am sorry not to have liked your story well enough to take it,” Howells wrote him, “but I hope for better fortune another time if you care to send me anything else.” At the bottom of this letter Julian scribbled “My first refusal!”<sup>3</sup> Worth noting, too, is the fact that George Parsons Lathrop, Julian’s brother-in-law, was Howells’ associate editor on the staff of the *Atlantic Monthly* from 1875 to 1877; and that in May 1879, Howells privately discouraged J. R. Osgood from buying American rights to Julian’s *The Laughing Mill and Other Stories*. The tales were “fascinating,” Howells allowed, “but mechanically operated, and coarse as hominy.”<sup>4</sup> After Julian returned to the U.S. in 1881 following a decade in England, he regularly met Howells at meetings of the Authors’ Club of New York and the International Copyright League.<sup>5</sup> He professed a “strong personal regard” for the older writer as late as July 1896.<sup>6</sup> He failed to mention in this interview, however, his antipathy to Howells’ writings and literary credo.

Julian first hinted at his disapproval of Howellsian “photographic realism” in his address before the Concord School of Philosophy in August 1883 and in his essay

“Agnosticism in American Fiction” in January 1884. He conceded that Howells and Henry James “have done more than all the rest of us to make our literature respectable during the last ten years,” but he added a caveat: Howells “does not seem, as yet, to have found a hall fit to adorn” his “finely wrought tapestry.”<sup>7</sup> After *The Rise of Silas Lapham* appeared in November 1885, “the romantic-idealists found it time to strip off their kid gloves and go to war with Howells,” as Edwin H. Cady has explained,<sup>8</sup> and Julian rallied if he did not rush to the frontlines. In the first review he wrote in his new job as literary editor of the *New York World* in June 1886, he tried to call a truce: “the antagonism which exists between the opposing ‘schools’ of fiction is for the most part uncalled for.”<sup>9</sup> But he soon abandoned all pretense of neutrality. Privately, as he wrote E. C. Stedman in September 1886, “Howells has talent—a most admirable and wearisome talent—and he has very naturally supposed that this is the thing people call genius,” but in fact he “is a wooden stick—a non-conductor—painted to look like a lightning rod, but incapable of exercising or comprehending its functions.”<sup>10</sup> As the literary editor of *Bookmart* in 1887–88, moreover, Julian repeatedly hurled salvos in Howells’ direction. In August 1887, he ridiculed the “spectacle of a disciple of the realistic school—of Mr. Howells, for instance—industriously and gravely manufacturing mud pies.” Six months later, he heaped scorn on Howells’ “Editor’s Study” columns in *Harper’s*: “The same infantile quality that appears so conspicuously in these ‘criticisms’ of Mr. Howells may be observed likewise in his novels, or whatever he calls them.” The following October, he noted that the latest installment of Howells’ *Annie Kilburn* had appeared, but that he had “not had the courage to read beyond the two opening numbers.”<sup>11</sup> In April 1888, as literary editor of *America*, the same periodical in which Maurice Thompson (in)famously attacked Howells,<sup>12</sup> Julian attempted to deliver a *coup de grâce*:

Mr. Howells says: “Stick to nature; describe only what you see and know.” There never was advice more wrong and foolish. The public does not want to hear what you see and know. . . . Mr. Howells thinks romance incompatible with human nature; but that is because he understands neither. He has never drawn a true or natural character.<sup>13</sup>

By the time he published his *History of American Literature* in 1891, Julian simply dismissed Howells: “High imagination is not among [his] literary gifts.”<sup>14</sup>

The screw turned when Julian published *Hawthorne and His Circle*, a type of intimate biography of his father, in 1903. Howells graciously praised it in the *North American Review* as “a picture of one of the most fascinating and important literary men who ever lived, as his own family knew him, and as the lovers of his books will be glad to know him.”<sup>15</sup> In the second of only two extant letters the two men are known to have exchanged, Julian thanked him. “Nothing could have been spoken more fitly to my sensibilities, filial or literary,” he avowed.<sup>16</sup> Howells and the younger Hawthorne also continued to move in the same New York social circles early in the twentieth century. Both attended the dinners to celebrate the seventieth birthdays of Henry Mills Alden and Mark Twain, for example.<sup>17</sup>

A final irony: in 1909, when postal inspectors began to investigate the Canadian mining companies Julian had touted in a series of letters and pamphlets—an investigation that eventually resulted in his conviction and imprisonment for mail fraud—he tried to fend them off by listing several prominent men who might be asked for testimonials on his behalf. “If you wish to know anything further about my character or reputation,” he wrote the inspectors, “I refer you to Theodore Roosevelt, William J. Bryan,” the editor of the *New York Tribune* (Whitelaw Reid), and the editor and publisher of the *New York American* (Arthur Brisbane and William Randolph Hearst). With more than a little chutzpah he ended the list with the name of William D. Howells, whom he had met in Concord a half century earlier and repeatedly slandered at the height of the Realism War.<sup>18</sup>

### Notes

1. W. D. Howells, “My First Visit to New England,” *Harper’s*, 89 (August 1894), 442.
2. Julian Hawthorne, *Confessions and Criticism* (Boston: Ticknor, 1886), p. 59.
3. W. D. Howells to Julian Hawthorne, 20 June 1873 (Julian Hawthorne Collection, 72/236z, box 4, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley).
4. Carl J. Weber, *The Rise and Fall of James Ripley Osgood* (Waterville, Me.: Colby College Press, 1959), p. 171.
5. “New York Clubs,” *Lippincott’s*, July 1883, 89; “Authors’ Readings,” *Life*, 30 April 1885, p. 248.
6. Julian Hawthorne, “A Sunday Stroll at Atlantic,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 20 July 1896, 7.
7. “Julian Hawthorne at Concord,” *Springfield Republican*, 7 August 1883, 4; Julian Hawthorne, “Agnosticism in American Fiction,” *Princeton Review*, 13 (January 1884), 13-14.
8. Cady, *The Road to Realism: The Early Years 1837-1885 of William Dean Howells* (Syracuse: Syracuse Univ. Press, 1956), p. 241.
9. Julian Hawthorne, “Literature of the Day,” *New York World*, 20 June 1886, 15.

10. Julian Hawthorne to E. C. Stedman, 2 Sept 1886 (Butler Library, Columbia University, New York).

11. Julian Hawthorne, “Book Reviews,” *Bookmart*, 5 (August 1887), 102-03; “Magazines,” *Bookmart*, 5 (February 1888), 355-57; “Book Reviews,” *Bookmart*, 6 (October 1888), 279-81.

12. Clayton L. Eichelberger, *Published Comment on W. D. Howells Through 1920: A Research Bibliography* (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1976), *passim*.

13. Julian Hawthorne, “Literature in Masquerade,” *America*, 7 April 1888, 7.

14. Julian Hawthorne and Leonard Lemmon, *American Literature: An Elementary Textbook for Use in High Schools and Academies* (Boston: D. C. Heath, 1891), p. 256.

15. Howells, “The Personality of Hawthorne,” *North American Review*, 77 (December 1903), 872.

16. Julian Hawthorne to W. D. Howells, 8 November 1903 (Howells Collection, bMS Am 1784 [214], Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.).

17. “Many Literary Folk to be Present at Dinner in Editor’s Honor Given by Colonel Harvey,” *New York Tribune*, 10 November 1906, 6; “Celebrate Mark Twain’s Seventieth Birthday,” *New York Times*, 6 December 1905, 1.

18. “Referred to Many Prominent Men,” *Boston Journal*, 13 December 1912, 3.

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### *The William Dean Howells Society Essay Prize*

## CALL FOR 2012 COMPETITION ENTRANTS

The Howells Society Essay Prize is awarded each year for the best paper on Howells presented at the annual ALA conference. The winning essay may have been presented in any session on the program of the conference, including but not limited to panels sponsored by the Howells Society. Papers are judged by members of the Executive Committee of the Society, who have the option of appointing additional readers as necessary. The prize includes a cash award of \$100 and an accompanying certificate. The winning essay is published in *The Howellsian*, a peer-edited newsletter indexed by the MLA International Bibliography. Copyright remains with the writer of the essay.

**2012 presenters** who wish to enter their papers in this year’s competition must submit them by **November 15, 2012** to the Society’s President, Lance Rubin. You are welcome to revise your paper before submitting it, but please keep in mind that the essay should be a “conference length” paper and should not exceed 12-15 pages, maximum. Please send the papers as e-mail attachments, in MS Word format, to lance.rubin@arapahoe.edu.

# ABSTRACTS

Howells Papers Presented at the ALA Conference, San Francisco, May 2012

Panel

## CONTRADICTIONS, IDENTITIES AND SEX IN THE WORK OF WILLIAM DEAN HOWELLS

Chair: Lance Rubin, Arapahoe Community College

### Elaborate Contradictions: Progress and Pastoralism in "A Sennight of the Centennial"

Tom Kinnahan, Duquesne University

During the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition of 1876, more than 9.7 million visitors traversed a 284-acre swath of former farmland along the banks of the Schuylkill River to view a rich panoply of technological, agricultural, botanical, anthropological, and artistic displays from around the world. Among those visitors was William Dean Howells, then editor-in-chief of the *Atlantic Monthly*, who recorded his impressions in a lengthy *Atlantic* article entitled "A Sennight of the Centennial." Howells' enthusiastic response to American technological innovation is expressed in his pronouncement that despite the country's cultural advancements, "it is still in these things of iron and steel that the nation's genius most freely speaks." In my paper, I will examine Howells' attitudes toward technological progress against the backdrop of the exhibition's pastoral design, which the geographer J.B. Jackson terms "a characteristically American organization of space." This juxtaposition, a literal embodiment of Leo Marx's "machine in the garden," reflects a deeper tension between agrarian pastoralism and the Centennial Exhibition's master narrative of technological progress as the nation stood upon the brink of modernity. More specifically, I'll suggest that Howells' essay reflects underlying anxieties about the United States' accelerating transformation from an agrarian to an industrial economy and social order. To focus my discussion, I'll begin with attention to the pastoral impulse that surfaces throughout the essay, move on to Howells' conflicted response to the exhibition's displays of new technology, and conclude with a brief survey of the Smithsonian Institution's Indian exhibit, a striking counterpoint to both the pastoral myth of the garden and the exhibition's overarching narrative of progress.

### The Rise of Silas Lapham: Masculine Identity, Class, and the Mythic Power of American Horses

Renee Boice, University of Memphis

Americans have modified the traditional symbolic meaning of horses as representations of power and vitality by using the horse as a participant in the construction of the mythic American West. In pushing this symbolic meaning, American writers have also used horses as exemplars or models of masculine identity and it is upon this point that I focus. In *The Rise of Silas Lapham*, William Dean Howells employs his central characters and the protagonist's prize mare to demonstrate one such construction of this myth. As a newly wealthy man reconciling the uncharted territory of the upper class in Boston, Lapham repeatedly uses his mare to experi-

ence the illusion of a leveled playing field for class and status. As Lapham's agitation levels increase, he uses his mare to bolster his confidence and masculine identity. In his mind, fine horses operate as social currency and as such, conveyers of Gilded Age masculine superiority. Silas Lapham associates horses, particularly American bred horses, with the kind of success that is the ultimate measure of masculine accomplishment for Americans. This will prove a mistake in his attempt to penetrate the leisure class, because he fails to understand the degree to which useful American horses like his mare actually serve to divide classes. Scenes involving a number of characters and revolving around horses repeatedly demonstrate this divide.

### Sex with Howells

Christian Reed, University of California—Los Angeles

This essay argues that the world of Howells's first novel, *A Chance Acquaintance*, and perhaps the world of the Howells novel as such, is one in which social life is animated by accident, for better and for worse. Howells's ontology of accident lends a new rhythm to romantic life, as well as a new form to the novel, the sort of stable and saleable narratives we can tell about romantic life. Contingency, in the Howellsian chance-world, has become a defining aspect of modernity; *Chance Acquaintance* implicitly explores the meaning this axiom has for our love lives and our reading lives. Modern love lasts as long as it lasts, its dissolution having become as mysterious as its origins—and as everyday. In *Chance Acquaintance* the nineteenth-century novel learns to tell the sort of a story that is as intrinsically interesting as a romantic "fling," but also, perhaps, as fleeting and discrete. Lovers can simply differ from one another without much imposing; realist novels can too. The realist procedure of genre-attachment via simple difference contrasts with the collaborative and creative cliché-circulation of midcentury sentimentalism, the conqueror's bid for representative individuality typical of the bildungsroman, and the intra-generic antagonism that defines the nineteenth-century gothic and its sub-sub-generic spawn. Filling out this claim, I explore the means by which *Chance Acquaintance* realizes its literary realism. In paired close readings, I first trace its refusal of the heavy symbolism of the gothic mode in favor of what we sometime refer to as the "realist" or immanent symbol, a symbol that functions only for the reader and in the context of the plot (examining the attacking dog scene at the book's center); I then turn to what I call *Chance Acquaintance's* structural didacticism, its principled refusal of literary sentimentalism through the refutation of that genre's lesson-teaching impulse (the only lesson taught by Howells is that a novel can tell a resonant story without teaching a moral lesson at all).

## Panel

## THE LATE WILLIAM DEAN HOWELLS

Chair: Lance Rubin, Arapahoe Community College

**Another Look at *An Imperative Duty*****Jason Williams, University of Akron**

*An Imperative Duty* (1891) is a novel confronting stereotypical views of race in the United States. Many times, Howells is unjustly criticized by critics who grasp certain lines from one of the main characters, Dr. Olney, Mrs. Meredith, or Rhoda in *An Imperative Duty* and assign these lines as his concrete reflections or beliefs without considering the words or actions of other characters. My claim in this paper is that Howells, after spending time in Italy, reflected on stereotypical American racism, and realized how absurd it was that white society praised the qualities of the 'good' Negro on the surface, when in reality it bore a deep hatred for the Negro based on pseudo-science and blatant racist propaganda. Howells' characters realistically reflect the view that whites have of Negroes in society and demonstrate why many mulattoes would choose to pass, as Rhoda ultimately does, and how the choice of a white man such as Dr. Olney to marry a mulatto woman succeeds because in reality love trumped race in many cases in the nineteenth century. I will illustrate similar views from the novel's historical context by referencing newspaper articles contemporary with *An Imperative Duty*. Howells' character Rhoda demonstrates how deeply felt this hatred for blacks was in her repulsed reaction when she learns that she is a Negro who has been unknowingly passing for white. I also raise the point that W.E.B. Dubois praised Howells' confrontation with the nation's "foolishness, shuffling and evasion" in *An Imperative Duty*.

**Edithas and Eidolons: Howells's *Between the Dark and the Daylight* and Occult Realism****Daniel Mrozowski, Trinity College**

After the turn of the century, William Dean Howells produced fiction seemingly darker and more troubling than the novels upon which his reputation now rests. Having suffered the death of his daughter and the loss of many of his friends, the older Howells turned to symbolically rich tales imbued with his readings of European naturalism, psychological innovations, and modern American fiction. In two linked short story collections, *Questionable Shapes* (1903) and *Between the Dark and the Daylight* (1907), Howells describes people on the edge of death and illness, foregrounding the ways in which these liminal states provoke contemplation, recollection, and dread. As time and causality shift, these stories take as their subjects the limits of perception and cognition. Through a continual framing device of twice-told tales spun by a reoccurring cast of participants, Howells foregrounds the role of storytelling as unstable and often disorderly – a threat to moral order and epistemological certainty. Critics often describe these stories (when they describe them at all) as technical experiments apart from his explicitly realist fiction. The tales are either a fumbling step forward into modernism or a rejuvenating if retrograde embrace of romanticism. Through a reading of *Between the Dark and the Daylight*, I will propose that these stories offer us a glimpse of Howells reassessing his

own concept of realism as a productive form of narrative. These revisions are neither particularly romantic or modernist, but rather reflect a new understanding of the ordinary as potentially informed and constructed by memory. My argument will be that these stories, oscillating between illness and illusions, psychology and phantasms, are always already about realism, meditations on the impossibility of mimetic representation in apprehending a knowable reality. They offer, near the end of Howells's career, a revised realism that seeks to describe occult experiences with the same fidelity as once applied to social mores and economic relationships. With particular attention to "The Eidolons of Brooks Alford" as an exemplary story, I hope to shed some long overdue light on this aspect of Howells's career, the issues circulating in his late fiction, and the faulty ways we as critics tend to periodize and represent realism in the Howellsian mode.

**Postmodern Howells: "The Angel of the Lord" as a Model for Reading****Paul R. Petrie, Southern Connecticut State University**

"The Angel of the Lord," the first of nine experimental "Turkish Room" stories published between 1901 and 1912, constitutes a strong corrective to the still-pervasive image of "the Dean of American Letters": that timid, naively mimetic, American-Victorian conventionalist bequeathed us by early-20th-century Howells detractors like Sinclair Lewis and Gertrude Atherton and routinely reconfirmed by inattentive readers ever since. A frame tale whose inner story concerns a mystical vision—one that might be either a supernatural revelation or a descent into madness—that ultimately kills its recipient, the story so deeply intertwines its narration of basic plot events with the perceptions and variant interpretations of its characters, both within and outside the frame, that it prevents any definitive decision about the real nature and purport of its events. A primary means of creating this outcome is the story's unusually complicated use of its frame, which so thoroughly interpenetrates the framed tale as to call into question where the "real" story is actually located: in the inner narrative of a man's pathway to an angelic vision, or in the frequently interrupting narrative of four professional-class men, gathered in the Turkish Room of their gentlemen's club, telling, hearing, interpreting, and questioning everything about the tale of Ormond's encounter with his "angel of the Lord." In its refractive narrative strategies; in its multiperspectival approach to narrative and to the questions of reality, perception, belief, and truth that this particular narrative investigates; in its ultimately indeterminate stance on the status and meaning of its own subject matter; and in the co-creative and open-ended interpretive mode it demands of its readers, "The Angel of the Lord" is better understood—anachronistic as the label undoubtedly is—as a postmodern fiction rather than as Realism in any commonly accepted definition of that term. Close investigation of this late Howells work suggests avenues for reassessing other works in the Howells canon, which, while less overtly experimental in form than this one, are no less invested than "The Angel of the Lord" in "proto-postmodern" conceptions of how reality and our linguistic interface with it work.

## Panel

## DREISER AND OTHER WRITERS

Chair: Gary Totten, North Dakota State University

**Dreiser, Howells, and Martí on the Beach****Jude Davies, University of Winchester**

In the 1880s and 1890s, the beaches of Brooklyn and Long Island, newly developed and linked to Manhattan by mass transit systems, became internationally famous as places of new, markedly American forms of mass leisure and entertainment. Their attractions were widely reported in newspapers and discussed in popular magazines. This paper reappraises three literary celebrations of New York's beaches that rank among the minor works of writers better known for very different productions: "Coney Island" (1881) by the Cuban revolutionary exile José Martí, William Dean Howells's "The Beach at Rockaway" (anthologized in *Literature and Life*, 1902) and Theodore Dreiser's city sketch "A Vanished Seaside Resort" (*The Color of A Great City*, 1923). Martí and Howells drew out a utopian dimension of the mass spectacle on the beach: crowded and vulgar, but healthy, vigorous, and ethnically diverse, in contrast to the hidebound insularity of Manhattan's ethnic and class enclaves. Martí celebrated Coney Island as emblemizing a vital, democratic, and specifically North American pursuit of pleasure, while for Howells, the ethnically mixed, generationally diverse, and peaceable crowd at Rockaway was "a monument to the democratic way of life." Both saw New York's beaches as synthesizing nature, technology and mass culture in ways that enticingly broke the bounds of middle-class respectability.

Dreiser's sketch "A Vanished Seaside Resort" looked back on this promise of the 1890s from a distance of twenty-five years. Reworking material from his autobiography *Newspaper Days*, Dreiser chose to memorialize the upmarket Manhattan Beach, situated to the east of Coney Island on the southern shore of Brooklyn, which at that time catered to a privileged clientele of politicians and business leaders. Repeating some of the tropes and cultural reference points of his

predecessors (advertizing, crowded mass transport, and the 1893 World's Fair), his account echoed and intensified Martí's sense of the resort's natural appeal and the magical appeal of its technology. Yet where Martí and Howells were comfortable in their status as cosmopolitan or middle-class outsiders to mass leisure, even reveling in it, Dreiser's spectatorship was defined by his exclusion from the middle-class crowd's pleasure and sense of entitlement, an exclusion only redoubled when he describes revisiting Manhattan Beach years later to find this former "fairyland" derelict, destroyed, or redeveloped for housing.

These evocations of New York's beaches belong to a tradition of writing that evaluates how the technological and commercial development of mass leisure re-forged American society in the long twentieth century. Though in some sense minor works, they condense some of their writer's most important preoccupations. For Martí the beach maps the ambivalences of modernity onto his sense of the duality of ["their"] North and ["our"] South America. For Howells the beach enables a playful, partial crossing of class barriers that loom impassably strong elsewhere in his work (notably in the better known, "The Midnight Platoon," which immediately precedes "The Beach at Rockaway" in the collection *Literature and Life*). "A Vanished Seaside Resort" highlights some of the central themes of Dreiser's novels: the exemplary American middle class (*Sister Carrie*), the relays between artistic and business values (*The "Genius"*), and the undeniably aesthetic, but evanescent results of individualistic materialism (the *Trilogy of Desire*). At one level these three pieces are realist accounts of the consumer modernity forged in the United States and subsequently exported globally. Yet reading them together highlights and testifies to their respective authors' attempts to envision democratic possibilities above or beneath the mass leisure that would become shorthand for American democracy in the twentieth century.

**WANTED**

**Writer** to review the Broadview Press teaching edition of Howells' *An Imperative Duty*. Review to be published in a future edition of *The Howellsian*. Send inquiries or letters of interest with current CV to Paul R. Petrie, editor of *The Howellsian*, at [petrie1@southernct.edu](mailto:petrie1@southernct.edu)

**S U B S C R I B E !**

to the

**HOWELLS-L DISCUSSION LIST**

Easy instructions on the Howells Society website:

**[www.Howellsociety.org](http://www.Howellsociety.org)**Full-text of works by Howells, web resource links, reviews, scholarship, back issues of *The Howellsian*, etcetera . . .

# CALL FOR PAPERS

The William Dean Howells Society welcomes submissions for two panels at the 2013 American Literature Association conference in Boston on May 23 – 26.

## Panel 1: The Short Howells

We are looking for papers that examine Howells's shorter works, including his literary criticism, poems, short stories, plays, travel writings, occasional pieces, and reviews. Though rightfully lauded for his novels, Howells was a remarkably sustained and prolific writer across genres throughout his career: how might his shorter works engage with typical articulations of his aesthetics and interests? Who is Howells the poet, the playwright, the letter-writer, the eulogist? Which works deserve more attention?

## Panel 2: Open Topic

We are looking for insightful, original papers that address any aspect of Howells's work.

Please submit your 200-250 word abstract and a current CV (or any questions) to Dan Mrozowski at [Daniel.mrozowski@trincoll.edu](mailto:Daniel.mrozowski@trincoll.edu) by November 1, 2012.

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### William Dean Howells Society Executive Committee

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## CALL FOR 2012-13 MEMBERSHIP DUES

The William Dean Howells Society will be updating its membership records soon. Annual membership in the society, which includes two issues of *The Howellsian*, is \$15.

**WATCH YOUR MAIL** for information about our new, online payment option for membership dues, or send a check payable to The William Dean Howells Society to: Mischa Renfroe, Middle Tennessee State University, English Department, Box 70, 1301 E. Main St., Murfreesboro, TN 37132.

Thank you for your continued support of the William Dean Howells Society.

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**MINUTES** of the**William Dean Howells Society Business Meeting****ALA San Francisco—May 25, 2012****Submitted by Mischa Renfroe, Secretary-Treasurer of the William Dean Howells Society**

The WDHS Business Meeting was held on May 25, 2012 at the American Literature Association Conference, which took place May 24-27, 2012 at the Hyatt Embarcadero Center. President Lance Rubin called the meeting to order and introduced the new Vice President, Daniel Mrozowski. Other members present were Sally Daugherty, Paul Petrie, and Mischa Renfroe.

- Treasurer Mischa Renfroe reported that, as of May 2012, the account balance was \$1442.00 and the society collected \$345.00 in membership dues. Expenses for the year included \$18.00 for new checks and \$314.23 for one mailing of the newsletter to 123 members with current addresses. The treasurer reported that of the 123 members, 53 members had paid dues at some point within the last three years and 60 members had not paid dues in over three years. To facilitate the timely payment of dues, members decided to formalize the dues collection process. In September, the treasurer will mail a dues reminder card and then purge the membership roll based on the response.
- Paul Petrie provided an update on *The Howellsian*. Several years ago, the society decided to publish one newsletter per year instead of two in order to limit expenses. Members revisited this decision and decided to try two issues next year to encourage participation in the society. We may include interviews with founding members of the Howells Society and post a call for papers to request short essays for the second issue.
- The topics for next year's ALA conference were discussed. To encourage a range of approaches, especially on Howells's lesser-known texts, members decided to offer one "open topic" session and one session focusing on Howells's short works (fiction, essays, poems, reviews, etc). Vice President Daniel Mrozowski will post the CFP and organize the panels.

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

*THE HOWELLSIAN*

PAUL R. PETRIE, EDITOR

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