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Sodoms in Eden: The City in American
Fiction before 1860

by

Janis Diane Pitts Stout

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PREFACE

Probably the two dominant historic images of America, to Americans, are the Pilgrim fathers' confrontation with the wilderness and the pioneers' confrontation with the West. Yet, as revisionist historians have been demonstrating for upwards of thirty-five years, urban centers were, even in the seventeenth century and increasingly thereafter, not only present but strongly influential in the nation's development. Long before the period of urban dominance in American life and literature, commencing after the Civil War,¹ urbanism was also an important force in American fiction. Both as setting or subject of fiction and as source of metaphor or point of view, the city in this earlier body of work deserves fuller consideration.

The earlier novel as a documentary record of urban life has already been traced in a study by George Arthur Dunlap first published in 1934 and recently reprinted.² The purposes of my study are substantially different. In the introductory chapter, I survey briefly the historic role of cities during the period in question--a subject that has been called "one of the most obscure problems historians face."³ In particular I focus on attitudes toward those cities and the role of the city in some literary works outside the limits of the present study. In Chapters II and IV, I examine attitudes toward the city in popular fiction. In these chapters I am concerned chiefly

with the forms of anti-urbanism which appear in these works and in the conventions for expressing such attitudes. In treating these minor works, my purpose is not to establish source or derivation, but to examine attitudes and techniques shared by major and minor novelists. The latter half of Chapter IV is devoted to Cooper's appraisal of urban society.

My interests in the study are aesthetic as well as historic. In Chapter III, I examine chiefly the urban tales of Poe, with a secondary purpose of distinguishing the gothic mode in which he worked from the sensational mode considered in Chapter II. Chapters V and VI are devoted to Hawthorne and Melville. In these three chapters the focus of attention is less on the writers' attitudes toward existing urban centers than on their use of the city, or more often the trend toward urban civilization and away from either a land-based or a primitive state, as a means of exploring other themes.

At various points in the study the distinction between the novel and the romance becomes relevant. The distinction is, in fact, of particular importance because the shift from romance to novel parallels the emergence of the city and the focus on urban subjects for fiction. Still, for the sake of convenience, I have used the term "novel" to designate any work of fiction published as a complete volume, applying the more precise generic terms only when the need for close definition arises.

NOTES

¹See Blanche Houseman Gelfant, The American City Novel (Norman, Okla: University of Oklahoma Press, 1954). Virtually all the novels designated by the title are twentieth-century works.

²George Arthur Dunlap, The City in the American Novel, 1789-1900 (1934; rpt. New York: Russell and Russell, Inc., 1965). The author's chief interest is directed toward works from 1860 to 1900.

³Alan Trachtenberg, "The American Scene: Versions of the City," The Massachusetts Review, 8 (1967), 281.

ABSTRACT

Sodoms in Eden: The City in American

Fiction before 1860

Janis P. Stout

Fictional treatments of urbanization and urban society in America before 1860 generally reflect the anti-urbanism prominent in American social thought since the time of Jefferson and even before. Although novelists of this period occasionally depict the city as an arena of opportunity and recognize its material and cultural advantages, the overwhelming tendency is to regard the city with strong ambivalence or total distrust. Particularly is this attitude evident among early and mid-century sentimental writers and sensationalists, who share a geographic scheme of exaggerated moral values in which the agricultural countryside is a scene of virtuous tranquility and the city a locus of degenerate luxury, pretense, social injustice, and sexual pollution. General redemption is potentially available through the embrace of nature or the presence of a chaste and charitable few, but individual heroes and heroines characteristically resort to escape.

While such writers often assert a purpose of reform, their books cannot properly be deemed fiction of social criticism because they are given to emotional extremes, thrills, and fantasy rather than social analysis and leadership. Only Cooper, in this period, produced a significant body of fiction critically appraising urban society. The failings he depicts

are chiefly money-consciousness, pretense, and indecorous frivolity. He aspires to an American urban culture having the high tone and stability of European capital cities, but, like other writers of the period, distrusts their moral standards. Cooper's social criticism does not indicate a doctrinaire anti-urbanism, but his Leatherstocking tales do build an anti-urban myth.

Judged by the standards of realism that are generally applied to the later urban novel proper, fictional treatments of the city before 1860 are inferior. However, other standards of judgment are essential here. Poe creates^a strong sense of place and accords it major importance in his work, but his settings do not function mimetically but as devices for effect or for projection of abnormal psychological states. Hawthorne and Melville use the urban/rural dichotomy to explore opposing systems of symbolic values, deepening the significance of the dichotomy even while finding it finally invalid. For Hawthorne, the city often represents a constricting system of social forms, the weight of the past, but the liberating instinctive values of the natural scene hold threat of moral insecurity and social atomization. Melville likewise opposes urban repression to primitive liberation, but rejects a moralistic contrast. Both Hawthorne and Melville concern themselves deeply with the problem of alienation, thus early coming to grips with that aspect of urban life which has chiefly engaged novelists and sociologists in the twentieth century.

CHAPTER I

THE CITY IN THE GARDEN

The Puritan settlers brought with them to America an urban ideal, an esteem for towns as centers of commerce and social control; they were encouraged and directed by the British government in building urban centers for these essentially regulatory purposes.¹ Thus the impulse to build towns was a conservative act, a continuation of a tradition. Recognizing this impulse toward stability that motivated early town-builders, Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., has written, "Usually the first object upon reaching the Atlantic shore was to found an urban community which might serve as a means of companionship and mutual protection and as a base from which to colonize the neighboring country."² But the building of towns in the wilderness was also a visionary act. The significance of town-building for the Puritans went beyond practical considerations to embody in the symbol of the New Jerusalem their impulse to establish the godly society. The strong hold of this complex urban ideal on the Puritan imagination is well illustrated by John Winthrop's famous sermon on board the Arabella, where at the emotional peak of his exhortation he says "wee shall be as a Citty upon a Hill."³

Despite this urban ideal, distrust and fear of burgeoning cities produced long before the "romantic" anti-urbanism of the nineteenth century the ambivalence that has

characterized American attitudes toward the city. Hostility to cities is, of course, as old as literature itself, and Biblical denunciation of Babylon was a ready source of early anti-urban rhetoric.⁴ Such traditions can have had little relation to actual cities, but their coloring of emotional response is incalculable--witness, for instance, the religious overtones of William Jennings Bryan's agrarian rhetoric. On the matter-of-fact level anti-urban sentiment developed early; Carl N. Bridenbaugh notes that resentment between city and country was expressed in print by 1750.⁵ In his studies of the five chief colonial towns, Bridenbaugh emphasizes their early sharp differentiation from both agricultural and frontier society and their close ties to Europe, producing a distinct "urban viewpoint." Schlesinger likewise terms the colonial port cities "ports of entry for European ideas and standards of taste."⁶ Thus the early foundation in fact for later anti-urbanists' association of the city with Europe and European decadence.

Social ills exacerbated by rapid growth also widened the gap between town and rural regions. Besides the need for physical facilities, the cities were early faced with mob disorder and crime, which Bridenbaugh attributes largely to "inequalities of wealth and opportunity" among a concentrated populace.⁷ Throughout the late-colonial period social problems kept pace with growth. But the city also meant economic opportunity and social mobility, witness that chief

symbol of American urbanism, Benjamin Franklin. Particularly in Philadelphia there flourished a variety of lively social and social-purpose clubs that performed a multitude of benevolent and educational functions and served as "'cells' of sedition" as the Revolution got underway.⁸ If urban life was often hectic and troublesome, it was also, even as today, endlessly diverting, and throughout the colonial period towns were the centers of intellectual, literary, and artistic activity. The colonial cities were, in the words of recent historians, "simply functioning as cities classically functioned: they were both matrix and evidence for the appearance of a civilization."⁹

By 1800, then, America had important centers of urban culture. The early nineteenth century witnessed the rise of western cities, which emulated those on the seaboard in the power struggle for commercial orbits if not in cultural tone. Hopeful enthusiasm for founding "cities" (an urbanism of aspiration if not of fact) produced land speculation described by Cooper in Home As Found. In the older cities, rapid growth in the pre-Civil War period brought the intensification of social problems that exacerbated anti-urban sentiment. By the 1830's New York was noted for "misery, filth, and overcrowding," "frenetic hustle and bustle," and its "notorious" Five Points district,¹⁰ which would repeatedly appear in popular fiction as the locus of sensational degradation. Specific urban problems included, chiefly in New York and Boston, spreading slums housing mainly immigrants

and, in all the cities, depths of poverty with glaring disparity of economic wellbeing,¹¹ crime, astounding quantities of mud in streets, absence or insufficiency of sewage facilities, uncollected garbage with a makeshift disposal system composed of roaming hogs that occasionally attacked children, and--not very surprisingly--frequent epidemic diseases such as cholera or the yellow fever that struck with particular virulence in the 1790's.

Despite this rather spectacular assortment of urban evils, cities of the period 1800-1860 continued to serve as the repository or nursery of cultural advancement. They were, as now, the centers of music, theatre, art, libraries; the absence or scarcity of such attainments in rural sections sharpened the division between city and country, and contemporary observers linked urbanism with cultural advantages like those of Europe. Another distinction of the cities was their serving as centers of the humanitarian movements of the ante-bellum period--perhaps because there the problems were most obvious.¹² The importance of little Concord to our view does not indicate a rural or village dominance of the cultural milieu.

There were thus many urban images for the writer of fiction to seize upon. Yet, perhaps because of its potential for sensational effects, it was urban evil, not the equally real urban advantages, that most attracted the imagination of the fictionist. In generally ephemeral expository works minor writers celebrated the possibilities of

various actual or proposed cities, but only a few celebrations of the city, like Washington Irving's loving spoof of the origins of his city in Knickerbocker's History of New York or Corny Littlepage's wondering enthusiasm for New York and Albany in Cooper's Satanstoe, now survive.

But whether for good or ill, the city meant change and hence opportunity. The image of the city as arena of possibility subsumes all others. It was this image, colored by hope, that waited at the end of the road for all the young men from the provinces.¹³ The city commonly figures in antebellum writing both as field for innovation and change and as a testing ground for young men on the make. But open possibility could as well lead to evil as to good, and the young men risked destruction or demoralization in their encounter with the "evil city."¹⁴ Anti-urbanism carried the day in fiction, even though fiction itself was one of the arts nurtured by the city, with its publishers and booksellers.

The strain of anti-urbanism running through American thought is quite familiar, particularly many of the expressions of Jefferson and Emerson. In the eighteenth century the city was not generally the subject for polemic that it later became. Franklin could express occasional irritation with the city--as, "This town is a mere Oven. . . . I languish for the Country, for Air and Shade and Leisure, but Fate has doom'd me to be stifled and roasted and teased to death in a City"--and yet become America's leading symbol of urban man. As Morton and Lucia White point out, he was not a

"theorist" or "controversialist" of the city.¹⁵ Crevecoeur, so valuable an indicator of established thought, praised both "fair cities" and the cultivated agricultural middle-ground (the prevailing ideal of American agrarianism), reserving his strictures for the frontier "where all was wild, woody, and uncultivated" and for crowded European cities.¹⁶

Reserving his chief aversion for the cities of Europe, which he regarded as a warning to the young republic, Jefferson nevertheless began American urban-rural polemics; his hostility to cities in general was strong and was never abandoned, despite modifications of his agrarian position. His most forceful exposition of these views was made in Notes on Virginia, well before the turn of the century. Here, for instance, is his oft-quoted "The mobs of great cities add just so much to the support of pure government, as sores do to the strength of the human body." But similar remarks can be found in his other writings, and occasional comments on cities in the late letters to Adams (1812-1826) are no less forceful. Yet though Jefferson's attitude toward cities was certainly negative, it was not simplistic. He could acknowledge the possible advantages of the city (as, "There are particular branches of science, which are not so advantageously taught anywhere else in the United States as in Philadelphia") without abating his distrust, a fear for the health and political stability of city dwellers.

Jefferson's anti-urban position was essentially that retreat or escape from the city was a move away from positive

evil rather than toward positive good. Similarly, John Taylor's "The Pleasures of Agriculture" in his noted Arator (1814) includes a rather eighteenth-century list of practical benefits to character and usefulness to country but does not, in a recent scholar's words, mention "solace yielded by mere contact with nature" or "balance given to an otherwise harried life."¹⁷ It remained for Emerson and Thoreau to express, as its chief voices, the doctrine of spiritual illumination through communion with nature and its corollary, the intense dislike of cities for their supposed cramping of man's spiritual capacities.¹⁸ Transcendental anti-urbanism, following Emerson (whose own position was more complex than it at first appears), is a more rarefied and theoretical position than Jeffersonian anti-urbanism despite their similarities. Certainly, though, the influence and prestige of Jefferson helped develop the strong anti-urbanism of the nineteenth century.

But Transcendentalist attitudes toward the city cannot be taken as typical of the age. Glaab and Brown point out that the economic desirability of the city was seldom questioned and suggest that "defenders and prophets of the material city" more accurately reflect the popular view. Similarly, Leo Marx notes that negative response to industrialism "has a special appeal for the more literate and literary, hence it appears in print with a frequency out of all proportion to its apparent popularity with the public."¹⁹

A consideration of anti-urbanism, then, discovers a

considerable and entirely natural ambivalence on the part of single individuals, even those most firmly identified with a given stance, and in addition a most vexing puzzle as to opinion groupings within the population. Further, one doubts that the rationale of intellectual anti-urbanism was a significant ground for the same views popularly held. For instance, a basic belief that the city was a physically unhealthy environment was widespread, and movements to bring trees and other vestiges of country living into the city, anticipating such later movements as the Green Belt plan, were motivated by this concern for public health as much as by such aesthetic and social theories as Ruskin's. In this same period, promoters throughout the settled continent were enthusiastically touting speculative ventures in city-building, and newer cities East and West were growing rapidly.

The point is that anti-urbanism, undeniably a major tradition in American thought, cannot well be taken as a consensus. In somewhat stronger phrasing in their chapter entitled "The City in American Thought, 1790-1850," Glaab and Brown warn against over-simplifying the "complexities and ambivalences of popular thought" and deny that the common assumption of "a basically anti-urban tradition" will "stand the test of historical analysis."²⁰ It is precisely this assumption, obscuring contrarities of thought and emotion, that one objects to in Morton and Lucia White's The Intellectual Versus the City (1962). Particularly when considering imaginative literature, one must remember that

American response to the city has been ambivalent and ambiguous.

* * *

Before turning to the works of fiction selected for this study, I would like briefly to consider some aspects of the role of the city in certain other bodies of literature. The novel has been from the outset a predominantly urban form. Simply as setting the city is prominent in the novel, and examples of more or less realistic glimpses of the urban scene, recorded in greater or less specificity of detail and fidelity to fact, abound. The effectiveness of such realization of place is a valid criterion for aesthetic judgment. One mark of development in the novel is increasing vividness and richness in the realization of setting, and it will be seen that this is one respect in which early minor fictionists in America can be faulted. Dickens, perhaps unsurpassed in this respect, provides an instructive standard both for presenting the urban scene with clarity and fullness²¹ and for achieving larger effects through setting. The readiest example is the London fogs of Bleak House, which become emblematic of stifling permeation of society by legal obstructionism. Here, setting, social criticism, and metaphoric richness are achieved as one.

Donald Fanger, in his Dostoevsky and Romantic Realism, gives extended consideration to the simultaneous achievement of realism and heightened emotional significance in the urban setting. Fanger summarizes the effect he dis-

tinguishes in Balzac, Dickens, Gogol, and Dostoevsky as the building of myth by "obsessive concern . . . with the character of this new urban life, with what happened to the traditional staples of human nature" when subjected to the "pressures" of the "unnatural" urban setting. The qualities which these writers actually perceive in their chosen fictional milieu--"strangeness, alienation, crime"--are reflected in the technical characteristics of every aspect of their works--"a carefully fostered sense of mystery (atmosphere), of grotesquerie, a penchant for stark contrasts, for the improbable, the sensational, the dramatic."²² That is, effective presentation of the urban scene merges with an imaginative deepening not derived from place itself. The city becomes not only an actual entity but an image or a symbol. The difference for the critic means, on the one hand, a consideration of what means the writer uses to explore and evaluate the city and, on the other hand, how the writer endows the urban image with symbolic meaning, using the city as a means to explore and evaluate other concerns or to project psychological states. For my purposes, this distinction is particularly relevant to Melville, Poe, and Hawthorne, whose works often share the qualities Fanger has stressed in his study.

In general terms, several kinds of images commonly recur in connection with fictional cities. The maze or labyrinth is virtually a convention in Dickens, his disciple Gissing, and practically everyone else who has written ex-

tensively on the city. Fog, smoke, or dirt frequently appears both as a device for unity--either unity of the created work or unity of the multifarious city itself²³--and as a barrier to sight and communication. The slough of fog, dust, and mud in Our Mutual Friend comes readily to mind. Alienation or lack of communication is itself one of the commonest themes of fiction with an urban setting and is often explored through images of prisons (for instance, in Little Dorrit) or other constricting or confining forces. The "subterranean network of social relationships"²⁴ so prominent in Bleak House and other Dickens novels is another recurring device building a sense of interrelatedness or a sense of the city as itself an organism. Very often the close, detailed rendering of a city will produce confusion, while a panoramic distant view, as from the top of a tall structure or a distant hill or from a ship at sea, will suggest unity or arouse wonder.²⁵ The association of the city with machine imagery will be discussed briefly below. Finally, the city very commonly appears in juxtaposition with images of or allusions to the Heavenly City, the city out of sight.²⁶

It is in this way but from the other angle of vision that the city operates in the poetry of retirement of the eighteenth century, as in works of Cowley, Waller, and Denham. The ideal of retirement to the society of a select group for conversation carries implicit criticism of the city, the ideal conversational community serving as the measure by which

society at large is measured.²⁷ This retirement ideal reaches fullest development with Pope, the significance of whose retirement at Twickenham has recently been examined by Maynard Mack. Mack's thesis is that Pope's life at Twickenham was "emblematic" as he fashioned both in living and in his poetry a "myth" of himself as "the fictive hero of a highly traditional confrontation between virtuous simplicity and sophisticated corruption." From his contemplative sanctuary, Mack writes, Pope presents that "emblem of . . . impermanent delights: London" and judges it by the standard of "the City a little further up-river."²⁸

The point here is that while the relation of such material to the city may be very oblique, it is a real relation nonetheless and operates in much the same way as Cooper's myth of the woods has relation to his appraisal of urban life. The "'pastoral' . . . character" Mack explicitly recognizes in Pope's "retirement syndrome" recalls a similar oblique relationship to urbanism in the classical pastoral,²⁹ assuming one adopts a theory of the pastoral which takes Virgil as the fountainhead. Taking the counter position that Theocritus offers the true standard, Thomas G. Rosenmeyer defines the authentic pastoral lyric by its mood of detachment, the absence of description, an idealized setting with undisturbed otium, and a complete avoidance of critical social relevance. The true pastoral, he says, did not have moral purpose; it was never "a symbolic vehicle for universals." Rather it was the Georgic, or Hesiodic,

from which the pastoral should be sharply distinguished, which drew contrasts between city and country. Rosenmeyer concedes that most critics of the pastoral, who thereby do take Virgil as its fountainhead, expect the poet to have serious critical purpose and to "incorporate his feelings about the city within the poem."³⁰ Virgil's Eclogue I is then seen as a major departure largely because it does establish a relevance of the city to the pastoral world. In a recent book on the Eclogues, Michael Putnam has called Eclogue I a "milestone," turning pastoral into "a poetry of ideas."³¹

In this first of Virgil's bucolics, shattering the convention of pastoral otium, the specific city of Rome is even mentioned by name. Tityrus, the happy shepherd, praises Rome as towering above others like the cypress over osiers. But the poem manifests uneasiness about the power of Rome over the countryside, where all aspects of rural life are dependent on arbitrary rule by the city. The same young god at Rome that granted Tityrus' plea to remain on the land has dispossessed Meliboeus and sent him driving his flock he knows not where, so that he cannot even stop when his prize goat gives birth to twins but must leave them to die. The pastoral world, then, is insecure, existing only at the sufferance of a distant political power which arbitrarily imposes change on a tradition-bound order. Similar inability to control their own actions is displayed in Eclogue IX

by the shepherds who converse while actually walking toward the city through gathering darkness in a landscape where foliage is being stripped from the trees and a tomb is the chief landmark. In both these poems disruption of the bucolic idyl is associated with property, and it can hardly be overreaching to find in this motif an intention to criticize urban materialism, a criticism made overtly in *Georgic* II, 458-474. In *Eclogue* VIII, the urbs is also associated with disruption of pastoral love. To be sure, the poet can also praise Rome: in *Georgic* II, line 534, Rome is "pulcherrima," the fairest thing on earth, and in II, 156, Virgil extols its "egregias urbes" (glorious cities) as one of the glories of Italy.

Virgil, then, displays much of the ambivalence toward the city that is deeply characteristic of American literature. In addition, the relationship of country and city in Virgilian pastoral carries symbolic properties such as freedom versus constraint, art or the imagination versus mechanization or repressive institutions.³² Virgil's focus on ruralism, whether envisioned idyllically in the *Bucolics* or didactically in the *Georgics*, did not mean ignoring the city, but embracing both. He initiated clusters of symbolic associations and antitheses which still persist, and many of the tensions of the *Eclogues* remain issues in fictional treatment of the city.

The literary pastoral is further related to American

fiction by the significant strain of broadly-defined pastoralism, or agrarianism, in our literature and thought.³³ This pastoral ideal is the subject of Leo Marx's The Machine in the Garden, and it is to Marx's work that I would now like briefly to turn. The pastoral genre, he writes, conceived as "a fixed body of poetic conventions," was dead by the eighteenth century, but can be seen to have been gaining new life if one accepts the "vital element in pastoral to be the design, the ordering of meaning and value around the contrast between two styles of life, one identified with a rural and the other with an urban setting."³⁴ Within this broad pastoral ideal, with its value on the cultivated middle ground of hard-working farmowners, can be seen the fusion of the old pastoral and georgic modes. But even in material so un-"pastoral" as to depict the rough frontiersman, his experience coarsened by human violence and harshness of nature beyond all thought of otium or song, the basic pastoral-georgic design remains in the polarization of "country" and "city," the confrontation of the simple and the sophisticated--in Empson's words, the "clash and identification of the refined, the universal, and the low"³⁵--operating chiefly to the discrediting of city ways. In sophisticated versions--Jefferson's, for instance--a man of learning and cultivation, in short, of the qualifications that we customarily associate with urbanity, deliberately adopts the bucolic point of view for the sake of values which he conceives himself to find or implant there, and

from this viewpoint he regards the city as a disruptive, potentially threatening entity. This idea of the city need not be expressed; as in the classical pastoral, a quite involved view of urbanism can be implicit in the poet's dealing with only his rural milieu.

In Marx's study of pastoralism in America, it is not the city which threatens disruption but the machine, industrialism. But the machine is very commonly (not in American literature alone) the surrogate of the city, and Marx's work is richly suggestive for study of the city in the garden. Marx himself makes the connection, seeing in the intrusion of the locomotive into the idyllic countryside "a variation upon the contrast between two worlds, one identified with rural peace and simplicity, the other with urban power and sophistication, which has been used by writers working in the pastoral mode since the time of Virgil." With important differences which Marx specifies, the intruding machine resembles "the archetypal city of Western literature."³⁶

The clusters of emotional suggestions which Marx perceives in the two terms of his clash are, except for the intruding dynamism of the locomotive, those traditionally associated with the polarity of city and country. Values of repose, tranquility, and order are "located" in the landscape. The locomotive brings "tension . . . a sense of dislocation, conflict and anxiety"; it is "an emblem of the artificial, of the unfeeling utilitarian spirit, and

of the fragmented, industrial style of life." Turning to the "city"/"country" contrast of the traditional pastoral, Marx finds the contrast operating as "an analogue of psychic experience." On this plane, the function of the city is the conscious logical faculty, that of primitive nature the unconscious springs of vitality. Geographic motion between the two, then, figures alternative states of psychological being or the attempt to unify the two in a total vital experience.³⁷

It is these clusters of symbolic or emotional values, deepening in imaginative suggestiveness as we move away from appraisal of the real city--as David Weimer writes, "from the recorded to the created, from cities described to cities perceived"³⁸--which we will explore in earlier American fiction, culminating in the work of Hawthorne and Melville.

NOTES

¹Charles N. Glaab and A. Theodore Brown, A History of Urban America (New York: The Macmillan Company, and London: Collier-Macmillan Limited, 1967), pp. 1-6. On the urban bias of Puritans these historians write, "There was little doubt among the colonists that the city was man's proper habitat" (p. 9).

²Arthur M. Schlesinger, "The City in American History," The Mississippi Valley Historical Review, 27 (1940), 43-44.

³See A. N. Kaul, The American Vision: Actual and Ideal Society in Nineteenth-Century Fiction (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1963), pp. 9-16. Also, Edmund Morgan, The Puritan Dilemma: The Story of John Winthrop, ed. Oscar Handlin (Boston: Little, Brown, 1958). The Puritans were not alone in approaching the establishment of towns with visionary purpose; William Penn's similar purposes are mentioned by Glaab and Brown, pp. 6-7.

Winthrop's sermon, "A Model of Christian Charity," is widely anthologized. Here, Roy Harvey Pearce, ed., Colonial American Writing, 2nd ed. (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, Inc., 1969), p. 131.

⁴Glaab and Brown suggest the relationship, p. 53.

⁵Cities in Revolt: Urban Life in America, 1743-1776 (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1955), p. 5.

⁶Bridenbaugh, "The Foundations of American Urban Society," in Allen M. Wakstein, ed., The Urbanization of America: An Historical Anthology (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1970), p. 74; reprinted from Cities in the Wilderness, pp. 567-81. Schlesinger, "The City in American History," p. 46.

⁷Bridenbaugh, in Wakstein, Urbanization, pp. 75, 79. Elsewhere, however, Bridenbaugh states of Philadelphia in 1726, "Observers found few traces either of great wealth or of real poverty." He notes, however, that this situation soon changed, with the "transformation of the merchant plutocracy into a privileged aristocracy" and a "definite development of class feeling." Rebels and Gentlemen: Philadelphia in the Age of Franklin (1942; rpt. London: Oxford University Press, 1968), pp. 2, 13-15. Bridenbaugh summarizes the early and increasing distinctiveness of urban society from that of rural and especially of frontier regions as follows:

In general, this society was more cooperative and social, less individualistic in its outlook toward problems of

daily life, far more susceptible to outside influences and examples, less aggressively independent than the society of frontier America. At the same time it was more polished, urbane, and sophisticated, more aware of fashion and change, more sure of itself and proud of its achievements, more able to meet representatives from the outside world as equals without bluster or apology than the rural society of the colonial back country. Because its outlook was eastward rather than westward, it was more nearly a European society in an American setting (in Wakstein, Urbanization, p. 85).

⁸Bridenbaugh, Cities in Revolt, pp. 162-69, 295; Rebels and Gentlemen, p. 25 and passim. Glaab and Brown also locate the "seeds of a sense of nationality" in relations between the cities and comment on the irony that towns "designed originally to serve the needs of a mercantilist empire became agencies in its dissolution" (20, 1-2).

⁹Glaab and Brown, p. 24.

¹⁰Glaab and Brown, pp. 84-86.

¹¹A particularly striking statistical demonstration of such disparity appears in a recent collection of studies. In Philadelphia in 1860, 10 per cent of the population owned 89 per cent of the wealth; the wealthiest one per cent owned half. Comparable figures are not available for earlier years, but data for Boston reveal a similar though lesser disparity in 1820, rising notably thereafter. The author concludes: "Philadelphia, on the eve of the Civil War, was a society of extreme economic stratification. . . . For never before were the rich so rich. And never before were the poor so plentiful." Stuart Blumin, "Mobility and Change in Ante-Bellum Philadelphia," in Nineteenth-Century Cities: Essays in the New Urban History, ed. Stephen Thernstrom and Richard Sennett (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1969), pp. 204-06.

¹²Schlesinger, "The City in American History," pp. 52-53. Also, Glaab and Brown, pp. 33, 97-98.

¹³The factual basis for this image has been strongly challenged by sociologist Stuart Blumin in his study "Mobility and Change in Ante-Bellum Philadelphia." Through analysis of data from the Philadelphia city directory and tax records, Blumin demonstrates that average upward mobility in occupation and residence from 1820 to 1850 was steady but slight while downward mobility increased. In Thernstrom and Sennett, ed., Nineteenth-Century Cities, pp. 165-208.

¹⁴Eugene Arden, "The Evil City in American Fiction," New York History, 35 (1954), 259-79.

¹⁵Franklin is quoted by Bridenbaugh in Cities in Revolt, p. 15. Morton and Lucia White, The Intellectual Versus the City (Cambridge: Harvard University Press and The M. I. T. Press, 1962), p. 9.

¹⁶David R. Weimer, ed., City and Country in America (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1962), p. 4. This anthology is addressed specifically to the question of anti-urbanism and is particularly useful to the student in that it gathers a number of lesser known expressions on the subject as well as the most familiar ones.

¹⁷Anselm L. Strauss, Images of the American City (New York: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1961), p. 130.

¹⁸The reservation should be made in regard to Thoreau that his point was not actually anti-urbanism, since he had just as great a dislike for grubbing agriculture. His target was dehumanizing materialism, and as an approach to his work the city/country opposition is an artificial issue.

¹⁹Glaab and Brown, p. 72. Marx, The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America (London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), 219n.

²⁰Glaab and Brown, pp. 53-54.

²¹George Gissing said his details of sight and sound "could not possibly be presented with more clearness to our mental vision." Critical Studies of the Works of Charles Dickens (New York: Haskell House, 1965), pp. 26-27.

²²Fanger, Dostoevsky and Romantic Realism (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1965), p. viii.

²³Fanger, p. 80.

²⁴Fanger, p. 83.

²⁵Weimer, in The City as Metaphor, mentions three recurring versions of the city, particularly in modern poetry: (1) a sense of the miraculous; (2) a "projective" approach, the city as "an extension of the psyche"; and (3) an emphasis on order or the "subjection of experience to form," sometimes an imposed or mechanistic order (pp. 6 ff.).

²⁶The most extended and most suggestive discussion of this kind of approach to the city is Michael H. Cowan's City of the West: Emerson, America, and Urban Metaphor (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1967). Also, for the contrast between the ideal and the actual city in the poetry of W. H. Auden and Robert Lowell, see Monroe K. Spears, Dionysus and the City: Modernism in Twentieth-Century Poetry (London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), pp. 82-93.

²⁷The distinction between society and community, an important issue in the thought of Dewey and Royce, is given valuable consideration in relation to literature by W. H. Auden in The Enchafèd Flood: The Romantic Iconography of the Sea (New York: Random House, 1950).

²⁸Maynard Mack, The Garden and the City: Retirement and Politics in the Later Poetry of Pope, 1731-1743 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1969), pp. 8, 50-51, 236.

²⁹I would here distinguish clearly between the city pastoral discussed by William Empson in Some Versions of Pastoral (New York: New Directions, 1960), and the traditional bucolic, which is the prevalent "version" and the one to which I am addressing myself.

³⁰Thomas G. Rosenmeyer, The Green Cabinet: Theocritus and the European Pastoral Lyric (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1969), pp. 15-21, 209-10, 212.

³¹Michael C. J. Putnam, Virgil's Pastoral Art: Studies in the Eclogues (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1970), p. 79.

³²See Putnam's elaborate symbolic interpretation of the Eclogues in Virgil's Pastoral Art. When he denies that the pastoral countryside can be taken as "a paradise in danger of being lost to that epitome of vice and crime, the city," his interpretation seems to have lost all hold on literal meaning. Nevertheless, his readings of the poems securely establish their serious imaginative content. The Eclogues, Putnam writes, show "deep involvement in issues"; they are not merely "soothing antidotes to urban elaborateness" (14).

³³John F. Lynen's study The Pastoral Art of Robert Frost (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1960) recognizes the specific importance of Virgil to the American. Lynen regards a significant portion of Frost's work as being sufficiently comparable to Virgilian pastoral to permit talking

about its place in a tradition. Frost's rural setting, he argues, is a country of the mind that operates analogically and permits a complex of varying symbolic associations as well as oblique reference to the city.

³⁴Leo Marx, The Machine in the Garden, p. 94.

³⁵Empson, Some Versions of Pastoral, p. 249.

³⁶Marx, The Machine in the Garden, pp. 19 and 31.

³⁷Marx, pp. 16, 18, 69-71.

³⁸Weimer, The City as Metaphor, p. 6.

CHAPTER II

"WO UNTO SODOM": URBAN STEREOTYPES IN POPULAR FICTION

While actual anti-urbanism was not so prevalent as has often been assumed during the early nineteenth century, its heyday, fiction of the period demonstrates that in the popular imagination the city aroused strong distrust. There is little ambivalence in the depiction of urban evil in the sentimental novel, which must be the point of departure for any discussion of the early history of American fiction. Until Cooper initiated a vogue of historical romance with The Spy, the novel in America simply meant the sentimental novel. The later sensational novel, while differing in many respects, shares its anti-urban sentiment. Indeed, both sentimental and sensational novels exploit the same good/evil antithesis, simply stressing opposite terms. An examination of the major writers' treatment of the urban scene must take into account the extent to which they adopted the popular stereotypes and their departure from them.

In the early sentimental novel setting was irrelevant or nearly so. Unlike the sentimental novels of the 1840's and 50's, in which a romantic plot and point of view were combined with realistic details in setting, the novel before 1810 seldom even builds a strong sense of where the characters are. For instance, in The Power of Sympathy (1789), generally

taken to be the first American novel, considerable shuffling between town and country occurs, but to no apparent purpose except to create the need for letters instead of conversation. Setting is of no consequence in either the phenomenally popular Charlotte Temple (1791) or Hannah Foster's The Coquette (1791), in which the young woman in question manages to find "busy scenes and active pleasures" as well as "festive mirth" and "the dissipating amusements of the gay world" impartially in Boston or in her more retired family home.¹

More typically, the correspondents in The Power of Sympathy and Charlotte Temple make pronouncements on the stability of rural content as opposed to the frenetic activity and passing pleasures of town life, though in neither work does such an opposition have significance for plot or theme. The opposition appears in these novels in a non-functional, didactic way which chiefly values a cultivated ruralism. The heroine of The Power of Sympathy, for instance, extols her country retreat for having an "elegantly furnished" summer house "enriched with a considerable addition to the library and music" and a statue of "CONTENT" (38). Mr. Howard of Charles Brockden Brown's Clara Howard (1801) insists that farm life is "the life of true dignity,"² but the youthful hero rebels, yearning for the wider opportunities of the city (314-17). Though his first sight of the city from across a river arouses in him a "pleasing astonishment" (338), a

disappointment in love leads him to depart for the West, that "depth of humiliation and horror." At the end Brown's hero returns to New York and gets the girl. The book thus conveys a more positive attitude toward urbanism than is usual in these novels, though all of them prefer urban life to the primitive.

Three considerably lesser-known works of this early period provide demonstration that such didactic references could be more fully integrated into the fictive fabric: Monima, or The Beggar Girl (1802), A Journey to Philadelphia (1804), and Laura (1809).³ No one would be so rash as to claim aesthetic merit for these books. In all three, action is chaotic and rambling and such aspects as dialogue very crude. Their interest lies in their use of conventions that will later enter in sometimes refined form into more satisfying works.

Monima is a novel striving for pathos in the genuine Cinderella mode. Physical setting, though not well realized descriptively, often accentuates the heroine's wretchedness. The conventional heartless materialism of the city appears early in "habitations that wore opulence in their aspect, yet forbade all entrance, to the almost homeless wanderer" (14). But Monima is taken in by a generous stranger who finds her on his doorstep barefoot in the snow; he is the rare saving exception who regularly appears in sentimental versions of the city. Monima and her old white-haired father are repeatedly tricked, deceived, falsely accused, and perse-

cuted, with the opposition between evil city and virtuous country becoming emphatic toward the end. Rescued from a depraved bachelor with money, she moves to a country cottage with a "romantic view" (359). Her father is both grateful to escape "the smokey atmosphere of a crowded noisy city" (364) and convinced that this will be the place to teach Monima virtue and religion. (To the reader, she seems already to have an excess of both.)

But an urban problem all too real in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century disturbs their idyllic retreat. With Monima's brother expected daily in Philadelphia, rumors begin of a "direful Epidemic fever" in that city. Worried about him and harassed by a would-be seducer who threatens Monima with "worse than death," they resume their rags and strike out for the city. There they find the "once busy and animated streets" (notably, descriptive terms that convey no hint of the evil city stereotype) gloomy with an "unusual" stillness that brings "creeping chills over their hearts" (417). The virtuous Monima nurses an old friend, catches yellow fever herself, once again faces "starvation and beggary," and is improbably rescued at last by another old friend who marries her. The novel has obvious failings but does present some interaction of character and urban setting, an unusual trait for a work of its time.

Neither A Journey to Philadelphia nor Laura frees itself from the commonplace even to the extent that Monima does. In A Journey, the hero moves from "the quiet of an

agricultural life" to direful experiences in the city, including false accusation as a murderer. But his journey also brings him business opportunity, chance for study, a rescue and vindication with the noose actually around his neck, and a wife. The writer has modified his basic anti-urbanism by entertaining an image of the city as arena of open possibility. The plaintive note of alienation that becomes dominant in later urban fiction appears in this early work in the narrator's being "acquainted with no human being, though surrounded by so many thousands" (24). The author adopts such attitudes perfunctorily without developing them. Laura, both an anti-seduction and an anti-duelling narrative, operates similarly. In the years of her innocence the heroine is sequestered on the banks of the Susquehanna. Philadelphia affords risks physical and moral; there the heroine encounters yellow fever in its full horror and an attempt to trick her into prostitution, a recurring peril to the sentimental heroine who goes to the city.⁴

These early sentimental novels, then, regularly present a dichotomy of rural good and urban evil, though in no case is that the central intent of the work and the prevailing stereotype is relieved by occasional good fortune in the city. Descriptively, though, place is insignificant; accounts of Philadelphia during the yellow fever plague,⁵ the vividness of which may well be attributed to the impact of the actual experience, are the sole instances in which the urban scene is not simply asserted. The sentimental novel of mid-century

displays the same good/evil stereotypes of country and city but far greater descriptive realism and strong social purpose, as, in the wake of Scott's and Cooper's romances, setting assumed greater importance. Still, the primary aim of such tales was not an apologia for city or country, but (aside from simply the arousal of emotion) the glorification of home, virtuous womanhood, and charity. Values assigned to setting are subservient to these goals.

The publications of Catherine Sedgwick are representative of the sentimental tale of the 1830's through 50's. She was a prolific but repetitive writer, and a very few works⁶ are sufficient to suggest both her own mode and the general type. Her Clarence (1830) offers an involved tale with heavy didacticism and numerous stereotyped incidents: scenes of urban luxury and pretense, the lonely individual in a crowded maze-like city, the child who reforms a neglectful parent by dying (Timothy Shea Arthur's Ten Nights in a Barroom contains a similar bit of pathos more effectively handled). The opening paragraphs of Volume I, which demonstrate the air of realism gained by mentioning actual places, suggest misleadingly that the author may intend to celebrate New York:

It was one of the brightest and most beautiful days of February. Winter had graciously yielded to the melting influence of the soft breezes from the Indian's paradise --the sweet southwest. The atmosphere was a pure transparency, a perfect ether; and Broadway, the thronged thoroughfare through which the full tide of human existence pours, the pride of the metropolis of our western world, presented its gayest and most brilliant aspect.

Nature does not often embellish a city; but here,

she has her ensigns, her glorious waving pennons in the trees that decorate the park, and the entrance to the hospital, and mantle with filial reverence around St. Paul's and Trinity churches.

Actually, she is suggesting a potential but unrealized redemption for the city through the embrace of nature.

Later incidents suggest another avenue of redemption, the virtue of charity. A sick old man receives kindness from one little boy, whose family takes him in. It turns out that old Mr. Flavel is actually old Mr. Clarence, and kindly Mr. Carroll is actually his son, the younger Mr. Clarence. A tidy inheritance is involved,⁷ but this is by no means the end even of Volume One. The author follows the Clarence family fortunes in ebb and flood until at the end of Volume II Gertrude, the daughter (a child when the book began), rejects fashionable New York society to marry an old friend and devote herself to "the inner temple" of the "family circle" (II, 285).

The society Gertrude rejects is depicted throughout as artificial and selfishly materialistic. Indeed, that the love of worldly display is the source of evil might be taken as the motto of the book, and that love is assigned to the city in the familiar opposition to a rural regard for more lasting values. The motif begins quite early, undermining the icy charm of the opening winter scene: "there was something in all this gorgeousness, this ostentatious brilliancy, that harmonized well with the art and glare of a city" (I, 8).⁸ Urban artificiality appears later in a

fashionable New Yorker who sprinkles her conversation with foreign phrases, proving she has abandoned simple Americanism. Even Mr. Clarence, influenced by his wife's yen for "polite society and impressive display," becomes so dazzled by the prospect of opulence that in the legal battle for his inheritance he neglects his children. Penitently, he comes to prefer a "rural life" so that he can direct Gertrude's character to "moderation and humility" in spite of "the indulgences of a luxurious town-establishment" (I, 147). Sure enough, in the country she learned to "love nature from an acquaintance with its sublimest forms" and to "view people and things as they are, without the false glare of artificial society" (I, 148). Their country retreat, however, is a cultivated one; they have the "Edinburgh-Review" and other publications, a piano, and many servants. The author has allowed her characters to bring away parts of the urban milieu with them.

Mrs. Sedgwick's other works utilize virtually the same effects. The Linwoods, an historical romance of the Revolution, chronicles divisions between family members and friends over choice of sides in the conflict. It is scarcely incidental that a youth "bred in a luxurious establishment" in New York who looks "with the most self-complacent disdain on country breeding" (41) chooses to remain neutral, while the son of "a laborious New-England farmer of sterling sense and integrity" (42) is a devoted revolutionary.

The author is following the convention, based to a degree on reality, of associating cities with leanings toward Europe. Her theme of urban pretentiousness appears again in a socialite's foreign phrases and in her city youth's following only "the light and beaten path of belles-lettres" at Harvard while the farmer's son is "patient and assiduous" at his studies (44).

Sedgwick's The Poor Rich Man, and the Rich Poor Man, published the year after The Linwoods, shamelessly exploits stereotypes of city and country as well as rich and poor and offers earnest homely advice that the reader is apparently expected to take much to heart. Purpose has far outweighed imagination. The main sympathetic characters reside in a country village and go to the city only for medical advice. In the course of a long disquisition on the virtues of the rural poor and the value of reading Franklin, the author's mouthpiece extols simple wholesome food, bathing, fresh air, and proper underwear as means to health. Wealthy city people eat rich carelessly-prepared food and care only for outer garments. As illustration, a family in the "fashionable quarter," slaves to show and fashion, are shown serving their guests pate de foie gras, which the author derides in a footnote. Harry and Susan, virtuous young people from the country, find similar hankering for show even in the poor quarter where they live; a gin-drinking woman down the hall whom they recognize as a childhood friend wears old silks over "rags and dirt." The source of her fall had been failure to be

content with poverty: her mother had married a rich man and moved to New York, where "temptation was on every side" (135). Fortunately, wealth does not invariably mean corruption. A rich family appearing briefly near the end of the book is notably cheerful and full of projects for helping the poor. Such as they are the hope of the city.⁹

A much later work of Catherine Sedgwick's, Tales of City Life, shows further decline into stereotypes. The title is misleading, since only one piece has scenes in the city and nothing but incidental details can be taken to represent "life." Again we are shown poor country people who pray a lot and are thankful for charity. The daughter, Ruth, goes to the city abruptly when she learns that her brother Charles has been wrongly accused of crime, a recurring incident in tales of country people going to the city. She arrives "on a New York wharf, dirty, crowded, and noisy enough to have confounded a head and heart less clear and strong of purpose than hers" (21). Out on the street, "no one heeded her," though one kindly clerk in the store where Charlie had been working tries to help and loses his job for his pains. She finds Charlie in the Tombs, another touch of spurious realism. At the end, with all trouble blown over, the kindly clerk is getting a job with a more honorable shopkeeper and feels confident Charlie can also find a place. The story is thus a classic example of the "romantic of optimistic view" of the rural swain's encounter with the city.¹⁰

Mrs. Sedgwick may be considered the progenitor of a school that extended well beyond the period of this study. These writers exalt sentimental domesticity and espouse humanitarian and moral causes while reinforcing an acquisitive social system with encomiums of hard work and virtuous poverty. One such book, Sylvester Judd's Richard Edney, follows from country to city a very religious young man who walks through the snow "musing . . . on the City in which truth was so scarce." (The capitalization of "City" suggests its archetypal character.) The hero, who is very idealistic and eager to work, is greeted by a strikingly positive merger of the city and industrial imagery: "Of a sudden, the Factories burst upon him, or their windows did,-- hundreds of bright windows, illuminated every night in honor of Toil. . . . The factories appeared like an abode of enchantment; and the sight revived his heart, and gave him a pleasant impression of the City."¹¹ He immediately receives warnings to beware: one verbal, the other an unavoidable covered bridge with shadows like great spiders. But he enjoys the booksellers' shops and other aspects of the city, resists its temptations, and joins the Sons of Temperance. (Whitman's Franklin Evans also displays the common overlapping of the urban novel and the temperance novel.) In the course of putting his hero through good deeds in the slums, Judd at length breaks completely out of the fictive illusion to consider urban problems directly.

Two cr , examples of their type are Maria Cummins' The Lamplighter and Elizabeth Oakes Smith's The Newsboy.¹²

Both were very popular; The Lamplighter sold 100,000 in its first decade, 40,000 of these in its first eight weeks, and continued to sell in the 1880's at 25¢ a copy.¹³ Both novels are largely given over to pathos through depicting the city's effects on a child and the contrast between rich and poor.

The opening paragraph of The Lamplighter well indicates these qualities:

It was growing dark in the city. Out in the open country it would be light for half an hour or more; but within the close streets where my story leads me it was already dark. Upon the wooden door-step of a low-roofed, dark, and unwholesome-looking house, sat a little girl, who was gazing up the street with much earnestness. The house-door, which was open behind her, was close to the side-walk; and the step on which she sat was so low that her little unshod feet rested on the cold bricks. It was a chilly evening in November, and a light fall of snow, which had made everything look bright and clean in the pleasant open squares, near which the fine homes of the city were built, had only served to render the narrow streets and dark lanes dirtier and more cheerless than ever; for, mixed with the mud and filth which abound in those neighborhoods where the poor are crowded together, the beautiful snow had lost all its purity (1).

As in Sedgwick's Clarence, the snow indicates the possibility of redemption but is inadequate to ameliorate the miseries of the slum. The emphasis on darkness prepares for the flame of the lamplighter, Trueman Flint, another redeemer figure. But redemption is shown to be a matter of individual prosperity or escape. The Lamplighter is a blatantly fantasizing Cinderella story, even to the heroine's feet being so small that her rainboots will not fit an unpleasant wealthy rival. The discrepancy between rich and poor seems likely

to have no resolution.

Elizabeth Oakes Smith begins The Newsboy with an announcement that she is resolved to "write of common things-- of the great wayfarings of the city just as it is" but to do so as the bee turns nectar into honey so that the result will not be a weed of literature but a "little flower of Innocence" (6-7). In the process the tale loses all relation to her avowed realistic intent and becomes an indulgence of bathetic emotionalism. Realistic notice of economic hardship, "dust and noise and evil and pollution" (8) is belied by fairy-tale heroism and villainy such as the literal kicking about of orphan Bob even before he learned to walk. New York newsboys, as well as firemen, regularly appear in popular fiction as minor heroes. But Mrs. Smith's newsboys emerge as angels: "There is no appearance of vice amongst them. Nothing is skulking, nothing mean, nothing vicious lurks in the aspect of the true Newsboy" (33).¹⁴ This is even more improbable than Flashy Jack (not a "true Newsboy" since he unsuccessfully offers Bob tobacco and drink) who occasionally helps the police. On one such occasion Bob finds the criminal first and instead of turning him in gives him some money, immediately reforming the "miserable wretch" (78). Or again, Bob's partner, Sam, marries an immigrant orphan who mends and sews for all the newsboys and tells them not to swear; if they are sick she keeps them "all night in her little room" (51). Apparently this is a sexless world --but no, she has a baby and both die immediately and prettily.

One cannot imagine the domestic conversation of such a pair as the writer of all this and her husband Seba Smith, author of the original Major Jack Downing papers.

Misery of a kind that would seem unbelievable if there were no evidence that in nineteenth-century cities it actually existed, appears in the novel. Bob adopts two waifs he finds on the streets and takes them to live in abandoned junk. In one scene as he sells papers night is falling and a virtual procession of beggars, the blind, and the lame pass. A dying prostitute wishes she could go back to her mother "and the birds, flowers, brooks and trees" (198). Bob roams "streets of ill repute" around the Tombs that were built on marshy ground so that "the crooked streets were always damp and uninviting, till the place became morally as well as naturally pestiferous" (87).¹⁵ By the efforts of missionaries, a brewery has been torn down and children in the Tombs area have been taught to sing hymns. This the author regards with obvious satisfaction; the note that "some had a look of profound melancholy, and all were more or less diseased" (10) seems to evoke no urge toward more reform. Indeed, in both *The Newsboy* and *The Lamplighter* social problems are raised only to be skirted. Bob is a walking lesson in doing-good, but his moral conscience never generates a general social conscience. He is finally adopted by a rich merchant, whose daughter, unbelievably kidnapped, he rescues from a tropic island. Given the chance to marry the girl, he lets her freely choose another and contents himself with a

junior partnership in the firm. Similarly, two poor young people of The Lamplighter hope to get rich by hard work. At the end they live happily in a fine home in Boston and look out the window at clean snow, unsullied by slum streets. Both young men have leapt the economic gap, and the reader assumes it will trouble them no more.

Another short novel of about the same time, Sam Squab, the Boston Boy (1844), surprisingly combines with the sentimental pattern of an innocent's encounter with and eventual victory over sin and temptation in the city a satiric mock-heroic tone. The result is interesting, if only by contrast. Sam Squab is a kind of anti-hero (undergrown, clumsy, inept) who comes across a wealthy man having d.t.'s in the city street, helps him, and gains a good job. This slight book, which concludes by advising the reader always to help people and get rewards, demonstrates again the convention of the city as testing ground but also shows that the author was sufficiently aware of sentimental stereotypes to parody them. Much the same had been done in 1830 by James Kirke Paulding in Chronicles of the City of Gotham.

A form transitional between the sentimental novel and the sensational, as well as between the sentimental novel and later realism, is the collection of sketches of city scenes. Although these can be called fiction only by a shamelessly unselective use of terms, they achieved great popularity and cannot be discounted in the development of fiction proper. The vogue can be seen as an offspring of Lydia Maria Child's

best-seller Letters from New-York.¹⁶ Because Child proposes to look directly at the city rather than tell a story, the balance is more toward realism than sentiment, though the latter enters in the author's responses, which she dwells on tiresomely. She vacillates between the "evil city" view, at which times New York is a "great Babylon" (1), and a delight in the city's parks and the variety of its people. When she wants to praise this variety New York is a "thoroughfare of nations" (58), but as her mood shifts it is a "swarming . . . hive" (1, 58) or "a place of rapid fluctuation, and neverceasing change," its people evanescent (56). In Letter XIV, "My spirit is weary for rural rambles. It is sad walking in the city" (82). But, "The fault was in my own spirit rather than in the streets of New-York. . . . To-day, I have been so happy in Broadway!" (104).

Mrs. Child's Letters are a virtual summary of stereotyped effects. She regularly draws contrasts with unspoiled nature, stresses the child's experience of the city, and utilizes the maze image. She offers various "sunny spots of greenery" as nature's potential redemption of the city, and explicitly compares these to human virtue in a pointed Biblical allusion: "I used to say, I knew not where were the ten righteous men to save the city; but I have found them now" (7). They are the Temperance Society. Her presentation of the physical setting is often vivid and convincing, however, and the varying temper of her responses does save her use of the "evil city" myth from complete obviousness.

Social concern is strong and pervasive in the Letters. Faults of the environment itself, such as "impure air" and "dirty pavement," appear regularly, though pushed out of the "foreground in my picture of New-York" in favor of parks and gardens. These physical defects, distressing to a near view, also disappear in a large prospect exciting wonder-- the night view, for instance, when "city lamps surround you, like a shining belt of descended constellations" (3) or the panorama from the distance of Brooklyn Heights. Human problems are more persistent. On the first page we meet a clearly detailed instance of the usual Wealth and Poverty contrast, which continues throughout the book. The city appears a "vast emporium of poverty and crime" (7), a place of "misery and vice" (104), where the prosperous are devoted only to moneymaking and the individual within the crowd feels a "restless" "loneliness of the soul" (82). The author plaintively exclaims, "I wish I could walk abroad without having misery forced on my notice, which I have no power to relieve" (181). Asking only decorum of "the vicious," she adds to her compassion a new serious realization that crime and vice may be a result of the environment: "The great searcher of Hearts alone knows whether I should not have been as they are, with the same neglected childhood, the same vicious examples, the same overpowering temptations of misery and want" (6). It is a realization that only George Lippard (in The Quaker City, 1844) then seemed to share.

Other popular collections of sketches of urban scenes show stronger ties to the sensational novel. G. G. Foster's New York in Slices (1849) and New York by Gas-Light (1850)¹⁷ include sketches of such standard features as Five Points, the Tombs, gambling houses, the celebrated firemen, newsboys, and the numerous eating houses. Foster bemoans "the horrible stench of the poverty, misery, beggary, starvation, crime, filth, and licentiousness that congregate in our Large City" and finds it personified in "the very rotting skeleton of City Civilization, the Five Points district (Slices, 4). Like other writers of exposé, Foster devotes considerable attention to New York's prostitutes. In an expensive house of prostitution, the girls give heart-rending stories of their fall into depravity, in the course of which occurs a piece of rhetoric Foster must have particularly liked: "I know I am a demon--a she-devil--as are all women who have lost their virtue; and I mean to make the most of it" (Gas-Light, 32). The same speech appears in Foster's incredible novel Celio. His assessment of the city's overall moral condition shows both the sensationalist's claim to give the awful truth and his utilization of the sentimental vision of the saving few: The "magnificent City . . . stripped of the cloud of appearances in which it is veiled, looks but a vast abyss of crime and suffering, with here and there a crystal shooting out over the horrid recess of filth" (Slices, 5).

Solon Robinson's Hot Corn (1854), claiming factual basis in its subtitle Life Scenes in New York Illustrated,¹⁸

may be taken as the very epitome of the form. It is not at all a bad book; if the reader yields himself up to its broad emotional effects, he finds himself swept along despite its conventionalism. The introduction, signed "The Publishers," claims all the characteristics of the sentimental-sensational urban novel:

The growing taste for works of this kind--works intended to promote temperance and virtue, to lift up the lowly, to expose to open day the hidden effects produced by Rum, to give narratives of misery suffered by the poor in this city--has induced the Publishers to offer liberal inducements to the author to use his powerful pen, and words of fire, to depict his 'Life Scenes'. . . . As a temperance tale, it has no equal. As such we hope it may prove but the commencement of a series. As an expose of life among the poor in this city, it will be read with deep and abiding interest, in all parts of this country.

At once the focus is on poverty "in the very heart of this great commercial city, where wealth, luxury, extravagance, all abound" (14). In dramatization of this line, a ragged girl begging and trying to sell hot corn is in danger of being trampled by crowds intent on business or amusement. In a quick vignette, an old apple dealer's husband who finally persuades her to give him a shilling for a drink is run over by an omnibus (then rather new) as he crosses the street; true to the genre of sensation, the writer gives much attention to crushed bones and spilled blood and to people crowding around to gratify "morbid, idle curiosity" (the gratification for which readers turn to expose). Focus on the city's effect on a child continues as thirteen-year-old Sally, the apple-seller's daughter, decides she is big enough

to begin as a "night-walker" but is rescued just in time by a reformed drinker and his daughter. Indeed, drunks who take the pledge and subsequently live lives of virtue form the chief substance of the book. The length to which the author would go in bending crude gothic effects to temperance purpose is demonstrated to the fullest by an incident in which a drunken woman gives birth while in a stupor next to the body of her just-dead husband in "pitch darkness" and with rats running over them: "Oh! how their slimy bodies felt," she reports, "as they crept over my face." In a "frenzy" to awaken the husband she "struck and bit him--bit a dead man" while rats eat the baby (645). All this is made to serve the end of having her sign the pledge. Writers in this form always claimed a reforming purpose. Hot Corn is heavily didactic, and the author extols "the West--new country--log cabin--little farm--cows, and pigs, and chickens--and a baby" (177) where people are "much better off" than in the city. But the virtue is all mechanical, while the lurid vice, as the incident above makes clear, is energetically amplified and embroidered.

In their preoccupation with vice and poverty, such sketches of urban scenes constitute an incipient social criticism. In Mrs. Child's Letters from New-York, unlike the sentimental novels, social consciousness is not dissipated by following idealized characters who come into money and apparently concern themselves no further with poverty. Nevertheless, Child's Letters remains more fully a sentimental

work than a book of social criticism because of its continuing lapses into the rhetoric of flowers and other manifestations of sentimentalism.¹⁹ In sketches of exposé, the reforming urge is chiefly a ruse masking a purpose of shock-effect. The line of demarcation between these works and social criticism, as well as between the sentimental and the sensational novel, is far from obvious, since some of the same elements may appear in all three. However, the literature of sentiment may be distinguished by its idealization of character, escapism, and emphasis on sweetness. Thus Mrs. Child asks no censure "if I turn wearily aside from the dusty road of reforming duty, to gather flowers in sheltered nooks" (5). The novel of social criticism takes an ostensibly rational approach to real perceived problems and suggests alternatives.

Like the collection of sketches, the works of Cornelius Mathews, who was prominent in the New York literary world by virtue of his strange friendship with Evert Duykinck, are transitional between the sentimental and the realistic urban novel. Mathews' tales combine insistent realism in details of the urban milieu, even its harshness, with romantic plots, sentimental conventions, and a general blurring that comports better with the sentimentalist's view than the realist's. Further, despite the revelling in New York sights and people that Perry Miller sees as evidence of a "love for the metropolis which was Mathews's excuse for being,"²⁰ Mathews regularly adopts the familiar evil city/virtuous country

dichotomy. His Moneypenny (1849) never escapes the tired stereotype of simple virtue coming to the frivolous cheating city and triumphing over it through force of character and ability to attract to itself the virtuous few. Big Abel and the Little Manhattan (1845), avowedly a romance, is unacceptable even under that label. The concept of a descendant of the Manhattan tribe and a descendant of Henry Hudson going about New York to divide it between them according to a distinction between nature and civilization is absurd to the point of puerility, and even the best of Mathews' stylizing devices, the structuring by their daily meals building to a feast at the end, is insufficient to lift the book higher.

The problem is finally a basic confusion of attitude toward the subject. Mathews' novels, particularly Puffer Hopkins (1842),²¹ seem intended as tributes to the vitality of the urban scene, as he lingers over New York's streets and restaurants. But in all three, images and incidents suggesting a negative response are most memorable. In Big Abel the ebullient affirmation of the two claimants' tour of Manhattan is undermined by a threat to the city's very existence in the brooding presence of the Little Manhattan near the end. At the final dinner party of friends from all over the city, Big Abel exults over the city that "springs" toward the heights of Harlaem and "leaps, and takes such mighty strides, that nothing can be or make a bar to him" (90-91). But Little Manhattan, the Indian, forgotten at

the party, forever lurks around starting fires and gloating when grass grows in the streets. In Moneypanny, imagery conveys a real fear of the city itself. As he approaches New York down the Hudson, the panoramic view of the city, commonly suggestive of wonder, is wholly sinister:

The city lies in the twilight, large, dark, massive. Mr. Moneypanny regards it with fear and trembling, as though it were some beast of prey crouching on the riverbank in the dark. . . . If he had known how large it was . . . how confused and bewildering its houses, he would have scarcely ventured thither in quest of lost children (42).

When he lands a crowd follows, "coiling around him like a monstrous snake" (49). His first morning in the city is the ubiquitous (e.g., Martin Chuzzlewit) scene of a hurried unmannerly hotel meal conveying urban greed. Five Points is a "sort of Hell-gate tumult" (74). Such images, as well as Moneypanny's stated preference for the country, subvert the hearty comic ending.

Mathews' The Career of Puffer Hopkins, like Moneypanny, is a tale of a father's search for his son and the son's search for a father. The book is packed with the sights and sounds of New York, and at times Mathews' breathless style conveys the crowding and activity of the place. Particularly is he successful in this way with the scenes of political rallies and electioneering Puffer participates in as a novice politician. But these satiric parts of the novel are irrelevant to the sentimental plot which constitutes its main action. The host of eccentrics with which Mathews' city is populated, potentially a demonstration of its endless

variety, are too patently imitations of Dickens' grotesques to ring true.

Besides the sentimentality and caricature that belie such touches of urban realism as Mathews manages to provide, Puffer and all his friends move to the country as soon as the obvious mechanism of his reconciliation to his father is completed. In addition, as in Money Penny and Big Abel, imagery conveys strong uneasiness about the city. A beautiful young girl approaching the alien city on an errand of mercy views the spectacle of New York from a hilltop: the many houses "suggested to her no thoughts of neighborhood and fellowship by their closeness, but rather one of dumb creatures huddled together by sheer necessity." The streets "yawned like chasms and abysses" and the whole "seemed to her a wilderness of dungeons." At her entry into the city the dread panorama becomes piecemeal confusion: "And now the great city which she had wondered at, in its entirety and vastness, met her part by part, and bewildered her with its countless details" (149). This combination of panorama with welter is the key to Mathews' treatment of urban setting. Moving toward a depiction of it as a mass of innumerable details, he creates instead a jumble, descriptively and in the ill-assorted combining of satire, melodrama, and attempted hearty humor that fails.

In the 1840's and 50's a flood of cheap novels offered thrill-seeking readers glimpses into urban low life. Mott, who in his 1947 study of American best sellers attributes

this vogue to the success of The Mysteries of Paris (1842) by Eugene Sue, says that these writers of exposé "entered into a friendly competition to show which was the wickedest American city."²² They were not mining a new field. Earlier sentimental novelists occasionally presented horrors in the wicked city, and other anticipations may be seen in John Neal's Keep Cool (1817), which opens with a young man's being accosted on Broadway by two apparent prostitutes, or later in an anonymous Adventures of a Bachelor (1837), the hero of which emerges from a theatre to encounter "legions" of rats in the streets. Or Charles Brockden Brown's bone-chilling account of yellow fever and intrigue in Philadelphia in Arthur Mervyn (1799) may be seen as an earlier and much superior prototype. Whitman's temperance novel Franklin Evans (1842), which gives the usual account of "a country youth, who came to our great emporium to seek his fortune,"²³ is related to the sensational novel by its capitalizing on sordidness.

The most estimable of urban sensationalists was George Lippard, whose noted The Quaker City appeared in 1844. It is scarcely surprising that Mott should credit the book with taking the palm for displaying the wickedest city. However, it is no more sensational than Lippard's others, but only more impressively fantastic. Its elaborate devices for pure deviltry place the book among gothic probings of the nerve, but some details of urban evil--lechery and prostitution, hypocrisy, dens of depravity, slums and other aspects of

economic injustice--do operate on the level of exaggerated fact proper to the exposé. Lippard's work, like Brockden Brown's, can be read on many levels. Alexander Cowie, in The Rise of the American Novel (319), calls Lippard "a curious mixture of the moral crusader and the sensation-monger" and The Quaker City "probably the most extravagant compound of Gothic terror, intense melodrama, and social invective ever written on this continent." Despite their reforming intent, the extravagant emotional tone of Lippard's shockers makes him more interesting as a prober of the dark underside of man's nature.²⁴ In either capacity, his fitting motto is the message emblazoned in infernal light over Philadelphia in The Quaker City: "WO UNTO SODOM." The phrase well indicates the mythic absoluteness of anti-urban sentiment among popular writers who depicted the city as an emblem of insinuating evil even while demonstrating by their persistent interest a response to its vitality.

Numerous writers exploited the mode of sensational exposé in which Lippard was the most distinctive practitioner.²⁵ His Quaker City, for instance, was blatantly imitated in the brief form of the cheap novel by one Henri Foster in Ellen Grafton. The Den of Crime: A Romance of Secret Life in the Empire City (1850), a work of unsurpassed crudeness in both fantastic prurience and improbable happy ending. Illustrations of the type can be taken virtually at random since stereotyped elements appear in them all with an oppressive sameness, trailing off into the bald thrillsmanship

of the dime novel. Such books regularly resort to the extremes of good and evil assigned to country and city but, unlike sentimental novels, emphasize exaggerated miseries rather than exaggerated virtue. The sensationalist manages to point "an obvious moral" while gratifying "prurient curiosity."²⁶ The urban thrillers of George Thompson, exploiting this scheme, even skirt pornography. Among the most prolific producers of such books were Z. C. Judson, who as Ned Buntline was the chief dime novelist of the sea, Osgood Bradbury, and Joseph Holt Ingraham,²⁷ whose books show some gift for capturing detail.

Bradbury and Judson have a habit of opening with descriptions of extreme states of weather. If the city first appears enjoying sunny skies or pearly twilight, with cool breezes and a cleansing shower just past, such beatitude is quickly shown to be spurious. Or, taking the opposite tack, they open at midnight on poorly-lighted streets with stormy wind or fog and bitter cold. In this case, meteorological misery is fully corroborated by events. The point is that ugly weather is somehow suited to the urban scene (generally, by this time, New York), which spoils or belies any natural felicity it may chance to receive. The stock drunks, prostitutes, gamblers, and wretched poor appear regularly in the productions of all these writers. Bradbury and Judson belabor the deceptiveness of the city in various forms (a newspaperman who publishes lies, boarding houses that turn out to be brothels), the complete variety of its people,

and such standard incidents as seduction of the innocent and betrayal into prostitution ("the old stereotyped story," Banker's Victim, p. 49), determined kindness to the poor by a charitable few, and wondrous reforms from drink. Their similarity extends to a startling likeness of heavily facetious style. The contrast between evil city and virtuous country is, like the other elements, either drawn explicitly or shown in very obvious dramatization. Possibly the most heavyhanded in this line is Bradbury's The Gambler's League (appropriately subtitled The Trials of a Country Maid) in which Grace, a country girl newly come to town, is the victim of an attempted seduction but cools the man with a lecture on religious commitment (42). Her cheerful, sincere religion is contrasted to the scowling hypocrites going to church alongside her. Perhaps Lippard's insistence on nonsectarian religion had set a pattern: Grace is nondenominational; her main church is "the open country--the woods, the mossy rocks, the gay wild flowers, the pure brooks, the singing of birds; and, at night, the silvery moon, and countless stars" (56).

The very essence of the sensational form appears in the vogue of "mysteries and miseries" books that struck in the mid-forties in imitation of The Mysteries of Paris and persisted through the fifties. Bradbury initiated the series with his Mysteries of Boston and Mysteries of Lowell, both 1844, the same year as Ingraham's Miseries of New-York. Judson produced a Mysteries and Miseries for New York and New

Orleans, and numbers of similarly titled cheap novels appeared anonymously. George Thompson capitalized on the vogue by ending his The House Breaker (1848) with a claim to have "shown a few of the MYSTERIES OF CRIME--and also some of its MISERIES." All these works show the familiar preoccupation with prostitution, gambling, and outlaw gangs,²⁸ and all make gestures toward documentation. Judson even appends a collection of "facts" about New York to his Mysteries and Miseries of that city.

One of the most remarkable of these books is an anonymous Mysteries and Miseries of San Francisco (1853). The book has the usual noble hero who has a series of near escapes both from depravity and from a criminal gang. The reader is assured that San Francisco witnesses more dire deeds than "it ever entered into the imagination of dwellers on the Atlantic sea-board to conceive of" (20). Also standard is the book's tribute to firemen, favorite heroic figures of urban novelists. An Irish fireman in this novel tops them all by supporting a ladder on his shoulders while the hero climbs up and rescues the inevitable beautiful girl. But the real distinction of Mysteries and Miseries of San Francisco is that the author's choice of locale allows him to produce an urban thriller, a robber gang thriller, and an exotic foreign adventure thriller, all in one.

San Francisco is in this way only a distillation of the type. The impossibility of taking these novels at all seriously lies at least in part in the fact that the same

writers who sensationalized the city (Judson and Ingraham, for instance) produced impartially thrills from sea adventures, wild west stories, robber gang tales, and wild romances in foreign lands. For such writers the urban scene was simply an excuse for thrillsmanship. The crudities of the form are of course obvious. Hastily written, circulated in small but very profitable cheap-bound editions, these novels manipulate stereotyped incidents and attitudes rather than develop any originality or depth in treating urban life. Among other evidences of crudity is the obviousness with which the opposition of evil city and virtuous country is presented in tale after tale. In many cases the contrast had not been drawn so blatantly in the earliest sentimental novels. It is well for American literature that a different class of writers was pursuing different lines--attempts at developing a technique adequate to the representation of the great city as well as serious social criticism and more subtle imaginative penetration of man's spirit.

NOTES

¹William Hill Brown, The Power of Sympathy, and Hannah W. Foster, The Coquette, ed. William S. Osborne (New Haven: College and University Press, 1970); Susanna Rowson, Charlotte Temple, ed. Clara M. and Rudolf Kirk (New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1964).

²Charles Brockden Brown, Clara Howard, Vol. IV of Charles Brockden Brown's Works (Philadelphia: David McKay, Publisher, 1887).

³Martha Read, Monima, or The Beggar Girl (New York: P. B. Johnson, 1802; Wright, I, 2098); "Adelio," A Journey to Philadelphia; or, Memoirs of Charles Coleman Saunders (Hartford: Lincoln and Gleason, 1804; Wright, I, 3); Laura, by a Lady of Philadelphia (Philadelphia: Bradford and Inskeep, 1809; Wright, I, 2279).

⁴As late as 1849 the heroine of Mary Beach; or, The Fulton Street Cap Maker becomes part of a large company of imperilled heroines when she moves into a boarding house really a brothel.

⁵Brockden Brown's in Arthur Mervyn is the best; that work is taken up in Chapter III.

⁶Catherine Maria Sedgwick, Clarence; or, A Tale of Our Own Times (Philadelphia: Carey and Lea, 1830; Wright, I, 2339); The Linwoods; or "Sixty Years Since" in America (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1835; Wright, I, 2350); The Poor Rich Man, and the Rich Poor Man (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1836; Wright, I, 2358); Tales of City Life (Philadelphia: Hazard and Mitchell, 1850; Wright, I, 2370).

⁷The unexpected inheritance, a motif appearing in American romantic fiction of all varieties, constitutes virtually the whole of one Peter Hamilton Myers' treatment of urban life in a group of novels published in the 1850's. The device may be seen to reflect the city's role as arena of open possibility.

⁸A similar attitude is stressed in Norman Leslie (1835) by Theodore Sedgwick Fay, which also opens with New York decked in snow and ice and which bears the subtitle A Tale of the Present Times, almost word for word the same as that of Clarence. Scenes of snow and sleighing in the city are quite common in popular books, no doubt emulating the well-known sleighing scenes in Cooper's Satanstoe.

⁹Like the ten good men who would have saved Sodom and Gomorrah, a redeeming charitable few regularly appear in the urban sentimental novel. In the anonymous Mary Beach (1849) the remarkable good man is a Quaker who had at first appeared to be another stock figure, the lustful Quaker. The author states the redeeming-few convention at the outset: Mary's mother says that the "city of New York is a very wicked place, although there are many good people who live in it" (6).

¹⁰Eugene Arden, "The Evil City in American Fiction," New York History, 35 (1954), 261. In this version of the "national myth" of New York as "the evil city," the young man comes to the city to study or "in some way to find scope for his grand ambition," finds fierce competition and other evils, barely escapes corruption, and goes home. This, of course, is the predominant mode of the sentimental novel's young men from the provinces.

¹¹Sylvester Judd, Richard Edney and the Governor's Family, a Rus-Urban Tale (Boston: Phillips, Sampson and Company, 1850; Wright, I, 1513), p. 10.

¹²Maria S. Cummins, The Lamplighter (Boston: John P. Jewett and Co., 1854; Wright, II, 672); Elizabeth Oakes Smith, The Newsboy (New York: J. C. Derby, 1854; Wright, II, 2257).

¹³Frank Luther Mott, Golden Multitudes: The Story of Best Sellers in the United States (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1947). Also, Alexander Cowie, The Rise of the American Novel (New York: American Book Co., 1951).

¹⁴Both newsboys and firemen are regularly idealized in popular fiction of the city. They receive repeated tributes, for instance, in G. G. Foster's sketches, New York in Slices.

¹⁵The possibilities this sentence raises of having the physical and the moral environment image each other are never developed with any subtlety in these novels. The repentant prostitute is another stock figure. George Lippard has a dying prostitute's prayer in The Nazarene.

¹⁶Letters from New-York (New York: Charles S. Francis and Company, 1843).

¹⁷G. G. Foster, New York in Slices: by an Experienced Carver (New York: William H. Graham, 1849; Wright, I, 980); New York by Gas-Light: with Here and There a Streak of Sunshine (New York: Dewitt and Davenport, 1850; Wright, I, 979).

According to Mott's Golden Multitudes, New York by Gas-Light was a "better seller."

¹⁸Solon Robinson, Hot Corn (New York: DeWitt and Davenport, 1854; Wright, II, 2097). The plight of the urban poor was so firmly entrenched as an essential ingredient of expose that the writer of Mysteries of Philadelphia, as if automatically, makes first-page reference to a midnight of cold winds piercing "the thin covering of poverty" directly after his prefatory announcement that he will expose only "the gay and fashionable" and ignore the poorer classes.

¹⁹The escapist tendency of the work is dominant in Mrs. Child's Second Series of the Letters (1845). Here, she is much more fanciful and digressive, wandering off to all sorts of places and times so distant as Christ's life on earth. There is no focus on urban experience.

²⁰The Raven and the Whale (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1956), p. 276.

²¹Cornelius Mathews, The Career of Puffer Hopkins (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1842; Wright, I, 1829); Big Abel and the Little Manhattan (New York: Wiley and Putnam, 1845; Wright, I, 1828); Moneypenny, or, The Heart of the World (New York: Dewitt and Davenport, 1849; Wright, I, 1832).

²²Mott, Golden Multitudes, p. 247.

²³Walter Whitman, Franklin Evans, or, The Inebriate: A Tale of the Times, ed. Jean Downey (New Haven: College and University Press, 1967), p. 35.

²⁴See below, Chapter III.

²⁵Dewitt's advertised a whole series of "Stories of New York Life" among their "Cheap Publications." See appendix to Judson's The G'hals of New York (Dewitt and Davenport, 1850; Wright, I, 1519).

²⁶Herbert Ross Brown, The Sentimental Novel in America, 1789-1860 (Durham, N. C.: Duke University Press, 1940), p. 366.

²⁷Considered here: Bradbury, The Gambler's League; or, The Trials of a Country Maid (New York: Robert M. DeWitt, 1857; Wright, II, 343); Bradbury, Female Depravity; or, The House of Death (New York: Robert M. DeWitt, 1857; Wright, II, 341); Bradbury, The Banker's Victim; or, The Betrayed Seamstress (New York: Robert M. DeWitt, 1857; Wright, II, 336);

Judson, The B'hoys of New York (New York: Dick and Fitzgerald, Publishers, 1850; Wright, I, 1514); The Mysteries and Miseries of San Francisco (New York: Garrett and Co., 1853; Wright, II, 1776).

²⁸A number of Thompson's books and others idealize captains of robber gangs who help the poor and hope finally to leave the city for a country refuge. It is a moral equivocation the sentimental novelist would not have indulged.

CHAPTER III

URBAN GOTHICISTS: BROWN, LIPPARD, POE

Lo! Death has reared himself a throne
In a strange city lying alone
Far down within the dim West

. . .

No rays from the holy Heaven come down
On the long night-time of that town;
But light from out the lurid sea
Streams up the turrets silently--
Gleams up the pinnacles far and free--
Up domes--up spires--up kingly halls--
Up fanes--up Babylon-like walls--

During the 1840's and 50's sensationalists produced a sizable body of journalistic fiction depicting the modern city as a place of lurid sin and crime, economic debasement, and heartless chicanery. In particular the sensationalists presented the city as a threat to feminine virtue, recounting the trials of poor seamstresses, usually from the country, who must thwart the lascivious designs of wealthy philandering businessmen while coping with drunken fathers. The urban tales of Charles Brockden Brown and George Lippard share the focus of these popular writers on moral corruption and violence and their extremes of emotional effect.

However, the work of Brown and Lippard differs from that of the sensationalists in important respects. Although the distinction is not always complete or obvious, Brown and Lippard can more profitably be considered in relation to Edgar Allan Poe as practitioners in a distinct form. These writers use the urban scene for the creation of

gothic effects and the exploration of abnormal states of consciousness. Like the sensationalists, they often set action in literal darkness, emphasizing the darker side of urban life: violence and physical suffering, fear and other mental distress. Their distinction from writers of *exposé* lies in the ends they pursue and the degree of referential reliability they attribute to their urban scenes. The sensationalist may in fact exaggerate the evils he describes, but implicitly he claims that they exist in a designated social setting. He expects his readers to be, if appalled, nevertheless persuaded not only aesthetically but morally. In short, his work is both presented and accepted as a report on actual, shocking conditions in need of reform. Even when it is apparent that the sensationalist's primary aim is the momentary thrill, the pretense of actual reference for purposes of moral enlightenment is maintained. But the gothic tale is not presented and cannot be taken as a report at all. The gothic writer who approaches the city places within a fantastic urban milieu characters and events that are obviously not representative of general conditions and in fact are barely conceivable. The reader places his credence not in the work as descriptive report, but in the psychological effects or thematic implications of a self-contained fictive construct.

The world of the sensationalist is distorted but rational, or at least ostensibly deliberate; the world of the gothicist provides for the impingement of the irrational.

If in the sensational tale it is the heroine's virtue that is imperilled, in the urban gothic it is primarily her sanity that is at stake. It is chiefly this threat to reason that links Brown, Lippard, and Poe. All three launch a forceful assault on individual sanity, social order, and temporal process, three symbols of governing Reason. The characteristics of their work inviting the term gothic--terror, luxuriance in the violent or lurid or revolting, improbable physical settings producing confusion or sense of mystery or threat--contribute to the thematic insistence on irrationality.

Neither Brown's work nor Lippard's fully bears out the distinction I have suggested between the gothic and other urban modes. Both wrote fiction of a mixed sort, with the urge to expose shocking depths of moral corruption particularly strong in Lippard. In Brown's Arthur Mervyn the exposé of corrupt business practice plays no small part, and indeed the most obvious virtue of the plague scenes is their oft-praised realism,¹ conveying more vividly than any other work of Brown's time the sense of plague-stricken Philadelphia. Both wrote as reporters on the perceived city, presenting fictionally their objections to its moral ills and social injustices. But in the work of both the report is strongly colored by emotion, and the social order is submitted to frequent incursions of individual malevolence or cosmic menace. Their fictions proceed in serial crises of fear. It is their vision of the modern

city and urban life as a fit image of terror in itself and as that symbol of order most significantly submitted to disorder that I find centrally important in the work of both Brown and Lippard.

Brown's relation to the European gothic novel is subject to question; he himself ridiculed its trappings.² A related but more basic point of debate is Brown's stance with regard to a rationalistic account of human life. The usual view that Brown sets out to urge reason against religious fanaticism and similar vagaries (an argument applied chiefly to Wieland) has been sharply challenged by both Warner Berthoff and Donald A. Ringe.³ That these two arenas of interpretive combat occupy much common ground is obvious, and both bear upon the matter of Brown's cities, where the chief question seems to be whether the environment most fully shaped by human effort be chiefly an image of order and reason or of the frightening unknowable. In Ormond and Arthur Mervyn, the two most important works in this connection, the city figures as a center of frenetic activity both harboring agents of human evil and besieged by an evil beyond human analysis or control, the plague. As Leslie Fiedler writes, Brown "found in the plight of the city under a plague an archetypal representation of man's fate."⁴ The image of the city (epitome of modern civilizing progress) brought to chaos by plague ("all that is monstrous and inexplicable in life") becomes a symbol of human reason assaulted by the irrational.⁵ This schema is suggested by Brown himself in

a letter dated October 25, 1796, first quoted by Clark in his study of Brown (p. 156):

Plague operates by invisible agents, and we know not in what quarter it is about to attack us. No shield, therefore, can be lifted up against it. We fear it as we are terrified by dark. . . .

I was talking of the yellow fever, or rather of the plague. . . . When I mentioned to you my treatment [of it] at Hartford in ninety-three, I was half disposed to instruct myself, and possibly amuse you, by recalling and putting [it] on the paper before me. . . .

The associative progression from the yellow fever plague he has just witnessed in New York to the idea of supernatural terror in itself, thence to his own writing of fiction suggests the importance of the conjunction in his work.

Both Constantia Dudley, the heroine of Ormond, and young Mervyn encounter repeated evidence of moral corruption. Mr. Dudley's financial ruin after he felt so secure as to retire from business proves to have been engineered by the person Dudley most trusted. Constantia is persecuted by grasping landlords and must contend with insults in the streets and an attempted rape as she pursues her trade of seamstress. Most spectacularly corrupt is Ormond himself, a man of secure social standing who has as mistress a woman he scorns. In Arthur Mervyn, the corrupt city is placed in a considerably broadened setting. Brown launches his story from the conventional contrast of city and country, opening the possibilities of the initiation theme.⁶ Mervyn leaves his rural home "uneducated, ignorant and poor" and resolutely virtuous. On his first entry into Philadelphia he encounters trickery, theft, and, in his acquaintance with

Welbeck, shocking ethical laxity. When he ventures into the city a second time he finds a plague-ridden scene of fear and desolation. It is apparent that Brown is here working within the sentimental pattern of virtuous country and evil city, modifying the usual heroine's persecution by an evil seducer to his young hero's assault by disease and his inadvertant participation in moral corruption.

That Brown avoids the insipidities of the agrarian duality may be attributed largely to his opening the novel with his young innocent already in the plague-stricken city so that the reader is spared long stretches of bucolic tranquility. In addition, the conventionality of the scheme is relieved by a degree of corruption and conflict in the rural world and by the wryness of Mervyn's success story. It may be doubted whether Brown intended to submit his hero's virtue to question, and the degree of Mervyn's innocence or moral pollution has occasioned considerable critical debate.⁷ Whether intentionally or inadvertantly, however, Brown reveals in his young hero a self-serving, meddling smugness and ability to turn every event to his own advantage, all masquerading as virtue in seeming crusades against dishonesty and depravity in the city. There is a fine even if unintentional irony in Mervyn's recovery from his near-fatal brush with disease but not from the moral pollution it represents.⁸ In Ormond, Constantia's contracting the plague serves not as an initiation but only as an opportunity to display her constancy in adversity.

More devastating than the moral corruption of the city, even while it epitomizes the vast moral blight, is the primitive force of disease to which all are subject, prefigured in Mr. Dudley's helplessness against cataract. When Constantia must go into the "very midst of the disease" to pay her rent, she seems to be vulnerably advancing into "the jaws of the pest."⁹ Brown uses his plague scenes for effects of horror, physical revulsion, and loss of rational stability--all characteristic gothic effects. Both Constantia and Mervyn find early rumors of the plague "wild and uncouth," "incredible" (Ormond, 33-34), or "unworthy to be believed."¹⁰ Mervyn neither rejects these rumors out of hand nor tries to put them out of his mind, but "ardently" "conjure[s] up terrific images, and . . . personate[s] the witnesses and sufferers of this calamity" (131). In the typical gothic thirst to know the fullness of horror, he pursues his explorations through scenes of desolation, at once eager and revolted: "I shuddered, while I longed to know the truth" (157).

In both cases, the evils of improbable rumor are fully substantiated in experience. The streets have a sinister unnatural quiet (a detail that appears in all accounts of the yellow fever plague). Mervyn is himself nearly carried off for dead, and he learns the truth of rumored abandonments and the inhuman awfulness of the contagious hospital. In rapid succession he encounters one man who appears a walking corpse and another whom he had thought dead, and sleeps on a bed marked with the filth of sickness. In Ormond,

people in the streets show "symptoms of terror" (34), and as the disease spreads it wreaks first "devastation and confusion" and finally a complete suspension of economic activity. Just as the crimes of Ormond gain in horror from juxtaposition with his exaggerated devotion to logical discourse, the horrors of the plague are intensified as it strikes down that social activity most firmly based on assumed stability.

Together with the sinister contagion, the fluidity and uncertainty of urban life as it appears in both novels represent the power of inexplicable chance and all that lies beyond human understanding or control. Plot in both is a series of unexpected reversals and coincidences. Reliance on improbabilities is, of course, characteristic of crude or trite fiction. It is Brown's insistence in piling up coincidences and oddities, abrupt changes in fortune, and disorientation within the city streets that suggests intent to question rational control of events through presentation of urban life.

Constantia's "knowledge of the vicissitudes to which human life is subject" has taught her only to hope for "some fortunate though unforeseen event" (29). But in every case except her friend's sudden arrival from Europe, "unforeseen event" proves to be fresh revelation of evil. Repeatedly the assaults of adversity bear not only on Constantia's fortunes but on her sanity as well, as she is "assailed by panic or foreboding" (36) or falls into "frenzy" (208).

Yet throughout these trials she speaks in the most severely (at times ludicrously) rational terms, cultivates such opportunities for learning as the city's booksellers, and engages in debate with Ormond. Brown demonstrates both devotion to reason and a sense of the incursion of unreason. But processes of reason are helpless as empirical evidence is shown to be unreliable.¹¹ From Ormond's devious unscrupulousness to the Dudleys' assumed name, appearances are false. Most emphatically the theme of deceptive appearances is applied to the city itself, a "town famous for the salubrity of its airs" nevertheless brought low by a "malignant" "pest (33-34), at its worst where "air [is] pent up within unwholesome limits" (55). In Arthur Mervyn, not only the numerous coincidences, deceptive appearances, oddities, and surprising shifts of fortune, but also the chaotic structure or virtual absence of structure through both volumes bears on the thematic concern with irrationality. Structure as well as other aspects of the work moves toward confusion or absence of predictable sequence, particularly time sequence.

Brown's Ormond and Arthur Mervyn are thus remarkable both as early examples of a well-realized realistic treatment of setting and as gothic novels which use urban setting rather than secluded castles to produce effects of horror and to question the pre-eminence of reason.

Of George Lippard's numerous works I would like to examine three--The Empire City, The Nazarene, and The Quaker

City; or, The Monks of Monk Hall. It is chiefly through Fiedler's notice of the latter that Lippard has been known in recent years. Like Brown, whom he admired, Lippard combines horror with social concern. All of these books exhibit emphatic protest against urban poverty. Indeed, The Nazarene is a virtual tract against economic oppression (as well as religious enmity and "Fraud, which has crawled up into high places at Washington," as Lippard announces in a preface). Lippard states his social message in such heavy-handed emotive terms as the following peroration on factory workers:

You may be sure, that for one mile round this slave-house, the very air is tainted with misery. You may be sure, that starvation crouches on its nest of straw in these dim alleys, while in yonder darkened court Nakedness shivers under its coverlid of rags. You may stake your life, that poison shops abound in this slave quarter of the Quaker City, where drugs are sold to little children. . . .¹²

The Empire City also opens with a prefatory announcement of a sort of muckraking purpose, pointing specifically to the contrast of rich and poor.

Because Lippard has a flair for dramatic incident, if not for structure, such denunciations of poverty and other evils become more alive than those of the usual humanitarian novelist. His books abound to excess in such telling incidents as the hero's discovery, in The Nazarene, that a young girl working in the "slave-house" mill earns only 12¢ a day. Similar incidents conveying both shock effect and reforming intent include (in The Nazarene) a hor-

rofic initiation by "loathsome rites," including the stabbing of a beautiful seductive woman, into a secret order surely intended to represent the Masonic order; the seduction (in The Empire City) of a young girl by a minister who offers consoling advice to her father; and the subterranean drunken revels (in The Quaker City) of religious and professional leaders. It is significant that this weird hell of corruption lies beneath tenements in a decayed part of town. But Lippard's vision of corruption in the cities implies no vision of rural innocence, as his Blanche of Brandywine demonstrates. The difference is that in the rural scene horrific events are intrusive; in his cities they are the norm.

More fully than Brown or Poe, Lippard creates an atmosphere of mystery and physical terror in the urban setting itself, even as it is conceived as a real place. Particularly is this true in The Quaker City. The maze image is insistent as the streets become an "intricate maze" or a "tangled labyrinth of avenues."¹³ In the shifting events of The Nazarene, the chief villain moves through dark streets further obscured by a "thick mist which arose from the dark pavements" (62). Monk Hall, the chief locus of mystery in The Quaker City, is approached by tortuous narrow ways between small tumble-down houses. Deep shadows hang about it. The hall is a "singular structure" (41); above it "numerous chimneys with their fantastic shapes rose grimly in the moonlight, like a strange band of goblin sentinels" (43).

And it has in fact a goblin sentinel, nicknamed Devil Bug, whose monstrously misshapen form fitly embodies compulsive evil and who is particularly linked to devils or Satanism by repeated images of his face alternately or in parts red-dened by fire and lost in darkness.¹⁴ The weirdness of the hall places it among the sinister castles of gothic tradition, as its physical improbability (no one, for instance, knows where its foundations rest, and even though it is located within the city and is very large it can be found only by the initiate) makes it more image than literal setting.

Repeatedly atmospheric passages move beyond simple terror of place to explore the abnormal or bizarre or to suggest apocalypse. Subterranean vaults and chambers in all three of these works and insistent images of chasms, both literal and figurative, in The Quaker City are used to suggest the instability of human life and the festering presence of secret guilt. Monk Hall itself follows the common literary use of a structure to represent mind, as it extends from some uncertain depth below ground to many levels above, all related in varying ways to crime and vice. A single switch can be tripped to drop a man through trap doors from several stories up to several depths below. It is in the buried depths that groups of the outwardly respectable but dissolute gather in uninhibited indulgence of baseness, and even deeper that bones of uncounted corpses lie in heaps. The psychological implications of the structure

are inescapable.

Sequences of nightmare, delusion, and vision reach toward both horrific distortion of reality and at times apocalyptic revelation of truth. A sequence that clearly falls in the first category is a scene in a slum alley in The Nazarene called "The Devil's Long Lane." The alley holds "a swarm of uncouth shapes--not the forms of wild beasts for they were one mass of rags and sores, pollution and disease" and children "maddened with draughts of fiery poison" (138). This emotionally charged but relatively realistic view of social horror expands to constitute an intolerable universe: "these shapes of misery wound along the dark alley, mingling together, until looking along the prospect of wretchedness you beheld nothing but a far spreading vista of rags and sores, blindness and misery, lameness, disease, starvation and crime" (139). The vision of horror cannot be taken as a realistic critical appraisal but an indication of extreme emotional response to a social fact.

A vision sequence in The Quaker City serves both explosion of reason and apocalyptic revelation. One Lorrimer, suffering a fit of madness in remorse for having seduced a fifteen-year-old, envisions himself on a great river before "a mighty city" when in the sunset city, river, and sky appear turned "to blood, red and ghastly blood" (127). In an even more nightmarish sequence, a dream dreamed by a monster, Devil Bug sees an elaborate vision of "The Last Day of the Quaker City" (215). Here are collected Lippard's preoccupation

with economic injustice sharpened by the thirst of the poor for "vengeance"; the destruction of representative government as Independence Hall is torn down to make way for a palace; the dead walking the streets unseen; and an angel writing in flame on clouds over the city "WO UNTO SODOM" (319). The city falls because "the curse of the poor man is upon it" (320). Lippard insistently fuses the exposé with gothic trappings as, in Devil Bug's vision,

The guiltless and the innocent pine in the dungeon,
while the unholy judge feasts upon the price of bribery
and shame. The corpse of the innocent swings upon the
gibbet, and the worms crawl over its brow, while the
Murderer rides in his chariot (320).

At the end of the book, in an apocalypse which the reader scarcely knows how to accept, "Death-Angels," "forms of mist and shadow," hover over the city (403). This concluding vision seems to have gone beyond all possibility of suspended-disbelief credibility, but the ending of The Nazarene is at least as farfetched, leaping from mid-nineteenth-century Philadelphia to A. D. 1500 in plague-beset Florence, thence to A. D. 30 in Palestine. In both cases, the telescoping of time and the drawing in of incidents that defy all cause-and-effect probability convey Lippard's questioning of temporal continuity and logical order.

More certainly than in Brown's novels, functional form contributes to the sense of a maddened and maddening world, though at times one is uncertain whether it is irrationality in the fictive world or Lippard's own emotional extremism that is revealed. Particularly is this true when

he harangues his readers with shrill authorial intrusions. Insistent discontinuities in plot, however, give formal support to Lippard's anti-rational tone. New chapters regularly begin with a new set of characters having no apparent relation to anything that has gone before. Events circle and swirl through the novels in a chaos of improbability. The author employs repeated and multi-stage flashbacks that cumulatively assault the reader's sense of chronology, just as the winding streets and abrupt rapid shifts in location assault his spatial orientation. In rapid succession in one section of The Nazarene, for instance, Lippard regresses in several one or two-hour stages; crowds together numerous events and scenes having little apparent connection; shows appalling crowds of the dissolute in subterranean chambers; and shifts to a dying prostitute's vision of heaven. The result is a sense of pervasive confusing disorder, a dissolution both of reason itself and of that great embodiment of order and modernity, the city. But despite its thematic function, this chaotic form simply confuses the reader without giving him the sense of enriched understanding of complexity that one derives, say, from Faulkner's complicated forms, and it can only be considered a defect.

Lippard's assault on modernity and progress and his strong sense of the threat to society from blood guilt, sin, and social injustice is emphatically conveyed by an incident in The Empire City. A train (itself fitting symbol of the modern world and linear progression through time and a

frequent surrogate for the city) bound from Trenton to the "Empire City" carries a lurid microcosm of American society in 1844--a newly-released convict, a minister-seducer, a would-be suicide, a fugitive slave hunter, a southern planter, his brother who has a tinge of Negro blood, his young sister being bought for pleasure by a famous Congressman, a businessman spiriting away an extorted \$50,000, and others. The train is first viewed coming through the dark toward a vantage point in a cold, bleak landscape. It is imaged as a meteor which "flings a blood-red light over the earth as it comes," then as a "monster," a "steam-devil" to which the author specifically assigns the function of representing the nineteenth century. But waiting in the dark is a young man who seems himself to have annihilated time, space, and possibility, as he has been thrown from the racing train miles back and apparently run over. Nevertheless, he is there as it approaches, and he deliberately derails the train, laughing as it crashes into a chasm.

One could scarcely express a more absolute rejection of the modern industrial world. It is probably unfortunate for the national literature that the imagination which could create such disturbing and suggestive incidents as this ran so to excess, personal crusades, and structural chaos that not only are his books virtually unreadable but the interesting fragments in them remain undeveloped.

The striving for effects and the sense of the irrational that sometimes characterize the work of Brown and

Lippard are dominant with Poe. His cities are devices for the creation of atmospheric effects and the exploration of abnormal psychological states. They are not objects for analysis in their own right. Poe locates reality in the mind or the imagination rather than in observed circumstances. In both his poetry and his fiction the impulse is toward escape from physical life. Daniel Hoffman calls the urge to escape physical existence the central "submerged allegory" unifying all Poe's work.¹⁵ In his aesthetic theories, the art work is a fully self-contained construct on which objective reality should impinge as little as possible. As his entire career makes apparent, the subjective world of art was for Poe more valuable than the antagonistic world of editors and monetary needs in which he had to function.

The implication for treatment of setting is chiefly that it is not presented in realistic, photographic fashion. Only in a group of newspaper pieces called Doings of Gotham does Poe offer straightforward comments on the real New York, concerning himself with problems such as noise and high rent.¹⁶ He sets his fictions in imagined places, urban or rural, which have only minimal reference to actual geographic place. Instead, his settings are pictorial representations of emotional states. Edward Davidson has commented in this connection,

. . . abstractions and ideas become translated into tableaux, a set of stylized and formalized pictures which enact the drama. . . . he sought to investigate

and to present conditions of mental awareness . . . by means of a series of topographical or apocalyptic visions which . . . would transcend the world of the commonplace and reach toward the infinite and the eternal.¹⁷

In landscape idyls such as "The Domain of Arnheim," setting represents wish-fulfillment as Poe projects into fictional statement his own tormented need to find an insulated blissful refuge. The Edenic enwombment which he envisions topographically lies beyond even the degree of reality possessed by the Eden of religious myth; it is a private "Aidenn." His urban scenes are equally cut off from the general reality. They are objectifications of intense private horror affording satisfaction only in withdrawal to encapsulated refuges. To the extent that he often does depict urban horror and rural idyl, Poe can be said to participate in the conventional presumptions of evil city and virtuous country. But the positive or negative qualities are atmospheric, not moral, and have no function as evaluative comments on society.

The atmospheric effects Poe particularly valued were weirdness and terror. Indeed, passages in his review of Hawthorne's Twice-Told Tales indicate that he used the term "effects" to mean specifically the horrific or the emotionally extreme. He bases a statement that Hawthorne's sketches made "no attempt at effect" on their being characterized by "repose." Consigning to poetry the treatment of "Beauty," he continues,

Not so with terror, or passion, or horror, or a multitude of such other points. And here it will be seen how full of prejudice are the usual animadversions against those tales of effect, many fine examples of which were found in the earlier numbers of Blackwood.

Effects of weirdness and terror are, of course, prevalent in Poe's poetry as well as tales, and such effects are by no means restricted to actions having a particular kind of setting. He is as happy with the "misty mid region of Weir" of "ulalume" or the "deep seclusion" of a "castellated abbe[y]" or "The Masque of the Red Death" as he is with the dead "City in the Sea" or the "large, old, decaying city near the Rhine" of "Ligeia." Nevertheless, his cities are generally places of sinister shadows, twisting passages, and evil vaults where deeds of violence and obsession are enacted. It is their sinister atmosphere, not any convincingness as recognizable depictions, that is important.

Specific qualities of the real city made it a fitting choice for Poe's working-up of effects. Its buildings offered innumerable chambers and cellars as lurking places. Its streets, then typically narrower and darker than now, wound in twisting curves or intersected each other at look-alike corners lined with monotonous structures so that the traveler could easily lose himself. Its crowds of strangers might remind the solitary individual of his aloneness. Furthermore, the poverty, dirt, and crime of New York and Philadelphia, both of which Poe knew well, made them suitable theatres for fear and disgust, while the eccentricities statistically inevitable among a great number of people

afforded Poe a believable basis for the depiction of oddities in his grotesque tales.

More important is the city's status as symbol of modern civilization and hence of progress and rational organization of human affairs. It is a meaning implicit in the urban scene which can readily be stressed by introducing policemen or other officials representing social order. Poe does this, for instance, in "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" and "The Purloined Letter." Both of these stories, as well as "The Mystery of Marie Roget," elevate the city as an emblem of rational order both in this social sense and as a fit residence of superior minds. The narrator and Dupin are devoted urbanites despite their withdrawal into the seclusion of their apartment.

But Poe is both rationalist and anti-rationalist. He at once exalts reason and, as Charles Feidelson writes, takes as his "primary aim . . . the destruction of reason, and . . . takes pleasure in the very horror of the task."¹⁸ All of the ratiocinative tales show the subversion of reason even as they exalt the reasoning process. All three build sinister and lurid effects through darkness, threat, and violence. In "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" the narrator's and Dupin's urbanity turns toward a ruinous "time-eaten and grotesque mansion, long deserted through superstitions" and toward late walks in which they seek out an "infinity of mental excitement" in the "wild lights and shadows of the populous city" (144). In "The Purloined

Letter," Dupin insists on conversing with the police commissioner in darkness, and the police conduct their searches at night. It is precisely these systematic investigations that most undermine one's confidence in rationality itself and hence in the city as emblem of rational order. That so astoundingly thorough a search as the police make of the minister's apartment, ~~spending a whole week~~ examining each room and then repeating the process, could fail to discover its object suggests the possibility of an incalculable number of mysteries, all of them as sinister as the letter, investing a whole city of such apartments.

Chiefly, it is the murders themselves that demonstrate the threat to social order by extremes of unreason. The safety of its ordinary inhabitants and the functioning of the city's officialdom are set at naught by passion (the sailor murderer of Marie) and unreasoning bestiality (the ourang-outang).¹⁹ But the Paris of "Marie Roget" is infested with "desperate adventurers," and in discussing her murder the narrator coolly alludes to the "great frequency, in large cities, of such atrocities" (171-2). This coolness on the part of both the narrator and Dupin is itself a sinister refinement of the theme of isolation within the large city. When the police commissioner first comes seeking aid in the Roget murder, the two have been withdrawn in their apartment with no communication with the rest of the city for over a month. Dupin's detachment in discussing without the least emotion details of pain and bodily

decay in drownings seems quite dehumanized; it conveys an implicit contempt for ordinary human life in its sensing physicality.

Not only rational order in society but reason itself is threatened by irrational forces. The ostentatiously reasonable narrators are never adequate to the mysteries they confront, and Dupin himself succeeds as much through poetic imagination as through analysis.²⁰ In this construct, the ourang-outang may be seen as an atavistic projection from the subconscious, and the inert spaces and structures of the city become allegorical loci of mental levels. Particularly do Poe's frequent subterranean passages or vaults come to represent the subconscious seething with obsessive violent urges and buried sense of guilt. D. H. Lawrence recognized this symbolic function of setting in calling Poe "an adventurer into vaults and cellars and horrible underground passages of the human soul."²¹ Accordingly, in "The Black Cat" both the narrator's murder of his wife and his burial of her corpse occur in a dark cellar. In the subterranean vengeance of "The Cask of Amontillado" Montresor's absolute logical clarity of planning and organization is given over to the service of an irrational compulsion.

Place functions analogously to reason: Poe elevates it to a striking eminence in his work while destroying its objective significance. Generally he is most fully descriptive when he is most divorced from actuality; he creates through description a sense of place wholly alternative

to the empirical world, so that the more real the created place becomes for the reader the further he is led from real place. The process is most obvious in "A Tale of the Ragged Mountains." Through a reversal of metempsychosis one Bedloe relives his own death as Oldeb, who had led a futile sally into the mob during an insurrection in Benares, India, a full generation before. Urban scenes in the story, then, occur in a totally unreal realm, a vision. Yet sense of urban populace "crowding through every avenue" (683) and of the physicality of Bedloe/Oldeb's becoming "bewildered and entangled among the narrow streets of tall, overhanging houses, into the recesses of which the sun had never been able to shine" (684) are more vivid here than in any other work of Poe's. The visionary city becomes more real than the actual setting of the story, thus compounding the real and the unreal and questioning the absoluteness of time and matter.

Both Poe's grotesque tales and his arabesques produce this effectual rejection of the empirical realm of physical experience in favor of a private reality. The two techniques are basically dissimilar despite the overlapping that creates occasional difficulty in distinguishing between them in specific instances. The grotesques function through exaggeration of diversity and discordance, recombining exaggerated elements from the real world in a weird jumble having just enough similarity to experience

to constitute recognizable departure from it. The arabesques function through reduction of diversity or abstraction from it, producing a strange unity or order so perfect as to deny the validity of empirical order. Daniel Hoffman, who has used the distinction to classify all Poe's fiction except the ratiocinative tales, defines the grotesque as a satire having effects related to "the depiction of monsters"; an arabesque is "a prose equivalent of a poem," having "no human form" but "intricate patterns of abstraction" in a "consistency."²² Despite their differences as techniques, both modes deny the primacy of the actual.

An interesting example of the grotesque tale of urban setting is "King Pest," a comic treatment of the image of the plague-ridden city which generally serves somber purposes.²³ Poe establishes a generalized and highly atmospheric sense of place peopled by personifications of abstract states:

The city was in a great measure depopulated--and in those horrible regions, in the vicinity of the Thames, where, amid the dark, narrow, and filthy lanes and alleys, the Demon of Disease was supposed to have had his nativity, Awe, Terror, and Superstition were alone to be found stalking abroad (721).

Into a barricaded district under Pest-ban run two drunken sailors who are "soon bewildered in its noisome and intricate recesses" (722). They push their way through scenes of the greatest desolation--fallen houses, broken-up pavement, "fetid and poisonous smells," and corpses. Entrance into the plague district had been forbidden on pain of death.

But the two sailors "would have reeled . . . undauntedly into the very jaws of Death" to avoid paying for their drinks, and they go shouting to "the stronghold of the pestilence" (723). Hearing "fiendish shrieks" from a cellar under the undertaker's shop, they find there six bizarre drinking companions arrayed in and equipped with various items of the paraphernalia of death, all of them having some absurdly exaggerated physical feature. The chief of these, King Pest, announces their purpose as the spreading of the domain of death, but one of the sailors challenges King Pest's identity and in the melee that follows the King and three of his court are themselves drowned or otherwise killed as a single hogshead of ale incredibly floods the entire room. At the end, the two sailors go dashing off toward an alehouse with the two horrid females of the court in tow. What the breezy good humor of the ending disguises is that for all its drunken oddity the experience has been a journey to hell (a subterranean hell within the city) and that the sailors' indomitable return from the quarantined district will surely spread the contagion. The two sailors have wedded death in the persons of Queen Pest, garbed in a shroud, and Arch Duchess Ana-Pest, wrapped in a winding-sheet. They are, after all, spreading the dominion of Death, assaulting the very existence of the city to which they return "under easy sail."

In his arabesques Poe characteristically produces cities having a quality of artificial arrangement and a

separation from any surrounding real world, as well as a general atmosphere of gloom or strangeness. Often his cities seem unnaturally devoid of inhabitants. For instance, the action of "The Cask of Amontillado" occurs during the "supreme madness" of carnival (274), yet one senses no crowds of revellers. After a typically abstract opening, the sole two figures of the tale encounter one another in seemingly empty streets, the festive city having become an empty stage for the acting out of obsession. The Venice of "The Assignment" is also starkly vacant, and only the details which create a sense of mystery--the depth of the canals, the shadowy ornate facades of buildings, the darkness--are stressed. The European city, inherently conveying great age and a tradition of intrigue, is specified but scarcely particularized. It is not a place of human density, but an art-work, an arabesque frieze created by the mind of the unnamed eccentric as the suitable backdrop for his final bizarre effect. Accordingly, despite its verbal elaborateness, Poe's opening description of Venice stresses only surfaces ("blank mirror of marble," p. 294), shapes, and such aspects of decor as light and shadow. The Marchesa, Mentoni, and the nameless hero stand motionless and are set in frames or niches like statues. The artificial quality is derived from a reductive method which recognizes only decor, not the depth of bodied life.

"The Assignment" may be taken to epitomize the arabesque, as a human situation so emotionally charged

as to lead to suicide takes on the quality of artifice. The planned ordering and synchronizing of the suicides constitutes that strangeness of extreme rational unity which characterizes the arabesques. The first three paragraphs of the story establish this romantic, extra-ordinary quality of the city. In the first, Venice is "that city of dim visions" surrounded by depths, laced with mysteries, removed from common cares (an "Elysium"). It is an urban Aldenn, a non-place "Out of SPACE--out of TIME" (968), yet a dream-place blighted with "a deep and bitter meaning." The second paragraph becomes more specific, identifying the place at which action begins as the Bridge of Sighs and the precise time as "deep midnight." It is a setting appropriate to the presence of Death, suggested also by the narrator's gondola, a "huge and sable-feathered condor" (293). Within this evocative scene "stalked" the "Genius of Romance." The third paragraph stresses darkness and a sense of desertion, and with the irruption of action we find the clashing extremes--light flashing into darkness, the shriek breaking silence--with which Poe regularly images extreme emotional states.

At the outset, then, Venice is presented as a withdrawal from the familiar and from modern time. The latter two-thirds of the story enact a further withdrawal into the baroque eccentricity of the nameless hero's apartment in a "huge structur[e] of gloomy yet fantastic pomp" (296). Retreat into an enclosed refuge, an enclave of the solitary

ego within or under the city, is a recurrent pattern in Poe's tales. The unearthly secluded valleys of the landscape idyls (more numerous than the tales with urban settings) fulfill the same function. In both cases the purpose is withdrawal from the physical world of social reality and present time. The apartment of "The Assignation," superficially grotesque, produces a fully arabesque effect in its unvaried splendor. It has a weird height of opulent decor which, like the hero's "habit of intense and continual thought," denies the usual human needs for emotional stability and repose. Similarly, the numerous blazing lamps assert a denial of natural light. The hero specifically links these "arabesque censers" burning in disregard of need with his own "spirit writhing in fire" which is "departing" for a "land of real dreams" (302). That departure is chronicled in the brief closing third of the story, the ultimate withdrawal of symmetrical suicide. Structurally, then, "The Assignation" is like nesting boxes, each constituting a narrowing denial of the world lying outside itself.

Poe's most intensive use of the urban scene is "The Man of the Crowd," distinctive among his works because of its convincing while highly atmospheric literal surface. Yet it is precisely because the literal surface is well established that the meaningless action so completely challenges the modern world of urban man. Baudelaire called this story "pure fantasy, modeled on nature and realistically

presented."²⁴ Similarly, the paradigmatic situation in all Poe's work has been called a "split between man and the objective world."²⁵ Such a split is recorded in the old man who rushes compulsively from one knot of human congestion to another and in the narrator who rushes after him. Just as the old man can never satisfactorily relate himself to his human environment, the narrator remains trapped in his apartness from the crowd he has been observing and from the old man (seemingly his double) whom he would understand. The title is in a sense ironic: the old man has no secure sense of identity apart from the crowd, but he never really finds a place as one of the crowd. He remains effectually estranged from his world. The story, then, is concerned with the two themes most characteristic of modern urban fiction: alienation and, to the extent that it is a "double" story, dissociation.

Initially the urban scene is presented as a realistic object of observation and analysis. The narrator's observation of the old man proceeds from a close observation of the crowd as a collection of intelligible types, objects for the manipulation of the observing mind. We sense the modern metropolis in the "noisy and inordinate vivacity which jarred discordantly upon the ear, and gave an aching sensation to the eye" (478). The course of the old man's flight from crowd to crowd leads the narrator through areas reflecting a wide range of social classes. Yet the old

man remains a mystery. He is an embodiment of human oddity lurking beneath the easily pigeonholed exterior.

That this is so, that we are here dealing with an instance of the perverse imp of mankind, is suggested by the modulation to extremes as the narrator's attention becomes focused on the old man. Night has "deepened" and gas-lamps cast over all a "fitful and garish lustre" (478), producing the discordant contrast of light and dark ("wild effects of the light," p. 478) suited to the extreme emotional state. The imagery of light and shadow is applied to the old man himself: his "spirits . . . flickered up, as a lamp which is near its death-hour" (481). The suggestion is that the old man's compulsive need and the setting in which he acts it out are one. So, from the beginning of the story, the urban scene is viewed in terms of its crowds and emptinesses, the ebbing and flowing of the urban populace, which constitutes the fixation of the old man. His compulsive acts, reflected in the narrator's, follow no intelligible scheme of motivation. He seeks crowds but shudders at a human touch; the narrator follows in the rain despite "the lurking of an old fever in my system rendering the moisture somewhat too dangerously pleasant" (479). Both are dominated by the perverse. Similarly, the violent lights and shadows suggest no conventional scheme of intellectual enlightenment and ignorance or virtue and vice; indeed, the last "blaze of light" is a "templ[e] of Intemperance--one of the palaces of the fiend, Gin" (481). Despite

its surface realism, the urban setting is also a projected image of the controlling mental oddity.

Poe represents the culmination of a tendency only partially apparent in the work of Brown and Lippard, the coloring of urban setting by extreme emotional states so as to create gothic effects of terror and thematic exploration of mental states lying beneath conscious reason. Poe uses urban setting both as an objective reality challenged by bizarre actions and as a city of the mind, a projection of tormented consciousness. In his more realistic cities, he emphasizes thoroughfares, the feature of the urban scene best representing process by their linear directness. But by insisting on labyrinthine twisting and darkness in his streets, he denies linear progression and hence by implication temporal progression. Thus he turns to distinctive thematic purpose the common maze image.

Poe similarly utilizes the sentimental and sensational stereotype of the evil city for his own aesthetic and psychological purposes. He does not bring to the city Brown's or Lippard's heightened awareness of moral corruption and their reforming purpose, but shifts the import of the evil city from a moralistic meaning to the projection of emotional or mental states. The chief significance of Poe's use of urban settings is not any depiction or interpretation of observed conditions but his escape from the observed to a private reality. In both his grotesque and

arabesque modes, Poe displaces reality from the physical and temporal realm to the imagination, the placeless and timeless world of a "City in the Sea."

NOTES

¹E.g., David Lee Clark's phrase "powerful realism" in his Charles Brockden Brown: Pioneer Voice of America (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1952), p. 179; also R. W. B. Lewis, The American Adam (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1955), p. 97. In an introduction to a 1937 edition of Ormond, Ernest Marchand commented that Brown's "realism bore good fruit in the descriptions . . . of the terror and death worked by yellow fever in Arthur Mervyn and Ormond" but nevertheless complained that he "applies his local color with a niggard brush." Ormond; or, The Secret Witness, ed., with Introduction, Chronology and Bibliography by Ernest Marchand (1937; rpt. New York and London: Hafner Publishing Company, 1962), pp. xviii, xxxvii.

²David Lee Clark pronounces the novelist to have "little or no kinship" with the Gothic romance (Charles Brockden Brown, p. 19). Probably the best capsule assessment of this problematic relation is made by Warner Berthoff in his Introduction to Arthur Mervyn (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1962), p. x: "Brown readily exploited the Gothic conventions of the English and German fiction of his day, but for his own ends."

³Berthoff, "Introduction"; Ringe, Charles Brockden Brown (New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1966). Cf. Harry Levin's moderating position in The Power of Blackness (New York: Random House Vintage Books, 1958), p. 21: ". . . he was completely committed to the postulates of the Enlightenment; and light itself is an almost compulsive source for his imagery. Ironically but not illogically, the consequence is an intensification of shadow."

⁴Love and Death in the American Novel, Revised Edition (New York: Dell Publishing Co., Inc., 1966), p. 148.

⁵The quotation is from Fiedler, p. 148. Compare the symbolization of unreason in Ormond and Mervyn with the disorder of the rationalist's assumed sensationalist psychology in Wieland as discussed by Ringe, pp. 31-39.

⁶See Lewis, The American Adam, pp. 92-98; Berthoff, "Introduction," p. xv; Berthoff, "Adventures of the Young Man: An Approach to Charles Brockden Brown," American Quarterly, 9 (1957), 421-34; Kenneth Bernard, "Arthur Mervyn: The Ordeal of Innocence," Texas Studies in Literature and Language, 6 (1965), 441-59.

⁷Harry R. Warfel, for instance, speaks of Mervyn's "disinterested honesty" and reads the story as "primarily

that of an ardent youth seeking to make his way honestly in a corrupt world." Charles Brockden Brown: American Gothic Novelist (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1949), pp. 143-44. Bernard ("Arthur Mervyn: The Ordeal of Innocence," p. 448) agrees that Mervyn has "stedfast virtue" and attributes doubts of his innocence to the fact that the characterization is overdone and hence irritating. Berthoff, conceding the overt signs of Mervyn's virtue, finds that the "essential comedy of his success is that the unwholesome world he moves through . . . has for the first time been overcome--by a corresponding unwholesomeness of character" ("Adventures of the Young Man," p. 433).

⁸ Compare Berthoff's association of the disease with moral decay: The plague scenes "define the city morally. It is a place of contagion where all decencies are corrupted and men perish in the public ways, sickened by the tainted atmosphere and left to die by their own families. But what these scenes reveal only corroborates the grim image of metropolitan existence we get elsewhere. Cutthroat financial intrigues occupy much of Arthur Mervyn. . . . A long generation before Poe and Dickens, Brown had captured the moral chaos of the modern city for imaginative literature" (Introduction to Arthur Mervyn, p. xv).

⁹ Ormond; or, The Secret Witness, Vol. VI of Charles Brockden Brown's Novels (Philadelphia: David McKay, Publisher, 1887), p. 39.

¹⁰ Arthur Mervyn; or, Memoirs of the Year 1793, Vol. II of Charles Brockden Brown's Novels, p. 130.

¹¹ Compare Ringe's interpretation of both Ormond and Wieland.

¹² Lippard, The Nazarene; or, The Last of the Washingtons (Philadelphia: G. Lippard & Co., Publishers, 1846; Wright, I, 1686), p. 167.

¹³ Lippard, The Quaker City; or, The Monks of Monk Hall (Philadelphia: G. B. Zeiber and Co., 1844; Wright, I, 1689), p. 43.

¹⁴ The weird lighting of Devil Bug's face resembles the coloring of the Satan-figure's face in Hawthorne's "My Kinsman, Major Molineux," first published in 1832. Also resembling Hawthorne is Lippard's frequent use of the tableau or static arrangement of characters with extended meditations on the grouping.

¹⁵Hoffman states, "His protagonists are all attempting to get out of the clotted condition of their own materiality, to cross the barrier between the perceptible sensual world and that which lies beyond it." Daniel J. Hoffman, Poe Poe Poe Poe Poe Poe Poe Poe (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1972), p. 206.

¹⁶Doings of Gotham, Collected by Jacob E. Spannuth, Introduction and Comments by Thomas O. Mabbott (Pottsville, Pa.: Jacob E. Spannuth, Publisher, 1929), pp. 59, 26.

¹⁷Edward H. Davidson, Poe: A Critical Study (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1957), pp. 80, 83. Compare Hoffman's use of the term "tableaux" in his Poe, p. 208: "Such arts decorative are essentially static, devoid (usually) of human content, and constitute expressions by a shaping aesthetic sense of its chosen materials. The reasons may readily be inferred why Poe's fictions so often resemble tableaux vivants, his tableaux vivants so readily becoming tableaux morts."

¹⁸Symbolism and American Literature (Chicago and London: The Chicago University Press, 1957), pp. 80, 83.

¹⁹Dupin's solution to the crime in the Rue Morgue "subjects the orderly routine of the city to the purposeless malignity of untamed nature." Harry Levin, The Power of Blackness, p. 141.

²⁰Daniel Hoffman comments on Dupin's intuitive or extra-rational acumen in his Poe. Joel Porte likens the "eminently rational narrator" whose reason is "but a whistling in the dark" to Poe's "insistence on the supremacy of technique" which ignores the compulsiveness of themes. He concludes, "The rational narrator, a device which Poe uses ostensibly to convince us that reason is man's 'natural state,' ends up by making up suspect precisely the opposite." The Romance in America (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1969), p. 60.

²¹Studies in Classic American Literature (1923; rpt. New York: The Viking Press, 1968), p. 81.

²²Hoffman, Poe, pp. 207-08.

²³"King Pest" is thus a grotesque counterpart of Poe's purest arabesque, "The Masque of the Red Death." As numerous commentators have pointed out, many of the tales can be thus paired.

²⁴Baudelaire on Poe, translated and edited by Lois and Francis E. Hyslop, Jr. (Carrollton, Pa.: Bald Eagle

Press, 1952), p. 71.

²⁵Charles O'Donnell, "From Earth to Ether: Poe's Flight into Space," PMLA, 77 (1962), 91.

CHAPTER IV

THE CITY EVALUATED: COOPER AND OTHERS

Fenimore Cooper was the foremost writer of the problem novel in America before the Civil War, but he was not the first to present a realistic, critical account of urban life. As A. N. Kaul points out, the mid-nineteenth-century American novel can be distinguished from the contemporary British novel by its concern with "radical substitutes" for society rather than reform.¹ Nevertheless, a minority strain of fiction having a general purpose of social evaluation, characterized (ostensibly at least) by analytic tone, realistic treatment of setting, and rational goals for reform or renewal, existed from the beginning. The hearty sanity of works such as Brackenridge's Modern Chivalry and Cooper's Home As Found affords bracing relief from the oppressiveness of sentimental novels. Such works also demonstrate a growing ability to treat social issues without falling into stereotypes.

Several failings of urban society are depicted in early novels of social criticism. Mainly these works reveal a sense that urbanites were violating an ethic of simple living, as writers repeatedly point to preoccupation with money and commerce, material indulgence, faddishness, and pretension--social flaws frequently cited also in sentimental rejections of the city. In Modern Chivalry, Brackenridge directs his caustic comedy at Philadelphia politicians,

"fat swabs, that guzzle wine, and smoke segars" whose only qualification for office is that they "had all stock in the funds, and lived in large brick buildings; and some of them entertained fifty people at a time, and eat and drank abundantly."² Brackenridge finds private citizens equally guilty of ostentation and unmanliness. James Kirke Paulding also turns to comedy his criticisms of flippancy, faddishness, pretension, and money-consciousness among prosperous urbanites in Chronicles of the City of Gotham,³ in which his tone, unlike Brackenridge's, is one of lighthearted spoofing. In an anonymous work titled The Hermit in America on a Visit to Philadelphia (1819) the city is scored for many of the faults which Cooper would shortly be pointing out and which Dickens would complain of in the New York of Martin Chuzzlewit. The narrator finds Philadelphia drawing room society pretentious, crowded and in general unpolished, good conversation notably lacking, and the general citizenry notably preoccupied with commerce.⁴ The themes of money-consciousness and social climbing also concern Brown and Lippard, who demonstrate also a strong humanitarian concern for the poor.

Toward mid-century, such satiric sketches of urban life as Paulding's gained something of the popularity of the sentimental sketch. Joseph C. Neal's Charcoal Sketches; or, Scenes in a Metropolis,⁵ first published in 1838, went through several editions. The book is composed of a series of humorous character sketches of lower or lower-middle

class figures bearing comic names. Despite the title, there is little direct attention to place, though occasional references to a street or corner or to getting a drink at a particular place convincingly establish the urban scene. A continuing sense of the variety and busyness of a city emerges--for instance, in the many people who leave children, horse, dog, baby, and storefront in the momentary care of Lemeter Salix, "the best-natured man in the world" (60-69). The author takes evident delight in the "infinite variety of form in the human race" (70), and despite such potentially grim touches as a ragged old soldier who sits on the curb and sleeps on a doorstep, the tone is one of affectionate joshing. For instance, in "A Pair of Slippers," the significance of the urban setting is that a very tall man does not have wide open spaces to fall down in when drunk and walking on sidewalks glazed with ice.

After some two hundred pages of this bantering delight in the city's variety and tolerance of its ills, a surprising concluding sketch turns on the familiar urban extremes of wealth and poverty--here, the contrast between insiders in a fashionable hotel with "blazing fire" and "numerous lights" (213) and one Fydget Fixington, outside and cold on a snowy January night and stubbornly determined to get in to warmth and food. In a final dialogue between Fixington and the hotel manager, the outcast avows a plan for "doing without elections, and police-officers, and laws" and upsetting "existing institutions" (221). His one desperate

act by that plan is to trip the hotel manager and run away. Coming as it does after repeated sketches that depict a surging vitality and sturdiness in the lower classes, the incident pointedly suggests the potentially aggressive discontent engendered by extreme economic inequality. The many instances in the book of falls into the gutter and similar upsets, described with the understatement that often insinuates reliability, come to seem more ominous. Neal's Charcoal Sketches has obvious shortcomings as a work of art: its excessively broad humor, its lack of unity, its general failure to push beyond the popular and the conventional; but it seems to me more worthy of regard than its obscure status in the history of American letters would suggest. Its merits include frequent stretches of easy colloquial dialogue, convincing delineation of a real milieu, and a skillful closing sketch in which social criticism is dramatized rather than asserted so that, under guise of humor, it compels a momentary rethinking of what has gone before.

Considerably more interesting is the work of Charles F. Briggs, whose The Adventures of Harry Franco (1839) was extremely popular and, as Miller has demonstrated in The Raven and the Whale, exerted direct influence on Melville. The book follows the career of a young man who sets out from a "quiet little out-of-the-way" village in the Hudson Valley to seek his fortune in New York and goes to sea in despair. The realistic urban scene is neither varnished over nor denounced; it is simply there in a kind of detailed

welter which young Franco must master if he is to amount to anything. His introduction to New York is a hotel dinner--noisy, hurried, and disorderly--where he gets drunk. In a rapid succession of events that keep him continually unsettled emotionally, he has his identity mistaken; is befriended by a man who thought he was a potential customer; is repeatedly fleeced by a pleasant hanger-on; fancies himself in love but fails in an attempt to call on the girl; tries to get a job but finds 683 have applied before him. Throughout these misadventures that lead finally to Franco's going to sea, the tone is not so much one of protest as of realistic acceptance of city ways, even of delight in their variety, deplorable though they sometimes may be. Indeed, the quality of urban life comes to seem largely subjective: going to visit his Miss DeLancey, Harry is delighted with the crowds and shops; returning "unhappy and dispirited," he finds Broadway all "geegaws and crowds."⁶ Briggs' appreciation for urban vitality, entirely free of agrarian predilections, is well conveyed in an incident in which Franco visits a firehouse where men sing and reminisce about big fires and good rescues until they become so wrought up that they stage a fake fire call just for the fun of it.

In Franco's first introduction to the city he is defeated; when he returns from the sea in Volume II it is evident that he still has not learned what he should. Continuing a significant motif of sea-garb and land-garb, he again spends more than he can afford on impressive clothes

and lets himself be fleeced in get-rich schemes. Briggs uses his hero's educative hard knocks to score some of the very vulgarities Cooper had attacked just the year before in Home As Found. Like the Effinghams, Franco observes reckless wrecking and building, overhears talk of fabulous speculation in real estate, and witnesses auctioneering of lots in speculative cities. Even his comment as he nears Wall Street--he wonders "what could be the cause of all the stir and bustle" (15)--is strikingly similar to a corresponding phrase in Home As Found.⁷ He is entertained at the home of a man newly rich who doesn't even know his name and who asks Franco to guess the prices of things in his house. But throughout these similar incidents Briggs' approach is unlike Cooper's in that his hero, instead of pronouncing the author's condemnation, participates in the vulgar bustle, suffers by it, and learns from it. He invests in nonexistent city lots and lends all his money to the fast-talking nouveau riche vulgarian. Thus the hero is human rather than olympian, the tone is comic rather than declamatory, and the faults of urban society are criticized from within by one of its own rather than from the aloof judiciousness of a moralizing country squire.

Harry Franco must experience a social awakening before he is fit for success. Penniless, he strays into the Five Points district where he observes the sufferings of the poor to whom, like Redburn in Liverpool, he can give only pity. Reduced to beggary, he envies those who have

even menial jobs. When good fortune next presents him some money, he buys simple good clothes and takes a humble clerkship. From this vantage point the author gives realistic glimpses of those who people the more stable business world, as well as a brief sequence on Tammany Hall. In a very contrived ending Franco retires to his home town with the girl he loves, but the city has provided his education, his change of character, and the arena for his success. His return to the small town is not offered as a moralistic repudiation of urbanism but merely a sensible resort to family property.

In The Trippings of Tom Pepper Briggs continued his account of contemporary urban life. Tom Pepper offers remarkably clever satire on figures of the New York literary world, particularly on Cornelius Mathews; it has been commended by Miller as having "more of the actual city . . . than any other work of the period."⁸ Its topicality, however, is a structural weakness, distracting the reader from the chief action of the novel, which is Tom's search for his father and real identity while he tries to shed a reputation as a rogue. At one point, having altered his appearance in an effort to make his fortune unshackled by the past, Tom appears a shrewd version of the American Adam. He announces, "I stood alone in the world, without name or connexion, like Adam when he woke into being. . . . But I had this advantage of Adam, I knew something of the world, and I had a good suit of clothes."⁹ Still, this shrewdness,

acquired through experience in the city's wiles from childhood up, brings Tom no stable success until, at the end of Volume II, he becomes reconciled to his British father. In a conclusion having allegorical implications for the nation, Tom inherits the income from his father's estate in England but not the estate itself. He has, his father says, proven himself worthy.

The response to urbanism in Tom Pepper is more negative than in Harry Franco, as varied motifs of imprisonment and deception run through the book. Tom participates in the deception motif through his uncertain identity and various disguises. Told by his early and lasting benefactor always to tell the truth, Tom endures repeated rebuffs from urbanites to whom truth is unpalatable. At one point he goes to board with a pious clerk named Dribble who lives in an uptown suburb or development where "the gentility of the neighborhood was so excessive as to be distressing" (63). Tom guesses that Dribble must be a "miserably poor man by an insane attempt to appear more prosperous than he really was" and ponders, "What a lying place a great city is! How all the inhabitants strive to deceive each other" (64). The streets of New York early seem to Tom "a large prison" (58), while a "very agreeable" picture of a ship in the bedroom of one of his childhood boarding houses carries strong connotations of freedom (42). But it is aboard ship that Tom experiences prolonged imprisonment, while instances of actual confinement in the city are brief mistakes. The meaning

of urban experience in terms of constraint or freedom is finally ambiguous; it is an environment which may mean either, depending as well upon accident as upon character. Tom's final good fortune is not an escape from the confining city but freedom to pursue his own fortune secure in his identity.

As he repeatedly loses money given him by his benefactor, Tom comes to appreciate the exquisiteness of poverty in a city where much "superfluous wealth" is all around but all is owned, hence forbidden. Anyone "without money, if placed in the midst of a large city," he muses, "has but two alternatives before him--either to starve or to steal" (128-9). Like Harry Franco, Tom must develop a social conscience through personal experience before he can find success. This specific, experiential quality of social protest in the novels is indeed characteristic of Briggs himself as journalist.¹⁰ Despite its vivid depiction of social hardship and such negative imagery as streets "silent as a cemetery" after working hours (I, 139), Tom Pepper is finally no more anti-urban than Harry Franco. Tom finds that the "bustle of the street was infectious" (133) and manages to begin again undaunted after each misadventure.

Because of their episodic nature and apparent lack of coherent focus, Briggs' novels must be regarded as showing only the potential for a viable social criticism in fiction more readable than Cooper's. As Miller suggests, Briggs was more anti-romantic than he was effectively creative

as a realist. But the instructive comparison of Briggs' New York novels with those of his acquaintance and literary adversary Cornelius Mathews redounds entirely to the credit of Briggs. Mathews' books also abound in pictures of actual New York scenes that suggest a realistic rendering of place, but his pictures are blurred, rendered curiously abstract, both by his elevated style and his "grandiose effort to present the panorama."¹¹ Mathews' books (Puffer Hopkins, Money Penny, Big Abel and the Little Manhattan) are simply too theatrically implausible to pass for effective realism. Probably because he was so fully committed to nationalism in literature and the distinctiveness of America was so universally identified with its spaces, Mathews was compelled to adopt ruralizing conventions despite his personal response to New York. Cities inescapably suggested Europe. But Briggs not only was free from the urge to idealize the countryside, but was consciously anti-sentimental as well. It is he who, next to Cooper, must take pre-eminence among would-be critical realists as America approached mid-century.

* * *

The work of Fenimore Cooper, particularly after his return from Europe in 1833, offers a strongly individual appraisal of every aspect of American society. To consider his critical evaluation of the city is to abstract one aspect from the whole.¹² Cooper did not concern himself with urban or rural polemics. Such geographic distinctions are largely

incidental to wider questions of social stability and leadership by the natural aristocracy. These are the criteria Cooper consistently endorsed for evaluating the worth of a civilization, but he differed as to where they are best located.

Emphasis on the Leatherstocking series has tended at times to obscure Cooper's conscious values and allegiances, which were tied most firmly to the cultured owners of large farms. He considered these the chief social force making for stability and thereby for a high cultural tone compounded of decorum, polished manners, and disinterestedness. His devotion to this eighteenth-century ideal is probably embodied most appealingly in the Clawbonny estate of Afloat and Ashore and Miles Wallingford. It is the world of his own Cooperstown estate and of the Jays and the Van Rensselaers, and other leading upstate New York families, their wealth derived from the land, whom Cooper took as models of natural aristocracy. Yet urban centers also form a part of the pattern. Throughout the Littlepage and Wallingford books, leading personae, clearly to be identified with the Coopers, regularly divide their year between the country estate and a town house. Cooper's insistence that such a practice was the optimum situation for himself appears in a letter of 1832. He wrote, "I may be induced to take the old house, fix it up, and spend six months of each year in it. My habits and pursuits require town for the rest of the year."¹³

Such biographical data as well as tributes to New York and Albany throughout his work can well be adduced to demonstrate that Cooper was no doctrinaire anti-urbanist. Indeed, he regularly complains that the American city is not urban(e) enough. He judges it, on the one hand, by a rural but town-frequenting society of cultivated large-scale landowners and, on the other, by the capital cities of Europe,¹⁴ with their polished society and fine old architecture. By both standards the verdict is the same: American cities do not offer the advantages cities should; they are too devoted to moneymaking; they lack stability and mature values. Yet in his last years Cooper may have been modifying even this judgment, repelled as he was by the Whiggish go-aheadism he saw epitomized in Wall Street. After the Anti-Rent War, when it appeared that landed wealth would be unable to insure social order, he began to consider large merchants a likely source of the crucial stabilizing influence.¹⁵ His concession in The Ways of the Hour that New York architecture (an important touchstone for Cooper) is improving is one such indication. But any shift is minimal and should not be exaggerated; it remains Cooper's characteristic response to find New York deficient in the stable values of either an agrarian or a highly evolved urban society.

It is not without wider significance that Spiller so often alludes to Cooper's settling down while in Europe

"in the somewhat tarnished halls of a past nobility."¹⁶ Such enthusiasm as Cooper had for city life was also backward-turning; it did not extend to the rapidly growing cities of his own time and place. These he found vulgar and disagreeable in a variety of ways, which he repeatedly specified. Cooper's mellowest version of the city, Satanstoe, gives tribute to the New York and Albany of the 1750's, when they were more closely allied to the manners and values of the gentlemanly country estate. He is severely critical of the city in Afloat and Ashore and its sequel Miles Wallingford, both set around 1796 to 1810. His most stringent treatment of the American city, Home As Found, has a contemporary setting. These differences cannot be attributed to shifting of Cooper's views at different periods of his life; the four novels were written within seven years.¹⁷

It is apparent, then, that several factors complicate the problem of understanding and analyzing Cooper's attitudes--that is, his conscious judgment--toward urban society. But an additional complicating factor is the working of unconscious levels of Cooper's mind. Despite serious concern with agrarian and urban society in a number of works, it is undeniably the vast forests and tranquil lakes of Deerslayer and its fellows that remain most memorable. This disparity between the creator's conscious allegiances and his finer literary achievements suggests that his deeper imagination was drawn to virgin wilds and was allied

with values very different from those of his critical intellect. Consciously he attempted to make fine critical distinctions: he said, "I want everything to stand on its own merits" (The Redskins, VI, 620). But he did not recognize the impact of his own personality on his perception of those merits.

It is in the Leatherstocking series that this subconscious or emotive force of Cooper's mind seems most fully engaged, and in these works he deepens anti-urbanism to myth. Here the antithesis to the city is not agrarian society but the primal wilderness, and the geographic loci of the myth represent, not the sentimental anti-urban values of innocence and evil,¹⁸ but freedom and constraint or community and, by implication, alienation. The forests and prairies have their own tensions and struggles between good and evil, but, as Grossman points out, "for Natty they are always the great good place"¹⁹ to which life in the settlements or towns is opposed. Throughout these volumes Natty is the anti-urban philosopher par excellence. Life in the woods and prairies, carrying its own risk of encounters with bad Indians or the likes of Ishmael Bush, is an authentic way of life, opposed to urban preoccupation with trivialities and deceptions. It is important to note that the picture of towns which appears in the Leatherstocking series shares the failings of materialism and triviality which Cooper points out in his other novels. Nevertheless, the extreme opposition which appears in these books lifts the question above the level

of specific flaws to the plateau of myth where "city" and "country" convey absolute values.

In the Leatherstocking books, then, Cooper made his most emotionally charged criticism of the city, an absolute repudiation. This deep emotional distrust of the city as such, a distrust characteristic of the period, exists alongside his critical appraisal of the city and subsumes the issue of his demurral from his time. His distrust surfaces in passages throughout his work in such forms as fear that the city undermines character or manliness.²⁰ The result is a basic tension running through his work.²¹

The one novel in which Cooper's deepest fears of the city and his conscious judgment coalesce is The Bravo, set, significantly, in a European city²² and offered to his readers as a warning to America against the dangers of republican despotism. Whatever its flaws, the work is a masterful achievement of sense of place through metaphoric richness and of absolute integration of setting and theme. Descriptive language of The Bravo is more ornate than is usual in Cooper. For instance, in the opening paragraph the crowds entering St. Mark's Square in Venice are like "water gushing through some strait aqueduct into a broad and bubbling basin" (X, 412). The image is well chosen to suggest a not unattractive sense of urban rush and bustle. Long sentences composed of staccato parallel noun phrases designating various people of the crowd give stylistic support to the author's assertion of "universal movement" (X, 412).

Venice is a center of the corruption and intrigue of a deteriorating civilization. Since nothing is as it seems, the frequent maze images and instances of confusion are appropriate and thematically functional. The image of the masks traditionally worn in the streets of Venice functions as a multi-level metaphor indicating the sinister disparity of appearance and reality. Repeatedly Cooper emphasizes the superficial gaiety and actual somberness of the city--e.g., "The great square of St. Mark was again filled with its active and motley crowd" but the "conspirator and the agent of the police, once more met in privileged security" (X, 474). Similarly, Chapter XV opens with a panorama of the sleeping city, the sea, and the night skies in a unity of repose and harmony; but it is a scene of murder. The members of the council of three would appear the venerable leaders and pillars of virtue of the state, but are actually the manipulators of an involved network of corruption and betrayal, while the supposed Bravo (a murderer for hire) is a high-minded young man innocent of the crimes charged against him, deliberately selling his reputation to protect his father. As if Cooper were afraid someone would miss it, the mask-disguise motif is made explicit by one particularly disagreeable young noble who announces, "Neither my countenance nor my mind is unused to a mask" (X, 439).

In its largest application, basic to all the others, the disguise motif applies to the system of government in

Venice. Nominally a republic, it is actually a corrupt oligarchy in which nobles clutch their hereditary privileges, the common people count for nothing, and public opinion is managed. So corrupt a political system, Cooper suggests, infects every aspect of the individual's life: distrust of the government and its spy system spreads to all personal relations so that "few paused to greet each other in that city of mystery and suspicion" (X, 539). The pattern of deceptive appearance is carried quite to the end of the book, when, after the government's crowning deception and injustice, moonlight throws "a deceptive glory" over the city and crowds gather for their nightly diversion though actually "each lived for himself, while the state of Venice held its vicious sway, corrupting alike the ruler and the ruled" (X, 600).

In no other work did Cooper create so sinister an urban setting. His view of the Republic of Venice was meant as a favorable comparison to his own republic, albeit a warning against moneyed oligarchy. Like Jefferson and others reserving his deepest anxieties for a congested European city, Cooper revealed in The Bravo the nature of his fear of the city in general, a fear lest its inescapable network of superficial relationships should totally thwart community and constrict individual liberty.

The difference between Cooper's fears of the city per se and his conscious disapproval of the city as he saw

it is readily apparent in turning from the metaphoric richness and sinister atmosphere of The Bravo to the heavyhanded pronouncements of Home As Found, Afloat and Ashore, and other novels of the later period. In all these works little effort is made to establish a sense of place through sense details or metaphor. Rather, Cooper states his appraisal flatly and in general terms, and the appraisal varies little from one book to another.

The first third of Home As Found is a thinly fictional series of vignettes designed to illustrate Cooper's judgment of his home city as found after a lengthy residence in Europe. That his purpose in this section was virtually expository is confirmed by his own comment at the beginning of Chapter VI, "Our task in the way of describing town society will soon be ended" (VI, 42). As one might expect of so purpose-laden a narrative, the characters move as stick-figures through a series of pasteboard sets, making illustrative gestures. Only Eve Effingham's independent play of mind relieves the grim stretches of commentary. The offenses Cooper derides in his then up-to-date New Yorkers amount to an overall lack of dignity and cultural tone. His vexation at urbanites' preoccupation with money is obvious in a brief interchange as his characters visit Wall Street:

"What are all these people running after so intently?" inquired Mademoiselle Vieffville. . . .

"Dollars, I believe . . ." (VI, 53).

The social insecurity of a moneyed class lacking secure traditions issues in such triviality that a typical "belle" is horrified at the thought of walking halfway across a room without an escort; ostentation amounting to "a strife in prodigality and parade" (VI, 58); and nervous imitation both of England and of the local fashionable few. That which passes for society ("unpleasant crowds," VI, 7) is dominated by vulgar, uncertain upstarts "who first appeared on this island five or six years since, and who, having accumulated what to them are relatively large fortunes, have launched out into vulgar and uninstructed finery." They do not even know the names of those who have "claims to social distinction" by virtue of their "historical names" (VI, 29). In short, as Marvin Meyers terms it, the New York of Home As Found is the "ultimate case" of the transitional state of society as defined in The Pioneers, when the gay neighborliness of first settlement is past and stable culture has not yet developed.²³

The Effinghams are well above this showy tasteless style of living; Eve Effingham even walks more steadily and dresses with greater dignity and "simple elegance" (VI, 26) than the New York nouveaux riches. Indeed, as Lewis Leary points out, Eve and her father, "whose fortune is in land," are "superior" to John Effingham, who makes his money in commerce.²⁴ He too is obviously above the social groups all the Effinghams deplore, but so shares their

Whiggish subservience to England that he can see nothing good in American society at all, while Eve and her father insist that they will not give up hope in America. The presence of the Effinghams themselves, as well as the self-possessed Mrs. Hawker and unassuming Mr. Jarvis, is proof within the novel that Cooper believed American institutions could produce a high social tone and stable social gradations provided dollars and display were not given first importance.

At the conclusion of the city third of the novel, it is "with a feeling of delight" that Eve prepares to

escape from a town that, while it contained so much that is worthy of any capital, contains so much more that is unfit for any place, in order to breathe the pure air, and enjoy the tranquil pleasure of the country (VI, 58).

Throughout this section, Cooper has scored some keen critical blows at American urban society but has displayed little of that "light and bright and sparkling" humorous play of mind that vitalizes social analysis. Instead, his heavy, assertive terminology--"ostentatious folly," "showy," "the struggles of an uninstructed taste," "an excrescence of society"--suggests a great anxiety to identify himself with the Effinghams of this world and to distance as far as possible the moneyed up-and-comers who threaten the uncertainties of social realignment.

But even in Home As Found one city comes in for praise: Albany. Approaching by river, the Effingham party apparently catches a panoramic view of that old town so

that even Eve "expressed her satisfaction." Unfortunately for the point Cooper apparently wished to make by comparison of the two cities, he omits any of the description that elsewhere supports his praise of Albany. But it is while viewing the smaller town that Eve makes her summary of the metropolis:

I expected to see a capital in New York, Grace, and in this I have been grievously disappointed. Instead of finding the tastes, tone, conveniences, architecture, streets, churches, shops, and society of a capital, I found a huge expansion of commonplace things, a commercial town, and the most mixed and the least regulated society that I had ever met with. Expecting so much, where so little was found, disappointment was natural. But in Albany, although a political capital, I knew the nature of the government too well to expect more than a provincial town; and in this respect I have found one much above the level of similar places in other parts of the world (VI, 63).

Actually, at this point Eve has not "found" Albany at all; only her creator knows the city she is commenting on. Albany merits his approval because, like his good Indians and good blacks, it knows its place and keeps it, keeps it indeed to perfection, without occasioning any of the anxiety that proceeds from social fluidity.

The picture of New York which Cooper presents in Afloat and Ashore and Miles Wallingford (really two parts of the same huge novel) is essentially the same as that in Home As Found, but in these works his comments are well integrated into an ongoing narrative with a convincingly live set of characters. More importantly, he has one character who symbolizes Whiggish urbanism even while he displays human growth and change. Thus, instead of asserting his

views, Cooper presents them in narrative situations.

The hero and narrator of both books, Miles Wallingford, is a garrulous old man looking back over the vicissitudes of a life on land and sea. Because he is realized as a distinct individual presence, the often crusty views he expresses can be accepted as part of his characterization, thus rendering Cooper's social commentary more palatable within the fictional frame. Wallingford is descended from a prosperous though not wealthy landed family, and his loyalties are solidly with Clawbonny, the family estate. The first appearance of the city in Afloat and Ashore evokes some rather unfortunate snide comments about calling New York a "commercial emporium" or "literary emporium" (IV, 253). More effective, if Cooper wished to express disapproval or distrust of the city, is young Miles' first glimpse of any part of New York, the gallows. This snideness does not characterize the full progress of the two volumes, which are predominantly genial if outspoken, but rather the narrator repeatedly attempts to make a balanced evaluation of New York. Chiefly he objects to its provincialism, its subservience to England, and its preoccupation with commerce. That Wallingford mixes a degree of affection for the city with his criticisms is apparent in his phrase "the good town of Manhattan." But he finds that "even in 1803" the town was "addicted to dollars" (IV, 468), a trend exaggerated by the 1840's. But until the end of the second book neither Wallingford nor Lucy, the heroine, falters in

devotion to country living. On returning to Clawbonny after inheriting a great fortune, Lucy exclaims "Oh! Miles, a day in such a spot as this is worth a year in town!" (IV, 490).

Such are the expository criticisms Cooper makes through his persona, Wallingford. They differ from those in Home As Found only in being generally less hard-hitting. But the strongest criticisms of the emergent urban way of life are embodied in the career of Miles' friend Rupert. Rupert accompanies young Miles when he runs away to the sea, and it comes as no surprise to the reader, who has already recognized him as a shallow feckless sort, that Rupert wants to loiter and look at the city while young Miles insists on looking for a ship straightaway. Later Rupert goes "strutting about with the best of them" on Broadway, and Miles realizes that his own sailor-garbed presence would be an embarrassment (IV, 257). After a later two-year voyage Miles returns with "a manliness about him of which mere walking up and down Broadway would have robbed a young Hercules" (IV, 408). Rupert, who has achieved only a dubious kind of social prominence in New York, is markedly reluctant to own a mere sea officer as his friend; predictably, he is in a set that "talked large, drank deep, and had a lofty disdain for everything in the country" (IV, 419). In the second volume of the story (a considerably slower-moving book than the first) Rupert's eagerness for money has subsumed any remaining standards of honor. At last when Miles,

risen to owner-captain, returns from a voyage in which he has lost everything, he goes strolling through a district of new "patrician residences" in an "enlarged style" (V, 438) and sees "a fashionably-dressed man standing, picking his teeth, with the air of its master." It is of course Rupert, who has accomplished nothing but to run into debt while keeping up appearances--the very epitome of that up-and-coming urban Whiggism Cooper deplures. He refuses even to ask Miles in because his sea uniform is not acceptable attire.

In Afloat and Ashore and Miles Wallingford Cooper managed to embed his social criticism successfully in a fictive fabric that sustains both narrative interest and theme. The career of Rupert Hardinge perfectly describes the uprooting from a landed culture which Cooper saw as the chief source of the city's superficiality. Wallingford, however, is no anti-urbanist. Like Cooper himself, he complains that town people in the United States are "a good deal less town" than in Europe; of all American towns, "no one of them all [has] the air, tone, or appearance of a capital" (V, 324). That is, for all his love of the country, he wishes towns of real urbanity.

Again, as in Home As Found, Cooper celebrates Albany. Approaching on the Hudson, Wallingford delights in its "beauty of situation," a oneness of town and geographic setting: "Then Albany came into view, leaning against its sharp acclivity, and spreading over its extensive bottom-land" (V,

254). Cooper strikes a similar note in Satanstoe, where Corny Littlepage's first sight of Albany evokes exclamatory delight. As in Wallingford, Corny's description emphasizes the union of city and setting from a panoramic vantage point:

The town itself formed a pleasing object, as we approached it on the opposite side of the Hudson. There it lay, stretching along the low land on the margin of the stream, and on its western bank, sheltered by high hills, up the side of which the principal street extended. . . . (VIII, 323)

Littlepage enters a scene of holiday gaiety, the celebrated sleighing scene, with young people "all sparkling with the excitement of the moment" (VIII, 324). In Wallingford, Cooper extols even the commercial prosperity of Albany; the difference from New York's commercialism is that this city is a part of an agricultural economy.

At the end, in what one is tempted to regard as a sellout of his active, manly life through two volumes of adventure, Miles has settled down with his Lucy in a series of town residences shifting with the patterns of residence and commerce "in the good and growing town of Manhattan" (V, 466). If this sounds suspiciously like a delayed version of Rupert's career, two important differences are that Miles retains his country estate, Clawbonny, and remains devoted to his unpolished sailor friend Moses Marble. Wallingford's unlikely settling down in town may again suggest to a critic so inclined Cooper's own subjection to contrary urges. Nevertheless, it is certain that consciously he meant this conclusion to the pattern of urban experiences

in the two novels to suggest that the urban way of life can be viable if based on tradition and on the land rather than on the insecure economic contention that estranged Cooper from his time.

Though to me less attractive as a whole, Cooper's Littlepage trilogy is more searching in its social criticism. The first volume, Satanstoe, has generally enjoyed rising fortunes in the Cooper canon, notwithstanding Jesse Bier's 1968 challenge of its racial prejudices and evidence of personal internecine warfare. Racial prejudices, as well as social, are simply parts of Cooper, however, and most recent readers have responded warmly to the geniality of the book, particularly to its high-jinx in Albany and the youthful ingenuousness of its narrator Cornelius Littlepage, plainly called Corny by his family. Grossman finds the "great virtue" of this, perhaps the most charming of Cooper's heroes, to be his "sense of the wonder of life,"²⁵ and it is indeed with a sense of wonder that fourteen-year-old Corny first beholds the sights of New York. When he again visits New York at the age of twenty his enthusiasm is unabated. Admiring, even awed at first, Cooper's narrator develops a continuing love for the place. "It is true," he remarks at one point, "that the town has much improved, within the last twenty years; but York was a noble place even in the middle of this [the eighteenth] century!" (VIII, 258).

The presence of imagery commonly indicating a more

threatening quality of urban life--as, they were careful not to lose their way in its "narrow and intricate passages," they "began to thread the mazes of the capital" (VIII, 274)--goes unheeded in the general sunniness of Corny's personality. In the hullabaloo of the Pinkster, or Pentecostal, festival of the slaves, "every thing and person appeared gay and happy" (VIII, 294) and people of all classes mingle cordially to enjoy the spectacle. Corny much admires the morning promenade in front of Trinity Church and regards Broadway as a "noble street . . . that all agree is one day to be the pride of the western world" (VIII, 293). It is unfortunate that Cooper cannot either let such a naive exaggeration stand on its own as a piece of characterization or else enlighten Corny through dramatized incident. Instead, in his capacity as "editor" of the manuscript, he inserts a footnote deriding such "provincial admiration" of a "third-class street." Undisturbed by such acid intrusions, Cooper's picture of 1750 New York would be a pleasant period piece not necessarily lacking serious import. For instance, Corny repeatedly attributes the charm of the city largely to the nearness of open land and fine country houses (e.g., VIII, 284, 293). That is, the city and the country are at one, and there are still "air and beauty enough" in the city to "satisfy any reasonable man" (VIII, 275). Obviously, such an appraisal could not be applied to nineteenth-century New York, but Cooper bypasses this opportunity to show deterioration of the urban

situation. Indeed, it is an issue foreign to his whole approach to the city. He does not treat humanitarian concerns such as living conditions, but issues of standards and tone in middle and upper-class society. Here, he prefers to express his disaffection from his own time by carping at his narrator's positive response to another.

At the end of the opening third of the novel, focusing chiefly on New York, Corny returns home, his mother apparently relieved at having him return safely. His summary comment is, "I had passed a whole fortnight amid the temptations and fascinations of the capital" (VIII, 314). Thus Cooper strikes the familiar note of presenting New York as a place of open possibility, but largely ignores the potential for ill. It is this choice of the positive side that makes Satanstoe so ebullient an exception in Cooper's work and distinguishes it so completely from Home As Found, which, following the same progression from New York City, up the Hudson, to the country, chooses nothing of the better side until it reaches Albany. In Satanstoe, it is only when action moves to the woods that evil intrudes in a horribly vivid Indian torture. The pattern is enough to give pause to anyone regarding Cooper as a romantic anti-urbanist depicting noble forests and nobler Indians.

Through the other two volumes of the Littlepage trilogy, The Chainbearer and The Redskins, Cooper maintains his near-tacit pattern of the prosperous families spending the

social season in New York and the rest of the year on the country estate. In The Chainbearer he reverses the common view of the city as a place of limitless possibility, assigning it the role of safety and caution, while the woods are a place of chance, courage, and danger. This is the pattern basic to the Leatherstocking books. In The Redskins, a remarkably unpleasant and largely uninteresting book, the last of the Littlepages, Hugh, returns from five years abroad a thoroughly snobbish young man²⁶ who pronounces New York "but a rag-fair sort of place" and complains of its incongruous extremes and "country air" (VI, 49). As always, Albany comes in for generous praise; Uncle Ro pronounces it a "first-rate country-place" and Hugh agrees that it has virtue in that it "lays no claim to be anything more than a provincial town" (VI, 502). Except for some details in the Thousandacres sequence in Chainbearer, Cooper submerges all distrust of the city in itself in favor of adversely comparing the New York of 1840 with the sophisticated European cities his world-travelling narrator has so enjoyed. Thus, although these two works touch hardly at all on the city and never render a living urban setting, they provide further demonstration that Cooper was no anti-urbanist on principle but was disaffected from his time and place. The only American city for which he continues to express liking is described in terms that emphasize its embrace by the land and its non-modernity, both in actual age and in its leanings toward the past.

In Cooper's last novel, The Ways of the Hour, he repeats substantially his earlier criticisms of New York as "a vast expansion of mediocrity" showing "tawdry vulgarity" (IX, 4) in its pretentious display. In short, he continues to see in New York the acquisitive strife and tastelessness of the transitional stage of civilization, the social flux he always deplored which reached a prolonged crescendo during the Jacksonian era. Yet Cooper suggests in this novel that the city is emerging from the brash transitional flux to assume a role of cultural leadership. He sees in "the goodly town of Manhattan" "visible improvement" in that the "radical defect" of garish architecture (a symptom of pervasive tastelessness) is "slowly disappearing from the streets" (IX, 4). The fact that the leading personages of the novel are urbanites who display the taste, discretion, and force of leadership to be expected of the natural aristocracy also indicates that the cultural tone and aristocratic values Cooper esteemed might be located in the city.

This urban aristocracy is country-frequenting, as the aristocracy of his agrarian ideal had been town-frequenting. Indeed, the lawyer Dunscomb is quite capable of lauding "escape into the open, unfettered fields and winding pleasant roads" in hallowed sentimental style as a nearer approach to the Deity than being "shut up between walls of brick and stone" (IX, 20). But he can also pronounce rural suspiciousness of anything and anyone "from the city," "such

vulgarisms" (IX, 20). Dunscomb's comprehensiveness and judicious care in making social judgment reminds one of Cooper's own standard for a public leader, one who can "make the proper distinctions" (Miles Wallingford, V, 464). It is the kind of objective judiciousness which, throughout his work, Cooper himself attempted to bring to the evaluation of culture. He did not subscribe to simplistic stereotypes. From his earliest assured work, The Spy, where the two charming Wharton daughters have been educated with "all the advantages the city could afford" and miss its "gayeties" in their country retreat (II, 453, 451), indications of his appreciation for things urban are intermingled with his critical strictures. But throughout, the emotional nostalgia for primitivism, adventure, and freedom that makes the Leatherstocking series his most memorable work brings into question his conscious urge toward high cultural tone and aristocratic values, which he located variously in Europe, in an agrarian order of established landed families in America, or in an urban society of secure wealth and stable social stratification. Similarly, in the last novel, The Ways of the Hour, the continuing and obvious disagreeable pomposity of Squire Cunscomb, for all his rectitude and gentility, undercuts his position as a new urban version of the natural aristocrat.

Natty Bumppo's rejection of civilization, an absolute judgment against urbanism, is not Cooper's rejection. In the Templeton on which Natty irrevocably turns his back

in The Pioneers one sees an incipient urbanism of the same go-getter sort Cooper objected to in contemporary New York. Both the action of the other volumes of the series and Natty's own pronouncements, particularly numerous in The Prairie, convey a rejection of all urban society in favor of absolute pre-social values. That Cooper felt an impulse in the same direction seems clear enough, yet he also valued the opposite extreme of a highly developed stratified urbane society. Henry Nash Smith has well summarized the conflict in Virgin Land. Leatherstocking, he writes,

. . . clearly expresses subversive impulses. The character was conceived in terms of the antithesis between nature and civilization, between freedom and law, that has governed most American interpretations of the westward movement. Cooper . . . felt the problem more deeply than his contemporaries: he was at once more strongly devoted to the principle of social order and more vividly responsive to the ideas of nature and freedom in the Western forest than they were. His conflict of allegiances was truly ironic.²⁷

The tension is never reconciled. As both Smith and Meyers observe,²⁸ Cooper never judges one allegiance by the other. Rather, he judges adversely the society that excludes either the genuine elite or the likes of Leatherstocking.

In his novels of explicit social criticism Cooper dealt, not with lasting absolutes of human life such as the search for community or the need for personal fulfillment through participation in the processes of unspoiled nature, but in specific "manners," the usages of good taste that make for a high level of civilization. That these specific, as opposed to archetypal, criticisms of urban society were often couched in general, expository terms rather than the

immediate presence of dramatic realization is a shortcoming of Cooper's technique and one reason his fiction of social criticism has not engaged the imagination of readers so deeply as have his adventure stories.

Cooper's standard for measuring the urban society which he experienced is not generally Hawkeye's life of the forest but a higher level of civilization, located either in the cultivated middle ground of the agrarian ideal or in a more highly developed urbanism. Valuing a stable culture with polished manners, the kind of culture he often attributed to the capital cities of Europe, he found instead urban centers in the throes of economic and social struggle seemingly without any settled standard except money--in short, he found in New York a "social bivouac." One can only suppose that if Cooper had been born to a different nationality or had had fewer disagreements with his contemporaries the balance between negative and positive views of the city in his fiction would have been different. Even as it was, his choice of the semi-rural life of his estate at Cooperstown, like the ideal of gentlemanly country life that recurs in his work, would always take advantage of the cultural and social resources of the city. It was "the clash between the man and his times,"²⁹ rendering his social ideal accessible neither in agrarian nor urban America, that forced Cooper's sensibility to the timeless world of forest and sea.

NOTES

¹Kaul, The American Vision, p. 53.

²Hugh Henry Brackenridge, Modern Chivalry, ed. Claude M. Newlin (New York and London: Hafner Publishing Company, 1962). Modern Chivalry appeared in installments from 1792 to 1815. Glimpses of town life are incidental to Brackenridge's political purposes, for which he takes Captain Farrago's home village as microcosm (so declaring, p. 445).

³James Kirke Paulding, Chronicles of the City of Gotham (New York: G. and C. and H. Carvill, 1830; Wright, I, 1998). An anonymous work Life in Town; or, The Boston Spy (Boston: Redding and Co., 1844; Wright, I, 1666) adopts Paulding's tone but in very labored toying with affectation and comic disparity between appearance and reality.

⁴The Hermit in America (Philadelphia: M. Thomas, 1819; Wright, I, 2649).

⁵Neal, Charcoal Sketches, 6th ed. (Philadelphia: E. L. Carey and A. Hart, 1841).

⁶Charles Frederick Briggs, The Adventures of Harry Franco, A Tale of the Great Panic, 2 vols. (New York: F. Saunders, 1839; Wright, I, 407), p. 140.

⁷See below, p. 110.

⁸The Raven and the Whale, p. 178.

⁹Briggs, The Trippings of Tom Pepper (New York: Burgess, Stringer, and Co. et al, 1847; Wright, I, 410), p. 132.

¹⁰Briggs' work on the Broadway Journal has been analyzed by Bette S. Weidman in "The Broadway Journal (2): A Casualty of Abolition Politics," Bulletin of the New York Public Library, 73 (1969), 94-113. Weidman finds that Briggs often attacked "social abuses" in the journal, chiefly by vivid pictorial pointing to "sharp disparities between the rich and poor, the elegant and the slovenly." But Briggs did not "take up broad programs of reform," but instead "insisted on remaining a critic, an acute commentator" (pp. 101-2).

¹¹Miller, The Raven and the Whale, p. 141.

¹²Robert Spiller thus entitled the last chapter of his Fenimore Cooper: Critic of His Times "The Complete Critic." Thomas H. Bender argues, as I do, that Cooper cannot justly be called an anti-urbanist because the issue is subordinate to his larger social values and in addition detects a shift in Cooper's attitude toward the city after the Anti-Rent War when, Bender suggests, he could no longer regard an agrarian aristocracy as the strong force for social stability that he had once believed it. See Bender's "James Fenimore Cooper and the City," New York History, 51 (1970), 287-305.

¹³Quoted by Spiller in Fenimore Cooper (New York: Minton, Balch, and Company, 1931), p. 231.

¹⁴"The town life of an American offers little to one accustomed to a town life in older and more permanently regulated communities" (Home As Found, Works of J. Fenimore Cooper, 10 vol. (New York: P. F. Collier, 1892), VI, 58. Subsequent references to Cooper's works will be made in the text and will refer to this edition.

¹⁵This is the argument of Thomas Bender, cited above.

¹⁶Spiller, Fenimore Cooper, 190.

¹⁷This backward-turning quality of Cooper's response to urban society substantiates Marvin Meyers' interpretation of the reason for Cooper's somewhat ambiguous allegiance to the political party of the Jacksonians:

"... he shared with them an angry sense of loss: the First American Republic--the "Doric" Age, to apply his term for Washington's character--was going down before a raw company of the commercial nouveau riche, the speculative promoters of paper towns and enterprises, the mock-democrats of the popular press. He was, in short, a variety of Tory Democrat who gave his qualified allegiance to the party engaged in resisting the conspicuous agents of social and economic subversion." The Jacksonian Persuasion: Politics and Belief (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1957), p. 43.

Regarding the question of Cooper's political commitments, see also Dorothy Waples, The Whig Myth of James Fenimore Cooper (New Haven: Yale University Press, and London: H. Milford, Oxford University Press, 1938).

¹⁸It has often been pointed out, but deserves re-statement, that those who think of Cooper's forests as a locus of idyl or innocence should read again. For instance, from the most idyllic of all, The Deerslayer, Chapter I: "Broad belts of the virgin wilderness . . . affording forest cover to the noiseless moccasin of the native warrior as he trod the secret and bloody warpath."

¹⁹James Grossman, James Fenimore Cooper (New York: William Sloane Associates, 1949), p. 149.

²⁰In The Chainbearer, for instance, Aaron Thousandacres assumes someone from town will be soft, debilitated. The fact that Thousandacres is presented as a direct antagonist to the hero and is given qualities the author specifically deplores would ordinarily obviate his words through a simple exercise in determining point of view. With Cooper, however, this cannot be done. Thousandacres, like Ishmael Bush and the more obviously attractive Guert Ten Eyck, elicit from Cooper a more sympathetic imaginative response than an author generally accords his antagonists, more, even, than his consciously-applauded genteel heroes.

²¹A number of critics have commented on Cooper's dual nature. D. H. Lawrence early recognized this split in his two chapters "Fenimore Cooper's White Novels" and "Fenimore Cooper's Leatherstocking Novels" in Studies in Classic American Literature. A. N. Kaul speaks of his "concern with the moral foundations of American society" and terms the duality in his work his concern, on the one hand, with the "myth of American civilization" and, on the other, with its "history" (The American Vision, pp. 85, 84). Richard Chase, marking this duality, speaks of Cooper as "both the analyst and the visionary of American conditions" in The American Novel and Its Tradition (New York: Doubleday, 1957), p. 46. In a strong recent demand for revaluation of Cooper in terms of this split, Jesse Bier applies the term "schizophrenic" to Cooper: "The Bisection of Cooper: Satanstoe as Prime Example," Texas Studies in Literature and Language, 9 (1968), 511-21. He writes, "The heart of the matter is that his themes invariably war against one another."

²²In The Spy the fact that New York City was indeed a Loyalist stronghold during the Revolution provides Cooper a convenient basis for utilizing the common association of urban effeteness and frivolity with European leanings. "There was no part of the continent where the manners of

England and its aristocratic notions of blood and alliances, prevailed with more force than in a certain circle immediately around the metropolis of New York" (II, 453). Repeatedly the author emphasizes that the heroine had "left the city before she had attained to the age of fashionable womanhood" (II, 527) and that, if she is less adorned than her sister and aunt, she has a natural beauty and charm that make her a favorite.

²³Meyers, The Jacksonian Persuasion, pp. 57-61.

²⁴Lewis Leary, Introduction to Home As Found (New York: Capricorn Books, 1961), p. xxi.

²⁵Grossman, James Fenimore Cooper, p. 201.

²⁶Grossman calls him "tiresomely righteous," p. 213.

²⁷Smith, Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1950), pp. 60-61.

²⁸Meyers, The Jacksonian Persuasion, p. 72, citing Smith.

²⁹Spiller, Fenimore Cooper, p. 283.

CHAPTER V

THE CITY AS MEANING: NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE

It has long since been demonstrated that Hawthorne was not so withdrawn from contemporary affairs as emphasis on his loneliness or inwardness has at times suggested, real though these traits were.¹ He had occasional involvement in politics, and his English notebooks record a strong concern over the social misery of Liverpool and the plight of merchant seamen. All his notebooks display a lively interest in the everyday human spectacle and abound in comments on place ranging from enthusiasm about "thronged streets and the intensest bustle of human life"² to regret at having "lost above a week of delicious autumnal weather" in Boston and Salem that might have been spent "in the woods, or upon the river."³ It seems scarcely surprising that so immediate a public issue as the accelerating process of urbanization should have engaged Hawthorne's interest, or, given the psychological emphasis characteristic of his work, that he should chiefly have concerned himself with the psychological effect of place on the individual.

However, the precise character of Hawthorne's assessment of urbanization, as well as a complex of values he associated with it, is more problematic. To call him either a pro-urbanite or an anti-urbanite on the strength of examples such as those above selected from either the notebooks or the fiction is to indulge in oversimplification.⁴ His re-

sponses to town and country varied. Thus in The House of the Seven Gables Salem appears at times in rather favorable light, perhaps because it is really a bustling village, urban only in tendency, so that it retains a vestigial sense of the embrace of nature. There is "warm sunny air"⁵ in the street, and if it is a dreary and dirty place during a rainstorm, on the morning after it is cheerful and clean. In The Blithedale Romance also Hawthorne adopts a flexible attitude, and while the response to Rome in The Marble Faun is more uniformly negative, he does fully appreciate the city's cultural riches.

The city is a frequent and significant presence in Hawthorne's work. As realistic settings, the Boston of Blithedale and the Rome of The Marble Faun are well realized, as is the town of Salem in Seven Gables, granted Hawthorne's characteristically subdued coloration. The London of "Wakefield" is strongly felt and quite essential to the thrust of the story; indeed, "Wakefield," with its sense of personal insignificance in the vast throng, is Hawthorne's most realistic story of modern urban life. But his interest by no means lies primarily in the real city or in creating a strong immediate sense of place. Rather, setting itself is typically an initial focus of interest through which he approaches larger concerns.⁶ Circumstances of place become emblematic means toward the romancer's oblique exploration of truths lying beneath the externals.

In "Wakefield," as in other works, Hawthorne uses

urban setting chiefly to explore the relationship of the individual to society, his most absorbing theme, but his cities carry a variety of other imports as well. Through a pattern of oscillation between natural and urban settings basic to each of the novels,⁷ he explores the actual tension between city and forest, or country, and a complex of implications. The values which Hawthorne develops in relation to city and wilderness are never forced into a schematic dichotomy of positive and negative. He tentatively adopts the opposition of city as constraint and nature as freedom that shapes Melville's geographic vision, extending it to the related meanings of moral values (law) and emotional values (instinct). But he modifies this scheme to show the need for social relationships as well as for individual fulfillment. In addition, he uses the geographic scheme to represent psychological states or orientations. In this context, the city represents material consciousness, the commonsense and logical faculties, and the wilderness the emotive, non-rational self; the two orientations might be regarded as the Apollonian and Dionysian complexes of values. In this context, the geographic tension figures the need to integrate the imagination or the subconscious with the practical and reasoning faculties.⁸ The tendency of the contrast between city and nature, in this psychological construct as in other systems of meaning, is toward integration or totality.⁹

It is because the role of the city in Hawthorne's

work is essentially a figurative one that The Scarlet Letter is important here despite the absence of actual urban setting. The tension between the Puritan village and the still alien forest is Hawthorne's most aesthetically satisfying development of the values he associated with the relationship of urban and rural settings. The complex relationship of Hester and Dimmesdale to society and their behavior in the forest have implications in numerous overlapping categories of meaning. It is largely because of this multi-level tension between town and forest that The Scarlet Letter is so rich a work.

The opening chapter of The Scarlet Letter is instructive in considering Hawthorne's progression from details of actual place to inner states. In that spareness of description which characterizes the entire work, he suggests the quality of a whole culture by reference to two physical features, the prison and the graveyard. The atmosphere deriving from the "beetle-browed and gloomy" jail with its plot of weeds is felt to encompass the settlement as the meditative pace of the chapter allows this sense of gloom to pervade the reader's consciousness unobtrusively, fixing an encompassing tone for subsequent action. The emphasis on "brow" and "front" in Hawthorne's description of the prison, "already marked with weather-stains and other indications of age, which gave a yet darker aspect to its beetle-browed and gloomy front,"¹⁰ echoes a similar emphasis on heads and

hats in his description of the townspeople, "men in sad-colored garments and gray, steeple-crowned hats, intermixed with women, some wearing hoods, and others bareheaded." Hawthorne's opening statements are always very precise. This parallel, reinforced by the architectural reference of "steeple-crowned," extends the ugly and repressive connotations of the architectural description to the Puritans' seat of intelligence. ("Front," here used to denote the street side of the building, formerly meant "forehead.") As in "The Artist of the Beautiful," Hawthorne will develop in The Scarlet Letter an association of the urban setting with values of the head as opposed to those of the heart.

The pressing contiguity of the forest strongly felt throughout the book is present at the outset in the only other significant detail of scene, the rose bush. Speaking in his own voice, Hawthorne comments that the rose bush may be there for the prisoner's view "in token that the deep heart of Nature could pity and be kind to him." Thus, besides establishing physical setting and suggesting an identification of sense of place with quality of human life and feeling, Hawthorne initiates in this brief opening scene an informing ambiguous tension of forest and town. Ranging from absolute contrast to virtual merger through shared descriptive terms of shadow, darkness, and gloom, the relationship of the two poles of setting tends often toward a conjunction of qualities of evil. Here, in the rose bush that may have survived the "stern old wilderness," the con-

junction indicates a possible redemption or enrichment of social life through reconciliation of Nature and Town or, in terms of the most significant values of symbolic place in the work, reconciliation of inner Self with Experience. It is because of this need that Hester and Dimmesdale find no fulfillment until they bring into harmony or balance their own impulses toward town and toward wilderness.

In the opening scene as Hester stands on the scaffold of the pillory, she sees, beyond this "roughly hewn street of a little town, on the edge of the Western wilderness,"¹¹ the "entire track" of her life, including her native village and the "continental city" with "intricate and narrow thoroughfares" where she once lived with Chillingworth (58). The diverse crowd and the recapitulation of Hester's emigration to the New World from an "ancient" Continental city, here as at the end suggest a microcosmic relationship of the Puritan town to all social history.¹² Yet only the letter and the infant are "her realities," and focus on these symbols of a private reality excludes social experience and history: "all else had vanished!" (59). Thus the initial impetus toward Hester's divorce from society derives from her own choice as well as from the repressive nature of the Puritan town.¹³

The tension between society and wilderness operates structurally in a pattern of flight and return. In Chapters I through XIII all the major characters remain physically in the town. In Chapters XIV through XXII Hester,

Pearl, and Dimmesdale are either physically removed or planning a removal. In XXIII and XXIV Dimmesdale and finally Hester return, on their own terms, to the town. The figurative flight and return, however, is not wholly parallel. Hester's position vis a vis society is from the outset ambiguous, as she is both outcast and withdrawn and at the same time a ministering (fallen) angel. But she does not assume the role of ministrant because of larger social ideals but because of a gnawing guilt that causes repression of instinct. Hence her ministering role is felt as constraint, and her resentment further estranges her from the town. Just as she thus stands "apart from mortal interests, yet close beside them" (84, my emphasis), her cottage stands significantly on the edge of town, between the village that is "foreign" to her and the forest (80).

Hester's dual estrangement places her in an increasingly complicated relation to society. In her guise of penitent and angel of mercy she is superficially reconciled to the town by a "species of general regard" (160) at precisely the time when she is more fully divorcing herself psychologically, wandering the "dark labyrinth of mind" amid "wild and ghastly scenery" (166).¹⁴ Her proposal to Dimmesdale that they escape the settlement is an explicit disavowal of their own society in favor of either the forest (instinctual self, the primal unknown of the emotions) or a European city (impersonal history). Either escape means an abdication of personal history, hence a severance of

self from experience. But this severance has been imposed by society: when Pearl asks that Dimmesdale "go back with us, hand in hand, we three together, into the town" (212), Hester can only answer "We must not always talk in the market-place of what happens to us in the forest" or "kisses are not to be given in the market-place" (240).

On her return to town, Hester's complex alienation is visually indicated by the space left around her by encircling election day crowds who gather to stare at her scarlet letter. Here Chillingworth, whose close identification with European cities and with the wilderness alike has been sinister, is fully as isolated from the townspeople. His, however, has been entirely a chosen alienation; he is in no sense a victim. It is a measure of his dehumanization that, though he is as aware as Hester of his alienated state, he does not seek reintegration or escape but trades on that knowledge. This is very clear as he proceeds with his plot and even signifies to Hester by nods and gestures what he is doing as secretly as if they were alone. The situation is doubly menacing because the presence of the crowd not only fails to thwart his machinations but impedes any attempt by Hester to avert them.

Unlike Hester, Dimmesdale is never outwardly estranged from the town. Yet he is alienated psychologically despite his apparent social integration; the public and the inward poles of his being (in McPherson's terms, the "daylight" and the "night" worlds) are at odds. It is a measure of

his real estrangement that there is "joy throughout the town" (125) when he and Chillingworth take joint lodgings, of all possible situations the one most destructive to Dimmesdale. This closeness to Chillingworth accelerates the erosion of his personality caused by his attempt to live two distinct identities. As in the case of Hester, the destructive situation can be attributed both to Dimmesdale himself and to the repressive town which forces such a divorce of instinctual from social self. One of the chief issues of the book is the question of whether existing society is not calculated to destroy the creative Dionysan dimension of man, represented geographically by the wilderness, and how a social structure which will deny neither moral order nor inner self can evolve.

Dimmesdale represses the dusky subconscious world of the passions represented geographically by the forest. He has given total allegiance to his social role and, through his ministry, to a higher concept of the Heavenly City embracing the actual. It is apparent that Dimmesdale's ministering role is thus a more structured, clearer version of Hester's. His higher allegiance is recognized, albeit sardonically, by Chillingworth, who remarks of the minister's willingness to die that "saintly men, who walk with God on earth" would like to go "walk with him on the golden pavements of the New Jerusalem" (122) and later says with strong irony that a good man's prayers are "the current gold coin of the New Jerusalem" (224). Yet the falsity of his position

makes Dimmesdale's dual allegiance a lie and a denial of life. He disclaims his worthiness to walk in the City of God, and the reader understands that he feels himself also to be walking unworthily in the City of Man. The moral and psychological destructiveness of his position is embodied in Chillingworth, whose eyes gleam as from the "ghastly fire that darted from Bunyan's awful door-way in the hill-side" (129). Bunyan's doorway to hell was midway between Christian's home town and the Celestial City--a telling approximation of Dimmesdale's near saintly but perilous spiritual position.

It is during the scene in the forest, when Hester convinces Dimmesdale of his peril and urges that they leave together, that the opposition between emotional freedom and the constrained hardheadedness of the town becomes fully apparent. Hester's acts of letting down her hair and removing the letter from her dress signify an escape from society's repression, as do her embrace of Dimmesdale, their first physical contact shown in the book, and Pearl's empathic participation in woodland life. The shadows of the forest, luring them to freedom where "the yellow leaves will show no vestige of the white man's tread" (197), thus represent the dusky world of the instinctual self, the opposite of the daylight world of rational order and public decorum in the market-place.¹⁵ Even as this symbolization becomes clear, Dimmesdale at last confronts the corresponding opposition within himself.

His decision to leave the settlement with Hester, however, is not an integration of the public and the instinctual aspects of personality but an abandonment of his public self, just as he had previously abandoned his passionate self. But this would be just as partial, and hence just as destructive, an existence as the other, since for Hawthorne the social self represents both the historic self, the product of individual experience, and the effectual link between the individual and humanity, or general history. To deny experience and the human brotherhood is as surely a death as to deny the inner self. By contrast, Dimmesdale's decision to acknowledge Hester and Pearl in the market-place is an act of return and reconciliation, an integration of self, experience, and social posture which Hawthorne offers as man's only means to personal wholeness.¹⁶ Dimmesdale escapes Chillingworth, the external embodiment of inner dis-ease, by forcing himself into the insulation of full social notice, where he cannot follow. The tragedy is that for Dimmesdale the realization is too late.

So complete an integration as Dimmesdale's is unworkable in society as it is actually constituted; few in the crowd understand the meaning of the act, and one can scarcely imagine a subsequent life for Dimmesdale and Hester in the settlement. Yet Hawthorne offers his act as an image of the only means to satisfactory personal or social existence. More workable because less disruptive of social order is Hester's final completion of the pattern of escape and

return as she makes voluntary, i.e. whole-souled, embrace of the penitential and ministering role which earlier had been imposed. The heraldic reading of her tombstone is dim indication that her act of return is in a high sense tragic, a knowing submission of self to society from a sense of mission. It is a submission to the destructive element which sustains her.

Neither Hester nor Dimmesdale, then, can achieve personal wholeness except through social experience,¹⁷ because social experience represents both one aspect of self and participation in humanity. That their differing embraces of social experience as represented by the town are not fully satisfactory is due to both the pre-existent damage of the prolonged denial and the imperfect nature of the social structure. Hawthorne's last word on the need for reconciliation is one of his first in the book: in "The Custom House" he says that although the city life is crippling and crass, the ability to participate in the city is evidence of "a system naturally well balanced, and lacking no essential part of a thorough organization" (25). It is a dictum as important to The House of the Seven Gables as to The Scarlet Letter.

In Seven Gables the city is a more substantial real presence, interesting in its own right, and the thematic values of the tension between city and country emerge more directly from plot and are less internalized than in The Scarlet Letter. That is to say, The House of the Seven

Gables is a more social and less spiritual book than the earlier one. The largest pattern of estrangement (not escape) and return is the figurative one of the whole Pyncheon family, isolated by their hereditary guilt much as Hester and Dimmesdale are by their own. Col. Pyncheon's legal but immoral seizure of the Maule land results in his family's varying and gradually deepening isolation from both society and nature despite their social prominence, until Phoebe leads the last Pyncheons back to solidarity through her union with the last Maule. The psychological reunion, however, involves a troublesome physical departure from town.

The patterns of physical escape and return, one Clifford and Hepzibah's and the other Phoebe's, operate in contrary motion. Clifford and Hepzibah are initially identified with the town by residence but estranged from it by the family curse. Clifford is snatched away by unjust imprisonment and returns only to face continued estrangement, while Hepzibah has withdrawn into the old house and is making a feeble attempt at return when the novel opens. After both fail to enter the social life of the town they again take flight, only to return dejectedly once again to exorcise Judge Pyncheon's death and participate in Phoebe's reconciliation. Their reward, rather surprisingly, is to leave town again, but this time without the onus of estrangement. Phoebe, the angel of mercy of the novel, begins outside the

town, not withdrawn or forced out like her two cousins but firmly rooted in a pre-urban community. She voluntarily enters the town (experience, history), initiates the process of reconciliation, withdraws to gather strength and divest herself of her rural commitments, and returns to complete the reconciliation of the Pyncheons. Phoebe's experiences in Salem prove to be a maturing or initiation, modulating her sunny childlike innocence.¹⁸

Though narrative attitudes toward Salem are mixed, toward the old house they are uniformly negative; it is gloomy, dark, and decaying. From its building the house has been associated with the growth of the town, and at the time the novel opens it has been engulfed by that growth so that the side door opens directly onto the street. It is thus a useful symbol of the town itself. But it also is a symbol of the Pyncheon family--their guilt as well as their aristocratic traditions and early leanings toward Europe. Because of these added associations, Hawthorne can use the house to represent, at various points in the novel, both the city and a withdrawal from it.

It is by using the old house as the epitome of entrenched urbanism that he continues the theme of merging Nature and the City which he had only suggested in The Scarlet Letter. The angular house is linked to nature by the spherical and cyclical patterns¹⁹ of the great old elm that shades it and seems to "make it a part of nature" (27). The garden behind the house is also a "breathing-place"

for nature within the "dusty town" (87). Moss and flowers growing on the roof of the mansion in dust settled there from the street also reconcile nature and the house, hence nature and the city. Only the garden can attract Clifford out of his antisocial retreat in the house (again, the house is a shifting symbol), though neither he nor Hepzibah is strongly associated with the garden, which has fallen into near ruin under their care.

The theme of nature's embrace of the city is chiefly associated with Phoebe and Holgrave, both of whom enjoy gardening and succeed in making things grow. It is significant that both of them are capable of participation in both city and country and take pleasure in both. Phoebe, the normative figure of the book, responds warmly to urban living and has a knack for getting on in the city even though Judge Pyncheon twice hints that she belongs in the country (125 and 126). For refreshment she might either "breathe rural air in a suburban walk, or ocean breezes along the shore" or go "shopping about the city" (174), and she urges Clifford to "look out upon the life of the street (159). Holgrave, who similarly insists that in operating the cent-shop Hepzibah will be "lending" her "strength . . . to the united struggle of mankind" (45), shows like adaptability to either environment in his list of occupations. Despite their own active engagement in the city and endorsement of a social life, both spend their pleasantest moments in the

garden and retire at the end to a rural or, more precisely, suburban home.

That home has been left them by Judge Pyncheon, and the question is repeatedly raised whether their acceptance of it is a perpetuation of the curse of bearing the heaped-up burden of the past. The ending is certainly puzzling. After his endorsement of social involvement within the city, why does Hawthorne have his hero and heroine turn their backs on that involvement? An answer to this question involves the reconciliation of nature to the city and the relationship of the present to the past.

First, in the reconciliation of nature and the city the direction of impact is important. A successful merging of the two means the ingress of natural life into the city, pervading and softening it. This is true of the rosebush in The Scarlet Letter and the mosses and flowers on the roof of the old gabled house. Similarly the giant elm grows up beside the house and finally overshadows it, figuratively absorbing the house into a larger pattern. So, too, Phoebe comes from the country. The opposite, an incursion of the town into the country, does not produce harmony. The site of the old house had been originally chosen by Matthew Maule for the sake of its spring "although somewhat too remote from what was then the centre of the village" (6-7). It is the growth of town outward to this site that brings it to Col. Pyncheon's attention so that the injustice is done

and the fresh spring becomes brackish. Judge Pyncheon, identified with urbanism by his social prominence, makes a similar incursion into nature by building himself a country house on the edge of town. But the quality of his rural retreat is rendered suspect by his deceptiveness, which also undermines his appearance of benevolence in town: at one point, in a moment of fantastic hyperbolic humor, Hawthorne tells us that the Judge's forced smile was so withering a sunshine that men had to follow him sprinkling the streets to lay the dust he had raised. The Judge's approach to the setting of his house is exploitative: he has "gathered" luxuries as well as "country-air, and all the conveniences" about him (128). Further, the Judge imposes on his country home site his hereditary guilt, the burden of the past which he has actively continued into the present.

Phoebe and Holgrave's departure to the same country house at the end does not mean they are following the Judge's path. They take with them none of his guilt, either hereditary or personal, nor his deviousness or use of his country seat as a power base. What they do take is their personal reconciliation of city and country. Phoebe, of course, is returning to her initial commitment. Their move to the country house, then, or actually to a compromise between country and city, is a symbolic reconciliation of the tension, though Judge Pyncheon's residence there was not.

The matter of Holgrave's diatribe against the past

and the constraint of permanent houses, followed by his taking on a house that he wishes were stone, is more difficult. If one is convinced by reading Hawthorne's work that psychological depth is his strength, it seems hard to believe that he would so have erred as to have Holgrave make this inadequately motivated shift and yet maintain him as hero, even granted that his deliberate turn to more cheerful subjects (Seven Gables lacks, for one thing, the powerfully evocative forest of The Scarlet Letter) caused a decline in power. But it seems to me a mistake to take Holgrave's diatribe as a full and binding commitment to these views. He is still very young and has been presented as a drifter, one who has tried and left a variety of roles and is still, by his own account, looking for a tenable identity. His reply when Phoebe asks him why he is living in Pyncheon House if he so dislikes old houses--"I dwell in it for a while, that I may know the better how to hate it"--is the overstatement of defensiveness. We have seen that he is in fact quite contented with his gardening and the Sunday afternoon teas there. Holgrave's position seems to be that of the usual Hawthorne division between heart and head, and at the end he exchanges his series of rejected roles for an arrival at a home where heart and head are reconciled. His shift to property ownership at the end, then, while it may still be unsatisfactory to a reader convinced of the truth of his earlier view, can be seen less as betrayal than as an evolution of character.²⁰

The quality of his settlement has been anticipated by the harmonized strains of rural and urban allegiances in his past.

Another contrasting parallel that illuminates the final move to the country is Clifford and Hepzibah's attempted escape. Although they go by means of the very image of newness and progress, a train, the old house, the guilt of the past, remains with Hepzibah all the way. The train is presented as a microcosm: "Sleep; sport; business; graver or lighter study;--and the common and inevitable movement onward! It was life itself!" (257). It is in effect a wheeled city, society with no sense of history, and its rush into the countryside is an image of accelerated urban spread. Clifford rants wildly all the way on the evil of binding the present by the past. Because his speech is obviously hysterical, it tends to invalidate Holgrave's diatribe against the past and towns built of durable material.²¹ But the result of this aggressive push into the rural landscape, as well as of Hepzibah's paralysis by the past, is desolation: they arrive at a ruined house and a ruined church. Clifford had been prophetic in stating that telegraphing a man's guilt would deprive him of his "city of refuge" (265), but the telegraph is not necessary for this to happen.

The image of the actual city in Seven Gables is problematic, but less so than in The Scarlet Letter because Hawthorne has avoided the extremes of both the forest and the

gloomy, destructive town. The cruel reality of the Puritan village has been transferred to dream forebodings: Hepzibah's waking nightmare of a thronged city with splendid stores among which her dingy shop tries in vain to compete (48-49), and her fear that Clifford may have wandered out into the city and been "goaded by their taunts, their loud, shrill cries, and cruel laughter--insulted by the filth of the public ways, which they would fling upon him" (247-8). Still, these nightmares grow out of the actual insensitivity and rudeness of the townspeople and hence out of an urban experience far from satisfactory. The townspeople treat Hepzibah callously and ridicule Clifford's innocent, if eccentric, pleasure in the transient beauty of soap bubbles. Yet Hawthorne urges that his characters embrace this flawed society because their need for social communion exceeds the destructiveness of the forms of that communion. If the rigidity of the city, the angular deteriorating house, is crippling, a headlong rush to change, the train, arrives at emptiness. But the ending of the book suggests a better way: simultaneous acceptance of the past and willingness to change it, commitment to the city from the middle distance recommended in the procession scene, and a sympathetic rather than exploitative move into the natural setting. The ideal city would be a reconciliation of the city with nature in an organic growth pattern like the cycles of the great Pyncheon elm. If this vision of an idealized suburbia

has made the book seem too disinfected of darker meanings, the fault lies less in it than in what it excludes. With neither the forest nor the dark heroine, symbols that evoked Hawthorne's deepest responses, the book lacks a means of showing that the incursion of nature will bring to the sunlit urban world the vitalizing unconscious forces of sexuality and imagination.

In Hawthorne's last two completed works the city is a yet fuller realistic presence, and the pattern of flight and return is delineated more clearly, though problems peculiar to each of these works vitiates the force of the pattern.

In The Blithedale Romance the peculiar limitations of Coverdale as narrator make the statement about urban experience uncertain. At the outset Boston seems a rather neutral setting in which one can meet mysterious people, go to shows, and enjoy good sherry. Memories of the "cheery . . . blaze upon the hearth"²² at Blithedale with which the second chapter opens suggest that more positive values were to be found in that utopian retreat from the city. But, suitably for an "exploded scheme," the fire had been built of "brushwood" that soon goes out. By contrast, at the time of departure Coverdale's city apartments are "cosey . . . with a good fire burning in the grate" and, besides, are "partaking of the warmth of all the rest" of the houses on the block (10); to go seeking a better life he "plunged"

from this warmth "into the heart of the pitiless snow-storm." But the city, though more comfortable, may not be preferable after all:

Whatever else I may repent of, therefore, let it be reckoned neither among my sins nor follies, that I once had faith and force enough to form generous hopes . . . even to the extent of quitting a warm fireside, flinging away a freshly lighted cigar, and travelling far beyond the strike of city clocks, through a drifting snow-storm (11).

In his flush of enthusiasm as he and his companions ride out of the city toward Blithedale, he sees the city as confining, dingy, and bound by convention; the streets resemble a maze which they "threaded" (11). Yet the country road is a "desolate extent" which, if free of time-hardened constraint ("the impress of somebody's patched boot"), is exposed to the "unfettered blast" of a sometimes hostile nature (11).

Imagery of fire and coldness, that is, suggests an ambivalent attitude toward conventional urban life: an opposition between reassuring human nearness in the city and vulnerability to the elements in the country, but also between a stuffy, debilitating habitual warmth in the city and a heartiness and hopeful energy in the particular country life of the Blithedale experiment. Thus Coverdale explains Priscilla's apparent fear of the storm by her having been "bred up, no doubt, in some close nook, some inauspiciously sheltered court of the city . . . accustomed to the narrowness of human limits, with the lamps of neighboring tenements glimmering across the street" (35-36).²³

But ironically the true source of Priscilla's nervousness is her experience of evil in the city. In the following chapter, when Coverdale wakes up sick, he scolds himself that the "hot-house warmth of a town residence, and the luxurious life" had taken the "pith" out of him. But he recalls that city life "had satisfied me well enough" with its comfortable, well-ordered facilities, its cultural advantages, and "my noontide walk along the cheery pavement, with the suggestive succession of human faces, and the brisk throb of human life, in which I shared" (40).

In the first six chapters, then, about twenty per cent of the book, Hawthorne establishes his tension between city and country in terms of a variety of qualities associated with each: comfort and hardship, protective solidarity and vulnerable exposure, sophistication and simplicity, the past and the future, and dreary but reliable routine and noble but transient dreams. The tension, that is, does not present all positive values on the one side and all negative ones on the other; and some values are less the property of the setting to which they are attached (as transient dreams with the country) than of the approach which these particular characters make to that setting. At this early point in the novel, judgment between the two is impossible.

In the intervening chapters leading up to Coverdale's return to the city (VII through XV) the rural setting is important chiefly for the deadening round of work it entails.

Also, the utopians are shown to be increasingly out of harmony with their environment. They are living in a "Modern Arcadia" (58), the artificial rustic setting of the city-dweller's imagination. Zenobia brings her hot-house flowers and Priscilla her troubled past from the city, and their retreat is threatened by the intrusions of Old Moodie and Westerveldt, both representatives of the city. Besides the imposition of these reminders of a destructive urbanism on the rural scene, new recruits and boarders are "from town and elsewhere" (62) so that altogether Blithedale takes on the heterogeneity of a city transported to the country. Coverdale says they might have been taken for "denizens of Grub-street" (64). There is no suggestion that this disharmony with the environment is a cause of the dissension within the group, but the one echoes the other, and Coverdale had remarked early in the book on the utopians' "position of new hostility" toward society" (20).

When Coverdale becomes fully disillusioned and decides to leave for a while, the fields and woods, which have appeared in such terms as "green cathedral" when he wanted to escape "the heavy floodtide of social life" (89-90), have taken on a "sun-burnt and arid aspect" (138). But neither does the city have a welcoming aspect on his return. As when he left, the weather is bad, with "occasional gusts of rain, and an ugly-tempered east-wind, which seemed to come right off the chill and melancholy sea, hardly mitigated by sweeping over the roofs, and amalgamating

itself with the dusky element of city smoke" (145). Buildings have an oppressive sameness, and Zenobia, who went out walking every day at Blithedale, regardless of weather, stays in her apartment "rather than bedraggle her skirts over the sloppy pavements" (156). Except for the comfort of weather-tight rooms and the availability of luxuries, the physical presence of the city is less than satisfactory,²⁴ even on his return when Coverdale is most sensible of its virtues.

An even drearier view of urban society emerges as Coverdale inquires into Old Moodie's history. From the unspecified city of his origins, where he "glittered in the eyes of the world," he had fled to a "squalid street or court of the older portion of the city" in crowded quarters displaying ruins of the past among "poverty-stricken wretches, sinners, and forlorn, good people" (184). Like so many of Hawthorne's characters, Moodie is isolated within a crowd. Both he and Westerveldt, as well as Chillingworth of The Scarlet Letter, are entirely city-oriented but alienated within the city. That is, they are embodiments of the destructive qualities Hawthorne sees in urban life--devotion to money-getting, deviousness, concern with appearances, manipulative reduction of others to the status of tools. It is in this capacity as symbols of destructive urbanism, as well as because of their personal involvements with Zenobia and Priscilla, that Moodie and Westerveldt constitute a threat to the utopian community. The extent to

which Old Moodie becomes a sympathetic character measures the extent to which he has ceased to function in these negative ways but is still suffering the effects. Also, he is a potential double for Coverdale, who has obvious tendencies toward sybaritic withdrawal.

But despite his realization of its defects and his sometime vision of a better order, Coverdale embraces the city. His response is remarkably warm for a person of such self-conscious reserve, a limitation he admits, and is much different from his response to the city before he left it for Blithedale. Then, he had remarked about the warmth of his apartment, his cigars and sherry, and one friend who helped him finish the last bottle. In retrospect, from Blithedale, that life began to look better, and he particularly recollected the vitality of the place. Though he does order a coal fire immediately upon returning and feels as if he has come back home, he is more concerned with reconciling the two poles of his experience, and revels in the bustle of human life around him:

Whatever had been my taste for solitude and natural scenery, yet the thick, foggy, stifled element of cities, the entangled life of many men together, sordid as it was, and empty of the beautiful, took quite as strenuous a hold upon my mind. I felt as if there could never be enough of it (146).

Enumerating some of the sounds of the city, he remarks, "All this was just as valuable, in its way, as the sighing of the breeze among the birch-trees" (147). Coverdale then turns for the rest of the chapter--as, indeed, he spends

most of the book--to his chosen role of observer and commentator. The obvious detachment of Coverdale's position has drawn the acerbity of numerous critics; Waggoner's parting shot at him, for instance, is, "We had thought that he could not love anyone but himself."²⁵ It seems to me that Coverdale is more human than that. It is true that he lingers "on the brink" beside his window rather than "plunging into this muddy tide of human activity" (147); from this vantage point he regards human events as shifting scenes in a play, observing rather than participating. But he observes with a benediction: "'I bless God for these good folks!'"

Coverdale's delight in the city is mainly delight in the variety of its human life, but he also describes various evidences of the infusion of nature into the urban setting, and these evidences suggest an answer to his uneasiness about the seeming split between his Boston and his Blithedale experiences. The weather itself is one such infusion, blanketing city and country impartially; Coverdale explicitly links his two poles of experience by thinking how the "gusty rain" would produce gloom at either place (154). More prominent are the back gardens his window overlooks. Hawthorne took these gardens from his own observations described in his notebook entry for May 19, 1850,²⁶ elaborating some details to suggest the artificiality of the gardens so that they are representative of nature but of nature distorted by the urban setting. For instance, a simple speculation about the health of the fruit trees--

"I suppose there is a rich soil about their roots"--appears in Blithedale as "the soil had doubtless been enriched to a more than natural fertility" (148). Or his pleasure at grapes growing "here in the heart of the city, in this little spot of fructifying earth, while the thunder of wheels rolls about it on every side" is transformed in the novel by Coverdale's remarking that they were "already purple" and that the "blighting winds of our rigid climate" were excluded and the sun "lay tropically there, even when less than temperate in every other region" (148). Hawthorne's own delight at the hardness of nature in braving this location becomes a suspicion that if nature enters the city it is thereby rendered the less natural. These gardens, then, participate unobtrusively in the contrast between the natural farm life of Silas Foster and the Arcadian one of the utopians. In addition, we recall that, although Coverdale welcomes his city comforts after he has come to know raw elements and work, his pleasure in them before was tempered by suspicion that the sheltered warmth of his apartment was shutting him off from rigorous experience.

Hawthorne's doubt about the status of nature in the city is transcended by the "robust and healthy buttonwood-tree" that spreads above the house and shelters numerous birds. Other links with nature are the cat that "evidently thought herself entitled to the privileges of forest-life in this close heart of city conventionalisms" and the rule

that holds for town and country alike that the "back view of a residence" offers more of "the picturesque" (149). Coverdale also thinks he has "not seen a prettier bit of nature, in all my summer in the country" than the display of family affection among a group of city dwellers across from his window (151). Another "pretty bit of nature" is the sunbeam after the rain: it "kindled up the whole range of edifices, threw a glow over the windows, glistened on the wet roofs, and . . . perched upon the chimney-tops" (161). Thus the possible reconciliation of city and country is suggested in Coverdale's motion between the two, in his attempt to see both poles of his experience as a total, and in his perception of nature within the city. But when Zenobia comes to the city she discards even her hothouse flower in favor of a piece of jewelry and changes her manner, commenting that only "a very circumscribed mind" has room for only one role (164). This insistence on the discreteness of her roles is, of course, unavailing, since the emotional involvements of one life follow her into another: Coverdale realizes that Hollingsworth's "influence was no less potent . . . here, in the midst of artificial life, than it had been, at the foot of the gray rock" (167).

Part, then, of any "statement" Hawthorne is making about the tension between city and country in Blithedale is that change of environment matters less than change or constancy of character. This is not to say that his con-

cern with place or with society is not serious. He continues his association of the city with a smothering weight of custom, but again his assessment is ambivalent. If purposive innovation proves unworkable, unthinking traditionalism is paralytic. Rather, organic social growth and continuity with the past are to be preferred over abrupt innovation because history, imaged in the city, cannot successfully be denied. Although the urban environment itself appears drab, the possibility of a vivifying harmony of nature and the city is entertained here as in the other novels. More important, the city offers Coverdale the mechanics of involvement with humanity, even though he is by temperament debarred from full human commitment; for this reason alone even a gravely flawed urban environment has value. To simplify, The Blithedale Romance is a more pro-urban than anti-urban work.

The Marble Faun introduces little new in Hawthorne's examination of the city, despite the shift to Europe. Rome obviously offered rich opportunity, which he utilized fully, to make the city an image of the past. But this is only raising to its highest power, because congenial materials lay ready to his hand, his previous practice. There is also some alteration of his theme of the tension between city and wilderness or country. The countryside of Italy did not carry the suggestion of moral threat that the New World wilderness did, and furthermore the greater horror of Rome with its catacombs evokes a more idyllic countryside

for contrast.²⁷ But although its suggestions are modified, the pattern of flight and return is still present.

In The Marble Faun the flight from the city is figured more urgently as escape than in the other books except The Scarlet Letter. Donatello and Miriam's flight to his country estate, after his murder of the sinister model with Miriam's complicity, is timed to coincide with the notorious Roman malaria season, intensifying the sense of their escaping an oppressive evil. After thought and spiritual purification they and Kenyon return to Rome to be reunited with Hilda, who has made another kind of flight, in the very streets and to accept punishment.

Rome is presented chiefly as a place of corruption, although the constant insistence on art mitigates this so that the city becomes, as Waggoner puts it, "both culture and corruption, paradoxically both superior and inferior to 'nature.'" In the second and third paragraphs of the opening chapter, having devoted the first to setting his characters within the framework of art and to suggesting the key theme of Innocence and Evil, Hawthorne establishes firmly a sense of this city as senecdoche for all of history -- "a vague sense of ponderous remembrances; a perception of . . . weight and density in a by-gone life" (28) with succeeding ages merging or superimposed. This perspective of vast time he uses to universalize the characters and their story, turning it almost too clearly into a moral fable.

Rome as History and Rome as City of Destruction merge

in the catacombs which dominate the early portions of the novel set in the city. The catacombs become a "type" of sin; they are labyrinthine and dark, there is danger of getting lost in them, and appropriately the model, who haunts the streets until he virtually lures Donatello to murder, turns up there. Linked to the past largely through the catacombs under it, the city also becomes insistently maze-like. Rome is "intricate" (325), has "intricacies" (51) and "crookedness" (202), and for Kenyon it becomes "a labyrinth of dismal streets" (413). The catacombs are also associated with the chasm down which Curtius jumped, extended to represent the "pit of blackness that lies beneath us everywhere" ready to swallow up all human happiness as well as the "great chasm" of time over whose brink all past civilizations have tumbled (162). The image recurs in Kenyon's thinking after Hilda disappears that she may have fallen into "some dark pitfall that lay right across her path . . . that abyss!" (828). The physical city, then, is firmly established as a symbol of the past and of evil.

Apart from this symbolism, Rome itself appears particularly repellent to Hawthorne. The book is punctuated with outbursts against it. It is a mixture--"its thousands of evil smells, mixed up with fragrance of rich incense . . . everywhere, moreover, a Cross--and nastiness at the foot of it" (110-11). Kenyon's studio is on an "ugly and dirty little lane . . . and though chill, narrow, gloomy and bordered with tall and shabby structures, the lane was not a whit

more disagreeable than nine-tenths of the Roman streets" (114). Old Tomaso calls Rome "that wicked and miserable city" (238). The chief reason for this aversion seems to be time and resulting dirt, and Hawthorne repeats the charge he puts into Holgrave's mouth in Seven Gables that cities should be "capable of purification by fire, or of decay within each half-century" (301). These complaints against Rome come directly from Hawthorne's notebooks kept during his stay there, which contain frequent complaints about the dirtiness of Rome and other Italian cities and the "indescribably ugly and disagreeable" streets. Even before his daughter's illness there he wrote, "I shall never be able to express how I dislike the place."²⁹ Nevertheless, it is easy to overstate his repugnance toward the city since, deriving from its capacity as artists' colony and its relation to past grandeurs, aesthetic value largely redeems it. Indeed, the need to make history meaningful and the need to transcend its miseries and shabbiness may be seen as a source of the impulse to art which transforms the city.

A further mode of redemption is, as before, the presence of nature within the city. Recalling the moss on Pyncheon House, moss and fern growing in the crevices of the Bernini fountain suggest that "Nature takes the fountain back into her great heart" (38). However, perhaps because of the nature of his material, Hawthorne seems less confident that reconciliation can be achieved here. Commending

one "small, ancient town" for being almost as rural as the country, he notes that in one street "Nature, in the shape of tree, shrub, or grassy sidewalk, is as much shut out . . . as from the heart of any swarming city" (293). The word "swarming," like the "vermin and noisomeness" elsewhere (301), suggests that instead the city exists in the decay of nature.

Nevertheless, even in so fallen a state, the city can provide means toward social communion, the most perennial of Hawthorne's concerns. The tone of his comments on Hilda's "maiden elevation" (53) above the street is initially almost adulatory, but she early displays angel-delusions and the narrator's attitude gradually becomes a condemnation of her priggish pride though he remains sympathetic. The street, even if full of "wicked filth," is the meeting ground of ordinary humanity; Kenyon longs to draw Hilda down from her tower to his level in the street, and when she emerges from her mysterious retreat of purgation she joins him at a street festival. Still, the gaiety of the festival takes on the nightmare quality of Robin's street experience in "My Kinsman, Major Molineux." After the murder, the burden of secret guilt causes for Hilda and Miriam the isolation within the city that torments so many of Hawthorne's characters. Urban metaphor, "a crowded thoroughfare and jostling throng of criminals" (176), suggests that the same guilt initiates Miriam and Donatello into the revolting community of secret crime. In Hawthorne's usual pattern, this

community should become a bond to all humanity if guilt is confessed. But Miriam and Donatello return to Rome, voluntarily enter upon expiation, and yet do not achieve or seem likely to achieve wider community. The city gives penance but little else, and as the book ends the negative images of threat and nightmare are more memorable than the positive ones. Hilda and Kenyon are planning to return to America, a flight from Rome and from the past.

Hawthorne's depiction of the city at the end of his effective career, then, was darker than at the time of his first mature novel. At the literal level, this was because of his actual dislike of Rome, which may have been largely the result of a dislike of entrenched, classbound English society which had grown up during his years as consul in Liverpool, just ended when he and his family went to Italy. Hall suggests that Hawthorne's experience in England led him to a more outspoken affirmation of democracy and reaction against the past than at any other time in his career.³⁰ Certainly such a frame of mind would color his view of the very symbol of the past. In addition, it is understandable that his always rather finical nature might react strongly against the dirt he saw in Italy as well as Liverpool and that the strangeness of the culture might have paralyzed his ordinarily ready sympathies. This strongly negative view of the actual city is reflected in the constriction of his affirmation of its symbolic values.

But even though he displayed less confidence than before in the city's efficacy as a means to community and the possibility of its being drawn into unity with nature, he persisted in drawing his characters back to the city. Insisting on their need for redemption within society, he submitted them to the city, as Lewis insists, not simply for punishment but also because some "fulfillment of the spirit" lay beneath the "darkness" of social experience.³¹ This ambivalence of perceiving the destructiveness of the urban experience yet affirming its value is present throughout his work. The bleakness and close-quartered animus of the Puritan settlement in The Scarlet Letter (like the towns in "The Gentle Boy" and other tales and sketches) are quite as blighting to Hester and Dimmesdale as the foreign evil of Rome is, in a more spectacular way, to Hilda and the others, and a dual sense of the past broods over the settlement no less surely than vast history broods over Rome, but their need for social experience is affirmed nonetheless. In all Hawthorne's novels the back and forth movement of characters between city and country, or wilderness, demonstrates this ambivalence; the city exerts both an attractive and a repulsive force. But in addition to his explicit affirmations, the circular patterns formed by flight and return effect a tentative reconciliation through form of the city and the wilderness and the values they suggest.

Hawthorne never produced an urban work of the caliber of Melville's "Bartleby." Assessed by the criteria of

of mimetic realism, his urban fiction is weaker than that of his contemporaries, as, indeed, it has the least direct bearing on the topic of urbanism. In terms of the variety of levels on which the contrast of urban and rural setting has meaning and the complexity of implication it holds, however, his work offers the fullest treatment of urban life in American literature of the period. It is not the urban scene but the meaning of urban experience to the individual in search of personal wholeness that is a significant presence in Hawthorne's work.

NOTES

¹See, for instance, Randall Stewart, Nathaniel Hawthorne, A Biography (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1948) and Lawrence Sargent Hall, Hawthorne: Critic of Society (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1944).

²Nathaniel Hawthorne, The English Notebooks, ed. Randall Stewart (New York: Modern Language Association of America, and London: Oxford University Press, 1941), p. 591.

³Hawthorne, The American Notebooks, ed. Randall Stewart (New Haven: Yale University Press, and London: Oxford University Press, 1932), p. 248.

⁴Morton and Lucia White, in The Intellectual Versus the City, p. 41, make the latter judgment. Michael H. Cowan, in City of the West, pp. 13-14, sees the cause for the "fluctuations" in Emerson's attitude toward cities, similar to those of Hawthorne's, in the "complexity" of his inner life.

⁵The House of the Seven Gables, Vol. II of The Centenary Edition of the Works of Nathaniel Hawthorne (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1965), p. 169. All subsequent references to Hawthorne's work will be to this edition to the extent that the Centenary Edition has been completed.

⁶Leo Marx describes such a progression in his analysis of the notebook passage of July 27, 1844, in which Hawthorne records his responses to details of nature in the woods and the intrusion of a railroad train, which Marx identifies figuratively with the city. Marx states that the author's chief interest is the "inner, not the outer world." The Machine in the Garden, p. 28.

⁷Hyatt H. Waggoner, in Hawthorne: A Critical Study (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1955), p. 152, mentions the "archetypal theme of withdrawal and return, which Hawthorne interpreted as isolation and redemptive reunion," in connection with The House of the Seven Gables. Lewis observes in The American Adam (pp. 111-14) that a "pattern of escape and return" in Hawthorne's work commonly emerges as a "frantic shuffling . . . between the village and the forest, the city and the country." The application of the term "city" here to the village of The Scarlet Letter, like its use to describe Salem, is

obviously not justified by any standard of population or density. Rather, it is a convenience referring to the distinction from absolutely pre-urban or extra-urban settings or to the tendency toward urbanism. "City" and "country" are virtually drained of denotative meaning and become instead symbols for polarized values, chiefly the opposition between rigidly structured society and absence of such structure, projected geographically.

⁸In a recent study Hugo McPherson has discussed the need for psychic integration in Hawthorne's characters and has aligned the "city-building" of the Puritans with what he calls Hawthorne's view of "empirical" activities, the "daylight" world of materialism, logic, custom, and common-sense which he opposed to the "night" world of imagination, largely represented by the forest. Hawthorne as Myth-Maker: A Study in Imagination (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1969), pp. 15, 33-34.

⁹Cowan (City of the West, p. 31) suggests that the recurring dream in the nineteenth century of the City of the West was an attempt to deny the existence of divisions between nature and civilization.

¹⁰The Scarlet Letter, Vol. I of The Centenary Edition (1962), p. 47.

¹¹Lewis rightly calls this scene with the "solitary figure set over against the inimical society, in a village which hovers on the edge of the inviting and perilous wilderness," the "paradigm dramatic image" of American literature. The American Adam, pp. 111-12. It can as well be seen as the paradigm of American history up to the present century.

¹²Marius Bewley mentions the microcosmic quality of the final scene around the scaffold in The Eccentric Design: Form in the Classic American Novel (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959), p. 164.

¹³To say that society forces Hester out with no responsibility on her part is to ignore Hawthorne's insistence on the estranging effect of sin or to say that he did not regard adultery as sin. Neither is tenable. See Kaul, p. 179; also Waggoner, p. 146.

¹⁴The urban labyrinth or maze image is recurrent in Hawthorne's work, as in the intricacy of the ancient Continental city. Here, however, the maze seems to be the forest, especially since ten pages later it is the forest that "imaged not amiss the moral wilderness in which she had so long been wandering" (183).

¹⁵Indians regularly served Hawthorne as a symbol of natural, instinctual life, sharing the ambiguous moral state of the dark forest. E.g., Septimius Felton, Vol. XII of The Complete Works of Nathaniel Hawthorne, The Wayside Edition (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co., 1884), pp. 316-22. In the opening scaffold scene of The Scarlet Letter, the suggestion that the crowd might have signified that an "idle and vagrant Indian, whom the white man's firewater had made riotous about the streets, was to be driven with stripes into the shadow of the forest" (49) makes the Indian an ambiguous intermediary, even a victim of society. The forest, though dark with (perhaps) sinister shadows, takes back its own blighted by society. Joel Porte in The Romance in America (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1969), finds that Indians recur in the works of Cooper, Hawthorne, and other romancers as symbols of sexuality having, again, ambiguous implications. Porte states, "Hester's lawless passion has turned her into a kind of white Indian, and she becomes in Hawthorne's mind a focus for all those associations of knowledge with sexual power which we have already observed in Cooper's mythic red men and dark ladies" (104).

¹⁶In a slightly different set of terms, Dimmesdale's confession can be interpreted as an indication that the dark knowledge of sexuality which Hawthorne associates with the forest must be brought to expression, i.e. brought into society, else it will become corrosive guilt and public expression (art) will be false and shallow. Cf. Porte, The Romance in America, pp. 102-10. It must be obvious that a reversal of the process, an expansion of control into the free realm of sexual instinct, is only destructive.

¹⁷See Lewis, The American Adam, p. 116.

¹⁸Lewis (The American Adam, p. 115) suggests that the circular flight and return patterns in Hawthorne's four novels test the idea that the "valid rite of initiation" for the American is out of society. That idea is most clearly disproven in The House of the Seven Gables and "My Kinsman, Major Molineux."

¹⁹Cf. Waggoner, pp. 154-55. Placing a flower or tree next to a structural ruin was as regular a romance convention as the dark and light heroines.

²⁰Cf. Francis Battaglia's demonstration that the ending is prepared for in "The House of the Seven Gables: New Light on Old Problems," PMLA, 82 (1967), 579-90.

²¹Hawthorne had earlier in "Earth's Holocaust" entertained the same ideas in his proper person, but found them unfeasible because the need for reform lay in the human heart. John Caldwell Stubbs views Hepzibah and Clifford, and in particular their abortive escape, as part of a pattern of parody that modulates the affirmation of the love plot in The Pursuit of Form (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1970), pp. 112-15.

²²The Blithedale Romance, Vol. III of The Centenary Edition (1964), p. 9.

²³Here, as when Zenobia guesses that Priscilla "has been stifled with the heat of a salamander-stove, in a small, close room," Hawthorne's negative response to closeness and warmth is decidedly uncharacteristic. His association of the fireplace and enclosed spaces with stability and values of the heart is clear in a number of short works.

²⁴The Whites' bias in The Intellectual Versus the City leads them to exaggeration here. Coverdale, they say, complains of the city's "duskiness and its bad air, of its hothouse warmth and excessive luxury, of its smoke, of the monotony of its buildings, of its slums" (41). Similarly, they understate his strongly positive response to the city on his return by calling it "notably concessive" (42).

²⁵Waggoner, Hawthorne, p. 194.

²⁶The American Notebooks, ed. Stewart, p. 249.

²⁷Waggoner (Hawthorne, p. 208) comments that in the chapters on Donatello's native country nature "suggests all the truth there is in primitivism without committing the novel to primitivism's errors."

²⁸The Marble Faun: or, The Romance of Monte Beni, Vol. IV of The Centenary Edition (1968), p. 6.

²⁹The French and Italian Notebooks, Vol. XIX of The Wayside Edition, p. 58. Typical of his distress at the dirt are pages 473-74, Vol. XX.

³⁰Hawthorne: Critic of Society, pp. 134-46.

³¹The American Adam, p. 116.

CHAPTER VI

THE ENCROACHING SODOM: HERMAN MELVILLE

In Melville's work, Moby-Dick looms so large that its powerful ocean tends to obscure the importance of other settings. But this emphasis on the ocean of Moby-Dick has the advantage of stressing the importance of setting in Melville's fiction, including the urban setting of other works. Dominant in Redburn, Pierre, and Israel Potter, an urban setting occupies in "Bartleby, the Scrivener" the entire field of vision, and figures as well in several short stories and in White Jacket, where the ship's status as symbolic city carries the meaning of the book beyond its original polemic intent. Melville's presentation and interpretation of cities in these works offers an angle of critical vision which is advantageous in that it takes into account his strong but often slighted concern with commonplace realities as well as his departure from them. That is, it comprehends both the realistic and the symbolic modes of his work.

In the tension between structured civilization and the primitivist or pseudo-pastoral impulse that pervades and shapes Melville's work, the city forms one logical extreme and hence functions implicitly whenever this pattern is invoked,¹ even when its presence is not fixed literally. The pattern is much like that in Cooper's Leatherstocking tales, where urban life implicitly constitutes the opposite

pole to the idyllic woodland of Hawkeye and Chingachgook. Similarly, in Typee, where the city scarcely enters even in passing reference, it informs the pattern of cultural contrast, both in its own right and in the ship, commonly a floating image of the city. Melville's contrasting settings are opposite poles to which are assigned opposing systems of meaning. The city represents constraint (as, men "tied to counters, nailed to benches, clinched to desks" in Moby-Dick), the primitive freedom; the city estrangement, the primitive community; the city calculation, the primitive spontaneity; the city refinement of vice, the primitive only its potential. These pairs of values are quite conventional, but in a process akin to Melville's transforming use of sources they are intensified, rendered vividly pictorial, and enriched by irony.

Only in Pierre does Melville imagine the city to be a place of opportunity or possibility, and here that image is only a thwarted potential. Otherwise, the city always means to him a constriction of possibility. Even in Redburn, where Liverpool is the essence of impermanence, there is no hopeful notion that in the city Redburn may make his fortune. As a part of his voyage, the exploration of Liverpool does provide him opportunity for learning, but it is the ocean that represents real exploration, mental as well as geographic. In Moby-Dick, the ocean-fronting city is the known, the familiar, from which man

launches out on the voyage of discovery.²

On the realistic plane Melville approaches the city chiefly as humanitarian, not, like Cooper, as social and political theorist. His "Rich Man's Pudding," "Jimmy Rose," and "The Paradise of Bachelors" demonstrate his concern with the human effects of economic hardship. It is a concern that engaged him more deeply than it did Cooper or Hawthorne; all class injustice or other denial of the human brotherhood was a virtual preoccupation throughout his career. Though Melville often depicts social misery in his cities, his indictment of urban vice implies no vision of rural virtue. Redburn's voyage down the Hudson makes this clear enough, and in the English countryside he finds warning of "mantraps and spring-guns," devices uncomfortably similar to images of exploitation in New York and Liverpool. Evil may be concentrated in the cities, but they are only an intensification of what is true for the whole. From Redburn through "Bartleby," Melville challenges assumptions regarding a moral contrast between city and country until in "Bartleby" the contrast disappears altogether and the city comes to represent the total experience of modern man. In Pierre, he exploits conventions familiar from the work of sentimentalists and pastoralists to explode, not only agrarian assumptions of bucolic virtue, but a whole complex of metaphoric and structural implications of the two settings. Similarly, his critical examination of commercial

dehumanization carries implications wider than the restrictions of specific place or social milieu. Melville's chief thrust is not toward the city but through it.

Though an early work which Melville regarded as "beggarly," Redburn is of real significance in his development of urban themes. It is his clearest statement of both the nineteenth-century vision of the city as a cruel labyrinth and its characteristic version of the archetypal initiation story, the young man from the provinces. Redburn illuminates two primary aspects of Melville's interpretation of the modern city: his humanitarian indignation at cruel social problems brought or exacerbated by urbanization, and his characteristic fusion of realism and symbolism. It is with these two patterns that I am chiefly concerned.

Redburn leaves home a virtual innocent, having known the woeful effects of evil but not the cause, not evil itself. He is an Adam³ already expelled from the garden of bliss but as yet unintroduced to the wider world. It is to this knowledge that he is introduced on his first voyage--to evil according to nature in the person of Jackson and to social evil in the cities, especially Liverpool, the very core of misery and degradation which young Redburn observes in horror. His experience in cities, the New York from which he sails as well as the Liverpool and nocturnal London at which he arrives, amply attests to Melville's "power of blackness." Liverpool's physical blackness--"sooty and begrimed," with a

"shroud of coal-smoke," "smoky," with "pitch and tar"⁴--images the black pall of evil and gloom with which Redburn sees it invested. As Harry Levin comments, his discovery of urban poverty and suffering is a "nightmare" at the opposite pole to the "daydream" of Typee.⁵ While the middle section of the novel at times seems near lapsing into a sightseeing tour--the details of which Melville, true to his usual practice, lifted from the original of the "prosy old guidebook"⁶--Redburn's chief interest is in the human spectacle. In this he finds suffering and degradation so appalling that he must at times, like the officers of the Neversink, avert his eyes. Liverpool becomes a veritable City of Dis, and to approach the dying woman and children who constitute its most shocking depth Redburn must appropriately descend, climbing down "with considerable difficulty, like getting down into a well" (183). The worse parts of Liverpool, he states in summary, are "sodom-like" (191). This association of the modern with the mythic city of sin and death, Sodom or Gomorrah or the City of Dis, appears in all his major urban works except "Bartleby."

Redburn's indignant discovery of the abysmal gap between the have-not's and the have's is conveyed in a style of relentless particularity.⁷ The spectacle of suffering is real with a painful specificity: an amputee whom the sailors favor, with face "red" and "round," is pictured even to the "little depression" in his improvised cushion "between his knees, to receive the coppers thrown him" (187); a blind

man's actual chant is quoted; a ballad-singer's odd gimmick of swinging his arm vertically is shown. In large part it is by means of this clarity of visual detail that Melville transcends conventions of urban presentation. Thus "elbowing" brings to life the "heartless-looking crowd" (202), and the appalling gauntlet of beggars solidly vivifies the exposure of extreme divergence of economic status in cities. The clear pictorial realism produces a setting fully convincing; Liverpool is realized as a distinct, actual place fixed in space and time, closely explored and described in clear analytic prose. But at the same time a generalizing process is expanding Liverpool to the status of symbol.

The simplest generalizing technique is comparison, stated or implied. When Redburn arrives at the Liverpool dock, he notices that Liverpool's "dingy ware-houses" "bore a most unexpected resemblance to the ware-houses along South-street in New York" (127). Though he did not witness there the misery and depravity he sees in Liverpool, the drunken sailors leaving its harbor and the hopeless poor pawning anything they can get their hands on have given him demonstration of New York's social misery. Images of despoliation liken New York's pawnbrokers to agents of exploitation in Liverpool. Despite sights that evoke the comment "I had never seen any thing like it in New York," he finds that "Liverpool, away from the docks, was very much such a place as New York" (202). Redburn compares Liverpool also to

Boston and to London, where the decked-out depravity of the prosperous oppresses him with a "dreadful feeling" he has previously experienced only "when penetrating into the lowest and most squalid haunts of sailor iniquity in Liverpool" (234). In short, the Liverpool of Redburn, distinct in itself, is to be read as The City.

The maimed and unfortunate who embody Liverpool's social problem themselves come to represent a truth larger than the empirical one. They shape Redburn's vision, not only of the specific European city that epitomized social fears current in America, but of final truth about the human condition. The dying woman and children whom Redburn sees by the street become fully and compellingly real for him both as individuals and as the epitome of suffering, the most devastating aspect of which is not its harshness or its fatality but its dehumanizing effect. The individuals of the appalling gauntlet of beggars are also clearly particularized, but the variety of their suffering suggests a universality of pain. The beggars of Liverpool share a need to act out or dramatize their woe. They convey their deepest needs only in role-playing or signs which they must hope will be rightly interpreted. The man injured in machinery says nothing but holds up a drawing of his accident. The "tall, pallid man" of "cadaverous" appearance "silently pointed down to the square of flagging at his feet, which was nicely swept, and stained blue, and bore this inscription

in chalk:--

'I have had no food for three days;

My wife and children are dying'" (187).

Through these devices for attracting charity Melville raises the theme of general failure of communication which he will explore most fully in "Bartleby, the Scrivener." He thus particularizes and intensifies the familiar motif of aloneness within the city's crowds and at the same time extends it to universal application.

As Redburn discovers instance after instance of the misery of the poor and the indifference of the prosperous, the repeated maze images of the physical city become emblematic of a moral state. The twistingness of Liverpool figures the hypocritical deviousness in uncaring which Redburn finds there.⁸ Largely it is by means of the guidebook that the maze of Liverpool takes on wider meaning. Redburn's guidebook with its "sacred pages" (157), which he had supposed "infallible" (151), proves no guide at all as Redburn receives successive "shock[s]" to his "faith" (152). Through such connotative diction as well as a direct reference to "one Holy Guide-Book . . . that will never lead you astray" (157), the guidebook gradually becomes associated with the Bible, and if it is to be seen as a spiritual guide, the experience requiring its help must be a moral, not just a geographic one.

Even more insistently the guidebook, symbol of Redburn's heritage, establishes the instability of Liverpool.

Redburn's attempts to see the city just as his father saw it utterly fail, for his old maps and the actual place "bore not the slightest resemblance" (152). At the historic level, this discovery of change in the span of a generation indicates the instability of an urbanizing society. Thus the only part of London Redburn sees is the financial flux of a gambling den where fortunes disappear in a night, and his New York is a place of insecurity where people trade belongings for coin and disappear and where one's best friend vanishes and can never be found again. The narrator's comments assert wider meanings. He says flatly that "the thing that had guided the father could not guide the son" and embarks on a meditation on transience: "This world, my boy, is a moving world . . . its sands are forever shifting" (157). Redburn's ship, the Highlander, is a fit image of the transient urban society. A moving milieu, its populace remain together for only a brief time after which those who have not already died disperse: "They are here and then they are there; ever shifting themselves, they shift among the shifting" (309).

Frequently in Redburn journalistic details are given wider meaning in passages of meditation by the older, narrating Redburn. For instance, he closes the chapters of humanitarian horror with generalizing meditations first on human callousness and the insignificance of creeds in the absence of active charity (184), then on the sufferings of

the urban poor as a family sorrow to Adam and Eve. Thus, the technique of Redburn is not true symbolism, in which discovery is one with perception, but a kind of allegorizing.⁹ Still, through a variety of devices, Melville extends the significance of his young hero's coming into experience. Redburn must venture away from his secure country home and divest himself of preconceptions before he can achieve the ripe maturity that enables him to recount his youthful trials with the detached, self-deprecatory humor which colors his narration. In this coming to maturity his confrontation with modern urban life is central. On the crossing to Liverpool Redburn is preoccupied with his own trials and distressed by his fall from gentility. The spectacle of suffering gradually turns his concern from self-pity to sympathy for others and indignation on their behalf. On the return crossing Redburn records the plight of the emigrants and his vulnerable friend Harry Bolton.

Redburn's initiation is more than his own. The emphasis in the title and throughout the text on the fact that it is Redburn's first voyage makes his story the universal one of progress from innocence to realization of evil. By accommodating his story to familiar archetypal patterns, Melville expands the meaning of the youth's first voyage. Though firmly grounded in actuality, Redburn's story becomes an everyman's voyage from self to world. Indeed, this Adam's voyage from innocence to knowledge may well be seen as a parable of America's progress from a simple pastoral

Eden to the social rude awakening of urbanism.¹⁰

The Highlander's role as symbolic city, which becomes more explicit when it carries a full human cargo on the return crossing, anticipates the similar function of the ship in White Jacket. Like the ships of Moby-Dick and The Confidence-Man, the Neversink of White Jacket is presented as a microcosm by virtue of the full variety of its people and the gradations of its social order. More specifically, a series of similes links aspects of shipboard life to urban life. The sailors during dog-watches go strolling "like people taking the air in Broadway" (50); the commotion during fire drill is "as if a whole city ward were in a blaze" (67); clearing the upper deck of snow is "like Broadway in winter, the morning after a storm" (117); and so on.¹¹ Like the city of sentimental convention, as well as like Sodom and Gomorrah, the ship is "almost redeemed" by its few good men (385). Several times Melville asserts the metaphor quite baldly: "a man-of-war is to whalemens as a metropolis to shire-towns" (16); or, "the ship was like a great city" (54). The first of these two simply asserts size; the second we will return to later.

Once the ship-as-city metaphor is established, a great variety of incidents and characteristics can be seen in its terms, commenting on both sides of the metaphor. The ship has the city's moral corruption, its variety of peoples and conditions, and most emphatically its extreme differences of social class and class cruelty. But to state

all this is to make strong charges against the city (primarily, because of the specific similes, against New York) as well as against the Navy. The edge cuts both ways. One suspects that among Melville's purposes in so belaboring the urban metaphor was the intent to suggest that, if the ship mirrors so many qualities conventionally associated with cities, the city mirrors the repressive, anti-natural structure of the ship, where individuality is as far as possible denied and art--like Lemsford's oft-hidden poem finally fired from a gun during salute--is a fleeting and furtive thing ill suited to the aggressive purposes of the whole.

Prominent in most of the ship-as-city similes are terms of violence, crime, and disaster, conveying a horrific vision of urbanism. Besides comparing fire drill to the tumult of a city blaze, Melville introduces the fire image with intensified effect in connection with a storm of lightning at midnight: "The occasional phosphorescence of the yeasting sea cast a glare upon their uplifted faces, as a night fire in a populous city lights up the panic-stricken crowd" (106). The ship has hidden and secret places like forbidden ghettos or the "cells of the Inquisition" (128). The very crowding and confinement of the ship--which must suggest that of a city, after so emphatic an insistence in identifying the two--causes mutual "decay" and gives rise to sexual degeneracy: "The sins for which the cities of the plain were overthrown still linger in some of these

wooden-walled Gomorrahs of the deep" (375-6).

Only twice in the book does Melville suggest a positive view of urban vitality, and in both instances the effect is ironic. Jack Chase, comparing the ship to a "metropolis," says, "Here's the place for life and commotion; here's the place to be gentlemanly and jolly" (16). But all the evidence of the book except the small sanctuary of conversation and comradeship in the maintop goes to disprove this account. The other favorable testimony is given by the arch-villain Dr. Cuticle, a patently unreliable source. His words, "The town, the city, the metropolis, young gentlemen, is the place for you students," are unexceptionable until he adds the telltale qualification: "at least in these dull times of peace, when the army and navy furnish no inducement for a youth ambitious of rising in our honorable profession" (257). It is just after this speech that Dr. Cuticle performs the gratuitous amputation that demonstrates his sadism and eagerness to advance his reputation without regard to his patients. Cuticle, that is, thrives on violence, disaster, anything that injures and maims, thus giving him surgical material. To Cuticle, it appears, cities are second only to wars. It is scarcely a recommendation of urban life.

Thus aside from the passages specifically directed at flogging, Melville's strictures on naval life are in large part also strictures on urbanism. Among these are

the alienating effects of the harsh shipboard world of suspicion and class hostility. Only the social brotherhood of the maintop men and White Jacket's concern for his messmates offer possibilities of breaking out of the systemized estrangement; the same restricted hope for cells of community must be applied to the city. It is surprising that social-purpose interpretation of the novel has not been extended to urban reform. Edgar A. Dryden has recently argued that in White Jacket Melville was covertly stating the impossibility of meaningful change, using the ostensible reform motive as a virtual ruse to win popular acceptance.¹² The implications of such a reading are even stronger in regard to the need for urban change, since Melville adopts the urban condition as a given without even affecting to propose melioration. Further, the rapid mid-nineteenth-century spread of cities, threatening to extend intolerably the bleak characteristics Melville perceived in them, gives his vision of urbanism added foreboding for the future. In such a world it is fitting that the convention of ship as microcosm be modified by applying it to urbanization.

It is in Pierre that Melville builds most consciously and most ironically on sentimental conventions of city and country.¹³ The action of the book is on the surface the familiar journey of the country youth to the city where he finds some variety of knowledge and either gains success and triumphs over alluring vice or succumbs to competition

or corruption far from his rural sanctuary. Pierre emerges from an idyllic scene of natural beauty, tranquility and love which Melville insists is conducive to poetic sensibility. New York is the antithesis of all this, a hell to the putative heaven. Pierre's journey to the city is a journey from innocence to knowledge of evil; from poesy to frenzied, failing prose, from songbirds and flowers to hard pavements; from family, friends, and a recognized place in a stable social structure to rejection by family, virtual isolation, and lone anonymity within a social flux. The list of oppositions could be extended ad libitum, but to do so is needless. Oppositions on the level of setting by no means comprise the whole of theme in Pierre, but there is little in the book that is not in some way related to or implied by the pivot from country to city dividing the book roughly into opposing halves.

Settings in Pierre are presented virtually as heaven and hell, but the first half of that most metaphysical of contrasts of place is no sooner identified than challenged. As Lawrence Thompson writes, it is "parody, parody, parody,"¹⁴ and between the conventional surface, which obviously is not meant straightforwardly, and the inversion of convention suggested by parodic irony lie varying degrees of doubt so that meaning becomes uncertain. At the same time that he is undercutting urban-rural conventions, Melville is deepening and enriching the opposition, and the uncertain relations between the two constitute much of the ambiguity

of the book and prefigure his questioning of all truth and virtue.

Denial of the conventional surface ruralism proceeds stylistically and in subsequent action. The flowery, ardent style beginning with the opening section of the book designedly cloys all but a saccharine taste, and throughout the idyllic passages the narrator warns that Pierre's apparent wellbeing will not endure. He establishes an association of the country with a warlike aristocracy, the city with a vital if unstable plebian democracy.¹⁵ More devastating is the light thrown on Pierre's country nurture by later events: the ominous overtones of incest in his relationship with his mother become more obvious as the incest motif with Isabel develops; concealed threat appears in the landscape itself; and Pierre comes to realize the fatuousness of his early literary effusions, which the narrator had pointedly linked to poetic sensibility derived from rural life. Lucy's dislike of the city's "empty, heartless, ceremonial ways"¹⁶ and her springtime yearning toward the country are presented without reservation, yet she later chooses the city; like her possible namesake Lucifer, the angel of light, she thus transfers a redefined angelic nature from heaven (country) to hell. The parallel with Lucifer does not mean her coming is Satanic. In this story of ambiguity all potentially illuminating parallels are incomplete. But she brings from the rural sanctuary with which she has been associated, not relief but intolerable compli-

cation and precipitation of the final catastrophe. This, despite the angelic nature of her mission, as signified by another namesake, St. Lucia, who brings guidance to Dante in the Inferno.

Melville does not question the "cruel city" stereotype as he does the "virtuous country," but intensifies the convention through incident and through strongly suggestive imagery. In Book XVI, "First Night of Their Arrival in the City," New York appears as the City of Dis.¹⁷ Within half a page of the opening, the "obscure heart of the town" has developed into an echo of Milton's "darkness visible"--"lamps which seemed not so much intended to dispel the general gloom, as to show some dim path leading through it, into some gloom still deeper beyond" (229). The cabmen are "Charon ferrymen to corruption and death" (232), and at last in the police station all the "infernoes of hell seemed to have made one combined sortie, and poured out upon earth through the vile vomitory of some unmentionable cellar" (241). Images of darkness, hardness, coldness, and locks accumulate during the chapter, which in this way resembles the chapter in Moby-Dick of Ishmael's arrival in New Bedford, with its images of darkness, hardness, death, and damnation and reference to "that destroyed city, Gomorrah."

In Pierre, building chiefly on extremes of light and dark--"dismal side-glooms" (230); "dark beetling secrecies" (231); "dubious light" (234)--Melville reaches in an unnatural crescendo toward surrealistic horror at the end of the

chapter. Unnatural contrast is stressed in the following passage:

. . . the instant he turned out of the narrow, and dark, and death-like bye-street, he [found] himself suddenly precipitated into the not-yet-repressed noise and contention, and all the garish night-life of a vast thoroughfare, crowded and wedged by day, and even now, at this late hour, brilliant with occasional illuminations, and echoing to very many swift wheels and footfalls (236).

The prostitute whose lure is convincingly quoted is "horribly lit by the green and yellow rays from the druggist's" (237). Re-emerging into the street from his improbable confrontation with Glendinning Stanly in an opulent social salon, Pierre abruptly encounters a balletistic encircling chorus of coachmen who chant in parallel rhythm an invitation to ride culminating in the accusing echo of self-doubt, "'He's a rogue! Not him! he's a rogue!'" (239). It is an impressive instance of the setting's echoing an inner state of anxiety in terms realistically plausible and stylistically attuned to the nervousness of the imaged mind.

Hurtling through the encircling cabmen with their uplifted whips who beset him "like the onset on the chastising fiends upon Orestes" (240), Pierre re-enters the police station, which appears as the epitome and lowest depth of the city-hell. He feels "horror and fury" at the crowd of fiends with which the place now "reeked" (240). In a weird heightening of the conventional note of urban variety, Melville presents the fiendish crew in a dissonant motley of physical details in tumbling confusion:

In indescribable disorder, frantic, diseased-looking men and women of all colors, and in all imaginable flaunting, immodest, grotesque, and shattered dresses, were leaping, yelling, and cursing around him. The torn Madras handkerchiefs of negresses, and the red gowns of yellow girls, hanging in tatters from their naked bosoms, mixed with the rent dresses of deep-rouged white women, and the split coats, checkered vests, and protruding shirts of pale, or whiskered, or haggard, or mustached fellows of all nations, some of whom seemed scared from their beds, and others seemingly arrested in the midst of some crazy and wanton dance. On all sides, were heard drunken male and female voices, in English, French, Spanish, and Portuguese, interlarded now and then, with the foulest of all human lingo, that dialect of sin and death, known as the Cant language, or the Flash (240).

Imagining Isabel and Delly, as if drawn into a whirlpool of filth, being "sucked into the tumult, and in close personal contact with its loathsomeness,"¹⁸ he joins them in this inverted baptism, rushing "into the crowd" and dragging out first Isabel and then Delly (241). It is a wry fulfillment of his wish, "'Oh, had my father but had a daughter! . . . some one whom I might love, and protect, and fight for, if need be'" (7).

In its piling up of vivid images and its deepening of scenic details into a nightmarish weirdness¹⁹ suggesting inner states and a terror less social than metaphysical, this section of Pierre is one of the most remarkable urban sequences in American literature. It notably fuses what might be called subjective and objective approaches to place. That is, in its confusion and violence the city mirrors Pierre's own turbulent emotions and impulses, as Whitman's *Mannahatta* mirrors his buoyancy, but at the same time the

city maintains an objective character having compelling impact on Pierre.

Structurally, setting divides the work into Heaven and Hell or Eden and the Fall. As Stern comments, the novel occupies a symbolic landscape "balanced between Saddle Meadows and the stone city."²⁰ But like the contrast between blonde Lucy and dark Isabel,²¹ the dichotomy of setting collapses from fixed extremes to ambiguity. The omnipresent stoniness of the city is prefigured in the Memnon Stone of Pierre's rural home, and Pierre is himself, by name, the Stone linking the two. Thus, despite the differences which justify their use as structural opposites, the city and the country both have stone at their core; the country has in posse what the city is in esse. The divorce of the city from nature parallels the unnaturalness of Pierre's foolish inspired gesture, and both parallel the Memnon Stone's removal from natural support, its mass unnaturally poised on a minute point of contact with the earth. Further, the naming of the stone indicates the parallel of Pierre's story with the myth of Memnon. Both, "with enthusiastic rashness flinging [themselves] on another's account into a rightful quarrel," are "overmatch[ed]" and meet "most dolorous death beneath the walls" (135) of cities--Memnon the walls of Troy, Pierre the stone prison walls of New York. And so Pierre's nervous challenge to the Terror Stone--"then do thou, Mute Massiveness, fall on me!" (134)--is taken up at

last, as the stone city does in effect fall on him.

The unmeaning of Pierre's urban experience is a further parallel between the stone city and the Terror Stone of the ostensibly contrasting first half. The stone, like the forehead of the great whale in Moby-Dick, is a study in inconclusiveness. Few people even know it is there, and to these it apparently represents only "a huge stumbling-block." The only person besides Pierre who seems ever to have appreciated the stone is himself unknown. To Pierre, who has manipulated, explored, and pondered the stone much as Ishmael does the whale, it represents a "ponderous inscrutableness" (134). Similarly inscrutable is his experience of the city. His departure from Saddle Meadows and arrival in New York enact a progression from innocence to experience and, one would expect, knowledge, or a re-enactment of the Fall. But despite the inadequacy of this Eden,²² the Fall is not fortunate. The city represents experience: a complex social reality, reality as it is outside the sanctuary.²³ But the only enlightenment Pierre gains from experience is realization that he cannot gain enlightenment. The answers that first seemed so clear become obscure as Pierre (Stone) becomes to himself as great an inscrutability as the Terror Stone or the stone City. With the nature of Isabel, his own motives, the contrast of city and country, and all else fading into ambiguity, the ultimate terror of the Terror Stone becomes unmeaning, resounding through the novel.

Pierre presents one of the strongest embodiments of the Evil City in all American fiction. Pierre's struggles and despair go unnoticed by the whole heartless city except a single incompetent. He lives in total loneliness and dies in the righteous but ludicrously uncomprehending clutches of city officialdom. Book XVI is a distillation of indictments of the city, with fear of urban spread explicitly stated (231). Yet for all this, Pierre is not primarily an expression of anti-urbanism. The work operates on many levels including the social and the topically satiric, but its thrust is metaphysical. Melville's intensification of conventions of urban horror is aimed through the city at more, as he interprets urban experience as the epitome and symbol of universal, but peculiarly modern, states of alienation, loss of certainty, and nihilism. At the social level, the anti-urbanism of Melville's hellish depiction of the city does not demonstrate agrarian theory because the work is not pro-rural. If Melville-Pierre is appalled by the city, Melville (but not so much Pierre) is appalled by the submerged potentialities of the country. The false, sugary style of the bucolic first half indicates this, as do such signs of dis-ease as Pierre's strange relationship to his mother, the social un-conscience of the Reverend Mr. Falsgrave, and the Memnon Stone itself, anticipating the stone City. Both poles of setting, in themselves and as symbols, are blasted with a common failure of meaning and of community.

After Pierre, Melville wrote two works of major relevance to his urban themes, both of them essentially simpler and the latter incomparably more polished as a work of art: Israel Potter and "Bartleby, the Scrivener." The story of the alienated Revolutionary War veteran is symptomatic of Melville's late work before he lapsed into virtual silence. Like the Piazza Tales, Israel Potter is characterized by failure, frustration, and bleakness as the author's imagination turns insistently to a landscape of desolation. Most telling in regard to Melville's state of mind is his comparing London to the "cursed Gallipagos" with their "convict tortoises" (284). Melville's interpretation of the city as constraint has intensified to a vision of the city as prison, and the sea, long emblematic of freedom, has become only a potential escape blighted and blotched by man. A warship imaged as a crowded city emits "sounds of the human multitude disturbing the solemn natural solitudes of the sea" (112). The baldness of such details well indicates the skeletal quality of the novel, a work quite evidently the product of exhaustion and preoccupation with that exhaustion, as incident after incident is dropped blankly into a void until Melville allows forty years of his hero's life to elapse in the barest outline, with only the desolation of it recorded.²⁴

Despite its summary statement, Potter's sojourn in London is the feature of his life that gives meaning (a meaning of unmeaning) to the desolate whole, and it is so

presented in repeated narrative comments from the earliest pages. The first chapter of the book, set in the Berkshires of Potter's youth, is thus made relevant to his urban existence by the narrator's comparing their natural harshness and loneliness to the "worse bewilderments" of "wandering forlorn in the coal-fogs of London" (6). When Potter actually approaches that city, it is again likened to natural desolation of desert and wilderness.

In London, Potter is explicitly "In the City of Dis" (212 and chapter title, 210). References to the Hades of myth combine with imagery of blackness and industrial grime in a vision startlingly similar, as Harry Levin has noted, to T. S. Eliot's in "The Waste Land."²⁵ The bridges of the Thames are "erebus arches" (211); a surge in the packed horses and vehicles "all bespattered with ebon mud" is as if a "squadron of centaurs, on the thither side of Phlegethon, with charge on charge, was driving tormented humanity, with all its chattels, across" (211-12); passers-by are "uninvoked ghosts in Hades" (212). The hellishly black urban vista has "no speck of any green thing"; it is like the grime of smithies, foundries, and coal mines (212). Finally, Melville envisions London as a scene of apocalypse:

As in eclipse, the sun was hidden; the air darkened; the whole dull, dismayed aspect of things, as if some neighbouring volcano . . . were about to whelm the great town, as Herculaneum and Pompeii, or the Cities of the Plain. And as they had been upturned in terror toward the mountain, all faces were more or less snowed or spotted with soot (212).

It is an appalling vision of modern urban life, particularly as Potter's world progressively narrows to just this hellish city, and when he finally does escape, his Berkshire home is dead, an irrelevancy.

It is instructive to compare this urban apocalypse to Lippard's in The Quaker City.²⁶ Melville's tactic of tying his apocalyptic interpretation to a real city through imagery and allusion clearly has the advantage in credibility and subtlety over Lippard's fantastic dream vision. A further similarity to the sensational fiction of the 1840's and 50's is Melville's mentioning as symptomatic of the bypassed London years his hero's "wrangling with rats for prizes in the sewers; or his crawling into an abandoned doorless house in St. Giles', where his hosts were three dead men, one pendant" (214-15). Here, the sensational details have been so embedded in a suggestive interpretation of urban life, a mythic and imagistic network enlarging meaning, that they take on significance wider than that of similar details in the work of popular sensationalists. This is to say that Melville's interpretation of urban experience, as well as his poignant exploration of failure, have considerable aesthetic weight. Israel Potter is, in ways additional to its history-book cameos, a book of excellent fragments and an estimable minor work.

"Bartleby, the Scrivener" can be viewed as the culmination of Melville's exploration and interpretation of urban-

ism, as certainly it is the culmination of American fictive statements in the nineteenth century linking the city and alienation. The surface of the story is extremely spare. Sense of place is built up with few physical objects, but those few are clearly seen and fully significant. Despite the really fine humorous portraits of Turkey, Nippers, and Ginger Nut, the New York of "Bartleby" is a scene of great bleakness, most fully epitomized by the blank wall outside the lawyer's window. In this bleak world, devoid of signs of visible nature, Bartleby lives the essence of bleakness. In his total negation can be read various meanings, all in some way reflecting alienation, lack of emotional fulfillment, lack of meaningful communication, failure to establish any rapport between one's self and society. The society which accentuates Bartleby's (surely prior) inclination toward withdrawal is the urban business world in which individuals are essentially objectified, denied significant human identity or even names. Melville does not present a full-scale indictment of this world; human relationships and humane values can and do operate within it. The lawyer-narrator is no villain. But they operate at a level so reduced as to be intolerable to Bartleby, whose demands are not correspondingly reduced. In a world of forms, rules, roles, he asserts his identity only by refusing to accept any form or role.²⁷ The narrator's attempts to relieve Bartleby's depression are not insignificant; he offers to

open his own home and visits him in prison. Indeed, his efforts are great enough that he should be regarded as one of the conventional redemptive few of the city, a wry version of the convention which exposes its facile inadequacy. But his attempts are not enough for Bartleby, who expects, one surmises, a fullness of communication and sympathy impossible in a depersonalized world of affairs and numerous fleeting acquaintances.

But it is the only world available to him. The physical presence of New York in "Bartleby" is thoroughly convincing but is never directly described: that is its importance. The city is assumed; it equals Modern Civilization. It is a world immeasurably constricted, emotionally as well as spatially, from the timeless world of Moby-Dick or even from the dual worlds of other works. The New York of "Bartleby" is the entire City of Man, and no Heavenly City offers. Perhaps that is why the presentation of the city as a hell which, together with allusion to Sodom and Gomorrah, had been the predominant structure of Melville's urban vision in earlier works, is notably absent from "Bartleby." Nothing exists except everyday, mechanical reality. It is the combination of this objective realistic dryness with the unaccountable oddity of Bartleby himself that creates the sense of strangeness which invests the work.

Through insistent imagery of walls, Melville continues his interpretation of urban society as a denial of individual freedom and ability, the narrator's as well as

Bartleby's. Nowhere does Melville use urban scenes to represent open possibility, but rather restriction of possibility contrasted to images of freedom located in extra-urban settings--in early works, the sea or primitive life. In "Bartleby" there is no contrasting pole. With the city occupying the whole field of experience, the only opportunity for escape is inward withdrawal. As Bartleby's withdrawal demonstrates, this course is a death; without sustaining human relationships, the imprisoning city is inadequate to man's spiritual needs.

In Bartleby's need for communication and the narrator's inadequate attempt to break through the walls he had himself helped to erect, Melville has brought to culmination the theme of urban alienation present in his work at least from Redburn. The story also recapitulates his concern with the dehumanizing commercialism of the modern city. Redburn's protest against prosperous urbanites' indifference to the poor who must witness material abundance at close quarters without sharing it is reflected in "Bartleby" in the business world's reduction of human concerns to questions of monetary advantage or disadvantage. In the late work, however, Melville is less concerned with social injustices such as poverty and class hostility, and more concerned with failures of communication and compassion between individuals. The theme of alienation within the populous city dominates both Israel Potter and "Bartleby." Further,

because there is no escape from the city of walls, isolation becomes an inevitability.

"Bartleby" is a return from the emotion-laden and mythically allusive style of Pierre and Israel Potter to the realism of Redburn. Here, however, there is no reminiscent narrator, as in Redburn, to meditate on experience and offer statements of its significance. That is, realism is not expanded to symbolism through meditative broadening and emphatic parallels, as in the early work. Rather, the realistically viewed urban scene is in itself a symbolistic statement as a total emblem inviting discovery of meaning. Indeed, much as the city had come to represent inscrutability in Pierre, the omnipresent blank walls restrict not only freedom but understanding as well, both by those within the story and by the reader. Like its pallid hero, the alienating city is simply inscrutably there, a blank upon which may be projected a variety of interpretations but which defies and frustrates them all. Melville's most flatly realistic work is also his most symbolistic, as sense of place conveys concepts of psychological and moral states perilous of definition. The modern city, recognizably realized in "Bartleby," represents at once deterministic imprisonment and lack of relevant meaning. The work stands at the beginning of a line of modern novels in which man finds himself alienated from nature and from others in an impersonal urban environment.

NOTES

¹Thus the tension Leo Marx perceives in Melville's work between the "pastoral" impulse and the machine, representing repressive organized civilization, has relevance also to the city/country pattern; see The Machine in the Garden, pp. 277-319. Also, Charles Olson, Call Me Ishmael (New York: Reynal and Hitchcock, 1947), Part One.

²Cf. Feidelson, Symbolism and American Literature, pp. 28-29.

³See Lewis, The American Adam, p. 136, and Newton Arvin, Herman Melville (New York: William Sloane Associates, 1950), p. 103.

⁴Redburn, His First Voyage, Vol. IV of The Writings of Herman Melville, The Northwestern-Newberry Edition (Evanston and Chicago: Northwestern University Press and The Newberry Library, 1969), pp. 191 and 212. All references will be to this edition except for references to Israel Potter and "Bartleby, the Scrivener," which have not appeared in the Northwestern-Newberry Edition. For these I have used the Standard Edition published in London by Constable, 1922-24.

⁵The Power of Blackness, p. 179.

⁶Willard Thorp, "Redburn's Prosy Old Guidebook," PMLA, 53 (1938), 1146-56.

⁷The photographic realism of Redburn may itself be seen to exemplify the stylistic aspect of the cultural shift to urbanism. It is apparent that the rise of conscious literary realism roughly parallels the modern mushrooming of cities. Miller links the shift from romance to novel (i.e., realistic fiction) to the emergence of the city, both on the social scene and as the subject for fiction, in his three-part lecture "The Romance and the Novel" included in Nature's Nation (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1967), 254-58.

Many critics have remarked that the Liverpool of Redburn seems Dickensian in its detailed sense of place. The importance of Dickens to the urban novel in America is touched upon by Perry Miller in The Raven and the Whale, pp. 34 and 179. In Dickens, Miller suggests, American men of letters found a reconciliation of faithfulness to "universal Nature" and ability to "treat, without embarrassment, the

individualities of cities." All American "attempts at realism" through the 1860's, Miller continues, were heavily under the "shadow" of Dickens. While he does not argue a direct influence of Dickens on Redburn, Miller does demonstrate strong interest in Dickens among the literati of New York in the years when Melville made one of them and shows that Melville and Dickens were not infrequently linked in contemporary notice.

⁸A similar transaction occurs in "Rich Man's Crumbs." A twisting, confusing route taken by the narrator to the scene of the disgusting charity meal of scraps re-enacts the twisted moral reasoning which led to the abomination occurring there. In "The Paradise of Bachelors," the womb-like immurement in irresponsibility is also approached through a maze-like course, reflected in a tangled baroque prose style in the presentation.

⁹Compare Feidelson, Symbolism and American Literature, p. 32: "Unlike Hawthorne, the Melville of Moby-Dick does not verge toward allegory, because he locates his symbols in a unitary act of perception."

¹⁰Feidelson also comments that the subtitle "generalizes the realistic narrative"; Symbolism, p. 180. Compare A. N. Kaul, The American Vision, p. 249: "Redburn's hardships seem to reflect the hard times in the world at large, and one wonders if the blighted hopes he talks about are his country's or only his own." Richard Chase also suggests an identification of Redburn and America, both of them Ishmael-figures in quest of society. See his Herman Melville: A Critical Study (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1949), p. 41: "In the books before Moby-Dick we see Ishmael leaving the primitive condition of man and trying to discover Western civilization: Redburn leaves the family home up the Hudson and makes his 'filial pilgrimage' to Liverpool; the young man flees from Typee Valley and boards a whaler and then a warship; later we see Pierre leaving the agrarian bowers of the family estate and settling in a colony of intellectuals in New York, and Israel Potter leaving his Berkshire forests for London, the City of Man."

¹¹White-Jacket; or, The World in a Man-of-War, Vol. V of the Northwestern-Newberry Edition (1970).

¹²See Melville's Thematics of Form: The Great Art of Telling the Truth (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1968). I do not mean to indicate agreement; it seems to me that this argument makes excessive demand for consistency

of all levels within a work and also adopts too rigidly the single meaning of the subtitle that the man-of-war is the world. Certainly, however, the relationship between reforming level and microcosmic level upon which Dryden's interpretation is built creates a tension, a questioning of the efficacy of purposive change. Critics have long recognized that the novel amounts to more than its application to the reform of naval abuses, specifically flogging.

¹³Thus, Richard Chase comments that the "reaction of the bewildered travelers to the big city is straight out of the commercial fiction of the day." Herman Melville, p. 110.

¹⁴Foreword to Pierre, or, The Ambiguities (New York: New American Library, Signet Classics, 1964), p. xix.

¹⁵In general one can identify Melville's sympathies with the masses although throughout his work he demonstrates uneasiness about their rise and fascination with the transcendent individual. In Pierre his attitude is one of the ambiguities; even while suggesting the city's democratic nature, he concedes that in America it tends to attract aspiring aristocrats, and in the later chapters he shows no vitality in the urban masses but simple cloddishness.

¹⁶Pierre; or, The Ambiguities, Vol. VII of the Northwestern-Newberry Edition (1971), p. 26.

¹⁷The specific reference to The Inferno should not be overlooked. Allusions to Dante appear throughout the novel. Nathalia Wright has worked out a fullfledged reading of Pierre by parallels with The Inferno; see her "Pierre: Herman Melville's Inferno," American Literature, 32 (1960), 167-81.

¹⁸The passage has a strange prophetic modernity. The surrealist effect of the irrational assorting of strongly physical images seems to anticipate Bloom's descent into hell in the Circe episode of Ulysses, and the sense of revolting immersion in filth as Pierre is baptized in hell itself is very like Pound's fourteenth Canto. Another similar passage is the bumping against the crowd in Eugene O'Neill's "The Hairy Ape."

¹⁹Melville has developed here, and to some degree in Redburn and in "Bartleby," the "fusion of the familiar

and the strange" that Donald Fanger finds in his "romantic realists," Dostoevsky, Balzac, Dickens, and Gogol, who discovered that the city, commonly regarded as the epitome of "restraint, familiarity, routine," could be "to an exhilarating degree, terra incognita, and . . . could offer . . . the strange in the familiar." See Fanger's Dostoevsky and Romantic Realism, p. 22. Fanger's remarks are also applicable to Poe, but his fantastic cities have too little of realism to fit the term.

²⁰Milton R. Stern, The Fine Hammered Steel of Herman Melville (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1968), p. 180.

²¹In his two heroines Melville has transformed the romance convention of dark and light females just as he has the city/country sentimental stereotypes, and in both instances to the same end: ambiguity.

²²See Lewis, The American Adam, pp. 148-49. For a reading of the novel in terms of the Fortunate Fall, see Charles Moorman's "Melville's Pierre and the Fortunate Fall," American Literature, 25 (1953), 13-30, expanded in his "Melville's Pierre in the City," American Literature, 27 (1956), 571-77.

²³Liverpool functions similarly in Redburn, to similar effect. Edgar Dryden comments in Melville's Thematics of Form (p. 65) that the maze-like streets become "metaphors for experience itself, as the young man becomes hopelessly lost and confused."

²⁴It is hard to understand Chase's calling the book "lighthearted" (Herman Melville, p. 176).

²⁵The Power of Blackness, p. 191. Particularly does this anticipation seem clear in "that hereditary crowd--gulf-stream of humanity--which, for continuous centuries, has never ceased pouring, like an endless shoal of herring, over London Bridge" (281).

²⁶See above, p. 70.

²⁷"Bartleby" is a perfect example of Melville's combining realism and symbolism. It seems to be inexhaustibly receptive to reinterpretation, probably because of the very bareness of its objects, particularly the wall, which in their lack of character invite attribution of meaning, that

symbolization. Readings I have found particularly cogent and applicable to the present study are Peter E. Firchow, "Bartleby: Man and Metaphor," Studies in Short Fiction, 5 (1968), 342-48; Norman Springer, "Bartleby and the Terror of Limitation," PMLA, 80 (1965), 410-18; and John Gardner "'Bartleby': Art and Social Commitment," Philological Quarterly, 43 (1964), 87-98.

CONCLUSION

The city novel is ordinarily conceived to be a form of the 1890's and after. Certainly it is true that it was in the novels of the naturalists and their contemporaries that urban life first became the dominant concern of fiction. Yet examination of a large body of popular and sub-literary fiction, as well as the classic novels of American literature, reveals that urbanism and the city were important concerns even in the pre-Civil War period. The distinctiveness of the late-nineteenth-century and early-twentieth-century urban novel is not its chosen subject but the manner of treating it.¹

Among early writers of urban fiction, several distinctions can be made. Many minor novelists treating the city in the 1830's through 50's continued the sentimental tradition in which American fiction was rooted. Catherine Sedgwick, Maria Cummins, and numerous others assumed that innocence was to be located in an agricultural setting (the placid idealization of the great wilderness) and that an assortment of vices--frivolity, pretension, heartless greed--resided in the city. This anti-urban consensus in popular fiction was not total: even the most absurdly polarized novelistic schemes showed occasional good fortune and intellectual or aesthetic advantages in the urban milieu and occasional moral turpitude among those firmly rooted in a rural nurture. Still, it was a consensus. In the thrill-

seeking sensationalism which issued in the dime novel the same broadly polarized framework obtained.

Judged by the standard of reportorial accuracy or sense of recognizable life that is often applied in evaluating later realistic urban novels, fictional treatments of cities before 1860 are inferior. Neither the sentimental nor the sensational form strove for "realism." For sentimental writers, the city was, in effect, a shorthand way of establishing a frame for morality plays characterized by preoccupation with seduction and sorrow. Such detail as the writers included was poured into depiction of their characters' miseries and trials in the city. The extreme moral dichotomy into which sentimental writers forced their depiction of urbanism, the overwrought emotionalism of such tales, and the absence of a full and particularized sense of the experienced urban scene made these early approaches to urban setting more an escape from the real city than a treatment of it. In the case of the sensational novels, the question of mimetic realism is complicated by an inevitable claim to be telling only the awful truth. The anonymous author of Mysteries of Philadelphia (1848) even avowed a notebook method: "nothing but what is entered on our own notebook is here recorded."² But the sensationalist's work was given over to the adventurous improbabilities and emotional extremes familiar in escapist literature. It did not develop the sense of deadening routine that would often

characterize the work of later realists. Thus though the intent is, the technique is not familiar through similarity to the work of early-twentieth-century muckrakers.

But a standard of judgment wholly different from the criteria of realism is needed. The merit of the most distinguished works of the period lies not in their recreation of the real city through language but in their manner of transcending the real city by turning it to symbol.

Poe's settings are of the mind only and have virtually no referential function. His fictive cities bear only tenuous relation to the actual urban centers in which he pursued his journalistic and literary career. Poe creates strong sense of place and accords it major importance in his work, but it is only as a device for effect or for projection of tortuous psychological states that his settings function. The preoccupation with evil reflected in their frequent sinister quality is solely a preoccupation with describing the existence of evil, not with accounting for its origins or exploring its implications for human life as it is normally lived. Only in that his cities are so often sinister can Poe be said to share the anti-urban value assumptions prevalent in his day.

The fullest treatments of the city in this period are the works of Hawthorne and Melville, who bring to the subject a broader spectrum of interests than Poe or Cooper. Both display strong ethical concern and sense of historic

process in connection with their urban settings, and Melville in particular shows a compelling awareness of humanitarian problems in cities. Both place greatest stress on the problem of alienation, thus early coming to grips with the aspect of urban life which has chiefly engaged novelists and sociologists in the twentieth century. Yet Hawthorne's attitude toward this problem is ambivalent in that he often regards the commonplace interactions of urban living as an effectual means to community.

Both Hawthorne and Melville, however, approach their urban themes chiefly as writers of romance. Their interest in the actual historic city is only secondarily a stimulus to social evaluation. Romance conventions provide them a shaping framework variously tested, expanded, and finally found inadequate. Tentatively adopting the urban/rural dichotomy, they extend it to opposing systems of symbolic values ranging from qualities of experience perceived by the individual to poles of personality itself. Their work is thus in the fullest sense romantic, a deeper exploration of both outer and inner worlds beneath the surfaces. Neither writes with the immediacy of the later realists in conveying the pressure of crowds and other qualities of urban experience. Thus their works often lack surface richness in spite of their thematic plumbing of depths and their resonant summoning of literary precedent. Only Melville's "Bartleby" combines with the widest suggestiveness about

the nature of man a high degree of realism in setting, despite the work's extraordinary descriptive spareness, and an immediate social awareness. "Bartleby" alone is noteworthy in both respects, as realistic and as symbolic treatment of the urban scene.

The city was at times during the period submitted to the theoretically realistic examination of the social critic. However, the great bulk of fiction written in America before 1860 abdicated any responsibility to furnish effective critical leadership in social development--or displayed failure to recognize that such a responsibility might exist. Only in the work of Cooper, and occasionally in novels by Brown, Briggs, and Lippard,³ did the novel become a vehicle for social criticism of the brash urban scene. Cooper's work often struck keenly at aspects of the social-climbing and money-getting social temper found in the commercial centers, aspects which, to judge by their long-time presence in woodenly general form in the popular novels, had long invited striking. But public response to Cooper's social fiction, as opposed to his adventure stories, suggests that readers were prepared to accept unflattering comments on their social system only if it assumed the humor of Briggs or the thrilling extremes--so easily distanced from the reader's own experience--of sensationalists. Cooper offered neither of these.

Thus the evaluative impulse which might have produced a body of social criticism was drained off to novels or

collections of sketches in which authors justified their relish of prurient exposé by claiming a controlling purpose of reform. These claims cannot be credited. The outlandish evils exposed in such works can hardly be supposed to represent the general social tone, though even a little of the devilry some of them depicted would, it must be admitted, suffice to mar the whole. The frequency with which sensationalists lured readers on to learn full particulars in later volumes (one offered the address of a particular brothel) or urged them to imagine the worst⁴ amply demonstrates that the target of their appeal was not a rational social conscience. Often in the stories of hack writers urban setting served only to provide excuses for thrills, as the same writer who turned out tales of urban violence might be writing sea adventures, wild west stories, and romances replete with exotic places and extravagant names. Such material should not so much be thought to express attitudes as to exploit a useful presence, as similar lurid effects emerge in thrillers whatever the setting.

In all levels of American fiction during the earlier and middle nineteenth century, one sees strong uncertainty about urbanization and its meaning for the national character. The attitude most characteristic of the period seems to be a strong ambivalence inclining toward fear but open to the possibility that the city (particularly New York, as in Cooper's late work New York) might represent opportunity

for the nation as for the individual. This dubiousness about the value of urban life for America is apparent in the stance of heroes and heroines vis-a-vis the city. To my knowledge there is no instance in a major work of a hero who is a city-builder or leader in urban affairs.⁵ Only Judge Temple, leading spirit of up-and-coming Templeton in The Pioneers, might be excepted, but here of course the relevance to the urban novel is tenuous. In one popular book after another a young hero rooted in rural innocence encounters the alien city and succeeds by moving through it--succeeds almost in spite of it--rather than by becoming identified with it as a shaper of urban culture. His victory brings either the reward of return to his rural home or a private and domestic happiness that exists as a kind of enclave within the city. A similar pattern is apparent in the virtuous blonde heroine's persecution by a depraved urbanite. She is generally a country lass who is forced to the city by economic necessity or a compelling urge to help a loved one. When virtuous city girls were put through similar perils in novels toward mid-century, they were still outsiders by virtue of poverty as well as goodness, and hence appeared as victims of urbanism rather than rightful members of the urban society. Conceived in very generalized terms, earlier American fiction opposed to a sympathetic cluster of values including virtue, innocence, simplicity, and rural scenes an alien cluster of greed, frivolous pretense, chance, sexual defilement, and

the city. The pretty heroines and upright young men, like the idealized virgin continent, could only experience the city as primarily an inimical presence.⁶ Just as they might re-emerge victorious from the encounter, a naturally bucolic America, in this romantic scheme, might hope to win through to greater success in spite of urbanization, but it would be a struggle.

NOTES

¹Perry Miller takes up this question briefly in his lecture "The Romance and the Novel." He states that "before the Civil War there simply was no material for the nascent realist to work upon. . . . the creative imagination of this country had taken shape amid the single reality of vast, unsettled tracts of wilderness. Crowded and noisy as New York seemed to country visitors in 1850, it was still not sufficiently a pile of 'civilization' to make imperative a writer's forsaking the wilderness for the urban scene. The dream of Arcadia died hard" (Nature's Nation, p. 258). But actually there were many writers who turned to the urban scene before this shift of which Miller speaks. The phrase here that strikes at the heart of the matter is Miller's reference to the way New York seemed to "country visitors": before the city became the proper home of the realistic and naturalistic novel in America, it was presented as the alien experience to characters whose proper home was elsewhere. The New York of pre-Civil War fiction was a bad place to visit and few "good" characters wanted to live there.

²Mysteries of Philadelphia, or: Scenes of Real Life in the Quaker City. By an Old Amateur (Philadelphia, 1848; Wright, I, 1939), p. viii.

³One should, perhaps, add the fictionalized tracts of temperance writers, but these were of far narrower intent than the broad evaluation suggested by the phrase "social criticism."

⁴The writer of Mysteries of Philadelphia, for instance, lapsed from his pose of indignation enough to describe the inflaming seductiveness of each of a series of expensive prostitutes, and when one leaves with her patron he leers, "What took place in that private apartment must be left for the imagination of the reader to conjecture" (25).

⁵There are very few in minor works either. Clinton Bradshaw, in Frederick Thomas' 1835 novel by that title, is probably the most notable exception. He is a city lawyer, sometime crime fighter, and sometime friend of both the urban poor and smalltime crooks. One of the most remarkable qualities of the work is its use of varied slang in giving an immediate presence of a vital and various lower class. But even Bradshaw hails from the country and that is where he goes at the end to claim his bride.

⁶Even if, as Joel Porte insists, Miller was too rigid in making the romance exclusively a reflection on natural

environment, his interpretation surely illuminates a significant aspect of the form. Miller states that before the Civil War the American "literary mentality" was "dominated by the then throbbing conventions of the Romance. These books were not dime novels, they were not amusements for idle ladies (though there were of course cheap imitations by the score); they were serious efforts to put the meaning of America, of life in America, into the one form that seemed providentially given . . . for expressing the deepest passions of the continent." The blonde and brunette conventions, Miller continues, were viewed by serious romancers not as "conventions but indispensable symbols for setting forth the true burden of Romance in America, which was not at all the love story. What all of them were basically concerned with was the continent, the heritage of America, the wilderness" (Nature's Nation, pp. 245, 252).

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C. Chapter Two

1. Primary Materials

Note: For most of the entries in this section, as well as some in Chapter Three and Chapter Four, I have used the microfilms keyed to Lyle H. Wright's American Fiction, 1774-1850 and American Fiction, 1851-1875. Volume and entry numbers in this collection appear after publication data.

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