

# 行政院國家科學委員會專題研究計畫 成果報告

## 《新富的機運》和十九世紀美國女性藝術家 研究成果報告(精簡版)

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計畫主持人：李欣穎

計畫參與人員：碩士班研究生-兼任助理：黃亮融  
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中華民國 96 年 09 月 13 日

## 一、前言

本研究計畫由郝渥斯（William Dean Howells）的晚期力作《新富的機運》（*A Hazard of New Fortunes*）出發，藉由探討書中的女性藝術家 Alma Leighton 的角色所帶出的各種議題，藉此深究女性藝術創作者在十九世紀末期的地位與處境。

Alma 向來不受批評家重視，但是在此一打破浪漫言情小說常規，反映工商主義社會現實，探討雜誌出版業的道德、藝術和商業糾葛，以及工業資本主義、基督教社會主義、父權封建制度相互辯證的小說當中，Alma 卻是唯一的女性藝術家，自應有其代表性。細究郝渥斯對她的刻畫，卻發現小說家仍侷限於傳統性別角色，以致於 Alma 在書中各重要主題的討論中未能找到著力點，甚至於談不上是個成功的藝術創作者，反而淪為乏善可陳的女性人物。

對照當代兩性藝術家所面臨的性別偏見，Alma 的角色刻畫既透露出男性面對就業女性所感受到的威脅與焦慮，又反映了男性藝術家面對自己的陰柔社會形象的不安與辯護。

## 二、研究目的

本計畫的目標首先在於藉由研究郝渥斯的晚期力作，對於這本重要的小說以及小說家後期的創作生涯能有更深入的認識。而繪畫史的研究則延續我先前的研究主題，只是將重點移至女性藝術家身上，並進而探討當時的性別問題，以及性別在社會、創作、經濟上的影響。

## 三、文獻探討

有關此時期插畫界的研究文獻相當有限，仍以畫冊為主，數量亦遠不及油畫、水彩畫的賞析。女性插畫家方面尤其如此，生平背景方面的介紹多半十分簡略。即使是女畫家的專門研究亦不多。研究者有興趣的通常是圖片內容本身，而非創作者，或者是圖片所反映的社會文化內涵，而非創作活動的社會文化條件，與我的研究目的不盡相同。Deborah Cherry 和 Whitney Chadwick 的女性畫家史倒是提供了全面概觀，對於瞭解女性藝術家在此時期的養成訓練、社會角色、職業發展，幫助頗大。Raymond Steiner 所寫的 the Art Students League of New York 的介紹則提供了此時期兩性藝術家習畫的背景資料。Sarah Burns 的研究著作和我的議題最密切；她研究此時藝術家的公眾形象，剖析藝術家如何仿效專業人士的經營手腕、穿著打扮與生活形態，如何藉由「美學」、「自然」等主題區隔藝術與商業，以及兩性藝術家都面臨的性別角色問題。

此外，Gail Collins 的著作與 Mary Kelly、Nancy Hewitt 所編輯的論文集補充

了當時女性教育、失婚女性與職場女性的概況。因為在郝渥斯筆下，Alma 在職場的處境與已婚婦女在家庭的地位其實頗有相類之處，我又參考了 Hendrik Hartog 與 Marilyn Yalom 對已婚女性的法律地位與權利的研究，從而對於 *coverture*（已婚婦女的從屬法律地位）有了更具體的概念。Amy Dru Stanley 的兩筆著作雖然就已婚婦女的勞力、工資所屬問題討論南北戰爭前後由奴役制度到契約社會所帶來的家庭、社會變化，與階級認同的形成，但是將婚姻關係和勞資關係類比，為我的論點提供不少啟發。

郝渥斯除了《新富的機運》，另有一本稍早的小說《波西米亞沿岸》（*The Coast of Bohemia*）描述的也是一個和 Alma 類似的女畫家的故事，書中年輕又有才華的女主角 Cornelia 同樣有志學畫，在鄉間遇見了紐約來的畫家 Ludlow，來到紐約習畫之後和他發展出一段戀情，最後兩人結為連理，共同經營藝術生涯，由妻子擔任模特兒與助手。此書比《新富》更明顯的顯露出作者對女性藝術家的保守心態。另一本小說《女人的道理》（*A Woman's Reason*）講述一對命運多舛的戀人的故事，難得其中有女性外出謀生的情節，可以看出郝渥斯對於中產階級女性困境的理解與同情，但是終究掙不脫「女主內」的傳統期待。《布恩醫生的執業》（*Dr. Breen's Practice*）則講述一位女醫師的戀愛故事，結局亦和前兩部書相同，可見得郝渥斯仍舊以家庭為女性的理想歸宿。

郝渥斯的研究方面，以 Alma 為主的論文只有 Mary Edwards 一篇，但是她認為 Alma 乃一拒絕婚姻、追求自我、實現理想的新女性；Patricia Schulster 討論當時的「女性問題」（the Woman Question），看法亦相同。Eric Cheyfitz 探討書中的「自我呈現／實現」主題，則認定 Alma 具有雙性人格，與 Christopher Diller 看法相似。這些學者都對於 Alma 的成就或潛力持肯定態度，和我的觀點相反。不過，Diller 的論文更將男／女、商業／藝術、文學／繪畫等議題對比討論，參照當時雜誌印刷技術與插畫風格，認為郝渥斯以女性特質來協調前述二元對立的劃分，與我的研究主題亦有重疊。Gib Prettyman 則把書中的雜誌經營視為進步主義下的商業烏托邦，Jason Puskar 以保險業之文化意涵關照寫實主義的訴求，都是對於書中工商社會描繪與經濟議題大有新意的讀法。另外，諸如 Alfred Habegger、John Crowley 和 Cheyfitz 等學者也就郝渥斯的傳記資料與文學作品，舉證小說家對於女性的善意與矛盾，正好強化我的論點。Dennis Denisoff 與 Penny Boumelha 則解析了英國維多利亞時期小說中的一些女性藝術家典型，亦值得參考。

#### 四、研究方法

我主要由文化史著手，希望對於小說家寫作當時的社會價值觀有較深入的認識，再與作家個人的思想做比較，藉以瞭解小說寫作當時的文化背景，以求進一步瞭解這本小說與當時的社會進行了什麼樣的對話，強化了哪些社會觀點，又

挑戰了哪些社會成規。除了多方補足涉獵繪畫史、婦女史方面的資料，小說家的著作和傳記資料也是主要的研究資源；當代書評家與讀者對於小說的反應也極具參考價值，但是因為研究主題並非書中較醒目的主旨或主角，這一方面的直接證據較為缺乏。

## 五、結果與討論（含結論與建議）

郝渥斯深受當時性別角色的限制，使得他的女性藝術家受限於性別空間（separate spheres）、女性美德（True Womanhood）等想法，雖然名義上有職業婦女的條件與空間，但是情節安排上仍舊謹守中產婦女的行為規範，甚至比當代真實的從業女性還合乎體統。Alma 的謀職乃迫於情勢而非雄心，其職業選擇（插畫）亦屬當時較適合女性的藝術行業。另外，她的天分亦絲毫不減她的女性特質，如自謙、持家等。她的職業活動，如習畫、投稿，也都限於單性場合或透過私人關係。然而，這也造成她的表現不符專業要求，反而和一般淑女們的玩票習畫沒有兩樣。雜誌社給她的待遇也有如業餘兼職，成品都由男性編輯做最後修正裁奪，他們也是唯一具名的成員。男性藉由將女性隔絕於商務之外而壟斷專業資源，結果或許給予女性創作不受市場左右的更大空間和自主，但是另一方面也阻撓女性取得專業認可。Alma 的不婚雖然同樣給予她更大的自主空間，但是也同時阻絕她參與男性世界，進而使得她自外於小說中一切嚴肅的社會議題討論，終至阻礙她成爲一位真正具有人性關懷的藝術家。至於男性藝術家的處境與女性亦有相同之處。婚姻難免是一項拖累，但是也唯其成爲一家之主，他們才成爲社會認可的具有責任感的公民。男性藝術家面對商業社會亦感受到居於次等地位的劣勢，但是郝渥斯另外給予書中的男性藝術家管理經營雜誌的工作，使得他們兼具商場專業人士的地位，也更接近當時社會認可的男性形象。

在後續研究方面，此次文獻閱讀的過程當中獲得的一些背景認識未來可以運用於分析其他文學作品中兩性藝術家的角色刻畫，乃至於作家本身的性別角色定位。對於女性問題的理解則可以廣泛運用於小說中女性角色的研究，以及女性作家本身的關照。

## 六、計畫成果自評

本計畫的執行與原先預期大致相符。研究內容上隨著研究論文的撰寫，另外增加了婦女就業史的研讀。個人原先預期研究之十九世紀末期文化、創作、出版、商業概況，經過研讀，都有了更深入的認識，可供日後之教學研究應用。論文撰寫上進度也大致符合預期。

我的論文的新意在於關注到了批評家一向在此本小說中忽略的女性藝術家的角色與其遭遇的工作上的阻難。對於 Alma 的角色解讀也與歷來批評家不同，並不那麼看好她的潛力和發展，反而覺得郝渥斯在浪漫情節上的突破反而爲她設

下許多限制。雖然結論與大部分學者對於郝渥斯的理解並無太大出入，但是以最近的文化史的研究論述佐證，也算是更新了郝渥斯與《新富的機運》的研究。研究計畫的學術價值在此。

初步研究心得已於 2007 年在美國波士頓舉行的「美國文學學會（American Literature Association）大會」發表。該場次由「郝渥斯學會」協辦，與會者多為著名的郝渥斯學者專家，對於我的論文反應良好，鼓勵有加。目前該篇論文已進完稿，將於近期之內做最後補充修正，投稿期刊。

## 七、引用書目

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## 出席國際學術會議心得報告

計畫編號	95-2411-H-002-081
計畫名稱	《新富的機運》和十九世紀美國女性藝術家
出國人員姓名 服務機關及職稱	李欣穎 / 國立臺灣大學外國語文學系 / 副教授
會議時間地點	2007 年 5 月 24-27 日 / 美國波士頓
會議名稱	2007 American Literature Association Conference
發表論文題目	The Art of Marriage: Taking the Woman Artist as Wife in <i>A Hazard of New Fortunes</i>

### 一、參加會議經過

「美國文學學會」係由美國當地各個作家學會和文學領域學會組成，各場次由個別學會主導，各自設定討論主題，分別收件篩選，最後由大會排定場次，三天半的議程連同工作坊與各學會的會員大會，共計 269 個場次。與會學者遍及美國、黎巴嫩、臺灣、英國、土耳其、波多黎各、斯洛伐克、加拿大、以色列、日本、法國、挪威、西班牙、中國、義大利、德國、印度、愛爾蘭、希臘、丹麥、埃及、波蘭、巴西等國；臺灣除了我，還有中研院的單德興老師與會。

我的論文排在第一天（5 月 24 日）上午 10：00-11：20 發表，同一場次還有一位 University of Texas 的博士候選人與 California State University, Long Beach 的副教授一同發表論文；台下觀眾有好幾位專門研究 W. D. Howells 的權威學者，以及 Howells 的曾孫女 Polly Howells。

我利用此次難得的機會，也聆聽了好幾場其他相關作家的論文發表，另外還參與了 Fulbright 國外研究申請工作坊與美國 National Endowment for the Humanities 申請計畫書工作坊，以吸取別人的經驗。

會議第二天晚上 W. D. Howells Society 舉辦一場晚宴，地點就在 Howells 擔任首任主席的 Tavern Club。我也報名繳費參加了。同席出了相關學者，還有 Howells 的孫子與孫女。

會議第三天我則參加了 W. D. Howells Society 所舉辦之 Howells 故居兼紀念館 Kittery Point（位於緬因州）之參訪活動與座談會。此一紀念建築目前由哈佛大學管理，車費與午餐皆由紀念館 / 哈佛大學招待。座談會由 Howells 的傳記學者 Susan Goodman，Carl Dawson 與 Sarah Daugherty 和作家的曾孫女 Polly Howells 引言，除了傳記資料的分享，還有文化古蹟保存的討論。

### 二、與會心得

因為國內研究 Howells 的只有我一個人，平常鮮少交流切搓的機會，因此此次參與 ALA 大會實為難得的機會，得以和其他學者交流。我頂著臺灣唯一 Howells 學者的光環，又是最遠道來訪的，令其他與會學者印象深刻，也算替臺灣學術界做了一點宣傳。

其他學者對於我所發表的論文大致上反應甚佳，讓我覺得自己雖然難免閉門造車，所幸還不至於難以和其他學者對話。我私自以為和同場發表的學者相較，並未遜色。幾位資深學者對於我的論文也多所鼓勵。

Fulbright 的工作坊雖然針對美國學者申請出國教學研究的準備工作而設計，但是對於準備此類研究計畫書之重點提示，讓我受益頗多。NEH 的工作坊則是介紹讀書會、進修活動、系列講座、設立學術網站、課程設計工作坊之經費申請，讓我對於學術紮根、普及的方法多了一些新的想法。

Howells 故居 Kittery Point 的參觀活動則是難得的經驗，讓人對於作家創作環境與背景另有一番實質的認識。

此外，在會議附設的書展中發現了不少相關的最新學術出版品，將於回國後陸續訂購。在會場也收集了學術刊物和出版機構的一些資料，可供以後投稿出版之參考。

## 附錄

### The Art of Marriage: Taking the Woman Artist as Wife in *A Hazard of New Fortunes*

Hsin-ying Sherry Li  
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The idea of this paper came from a comment by Basil March toward the end of *A Hazard of New Fortunes* in which he asks: “Why shouldn’t we rejoice as much at a nonmarriage as a marriage? ... By and by some fellow will wake up and see that a first-rate story can be written from the antimarriage point of view” (416). Howells almost writes such a novel himself in the subplot involving Alma Leighton, who rejects a marriage offer from Beaton because, in her own words, she is “wedded to [her] art” (182). I took interest in the analogy, because I felt that Alma is nevertheless given a secondary status in the art world, so that although she is not wife in name, she is nevertheless no different from being a wife, not to any individual artist, but to the whole art and business world. My reading of Alma’s characterization differs from the usual reading in that I see her not as a successful artist, or one with great potential.

By Alma’s wifely status I refer to both Alma’s professional activities and professional relations. Howells confines her professional activities strictly to the domestic sphere: we only learn about her single-sex art class through her talk, while she sketches either boarders or callers in her parlor and conducts all her professional transactions through her instructor and family friends. Even Beaton offers criticism on her first cover design during one of his social calls. The possible reason for Howells’s restriction to her career may be that he wishes to conform her to the Victorian ideal of True Womanhood and save her from the Victorian prejudice against “unnatural” single women and “unfeminine” career women. What he does in her characterization is quite similar to techniques other critics have observed in the depiction of female artists of this age. He firstly emphasizes her modesty. Penny Boumelha has commented on how “the concept of innate genius [in woman artists] enables the representation of achievement without conscious ambition”; the woman artist simply “assents to her destiny [to be an artist] without challenge to the conventional womanliness of self-forgetfulness” (172). The use of the image of “distressed gentlewoman” who is forced into economic independence yet maintains her gentility, such as Deborah Cherry corroborates in her analysis of Emily Mary Osborn’s controversial painting *Nameless and Friendless*, also helps Howells to “work against the claims that the ‘lady’ who worked lost caste, sacrificed her class position and endangered her purity” (80). Alma’s choice of career also indicates artistic humility, since illustration was considered a lesser genre in the ordering of graphic arts. Even after Wetmore helps her to get “a little bit of color” into the fall exhibition, as Howells lightly puts it, the narrator still apologizes on her behalf that “the fall exhibition is never so good as the spring exhibition” (430). This same modesty further extends to her lack of social ambition and sexual designs, in contrast especially to Beaton and Christine. She also seems to juggle her personal interests with her family duties quite well. Early in the novel the narrator calls Alma “the

pervading light, if not force, of the [St. Barnaby] house” (91), a good housekeeper occasionally taking a few days off to express her artistic nature, a permissible avocation in a daughter if not a housewife.

What Alma gains in respectability she possibly loses in professionalism. Although she tries to verify, upon the acceptance of her magazine cover design, that “It’s a matter of business, isn’t it?” (150), the manner of the transaction—a tête-à-tête with Beaton in her own hallway—fails to reassure the reader that artistic merit rather than ulterior motives influenced his decision. Indeed the difference between the public and the domestic underscores the difference between the professional and the amateur, i.e. between consumer industrialism and cottage economy. The few instances in which we see Alma at work, moreover, mainly serve as a backdrop to courtship. Her sketch of Miss Woodburn gives Fulkerson a chance to express his admiration for the sitter, while her sketch of Beaton gives him a chance to make love to herself. These romantic scenes reduce her art work to “lady” accomplishments— cultural skills and tastes cultivated in marriageable middle-class girls to better prepare them for wifehood and motherhood. Because of this confusion, both Beaton and Fulkerson call the woman illustrators “amateurs,” although Fulkerson nevertheless sees market potential in them, specifically because of their gender. With female readers forming three-fourths of the reading public, he argues, female art could prove as popular as female fiction. Implied is the inferiority of female taste, on the one hand for amateurish art as consumers, and on the other hand in the judgment and execution of artistic creation as artists. The men seem to believe that there is such a thing as a universal aesthetic criteria separate from gender politics, but Beaton’s impression of Alma’s cover design may prove otherwise. As the painter corrected the drawing with a pencil, “he respected it a little more, though he still smiled at the feminine quality—a young lady quality” (146). The design is obviously a decent piece of work, but the male critic finds fault, forgivingly and benignly perhaps, with its feminine “limitations”—in other words, because a woman created it and it shows.

Not that feminine works are necessarily bad business investments. Fulkerson exploits these supposedly inferior artistic products to the advantage of the accounting room, paying “amateurish” prices for commodities he sells to the public as professional goods. This calls to mind the “feminization” in the Progressive Era of clerical work, elementary school teaching, nursing, librarianship, and social work: as more women entered these careers, they became “semi-professions”—“dead-end occupation with little status, low pay, and few opportunities for advancement” (Gordon 235). In keeping, moreover, with the management of these semi-professions, Fulkerson also relies on male supervision for a skilled finish: he hires Beaton as art editor to touch up the female contributions, an arrangement that further demotes these women illustrators to apprentices. How effectively this division of labor works Howells leaves open to question, though, since both Mrs. Leighton and Alma assert that Beaton’s suggestions do not improve the drawing, and Howells fails to identify which design finally appears on the magazine cover. But Beaton’s input inevitably throws doubt on Alma’s authorship.

The “female illustrator and male editor” collaboration works well with “the good old anonymous system” Fulkerson advocates, however, because the “volunteer illustrators,” as Beaton calls them, would hardly expect to see their names attached to the product. The male participants,

on the other hand, receive all the recognition. Beaton is praised for “the pretty thing he is making of that magazine *of his*” and Wetmore shares credit for the cover done by his pupil, “a little girl Beaton discovered down in New Hampshire last summer” (212). In fact Alma remains nameless except in her own social circle. Thus she nonetheless resembles a wife in her professional relation to Beaton, since her status is the same as what the marriage laws in those days called “feme covert”—“a wife whose public identity had been covered over by her husband” (Hartog 95). According to Blackstone, this means that “the very being, or legal existence of the woman is suspended during the marriage, or at least incorporated or consolidated into that of the husband, under whose wing, protection, and cover, she performs everything” (qtd. in Yalom 185). In other words, the husband gains full ownership and absolute control of the wife’s property, and in the eyes of the law their identities, rights and responsibilities are one—the husband’s. As Beaton’s freelance illustrator, Alma also has no separate professional identity and no claims to copyright. For that matter, she fares worse than a real wife, since she cannot even bask in the reflected glory of “his” achievement as his associate/ dependent.

In comparison, Fulkerson does not mind acknowledging his female illustrators— as a nameless, faceless staff—as long as it does not involve increased expenditure. Besides exploiting their labor, Fulkerson plans to go one step further and exploit the woman artists’ their market value as well. To attract the female readers, he will give them all the credit for the illustration. Fulkerson in fact cleverly combines his business goals with his wish to please and flatter his female employees and female customers, to the extent that he constantly blurs the line between business dealings and social pleasures, for instance sending complimentary copies of the magazines to his lady journalists with boxes of roses and candy. Fulkerson’s problem may well be that he does not know how to, nor want to, treat ladies in a professional manner, supposedly out of deference for them, but this deference actually excludes them from the real business world.

This exclusion from commerce, though sometimes allowing more freedom and autonomy in creativity, turns out to hinder women’s claim to authorship and professionalism. Alma’s sketch of Miss Woodburn is a good example of how artistic works in a non-business setting acquire only ambiguous status in the market economy. The impromptu sketch, since not a commissioned portrait but a product of intimate female friendship, would traditionally have stayed out of the market and become either a gift to the sitter or a keepsake of the sketcher. Fulkerson’s offer to print it in the magazine, however, immediately turns it into a commodity, the ownership of which is also immediately called into question. Colonel Woodburn, opposed to the implication of commodifying the person of his daughter, forbids the scheme, while Miss Woodburn, confident in the impersonality of commerce, encourages it—“Who’s to know who it’s from?” (177) she demands, referring to the anonymity of both sketcher and sitter. When Alma enters the fray to claim that “This sketch belongs to me. . . . I’m not going to let it be printed,” Fulkerson finds himself again on familiar ground and returns to his usual managerial position: “we’ll leave it to Beaton.” While those involved finally respect Alma’s wishes, the consensus seems inclined toward a joint ownership—Miss Woodburn forfeits her rights in submission to “the stern parent and the envious awtust” (181) and Fulkerson also suggests that Beaton could get around *them*. Intellectual property rights are the core of authorship in the capitalist economy, and any question

about Alma's assertion of these exclusive rights denies her full authorship in the marketplace and casts doubt on her professional status. Beaton's published sketch of a fiery spirit floating above a gas-country landscape, though an obscure tribute to Christine, nevertheless stands in marked contrast to Alma's awkward situation.

Women artists' marginalization in the marketplace finally excludes them from the discussions of the socio-economic realities occupying Howells's attention at this stage of his career. Alma is possibly the only important character in the novel exempt from any moral crisis, unless the exemption itself be a moral issue. Her move to New York and her involvement with *Every Other Week* bring no moral tests. The Leightons have their financial difficulties, but they get along in New York the same as they did in St. Barnaby—by taking in boarders. The commercial forces and social unrests of the Progressive era and the metropolis barely affect their way of life, except for the new heterogeneity of their boarders and associates, which in turn barely change their outlook on life. Even though Alma never denies the mercenary motives behind her artistic aspirations, it never plays a significant role in her professional pursuits. When Colonel Woodburn expounds his creed that the “law of commercialism is on everything in a commercial society, ... [and the] final reward of art is money, not the pleasure of creating” (151), she makes no response at all but chats with Miss Woodburn as their parents debate the virtues and evils of slavery and capitalism. Nor do we ever learn her ideas on the collaborative-anonymous set-up of *Every Other Week* or on the streetcar strike.

In regard to her seeming insensitivity to the social milieu, Alma in effect resembles Beaton, who plays to perfection the amoral artist who cares for nothing but art. Sarah Burns shows in her study of the public image of the Gilded Age artist that the “art for art's sake” school was under attack for its rejection of “the conventions of morality, legibility, and imitation of nature while worshipping at the shrine of incandescent, sensuous beauty” (80), the principles of which Howells must have readily agreed. Nor did he ever believe it possible to separate creativity from the market. Alma's characterization certainly shows no traits of a romanticized, transcendental artist for whom virtuosity is its own reward, yet Howells curiously spares her from the strains of financial struggles and moral uncertainty. In fact, even though the self-absorbed Beaton fits the more negative descriptions of a corrupted aestheticism, Howells still depicts him with occasional scruples about neglecting his familial duties and toying with Christine, even if he never cares enough to reform. A dilettante like Kendrick, who looks into social conditions even if mostly from an aesthetic point of view, also has his brief moment of trial when he ponders over how to meet Mela Dryfoos's advances, and comes to recognize the “something earthly good and kind” in her, “if it [is] simple and vulgar” (343), and decides to follow the code of honor. Alma, in comparison, does not lack a strong moral sense, but she lacks a dramatic vehicle to exercise it.

If, like a proper Victorian lady, Alma never talks about business matters with Miss Woodburn's practicality and shrewdness, part of the reason is that Howells does not give her much business to talk about. Concerning the business of art or the matter of taste, which various scholars have identified as important themes of the novel, she remains detached and reticent. Edwin Cady therefore sees Alma as an “honest but immature” artist (104) who finally misses out on an education in humanity like March's. The lost opportunities for spiritual growth, which help create worthy art,

are actually lost opportunities for marriage. The only legitimate means available to Howells's women characters to experience the social-economic realities is to do so vicariously through husbands, while playing the role of the supportive spouse. Miss Woodburn and Mrs. March, for example, prompt March and Fulkerson to realize their ideals of male independence, authority and integrity. If Alma meets any moral tests in the novel, it can only be her hesitation to enter marriage and thus assume ethical responsibilities. The moral dilemma of the woman artist is finally then the incompatibility and interdependence of art and marriage. Wifely duties interfere with artistic creativity, but art—indeed life—devoid of romantic attachment seems to render bona fide creativity for women impossible. Alma's moral test lacks dramatic tension, however, because she does not seem to go through much of a struggle. Aside from a "dreamy tone" (114) which she quickly casts off at Beaton's first visit, Alma—and the reader—are very soon disillusioned with this half-hearted suitor. Yet without another passion in human subjects such as Miss Vance's religiosity to balance her good sense, Alma comes across as cold and indifferent. Howells ends up presenting Alma as, if not less than a woman—which is not necessarily more of a man—then an atypical woman, at least by his own standards. In terms of romantic reveries or sensitivity, she appears to have less imagination than the narcissistic Beaton. Nor does Alma engage in any girlish teasing about suitors quite common among Howells's young ladies. Dennis Denisoff observes in British Victorian fiction the tendency to portray women painters as women of dubious gender identity and sexual orientation. In his own ironic way, Howells both supports and contests this argument: he seems to agree that the women's asexuality empowers their creative careers, but in this case Alma's creativity falls short of the kind of realism Howells values, so that her asexuality finally hinders her creative career as well.

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