

AMST 333
House and Home in America
Roger Williams University
M-TH 3:30 - 4:50
GHH 108

Michael R. H. Swanson, Ph. D.
Office: GHH 215 Phone: ext. 3230
Hours: M, T, Th, F 9:00-10:30
or by Appointment
mswanson@rwu.edu

Week of April 9

For Monday April 9

Read, in Rybczynski.

Chapter 5, "Ease" pp. 101 - 122

Review, in Stilgoe, part II

Chapters 9-10, Country Seat, and Grounds

Chapter 5 takes the idea of "ease" which we first associated with the "easy chair" and applies it to the entire house. We expect our houses to be places of relaxation, apart from the hustle and bustle of urban life and economics. Rybczynski tracks that idea to the English, particularly the English gentry . . . who maintained a town house for conducting business and affairs of court and a country house to which they could withdraw from political affairs and amuse themselves, their friends, and families. (Remember the fairy tale about the Town Mouse and the Country Mouse). Americans expect suburban houses to function similarly, and orient them to the landscape much the same way English gentlemen oriented country houses and grounds to the working agricultural estates around them. We'll see how that relationship works itself out.

Internet Study Exercises.

Visit and compare English and American Country Estates. For English examples you can visit [Duncombe Park](#) and [Harewood House](#). For a comparative American Example, visit [Drayton Hall](#). While the buildings may be visually different from each other, a comparison of how they function will show their intellectual relationship. The pictures on the website are linked to different areas of the websites of the houses. Click on them, too.

For Thursday, April 12

Read, in Stilgoe,

Part III.

Chapter 14, Barnacles pp. 151 - 161

Part IV, Borderland Life and Popular Literature

Chapter 15, Advocates, 168-186

We've seen that it was the rich who escaped the cities first. The middle class was not too far behind. Some early developments were rather haphazard, as the chapter Barnacles shall show. Barnacles is an interesting metaphor, and to understand its use you'll need to think a little about how barnacles grow. Some nautical types in the class may be able to provide inspiration to the landlubbers. These were not the first Barnacles, of course . . . Rather grotty areas had developed on the fringes of Urban America's walking cities earlier.

Part IV, Chapter 15 will introduce us to literary figures who popularized the Suburbs and the Suburban lifestyle. Among these was H. C. Bunner and when I discovered him I was impressed enough to hunt down examples of his work which could be accessible on the Internet. You'll be reading four of his short stories in the internet exercise below.

Download and Read

Four Short Stories and essays by H. C. Bunner:

[A Letter to Town](#)

[The Lost Child](#)

Natural Selection [Part 1](#), [Part 2](#), and [Part 3](#)

[Shantytown](#)

I'm betting that many of you will become fond of H. C. Bunner, even as I have. These essays and stories are warmly sympathetic to persons in a variety of situations expressing the "human condition".

- Shantytown will show how urban expansion frequently eradicated housing of the poor which had sprung up as squatters built as they could on the fringes of city areas
- A Letter to Town shows how one's mind-set must change if one is to enjoy suburban living

- The Lost Child suggests to us that suburbs also can be scary places
- Natural Selection presents the culture clash between the older "city" elite and the newer "country" elite as Chelsea and the Hamptons try to negotiate the rapids of romance.