

**THE QUEST FOR A NEW IDENTITY IN URBAN LIFE: THE CASE OF
URBAN-VILLAGERS IN THE AMERICAN NOVEL***

**“Kent Hayatında Yeni bir Kimlik Arayışı: Amerikan Romanında Kentli-Köylülerin
Durumu”**

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ABSTRACT

This article aims to expose that under the ethics of modernity, Americans had a transmission through attributing a new identity of becoming urban-villagers which signifies a divided state of mind between the rural and the urban lifestyles. The dilemma of the modern man seems to manifest itself in the American mind from the beginning, in the shape of a desire and/or nostalgia for the rural yet a need for the urban. The concept of “urban-villager” will be evaluated in American literary context in respect to William Dean Howells’ *The Rise of Silas Lapham*, Stephen Crane’s *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets*, Upton Sinclair’s *The Jungle*, and Theodore Dreiser’s *An American Tragedy* in American literature.

Key Words: Modernity, Modern Man, Urbanization, Social Change, *Anomie*, American Literature

ÖZET

Bu makale, modern dönemde kırsal yaşamdan kent yaşamına göç eden Amerikalıların “kentli-köylüler” olarak adlandırıldığını ve kentli-köylü zihniyetini temsil ederek yeni bir kimlik kazandıklarını göstermeyi amaçlamaktadır. Amerikan düşüncesinde modern insan ikilemi kendisini erken dönemlerden başlayarak kırsal yaşama bir özlem ve kent yaşamına ihtiyaç olarak göstermiştir. Kentli-Köylü kavramını inceleyebilmek için Amerikan romanlarından William Dean Howells’in *The Rise of Silas Lapham*, Stephen Crane’nin *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets*, Upton Sinclair’in *The Jungle*, ve Theodore Dreiser’in *An American Tragedy* adlı romanları ele alınacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Modernleşme, Kentleşme, Sosyal Değişiklik, *Anomie*, Amerikan Edebiyatı

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1. Social Changes and the Concept of “Urban-Villager”

This paper intends to convey that under the ethics of modernity fictional characters in some of the American novels had a transformation through attributing a new personal identity of becoming urban-villagers. Such a dilemma of the modern man portrays itself in the American mind by means of retrospection for a rustic way of living in the urban setting. Spiritually accommodating in their previous urban lifestyle, urban villagers settle physically in the modern world which signifies that they are associated with the old and the new simultaneously in their minds. The issue of urban-villagers will be considered in respect to William Dean Howells’ *The Rise of Silas Lapham* (1885), Stephen Crane’s *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets* (1893), Upton Sinclair’s *The Jungle* (1903), and Theodore Dreiser’s *An American Tragedy* (1925).²

While flooding into rapidly growing cities via inner and outer migration in the post-Civil War Era, basically known for “the growth of an urban and business civilization and youthful optimism,” some fictional characters in these novels struggled to adjust to the urban way of living by means of keeping their traditional, cultural, and religious values (Forster, 1970, 942). In American history, the period between the 1880s and the 1920s is predominantly known as the time of great expansion toward cities (Chudacoff, 1972, 112). During that period, the newcomers arrived from two main routes: “the American countryside and Europe. Asia, Canada, and Latin America also supplied immigrants, though in smaller numbers” (Norton, 1994, 567). This frontier tradition affected many individuals’ life because of the change in the social, political, and economic circumstances when compared to their hometowns.

Immigration towards cities, especially from the rural parts of England and many other European countries, puts forward that there has been a conflict between the rural and the urban lifestyles which end up in a different way of living as “urban villagers.” In this article, an “urban villager” is regarded as the one who had a rural or country background or experienced the life in the less developed areas of a city. Thus, an “urban villager” does not only stand for a person who has an agriculturally oriented background. It is related to individuals’ lower standard of living and their disability for adaptation to the urban way of living. They are the ones who consider the city as their new frontier for improvement in life through combining their new lifestyle with their traditional rural way of living.

2. The Distinction between the Rural and the Urban States of Mind

People who migrate from rural regions to settle in urban centers aim to find a better life style in satisfactory living circumstances polished with an urban consciousness. However, it is natural for inner and outer migrants to experience difficulties in adaptation to the new occasions in cities. In this respect, as Nel Anderson argues residents should have “a special way of behaving and thinking” to be an urban dweller (1971, 103). In other words, to be urbanized or modernized, it is requisite “to be

² *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets* is hereafter abbreviated as *Maggie*.

civilized and citified” which mainly indicates a state or habit of the mind (Slater, 1970, 9). To be more explicit, Edward Shils’ “Daydreams and Nightmares” can be referred to in order to explain the differences between the rural and the urban states of mind. Rural mind depicts:

. . . a picture of a pre-modern peasant society in which men lived in the harmonious mutual respect of authority and subordinate, in which all felt themselves integral parts of a community which in its turn lived in continuous and inspiring contact with its own past. Traditions were stable, the kinship group was bound together in unquestioned solidarity. No one was alienated from himself or isolated from his territorial community and his kin. Beliefs were firm and were universally shared. . . This idyll was juxtaposed against a conception of modern urban society. . . where no man is bound by ties of sentimental affection or moral obligation or loyalty to any other man. Each man is concerned only with his own interest. . . . The family is dissolved, friendship dead, religious belief evaporated. Impersonality and anonymity have taken the place of closer ties. (qtd. in Mizruchi, 1964, 12-13)

Thus, in rural life, there is a communal orientation, dependency on conventions, unity of kinsmen and performance of religious values. Conversely, in urban life, people become more impersonal and fall into a state of *anomie* as a result of their disappointment for not finding what they expected in urban life.³ As a result of this cultural dislocation, rural residents of the city find themselves in the dilemma of living in between past and present, old and new values, conventions and innovations, limitation and freedom which also end up the rise of a new state of mind enforcing a change in personalities and consciences while struggling to adjust to new circumstances.

3. Consequences of the Mobility from Rural Regions to Urban Centers

However, it is a fact that the movement from rural regions to urban centers does not result in an immediate and unproblematic change from rural consciousness to urban consciousness. They cannot leave all their customs, habits and values behind. As they strive for adjusting themselves to a mixture of rural and urban life, they neither

³ *Anomie* is a new term to be introduced in literary analysis to discuss the modern man. Emile Durkheim’s concept of “anomie” signifies individuals’ mental and emotional breakdown generating from the absence of personal norms, standards or values in social changes. Durkheim defines anomie in terms of three main characteristics: “a painful uneasiness or anxiety, a feeling of separation from the groups or of isolation from group standards, or a feeling of pointlessness or that no certain goals exist” (qtd. in Mizruchi: 1964: 47-48). Such a social unrest ends up the emergence of the mental and emotional states of alienation, isolation, and estrangement as well as normlessness. Basically signifying the deregulation in social life in 1893 and onwards, Durheim substantially implies the state of powerlessness deriving from economic circumstances in the process of rapid urbanization. For a detailed analysis of anomie, see Anthony Giddens’. *Emile Durkheim; Selected Writings*. 1972.

become urban nor remain rural. They keep their old values while trying to adapt to the new values of urban life. In the transformation of the state of mind, the individual will be unable to change his own original identity. For example, an American who migrates to urban life from provincial places certainly keeps the national traits of the “Frontier and Puritan” of American identity. Or an Italian or a Lithuanian will obviously preserve national rustic characteristics. In this respect, an alteration in location does not necessitate a change in the characteristics of original identity. Yet, it requires a shift in the personal traits for the adjustment to city life.

Identity and personality are two different concepts. As Joan Scott puts it in “Multiculturalism and the Politics of Identity,” identity is “considered to be the manifestation of a set of customs, practices and meanings, a long-lasting inheritance, an identifiable sociological division, and a set of unique traits and/or experiences” (1995, 5). On the other hand, personality is limited to individual characteristics of a person and may change with downward or upward social mobility. Personality is defined in *The New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary on Historical Principles* as “the set of qualities or characteristics forming a person as a distinctive individual.” Identity is a general concept that indicates common representations of a group of people or a nation, but personality or character is subjective, inner and unknown. Although the personal traits of an individual may change regarding the new patterns of behavior and attitudes of a new environment, identity remains intact. The newcomers of the city, in this case, will be open to the characteristic change of becoming an urban-villager while being unable to adapt to urban life. In urban life, the God-centered view of rural life leaves its place to a man-centered and money-oriented world⁴. Such a big change will certainly cause the creation of a new characteristic, i.e., the change in personality has a more materialistic character in cities. In urban centers, money becomes the principal criterion to achieve success. However, in rural places, people generally lead a life encouraged by thrift and hard work to acquire success. They grow up with the stories of rags-to-riches and believe in the possibility of achievement whatever the conditions are. As a result of these contradictions, the newcomers feel the difficulty in adaptation and find the best choice for living in cities as the urban-villagers, i.e. they are neither the urban dwellers nor the villagers of their rustic life, but in between.

Newcomers of urban centers have a tendency to lead an urban-villager lifestyle because of believing in the necessity of both rural and urban ways of living. As Raymond Williams argues in *The Country and The City*, both urban and rural life have advantages for individual improvement in various aspects. Urban life holds “learning, communication and light,” as countryside offers individuals “peace, innocence and simple virtue.” (1973, 1). This highlights that a divided state of mind has emerged ever since the dilemma of the modern man manifested itself in the American mind from the beginning, in the shape of a desire and/or nostalgia for the rural yet a need for the urban. They live in both places: spiritually in their previous lives, but physically in the modern world by living the old and the new at the same time. They become a new type of man:

⁴ Focusing on God-centered life indicates that rural life basically involves the existence of ethical values in social life.

the urban-villager who both lives his previous experiences in the present and tries to adjust to the new world circumstances.

4. The Evaluation of Urban-Villagers in American Literary Canon

All literary figures in the aforementioned novels thought that life would be easier in urban life, because they assess that life satisfaction was associated with socio-economic standards. As a result of their optimism, these fictional characters flooded into the new frontier, toward rapidly growing cities. Especially young individuals looked for an atmosphere of change and the hope for a better standard of living. While trying to adapt the urban consciousness, the main characters such as Silas Lapham in *The Rise of Silas Lapham*, Maggie Johnson in *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets*, Jurgis Rudkus in *The Jungle*, Clyde Griffiths, and Roberta Alden in *An American Tragedy* were unable to acquire success due to their inadequacy of skillfulness, education, and qualifications. Their hard social and economic circumstances also contributed their failure in urban life and caused them to become the alienated, isolated, and anomic characters in their new settlements.

This study puts forward that some individuals such as Maggie, Silas Lapham, Jurgis, and Clyde as well as Roberta portray an urban-villager characteristic while migrating to urban life either from the inner or the outer parts of the United States. Because of their illiteracy, unskillfulness, poverty, unemployment and insufficiency in their aptitude for work, these immigrants were not able to adjust to the requirements of urban living and, thus, were regarded as the “urban-villagers” due to keeping their rural traditional and cultural values alive in their new environment.

William Dean Howells depicts Silas Lapham as a strong, morally honest country boy who aimed to achieve financial success in Boston in *The Rise of Silas Lapham*. As it is obvious in the novel, Lapham grew up in rural Ohio and immigrated to Boston to acquire success there. However, Howells introduces Lapham as an individual who gains financial success, but feels socially unsafe because of the necessity of adaptation to the Boston-born Brahmins, the upper-class Bostonian group. Despite being accepted by the Brahmins, Silas never feels comfortable with them due to the sense of nostalgia for his country life. He knows that highly traditional culture of the Laphams could never be sufficient to do and say what the Brahmins expect. In fact, as Michael Anesko also points out, *The Rise of Silas Lapham* is enough to understand the American character, because “anyone who wishes to gain an insight into the conditions of life in America, and to peer into its social complexities, cannot do better than to give his days and nights to the study of Mr. Howells’ stories in general and to *The Rise of Silas Lapham* in particular” (2005, 1). Lapham depicts the complexity of the urban-villager characteristic because of struggling to live his rural background, —Vermont, New Hampshire—in Boston. He portrays his past in most of his behaviors and attitudes. The dinner party of the upper-middle class Coreys can be an example because of announcing his agricultural background. He just portrays his urban-villager characteristics. For instance, in one of his interactions with Colonel he states:

Yes, sir, it’s about the sightliest view I know of. I always did like the water side of Beacon. Long before I owned property here, or ever expected to,

m' wife and I used to ride down this way, and stop the buggy to get this view over the water. When people talk to me about the Hill, I can understand 'em. It's snug, and it's old-fashioned, and it's where they've always lived. But when they talk about Commonwealth Avenue, I don't know what they mean. It don't hold a candle to the water side of Beacon. You've got just as much wind over there, and you've got just as much dust, and all the view you've got is the view across the street. No, sir! When you come to the Back Bay at all, give me the water side of Beacon. (Howells, 1965, 50)

Depicting Boston society and manners of the 1880s in his novel, Howells portrays Silas Lapham as a newly rich entrepreneur who inherited his father's paint business and who keeps his rural personal characteristics alive. His rising ambition is revealed through the houses he constructed in different periods. His small farmhouse in Vermont is the place where he leads a simple, pure, honest, and rural life, and where he is content with his success in his moral perfection. His house in Nankeen Street represents Lapham's rejection of the civilized urban society and his return to the rural Vermont life once again. He is proud of being a self-made urban-villager in Boston. Howells describes Lapham as the one who "had the pride which comes of self-making, and he would not openly lower his crest to the young fellow he had taken into his business" (1965, 98). It is clear that Lapham gives up his scramble after money in Boston, embraces his morality and leads his life by keeping his virtues of being "simple, clear, bold, and straightforward in mind and action" (Howells, 1965, 19). This implies that Lapham does not become a participant of the harsh, rigid, competitive, and materialistic life style of urban life because of pursuing the principles of integrity, honesty, justice, and perseverance of rural life. Therefore, Silas Lapham can certainly be referred to as an "urban-villager." Although money dominates individuals' minds in the 1880s—the Gilded Age in American history—Lapham cannot be included in this category due to being away from the "overpowering and unethical financial manipulations of the robber barons"⁵ (Weiss, 1969, 104; Divine, 1984, 517). This indicates that Lapham does not compromise his traditions with the standard living of the Brahmin society.

Silas Lapham cannot be regarded as an urban resident whose mind is dominated by the money appreciation. He rejects all urban values of the rising middle-class and remains an urban-villager. As Robert Wiebe in his *The Search for Order* indicates, the bureaucratic values of the prosperous families and entrepreneurs such as the Coreys and the Rogers in *The Rise of Silas Lapham* are the reason of why individuals from the rural world have the problem of adaptation to urban life and, thus, become the urban-villagers because of preserving their traditional and cultural values. Wiebe notes the diversity of urban life as:

⁵ "After the Gilded Age in American history, there were the robber barons" or the "captains of industry who could ignore the clamor of public opinion and the rise to truly national power and prestige by economic means alone." (Bellah, 1985, 43)

The new middle class supplied the largest body of adherents to bureaucratic thought. Leaders in a major social reorganization, these men and women required values suitable to their new sense of location. More simply, they were the ones who thought that way. From an urban vantage point, they quite literally saw that impersonal life in flux which they could understand most readily as the interaction of groups—their relation with others. In the city people daily felt the need for continuity and regularity. These were the natural values of the trade associations and somewhat later of the craft unions as well. (1967, 153)

Hence, Robert Wiebe expresses the distinctions of the urban mind, i.e. urban consciousness. Lapham rejects the bureaucratic values of the prosperous families and entrepreneurs such as the Coreys and the Rogers. In this way, he keeps his traditional rustic values through leading a simple way of living in his choice of acquiring success in moral perfection in the rural world rather than attaining material success in urban life. His success in moral perfection of the provincial areas necessitates a departure from his business world. This is the implication for his success in rural moral values and failure in his urban financial terms.

Stephen Crane's *Maggie* displays the departure of Maggie and her family from their rural background in England in order to live in the urban life of Bowery, New York City, to have better living circumstances. In *Maggie*, the story centers on Maggie Johnson who struggles to survive in the fierce environment of Bowery slum region because of not finding the opportunity for accommodation in any urban center at the end of the nineteenth century. Maggie depicts the social and economic circumstances of many men and women immigrants during the nineteenth century who escaped from the harsh living conditions of their hometowns. Maggie and her family migrated from Ireland to the United States because of their insufficient economic circumstances. However, it is obvious that neither of the characters in *Maggie* is content with the social and economic factors because of environmental determinism that exists in Bowery.⁶ Maggie's brother Jimmie's fight with a gang of children "for the honor of Rum Alley" indicates the existence of environmental determinism in the brutal tenement life of New York City. When the characters are analyzed in *Maggie*, it can be said that they mainly cannot adapt to the way of living of urban life and feel the impetus for misery that basically occurred because of the state of poverty where they live. Thus, Maggie and her family experience various problems due to not being able to adapt to urban living conditions.

As Gerd Hurm explains, success and progress can be accepted as "unreachable goals and false ideals" for Maggie and her family because of the existence of "the small dirty, overcrowded, and violent metropolis of the working class" in Bowery (1991, 120).

⁶ Stephen Crane in *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets* also tries to base his story on the literary movement of Naturalism which basically depicts a pessimistic, destructive, and corrupted environment in which individuals turn of to be the victims of the harsh living conditions. Thus, corrupted environment signifies environmental determinism in which individuals care for materialistic values rather than moral perfection of urban life.

The fictional characters are the depressed individuals because of their inadequacy to adjust to the environmental and economic circumstances in *Maggie*. Thus, because of their poverty in their lives, family life is dissolved and individuals isolate themselves from their domestic lives as seen in Mr. and Mrs. Johnson's alcoholism in order to forget the realities of their brutal life of the slums.

Crane highlights that alienation becomes an inevitable consequence of the brutal slum living conditions of Bowery or Lower East Side in which urban villagers cannot adapt to the urban way of living and fall into the state of isolation, dissatisfaction, disappointment, and anxiety for housing and sanitary circumstances in cities. He indicates that individuals such as Maggie and her family members are powerless to change and prevent the disputes of their environment. Although Maggie struggles to overcome poverty in her urban-villager standard of living through working in a shirt factory, she gives up her job as she meets Pete who later betrays her and causes her to fall into the trap of prostitution.

As Maggie's family members cannot adapt to the urban world because of being the urban villagers in harsh social and economic circumstances, quarrels become inevitable in front of the children at home. Jimmie tells Maggie: "Eh, child, what is it time? Is yer fader beatin' yer mudder, or yer mudder beatin' yer fader?" (Crane, 1995, 7). It is obvious that socioeconomic conditions cause these individuals to isolate themselves not only from the social life but also from their domestic lives. To illustrate, Mr. Johnson complains about the miseries they face through calling his home a "hell" in a bar drinking whiskies. He repeats several times, "My home reg'lar livin' hell! Why do I come an' drink whisk' her thish way? 'Cause home reg'lar livin' hell" (Crane, 1995, 8). The social and economic circumstances of the slum life of Bowery make his home a "living hell." Since they cannot adapt to the urban world due to being illiterate, unskillful, and unqualified, they fall into the states of isolation, alienation, estrangement and normlessness. Hence, being in lack of urban consciousness because of their urban-villager state of mind, Maggie and her family are in fight with the social and economic occasions in Bowery. They are in between the urban world of New York City and the slum life of Bowery. Their lack of adaptation to the urban world indicates that they still continue their rural way of living in their minds.

Upton Sinclair in *The Jungle* portrays Lithuanian immigrants as the urban-villagers living in Packingtown. They have left Lithuania because of experiencing economic depression, poverty, and hard living conditions and they considered America as their new frontier to acquire better living circumstances and material possessions (Yoder, 1975, 30). The immigrants in *The Jungle* are unskilled, uninformed and unqualified individuals⁷. Jurgis is depicted as the one who "had never seen a city, and scarcely even a fair-sized town, until he had set out to make his fortune in the world and earn big right to Ona (Jurgis' wife)" (Sinclair, 1959, 23). Coming from an agrarian

⁷ In "Upton Sinclair: *The Jungle*," Gerd Hurm states that two-third of workforce in the stockyards consisted of unskilled laborers earning only minimal wages. By 1900, three out of four Chicagoans were immigrants (1991, 170). The main American policy in this period was to benefit from these immigrants by paying them low wages in work places.

background, they are not ready to adjust to the industrial world of Chicago. For Lithuanians, as for other people from agrarian countries, traditional weddings and cultural ceremonies have been significant events while leading their lives in a foreign country. Abundant food and drinks during the wedding has been an important tradition such as Upton Sinclair has clearly noted:

It was one of the laws of the *veselija* that no one goes hungry, and, while a rule made in the forests of Lithuania is hard to apply in the stockyards district of Chicago, with its quarter of a million inhabitants, still they did their best, and the children who ran in from the street, and even the dogs, went out again happier. (1959, 6)

As Bong Suk Suh expresses in “Lithuanian Wedding Traditions in Upton Sinclair’s *The Jungle*,” Sinclair demonstrates the old Lithuanian traditional wedding feasts that are abundant in food and drinks in Packingtown of Chicago (1987, 1). They perform their *veselija* through their traditional songs, music, and dances. It is obvious that Sinclair has wonderfully depicted traditional values well in *The Jungle*. Because of trying to lead their rural traditional values in Chicago, Jurgis and his family can certainly be called as the urban-villagers. Especially their wedding ceremonies involve loud joyful Lithuanian music and uninterrupted series of dances.⁸ It is clear from the novel that these newcomers to Chicago keep their traditional rural values even in the new setting of urban life. They are physically in urban life but mentally in their rural background:

It is out of this material that they have to build their lives, with it that they have to utter their souls. And this is their utterance, merry and boisterous, or mournful and wailing, or passionate and rebellious, this music is their music, music of home. It stretches out its arm to them, they have only to give themselves up. Chicago and its saloons and its slums fade away—there are green meadows and sunlit rivers, mighty forests and snow-clad hills. They behold home landscapes and childhood scenes returning; old loves and friendships begin to waken, old joys and griefs to laugh and weep. (Sinclair, 1959, 10)

Hence, the Lithuanian immigrants do not forget their hometowns and their traditional values even in a big industrial city such as Chicago and continue their lives through urban-villager state of living. Although they cannot adapt themselves to the harsh and competitive industrial world, they survive in the fierce circumstances of meatpacking industry in Packingtown and keep their traditional provincial values alive. Sinclair implies how these traditional values are significant in immigrants’ lives as:

⁸ Whereas urban youth mostly get married through the act of marrying without any musical entertainment or traditional songs and dances, urban-villagers perform all their traditional entertainment in their weddings. Jurgis and Ona, for instance, in *The Jungle* cooked their delicious traditional meals in their wedding in addition to their singing their traditional songs and dances.

Bit by bit these poor people have given up everything else; but to this they cling with all the power of their souls—they cannot give up the veselija! To do that would mean, not merely to be defeated, but acknowledge defeat—and the difference between these two things is what keeps the world going. The veselija has come down to them from a far-off time; and the meaning of it was that one might dwell within the cave and gaze up shadows, provided only that once in his lifetime he could break his chains, and feel his wings, and behold the sun; . . . Thus having known himself for the master of things, a man could go back to his toil and live upon the memory of all his days. (1959, 15-16)

Sinclair stresses how Jurgis's urban-villager state is significant for him in Packingtown and how he lives with all his rural memories in such harsh and miserable working places. In fact, Jurgis and all the other immigrants in *The Jungle* are in a state of nostalgia for their past.

Theodore Dreiser depicts the story of a young man, Clyde Griffiths, who leaves behind his religious lifestyle of Kansas City to become a prosperous individual in Lycurgus, New York in *An American Tragedy*. He intends to estrange himself from his social life basically formed of the traditional and religious values of countryside. Dreiser mainly depicts the American business civilization in New York in which the newcomers such as Clyde Griffiths and Roberta Alden consciously or unconsciously fall into the trouble of adaptation rather than improving their social living circumstances. The main character, Clyde Griffiths, has an important role to play as regards his attempts to improve his social status. The first step in his social ascendancy is migrating to Lycurgus from the countryside. Clyde, being discontented with his living circumstances and tired of living in poverty and feeling restricted by the religious ethics of his family in Denver, decides to experience opportunities that a city life has to offer. For him, the city offers upward mobility, a prosperous lifestyle, individual freedom, amusement, lovely girls, prestige, wealth and social improvement. However, although he seeks to escape from the strict norms and rules of Denver, he still leads an urban-villager way of living in New York and cannot overcome the problems he encounters in urban life. In *An American Tragedy*, Dreiser conveys in a naturalist perspective that only those who are economically and socially powerful can attain the ideals of success, progress and individual freedom. Hence, yearning for great expectations without the possession of adequate qualifications is not satisfactory to adjust to the urban way of living. Dreiser conveys such a way of living for Clyde and his family. He emphasizes the significance of the religious and ethical principles in their lives:

They seemed more or less troubled in their lives, at least materially. His father was always reading the Bible and speaking in meeting at different places, especially in the "mission," which he and his mother conducted not so far from this corner. . . . The family was always "hard up," never very well clothed, and deprived of many comforts and pleasures which seemed common enough to others. And his father and mother were constantly

proclaiming the love and mercy and care of God for him and for all. (1964, 9)

The pushing factors for residing in cities end up in failure because Clyde is unable to adapt to the urban way of living as a result of becoming an urban-villager in New York. As Adna Ferrin Weber emphasizes in *The Growth of Cities in the Nineteenth Century*, the economic, political, and social causes behind the migration to the cities are based on the desire of improved education, amusement, a higher standard of living, and the availability of intellectual associations. However, Clyde lacks most of these necessities except the expectation for having an enjoyable and a higher standard way of living. His troubles with the girls by whom he seeks prosperity lead him both into moral and material corruption. Thus, his quest for the accumulation of wealth turns out to be a failure in urban life because of having an urban-villager lifestyle. The deficiency of the possession of qualifications in business life and the lack of the possession of urban consciousness are the main reasons for his failure in New York. Clyde, then, cannot attain success in monetary wealth, because he is unable to adjust to urban life. As Shelley Fisher Fishkin states, Clyde “lacks the mental and moral faculties to view the surroundings critically” in his pursuit of success (1988, 121). As an urban-villager, he is unconscious of the division of categories in economic and social life. Vernon L. Parrington also states in “Theodore Dreiser: Chief of American Naturalists” that social life is basically formed of the contradiction between the powerful and the powerless, the rich and the poor, the ruler and the ruled (1987, 355). Dreiser depicts Clyde’s defect to conform to urban life in *An American Tragedy*:

He had ever earned any money at all, he had always told himself that if only he had a better collar, a nicer shirt, finer shoes, a good suit, a swell overcoat like some boys had! Oh, the fine clothes, the handsome homes, the watches, rings, pins that some boys sported; the dandies many youths of his years already were! Some parents of boys of his years actually gave them cars of their own to ride in. They were to be seen upon the principal streets of Kansas City flitting to and from like flies. And pretty girls with them. And he had nothing. And he never had. (1964, 19)

However, Clyde is unaware of the fact that the city does not offer the equal opportunities for everyone, but only for those who are talented and skillful to survive in urban life. He is ignorant of the misery and poverty of the city and is unconscious of businessmen’s interest to employ only the talented and skillful individuals whom they can exploit for their own purposes. In this social determinism, Clyde’s endless expectations drive him into the commitment of the crime of his pregnant rural-villager girlfriend, Roberta Alden, a poor and very innocent farm girl who works in the factory where Clyde is the supervisor. Her lower social status of being a poor factory worker later irritates Clyde and causes him to commit a crime of killing her in Pass Lake where he intends to make a pseudo marriage proposal (Dreiser, 1964, 301). This indicates that Clyde loses his honesty and justice at the expense of achieving success through intending to get married to a prosperous girl, Sondra, rather than getting married to the poor urban-villager girl, Roberta. As sociologist Louis Wirth also states

in “Urbanism as a Way of Life,” people devalue their humanity to achieve monetary wealth:

The contacts of the city may indeed be face to face, but they are nevertheless impersonal, superficial, transitory, and segmental. The reserve, the indifference, and the black outlook, which urbanites manifest in their relationships may thus be regarded as devices for immunizing themselves against the personal claims and expectations of others. (1964, 71)

Some newcomers to the city such as Clyde become indifferent and impersonal in urban life because of their wish for social ascendancy. Such an expectation forces them to lose their honesty and justice and even lead them into murder cases because of falling into the dilemma of choosing either moral values or the secular values in city life. As John McAleer expresses in his article “*An American Tragedy*,” Clyde is “torn between his moral upbringing and his material desires, a dual personality.” (1968, 131). Consciously or unconsciously, they are indecisive to follow either the rural or the urban values in their new settlement.

Contrary to Clyde Griffiths who depicts secular values in order to attain social ascendancy, Roberta Alden portrays the characteristics of being an urban-villager because of preserving her traditional values while being decisive not to have an abortion despite Clyde’s persistence. As Dreiser expresses, “because of her social and moral training and mood, and in spite of her decided looks and charm and strong desires” she feels alone and neglects her urban life (1964, 248). So, her decisiveness on keeping her traditional values in urban life is the reason for her to become an urban-villager in the city. As Dreiser reveals in *An American Tragedy*, she alienates herself from the others in urban life because of reckoning about her family. Dreiser frankly portrays Roberta’s urban-villager family state:

A single, serious, intelligent or rightly informing book had never been read by any member of this family—not one. But they were nevertheless excellent, as conventions, morals, and religious go — honest, upright, God-fearing and respectable. She was really doing nothing for herself because she was too closely identified with her home and her family, who appeared to need her. (1964, 245)

While preserving her traditional and religious values, Roberta devotes herself to her family and her rural way of living. She never gives up her traditional rural values of her kinship ties and never loses her connections with her family. It is clear from the novel that although Roberta hopes to improve herself by getting married and being educated, she also breaks the rules of conduct through talking to the other factory boys which is considered as a taboo while trying to adapt the urban way of living through preserving her moral virtues. This indicates that she is in a dilemma of living in both the urban and the rural lifestyle drawing her into having conflicts with other individuals who even cause her to become a victim in such a social environment.

5. Conclusion

Finally, through being an urban villager, Silas Lapham, Maggie Johnson, Jurgis Rudkus, Clyde Griffiths, and Roberta Alden struggled hard to adjust to urban life through preserving their traditional and ethical rural values. However, each of them regretted for experiencing urban consciousness because of a tendency for the possession of nostalgia of the rural way of living. This indicates that urban-villager is in a dilemma whether to continue urban or rural way of living. Preserving traditional values, customs and conventions become the most significant item in their lives. Such a state of mind resulted in a sense of alienation and isolation from the social and economic life in cities and caused a failure in their social activities. This implies that the urban-villagers become the alienated individual in different phases of their lives. It is inevitable that their alienation and isolation in the new environment turn them out as the victims of the urban settings and way of life. They become psychologically problematic individuals which mostly end up in anomic states of mind as indicated in the target novels of this article. Signifying the changing social order, the state of urban villagers implies also the change of the customs and norms which necessitate new adaptations to the new settlements. As the urban-villagers live in between the urban and the rural world at the same time, new conflicts and psychological problems become inevitable. Being an urban-villager seems to be only an urban sociological problem, however, it should also be evaluated in terms of a social movement, a sociological innovation, or a psychological development when social relations and social behaviors are considered. In the world of globalization, the case of urban-villagers should be assessed as a community practice in various fields of study such as urban sociology, literature, or psychology and should be dealt with from different perspectives to find solutions for their various problems and conflicts in life. Globalization is a significant item to study in psychology, sociology, and human relations. Thus, urban-villagers' way of living should be dealt with in this perspective.

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