

FRANK NORRIS, NATURALISM AND THE WRITERS OF NATURALISM

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Abstract: Naturalism This article describes the meaning of naturalism and the origin of naturalism in American literature. So. It contains the information about the writers who wrote the novels in Naturalism period and their novels. This article especially highlights the novels of Frank Norris .

Key words: McTeague , Naturalism, Frank Norris, Emile Zole, Draiser.

In world literature During the last quarter of the nineteenth century a group of writers began to publish work that went beyond the restrained realism of Howells. These writers later called naturalists, included Hamli Garland, Frank Norris, Theodore Draiser and Jack London. Naturalism, a literary direction that aims at scientific (experimental) study of human character, has its place in world literature. Naturalism first appeared in France. Literary and artistic works in the naturalistic style were considered as "human documents" and several world writers worked hard in this direction.

The French writer Emile Zole founded Naturalism as a creative method in his works "Experimental novel" (1880), "Naturalist novelists", "Naturalism in the theater", "Our dramatists" (1881). P. Alexis, A. Dode, etc.). J. Chanfleury, L. E. Duranci, G. Flaubert, brothers E. and J. Goncourt, P. Amp (France), A. Hold (Germany) and others. Also made a great contribution to the development of the theory of Naturalism. Critical attitudes were expressed to naturalists' views on some image principles, showing a person in a morally naked state, and the lack of need to choose an image object. At the same time, it is recognized that this stream is an existing reality in the history of world literary-biological thinking; The breadth of the subject, new image methods, and the study of the relationship between the individual and the crowd were evaluated as a positive phenomenon.[1]

The influence of Naturalism, which appeared in the French literary environment, was felt in other countries after a certain time. In particular, Naturalism had representatives such as A. Halls, G. Hauptman in Germany, J. Moore, JTissing in England, S. Crane, F. Norris, H. Garland in the USA. Although the term "naturalism" was not directly used in the Russian literary environment, the influence of this trend was felt by D. Ye. Maminsibiryak, P. D. Boborikin's works are felt. Some elements characteristic of naturalism can also be found in various artistic works written on the basis of other creative methods.

Still now Although most of the definitions that one finds of this scientific naturalism can be quarreled with, there are some which seem to meet with fairly general agreement. W. P. Taylor's definition is one such: Naturalism, as it developed in the latter nineteenth century, is a by-product of the scientific spirit. One of its motives is a scientific curiosity about human nature in all phases, pleasant and unpleasant. The naturalist applies to human life, moreover, the concept of scientific materialism. To him, man is not a complex intelligence, controlling his destiny by free will. Man is, on the contrary, a machine controlled either by the inner constraints of instinct and passion, or by the outer constraints of environment and circumstance. From this point of view, human life appears to be only a part of the automatic processes of the physical universe. The consistent naturalist is, therefore, a determinist, who holds that man's every deed is inexorably shaped by factors beyond his control. In a philosophy where there is no place for free will, there is no place for moral judgment; right and wrong alike fall into perspective as parts of the uncontrollable processes of the cosmos. And as naturalism negates the ideas of free will and moral control, so it opposes those

ideals of gentility which had so long dominated American letters. If the naturalist is to render man faithfully, he must study man not only in the pulpit and drawing room, but in the sweatshop or the brothel or the mud-filled trenches of war--areas of life whither the genteel novel dared not venture.[2] Many people have been debating on the theme Naturalism and some of them are right with their opinions about naturalism. For example, Donna Campbell wrote much in her article what kind of opinions were given about Naturalism and Naturalists. Debates over classic naturalism have tended to focus on its limitations, in all senses: the limited possibilities of plots governed by its deterministic philosophy; the limitations of characters, defined by their heredity and often hampered by a lack of intelligence and economic opportunities; and the self-imposed limits of writers working within the laws of probability and what could rationally or scientifically be explained. But two of the key issues in defining naturalism have historically been the ways in which it maybe differentiated from other genres, such as the social problem novel or the realist novel, and the shifting relationship that naturalism has had with the romance. Distinguishing naturalism from tragedy and the social problem novel presents fewer problems than defining naturalism in the context of realism. With their typical plots of decline and strong sense of causation, naturalistic novels resemble classic tragedy, but the cause of the decline and the sense of agency differ in each. As Donald Pizer describes him, the American 'naturalistic tragic hero' is not a noble character who falls from a high position; rather, he is a character whose 'potential for fineness' is blocked or crushed by circumstance .[2] In classic tragedy, the protagonist chooses an action that may lead to his downfall because he has the power to do so and the hubris to believe that his action is right. Naturalism, in contrast, presents characters whose reasoning abilities and hence choices are hampered by

unfortunate hereditary traits and a limited environment. The choice and ability to act – or not to act – is central in naturalism. As Lee Clark Mitchell points out, an important difference between realist and naturalist novels is that characters in realism can choose not to act and thereby demonstrate their free will, whereas ‘when everything required for an action is present, determined characters cannot refrain’ from acting. The choice to act also distinguishes naturalistic fiction from the 19th-century social problem novel, because naturalism’s aim is to present the problem as primarily an aesthetic exercise rather than as call to action. By contrast, social problem fiction such as Elizabeth Gaskell’s *North and South* (1855), Elizabeth Stuart Phelps’s *The Silent Partner* (1871), or Rebecca Harding Davis’s ‘*Life in the Iron Mills*’ (1861) builds to the point at which the protagonist, and by extension the reader, understands the course she must follow to ameliorate the industrial or social crisis that has drawn her attention. Rather than such purposeful action toward a positive goal, characters in naturalism engage in accidental gestures that prove to be their undoing or in endless loops of point-less activity, as Barbara Hochman and Jennifer Fleissner have shown in their studies of naturalist characters’ compulsive tendencies toward repetitive action. The principal issue critics faced in defining naturalism well into the 20th century was its difference from realism, a term used in two senses by its critics: realism as a literary technique and as a time-delimited literary movement. [3]

When it comes to naturalistic works and their aim, their writers each naturalists tried to write the real and social problems in that times. naturalistic landscape of urban poverty and violence appears in Stephen Crane’s *Bowery Tales*,¹ which provided an ironic twist on sentimental slum tales such as the ‘*Chimmie Fadden*’ stories (1895) of Edward Townsend or Brander Matthews’s ‘*Vignettes of Manhattan*’ series in Harper’s (1894).² As David Baguley observes, ‘Naturalist texts constantly undermine parodically the myths, plots, idealized situations, and heroic character types of the romantic and the institutionalized literature to which they are opposed’ (Baguley 21), and tales like *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets*, *George’s Mother* (1896), ‘*An Ominous Baby*’ (1894), and ‘*A Dark Brown Dog*’ (1901) ironically invert the standard expectations of the slum story. For example, *Maggie* is a ‘girl who goes wrong’, yet she is not led astray from a loving family by a deceptive, lecherous lover but by someone she sees as a ‘knight’ who rescues her from a violent, chaotic home. Crane also satirizes the conventions of the temperance tract, in which a father’s drunken, violent behavior condemns his innocent wife and family to poverty, by portraying a family in which Mrs Johnson, *Maggie*’s mother, is the more drunken and violent parent. Unlike the prostitutes of slum tales, *Maggie* is neither redeemed by a clergyman – indeed, a clergyman ostentatiously avoids her as she trolls for clients – nor dies in the knowledge of redemption. Staples of sentimental fiction such as parental love, children, and pets are not held sacred in the naturalistic tale. George Kelcey, of

George's Mother, is not saved by a mother's love but is instead driven to drink by it, a complete reversal of the theme of redemption by a Christian mother's faith common in tract literature.³In 'An Ominous Baby', a poor child does not wait for charity but wrests the toy he wants from the hands of a rich child, an act with overtones of class warfare. The dog of 'A Dark Brown Dog' does not grow up to be a loyal friend of the child who owns it but is heaved out the window to its death by the random impulse of a drunken, angry parent. What is shocking is not the fact that violence exists, for violence is a constant in a naturalistic, Darwinian universe, nor the description of pervasive alcoholism, but the naturalistic story's casual acceptance of violence and alcoholism as an ordinary part of life. In contrast to Crane's professedly intuitive and experiential approach, Frank Norris admitted his debt to the novels of Emile Zola, the preeminent French naturalist author.⁴Proclaiming in 'The Experimental Novel' (1880) that the novelist must be a scientist or 'experimental moralist', Zola developed the characters in his Rougon-Macquart series as figures in a grand experiment to test the physical and emotional responses of the human beast. Norris's *McTeague* is an exercise in Zolaesque experimentation, with characters who face an inevitable downward spiral through their hereditary predispositions to alcoholism, violence, and greed. Less overtly naturalistic than *McTeague*, Norris's later novels, such as *The Octopus* (1901) and *The Pit* (1903), share the earlier novel's fascination with the underlying mechanisms that govern the operations of the universe. This concept of a 'universe of force', as Ronald E. Martin calls it, carries with it something of the 18th-century rationalist's faith in a God as divine watchmaker: if the forces were observed and calculated carefully enough, according to the naturalists, the mechanisms that drove them could be calculated and understood. Like Zola, Norris organizes the plots of his later novels around a central apparatus symbolized by a single major place or object.

Considered as a whole, all novels written by Norris contain enough of naturalism to justify classifying him as a naturalist. Naturalistic technique is probably found in Norris' work more consistently than are any of the other attributes of naturalism.

The environment in which the characters move is described thoroughly. *The Octopus* even contains a map of the area--and even in *Blix*, the least naturalistic of the novels under discussion, a great deal is made of technical detail. Norris either knew the situations and events of which he wrote or took care to find out about them. Since naturalism rarely occurs in an undiluted form, however, the enumeration of the naturalistic elements in a writer's work will not serve to adequately describe it.

Bibliography

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