

CHAPTER: III



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An Analysis of Stephen Crane's *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets* in Terms of Naturalism

The analysis and interpretation of the novel is attempted here in terms of the major tenants of naturalism, mentioned in the chapter second. However, for the sake of understanding a very brief comment on the plot of the novel is necessary.

Stephen Crane's *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets* was first published at his own expense in 1893. Literary critic William Dean Howells was so impressed by this novel that he helped to publish it again by D. Appleton and Company in 1896. *Maggie* came to be regarded as one of Crane's finest and most eloquent statements on environmental determinism. Arthur Voss rightly says, "...at any rate the novel (*Maggie*), along with Frank Norris's *Mc Teague* (1899), marks the beginning of Literary Naturalism in America." (Voss, 1973: 159)

Maggie: A Girl of the Streets is the story of fragile dreams in a harsh and unrelenting world. Maggie's home is one marked by despair and suffering. Money is scarce, her parents are neglectful, and her siblings spend their days fighting with other children in the streets. Still, Maggie dreams of a better life, somehow remaining true to herself amidst the chaos. When a childhood friend, Pete, returns to her life years later, Maggie begins to believe that her hopes may have been answered. She falls deeply in love with Pete, and is soon swept into a passionate affair. When her relationship

is discovered, Maggie is forced to make a difficult choice between the man she loves and her cruel but demanding family. Choosing love above all, Maggie leaves home and becomes dependent on Pete for everything. All she can do is hope that the life she has chosen will remain solid, and that her dreams will not slip through her fingers.

Mary accuses Maggie of going "to deh devil" and disgracing the family; Maggie runs into Pete's arms, and we are given to understand that the two are, indeed, sleeping together. Jimmie is furious that Pete has "ruined" his sister, and he gets very drunk with a friend and gets into a brawl with Pete. After this, Maggie leaves home and goes to live with Pete. Jimmie and Mary affect sorrow and bewilderment at Maggie's fall from grace, and her behavior becomes a neighborhood scandal. A few weeks after Maggie leaves home, she is in a bar with Pete where Nellie, a scheming woman, convince Pete to leave Maggie. Abandoned, Maggie tries to return home, but her family rejects her. Maggie again visits Pete at work, and he, too, refuses to acknowledge her legitimate claims on him. Months later, we are shown a prostitute--presumably Maggie, but unnamed--walking the streets of New York, pathetic and rejected, bound for trouble. Finally, the novel ends with Jimmie giving Mary the news that Maggie's dead body has been found. Mary stages a scene of melodramatic mourning for her ruined child, which ends with her deeply hypocritical and bitterly ironic concession: "I'll fergive her!" Crane's unblinking depiction of the devastating environmental forces that ultimately destroy this young, hopeful woman was celebrated as one of the most important documents of American Naturalism.

A naturalist writer like Crane, Emile Zola, and Theodore Dreiser

argued in their works that human destiny is controlled by biological and/or environmental factors. Their characters enjoy no free will as they struggle to survive their often brutal lives. In his first novel, *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets*, Crane examines naturalistic tendencies in the harsh lives of the novel's main characters. Through his story of a young Bowery woman's experiences within a destructive and indifferent social environment, Crane raises important questions about endurance and survival. Crane wrote on early copies of the novel that the story "tries to show that environment is a tremendous thing in the world and frequently shapes lives regardless." (Crane, 1893) Crane's depiction of Maggie's tragedy reveals an ironclad biological as well as environmental determinism, as is noted by Edward Garnett, in his essay *Crane and His Characterization* (1969:54). Garnett writes that the characters' human nature responds inexorably to their brutal environment and concludes the curious habits and code of the most primitive savage tribes could not be presented with a more impartial exactness, or with more sympathetic understanding. ✓

Naturalism is synonymous with characters being pitted against forces that are beyond their control. The naturalists of Crane's day naturalized historical process, by making it inevitable. They believed that social circumstances were natural and hence unavoidable. The naturalistic universe falls under one single explanatory theory of all events. In such a universe one can either internalize the laws of determining natural and social forces or be their victim. Man has no free will, but it determines social and natural forces. Crane falls into this grouping of writers and supports this view in the novel, *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets*. Maggie is given two options upon arrival at the mental crossroads in her life. She can either submit to the social

norms ascribed of her class or venture forth and fight them. Each choice comes with a consequence. Maggie, who attempts to distance herself from her own social circumstances and follow her own will, loses her life, but, in the process, gains a sense of individualism. She makes herself one of the few that dares to be different, not follow the implied guidelines set before her at birth. She elopes with Pete for the escape of brutal Bowery environment. Naturalistic form can not allow one such as her to succeed and consequently Maggie is consumed by the new life she leads. It makes clear that, 'man can break the code, he can depart from social norms: and to this extent he has free will; but if does so he must expect defeat at the hands of social prejudices.'(Schneider, 1959, p. 91) Conversely, by submitting to the assumed cultural standards of his class and making no attempts to distance himself from the life in which he was born, Maggie's brother, Jimmie, manages to survive. Jimmie gains this life at the price of individualism. He behaves according to slum life. He became a pawn of the environment he lived in, conforming to its will and not his own. Nell is characterized as a consummate opportunist and much more successful than the other prostitutes who pursue men but are not pursued by them. Again we see, Nell knows Pete's salary and she knows how to make him want her - by remaining aloof. In this she is the opposite of Maggie whose vulnerability is all too obvious. Having never been anything but submissive to Pete, Maggie is shocked by the change in his demeanor while in Nell's presence. Pete is openly desperate for her attention and Nell uses this to lure him from the hall and away from Maggie. Not only does Maggie lack the capacity for fight for Pete but she also fails to understand that she has been abandoned until the "mere boy" Freddie solicits her for sex. It suggests only a person, who compromises and is able to fight all the odds, is liable to live in the world.

Lack of such ability Maggie is subject to doomed her life.

The naturalist attempts to make literature into a document of society. In this pursuit, in *Maggie* Stephen Crane exposes destructive Society in quite naturalistic manner. In *Maggie*, Stephen Crane deals with poverty and vice, not out of curiosity or to promote debauchery but as a defiant statement voicing the life in slums. Drawing on personal experience, he has described the rough and treacherous environment that persisted in the inner-city. By focusing on the Johnson's, Crane personalizes a large tragedy that affected and reflected American society as a whole. His creation of Maggie was to symbolize a person unscathed by their physical environment. Through Jimmie he attempts to portray a child raised without guidance, who turned into his abusive, drunk father. The mother and father are depicted as failed drunken hypocrites and poor role models. Crane skillfully characterizes and stereotypes the personalities in *Maggie* to illustrate the influence of environment and the wretched conditions in slums. The theme of the happy American family had been popularized by several well known writers; among them Louis May Alcott, in her *Little Women* (1868), *Little Men* (1871), and *Jo's Boys* (1886). In this convention the family usually is threatened with not only a series of minor disappointments, but also with dissolution. At the end however, the family is joyfully unified. But by "Refusing to allow his novel to compensate for life's losses, Crane, in *Maggie*, violently shatters the literary convention of the happy family." (Jay, 1967: 59) Maggie's mother is hardly more than an animal. Her home is always spoken of as "gruesome." Maggie's father and little brother, Tommie dies in the middle part of the novel, she herself commits suicide, Jimmie becomes drunkard like his father and Mary becomes more violent.

Thus, once unified family broke into pieces. Instead of happy ending with joyful unified family, Crane made destruction of the Johnson family in naturalistic manner.

Crane utilizes several different manners to typify the evils that persisted in city slums. He focuses on a family, and specifically a girl in that family to expose the flaws in the family unit and the influence of environment on individuals. Maggie was the girl untouched by the evils around her, but eventually succumbs to them. Jimmie was the tough and somewhat virtuous boy who due to lack of fatherhood becomes corrupt. The mother was abusive, drinking and careless. They all combined to represent a destructive society. Maggie blossomed in mud puddle represents purity in a corrupt world. When she meets to Pete, she attempts to get out of the world, she despised, instead remained in the slum, unable to escape. Although she is repeatedly abused, Maggie continually picks up the remnants of her life despite being in a worn and sorry state. Jimmie is seen both in a good light, like his sister, as well as an evil and cruel person. In the beginning of the story, he is portrayed as the little champion of Rum Alley. However, that description merely cloaked the brutal fight that he was engaged in and the beating he later gave his sister. Later in the story, Jimmie buys some beer for an old leathery woman, but it is taken by his father. Jimmie protests in the name of justice but is not successful. The crude and abusive relationship with his father severely cripples his chances to become a benevolent adult. Instilled with poor values he did not see the world as good and bad but rather bad and worse. Crane was well aware that his readers would have been inculcated in the nineteenth-century ideology of true womanhood. This ideology produced a set of images and ideals which glorified the woman's

place in the home as a beacon of moral light aiding her husband. The husband, who was forced to go out into the grubby world to make a living, to achieve moral rectitude, teaching her children the values of chastity, temperance, and thrifty fortitude. Crane's depiction of the Johnson home would have been a nightmare for the nineteenth-century readers unaccustomed to having their illusions challenged. Mrs. Johnson is a portrait of the opposite of this ideology. In the vehemence with which Crane paints the ugliness that is Mary Johnson, he reveals his own implication in that ideology. Mr. Johnson is brutish and violent, but he is nothing compared to Mrs. Johnson. From her, the children, with whose points of view the narrator identifies, have no escape. They are stuck in the apartment with her and brutalized in the most intimate relations of life.

On one level, the antagonist is Mrs. Johnson, Maggie's mother, who inspires most of the violence of her home and who forces Maggie to live on the streets. On another level, the antagonist of the novel is the economic and social world into which Maggie is born. In this context Carlsen aptly says, "Pete and Jimmie and the drunken mother are to be blamed for Maggie's death, but the real villain is the Bowery." (Carlsen, 1967: 496) The social and economic forces of her society inevitably push Maggie from a sweatshop to the life of prostitution. But because of the characters in the book are products of their environment, the novel has no villains in the traditional sense unless one counts the Bowery itself as a perpetrator. In this manner Crane's vision is in keeping with the central tenets of Darwinism, that were coming into vogue at the time that he wrote the novel. Individual's act according to the demands of their environment and their actions are determined by what they learn from their surroundings. The environment of

the slums suggests, as is presented in *Maggie*, the only guarantee for survival is strength. Thus, Maggie becomes enamored of Pete not because she sees him for what he is but because she has never known anything better. Significantly, her first encounter with him is hearing his boastful description of his prowess in fighting. Maggie's attraction to Pete is not confined simply to her romantic notions but also to her very real need for a protector. Pete's boasting suggests the survival of the fittest. Pete details an experience in which a nicely dressed man bumped into him on the street and called him an "insolen' ruffin" to which Pete responded "Go teh hell an' git off deh eart'." (Crane, 2004:21) This upset the fellow who insisted on giving Pete a lecture so Pete struck him to the ground and went about his business. After Pete and Jimmie leave to go to the boxing match Maggie comes to the conclusion that Pete is a gentleman who knows the ways of the better classes. She knows only a world full of hardship and struggle and Pete, she believes, is a man who can stand against it.

In the first three chapters Crane tries to suggest the struggle and animal qualities in human life. The life of the Johnson family is that of fierce battle with those around them and among themselves. The novel opens with Jimmie's fighting with the children of Devil's Row. He then fights with one of his own gang mates. His father separates them with a blow. Maggie mistreats the babe Tommie; Jimmie strikes Maggie; Mrs. Johnson beats Jimmie for fighting. Mr. and Mrs. Johnson quarrel. Mrs. Johnson beats Maggie for breaking a plate; Mr. Johnson strikes Jimmie with an empty beer bucket. Mr. Johnson comes home drunk and he and Mrs. Johnson fights. Thus, this entire incident suggests the warfare in human life. It also suggests that the home is not a sanctuary and far from the struggle

and turmoil of the world. Rather it is a home where warfare is even more intense and where the animal qualities are encouraged by a life of battle. The slum and home are not only battlefields, however, but are also enclosed arenas. Crane's description of the Johnson children's eating combines, both, the warfare and cave image. It also shows an animal like (primitive) competition for food. Crane describes:

“The babe sat with his feet dangling high from a precarious infant's chair and gorged his small stomach. Jimmie forced, with feverish rapidity, the grease-enveloped pieces between his wounded lips. Maggie, with side glances of fear of interruption, ate like a small pursued tigress.” (ibid: 8-9)

By giving of this type of double imagery, Crane suggests that the Johnsons's world is one of fear, fury, and darkness. It is a world in which no moral laws are applicable, a need to protect and feed them.

After the death of Mr. Johnson, this struggle and warfare continues as before. After his father's death Jimmie assumes his position. Maggie and Jimmie go to work, and each finds that struggle and enclosure marks their adult world. Jimmie becomes a belligerent truck driver, imprisoned by his ignorance and his distrust. He respects only strength in the form of the red fire engine which has the power to crush his wagon. Maggie also works in prison-like sweat shop where she is chided into resentment by her grasping employer. Thus, their lives are of animal struggle and of spiritual bareness in which they only slightly realize their own deprivation.

Street fighting was commonplace in the Bowery at the end of the nineteenth century, as one gang of boys would battle another for a dominant position in the neighborhood. Boys like Jimmie joined gangs for a sense of belonging and protection. Ironically, though, in the opening scene, Jimmie's friends have abandoned him, and as a result, he is being brutally beaten by a rival gang. His instincts for survival take over as he does anything he can to defend himself. The "fury of the battle" turns him into "a tiny, insane demon" as he uses every method available to fend off his attackers. Jimmie's fists, however, are not the only tools he employs to survive his savage environment. In order to endure the beatings doled out by his parents as well as the neighborhood children and the devastating, abject poverty of the tenements, Jimmie along with his sister Maggie must invent comforting illusions. Jimmie survives because he creates a vision of himself as a god within the neighborhood, vastly superior to all the other inhabitants. This vision begins to take shape from an early age, when Jimmie has dreams of becoming some vague soldier, or a man of blood with a sort of sublime license.

Jimmie has grown to view the world in Darwinist terms in which strength is the key to survival. As a truck driver he operates under the premise that all things that impede his path, from pedestrians to other cabs, are wicked and worthy of slander or destruction. The author's observation that Jimmie never developed any respect for the world because it offered him no higher ideals (i.e. idols) to challenge is particularly significant in regard to Jimmie's fear of fire engines. He fears the engines' power to destroy his coach so, he comes to respect them. Thus, the one ideal that Jimmie holds to be true is that of strength and as a young man the only thing

that he considers strong enough to warrant his respect is a fire engine. He certainly lacks respect for the women he uses for pleasure and then discards. The only indication is that he is sensitive to anything beyond his own needs. We see in the first three chapters of the novel, the strong rules the home and need not justify their actions to those who cannot physically best them. Mary tries to be a dominant at home, Maggie drags the suffering Tommie down the street to the apartment, Jimmie's father forcibly takes the bucket of beer despite his son's protests and there is nothing Jimmie can do to stop him. Thus, in short all the incidents of the novel suggest the survival of the fittest and strong should rule over the weak. For example: Tommie and Mr. Johnson dies because of inability to live in the brutal environment.

From the first sentence of this novel "A very little boy stood upon a heap of gravel fighting for the honor of Rum Alley"(ibid: 39) emerge two prevalent themes - destruction by violence and destruction by morality. Violence is central to the first half of the work. Slaps, strikes, pummels and fisticuffs encompass in the story. We first meet Tommie Johnson in the middle of a savage and desperate fight with children from a rival gang; but when that action dissipates he picks a fight with one of his own gang which in turn only ends when Jimmie's father begins kicking the enmeshed boys. In the second chapter, we meet Maggie - a young girl dragging her baby brother home through an alley. She is characterized as simply another product of the rough and tumble Bowery environment caught in the cycle of violence and hypocrisy. Maggie drags the suffering Tommie down the street to the apartment where she is in turn beaten by her mother who also does violence to her husband and destroys the furniture. Marry, mother of Maggie and Jimmie, always beats one of her children. Seemingly bereft of maternal

feelings she not only responds to her son's wounds by doing more violence to him but she grabs Jimmie, violently shakes him, and vigorously scrubs his wounds. She also knocks her baby aside in this effort. Maggie shows genuine sympathy for her brother when she asks if she can help clean his wounds but he refuses and occupies himself with thoughts of revenge upon a member of the Devil's Row gang. All this reveals the savage nature of mankind and brute within a man.

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 Apart from the outright violence, however, *Maggie* is also a novel about the destructive power of morality misapplied. Stephen Crane, a true naturalist, shows the natural hypocritical nature of the man. The novel exposes the cruelty engendered by hypocritical assumptions of virtue in a morally bankrupt world. The atmosphere of the novel breeds a moral hypocrisy as the characters struggle to justify their own immoral actions. Through the character of Mary Johnson Crane exposes the hypocrisy of the mankind. She is typical, a drinking, abusive, and careless mother. She stood for a hypocritical, industrializing society that was neglecting its children. When Jimmie tries to take his mother home when she has been kicked out of a bar she raises her arm and whirls her great fist at her son's face. Even after learning of Maggie's death she says that "[she'll] fergive her [Maggie]," (ibid: 71) although she had abused and disregarded Maggie when she was alive. She displays the attitude of a society mocking law and justice when she repeatedly appears in court and lies to the judges. Mr. Johnson yells at his wife to stop always "poundin' a kid" after he has just savagely kicked Jimmie in an attempt to break up the street fight. Mrs. Johnson, who is more brutal to her children than her husband, declares Maggie to be a disgrace to the family and questions "who would t'ink such a bad girl could grow up in

our family."(ibid: 37) Jimmie, who has abandoned many young women in the same manner as Pete has done with Maggie, declares that he will kill Pete for his bad treatment to Maggie. Yet, he wonders only vaguely, whether some of the women of his acquaintance had brothers. Nevertheless, his mind did not for an instant confuse himself with those brothers nor his sister with theirs. Crane uses the episode with the minister to express the manner in which the culture's hypocritical morality extended to religion as well. Heartbroken, confused and scared Maggie wanders the streets. After some time she notices that some men are looking at her in a strange way and she hurries her steps as if with purpose. Maggie, without purpose, however and in desperation turns to a gentleman she sees whose dress marks him as a minister. She approaches the gentlemen hoping for pity and the Grace of God but he shies away from her to protect his respectability. "He did not risk it to save a soul," notes the author, "for how was he to know that there was a soul before him that needed saving."(ibid: 61)

The economic and social forces at work cannot be resisted. Maggie is doomed because she has no free will. Her fate is determined, solely determined, by overwhelming forces beyond her control. This is the social forces model of naturalism appearing in Crane's story *Maggie*. Maggie dies not only because she is surrounded by violence but because her family and the society of the Bowery consider her unworthy of inclusion except as a whore. Hypocritical socially moral code of conduct has determined Maggie's will and life. Mary, Jimmie and Pete rationalize and accept Maggie's ruin by standards they pretend to uphold. Irony is that they all fail to achieve themselves this standard. Mary is a drunkard and a brawler - she rains violence upon the heads of her children and she smashes their

belongings. Yet she judges Maggie to be worthy of damnation for what society believes to be her compromised virtue. She denounces Maggie:

"Yeh've gone teh deh devil, Mag Johnson, yehs knows yehs have gone teh deh devil. Yer a disgrace teh yer people, damn yeh. An' now, git out an' go ahn wid dat doe-faced jude [Pete] of yours. Go teh hell wid him, damn yeh, an' a good riddance. Go teh hell an' see how yeh likes it." (ibid: 33)

Obviously, social force is most important that determines and controls Maggie's action. The Johnson's violence is very much part of the social fabric of the tenement. Mary's denunciation of her daughter in her drunken state of mind causes Maggie to leave with Pete. Mary and Jimmie assimilate Maggie's fall into their lives. Mary rejects her daughter outright and gives no thought to her feelings. Rather, she takes Maggie's actions as a personal attack and looks forward to the opportunity to refuse her comfort when she does return home. She assumes the posture of a martyr and uses Maggie's fall from grace as an excuse for her drunken misdeeds. Rather than allow the neighbors to gossip about the event she makes it public and exacts a righteous comfort from what she perceives as a personal injury. Jimmie initially hopes to put things right by fetching Maggie home, not because he is worried about his sister but because he fears the loss of social status. When Mary rejects that idea Jimmie also publicly denounces his sister and fights with Pete for the honor of the family. In this way the morality and social pressure of the Bowery work against preserving the family, because in order to maintain the family's honor both Jimmie and Mary must reject Maggie, lessening the family by one third and depriving them of a daughter

and a sister. Jimmie fights with Pete ostensibly in order to revenge his family for Pete's despoiling of Maggie but at no point does Jimmie or Pete mention Maggie in the dialogue that leads up to the fight. Since her honor cannot be restored, she is already lost as far as Jimmie is concerned so his actions are not for his sister's honor but for that of his family. He must take revenge upon Pete so that the family cannot be accused of not caring that Maggie has been lost. It is obviously clear that their thinking and action is controlled by social force, social code of morality. This social code is equally responsible for Maggie's degeneration and destruction. Though, she is innocent by physically and spiritually, she is fallen woman because of social morality, and again because of this social morality is imposed on Mary and Jimmie.

Maggie is not the poor heroine, who is saved, but the evil character, who the audience (in this case the neighbors) scorn and reject. Just as Maggie previously pulled her skirt away from a prostitute the neighbor woman pulls her baby away from Maggie. Jimmie also rejects his sister as brutally as he rejected Hattie, his beloved at the beginning of the chapter fifteen.

Pete rejects Maggie not because he feels that she has sinned, for he would have to admit to his complicity in that sin. Rather, he rejects her because her family and society has rejected her. He is unwilling to compromise his own honor for what he feels are the wholly unwarranted actions of her family. He forgets the pleasure he enjoyed being worshiped by Maggie and opts instead to pursue Nell whose good favor he desires. Nell, for her part, eliminates Maggie as a potential rival for Pete's attention

by convincing him that she was not worth his time. The scene, in which Maggie attempts to return to Pete and is soundly rejected, mirrors the earlier one, in which Jimmie rejected his former lover Hattie. Maggie is now without means and marked as a fallen woman. Nobody will offer her comfort or work. Simply by being in the street with nowhere to go she begins to attract the attention of men. Thus, she is being inexorably forced into the life of a prostitute by a society that believes she already is one. Maggie, the poor girl, whose search for a companion takes her from the fringes of respectable society to the river where she drowns herself. In this context, we can surmise that she has been reasonably successful as a prostitute from her fine cloak and shoes but we also know that she has had to sacrifice what scruples she might have had in order to survive. We can also infer that the months on the street have been hard on her when one man rejects her because she looks worn and another mistakes her by supposing Maggie as her mother. Thus, it clearly seems that the social morality is a destroyer of young, innocent girl Maggie.

Naturalism is scientific or pseudo-scientific in its approach; it attempts to treat human beings as biological pawns rather than as agents of free will. The author does not attempt to judge his characters or to comment on their actions; he merely inserts them into a crucial situation and then pretends to stand back and watch them with the impassivity of the scientist. Maggie became a prostitute not to lead a life of indecency but because Crane had provided her two unique qualities: initiative and beauty, and had put her in a place where the combination of the two came at a loss of integrity. Maggie grows up under conditions which repress all good impulse, stunt the moral growth, and render it inevitable that she should become what she

eventually did, a creature of the streets. Her parents are alcoholic, they fight all the time. In such a situation one can try to escape from it and Maggie does the same. After her father's death she obtains a position in a factory. Maggie's workplace is more akin to a prison. The collar factory limits her vision and circumscribes any hopes or dreams beyond the Bowery. It effectively encloses and limits her potential. To escape from it, she elopes with Pete but very soon he abandons her. Helpless and penniless Maggie, to make a living, turns to prostitution. Again her action is controlled by the unknown forces; she can't attract the customer because of the starvation she looks like an old woman. A belated man in business clothes says to Maggie, "Hi, there, Mary, I beg your pardon! Brace up, old girl." (ibid: 63) Thus, Maggie's fate was determined more by the environment that Stephen Crane created for her than by her actions as a response to the environment, classifying the novel as naturalistic.

In the novel, Crane eschewed the conventional plot, shifting the focus from the drama of external event or situation to the drama of thought and feeling in the mental life of his subjects. As a Naturalist, Crane has used in the novel *Maggie* a "plot of decline". It is presented as clinical, panoramic, slice-of-life drama that is often a chronicle of despair. It is also a novel of degeneration which plot depicts progression toward degeneration or death of character. The linear narrative now ceases, and we are given a series of scenes, arranged in chronological order but separated by passages of time. There are important events in the story, usually marked by their violence, but they serve mainly as a catalyst for the characters' internal responses, which adroitly focus the narrative on the effect the environment has on them. For example, few details are given of Jimmie's fight with the neighboring

gang, while more time is spent detailing the animalistic rage he feels coupled with a sense of heroism. A few sentences provide a description of what Maggie sees on stage, but her response to it mingled with her feelings toward Pete, reveal Crane's ironic depiction of the tension between illusion and reality.

As far as concern with the setting of the naturalistic fiction, The Bowery slum is the setting for Stephen Crane's first novel, *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets*, which decides Maggie's future, good or bad. Crane describes the Rum Alley and miserable tenement building (apartment) where Jimmie and Maggie born. Crane describes as: bedraggled clothes flap from the fire escapes, disordered women gossip and quarrel, withered old persons sit listlessly on the ground and babies are left to fight amongst themselves. The building itself is full of the odors of cooking food and loud noises that betrayed weight of humanity bound inside it. He also gives the details of the atmosphere of the Johnson family. Mary, a mother of Jimmie and Maggie, is described as a large woman; her face is "lurid" and "crimson". She scrubs Jimmie's wound instead of dressing and clean it, as a mother. Father complaint that he can't get any rest in the home because; Mary is always pounding one of the children. He also accuses her of being drunk. Then husband and wife falls to argue and the children cower. Mary drinks a bottle while they eat. She becomes somber and beats Maggie for breaking a plate accidentally. Jimmie flees and runs down to the next floor. Thus, by providing such atmosphere (setting) crane makes evidence that in such environment there is no possibility to be a good person. Rather, it is strong possibility that one would be a spoiled man.

By choosing a character from the slum area which is full of all the evils of society and the immorality of the people in addition to their illusions, Crane has enlarged the range of characters in his fiction. He studies Maggie in all the aspect of life, of that particular society in that particular environment. She has been compared with Madame Bovary of Flaubert, Nana of Emile Zola and Sister Carrie of Theodore Dreiser by different critics. Regarding her Donald Pizer says:

“Zola’s portrait of the Nana dying of disfiguring disease which symbolizes her spiritual as well as physical corruption is more convincing. Crane’s desire, however, was to stress that the vicious deterministic force in the slums was its morality, not its poor housing or inadequate diet, and it is this emphasis which controls his characterization of Maggie.”(Donald Pizer, 1965: 173)

Maggie’s mother, Mrs. Johnson with her greed, selfishness, wrong notions, double moral standard, immorality, irresponsibility and the typical, distorted Bowery version of reality symbolizes the limit of human corruption. Mrs. Johnson, the woman who was responsible for the tragedy in the family, is described in such manner that her anger, frustration, unhappiness, and her attitude toward life and her children come out clearly in the following example. “As the father and children field in she peered at them. ‘Eh, what ? Been fightin’ again!’ She threw herself upon Jimmie.... The woman screamed and shook her fists before her husband’s eyes. The rough yellow of her face and neck flared suddenly crimson. She began to howl...” (Crane, 2004: 8-9)

Mrs. Johnson is seen as a peevish, drunken, violent type of woman. She does not contribute any thing towards making the house a home, a place of peace and love. She has all the bad qualities which make her home look like hell. Crane here, successfully, bring out the slum character with his description. In the same novel, Mr. Johnson is introduced as a typical Bowery bum who has resigned himself to his poverty, and whose behaviour is characterized by fighting and drinking and a general neglect of his children.

A subtle hypocrisy is revealed through the Character, Pete. Crane describes Pete, the deceiver of Maggie, in such a way that all the traits of his personality become known. He is cunning, cowardly and conceited. He poses as gentleman but remains at heart a Bowery bum and rouge. After, her mother and brother rejects, Maggie goes to Pete. Pete is at work tending to an empty bar room. As he contentedly wipes the clean glasses even more luminous he is horrified to see Maggie pass outside the bar. He quickly makes his way to the door. Maggie sees him in the entryway and smiling comes over to him. Before she can complete a sentence, however, Pete rejects her in the rudest terms. The smile fades from the girl's lips and bewildered she asks Pete where she should go."Oh, go teh hell," he offers before banging the door. All the characters which are come from the Bowery slum makes novel a true naturalistic fiction.

Use of vernacular language or slang words is one of the tenents of the naturalism. In Maggie Crane has used this form of the language very effectively. While certainly a practice with ancient roots in the Old World

and the East, it's generally accepted that Mark Twain's "*The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*" first introduced the form to U.S. fiction readers. His accurate phonetic spellings of the slave Jim and young Huck's dialogues brought them to life and removed contrivance and unnecessary artifice. Vernacular usage later became quite prevalent in the twentieth century as evidenced in such works as "*Catcher in the Rye*", "*A Confederacy of Dunces*" and in the UK, "*The Ginger Man*." The most shocking (and therefore also effective) feature in the first novel of Stephen Crane, "*Maggie: A Girl of the Streets*" was its bold language. The language of the novel is as close as possible to the spoken form in those days by such characters in those conditions. Eric Solomon comments on Crane's use of dialect in the novel *Maggie*. He says, "As in most of slum-novels, Crane uses dialect to an excess to characterize his slum dwellers and to indicate the paucity of their linguistic, intellectual and emotional resources." (Solomon, 1968, p. 33) Stephen Crane's "*Maggie: A Girl of the Streets*" uses vernacular in a dramatic and forceful way. With the brutal backdrop of fictional places like Rum Alley and Devil's Row of Manhattan's Bowery or Lower East Side, the dialogue of its denizens is phonetically drawn to recreate the authentic speech of this burgeoning late nineteenth century slum. The bizarre spelling can make reading difficult but it takes one right to the heart of the characters. Crane reproduces the language of the slum-dweller, as is clear from the following passage.

"I met a chump deh odder day way up in deh city," he said. "I was goin' teh see a frien' of mine. When I was a-crossin' deh street deh chump runned plump inteh me, an' den he turns aroun' an' says, 'Yer insolent' ruffin,' he says, like dat. 'Oh, gee,' I

says, 'oh, gee, go teh hell and git off deh eart', I says, like dat. See? 'Go teh hell an' git off deh eart', like dat. Den deh blokie he got wild. He says I was a contempt'ble scoun'el, er somet'ing like dat, an' he says I was doom' teh everlastin' pe'dition an' all like dat. 'Gee,' I says, 'gee! Deh hell I am,' I says. 'Deh hell I am,' like dat. An' den I slugged 'im. See?" (Crane, 2004: 21).

This is the character Pete bragging to his friend Jimmy while in the presence of possible love interest Maggie. The monologue is particular to the time, place and social class. The main characters are most likely British immigrants or possibly from a Northern European country. We can discern this by the derogatory ethnic names used for others. Fairly early on we know the main characters aren't Italians or Irish by the frequent use of slang terms for those nationalities. The following passage illustrates this: "'Why," he said, referring to a man with whom he had had a misunderstanding, "dat mug scrapped like a damn dago. Dat's right. He was dead easy. See? He tau't he was a scrapper. But he foun' out diff'ent! Hully gee."'(ibid: 21) This brings a gritty realism to the scene that conventional spelling cannot. We can practically hear the braggart, thus the reader is brought into this world of poverty, ignorance and violence. Ethnic tensions, stereotyping and tribalism were mainstays of the slum and Standard English would only evoke an artificial or wooden feeling. The vernacular makes the reader feel part of the scene. Here Crane realistically portrays a world that may have been unknown to the reading public. The language reinforces this dark world, ironically, a world quite similar to the London East End of the same period. These are the times of Jack the Ripper and the world's first urban slums. Here, "unfortunates", often immigrants, in search of a better life, found

themselves in dirty crowded tenement houses populated with foreigners. The struggle for survival was the only constant and self worth was often determined by such low brow achievements as fighting or the status of one's few material possessions. Crane also used the vernacular to show the relative inanity and meaninglessness of many of the day's common phrases. The same words might be used in response to many different queries, situations and circumstances. Here the vernacular reveals an overuse of tedious clichés and how they prevent meaningful communication. These phrases, more than anything, display an attitude. Crane makes this clear at the end of Chapter five with this comment by the narrator about the ruffian Pete. 'When he said, "Ah, what deh hell," his voice was burdened with disdain for the inevitable and contempt for anything that fate might compel him to endure.'(ibid: 20)

Maggie is thus a novel primarily about the falseness and destructiveness of certain moral codes. To be sure, these codes and their equivalent romantic vision of experience are there in Maggie's environment, and are in part what Crane means when he wrote that environment shapes lives regardless. But Crane's ironic technique suggests that his prime goal was not to show the effect of environment but to distinguish between moral appearance and reality, to attack the sanctimonious self-deception and sentimental emotional gratification of moral poses. ✓

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