CHAPTER I

LITERARY NATURALISM AND SHERWOOD ANDERSON

The impetus for the growth of literary naturalism in America towards the end of the nineteenth century came from the French naturalistic movement in literature. At that time the astonishing as well as shocking inventions and theories made by science had played havoc with the age-old conceptions of man regarding himself, the earth and the universe. Moreover, the country was making tremendous strides industrially and socially for which reason the temper and quality of life was undergoing a sweeping change. Such was the pace of change on all fronts that the common man found it difficult to absorb, and adapt himself to, the new values enforced upon him by the new age. There were success and plenitude, prosperity and euphoria; but, at the same time, there were disillusionment and disenchantment, failure and unhappiness insofar as the common man was concerned. The social and economic issues became malignant which crushed and defeated him. So harsh were these factors that literature, in consonance with the mood of the common man, became a voice of protest, muckraking and propaganda.

The compulsive and typical local factors give American literary naturalism a certain broadness and flexibility in
comparison with the dogmatic and theory-bound naturalism in French literature. This is one reason why American literary naturalism enjoyed a longer life-span. Writers like Hamlin Garland, Stephen Crane, Frank Norris and Theodore Dreiser had already created and enriched the naturalistic movement in American literature which had developed in direct response to the native socioeconomic problems. These problems had forced the naturalistic writers to make a fresh assessment of man in relation to the crises surrounding him. This spirit of interpreting man's destiny in the context of the problem he encountered was still pervasive at the time of Sherwood Anderson which is one reason why traits of naturalism can be clearly identified in his writings.

As Edward Stone points out, "literary critics and historians have used the term 'naturalism' to describe both an artistic technique as well as intellectual content." This artistic technique parallels the scientist's experimental method by which conclusions are arrived at through observation. The intellectual content reflects the artist's vision of life as it is conditioned by factors of determinism. The naturalistic writer insists that life is governed by uncompromising factors. His mode of depicting the course of life is to observe, as the scientist does, the impact these factors exercise on it. Naturalism in literature, thus, draws its vitality and relevance from the findings of natural sciences which brought to clear focus the place of man in the midst of forces operating automatically in the mechanistic nature. Science has, indeed, taken a long time in identifying this place of man
and in understanding this mechanism in nature. In the following few pages a brief survey of the important findings of the scientists, which account for the emergence of naturalism in literature, will be made.

Until the Renaissance the authority of the church was supreme: questions concerning religion and personal morality were being referred to the Pope who was considered to be divinely inspired. The Bible and Genesis were inviolable and were guiding human conduct. Theology and religion taught that man, living in a dualistic universe of heaven and earth, God and Satan, the eternal and the transient, should aspire for the salvation of the soul. He being a fallen creature with a body and a soul, should direct his mind towards God for this purpose. Man's happiness and sorrow were thought to be preordained and part of the divine scheme which he had to accept as the inevitable, unpredictable caprice of his fate.

It was astronomy which first started breaking the ground on which such theological conceptions stood. Copernicus, Kepler and Galileo proved that far from being the centre of the universe, the earth is only a small member in the family of the solar system that goes round the sun. The solar system itself is an insignificant constellation of planets in comparison with the entire cosmos.

With the vastness of the universe unfolded under the investigating eye of the astronomers, man was forced to realize the finiteness of the planet which he inhabits. Moreover, he became aware of his own limited physical size and life-span. The astronomers
"pushed back the outskirts of the universe, and in doing so, destroyed heaven. Nowhere could the new telescope spy God."²

This process of annexation of the primacy and importance of man and the earth accelerated with the development of experimental science which acquired new prestige at the hands of Newton. With mathematical precision he announced the laws of motion of physical bodies which had nothing to do with the so-called divine scheme or the miraculous operation of any unseen hand. The laws give a mechanistic picture of the forces operating in nature to which man is subject.

Although such scientific theories and intellectual strides initially failed to secure conviction and acceptance, they started throwing theology and deism on the defensive. Infallible as the scientific conclusions were, they posed a serious threat to man's age-old beliefs that God was the benevolent creator of things in which He manifested Himself and that the phenomena were a divine and cosmic plan for man's good and redemption. Man was reluctant to shed the belief that he carried the image of God and was slightly inferior to the angels. Science was, therefore, looked down upon as a dangerous heresy out to malign God and, consequently, undermine the supremacy of the church.

The first fatal wound inflicted on theology and supernaturalism came from the geologists who unwrapped the mystery concerning the origin of the earth. Sir Charles Lyell's "doctrine that the earth, instead of having been created in seven days, was the result of a
long glacial development was corroborated by geologists like Louis Agassiz working at Harvard. They were forcing Americans to question the literal truth of the story of the world's creation in the book of Genesis. The Fundamentalist religious concepts which adhered to the belief that what has been recorded in the Bible was accurate, received a shocking jolt.

Sir Charles Lyell's doctrine did not confine itself to just pointing out the origin of the earth. It went further. According to him: "From the earliest period at which plants and animals can be proved to have existed, there has been a continual change going on in the position of land and sea, accompanied by great fluctuations of climate. To these evervarying geographical and climatal conditions the state of the animate world has been unceasingly adapted." The statement implies two things: First, there is no uniformity and permanent shape in the order of nature which, because of the continual change going on in its realm, is in a state of flux. Second, the animate world including man has to adapt itself to the uncontrollable modifications constantly occurring in nature for its survival.

This emphasized the idea about the mechanistic operation of forces in nature which bring about changes in the physical world. Sir Charles Lyell, however, conceded that the range of man's knowledge is too narrow to comprehend the unbounded extent of the scheme of the universe. He perceived a perfect harmony of design and unity of purpose prevailing in the universe because of which the species find accommodation in the changing geographical and
climatal conditions. This he attributed to an "infinite and Eternal Being." He added that the modifications taking place on the planet are "not of a physical but a moral nature." 6

The biologists in the eighteenth century were maintaining theories that anticipated the Darwinian theory of evolution. The French naturalist Buffon (Georges Louis Leclerc, Comte De Buffon, 1707-1788), for example, held "the theory that animal species were not fixed, but varied according to the influence of the physical environment upon their external forms." 7 He maintained further that the animals of today are considerably smaller in size than the ones that existed in the remote past.

Another aspect of the animal world was revealed by Jean Baptiste Pierre Antoine de Monet de Lamarck (1744-1829) who observed "that evolutionary changes in animal species may take place through the inheritance of acquired characteristics." 8

This theory, known as Lamarckism, found acceptance in America. Samuel Stanhope Smith (1750-1819) of the college of New Jersey, Princeton, extended its scope to include man. Species, he held, are not fixed and "all men, regardless of their differences in appearance, were descended from a single pair of ancestors, and that, therefore, external variations are the result of environmental variations, not of special creation." 9

The fact that man's characteristics and external form are due to heredity and environment robbed God of His benevolent and divine role. This picture emerged after theological and religious
assumptions about man had dissolved like fog. But this picture was neither pleasant nor beautiful. Harry Hartwick sums up the situation like this: "But while one group of astronomers and geologists were attempting to prove with telescope and spade that there was no place in the universe for God to hide, another family of scientists had been turning the microscope on man to demonstrate that there were no crevices in him where a mind or soul could secret itself." The anatomists and physiologists proved that human body is a machine, a bundle of muscles and nerves on a frame of bones.

Arthur Schopenhaur in his *The World of Will and Ideas* (1818) stressed the importance of sex as the centre of all action and conduct. This being the deterministic force, he ascribes all human activities, including war and peace, to this powerful impulse. Sigmund Freud subsequently formulated the theory that from libido spring all human actions. His contention is that the force which governs human destiny operates from within man's mind. Such psychological explanations of human conduct run counter to earlier ideas that what happens to man is preordained. The fact that man is a creature of impulses and reflexes provides a new insight into his mind and proves that these impulses and reflexes are inexorable.

With the myth about the creation of the earth exploded, theology and metaphysics liquidated, and the passive God pushed to a remote corner, man confronted the world not as a creation of God, but as the result of an accident in the operation of natural forces. On the earth itself natural life is born and its growth and decay are brought about by natural laws. Nature is self-contained; it
explains itself. The living creature having no free will or choice about its existence, has to submit and conform itself to the natural laws in order to avoid being eliminated in the process of their operation.

Understandably, the truth was bitter and humiliating for the spiritualists and theologians because it presented a pessimistic and gloomy picture of man. Not that some religious schools were not pessimistic in their outlook. Calvinism, for example, attributes the predestined forces of the universe to God. These forces, preaches Calvinism, are ineluctable against which man is a weak and helpless being. God's playing this directive role "was metamorphosed into the rationalistic view of a universe being directed by the forces of nature."\(^{11}\) Before the publication of *On the Origin of Species* (1859) which prepared the coffin of God, the adherents of religion and theology had to take the defensive stance that God set the universe in motion and then abandoned it alone amid a multitude of forces. Therefore, in the light of the new knowledge gained through science, the naturalist saw the world as essentially Godless and amoral. He no longer sang in agony that "as flies to wanton boys, are we to the gods; they kill us for their sport." The naturalist substituted Gods for natural forces which, indifferent as they are to man, were considered to be malignant and hostile.

The philosophers of the time accepted the scientific method of observation, analysis and classification with the conviction that by this method they could study social maladies and prescribe effective remedies. The scientific approach to the study of social issues
is called positivism expounded by the French sociologist Auguste Comte (1798-1857).

In his *Cours de Philosophie Positive* (1830) Comte maintains:

"The basis of positive philosophy is to see all phenomena as subject to constant natural laws, and its aim is the exact discovery and schematization of these laws."\(^{12}\) Comte accepted the naturalistic view of the physical environment and suggested the study of society in terms of its being influenced and moulded by environmental forces. Positivism discards the two earlier schools of thought concerning social questions; namely, the theological in which all phenomena were ascribed to supernatural causes, and the metaphysical in which preformulated principles were attributed to the causes of social events.

The publication of *On the Origin of Species* forced man into the most radical assessment of himself and his relation to the world. It made the philosophy of naturalistic determinism incontrovertible. It threw new light on the secret of man's descent on earth and on the basic qualities with which he is invested.

Man's birth, claims Darwin, is accidental which owes its origin to the natural evolutionary process spanning over millions of years. A direct descendant from the animal kingdom, "man still bears in his bodily frame the indelible stamp of his lowly origin."\(^{13}\) Man's survival is dependent upon his capacity to conform himself to the inexorable natural forces which eliminate the weak and the "less wellfitted." This perpetual process going on in nature is described
by him as "natural selection" which keeps nature in a state of equilibrium. Moreover, the "struggle for existence" gives the picture of continual amoral warfare going on in the animal kingdom, and between the animate world and its surrounding.

Life being precarious on the planet and subject to uncontrollable natural laws, Darwin dispenses with the idea of free will and choice. The biological science of Darwin influenced philosophical outlook and it is Spencer who gave it a cosmic generalization. He believes that the process of natural selection "must everywhere produce greater fitness to the conditions of existence," and by means of this process can mankind achieve perfection and efficiency. Spencer's philosophy sheds no tears for the weak who get automatically eliminated in the ceaseless struggle for existence. Moreover, it justifies war among social organizations which, he claims, leads to a higher degree of civilization in the world.

The Spencerian philosophy implies "survival of the fittest", since under nature's laws all species are put on trial. His belief that "Persistence of Force" is beneficial, gives no credit to moral principles and human qualities like compunction and conscience.

In On the Origin of Species Darwin makes the optimistic prophecy that "whilst this planet has gone cycling on according to the fixed law of gravity, from so simple a beginning endless forms most beautiful and most wonderful have been, and are being, evolved." The evolutionary process, then, as Spencer explicates in philosophical terms, is dynamic consequent upon which a complex and heterogeneous condition is evolved from a simple and homogeneous one. This condition, which
is in a state of continual flux, disdains absolutism and reflects relativism.

Comte had formulated the positivistic theory for the study of society keeping in mind the dynamism of the natural laws. This theory, reinforced and validated by the Darwinian concept of heredity and surrounding, was first applied to the study of literature by Hippolyte Taine (1828-1893). In his "Introduction" to History of English Literature (1865) Taine claims that a work of art is a byproduct of "race, moment and milieu" which mirrors national character, the age or period, and the general social environment in which the art is produced. More than any other writer of the nineteenth century, Taine resolutely and systematically applied the approach and general principles of natural science to the study of the history of literature.

The foregoing discussion of some naturalistic ideas suggests that man, the product of an evolutionary process, lives in an everchanging environment brought about by natural laws. The positivistic method enunciated by Comte and Taine became a channel through which the deductions of evolutionary science filtered into the realm of literature. As the subsequent pages will try to show, the question of human survival, problematic as it is, tormented the minds of the philosophers and writers alike. They were convinced of the existence of uncontrollable forces which determine human destiny.

The Darwinian-Spencerian optimism that "evolution brings about an increasing amount of happiness; all evils being but incidental", hardly cheered the writers adhering to the naturalistic conception
of life. The awareness that man, devoid of free will and choice, is governed by irresistible forces opened a fresh perspective for creative writing. The writers identified social, economic, political, psychological and hereditary forces as deterministic in shaping human life. The tragedy, therefore, is that man, a conscious and temperamental being with yearnings and dreams in his self, finds himself in the midst of uncompromising forces which shatter his yearnings and bury his dreams. He lives a life not in accordance with his desires but in conformity with the pressures of circumstances. The naturalistic literature draws much of its substance from this area of tension arising from the conflict between subjective longings and external realities. What makes naturalistic literature essentially tragic is the predominance of forces which preside over human destiny.

"It is necessary to be accurate; we are not fatalists, we are determinists which is not the same thing," declared Emile Zola (1840-1902) who formulated the influential manifesto for the naturalistic novel and tried to give expression to it in his own novels. The French naturalists claim themselves as the second generation of realists because the naturalists endorse the realists' method of describing normal, average life in an accurate and faithful way. The naturalists, however, insist on determinism as governing human life. And, like scientists, they try to maintain detached neutrality in their description.

Zola concedes that French naturalistic fiction, to some extent, owes it vitality and method to the preceding realistic tradition in literature. There were elements in the writings of Stendhal
and Balzac which were intensified and reinforced by the naturalists in the light of the knowledge gained from the advance of natural science. Says Zola: "Stendhal remained above all a psychologist. Balzac more particularly studied temperaments, reconstituted milieux, amassed human documents, taking for himself the title of doctor of social sciences."  

From Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* (1857) naturalism as a literary movement acquires its strength and form. In this novel Flaubert shows how the uncompromising temperamental drives and reflexes determine Emma Bovary's destiny which ultimately bring about her doom and annihilate her family. The novelist, in dealing with the cause-effect story of Emma, takes the role of an experimental scientist examining a human specimen.

Zola says: "Without risking the formulation of laws I believe that the question of heredity has a great influence in the intellectual and passional behaviour of man. I also accord a considerable importance to environment." Dr. Claude Bernard in his *Introduction to the Study of Experimental Medicine* (1865), from which Zola quotes profusely in his *The Experimental Novel* (1879), observes that the life of a higher living being like man, is conditioned by internal or "intra-organic" and external or "extra-organic" forces. The intra-organic forces are due to heredity and temperament; whereas the extra-organic forces refer to external deterministic forces such as environmental, social and economic, etc.

Zola's contention is that since heredity and environment are factors governing human destiny, betterment of social condition
can be accomplished by eliminating the evils in the environment. By "a modification of circumstances and environment," which will be brought about to bear upon an individual, his responses and behaviour can be observed. The conclusions thus arrived at through such observation will enable man to direct and control social phenomena, prophesies Zola. The role the new novelist would play, envisages Zola, would be that of "the examining magistrates of men and their passions." Since the aim is to liberate man from forces of determinism, the novelist would be an "experimental moralist."

The Experimental Novel is an elaborate and enthusiastic manifesto, but it is an amplification of the "Preface to the Second Edition" (1868) of Therese Raquin (1867) Zola has to write in order both to defend the novel and his vision as a novelist from harsh criticism. In the preface he claims to have applied the "analytical method that surgeons apply to corpses" in order to examine and observe the characters in the novel in terms of environmental and temperamental determinism. For him "each character is a study of a curious physiological case." His Les Rougon-Macguart comprising twenty novels written between 1871 and 1893 and having the sub-title, "Natural and Social History of a Family under the Second Empire" traces the gradual fall and dissolution of the family spanning over five generations.

The contemporary French society was afflicted with "flagrant class-distinctions, fathomless corruption, intellectual ambiguity, and moral rottenness, all of which he [Zola] wanted to disclose
and hold up for opprobrium." In order to show the destructive impact of such environment, Zola made the novel a massive documentation of man's experience in his losing battle against deterministic forces and mimetic in its accurate and veritable description of the setting. To make the novel "experimental", he tried to banish emotion and imagination from the conception of plot, soul and free will from the characters under investigation. He chose characters who could be susceptible to their primal drives and be victims of environmental forces. Therefore, characters of passive, excitable and neurotic temperament were taken for experiment and observation. Drunkards, harlots, slum dwellers, diseased persons and persons with indelible hereditary traits were subjected to vivisection to identify the causality of their state of being and its eventual impact on them.

In showing the disintegration of man, the naturalistic novelist depicts what Malcolm Cowley calls the "magnification of forces and minification of persons." Implicit in the naturalistic novel of Zola, or, in the drama of Ibsen, Galsworthy and, to some extent O'Neill, is a profound sense of protest and pity. This sense is heightened by sensationalism and shock in which the naturalistic novel or drama ends. The sense of protest stems from the awareness of social and environmental injustice which victimizes man; pity from the fact that man is essentially weak and incapable of fighting against the inevitability of forces. The result is that naturalistic literature makes one conscious of one's confrontation with these forces in which one is condemned to live.
The world presented by naturalistic literature is, therefore, an atheistic and malignant one in which the prospect of leading a wholesome life is always gloomy. As Oscar Cargill observes, naturalism is "pessimistic determinism" which believes that men "are hurried towards evil and ignominious ends" and that it is "nourished on the substance of defeat." It is beyond the scope of this essay to ascertain the dichotomy between Zola's literary theory and practice. However, the fact remains that he is a highly emotional writer. His profound sense of compassion and pity for his characters betrays his scientific pretension of detached neutrality in his plot. For example, his treatment of Lalie in L'Assommoir (1876) is so sentimental as to strain the credulity of the reader. Nor is it possible to share Zola's enthusiastic euphoria that the novel can assume the position of the laboratory in locating the ills of the environment and eventually delivering man from the rigorous clutches of deterministic factors. Further, the naturalists may not find many supporters of the contention that theirs is the only and ultimate way of revealing the truth of life. In short, there exists a chasm between what the manifesto of naturalistic novel aims at and its accomplishment. W.S. Lily, for example, takes the extreme stand by describing experimental medicine and experimental morality "as false in theory, and as worthless and worse in results, as they are vile and debasing in practice." He argues that by banishing from human life all that gives it glory and honour and by showing the victory of fact over principle, of sensation over intellect,
of brute force over justice, of matter over mind, the adherents of naturalistic literature have, indeed, distorted truth, mutilated man and depicted a picture not in complete accord either with man's resilient spirit or with his complex relations with the forces he encounters. Moreover, documentation, however massive, cannot render the total context of human experience.

Such criticism of Zola's theoretical excess is valid. Much controversy regarding naturalism as a literary movement and its intention flows from this fact. But it has to be conceded that the naturalists' insistence on the prevalence of deterministic forces against which man stands in tension is also valid. The strength and universality of the naturalistic novel can be ascribed to this philosophy of determinism. There are realities and facts in the phenomenal world which are hostile to the human spirit. Man experiences disharmony and inner strife as he perpetually tries to overcome the factors which threaten the wholesomeness of his life and keep his ideal from his reach. This existential predicament of man is timeless and its continuing treatment in literature has its roots in naturalism that had flourished in France and America.

The growth of naturalism as a major movement in American letters towards the closing decades of the nineteenth century was the result of the response literature had to make to the contemporary socioeconomic factors. It developed at a time when it had spent its force in France. The paradox is that naturalism, a product of despair, a philosophy believing in the helplessness and defeat of man, should have attained such pervasive acceptance in a country
when it was poised for a tremendous economic and industrial growth, when its potentialities seemed to be limitless to make it a leader in world affairs. Therefore, a brief discussion of America's social condition and philosophical mood is necessary in order to understand the reasons which were responsible for the emergence of naturalistic novel in the country.

In the wake of the Civil War and its aftermath, the country had witnessed largescale violence and brutality which had exploded the transcendental myth of optimistic idealism and perfectability of man. Moreover, the Calvinistic conception that the ways of God are arbitrary and transcend human comprehension and control was an accepted religious dogma in America. The evolutionary philosophy was acceptable because it replaced God with nature and, in fact, Calvinism came to be known as naturalistic Calvinism. The natural laws defy human understanding and control—a fact which was not in conflict with Calvinism.

One of the reasons why Spencer found in America a responsive audience to his evolutionary philosophy was the sense of optimism inherent in it. William Graham Sumner and John Fiske based their philosophy on Spencerianism. Sumner believed that man's relation to nature is hard and demanding but his salvation lies in self-assertion and economic activity. This can lead to the development and encouragement of personal character and strength.

Fiske, the American disciple of Spencer, was convinced that evolutionary process moves towards inevitable perfection and
happiness of mankind. In the process, "evil, which was now seen to be but a maladjustment to nature, was destined inevitably to disappear in that larger harmony which was good." Such optimism seemed to have been based on the assumption that the rise of industry and the machine can eliminate human problems.

William James's pragmatism, however, emphasized free will and individual uniqueness. It declared that man fails or succeeds through his own efforts. It encouraged individual endeavor, expediency and adventure. While put to practice, pragmatism displayed contempt for law and morality, discipline and authority. It preached individualistic expansionism and justified means that accomplish ends.

This emphasis on free will is in total agreement with the principle of democratic individualism central to the American spirit and way of life. Besides, it justifies and explains America's growing power and gives credit to the American for having awakened the country to eminence. The pragmatists, like the social Darwinists, "stand firm for capitalism, rugged individualism, survival of the fittest industrially, laissez-faire, and free competition." The idea of failure and subjugation is repugnant to American temper; to rise and be master over things is an important aspect of this temper. But the closing decades of the last century were a period of transition which brought about a sense of perplexity and bewilderment. With the old values dislodged, the new age demanded adjustment on the part of the American for survival. The breathtaking pace with which the complexion of the country was changing because of the rise of industry and technology, overwhelmed him.
Having failed to come to terms with the new realities and unable to get social security either from politics or government, he became a weaker species in the Darwinian warfare of the struggle for existence.

Moral strictures and economic ethics became out of style. The "growing divorcement of the economic process from considerations that can be used to discipline human character" precipitated a mood of despair and resentment among the under privileged. The agrarian heritage was replaced by an apotheosis of industry and technology. The working class became a victim of sweat shops, unfair competition, and erratic and irresponsible fixation of wages and prices. This made him feel demoralized, bitter and angry. The industry in which he had to work became a menagerie for him; it dwarfed his manhood and destroyed his individuality. This sense of smallness together with economic privation, wiped out his dreams. In the teeth of harsh realities, his life became a desperate struggle to keep himself alive. His struggle was no longer against nature but against the man on whose whim his destiny dangled precariously.

The steady influx of immigrants in search of better prospects, and the growth of industrial slums devoid of reasonable amenities, made the under privileged feel defeated in life. In the midst of destitution and frightful surroundings, the rootless worker indulged in drunkenness and violence, prostitution and murder. The conscientious American was aware that under the veil of apparent achievement, there still remained pressing problems unsolved, high promises unkept and good deeds unaccomplished. The sense of certitude seemed to
have slipped away from the grasp.

Another factor that accounted for the rise of naturalism in America was the closing of the western frontier by 1890. Prior to that, the country was thought to be a land of endless boundary. The novels of Mark Twain, for example, give the impression of a limitless America. The discovery of minerals in the west and distribution of free land among the settlers prompted them to move westward. By 1890 there was no free land left, but the pouring in of immigrants still continued to make the situation worse. Labour became cheap and the industrialists gambled with wage-fixation.

The picture hardly had any room for romantic idealism. The social and intellectual climate dictated new terms to literature so that it could be a faithful transcription of contemporary realities. As Kazin puts it, "realism in America grew out of the bewilderment, and thrived on the simple grimness, of a generation suddenly brought face to face with the pervasive materialism of industrial capitalism." The American naturalistic novelist, thus, is termented by the fact that forces circumscribe human life and the human spirit makes futile attempts to transcend them.

The American naturalistic novel does not claim to focus on the evils of society for the first time in the literary history of the country. The realistic novels of Mark Twain, Henry James and William Dean Howells have left behind them a rich tradition of delineating the social world as the embodiment of evil. These realists believe in the affirmation of human life which, in its confrontation with subversive and corrupting forces, comes out
victorious. The basic vision in most of their novels is, therefore, ethical idealism. The choice which the protagonists of the realistic novels make is essentially moral because these novelists depict what should be rather than what usually is. The unusual incidents created by Twain and the unusual characters created by James are fused and embodied in a narrative so dynamic, detailed and alive that the total effect of their novels in no way contradicts the reader's perception of what can, indeed, happen.

The naturalistic novel realistic in spirit, reverses the position and depicts an amoral world into which the protagonist sinks and gets destroyed. The naturalistic novelist attempts "to represent the intermingling in life of controlling force and individual worth", and this worth always remains unequal in its encounter with this force.

The transition of American literature from the tradition of realism to naturalism was necessitated by issues some of which are discussed above. Hamlin Garland, for example, pleads for the emancipation of American literature from the influence of foreign, particularly English, literature. In his *Crumbling Idols* (1894) he calls for a literature which should be original and genuine instead of being imitative; a literature that should emanate from the roots of the American way of life. By "Veritism" Garland implies perception of the truth and uniqueness of American life which should nourish the creative vision of the American novelist. He laments that "American life had been lived, but not embodied in art."
Garland is one of the important critics who believes in the evolution of literature. This conviction enables him to defend W.D. Howells's novels from uncharitable criticism and paves the way for the growth of literary naturalism in America. Says he: "Nothing is stable, nothing absolute, all changes, all is relative. Poetry, painting, the drama, these too are always being modified or left behind by the changes in society from which they spring." His *Main-Travelled Roads* (1891) depicts, in a poignant way, the frustration and defeat of farmers under the pressure of circumstances and social forces.

The idea of force which ineluctably determines human survival and destiny, is the central stance of naturalism. The American naturalistic novelists have identified diverse sources from which this force operates. Some of these sources which have engaged and exercised their minds are noted below to show the range and complexion of naturalism in their works. Frank Norris and Stephen Crane delineate the dehumanizing impact of environment on man. At the hands of Crane environment takes on a palpable brutal form. This is reflected in *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets* (1892). It is the first most serious American naturalistic novel dealing with slum life. It brings home the picture of a place dominated by animal savagery. The place embodies forces that outrage and seduce Maggie. Economic constriction makes life in the slum harrowing and tension-ridden. Such is its pressure on life that the primal brutal instincts of man no longer remain hidden in him. The naturalistic pathos explicit in the novel stems from the fact that the destiny of Maggie could have
been different had she been brought up in a humane atmosphere. The indictment, thus, is not of Maggie for her moral failure but of the uncontrollable circumstances emanating from a destructive environment that overwhelm her.

Environment accounts for dissipation of life and the loss of direction in life. It divests life of its positive force. This is emphasized in Crane's George's Mother (1896) and James T. Farrell's Studs Lonigan: A Trilogy (1938). George leads a riotous, irresponsible life much against the wishes of his mother. He associates with friends who are the metaphorical expressions of the evils of environment. The novel does not say what happens to George after he loses the two props in his life—his mother and his job. Crane is not interested in that. What he drives home is that man is infected and poisoned by seemingly harmless environmental forces. Maggie and George's Mother originate from the same creative source and embody identical social vision of Crane.

The narrative in Studs Lonigan is wider. Farrell gives a photographic and detailed picture of the surrounding in which the young Studs grows up. He is inexorably drawn towards mischievous friends, leads an irresponsible life, and dies a premature death.

It may be argued that George and Studs are immature, not intellectually equipped, to recognize the web of circumstances that leads to their debacle; but Carol, the heroine in Sinclair Lewis's Main Street (1920), is aware that the small-town street in front of her house is "tediousness made tangible, a street builded of lassitude and of futility." Lewis depicts Gopher Prairie as a constricting
place in which Carol, the intellectual, vivacious, city-bred wife of Dr. Kennicott, finds herself inescapably trapped. Totally disillusioned about marriage and children she loses enthusiasm in life owing to the absence of moments of animation. She considers the small town mean and infested with curiosity and "felt that she was no longer analyzing and controlling forces, but swept on by them." The naturalistic pathos in the novel is due to the gradual and inevitable destruction of Carol's spirit. Her inwardness withers and her dreams of an ideal married life are shattered in a place which circumscribes her.

The tragic vision projected in these novels is due to the awareness that the possibilities of man ordering his life in a meaningful direction so as to achieve happiness and purpose are thwarted by his surroundings. But Jack London's perception of life is different. London's novels are based upon the archetypes of amoral forces and ceaseless warfare. Life, as he sees it, sustains itself and, conversely, gets devoured, by force. Reason and intellect do not play any role in life which itself is purposeless and a byproduct of natural forces. Wolf Larsen, the embodiment of violence, strength and mercilessness says of life: "'Life? Bah! It has no value. Of cheap things it is the cheapest. Everywhere it goes begging. Nature spills it out with a lavish hand'." In The Sea Wolf (1904) London's naturalistic irony is reflected by the fact that Wolf Larsen, the once-egoistic, strong captain of the ship, "Wolf", is reduced to a pathetic man after becoming blind. The Spencerian philosophy of survival of the fittest finds expression
in *White Fang* (1906) in this way: "The aim of life was meat. Life itself was meat. Life lived on life. There were the eaters and eaten. The law was: EAT, OR BE EATEN." London's world is planless and arbitrary dominated by slaughter and gluttony, violence and brute forces. He subjects all living creatures to the determinism of destructive forces notwithstanding that the strong dominates over the weak momentarily. The implication of force in American naturalistic novel, thus, remains identical: it is destructive, it deflects man's course of life, thwarts his desires, and arrests his wholesome growth.

In the novels of social protest, man is seen victimized by the injustice of a Darwinian world. Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle* (1906) presents a frightening picture of American industrialism, deception and treachery in which a family of immigrants is destroyed. In his struggle for existence against a combination of forces, the physically strong Jurgis Rudkus concludes that "the best powers of a man might not be equal to it! It might be true that, strive as he would, toil as he would, he might fail, and go down and be destroyed!" The slaughter house of Chicago's Beef Trust in which Jurgis works becomes a metaphor for the whole city in its remorselessness and relentlessly towards the rootless persons like him. Indeed, his fate gets identified with the slaughtered animals; although, having lost everyone of his family, he embraces socialism as a means of salvation for the workingman.

Novels like this, contrary to Zola's dictum of detached neutrality in the subject, are based on a sense of commitment to
human and moral issues in danger. And, in fact, some American
naturalistic novels are moving stories of man's helplessness and
despair because the writer is irresistibly drawn to plead the case
of the victim. Not neutrality but compassion, not detachment but
a sense of involvement in the misery of man, make these novelists
stand by the victim while describing the inexorable forces gradually
defeating and destroying him.

It may be repeated that the American naturalistic novel
reflects the writer's response to a number of disturbing and complex
local issues. It chronicles the temper of a particular phase of
its social history. As late as 1939 John Steinbeck indictsthe
so-called American opulence and scientific advancement: "There is
a crime here that goes beyond denunciation. There is a sorrow here
that weeping cannot symbolize. There is a failure here that topples
all our success."40 Steinbeck describes America of the depression
period as the "God-forshaken country" and juxtaposes the social
planning with the colossal story of human suffering. The rootless
and shelterless man floats pathetically on the troubled waters of
a society in quest of a foothold.

Nor has the Civil War solved, once and for all, the Negro
question in the country. In reality, the Negroes are "stunted,
stripped, and held captive within this nation, devoid of political,
social, economic, and property rights"41 and live under the constant
dread of white domination. In a desperate bid to save the life of
Bigger Thomas, the defense lawyer, Max, analyzes the consciousness
of a people which remains distorted and cramped. Richard Wright's
Native Son (1940) is not the American Crime and Punishment, although Bigger Thomas accidentally causes death to a white girl and, in order to cover up the fact, murders his girl friend. Wright conceives of the Negro as essentially a victim and the attitudes of the white towards the Negro as a determining force governing his destiny. The picture of Bigger Thomas being encircled by the police before his arrest, becomes the correlative of his people being surrounded by malignant social forces.

These novels are poignant in their depiction of human tragedy. As is seen, man never experiences life in the true sense of the term; his confrontation with forces being a never-ending story. Thus, V.L. Parrington defines naturalism as "pessimistic realism, with a philosophy that sets man in a mechanical world and conceives of him as victimized by that world... Men are victimized either by outer forces--the milieu--or by inner drives--impulses and instincts..." Such is the demand of these forces on his manhood that he is shown "in a continuous waking state of prosaic daily living, in effect as never dreaming."

Susan Lenox, the heroine of David Graham Phillips's Susan Lenox: Her Fall and Rise (1917), says exactly the same thing: "'Birds in the strong wind--that is what we are. Driven this way or that--or quite beaten down'." Like Dreiser's Sister Carrie, Susan suffers and flouts contemporary moral standards. By sheer chance she achieves a measure of success in life by being an actress and releasing herself from economic constriction. In this novel of social protest Phillips gives a veritable picture of injustice
inflicted on the workingman by rapacious industrialists for which his inner life remains compressed, thoughts bent, and character mutilated.

From this endless story of man-environment confrontation, spring the ideas of pessimism, despair and determinism. Indeed, the naturalistic novel is defined by various critics with these ideas in mind. George J. Becker defines it, as does Cargill quoted earlier, as "pessimistic materialistic determinism"; whereas Ahnebrink says that the naturalistic novel "portrays life as it is in accordance with the philosophic theory of determinism (exemplified in Zola's L'Assommoir)."

C.C. Walcutt believes that "Naturalistic tragedy evokes the emotions of pity and guilt—pity for the same reasons but guilt because the destroying forces are no longer mysterious but clearly social, for which the spectator shares the responsibility and therefore experiences guilt." Obviously, Walcutt formulates this definition keeping in view the external forces as deterministic and destructive. As some of the novels discussed above demonstrate, external factors determine the destiny of man. These factors, to quote Claude Bernard again, are "extra-organic." But the above definition of Walcutt does not take into account the "intra-organic" factors which operate from within man and which are no less inexorable and deterministic. These factors, it need be reiterated, owe their roots to the peculiarity of temperament and heredity of the protagonists. Society, clearly, cannot be indicted for the debacle of a man who falls prey to these "intra-organic" factors.
The naturalistic novelist's investigation into the causality of man's destiny extends, as Everett Carter sees it, in two directions: "One was downward, deeper into the inner life of the individual; the other was upward, into the life of the race." How the realities of the inner life of man lead to his doom is exemplified by characters like Emma Bovary, Clyde Griffith, Hurstwood, etc. The cause of their doom is not related to any social factors as Walcutt's definition would persuade us to believe. They suffer largely because of their irresistible passions and reflexes under the sway of which they become mere puppets. In Dreiser's *Sister Carrie* (1900) and *An American Tragedy* (1925), Hurstwood and Clyde Griffith are consumed by the indomitable fire of their desires. In both these novels determinism operating from the protagonists' passions is given the most vigorous and uncompromising application. "We suffer for our temperaments, which we did not make, and for our weaknesses and lacks, which are no part of our willing or doing." Dreiser exonerates man from the responsibility of all his acts which he does under the compulsiveness of his temperament: Dreiser's compassionate treatment of Clyde Griffith is a case in point. Thus, the naturalistic novelists whether dealing with "intra-organic" determinism or "extra-organic" determinism arrive at identical conclusions about man: that man is too feeble to take cognizance of, or resist, the factors that govern his life. Dreiser's vision is that man is divested of intellect and reason for which he is unable to give controlled expression to his desires and
passions. Man becomes oblivious of the fact that his yearnings may run counter to the established norms and principles of the society in which he lives; never is he aware that his untrammelled desires unleash forces that overwhelm and annihilate him. This perpetual conflict between human aspiration and his experience with facts makes Dreiser's world tragic.

Harold Frederic, like Dreiser, explores the inner recesses of man in order to show how primal passions condition his life. Temptation and sexual jealousy hold sway over Theron Ware, the minister of a church. The severity of his profession fails to keep these instincts at bay. In *The Damnation of Theron Ware* (1896) Frederic traces the fall of the minister, shows his inward rottenness; although the minister moves from the world of innocence into the world of experience through that fall. His introspective awareness of his psychic stirrings compels him to resign from the ministership.

The naturalistic novelist also believes that primitivism and hereditary traits in man are indelible which get reflected in his behaviour and actions. Frank Norris says about McTeague: "Below the fine fabric of all that was good in him ran the foul stream of hereditary evil, like a sewer." Norris depersonalizes man and personalizes force. As for his conception of nature he sees it as "relentless, a gigantic engine, a vast power, huge, terrible ... crushing out the human atom with soundless calm..." Under the pressure of circumstances man degenerates morally and gets reduced to the level of the animal as it happens in the case of Vandover in *Vandover and the Brute* (1914). In his novels Norris shows the
operation of two forces on man: the relentless nature and the primordial instincts of man. These instincts get manifested as the external forces close in around him and eventually entrap him.

The fact that naturalism can evolve from impressionism was first demonstrated by Crane in *The Red Badge of Courage* (1895). In the imaginary battlefield of Chancellorsville, Henry Fleming, the raw, untried country youth, is shown struggling within himself in order to come to terms with the realities in the battlefield. Crane fictionalizes Fleming's inward, emotional experiences gained by his encounter with, and apprehensions of, these realities. The centre of interest in the novel is Fleming's psyche which is shown receiving impressions without judging, classifying or speculating about them.

The American literary naturalism, as the foregoing discussion suggests, is broad in spectrum and is an extension as well as a modification of the Zolaesque tradition. In their moving delineation of human fallibility and helplessness, the novelists transmit a voice of sympathy for man and righteous indignation against the victimizing factors. As Ludwig Lewisohn observes, the novelists are pained and anguished by the fact that life is no equal to the forces it confronts. They find a process of "self-cure, and self-catharsis" in revealing this pain and anguish in their novels. They inflict more pain, as it were, on their lacerated spirit as a protest that life is not lived in accordance with man's intentions.

Sherwood Anderson can clearly be identified with this tradition of naturalism in American fiction. His fictional world depicts the story of man's confrontation with forces which disarray the pattern
of his life and circumscribe his self. Critical stance as to whether Anderson's writings conform to the naturalistic frame of reference is, of course, sharply divided. I quote a few important opinions in order to bring home the reason why Anderson is not regarded as a naturalistic writer by a school of critics.

Norman Holmes Pearson takes exception to the observation that "Anderson's fiction marks a step in the naturalistic presentation of American life." According to him, naturalism "presents the facts of life in detail, supposes no order nor outcome of them. Anderson was fundamentally an exuberant optimist."  

"However," says David D. Anderson, "Anderson is not expounding the theory of a universe of mechanistic forces operating on his people, as naturalism implies . . . Neither does he depend for effect upon the constant and careful accumulation of sharply drawn, realistic detail; rather he sketches, he implies, he insinuates."  

Julius W. Friend observes: "It is curious therefore that he should ever have been confused with the school of naturalism, (or as it is miscalled, realism). Anderson never troubled to observe and note down details which had no relevance for his vision."  

If naturalistic novel implies just massive documentation of realistic details about a character or a situation, Anderson of course is not naturalistic. The above observations have been made apparently keeping in view the Zolaesque or Dreiserian method of writing as the standard. Anderson's writings, however, have to be approached not from the point of view of the method or technique..."
adopted by the naturalistic novelists, but from the point of view of the spirit and vision behind naturalism as a way of interpreting human life.

Anderson says about life: "There is this thing called 'life'. We live it, not as we intend or wish, but as we are driven on by forces outside and inside ourselves." Clearly a naturalistic conception, it recognizes "extra-organic" and "intra-organic" deterministic forces conditioning human life. It also subscribes to the naturalistic thesis that man fails to impose a pattern on life so as to live it in accordance with his intention or wish. Consequently, the tension is between what life should be and what it actually is—a vision which the naturalistic novelists consider to be the most important.

In order to ascertain the spectrum of naturalism in the creative writings of Anderson, it is necessary to identify the forces which, according to him, operate from outside and inside man and determine his life. It must be noted that the Anderson protagonist protests against life because the real continually deflects the course of his life from the direction he thinks to be ideal for him. His feeling of being inhibited prompts him to search for the realm of liberation, but his quest lacks positive force and direction. He moves from one set of values to another only to be disenchanted about life itself.

Anderson shows this struggle for liberation taking place in the psyche of his protagonist. The external world which he does not depict in detail, exists insofar as to be a correlative of the
protagonist's turmoil and disjointedness, or to be a factor exacerbating his crisis due to unrealized yearnings and bottled up desires. Anderson's concern with the protagonist's subjective, psychological phenomena leads some critics to believe that the naturalism reflected in his writings is of a psychological nature. But this dissertation suggests that his naturalism is broader and more varied than that.

A look at Sam McPherson (of *Windy McPherson's Son*), Beaut McGregor (of *Marching Men*), Hugh McVey (of *Poor White*) and Kit Brandon (of *Kit Brandon*) convinces one that they have one pattern of life. They rise in the world and achieve material success, but they repudiate this success after being disillusioned about it. They become pilgrims of values that can bring them harmony and purpose in life. Hereafter they grope, not knowing how to search for the ideal and not knowing the direction in which to channel their lives. These Anderson heroes searching for the unknown "something" have essentially metaphysical longings. Their rejection of the material success is necessitated by their conviction that their inward disharmony and emptiness can by no means be resolved and fulfilled either by money or power. The physical and experiential world becomes finite and hostile for them. It does not offer any means for the realization of their metaphysical longings.

Anderson, then, is seriously concerned with the matter-spirit conflict. The human spirit in search of something bigger and more significant than the physical world can ever offer, finds itself inexorably bound to this world for which reason liberation of the
human spirit is not possible in a society intoxicated with the success ethic.

The naturalism discernible in *Winesburg, Ohio* is of a biological nature. Most of the characters in the book have deformed and twisted psyche owing to inexplicable, mysterious biological forces for which they fail to take cognizance of the realities around them. Unable to relate themselves to their external world, they become pathetically lonely creatures, but paradoxically, they feel overwhelmed and perplexed at the moment of human contact for which they withdraw themselves into their being. These characters are forever restless and tense because, unable to find any outlet for self-expression, they remain in a state of arrest. At moments, their surface placidity explodes and their pent-up desires and frustrations find momentary release through their violent acts and outbursts. Anderson's aim is to reveal the inner recesses of these characters and he does it with the effect of a lightning flash. In *Winesburg, Ohio* Anderson has subordinated surface details to the purpose of depicting the interiority of his characters. Victims of the biological mistake, they lead a buried life and silently wither away.

Psychological naturalism presides over the destiny of John Webster of *Many Marriages* and Bruce Dudley and Aline of *Dark Laughter*. Marital life becomes a trap for these characters because their sexual desires remain constricted. In these two novels sex is depicted as a physiological force, as the creative centre of life. These self-willed characters are victims of what Anderson
calls "inside forces" as their lives are governed by their instincts and psychic reflexes. In these novels Anderson records the response of these impulsive characters to their discordant and life-denying situations and traces the line of their conduct.

Some of the characters in the stories of *The Triumph of the Egg, Horses and Men* and *Death in the Woods* as well as the minor characters in some novels, particularly those in *Beyond Desire* and *Poor White*, are victimized by environmental forces. These forces owe their roots to social conventions, puritanical code of conduct, and economic privation. Anderson believes that these forces, in demanding the allegiance of man to them, act as a prison arresting his spontaneous behaviour and healthy growth of his inner self. Besides, most of these characters are brought up in dehumanizing atmosphere in the family with the result that emotional privation and spiritual malnutrition, lack of love and understanding, distort their outlook beyond redemption.

The antithesis of Sam McPherson, Beaut McGregor, McVey, and Kit Brandon who rise in the world are the factory workers movingly depicted in *Beyond Desire*. This novel, written during the depression period of the thirties, elaborately depicts the frightening repercussions of industrialism. The workers, imprisoned in the factory and precariously dependent for livelihood upon the whim of the owner, lead a life of sheer exhaustion with their family ties reaching the breaking point. Anderson recognizes an inward liveliness in the lives of these workers, but what torments him is that they are dominated by gigantic machines which emasculate them.
Anderson has never been sympathetic to the rise of industry; rather he looks at the decaying pastoralism with nostalgic retrospect. Craftsmanship and the craftsman's moral integrity echo in his work as the final groans of the old world. The supersession of craftsmanship by industrialism is dramatized in the unforgettable character of Joe Wainsworth in Poor White. With Joe are juxtaposed other characters who enthusiastically assimilate the new values brought about by the technological age and become metaphors for the survival of the fittest ethic.

Anderson's world is the bustling city, or the small town, or the solitary house where loneliness and silence become oppressive. His lonely and restless man feels constricted and struggles within himself to get something from life which remains unnameable for him. He runs, mutters to himself; his haphazard movements and gibberings symbolize the incoherence of his life itself.

Thus, the factors governing human life in the fictional world of Anderson are manifold. Like any other naturalistic writer he believes in forces that distort, twist and arrest human life. For this reason life, as he depicts it in his works, is devoid of spontaneity and uninhibited expression.


6 Ibid.


8 Ibid., pp. 151-152.

9 Ibid., p. 152.


20 Zola, The Experimental Novel.

21 Ibid.


26 Ibid., p. 15.


36 Ibid., p. 436.


45 George J. Becker, "Introduction: Modern Realism as a Literary Movement" in DMLR, pp. 3-38.


