An attempt had been made in the preceding chapter to discuss characteristics of Realism as a literary movement. Here, in this chapter, it is proposed to examine the later part of the same movement when realism culminated in naturalism. This extension of realism, in fact, strives more than realism for accurate description and truthful presentation of things. "Naturalism", according to the New Catholic Encyclopedia, "is generally distinguished as a specific outgrowth of realism as well as its most extreme form".\footnote{1} Harry Levin shares the same opinion in defining naturalism. He sees it as "the last prolongation of realism".\footnote{2}

Frank Norris analysed minutely three trends in literature — realism, romanticism and naturalism, in his well known essays named "A plea for Romantic Fiction" and "Zola as a

romantic writer". He put these three terms in a dialectic, in which realism and romanticism were opposing forces, and in which naturalism was the transcending synthesis. Realism, to Norris, was the literature of the normal and representative of "the smaller details of everyday life, things that are likely to happen between lunch and supper..." Moreover, realism does not probe the inner reaches of life, "it notes only the surface of things". Naturalism differs from realism both in its concern for "Variations from the type of normal life", and in its desire to penetrate beneath the surface of experience and derive large generalizations on the nature of life. Naturalism explores "the unplumbed depths of the human heart, and the mystery of sex, and the problems of life, and the black unsearched penetralia of the soul of man". Although Norris at times called Zola a romanticist, it is clear from the above two essays that he intended to classify Zola as a naturalist. He emphasised that Zola's naturalism is a kind of realism which is different from Howellsian realism. Naturalism, in short, abstracts the best from realism and romanticism, that is detailed accuracy and philosophical depth. In addition,

naturalism differs from both modes in one important characteristic — its subject matter.

Realism and naturalism are interrelated. According to Domian Grant, "Realism derives from philosophy and describes the objective, the attainment of real; Naturalism derives from natural philosophy or science and describes a method which shall conduce to the attainment of the real. Realism is spoken as a technique and naturalism as a tendency." Naturalism as a mode can not stand independently without realism — a solid base. Realism is the basic tenent of naturalism. Their relationship is conveyed by Lilian R. Furst through the image of "Siamese twins, who have separate limbs while sharing certain organs. What the realists and the naturalists have in common is the fundamental belief that art is in essence a mimetic, objective representation of outer reality (in contrast to the imaginative, subjective transformation practised by the Romantics)." Thus naturalism maintains its rapport with realism making it more mature and profitable as a literary trend.

Naturalism says M.H. Abrams "is sometimes claimed to be an even more accurate picture of life than is realism. But naturalism is not only, like realism, a special selection of subject matter and a special literary manner, it is a mode of fiction that was developed by a school of writers in accordance


with a special philosophical thesis. This thesis, a product of post Darwinian biology in the mid-nineteenth century, held that man belongs entirely in the order of nature and does not have a soul or any other connection with a religious or spiritual world beyond nature; that man is therefore merely a higher order animal whose character and fortunes are determined by two kinds of natural forces, heredity and environment. He inherits his personal traits and his compulsive instincts, especially hunger and sex; and he is subject to the social and economic forces in family, the class and the milieu into which he is born.\(^9\)

As such, naturalism like realism owes its origin to France. Emile Zola is considered as the fountainhead of naturalism. He popularised it in his novels. He propounded a set of theories for this new school of writing. He used the term first as a literary standard of novel writing while interpreting Gustave Flaubert's Madam Bovary. Zola's naturalistic novels are marked by a sociological study of background with a multitude of characters dwarfed by the milieu. Besides Zola, Flaubert represented another strain of naturalism. His novels studied individual characters set in the same sociological background. Although Flaubert appeared in the literary scene of France earlier than Zola, he was reluctant to blow his trumpet as a naturalist. Therefore, Zola's

position as the chief exponent of naturalism was undisputed. He, with an innovator's zeal, invented and experimented with new themes and techniques of naturalistic writings. Hence, Zola became the master artist of naturalistic fiction and France the native land of the naturalistic movement in literature. Then it began to spread like fire in an oil depot, from country to country throughout the world.

Literary naturalism is exclusively the property of gracious science and the new-philosophy of life prevalent in the nineteenth century. It is born out of nineteenth century-critical thought and is the offspring of Darwin, Marx, Comte, Huxley and Taine. These scientists and philosophers with their new theories and hypothesis captured the intellectuals. A new vista of knowledge was opened to them. With much anxiety and curiosity, the literary artists embarked on a scientific movement and emphasised the law of causation. Literature and science marched hand in hand. Literary artists assumed the role of scientists and doctors. They observed and experimented with society and human elements. Their scientific study demanded a serious preparation for their writings. They felt the necessity of careful collection of materials before they began to write. Imagination played a minor role; instead, the emphasis was on the methodical and scientific study of the setting, the characters, and problems involved. Thus, a thorough-going naturalistic novelist adopts the technique of documentation and carefully studies physical reality.
A staunch naturalist follows the following assumptions as formulated by the French naturalists. Here, the discussion is limited only to literature and particular attention is given to novel writing.

As naturalism is an "outgrowth of realism", it maintains 'objectivity' as the basic principle in the choice of subject matter and its treatment in the novel. It accepts scientific theories and ideas in planning the novel. The naturalist seeks truth in the spirit of a scientist. Zola says "We naturalists, we men of science, we must admit of nothing occult; men are but phenomena and the conditions of phenomena". A naturalistic novelist chooses selected subjects like sex, love, physical and psychological angularity of men and women, all kinds of social misery and pathological cases as themes of his novel which suit the naturalistic interpretation of human life. He collects characters like a biologist's collection of specimen. These characters are portrayed in the novel with fidelity to the facts as in a report of an experiment in the laboratory. The novelist as an observer and an experimentalist "sets his characters going in a certain story so as to show that the succession of facts will be such as the requirement of the determination of the phenomenon under examination call for".

Such an objective observation of the facts of human life leads the naturalist to an impersonal method of treatment where


11. Ibid., p. 8.
frankly he studies the deeper instincts and endless impulses of both men and women. Realists were objective observers but they dare not expose shamelessly the private life of man as the naturalists did. Naturalists differ from realists in their frankness. They hold the opinion that the study of human nature will be unfulfilled without a frank depiction and an access into primal instincts like fear, hunger and sex. Along with other instincts sex dominates more and plays a vital role in shaping the life of a man. Therefore, the naturalists make much of it in their novels. They reduce the passion of love to sexuality. Though naturalists' treatment of sex is shocking and obtrusive, they determine man's behaviour by such an objective observation of sex. Moreover, due to naked treatment of sex and truth of life the naturalistic novel suffers a lot and is alleged as "dirty hands of literature."\(^{12}\)

A naturalist possesses an amoral attitude towards material. It is only because he records the things as it happens or as it is. He is not a judge, rather an impartial demonstrator. He holds no brief for any ethical standard. As Edmund Gosse says, a naturalist "must not be a moralist but an anatomist."\(^{13}\) Similarly, in the words of Zola a naturalist "must possess a knowledge of mechanisms inherent in man, to show the machinery of his intellectual and sensory manifestations under the influence of heredity and environment, such as physiology.

---


shall (sic) give them us, and then finally to exhibit man living in social conditions produced by himself, which he modifies daily and in the heart of which he is undergoing constant transformation. This view implies that man is no more an ethical being than a mere biological creature. Man has also been reduced to a thing rather than a being.

Such a materialistic assumption put the naturalists between the two horns of a dilemma — secularism and puritanism. Naturalists tried to be completely materialistic in their attitude towards life but could not. Even, Zola, the native theorist fell short of achieving complete materialistic attitude towards life in his novels.

Naturalism assumes a philosophy of determinism. This is the vital principle of naturalism which sets it off from realism. According to genuine naturalists, man has no free will; either external or internal forces, environment or heredity control him and determine his behaviour, for which he is not responsible. This belief is called determinism and is fundamental in naturalism. There are, of course, different stages of determinism, because a writer may not be a confirmed determinist, but a determinist only to a certain degree. Realists are determinists but in a lesser degree as they are direct descendents from a puritanical background who believe that man has no free will and his "Will" is enslaved by cosmic

forces other than heredity or environment. They add the chance factor to cosmic determinism and call it fatalism. According to the realist Thomas Hardy human life is not regulated by natural laws (heredity, environment, passions and instincts), but is made irrational and illogical through operation of inevitable "Chance". But naturalists are the last men to accept the chance factor. Hence Zola accepting Claude Bernard's position explains two terms plainly: "we have given the name of determinism to the nearest or determining cause of phenomena. We never act upon the essence of phenomena in nature, but only on their determinism, and by this very fact, that we act upon it, determinism differs from fatalism upon which we could not at all. Fatalism assumes that the appearance of any phenomenon is necessary apart from its conditions, while determinism is just the condition essential for the appearance of any phenomenon, and such appearance is never forced... . All we do is to apply this method in our novels, and we are the determinists who experimentally try to determine the condition of the phenomena, without departing in our investigations from the laws of nature. ...the moment that we can act, and that we do act, on the determining cause of phenomena — by modifying their surroundings, for example — we cease to be Fatalists."¹⁶

Naturalistic philosophy is known as mechanistic determinism. The naturalist solves the problem of free-will

¹⁵. Claude Bernard was a physician, who applied experimental method in the field of medicine. Zola observed Bernard's scientific experiments and was encouraged to apply the experimental method in novel writing.

scientifically. He analyses man's course of action by applying scientific ideas. As Zola, the naturalistic theorist says: "We take men from the hands of physiologist solely...to solve scientifically the question of how men behave in society."\textsuperscript{17} 

The naturalist dissects and studies the mechanism of human biology and the mechanism of social and economic forces with a keen insight into the natural origin. Supporting this James T. Farrel says that "whatever happens in this world must ultimately be explainable in terms of events in this world... all events are explainable in terms of natural origins."\textsuperscript{18} Thus, such a mechanical study of man and the world, leads the naturalist to propound a mechanistic philosophy of life.

A broader mechanistic philosophy is found in the novel of Flaubert and Dreiser. They arrive at it as a result of their deep pondering over life and society, against which background, their novels were set. Their mechanistic philosophy is an outcome of the study of physical sciences like chemistry and physics, mixed with laws of nature. Dreiser sees life as that which is "a mere idle rocking of force in one direction or another",\textsuperscript{19} and man merely "an orphan in space, an evolved arrangement of attractions and repulsions, arranged by chemicals and forces which desire or can not escape whirls or epitomes of complicated notions and emotions or attractions which take the

\textsuperscript{17} Emile Zola, \textit{op. cit.} p. 19.


odd forms presented by men and animals.\textsuperscript{20} He further explains that every process of man originates in and is governed by "the inescapable chemical and physical reactions and compulsions of seemingly blind forces, as Cright and Leob have shown. Even, now chemists and physicists are at work upon the balances and equations involved in the mechanical and chemical construction of man."\textsuperscript{21} Dreiser also speaks of the world where the only truth is "change" and man born in his world is subjected to change according to the laws of nature.

A similar mechanistic conception of life is inherent in the novels of Frank Norris. He observes in his outstanding novel \textit{The Octopus} that "Men were naught, life was naught; force only existed — Force that made the wheat grow — Force that garnered it from the soil to give place to the succeeding crop."\textsuperscript{22} By "Force" what Norris meant was the natural force which obeys natural laws. Without this "force" life is impossible. He also thinks about the riddles of existence and man's helplessness when this natural force becomes indifferent towards individuals. He says: "... the individual suffers but the race goes on. Annixter (a character) dies, but in a far distant corner of the world a thousand lives are saved. The larger view always and through all shams, all wickedness, discovers the truth that

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{20} Theodore Dreiser, \textit{Hey-Rub-A-Dub-Dub!}, p. 242.
  \item \textsuperscript{21} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 247.
\end{itemize}
will, in the end, prevail and all things, surely inevitably resistlessly work together for good". Here, Norris's view is not completely mechanistic because he believes partially in the inevitability of happenings (chance factor) without cause and effect, which the naturalists deny.

What the naturalists in general assume is that everything is conserved in this world, nothing is created new or destroyed, rather everything changes and change is one of the natural laws. Thus, the scientists of literature have turned into philosophers. These philosophers of naturalism seriously think over life and its meaning. They engage themselves in the sociological study of individuals applying laws of heredity and environment. They take it as strictly as the second law of thermodynamics which is unchangeable and universal. Zola explains through his novels that suicide, alcoholism, prostitution and insanity in men and women are but hereditary traits. He argues like Hippolyte A. Taine that "Vice and Virtue are products like vitriol and sugar". Norris also offered the same explanation for the brutality of McTeague in the novel of that name. McTeague is a typical victim of his hereditary trait. To show it Norris says that in him "ran the foul stream of hereditary evil, like a sewer. The vices and sins of his father and his father's father, to the third and fourth and five hundredth generation, tainted him. The evil of an entire race flowed in his veins. Why should it be! He did not desire it. Was he to blame?"

Like heredity, environment shapes the characters in the naturalistic novels. A study of Maggie's character in Stephen Crane's novel will make this point clear. Maggie stands apart as a victim of environment who was degraded and transformed into a prostitute of the New York slum. So also Dreiser's Carrie Meeber and Norris's Trina are in no way freed from the influence of environment. Thus, the "will" of the characters in the naturalistic novels is sacrificed either to heredity or environment.

Naturalists assume a sense of pessimism in selecting details about human life in this world. It is because of the naturalists' revolt against the romanticists. The romanticists saw only the bright side of life and believed in the nobility of human life. They had also a conception of "purposive will".

Romance springs from the longings of a baffled and thwarted "will", creating a world of make-believe wherein the romanticists find refuge. But the naturalists do not tolerate such refuge. Their purpose is to envisage the truth that they see around them. They do not find any purpose behind the creation of man. Man's life is purposeless. Man is a victim of forces within and without and the world is apathetic to him. Therefore, the naturalists interpret life in two forms: life is a trap and life is mean. Such interpretations lead them to dissect life mercilessly in their works where we see the sordid images of life filled with blood and mire. Everything seems ugly to them. The insignificance of man is revealed through words
and phrases like "infinitesimal insect", "gnat", "atoms and stardust", "mole", "ant", "Speck in the sun". This view has been deduced from the theory of evolution, but when evolution is treated in their novels, it almost always takes the form of devolution or degeneration. Man seldom evolves toward a superman, he sinks backward toward the beasts. In order to show the beast in man the naturalists use animal images and revert man's position to the stage of primitivism and elementalism. Even, man in early naturalistic novels loses semblance to humanity as he has been reduced to "the abysmal brute". Thus, the constant reduction of man to animal and the view that man is absolutely incapable of shaping his own destiny lead the naturalists to entertain a pessimistic view of life.

Finally, the naturalists assume a unique method in selecting characters. Since naturalistic novelists stress on the mechanism of society and human biology, their characterization is mechanical. The characters of naturalistic novels are chosen to emphasise a particular theme. Therefore, almost all the characters of a naturalistic novel are "type" characters rather than "round" or "individual". Usually, the naturalists choose one of the "three types of characters". 26

According to V.L. Parrington, the first category of characters possess marked physique and small intellectual activity. They are persons of strong animal drives. They range all the way from morons like Norris's McTeague, Zola's Nana, and Dreiser's Jennie Gerhardt to natures like Hardy's

Tess and Sallie in Maugham's *Of Human Bondage*.

The second category of characters are characters of excited and neurotic temperament. They act at the mercy of moods, driven by the omnipotent forces that they do not stop to analyse. The characters of Emma Bovary, Angels Blue and Sue are typical examples of this category.

The third category of characters are exceptions in naturalistic characterization. These characters are strong having extraordinary will power, but their will is broken by abstract forces. Hardy’s Jude, Dreiser’s Solon Barnes and the doctor in Strindberg’s *By the open Sea* belong to this category.\(^\text{27}\) In addition, there is a host of minor characters who appear and disappear in a naturalistic novel. The novelist uses them for the reader's understanding of the main characters and the facts of the novel.

Attempts have been made by the naturalistic novelists to model their novels in the form of tragedy. They tried to achieve "bigness" and "intensity"\(^\text{28}\) of a genuine tragedy. Though the naturalistic novels end with a tragic note and may be considered as tragedies, the philosophy of naturalism that underlies them keeps them away from the Aristotelian conception of tragedy. According to the Aristotelian tradition, tragedy results when an essentially noble character of heroic proportions

---


transgresses an immutable moral law by a self-originating will and suffers the punishment dealt by poetic justice. It happened in the case of Macbeth, Othello, King Lear and Hamlet. They were men having "a self-originating will power" and they had violated "an eternally changeless moral law." Moreover, Shakespeare believed in the existence of "purposive will". But the naturalists refuse to accept an eternally changeless moral law and purposive will, and naturalistic characters are not attributed with "self-originating will". Naturalistic characters are taken from common and ordinary men, whose "fall" and "sufferings" will not create such a thrilling pity in the readers as it is in the case of Macbeth or King Lear. The tragedy of naturalism lies in disintegration. The characters are placed in an apathetic world where life has no meaning and dignity. Therefore, the vision which emerges out of naturalistic fiction is not tragic, it is rather pathetic and naturalistic novels are "case histories" not tragedies. Talking about pathos and tragedy Warwick Wadlington says that, "in tragedy our attention is focused more upon a man who suffers disjunction within himself; in pathos, more upon a man who suffers disjunction with his world." He compares naturalistic characters with tragic characters of tragedies and justifies that naturalistic novels should justly be classified as pathetic than tragic.

From the above assumptions it is clear that naturalism is pessimistic realism with a mechanical deterministic philosophy. The naturalist sets man in a mechanical world and conceives of him as victimized by that world. Doing this, the naturalist unconsciously exaggerates naturalism. From much brooding over the man and his world, he is liable to commit the following mistakes.

While showing the effects of the devastating milieu, the naturalist may end in desiring to change that milieu to the end where man may achieve happiness. Hence he tends to lose his objectivity and scientific detachment, and becomes a partisan to causes. This makes the naturalist more a reformer than an objective observer. In practice both the French and American naturalists succumb to this mistake.

Secondly, from much study of inner drives of low-grade characters the naturalist is in danger of creating grotesque characters and characters with sex complex. Frank Norris, D.H. Lawrence and Dreiser to some extent commit this mistake in their novels.

Thirdly, from much emphasis on animal impulses the naturalist may turn man into an animal. The invariable repetition of the ugly, the vile and the miserable aspects of life may dampen the work of literature where it ceases to be literature. This is the commonest objection to naturalism and critics have made it a target of their criticism.
Naturalistic assumptions discussed so far are too rigorous and difficult for the practitioner novelists. There is a wide gap between the theoretical assumptions of naturalism and the practical use of these in the novels. Naturalism as a literary tendency differs from writer to writer, and country to country. It depends on the temperament of the writer and general social conditions of the country.

Traditional American temper is not suited to naturalism. The American temper is marked by two distinct qualities: puritanism and optimism — the belief in the supremacy of the moral law, and the conviction that this is a good world that man shapes to his will. This was popularised by Thoreau and Poe, the religious priests of American literature. In the later years Emerson came with a philosophy of optimism which was a product of the new world free economics. A free economy created a free will philosophy. Hence, the Americans became hopeful of a better life. They thought the world is good and man is good: let him stand upon his instincts and the whole world will come round to him. They also believed in individual potency. These feelings liquidated the firm deterministic attitude of the writers. Therefore, naturalism as a pessimistic determinism was slow to take root in the American soil. However, naturalism came to America but in a mild form shadowing occasionally but deeply, the bright sky of American optimism.
As such, the American naturalists fall into two groups: the "meelorists" or "soft" naturalists, and the "tough" or "hard naturalists". 31 Hamlin Garland, Jack London and Frank Norris belong to the first group, and Theodore Dreiser and Stephen Crane constitute the second. When the former novelists are imperfect exponents of rigorous naturalism, the later are consistant followers of logical science and proved man's incapacity of shaping his own destiny. All these novelists, though they accept naturalistic themes and naturalistic concept of characters, felt that necessary reforms can be made in society through scientific searching out of truth. They all have taken naturalism only as a manner or mode of writing by which they can portray life as it is in accordance with the philosophical theory of determinism. As James D. Hart defines American naturalism, it is "a method of literary composition that aims at a detached scientific objectivity in the treatment of natural man. It conceives of man as controlled by his instincts, by his passions, or by his social and economic environment and circumstances, since naturalism comes after realism and it takes literature in the same direction as realism, it is primarily an extension and continuation of realism. Critics generally agree with the fact that the major distinction between realism and naturalism is the particular

philosophical orientation of the naturalists. A widely accepted concept of American naturalism is that it is essentially realism infused with a pessimistic determinism." 32 Concluding his discussion on naturalism James D. Hart is of the opinion that American naturalism is devoid of materialistic determinism or any other philosophical ideas and thus, it differs from Zola's naturalism.

Literary naturalism is not pessimistic argues Leopold Alas and says that "to depict the misery of life is not to be a pessimist. A realization that there is much sorrow in the world is perhaps the result of exact observation." 33 The man who derives pessimism from a work of art or literature, perhaps bears pessimism in his character.

Naturalism is not a closed doctrine. It is rather a literary opportunism, which rules out other tendencies. Naturalism believes modesty that the literature which is most suited to modern life, is its kind. Therefore, naturalistic fiction is more than mere recording or reporting of actual conditions and it ends as a criticism of life itself.

33. Leopold Alas, "What naturalism is not" op. cit. pp.268-69.