Abroad the goodship Arabella as she headed for New England in the spring of 1630 the Puritan leader John Winthrop composed a sermon for his fellow passengers—the ladies and gentleman, artisans and their families, Yeoman farmers and servants who would establish the Massachusetts Bay Colony. To them, and to posterity he gave an image: We shall be as a City upon a Hill. In his warning that what they built would stand as a model before “the eyes of all the people”, he chose a religious symbol taken from the Gospel of Matthew. But in evoking an urban rather than a rural image, John Winthrop foretold the enduring importance of the city in America.

As Blake Mckelvey remarks “The rambunctious American town flexed its muscles during the industrial revolution and grew into a city. Fed by old skills and new technology, the city bulged out, then up after the Civil War. With the traditional tools of their art-triangle, T-Square, brass compass, ruler for measuring in reduced scale-architects and planners blueprinted a new look for the city. And a structure peculiarly American began to scrape the sky.”

“Streets on paper became streets of stone as planned towns emerged from the wilderness. A map of New Haven in 1748 shows its plan intact a century after founding; a grid of blocks, each 825 feet square, surrounds public buildings on a
central green. Most towns sprawled, their muddy roads following builders' whims. Then paving inscribed the pattern of streets—naturally rounded 'cobbles' or in hewn stones. These neat, closely arrayed Belgian blocks (named for the source of the style, not the granite) gave horses solid footing as they clattered in Washington, D.C. In time, progress in paving- and automobiles-made cobblestones and blocks relics". (Blake McKelvey.35).

Telegraphs, and electric lights made midtown hum, but their wires wrapped the center of the growing metropolis in a cocoon. Elevators let New York's 260-foot, clock-towered Tribune Building strain upward. But the alchemy that changed iron to steel let buildings soar. When the Bessemer converter and the open-hearth furnace lowered steel princes from $150 to $45 a ton, skeletons made of I-beams became practical. They became curtains enwrapping the building's inner strength. The sky was the limit! And the appetite for Skyscrapers would help fire the foundries that launched the United States into 20th century as the industrial leader of the World. Walt Whitman wrote recognizing this indomitable spirit as "The human qualities of these vast cities" "is... heroic, beyond Statement". ²

Much of the special character of American life and American Civilization, at least until the Centennial of 1876, came from the continuing encounter of post Renaissance Europeans with pre-Iron Age America. Here was the first surprising promise of the New World, a promise that would be fulfilled in many ways: Americans would find new ways to work the land. They would build new kinds of
cities- Cities in wilderness- and new kinds of schools and colleges, a new
democratic world of learning. The promise- that civilization could transform the
raw land—would explain why so many Americans were on the move, why they
were so energetic at building canals, so precocious at laying railroads and at making
their own kind of steamboats and locomotives. It explained the special
opportunities for Americans to better their lot and rise in the world.

Whenever American attitudes towards the city are under discussion, we are
likely to hear a familiar note of puzzlement. We hear it, for instance, near the end of
the influential study by Morton and Lucia White, The intellectual Versus the City;
From Thomas Jefferson to Frank Lloyd Wright (1962). After making their case
study for the centrality of anti-urban motives in American thought and expression,
the Whites wanted to share their perplexity and puzzle, regarding the city.

It is, however, better to consider a few of the more compelling reasons for
expecting American writers to convey an affirmative attitude toward city life.
Behind this expectation there is a view of history, and its starting point is the
inevitable fact that the Americans are the city building people. From the every
beginning, indeed, the European occupation of North America has been a process
of relentless urbanization. During the Atlantic crossing in 1630, John Winthrop
envisaged the colony the Puritans were about to establish as A City Upon a Hill.
The trope was conventional, to be sure, but it nonetheless expressed an important
attribute of the Calvinist mentality. Though many of these migrating Englishmen
were of rural origin, they were carriers of an essentially bourgeois culture, or what Max Weber was to call "The Protestant Ethic". They were burghers in spirit, and like most other European settlers, they conceived of the colonizing enterprise as an affair of organized communities. Their aim was to set up villages, towns, and potential cities in the wilderness. During the Colonial period, settlement by the unaffiliated was discouraged, and historians long since have discarded the beguiling notion of a westward-moving frontier comprised of individual 'pioneers' like Daniel Boon or Natty Bumppo. The effective cutting edge of population until the end of the nineteenth century was a chain of small communities which often, as in the dramatic instance of Chicago, became cities overnight.

The fictional charting of American attitudes is far more persuasive, it captures more of historical actuality than the notion that Americans harbor some special bias against cities as such. Indeed, it casts a reasonable doubt upon the validity of the abstract conception, the city, for it stresses the difference, rather than the similarity, between American cities and the classic pre-industrial cities of Europe. Most American cities, after all, have been built since the onset of industrialization, and unlike London, Paris, or Rome, they embody relatively few features of any social order than that of industrial capitalism. "If the American city is perceived chiefly as the locus of a particular socio-economic order that view accords with the historical face that millions of Americans have moved to cities, not
because they preferred urban to rural life, but rather because of the inescapable coercion of a market economy."³

We can say that all these classic American writers are not realistic-that their images of the city, not to be taken at face value, make a criticism of the emerging or achieved industrial state. In these writers the "distinguishing features of the American city do not reside in its cityness," just as in their words the country is not real country: the ugliness in the one, the "glorious impracticality" in the other arise from the author's "highly critical conception" of the American "socio-economic system as its accompanying culture". ⁴

Stephen Spendler's "Poetry and the Modern City" moves from the Romantic poets rejection of urban crowds, urban deprivation, and industrial squalor, through the Victorian poets avoidance of the city's reality, to the Decadent poets-the true inheritors of Romantic antiurbanism. The Decadents "sought to prove the ugly was beautiful", ⁵ and by this Romantic aesthetic influenced both the idealistic associations between poet and proletariat in the twentieth century and the general expectation that cities could be made new and good.

TERRITORIAL EXPANSION:

The emergence of the new nation, proud and self confident was furthered by a number of factors. National consciousness was fostered by the notable victories that the new republic won in the early years of the new century. The War with the Barbary States which first made American flag respected, and the naval victories of
1812, vastly increased American confidence and solidarity as a nation. There after, the Americans were not a mere confederation of States as in the Revolution, but a united people animated by a national spirit. There was expansion all around. The population was increasing, new territories were acquired, and more and more colonies were brought to the fold within the Federation. The Louisiana Purchase, and the acquisition of Florida doubled the American territory, and the population increased from five to seventeen millions. The vast Louisiana territory was cleared of hostile savages and settled with almost bewildering rapidity. It was a second era of the colonization, and it differed in some important respects from the first. The earlier Colonists were all foreigners, men who knew nothing of America, who had to win their slow way by experiment and failure. The neo-colonists were mostly Americans, men born and bred in the spirit of the ‘New World’ who carried the ideals of democracy as they carried their long rifles, wherever they went. The first colonists stood in awe of the vast mysterious forests that stood between them and the unknown West; they dreaded its hunger, its solitude its wild beasts and savages. The second generation colonists loved it, they rejoiced in its freedom, its teeming game, its wide, untrodden spaces; they saw in imagination a home by every spring where they quenched their thirst, a field of wheat or corn in every fertile glade, a town and a busy mill wherever a waterfall thundered its invitation. So they passed westward, ever westward, with the keen-eye and confidential step of men who were lords of the wilderness.
Indeed, the Great Forests, through which travel was both languorous and difficult, were one of the most important factors, which had kept the states divided and which had come in the way of national unity. But now this barrier was rapidly broken down. There was rapid and unprecedented expansion of means of communication. The federal highway, the network of canals and later on railroads, linked all sections of America and helped to bring together the industrial East and the grain and cattle-producing West. Manufacturing was vying with agriculture in importance and improved machinery gave great profit to those engaged in manufacture and commerce. Yankee ships, for a time, even rivaled those of Great Britain in establishing commercial contacts with China, India and other important trading centers of the world.

The United States, for example astonished the world by the pace and style of its railroad-building. Railroads were laid more speedily-and often more flimsily-than elsewhere, and the young United States fast outdistanced the world in railroad mileage. Foreign visitors, especially the British, marvelled at how American railroads stretched from ‘Nowhere in Particular to Nowhere -at All’. This was accomplished not in spite of -but because of-the “primitiveness” of the land. In half wild America, today’s technology did not have to compete with yesterday’s technology.
INDUSTRIALISATION:

The discovery of gold in California in 1848 resulted in an immediate rush of adventures and fortune – hunters to that part of the country. Those who did not go to it still dreamed of the “golden country.” While the North became rapidly industrialized, the South remained predominantly tobacco growing and cotton growing. But agriculture, too brought rich dividends. More and more Negroes were brought in as slaves, and thus were sown the seeds of the civil war between the North and the South, through which America would emerge as a nation more powerful, more united and more proud.

There was also unprecedented industrial, and educational expansion. In the beginning of the nineteenth century Americans were a nation of farmers and small traders, having no settled currency, bartering most of their products as in ancient times. In the few large centers, by courtesy called cities, there was a pleasant, neighborly kind of social life; but just outside the town limits stretched an immense country of field and forest. Suddenly, towns sprang up as if by magic; cities overflowed their borders; hundreds of mills and factories sprang up; money circulated freely and fleets of American ships were soon carrying American merchandise on every sea. With the increase of wealth came the growth of the cities and mental stimulus of social intercourse, the common school system of Pilgrim became a national policy; and forty years which saw the growth of eight hundred
mills saw also the establishment of unnumbered high schools, and of more than fifty colleges and higher institutions of learning.

With the speeding up of the manufacture there came up the commercial class which had great importance. Industrial prosperity, while raising the standard of living, also brought about a great differentiation of classes, especially in the East. In the West, where farming was still the chief interest, the cleavage was not so marked as in the East. The South: raised cotton and tobacco and was pre-occupied with agriculture and politics.

RISE OF AMERICAN DEMOCRACY:

Another important development of the early years of the century was the rise of the American democracy. The wind of revolt which blew over Europe and England, also swept America. The revolutionary writings of Rousseau and the other makers of the French Revolution and with its cry of "Liberty, Fraternity and Equality" inspired Americans also. In England there were the various Reform Acts, and the Romantic Revolt. The focus shifted from the state or society to the individual. There was widespread enthusiasm for the American experiment in popular Government and firm faith in its success. Host of immigrants came to America mainly from England and there was a huge Westward movement, and the establishment of new colonies (or states) by common man, based on the common principles of humanity.
TOWARDS URBANITY, TOWARDS MODERNITY....

Demographers have shown that for many people the movement of population from East to West was a movement from one city to another, and it was accompanied by a simultaneous movement throughout the nation from country to city. When the republic was founded, roughly nine out of ten Americans lived in a rural environment; by now that fraction is less than three out of ten. On this view of the past, the Americans, we can say a City-Building and City-Dwelling people, and so it would seem reasonable to expect the Americans high culture to 'reflect' that ostensible preference for an urban way of life.

To this conception of the American past it is necessary to add the received wisdom concerning the ancient and virtually timeless affinity between city life and the life of the mind. Cities, after all, are the places where scholars, artists, and writers naturally congregate. They do so because, for one thing, most of the vital institutions of mental production—universities, libraries, theaters, museums, galleries, publishers, printers—almost invariably have been located in cities. Cities are the places where ideas travel most quickly, where one can most readily become knowing or, so to say urbane. The origins of civilization itself are thought to have been closely bound up with the invention of settled agriculture and cities, and historians of early man often cite the relative size and prosperity of people's cities as a more or less reliable index of the level of culture to which it has attained.
The long history of cities as the environment most conducive to thought lends credence to the claim that city life has been held in special favour by most intellectuals in the West. More often than not, they have chosen urban settings for their literary accounts of utopia, and by the same token many influential thinkers from Socrates to Karl Marx have looked upon the countryside as a region of mindlessness, not to say idiocy. All of which would seem to justify the notion that the anti-urban motives that make them-selves felt in American literature, if that indeed in what they are, constitute a puzzle in need of explanation.

In the United States, where the phenomenon of rapid urbanization could be seen in its most extreme forms, Josiah Strong called the modern cities— with their proliferating social problems, their melting-pot of classes and races check by jowl, their social contrasts, their in bulk: mixture of expectation and disillusion, and their tentacular and mysterious growth— the centers of civilization. So they were civilization as culture, was what they both created and destroyed. Formal echoes of that proclaim are clear in the shape and shapelessness, making and unmaking of Modernist art. The cultural chaos bred by the populous, ever growing city, a contingent and polyglot; ‘Tower of Babel’, is enacted in similar contingency and plurality in the texts of modern writing, the design and form of modernist painting.

Within the great cities lay cosmopolitan villages of the arts, the bohemia’s and neighborhoods where the aesthetic function was pursued: Montparnasse, Soho, Green which village Roger Shattuck’s neat definition of the climate in his study of
French, avant Grade. The Bonquet years, is appropriate: he speaks of the cosmopolitan because they radiated influence and maintained contact, and it is largely because of this effectiveness of the communication and contact that modernism is an international movement. It depended considerably not only in the action in particular cities but on the readiness of writers to continue the journey to the city they had begun through many cities. So Gertrude Stein, moving from the USA to Paris in 1903, and then twenty years later becoming the great point of influence for a proceeding generation, linked the American novel and Cubism. Likewise, Strindberg moving south, linked Scandinavian drama to mid European Expressionism. Imagism was largely a derivative of expatriates Americans in London immediately before the war, as Dada was largely a derivative of expatriates from Germany and elsewhere in Zurich during it. In the 1920's Paris tended to become the Supra-City of Modernism drawing in Russian emigres, Dadaists from Zurich, and a whole generation of young American writers of experimental disposition. In a state of economic and moral collapse following the war it maintained the climate, the appropriately fluid but semi permanent cultural institutions, which young writers needed. Infact it became, both in its chaos and its continuity, the ideal cosmopolitan city, cultured, tolerant, feverish and active, radical but contained. To some extent with the Second World War, it was New York City that would inherit. But modernism was more than any one city: it was; “the distillation of many
capitals and nations, and many different intellectual and aesthetic endeavors and moods."\textsuperscript{6}

The problem of Modernism's social cultural and intellectual origins has generated a considerable amount of discussion, because Modernism, as a highly complex aesthetic tendency, has not been much given to a direct, realistic expression of the social and intellectual forces and conditions underlying it. According to Allan Bullock clearly "it is an art of a rapidly modernizing world, a world of rapid industrial development, advanced technology, urbanization, secularization and mass forms of social life."\textsuperscript{7} Clearly too, it is the art of world from which many traditional certainties had departed, and a certain sort of Victorian confidence not only in the onward progress of mankind but in the very solidity and visibility of reality itself has evaporated. It contains within itself that tendency, so apparent at the end of the nineteenth century, for knowledge to become both pluralistic and ambiguous, for surface certainties no longer to be taken on trust, for experience to outrun, as it seemed to many to be outtunning the orderly control of the mind.

This, in turn, suggests that Modernist might mean not only a new mode of mannerism in the arts, but a certain magnificent disaster for them. In short, experimentalism does not simply suggest the presence of sophistication, difficulty and novelty in art; it also suggests bleakness, darkness alienation, and disintegration. Indeed Modernism would seem to be point at which the idea of the
radical and innovating arts, the experimental, technical, aesthetic ideal that has been growing forward from Romanticism, reaches formal crisis, in which myth, structure and organization in a traditional sense collapse, and not only for formal reasons. If modernism is the imaginative power in the chamber of consciousness that, as James puts it, ‘converts the very pulses of the air into revelations, it is also often an awareness of contingency, as a disaster in the world time’ (qtd. Modernism-1890-1930 Malcarm Bradbury and James Mc Farlane, eds).

Seventy five million Americans welcomed the year 1900 with some doubt as to whether they were still in the nineteenth century or had left it behind them. For several years, in fact, there remained a large uncertainty as to what sort of new era was about to dawn. Gradually the dire suspicion grew that the twentieth century had come trailing clouds of bogus glory known as Victorianism. To ring out the old, indiscriminately and at once, became a fashionable concern which lasted well into the nineteen-twenties. When it was revealed what sort of newness had rushed into fill the void, there was less occasion for bells. But an increasing awareness of human predicaments gave rise to an extraordinary activity on the part of American writers.

A possible reason for the passionate urgency to discard the past may be discerned in the cultural development of the United States between the Civil War and the end of the century. It was the time of specious and premature flowering. Concentrations of wealth in the hands of industrialists, businessmen, and bankers
made possible a large surplus of leisure, if not for them then at least for their wives and children. At the same time a rapidly increasing proportion of the people were leaving the farms for the cities. The kindly neighborliness of the village could not be maintained in a shifting and highly competitive urban community, where standards of living were more and more affected by the influx of fresh arrivals from Europe. Nor could a simple personal morality suffice to meet the complex problems of an industrialized society. Thus native traditions, codes and standards soon became discredited. In the hope of recovering the certainties dimly associated with the past many Americans looked again to the old world. Perhaps the greater sophistication of long-established societies might hold an answer to their perplexities. They no longer went abroad to be Americanized, as Emerson had said, but to divest themselves as far as possible of their Americanism.

The ensuing invasion of Europe by American tourists has had no parallel in cultural history. For nearly half a century restless droves of pilgrims have journeyed across the Atlantic, not to transact business, not to study nor to visit friends, but merely to wander from place to place, inspecting historical sites, buildings, museums, galleries, and when all else failed, scenery, in a vague search for atmosphere or for release from tedium. They brought home to middle-class America a gloss of European manners and European styles of dress. Forms of architecture were borrowed wholesale from abroad. Paintings and objects of virtue were improved in quantity and displayed in private collections and public
museums. The literatures of England, France, Germany, Italy, and Spain were taught in American colleges and universities to the almost total neglect of native authors. In consequence the national culture lost connection with the vital physical, economic, and political forces of the country and became a rootless, imitative thing without stability. The ground was prepared for the widespread confusions and the collapse of standards that distinguished the early twentieth century from the previous era. Unlike more mature nations the United States had no deeply rooted confidence in its own cultural integrity.

While many Americans were enriching themselves with an acquired cosmopolitanism, there was less need for cultural expression at home. Nobody was concerned to ask, as Emerson had asked half a century before, why we too should not enjoy an original relation to the universe. Native talent in the arts either matured in obscurity as in the painting of Eakins and in the poems of Emily Dickinson, or was merged like Henry James' fiction in the general, current of internationalism. Society as exhibited at Newport, architecture as displayed in Fifth Avenue mansions, literature as encouraged by magazines that catered to intellectuals, lacked national tang. "The American mind seemed to be filled by a conglomerate of ingredients, mostly imported and imperfectly assimilated." If the business of intelligent criticism is "to be in touch with everything," (Aurthur Hobson Quinn, The Literature of the American People. 814) a practicing critic might have
felt that at least a little of everything was included in the ragbag of American
culture as the new country opened.

Jefferson’s fear of the European city was shared by a number of major
American writers. “In Bravo” (1831), James Fenimore Cooper (1789–1851)
depicted Venice as a center of intrigue and corruption; Herman Melville (1819–91)
would describe a heartless London in Red Burn (1849), and Nathaniel Hawthorne
(1804–64) saw modern Rome beyond redemption the Marble Faun (1860). If the
American city were to thrive, there had to be a break with the European past, the
creation of a new urban reality. But the vision was conflicted from outset. All of
these authors had serious reservations about the nature of city living. A city was a
city, whether in Europe or America, and American cities were already beginning to
show similarities to their European counterparts. Jefferson’s was a failed vision of
what America might have became—a vision that dominated the literary imagination
of the modern. Henry Adams wrote a nine-volume history of the Jefferson’s
administration. Ezra Pound saw Jefferson as the last hope of America. F.Scott
Fitzgerald set his idealized America in the realm before the city—that is in the world
of Jefferson. John Dos Passes wrote three books of idealizing Jefferson. Faulkner
centered his fallen, fictional world in a Mississippi town called Jefferson, and as a
number of critics have suggested—Frank Lloyd Wright’s organic sense of
architecture owned much to Jefferson.”9
The changes that took place in America between the Civil War and the First World War were remarkable both for their completeness and for their rapidity. Institutions, systems of belief, ideological and social assumptions, ways of feeling at home in the world-in short, the whole scene of human endeavor and thought—that had existed, as Henry Adams said, since the Middle Ages, now passed away during this fifty-year period. Confusion, resulting from feelings of personal alienation amid the loss of social stability, became more and more apparent, particularly in the autobiographies that proliferated at the century’s end.

The alienation and stress found outward expression in the 1960 in the USA. Edith Wharton felt the pain alienation perhaps more deeply than any other of Theodore Dreiser's contemporaries. In many ways Mrs. Wharton’s and Drieser’s personal senses of isolation are so similar that it will be wise to hold off speaking further of Dreiser’s autobiographical works, “A Book About Myself” and the others, until we can examine Wharton’s “A Backward Glance.” These two writers—whose subject matter is so different—both wrote naturalistic novels derived from the similar collective, American, and personal experiences which they shared. Like Dreiser, Edith Wharton lived most of her life in a kind of essential solitude. Inheriting a secure social position, she was nevertheless personally so shy that she terrorized many people by her protective, imperiously cold aloofness. In her second kind of novel not the natural, but the ‘human things’ of a hallow society are so devoid of meaning that the individual drifts aimlessly among them. People are
defined by their cloths or houses; they are spoken of, usually, in terms of the machine culture that they mentally exemplify, as “a screw or a cog in the great machine”. One of his characters, Judy Trenor, is “suggestive, with her glaring good-looks, of a Jeweler’s window lit by electricity”. Another, Mrs. Spragg, resembles “a wax figure in a show-window”. (Edith Wharton).

In the midst of the society filled with human automata, Mrs. Wharton sets seekers after human fulfillment;

Here she writes a picaresque novel of manners in which the individual seeks satisfaction in collectives as far apart as vulgar parvenu-parties and “republic of the spirit”. Again and Again, however, he is alienated by the indifference of emptiness of society; he can find no satisfying way of penetrating social things, and so wanders vaguely across the changing surface of society.

Dreiser's “A Book About Myself” is an account of his growing understanding of the actualities of metropolitan existence. By learning how to report the news of the city he understands how to dispel its myths. He comes to recognize “the pagan or unmoral character (of reporting), as contrasted with the heavy religionistic and moralistic point of view seemingly prevailing in the editorial office proper.” In the city newsroom, he wrote, “The mask was off.” (Dreiser intended to treat is literary career, in a “Literary Apprenticeship and Literary Experiences”, both incomplete and unpublished at the time of his death). His newspaper work thus comes to
symbolize the stripping away of social, political and economic myths in the pursuit of personal truth.

His progress, in the course of 'A Book About Myself' from paper to paper, city to city, then represents an intellectual progress where by the stumbles toward truth. Not Dreiser alone, but several of his contemporaries had found their imaginations stimulated by this abrupt revelation of the gulf between the ideal and the real. Mark Twain, Howells, Bierce, Hart Crane, and Harold Frederic all were touched and moved by the disillusioning experience of the city room. In this sense, Dreiser makes his increasing awareness representative of a significant aspect of the American imagination

'The Gilded Age' also exposed political corruption in the national capital, where votes were bought and sold. Henry Adams [p.1053] in his novel "Democracy" [1880] turned a censorious eye on similar political phenomena. He portrays a distinguished United States senator, the leader of his party, who accepted a bribe of $100,000. His reasons were good "Political" one's, but they did not satisfy Adams heroine, whose break with the senator parallels Adams own withdrawal from the corrupt politics of 'The Gilded Age'. But Adams remained a fascinated observer and refused to surrender his belief in democracy despite it's current evil manifestations. "I grant it is an experiment", he said through one of the characters in the novel, "but it is the only direction society can take that is worth it's taking... Every other possible step is backward."
The writers not long content with a general censure of materialism and political corruption. Growing ills awakened the social conscience and called forth specific indictments which became increasingly prominent in the literature of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Prepared by his own experience on an Iowa farm and indoctrinated in the economic theories of Henry George, 'Hamlin Garland' in Main Traveling Roads' [p.943] exposed, with strong emotional appeal, the hardships and injustices suffered by the farmers in the Iowa Wisconsin country. An angry and anger rousing book, “Main Traveled Roads” suggests the gathering strength of the populist Movement and helps explain the spectacular rise of William Jennings Bryan in 1896. An important phase in the history of the railroads exploitation of the farmer is presented in Frank Norris ‘The Octopus’ [p.975], which powerfully portrays the struggle between the Southern Pacific Railroad (‘The Octopus’) and the wheat farmers of California. The triumphant force is neither the railroad nor the farmers, but the wheat, which Norris represents in both “The Octopus” (1901) and “The Pit” (1903) as more powerful than anyman or combination of men.

With the opening of the new century, the exposure of injustices and abuses in the national life became the more popular of literary subjects. In politics, the, 1900’s were the era of Theodore Roosevelt’s progressivism and “trustbusting”, in literature, the ear of the ‘Muckrakers’. Literature was dedicated to the expose, and scores of books revealed all sorts of malpractices to an indignant public. Perhaps
the greatest of the muckraking books was Upton Sinclair’s “The Jungle” which dealt graphically with the life of Lithuanian immigrant employed in the stockyards. The sturdy young man is gradually broken, and his family completely ruined, by the inhuman cruelties of the Stockyards. The book’s exposure of insanitary practices in the processing of meat undoubtedly hastened the enactment of the Pure Food and Drugs Act.

The leader among Muckrakers was Lincoln Steffens, whose “Shame of the Cities” brought to a focus the problems created by the sudden emergence of great urban communities and contributed to the movement for municipal reform. Steffens book drew attention to the corruption in city government and attempted to fix the blame on certain prominent citizens. The growing problems of the ‘Big City’ had been noticed before Steffens and were to be further exposed after his notable book. As early as 1890 William Dean Howells (p.888) had exhibited, somewhat conservatively, the crime and squalor of New York city in “A Hazard of New Fortunes” (p.896).

Less conservatively, Stephen Crane’s Maggie: ‘A Girl in the Streets’ (1893) exposed the ugly life of New York’s Bowery. In ‘Sister Carrie’ (1900) and ‘Jennie Gerhardt’ (1911) Theodore Dreiser told affectingly of the hard lot of the underpaid working girl in the big cities of the Middle West. Henry Black Fuller in ‘The Cliff Dwellers’ (1893) and Robert Herrick in “The Common Lot” (1904) underscored the degrading effect on Chicago’s social life of greed and cutthroat
competition. Possibly the apogee of the literary attack on the Big City as a monster of corruption and vice was reached in David Graham Phillip's Susan Lenox (1917), whose heroine encounters (and miraculously survives) nearly all the evils of modern Babylons.

The most prominent and commanding figure in the new industrial scene was the captain of industry. The years following the Civil War saw the amassing of unprecedented private fortunes. Financiers like Jay Cooke, the first great American banker; John D. Rockefeller, the oil king; Andrew Carnegie, monopolist of iron and steel; and Jay Gould, Commodore Vanderbilt, and Collis P. Huntington, railroad magnets, became the real ruler of America. The reputations of these great entrepreneurs are now tarnished, their money was often acquired unethically, and they have been called with a good deal of justice, the "robber barons".

The naturalistic techniques which James and Howells had developed and sponsored in fiction were used by the muckrakers, then to make vivid and sensational their portrayals of metropolitan degradation. But if James, Howells, Norris, and Crane had revealed metropolitan evil, they had also seen in the city a rich and various metaphor of human experience. In the later nineteenth century it was they who continued the tradition which includes Franklin, Melville (Pierre and Reburn), Nathaniel Hawthorn (The Marble Faun), R.W. Emerson, and Poe—where in the city is portrayed as the principle not merely of exchange, but of change, for
good or evil, in the social and personal orders. Man is involved in and tested by his capacity to meet, adjust to, or sometimes alter urban change.

"If I were to preach any doctrine to the world", Theodore Dressier began a philosophical easy, "it would be love of change, or at least lack of fear of it". (A Book of the Mystery and Wonder and Terror of Life: New York, 1920). With little intention to reveal or reform, these writers kept their visions open to the varieties of urban experience. For all these writers, the city provided the context and possibility for both good and evil. In it they set characters who richly demonstrated their capacities for both. Accepting the city was a fact, these writers transformed it into a fiction, and so provided the means whereby their contemporaries might adjust themselves to the conditions and opportunities of metropolitan regionalism.

If the muckrakers explored the documentation of life in the city, it was the literary tradition of Howells, James, Crane, and Norris that created metropolitan poetry. But from 1905 to 1912, with Stephen Crane and Frank Norris dead and Howells and James ignored, the muckrakes, cornered the techniques of literary naturalism, to polarize good and evil, the simple and complex, the country and the city. They thus offered placebos for America’s fears and frustrations. Momentarily they severed the tradition of American adjustment to the city.

Despite the overwhelming ascendancy of the muckrakers, a faint line of the naturalistic absorption of the new patterns of metropolitan life ran from Howells to Henry Blake Fuller, expanded in Norris Mc Teague (1899), and emerged in the
twentieth century with Dreiser’s ‘Sister Carrie’ (1990). Fuller did not begin as a naturalist. His first novel, The Chevalier of Pensieri Vain (1890), Written out of his Italian travels and his love of the medieval, was warmly received in autumnal Boston by Charles Eliot Norton, James Russell Lowell (who had similarly established Howells with his review of Venetian Life), and by Howells himself.

In 1893, however, Fuller abruptly abandoned the medieval revival just then gaining momentum in New England, and, in ‘The Cliff-Dwellers,’ perceptively analyzed the imperial myths spawned by the Chicago metropolis. There is reason to believe that Fullers, interests were deflected in that year from recrudescent Europe to contemporary Chicago by the World’s Columbia Exposition. Indeed, he had written several articles for the “Chicago Record” on “World’s Fair Architecture”, “Mural Painting”, and similar subjects recognizing in the invasion of Chicago by Europe or reverse of James trans atlantic theme. In “The Cliff-Dwellers” Fuller shows conclusively how completely the city had come to embody American hopes for the future. The tall buildings by Root, Holabird and Roche, and Sullivan that had created “Chicago Architecture” served Fuller as his central symbol. In The Clifton, the skyscraper wherein the various fortunes of the Cliff Dweller are enacted, Fuller summarized the city’s ruthless and impersonal but energetic forcefulness. Although the Easterner satirizes the brash self-assertion of Chicago—“I see, if you can only be big you don’t mind being dirty”—the Chicagoan
believes that his city will “give to country the final blend of the American character and its ultimate metropolis”.

This “ultimate metropolis,” as Fuller shows it, has elicited a myth of hope and satisfaction as strong as the agrarian, regional, or utopian myths with which it contended for a place in the American imagination. The city summons faithful commitment. “To the Chicagoan”, Fuller writes... “The name of the town, in its formal, ceremonial use has a power that no other word in the language quite possesses. It is a Shibboleth, as regards its pronunciation; it is a trumpet call, as regards its effect. It has all the electrifying and unifying power of a college yell”.

In 1928 Theodore Dreiser wrote: “I find the usually well-informed H. G. Walls speaking of Stephen Crane as not only the pioneer but the most brilliant of all the early realists of this generation. Stuff and nonsense! Crane was not the pioneer not even the equal in any sense of the man who led the van of realism in America. That honor—if any American will admit it to be such—goes to Henry B. Fullers of Chicago, who (wrote, in) “With the Procession”, as sound and agreeable a piece of American realism as that decade, or any since, produced.¹⁰

‘With The Procession’ (1895), studies the overwhelming drive in the metropolis to maintain economic and social pace, and thus violently to accelerate change. Again Fuller uses the skyscraper as his chief symbol. David Marshall, an early settler and symbol of frontier Chicago, is persuaded to build a new office building and a new house. When both his business and personal hopes crumble,
Marshall, unable to keep up with the procession, dies. But at the same time, the involvement of others in the procession of force raises them to new types of heroism. Fuller’s view is essentially paradoxical, much like Henry Adam’s. The dynamo that destroys the old also creates a new and in its own way, better order of man.

Frank Norris more spectacularly continued, though only briefly, the Howells tradition. Mc Teague (1899) began in 1892, while Norris was attending the University of California at Berkeley, originated in his studies of the San Francisco poor. Uninterested in Zola or the impressionists when he was an art student in Paris, and still writing romantic poetry after his return to America, Norris now felt the influence of the naturalism inherent in American life. After he had completed and final three chapters in the Sierras in 1897, he again returned east and became a staff writer for Mc Clure’s. Working in the same office with Tarball, Stiffens, and Baker, he remained hardly touched by the muckraking stereotypes (Mc Teague Letters p.23) emphasizing always the fictional possibilities of experience, he wrote to one critic of the forthcoming MC Teague—which he was then calling “The People of Polk Street”.”I have great faith in the possibilities of San Francisco and the Pacific Coast as offering a field for fiction. Not the fiction of Bret Harte, however, for the country has long since outgrown the “red shirt” period. The novel of California must be now a novel of city life”(Mc Teague Letters p.23). The city life fills Mc Teague. In Mc Teague’s daylong observation of the changing scene on
Polk Street, Norris suggests the fluctuating varieties of mixed metropolitan life. Particularly in his vivid evocation of metropolitan odors, Norris delineates the specific surface of urban life.

Norris's San Francisco anticipates Eliot's London of the "Preludes" by two decades. Through the odors and other sense-impressions of scraps and fragments of the city, Norris conveys sensuously the character of Mc Teague's city—or an city; for, as he wrote, although the novel is set in San Francisco, "it could have happened in any big city, anywhere". (Mc Teague. Letters.30). He learned from Zola and Balzac, but also from his own life in several cities, that the metropolis is properly defined not by the romantic curiosities it contains—as David and O. Henry would define it—but by its abundant embodiment of mass, surface life, which agitates (and finally dulls) man's senses.

Using the violent animal imagery of all the Darwinian struggle, then, Norris associates it with the rise to dominance—symbolized by gold—in the achievement of success. Dramatizing the social Darwinist's absorption of the principles of biological into social patterns, he reveals the brutality and injustice of the assumptions underlying social Darwinism. Nonetheless, Norris remained essentially committed to city and city life. His next novel, Blix, appearing in the same year as Mc Teague, provides his affirmation of the smiling aspects of urban life, and so serves as an appropriate counterbalance to Mc Teague. Less than a decade after Turner announced the closing of the Frontier, Norris declared that trade, and thus
the spread of cities, already constituted the ‘New Frontier’. Portraying the
diversity and varying, possibilities of city life, Norris was beginning to modify the
structure of Howell’s National novel by giving it a focus not in travel, but in an
elucidation of the multiform character of a metropolis. “I have traveled much in
Walden”. Thoreau wrote. A whole generation was now discovering that in a literal
sense they could travel much in the cities that the new shape of America provided.

To be sure, Turner himself called, in 1925, for “an urban reinterpretation of
our history”, a fact too often forgotten. At his death he was planning an essay to be
entitled “The Significance of the City in American Civilization”. (Selected Essays
of Fredrick Jackson Turner, ed. Ray Allen Billington, pp .x.). Theodore Dreiser,
who resigned from the staff of the Broadway Magazine when editorial policy began
to emphasize the muckraking formula, intuitively rejected its single minded stress,
as the shame of cities. “A Big City” he wrote in 1914, “is not a little teacup to be
seasoned by old maids... Removing all the stumbling stones of life, putting to flight
all the evils of vice and greed, and all that, makes our little path a monotones
journey”12. He himself had arrived in New York “Very much afraid”, just at the
same time that Steffens was beginning his exposes of municipal corruption and
while James Gibbons Huneker, on the other hand, was beginning to hope New York
might rival the cities of Europe as an artistic center. But, as F. O. Mattheiessen has
remarked, Drieser came to neither Steffen’s nor Hunker’s New York, but to his
song writing brother Paul Dresser’s “city of actors and sports, the Broadway of the
Martinique and Metropolis, of Muldoon the famous wrestler and Tod Sloan the Jockey, of Tony Pastor's and Niblo's and Weber and Fields. In this New York he found what he had found earlier in the white city of Chicago—illusion. Stirring vague emotions of wonders hoop, and fear, betraying and perpetually changing, the city was above all—in one of Dreiser's favorite images—an Arabian night's enchantment, illusory and ultimately deceptive. In their inarticulate ineptitude in the face of the metropolis his characters render the tragedy—but also the romance of the city, for whose immensity and impenetrability they can find no words. "Woe to him who places his faith in illusion", Dreiser wrote—"and woe to him who does not. In one way lies disillusion with its pain, in the other way regret". Carrie, Jennie Gerhardt (of Jennie Gerhardt), Cowperwood (The Financier, the Titan, and The Stoic), Eugene Wilta (of The Genius), and Clyde Griffiths (of An American Tragedy) are all caught and defeated by a web of urban illusion.

"Life is a complete illusion or mirage which changes and so escapes and chides one at every point". Dreiser used as his working title for the story of Clyde the single word: Mirage. (Matthiessen, Theodore Dreiser, p.185).

But all gain stature and remain important to us by virtue of the readiness and power with which they embrace the illusions that, although ultimately defeating, are momentarily comforting and even ennobling.
THE CULTURAL GROWTH OF THE CITY:

Between the wars city life-and, of course, the mind it fostered-came to dominate American experience. Like the increase in wealth, the city created new aspirations and new ways of satisfying them. Both helped to shape the new, widened consciousness of the age. Nowhere more than in the city were the contrasts between poverty and wealth so appalling; but nowhere else did they hold such fascination. Particularly in America, where man, in the tradition of Thomas Jefferson, R.W. Emerson and Walt Whitman, conceived of American destiny in terms of the regenerative frontier, the city symbolized as seemed to embody evil.

*Emerson continues to say, the civilized man has built a coach, but has lost the use of his feet. He is supported on crutches, but lacks so much support of muscle. He has a fine Geneva watch, but he fails of the skill to tell the hour by the sun. A Greenwich nautical, almanac he has, and so being sure of the information when he wants it, the man in the street does not know a star in the sky. The solstice he does not observe, the equinox he knows as little; and the whole bright calendar of the great is without a dial in his mind. His note book impair his memory; his libraries overload his wit, the insurance office increases the number of accidents; and it may be a question whether machinery does not encumber; whether we have not lost by refinement some energy, by a Christianity, entrenched in establishments and forms, some vigor of wild virtue. For every stoic was a stoic; but in Christendom where is the Christian?*
As Walt Whitman remarks- “Their will soon be no more priests, their work is
done. They may wait a while, perhaps a generation or two… dropping off by
degrees. A superior breed shall take their place… the gangs of cosmos and prophets
enmasse shall take their place. A new order shall arise and they shall be the priests
of man, and every-man shall be his own priest. The churches built under their
umbrage shall be the churches of men and women. Through the divinity of
themselves shall the kosmos and the new breed of the poets be interpreters of men
and women and of all events and things. They shall find their inspiration in real
objects to-day, symptoms of the past and future, they shall not deign to defend
immortality or God or the perfection of things or liberty or the exquisite beauty and
reality of the soul. They shall arise in America and be responded to form the
remainder of the earth.

In Christian literature, from Dante’s ‘Inferno’ to Banyan’s ‘Vanity Fair,’ hell
was conventionally represented as a crowded city. But if the city represented
something evil for the American, he seemed to feel as well, like Baudelaire at about
the same time, that it offered more intense opportunities for human life than
possible anywhere else. Both were seeing, as a later American, T. S. Eliot, would
interpret Baudelair’s thought, that “It is better, in a paradoxical way, to do evil
than to do nothing; at least, we exist”.15

T. S. Eliot’s Wasteland offered the possibility of regeneration. Americans
were willing to face evil that they might experience good. Between the wars, while
the rural population of America was doubling, urban dwellers multiplied seven times. From a country that was essentially still agrarian in 1865 and, indeed, still contained large unsettled areas, America became, by 1914, bound to cities and city needs. By the time of the First World War, only about 30 percent of Americans were involved in agriculture. While American were still conceiving of the middle West as an aspect of the frontier, Ohio and Illinois had over a hundred towns and cities, including some of the largest in the country. Even in Missouri and Minnesota, three out of every ten inhabitants were townsfolk.16

Clearly, Americans needed to absorb the city into their consciousness-to accommodate and perhaps compromise, their predilections toward the image of the frontier, with all that this implied, to the actualities of city living. As early as 1870, a critic of American manners noted that “city folks” were the “heroes and heroines”17 of the time. The Americans who were uneasy, all through the period, as Arthur. Schlesinger has said, have found with the city, “all those impulses and movements which made for a finer, more humane civilization, including education, literature, science, invention, the fine arts, social reform, public hygiene, (and) the use of leisure”.18 Cities were the first and most often the last-stop of the waves of immigrants that came to America’s shores following the Civil War. Before the war the immigrant was able to adjust to the patterns of rural society with little difficulty. But in the city the problems of adjustment between immigrant and native were more and more intensified. Whitman’s multitudinous ‘Leaves of Grass’ and the
'Pequod' of Melville's 'Moby Dick' with its English, Dutch, Irish, Portuguese, Sicilian, Danish, Spanish, Negro, and Oriental sailor had been prophetic of this varied America. Chronicling the march of triumphant democracy in 1885, Andrew Carnegie counted nearly a thousand foreign-language newspapers in the United States. By 1890 a third of all Bostonians were of foreign birth. New York held as many Germans as Hamburg, twice as many Irish and Dublin, and two-and-a half times as many Jews as Warsaw: it was the greatest immigrant center in the world, with four of every five residents of foreign birth or parentage. (Andrew Carnegie, 72-3).

Muckrakers like Jacob Riis and novelists like Stephen Crane vividly portrayed them. It is true that the new comer to the city was not quite so easily assimilated into American life. But immigrants were able, to learn the less obvious patterns of city life almost as readily. It is true as well that the immigrant had in turn decided effects upon the American character. He too, for good or evil, was a force for change. While immigration Restriction Leagues, publicized by Thomas Bailey Aldrich and Henry Cabot Lodge, were lamenting the loss of homogeneity and promulgating a myth of Anglo-Saxon supremacy, immigrants, who for their part, brought with them hopes for a better life, constantly refreshed and revitalized the American optimism. The immigrant, who had long used America as a symbol of the Promised Land, helped to produce, as much as the Frontier, the American

Rapidly increasing wealth, the rise of the city, expanding immigration, a widened spirit of reform, mass education, a new scientific point of view, and the acceptance of technology as the American way of life—these were the interests that modified contradicted, or merged with each other in American culture during the period between the wars. So rapid and wholesale were the changes that these made in American culture that the mind found it difficult to accommodate them. As Henry Adams puts this in his “Education” (1918)—one of the books depicting the impact of change upon a nineteenth century man—in 1865 he was living in a twentieth century world with eighteenth century assumptions about order and purpose in change. Man had to make his beliefs about his world anew, to accommodate his new circumstances. Certainly the old orders of American culture were dissolving. Although the Civil War did not bring out these changes—they had already begun—it did help to accelerate them, and thus for many stood as a symbol of the division between the New and the Old. In a lecture Emerson gave during the early stages of the War, he noted how consciousness tends to break down at critical moments:

“All arts disappear in the one art of war. All which makes the social tone of Europe milder and sweeter than the miner’s hut, and the lumberer’s camp in America; the ages of culture behind; traditional skills and slow secular adjustment
of talent and position, the cumulative outward movement, the potency of experience, is destroyed; and the uncouth, forked nasty savage stands on the charred desert to begin his first fight with wolf and snake, and build his dismal shanty on the sand”. (Emerson’s lecture).

So, similarly, “Freud would later say, in times of crisis in a culture—not only of war, but of any variety of critical change—men tend to seek refuge in the past, in various forms of utopianism, or in psychic withdrawal. In short, there is a wholesale collective retreat from the systematization of consciousness”. 20

American writers, as men needing to deal with an ordered mind, were thus committed during this period to the absorption of the new conditions of culture into a systematized consciousness. They were obliged not to experiment for the sake merely of a delight in aesthetic advance, but in order to make a literature that could truly reflect the actualities by which they and their fellows lived. Emily Dickinson, Howells, James, Mark Twain, Theodore Dreiser—all were, deeply experimental writers, endeavoring to give shape, through imagination, to their chaotic new America. They were the servant examples of their race. During this period, then, it was through American writers that the American consciousness was preserved and slowly began to evolve.

Gertrude Stein explained in 1918 to the French that ‘America was the oldest country in the world because it entered the twentieth century in the 1880’s, and ahead of all the other nations’. 21 Even earlier, beginning after Civil War, the new
circumstances that would make twentieth-century American were entering the life of the nation, even while men were acting on their simplistic eighteenth century educations. The human environment was altering drastically; its earlier unity shattered, it was providing the materials for Adam’s study of twentieth century multiplicity. Perhaps the confusingly encyclopedic case of Benjamin R. J. Tucker was the archetypal experience of the age. By the age of eighteen, he says, having read Drawin, Spencer, Mill and Tyndall, he had been successively “an atheistic, a materialist, an evolutionist, a prohibitionist, a free trader, a champion of the legal eight hour day, a woman suffragist, an enemy of marriage, and a believer in sexual freedom”.  

Erich Kahler has spoken of the unique character of the modern world as a crowding of events in the domain of our vision and consciousness, an oppressive closeness and overwhelming shiftiness of events, an excess of details and complexities in every single event-in short, what I would call an overpopulation of the surfaces.  

Out of contrast and contradiction the daily lives are shaped. This overpopulation of surface experience first began seriously to transform America after the Civil War. The new demands of the machine, the city, and widened knowledge resulted, on the one hand, in and insensitivity to conflicting values, and, on the other, in a new sensibility consisting of a receptivity to fact and detail. The decline of the traditional value governed the mind, that is, was accompanied by the
corresponding growth of a peripheral mind open to a torrential rush of experiences precisely because it no longer discriminates among them. The American mind had been violated and transformed by knowledge—Not of good and evil, but of a world that was for the first time photographed, measured, explored, described, analyzed, and counted. "We mostly put faith in our statisticians," Lowell wrote in 1886, while the older "celestial computations are gone some what out of fashion."²⁴ Like Melville in "Battle Pieces", the writers of the age responded or reacted to the increased rush of objective experience rather than to "celestial computation". In understanding the opportunities that the fragmentation of the modern mind offered them to reshape it, give it a new and more fruitful order, American writers of the later nineteenth century began to create the twentieth-century mind. Beginning with a consciousness opened by knowledge and incredibly widened; they deepened and justified man's new view of the world. In the evolution of the consciousness of modern man as American, they were the finders and makers.

Joseph Hudnut, a recent analyst of modern city life, has made clear that modern man is city-dweller, not essentially from economic necessity or for metropolitan pleasures; but by a hunger which transcends both practical and sensuous experience, a hunger seldom revealed by appearances, seldom acknowledged in our consciousness. We are held in the city by our need of a collective life; by our need of belonging and sharing; by our need of that direction and frame, which our individual lives gain from a larger life lived
together. There are city habits and city thoughts, city moralities and loyalties, city harmonies of valuations which surround us in cities with an authority and system which, whatever may be the turmoil in which they exist, are yet friendly to the human spirit and essential to its well being. Beneath the visible city........ there lies an invisible city laid out in patterns of idea and behavior, which channels the citizen with silent persistent pressures and, beneath the confusion, noise, and struggle of the material and visible city, makes itself known and reconciles us to all of these. 25(Joseph Hudnut.Architecture and the Spirit of Man. 159-60).

Such satisfactions as the city would offer for the twentieth century American were brought into question in the late ninetieth century by the reformer’s emphasis on the “Shame of Cities” and the agrarian’s insistence that true virtue resided only in nature. The earlier and wiser recognition, by Americans from John Adams and Franklin to Emerson and Hawthorne, that the American identity was eradicably marked by metropolitanism, was threatened by these stereotypes of urban worthlessness. The beneficence of the invisible city was submerged by the insistence on the evils of the material metropolis. It is certainly true, as Ralph Ellison has brilliantly shown in his novel Invisible Man (1952), that the Individual can be made invisible by the mass collective life of the modern city. But he may be invisible anywhere. The new architecture of urban expansion, monumental demonstrations like that in the Colombian exposition of the connection between the
city and civilization, the paintings of John Sloan and his followers (Glackens illustrated Dreiser's 'A Traveler at Forty'), and city planners like Fredrick Law Olmsted have all proved that the value of the invisible city is to help man to be visible again by reviewing himself. But it was chiefly by the writers who have been discussed here, that a vital sense of the uses of the city was preserved, enlarged, and transmitted.

Using the techniques of literary realism, they stripped away the economic struggle and blase pleasures of metropolitan life to reveal beneath these, the permanently satisfying nature of the invisible city. Unwilling to be trapped by the extreme alternatives of progress or poverty, they knew and showed that these were not exclusive, and were hardly the basic choices of modern man.

**GRAFFITI WRITINGS (Poetry on City Walls)**

Graffiti Writings, which is the modern form of poetry, it is also the poor man's art (poem) on the city walls. Graffiti writers are marginal writers- poets of lesser consequences who feel the pains and write the Graffiti on the wall. They want to build cities to human scales. For as long as people have been able to write they have been writing on walls. The Romans wrote on the buildings of the towns they conquered, and even before words were used, the cave man painted on walls. This writing was first called graffiti in Roman times and holds the same name now. But as the times have changed, so have the forms that these writings on the walls have taken. Today, there is the gang graffiti that street gangs use to mark their turf,
graffiti that people write to express political views and a new form of graffiti that has just emerged. This new form is artistic graffiti. Artistic graffiti is a modern day offspring of traditional graffiti that has elevated itself from just scrawling words or phrases on a wall, to a complex artistic form of personal expression. This new form of graffiti first took form in the inner city of New York. It started with people writing their names and street numbers on public buildings, street signs or more commonly public transportation. These graffiti artists started experimenting with different styles, colors and mediums. Soon this new form of graffiti blossomed into intricate artistic works. Contemporary graffiti involves much more than just a spur of the movement defacement; it is now a skillful display from each particular graffiti artist. At first, the New York citizens were amazed when a train rolled past with huge colorful spray painted work on it. The first reaction of the liberal New York public was to take pictures of this art work.

For a while, this graffiti was tolerated in New York by the law and the public which helped spread this novel form of graffiti to other cities. Artistic graffiti grew by leaps and bounds as younger aspiring graffiti artists became attracted to this mode of artistic expression. The majority of graffiti artists were young boys from the city looking for some way to express themselves; painting graffiti became an artistic form of rebellion. Eager to show everyone their artistic skills and earn respect from other graffiti artists, this new generation of graffiti artists enlarged the
circle of people who did artistic graffiti to include all sorts of races and economic classes.

As modern artistic graffiti expanded, a graffiti subculture filled with young artists emerged. This subculture became fused with a rising music culture now known as hip-hop. This connection came about mainly because hip-hop started in New York about the same time as modern graffiti took root, hence many people were involved in both areas.

Unfortunately, artistic graffiti grew to a point where it invaded personal property. Graffiti artists had to compete for space, and it inevitably offended property owners. This combined with the common misconception that all graffiti represented gang activity led to community pressure on politicians. These politicians responded by ordering police pressure and other measures on graffiti writers. New York led the way with such constraints and other cities followed suit. Most politicians saw this problem as much easier to solve than a drug or gang problem. They realized that most graffiti writers are young and don’t have the same resources as a gang might. Also the effects of graffiti can be painted over, while the effects of a drug problem take much more effort to “erase”.

Instead of trying to work with the youth who are doing the graffiti, the various politicians have taken the classic stance and declared war on graffiti writers. This approach is out-dated and accomplishes little as far as fixing the problems that motivate these kids to do graffiti in the first place. This strategy only breeds
resentment from the youth who perpetuate these crimes. The fines, imprisonment and police tactics against graffiti writers continue to escalate as the law proceeds with its attack on graffiti. This reaction has come to a point where the police in many cities have formed special task forces in an attempt to trap graffiti writers. Various bans to the sale and possession of markers and spray paint have also been implemented. In some cases, the penalties for having a Can of spray paint can be equal to the penalties for possessing a handgun.

At the advent of artistic graffiti, it was a new and accepted art form. Since then, the public outlook on graffiti has been changed greatly. This change occurred mainly because of reports to the public which equated artistic graffiti with gang graffiti. Soon people became scared whenever they saw any form of affiliation which contributed to community pressure against graffiti.

It is unfortunate that artistic graffiti has been given such a negative undertone. The positive conceptions of this form of graffiti would be restored if the public were more knowledgeable of what this graffiti really consisted of. This creative outlet for many people would be more accepted, and graffiti artists would have better chance of achieving something beyond their neighborhoods if only the public perception of graffiti is changed.

It is fitting to use the definition of “graffiti” as provided by ‘The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language’ when examining the word’s etymology, For it was in America that the modern day graffiti we are concerned
with in this study originated. The word is derived from the Italian, "graffito", a scratching or a scribbling, and according to the AHD, is probably from vulgar Latin 'graphire' to write with a stylus, from the Greek "grapheion" to write. As the word's origin suggests, the action of writing or scratching letters into a surface has been around for a very long time.

Killian Tobian's first declaratory statement in his article 'A Modern Perspective on Graffiti' is as follows. "For as long as people have been able to write, they have been writing on walls."27

Similarly, Kevin Element's article opens with the statement that "Since the dawn of early man, public walls have been used as the prime surface of the creation and communication of ideas".28

The ancient practice of writing on walls is discussed in depth by Cavan in her Ph. D. Thesis of 1995. "People do not go to the ancient city of Pompeii and say 'Look at all that graffiti. This place is a mess', She states. "Instead they view the copious graffiti on the walls of that place as a normal feature of the landscape."29

New York is often seen as the ultimate metropolis; vast, densely populated and demographically extremely diverse, it has always been a place where contact with very different people is given. Be it on the busy subway systems or in the street, residents from various classes, races and backgrounds have been in contact with and in sight of each other for centuries. "The progressive Era saw the city
become even more polyglot and cosmopolitan as European immigrants began to flood into the city looking for better opportunities work, and a new start.30 This influx of new ideas, new cultures and new attitudes was to become the defining characteristic of the city in later decade, as it came to be seen as a place where any person, regardless of ethnicity; sexuality, religious belief or proclivity could find a group of like-minded people.

When graffiti first emerged in New York it was written by the poor and working class youth’s of densely populated urban neighborhoods. Sarah Giller Claims that it was “African American and Puerto Rican youth”31 that began to write on urban walls and surfaces, but this racial profile is not necessarily borne out by other studies and research in this area. Henry Chalfant, who made the seminal racial and intercultural. “It was a whole cross section of New York’s immigrant cultures... It crossed classes.”32 His comment is reinforced by the producer of the film. Tony silver who states, middle class Jewish and Italian kids.”33

This tends to disrupt notions that hip-hop, and especially graffiti is made up of poor, marginalized groups of urban youth. Certainly black and Latino youth had a large presence in the subculture at its inception, but to claim they were the sole driving force behind graffiti is to reduce the practice to one dominated by class and race, when this is not the whole picture. In Australia, and in particularly Sydney, it is possible to find a whole cross section of social strata and racial groups in the graffiti subculture. Working class, middle class and upper class youth write; as do
white, Arabian, Asian, Mediterranean and African descended youth. In fact, the more one investigates this subculture, the more it becomes clear that the traditional distinctions and stereotypes used to engage with subcultures and youth movements are inadequate.

The concept of subculture had its genesis in the study of sociology, and in particular in the work done in the University of Chicago's Department of sociology, the first of its kind to devote its attention to "a specific kind of urban micro-sociology," which it became famous for. The "Chicago School" was particularly focused on the interactions of people living in cities. Where various races, classes and genders came into contact with each other. Indeed, it is with the urban situation that this study is primarily concerned.

The rise of graffiti was informed as much, if not more, by the city and the urban environment as it was by issues of class and race. It is the purpose of this study to investigate the element of space, and what can be learned by using it as lens with which to view graffiti through. Once we look at this precise of marking public surface in this way, we can begin to see just how spatially determined and determining graffiti is. It is the city that has always influenced, frustrated and inspired graffiti artists; the metropolis is their canvas and their irritant. Many of the writers have all commented on the fact that graffiti seems to 'fit' the urban landscape. Researchers such as Richard Sennett have also discussed the human desire to communicate and leave an imprint on their surrounding environment, the
city certainly provides bountiful surfaces and places to put up and experiment with style, identity and the construction of the self as a subcultural member.

To generalize, most graffiti writers are young, male and according to one "Australian study, prone to depression and low self esteem, and indulge in risk taking behavior such as serious drug use or social ideation". This paints a pretty bleak portrait of the graffiti writer: a young man who is unhappy, lonely and has little concern for his own safety or the consequences of his behavior. It reads like a classic list of ingredients for any threatening subculture.

Among the graffiti writers, there are 'season writer's: people who only write for a year or two, and do not go much further beyond a handful of pieces. "The majority of writers", Says Graycar, 'do it for a limited time of perhaps two or three years'. Those at the very top are the "style kings' of the city, who have not only been active for a long time, but also display the most innovative and integrated approaches to graffiti. They may, like AIB, travel the globe doing graffiti, and are often accomplished in other artistic media as well as spray cans and Texas. To sum up, the most prolific and accomplished writers usually have an in depth knowledge of art history, and are fascinated by the possibilities offered by the spray can and the public placement of their works. They were not mindless vandals, nor are they hot house flowers unable to connect with the greater art movement.

**URBAN SPACE:** The metropolis provokes and inspires. As Richard Sannett notes, it is "the exposure to difference otherness, (and) frustration" that
stimulates the artist. It is the purpose of the graffiti study to argue whether or not graffiti writers are artist or vandals. At the very least it can be said that they are often willingly both. It is the city and the influence of the urban on the body of the writer that is of most concerned.

The way graffiti writers travel through and interact, with space is decidedly different from the ways in which non-writers do. They frequently seek out abandoned or derelict areas, search for dangerous and physically challenging spots in the city to leave the mark, and create living maps of their city through their travels. It is possible for another writer or a fan to determine the local writers of a particular area by looking at the walls, and to chart or map their individual trajectories on a series of single nights. Someone with the knowledge required to read and understand the signs and symbols of graffiti may be able to tell you that a certain writers has traced a clear rout for blocks, ducking into doorways waiting for breaks in traffic and looking for non-grimy surfaces to leave their mark.

By nothing-overnight changes to the surrounding environment, it is possible to follow a writer's path, and construct a rough idea of their movements through space. Here, they stood on a handy roadside milk crate to throw up a tag in bright red solid. Further down the road in this doorway they crouched down and left their signature in the corner of this metal door. And at the top of the hill, you can see where they left the main road and walked down an alley. Late at night, and by themselves, they took this route back to their suburb, dropping occasional tags as
the surfaces presented themselves, but always ceasing their writing before coming into their own immediate neighborhood. For it is not just writers and fans who can determine these paths and traces left by writers, but authorities and police as well.

The city plays a crucial role in the creation and proliferation of graffiti, for it is usually only in urban areas that one can find graffiti. It originated in the ultimate city, Newyork and was transmitted through popular media to other cities around the globe. And yet, despite the far flung reach of its method and practice, graffiti is not a parochial phenomenon. It is based in cities, and practiced by those who live in them. While there are a few instances of graffiti making its presence felt in urban areas, the overwhelming majority of graffiti is found in cities and their immediate suburbs.

If the city is a simulation or simulacra of the body, then, we can begin to look at its functioning and the language that surrounds it in a new light. In Mazzoleni's formulation, the city becomes "anthropomorphic", the city becomes not just a body, but 'The Body', and like all bodies, it can be diseased, attacked, and invaded by hostile pathogens. The reaction and language of many anti-graffiti commentators and policy makers posit graffiti interns of disease, a blight or a filth which coats the walls and eats into social values, property values and the well-being of a place. The space around us becomes gigantic, Mazzoleni says, "the body shrinks, to lose one's identity in the ....... crowd. These are metropolitan experiences". (Mazzoleni.289). To become a faceless drone in the urban
environment is anathema to some, and it is in subcultures that we find the most aggressive displays of this. Some people, particularly young people, cannot stand the idea of blending in with the majority. They try to make themselves stand out in the crowd, while still being ‘in place’ in a particular group, or in the case of graffiti writers, a particular subculture.

The inscribing of identity on the urban landscape by writers leads in confusion and fear among the non-writing population. At the most basic level, most tags and graffiti are unreadable, and therefore unable to be understood by the wider community. In societies where words and their meaning denote power and assist survival, being effectively illiterate when it comes to the markings of the walls of one’s own city comes as a shock and an insult to many. There develops, as Tim Cresswell so eloquently puts it, “a deep fear of disorder in the landscape,” a threat to the established order and perhaps a symptom of deepening decay. (Cresswell op.cit.,37).

The graffiti writer’s use of space can also encompass their comment about, or opinion of that surface. While some surfaces and easily accessible and take the marks of almost every writer who walks past them, there are other places, far more valued and sought after, which contain, within them values attractive to writers and vital to the practice and performance of their art.

Most studies and discussion of graffiti that mention place do so in reference to private property, and the vandalism that is perpetrated upon it by writers.
Similarly, a great deal of emphasis is placed on tags. Their uniquity in the modern metropolis is hard to ignore, these scrawled names of unknowns that can instill fear or unease in those who cannot read, or do not understand it.

So what is it about the city that makes graffiti seem so natural, and makes it "just fit"? Richard Sonnet opens his chapter "Making Exposed Things". 40 (Sennet.op cit.205). with these words. "In a city that belongs to no one, people are constantly seeking to leave a trace of themselves." (Sennet.205). His explanation for the appeal of graffiti seems to be fairly straight forward: there are ostracized and disenfranchised groups within urban society, "Slum kids"(Sennet.205) as he deems them. Indeed, many of the first writers came from the ghettos of New York, a city which in the 1970's, was under extreme pressure and experiencing widespread difficulties and decay within, and of, 'the system.'

GENDER AND IDENTITY:

The graffiti subculture is overwhelmingly populated by males. There are females who paint, but they are a minority within the writing community. Nancy MacDonald makes the point that "the masculine heavy membership of most subcultures is not an easy feature to miss",41 and it is gender disparity that has to be observed.

While many studies have noted the gender disparity in the graffiti subculture, it is really only MacDonald who has tackled the issue head on. Citing the British Transport Police Records from January 1992 - January 1994, she illustrates just
how marginal female participation is; “The sex of graffiti offenders appears to be almost entirely male, only 0.67% of people arrested are female”. (Macdonald, p. 95). Naturally, there are some caveats when considering such a figure. Firstly, this statistic deals only with writers arrested, not writers who are active. Secondly, these figures are at least ten years old, and since their publication, it is feasible to expect that there has been a rise in female participation, just as there has been a rise in female presence on the hip hop culture in general. Of the 29 writers Nancy Macdonald interviewed, only three were female. Similarly, Janice Rahn included interviews with about twenty-five writers in Canada, and only managed to speak to four females. There is a female presence in this subculture, but it is small.

When asked why girls do not like graffiti, the answers from male writers are consistent almost to the point of cliche: it is a dangerous past time that involves physical risks. As veteran female writer PINK states, “It’s a dirty job, a dirty hard job”. (Macdonald, p. 99). Writers of both sexes participate in this construction of graffiti as both a dirty and physically demanding occupation. The inference here is that girls are not suited or comfortable with dirt and grime; not are they physically strong enough or conscious enough of their own body to do the things males do. But is this necessarily so? As Macdonald points out “graffiti places comparatively little emphasis upon physical skill, force or stamina……. Writers……. use courage and cunning as their primary credentials... (They) earn recognition and respect for
their bravery and dexterity; mental representations of masculinity as opposed to physical one’s. (Macdonald. 106)

**THE REAL WRITER:** Graffiti writing began as a fun, creative, adventuresome, competitive expression among peers. It also had an incidental audience of the entire city of New York. It was not a plea for acceptance, certainly. As resistance to graffiti mounted in New York so did the measures that the writers would use to work. Even today, when web sites, lovely fanzines, and books extol the virtues of graffiti, it is rarely a soft and friendly medium, especially when done well. Popular interest in graffiti is at a bit of a high at the moment and avenues for graffiti writers above ground are all over the place: legal wall magazines, books, the internet, galleries, at school, clothing lines, etc. A "real writer" will likely do none of this stuff, and will stay illegal, steal his paint, and not bother with the above ground avenues that inevitably water down the culture's original essence.

This definition is facetious, and it is difficult to write down a definition of “real writer” without sounding silly. This is because “real writers” do not write critical terms for graffiti. They do, however, enjoy a universal respect from a community of people that in many cases extends internationally, a status earned the hard way by displaying longevity in a world full of quitters, and significance in a world full of the insignificant.

Graffiti writers define and create their own identities through the inscription and the repetition of their chosen word. The move through space, continually
reinforcing their claim and comment upon it. These spaces are urban, dominated by walls owned by others. The names and brands of companies are slathered across the urban environment in order to produce a positive reaction in the viewer: to buy the product or support the cause beingadverted. Graffiti, on the other hand, does not ask for a reaction from the general public. It is by and for a subcultural minority within the city, and its meanings and purpose are deliberately obfuscated, both because writers face serious legal ramifications for their active, and because the manipulation and re-presentation of the identity is so important to writers.

*****
CHAPTER II

Bibliography:


10. Mc Teague *Introduction to Frank Norris*. (Garden City, 1928. [1899]. Viii


12. Dreiser, qtd, in *The Chicago Journal*, March 18, 1914; qtd from Robert Elias,

13. Matthiessen. 43.


33. Tong Silver, 45.


38. Mazzoleni.289.


40. Sennet. op cit. 205