

The City in Late-Nineteenth Century American Literature: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly



Tenements at Park Avenue and 107th Street, New York City, around 1900

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15 June, 2016

Abstract

This bachelor's thesis explores the representation of the city and city life in the late-nineteenth century works of Stephen Crane, Frank Norris, and Theodore Dreiser. Subsequently, it aims to answer the question: How are the modern cities of New York, San Francisco, and Chicago and life within these cities represented in the novels *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets* (1893), *McTeague* (1899), and *Sister Carrie* (1900)? These novels were all written during the height of industrialization and urbanization, which transformed modest American cities into modern metropolises. The three writers all used fiction to provide Americans with a first-hand account of the changing world around them, which helped people to experience the modern city. Each of these novels has been analyzed before, but this thesis compares and contrasts the representations of New York, San Francisco, and Chicago and its life-shaping influence on the characters. Theories on the city, the city in literature, and American Naturalism have been used to examine the novels. The findings illustrate that all three cities are similarly represented as places that were both embraced for their modernity and as sites of opportunity that attracted many Americans, but also as indifferent environments responsible for the physical and moral downfall of mankind. The cities, however, slightly differ in terms of the depiction of factors that contributed to this downfall. This suggests that underneath the cities' glossy, modern surface layer anguish and hardships prevail.

Key words: city culture, American fiction, American Naturalism, industrialization, urbanization

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Introduction

Mark Twain and Charles Dudley Warner observed that, in the Gilded Age, “every silver lining has a cloud behind it” (*The Gilded Age: A Tale of Today*). Twain and Warner, indeed, rightfully noted that the Gilded Age, the era that succeeded the Civil War period, was an era in which America experienced the best and the worst that could happen to a country. It developed into a modern, industrial nation that enjoyed economic, scientific, and technological progress but, at the same time, the country’s high spirits were undermined by social issues, such as corruption, income inequality, shortage of immigrant housing, public health concerns, and alcoholism. Twain and Warner coined the term Gilded Age in their satirical novel *The Gilded Age: A Tale of Today* (1873). Gilding refers to coating a solid surface in a thin layer of gold, which is different from golden as this entails that the surface is made of gold too. The term Gilded Age, consequently, underscores Twain’s and Warner’s aforementioned quote, because the final decades of the nineteenth century were not golden, but gilded as this thin layer of prosperity and progress coated America’s worst social and political problems. American cities epitomized this opposition in which conspicuous consumption and abject poverty seemed to be inseparable. This is the subject of this thesis and it is particularly interesting to examine the representation of the city and city life in late-nineteenth century novels, for they were written during the Gilded Age; at the height of industrialization, urbanization, and immigration.

The cities that are analyzed for this thesis are New York, San Francisco, and Chicago, all three of which transformed into modern metropolises in the late-nineteenth century. As noted, this period was characterized by industrialization, subsequent urbanization, and immigration. These cities, consequently, expanded tremendously in terms of geography, population, and demographics. This thesis will not explore the effects of modern cities on their citizens in the nineteenth century, neither will it draw comparisons between cities across

time, and nor will it discuss how Americans felt about their changing environments. The purpose, here, is to explore the dualities in the representation of three American cities as well as life within these cities in the works of Stephen Crane, Frank Norris, and Theodore Dreiser. This, subsequently, leads to the research question: How are the modern cities of New York, San Francisco, and Chicago and life within these cities represented in the novels *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets*, *McTeague*, and *Sister Carrie*?

These novels are perfect for a comparative analysis, because they are set in three different cities, but were all written in the same decade, the 1890s, in which cities increasingly enlarged and modernized. Crane, Norris, and Dreiser had lived in the cities they wrote about and, consequently, they saw them transform before their own eyes. As such, the writers had first-hand experience of the changing urban landscape of America. Furthermore, all three writers worked as journalists in the aforementioned cities, which allowed them to give a detailed, and often factual, account of the city and city life of which all three were critical. Moreover, they devised their unique interpretations of American Naturalism derived from French Naturalism and European theories of evolution, which paved the way for early-twentieth century Naturalist writers. Previous research on these novels has often focused on, for example, the use of Naturalism to emphasize the negative influences of the city and city life. It is, therefore, worthwhile to examine how Crane, Norris, and Dreiser represent the city as both a beautiful modern site and, at the same time, as a site responsible for disillusioning, demoralizing, and corrupting its citizens.

Crane moved to New York City to work as a journalist in 1891. He wrote extensively about slum life and social problems within the largest American city, because it embodied the extreme environments that he was interested in. (Vanouse 1555). Crane decided that fiction, rather than newspapers, would be the best medium to convey the social problems that prevailed in New York's slums. Crane's first novel, *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets*, is set in

New York and illustrates the poor living conditions in the tenement buildings of the Bowery.

Frank Norris studied in Paris and California, after which he became a journalist and a writer. During his time as a student, Norris read French Naturalist works and works on Social Darwinism that inspired him. *McTeague* was his second novel and it is set in San Francisco – the only modern city in the American West in the 1890s. San Francisco became the largest, most populated, and most important commercial, financial, and naval city of the American West after the 1848 Gold Rush. It attracted many immigrants, which led to a population of almost 350,000 in 1900. This meant that San Francisco, while the smallest of the three cities discussed in this thesis, soon expanded into a modern city (“Population of the 20th Largest U.S. Cities, 1900-2012”).

Theodore Dreiser also started out as a journalist and wrote his first historical novel *Sister Carrie* based on the experiences of his sister Emma. *Sister Carrie* is initially set in Chicago until protagonists, Carrie and Hurstwood, move to New York. At the turn of the century, New York was already an established modern city, but Chicago, although certainly a booming city, was slightly behind on the former in terms of size and population, as Chicago had 1,7 million inhabitants and New York had 3,4 million inhabitants (“Population of the 20th Largest U.S. Cities, 1900-2012”).

My approach to these novels particularly includes the method of close reading to understand how the writers use plot, vocabulary, irony, and imagery to represent the city in their works. I will use Charles Baudelaire’s and Walter Benjamin’s concept of the *flâneur*; Georg Simmel’s theory on the city and the urban experience; and Michel de Certeau’s theory on the importance of walking through a city, as well as his concept of the panopticon, to analyze the city’s influence on the characters’ psyche. Richard McNamara’s theory on city literature and Kevin Lynch’s *The Image of the City* (1984) will subsequently be used to examine how Crane, Norris, and Dreiser represent reference points within the city that help

their characters make sense of their new environments. Lynch found that people understood their surroundings in consistent and predictable ways, which he calls mental maps with five elements: paths, edges, districts, nodes, and landmarks. These five elements are traced in each novel to understand which reference points make a city legible for the characters.

Stephen Crane, Frank Norris, and Theodore Dreiser are often grouped together as naturalistic writers, for their shared interest in environmental determinism. Many writers tried to depict city life as faithfully and realistically as possible at the end of the nineteenth century, which led to the development of Naturalism in the 1890s. Naturalistic literature refers to fiction in which environmental forces, either of nature or of the city, overpower human agency so that the individual has little or no control over determining events, for the environment is indifferent to humankind (Lauter 1331).

The thesis consists of four chapters. Chapter 1 deals with theories on the city and the urban experience, the city in literature, and American Naturalism, which are all used as a theoretical framework to analyze the three novels. Chapter 2 explores the context in which *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets* was written, which is followed by an analysis of how the city of New York and city life are represented in the novel. Chapter 3 analyses the context in which *McTeague* was written after which it will illustrate how the city of San Francisco and city life are represented in the novel. Chapter 4 demonstrates the context in which *Sister Carrie* was written after which is demonstrated how the cities of Chicago and New York are represented in the novel.

Chapter 1

Background: The Modern American City and the Urban Experience, The City in Literature,
and American Naturalism

The development of the modern American city and the urban experience have drawn extensive scholarly attention since the mid-nineteenth century. Early debates have tended to focus on the positive aspects of the city and city life, while later debates emphasized the negative aspects. Charles Baudelaire was one of the first writers to conceptualize the city and the urban experience. In his book *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays* (1863), he coined the term the *flâneur*, which refers to a man strolling around an unfamiliar city. Put differently, the *flâneur* is an outsider within the city and, therefore, in an excellent position to objectively observe the city and all it entails (9). He is, consequently, also a man of the world and a man of the crowd, Baudelaire argues. Thus, Baudelaire recognized the role of the modern city in people's lives, for they are sites to be discovered through walking. Walter Benjamin revived the concept of the *flâneur* in his unfinished work *The Arcades Project* (1927-1940). Benjamin used the concept to explain the human response to modern city life. He claims that there are two different responses to city life; people either become paralyzed as a consequence of sensory overload, or they experience the city as an outsider – the *flâneur* – while wandering the streets and taking in all the new sights (10). Thus, almost a century later, Benjamin used Baudelaire's concept as a starting point to understand the influence of city life on the human psyche.

Georg Simmel, in contrast, focused on the negative influences of the modern city and city life, because the city is an artificial environment to which people have to adapt completely. In his essay "The Metropolis and Mental Life" (1903), Simmel contrasts the psychological effects of rural life and city life and argues that the city constantly bombards people with modern stimuli, such as lights, sounds, and smells that they can only process by

developing a *blasé* attitude (12-14). This attitude entails that people respond in a calculated, rational, reserved, and indifferent manner as a protection mechanism against the city. Simmel, moreover, states that city life is regulated by money and time which, subsequently, dominate the lives of people and makes them more akin to machines than to human beings (16). The city is also the seat of freedom and individuality, Simmel claims, but this often leads to feelings of alienation, for cities make people feel small and alone in a crowd of strangers (17). Interestingly, many of those negative feelings and modern conditions that the city evoke are central to Modernism, which ties in with the notion that the three novels discussed in this thesis can be seen as proto-modernist works. Thus, Simmel illustrates how the modern city, in comparison to rural towns, has a negative influence on people's psyche and, therefore, negatively influences the lives of city dwellers.

Michel de Certeau illustrated that the concept of strolling around the city is still of pivotal importance decades after Baudelaire's work was published. In his book *Practices of Everyday Life* (1984), he dedicates the chapter titled "Walking the City" to the art of wandering through an urban environment. Walking is an act executed on street level and de Certeau believes it is the most basic way to experience a city (93). He uses the perspective of the panopticon to distinguish between the overseer and the people that are overseen while walking through the city. The view of the overseer, consequently, does not necessarily corresponds to city life as experienced on street level, because the overseer only perceives one perspective of the actual experience of walking through a city (92). De Certeau argues that walking through a designed city is a textured experience in which emotions, imagination, bodies, and memories are all involved (108). However, he is more interested in how people use tactics to escape their designed environment, because these spaces are not within the range of the panopticon. Thus, de Certeau explains that the city greatly influenced city dwellers on street level and, similar to Baudelaire and Simmel, he shows that the city and

urban experience are intertwined as he has analyzed how people deal with their planned environment, which is both tangible but also touches people's soul.

The modern American city became a great subject in late-nineteenth century literature, because it depicted the urban experience that in itself was new to most Americans. Many academic works have therefore been devoted to this phenomenon. Richard McNamara, for example, compiled an extensive *Cambridge Companion of the City in Literature* (2014) in which he traces the history of cities in literature that shows how literature and cities have been intertwined since antiquity (2). McNamara explains that a rich body of literature devoted to the depiction of actual cities and city life, not symbolic as in Greek myths for example, developed during the nineteenth century (5). He also argues that city literature is best at exploring the relationship between urban environments and human behavior as writers found a way to provide readers with intimate knowledge of urban life, which scholars are unable to do (5). City literature, after all, invites readers to experience the city and city life, which helps them to make sense of this new phenomenon. McNamara, moreover, states that late-nineteenth century works illustrate the awareness of a social-science literature of cities that modeled the cities as a functional or structural totality (6). Writers, indeed, use theories to research their characters' motives and behavior when confronted with the surprises of city life, which shows how urban institutions, rather than the characters, have social control. This, subsequently, leads to a *blasé* attitude of the city dwellers. Thus, city literature is very helpful in illustrating the urban experience and making the city legible during the Industrial Era in which many people were not acquainted yet with the modern city.

Kevin Lynch's *The Image of the City* (1960) delves deeper into the concept of urban experience, because his book explains how citizens perceive and experience the city. Lynch is an American urban planner who studied how people take in the information of the city. His study focusses on the visual aspects of three American cities, Boston, Jersey City, and Los

Angeles, through the mental images people hold of those cities (2). Lynch states that “our purpose is simply to consider the need for identity and structure in our perceptual world, and to illustrate the special relevance of this quality to the particular case of the complex, shifting urban environment” (10). In other words, Lynch believes that people have a need for identity and structure in an ever changing, modern city. These mental images refer to easily recognizable landmarks within the city that people organize into a coherent pattern to structure and make sense of their urban environment (3). Lynch, as noted, argues that city legibility is crucial in modern cities for it provides people with structure, identity, and meaning (8). Lynch has classified the aforementioned mental images into five types of elements: paths, edges, districts, nodes, and landmarks (46).

These five mental images also come to the fore in the novels that will be analyzed in the following chapters and, therefore, they will be explained in more detail here. Paths are the most important mental image, because they are the channels that allow people to move through the city. Paths include streets, canals, transit lines, and railroads. Edges are boundaries between phases or linear breaks within continuity and help people understand the scope of generalized areas, such as the outline of a city by water. Shores, railroads, and walls are examples of edges. Districts are medium to large sized parts of a city that all have something in common with each other, such as neighborhoods. People can mentally “enter into” districts. Nodes are strategic points in a city into which people can physically enter and help them establish in which directions they should go. Nodes can be junctions, a crossing of paths, or a break in transportation. Landmarks cannot always be entered into, because they are external. They are usually easily definable and recognizable objects, for instance buildings, signs, mountains, and stores that are frequently used as clues of structure especially when someone is very familiar in a particular city. This requires active senses, because the person has to focus on how things look, feel, smell, and sound that is, again, a modern condition.

Thus, these mental images show how people translate the modern city into visual pieces of information that provide them with structure, meaning, and identity.

Stephen Crane, Frank Norris, and Theodore Dreiser were all involved with American Naturalism - a literary movement closely related to American Realism - that perfectly conveyed the modern conditions of living in a city at the turn of the nineteenth century. Realism became the distinctive form of fiction in the second half of the nineteenth century. It was the response of writers, like William Dean Howells and Henry James, to the political, economic, and social changes after the Civil War and to the need to understand an America that became increasingly industrial and urban (Lauter 1329). Realist authors were interested in the rise of science and investigative journalism and, consequently, wanted to portray life as faithfully as possible. They focused on portraying ordinary events and characters, often middle class, and authentic American speech and dialogues. Realists also believed that the individual could largely determine his own fate and, therefore, he had the choice to become happy and successful (1330). From the 1890s onwards, however, many writers found that Realism was no longer adequate to capture and interpret the changing world around them. The middle class was replaced by a large working class that lived empty lives in expanding cities and whose fates were determined by chance rather than by choice (1331). As a result, Naturalism - a darker form of Realism - developed, which focused on indifferent environmental forces, both natural and urban, outweighing human agency in determining people's faith. The individual, here, belongs to the working class and has no control over his life, which was the case for the majority of the urban masses.

American Naturalism was partly influenced by French Naturalism, led by the influential author Émile Zola, a literary movement that enjoyed great popularity in the 1870s and 1880s (Åhnebrink 263). French Naturalism was the logical response to the nineteenth century school of thought that was largely influenced by discoveries in the natural sciences,

such as Darwin's theory of evolution. Analytical thinking and the search for truth marked this period. At the same time, the realm of philosophy became dominated by positivism and determinism, which resulted in Naturalists focusing on the power of external events (264). Consequently, these new trends in science and philosophy became the basis of French Naturalism. American and French Naturalism share commonalities in terms of characters, plot, and criticizing society. Both French and American naturalist writers, indeed, describe individuals from the lower classes, often people easily victimized by an indifferent environment and inseparable from their milieu that molds, surrounds, and confines them (268). These authors, moreover, do not shun, but rather criticize the ugly characteristics of modern society that includes corruption, class distinctions, and a lack of morality. American Naturalism, however, differs from its French counterpart in terms of focus on the philosophical aspect and, instead, focusses on subject matter and method (Åhnebrink 271). Put differently, the American Naturalist writers derived their ideas predominantly from the documentations of the contemporary and the sensational and combined this with their own ideas about Naturalism, which are not derived from a school of thought. Thus, although French and American Naturalism are quite similar, American Naturalism was less grounded in a philosophical ideology, which allowed writers to develop their own approach to Naturalism.

Donald Pizer disagrees with Paul Lauter about the relation between Naturalism and Realism that Pizer discusses in his essay "Late Nineteenth-Century American Naturalism". He recognizes that many scholars, who have attempted to define American Naturalism, indeed argue that Naturalism is either an extension or continuation of Realism as it succeeded the latter with the only distinction that Naturalism is permeated with pessimistic determinism (306). This definition, Pizer believes, is not representative of the entire literary movement, because it disregards those Naturalist writers that infused their works with sensationalism or

moral ambiguity - characteristics that coincide with other literary movements, such as Romanticism (307). Pizer, consequently, proposes a different definition of the Naturalist novel that usually contains two dimensions regarding the form and theme of such a novel. The first dimension deals with the relation between the subject matter of the novel and the concept of man that arises from this subject matter (307). In other words, Pizer refers here to the notion of man versus nature in which often a lower class person has to battle a hostile environment that, consequently, shapes his extremely violent or heroic character. The second dimension concerns the theme of the Naturalistic novel that exposes the writer's attempt to portray how characters are controlled by environment, heredity, chance, and instinct, while also trying to depict the significance of those lower class individuals and their lives (307-308). Thus, Pizer asserts that Naturalism, similar to the lower class characters in Naturalistic novels, is more complicated than it appears in the initial definition, because Naturalism endows the lowest of the low with emotions, thoughts, and moral ambiguity - characteristics that used to be ascribed to higher-ranking individuals. This allows them to have a voice in an era that tried to hide them underneath a gilded layer.

In sum, this chapter has provided the theoretical framework that will be used to analyze the novels below. The next three chapters explore the context in which each of the works were written, which includes biographical information about the author, who and what inspired him to write this particular novel, and his personal ideas on Naturalism and the city. This is followed by an analysis in the light of the academic works discussed in this chapter. The representation of the city and city life in Stephen Crane's *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets* is the subject of the next chapter.

Chapter 2

The City and City Life in *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets*

Maggie: A Girl of the Streets (1893), written at the age of nineteen, was Stephen Crane's introduction to the American literary scene that immediately set the tone for his subsequent works. It was, after all, a new and experimental novel that served as the foundation for all his other famous works, such as *The Red Badge of Courage* (1895). The novel, moreover, revolutionized literature: it showed the depiction of the grim slum-side of a city much celebrated in literature at the end of the nineteenth century, hereby challenging romantic and realist literary conventions; it broadened the idea of the American novel beyond entertainment, for it could now also address sex and sacred institutions through satire; and it paved the way for the muckraking movement of the early-twentieth century (Gullason xi). *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets* was also the first major Naturalistic novel in America, a novel pervaded with Crane's modern visions about city life at the turn of the century. Especially Crane's use of imagery and irony in relation to environmental determinism and heredity distinguished him from the writers that preceded and succeeded him.

This chapter examines the representation of New York City and city life in *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets*. To understand how Crane depicted the city, it is of pivotal importance to gain a deeper understanding of the novel and its writer. Among the three writers discussed in this thesis, Crane died the youngest at the age of twenty-eight succumbing to tuberculosis. His life, although tragically short, contains many useful insights as to how he came to write his first novel. First, it is important to note that Crane's novel challenged deep-rooted literary conventions, hereby securing his unique place within American literature. Secondly, it is significant to explore the works to which Crane might be indebted for themes and characters. Thirdly, it is useful to examine Crane's unique interpretation of Naturalism that distinguished him from Norris and Dreiser. Lastly, it is important to gain an understanding of his thoughts

on New York City.

Stephen Crane (1871-1900) was born in Newark, New Jersey, the fourteenth child in a middle class, Methodist family. In 1891, after a semester at Syracuse University, Crane moved to New York City to work as a journalist for the *New York Tribune*. He also experimented with writing short stories and a novel about city life that embodied extreme urban environments. (Vanouse 1555). Crane was predominantly interested in slum life in New York, which is exemplified by *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets* - a powerful story about the wretched and poverty-stricken people that live in the Bowery (Vanouse 1555). It was written under the pseudonym Johnston Smith and published by Crane himself at his own expense as commercial publishers deemed the novel to be too “shocking and cruel” (Gullason xi). Crane initially only sold a few copies but, after the success of *The Red Badge of Courage*, D. Appleton and Company officially published *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets* in 1896 (xi). Crane is often mentioned in relation to other late-nineteenth century naturalist writers, such as Frank Norris and Theodore Dreiser, because of his interest in environmental determinism (Vanouse 1555). Crane, however, distinguished himself by defining his characters with vivid images and sharp, ironic comments, whereas Dreiser and Norris focused on factual documentation (Vanouse 1556). Crane, therefore, combined his fascination for extreme environments - the slums of New York - with his love for writing.

It is likely that Crane was indebted to his father, the minister Jonathan Crane, and to the social reformer Jacob Riis for inspiration. Minister Crane, in fact, wrote several works on the themes that come to the fore in *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets*. The minister wrote on, for instance, the effects of slum life on children. In *The Annual Sermon* (1858), he urges missionaries visiting the cities to not give up on the hopeless children from the “worst localities” (Gullason 104). Crane’s father also wrote about alcoholism, the psychological effects of intoxication, and how this affects children in *Arts of Intoxication* (1870) (104).

Interestingly, the minister also refers to the hereditary effects of alcohol, for he explains that children growing up with alcoholic parents are liable to fall victim to alcohol too. Put differently, Jonathan Crane already wrote about slum life and alcoholism decades before his son wrote *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets*. Thus, although Crane's father died when he was eight years old, his literary legacy may have contributed to the themes that Crane chose for Maggie's story.

Famous social reformer Jacob Riis, author of "How the Other Half Lives," studied slum life in New York, and Crane was present at Riis' subsequent lecture in 1882 (106). Themes that Riis discussed include the opposition between the lives of the poor and the rich, the effects of slum life on youths, the abundance of saloons and alcohol in the slums, and the working conditions of girls who are affected most by this arduous life (Riis 75-84). Crane's novel bears notable resemblance to Riis work, which also includes depictions of contrasts between the rich and the poor, violent occurrences, alcohol abuse, and deplorable working and living conditions that are detrimental to young women. Thus, it is likely that Riis also gave Crane ideas regarding themes and characters through his study of slum life.

Crane once said in regard to the purpose of writing *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets* that "the environment is a tremendous thing in this world and often shapes lives regardlessly" (*Stephen Crane: An Omnibus* xxxviii). The notion of environmental determinism is one of the primary characteristics of American Naturalism. *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets* also possesses many other characteristics of Naturalism, such as urban poverty, violence, heredity, and human degradation. As noted, on the whole, these themes were neither overtly present, nor widely accepted in early 1890s literature, but Crane had done extensive research in the Bowery and he wanted to reveal the social problems that gripped the poor in New York. Hence, Crane's novel is widely known as the first American Naturalistic novel. It has been argued that Crane's Naturalistic themes and methods also mirror those of his French

contemporary Émile Zola. In his novel *L'Assomoir* (1877), for example, Zola describes the milieu of the characters, the gloomy atmosphere of the environment, and poverty-stricken life in the slums of Paris in great detail (Åhnebrink 90). Crane, similarly, extensively describes the gang-life that has the boys in the Bowery in its hold, the run-down tenements, and the Johnson family and their neighbors to give an impression of slum life in New York. Both authors, therefore, focus on the dark and rough side of life in the slums. Zola, moreover, illustrates the demoralizing force of alcoholism on his characters that often results in violence (91). Crane also depicts two of his characters, Mr. and Mrs. Johnson as brutal alcoholics who neglect and often mentally and physically abuse their three children when under the influence of alcohol. Crane's Maggie, furthermore, has striking resemblances to Zola's Lalie, for both are girls, the eldest of three children, and described as beautiful, pure girls whose appearances are strangely unaffected by slum life (92-93). Maggie's downfall, in addition, mirrors that of Zola's Gervaise as both girls are kind people who mean well, but who become victims of their hostile environments. Thus, it is likely that Crane, for his first novel, used his own research and experiences in the Bowery and infused this with Naturalistic elements that also come to the fore in Zola's *L'Assomoir*.

As noted, Crane became interested in New York City, because social problems, such as poverty, inequality, and violence were prominent in this city and he wanted to make them visible. In 1891, Crane befriended author Hamlin Garland with whom he conversed extensively about using fiction to address the aforementioned problems that prevailed during the 1890s. Crane, subsequently, made several trips from New Jersey to New York City to explore the tenement areas of the Lower East Side (Watts viii). Slum life in the Bowery district was of particular interest to Crane, for it exemplified the hardships of life in the city. Marcus Cunliffe claims that literature dealing with slum life had been around for decades when Crane wrote *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets*, and these works may have supported

Crane's ideas about New York's slums (94). Charles Loring Brace, for example, published his study *The Dangerous Classes of New York* in 1872 in which he voiced his concern about, among other things, the position of young women who ended up in prostitution, due to a lack of stability, money, and good influences, because they did not know how to escape their deplorable circumstances (95). Brace's study, consequently, could have provided Crane with detailed information about the milieu that lived in the Bowery. Another author who may have influenced Crane is minister Thomas DeWitt Talmage. He became a minister and social reformer in Brooklyn in 1869 where he held sermons about the many inequalities in the city, which attracted thousands of people (97). As a result, his sermons that comprised topics that ranged from alcoholism to prostitution and from starvation to the exploitation of workers were printed in newspapers (98-99). Talmage also addressed the many hardships of slum life that, again, seemed to shape the lives of young women the most. Thus, the works of both Brace and Talmage could have supported Crane's own findings, because all the research he had done in the Bowery for two years eventually served as the basis for his novel *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets*.

In sum, *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets* is America's first Naturalistic novel, because Crane used a unique combination of irony and imagery in relation to environmental determinism and heredity. Furthermore, Crane showed America the dark side of city life, which was revolutionary in American literature. Crane, moreover, studied urban life in the Bowery as a journalist for years, but his father – minister Crane – and social advocate – Jacob Riis – could have also been of influence to Crane, because they wrote about themes that are also central to Crane's *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets*. Another author that may have influenced Crane's writing is Émile Zola as Crane's use of Naturalism closely resembles that of Zola. In addition, Crane may have also drawn inspiration from other authors, such as Brace and Talmage, who wrote specifically about social problems in the slums of New York. The

summary and subsequent analysis of Crane's novel will cast light on how the city of New York and city life are represented in *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets*.

Maggie: A Girl of the Streets depicts the lives of Maggie Johnson and her family in New York. The novel opens with Jimmie, Maggie's older brother, fighting a rival street gang with the help of his friend Pete. Maggie, Jimmie, and their younger brother Tommie live with their alcoholic parents in the tenements of the Bowery, an environment that is characterized by violence, fear, alcoholism, and poverty. After a few years have passed, Tommie and Mr. Johnson have died, Jimmie has become a cynical truck driver who loathes the well-to-do, and Maggie has developed an interest in Pete whom she finds sophisticated - he takes her to museums and theaters - and whom she believes will provide her with a better life. Jimmie and Mrs. Johnson, however, along with the other tenants, condemn Maggie for dating Pete and she is not welcome anymore. When Pete encounters his friend Nellie, she encourages him to leave Maggie and he agrees, leaving Maggie alone and homeless, for she is unable to return home. It is implied that Maggie, subsequently, descends into prostitution and eventually dies as a scorned woman. Upon hearing the news of Maggie's death, Mrs. Johnson ironically proclaims that she forgives Maggie. Thus, Crane uses irony and imagery to represent New York as experienced by the Bowery tenants: a battlefield that breeds social unrest and is characterized by imprisonment, violence, and disillusionment.

Maggie: A Girl of the Streets is set in the Bowery, a neighborhood in the southern part of Manhattan that functions as an enclave within New York and, as a consequence, imprisons its inhabitants. Through the use of imagery, Crane illustrates that the characters are confined to this grim neighborhood and, therefore, in contrast to Norris and Dreiser, he does not describe the affluent parts of New York, or other cities and modern vehicles, such as the cable car. Crane's New York is indeed pervaded with a sense of gloom, darkness, and decay, for life in the Bowery is described with images such as, "dark region," "gruesome doorways,"

and “general disorder” or as Mr. Johnson concisely describes it: “a livin’ hell” (Crane 8). Furthermore, the crowded tenement building is described as quivering and quaking from “the weight of humanity stamping about in its bowels” (6). These images illustrate the bleakness of life in the Bowery. As a result, the negative influences of the city that Simmel explains, such as alienation and isolation are also visible in Crane’s novel. Maggie, for example, is arguably an alien in the Bowery, for Crane describes her as “a most rare and wonderful production of a tenement district, a pretty girl” (14). This suggests that Maggie is a diamond in a pile of rocks, which makes her different from everyone else. Spending time with Pete, moreover, makes Maggie realize that she is different from the other tenants and she increasingly longs for freedom outside of the confinements of the Bowery. This becomes evident as Maggie suddenly realizes that the apartment looks shabby, that she has a grinding job in a collar-and-cuff establishment in which the air “strangle[s]” her (22), and that she yearns for beautiful clothes (21). This underscores how life in the Bowery entraps Maggie. Her relationship with Pete, however, does not help her rise on the social ladder, in fact, the opposite is true, because it alienates and isolates her completely from her fellow Bowery tenants. Maggie’s involvement with Pete is seen as a disgrace upon the family and, as a result, Mrs. Johnson, Jimmie, and their neighbors condemn Maggie. When Pete leaves Maggie, she has no one left to return to and, subsequently, she becomes fully isolated and alienated from society. Thus, while Maggie was a ‘beautiful alien’ in the Bowery from the start, her aspirations to climb the social ladder exacerbated her living situation as it alienated and isolated her even further.

De Certeau’s concept of the perspective of the panopticon, through which the people in power oversee the powerless people on street level, arguably also comes to fore in *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets*. It is natural to assume that Crane’s characters would embody the powerless that are overseen through the panopticon. Crane, however, known for his clever use of irony, positions Jimmie behind the panopticon in the Bowery to illustrate how Jimmie

perceives himself to be more powerful than he is in reality is. Crane's opening line of his novel exemplifies this as "[A] very little boy [Jimmie] stood upon a heap of gravel for the honor of Rum Alley" (1). Jimmie, here, is fighting off a rival gang called Devil's Row and he is in an elevated position above the street - standing on a heap of gravel - from which he has the perfect vantage point to oversee the street and his enemies. Ironically, he is not mighty and big, but a very small boy defending his 'street's honor' through fighting - an act that seems hardly honorable. After a few years have passed, Crane describes Jimmie's occupation as standing at street corners and watching the world go by (11). In other words, Jimmie has found another vantage point from which he can oversee 'his' Bowery. This becomes evident from the fact that he maintains a hostile and violent attitude towards all well-dressed men who he deems weak, faint, and inferior, for he and his order are "kings" of the streets (11). Put differently, Jimmie has exchanged his heap of gravel for this street corner where he still defends the 'street's honor' like a king reigning over his kingdom. Ironically, again, Jimmie believes himself to be superior to these aforementioned men, while - in reality - he is portrayed as a cynical and violent teen who occupies the lowest rank of society. This is further underscored by the fact that, after his father's death, Jimmie becomes the head of the family, someone who, metaphorically speaking, is in control of and above the rest of the family and thus oversees all they do (14). Jimmie, in fact, is as much of a failure doing this 'job' as his father was, because he is often drunk and verbally abusive to his family. In other words, Jimmie might feel mighty as the head of the street and the family, in reality, he is as insignificant as all the other people that are overseen by the 'real' people in power. Thus, Crane portrays Jimmie's gang-fight, subsequent occupation, and his position in the family in an ironic manner to show how the Bowery is governed by violence and a distorted sense of superiority and honor due to the social inequalities that prevail here.

In *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets*, characters predominantly move around the Bowery

by foot, which is according to Baudelaire and De Certeau the most basic way to experience a city. Lynch, moreover, argues that people hold mental images of the city in which they live that they structure into coherent patterns, which helps them make sense of their urban environment. McNamara agrees that it was very important for people that the new, ever-growing cities became legible and comprehensive. He believes that city literature – fiction that makes cities an integral part of the story for readers to experience the city – is the answer to this. McNamara and Lynch's views are both visible in *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets*. Crane, indeed, sketches a detailed image of slum life in New York city, although he focusses less on factual details - street names, names of saloons, names of theatres, etc. - compared to Norris and Dreiser. Frequently traveled paths that allow Maggie to move through the city are, for example, Rum Alley and the avenues. Maggie's tenement building is located in the former and Maggie notices the well-dressed women, which awakened her desire for such dresses, in the latter (20). Edges provide a break in or surround the city landscape that help people remember large areas within a city. In Maggie's case, the East River in the Bowery is an example of an edge, because it separates Manhattan from Brooklyn (51). Districts are large, similar areas in the city, such as, the Bowery on the Lower East Side or Uptown Manhattan where Maggie and Pete visit theatres (20). Nodes are strategic points within the city that establish direction. Nodes are, for instance, the street corner where Jimmie watches the world pass by and the saloon on a corner where Pete works as a bartender (48). Landmarks are easily definable objects that provide characters with structure. The Central Park Menagerie and the Museum of Arts are landmarks that Pete and Maggie visit on their dates (23). Thus, through Maggie's mental map of New York, Crane invites people to experience life in New York, in particular slum life, that illustrates that not every part of New York is a celebration of modernity and progress.

Crane's approach to Naturalism made him famous since he, as noted, portrays city life

in a unique manner that intertwines environmental determinism and heredity with irony (Pizer 186-187). Maggie, indeed, encounters violence, suffers from urban poverty, and becomes a victim of her Irish heredity. The latter suggests that Maggie's Irish heritage contributes to her demise, for the Irish were seen as an inferior race bound to fail at life. Interestingly, the deterministic forces of her slum environment are not solely the poverty she is in or the fact that she is devoid of free will. Rather, her natural kindness, trustfulness, and romanticized image of morality that she developed in the Bowery exacerbate the hardships in her life and eventually prove to be fatal in her degeneration, as they allowed her to make the wrong decisions in life. Her decision to date the well-dressed and worldly Pete whom she believes will lift her out of poverty proves to be detrimental, for he has no intentions to engage in a serious relationship with her, which leaves Maggie 'ruined'. Maggie's involvement with Pete also results in her status as the 'fallen woman' among the Bowery tenants and eventually leads to her degradation into prostitution. Thus, Crane portrays environmental determinism as predominantly shaping Maggie's morality in which the Bowery failed to debunk those myths that changed her life for the worst. In addition, heredity plays a prominent role in Pete's faith. The notion that the Irish are predestined to fail in life is extensively explored in nineteenth century literature and comes to the fore in both Norris' and Crane's novel. Jimmie, for example, is stereotypically depicted as a violent and brutish alcoholic of Irish descent. The fact that he, similar to his late father, gets drunk, stumbles upstairs late at night, swears at his mother and sister, and finally falls asleep on the floor only to repeat this process the next day epitomizes this (14). Jimmie also has inappropriate feelings, such as lust and greed that were associated with the lower class Irish. This becomes evident from the fact that Jimmie stands on a street corner "dreaming blood-red dreams about the women passing by" (11). The color red - a virile and sensual color - underscores that Jimmie has passionate and lustful dreams about these women. Jimmie is also obsessed with money. As Crane notes, if he has a dollar

“his satisfaction with existence [is] the greatest thing in the world” (11). This implies that money determines Jimmie’s happiness. Thus, Jimmie exemplifies how the Irish were depicted according to popular American stereotypes in nineteenth century literature: as an inferior race unable to contain its desire for alcohol, lust, and greed, which made the Irish predestined to fail.

In conclusion, although Crane’s novel is the thinnest of the three novels analyzed in this thesis, Crane convincingly shows how the Bowery entraps, alienates, and ‘ruins’ Maggie. Crane also illustrates the irony in how the Bowery is ruled by violence, ‘street honor,’ and superiority; how the Bowery seems to be the dark and gloomy underbelly of the bright and shiny industrialized New York City; and how the Bowery tenants are affected by their indifferent environment and heredity. Thus, Crane, at nineteen, depicts New York through the eyes of the Bowery tenants whose lives are characterized by social unrest, violence, and disillusionment. The following chapter explores the representation of the city and city life in Frank Norris’ *McTeague*.

Chapter 3

The City and City Life in *McTeague*

Frank Norris (1870-1902) was born in Chicago but moved to San Francisco at the age of fifteen in 1885. He grew up at the height of industrialization and urbanization and saw both cities transform into modern entities. Norris was determined to show the changing world around him in his fiction of which *McTeague* (1899), is the first and best example that put Norris on the literary map. The novel also earned him a place in the Naturalist canon. Written at the turn of the century, *McTeague* illustrates people's need for survival when devoid of free-will and controlled by indifferent forces, such as the environment and heredity.

This chapter demonstrates how the city of San Francisco and city life are represented in *McTeague*, but before we turn to this analysis it is useful to gain an understanding of the context in which this novel was written. To understand the context, Norris' time as a student and as a reporter must first be examined, because during the former he became interested in French Naturalism and Social Darwinism, and during the latter he became acquainted with the factual documentation of events. Although the European origins of Naturalism have already been discussed in chapter 1, it is of great significance to especially examine Zolaesque Naturalism in relation to theories of evolution, for Émile Zola, Charles Darwin, and Herbert Spencer greatly influenced Norris. Furthermore, Norris' own definition and approach to Naturalism culminated into the development of American Naturalism that clearly differs from its French counterpart and, therefore, also deserves attention. Lastly, Norris views on San Francisco shed light on why this city is such a good setting for novels.

Norris was a student at the Julien Academy in Paris from 1887 until 1889. Here, he encountered the Naturalist works of Émile Zola (Pizer 406-407). Zola is often hailed as the father of French Naturalism as he produced highly praised Naturalist works, such as *L'Assommoir* and *La Terre* published in 1877 and 1887, respectively. As noted in chapter 1,

science and philosophy greatly influenced French Naturalism, which subsequently entailed that literature – a field often dominated by emotion and imagination – also became subject to science (Åhnebrink 264). In 1880, Zola published *Le Roman Expérimental* in which he adopted the same research methods as scientists and advocated a literature “governed by science” (264). Literature, therefore, became an art-form that rose to the level of science. Zola predominantly focused on studying heredity and milieu, two factors that cannot be escaped in life, yet these are also the most influential in shaping people’s lives (265). This resulted in the depiction of literary characters that are brutish and controlled by their sexual instincts, which all come to the fore in *McTeague*. The novel’s eponymous protagonist, after all, is described as a “brute” and “animal-like,” which stems from Zola’s concept the ‘human-animal’ (Giardina). In addition, *McTeague* is also a victim of his own lower class, Irish ancestry that immensely shapes the course of his life. Thus, Zola was Norris’ prime influence for writing *McTeague*.

In 1890, Norris returned to America and attended the University of California where he read Herbert Spencer’s and Charles Darwin’s work on evolution. Darwin argues in *On the Origin of Species* (1859) that human evolution follows a pattern of natural selection in which people that are suited to the environment will survive and pass those heritable traits on to the next generation. As such, people have to constantly adapt to new environments, which consequently allows for a diversity of species (*On the Origin of Species*). Spencer, subsequently, evolved the concept of evolution even further and coined the phrase “survival of the fittest” in 1864 (*Principles of Biology*). Spencer’s and Darwin’s views on human evolution, in which only the fittest are to survive in the modern world, are also visible in *McTeague*. The protagonist himself is portrayed as a type of degenerate species unable to adapt to his city environment and, therefore, biologically unfit to survive. This ties in with the fact that *McTeague* is of Irish ancestry, which many Americans perceived to be an inferior,

working class race in the nineteenth century (Kenny) McTeague's Irish heritage, therefore, prohibited him to succeed in America. Thus, Darwin's and Spencer's works on human evolution underscore how a person's chance of survival is based on hereditary traits - a notion that became important in American Naturalism.

From 1889 onwards, Norris wrote several articles for San Francisco-based newspapers, such as the *San Francisco Chronicle*, and the *San Francisco Wave*. In 1893, Norris read a newspaper article about Sarah Collins who was brutally murdered by her husband in a San Francisco kindergarten, because she refused to give him money ("Twenty-nine Fatal Wounds"). This story was the initial inspiration and served as the basis for *McTeague*. After university, Norris continued working on *McTeague*, but he also found a job in journalism for two years – reporting on the Boer War in South Africa for the *San Francisco Wave* from 1896 until 1898. As a reporter, Norris developed a taste for popular subjects and learned how to document those in a factual and interesting manner, hence the focus on factual documentation in *McTeague*.

Norris devised his own interpretation and definition of Naturalism from the knowledge he gained through studying Zola's work and French Naturalism, through studying Darwin's theory of evolution, and through his experience as a journalist. Norris argued that Naturalism shares characteristics of both American Realism and American Romanticism that results in a unique combination of characteristics and evolves into a new literary movement called American Naturalism (Norris 271). Naturalism, indeed, borrows the attention to scientific detail from Realism and the depth and sensationalism from Romanticism (271). American Naturalism, after all, incorporates the same grotesque drama, tragedy, monstrosities, and vast scenic effects covered with a layer of the extraordinary and the imaginative that are all associated with Romanticism (274). It, moreover, only differs from Romanticism in terms of milieu, for Naturalist characters tend to belong to the lower class, not aristocracy. American

Naturalism, therefore, is as much an extension of Realism as it is of Romanticism, it is not the opposite. This certainly becomes evident from *McTeague*, which possess all the characteristics Norris deems just for a Naturalistic novel. Norris claims that:

Terrible things must happen to the characters of the naturalistic tale. They must be twisted from the ordinary, wrenched out from the quiet, uneventful round of every-day life, and flung into the throes of a vast and terrible drama that works itself out in unleashed passion, in blood, and sudden death. (Norris 274)

Norris, as such, illustrates that his characters are subject to all the aforementioned Romantic features and mixed with the scientific attention to detail associated with Realism, Norris' American Naturalism arose – a new literary movement that is unique, yet draws heavily from the movements Romanticism and Realism.

During his time as a journalist, Norris observed that San Francisco had often featured in short stories, yet not in novels, which Norris changed with the publication of *McTeague*, as he recognized the suitability of such a city for a novel. Norris wrote “An Opening for Novelists: Great Opportunities for Fiction Writers in San Francisco” two years before publishing *McTeague*. In the 1897 article, he urges people to write realistic novels about San Francisco, because it has the perfect conditions for great stories. The city, for example, has an isolated position, for there is no other great city in the American West (248). Isolation, Norris claims, produces originality and individuality, which allows for the independent development of characters that are unblemished by outside influence. Such character, therefore, are perfectly malleable to fit any type of fiction (249). Thus, San Francisco makes a suitable background for novels, as it is a great city amidst a desolated environment, it therefore has no example to follow, and this will allow the flourishing of unbiased characters that writers can

easily adapt to their liking.

In short, *McTeague* is the product of Norris' interest in French Naturalism and Social Darwinism that congregate in his vision of American Naturalism. Especially Zola's focus on heredity and social milieu appealed to Norris, as they correlate with theories of evolution. Furthermore, through Norris' job in journalism he learned the importance of factual documentation. Moreover, The Collins' murder in San Francisco and his believe in the suitability of this city as the background for a novel initiated the writing of *McTeague*. It is now time to turn to the novel itself. The following section starts with a brief summary of the novel after which an analysis of the representation of San Francisco and city life in *McTeague* will follow.

McTeague chronicles the life of McTeague, a mineworker turned dentist, in San Francisco where he lives a simple but happy life. His friend Marcus introduces him to his cousin - and lover - Trina with whom McTeague is immediately infatuated. With Marcus' consent, McTeague courts Trina and they subsequently marry. During their courting period, Trina wins 5,000 dollars in the lottery - a significant turning-point in the novel, for everything goes downhill from there on. Trina decides to save the money and becomes increasingly stingy refusing to touch her savings and rather adds money to it by constantly lying to McTeague about their finances. She eventually cares for nothing else but saving money and, consequently, she descend into poverty. Marcus becomes very jealous of McTeague, because he feels he is entitled to part of the money and he wrecks McTeague's dentistry career out of jealousy. Due to Trina's miserly behavior, McTeague decides to leave her. He, subsequently, also descends into poverty and drinks away his sorrows. When he finds out Trina has sold his beloved concertina, he embarks on a mission to steal her money. He kills her in a drunken rage, takes her money, and eventually ends up in a fight with Marcus. McTeague dramatically shoots Marcus in the desert, but he cannot go anywhere as he is handcuffed to Marcus' corpse

and will likely die as well. The majority of the story, as noted, is set in San Francisco.

Although Norris depicts this city in great detail as a site in which modernity triumphs, he also represents San Francisco as a site that breeds greed, demoralization, and human degradation.

Norris depicts McTeague as an outsider within the city who, although he has been living in San Francisco for ten years now, never seems to really fit in and has never fully accustomed to city life. McTeague, for example, has only one friend in a place with 350,000 inhabitants. He, moreover, has no clue how to order theater tickets, while the theater is a popular place of amusement for most city dwellers. McTeague, it might therefore be argued, resembles Baudelaire's *flâneur*, for he, unwillingly, remains an outsider in San Francisco (Norris 5). As such, he is in the perfect position to objectively observe the bustling, modern city. McTeague - as the *flâneur* - also corresponds to Benjamin's theory of urban experience, for McTeague responds to the city as an "alien" enjoying and observing all the city has to offer. This becomes evident from the onset of the novel in which McTeague goes out for dinner on a Sunday afternoon. Norris describes this activity in great detail allowing the reader to experience the city and city life. He reports what McTeague eats "thick gray soup; heavy underdone meat, very hot, on a cold plate; two kinds of vegetables; and a sort of suet pudding, full of strong butter and sugar" (5); where he eats it; and where he goes after for a steam beer. This illustrates what the city has to offer: coffee joints and saloons that provide people with relaxation and enjoyment. These activities are repeated every Sunday, as a ritual, which shows the repetitiveness and order of city life. This coincides with Simmel's argument that the city is run by money and time that, consequently, make its inhabitants run by time as well as if they are machines rather than human beings. The same could also be said of McTeague himself, as his repetitive life runs smoothly similar to a well-oiled machine. Thus, through McTeague, Norris allows the reader to experience the city and city life from an outsider's perspective and represents this life as orderly and repetitive.

McTeague's conveniently located bay window of his dental parlors on the corner of Polk Street also provides McTeague with an excellent position to oversee the city. The bay window, in fact, is arguably depicted as de Certeau's panopticon through which McTeague oversees everything below him on street level, because he has a panoramic view on Polk Street. This is highlighted by the fact that the window is a vantage point for McTeague from which he can "watch the world go past" (9). Norris explains that this street is always in motion and, subsequently, illustrates all there is to see from drug stores to barbershops and from restaurants to the post office (7). He predominantly focusses on how Polk street sounds and smells as cable cars trundle heavily and an "acrid odor of ink" emerges from the post office (7). Norris, again, emphasizes the experience of living in a modern city. This is also underscored by the fact that Norris personifies the street as if it were a living, breathing organism. He describes the street waking up at seven, breakfasting between seven and eight, by eleven "Polk Street dropped back to solitude," and eventually "the city is asleep" (7-9). The street, here, is depicted as a human being going through the cycle of a day, and it is, therefore, similar to a living character, such as McTeague and the rest. Thus, the bay window exemplifies a panopticon that allows Norris to describe San Francisco in great, factual detail hereby helping the reader to oversee and experience the modernity of the city that makes it a bustling and exciting place.

De Certeau also emphasizes that walking through a city is a textured experience that involves bodies, emotions, imagination, and memories. It is a place that is tangible, but at the same time, it also makes an imprint on people's soul. This becomes evident from the manner in which Norris describes the effect of the dental parlors on McTeague. The parlors for McTeague are both a tangible space through which he can move physically and practice dentistry, but it is also his safe haven where he can relax. The room also evokes pleasant memories of Trina, as this is the place where McTeague first met her. The parlors, therefore,

represent how walking through only one room in a city can be a textured experience that helps people find structure and meaning in their lives. Lynch, similarly, argues that this is what makes a city legible for people. The five elements of mental images that provide people with structure within the modern city are also visible in *McTeague*. Paths include Sacramento Street, B Street, the cable car, and the local train that takes McTeague across the bay. Those paths allow McTeague and the other characters to physically move through the city. Edges are, for instance, the San Francisco bay and the beach, because they clearly separate the city from Oakland across the bay. Schuetzen park, where McTeague meets Trina's family for the first time, and downtown San Francisco where the theater is located versus uptown San Francisco where McTeague lives are examples of districts. Nodes, for example, are B station and Polk Street, for the latter is a cross street rather than a regular street, that establishes the direction in which McTeague is going. Landmarks include the Golden Gate Bridge, The gilded tooth, the power-house of the cable-line, and Joe Frenna's saloon. Those landmarks are easily recognizable and provide McTeague with structure. All these elements help McTeague and the other characters to structure the growing city of San Francisco. Thus, walking through a city is not only a physical but also a psychological experience in which people use mental images that provide meaning and structure to make the modern city legible.

While the onset of the novel paints an attractive picture of San Francisco, the remainder shows the dark side of the city - one that is indifferent and governed by money and greed that leads to a *blasé* attitude and results in human degradation. Simmel, as noted, contended that modern cities are controlled by money and time that, consequently, turn people into machines. This is certainly the case with Trina and Marcus who both become obsessed with the lottery money and, subsequently, become so greedy that it consumes their entire lives. Trina becomes increasingly preoccupied with the physicality of money and at the height of her obsession she literally lays in all of her money and buries her face in it (179). Feeling

the heaps of shiny, gold coins, for Trina, is in fact similar to a high one would experience from using drugs. Furthermore, she completely neglects her marriage, her appearance as “she lost her pretty ways and her good looks” (184), and her health to the extent that she cares for nothing anymore but the money. This is epitomized by the fact that saving money “excluded every other sentiment” (197). Trina, at the end, is not much more than a shadow of her old self; very thin, haggard, and living in a tiny room to which she has degraded herself out of love for money. Marcus, although he did not win the money himself, similarly becomes obsessed with it, for he wants his share, as he allowed McTeague to court Trina (83). His greed completely consumes his life, since he devotes it to ruining McTeague’s career, as he notifies the authorities that McTeague does not have a dentistry diploma and, consequently, McTeague is barred from practicing (145). In addition, when Marcus hears of Trina’s death he immediately goes looking for McTeague with one goal in mind: stealing the money from McTeague as an ultimate act of revenge. Marcus, therefore, allows his greed and jealousy to degrade himself into a violent person willing to shoot his best friend. Thus, Norris reveals that the modern city - in which capitalism and money rule - proves to be a hostile environment with which Trina and Marcus are unable to cope. Additionally, Trina has a stroke of luck by winning the lottery, but this luck does not last, which illustrates how city life is dominated by luck rather than choice.

McTeague exemplifies the influence Zola had on Norris, because, similar to Zola’s protagonists, McTeague experiences the most intense form of gradual human degradation - from human to animal - due to sexual repression, poverty, and alcoholism. McTeague is initially described as a friendly, simple-minded giant whose mind and body were “slow to act, sluggish and immensely strong, stupid, docile, and obedient” (6). His first encounter with Trina, however, already tarnishes his “friendly image” as she awakened his “virile desire” that was “strong and brutal [...] resistless, untrained, a thing not to be held in leash an instant”

(19). Put differently, Trina arouses McTeague's repressed sexuality that, once unleashed, brings out the brute in him as he kisses her while she is anesthetized. Zola also believed that love and sex were physical cravings, similar to hunger and thirst, that lower class men find difficult to repress (Åhnebrink 269). Remarkably, this is the opposite of Simmel's *blasé* attitude. McTeague, as noted, does not suppress his feelings and emotions due to sensory overload. In fact, the opposite happens as McTeague's oppressed feelings come out when confronted with the sexual temptations of the city. This correlates with Pizer's claim that Naturalist writers endow their lower class characters with extreme emotions, feelings, and moral ambiguity. Trina and McTeague also slowly descend into poverty because of the loss of McTeague's practice and Trina's subsequent niggardly behavior. This angers McTeague as she has money saved up but refuses to spend it, which results in McTeague losing interest in her. Everything about Trina starts to irritate him and he resorts to alcohol to make his city life bearable. The city boasts an abundance of alcohol in the many saloons Norris describes and alcohol abuse, subsequently, degrades McTeague even further, as he frequently abuses Trina physically (171). Alcohol combined with anger towards his wife and their poverty-stricken situation, therefore, also awakens the brute in McTeague and he eventually kills Trina. Thus, the city's temptations, which McTeague cannot resist, shape his violent character that contribute to his general degradation from human to animal.

McTeague also epitomizes how the lower class man has no control over his life, for he is shaped by his environment and heredity that make him, according to Darwin's theory of evolution, unfit to survive. This is epitomized by the fact that the Irish were often stereotypically depicted in nineteenth century city literature. The modern city was often seen as the seat of opportunity, but McTeague illustrates that this was not the case for the Irish. They were, as the previous paragraph demonstrated, the drunk, working class brutes unable to succeed in life. This is accentuated by the fact that McTeague's father, when under the

influence of alcohol, becomes an “irresponsible animal, a beast, a brute” who eventually died of alcoholism (5). McTeague, indeed, behaves in a similar fashion when he is intoxicated, because “[T]he evil of an entire race flowed in his veins” (22). This confirms that Americans perceived the Irish as an inferior race whose heritage is tarnished by alcoholism and violence. McTeague’s mother, moreover, wanted her son to enter a profession and rise from the poor social position the Irish occupied. Initially, this seems to be the case as McTeague assumes a comfortable middle class lifestyle, but the rules of Social Darwinism deem McTeague unfit for this and, therefore, McTeague’s life and subsequent demise are predetermined. Thus, McTeague is helpless against the forces of heredity and the modern city that demoralize him, turn him into a brutish alcoholic, and lead to his inevitable death.

In conclusion, Norris’ powerful story illustrates that San Francisco is a great city in the American West in which modernity thrives. McTeague is in an excellent position to enjoy and watch this modern city, while strolling around San Francisco and from his bay window. The city, however, is also depicted as an indifferent environment in which time and capitalism rule and, as such, it breeds greed, demoralization, and human degradation. Norris also shows that McTeague’s Irish heritage exacerbates his situation, as it predestined his life and subsequent downfall even before he was born. This is also the case with Crane’s Irish Maggie whose hopes and dreams could not spare her from her inevitable downfall. Thus, Norris represents San Francisco as a city covered in a layer of modernity that conveniently hides the city’s flaws. The final chapter deals with the representation of the city and city life in Theodore Dreiser’s *Sister Carrie*.

Chapter 4

The City and City Life *Sister Carrie*

Sister Carrie was Theodore Dreiser's first novel, which immediately established his reputation as a controversial writer. Similar to *McTeague*, *Sister Carrie* was written at the turn of the century and was considered an immoral work, because of its frank portrayal of sexual matters, such as, adultery. It was, therefore, difficult for Dreiser to find a publisher willing to print *Sister Carrie*. Luckily, Norris worked at Doubleday, Page and Company where he tried to convince his colleagues to publish Dreiser's novel (Pizer 429). Over the course of a six-month period, Norris and Dreiser had corresponded extensively about the possible publication of *Sister Carrie*. On 28 May, 1900, Norris wrote to Dreiser that *Sister Carrie* was the best novel he had read since he worked at the firm and that he would do "all in [my] power to see that the decision is for publication" (430). A few months later, after Doubleday's requested revisions, *Sister Carrie* was ready for publication. *Sister Carrie* was Dreiser's introduction to the Naturalist literary scene that he quickly came to dominate with his works. Similar to Crane, Dreiser introduced America to the dark side of city life, hereby inspiring and paving the way for early-twentieth century novelists (Hutchisson and West 1810). Although *Sister Carrie* initially only sold 465 copies, nowadays it is regarded to be a "landmark in naturalist fiction" (Hutchisson and West 1810) and ranked 33th on the *Guardian*'s 2014 list of "100 best novels" (McCrum), which epitomises *Sister Carrie*'s enduring influence.

This final chapter examines the representation of the cities of Chicago and New York. Before we delve deeper into this, it is of great importance to explore all the aspects that influenced Dreiser to write *Sister Carrie*. These aspects include Dreiser's time as a journalist during which he familiarized himself with scientific determinism and European Realism, the event that inspired him to write *Sister Carrie*, his unique approach to Naturalism, and Dreiser's feelings and ideas regarding Chicago and New York, cities that both fascinated him

and, therefore, had to be captured in fiction.

Theodore Dreiser (1871-1945) was born in Terra Haute, Indiana, but his parents frequently moved around in the Midwest to search for steady jobs. Dreiser spent a few months in Chicago in 1884 and moved there for a longer period of time in 1887 after which he spent one year studying at Indiana University and returned to Chicago in 1890. Similar to Crane and Norris, he started working in journalism for - amongst others - the *Chicago Globe* (Dreiser 425). During this period, Dreiser decided that he wanted to have 'real' contact with life and he submerged himself into the world of arson, bribery, corruption, sodomy, murder, rape, and trickery (425). In 1894, Dreiser discovered the philosophical works on scientific determinism of Huxley, Tyndall, and Spencer. These works destroyed all that was left of his belief in Catholicism and he came to detest it as a political organization (425). Dreiser also encountered the fictional works of Honoré de Balzac, four of whose novels he read without stopping (425). While Norris had 'his' Zola as a prime inspiration, Dreiser was profoundly influenced in his thinking and writing by Balzac (Hutchisson and West 1810). The French novelist is often hailed as one of the founders of European Realism, which was established as a response to Romanticism. Balzac was renowned for extensively depicting ordinary people living their ordinary lives. Dreiser imitated this, as can be seen from the fact that he devoted five pages to describing Carrie's first day punching holes in leather in a shoe factory - not the most interesting job to describe, but one that exemplifies how the ordinary masses earn a living. At the turn of the century, moreover, Dreiser's sister-in-law, Rose, convinced him to read Norris' *McTeague*. In a letter to his friend and fellow journalist H.L. Mencken, Dreiser wrote that he loved reading *McTeague*, could not stop talking about it, and that it was "the first real American book" he had ever read (424). Finally, in September 1898, Dreiser's wife and his friend and novelist Arthur Henry, encouraged him to write his first historical novel *Sister Carrie* that was published in 1900. Thus, Dreiser's work as a journalist and the works

he encountered during this period all contributed to his first novel *Sister Carrie*.

Sister Carrie is based on the experiences of Emma, one of Dreiser's older sisters, which partly catalysed the writing of the novel. In 1886, Emma's married Chicagoan lover L.A. Hopkins - a shipping clerk in a saloon - stole approximately 3,500 dollars and some jewelry from his employers and fled with Dreiser's sister to New York (Pizer 373-380). This incident was widely covered in the media, such as the *Chicago Mail* and the *Chicago Tribune*. The former, in fact, was the first newspaper to mention that L.A. Hopkins fled with a young, pretty, and married companion - that is Emma (376). The newspaper also reported that L.A. Hopkins and Emma planned the robbery together. According to the latter newspaper, L.A. Hopkins sent the remainder of the money and all of the jewelry back out of remorse (379). The aforementioned incident is central to the plot of *Sister Carrie*, for it marks the transition in setting from Chicago to New York. Dreiser clearly altered Emma's story for his novel, since L.A. Hopkins was a clerk, a profession that yielded neither wealth, nor power, whereas Hurstwood is depicted as a rich Chicagoan manager. Emma, moreover, helped plan the robbery, while Hurstwood is solely responsible for stealing the 10,000 dollars. In addition, Carrie accompanies Hurstwood to New York, but only under Hurstwood's false pretenses that Drouet has been hospitalized (Dreiser 187). Dreiser, therefore, gave Emma's story a Naturalist spin to represent his views on life at the turn of the century, which will be explained in more detail in the following paragraph.

Both Crane and Norris studied violence and human degradation within the lower classes in America from an Anglo-Saxon, middle class background. Dreiser, however, came from a working class, immigrant background, as his parents were originally from Germany. He, consequently, experienced a different youth compared to Crane and Norris, one that was characterized by poverty, a lack of stability due to extensive traveling, and anti-immigrant sentiments (Pizer ix). Put differently, Dreiser predominantly derived his inspiration from first-

hand observations. This, subsequently, influenced Dreiser's interpretation of American Naturalism that was, at the time, popularly perceived to be cynical and sexually explicit (Pizer ix). Because of his own struggle with poverty, Spencer's Social Darwinism and the notion of the "survival of the fittest" appealed to Dreiser. The role of chance in a deterministic plot, moreover, is another characteristic Dreiser contributes to American Naturalism (Campbell 502). Hurstwood, for instance, has the chance to steal his employer's savings and, with this money in hand, decides to put it back exactly how he found it, but in a stroke of bad luck the lock springs and Hurstwood is unable to open the safe again and, thus, he has no choice but to steal the money. In other words, Dreiser is not only interested in the manner in which environments shape characters, but also in how characters deal with sudden opportunities and setbacks and how they cope with their predetermined fates. Thus, Dreiser's notion of American Naturalism arose from his own experiences of enduring hardships during the late-nineteenth century.

Dreiser became fascinated with 'the city' after having spent a few months in Chicago - the first major American city he had ever seen - in 1884. In his autobiography *Dawn* (1931), he explains that he wished he could experience his first days in Chicago again, for he remembers the "pleasing sensations and fascinating scenes" (396) - that felt as if the spirit of the city flowed into him and made him feel esthetic with intense joy and hope. Precisely that exciting feeling was what Dreiser wanted to capture in prose. To underscore the feelings Chicago evoked in him, Dreiser accounts the moment he came back to Chicago, after a year of studying in Indiana, which filled him with enthusiasm. The city, he felt, with all its odors, sounds, and flavors appeared to sing and speak to him as if it were a "speaking, living thing" (396). Chicago, therefore, touched Dreiser's soul, because it embodies modern life that became an integral part of him.

In another, earlier, autobiography *A Book about Myself* (1922), Dreiser explains that

New York was not as pretty as Chicago, for it was mostly covered in dirt, poverty, and despair; consisted of cramped buildings; and lacked nature (379). When Dreiser discovered Broadway, however, he found something that Mid-Western cities lacked and he had never seen before: “the feeling of gross and blissful and parading self-indulgence” (397). Broadway, as such, was the epitome of a shop window in which all that is luxurious, beautiful, and fun is on display. For the majority of poor New Yorkers, Broadway was very difficult to behold as this place embodied everything they wanted but could not have and, yet, it made Broadway all the more alluring. Dreiser believed that, compared to Chicago, New York had an even bigger wealth gap, because he had never seen such bitter poverty and such conspicuous consumption in one city at the same time, which greatly fascinated him (398). It also made Dreiser aware of the fact that New York embraces show and luxury and, therefore, embraces the rich. This means that the less well-off people can only advance their social position with chance and luck. Thus, New York’s vulgar display of wealth against the backdrop of massive poverty and inequality made the city as interesting as Chicago.

In sum, during Dreiser’s job in journalism his interest in the real ‘dark world’ that is the city developed and, at the same time, he also became interested in scientific determinism and European Realism. Dreiser, consequently, devised his own interpretation of American Naturalism that was largely influenced by his own poverty-stricken youth, and the different, contrasting feelings Chicago and New York evoked in him. After Dreiser heard about the incident Emma got herself involved in, he had everything he needed to write *Sister Carrie*. In light of all of the different aspects that inspired Dreiser to become a Naturalist novelist and write *Sister Carrie*, it is time to take a closer look at the novel itself. What follows is a brief summary of the novel after which it is analyzed in terms of the representation of the cities of Chicago and New York and life within those cities.

Sister Carrie opens with Carrie on a train from rural Wisconsin bound for Chicago.

She meets the well-dressed, traveling salesman Drouet on the train and is immediately impressed by his travel stories. The feeling is mutual, for Drouet is captivated by Carrie's young and innocent appearance. In Chicago, Carrie's sister, Minnie, escorts Carrie to her apartment to meet her husband Sven and their baby. Carrie swiftly embarks on a job hunt that proves to be difficult for an unexperienced country girl in the 'big city'. This annoys Minnie and Sven who also disapprove of Carrie's interest in the theater. When Carrie finally gets a job in a shoe factory, she realizes that moving to Chicago and living with her boring, poor sister's family is not what she had anticipated. She meets Drouet again by accident and moves in with him in the hope of a better life. Drouet provides her with everything she wants, but Carrie is still unhappy. When Drouet introduces her to Hurstwood, Carrie is, once again, impressed by this older, rich man and Hurstwood, similar to Drouet, is immediately attracted to Carrie's purity and they begin an affair. Drouet also offers Carrie the opportunity to perform in a local theater, which triggers Carrie's ambitions to become an actress. After Carrie's performance, Drouet and Hurstwood's wife find out about the affair, which leaves Hurstwood in a predicament that will eventually lead to him fleeing Chicago, Carrie's rise as an actress, and Hurstwood's downfall in New York. This catalyzes when Hurstwood steals his employer's money and, subsequently, flees to Canada with Carrie. Once in Canada, he returns part of the money to his employers and takes Carrie to New York. Initially, they manage to live a decent life, but as the money gradually runs out, their relationship follows the same downward path. Out of dire financial need, Carrie gets a job in a chorus and eventually becomes a famous actress, while Hurstwood slowly descends into poverty. Hurstwood eventually commits suicide to escape his deplorable existence and Carrie realizes that her highly anticipated fame and money do not make her happy either. Thus, Dreiser represents Chicago as an indifferent, fast-paced world that favors few and impedes many to succeed. New York, conversely, is depicted as a place in which one can rise high or fall hard, which is

determined by chance, bad luck, and predestination.

Carrie is initially an outsider in Chicago, for she has never lived there before, but she soon finds herself caught in a disillusioning experience as she realizes she occupies the lower ranks in society. Carrie arrives as a young, unexperienced, and naïve girl in Chicago and, therefore, she experiences the city as Baudelaire's *flâneur* would do. Carrie often has no money for carfare and, consequently, has to familiarize herself with Chicago by foot. Especially at the start of her job hunt, Carrie merely strolls around in downtown Chicago, because she does not possess the self-confidence to enter the factories and stores yet. As a *flâneur*, she is therefore able to objectively observe the factory workers, shop girls, clerks, and genteel business men working in tall buildings in a manner only "the casual wanderer" could do (Dreiser 11). Carrie's strolling, however, soon becomes fast-paced walking that is quickly tiring the country girl. This corresponds to Simmel's belief that city dwellers become machines that have to adapt to the fast-paced rhythm of the city as "[H]er feet carried her mechanically forward" and "[B]lock after block passed by" (13). This underscores how Carrie has already taken over the pace of Chicago which, according to Simmel, is governed by money and time. Carrie's work in the shoe factory, moreover, epitomizes this further as her repetitive work only consists of punching holes in leather and to do this, Carrie soon realizes, "an average speed was necessary" to not delay the process (26). Put differently, Carrie has to adapt herself to the pace of her coworkers and the machines with which she works and in the repetitive process she becomes akin to a machine herself. For lower class wage-seekers, this is what the city entails, or what constitutes its rules to which Carrie has to abide if she wants to survive. De Certeau argues that these rules are set in place by those who have power and are in a position to oversee those such as Carrie. De Certeau also explains that it is interesting to examine how people use tactics to escape the designed city, which Carrie does too. Carrie, does not like the rules, nor does she like working as a 'machine' and by becoming Drouet's

kept woman she dodges this plan the city has laid out for people like her. Thus, Dreiser positions Carrie as *flâneur* in Chicago where she is quickly swallowed into a fast-paced city life in which she loses most of her human agency and, rather, becomes a machine controlled by the city of which she can only escape by becoming a kept-woman.

In contrast, when Carrie lives in New York she is already used to city life and, therefore, starts out as an outsider but gradually becomes a successful insider as New York comes to embrace her. Walking through Broadway as a *flâneur* makes Carrie realize that she was never happy as a kept-woman and now that money is tight she tries to pursue an acting career. Carrie initially has difficulty getting work, as she is little-experienced, but she starts out as a chorus girl and with the help of her good looks manages to become a rich and famous actress. New York, similar to Chicago, is a city that is designed to favor the powerful and the rich and, therefore, the powerful elite and institutions rule here too. This coincides with McNamara's opinion that when institutions overpower human agency, people will develop a *blasé* attitude. This, indeed, is the case with Carrie, who is dependent on the companies that employ her. As a result, she increasingly behaves in a calculated, rational, and indifferent manner towards Hurstwood, because she only cares about making money and advancing her career. Put differently, Carrie, here, exemplifies the 'human-machine', created by the city, who is only interested in a fast-paced, wealthy existence that Simmel wrote about.

Interestingly, Carrie was unable to cope with Chicago's fast-paced rhythm from which she escaped, but she quickly adapts herself to New York's rhythm. Furthermore, as Carrie's career progresses she is constantly on stage. This literally elevates Carrie above the audience that watches her perform, which enables her to look down upon them. In other words, Carrie is no longer the *flâneur*, for she now assumes the position of overseer through de Certeau's panopticon. This makes her realize that, similar to de Certeau's claim, people at the top looking through the panopticon do not necessarily see an accurate representation of city life at

street level and vice versa, for she is still unhappy although she has reached the metaphorical top. Thus, in New York, Carrie is better adapted to city life and after she developed a *blasé* attitude towards her husband her career as an actress sky-rockets, which means she is no longer the *flâneur* she was in Chicago but, rather, becomes the overseer behind the panopticon in New York.

De Certeau describes that walking is the most elementary form to experience a city, because it creates true mental maps from street level-perspective that are different from the ones the overseeing elite has constructed. McNamara similarly states that writers of city literature can invite people to experience the city in a way academics are unable to, for the latter write about the city from a certain viewpoint and not from street level. Lynch's concept of mental images make the city more legible and also come to the fore in *Sister Carrie*. Paths, for instance, comprise West Van Buuren Street in Chicago where Minnie and Sven's apartment is located and Broadway in New York through which Carrie often walks. Edges are, for example, the Chicago River that separates downtown Chicago from the residential areas and the Hudson River on the edge of New York that constitutes a break between New York and the rest of America. Districts in Chicago are, for instance, the middle class North-Side where Hurstwood lives in contrast to the lower class West-Side where Minnie and Sven live. Districts in New York include residential neighborhoods, such as Brooklyn where Hurstwood works as a scab and the Upper West Side where Carrie's and Hurstwood's first apartment is located. Nodes, such as the crossing on Halstead Street - Chicago's theater district - or New York's Madison Square - the center of city life and amusement - are all strategic points in the city that provide direction. Landmarks can be the Fair, one of Chicago's department stores, which awakens Carrie's desire for consumer goods or the Casino Theatre in New York where Carrie gets her first chorus job. These elements clearly constitute a mental map for Carrie that make both cities legible for her as well as providing her with

meaning and structure. De Certeau concedes that memories tie us to a place and, therefore, these places are personal and not of interest to everyone (108). Carrie's memories, feelings, and thoughts of certain places are thus only of importance to her own mental map. Thus, through Carrie's mental map of Chicago and New York, readers are invited to experience the cities on street level as well, which could help make these modern phenomena more legible.

Dreiser's use of Naturalist characteristics in *Sister Carrie* combines both Lauter's and McNamara's views on Naturalism and include Dreiser's focus on Social Darwinism and the role of chance in a deterministic plot. Lauter described Naturalism to be a darker form of Realism, which implies that it is a mere continuation of Realism only slightly grittier. Dreiser, indeed, infused the novel with extensive descriptions of ordinary activities, conversations, and ordinary people, that are characteristic of Realism. Dreiser, for example, describes grocery shopping and the price of the groceries. Dreiser also deliberately chose lower class Americans as characters for *Sister Carrie*, which is characteristic of Naturalism. This illustrates that Realism and Naturalism are closely linked and that the latter follows in the footsteps of the former. Pizer, conversely, focusses on how people are governed by their environment and the notion of man versus nature in which an individual has to deal with an indifferent environment that will intrinsically shape his character. This also comes to the fore in *Sister Carrie*, but Dreiser illustrates that Chicago and New York are two very different cities and thriving in one city does not necessarily mean that this is the case in every city, because "[W]hatever a man like Hurstwood could be in Chicago [...] he would be but an inconspicuous drop in an ocean like New York" (205). Carrie and Hurstwood, indeed, illustrate this. In Chicago, Carrie has difficulty getting and keeping a job, resisting her urge to find amusement, and repressing her desires for the goods in the department stores, whereas Hurstwood is a wealthy businessman able to do and buy all the things Carrie longs for. In New York, however, it is Carrie who becomes a successful actress able to dine at fine

restaurants, while Hurstwood descends into poverty and is reduced to asking Carrie for money. Every environment, therefore, is indifferent and allows only the fittest to survive. The fittest are those who seize the opportunities and handle the setbacks in their predestined lives well. Carrie and Hurstwood are subject to both opportunities and setbacks that life randomly throws at them and Dreiser's interest lies in how both deal with those. Hurstwood, again, exemplifies this, for he does not have much control over his declining life in New York and fails to seize the few opportunities he receives and, consequently, is stuck in a downwards spiral of degeneration. Thus, Carrie and Hurstwood illustrate that each city is different and indifferent in which they essentially are devoid of free-will, which means that it is crucial to seize every opportunity.

In conclusion, Dreiser represents both Chicago and New York as similar, indifferent fast-paced environments in which a person either sinks or swims. Both cities also differ from each other, as Chicago clearly favors people like Drouet and Hurstwood who are quite successful businessmen, but the city dislikes Carrie. New York, in contrast, is more glamorous and luxurious than Chicago and Hurstwood proves to be unfit for such a different environment. New York does embrace Carrie for her talents that fit perfectly with New York's image. In short, chance, bad luck, and predestination determine whether a person survives in a certain city or not. This leads to the realization that Carrie and Hurstwood are predestined to live unfulfilled, unhappy lives. Thus, in *Sister Carrie*, cities are represented as sites of disillusionment in which money and fame seem the highest attainable things.

Conclusion

Twain and Warner remarked that, in the Gilded Age, for only a few people “it is as natural to be rich as it is for most people to be poor” (*The Gilded Age: A Tale of Today*). It illustrates that behind the sparse surface layer of affluence, poverty and despair were omnipresent and the representation of the three cities exemplifies this. This contradiction is also the subject of this thesis and, accordingly, it has aimed to explore the dualities in the representation of three great American cities: New York, San Francisco, and Chicago as well as life within these cities in the works of Stephen Crane, Frank Norris, and Theodore Dreiser. At the end of the nineteenth century, America transformed into an industrial urban society in which cities became important capitalist centers. This was the result of rapid industrialization and urbanization, which changed the way Americans perceived and experienced cities. These changes were, subsequently, captured in fiction, which led to the development of American Naturalism, a literary form that writers felt was perfectly suited to capture the changing world around them. Previous research on this subject tends to focus on either the negative or the positive influences of the city and city life and it, therefore, remains inconclusive on pivotal matters regarding the literary representation of those. This thesis, subsequently, has aimed to answer the following question: How are the modern cities of New York, San Francisco, and Chicago and life within these cities represented in the novels *Maggie, a Girl of the Streets*, *McTeague*, and *Sister Carrie*?

To answer this question, I have predominantly examined the plots, vocabulary, irony, and imagery in the novels. I have used Charles Baudelaire’s and Walter Benjamin’s concept of the *flâneur*; Georg Simmel’s theory on the city and urban experience; and Michel de Certeau’s theory on the importance of walking through a city and his concept of the panopticon to analyse the city’s influence on the characters’ psyche. Richard McNamara’s theory on the city in literature and Kevin Lynch’s theory of mental images were used to

analyze how the characters understand their environments.

This section briefly summarizes the findings of each chapter followed by an interpretation of these findings to answer the research question. Crane's *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets* primarily focused on irony and imagery in relation to the Naturalistic characteristics of environmental determinism and heredity for his depiction of the Bowery and slum life. He, consequently, represented New York as a battlefield governed by social problems and violence that imprisons and disillusion its inhabitants. In *McTeague*, Norris embraced San Francisco's isolated position and illustrated his vision of the city with the same Naturalistic elements Crane used. As a result, Norris represented San Francisco as a site where modernity and technological advances are greatly admired, but also as a site that breeds greed, demoralization, and human degradation. In *Sister Carrie*, Dreiser used the Naturalistic traits of environmental determinism in relation to opportunities and setbacks. Dreiser represented Chicago as a fast-paced city that tends to devour the many who fail to keep up. New York, in contrast, is represented as a place in which the American Dream is certainly attainable depending on how a person deals with chance, bad luck, and predestination. These findings, therefore, prove that Crane, Norris, and Dreiser were all very critical of the modern city and city-life.

The following conclusions can be drawn regarding the research question. The notion that the city plays a significant role in human ruin and degeneration comes to the fore in all three novels. Crane's Pete ruins Maggie's purity and innocence and, as a result, she is not welcome in her tenements building any longer, which means she has to resort to prostitution to survive. Norris' Trina also loses her beauty and innocence due to her obsession with hoarding money, which ruins her marriage and degrades her appearance and mental state. Dreiser's Hurstwood, similarly, loses his handsome, masculine looks in New York, due to the job and money related setbacks he has to face, which eventually degrade him to the level of a

beggar. The notion that the capitalist and consumerist ethos of the city leads to temptation and disillusionment is another theme that all novels have in common. Crane's Maggie feels dissatisfied with her worn-out dresses and the shabby apartment she lives in after the sophisticated Pete takes her to theaters and museums where people are well-dressed. Maggie desires to be like those people, but quickly realizes that Pete does not want to pursue a relationship with her and her hope quickly evaporates into disillusion. Norris's McTeague longs for the gilded tooth that he believes would perfectly complement his dental parlors and represent his success and wealth. McTeague, however, is not as successful and wealthy as he believes, as the loss of his job disillusiones him and shows he is a victim of the city's capitalism. Furthermore, the lottery money gradually becomes the most important object in the character's lives, which makes them greedy and jealous and, consequently, leads to their moral deterioration and demise. Carrie, similar to Maggie and McTeague, develops a taste for the finer things in life, such as beautiful clothes and theater visits. She believes that fame and money will make her truly happy, but as soon as she has achieved this in New York her persistent feelings of emptiness and unhappiness reflect her growing disillusionment with stardom. Thus, the city and city life in all three novels are represented as places in which capitalism and consumerism play a central role, which tempt people to lower or corrupt their morals and, consequently, ruins and degrades them.

Although this thesis has contributed new insights to the extensive debate concerning the representation of cities in nineteenth century American literature, future research, which employs other theoretical frameworks or research methods are needed to gain a full understanding of the representation of modern cities within literature. In short, this thesis illustrates that modern cities, indeed, were often embraced for their modernity - that glossy, attractive surface layer - that only exhibits 'the good' to conveniently conceal all else cities entail: 'the bad' and 'the ugly'.

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