

The Image of Women and Society in the Literature of XIX Century

Umarova Dildora Rustamovna

Master student at NamSIFL

Abstract: Throughout centuries, literature has been regarded as entertainment for readers. Reading a literary work allows readers to identify themselves with some elements of the written work, experience a variety of emotions within the text, enrich their knowledge and enhance critical thinking. Furthermore, literature and history have always been closely interrelated since writers have repeatedly reflected the cultural and ideological movements prevailing at a specific time in history in their works. Literature, as a reflection of real life, evolves at the same time as society. American literature is no exception. Until the mid-nineteenth century, romanticism dominated the literary scene characterized by its focus on imagination, idealism, and subjectivity over the objective.

Key points: American Literature, society, women, naturalism, realism.

Literature review

Until the mid-nineteenth century, romanticism dominated the literary scene characterized by its focus on imagination, idealism, and subjectivity over the objective. However, as noted by the scholar Phillip J. Barrish, in the nineteenth century, realism emerged as a distinct literary movement in response to romanticism (J.Barrish). Realistic literature focused on the faithful and detailed depiction of the everyday lives of people of the middle classes in society showing characters as they truly were rejecting idealization in favour of close observation. Furthermore, the economic and social transformation that took place in Europe and America in the late nineteenth century, together with the leading philosophical theories at that time, originated a new literary movement: naturalism.

Naturalism is a kind of new critical realism developed under the war and social turmoil which affects people's beliefs in their early ages. It is known that naturalism came from Europe, and was first put forward by the French novelist Emile Zola, who held that the purpose of a novelist was to be a scientist, to place his characters in a situation and then to watch the influences of heredity and environment on them. This idea was picked up by writers in different countries, they held that realism was too genteel in tone to reveal the harsh reality, then a literary movement called "Naturalism" started. Naturalism in America had been shaped by the war, by the social upheavals that undermined the comforting faith of an earlier age, and by the disturbing teachings of Charles Darwin. Darwinism seemed to stress the nature of animal in man, to suggest that man was dominated by the irresistible forces of evolution (Wu, 2005). In reflecting the reality of life, naturalistic writers tended to show the feature of sentimentalism of early romanticism (Wu, 2005). The difference between naturalism and romanticism is that naturalists take the attitude that the world is lack of morality, people have no willing of freedom, their lives are controlled by heredity and environment (Wu, 2005), people lead a miserable life when they are alive, but they are forgotten by others after they are dead. Though naturalism reveals the weakness of the world by the way of extremely strict realistic technique, it sometimes paves the way to improve the world by social reform (Wu, 2005). With the development of economy, science and culture, influenced by European naturalistic literature, American naturalistic literature emerged in the late 19th century

and the major representatives were Stephen Crane, Jack London, Frank Norris and Theodore Dreiser etc. These writers' detailed depiction of the lives of the miserable and the abnormal, their frank treatment of human passion and sexuality, and their portrayal of man and women overpowered by blind forces of nature still exert a powerful influence on modern American literature (Wu, 2005).

American society in 19th century

American society in the nineteenth century moved from the state of stability to the state of maturity. The life of American people changed in many different fields, it marked a big progress during the four decades of the nineteenth century. This period characterizes by the emergence of corporations, new inventions and transportation. The nineteenth century American society had known great periods of urbanization, immigration from the Southern and Eastern Europe and Asia and rapid industrialization. So, during these years American's identity changed from the stability to maturity (Lamb, R.P & Thompson, 2005). From the era of reconstruction to the end of the 19th century the United States had witnessed an economic transformation marked by the quick expansion of big business, the development of agriculture, and the rise of industrial conflict. These developments led to the coming of immigrants from southern and Eastern Europe, from Asia and Mexico. American society in the nineteenth century had witnessed a quick industrialization, in that America's great industries were marked by steel production, petroleum, the railroads (the essential means of transformation for business), electricity, textiles, meatpacking, the automobile and the tool making.

The industries of American country consolidated in very rapid state into large and large entities, monopolies and consortia run by interlocking directorates. They were headed by powerful men. Between the mid of 1870 and 1914, America was characterized by strike every day, this conflict was strong and intensive. The railroad strike was the first nationwide strike in the American history. This involved not only the workers of railroads, but also farmers, craftsmen and unemployed who brought the Nation's railroad to standstill. Then, in 1886 there wear almost fifteen hundred strikers, affecting half a million workers (ibid). But in 1890, there were strikers between two thousand took place every year (Lamb& Thompson, 2005). The industrial revolution which came to America in the late nineteenth century made a great change in American life. This period saw the appearance of corporations, new inventions, transportation and communication. As we have seen above, the nineteenth century of American society was marked by immigration; immigrants were arriving from Southern and Eastern Europe and Asia, this led to unimaginable diversity of culture (Lamb& Thompson, 2005). The urban population of the entire Nation enhanced from six million to twenty million, as displaced rural population from both home and abroad settled in urban areas (ibid). The history of natives between 1864 and 1890 was characterized by broken treaties, forced relocation, new immigrants came to America between 1860 and 1900 they were coming from non Anglophone cultures, unlike the midcentury immigrants, they were Italians, Jews, Poles, Russians, Greeks, Chinese, Bohemians, Turks, Austro-Hungarians, Japanese and others. They were endured poverty, disease, crime, lack of economic opportunity (ibid). The thing that led to the coming of immigrants is the interaction between social and economic conditions in Europe and those in America. America offered attractive possibilities to new immigrants.

Writers and their novels highlight the problems of society and the issues of women's fate

Stephen Crane has been considered both a realistic and a naturalistic writer. The historical and personal circumstances that surrounded this writer influenced his work. Crane was born in Newark, New Jersey, in 1871, and he was the last of a family of fourteen children. Crane's father was a Methodist minister and his mother was a woman 12 devoted to social concerns. His familiar conditions directed the themes of Crane's writings towards social issues focusing on the characters' environments. Stephen Crane started his literary career in 1892 when he moved to New York where he worked as a freelance reporter, writing articles about the slums of New York for several newspapers and magazines. As Lelekis mentions: "... Stephen Crane's newspaper work significantly influenced his literary career as a reporter-novelist". He reflected his journalistic approach to the fiction he produced which placed him into the realistic genre. Moreover, after

befriending critic William Dean Howells, an advocate of literary realism, Crane's writing focused on the descriptions of ordinary life in an objective and unadorned way becoming a relevant figure of realistic literature. However, Crane is also characterized as a naturalistic writer. The scholar Donna Campbell defines Stephen Crane as a "classic naturalistic" writer ("American Literary Naturalism" 500). Similarly, the critic Donald Pizer considers him an example of a naturalistic writer since he was a practitioner of Emile Zola's principles. Consequently, Crane's fiction began to present characters objectively as well as "... shaped, conditioned, and usually destroyed by social and biological forces beyond their control" (Pizer,D). Furthermore, as the American literary critic Harold Bloom reports, Crane was a writer leading a bohemian lifestyle among local artists in the Bowery, one of the worst slums in New York City. This first-hand experience of poverty and life of deprivation was reflected in his first novel, *Maggie*, portraying an innovative and realistic depiction of life in the slums and being considered one of the most compelling examples of naturalism in American literature (Lelekis 171). Being initially rejected by publishers who thought that Crane's description of slum life would shock readers, Crane published his first fiction work himself in 1893, under the pseudonym Johnston Smith. His novel *Maggie* is an example of the application of the theory of social determinism in American literature.

Jack London means many things around the globe. He was a pivotal writer at the turn of the century whose literary naturalism and socialism also had important effects on the literatures of many nations – including, first the United States, but by the year 2000, also in nearly 100 separate languages. He led a nonstop life full of his great love of the land and sea, advanced ideas about agriculture, adventuring abroad, sailing, socialism and photography. His marriage to his second wife was intensely loving. His personal biography is so compelling that many do not fully appreciate his status as a contributor to literature.

His work transformed fiction. His influence was immediate and global after the publication of "The Call of the Wild" in 1903, but he was not only influential in his Klondike stories, but in his tales of the Pacific, his socialist speeches, even horror stories. He wrote the most famous autobiography of alcoholism, "John Barleycorn."

He invented the first prize-fight story, and made as his hero a skinny teen boxing for money in Los Angeles to buy guns for the Mexican Revolution. He wrote feminist novels. He wrote poetry and plays.

Jack London envisioned a world for every working man or woman, slave, writer/artist or anyone, in which his chosen method of "sincerity" as a cardinal virtue would be realized. He also wrote for the general public - scattered over many nations - stories that seemed elemental on one level, but rich with myth and symbol on other levels.

His heroes are always quite diverse: Russians and Americans in the Klondike; American Indians; a rough-and-tumble crew aboard a North Pacific sealing ship; Californians from Truckee to Mexico; South Sea Islanders, lepers in Hawaii and many more.

Frank Norris, an influential American novelist of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, indeed addressed societal issues and often depicted the challenges faced by women in his works. His novels, notably "McTeague" and "The Octopus," focused on broader societal problems while touching on the fate and struggles of women within those contexts. Norris delved into economic disparities and social class divisions, depicting the struggles of individuals within society's rigid structures. His works often explored how societal structures and environments impacted characters' lives, including women, shaping their fates. Norris depicted women constrained by societal expectations, showcasing their limited agency and opportunities within the prevailing gender roles. Female characters in his novels faced challenges navigating societal norms and often contended with circumstances beyond their control. Norris's novels employed realism, portraying the harsh realities of life, which included the difficulties and limitations faced by women in the societies he depicted. While Norris's primary focus was on broader societal issues, his works indirectly shed light on the challenges and constraints faced by women. His portrayal of female

characters within the context of societal struggles contributed to a larger critique of the social fabric of his time, highlighting the limitations and fate of women within those societal constructs.

One of Frank Norris's notable novels is "McTeague: A Story of San Francisco," published in 1899. This novel delves into the lives of its characters within the societal context of late 19th-century San Francisco, touching on various societal issues, including the fate and struggles of women. Norris uses Trina's character to comment on the restrictions and challenges imposed on women, particularly in the context of economic struggles and societal norms of the time. The novel employs realism to depict the harsh realities faced by its characters, including the limitations and fate of women within the societal framework. "McTeague" serves as a significant example of Norris's portrayal of societal issues, wherein the challenges faced by female characters reflect broader societal constraints prevalent during that period in American society.

Mark Twain is widely known for his witty and thought-provoking writings idealism. The picture' that finally emerges admits of no easy generalization. Women in Mark Twain are neither angels of domesticity nor venomous bitches, neither avatars of social convention nor creatures of Instinct. They can be any of these things (or combinations of them), and their very diversity indicates that, in matters relating to women as in other matters, Mark Twain was at once his age's staunchest advocate and severest critic. Yet the complexities of a number of Twain's female characters have never been given adequate attention. Readers habitually dismiss characters like Aunt Polly and Mary Jane Wilks as mere caricatures while finding much to praise in the more "dynamic" male characters. To understand just why this division persists, we may look to the history of Mark Twain criticism.

A general survey of Twain's entire literary career, which spanned over half a century, produces several various literary identities that reasonably fail to harmonize with one another, making it difficult to choose just one predominant, all-inclusive image. Mark Twain as the Southern regionalist and frontier novelist, likely the most recognized of these strands, gathers its substance from Twain's poignant and accurate capturing of the culture and history of Southern Whitesell 2 life and milieu both before and after the Civil War.

Conclusion

Women's roles in the workforce were extremely limited during the 19th century and it failed to allow promotions amongst women for their work. An underlying theme of the inequalities throughout the workforce is apparent in Stephen Crane's novel, *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets*. *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets*, is the foundation of realistic literature written during the late 19th century which features several progressive undertones for broader topics such as nature versus nurture, women's roles, and socioeconomic status. Crane's work continues to lead back to one important question that is relatable to countless Americans, especially during the 19th century. Lower socioeconomic status served as a confinement for all people, but especially, women. Women of a lower socioeconomic status would receive fewer opportunities to better themselves economically and socially. These women labeled with a lower class status would be confined to a hard working life and very poor shelter opportunities in slums. Stephen Crane's character Maggie dreams of a new and improved life, much like many Americans at the time.

The image of society in the fiction of the United States often concentrated on the non-Anglo, ethnically marked inhabitants of the growing American cities, many of them immigrants and most belonging to a class-spectrum ranging from the destitute to the lower middle-class. Writers were skeptical towards, or downright hostile to, the notions of bourgeois individualism that characterized realist novels about middle-class life. Most naturalists demonstrated a concern with the animal or the irrational motivations for human behavior, sometimes manifested in connection with sexuality and violence. The writers as Theodore Dreiser, Stephen Crane, Jack London and Frank Norris's detailed descriptions of the lives of the down-trodden and the abnormal, their frank treatment of human passion and sexuality and their portrayal of men and women overwhelmed by the blind forces of nature still exert a powerful influence on modern writer.

References

1. Barrish, Philip J. *The Cambridge Introduction to American Literary Realism*. Cambridge University Press, 2011
2. Lamb, R. P & Thompson, G. R. (2005). *A Companion to American Fiction 1865-1914*. USA: Blackwell.
3. Pizer, Donald, "The Problem of Philosophy in the Novel", in *Sister Carrie, A Norton Critical Edition*, W. W. Norton, 1970
4. Lelekis, Debbie. "Experimenting with Poverty & Performing Benevolence: Morality and Social Reform in Stephen Crane's New York City Sketches and *Maggie, a Girl of the Streets*." *Humanities Bulletin*, vol. 3, no. 2, 2020, pp. 157–172.
5. Wu Weiren. (2005). *History and Anthology of American Literature*. Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press