

ABSTRACT

“Thy Damnation Slumbereth Not”: A Study of the Effects of Shame in Literature
from the Industrial Era

Baylee VerSteeg

Director: Kristen Pond, Ph.D.

This thesis discusses the effect of shame on young women represented in Naturalist literature who have violated the sexual social contract of the late Nineteenth century. The research looks primarily at three works: *Tess of D'Urbervilles* by Thomas Hardy, *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets* by Stephen Crane, and *Sister Carrie* by Theodore Dreiser, as well as at the critical work surrounding these authors. Shame in these novels is depicted as an unnecessary weight placed on the shoulders of a character by an indifferent society and when heeded, this shame causes ultimate destruction.

APPROVED BY DIRECTOR OF HONORS THESIS:

Handwritten signature of Dr. Kristen Pond in cursive script.

Dr. Kristen Pond, Department of English

APPROVED BY THE HONORS PROGRAM:

Dr. Elizabeth Corey, Director

DATE: _____

“THY DAMNATION SLUMBERETH NOT”: A STUDY OF THE EFFECTS OF
SHAME IN LITERATURE FROM THE INDUSTRIAL ERA

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of
Baylor University
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Honors Program

By Baylee VerSteeg

Waco, TX

May, 2018

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	iv
Introduction.....	1
Chapter One	11
Thomas Hardy.....	11
Review of Literature	11
The Dignity of Tess Durbeyfield.....	15
The Shame of Tess Durbeyfield.....	19
The Role of the Industrial Age	22
Tess' Story: Relevant and Timeless	25
Conclusion	27
Chapter Two.....	29
Stephen Crane	29
Comparison of Hardy and Crane's works	29
Review of Literature	31
Religious Allusion: Hell is the final Destination of Shame	34
Maggie: Humanity denied.....	41
Maggie: The Shame of a Nation	43
Conclusion	46

Chapter Three	47
Theodore Dreiser	47
Review of Literature	50
Carrie's Character.....	51
External Reaction to Carrie	56
Carrie's Ambition Fueled by Shame	57
Political Climate	60
Conclusion	60
Conclusion	64
Bibliography	68

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to first thank my advisor Dr. Kristen Pond for leading me through this process. She embodied everything I needed to find the motivation and confidence to complete this process. Dr. Pond has the cool patience of a teacher, the veteran knowledge a mentor, the persistence of a track coach, and the kind encouragement of a friend.

Additionally, I would like to thank Dr. Tara Foley for her more behind the scenes role as mentor and friend. Her advice and benevolent bookshelf eased me through the process from the moment I met her in my second semester sophomore year. She helped provide me with the strength to overcome fear of the largest project I have ever completed.

Finally, I would like to thank all of my Honors friends for the community that grew around this process. We linked arms and embraced the waves of stress together, and I will never forget the warmth of this small family.

INTRODUCTION

Like all human emotions, shame is universally felt and rarely understood. It cannot be argued away or practiced out of existence. Shame reflects the past so strongly that it is drawn into the present. It bears down on a character like a weight, and until lifted, the shame only changes form in such a way as to grow. Shame corrupts one's sense of self according to the standard set by a surrounding social group and often functions as a blunt weapon used by society for policing homogenous behavior.

Like many things, shame is partially defined by what it is not. Shame is not guilt. The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines guilt as "a feeling of deserving blame for offenses". The shamed person is not necessarily to blame for their situation, while a guilty person, by definition, is. When a person feels ashamed they are not necessarily admitting guilt to themselves either, as they can realize that they had no part to play in whatever caused the shame. Rape is one such event that could cause the separation between shame and guilt.

Shame is also different than regret. To regret is to be sorry for or to mourn an event. Regret is a wish that things had been different. Shame, on the other hand, may realize that things occurred exactly as they needed to or that things have no other way of being. Shame carries the pain of regret, without necessarily wishing it away in every circumstance. In a just war for example, shame and regret would manifest very differently. Because shame is so destructive and often entirely unrelated to guilt, characters experiencing shame are often a victim of a more powerful evil. Shame is deeply personal, and finds its strength in the silence of its victim.

By definition, shame is an emotion so dark and painful that its symptoms can include misery, insanity, and even suicide. At a time when self-proclaimed social justice warriors have taken the Internet captive in the attempt to abolish genuine issues like body-shaming, slut-shaming, race-shaming, and more, I notice a powerful discussion on the nature of shame and its effects. In an effort to distance my discussion from a political agenda, I opted to take a step back and look at the emotion from the perspective of progressive minds from earlier generations. For this I looked to a notably pivotal moment in both technological advancement and social reform: the 1890s Industrial Era.

Shame is often considered along with depictions of sexuality and plays an important role in the way a culture polices sexual behavior. No group is shown to feel the brunt of sexual shame like women, and literature has not been shy about critiquing this issue. The literary vision of women changed at the turn of the Nineteenth Century and that is partially due to a slew of authors who chose to depict women as victims of a society that burdened them unfairly with the weight of shame. The Fallen Woman trope began to fall by the wayside for a more modern envisioning of women that more closely resembles the female protagonists featured in literature today. Alexander Cowie discusses the change of the heroine in literature at the turn of the 19th century in his article “The New Heroine’s Code for Virtue”. He comments that “virtue in the novel used to be a relatively simple and definite thing; any heroine knew when she had it and when she lost it. For an unmarried heroine it was her virginity; for a wife it was marital fidelity. It was therefore practically synonymous with chastity, and chastity was the sine qua non of a heroine” (Cowie 191). He later reminds readers that the fallen woman was

expected to die by the end of the novel. Cowie marks a shift in the depiction of women and creates a definition for the New Heroine:

Now the heroine need not be very young; indeed her average age is nearer thirty than eighteen. Beauty is still useful to her, but, being primarily a privilege of youth, it may be conveniently exchanged for charm, which is available at any age. The marriage certificate is still a desideratum but the lack of it is no insuperable bar to a happy heroine's life. Nor does the possession of it prevent her from continuing to be a heroine long after the old-fashioned novelist would have written *finis*. Domestic art for his is less likely to consist in knowing when to turn a roast than where to find the best recipes for mixing cocktails. But in no way does the new heroine differ from her young predecessor more radically than her relationship to virtue. (190).

Cowie compares the two, arguing that the New Woman is no longer defined by her beauty or domestic abilities, falling finally on the issue of her sexuality and the changed societal consideration of the meaning it held for the value of a woman.

In this thesis I have selected three works by three influential Naturalist authors from both the American and British literary realms for a discussion on the effect of shame on young women in the late 19th century. I primarily discuss *Tess of D'Urbervilles* by Thomas Hardy, *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets* by Stephen Crane, and *Sister Carrie* by Theodore Dreiser. Each of these novels depicts a young girl at the turn of her womanhood who is left on her own in the indifferent world of the late 19th century. Despite varying specifics, each desperate protagonist is offered the favor of a man in return for a sexual act as an alternative to an outcome that is hopeless. Additionally, each novel is written in the Naturalist method. It is clear that despite not quite being contemporary to each other, each author chose this premise to make a point about the sexual culture in the specific time and place at which they wrote the novel. Central to these works is the issue of shame, and it is with a magnifying glass on that particular idea

that I find my thesis. My argument points out that while the novels *Tess of D'Urbervilles* by Hardy and *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets* by Crane, written in the early 1890s, illustrate the self-destruction of their protagonist by shame, the third novel discussed, *Sister Carrie* by Dreiser, written in 1900, illustrates a character presented with the possibility of the same destruction who ends up in a far better status than she began the novel. I argue that what Dreiser's character had that Hardy's Tess and Crane's Maggie did not was a relative shamelessness in the face of societal norms. Finally, I argue that in their discussion of shame, Hardy, Crane, and Dreiser are at the forefront of the New Woman theme, made popular at the turn of the 19th century.

What makes the thematic relationship between these authors so clear are the many similarities between their three chosen works. All of the similarities are distinct in each novel and multiple comparable themes are depicted as well. For one, each novel is written to take place contemporary with the publishing date. First and foremost, as discussed before, each novel heavily considers shame and the implications of it in the life of a young unmarried woman. How the characters deal with this shame and how they perceive themselves under its burden offers a powerful discussion of human nature that each author capitalizes on in his own way. Additionally, each of the issues discussed in the novels are discussed for the present and stand as a critique to each author's contemporary culture. As each author includes the thematic backdrop of technology and changes in social customs as they tell their tale, they are making poignant claims about the time they write in, and the implications of these changes on it. It is important to note that Hardy and Crane published their novels a decade earlier than Dreiser, a fact that shows in the conclusion where Dreiser's Carrie is allowed to live at the top of society

while Hardy's Tess and Crane's Maggie had fallen so far in social esteem that they were essentially trampled by the shame they felt. Though Dreiser's conclusion was controversial, it was not too far off from the place society had reached in the short decade since Hardy and Crane wrote their novels.

I am not the first to consider the treatment of women in the late Victorian era. The discussion is both long standing and transatlantic. Janet Mason Ellerby considers the "fallen angel" trope in a comparison between Nathanael Hawthorne's Hester Prine, Hardy's Tess Durbeyfield, and Dreiser's Jennie Gerhardt. Stanley Renner discusses the reaction of authors William Acton and Thomas Hardy to the buried culture of prostitution so prevalent in the sexual culture of Victorian society.

Another important aspect to each of these novels is their place in literary criticism as Naturalist works. Different literary schools differentiate between each other based on how they trend toward certain patterns, as determined by analysis many years after the work has been completed. No writer plans to write within the boundary of a certain movement, rather they create works according to their surroundings and in response to the works of other authors. In this way, just as the literary Naturalist movement developed out of Romanticism and Realism, the later Modernist movement developed out of Naturalism in the early 20th century¹.

In order to understand the Naturalist style of writing, readers must first understand that the Naturalist method developed out of two former movements: Romanticism and Realism. The Romantics are attributed for developing a passion for nature, attributing supernatural traits to its wonders and using its wildness to celebrate a thematic aversion

¹ For a discussion on the transition from Naturalism to Modernism, see Joyce, Simon. *Modernism and Naturalism in British and Irish Fiction, 1880–1930*.

to the oppression of society. To Romantics, individuals are generally good and every plight can be sympathetic, while the whole of society is cancerous and is often a prison to the full beauty offered in an individual mind. Often a Romantic protagonist would retreat into nature to gain a more enlightened perspective. In Romantic works the wild beauty of the natural world functioned as a mirror to the wild beauty of the human soul. Hardy could easily be misunderstood as a Romanticist because of the way that so many of his characters interact with nature in such a way as to use it as a mirror of themselves.

Realists had a fascination with nature as well. Within Realist works is often a theme of positive celebration for the ordinary. They were largely averse to literary garnishments and allowed simplicity to speak for an organic beauty. Along with simplifying plots to make themes and characters more true to reality, Realists made an effort to depict nature as like its real self as they could, celebrating nature for its ordinary patterns and simple beauty. In a similar technique to that of the Romantics, Realists used the simplicity of a Realist natural world to hold a mirror to the simplicity of human life. Realists also emphasize human interactions with each other and their environments in the opposite style Romanticists do. The world's beauty does not need to be embellished and the prose often reflects that unembellished style. In a Realist novel, a character may go remain unnamed throughout the work and their life could end with an inconsequential mistake and with barely a notice by the prose. Many of these traits found in Realist works are also found in Naturalist works, as Naturalist writers share a common goal with Realist writers as they each seek to depict reality true to how they see it.

With a blend of the two larger literary movements, Naturalism creates a method for generating the ideological backdrop that ultimately became Modernism, the literary

movement that was most prevalent in the early 20th century. Naturalism is named for the philosophical movement of the same name that asserts that the happenings of the world are all determined by natural forces and rejects the existence of supernatural forces and beings. It has a very dark leaning, and the endings are almost never positive. It seems like it does not fit in the same category of movements as the two previous because this philosophical focus is so much more important and uniform. Even more confusing: Naturalist authors tend to use both Realist and Romantic styles, often even in the same work. For example, Stephen Crane's "The Open Boat" is one of the most famous Naturalist works that exist, yet the prose has both Realist and Romantic elements. The sea is indifferent and the occurrences are ordinary as demonstrated by the clipped, Realist-like prose. Yet the characters on the boat choose to see the event of their struggle as cosmic, supernatural, and unique. Their internal reaction to the colossal waves around them is like the Romantics staring up at Mont Blanc, seeking meaning².

Additionally, there are characters in Naturalist works that operate on no moral code whatsoever, and the universe rarely punishes them. Carrie, from Dreiser's *Sister Carrie*, the main text I will look at in my Chapter Four, is a perfect example of this, operating as an antithesis to Crane's Maggie when her stint as a live-in mistress launches her to fame and success as an actress. The Naturalist element comes in when she has no agency. Her lack of shame is what protects her from the depression and suicidal actions demonstrated by Maggie, Tess, and the other "fallen" women.

Naturalist writers are also all very antagonistic to the concept of God. Religious allusions are consistently used throughout, however often as a metaphor for the

2

For an overview of the generation of American Naturalism see Eric Carl. *The Vast and Terrible Drama: American Literary Naturalism in the Late Nineteenth Century*.

indifferent nature of the environment. To them, it is almost like the evilness of the uncaring nature of God and organized religion are a given, so it represents a perfect metaphor for the evilness of a powerful nature and an unforgiving society. They seem to include a discussion of God only to use it as an argument that he doesn't exist, or in Hardy's case, that he is indifferent to human pain. In Naturalist works the environment speaks that there are no supernatural answers, while the characters within run around desperate for supernatural answers. Even more poignant to this point is that this search seems to be the one thing that results in the destruction of the character, if the society or force of nature doesn't get there first. When characters in Naturalist novels feel shame for an event and have redefined themselves by that shame, they are in juxtaposition with the Naturalist ideal that morality is not real and individuals have not agency in a cold, natural world. This juxtaposition is what makes the study of shame in Naturalist novels so important.

Naturalism is the perfect movement for the discussion of shame. This is the case largely because of its emphasis on the connection between the physiological and psychological. In his article "Hardy and the Naturalists: Their Use of Physiology" William Newton discusses just how deep a discussion of physiology went into the works of Naturalists. He writes "One such prominent characteristic of Naturalism was the great emphasis placed on 'the physiological', upon the explaining of man's behavior in terms of his bodily organization. In some ways this naturalist tendency manifests in such a way as to draw criticism from its critics that the movement had racist tendencies. Indeed, naturalist authors often included the race of a character as an early explanation for expected behavior that would manifest itself as proof later in the text. (Crane's "Blue

Hotel”) Beyond this however, Naturalists offer a progressive explanation for the power of sexuality. The body demands sexual behavior, and Naturalist characters, equipped with little free will, are unable to resist such demands. Under the shadow of this philosophy, it is easy for authors to comment critically on a society that demands purity from characters who are unable to resist their sexuality. They question a culture that shames creatures that are incapable of guilt.

In Chapter Four of his book *Modernism and Naturalism in British and Irish Fiction*, Simon Joyce makes a strong case that the New Woman novels that were so important to the Modernist movement were a natural reaction to novels with similar premises found in the Naturalist movement. He discusses in particular the British Naturalist authors Sarah Grand and George Egerton, both of whom believed that “the female mind operated with a degree of complexity that was far beyond its male counterpart”(119) and that “environmental and social factors persistently blocked its capacity for self-expression”(120). This comment clearly applies to Hardy, Crane, and Dreiser as well, as each goes into depth regarding the intellectual capacity of their characters as well as the constraints they are placed under.

I have ordered my discussion of the novels by chronological order of publishing date. As my thesis communicates the rapid changes undergone in the late 19th century, the order selected reflects these changes progressively and makes for a fascinating study. This ordering places the story of Tess Durbeyfield first as she struggles to escape from the archaic genealogical preferences of English society in the late Victorian era. Next, I discuss Crane’s *Maggie a girl of the streets*, a novella written to bring light into the slums of New York and to be an early beacon of education that would play a role in igniting a

decade of social revolution in favor of the American poor. Finally, I discuss Dreiser's *Sister Carrie*, written a decade later than the earlier novels and demonstrating the shift in societal focus from moral integrity to corporeal comfort and pleasure, much to the benefit of a beautiful young mistress rising in the social spotlight as an actress.

CHAPTER ONE

Thomas Hardy

Review of Literature

Thomas Hardy's novel writing career was harshly critiqued by his contemporaries for the way that his works controversially regarded women's rights, religion, marriage, and class struggle. Yet, his works stood against the criticism of his day and he remains well known today as a classical novelist, regarded by many as a champion of women's rights. This has occurred because time and again Hardy wrote from the perspective of women and considers the implications of a society that holds them to different standards than it holds to men³. It must be noted that while Hardy's views regarding women appear to have been progressive for his time, there are still notes of the misogyny of his day in his writing⁴. That said, Hardy's writing has stood the test of time and can stand on its own against the lens of centuries.

There is some debate over whether or not Hardy can be considered a Naturalist author in the first place. At the time when Naturalism was its strongest Hardy was writing as a contemporary to the movement's French founder Emile Zola. This is just one of the reasons many critics consider Hardy to be a naturalist. But critics such as Juro Suzuki, Howard O. Brogan, and John Crowe Ransom argue that Hardy's stylistic signature also clearly marks him as a Naturalist.

³ For a perspective on Hardy's criticism of society and its double standard of friendship, see Deresiewicz, William. "Thomas Hardy and the History of Friendship Between the Sexes."

⁴ On a critique of Hardy's use of female tropes see Rogers, Katharine, "Women in Thomas Hardy."

It is true that stylistically Hardy fell in line with the movement quite well. These stylistic clues include using pieces of regional dialect in his work, allowing a character's physical state to offer something to say about their overall character, presenting nature as an indifferent villain, and giving his characters little or no free will throughout the novel.

However, many authors maintain that Hardy was not in line with the movement at all. Carl J. Weber, William Newton, and Frank R. Giordano argue that regardless of style, the underlying themes of Hardy's works are directly contradictory to the message of Naturalism. One of the strongest voices in the case against Hardy's categorization as a naturalist is William Newton. Newton points out that Hardy's novels are in many ways fundamentally different than those of other naturalists. Whereas naturalists use nature as if they were scientists seeking to explain "how" life operates, Newton argues that Hardy uses nature more philosophically to interpret life, "questioning *why* it should work as it does" (41). To Newton the end result of a Hardy novel leaves readers in a different place than another Naturalist novel would, thus he concludes that a Hardy novel cannot be categorized the same way.

Newton and other scholars who resist the idea that Hardy is a naturalist do so because they believe Hardy's humanist bent transcends the genre as something better. For example, In his book *"I'd Have My Life Unbe": Thomas Hardy's Self-destructive Characters*, Frank R. Giordano notices a pattern in the works of Hardy that questions the perceived lack of agency of Hardy's characters and considers that rather than being helpless to fate, Hardy characters are innately self-destructive and the death instinct is stronger in his characters than in characters by other Naturalist authors. The general reason for these self-destructive behaviors, Giordano writes, is, "the occasional episodes

of happiness in life's drama of pain are purchased at too high a price in suffering and loneliness" (43-44). He quotes J. Hillis Miller saying, "At the end of [his characters'] lives, even if they do not actually commit suicide, they come to a suicidal passivity, a self-destructive will not to live" (45). This final act of agency granted to Hardy characters separates him from other Naturalist authors who instead choose to use circumstances or coincidences to make the final blow in the downfall of their characters. At this point, however I raise the question that if the choice given is between death and a miserable life, can an audience really consider the character's decision a choice at all, or is it yet another stage trick used by nature to disguise what is really a complete lack of agency.

The debate of Hardy's Naturalism is founded on years of discourse and considers all of Hardy's works, from his first novel to his last poem. Ultimately, as said by Barnaby in his work "The Realist Novel as a Meta-Spectacle", Hardy's goal throughout was to "portray realistically the human consciousness in negotiation with the world" (45). This goal is one that few critics would dispute and it presents a very strong argument for the author's Naturalism in a novel like *Tess of D'Urbervilles* that so often considers nature as a ruling, omnipresent force. The disruption of human life at the whim of nature is so common of a theme in both Naturalist work and Hardy's novels that it would be disingenuous to both to consider them separate movements, especially considering the place in history they share. For this reason, it is truest to the message of the work discussed in this thesis, *Tess of D'Urbervilles*, to consider it by its own merit and style as a Naturalist novel.

Hardy's work *Tess of D'Urbervilles* especially remarks on the effects of shame in the 19th century. I argue that this discussion of shame is one of the most prominent examples of Hardy's naturalism and presents his readers with the emotional cues needed to look at a society critically for its treatment of women. His work depicts a young woman named Tess whose shame ends in her downfall and death at the end of the novel. Tess' story begins when her family sends her to live with supposed noble relations. The unwanted and constant attentions of the unmarried nobleman Alec D'Urberville end on a beautiful summer night as his desire is consummated and he rapes her. Tess, filled with shame, returns home and the reader is led rapidly through a series of events that feature the birth and death of her and Alec's illegitimate child. Tess leaves her home and meets the virtuous farmer Angel Clare. They fall in love, marrying in euphoric bliss, until Tess tells Angel of her past on their wedding night and he shuns her. Upon her loss of Angel, Tess returns home again. Though she seeks to regain the love of Angel, Alec approaches her with an offer of marriage. Tess, torn apart by the notion that she has two husbands, a legal one and a physical one; she ultimately murders Alec and reunites with Angel. The end of the novel is in the point of view of Angel as he watches a black flag over the prison, signaling the completed execution of Tess. Although Tess recognizes initially that she was not to blame for the rape, the shame imposed by the society around her slowly affects her and results in her downfall.

In this chapter I argue that the novel *Tess of D'Urbervilles* by Thomas Hardy makes a strong case that shame is a slow destructive process initiated by societal restrictions and is unnatural to the human soul. I will then conclude that Hardy's work presents a discussion on the nature of sexuality and shame in the rapidly changing industrial era of the late Nineteenth Century. My focus will be on the plight of women in the Late Victorian Era and the unforgiving society they were forced to navigate.

The Dignity of Tess Durbeyfield

While it is true that Hardy is often critiqued for the simplicity of his female characters⁵, it is also true that the vague description of Tess's character allows for a more metaphorical reading of the novel. In this way Tess's character is allowed to blanket over all young women harmed by the purity culture of the Victorians. The character of Tess Durbeyfield is written in such a way so as to provoke pity in the reader and to remind them of the pain that is felt when a beautiful thing is marred. This emotion felt by the reader is similar to the effect Tess is written to have on her peers, and is itself a facet of the power Tess has been given. This is especially exemplified in the way that the novel represents her outward appearance and public demeanor. The first phase of the novel is titled "Maiden" and this is possibly, blunt as it is, Tess's most defining characteristic at this beginning stage.

⁵ For a criticism on vague characterization in Hardy's works see Rogers, Katharine. "WOMEN IN THOMAS HARDY."

The eventual shame and downfall of Tess Durbeyfield is only possible because she was at one point a beacon of dignity and beauty. Shirley A. Stave, writer of the literary study *The Decline of the Goddess: Nature, Culture, and Women in Thomas Hardy's Fiction*, offers high praise of Hardy's characterization of Tess. Stave writes that Tess is Hardy's "crowning achievement" and "one of the most memorable women characters in all of literature." She likens Tess to a goddess. Tess "is at once child and woman, strong and fragile, masterful and timid" (Stave 101). Stave emphasizes that Hardy gives Tess qualities usually denied to women in the Victorian era such as pride, dignity, and a sense of sexuality. While Stave's comparison of Tess to a goddess when Tess exists in a random, naturalist world strikes a skeptical note; it is true that Tess has been given the dignity of desire and power often refused to characters in her position.

In the first description of Tess the narrator depicts her beauty, "her mobile peony mouth and large innocent eyes added eloquence to colour and shape" (9). Later in the same scene, her image is seen dancing among other girls her age. The narrator emphasizes an aura of innocence around the character of Tess by depicting the way that her childhood still remained a part of her character:

Phases of her childhood lurked in her aspect still. As she walked along to-day, for all her bouncing, handsome womanliness, you could sometimes see her twelfth year in her cheeks or her ninth sparkling from her eyes; and even her fifth would flit over the curves of her mouth now and then. (10)

The novel's heroine is introduced in this way as a sort of personification of innocence and to the reader it is a defining aspect of her character. Tess is in this

in-between stage, undergoing the transition from child to woman. The text goes so far to show her innocence that it describes the way that the image of her childhood still lingers in all of her behaviors. In this part of the novel, childhood, innocence, virginity, beauty, and goodness are all placed on the character of Tess. However, along side her girlhood, there is a very sexual aspect of Tess's description as well, as the text includes lines like "she walked along to-day, for all her bouncing, handsome womanliness". Tess is given a very definite sense of power in this image. At one point the text reads, "A small minority, mainly strangers, would look long at her in casually passing b, grow momentarily fascinated by her freshness, and wonder if they would ever see her again.

This childlike image of Tess at the beginning of the novel is taken away in the very next chapter, titled "Maiden No More", as her childhood has been taken from her along with her purity. Yet Tess retains the power of beauty, and the narrator allows her an even more nuanced version of that power. In this phase, Tess gives birth to a child and only a year later loses him to illness in the night. The event of Tess' rape along with the sorrow that accompanies the death of her child strip Tess of that childlike beauty. The text reads,

Almost at a leap, Tess thus changed from simple girl to complex woman. Symbols of reflectiveness passed into her face and a note of tragedy at times in her voice. Her eyes grew larger and more eloquent. She became what would have been called a fine creature; her aspect was fair and arresting; her soul that of a woman whom the turbulent experiences of the last year or two had quite failed to demoralize. (99)

This passage depicts more mature and understanding demeanor; she is still beautiful, but her beauty comes with knowledge of pain and she has lost all aspects of the girl shown in the earlier passage. Tess' eyes are described as "eloquent" and her aspect is "arresting". Terms such as these allow Tess a power that she had not been given before. This image of Tess stands strong as "the experiences of the last year or two had quite failed to demoralize" and her womanly beauty is born out of respect and experience. What this passage and other describe, are the outward appearances of Tess' stubborn dignity, standing firm in the face of societal shame.

This passage could be interpreted one of two ways in the context of Naturalism. It is possible that Hardy is openly defying the conventions of the movement by allowing his character the strength and will to defy the workings of nature. Or, it is possible that Hardy is subtly asserting that the desire of society does not function on the same level of power as nature, and so Tess is strong enough to defy a synthetic thing like societal pressure. Either way, Hardy's decision to maintain Tess' beauty in the face of shame and downfall makes a powerful comment that the corrupting nature of shame is entirely internal, and as such, is tragic and unnecessary.

Besides beauty, Tess's character has one other major aspect: she means well always. The ninth chapter of Frank Giordano's criticism of Hardy's works "*I'd Have My Life Unbe*": *Thomas Hardy's Self-Destructive Characters* includes in one of the opening lines that there is "an essential matter in the novel: the

conflict between life-affirming and life-denying elements in Tess Durbeyfield” (159). Tess desires nothing more than to live a simple life in goodness. Her selfless and kind demeanor indicates that this extends with genuine goodwill to others as well. Her goodwill and pride in doing what’s right offers another sort of dignity that is lost when Tess strikes out at Alec and kills him at the end of the novel, committing a grave sin. Consistent with its definition, in shame Tess loses all sense of herself in an act of irreversible harm to another human being.

The Shame of Tess Durbeyfield

Tess’ encounter with shame begins when she is raped by Alec d’Urberville, the local nobleman. Tess’ walk home soon after the horrific ordeal with Alec presents Tess with time spent in nature to reflect on her situation. The opening line of the chapter reads, “The basket was heavy and the bundle was large, but [Tess] did not find her especial burden in material things” (74). The passage indicates that it is shame that weighs Tess down. Her shame is emphasized as Tess continues on her journey and encounters a traveling evangelist. He unknowingly throws Tess’s undoing shame in her face by painting damning scripture on the side of buildings along his journey. Tess witnesses him writing “Thy, Damnation, Slumbereth Not – 2 Pet. ii.3”. Later the narrator remarks, “The words entered Tess with accusatory horror. It was as if this man had known her recent history; yet he was a total stranger” (79). She asks him, “Suppose your sin is not of your own seeking?” (79), only to have him shrug her concern as if that

was impossible. This encounter tells readers first that Tess is aware that she is not guilty for being raped, and second that her society does not care.

There are other instances in which Tess admits that she knows she is not to blame for her rape. One such occurrence happens when Tess seeks solace in the beauty of nature. To accompany this internal struggle, Hardy includes a literary depiction of nature: the length of the walk, the heat of the day, and the buzzing of bees in Tess' ear. Hardy's expert hand at natural descriptions paired with Tess's existential thoughts provide the reader with a familiar scene in literature; one in which the protagonist seeks self-understanding in the face of nature. The scene reads:

Walking among the sleeping birds in the hedges, watching the skipping rabbits on a moonlit warren, or standing under a pheasant-laden bough, she looked upon herself as a figure of Guilt intruding into the haunts of Innocence. But all the while she was making a distinction where there was no difference. Feeling herself in antagonism, she was quite in accord. She had been made to break an accepted social law, but no law known to the environment in which she fancied herself such an anomaly. (85)

The narrator uses this passage to express to readers that the very downfall they are about to witness is completely at the hand of social norms, rather than at the hand of natural ones. Additionally, it allows readers to see Tess psychologically working on her shame. In this particular instance, Tess seems to believe that she is guilty for her sin. When the text reads "she looked upon herself as a figure of Guilt intruding into the haunts of Innocence" Tess has returned to the shame of her rape and feels that her damaged presence is at odds with the nature around her.

This setting shows a comparison between nature and society, highlighting specifically society's immobility for the weak. Included in Hardy's consideration of Tess's predicament in this particular scene is a very naturalist theme. Deborah L. Collins discusses the theology of Hardy in her book "Thomas Hardy and his God", and considers his take on the natural world. She writes, "For young Hardy, Nature was never the scene of consolation. Nature's apparently random cruelty to one creature meant prosperity for another" (Collins 33). As Tess walks among the chirping bird and buzzing bees, aware of their indifference to her very existence, Tess considers the implication of her social place as well. She knows that there is nothing natural about the way society has treated her and nature presents no "scene of consolation" (33). Hardy offers this scene to foil the Romantic writers of the time who use a walk through nature to invoke a protagonist's healing and understanding of a situation.

Another passage reads:

If she could have been but just created, to discover herself as a spouseless mother, with no experience of life except as the parent of a nameless child, would the position have caused her to despair? No, she would have taken it calmly, and found pleasure therein. Most of the misery had been generated by her conventional aspect, and not by her innate sensations. (91)

This passage indicates yet another instance in which Tess recognizes that she is not to blame for her rape, and so should not be experiencing the shame that has been so heavily placed on her shoulders. Here she argues that there is nothing

inherently wrong with raising a child on her own. Yet society turns on her to make what could be a beautiful thing shameful.

Lastly, Hardy presents readers with a picture of just how deeply Tess' shame has reached, despite the fact that even up until the end of the novel Tess still does not falter on the knowledge that the rape was not her fault. This happens when at the end of the novel; Tess faces another encounter with her rapist. This time Alec is a traveling preacher, and he has accused Tess of attempting to bewitch him yet again. Alec's lack of acceptance of responsibility for the rape he had committed stands in sharp contrast to the final conclusion Tess has reached regarding her responsibility in the event (361). In this scene he pressures her to marry him and make herself right with God. Tess has no desire to do so, but feels a sense of duty to acquiesce to this request. The text reads,

Never in her life – she could swear it from the bottom of her soul – had she ever intended to do wrong; yet these hared judgments had come. Whatever her sins, they were not sins of intention, but of inadvertence, and why should she have been punished so persistently? (362)

Hardy's Naturalist novel offers Tess the ability to recognize that her shame is unjust, yet indicates just how strongly she is held captive to the forms of a society that requires sexual purity at all cost.

The Role of the Industrial Age

One widely accepted fact among literary and historical scholars is that the sexual culture of the Late Victorian era was heavily lopsided in favor of men. In

her book *The Long Sexual Revolution: English Women, Sex, and Contraception 1800-1975*, Hera Cook discusses this double standard in detail. She reports “Mid-Century middle-class England saw the apogee of the double standard of sexual morality; male sexual access to women was a necessity but any slip from sexual purity on a woman’s part cut her off from respectable society” (92). She claims that women were not allowed to participate in even just the discussion of male sexuality in a society that had accepted “purchased sexual relief for men” and forbade female sexual expression even within the union of marriage (93). In light of this scholarship, it is clear that Hardy’s novel speaks to this very societal inequality.

Hardy works a criticism of this societal issue into the text. At the happiest moment of Tess’ existence, when she has just married Angel Clare, the man she loves, she trusts his goodness and finally tells him about her past. Although it is revealed that Angel had a similar encounter with a woman many years ago and Tess has forgiven him, he refuses to accept her as a tainted woman. The major issue here is the Angel had chosen to imagine Tess as this perfect creature of purity, and had based all of his expectations in this image. When Angel had fallen in love with Tess he had begun to see her as the idealized image of a goddess. He describes her saying, “She was no longer the milkmaid, but a visionary essence of woman – a whole sex condensed into one typical form” (147). However despite his infatuation, when Tess confesses her past on their wedding night, this cultural ideal that Angel had imposed on the character of Tess was shattered, and he

shames her. Tess is disgraced yet again, and forced to return to her home in disgrace and poverty. The clear double standard depicted here is no mistake, and it is doubtless that Hardy is speaking to a culture that encourages sexuality as a need for men while punishing women for the smallest sexual infraction.

The climax of Tess' shame is one of self-destruction and it is her idea of marriage that causes this self-destruction to take place. By the end of the novel Tess finds herself with two different men who by the consideration of society could be called her husband for different criteria. The first husband, d'Urberville, is her bodily husband, a consummation that went even as far as to produce a child. The predominantly Christian society of late Victorian England would cite the Old Testament in this case. The text reads in Deuteronomy 22:28, according to the NIV translation,

“If a man happens to meet a virgin who is not pledged to be married and rapes her and they are discovered he shall pay her father fifty shekels of silver. He must marry the young woman, for he has violated her. He can never divorce her as long as he lives.”

However, Tess loves Angel with a worshipful devotion, and pines for him as if he were her husband. Hardy writes, “Yet a consciousness that in a physical sense this man was her husband seemed to weigh on her more and more” (365) K. M. Newton, in her chapter “Tragedy and the Novel”, discusses the classical and unusual tropes that mark Hardy's works as tragedies. In her discussion of the downfall of Tess she considers the turmoil that results in the act that will ultimately end Tess' life. She discusses her marriage, saying, “Tess does not wish

to transcend or reject sexuality or the body, but rather to relate them to a human ideal of reciprocated love in which body and spirit are unified” (129). Tess cannot do this however, because the marriage of her body and the marriage of her spirit lie with two separate men. When both of them return to her life at the same time, her morality is torn, and she is forced to choose between them. The action she takes to resolve this issue, the murder of Alec, is a result of a deep sense of shame. In a sense, Tess was finally successful in her attempt to relieve shame as the murder allowed her a tragically brief time to spend with Angel in a union deemed by herself and her universe to be a true marriage in all considerations of the word. Although for just a few hours, this is the only happy ending Tess could have hoped for.

Tess' Story: Relevant and Timeless

Hardy's purpose in writing *Tess of D'Urbervilles* was to argue for a more progressive idea of the role and treatment of women. He uses Tess' society invoked shame to illustrate just how helpless she was to society's animalistic nature and how preventable her tragedy is. Hardy's novel stretches past the mere telling of story when he includes a sort of timelessness in the narrative to assert just how out of place and yet pervasive the Victorian shame culture is. Alongside Hardy's illustration of Tess' fall from grace, Hardy inserts little symbols and motifs to communicate to his audience that this downfall and the society that has caused are wrong and stuck in an antiquated mindset.

One way he communicates this is by illustrating contrast in the novel between antiquity and progress. On one hand, invocations of antiquity represent timelessness. The character Tess sees these timeless monuments to the past as a beacon to her hopeless situation and that things will never change. This is an obvious criticism, and even though Tess cannot see it, on several occasions Hardy allows a glimmer of change to show through, allowing readers to see that things are about to change, even if they are changing too late for Tess. This can be illustrated by several examples in the text of *Tess of D'Urbervilles* that invoke antiquity.

One way that Hardy invokes antiquity is by making several allusions to bygone civilizations throughout the novel, and in doing so he invokes a sort of timelessness to the power societal norms hold over a person, specifically a female person. The first and most prevalent invocation of another time is in the d'Urberville name itself. Tess is intended to represent a modern woman, as do many of the other female characters in Hardy novels. However she is given two names: Tess Durbeyfield and Tess d'Urberville. The Durbeyfield name is her given name and the name of her common family. In the beginning of the novel and as the catalyst of events, Tess' father learns that the Durbeyfield name is a mispronunciation of an ancient and highly noble name: d'Urberville. Tess herself prefers her own original name, Durbeyfield, but is at several times begrudged this preference. This detail strengthens a larger theme in the book: Tess desires to live in a newer more accepting reality, but those around her refuse to give her that

grace and she is held to an ancient social standard of purity throughout the novel. The author's choice to title the novel *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, rather than "Tess Durbeyfield", emphasizes the triumph of the archaic standard over the new one.

Additionally, in the novel's final invocation of antiquity, Hardy has Tess and Angel retreat to Stonehenge where they are finally intercepted by authorities. By this moment in the novel, Tess has murdered Alec, creating the social freedom for her and Angel to have reconciled as husband and wife. They are allowed a glimmer of happiness for the briefest span of times. This briefest of scenes finds Tess with only one husband, and as she is finally right with her soul, she is given shelter by the archaic shadows of the ancient Stonehenge. This final invocation of antiquity demonstrates a universal approval of the match.

Conclusion

As Thomas Hardy presents the societal downfall of Tess alongside her internal anguish and shame, he is making a point to critique the society that imposes a double standard on her and blames her for an incident she was helpless to prevent. Tess's shame is not the same thing as guilt, and from beginning to end, she is aware that society is to blame for her anguish, not her own actions. Nevertheless, Hardy's work borders on religious commentary as it discusses the nature of shame, marriage, forgiveness, and love. Though Hardy's work is clearly part of the Naturalist movement, his tendency to lean ethically on Christianity depicts what resembles a religious crisis in the author's own personal life. This cannot, of

course, be verified with examples within the text, so it is important to let such an assumption remain as just that: an assumption.

CHAPTER TWO

Stephen Crane

Along with Theodore Dreiser and others, Stephen Crane is remembered to be one of the main American Naturalists of the late 19th century. His writing depicts an ideology that is arguably one of the bleakest viewpoints within the canon of American literature. That or Crane at the very least inspired the bleak writers who succeeded him. The darkness of his work comes from many of the hopeless themes found within, namely the negative psychological effect of shame. Crane has several works that depict the hopeless existence found within a Naturalist universe and each tends to focus on the downfall of the protagonist by the doing of a careless society or by the doing of an apathetic natural force. In his works of social commentary especially, such as *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets*, Crane's characters are made to feel a deep sense of shame for their actions. As the shame wears Crane's protagonist Maggie down, contemporary readers to Crane were intended to watch her pain, all while the devastating text points an accusatory finger at the society they take part in.

Comparison of Hardy and Crane's works

Like Thomas Hardy, Stephen Crane chooses to depict the downfall of a young woman after society marks her as "ruined" in his novel *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets*. Crane's protagonist, Maggie, is a beautiful young woman full of promise whose relationship and association with a careless man results in being put out on the streets and forgotten until her eventual death. Opposite to Hardy's country setting, however, Crane

sets the tale in the fast moving industrial society found in the squalor of tenement life in New York City. His Naturalism is shown in the carnivorous tendencies of an unforgiving society rather than in the unfeeling presence of a vast nature as Hardy had done. The tale is much shorter than Hardy's work, has several stylistic differences, and is speaking to an American audience rather than a British one. However, even with all of these differences, the beginning and outcome of the works are the same, as are several naturalist themes regarding the concept of shame.

Crane's *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets* is very similar to Hardy's *Tess of D'Urbervilles* in the way that it discusses shame. Crane's novel recounts the tale of the irreversible corruption and eventual suicide of a beautiful young girl in the slums of New York. Maggie, like Tess, begins the story at a point of hope beyond that of her peers. She is the most beautiful girl in the impoverished New York neighborhood she comes from, and well-intended actions and hard work provide just enough security to garnish a good reputation among her community. Crane writes, "The girl, Maggie, blossomed in a mud puddle. She grew to be a most rare and wonderful production of a tenement district, a pretty girl" (Crane 41). Yet, in her struggle to escape poverty, she becomes a shamed woman, and enters an irreversible decline into destruction. The story is that of a fallen angel from start to finish, and in that sense it is very similar to Hardy's novel *Tess of D'Urbervilles*.

There is a stark difference between how Hardy allows his character Tess the benefit of narrated feeling where Crane, on the other hand, allows Maggie no such dignity. For example, a sentence in Hardy's work says, "she had hoped to be a teacher at the school, but the fates seemed to decide otherwise" (Hardy 44). Here Hardy gives Tess

the ability to dream, and allows the audience access to that intimate knowledge of her person. The distant narrator describing Maggie's journey, however, does so either by discussing the thoughts of those surrounding Maggie or from its own unattached narrative perspective. Although there are instances in which Maggie's thoughts are revealed, they are rare and limited. One such example of the narrator's distance is found when the text reads, "None of the dirt of Rum Alley seemed to be in her veins. The philosophers upstairs, downstairs and on the same floor, puzzled over it." (Crane 40). The narration found in Crane's novel reads reminiscent to a newspaper article as it succinctly depicts events as they happen, sparing readers from sweeping description and literary devices.

Finally, although both authors discuss shame and the way shame results in the destruction of a person, their outcome is very different. During my discussion of Hardy's *Tess of D'Urbervilles* in Chapter One I argued that Hardy's tale critiques a culture of shame in Victorian England in a thought provoking way with a text that offers readers empathy, beauty, and a compelling plot. While Hardy's work takes a literary and philosophical approach, Crane's tone is far more accusatory and direct. In Chapter Two, my discussion of Crane's work *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets* will conclude by asserting that Crane intended to tell an uncomfortable tale about the affect of unfair shame culture on an innocent in poverty for the purpose of prodding the American population toward charitable action.

Review of Literature

To place Crane in context, the late nineteenth century in the United States is most often analyzed for its industrialization. Between 1880 and 1900, the population of cities was booming. Although the overall economy of the nation improved, poverty in these

cities was more rampant and people had more access to information about the conditions of the poor. Immediately prior to this era, the Romantic literary movement had shone a flattering light on the human soul, and readers were growing more attracted to humanist works. Alongside this, a flux of journalistic media coverage and the invention of photography brought to light the travesties of poverty.

This flux of journalism provoked a sort of national shame for the horrors found within the United States' own borders. Donald L. Nathanson discusses the effect the invention of the camera had on the Victorians in his book *Shame and Pride: Affect, Sex, and the Birth of Self*. He writes, "where shame had created a culture of privacy, the camera had ripped it asunder"(451). Nathanson argues that privacy was no longer possible, so the shame of the nation was public and painful. This revelation of destitution resulted in a more truthful idea of what humankind could do to each other, and the Naturalist movement in the United States was born.

Crane's novel *Maggie Crane: A Girl of the Streets*, realizes a similar goal to new journalistic and photographic attempts to publicize poverty as it presents a snapshot of the hardships of life in the slums of New York City in the late 1880s. He chooses as his protagonist the most classically helpless and sympathetic character motif out there: a beautiful young virgin. As the short novel traces her journey to destruction, readers glimpse a depiction of the way of life in the slums that is pitiable and accusatory to the more elevated classes of the late nineteenth century.

Of course, Stephen Crane is not the first American author to have written about a fallen woman shamed for her sexual history. Students of literature will remember Nathaniel Hawthorne's novel *The Scarlet Letter* in which he depicts Hester Prynne, a

woman ostracized from society for having an extramarital affair with the town minister. Hester is made to wear a red letter “A” on her dress to symbolize her sin and as a physical reminder of her shame to those around her. This novel was written in 1850, however it is set in early Puritan America, a time known for its tendency to put sexual sin to shame in a far more dramatic fashion than necessary. Whether Crane intended to allude to this classic work by Hawthorne or not, the very fact that the premise is similar means that comparisons of theme and style are unavoidable. However, Crane’s tale is set in the present, so his accusation to society is much more obvious and direct.

Besides the stylistic effect of his role as a journalist, Stephen Crane is also well known for his tendency to use inverted tropes in his works to make a powerful point regarding his own theme. In fact, this tendency has resulted in critical accusations that his work is too philosophical and falls outside the bounds of Naturalism⁶. However, other critics argue that Crane is undeniably a Naturalist, and place him firmly among the founding members of the genre. Many such critics, among whom are James B. Colvert, Richard Stallman, Donald Pizer, and Sydney J. Krause, name French and Russian naturalists as Crane’s major influences.

In the introduction to his book *The Beginnings of American Naturalism* Lars Ahnebrink discusses Crane’s personal origins in the context of his work as a Naturalist. He points out that Crane grew up in a hyper religious environment due to the fact that both of Crane’s parents were college graduates who wrote articles on Methodism (90). When he attended college for one semester, he was introduced to other philosophies and immediately took a different ideological route than his parents. During this time he was

⁶ For a critical essay on this subject see Gendin, Sidney. “Was Stephen Crane (or Anybody Else) a Naturalist?”

reading the works of Russian fatalists like Dostoyevsky voraciously (92).

Simultaneously, Crane was making his way in New York City as a struggling journalist.

His own poverty as well as a professional access to the poverty of others given by his role as a journalist brought him face to face with the condition of slums in New York City.

That experience, along with the naturalist ideology he was beginning to develop, was the spark that inspired his first novel, *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets* (93). Here Crane debuted his first major work written to shed light on one of the darkest corners of American culture.

Just as he uses religious metaphor to accentuate his Naturalist point, Crane also tends to play with established literary tropes to the same effect. One such example of this is occurs when Crane depicts the rising waves in his shipwreck short-story “The Open Boat” as containing elements of the sublime. His protagonist looks to these phenomena of nature to reflect on his place and meaning in the universe, as a romanticist character would have done, only to find that life is cold and meaningless⁷. Seeing this background of poverty and atheism along with Crane’s philosophical and contradictory writing style, it is difficult to remove Crane from any discussion of Naturalism.

Religious Allusion: Hell is the final Destination of Shame

The arching plot of *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets* depicts a virgin who falls from grace toward prostitution and death. Behind this exterior plot, lies a deeper and more thematic metaphor: Maggie, the angel, descends to hell, the greatest shame of all.

Because his work is written more like an account of events, often Maggie’s feelings are

⁷ For a critical essay on Crane’s tendency to invert tropes from the lens of this specific example see Claviez, Thomas. “‘Declining’ the (American) Sublime: Stephen Crane’s ‘The Open Boat.’”

hidden from the audience. Instead, Crane depicts this descent with a heavy use of religious metaphor and alludes to classic depictions of shame.

It is important not to mistake Crane's use of religious allegory as any kind of homage to religion itself. Crane was undeniably an atheist, and his works reflect that viewpoint tirelessly. However, for a generation whose cultural viewpoint is largely driven by the belief in an all-powerful deity, namely the Christian God, sacrificing Christian determinism for another, more atheistic determinism, in which the all-powerful forces of nature and society impede free will, would have been less difficult than one might imagine. In this smooth transition of societal ideology, Crane found many tools to use in his writing. Allusions to religious tradition, text, and story have always been commonplace in literature and the American Naturalist movement is no different. Because Naturalism and Christianity share determinist reasoning, religious metaphor and allusion are the perfect devices to use in naturalist writing, as they take an already formed perception of helplessness and twist it to communicate Naturalism's atheistic ideology. Religious metaphor is an especially powerful tool to use in the discussion of shame. By using this technique, Crane questions the place of shame in a changing time.

While Crane used many religious metaphors to enhance his image of an uncaring god like Hardy did, one of his most common tropes depicts a character's shame in the face of that god. This is not surprising to find in the works of an author so focused on determinism. While just like Hardy, Crane considers characters who have been put to shame by society, unlike Hardy his focus falls primarily on the external forces that impose that shame on them. This occurs very explicitly in his poetry as well as across several of his novels and short stories. Crane portrays clear allusions to biblical

references throughout the novel with his own signature: twisting the ending as a direct inversion to the corresponding Biblical allusion. In the case of Maggie, her downfall is her decent to shame as Crane writes in such a way as to allude to her descent into hell.

Maggie's angelic character and reputation the start of the novella exists as a stark contrast to the environment she exists in. The text reads, "The girl, Maggie, blossomed in the mud puddle. She grew to be a most rare and wonderful production of a tenement district, a pretty girl. None of the dirt of Rum Alley seemed to be in her veins" (41). Crane continues the metaphor of a flower growing out of the mud miraculously throughout this passage. It isn't until later in the novel, when Maggie is brought to experience the glamorous nightlife of New York City with her beau, Pete, that she becomes aware of this miraculous blossom. When Maggie notices the misery of her surroundings, she becomes embarrassed of where she came from. She questions her surroundings with distaste and considers what her attraction can do to help her escape from the tenement lifestyle. The text reads, "She began to see the bloom upon her cheeks as valuable" (66). In this moment, Maggie realizes that her beauty is a tool, and she intends to use it to shirk the shame of her upbringing and escape from poverty.

A major Biblical allusion in *Maggie* emerges right at the start of the novella with helpless characters in desperate need of a savior to rescue them from a degenerative existence in poverty. The story opens on Maggie's brother, Jimmie, fighting with other impoverished urchins like him. Crane paints the scene like he would paint the pits of hell, even to the point of garnishing the image with smoky haze and shrieking. In one instance he describes one of Jimmie's assailants by saying, "His wan features wore the look of a tiny, insane demon" (*Maggie* 4). Here a smaller allusion is seen: Crane equates

the abject poverty of the New York City Bovary to hell. In this scene, Jimmie is losing the battle against the other urchins until Pete comes sauntering out of an avenue called Devil's Row. Pete saves Jimmie, gaining a servant for life.

When Pete meets Jimmie's sister, Maggie, she is entranced by his reported success, both financially and as a fighter in the streets. She falls in love with him immediately and the attentions he sprinkles on her become a seduction to downfall. The narrative reports, "under the trees of her dream gardens there had always walked a lover" (*Maggie* 48). Maggie had always idealized romance as her savior and in placing Pete on that stage as a lover; Maggie's understanding of him is idyllic and fantastical. He whisks her away to a show one Friday night, even as Maggie's drunken mother has squandered their pennies and trashed their home. In this way Maggie too perceives Pete as her savior from the drudgery of her family poverty and a life on the factory assembly line. to Maggie, "Swaggering Pete loomed like a golden sun" (68). Maggie allows Pete into her life and it is at this turning point where Crane introduces a tonal shift, initiating the inversion of the Christ figure readers understand Pete to play.

When Pete seduces Maggie, her chances of marriage and any hope of a steady source of living are ruined. Eventually Pete abandons Maggie, her family forsakes her, and she is forced into prostitution. When Maggie's value to society as an unblemished flower is gone, it turns its back on her. Jimmie is also seduced by the ways of Pete, following him to brothels, joining in fights, and eventually succumbing to alcoholism. Pete, the supposed savior, is the catalyst for the downfall of both Jimmie and Maggie. In this way Crane inverts the Christ figure, offending the most important Christian symbol

of all. Rather than leading sinners out of shame as Jesus had done, Pete leads the innocent toward shame.

Another inverted biblical allusion comes toward the end of the novella when Crane reveals that the relationship between Maggie and her mother is meant to be an allusion to the parable of the prodigal son found in Luke 15: 11-32. It recounts a tale told by Jesus in which a rich man has two sons. The younger son asks for his inheritance early, and after running off and squandering it, shaming himself and his household, he returns home to his father's open and forgiving arms. Crane powerfully alludes to this famous biblical scene of a young man falling from grace and being forgiven by twisting the ending in such a way to eliminate hope and to signify Maggie's fall from grace. Ahnebrink writes, "The portrayal of the mother is closely linked with the religious crisis of the central character and helps to stress Crane's ironic attitude to this theme of religion" (190) Crane even names Maggie's mother Mary, obviously alluding the mother of Christ, the harbinger of renewal and purity. Crane uses the relationship between Maggie and her mother to depict the corrupting effect of poverty on something even as pure as the love between parent and child. Maggie leaves the unstable and impoverished home she grew up in to be a part of Pete's "extravagant" lifestyle. When he abandons Maggie after only a few months, Maggie's mother denounces her, saying to her older son, "She had a bad heart, she did, Jimmie (*Maggie* 110). "She kin cry 'er eyes out on deh stones of de street before I'll dirty deh place wid her" Mary later says, offering no forgiveness as the good father would have in Jesus' parable (*Maggie* 110, 113). By setting up Maggie's situation as parallel to that of the prodigal son and then taking away the parent's merciful forgiveness, Crane is inverting the parable's most important

element. In doing so he packs a punch that would be far less effective without the allusion to religion. For Maggie there is no forgiveness and she has fallen to irreparable shame. Maggie's only option is to fall to prostitution, and she enters the lowest tier of society for no other reason than the sheer necessity of survival.

In several cases throughout the novel, prostitution is synonymous with going to hell. Early in the novel, once Maggie has grown into a young woman, but before she meets Pete, her brother Jimmie has become the head of the family and encourages her to get a job. Crane writes, "her brother remarked to her: 'Mag, I'll tell yeh dis! See? Yeh've edder got the go teh hell or go the work!' Whereupon she went to work, having the feminine aversion to going to hell" (41-42). The meaning is left ambiguous on its own; indeed Jimmie could just be using the phrase "go teh hell" to be cruel. However, Jimmie, as the head of the household and primary breadwinner, is refusing to accept responsibility for Maggie's survival. The responsibility rests on her shoulders and she has two options: go to work or go to hell. Her "feminine aversion" to hell is easily the same "feminine aversion" to prostitution.

The same phrase is used again later, this time by Pete. We return to the scene where Pete rejects Maggie after her family had already done so, and there he refuses responsibility for her survival and offers similar advice to Jimmy's. Crane writes this scene from the point of view of Pete.

Finally she asked in a low voice: "But where kin I go?" The question exasperated Pete beyond the powers of endurance. It was a direct attempt to give him some responsibility in a matter that did not concern him. In his indignation he volunteered information. "Oh go the hell," Cried he. He slammed the door furiously and returned, with an air of relief, to his respectability. (140)

Pete's refusal to accept responsibility for the downfall of Maggie is stated earlier in this chapter more explicitly when Crane writes, "Pete did not consider that he had ruined Maggie" (133). Yet he recognizes that Maggie's presence impedes his "respectability" and brushes her off with an easy, "Go to the hell." Like her brother, Pete is unable to accept responsibility for Maggie's survival, even though he is the only person who can preserve her honor. Pete understands however just how far Maggie has fallen from the grace of society and this time Maggie is only given one option: go to hell.

Maggie's next step is prostitution, and Pete and her family never hear from her again until her death. The ending scene offers her mother sitting in tears saying "I forgive her" over and over again, as if Maggie's downfall had affected the family in some unforgivable way. Another woman in the room says, "Yeh'll forgive her Mary! Yeh'll forgive yer bad, bad chil'! Her life was a curse an' her days were black an' yeh'll forgive yer bad girl? She's gone where her sins will be judged" (165). This woman offers the implication of hell as a sort of comfort for her mother.

Behind the societal fall from grace that Maggie experiences, Crane incorporates a deeper cause than merely the loss of her chastity. Maggie's tale is a classic trope, yet the setting provides enough context to allow Crane to expound on a social commentary incredibly relevant to his late 19th century era. When Crane tells Maggie's story, he depicts a young girl caught between two eras: the older puritan one that values chastity and family and a new one that values material wealth and public recognition. She is expected to marry and exist as the domestic ideal of the Puritan Era. Her beauty will be the ticket into that lifestyle, and when she meets her villain Jimmy, she falls prey to the fantasy that he will be her savior from poverty. It is also true that Maggie is living in in

industrial New York where women increasingly fill factories and sweat shops. While they are given the power to provide an income for their families, they work in bitter conditions and are paid barely enough to survive. The myth of the American Dream so commonly described in contemporary novels includes with it images of beautiful clothes and glorious parties, all attainable through hard work. Jimmy uses this opposing cultural obsession to seduce Maggie as well, promising her glamour and offering shelter from her impoverished family.

Maggie: Humanity denied

The writing style of Stephen Crane presents Maggie from a very external perspective. The novel is told like a story that personifies the slum the characters come from rather than the characters themselves. Often they are unnamed, rarely does the text discuss their thoughts and emotions, and when the story begins and finishes, it is told like a brief descriptive snapshot of an ever-existing setting. Because of this writing style, Crane presents Maggie in a way that the reader must understand her shame from the perspective of the society that views her. Hardy also offers readers an understanding of Tess Her own emotions are not expressed, but those around hers are. In such a way, Maggie is dehumanized.

Again Crane's symbolic use, or lack of use, of Maggie's name offers a connection to Hardy's Tess of D'Urbervilles, as Hardy creates meaning in the way that he uses Tess' name. Hardy uses the D'Urbervilles name to symbolize the archaic: old notions of sexuality, marriage, and the superiority of the noble class. Tess refuses this name until the

end of the novel when she marries Alec D'Urbervilles in a resigned act of submission to the pressure of society to return to a state of being an "honest" woman.

One clear example of Crane's resistance to name Maggie is when Maggie falls to prostitution and she loses the dignity of a name. The final chapters of the novel depict the lonely life of a nameless prostitute and her eventual suicide. It is assumed that the unnamed girl is Maggie, however the text never names her specifically. For example, one such narrative sentence reads, "A girl of the painted cohorts of the city walked along the streets" (Crane 144). Several clues indicate that this is Maggie, despite the avoidance of her name. This is first of all a clear nod to the title of the novel, *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets*. On top of that, the character is identified as "a girl", indicative that this character maintains the sympathy of youth that a character called "a woman" would not have. For example, a character in a similar situation to Maggie in an earlier chapter is not allowed the same innocence as Maggie and is instead described as a "forlorn woman"(Crane 128). The girl assumed to be Maggie in the discussed passage is also clearly identified as a prostitute by the phrase "of the painted cohorts" (144). Crane's audience will remember that they left Maggie at the end of an earlier chapter standing alone on the street at night wondering what she will do to survive, a question which they now have the tragic answer to. As if written in a minor key, the girl is still wondering the streets, an activity that Maggie had done in the last chapter she was mentioned in.

In not using Maggie's name for these final scenes, the novel has done two things. First, as mentioned before, the aloof narrator is recognizing how incredibly shameful Maggie's situation is and refuses to include her name. Second, he is bringing the narrative back to the audience as a reminder that Maggie's story is the story of many

people in the Bowery, and her lack of a specific title is symbolic of just how common a story like Maggie's is.

Maggie: The Shame of a Nation

Maggie as the beautiful flower tainted by the poisonous environment she comes from represents what the American ideal is most threatened by. Maggie, and the poverty she represents is a portrayal of a larger message of shame Crane hopes to highlight. To an American society obsessed with the idea that anyone can find a place to succeed with enough Protestant grit and hard work, Maggie represents a threat to their ideology and moral comfort. Crane, working as a journalist in the slums of New York, knew that the reality expressed in his novel would not be a popular revelation to the United States' growing middle class. Maggie and the poverty she represents is the shame of the nation, and readers of her novel are to blame.

The first way Crane makes his intention to communicate this clear is by a clear allusion near the end of the novel to the Biblical parable "The Good Samaritan found in Luke 10. As a disgraced Maggie searches for a savior she encounters three men, only to be denied by each. She first goes to Pete, the man who had been the cause of her disgrace in the first place. Standing behind the bar as the bartender, he is taken aback by her appearance in his sphere, and out of concern for the respectability of his establishment, he shuns her. The narrative depicts her rejection,

"She was apparently bewildered and could not find speech. Finally, she asked in a low voice, 'but where kin I go?' The question exasperated Pete beyond the powers of endurance. It was a direct attempt to give him some responsibility in a matter that did not concern him. In his indignation he volunteered information. 'Oh, go teh hell,' cried he. (*Maggie* 140)

After this encounter, Maggie turns to walk the streets aimlessly, with nowhere to go. She encounters her second chance for salvation. A kind man misinterprets her wandering for a direct address to him. When he realizes the mistake, he laughs it off with barely a second glance at the dejected urchin in need of aid. Finally, Maggie encounters a priest. Crane describes the hopeless scene, “But as the girl timidly accosted him, he gave a convulsive movement and saved his respectability by a vigorous side-step. He did not risk it to save a soul. For how was he to know that there was a soul before him that needed saving?” (*Maggie* 142). This moment represents the third and final chance Maggie has for salvation. Not only is the man a priest whose main purpose is to protect and uphold a struggling flock, but also his indifference toward her and her situation represents the overall indifference of the church toward the destitute.

Certainly, the reader can blame these men for refusing to step forward to help a woman so desperate for their help. However there are two samples from Crane’s later work of poetry, *Black Riders* and other lines, that point out the shame of the nation in a way that is even more direct than Crane’s novel *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets*. In addition to being distinctly identifiable as Naturalist works, the poems depict a systemic cause for men’s indifference toward shamed women as exemplified in Crane’s tale about Maggie.

The first poem reads:

There was a man and a woman
Who sinned.
Then did the man heap the punishment
All upon the head of her,
And went away gaily.

There was a man and a woman
Who sinned.
And the man stood with her.
As upon her head, so upon his,

Fell blow and blow,
And all people screaming, "Fool!"
He was a brave heart. (67)

This poem illustrates two alternate universes. In one, the man turns on the woman after they committed the same sin, and is able to escape from the anger of society. In the other he stands by her, and society retaliates against both of them. The speaker rewards the man, calling him a "brave heart" (line 12), however the tone implies that the speaker agrees with the people; the man was a fool. The critique of this work is not on the man for either of his actions in each alternate reality. The critique of this poem falls on society. The work points out that a woman cannot escape society's retaliation for promiscuity, she will fall from grace no matter what, and the rare foolish men who stands by her side will fall alongside her.

In addition to criticizing society for actively shaming Maggie, Crane criticizes society for passively averting their eyes to poverty and refusing to help those in need. Maggie is a character full of hope at the start of the novel, yet she is unable to receive the mercy from society that she needs to survive. Another poem from Crane's *Black Riders and Other Poems* moves well alongside this theme. The work reads:

Charity, Thou Art a Lie,
A Toy of Women,
A pleasure of certain men.
In the presence of justice,
Lo, in the walls of the temple
Are visible
Through thy form of the sudden shadows. (17)

Crane's poem begins by saying that charity is a lie, played with for pleasure by women and men. Yet, "in the presence of justice", or when charity is no longer going to be rewarded and the state has taken dominion over a particular case, the people who

would be charitable are gone, nothing more than a “sudden shadow”. In Maggie’s case, no help will come to her, because she has become a prostitute and is therefore to shameful to touch.

Conclusion

Both Hardy and Crane write novels that depict the downfall of a female protagonist at the hands of destructive shame imposed by society. Other novels follow this trope as well, among them *Anna Karenina* by Leo Tolstoy and *The Scarlett Letter* by Nathaniel Hawthorne. A society that approves of strictly enforced morality is willing to turn away when people fall through the cracks of their strict system. Works that humanized these tragedies, like those listed above, however, offered the world a fresh look at a situation it seemed happy to ignore. By pulling at human sympathies, these works began to provoke change. Decades of progress created the society so near to gender equality we have today.

CHAPTER THREE

Theodore Dreiser

A poem called “The Ruined Maid” amongst Thomas Hardy’s cannon of works argues that economic and social gain of a mistress in Victorian society is tempting enough to be worth the social stigma associated with it. One of Hardy’s lighter works, it offers a harsh criticism of a society that subjects the virtuous woman to poverty and rewards the sinful ones with status, leisure, and economic gain. Written in 1866, the poem represents Hardy’s disillusionment of a society that had just legalized the Contagious Diseases Act, a legal measure regulating the prevalent culture of prostitution in and around military camps. As Stanley Renner says concerning the poem, “it dispelled a morally comfortable mythology that allowed Victorian society to view a seething complex of social problems with moral satisfaction rather than concern” (Renner 19).

Hardy’s poem “The Ruined Maid” is a conversation between two old friends. The main speaker is a virtuous country girl who sees her old friend, a young woman who has been “ruined” and is presumably living as the mistress of a rich man. In the first stanza the country girl approaches the ruined maid and applauds her lovely clothes. The ruined maid responds, saying, “O didn’t you know I’d been ruined?” (line 4). Each respective stanza articulates a new way in which the life of the ruined maid has been improved. Stanza two depicts that the dress of a ruined woman is much improved from the dress of a virtuous country girl. The third stanza outlines the improvement of speech and education received in the company of higher classes. The fourth stanza comments on the ruined maid’s glowing beauty and lifestyle of leisure. Finally, the fifth stanza depicts

the way that the ruined maid is improved even in her general liveliness of disposition and overall happiness. The sixth and final stanza finalizes the poem:

I wish I had feathers, a fine sweeping gown,
And a delicate face, and could strut about Town!
“My dear – a raw country girl, such as you be,
Cannot quite expect that. You ain’t ruined,” said she.

The irony of this poem is that the “ruined” woman is living a better life than the virtuous one, and the favor she has garnished with her rich lover has granted her a position in life higher than anything she could have achieved by her own merit or social power. The irony is humorous, but the meaning lying behind it alludes to a darker truth to the reality that Hardy is parodying. The poem comments on the way that women are often offered a choice between a happy life as a “ruined” woman or the life of toil and hardship. Even beyond this, Hardy’s work draws attention to the fact that the only means for which a woman can gain a rise in social status is by way of the favor of a man. Such a comment on the corruption of the ailing Victorian culture is only furthered when a reader considers other fictional works by Hardy, such as *Tess of D’Urbervilles*, that depict mistresses who have fallen out of favor with their lovers and have lived a life outside of even their common class due to the perception of society and their inability to marry.

During my previous discussions of Thomas Hardy and Stephen Crane, I consider the devastating role of shame in the downfall of a female protagonist. For both of the women discussed, a premarital sexual act with a man followed by a deep sense of shame instigated a spiral to doom that was evident in both the internal consciousness of the character as well as in the external consciousness of society. The shame imposed on both women is for an act that happened in the past and cannot be removed. From there the

criticism of society ultimately drove the shame deeper and forced the women to self-destruct on their own. It would be easy to draw my conclusion here and point out that shame is imposed by society in a potentially devastating way. However, as many moments point out in Hardy's *Tess of D'Urbervilles* specifically, shame is felt internally and at some point the critique of society stops to make way for a deeper, sense of a self-loathing that leads to eventual self-destruction. Theodore Dreiser's *Sister Carrie* depicts a similar premise to the novels *Tess of D'Urbervilles*, by Thomas Hardy, and *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets*, by Stephen Crane. However, the outcome of Dreiser's novel stands as a stark contrast. Carrie does not die; in fact she ends the novel at a social status far higher than the one that she began the novel in.

Theodor Dreiser's *Sister Carrie* is a similar novel to *Tess of D'Urbervilles* by Thomas Hardy and *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets* by Stephen Crane in that he depicts a young woman who is left out on her own and must choose between the horrific drudgery of life working in sweatshops or accept the offer of a life of leisure living as the mistress of a wealthy man. However unlike the previously discussed works, Dreiser's protagonist ends the novel as a wealthy actress, positioned on top of the society that readers would have expected to turn on her. Carrie does feel shame, however she feels it for her social status, not for the stigma of a past action. In this chapter I argue that Carrie's positive outcome is due to her lack of concern for moral shame and her ability to use social shame as a tool to rise in society. Additionally, I point out that Carrie's ability to do this is in the face of a historical back drop that allows the novel to comment on the changing era and the social progress of the generation.

Review of Literature

Dreiser is one author who is, according to critics, undeniably influenced by the Naturalist Movement. Lars Ahnebrink writes in *The Beginnings of Naturalism in American Fiction* “scholars generally agree that naturalism in the United States came of age in the writings of Theodore Dreiser whose first novel, *Sister Carrie*, is a fairly typical work of the movement” (Ahnebrink 160). However many critics do dispute whether Dreiser made any positive influences to the growth of the American Novel, among the Stuart P. Sherman. These writers claim that Dreiser’s work is not written well enough to rise above writers like Crane and Frank Norris.

Dreiser’s questionable personal integrity places critic Louis Filler on the fence between approval and disapproval of Dreiser. The history of how *Sister Carrie* got published is mired with confusion and myth. According to the Filler in his article “Theodore Dreiser and the Anti-Progressive Drive”, Dreiser himself began the rumor that early in the publication process a reader of his agency, Doubleday, objected to the novel on the basis of immorality and Dreiser had to fight for the work to be published. However, Filler reports that Dreiser totally falsified this account in an effort to produce a legacy of progressivism. This calls to question much of what critics assert about Dreiser, especially his motive for writing a novel that contained as much fluid morality as *Sister Carrie*. If *Sister Carrie* was not persecuted as Dreiser originally asserted, than is the meaning within even progressive? However, in another article, also by Filler, called “Sense, Sentimentality, and Theodore Dreiser”, we find an important distinction between understanding an author and using that understanding as a weapon against his work. Filler says, “All this is intended to show Dreiser as human” (92). He concludes by reminding his audience that a work as classic as *Sister Carrie* can stand on its own as a

positive influence on the canon of American literature now that years have passed and its message still speaks to an eager audience.

Other critics such as Charles Child Walcott, Eliseo Vivas, and Yoshinobu Hakutani assert that Dreiser's work is a literary treasure, necessary to the many later works it inspired. Hakutani writes in his article "Sister Carrie and the Problem of Literary Naturalism", that Dreiser does what Crane could not do:

In Crane's description there is little sense of humanity in the scene, neither of the people in question nor of the author who is showing his wonder and compassion. Where Crane is an objective observer of surfaces, Dreiser subjectively penetrates the mental state of the outcast. (15)

Dreiser is, overall, an important figure to the canon of American Literature merely based on the fact that his works have stood the test of time and are mostly regarded as important to the Naturalist movement.

Carrie's Character

At the start of the novel the protagonist, Caroline Meeber, or Carrie, boards a train from her rural town to Chicago to begin a life in the city. On the train she meets a successful young man called Drouet who implies interest of the sexual kind that Carrie has not yet grown to accept. Carrie begins her time in Chicago the proper way: she acquires a job in a factory, lives with her sister and her family, and attempts to sightsee the glory of the city around her as much as she can. Eventually Carrie falls sick and loses her job. After a few days of half-hearted searching, Carrie encounters Drouet again, who immediately considers her to be his next conquest and offers her a taste of the lavish life style of a live-in mistress. Carrie reluctantly accepts, persuaded by the thought of escaping from the impoverished social status of a factory worker, and abandons her sister in the night. Months pass in this status and Carrie reaches a relative state of satisfaction.

Eventually Carrie is introduced to Mr. Hurstwood, an incredibly successful married bar manager. The two run away together to New York City, adopting a new name and living as husband and wife. Hurstwood, having given up all of his wealth, business connections, and family, eventually falls into a depressive state and turns away from Carrie. Upon Hurstwood's loss of employment, Carrie is forced to seek work of her own. She becomes a stage actress, grows in success, leaves Hurstwood in his depressive state, and becomes a star. The novel ends with Carrie gazing out the window, contemplating just how unhappy she is no matter her success.

The initial mood of the novel is hopeful, matching the excitement felt by the protagonist. However, the narrator allows a tone of doom and foreshadowing to shade the narrative with the implication that Carrie's story will be very similar to others of the genre that feature a young virgin headed for the traps of a predatory society.

This doom is exemplified by a passage included at the very start of the novel where Dreiser sets the scene of peril that Carrie is about to face as a lone female in a large city like Chicago. The text reads,

When a girl leaves her home at eighteen, she does one of two things. Either she falls into saving hands and becomes better, or she rapidly assumes the cosmopolitan standard of virtue and becomes worse. Of intermediate balance, under the circumstances, there is no possibility.
Dreiser (3)

Dreiser, like Hardy and Crane, creates a character that is helpless to the cannibalistic moral whims of the city she exists in. In fact, not only is Carrie portrayed as helpless to her own outcome; she is doomed to fall prey. By the words "better" and "worse" used in the passage, Dreiser offers no specific point of comparison, however it is possible that he intends to lead his reader to assume that he means a moral "better" or "worse". In this

way he invokes a sense of doom over the setting, and plays to the trope of a young girl falling from grace at after a moral misstep. In this way, the novel is introduced much like the other two discussed in this thesis: with a young girl helpless to save herself from the devastating fate of immorality.

However, Dreiser may well be making the opposite point in this passage as well. The passage above mentions the “cosmopolitan standard of virtue” that young women often turn to when they leave their home. Carrie certainly is one of these young women, and as the novel progresses, readers watch this grow into an asset for Carrie. Here it is important to remember that Dreiser is a Naturalist writer, and when he comments on a “cosmopolitan standard of virtue” he is not speaking sarcastically or judgmentally. His comment alludes to a fluid morality that is based on the society one surrounded by; in Carrie’s case, she has moved to the bustling city of Chicago and the standard of virtue has changed.

To further accent this image of helplessness, Carrie is described as “warm with the fancies of youth, pretty with the insipid prettiness of the formative period, possessed of a figure promising eventual shapeliness and an eye alight with certain naïve intelligence” (Dreiser 4). Again, this is directly parallel to Hardy’s novel in which the narrator discusses Tess, saying, “Phases of her childhood lurked in her aspect still” (Hardy 10). However, as the novel progresses it becomes clear that Dreiser is not overly concerned with the moral implications of Carrie’s actions as a mistress.

Carrie’s character is thematically different than that of Tess and Maggie. Dreiser twists the character of his protagonist just enough to allow her the agency she needs to survive in a competitive world. Like the protagonists, Carrie is beautiful and her image

radiates youth. Unlike them, however, Carrie does not feel shame for her actions. In addition to this moral numbness, Carrie has been given two clear assets that she learns to use quickly on the way to her rise: her ability to imitate, and her sexuality.

As the novel progresses, readers learn that Dreiser's America is one of competition and his protagonist Carrie is up for the challenge. In the case of Carrie, innocence is merely a look. Internally Carrie is intensely self-aware, ambitious, and cunning, traits that give her the drive she needs to use that perceived innocence and helplessness against the indifferent society to rise by her own merit. In addition to this, Carrie's greatest asset is her ability to imitate those around her. In one scene, Drouet compliments Carrie for her improved manner after Carrie had begun to make these imitations habit and the narrator explains, "she began to get the hang of those little things which the pretty woman who has any vanity invariably adopts. In short, her knowledge of grace doubled, and with it her appearance changed. She became a girl of considerable taste" (Dreiser 77). Such imitations so expertly practiced inevitably lead Carrie to her successful career as an actress, showing yet another way in which her talent of imitation proved such an asset to Carrie.

Carrie's other asset, more obvious to the reader yet rarely directly referenced in the novel itself, is her sexuality. Carrie makes her rise from poverty by becoming the mistress of Drouet only to rise to a more wealthy status as the mistress of Hurstwood.

In one scene during the early courtship of Drouet to Carrie, this use of her sexuality functions exactly like a monetary transaction. The interaction begins when Drouet notes that Carrie was "really very pretty" (45). Carrie feels his eyes watching her, and notes a "current of feeling" passing between them. This initial unspoken

communication regarding the sexual chemistry passing between them turns into both a spoken and unspoken communication of Carrie's financial need. The text reads, "they came to an understanding of each other without words- he of her situation, she of the fact that he realized it" (46). At this moment, Drouet invites her to a show, accepts her refusal, and offers her money. Their sexuality plays a role again as the element of touch enters the description when Drouet places his fingers around the dollar bills in his pocket and "crumples them up in his hand"(46). Almost at queue, Carrie reaches her hand across the table for him to grasp, the text making special note that "they were quite alone in their corner", and the two agree to meet again. As they part, the text reads, "Don't you bother about those people out there," he said at parting, "I'll help you." Carrie left him, feeling as though a great arm had slipped out before her to draw off trouble. The money she had accepted was two soft, green handsome ten-dollar bills" (47). Although this dinner makes no specific reference to the status Carrie would hold as Drouet's mistress in just a few weeks, the transaction where Carrie offers her sexuality in return for a financial gain is made clear, and Carrie uses this asset successfully for the first time.

In addition to Carrie's growing ability to use her assets in her own favor, she is helped by the fact that she is consistently underestimated. When Carrie is introduced to her future lover, Mr. Hurstwood, by her current lover Mr. Drouet, the wealthy bar manager examines Carrie as an exciting fling, feeling fortunate to have encountered her in what he interprets as a vulnerable time in life. Hurstwood is enamored by her and considers her to be full of untouched potential. The text reads, "He was lucky in the fact that the opportunity tumbled in his lap, as it were. A few years later, with a little more experience, the slightest tide of success, and he had not been able to approach Carrie at

all” (71). Hurstwood’s judgment of Carrie’s potential is what attracts him to her and provokes the pursuit that leads him to sweep Carrie into the next era of her life. In fact, Hurstwood was so correct in this judgment that Carrie would soon be so far out of his reach that Carrie eventually overshadowed him. By the end of the novel, Hurstwood commits suicide in New York City when Carrie leaves him.

Finally, I conclude my discussion of Carrie’s character to abolish the impression that Carrie never once considers the effect of her actions on her morality. In fact, after Carrie has just moved in with her first lover, Drouet, Dreiser dedicates a whole passage to this concern. Dreiser the chapter by saying, “we have but an infantile perception of morals” (Dreiser 65), directly citing in the text the Naturalist philosopher Herbert Spencer. Dreiser goes on to list the material gain that Carrie has just received in great detail, ultimately pointing out that she is much better off. Carrie on the other hand, is more concerned. A passage reads, “She looked into her glass and saw a prettier Carrie than she had seen before; she looked into her mind, a mirror prepared of her own and the world’s opinions, and saw a worse. Between these two images she wavered, hesitating which to believe” (Dreiser 66). Carrie is clearly conscious of the code of morality she has broken, however it is rare that Dreiser mentions that this is a concern to her. Ultimately, Carrie decides to ignore her sense of morality and advance in the world for material gain.

External Reaction to Carrie

Though Carrie does not receive much repercussion for her moral actions, at least compared to Tess and Maggie, there is certainly external criticism acted on Carrie by the society around her. Despite the fact that Carrie is numb to the prospect of moral shame,

those around her do not expect this of her. Neighbors judge her for her actions and call her lost, rather than considering the gain she might be receiving. Her lovers misinterpret her numbness to morality for naiveté.

This occurs in several instances in the novel. As I mentioned earlier in the chapter, when Drouet begins to court Carrie as his mistress he cautions her, saying, “don’t worry about those people out there” (Dreiser 47) while sliding smooth green cash into her hand. In a later instance when Hurstwood courts Carrie, the narrator mentions the judgment of Carrie and Drouet’s neighbors, folks who think that Carrie and Drouet are married. The text reads, “Mrs. Hale, from her upper window, saw her coming in. “Um, she thought to herself, ‘she goes riding with another man when her husband is out of the city. He had better keep an eye on her.’”(Dreiser 95).

Carrie’s Ambition Fueled by Shame

When Carrie arrives in Chicago her goal is vague: to make a way for herself. Like many at the time, rural life was not sustaining, and Carrie sought the economic opportunities of the city to reach success. This purpose is depicted vaguely early in the novel from the perspective of Carrie’s sister:

She would get in one of the great shops and do well enough until—well until something happened. Neither of them knew exactly what. They did not figure on promotion, they did not exactly count on marriage. Things would go on in a dim kind of way until the better thing would eventuate. Carrie would be rewarded for coming and toiling in the city” (Dreiser 12).

While Carrie does not experience shame for her sexual actions, frequently throughout the novel she is ashamed of her social status, as represented by her clothing, and acts accordingly.

Dreiser attributes this desire to know and attain clothes to Carrie's gender often. In one instance he writes, "A woman should some day write the complete philosophy of clothes. No matter how young, it is one of the things she wholly comprehends" (Dreiser 6). In a later scene, Carrie sees a pair of shoes in a shop window and the narrator informs his audience that, "her woman's heart was warm with desire for them" (51). However, Carrie is more ambitious than others around her facing the same poverty. The narrator compares her specifically to the other girls chattering contentedly in the sweatshop beside Carrie early in the novel. It reads, "They seemed satisfied with their lot, and were in a sense 'common'. Carrie had more imagination than they. She was not used to slang. Her instinct in the matter of dress was naturally better"(Dreiser 40). Later in the same scene, Carrie is disgusted when some of the male workers make lewd comments in her direction, despite a realization that this is a function of the sweatshop environment. This scene indicates the natural inclination Carrie has to see herself as adaptable and able to compete at the next rung of society. Throughout the novel this trend repeats until the end where readers see Carrie at the top, lonely and lacking in purpose. Carrie's stubbornness and refusal to accept poverty as an option is clear. It reads, "She was not going to be a common shop girl, she thought; they need not think it, either"(Dreiser 41). Here we see Carrie deriving strength from shame.

Carrie's motivation by shame plays out later in the novel as well when she has been placed in New York City as the mistress of Hurstwood. Though her living

conditions and way of life have noticeably improved since her time with Drouet, Carrie eventually becomes dissatisfied when a pair of glamorous neighbors moves in next door and shows Carrie the lifestyle of wealthy New Yorkers Hurstwood knew nothing about. This education and the motivating shame that results is most evident in a scene when Carrie is taken to walk Broadway among New York high fashion. As she walks beside her neighbor, the glamorous Mrs. Vance, Carrie reacts to the shame of being seen as the lesser of the two women:

She could only imagine that it must be evident to many that she was the less handsomely dressed of the two. It cut her to the quick, and she resolved that she would not come here again until she looked better. At the same time she longed to feel the delight of parading here as an equal. Ah, then she would be happy! (Dreiser 220)

This occurrence begins Carrie's dissatisfaction with her simple life as Hurstwood's mistress, as he cannot provide for her material desire enough to satisfy her. The line "ah, then she would be happy" cuts into Carrie's character and draws a thread between Dreiser's work and other authors of his day that consider the driving effect of American consumerism. In Carrie's case, unlike Tess and Maggie, she can pinpoint the cause of her shame to be a lack of material possessions and she can maneuver herself so that she is in a place to eliminate it. In this sense, Dreiser offers Carrie certain power, despite the naturalist undertone that asserts her desire is an animalistic need to consume that Carrie has no chance of controlling. However, Carrie resigns herself to this fact, and allows her urges to control her without the moral shame Tess and Maggie would have had.

Political Climate

Hardy's *Tess of D'Urbervilles* depicts the technological, political and social climate of the Great Britain in the early 1890's and Crane's *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets* depicts the social and class climate of the United States in the early 1890's. Likewise, Dreiser's *Sister Carrie* reflects America just a decade later, and places his characters in the heart of one of the largest social revolutions of the century: the Labor Movement of the 1900. The novel opens in Chicago, and at this stage Carrie is one of the very workers so oppressed by the large sweatshops at the heart of the revolution. The narrator writes about Carrie's miserable work conditions, qualifying it in the times, saying, "under better material conditions, this kind of work would not have been so bad, but the new socialism which involves pleasant working conditions for employees had not then taken hold upon manufacturing companies" (30). By the end of Maggie's first day she is exhausted and she recognizes the hopelessness of a life in such conditions. To make matters far worse for the ambitious Carrie, she leaves that day only to encounter a cluster of beautifully dressed girls her own age shopping outside her sweatshop location. The text reads, "She felt ashamed in the face of better dressed girls who went by. She felt as though she should be better served, and her heart revolted" (Dreiser 32). This feeling inspires Carrie to be different and leads her to accept opportunities that raise her status rather than stabilize her in poverty. Unlike the shame of the unalterable past felt by Tess and Maggie, Carrie is ashamed by her circumstances and works to elevate herself to escape them.

Conclusion

Carrie's refusal to be defined by shame, and the consequent societal status she enjoys as a result, would have offered a shocking ending in Dreiser's day. In light of the

tragedy that Tess and Maggie experience along with their encounter with destructive shame, there is something to the assertion that people are better off ignoring moral urges and the shame that results from violation of social law.

That said, I would like to finish my discussion of Dreiser's *Sister Carrie* by pointing out that although Carrie did not end up deceased by the end of the novel, as the protagonists of the other novels had, her ending is still by no means positive. By highlighting some passages in the novel, I will cast a shadow on the impression that Carrie or any of the other characters end well.

Dreiser's inversion of the literary norm of the time, killing the character of the esteemed man rather than the ruined mistress, presents critics with much to discuss. At the beginning of their acquaintance, Hurstwood is at his peak: wealthy, respected, and content. His contentedness has limitations, however, and as the narrator points out about Hurstwood's character, "he was not in the order of nature to trouble for something better, unless the better was immediately and sharply contrasted" (Dreiser 65). When he meets Carrie however, he loses himself in pursuit of her, a conquest that he finds worthy, but manageable. He diminishes her by limiting her capabilities to her inexperience and making the mistake of synthesizing that inexperience with innocence. One passage depicts Carrie as Hurstwood sees her.

"She came fresh from the air of the village, the light of the country still in her eye. Here was neither guile nor rapacity...She was too full of wonder and desire to be greedy. She looked about her upon the great maze of the city without understanding. Hurstwood felt the bloom and the youth. He picked her as he would the fresh fruit of a tree. He felt as fresh in her

presence as one who was taken out of the flash of summer in the first cool of the spring.” (96)

Carrie is desired in the same way that she desires things. “As yet Hurstwood had only a thought of pleasure without responsibility” (Dreiser 96). “His recent victory over Carrie seemed to atone for much he had endured during the last few days. Life seemed worth fighting for” (199). Hurstwood is driven by the idea that when he attains Carrie, he will be happy. However, by the end of the novel Hurstwood is definitively unhappy, as indicated by his suicide.

Carrie is driven by the same search for happiness, though she also fails. She ends the novel rocking in a chair contemplating her dissatisfaction. The text reads, “Oh Carrie, Carrie! Oh, blind strivings of the human heart! Onward, onward it saith, and where beauty leads, there it follows.” (Dreiser 354). In this passage, readers gain insight into how deep the naturalist perspective penetrates *Sister Carrie*. The novel inverts the expected trope of the fallen angel, offers its character all she wants, and concludes with a statement on the nature of mankind: happiness is unattainable.

A final message to the reader is direct, reading, “Know then, that for you is neither surfeit nor content. In your rocking chair, by your window dreaming, shall you long, alone. In your rocking-chair, by your window, shall you dream such happiness as you may never feel” (355). It is unclear of course why Dreiser chose to end the novel this way. It is possible that the pressure of his religious contemporaries made him feel motivated to remind readers that sinful actions do not lead to happiness. Maybe Dreiser needed to remain true to Carrie’s ambitious character. Nevertheless, as *Sister Carrie* ends

with this statement, critics can rest with the fact that Dreiser's work is undeniably part of the naturalist movement.

CONCLUSION

The similarity of a basic premise and a unified goal to provoke social change link Hardy, Crane, and Dreiser as a natural trio for comparison. As each writer works with an era of intertextuality, he puts his own take on gender, class, and ethics into his work. The lens of shame that each looks through inserts a personal entry point into the works that is beyond emotional. These works were remarkably influential in the realm of literature that I have the benefit of studying today. They were also influential to create the mostly egalitarian society in which I benefit as well. That said, there are moments in the novels where the symptoms of their time show, and a healthy discussion of where they fall short is important to have. As I conclude this work, I will pose some questions regarding these authors and their writing that were not answered satisfactorily in my research.

First of all, I find it curious that most of the authors who depict the downfall and shame of women for violations of societal sexual boundaries are men. Critics have certainly noticed this, especially Katherine Rogers, who said, “Tess is suspiciously like the beautiful helpless animals who’s sufferings parallel her own” (Rogers 249). My own critique lies in the need for each of the authors to assert that their protagonists are still beautiful, despite unmatched suffering. It is possible that this was a conscious decision, intended to maintain sympathy from the audience. However, such a move implies that women who are no longer beautiful do not engender sympathy and is a clear symptom of a less progressive time.

My most prominent question is sought to be answered by the Naturalist genre as a whole. First of all, the Naturalist genre is by definition atheistic and amoral. It explains

the universe as an unfeeling mass of painful existence and discusses the ethical dilemmas of the human race as animalistic and unnecessary. Dreiser does really well to illustrate that shame is unnecessary in his novel *Sister Carrie*. While I am clearly intrigued by the Naturalist movement and its historical implications, my own theistic worldview causes me to question the genre of Naturalism at its very foundation. I find its overall tone to be angry and aching, as if rather than gracefully accepting a nihilistic existence, the genre cries out in anger at God for not existing. Here lies yet another difference between the Hardy and Crane pairing versus Dreiser, as Dreiser's overall conclusion could easily be interpreted to mean that shame is unnecessary, meaningless, and archaic, whereas Hardy and Crane are so often interested in theism that it almost seems to be real to them. These examples can be found in the biographies of the authors as well as in the works themselves. Because I am no longer specifically discussing the depiction of shame, but rather its implications and placement in the concept of morality, I will move past the examples already shared to include a more comprehensive discussion of the authors and their works as a whole.

One of Stephen Crane's most famous works, the short story "The Open Boat", offers the perfect example of Naturalism while also presenting the pained relationship the movement and Crane have with theism. The story depicts four men stranded on a lifeboat after a shipwreck completely at the mercy of the sea. The meaning of the tale is even more poignant considering the work's autobiographical nature, adapted from Crane's own experience. At one point in the text the protagonist cries out to God, angry at its non-existence. The character cries out in what has become a very famous moment in Naturalism:

“When it occurs to a man that nature does not regard him as important, and that she feels she would not maim the universe by disposing of him, he at first wishes to throw bricks at the temple, and he hates deeply the fact that there are no bricks and no temples” (PAR 480).

Crane offers an explanation for the existence of religion here. He argues that religion exists to make us feel like we matter to something.

Poem 12 in *The Black Riders* features another outburst from Crane,

Well, then, I hate Thee, Unrighteous picture;
Wicked image, I hate thee;
So, strike with Thy vengeance
The heads of those little men
Who come blindly.
It will be a brave thing. (*The Black Riders* 14)

Crane’s anger at what he perceives to be the lack of a God shows a deeper wound than I think he intends to show. Finally I get to my question. If morality is a fake concept used to invoke shame on humanity, why is it so important that naturalist authors discuss it and its manifestations so thoroughly?

When I began this thesis I intended to discuss the way women fall from grace in Victorian society. It took me months to realize that I needed to focus on the cause, and not the symptom of the problem. As my research shifted to consider shame, the pieces fell into place, and arguments were relatively easy to piece together. What is less easy, however, is the realization that although society has changed toward a more progressive bent, humans still experience-crippling shame. Suicide among teenagers is rampant, adults invest thousands of dollars in the modification of their appearance, and we still have to send rape victims to counseling to alleviate the pangs of shame felt after an event for which they carry no blame. This essentially takes what Dreiser had to say about shame not being important, and renders his argument null. Clearly shame played a

massive role in the Industrial era. However, it affects ours as well, and we need to be conscious of that.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Ahnebrink, Lars. *The Beginnings of Naturalism in American Fiction: A Study of the Works of Hamlin Garland, Stephen Crane, and Frank Norris, With Special Reference to S. Russell*&Russell Pub, 1961.
- Barnaby, Edward. "The Realist Novel as Meta-Spectacle." *Journal of Narrative Theory*, vol. 38, no. 1, 2008, pp. 37–59.
- Brennan, Stephen C. "Literary Naturalism as a Humanism: Donald Pizer on Definitions of Naturalism." *Studies in American Naturalism*, vol. 5, no. 1, 2010, pp. 8–20.
- Brogan, Howard O. "Early Experience and Scientific Determinism in Twain and Hardy." *Mosaic: A Journal for the Interdisciplinary Study of Literature*, vol. 7, no. 3, 1974, pp. 99–105.
- Claviez, Thomas. "'Declining' the (American) Sublime: Stephen Crane's 'The Open Boat.'" *Amerikastudien / American Studies*, vol. 53, no. 2, 2008, pp. 137–51.
- Colvert, James B. "THE ORIGINS OF STEPHEN CRANE'S LITERARY CREED." *The University of Texas Studies in English*, vol. 34, 1955, pp. 179–88.
- Cook, Hera. *The Long Sexual Revolution: English Women, Sex, and Contraception, 1800-1975*. Oxford University Press, 2004.
- COWIE, ALEXANDER. "The New Heroine's Code for Virtue." *The American Scholar*, vol. 4, no. 2, 1935, pp. 190–202.
- Definition of GUILT*. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/guilt>. Accessed 19 Mar. 2018.
- Definition of SHAME*. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/shame>. Accessed 18 Mar. 2018.
- Deresiewicz, William. "Thomas Hardy and the History of Friendship Between the Sexes." *The Wordsworth Circle*, vol. 38, no. 1/2, 2007, pp. 56–63.
- Ellerby, Janet Mason, editor. "Theodore Dreiser's All-Giving Angel:: Jennie Gerhardt." *Embroidering the Scarlet A*, University of Michigan Press, 2015, pp. 48–62. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.3998/mpub.6944967.6>.
- Filler, Louis. "Theodore Dreiser and the Anti-Progressive Drive." *Biography*, vol. 16, no. 3, 1993, pp. 249–57.

- Gendin, Sidney. "Was Stephen Crane (or Anybody Else) a Naturalist?" *The Cambridge Quarterly*, vol. 24, no. 2, 1995, pp. 89–101.
- Hakutani, Yoshinobu. "Sister Carrie and the Problem of Literary Naturalism." *Twentieth Century Literature*, vol. 13, no. 1, 1967, pp. 3–17. *JSTOR*, doi:10.2307/440549.
- Hardy and the Naturalists: Their Use of Physiology on JSTOR*.
<http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.baylor.edu/stable/435651?Search=yes&resultItemClick=true&searchText=thomas&searchText=hardy,&searchText=naturalism&searchUri=%2Faction%2FdoBasicSearch%3Ffc%3Doff%26amp%3Bacc%3Don%26amp%3Bgroup%3Dnone%26amp%3Bwc%3Don%26amp%3BQuery%3Dthomas%2Bhardy%252C%2Bnaturalism&refreqid=search%3A728c9deda96a90b08410e0a08138d818>. Accessed 27 Mar. 2018.
- Heuston, Dustin. "Theodore Dreiser: Naturalist or Theist?" *Brigham Young University Studies*, vol. 3, no. 2, 1961, pp. 41–49.
- Joyce, Simon. *Modernism and Naturalism in British and Irish Fiction, 1880–1930*. Cambridge University Press, 2014. *ProQuest Ebook Central*,
<http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/bayloru/detail.action?docID=1775887>.
- Joyce, Simon. *Modernism and Naturalism in British and Irish Fiction, 1880–1930*. Cambridge University Press, 2014. *ProQuest Ebook Central*,
<http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/bayloru/detail.action?docID=1775887>.
- Krause, Sydney J. "The Surrealism of Crane's Naturalism in 'Maggie.'" *American Literary Realism, 1870-1910*, vol. 16, no. 2, 1983, pp. 253–61.
- "Labor Movement - Facts & Summary." *HISTORY.com*, <http://www.history.com/topics/labor>. Accessed 19 Mar. 2018.
- "Ruined Landscapes." *Anglo-Saxon Literary Landscapes*, Amsterdam University Press, 2017, pp. 61–88. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1zkjxx3.6>.
- Link, Eric Carl. *The Vast and Terrible Drama: American Literary Naturalism in the Late Nineteenth Century*. University of Alabama Press, 2004. *ProQuest Ebook Central*,
<http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/bayloru/detail.action?docID=4810048>.
- Nagel, James. "Donald Pizer, American Naturalism, and Stephen Crane." *Studies in American Naturalism*, vol. 1, no. 1/2, 2006, pp. 30–35.
- Nathanson, Donald L. *Shame and Pride: Affect, Sex, and the Birth of the Self*. W. W. Norton & Company, 1994.

- Newton, K. M. "Tragedy and the Novel." *Thomas Hardy in Context*, edited by Mallett, Phillip, 2013.
- Ransom, John Crowe. "Thomas Hardy's Poems, and the Religious Difficulties of a Naturalist." *The Kenyon Review*, vol. 22, no. 2, 1960, pp. 169–93.
- Renner, Stanley. "William Acton, the Truth about Prostitution, and Hardy's Not-So-Ruined Maid." *Victorian Poetry*, vol. 30, no. 1, 1992, pp. 19–28.
- Renner, Stanley. "William Acton, the Truth about Prostitution, and Hardy's Not-So-Ruined Maid." *Victorian Poetry*, vol. 30, no. 1, 1992, pp. 19–28.
- Rogers, Katharine. "WOMEN IN THOMAS HARDY." *The Centennial Review*, vol. 19, no. 4, 1975, pp. 249–58.
- STEARNS, PETER N., editor. "Reconsidering Shame in Western Society:: The Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries." *Shame*, University of Illinois Press, 2017, pp. 57–95. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5406/j.ctt1vjqrq8.9>.
- Suzuki, Juro. "A Note on Hardy and Tōson." *Comparative Literature Studies*, vol. 20, no. 1, 1983, pp. 44–47.
- Walcutt, Charles Child. "The Three Stages of Theodore Dreiser's Naturalism." *PMLA*, vol. 55, no. 1, 1940, pp. 266–89. *JSTOR*, doi:10.2307/458439.