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**A Comparative Study of the Manifestations of
Naturalism in Stephen Crane's "The Open Boat" and
Jack London's "To Build a Fire".**

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Abstract

This dissertation explores the manifestation(s) of naturalism in the works of two outstanding American writers, namely Stephen Crane and Jack London. We seek to show the ways in which Stephen Crane's short story "The Open Boat" and Jack London's "To Build a Fire" display the elements that are said to be pillars of naturalism. Our special aim is to explain how these two American writers share the common concern of portraying the nineteenth century America. To achieve such an aim, we resorted to social Darwinist theoretical approach, following Herbert Spencer's ideas of social Darwinism and highlighting the most important naturalistic features present in the two selected short stories, among which we mention the indifference of nature toward human struggle, the survival of the fittest, fate and determinism as well as pessimism and hopelessness.

General Introduction

Frank Norris' *Mc Teague* (1899), Stephen Crane's "The Open Boat" (1898), Jack London's "To Build a fire" (1908), Edith Wharton's *The House of Mirth* (1905), John Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men* (1936), etc., represent a remarkable trend in the American literature of the nineteenth and twentieth century's. The literary trend in question answers to the name of Naturalism. It emerged in Europe, in France, and became mature in America.

Philosophically speaking, naturalism refers to a way of thinking which considers nature as the A principle. And aesthetically speaking, Naturalism aims at imitating nature. In literature, naturalism is realism with a special focus on factors like, poverty, heredity, fate, nature, etc., which constitute determinism, and an overt implementation of scientific principles and discoveries (Darwinism for instance) to literature. Characters in naturalistic works are neither heroic, nor romantic; they are workers, slum dwellers, prostitutes, etc. They are governed by heredity and passion that they cannot understand; also, naturalists attack capitalism and explain society in Darwinist terms, where only the fittest survive (Laura,2012:353).

Our present work sheds light on the works of two American authors of the nineteenth century who are respectively Stephen Crane and Jack London. These two writers, in their short stories "*The Open Boat*" (1898) and "*To Build a Fire*" (1908) share the common concern of expressing their age and showing the effects of environment on people who were helpless to change their situation. Thus, we intend to compare the two short stories to sort out the manifestation of literary Naturalism. Through the study of both writers' treatment of phenomena such as heredity, fate, and the weight of the environment, we aim to demonstrate what is naturalism? The hard circumstances (industrialization, social change) of America at

the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth were favorable for the birth of a pessimistic fiction like Crane's and London's.

Review of the Literature

"*The Open Boat*" by Stephen Crane and "*To Build a Fire*", by Jack London have received a wide range of criticism. If taken separately, many critics dealt with the two short stories and commented on them from different angles. If taken together, the two works have also been put together in many essays and are assumed to be amongst the emblems of literary naturalism of nineteenth century America.

Among the critics who joined the two short stories together, we cite Geoff Hamilton and Jones Brain, who in their work *Encyclopedia of the Environment in American Literature*(2013), tackled the story from a naturalist perspective and focus more on Crane's and London's use of naturalistic techniques as the use of vivid imagery throughout their stories to underscore both the beauty and terror of natural forces and to convey the antagonism between the survivors and the sea, which they view as indicative of the struggle of the all humanity against nature (2013:11).

In addition to these critics, Kenneth Costine in his article "Comparing themes and moments in "The Open Boat" and "To Build a Fire" asserts that the two short stories present the theme of mankind's fragile insignificance within nature. Thus he declares that the two stories are alike in that:

Nature gives no quarter to the situations of the people have become involved in the stories presented. Examples of this "no quarter" atmospheric stand out in "The Open Boat," with one of the opening sentences being, "none of them knew the color of the sky" (Crane,1898, p. 96). Likewise in "To Build a Fire" in the sentence, "day had broken cold and gray" (London, 1902, p. 116). Both authors refuse to give empathy towards the situation of the people (2014:1).

If we take the critic Kevin J. Hayes, in his work *A Journey through American Literature* (2012), we find that he joins the two short stories together and sorts out one major difference between them in term of their mode of narration. Thus, he posits that Jack London's "*To Build a Fire*" is narrated from an omniscient point of view, while in "*The Open Boat*"; London's is more objective and less sympathetic. In addition, human judgment is not match for Canine intuition as in "*The Open Boat*" since the man at the end of "*To Build a Fire*," unable to build a fire, perishes. (2012: 84).

Issue and Working Hypothesis

We have in the review of the existing literature on the two writers that their short stories are subjected to criticisms. We noticed that they have been tackled from a naturalist perspective as they were vectors of this ideology during 19th century America. However, no work as far as we know was devoted to put the two works together for a comparative study by applying Spenserian Social Darwinism and borrowing from the English thinker and scientist Charles Darwin theoretical assumptions in *On the Origin of Species*(1859). This is why we suggest filling up this gap and exploring the two works from this standpoint. Indeed, the discussion of this point will show how characters in the two novels are determined by environment and fate.

To conceptualize our research, we will divide our dissertation into four sections. In the Method and Material section, we will include a short summary of the American literary Naturalism, borrowing from Charles' Darwin and Herbert's Spencer's principles of social Determinism that we are going to apply in our analysis. We will also include brief summaries of the two short stories, their historical background and settings, as well as a short biography of the two authors. In the third section which is the Results section, we will give our findings.

The fourth section will be the Discussion section and we will show in which how the two short stories can be read from a social Darwinist point of view and how the two authors resort to the same naturalist's themes in tackling the naturalist issue of the American society of the nineteenth century. In this respect, the Discussion section will be divided into two Sub sections. The first one will include the themes of struggle and the indifference of nature as well as the survival of the fittest. The second chapter, however, will be devoted to the study of the themes of fate and determinism as well as pessimism and hopelessness.

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II. Methods and Materials

The following chapter will expose the methodological elements and materials that will be applied in our study of Naturalism in Stephen Crane's short story "The Open Boat" and Jack London's "To Build a Fire". The Method section will include the summary and the explanation of the theoretical approach that will be used in our analysis. The Material section will provide the biographies of the two authors, Stephen crane and Jack London, and the summary of their short stories, "The Open Boat" and "To Build a Fire", as well as the historical context that marked America during the period of their publication. The purpose of this chapter is to draw parallels between the lives and the times of the two selected short stories.

1. Methodological Considerations

A. Theoretical approach

Naturalism as a fictional movement first appeared in France with the publication of the two prefaces by Edmond and Jules de Goncourt in the novel entitled *Germinie Lacerteux*(1864) which is regarded as the true manifesto of naturalism, and Émile Zola's second edition of *Therese Raquin*(1868). Later Zola made his literary and scientific method known with his *The Experimental Novel*(1880). He has coined the term naturalism and claims that society acts like a living organism and that spirit is determined by its environment. Naturalism as a movement considers that "literature and art are ruled by the same laws as natural sciences"(Bahr, and all,1993:213)

The experimental methods show that naturalists were largely influenced by Claude Bernard's ideas included in his work *An Introduction to the Study of Experimental Medicine*(1965), Charles Darwin's theory of evolution *On the origin of species by Means of*

Natural Selection(1859) and *The Descent of Man* (1871) which were the fundamental influences of George Mendel and Herbert Spencer who revised the theory of Social Darwinism(Ennis,2005 :56).

Before starting this analysis, it will be necessary to explain what is meant by the “survival of the fittest”. Abby H. P. Werlock in his book: *Companion to Literature: Facts on File Companion to the American Short Story* studies the origin of the concept of the survival of the fittest and affirms that Darwin’s theories led to the survival of the -fittest concept of human social evolution. He adds that Donald Pizer has argued that American naturalism is informed by the “ideological core” that “*man is more circumscribed than conventionally acknowledged*” (Werlock, 2010: 476). In particular, naturalists believe that the powerful dominate the weak, “*few can overcome the handicaps imposed upon them by inadequacies of body and mind, and that many men have instinctive needs that are not amenable to moral suasion or rational argument*”.(Ibid:476).

The above quotation means that the concept is originated from Charles Darwin’s theory *On the Origin of Species*, and adopted by naturalist writers. The theme centers mainly on the idea that there is always a weak who is dominated by a powerful and it’s impossible to overcome this weakness or to change this law. Werlock emphasizes his opinion by declaring that American naturalism began in the 1890’s, led by Stephen Crane, Frank Norris, Theodore Dreiser, and Jack London who choose to work with a prose that was sparse and themes that were more deterministic than the realists who preceded them.(ibid:476)

The individuals that are best equipped to survive and reproduce perpetuate the highest frequency of genes to descendant populations. This is the principle known colloquially as “survival of the fittest,” where fitness denotes an individual’s overall ability to pass copies of his genes on to successive generations. The theory of evolution by natural selection was proposed by Charles Darwin and Alfred Russel Wallace in 1858. They argued that species

with useful adaptations to the environment are more likely to survive and produce progeny than are those with less useful adaptations, therefore increasing the frequency with which useful adaptations occur over generations. (ibid: 477)

Charles Darwin defines the concept of natural selection and its relation with the struggle for existence in his book *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, Or the Preservation of Favored Races in the Struggle for Life*, in the third chapter entitled Struggle for Existence, he affirms that “*The struggle for existence bears on natural selection*”(Darwin,1861:60,and in the fourth chapter entitled Natural Selection, he writes, “*This preservation of favorable variations and the rejection of injurious variations, I call Natural Selection.*”(Darwin, 1860: 50).Darwin writes in the sixth edition of his book where he expanded the explanation, “*This preservation of favorable individual differences and variations, and the destructions of those which are injurious, I have called natural selection, or the survival of the fittest.*”(Quoted in Francis, 2007, 53).

After examining the power of selection, Darwin directs his attention to the power of Natural Selection where man has the power of a breeder’s hand, nature has the power to kill off individuals with qualities that are not advantageous to life, while those with more advantageous qualities will be more likely to live and reproduce. Qualities that are neither useful or injurious would not be affected by natural selection and would remain fluid throughout the species or could eventually become fixed “*owing to the nature of organisms and the nature of conditions*” (Darwin,1861: 61).

Later Zola considered himself as “a scientific observer neither of the truths of experience that others have agreed to see nor to record”(Pizer, 1993:38). He observed that truth should be reached by adopting scientific rules and was against some Christian beliefs which he saw that they were corrupting social life and individual intelligence.

The term *Naturalism* describes a type of literature that attempts to apply scientific principles of objectivity and detachment to its study of human beings. Unlike realism, which focuses on literary technique, Naturalism implies a philosophical position: for naturalistic writers, since human beings are, in Emile Zola's phrase, "human beasts", characters can be studied through their relationships to their surroundings. Zola's 1880 description of this method in *Le Roman Experimental (The Experimental Novel, 1880)* follows Claude Bernard's medical model and the historian Hippolyte Taine's observation that "*virtue and vice are products like vitriol and sugar*"--that is, human beings as "products" should be studied impartially, without moralizing about their natures (Londré, 1999:351).

Accordingly, the characters used in Emile Zola's and other naturalistic writers' writings, are generally common people from the lower-class, they are uneducated and their lives are governed by forces of heredity, instinct and passion. Yet their attempt to go beyond these forces which control their existence has always failed. As for most of the protagonists, they are subjected to a fatal ending. Other influences on American naturalists include Herbert Spencer and Joseph Le Conte. Like French Naturalism, the American movement was as a disciple (Novak, 1985:180).

This new literary method appeared as a continuation of literary realism and as a reaction against the prevailing romanticist brand in which emotions, heroism, spirituality, love and chivalry played important roles. Webster's Dictionary introduces naturalism as follow:

[...]thought (religious, moral or philosophical) glorifying nature and excluding supernatural and spiritual elements close adherence to nature in art or literature, esp. (in literature) the technique, chiefly associated with Zola, used to present a naturalistic philosophy, esp. by emphasizing the effect of heredity and environment on human nature and action (Smialowska, 2013:4).

As mentioned in the above quotation, naturalism in literature is a technique, first endorsed by the French theorist and novelist Emile Zola, who assumed that social conditions, heredity, and the environment have inescapable force in shaping human character and rejecting romanticism which praises emotions, spirituality and supernatural elements.

Emile Zola is known as being the founding father of the French literary naturalism. He was widely influenced by Balzac and Flaubert and mainly by Charles' Darwin and Herbert Spencer's writings about heredity and environment, which he successfully transformed into a literary form. Donald Pizer states on this point:

Zola believed that the literary imagination could make use of the ideas in books so long as the novelist functioned like a scientist observing nature and social data, rejecting supernatural and historical explanation of the physical world, rejecting absolute standards of morality and free will, and depicting nature and human experience as a deterministic and mechanistic process. All reality could be explained by a biological understanding of matter, subject to natural laws, available in scientific term(Pizer,1995:47).

It follows from the above quotation that Zola believes that any literary imagination should incorporate “a scientific observing nature” and “social data” by rejecting the absolute standards of morality and free will. Thus, any reality should be submitted to a scientific study and explained in biological terms with respect of the natural laws. Here, it is easy to see the traceability of the theories on evolution of Charles Darwin in his theoretical work *The Origin of Species*, who theorized that “environments alter the biology and behavior of organisms; the organisms whose traits promote survival reproduce more successfully and adapt new, more efficient traits.

On his side, the British theorist Herbert Spencer takes the raw material of his theory of social Darwinism from Darwin's ideas to the human environment by asserting that the forces which control the individual are partly a result of environmental facts; “[human being is]Small to balance some incident force; and *there arises a residuary force exerted by the environment or by the organism, on the organism on the environment*”(Adolphus,1889:37).

Hence, Social Darwinism became one of the dominant philosophies in the late 19th century, based on the postulate that since the evolutionary world is based on "series of links (each of which causes the next), any action humans make is not, as we might otherwise believe, a "first" step. Rather, the action has been caused by prior environmental, social, and biological factors beyond our individual control”; subjects have no free will.

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II. Materials

II.1. Historical Background of the Stories and Their Setting

II.1.1 America during the Writers' Time

Being the mirror of its society, literature reveals the social and the historical characteristics of a given nation during any period of time. The literary field therefore conveys and records the different changes that occur in the history of a given society. Accordingly, such important events as the social revolution from a rural state to an urbanized one and the gap between the social classes constitute the major concern of the greater part of the literary works. These radical alterations were mainly carried out in the works of naturalist and realist American writers. For instance, Stephen Crane's "The Open boat"(1898), and Jack London's "To Build a Fire"(1908), that are the concern of our research are valuable examples of such a literary issue.

These short stories were shaped by the movement of naturalism and treated naturalistic concerns such as fate, determinism, and the indifference of nature toward human beings' suffering. The extension of naturalism from Europe to America during this critical period, the Gilded Age, was a turning point in the American history as it brought great changes in nearly all fields including literature, economy, society and politics.

II.1.2 The Global Revolution in the American Society or the Gilded Age

The Gilded Age was coined by Mark Twain in reference to the late 19th century. By this, he meant that the period was glittering on the surface but corrupt underneath. The period was that of greed and guile: of rapacious robber barons, unscrupulous speculators, and corporate buccaneers, of shady business practices, scandal-plagued politics, and vulgar

display. The Gilded Age is described as an era of corruption, conspicuous consumption, and unfettered capitalism. But no one can deny the fact that it was modern America's formative period. That is to say the shift from an agrarian society of small producers into an urban society dominated by industrial corporations (Whalen, 2011:66).

It was mainly the period from 1870 to 1901 which came after The American Civil-War which brought profound “change wrought by urbanization in the Gilded Age was dramatic shift from the predominance of rural values to urban values” (Shrock, 2004: 04). Clearly, this was the transformation from a rural and agrarian state to an urban nation in succession with the closing of the frontier and economic growth. While the white settlers inhabited the open lands west of the Mississippi River and the Indians were into restricted reservation throughout the plains. Some historians described the Gilded Age as “the Era of Excess and the Great Barbecue”(Calhoun,2006:12).

Furthermore, the great cities such as New York and Chicago were growing rapidly with the economic boom. As a response, an influx of immigrants flooded from Europe, China and Mexico to the New World with a dream of better life and material success. However, new problems emerged such as overpopulation, poverty in the slums, corruption and crime. Besides, these newcomers faced many barriers such as discrimination, hatred and anti-Semitism. By contrast, there was a growth of what was known as nativism and some minorities such as Jews, Poles, Mexicans, and Asians were hardly integrated among the workers for the factors of language difficulty and color of the faces. They could only work in the same members of their communities.

In fact, it was the time when industry was ruled by the robber barons who were the only to get the benefit he rich and got richer while the poor got poorer. Then, the great cities such as New York and Chicago became world's extremes; in one side lived the millionaires

and on the other side lived immigrant families in tenements. In the advantage of modern economy, a national transportation and communication network was created and the corporation became the dominant form of business organization. By the beginning of the twentieth century, “The industrialization of the United States [...] surpassed France and Great Britain as the world’s leader in industrial production”(Foresman,1969:500),and the annual income of the industrial production in the United States exceeded that of any other country except Britain.

Moreover, workers “also endured pay cuts and layoffs during bad times and long periods of unemployment. By the late 1880s, protesting such conditions had become almost constant” (Perry and Manners ,2006 :06).This era is described by Charles W. Calhoun as, “Failings of character may have been especially prominent in the age, but they are part of life in every age. In any case, they could hardly account for the Era’s deep-seated, widespread changes in the economy and business system”(2006:12).

In the political sphere, there was the emergence of new problems from the monopolies and big business. Thus, the vast financial and political influence of these businesses over American life gave rise to the predominant issue in the politics of the era, “should the government impose regulations to curb the power of these vast financial interests, or should it maintain the policy of Laissez Faire, or minimal government interference, and allow business free rein?”(ibid:06).In other words, the rulers of the great industries have very significant influence on the American lives in many fields and this led to the new question such as setting new norms on the industries to limit their control or letting the business ruled by freely, that is to say, “*let them do*”.

In addition to this, this era saw competition as usual between Republicans and Democrats and also there were many initiatives calling for reform. Such as, The Civil Service Pate that sought to limit government control by requiring laws for certain jobs as sitting

competitive examinations including The Interstate Commerce Act which sought to end discrimination in the railroads. Indeed, the Sherman Anti-trust outlawed business monopolies.

Conclusion

It is obvious that the two writers share the same characteristics in their literary style which make them belong to naturalism. This is well reflected through our study of their historical and literary backgrounds. The two writers share common a distinctiveness, starting from the rise of naturalism in the New World beginning from the 1890 that was favored by the political, the economic and the social spheres of America.

Indeed, the Gilded Age with the growth of the cities and urbanization raised new problems which were highly reflected in American naturalism. Consequently, after the study of the historical and literary heritage of both writers and the analysis of the prominent events that marked American naturalism, a comparative study between Stephen Crane's "The Open Boat" and Jack London's "To Build a Fire" becomes urgent and more feasible.

II.2. Biographical Elements

II.2.1. Biography of Stephen Crane

Despite his short life, Stephen Crane (1871 –1900) contributed to "the canon of American literature" (Bloom, 2004:1). He was the author of the famous *The Red Badge of Courage*, *Maggie: a Girl of the Streets*, three short stories among which "The Open Boat" under discussion and two or three lyric poems. Crane was the youngest of 14 children. His father died when he was nine, and the family moved to Asbury Park, New Jersey where he became a journalist in New York City and worked briefly for several newspapers.

His desire to write was inspired by his family: his father, a Methodist minister, his mother, a devout woman dedicated to social concerns and two of his brothers were journalists. Crane began his higher education in 1888 at a military school where he nurtured his interest in

Civil War studies and military training. In 1893, at age 23, he published *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets*, a short story about a poor girl's decline into prostitution and suicide. The novella was published by Crane himself under a pseudonym after several publishers rejected the work because of its scandalous content. Despite its critical success, the book failed to sell well. Accordingly, Crane turned his attention to more popular topics and wrote *The Red Badge of Courage* (1895), his most famous novel, a work that followed an individual soldier's emotional experiences in the midst of a Civil War battle. The novel was serialized by a newspaper syndicate, and Crane became an international celebrity at age 24.

In 1897, Crane went to Cuba to write about the insurrection against Spanish colonization where he met Cora Howard Taylor, who became his lifelong companion. In 1897, his boat to Cuba sank, and he hardly survived. Crane's heroic role in this disaster evoked his best short story "*The Open Boat*". He later settled in England, where he became a friend with Joseph Conrad, H.G. Wells, and Henry James. Sick and aware of nearing death, he wrote furiously till his death on June 5, 1900, in Badenweiler, Germany, caused by tuberculosis.

II.2.2. Biography of Jack London

The terms wild, fire, and fang have been popularized by a certain Jack London, one of the greatest American naturalist writers. John Griffith Chaney was born on January 12, 1876, in San Francisco, California from Flora Wellman, an unwed mother, and William Chaney, an attorney, journalist and pioneering leader in the new field of American astrology. His father was never part of his life, and his mother ended up marrying John London, a Civil War veteran, and settled in Oakland. Jack took the surname, London, of his stepfather.

Jack London was thus raised by his spiritual mother and his stepfather. At the age of 14, he quits school to escape poverty and try adventure by working on a sealing ship on the Pacific. London educated himself at public libraries reading novels and travel books and the writings of Charles Darwin, Karl Marx, and Friedrich Nietzsche. At the age of 19, he entered the University of California, but after a year he left school and decided to earn a living as a writer.

His experience in the Yukon had convinced him he had stories he could tell. As a result of poverty he experienced with many other people, Jack embraced socialism and stayed committed to it all his life. London found fame and some fortune at the age of 27 with his novel *The Call of the Wild* (1903), which told the story of a dog which finds its place in the world as a sledge dog in the Yukon. *The Call of the Wild* and his other Alaskan stories, namely, *White Fang* (1906), and *Burning Daylight* (1910), dramatized the appeal of the wilderness and constitute his major contribution to literary naturalism.

For much of the last decade of his life, London faced a number of health issues. This included kidney disease, which ended up taking his life. He died at his California ranch, which he shared with Kittredge, on November 22, 1916. Through this brief survey of Stephen Crane's and Jack London's personal lives, we notice the influence of their environments on their writings that center mainly on themes of men and nature and the struggle for survival.

II.3. Summary of the two stories

II.3.1 Summary of “The Open Boat” (1898)

“The Open Boat” was first published in 1898 and was based on Crane’s experience of surviving a shipwreck off the coast of Florida while traveling to Cuba to work as a newspaper correspondent. He and three other men were stranded at sea for thirty hours till they made their way to shore in a small boat, but one of the men drowned while trying to swim to shore. This short story was published a few days after the occurrence of the incident. “The Open Boat” is considered as Stephen Crane’s masterpiece. The sea tale is told from the point of view of an anonymous correspondent, with Crane as the implied author. It is divided into seven parts. The first part introduces the four characters, the correspondent, the captain, who is injured and morose at having lost his ship, the cook, fat and comical, and the oiler, Billy Higgins, who is physically the strongest, and the only one in the story referred to by name.

The following four sections incarnate the men’s internal struggle with their selves and their external struggle with nature. It describes their shifting moods from anger at their desperate situation, to empathy for one another and the sudden realization that nature is indifferent to their fates. The final chapter begins with the men’s decision to abandon the boat and to swim ashore. As they begin the long swim to the beach, Billie the oiler, the strongest of the four, swims ahead of the others. After three of the men safely reach the shore and are met by a group of rescuers, unfortunately Billie died.

According to many critics, the story is viewed as an exploration of human behavior under extreme circumstances. The four characters experience hope and fear, confidence and despair, anger, and love for one another in the brotherhood of the boat. They taste a range of emotions that show that in such situations one’s attention is focused only on survival from moment to moment. “The Open Boat” represents man’s eternal struggle against nature, the struggle for survival, and the fragility of human existence.

II.3.2. Summary of “To Build a Fire” (1908)

“To Build a Fire” is one of London’s funniest short stories. It is the title of two short stories published in 1902 and 1908. The initial version of the story appeared in 1902 but was considered a children’s tale. A revised version of the tale was published in 1908 and collected in *Lost Face*, London’s volume of short stories, in 1910. Both versions of the story deal with man’s struggle for survival in nature. Whereas the earlier version is not so cold, there is no dog, and the man (named Tom Vincent) survives, the latter one ends with the death of the protagonist, who freezes to death in the Alaskan wilderness, in reference to man’s defeat against nature.

The 1908 “To Build a Fire”, the one that concerns us, is an example of the naturalist movement that portrays the conflict of man against nature. It describes the journey of a nameless man, who decides to travel alone through the icy environment of the Yukon wilderness to join his friends’ camp. Throughout our reading of the novel, the main character, the man, was described in a constant search of ways of keeping his body’s temperature safe under the freezing atmosphere.

It is ten o’clock in the morning when the protagonist, the man, accompanied with his wolf-dog, decides to join his friends’ camp with the intention to arrive at lunch time. Although the weather circumstances announce a very gloomy and cold day, the man underestimates that and ventures himself in this harsh environment walking some four miles every hour. At first, he seemed to be so confident and satisfied in travelling such a distance by making good times. However, as the story unfolds, the man starts to panic as his face becomes more and more frozen, adding to his dog’s behaviors which announces a fearful situation.

Under such circumstances, the man’s major will was to build a fire to rescue his frozen fingers, toes and feet from a certain death. So, he hopefully collects some woods branches and tries to make a fire. The man’s desperate situation in making a fire pushes him to think about

an alternative way of getting warmth. Thus, he realizes that his last chance to survive was to kill his dog and put his hands in its carcass so that he could relieve them from their frozenness. However, after catching it, he comes to the conclusion that he cannot kill it as his fingers were totally unable to move. It was at this time that the man knows that death is inevitable and starts to accept his fate. After the man had died, the dog left the carcass of his master alone.

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Results

In this part of our research, we have shed light on the results reached after having dealt with the issue of naturalism in Stephen Crane's story "The Open Boat" and Jack London's "To Build a Fire", we borrowed from the ideas of social Darwinism, articulated on Spencer's principles of social determinism as well as the naturalist literary themes. We also provided in our comparative study attempt, a historical and a literary background of the two writers and their stories to make our study more relevant.

From the historical and literary background of the two writers and their works, we have noticed that "The Open Boat" and "To Build a Fire" share historical and thematic similarities. We have deduced that both writers share common distinctiveness, starting from the rise of naturalism in the New World. Through this brief survey of Stephen Crane's and Jack London's personal lives, we notice the influence of their environments on their writings, centering mainly on themes of men and nature and the struggle for survival.

Consequently, after the study of the historical and literary heritage of both writers and the analysis of the prominent events that marked American naturalism, the affinities between Crane and London prove that they are largely influenced by the scientific theories that emerged in the nineteenth century including Herbert Spencer's Social Darwinism which was adapted from Darwinian evolutionary theory to the state of human environment. Indeed, it has been possible for us to discuss the issue of naturalism in the American context, in which we have seen the two writers sharing many affinities and common naturalist's themes that characterize this literary movement as illustrated in the two stories.

In the first chapter of our discussion section, we come to the result that the man in the "To Build a Fire" struggles in what Spencer coins as "the Survival of the Fittest", or the fight

for existence in the changes which occur in society mainly the America of the nineteenth century, has failed within the offensiveness of the American society of the nineteenth century and met a dramatic death. The same thing for the fourth man 'Oiler' in "The Open Boat" who could not resist the harshness of the ocean. He lost his life even if he was a good swimmer and physically stronger than the other staff. Thus, both characters are determined mankind weakness in front of natural forces as well as their inevitable fate.

Throughout our study of the main themes, we deduced that the characters in both works struggle to survive and how the two writers show their futile attempt to survive within fearful natural forces that seemed to determine their fate. So, we have seen how the two writers resorted to the same naturalist themes such as the indifference of nature, the survival of the fittest, fate and determinism and pessimism and hopelessness.

Discussion:

Introduction

We have already mentioned that our comparative study aims at demonstrating that both Stephen Crane's short story "The Open Boat" and Jack London's "To Build a Fire" can be read from a naturalistic perspective. This subject-matter is related to the major aspects of the nineteenth century literary movement which highlights nature's indifference towards individual's struggle for survival. And how the fittest survives in some cases without any logical explanation also the pessimistic tone within this movement in addition to hopelessness of characters

Following the ideas of Social Darwinism as developed by Herbert Spencer, basically related to the indifference of nature, fate and determinism as well as pessimism and hopelessness, this chapter will be devoted to discuss these naturalistic emblems and features. In fact, interpreting the social and historical background of the two writer's era and their influence on their writings has been a great asset in demonstrating the features of American literary naturalism in its both environmental and social aspects. Since literature is the voice of people at a given setting.

Hence, it is obvious that the American social and industrial revolutions: the shift from traditional means of production and transportation to more sophisticated ones generated immigration from rural to urbanized era and the gap between the classes, as well as the worries of evolutionary and pessimistic thoughts as clearly explained in the historical background of the two novels, constituted also the concerns of many American novels of this era. Thus, all these radical alterations were also carried out in the works of Stephen Crane's "The Open Boat", and Jack London's "To Build a Fire".

Chapter One

1- Human Struggle and the Neutrality of Nature

Throughout our first reading of “The Open Boat” and “To Build a Fire”, we have been easily captured by the different themes of literary naturalism like the neutrality of nature and the struggle for survival. For instance, since the works of naturalism focus on the lower class; naturalist writings as we have seen are almost tales where the individuals are at the mercy of a dominant force. This is highly shown in our selected works where the characters are described in constant struggles against natural forces in order to survive and how nature manifests its indifference toward their persistent struggle.

In “The Open Boat”, the lack of interest of nature toward human struggle appears mainly in the difficult situations faced by the four men on the lifeboat. These four men throughout their sea journey are described in a constant search for ways to gain the shore and overcome the sea natural obstacles. Thus, they appear as having no control over their destinies and the sea natural elements control everything; this is clear from the beginning of the story when Crane announces that “None of them knew the color of the sky”(Crane, 1999:01).

The indifference of nature manifests itself in the story when the seamen struggle with the sea natural forces in order to reach the shore. But, as soon as their boat gets closer to the shore, it drowned and the captain and his staff were obliged to carry on swimming in January icy water. The Captain says: “if no help is coming, we might better try a run through the surf right away”(ibid: 9). Another example of the struggle against nature is shown when the Cook bent to bail out the boat; “the oiler steering with one of the two oars in the boat, the Correspondent pulling with the other oar and the Captain directs them(ibid:11).

When the captain decides to not wait any longer to get the boat as close to the shore as possible and to swim to reach the land, all the men manage to jump out into the cold January water in time before the boat overturns. The captain stays behind, holding with his one good hand the keel of the overturned boat, while the others are swimming. The captain keeps on encouraging the men. Finally, the stranded men are rescued and the oiler met his tragic end and perishes.

Similarly “The Open Boat”, Jack London’s “To Build a Fire” displays the theme of the indifference of nature toward human struggle. After reading the novel, we can presume that the title itself “To Build a Fire” implies the need for survival as Jack London might have simply given his story the title of “To Survive, You Need to Build a Fire.” From the beginning of the story, the man, the nameless protagonist, struggles with the harsh icy Yukon environment to join his friends’ camp. Survival in this case becomes his primary motivation and he simultaneously copes with the natural wilderness. The man’s efforts in crossing the freezing environment are described when London says that the man “turned aside from the main Yukon trail. He climbed the high earth-bank where a little-traveled trail led east through the pine forest”(London, 2003:262).

Correspondingly, the man’s life depends upon his ability to promptly light a fire to keep his feet from freezing; he has no control over his destiny and the natural elements control everything “This fact did not worry the man. The absence of sun [...] He was used to the lack of sun. It had been days since he had seen the sun” (ibid: 262).Also, after few minutes of having lighted the fire, “The snow fell, without warning, upon the man and the fire was dead”(Ibid: 272).Here, it is also noticeable to say that the indifference of nature has caused a disaster to the man’s attempt to build a fire and that he ignores everything as his knowledge is restricted by the natural environment.

In continuation to the above idea of the protagonist's "fragility as a creature weak in front freezing temperature, and upon man's frailty in general, able only to live within certain narrow limits of heat and cold"(Ibid: 263), even under freezing degrees below zero, he doesn't care and just after few minutes of having lighted the fire, the snow on the tree's branches started to crack as declared by London: The snow fell, without warning, upon the man and the fire, and the fire was dead(Ibid: 272).

Here, we see the indifference of nature to man's plight and how it deprives the individual from any morality or reasoning.

A valuable explanation of the above idea could be shown in the short story when Crane says that "The animal was depressed by the tremendous cold. It knew that it was no time for travelling. Its instinct told it a truer tale than was told to the man by the man's judgment"(Ibid: 269).Here, the author shows that the beast was more conscious than the man about the danger of travelling in such hostile environment. The former idea conducts us to the degenerated state of the man caused by the environmental atmosphere. London puts his character as an unreasonable man in a futile attempt to reach his goal as everything is controlled by nature.

The last sentence of the story reinforces the idea of the indifference of the natural elements toward the man's condition; so after his death, the dog has gone, leaving the carcass of his master and changed owners as if it had no one before. Here, we see the absence of any real bond between the man and the dog. Thus, it would be fair to conclude how the man is worthless in the regard of his beat, because the man from the very beginning of his journey on the Yukon river was keeping in mind that his dog will be a great asset for him, but at the end there is neither compassion nor attention for help from the animal. London states:

[...]there was no keen intimacy between the dog and the man. The one was the toil-slave of the other, and the only caresses it had ever received were the caresses of the whip-lash and of harsh and menacing throat-sounds that threatened the whip-lash. So the dog made no effort to communicate its apprehension to the man. It was not concerned in the welfare of the man; it was for its own sake that it yearned back toward the fire(Ibid, 2003: 270).

From what has been discussed above, we come to the conclusion that the four men in “*The Open Boat*” and the man in “*To Build a Fire*”struggle to survive in fearful and indifferent natural forces. Hence, they have failed in their struggle and their lives end with a tragic death. They are the product of a desperate environment in which they couldn’t resist the harshness of nature despite their hard efforts as they are determined by their inevitable fate as well as their weakness.

It is worth concluding from the given analysis that two writers, in their attempts to describe the offensiveness of the American society at that time and the fight for existence in the changes which occur in the American society of the nineteenth century, deprive their characters from reasoning and posit them just as victims of the environmental harsh conditions. Thus, the two authors endeavor in the same way to justify some of the harsher aspects of capitalism and show some aspects of the nineteenth century America including the concentration of power and wealth, the social classes, the fervent competition , the strain of pessimism, and the struggle for existence.

2-The Survival of the Fittest

This theme is given a great importance in both short stories ,regarding its weighty role in naturalists' works. Accordingly, we will explain how the issue of the survival of the fittest is used by literary naturalist to attain different objectives that will be revealed in the following lines.

Being a naturalist work ,“The Open Boat”, by Stephen Crane is a story of survival of the fittest or natural selection. Generally in such stories, the strongest always survives but in “The Open Boat” the strongest, who is the oiler, and therefore the most likely to survive the ordeal ironically, is the only one who dies at the end. This shows the futility of his struggle against the indifferent forces of nature and shows also the futility of all the characters' struggles. If the oiler is killed, and was most likely to survive, his death becomes the result of bad luck. Thus, chance in this case is more appropriate since we are dealing with the indifferent forces of nature.

When the group jumps in the icy water, the oiler, the strongest one, leads the group. He jumps in, first followed by the cook and the correspondent swimming slowly and the captain. The oiler leads the group to the shore safely but did not survive. This story is in some ways opposite of survival of the fittest, since the strongest person of the group doesn't survive. The strongest person is the one who is supposed to keep control and to lead the others and this is exactly what the oiler in this story did. This story shows how the strongest person takes control of the group but does not always turn out the best for him. The oiler did his best to lead the group to the shore and he was the only one who died in the attempt.

Critics generally agree that “The Open Boat” is an examination of man's relationship to the universe as well as to other men. But, there are different opinions about the nature of these relationships. The Darwinians understand Crane to be embracing nature that his plot

expands on Darwin's idea of "survival of the fittest." They claim that nature has no will or purpose and as the men come to realize this, they begin to devote themselves to "the business of the boat", to survival.

Although the oiler's death seems to deteriorate the Darwinian interpretation of the story, because he should have survived since he is the strongest of the group, it supports the idea of "survival of the fittest." While the cook, captain, and correspondent all depend on a manmade or naturally occurring device to help them to the shore, the oiler relies only on his human strength and not on his capacity for thought and strategy. The "fittest" are the men who have relied on man's ability to intelligently adapt and create.(Amarang,2010:01)

"Survival of the fittest" is contradicted in this story since the fittest does not survive. Because the strongest and fittest are expected to work harder in most cases and so they can be burnt out. Billie becomes tired while the others are less so and this means the other men end up surviving. Sometimes, unlike the strong, the weak save their energy and end up surviving in the end. Crane describes the situation, "*In the shallows, face downward, lay the oiler. His forehead touches sand that was periodically between each wave, clear of the sea.*" Shortly, after the oiler's body is found this way the other men are met with some hope. London adds, "*It seems that instantly the beach was populated with men with blankets, clothes and flask, and women with coffee-pots...*"(Crane,1999:43).

Naturalism not only maintains that the environment is deterministic, but indifferent. The environment does nothing to help its inhabitants; it is uncaringly indifferent to their existence and struggle. In Jack London's "To Build a Fire", the Yukon would be bitterly cold without the man and it does not cease when the man struggles to stay alive. This indifference makes survival itself a critical goal for naturalist characters. As the story goes on, the man

changes his goal from reaching the camp, to warm him-self, to merely staying alive. Naturalism thus extracts profound conflicts, man versus nature being one of them.

Survival of the Fittest is another common theme between Stephen Crane's "The Open Boat" and Jack London's "To Build a Fire". According to Charles Child Walcutt, Jack London was greatly influenced by the ideas of Charles Darwin and this theme goes hand in hand with Darwin's ideas and his theory of evolution. In "*To Build a Fire*", the conflict is man versus nature and the strongest will prevail and survive. In the theory of natural selection the species that survive, man or animal, are the one that overcome the hardships of the conflict and adapt to the environment around them thus making them the stronger species(Walcutt, 1966:24).

In the case of "To Build a Fire", we have a man and a dog versus nature and each one of them tries to survive, entering in a conflict even against each other and the fittest will survive at the end of the story. The unnamed man in this story is the protagonist. London declares that "The trouble with him was that he lacked imagination [...]He was quick and alert on the things of life, but only in the things, and not in the significances"(London, 2003:269).

From the very beginning of the story, the environment is described as being a very cold, dark, and harsh one. The unnamed man travels along the Yukon trail in fifty degrees below zero and doesn't care or see the significance of this situation. As the story progresses, he becomes a dynamic character as he realizes he is in a front of a critical situation, which is that of life or death. London says, "But all this- the mysterious far reaching hairline trail, the absence of sun from the sky, the tremendous cold, and the strangeness and weirdness of it all - made no impression on the man"(Ibid: 269).Without his imagination, the man does not realize the significance of the warnings nature has given him, or even of the danger in which he ventures his life. As declared by Jill Widdicombe, "*In the Context of 'To Build a Fire,'*

'Imagination' is the ability to recognize ones limitations. As it happens, the man does not possess this ability until it is too late" (2010:02). With or without a fire and imagination, the man's chances of survival are still few or rare.

Critic James I Hedrick emphasizes this point when he remarks that, even if the man was aware of the danger, there is no guarantee that he would have survived in such harsh conditions (2010: 03). Joan D. Hedrick believes that the man in 'To Build a Fire' believes that *"a man who is a man"* travels alone. He reads no message in the vast Alaskan landscape, nor does he understand, in human, mortal terms, the significance of sixty-five degrees below zero. When he breaks through the ice and wets himself to his knees, his limbs begin to freeze before he can get a fire started to dry himself out and it is only when death is upon him, that he could realize his own mortality"(Hedrick,2010:03).

As the story advances, the situation becomes harder, London affirms, *"He knew the coldest snaps never froze these springs, and he knew likewise their danger"*(London,2003:277). This means that the unnamed man will soon realize the danger in which he has put himself, and that it is harder to survive in such conditions. London declares, *"The fear quickly became poignant as he realized that it was no longer a mere matter of freezing his fingers and toes, or of losing his hands and feet, but that it was a matter of life and death, with the chances against him"*(Ibid:275). The antagonist or the enemy of the man and the dog in the story is just nature and the cold weather. In "To Build a Fire," we have a major conflict that is Man versus nature and a minor conflict, between the man and the dog as each one of them is trying to survive and to be the fittest. While the man has his intelligence, the warm clothing, and the knowledge to build a fire, the dog has his wolf instincts to rely on.

"The rest of the story suggests that the man is unequipped to face the unknown and inherently too limited to explore life's mysteries and live" (Matt bechard and Liz Abert,2010:05). This quote shows the progress of the story and the "survival of the fittest" the

man starts to deteriorate while the dog continues to remain strong while advancing through the harsh environment. As the man continues and do not give up, the dog is right there by his side. Finally, the dog gives up, London says, “And still later, it crept close to the man and caught a scent of death”(2003:281),as the dog waits for the man to wake up. Unfortunately for the man, he loses not only the battle to nature, but also the battle to the dog. The dog however, leaves the man and continues on to the camp.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we can say that the survival of the fittest is another theme that links Stephen Crane’s “The Open Boat” and Jack London’s “To Build a Fire”. Through our analysis, we have seen that it is not the strongest that survives always at the end, but the one who creates and uses his capacities to adapt to the different situation. Therefore, survival is never related to power of being ready to face danger; everything is determined by the will of nature; man in the universe is doomed to his fate.

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Chapter Two

1-Fate and Determinism

To express the concern of their age, American authors such as Stephen Crane and Jack London were greatly influenced by the 19th-century ideas of Social Darwinism, which was in turn influenced by Charles Darwin's theories on evolution. Social Darwinists and naturalists believed that organisms, including humans, do not have free will, but are shaped, or determined by their environment and biology. (Berger,2006:224)

In “To Build a Fire”, London constantly shows how the man, the protagonist, does not have any free will and how nature has already mapped out his fate. Indeed, at each time he faces an obstacle, he states “it happened”; here we can see how the man’s destiny is bound as all things seemed to be as inevitably mapped out by nature and how the man is just put as an observing entity without any effective action in his milieu. The man’s major goal at the beginning of his story was to gain his friends’ camp in order to prospect for gold. However, his fate was predetermined by the crucial environment in which he was described in a risk of freezing in the brutal cold. Thus, his final conquest was not to find gold but rather to fight for survival.

The man in “To Build a Fire” is purposely not given a name, as the deterministic environment is more important than his free will and person. His goal at the start of the story was to reach the camp to meet “the boys,” presumably to prospect for gold. In our previous analysis, we have seen how the extreme cold didn’t allow the man to realize that building a fire under a spruce tree may be dangerous. The dog, however, understands the danger of the cold without knowing what a thermometer is. Here, we see the absence of morality upon man’s actions as his lack of free will, exonerated him from any responsibility for the situations into which he fell. London informs us that the man’s second accident was his “own

fault or, rather, his mistake.” A “fault” implies full responsibility, whereas a “mistake” suggests an isolated incident out of one's control.

Similarly, Crane's deterministic view of life, primarily influenced by Darwinism is clearly shown in “The Open Boat” where the life of the sea men is controlled by their fate. Hence, we are given a typical description of the characters struggling and fighting to survive. However, at the end of their incessant struggle, the bravest one, Billie, perished, while the others; the captain, the correspondent and the cook survived:

The correspondent, schooled in the minor formulae, said: “Thanks, old man.” But suddenly the man cried: “What's that? He pointed a swift figure. The correspondent said: “Go”. In shallows, face downward, lay the Oiler. His forehead touched sand that was periodically, between each wave, clear of the sea(Crane,1999 :22).

The given quotation shows us how the oiler's life is controlled by his fate, after two nights and days of struggle within harsh waters. Although he is the strongest of the group, he is the only one who perished; he was not the master of his fate. In this respect, Patrik Dooley points out that the characters in naturalist fictions “*Through their confrontation of indifferent universe. The survivors appreciate both the limits and the possibilities of human effort and human community*”(quoted in. Crumbley, 2010: 40).

The characters in “The Open Boat ”have no control over their boat; rather nature was totally in control “*She seemed just a wee thing wallowing, miraculously top up, at the mercy of the five oceans. Occasionally, a great spread of water, like white flames, swarmed into her.*”(Crane, 1999:29). There is also a sense that the man is totally not important to the natural forces controlling his fate

“*When it occurs to 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 that there are no bricks and no temples*”(Quoted Müllenbrock and all, 1990 :180).

2. Pessimism and Hopelessness

Evolutionary thoughts and industrialization contributed conspicuously to the strain of pessimism that naturalism promulgated from its very beginning. (Paulineand all 1993:123).Naturalism has also been defined as “*realism infused with a pessimistic determinism.*”(Pizer,1993:85). It grew out of the post-civil war mood of skepticism with its crisis of faith and rapid breakdown of many social, political and ideological aspects of nineteenth century America.

While reading “The Open Boat” and “To Build a Fire”, we quickly noticed the pessimistic thoughts that stretch throughout the entire stories. In the first short story, even though the four seamen do have the will to survive and were trying their best to resist the harsh sea, we always feel that nature has the supreme force and that their chances of survival are so tiny. This, create a pessimistic tone for the entire story, it makes the reader to suspect the bad ending of the stories.

In this respect, Crane describes the pessimistic feelings and anger of his characters when saying: “if I am going to be drowned, why in the name of the seven mad gods who rule the sea, was I allowed to come thus far and contemplate sand and tree.”(Crane,1999:10). This passage is repeated three times in the short story, In literature Repetition consists of repeating a word, phrase, or sentence, and is common in poetry and Prose, like Crane in this passage, to strengthening his pessimist tendency, through repetition because he wants to leave in the reader’s mind pessimistic view of life by emphasis and empowering that negative view of life and the harshness of the outside world.

There have been other examples of repetition throughout the story, since it is a good technique to influence the reader imagination and to make him remember the story,

“The gulls went in slanting up the wind the gray desolate east. A squall, marked by dingy clouds, and clouds brick-red, like smoke from a burning building, appeared from the southeast (Crane, 1999:33).

This passage paints a very gloomy atmosphere; it announces a storm and leads the reader to expect a bad ending for the four men. Thus, repetition has been an essential part in Crane story.

We also feel the pessimism of the characters when Crane says: "*If we do not all get shore....*" said the Captain. *If we do not all get ashore, I suppose you fellows know where to send news of my finish?* (Ibid: 35). Here, the captain expresses his sadness by repeating 'if we do not all get a shore and this reflects undoubtedly his negative thoughts and makes the pessimistic tone of the story very apparent.

Crane makes clear that the sea with its waves is the location where hope for survival is reduced and sometimes it is impossible to survive without loss, with a pessimistic tone; he repeated words which have the same meaning like: coldness, shadows and gloom: "*The shadows on the sea slowly deepened. The wind bore coldness with it, and the men begun to shiver* (Ibid: 35). Add to this, the black shadow represents the gloom and hopelessness that the sea offers to the men. The overall picture of the black shadow is constantly present to remind the readers how hopeless their situation is.

It is fair to deduce that this pessimistic tone is in line with literary naturalism along with the idea that there's no God controlling human fate. And the tradition was all about portraying the cruelty of life and man's hopelessness, (although sometimes it was done to an over-the-top extent).

The theme of hopelessness which is recurrent throughout the entire stories contributes to the distrustful and melancholic view of life. In the whole stories, we are given a description of characters that never seem to be free of peril. The four men are always struggling against something: waves, wind, night, and fatigue...etc. Crane Says that "*The wind came again. It had veered from the northeast to the southeast. Finally, new sound struck the ears of the men in the boat.*" (Ibid: 16)

It follows from this quotation that the four men are always hopeless because they have no free will and presumed to their fate. Crane highlights the temper of his characters when saying that “A singular disadvantage of the sea lies in the fact that after successfully surmounting one wave you discover that there is another, behind it just as important and just as nervously anxious to do something effective in the way of swamping boat”(Ibid:02). Here, Crane describes the harshness of the sea with its recurrent obstacles that gave no hope for the four men.

“The Open Boat «illustrates the theme of hopelessness and desperate temper of the characters in their struggle for survival. In reading the short story, we can presume that Crane’s title is descriptive, of his desperate attitude toward the orientation of the American society, of the twentieth century. From the beginning of the story we feel the loss of optimism, when the men struggle against the sea, the wind, fatigue, loneliness, all of them expressed their feeling of hopelessness for survival.

The seamen’s primary motivation was to transmit the news of their endings; they began to exchange their social addresses in an attempt of ensuring to communicate the information to their families in case anyone of them survives. Here, we see how the harshness of nature creates negative thoughts in the minds of the four men and how it degenerated them; they have lost trust in life and they are only waiting their agony, Crane wrote «They then briefly exchanged some addresses and admonitions”(Crane,1999:23).

Also, London’s protagonist efforts in crossing the freezing wilderness are described as being in vain and this situation influenced the changing temper, in this sense London wrote «He was angry and cursed his luck aloud. He had hoped to get into camp with the boys” (*London, 2003:269*).

Similarly “The Open Boat”, pessimists tone is also notable in “To Build a Fire” as both writers show an affinity with aspects of naturalism pessimistic tone which is in line with literary naturalism, especially in the plight of individuals in hostile environments. So, we can easily conclude that the fearful force of nature and its indifference to man’s plight, who is completely unprepared to the severity of winter freezing temperature, gave birth to pessimistic and hopelessness thoughts. The man in “To Build a Fire” is described in an increasingly desperate attempt to restore warmth to his freezing body, what creates a pessimistic tone throughout the entire story.

London’s pessimistic tone is reflected in the setting of his short story. The opening setting describes a common naturalist theme, pessimism when Crane announces that the “*Day had broken cold and gray, exceedingly cold and gray.*”(Crane, 2003: 262) London’s choice for gray and cold icy environment in the frozen Yukon region during the harsh winter months where “*there was neither sun nor hint of sun in the sky*”(Ibid:262) with a solitary human character is enormously enough to begin to illustrate his theme of hopelessness. Also the fact to present the loneliness of the character pushes us to imagine the powerless of man in front of nature.

Like Crane, London also used repetitions of words that sound with pessimism in *To Build a Fire* to contrast the Romantic view of nature, which promoted beauty without objectivity. Throughout the story we find the frequent mention of the freezing temperature which represents the great danger for the man survival and the numerous attempts of the unnamed man to build a fire, which were in vain.

Like the majority of naturalists, London and Crane always use pessimistic tone in their stories, by describing the depression of their characters that are in state of suffering without knowing why; this style is unromantic and full of harsh words. The two stories’ ends are

tragic; they leave us with a moment of deeper disappointment for the deaths. The narrative of these two stories are naturalistic which lead us to think, are we really in control of our fates as human beings in world natural selection.

Conclusion:

In conclusion to our thematic analysis of both Crane's "The Open Boat" and London's "To Build a Fire", it would be fair to conclude that both authors are emblems of American literary naturalism. They resorted to the same naturalist themes and were both strongly influenced by Darwin's theory of evolution. The determinism and "the big fish eat up the small, the fittest survive" theory of naturalism are clearly shown in their short stories. They expose the essence of human's life, there seems to be only one law in this world, which both men and beasts obey - only the fittest can survive in the strongly competitive world.

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General Conclusion

To sum up our work, it seems fair to conclude that American naturalism is an important literary trend and it is influential to realism and also modernism. As fervent practitioners, Stephen Crane and Jack London played an important role in the American naturalistic trend, and made great contribution to the world's literary history. They are strongly influenced by Darwin's theory of evolution. The determinism and "the big fish eat up the small, the fittest survive" theory of naturalism, more clearly shown in their works. Thus, "The Open Boat" and "To Build a Fire" «exposed the essence of human's life: from the society perspective, there seems to be only one law in this world, which both men and beasts obey - only the fittest can survive in the strongly competitive world.

In our endeavor, we have supported this research with a historical and a literary overview of the American literature during the nineteenth century and linked both writers' naturalistic tendencies. Thus, the research concluded that both Jack London and Stephen Crane share affinities in their use of naturalistic themes. The study demonstrated that the characters of both novels are trapped in their environmental and biological forces, subjected to their out-side environment by which they could not surrender and rise above their will. Then, we deduced that the individuals are engaged in Spencer's account for "Survival of the Fittest" in both short stories.

However, we have also noticed that the short stories are dramatic tragic tales, where the characters fall victims of nature: Crane's characters were shown in a more pessimistic and lamenting state since the best swimmer and the strongest man among the staff, the Oiler perished, comparing to London's character the unnamed man, who failed in his struggle and died. Thus, the two stories' themes rely on man's need to find meaning in the sufferings of his solitary existence, in an environment which is both hostile and indifferent towards his

suffering. The naturalists illustrated and emphasized this theme in many ways, through their choice of setting, and the artful placement within the sea or the icy environment.

Indeed, this comparative study included the study of Spencer's ideas of «Social Darwinism» and tried as far as possible to explore the issue of hopelessness, powerless and determinism in both short stories. Yet, this work can be extended to a further study discussing the issue of psycho analysis in both works, since the harshness of nature has altered the psychological state of the characters portrayed in the two short stories.

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