

THE PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF ALGERIA
MINISTRY OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH
ABDERRAHMANE MIRA UNIVERSITY OF BEJAIA
FACULTY OF LETTERS AND LANGUAGES
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH



**A New Historicist and Comparative Study
of Stephen Crane's *Maggie a Girl of the
Street* and Tennessee Williams' *The Glass
Menagerie***

A Dissertation Submitted to the Department of English in Partial Fulfilment of
the Requirement for a **Master Degree in English Language, Literature and
Civilization**

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Academic Year: 2019/ 2020

Dedication

With great honor, I dedicate this work to the most amazing people in my life:

To My beloved mother for her support and understanding all along my studies

I dedicate, also this research to my dear fiancé Mouhamed for being with me through good and bad times encouraging me each step of the way.

To my siblings: Nassima, Fahim and Abd Rahmane.

I dedicate this work to my best friends: Seloua, Djedjiga, and my lovely Marina.

Acknowledgement

First of all, all the praises to Allah and peace to our prophet Mouhamed peace be upon him.

The greatest thank goes to God Almighty who blesses me during my writing time and helps me finish this thesis.

My deepest gratitude goes to my supervisor Dr. Ounissa Chioukh-Ait Benali, for her support, patience and valuable advice.

A special acknowledgement should be dedicated to Ms. Benkhoudja Abida for providing me with two essential books needed for my research.

I would like to express my thankfulness and my biggest love to my cherished Mouhamed who supported me in my moments of depression and overstress. Thank you for your encouragements and your belief in my capacities when I was down.

I also thank my family members for their great help.

I would warmly thank my sister Nassima for her moral help during the process of writing of this humble thesis.

Thanks are also extended to my lovely Malaysian friend, Marina, for her moral support and daily encouragements who always tells me: 'you can do it Djamila'.

Table of Contents

Dedication.....	I
Acknowledgements.....	II
Table of Contents.....	III
Abstract.....	V
List of Abbreviations.....	VI
General Introduction.....	1
Chapter One: Crane’s and Williams’s Biographies, Historical Background, and Literary Influences.....	7
Introduction	
1. Biography of Stephen Crane.....	7
2. Biography of Tennessee Williams.....	8
3. Naturalism.....	10
4. Nineteenth Century America / the Gilded Age.....	12
5. The American Great Depression.....	13
6. Stephen Crane’s <i>Maggie a Girl of the Street</i> and Tennessee Williams’s <i>The Glass Menagerie: Literary Influences.....</i>	15
Conclusion	
Chapter Two: Modernism, New Historicism, and Experimentation in Prose and in Theatre.....	20
Introduction	

1. Modernism.....	20
2. Greenblattian New Historicism.....	23
3. Experimentation in Prose and in Theatre.....	30
Conclusion	
Chapter Three: A New Historicist Reading of <i>Maggie a Girl of the Streets</i> and <i>The Glass Menagerie</i>.....	35
Introduction	
1. Synopsis of <i>Maggie, a Girl of the Street</i> and <i>The Glass Menagerie</i>	35
2. Self-fashioning in <i>Maggie, a Girl of the Street</i> and <i>The Glass Menagerie</i>	37
3. Religious Discourse in <i>Maggie, a Girl of the Street</i> and <i>The Glass Menagerie</i> ...	49
4. Anecdotes in <i>Maggie, a Girl of the Street</i> and <i>The Glass Menagerie</i>	54
5. Capitalist Tenet in <i>Maggie, a Girl of the Street</i> and <i>The Glass Menagerie</i>	58
Conclusion	
General Conclusion.....	62
Works Cited.....	64

Abstract

This present dissertation borrows the New Historicist approach to reading and comparing between Stephen Crane's *Maggie, a Girl of the Street (MGS)* and Tennessee Williams's *The Glass Menagerie (GM)*. Based on the principles of the Greenblattian New Historicist aspects, our inquiry dissects the different socio-political, historical, and cultural context that helped the emergence of the two selected literary works. The present study unveils the importance of Crane's and Williams's biographies in their careers. The two literary works proved to be social inquiries that depict the lives of the Americans during the Gilded Age and the Post-Great Depression periods. In the limits of some New Historicists creeds, our investigation examined the different facts and incidents that influenced the process of personality and identity fashioning, religion, and Anecdotes. Besides, this study strips the plights of people within the capitalist system adopted by America and unveils the bad conditions under which people were struggling for survival.

Key Words: *Maggie, a Girl of the Street, The Glass Menagerie*, the Gilded Age, the Great Depression, New Historicism.

List of Abbreviations

MGS: Maggie, a Girl of the Street

GM: The Glass Menagerie

General Introduction

General Introduction

The present research is a reading of Stephen Crane's novella *Maggie: a Girl of the Street* and Tennessee Williams *The Glass Menagerie* using the new historicist tenets as stated by Stephen Greenblatt. This analysis explores the four major new historicist tenets Self-fashioning, Anecdotes, Religion, and Capitalism in the selected works. This dissertation unveils the different historical, social, cultural, and economic events that urged both Crane and Williams to produce their literary works. Thus, a review of some critical historical circumstances is crucial to understand the characters roles as well as writers' intentions.

Through the literary medium, Crane and Williams managed to reflect the lives of common American people in two different periods characterized by severity, corruption, and instability due to various factors. Their main endeavor is to communicate the suffering of a hundred if not thousands of children in America through the characters of Maggie and Jimmie in Crane's novella; Laura and Tom in Williams's play. To achieve the aforementioned purpose, they built their works upon some social and historical issues that took, in fact, the lion part of their literary texts. Both writers regard familial dysfunction as a source of self-destruction, a point that would be clarified throughout our analysis. The devastation effect of these familial, social, cultural and historical impulses on children's development is not to be neglected. They become the victims of their environment and they would probably inherit the same mannerism as their models.

The selection of these works *MGS* and *GM* is the result of my previous readings of both Crane's *Maggie* and Williams's *The Glass Menagerie* in which I noticed a certain shared conflicts between their characters each one in his context. What affected me more is that cultural beliefs of the American society in the nineties and twenties resemble to a large extent the Algerian morals and traditions, especially when dealing with scenes of child abuse, parents neglect, familial disorder, alcoholism, obliged marriage for girls and the social view

towards unmarried women, besides to boy's being burdened with familial duties and responsibilities. As a result, I tried to investigate the two works according to the new historicist tenets of Greenblatt for it is concerned with text and context.

As this research will show, the writers under analysis, Stephen Crane and Tennessee Williams are among the most well known American writers whose works were classified as being icons for the American history due to the themes that the works foreground. Hence, Crane's *Maggie: a Girl of the Street* (1893) and Williams *The Glass Menagerie* (1944) gathered a great attention by scholars and have been studied from various perspectives.

In terms of structure, this dissertation is divided into an introduction, three independent chapters and a general conclusion. The introduction concerns the general interest of the research and its limits. The first chapter is entitled "Crane's and Williams's Biographies, Historical Background and Literary Influences" provides the life times of the writers, relates the novella and the play to their historical framework and embodies the literary impacts of the authors.

The second chapter entitled "Modernism, New Historicism and Experimentation in Prose and in Theatre" reviews shortly the modernist era, introduces some of the new historicist tenets as explained by Greenblatt. Moreover, experimentation as a new technique of modernist writers is explored in the works of Crane and Williams.

The third chapter entitled "A New Historicist Reading of *Maggie a Girl of the Street* and *The Glass Menagerie*" provides the readers with the synopsis of the novel and the play, and then the whole chapter is dedicated to the analysis of Self-fashioning, Anecdote, Religion and Capitalist tenets according to Greenblatt's ideas.

Thesis Statement

MGS and *GM* have been already tackled by many researchers in different fields, yet, none of them attempted to compare these two works of literature. Through our research, we will conduct a New Historicist comparative study between Stephen Crane's *Maggie: A girl of the Streets*, and Tennessee Williams's *The Glass Menagerie*. We will put focus on the different social, economic, cultural, and personal aspects related to the aforementioned writers.

Literature Review

The two works have been studied by different scholars from different angles. Crane's *MGS* was mainly tackled from naturalist point of view since it was the first American novel that applied the naturalist style of writing. The novel revolutionized the former writing standards and reflected the reality of the American bowery life during the 90s.

In his PhD dissertation entitled "The Literary Development of Stephen Crane", James B. Colvert declared that Crane's literary style is impossible to be clarified. Yet, scholars tried to interpret his works by comparing him to several European authors such as: Tolstoy and Zola. This comparison failed according to Colvert. He described Crane as being an inexplicable genius (iv). He commented on the use of irony in Crane's novella *Maggie*, Colvert said that the development of this technique of irony permitted Crane to form "the tone of high and lurid melodrama" (112), for this reason the Critic regarded the short story as being "the most didactic of novels" (113). Colvert's argued that despite the potency of crane's proficiency, the perfect artistic focus in *Maggie* was missed (119).

In the same concern, James Stronks, in his review, "Cylinder of Vision: The Fiction and Journalistic Writings of Stephen Crane by Milne Holton, Stephen Crane " referred to Crane's process of thinking as being divided into the following aspects:

The materialistic monism fostered by nineteenth-century science and the orthodox faith in the dignity and strength of the self-reliant individual. [this] can be accounted for in part by his association with intellectual radicals and in part by the orthodox faith of his parent. His theory of literature was derived in great part from the principles of the impressionist painters with whom he was associated from the late eighties to 1895 (v).

Crane's story challenged the conventional realistic writings of the era and gave another vision to the reader about the plights of poor citizens in America and even, faced the corrupted church and clergymen who were characterized by hypocrisy. James added that studies on Crane's stories stay unenlightened and that approximately 280 of Crane's prose works have been studied by Halton where he observed the recurrence of what is called "event of seeing" and became Crane's representative touch in his writings (327). To further his arguments, Halton analyzed Stephen's works from the early narratives of *Sullivan County Sketches* to his major work *The Upturned Face* in which Halton, according to Stronks, argued that "Stephen Crane's stories are dramas of vision" (327). "The ironic last word" used by Crane was a point of debate among scholars; the technique refers to the conclusive touch of doubtfulness in his works, which the lector may not be certain in interpreting the story's intent (328). Besides to the aforementioned technique, Stronks stated that Halton commented on Crane's writings as being characterized by "Confrontation and return" through which the character became an "interprete" of his experiment after being dissociated or displaced from his own community and faced severe circumstances (328).

Harold Bloom in his book entitled *Bloom Guides Stephen Crane's Maggie: A Girl of the Streets* considered Maggie as the result of pure imagination, poverty, and bowery life (13). The reception of the novel according to Bloom was not really satisfactory because readers of the 1890s were asking for an "escapist fiction" (14) to get away from social and

moral dilemmas of the era. He referred to the story behind writing *MGS* and added that the irreverence and rudeness of the language used in writing *Maggie*, made Crane aware of the arduousness to get a publisher despite the commendation for his work (16).

Michael Robertson's "on Crane's Journalistic Experience" classified Frank Norris as being the first writer to cast doubts on *Maggie* as a result of Crane's experimentation in the bowery slums of New York. In Robertson's words the novella was arranged as being a "Journalistic" work (40). Another point of focus by critics was on the use of food items in *Maggie*, Henry Golemba's "on the Language of Food" commented on the use of religion, food, and reform by writers of the 1890s (49). He writes that "in popular literary genres, food shifted from being a metaphor for words to an equation with language" (50). Crane's use of words as food to rend the principle of realism has produced new dilemmas related to the understanding of his texts "problems with voyeurism yielded to problems about consumption" (50).

We cannot speak about Stephen Crane without mentioning Crane's expert Paul Sorrentino. He studied the whole life of Crane from his early existence until his death. In a section entitled *Maggie*, the writer captured the life of Crane in New York district of Manhattan, his inspirational setting in writing his novella (108). A place that resembles the one presented in *Maggie*. For Sorrentino, it is a "significant example of literary determinism" (108). He added that the novella was neglected and kept unseen, according to Crane's pronouncement; it is rather "misread" (112).

GM was the reflection of the suffering of the Americans during the Great Depression and the breakdown of the American Dream, along with Williams's family disorder which greatly affected his career as a writer. Abhik Maiti in his article "A Kaleidoscope of Fluctuating Memories: Exploring Tennessee Williams' *The Glass Menagerie*," claimed that

the play subsisted within the post-war style of “domestic realism” in which family was described as an omission established custom of society (1). Maiti considered Williams’ *GM* as a remolding of the Shakespearean play “*Must I Remember?*” which dealt with the topic of memory ,the only difference pointed by the author is that Williams’s reconstructed the memories instead of recollecting them (2).

There were lots of controversial ideas behind writing *GM*, for this reason, Nudžejma Durmišević in an article entitled “Plastic Theatre And Selective Realism OF Tennessee Williams” pointed that the creation of the *GM* aimed to introduce the “plastic theatre” and it was for this reason that Williams constructed his work in a form of a play to grant some poetic freedom (100).

Another critic who emphasized Williams’s ideals in writing is Harold Bloom in his book entitled *Bloom’s Guides Tennessee Williams The Glass Menagerie* referred to the influence of Hart Crane on Williams’s writings and indicated that both writers had approximately lived the same life circumstances (7-8). The *GM* was described by Bloom as being a dramatist and lyrical work in which Tennessee revised the lyrical style of Shelly (9). The reason behind the success of the *GM*, according to Harold, is that the audience was satisfied and felt happy from the shift from realism in drama to fantastic and expressionistic drama (15). In addition, he categorized the play as being a ‘personal investment, which took a form of a short story named “Portrait of a Girl in Glass” (15).

This research as we stated before is an investigation that foregrounds the impact of society, history, and culture on literature. We will focus on the common points between Crane’s and Williams’s life experiences.

Chapter one

Crane's and Williams' Biographies, Historical Background, and Literary Influences

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Introduction

In the following chapter, the biographies of the two authors Crane and Williams are introduced to help the readers understand their lives and career as writers. We will try to shed light on the historical background, personal, and social contexts in which the two works emerged. A special focus will be put on naturalism, the gilded age, and the American Great Depression to point out the major events Americans went through. Moreover, to enhance the understanding of Crane's novel *MGS* and Williams' play the *GM*, a set of literary influences and techniques are provided in this section.

1. Biographical Elements

1.1 Biography of Stephen Crane

The American writer, poet, and journalist Stephen Townely Crane was born in New Jersey on November 1st, 1871. He was the youngest of the fourteen Crane children under the nickname of "Stevie". His father, Reverend Jonathan Townely Crane was a Methodist churchman and writer while his mother, Mary Helen Peck Crane, was an author and an emancipationist Commander. She was involved in church activities, and was a suffragist.

Crane was enrolled into a preparatory school at Claverack College. At early age of 4 years he began to write. He published many articles at the age of 16. In 1891, Townely Crane who was unable to attend school regularly due to his poor health conditions left school to work as a Professional reporter and writer in New York. Crane became an orphan at the age of 8 after the death of his father. It was no longer strange for him for he had experienced and witnessed the loss of his 5 elder brothers and the death of his mother on December 7th, 1891.

Crane was raised by Agnes his 15 years old sister who became later on an influential figure in his life. At the age of 21 years old, Crane worked as a journalist, covered the Spanish-American War in April, 1898 as a war reporter in Cuba. Crane's first novel was entitled *Maggie: the Girl of the Streets* in which he gave an exploration of New York's bowery life and it was not a work of total imagination. However, the novella reflected the author's experience of slums in October 1892 along with other painters and illustrator friends suffering from poverty in New York tenements. He wrote the first novella in 1891, two days before Christmas. In March, 1893 he managed to publish it under the pseudonym of "Johnston Smith", and printed it from money taken from one of his siblings.

While living in England with Cora, Crane befriended authors like Joseph Conrad and H.G Wells. Crane worked for *Blackwood Magazine* on February 15th, 1898, where he wrote articles on the United States and the Spanish War. Nevertheless, Crane succumbed to pulmonary tuberculosis and his health condition deteriorated. On June 5th, 1900, Crane passed away at the age of 28 years in Badenweiler, Germany.

1.2 Biography of Tennessee Williams

The Southern playwright, Thomas Lanier Williams was born on palm on Sunday March 26th, 1911, in Columbus, Mississippi. His early life was full of family problems and disorder. His father was Cornelius Williams, a shoe salesman in an international company in St Louis; employed in a telephone company. Cornelius was a gambler, alcoholic, womanizer, and homosexual who was most of the time absent. His mother was Edwina Dakin who was the heroine of many of Williams's plays. She portrayed the "Sothern Belle". Due to her husband's absence, Edwina took her three children Rose, Thomas and, Dakin to live with their grandparents named Reverend Walter and Rosetta Dakin, the mother suffered from hysterical attacks along her life. Tom's sister, Rose was suffering from Schizophrenia, and most of the

time was skipping school and staying home. Since childhood, at the age of 5 and 7, the child Thomas struggled with several illnesses which turned him weak and an invalid for two years, a reason to not attend school earlier. As a result, Thomas spent much time with his sister Rose. Together they tried making up stories. Williams's mother, Edwina accepted a prefrontal lobotomy for Rose in 1937. After that, Rose kept institutionalized for the rest of her life. The trauma of William's sister was the core theme of his plays. He was incapable of forgetting that event and Rose became his inspiration for Laura in *The Glass Menagerie*.

During the American Great Depression, Williams lived in St Louis. The setting inspired him to write his first play *The Glass Menagerie*. In Columbia, he attended Missouri University, where he was nicknamed "Tennessee" because of his Southern accent. After that, he moved to Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri. In 1938, he obtained his grade from the University of Iowa, where he joined the school's writing program (Grosskreuz, Vetro n. pag).

In the coming years, he moved to New Orleans where he adopted the name of "Tennessee" when his first short story was published. In 1940, Tennessee produced his first play, *A Battle of Angels* which made Williams known in spite of the critics. He worked as a contract writer and wrote a sketch entitled *I'm Called the Gentleman Caller* which became later on *the Glass Menagerie*. In 1944, *The Glass Menagerie* appeared as a play in Chicago and gained the New York Drama Critics Circle Award and the Sidney Howard Memorial Award. The play revealed many personal events that Williams had lived during his life. Even his characters mirrored his real life experience. The second success of Tennessee was in 1947 with *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *Camino Real* (1953), *Cat in a Hot Tin Roof* (1955), *Baby Doll* (1969), and *Orpheus Descending* (1957). In 1969, as his health was getting worse, he was institutionalized due to a harsh nervous downfall. Tennessee Williams died on February 25th, 1983, choked on the cap of the eye drops stacked in his throat.

2. Historical / Literary Background

2.1 Naturalism

Naturalism is a literary movement that exaggerates the methods and techniques of realism. Naturalists believed that the experimental sciences governed the physical world. Writers such as: Frank Norris, Jack London, Stephen Crane, Harold Frederic, etc, came against the previous theories of realism in terms of content. They tackled new challenging subjects, facing human life struggle to survive and the bitter reality in which individuals were forced to live. As a result of the publication of two prefaces by Edmund and Jules de Goncourt in the novel *Germinie Lacerteux* (1864), naturalism emerged as a fictional method. It is first spread in France in 1860 and generally linked to realism but one major difference between the two is that realism was dealing more with description. However, naturalism emphasized on the real situations that the characters encounter in specific context that was always tragic, sad, and pessimistic. They claimed that “American reality was so corrupted that writers used literature as a tool to criticize it” (Fontán Morales 13).

Poverty was the major issue in America during the 19th century. Crane’s involvement with the bowery life gave him the basic material to produce *MGS*. As illustrated by Dos Santos in her article "Self and Other: Mimetic Desire and Violence in Stephen Crane's *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets* and DH Lawrence’s: *The Prussian Officer*" (2005) that poverty, abuse, and violence created a dangerous, unfriendly atmosphere for the character of Maggie (94). Arunkumar and Benazir in "Stephen Crane’s Naturalism with Special Reference to the *Open Boat*" declared that the individual in a naturalist point of view was seen as a “doll whose developments are completely controlled by powers outside their ability to control” (251).

Naturalism puts a great interest in the setting because it symbolizes freedom. Thus, characters feel themselves lost and their potential opportunities to achieve their targets is limited and restricted because of the fact that their mission in life is already determined by forces outside their power. Contradiction is often a mark of deterministic view in Crane's *MGS*. In a way, it is used to show the characters' desires and objectives in life and the set of limitations and obstacles imposed by their surroundings. The human, in this case is imprisoned in an empty circle where all his wills, wishes, and aims in life are functioning according to an external law out of their control. These laws form a "cage for the characters" (Wade 64). The purpose of naturalists is to describe reality as it is without illusion or lies. The aim is to make people aware of what is happening around them and to find solutions and treatments for the society's illnesses.

2.2 Nineteenth Century America / The Gilded Age

The period between the Civil War and First World War was a significant period for the USA. This era witnessed a huge development in almost all fields of life: cities growth, economic shift, social and cultural change. In 1840, due to a pestilence in the life principle potato harvest, Ireland experienced The Great Famine. The Irish people, then, were pushed to quit their homeland to the wealthier, rich lands of America. In fact, America was like the Promised Land for the immigrants where to find their freedom and to get benefits from the wealth of the country. In the early nineteenth century, immigrants escaped from Ireland and Germany to find better life conditions in America (Hoffman 6). Eynon confirms that "Between 1845 and 1855 over two million Irish escaped to America, where they hoped to find work, security, and freedom from the English rule" (5).

This process of European immigration towards America and the process of urbanization, industrialization, and the shift from agricultural regions are referred by

historians as The Gilded Age. Carroll in an article entitled "Urbanization During the Gilded Age and Progressive Era: An Overview" argued that "The Gilded Age and Progressive Era spans from 1876 to 1920 and conveniently captured the period of urbanization in the United States" (4). He further emphasized the fact that "Urbanization is a process and not a place" (4). The Gilded Age as defined in the *Socratic Seminar Unit II Final*, is a time in which putrefaction existed among fellowship, yet it was covered by the fortune of the era. The word "Gilded" reflects something that is externally splendid and excellent, however miserable and poor internally (n. pag).

The growth of cities was the consequences of the move from rural districts to more populated areas. Migration and immigration were occurred in an anarchic way which caused a great disorder in the life of people. Hoffman and Felkner supported this idea in their article entitled "The Historical Origins and Causes of Urban Decentralization in the United States" (2002) that the result of the increasing number of immigrants and migration caused the raise of population in the nineteenth century and metropolitan progress (6). Social issues started to appear because of the crowded cities and conflicts between the natives and the immigrants especially the Irish ones who were characterized by a violent, intoxicated mood, they were poor, bunched in a disgraceful city slums. Middle class people considered them as a source of illness and felony (Hoffman 7). People were living in the bowery tenements of New York where alcoholism, fight, and crime took the central features of humans' life.

In the nineteenth century, America offered a comfortable life to the population. The standards of living were developed and more chances were given to citizens due to the industrial development. However, the down side of the progress was terrible and full of ups and downs as Thomas C. Reeves pointed in his book *Twentieth Century America* where he claimed that after the Civil War Americans witnessed a decrease in prices because of technology growth and production proficiency (6). Thomas argued that the cleft between the

poor and the rich was inevitable. Despite of all the positive effects, The Industrial Revolution brought to the nation, still dazzling illustrations of putrefaction, unfairness, dread, ache, and deformity were the result of industrialization and urbanization (10). The workers were submitted to severe work conditions as declared by Reeves "a ten-hour day and a six-day week were standard by 1890" (11).

2.3 The American Great Depression

During the Roaring Twenties America was in its full prosperity. The American Stock Market was stable and had a rising stock values. People enjoyed an easy, luxurious life in spite of some recessions and depressions that were smoothly overstepped. In 1929, prices in stocks started to sink in an unusual way. People especially investors who bought stocks on margin felt panic and were afraid of not giving back the sum of money borrowed from banks. This pushed them to liquidate and sell their stocks in cheaper prices. Banks were the first to be touched by the Stock Market collapse due to several causes. It could not have back the loans lent to Americans to buy stocks on margin; people lost everything and became forlorn. Incapable to refund the investors, banks shut their doors. "In September 1929 the total value of all stocks was \$87 billion. Less than two months later, more than \$30 billion in stock value had disappeared" (*Boom times & challenges* 778- 779).

The gap between the rich and the poor was remarkable due to unfair distribution of incomes between the social classes. In fact the signs of depression started to be seen earlier with the over production of goods in addition to the inconsiderable management of banks at that time. Declining World Trade was among the causes that resulted in the Great Depression. The European countries, after the First World War, were still rebuilding their economic basis which prevented them to sell or buy the American goods and products (*Boom times & challenges* 780). According to Reeves, problems of unemployment became the front

issue within society. He pointed that the rate of unemployment shifted from 5 million in 1930 to 13 million in 1933 (10). Lots of workers lost their jobs due to limited production, others were paid in lower prices and found themselves obliged to find other labors to satisfy their families' needs. Losing their savings and money, people found themselves without shelters nor incomes. Even children were not excluded from the devastated effects of the disaster since they were forced by their families to work at an early age. They were obliged to quit college for labor. In his book, Reeves described the situation according to a witness saying what follows:

In Chicago, one observer reported, 'we saw a crowd of some fifty men fighting over a barrel of garbage which had been set outside the back door of a restaurant. American citizens fighting for scraps of food like animals!' Another remembered seeing 'thousands of men, rolled up in their overcoats, just on the pavement' under the Michigan Avenue Bridge (101).

The president Franklin Delano Roosevelt, 1932, gave hope and an optimistic view for the population. The president and the congress met in a special session called "*The Hundred Days*" in 1933 to discuss, find solutions, and establish programs to overstep hard times. The program was named "The New Deal" (*Boom times & challenges* 784). In 1935, Culture started to flourish and progress. Musicians initiated the production of Cowboy Ballads, Folk Songs, and African American Spirituals in rural areas. Depression as a theme became popular; writers began to produce literary works about the cataclysm such as John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*.

The Great Depression of 1929 made the American economy more substantial, strong, and filled all the gaps found in economy. This paved the way for the most powerful economy in the world to stamp it among other countries. Efforts of the president Roosevelt were not to

be neglected to get out America from the turmoil and achieve a recognized status. In this concern Inboden in his article "Lifting the Burdens of the Past: How Three Mid-Twentieth-Century Presidents Transformed the United States" celebrated the efforts of the president saying that: "Franklin Delano Roosevelt envisioned an America that was more pluralistic and tolerant at home while showing international leadership and engagement abroad" (18).

3. Stephen Crane's *Maggie: a Girl of the Streets* and Tennessee Williams' *The Glass Menagerie*: Literary Influences

The two works of literature were realized during a period where America underwent several changes in fields of economy, lifestyle, technology, and social changes. *MGS* was considered as the first naturalist novel in American literature. America in the nineties witnessed advancement in technology due to the Industrial Revolution which in turn resulted in many social issues such as: crimes, illnesses in addition to crowded cities. Thus, writers found themselves obliged to capture the bitter reality of American bowery lifestyle; it was no more a time to idealize nature. Therefore, writers ought to go beyond the principles of realism. The main purpose of the writers was to interfere with social obstacles, to explain how human was governed by forces outside their will.

Crane maintained his sister's position against the instruction of the Christian orthodoxy and defended Agnes' negative view regarding severe and strict Methodism. In fact they were described as the rebels of Crane's family (qtd in Clovert 25). His anti-Christian orthodoxy stand was revealed in many of his books mainly in *Maggie* in which he satirized the role of churches and clergymen to afford a relief for the poor innocent girl, a circumstance applied to all the inhabitants of the slums of New York.

Clovert confirmed in his dissertation entitled "The Literary Development of Stephen Crane" that the impact of Twain's experimental writings was clearly noticed in crane's

narratives, especially in the selection of materials. His argument was that Twain applies his experiment outside and used it in his novel *Roughing It* in chapters twelve and thirteen (35). As declared by the author, Crane in his attempt to form his proper style visited the ancient caves with his friends and met bears to use this experience later on in his *Sullivan County*. “Comic devices” found in *Roughing It* by Twain influenced five of crane’s sketches: *Four Men in a Cave*, *The Octopush*, *The Holler Tree*, *The Cry of a Huckleberry Pudding*, and *The Explosion of Seven Babies* (35). In *Four Men in a Cave*, Clovert argued that the potency of Bierce’s style of writing was expressed in Crane’s works, mainly in the use of horror elements and alien figures (36). The style was appreciated primarily by Poe and Bierce who called it the Gothic Style. The influence of the writers cited above was not of much effect and it did not made of him a copy paste writer. In this respect Clovert wrote " neither Twain nor Bierce could have given Crane the most characteristic aspects of his style, its heavy reliance upon the effects of color and its extreme compassion" (38).

Crane’s use of colors in *MGS* was not a random process. Instead, it was a result of his acquaintance of the impressionistic techniques in painting. This point was discussed in Clovert’s dissertation in which he asserted that Goethe’s psychological values for the different colors inspired Crane’s use of color to communicate psychological meanings of characters in his novels. However, he did not reflect the same or exact interpretations given by Goethe (39). For Crane, as the author added, the red color symbolized anger; yellow reflected unluckiness, black dimness, and grey was associated with soberness (39).

Donna M. Campbell in her article entitled "More than a Family Resemblance? Agnes Crane’s *A Victorious Defeat* and Stephen Crane’s *The Third Violet*", Stated that Agnes’ story *A Victorious Defeat* published in *Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper* on January 13th, 1883 affected Crane’s novel *The Third Violet*. In fact, she was the closest person for Crane; both Agnes’s and Crane’s novels share the same setting which is middle class spare hours

especially in *The Third Violet* (19). She further explained the above mentioned idea by saying that "The parallels with Crane's work are striking. The setting is close to that in *The Third Violet*, as are several of the incidents and themes, including an evening boat ride and a more general emphasis on water as an uncontrollable natural force propelling the couple toward romance" (20-21).

Tennessee Williams's *GM* was a result of psychological troubles of the writer. His plays were of a double effect, in a way he reflected his life experiences through his plays, and his plays were a portrayal of his life. His style was unique, a common point shared with Stephen Crane. They were both characterized by self-style approach in treating social and mental issues. He was greatly influenced by the 19th century playwrights. However, critics were of none importance for him since he preferred to stick to his beliefs rather than to what others wanted him to do. Strindberg, Ibsen, and Anton Chekhov were the most influential figures of his career. The Russian playwright Anton Chekhov was of great influence on Williams's career as a playwright and even considered as his inspirational hero and Idol (*GradesFixer* n. pag). In fact, Williams himself admitted to be attracted by Chekhov's style, saying that "the strongest influences in my life and my work are always whomever I love, whomever I love and with most vividly. I think that is true of everyone, don't you?" (*GradesFixer* n. pag). Augustine Correro in his article entitled "Performing Tennessee Williams: Impact of his Life on his work", stated that Anton Chekhov was probably Williams's precursor in the application of sound, lighting, and stage effects not as excessive exemplifications, yet, as psychological components (13).

In the *GM* as well as in *A Streetcar Named Desire*, Tennessee Williams' characters were molded under Chekhov's influence especially in his representation of daily life, social issues, people's sufferings, weakness, defectiveness, and the use of characterization. Thus, created what is called duality of characters. Chekov's works were featured by a mixture of

tragedy and comic style due to the ironic style he used. Characters in Chekhov's *The Cherry Orchard* were similar to Williams' ones in the *GM* in being a memory play. The characters seemed to be reminded of, hopelessness, inferior, and incapable to overthrow the past and admit reality (*GradesFixer* n. pag).

Williams in his plays, asserted Correro, was greatly impressed by Bertholt Brecht, despite the fact that there was no evidence that they met one another. "Nothing needs less justification than pleasure" is a quote by Williams; however, originally coined by Brecht in *A Short Organum for the Theatre* (15). Tennessee's use of certain techniques such as lighting to create an atmosphere of "reality" was a fruit of Brecht's impact on the writer. Brecht was the founder of the epic theatre, a genre that impressed Williams' writings. Emerged in the early to Mid- 20th century, the Epic Theatre was a reaction against the political circumstances and the nomination of modern political theatre by Erwin Piscator (*dauggauld Worldpress* n. pag). The purpose of this category of theatre was to urge the audience to dig deeper and construct critical feedbacks, along with ethical and moral standards in which social injustice and exploitation were revealed to the public to make them aware of the situation of Americans and react to find solutions. For Brecht, "the play is a representation of reality and not reality itself" (*dauggauld Worldpress* n. pag). Correro argued that Brechtian techniques (supertitles and music) were used in different plays by Tennessee Williams in his early writings. These plays, according to the author were: *Not About Nightingales* (1938), *Stairs to the Roof* (1947), and *The Glass Menagerie* 1944 (15).

Another figure which impressed Williams's literary career was Hart Crane in which the motto *A Streetcar Named Desire* was extracted from Hart Crane's poem *The Broken Tower*. Both Williams and Crane experienced a bad consanguinity with their parents, homosexuality, besides addictedness to alcohol. The greatest influence on Thomas Lanier Williams was that of his sister, Rose. She was the source of inspiration for Tennessee in

which he built up his play the *GM*. The crippled girl, Laura in the *GM* is the symbol of his sister. She is suffering in the world of despair, darkness, and hysteria. In their article entitled "Tennessee Williams: Impact of his life on his work" Dr. Asha Sharma and Hargovind Sharma said that: "the familial tragedy trapped in his consciousness like a pinned butterfly, would continue to haunt Williams' fevered imagination throughout his career and would impart to his writings all their poignant power and immediacy" (604). The same source claimed that *the Rose Tattoo* by Williams was a praise for the great admiration he held for his sister and described her as the essential power of life (604).

Conclusion

In the present chapter, we have referred to the lives of the authors as a point of starting to become familiar with them. We have also investigated America during the nineteenth and twentieth century and pointed at some socio-political dilemmas that existed in that period, along with the literary influences that helped Crane and Williams to shape their narratives and styles of writing. In the coming chapter, we intend to explore the new historicist theory, along with modernism. Further, Experimentation in the novel and in theatre will be introduced in the next chapter.

Chapter Two

Modernism, New Historicism and Experimentation in the Novel and in Theatre

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Modernism, New Historicism and Experimentation in the Novel and in Theatre

Introduction

An overview of the modernist era will be offered in this chapter to make the reader aware of the socio-cultural atmosphere of the American society in the period in which the two literary works were written. Then, because it will be used in the analysis, we will attempt to provide a brief overview of the New Historicist theory as stated by Stephen Greenblatt, with a representation of the main elements that modeled this literary method of analysis. In the same concern, we will focus on one major modernist tenet which is experimentation in *MGS* and *GM* and we will focus on the new techniques that were brought by Crane and Williams to the field of American literature.

1. Modernism

Modernism was a reaction and a radical rejection of the literary tradition starting from the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. America in that period witnessed a revival in the field of economy, social and political atmospheres. This turned the conventional methods used in different fields such as religion and social norms that were inherited from the Victorian moral certainty and literature which seem to be obsolete. Modernists believed on the power of human to construct new meanings and to analyze their surroundings using experimentation, science and technology (*Modernism & Modernist literature* n. pag). Writers broke down the accepted conventions of the era for the purpose of creating new formal styles of literature and to discuss taboo subjects openly. In his article "Towards A Definition Of American Modernism", Daniel Joseph Singal claimed that "Modernism should be seen as a culture- a constellation of related ideas, beliefs, values, and modes of perception- that came into existence during the mid to late nineteenth century" (7).

Religion lost its value in society as we will discover in the analysis of the two selected works *MGS* and *GM*. Pericles Lewis in his article entitled "Religion" declared that Eliot deplored the birth of atheism and the change of the Christian God with modern "gods". For Eliot religion was reinstated by money in modern era. Modernists were asking questions about "human conditions, the nature of historical experience, sexuality, death, and ultimate realities" (20).

The first modernist novel was Knut Hamsun's *Hunger* in 1890 (*Modernism & Modernist literature 10*). However historians suggested different dates that indicates the birth of modernism. Clement Greenberg pointed that Immanuel Kant was "the first real modernist" while William Everdell claimed that Richard Dedekind's division of the real number line in 1872, besides to Boltzmann's statistical thermodynamics in 1874 marked the beginning of modernism (*Modernism 3*). The poet Ezra Pound's slogan "make it new" fueled the modernist wave. The latter along with Eliot and Joyce were considered as the most ancient figures that formed and adhered to the rise of modernism. Gillies and Mahood in their book *Modernist Literature: An Introduction* announced that the strength of modernist studies was the result of the appearance of four major speculations which were feminist literary criticism, New Historicist/textual criticism, cultural studies, and postcolonial studies (187).

Charles Darwin and Karl Marx were regarded as the brilliant figures of the period. Darwin's theory of evolution ruined secretly the religious regime of the common people since the belief that humans were controlled by the same instinct as 'lower animals' confirmed the difficulty to restore a relationship with a dignified and exalting spirituality. Darwin's focus on the part of chance in evolution opposed with the Christian traditions that the world was a creation of a powerful, tender creator (Lewis 20). In the same source, Lewis commented on Marx's claim that there were rudimentary oppositions inside of the capitalist system and the laborers were not free to make their decisions and they were subjected to rules and

regulations. In fact, these new ideas gathered a lot of attention and paved the way for modernism to flourish (20). American modernists of this era should be regarded as post-Victorians, according to Signal. His argument was that the primary purpose of these early modernists was to reform, adjust and modify nineteenth century morals and ethics, not attempting to radically reject it (10).

The main concern of modernists as George Simmel argued were “The deepest problems of modern life derive from the claim of the individual to preserve the autonomy and individuality of his existence in the face of overwhelming social forces, of historical heritage, of external culture, and of the technique of life” (*The Metropolis and Mental Life, 1903 qtd in Modernism & Modernist literature 10*). Literature of the modernists went beyond the limits of realist literature and brought into life notions like dislocated timelines. There was a noticeable franchise or liberation at the level of writing metanarratives in this period.

The literary works were more likely to be pessimistic. The plot was a set of separated parts to show social or historical shift especially in “stream of consciousness” narratives, prominently, in the works of Virginia Woolf and James Joyce (*Modernism & Modernist literature 11*). This narrative technique used to depict the thoughts and feelings which passed through the mind of an individual as Mary Ann Gillies and Aurelea Mahood further explain in their book *Modernist Literature An Introduction*, that “free indirect discourse and stream-of-consciousness were two of the most important modernist techniques for gaining access to a character’s mind” (10). Stream of consciousness was used by several writers including Stephen Crane and Tennessee Williams. Both of them studied the consciousness of their characters which was extremely important to convey a meaning of truthfulness.

Modernists considered peoples’ plights not as a personal issue, but rather as a social instance that should be transmitted properly to the audience. They tried to establish a sense of

order to human experience in a disordered society. Crane's and Williams's literary works were based on experimentation which was a basic feature of modernism. As pointed by Singal, modernists imply a radical experimentation used to strike against the middle class bourgeoisie by means of refining or investigating the distorted and the deleterious deportment of people (8).

2. Greenblattian New Historicism

New Historicism deals with the analysis of society, history, economy, culture, and the study of one's experiences in accordance to a given literary work that is written in the same period of time. According to John Brannigan, new historicism started in the late 1970s in USA (4), it stands as a theory, a method of analysis and a critical application with the publication of *Renaissance Self-Fashioning* (1980) by Stephen Greenblatt and with Louis Montrose's essay *Eliza, Queen of Shepherdes'* (56). Greenblatt coined the term "new historicism" in 1982 (Hoover 360). However one cannot deny the influence of Michel Foucault's explanation of discourses as being important and rudimentary in power relations (182) as expressed in Raman, Widdowson, and Brooker in their book entitled *Reader's Guide to Contemporary Literary Theory*. Efforts of the new historicists such as Montrose, Jonathan Goldberg, Leonard Tennenhouse, and Stephen Greenblatt are to examine the methods applied by Elizabethan writers especially in the field of drama, masque, and pastoral to mirror the matters of Tudor Monarchy (183).

Dwight W. Hoover mentioned in his article "The New Historicism" that the common point between new historicism and old historicism is that they both accord with Vico on the point that "humans have no nature, no 'transhistorical core of being,' only history" (360). Old and New Historicists believe that several societies differ in ethnical assumptions and that a given phenomenon is not automatically present in another society. Hoover adds that new

historicism's trial is not to write one single history but rather histories (360). Greenblatt, according to Hoover, argues that new historicism truly believes that there is no particular political sight in history. Instead there are certain rivalry visions (362).

New historicism goes hand in hand with cultural materialism. They both show interest in literature and history and view texts as being "products" and "functional components" of social and political dimensions (Brannigan 3). Literature and history in this case are inseparable and share an interchangeable role in which both can be regarded as an umbrella terms. That is to say, history is literature, and the latter is a set of gathered histories. Brannigan illustrated the aforementioned idea by saying that the distinction between literature and history is no more seen as being simple; instead it is a complicated relation (3). The author explains that:

For new historicism and cultural materialism the object of study is not the text and its context, not literature and its history, but rather literature in history. This is to see literature as a constitutive and inseparable part of history in the making and therefore rife with the creative forces, disruptions and contradictions of history (3-4).

In the same context, Raman, Widdowson, and Brooker added that the link between literature and history ought to be "rethought", immovable and that permanent history does not exist, and instead, there are lots of "histories" (181). American new historicism has a pessimistic tendency in interpreting the discursive power embodied in the literary description of the Elizabethan and Jacobean social scale. Greenblatt presumes that subversion is the reflection of an inner need as we shape our identities in accordance to what we desire to be, that desire for being is called by Greenblatt "Falstaff", and it is externalized as "others" which in turn helps us reinforce and strengthen our identities (183). Mehmet Akif Balkaya in his

article "Basic Principles of New Historicism in the Light of Stephen Greenblatt's Resonance and Wonder and Invisible Bullets" points that Greenblatt deals with marginal affairs that were neglected or put aside. He believes that the "alien" or "the other" must be examined. He adds that the main purpose of new historicists is to review the past and social evaluation (7069).

The anecdote as a concept is a new phenomenon in literary theories. It is deeply related and linked to complicated and longer narratives of history. It conveys powerful ideas and meanings for the reader. As Catherine Gallagher and Stephen Greenblatt presume in their recent book *Practicing New Historicism*, (2000) an anecdote is the representative element of new historicism that depends on the importance of one's experiences in life and daily incidents in shaping a historical purport by using insignificancies and details of everyday life (49). One may find it strange to recognize the role of a given anecdote in imploring history or pointing up a certain episode in history. In fact, anecdotes are the reflection of human desire and goes beyond its literary boundaries to triumph into peoples' lives and social performances. Rani Paul Ukkan in his thesis entitled "Introduction: An Approach to New Historicism and Its Possibilities in Anne Tyler's Fiction" (2002) declares that anecdotes according to Barry have the power of the documentation with striking impressive apertures, dates, and references for settings which adds a sense of real occurrences (4-5).

Greenblatt refers to Fineman's point of view in which he argues that an anecdote came to breakdown the conventions of continuous flow of larger histories (*Practicing New Historicism* 50). It means that there is no that fixed or standard history. Instead, it is opened to broader interpretations which are constructed according to a specific time, place, or narrator. It is the hidden representation of history through narratives that makes sense to reality or in Greenblatt's words that achieves "the effect of the real" (51). Greenblatt declares that new historicists argue that not all anecdotes could achieve the abovementioned purpose. Only if it

conveys diverse content, details, elements that deviate from what is standard and a misdate content to mark the move from “history” and “text” (51).

The term “counterhistories” as defined by Gallagher and Greenblatt is the group of histories produced through the anecdote. The latter is considered by both Greenblatt and Fineman as being a way of history explanation. Stephen uses the notion of counterhistory to attack the “grands récit” derived from the previous decades. He further suggests that even grands récit of the nineteenth century themselves began as counterhistories and as a result, both history and counterhistory are always in a mutual disagreement (52). Anecdotes in this sense can be viewed as the smallest unit of historiography through which history is recreated and build on, or as Greenblatt explains that the anecdote used by new historicists is a way of transmission of these counterhistorical visions and desires into literature (54). A well constructed anecdote plays a great role in reflecting the author’s thoughts, experiences and sometimes corrects history. For this reason, it is a referential method that mirrors life circumstances in particular period about which Greenblatt writes that:

The wish of anecdotalist may always have been to revivify, to bring something back to life that had been buried deep in oblivion, and Foucault often underlined the macabre implications of that wish: the revived creature comes back in the agony of its death throes. This sensationalism, this striving after “terror and awe,” produced a heightened sense of being on the extremities of the historically knowable, at the very edge of what we could know, cognitively, about the past (70-71).

There are two types of anecdotes according to Greenblatt, one is the anecdote about experiencing and the second is an anecdote about thinking. Anecdotes about experiencing or

autobiographical anecdotes are less constructive and it does not enhance the reader's learning capacities since it just reports events (71).

Self-Fashioning is another key concept brought by Greenblatt. It is the firm belief that human's identity is characterized by its plasticity and flexibility. New historicists study the effect of social, cultural, and ideological beliefs, traditions, or visions on the process of individual's identity construction. The theory is initially formed by Stephen Greenblatt in his book *Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* in which he explains that literature is the only expression of Self-Fashioning mechanism and it can be defined as the expression of behavior of the writer, as a manifestation of the codes that control behavior and finally, as a meditation on these codes (4). He discusses, in fact, the link between the self and the text as he points that the process of Self-Fashioning arises under a set of conditions or powers such as family and state (2).

In his article entitled "The New Historicism of Stephen Greenblatt: On Poetic of Culture and the Interpretation of Shakespeare", Jan R. Veenstra argues that Greenblatt comes against T.S Eliot's assertion where he claims that a poem is seen as poetry not as something else. Greenblatt mentions that it is for sure a poem belongs to poetry, but the fact that believing that a poem is just a poem is to turn a "blind eye" to the most fundamental issues of sociohistorical boundaries and how it reflects its interpretations. Greenblatt further says that "regarding a poem as nothing but poetry is not regarding the poem at all" (176). This view concerns prose also. Any given work of literature mirrors and transmits facts to the readers about a particular period and even about some autobiographical sketches of its writers. Veenstra emphasizes the fact that religious boundary is the core point and the first phase in the construction of one's self. It is the surrender to a supreme power or authority of the state, church, and the family. The second phase is otherness or the stranger who is enclosed and either dispossessed of his otherness or ruined which in turn causes a loss of the self. To make

it clear, he says that Self-fashioning is controlled by a double relationship of authoritative power (181-182). Greenblatt argues in his book *Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* saying that:

If we constantly use devices of section and shaping in accounting for our lives, if we insist upon the importance of certain “turning points” and “crises” or, in Freud’s famous modern instance, seize upon the plot of Sophoclean tragedy to characterize our shared “family romance”, then it is not surprising that we engage in a similar narrative section when we reflect upon our shared historical origins (6).

New historicism view texts from a new angle. The focus on history, culture, society, personal agendas and religion brings back some ancient histories and yet opening new horizons of research and perspectives. Religion is a rudimentary element of new historicism. Going back to the end of the nineteenth century, a new dilemma emerged among the religious men of America to discuss the relation between society and religion. People started to ask about the role of clergy men, about the origins of human existence and the role of churches in the shaping of one’s identity and belief. In the modernist era a new way of looking to religion appears. There was a great need to evaluate Christian principle in accordance to its ethical practices not its conventional rules (*Religious pluralism* 6). People started questioning the certainty of churches. Greenblatt says in this concern in his book *Renaissance Self-Fashioning* that, "Christianity brought a growing suspicion of man’s power to shape identity" (2). The spreading belief that no one can build himself serves as destructor element for the self, instead of being a source of power and hope. The Christ as expressed by Greenblatt is considered as the most authoritative power and the only one who had the ability to fashion people and described any other attempt to strengthen one’s self as useless in Stephen’s words "try to build up yourself, and you build a ruin" (3).

Literature of the nineteenth used to mock Christianity and clergymen through a precise and special selection of characters and themes to unmask the hypocrisy of religious practitioners and the corruption of the church. Religious instability of the nineteenth and twentieth century led to the loss of faith and moral values as well as the deterioration of man in his own community. New historicism seeks to show the reality behind writing texts and to get rid of the old instructions that used to be fixed realities for people. However new interpretations could be applicable on literary text to show more accuracy and authenticity of a given text.

The Objectives of literature are to awaken the society to the realities that surround it. The use of the author's biographical circumstances has a great power in convincing people and an impact on the audience as well. For the new historicist, text and context are inseparable. Writers tend to explore their experiences to express not only their grief but beyond that limits is to reflect all the people living under the same life circumstances. In fact, this is how the writer and the reader can feel "the touch of the real" that Greenblatt already expressed. Capitalism is a crucial element in New Historicism. As an economic ideology, it ruins middle and lower class people due to finance inequality. Greenblatt is among the critics who reject this ideology. Geoffrey Galt Harpham quotes Greenblatt's pronouncement on capitalism in which he suggests that:

Capitalism characteristically generated neither regimes in which all discourses seem coordinated, nor regimes in which they seem radically isolated or discontinuous, but regimes in which the derive towards differentiation and the derive towards monological organization operate simultaneously, or at least oscillate so rapidly as to create the impression of simultaneity (6 qtd in Galt Harpham 363).

Capitalism is not a system that favors the interest of the whole; instead it is marked by personal hold of goods. This means that people have the right to get interest from their private ownership of properties. Eamonn Butler in *An Introduction to Capitalism*, defines capitalism as “a general way of economic life which people create and apply capital goods in order to produce, as productively as possible, the goods and services that they and others want” (14).

Literary works are products of various circumstances, especially the surrounding and the sociohistorical factors. *MGS* and *GM* emerge in a sensible period in the history of America in which the necessity of a radical change is unquestionable. Hence, the New Historicist approach enables us to identify Crane’s and Williams’s efforts in interpreting the American society in two different periods and the way in which they handle the issues gives us a much more details about different aspects of life. They use irony, symbolism, and experimentation as means of literary transmission. Experimentation is the most essential component of modernism, for it introduces a new reasoning method and perspective to re-examine every aspect of existence. In this respect, an introduction to experimentation in prose and theatre is essential for the understanding of the aforementioned literary production in their historical literary framework.

3. Experimentation in Prose and in Theatre

Jesse Matz in *The Modern Novel* stipulates that the idea of experimentation is introduced by Gertrude Stein in 1896. She wants to study how “human” can be automatic in his writing. The steps of experiment are explained by Matz as follows:

She gave her test subjects a book; and a ‘planchette’ (a glass plate mounted on metal balls); she then had them place a hand on the planchette and get engrossed in the book; and she found that as they read, her subjects moved their planchettes even while paying no attention to them at all. They moved

their hands automatically. And not only that: when pencils were attached to the planchettes, as the subjects moved them, they wrote (3).

Stein emphasizes and puts interest in this automatic writing because it is new, difficult, and has a visionary effect. Furthermore, she is aiming to show the impact of modern inventions on literature through experimentation (4). The same idea is affirmed by Richard Gray in his attempt to interpret the meaning of experimentation in writing. He says:

As Gertrude Stein (1874-1946) was dying, she asked those with her, 'What is the answer?' There was no reply and after a short pause, she laughed and added, 'Then what is the question?' Those last words were characteristic of a writer who was committed to experiment and inquiry and in particular to asking fundamental questions about the relationship between language and reality (193).

Experimentation means the divorce with old literary forms and the adoption of more complex and difficult forms of literature as a step to capture reality and the truth of things. It is more characterized by self-reflection about the act of writing that is why old narratives are regarded by Stein as 'enemies' (Gray 193).

The works of both Crane and Williams reflects a sense of cultural crisis. It is marked by experimentation, especially the handling of literary shape. Despite the fact that the two writers belong to two different generations, their works resemble each other especially when referring to Crane's *MGS* and Williams's *MG*. The stem content of their literary works is based on real life events of both authors and reflects the period in which the novel and the play were furnished. Family bonds, love, disappointment, religion, hypocrisy, mental disorder, and poverty are the main shared themes between *MGS* and *GM*.

The modern novel applies new techniques, new theories, and new languages. Matz defines it as follows: “The modern novel means fiction that tries for something new, in the face of modernity, to reflect, to fathom, or even to redeem modern life” (7). In this respect, we refer to Crane’s *MGS* (1893) in which he uses experimentation in his analysis of American bowery life. His pledged relation with his surrounding makes him familiar with the life issues of his society. He uses a direct, sharp language of the streets, instead of formal or standard language. The novel is dealing with new, taboo subjects. Jean Cazemajou, in his pamphlet entitled *Stephen Crane*, describes the theme of the novella as being “audacious”. He further declares that the novella is warmly welcomed by Hamlin Garland and W. D Howells (9). In accordance to Cazemajou’s statements, Crane’s attempt to experiment the slum life is by itself something new; the purpose behind the story of Maggie is to mirror the reality as it is and not to promote “slumming” (14). *Maggie* calls for the reframing of social norms and rejected slum fiction conventions and arbitrary arrangements. This point makes of his narrative unique as explained by Cazemajou who says: “his own rebellion went against the God of Testament and the stove to debunk a cluster of false values, especially ambition, conformity, worldly wisdom, military glory, and traditional religion” (32).

Illustrating the previous idea, we can refer to Gandal’s announcement where he affirms that Crane is not traditional in his analysis of the slums. Despite his interest in describing the surrounding, he is using new method of analysis (49). Crane makes it new by adopting new techniques of literary experimentation. His style is fueled by his real experimentation of the bowery life. His prose production influences human reasoning besides to literary proficiency. *MGS* is among the earliest modernist works by excellence. He himself admits that he is neither a realist, nor a naturalist or even an impressionist, the reason is that he rejects all the traditions and conventions. He is just an exception of his period that influenced the coming generations (Brannan 78).

Crane reinvented the tenement novel. Conventional novels of the poor in 1880s and 1890s were turning around moral conflicts and changes. It was about resisting the negative effects of slums and physical plights intimidation (Gandal 40). Despite the fact that slum fiction was the prevailing fashion at that time, Crane failed in getting a publisher. Gandal considers this failure as a proof for his accomplishment in writing *Maggie*. He adds that the general public outrage against Crane's novella is his negation to account slum life in accordance to middle-class measures (39).

Tennessee Williams builds up his play to fit the social and the economic realities of his era. "In his career as a playwright, his combination of lyricism/ poetic language and experimentalism revolutionized American drama in the post World War II scenario" (Abhik Maiti n. pag). As Crane, Williams rejects all sorts of conventions in literature and opts for new forms such as expressionism, symbolism, impressionism, experimentation, and absurdity in theatre. As far as experimentation is concerned, Williams is classified as an innovator of experimental drama who refuses the old forms of dramatic production and emphasizes the urgent need to surmount photographic realism (*Dramatic Techniques in Tennessee Williams* 10). Subashi Esmeralda and Miranda Ostrosi Veliaj in an article entitled "Tennessee Williams's Dramatic World", argue that unlike realism which focuses on the photographic interpretation of real life, Williams emphasizes "plastic theatre" where he joins production components, conversation, movements, scene, lighting, and style of dress in a corpus of expressionist truth. It is a unique technique used by Williams in *GM* (79). One should first explain the meaning of plastic theatre. In fact, it is a leaning towards experimentation that focuses on expressionism and symbolism besides to lyricism. Williams's explanation of new concept goes like this:

Expressionism and all other unconventional techniques in drama have only one valid aim, and that is closer approach to truth. When a play employs

unconventional techniques, it is not, or certainly shouldn't be, trying to escape its responsibility of dealing with reality . . . but is actually or should be attempting to find a closer approach, a more penetrating and vivid expression of things as they are ('Production Notes' 299 qtd in Durmišević 97-98).

Through the *GM* character's, the traumatic consequences of the American Great Depression on citizens are perfectly captured. The economic condition determines the social design of the era. There is a kind of paradoxical events of thrift and demolition in the American society which affects the plot in *GM*. The writer cannot turn blind to the circumstances of his surrounding; Williams's characters in the play are the reflection of his real family and life experiences. Laura in the *GM* is the representation of Williams's sister Rose while Amanda reflects Tennessee's mother. Laura's brother Tom is the reflection of Williams himself, what makes the *GM* special is his use of Tom as both a character and a narrator of the play which is something new for the American drama.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we have introduced modernism and the different social and cultural events that paved the way to the production of modern works in America. In addition, we have briefly reviewed Greenblatt's New Historicist theory and referred to its four major components. Besides, we shed light on experimentation in Crane's prose *MGS* and Williams's *GM* and highlighted some new techniques that were adopted by the writers. In the coming chapter, we will introduce the summaries of the selected works. Then, we will start the analysis of *MGS* and *GM* in the light of the New Historicist perspectives.

Chapter Three

A New Historicist Reading of *Maggie*

a Girl of the Street and The Glass

Menagerie

Chapter Three

A New Historicist Reading of *Maggie a Girl of the Streets* and *The Glass Menagerie*

Introduction

As we have seen in the previous chapters, the American society witnessed some circumstances that radically changed the American lives. The Industrial Revolution, the American Great Depression and many other events shaped new cultural and social frames. Social diversity became popular and various social classes appeared, thus, people felt unsecured. In this chapter, we will try to explore the different new historicist tenets presented in the selected works starting with a brief summary of the novella and the play. Then, we will analyze them in the light of Greenblatt's: self-fashioning, anecdotes, religion and capitalism.

1. Synopsis of *MGS* and *GM*

Crane's objective in writing *Maggie* is to introduce a new style of writing and to portray life in New York slums. The nineteenth century America was the period of immigration. The main character of the novella is Maggie from the Johnson's family. The other characters are: the drunkard parents, Jimmie and Pete. The beginning of the story starts with Jimmie's fight against neighboring children called Devil's Row. After being saved by Pete, a member of Rum Alley's group, they met the sullen-eyed man who is Jimmie's father and brings him home.

In their arrival at home, readers are introduced to Maggie, the baby Tommie, and Mary the drunkard, harsh, and brutal mother. The latter reacts angrily towards Jimmie as she found him bleeding and Maggie's breaking of a plate awakens the mother's violent character.

For unknown reasons, the father and Tommie died. Jimmie and his sister Maggie grow up in difficult conditions. They live a harsh, sneering, and aggressive youth. The boy becomes

a truck driver and the beautiful Maggie works in a shirt factory. Maggie is an innocent girl described as a flower that flourished in a mud puddle. She is the one to be unique and different. The bad environment along with the bad-tempered mother forms an obstacle for Maggie to improve her life's conditions. Pete is the only escape for Maggie to overcome her bitter reality. They are involved in a relation while visiting the theatre and the museum. One night, as a quarrel in the Johnson's family raises, Maggie is accused by Mary and Jimmie of a bad behavior with Pete and they kick her out of the tenement. As a result, she goes to live with Pete. After a period of time, Pete meets with an old friend of him called Nellie. The latter manages to seduce and convince Pete to leave Maggie. After being rejected by her family and her lover, the girl lives a great depression and agony, walking in the streets alone and turning into a prostitute. Due to unknown reasons, Maggie is found dead. Mary starts a hypocrite, ironic, and artificial mourning claiming that she will forgive her.

Tennessee Williams's *GM* is widely known as being a memory play. Tom Wingfield is the narrator and the main character as well. The play was firstly staged in Chicago in 1944. The Wingfield belong to the lower-class of the American society living in a tenement in ST. Louis. The characters are Amanda the mother, Laura the daughter, and Tom the son, besides to Laura's secret lover. The play starts as Tom comes into the apartment while the family members are having dinner. The mother is complaining about the behavior of Tom on the table as she recounts her series of repeated "Southern Belle" memories to them and how she used to flirt with lots of gentlemen callers. Laura is not expecting or planning to welcome any gentleman caller, a point which makes Amanda frustrated. Due to her lack of self-confidence as a crippled girl, Laura quitted the Business College to which she was enrolled. The girl finds her inner peace and stability in holding her glass menagerie. Her mother realized that the only solution for her daughter was to find a suitable husband for her. Tom worked in a warehouse to provide financial support for his family. He found poetry writing, movies, drinking, and

literature as his sole escape from social and family pressures. The mother and the son are in total disagreement and conflict. Tom blames his mother's unrespectable character towards his private life. Amanda as well accuses him of being careless towards the family. As the conflict arose, Tom caused the break of some of Laura's glass menageries. After a period they pacified and thought of Laura's benefit. The son brought a friend of him called Jim O'Connor. The mother feels happy and makes a new dress for Laura. The latter, after meeting Jim, realizes that he is Jim, her high school crush and suddenly feels alarmed. At a given moment, the light went off because Tom did not pay for it. To fix the problem, Amanda lighted candles. Jim sits with Laura and declared to Jim that they knew each other from high school when he used to call her "Blue Roses". He kindly advises her to overpass her complex of inferiority. She shows her collection of glass animals as she permits him to hold his favorite one which is the unicorn. As they are dancing, Jim, involuntarily, breaks the horn of her unicorn. In a moment, Jim kisses Laura and asks for forgiveness announcing that he has a fiancée. The girl feels ravaged and destroyed; however, she pretended to be calm and offers the broken unicorn as a souvenir. Amanda's reaction was full of anger; she accused Tom of planning for this. The son rushed out of the house to the movies as she told him to go to the moon. He declares that he is jobless and he cannot emotionally separate himself from his mother and sister.

2. Analysis of *Maggie: a Girl of the Streets* and *The Glass Menagerie*

2.1. Self-fashioning in *Maggie: a Girl of the Streets* and *The Glass Menagerie*

Identity is the core element of Greenblatt's New Historicism. The construction of one's identity depends on his surrounding or environment and to the set of cultural norms that governed the American society during the nineteenth and twentieth century. As we already referred to in the second chapter, the principle of Self-fashioning is characterized by its

complexity and flexibility. Human being can adopt more than a single personality according to the environmental conditions in which he grows up. In this respect, Greenblatt in *Renaissance Self-Fashioning* states that texts may be interpreted according to the life experiences of their writers in the vast social environment, this led to the formation of a unique, complicated process of Self-fashioning and the whole process gives an insight on the building of social identities (6).

Self-fashioning tenet can be clearly explored in Crane's *MGS* through several characters. The novel opens with a fight between the children of Rum Alley in which Jimmie belongs to the Devil's Row. The environment in which the children grew up shaped their aggressive behavior and fueled their souls with violence and hatred. Jimmie "the little champion of Rum Alley" (1) is described as being a hero due to his animalistic behaviour against the enemies, the fight is a battle-like scene, only the fittest would survive. Honor, respect, and dignity for these people can only be saved by showing cruelty and superiority towards the others. Despite the fact that Jimmie's "coat had been torn to shreds in a scuffle, and his hat was gone. He had bruises on twenty parts of his body, and blood was dripping from a cut in his head. His wan Features wore a look of a tiny, insane demon" (1), his self-acceptance and self-love are fully achieved. He is governed by his selfish impulses which can be illustrated through his animalistic desires for fight which is experienced as pleasure.

In fact, education plays a great role in the process of identity's development for a child. Rum Alley's and Devil's Row infants are not exposed to school education. This can be the cause which interrupted the mechanism of personality erection. As a character, Jimmie, has not a standard or fixed individuality all along the novella. However, he shifts from one phase to another. First his strong and powerful character towards other children, for example in this passage "dese micks can't make me run" (1) versus his vulnerable and weak character in front of his mother and father as expressed in this extract "Eh, what? Been fightin' agin, by

Gawd!” (6) She threw herself upon Jimmie. The urchin tried to dart behind the others and in the scuffle the babe, Tommie, was knocked down, she tossed him to a corner where he limply lay cursing and weeping” (6). Parents play a great role in the formation of children’s identity. This split in personality can be explained as the repressed feelings which provoke violence because of family environment which promotes savageness and carelessness.

The description of the alcoholic Mary as “big and formidable” (5) with “massive shoulders heaved with anger” (6) and the sullen-eyed man (5) are such a frightening images for a child to witness. It does not represent a model family for raising children. Mary “drank whisky all Friday morning” (22); “her face was inflamed and swollen from drinking” (12). “The father wrenched the pail from the urchin. He grasped it in both hands and lifted it to his mouth” (10). Having a drunkard parents would eventually affect the mind of the infants and teach them bad habits as it was the case for Jimmie “who never conceived a respect for the world, because he had begun with no idols that it had smashed” (13). We should point that the Johnson’s are not the only ones to be designated by such deleterious manners, yet, the whole inhabitants of Manhattan. As declared by Richardson Hester Dorsey, “The nineteenth-century gentleman was far more interested in the pedigree of his horse or dog than in that of his children, and he knew much more about the age of his wine than of his family” (761).

Another momentous condition that should be foregrounded is the language used among the members of the family which consists of the use of slangs and bad words. Family in its broader sense is the first phase for child education. However, the Johnson’s daily conversations are full of sharp attacks. In a scene where the parents are fighting, Mary addresses her husband, saying:

‘Ho,’ she said, with a great grunt of contempt. “An’ what in the devil are you stickin’ your nose for?”

“Go teh hell,” he murmured, tranquilly. (7)

Children’s attendance and exposition to such dialogue will inevitably push them to adopt the same manners that will influence their identity formation. Moreover, the house’s role as a place of relief, serenity, and protection does not fit the Johnson’s one even while gathering for dinner. The following passage supports our argument:

The children scrambled hastily. With prodigious clatter they arranged themselves at table. The babe sat with his feet dangling high from a precarious infant chair and gorged his small stomach. Jimmie forced, with feverish rapidity, the grease-enveloped pieces between his wounded lips. Maggie, with side glances of fear of interruption, ate like a small pursued tigress. (8)

From this passage, we understand that the children’s personality in this novella is formed under a set of conditions that may not be done purposely by the parents. Yet, they unconsciously affected their children’s personality. Jimmie’s identity is fashioned through blood relations which means through hereditary impulses. He inherently acquires the bad-tampered mood of his parents, being superior equals who are violent and heartless person. Even the most innocent baby Tommie is affected by his environment. Despite his age, his aggressive behavior is noticeable. Here is an extract to reinforce this idea “he protested against being dragged in a chosen direction. He made heroic endeavors to keep on his legs, denounce his sister and consume a bit of orange peeling which he chewed between the times of his infantile orations” (5). According to Brace “slum boy’s characters could be redeemed

with a change of environment and refined influences, but girls, in losing their purity, experienced a ‘deeper’ fall, one from which they could never recover” (qtd in Gandal 47).

Maggie, a ragged girl, can also be explored through Self-fashioning principle. The urchin, like her brother Jimmie, is a paradoxical character. On the one hand, she is characterized by her violent actions as “she jerked the baby’s arm impatiently. He fell on his’ face roaring. With a second jerk she pulled him to his feet, and they went on” (5). When the ragged girl sees her brother covered by blood, she reacted angrily saying “youse allus fightin’, Jimmie, an’ yeh knows it puts mudder out when yehs come home half dead, an’ it’s like we’ll all get a poundin’.” (5) Maggie’s environment and family situation forced her to construct a self-defiance power. Her fear, as she truly knows that her mother’s volcano will burst when she sees Jimmie, urges her to take an offensive stance against her brother. On the other hand, Maggie shows mercy, sympathy, generosity towards Jimmie after being thrown to the corner.

The ragged girl went stealthily over the corner where the urchin lay.

“Are yehs hurted much, Jimmie?” she whispered timidly.

“Not a damn bit! See?” growled the little boy.

“Will I wash deh blood?”

“Naw!” (7).

When the baby, Tommie, died “his small waxen hand clutching a flower that the girl, Maggie, had stolen from an Italian” (13). We may interpret these crisis and troubles in behavior of both Jimmie and Maggie as a result of their social and family milieu.

New historicism’s notion of Self-fashioning is manipulated and modeled through a set of cultural dogmas. In Maggie, the characters’ appearances are of significant and crucial impact

in shaping personalities. People are judged according to their clothes, which means that garments form one's attitudes towards the others. To reinforce this idea, Jimmie in his adulthood "maintained a belligerent attitude toward all well-dressed men. To him fine raiment was allied to weakness, and all good coats covered faint hearts. He and his order were kings, to a certain extent, over the men of untarnished clothes, because these latter dreaded, perhaps, to be either killed or laughed at." (14) The country's economy and the technological advancement constructed a new vision towards peoples' ranks in society. The novella shows clearly the importance of this cultural aspect in the American society. When Maggie first saw Pete she presumed that "he must be a very elegant and graceful bartender", "the beau ideal of man" (18-19) due to the description of his attractive physical appearances.

His hair was curled down over his forehead in an oiled bang. His rather pugged nose seemed to revolt from contact with a bristling moustache of short, wire-like hairs. His blue double-breasted coat, edged with black braid, buttoned close to a red puff tie, and his potent-leather shoes looked like murder-fitted weapons (18).

Furthermore, Maggie as described by Crane "blossomed in a mud puddle. She grew to be a most rare and wonderful production of a tenement district, a pretty girl" (17). Her beauty is remarkable in the slum and men admit her charm "Dat Johnson goil is a puty good looker" (17). Maggie's lover, Pete, acknowledged her beauty; he utters "Say, Mag, I'm stuck on yer shape." (20) According to these extracts, we may understand that Maggie's attraction to Pete is shaped because of his appearances and wealth. Because she is a dreamer, she wants to overstep the life of slum and ensure a better life conditions with Pete who is an "aristocratic person" (19) and "who had contempt for brass-clothed power; one whose knuckles could defiantly ring against the granite of law. He was a knight" (21).

The American society in that period was witnessing a huge development in different domains mainly in garments. People became haunted by all that is fashionable, well-advertised, and with new tendencies. After their meeting, Maggie “began to have an intense dislike for all of her dresses” (27). She found them old-fashioned and not suitable for the aristocratic class as she saw “the well-dressed women she met on the avenues” (27). The urchin feels certain inferiority towards well-fashioned women. Being a common or regular girl of lower-class does not permit her to achieve a full identity construction in a society that focuses on appearances and regard them as a measure of superiority and power. In chapter fourteen when introduced to Nellie, the woman of brilliance and audacity, Maggie “perceived that her black dress fitted her to perfection” (49). Relations are based on mutually exchanged benefits even emotions were controlled by the amount of money and beauty that one owns. Pete chooses Nellie because of her disguised charm and mannerism. The mere boy pronouncement reinforces the idea through his utter “shay, lil’ girl, we mightish well make bes’ of it. You ain’t such bad-lookin’ girl, y’know. Not half bad. Can’t come up to Nell, though. No, can’t do it! Well, I should shay not! Nell fine-lookin ‘girl!” (52). This statement reveals the importance of physical appearances in establishing relations in the American society.

It is a representation of lost identities and selves, more precisely; it is an ironic way of describing reality. Poor people became victims of their materialist world due to the industrial advancement that was not offered for everybody. As a result of this unfair share of fortunes, people are struggling, to get their food and preserve their lives. History is reflected in *MGS* through the rumination of New York’s bowery life during the nineteenth centuries which was featured by an atmosphere of violence, intolerance, poverty, and injustice. Cultural and social issues are condemned to be the consequences of the massive immigration during

that period which made it difficult to control the outgrowing population and to Americanize the new comers.

In Tennessee's *GM*, we can study the new historicist tenet of self-fashioning through several characters. Amanda Wingfield is living a double personality. She does not admit her belonging to the lower-middle-class population and she denies reality. The American Depression changed the lifestyle of the Wingfield family from being a rich family surrounded by servants to a poor one that struggled to gain the food of the day. Another reason which shaped the mannerism of Amanda is probably the absence of her husband who burdened her with extra responsibilities. Tom's introduction of his father in the first scene reveals much about the effect of his absence on the family. He says that: "there is a fifth character in the play that doesn't appear except in this larger-than-life-size photograph over the mantel" (2). The father relinquishment of his family acts upon the psychology of the characters. Amanda conveys a double feeling of love and hatred towards her husband. She was pleading him by saying "one thing your father had plenty of – was charm!" (14), as well as blaming him in some other passages while looking at his picture in the wall, "your father left as a painful reminder of him?" (12). As in *Maggie*, blood relation cannot be outdistanced in *GM*. Being a son of a drunkard man, Amanda was afraid that her son will follow the path of her alcoholic husband. "Promise, son, you'll – never be a drunkard!" says Amanda. As a matter of heredity "he has been drinking" (21) and he himself argues the fact that he resembles his deserted father "I'm like my father, The bastard son of bastard! See how he grins? And he's been absent going on sixteen years!" (68). Further, Tom's plan to desert his family reflects the hereditary effect of his father's mannerism. This passage below would enhance the viewpoint of carelessness and irresponsibility.

JIM: What?

TOM: I'm a member.

JIM [reading]: The Union of Merchant Seamen.

TOM: I paid my dues this month, instead of the light bill.

JIM: you will regret it when they turn the lights off.

TOM: I won't be here. (67)

From this pronouncement, we can easily distinguish the unconscious result of the father's departure upon the reasoning of Tom. The selfishness of the father is regarded as something that should be followed by the children. The young man finds no honorable idol to take as an example. Thus, Tom is preoccupied with the idea of desertion as an escape from family obligations.

Another important idea that is worth investigation is the influence of the physical appearances. In the play references to clothing are repeatedly foregrounded. "Tom enters dressed as a merchant sailor from alley" (1). This description has for purpose to show his social position which is that of poverty. In another description of Laura's fashion, Williams's writes: "she wears a dress of soft violet material for a kimono- her hair tied back from her forehead with a ribbon" (7). Besides, Amanda's appearances foreshadows her nostalgic, glorious past that she cannot exceed. She is described as follows:

She has on one of those cheap or imitation velvety-looking cloth coats with imitation fur collar. Her hat is five or six years old, one of those dreadful cloche hats that were worn in the late twenties and she is eloping an enormous

black patent-leather pocketbook with nickel clasps and initials. This is her full-dress outfit, the one she usually wears to the D.A.R. (7).

When Laura recalled her past memories to her mother, she referred to Emily Meisenbach, then she declares that “Emily was the best-dressed girl at Soldan” (14). Exterior features are the most critical balance to rich people in America. Amanda as a character in the play insisted on her children’s physical care in various positions.

AMANDA: Comb your hair! You look so pretty when your hair is combed!
[Tom slouches on sofa with evening paper. Enormous caption ‘Franco Triumphs’.] There is only one respect in which I would you to emulate your father.

TOM: what respect is that?

AMANDA: The care he always took of his appearance. He never allowed himself to look untidy. (36)

Relations are so superficial in the American society at a point that fashion and beauty is the primary distinctive features that categorize people’s position in society. Amanda’s relation with her husband is condemned by Tom as being “a tragic mistake” (46) for she was attracted by his charm and good manners. This fake love leads her to be an abandoned woman. She was left by her husband in the heart of hardship with two children to take care of. Later on, the wife admitted that man’s physical appearance is a trap. She says:

AMANDA: That innocent look of your father’s had everyone fooled! He smiled – the world was enchanted!

No girl can do worse than put herself at the mercy of a handsome!

I hope that Mr O'Connor is not too good-looking. (46)

To impress the gentleman caller, Amanda offers a new dress for Laura, which “is coloured and designed by memory. The arrangement OF LAURA’s hair is changed; it is softer and more becoming.” (52) The mother’s girlish look astonished the family members and the gentleman caller. She refreshes her old memories saying that “I wore it on Sundays for my gentlemen callers! I had it on the day I met your father I had malaria fever all the spring.” (55) In fact, Amanda burdens her children with her desires and wishes in life without taking into consideration their preferences and dreams. She wants to see herself through her daughter. Marriage for a crippled girl is seen as the only escape to save her from a miserable future. Using Greenblatt’s words, Laura is the “Falstaff” of Amanda, which means it is the desire of being that pushes the mother to externalize her desire through “others” which refers to Laura in the play.

The play is full of cultural dimensions that adhere strongly to the formation of the American identities. New historicism as a theory is concerned with both what is literary and non-literary. Thus, culture for the new historicists can manipulate humans’ traditions, fashion, and beliefs in a given society. It is an authoritative power and a critical paradigm in which human actions are evaluated. Marriage, for instance, is regarded as liberation for women from societal attacks. Laura, in the *GM* realizes her mother’s anxiety to be an unmarried woman when she utters “mother’s afraid I’m going to be an old maid” (6). Amanda’s obsession with this idea is a result of her husband’s desertion. She believes that the only escape for her daughter is to find a suitable man who is financially secured to take care of her. Her bad marital experience urges her to take further steps to protect Laura.

AMANDA: Tom, he – doesn’t drink?

TOM: Why do you ask me that?

AMANDA: Your father did!

TOM: Don't get started on that!

AMANDA: He does drink, then?

TOM: Not that I know of!

AMANDA: Make sure, be certain! The last thing I want for my daughter's a boy who drinks! (43-44)

Amanda's frustration by the behavior of Tom in the table in the first scene has a cultural dimension. As the Wingfield family before the Depression era was of a high status in society their behavior was fashioned by etiquette and elegance. Yet, their misfortune changed everything in their lives except for the mother who refused to admit her poverty. This rejection or denial of reality is articulated through her continuous nagging on Tom's mannerism while eating, for it does not fit a boy from a bourgeois family. The children could not adjust themselves with this elevated mannerism because they are no more belonging to high-class people. This scene will support the above mentioned clue:

AMANDA [To her son]: Honey, don't push with your fingers. If you have to push with something, the thing to push with is a crust of bread. And chew! chew! Animals have sections in their stomachs which enable them to digest food without mastication, but human beings are supposed to chew their food before they swallow it down. Eat food leisurely, son, and really enjoy it. A well-cooked meal has lots of delicate flavours that have to be held in the mouth for appreciation. So chew your food and give your salivary glands a chance to function!

[TOM deliberately lays his imaginary fork down and his chair back from the table.]

TOM: I haven't enjoyed one bite of this dinner because of your constant directions on how to eat it. It's you that makes me rush through meals with your hawk-like attention to every bite I take. Sickening – spoils my appetite – all this discussion of – animals' secretion – salivary glands – mastication! (2-3)

Tennessee Williams attempts to exhibit the American plights during the Great Depression period both psychologically, financially, and its effects on the American selves. This endeavor is reinforced by the application of the new historicist principle of Self-Fashioning which embodies the different sides of literary production as an investigation of the social milieu. It shows, in part, the historicity of texts regarding the present.

2.2 Religious discourse in *MGS* and *GM*

Society is always constructed and built upon various bases such as traditions, beliefs, and religion. This body of societal arrangements determines people's actions and behavior in a given community. In America, during the modern era, people lost their faith in the role of religion clergymen in the construction of a solid, fervent nation. Churches became under scrutiny and doubt, there was a great need to discover reality. Submission to church's instructions and orders in America was a tradition that should be blindly followed. The power of churches upon its subjects has no more that sense of divinity. The New Historicist literary theory deals with religion as an authoritative power which has the ability to shape peoples' attitudes and personalities. In *MGS* and *GM*, religious discourses are maintained as a mean to show hypocrisy of churches and the disorientation of the Christian faith in America during the time in which the novels were written.

The role of religion in *MGS* is to save souls to provide help for the poor, and to strengthen the relationship between sinners and God which is absent in *MGS*. Crane shows the cost of the blind pursuit of church orders. Churchmen's hypocrisy is perceived when Maggie became homeless walking hopelessly in the streets waiting for a help from benevolent and kind-hearted passengers. Unfortunately, she was surprised by the corruption and hypocrisy that afflicts the Christian religious establishment. This quotation is an illustration to the mentioned clue:

Suddenly she came upon a stout gentleman in a silk hat and a chaste black coat, whose decorous row of buttons reached from his chin to his knees. The girl had heard of the Grace of God and she decided to approach this man.

His beaming, chubby face was a picture of benevolence and kind-heartedness. His eyes shone good-will.

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? (59).

The above passage may appear to the contemporary reader as no more than a simple, ordinary, and innocent pronouncement. Yet, its power lies on its Christian echoes. The rejection of a weak, vulnerable soul to save one's respectability does not present a proper image of a sacred church and clergymen. The use of the word "benevolence" and "Grace of God" is for the purpose of mocking the hypocrisy of the stout gentlemen and religious practitioners in general. In fact, Crane was against the practices of the church despite his parental religious roots. He came against its principles since he strongly supported his sister's Agnes instance of anti-Christian orthodoxy. To reinforce the issue, Paul Sorrentino writes in *Stephen Crane A Life of Fire*: "for Crane, humanity was continually in conflict with a

merciless God, indifferent nature, and a bitter fate" (78). This quotation highlights the fragility of the Christian faith in America, thus, shows the consequences of this brittleness on lower-class citizens as it deviates from its sacred role which is grace, hope, and support to hypocrisy, selfishness, and self-interest.

New historicist tenet of religion is manipulated in *MGS*, as a mean of criticism, the novella applied various biblical images to blame and sharply criticize Christianity. The distorted profiles presented in *MGS* have a decisive impact on the process of personality development of the American nation as claimed by Greenblatt.

In one moment in the short story Jimmie feels hopeless. In a conversation with his companion, the latter says "if he should ever meet God he would ask for a million dollars and a bottle of beer" (14). This significant extract conveys a great meaning. Instead of asking for tolerance, salvation, mercy, and forgiveness, Jimmie's friend would ask for money and beer. It is an expression of the degree of contradiction and opposition between the American virtuous or religious principles and the real unethical practices of Christians. These display difficulties in maintaining close relations between God and poor people and churchmen with ordinary people lead to an interruption in the formation of complete identity. It is clear that these circumstances have a weighty effect on the cognitive psychology of the characters. This can be illustrated through Maggie's suicide as she does not find any support neither from society nor from family or religious people. The urchin realizes that she is not able to achieve success and happiness. Maggie's belief in appearances and popularity is proved to be false. Crane aims to awaken the consciousness of the population toward the bad mannerism of clergymen. He denotes the fact that churches are just giving orders and prescription on how an ideal Christian should behave and does not care about people's plights.

Religious references in *GM* are also meant to criticize and mock the practices of Christians in America. Despite its fewness, these references convey deep meaning that generate the dark side of the American spirituality. One may note that these judgments are not universal or applicable for all Christians of the world, but it is a partial reality or a personal view of the author. Greenblatt dealt with religion as a powerful aspect in which human behavior is based on.

In a conversation with her son, Amanda reacted angrily because of Tom's use of the expression "What in Christ's name am!" (16). In the first scene Amanda addresses Tom by saying: "We can't say Grace until you come to the table!" (2). This passage has not the real religious meaning that one may understand. Instead, it has an ironic dimension. Williams uses biblical intimations to show the frailty of Christianity to provide a spiritual support for the Americans in moments of hardship and misfortune. Another sarcastic passage that reveals the pretence behind using religion in the *GM* is the repetitive expression "Christian martyr" used by Amanda in her dialogue with her friend Ida Scott:

A M A N D A: Ida Scott? This is Amanda Wingfield! We missed you at the D.A.R. last Monday! I said to myself: She's probably suffering with that sinus condition! How is that sinus condition? Horrors! Heaven have mercy !- You're a Christian martyr, yes, that's what you are, a Christian martyr! (16)

In another conversation with Ella Cartwright, Amanda articulates:

AMANDA: Ella Cartwright? This is Amanda Wingfield! How are you, honey?
How is that Kidney condition?

[Count Five]

Horrors!

[Count Five.]

You're a Christian martyr, yes, honey, that's what you are, a Christian martyr!
(35).

The previous statements represent the distorted images of Christians who are superficially shown as fervent believers, yet profoundly demoralized. Tennessee aims to show Amanda's self-interest, selfishness, and egoism through her conversations. Her purpose is to guarantee the right flow of her business affairs by gathering subscribers to the Companion.

As we already noted, Christian hypocrisy is proffered through the character of Mrs. Wingfield. To enhance the above mentioned analysis, another passage can be scrutinized and in this respect Tom says:

TOM: Man is by instinct a lover, a hunter, a fighter, and none of those instincts are given much play by the warehouse!

AMANDA: Man is by instinct! Don't quote instinct to me! Instinct is something that people have got away from! It belongs to animals! Christian adults don't want it!

TOM: , What do Christian adults want, then, mother?

AMANDA: Superior things! Things of the mind and the spirit! Only animals have to satisfy instincts! Surely your aims are somewhat higher than theirs!
Than monkeys- pigs (31)

From this pronouncement, we can recognize the mother's self-esteem and corrupted reasoning. She perpetually appropriates her speeches with biblical clauses not because she is an eager Christian, but to promote her plans and protect her interests. In fact, her daily

comments on her children have only one reason which is to ensure her financial future and to overcome the nightmare of poverty. She does not care about her children's desires, preferences, and choices in life, she only thinks of herself. In the scene where the light goes out, Amanda makes a sardonic comment about Moses. She utters:

AMANDA: Where was Moses when the lights went out? Ha-ha. Do you know the answer to that one, Mr O'Connor?

JIM: No, Ma'am, what's the answer?

AMANDA: In the dark!

[JIM laughs appreciatively] (73-74)

Williams is aware of the religious crisis in America. Thus, he tries through this evidence to seize his contemporary society's troubles.

2.3. Anecdotes in *MGS* and *GM*

In its broader meaning, an anecdote is the recreation of the past in the present by means of historical references. It serves as an illustration for a given event. As we pointed in the second chapter, anecdotes are divided into two types: anecdotes about thinking and anecdotes about experiencing. They are generally short narratives that provide "the touch of the real" (Greenblatt 51). Writers use anecdotes to help enlighten and illuminate the readers about some historical incidents to reinforce their points of view regarding past events that are generally forgotten or marginalized episodes. In this respect, Crane and Williams used anecdotes to describe a moment of crisis and weakness in their lived experiences since anecdotes are the vehicle in which authors add credibility to their counterhistories. New historicism is engaged not only to mirror the past and shed light on specific events in history, but, it goes beyond into visualizing literature through anecdotes.

Crane's *MGS* contains significant anecdotes that open a large horizon in the American history. The anecdote refers to American aristocracy of the nineteenth century. In a statement describing the character of Jimmie in his adulthood, Crane utters "above all things he despised obvious Christians and ciphers with the chrysanthemums of aristocracy in their button-holes" (14). This quote reveals much about the socio-historical atmosphere of America. In his article, Hester Dorsey declared that "with the declaration of American equality the scramble for a dollar began, which resulted in the supremacy of the successful rich" (761). Jimmie's opposition and the sense of superiority against Christians and aristocrats can be interpreted as a feedback toward the American regime which favored the rich over the poor under the slogan of what is called "American equality".

Ironically, Crane used a reference to the Japanese tradition and culture by adopting the word chrysanthemums, in which "Chrys" means Gold in Greek. It is a flower owned only by aristocrats in Japan. According to Dorsey, "First families" are the ones holding opulence and authority (762). They gathered their fortunes by digging and searching for gold. This, in fact, brings us to the question of classes in America. Crane's experiment of the life of the bowery unveiled the injustices, and inequalities between the upper-class and the lower one. He constructed an idea that embodies the belief that despite Jimmie's poverty and miserable life, he does not feel afraid of religion and high-ranked aristocrats. He is rather genuine and has a typical identity, which opposes the fake aristocrats and clergymen that are condemned to be corrupted and whose identities are molded according to their self-interests. To sum up, the role of this anecdote is to shed light on the neglected and marginalized lower-class and to expose the indifferent atmosphere in which the American nation arose.

Crane's novella was the fruit of his individual experience in the slums of New York. He observed and witnessed the life circumstances of poor people in a non-merciful surrounding to produce his experimental narrative. Sorrentino declared that Crane "explored

New York's tenement districts for background material to use in writing *Maggie*" (88). The principle of new historicism about the relation between the text and history is confirmed in *MGS* by the nature of the novella's use of an Irish poor girl as the main character. The narrative is an anecdote about how Irish immigrants were treated in America during the nineteenth century. The story is a reflection of the plight of almost all Irish people.

Since new historicism prefigures the impact of history, biography, society, economy, and culture on the formation of literary texts, Williams's play *GM* is a summary of the author's personal life. Greenblatt and Gallagher proclaim in their book *Practicing New Historicism* that, "The new historicist anecdote was a conduit for carrying these counterhistorical insights and ambitions into the field of literary history" (54).

The biographical background of the play is not different from the historical one. Williams's family dysfunction inspired him in writing his work. The portrayal of his character Laura is the representation of his real sister Rose who suffered from mental troubles and turned to a fragile girl. The latter corresponds to Laura in terms of sensitivity and both are images of vulnerable, weak, and dependent female living in an ocean of despondency. The father Charles was a drunkard. He was always far from the house, the same characteristic of the absent father used in the *GM*. His mother Edwina is delineated through the mother Amanda since they both belong to sophisticated origins. Williams close relationship with his sister Rose especially in the period of his diphtheria diagnosis strengthened their company. Even after her death, he could not overcome the trauma of his sister's loss. In fact, this incident reminds us of Tom's pronouncement in the last scene after his desertion. He enunciates: "Then all at once my sister touches my shoulder. I turn around and look into her eyes...Oh, Laura, Laura, I tried to leave you behind me, but I am more faithful than I intended to be!" (116). The author's life struggles and his psychological disturbances are almost present in all his literary production. Simply, he was haunted by his past and his childhood

sufferings which led him to find an escape and a therapy in writing literature. In this concern, an anecdote used by Tennessee in the *GM* that has a historical significance lies on his reference to the famous writer D.H. Lawrence in this passage:

TOM: Yesterday you confiscated my books! You had the nerve to-

AMANDA: I took that horrible novel back to the library- yes! That hideous book by that insane Mr. Lawrence [Tom laughs wildly.] I cannot control the output of diseased minds or people who cater to them- [Tom laughs still more wildly.] BUT I WON'T ALLOW SUCH FILTH BROUGHT INTO MY HOUSE ! NO, no, no, no, no ! (17).

As we mentioned in the first chapter, Lawrence was the most inspirational figure in the life of Tennessee Williams. Both writers share the same visions of life and make parallels with their family troubles. His mother Edwina hangs a great hatred to D.H. Lawrence and prevented him several time to read his works just like the figure of Amanda did in the *GM*. Thus, for new historicists, a text cannot stand far from its surrounding which embodies the writers' experiences, social events, and cultural dogmas. This is why the use of anecdotes as counterhistories bears a weighty sense in shaping history. The power of anecdotes as said by Greenblatt and Gallagher is "pulled even the most canonical works off to the border of history and into the company of nearly forgotten and unfamiliar existences" (74). These anecdotes about experiencing serve as a tool to join the past with the future and add credibility to the narrative.

There are salient anecdotes that overlook the different historical events of the period. In the first scene the narrator Tom announces: "[In] Spain there was revolution. Here there was only shouting and confusion. In Spain there was Guernica. Here there were disturbances of labour, sometimes pretty violent, in otherwise peaceful cities such as Chicago, Cleveland,

Saint Louis. . . .” (2). It is an anecdote about thinking, the writer wants to direct the attention of the readers to the Spanish Civil War and the Guernica atrocities in contrast to the American social life of the period. This worldwide atmosphere is condemned to be a forerunning alert for the Second World War. Through his reference to this historical period, Williams gives an insight about the traumatic state of the Wingfield family particularly and all the Americans generally due the international instability. The previous declarations presented in the novel prove the effectiveness of new historicism as a theory that concerns texts and their contexts, with history not as a universal truth, but rather as a personal counterhistory.

2.4. Capitalist tenet in *MGS* and *GM*

Capitalist ideology was adopted by the Americans whose economy is initially based on free market and the private ownership of materials. In *MGS* and *GM*, references to capitalism are used as a critical stance to denounce its practices and cause its negative impact on the poor.

In *Maggie*, Crane hints his critical attitude towards the unfair share of capitalist commodities among the lower-class in several parts. The girl Maggie as crane utters to:

Got a position in an establishment where they made collars and cuffs. She received a stool and a machine in a room where sat twenty girls of various shades of yellow discontent. She perched on the stool and treadled at her machine all day, turning out collars, the name of whose brand could be noted for its irrelevancy to anything in connection with collars. At night she returned home to her mother (17).

The above mentioned quotation indicated how lower-class people are exploited by the capitalist community. Maggie works all the day, yet she cannot afford a better life conditions. Lower-class population were not given any opportunity to better their lives, this may be

interpreted according to Eamonn as follows: “since their homes and businesses have no legal standing, they cannot use them as collateral for loans and contracts, so can never grow their enterprises or achieve real financial security” (114).

Money and the capitalist regime of the nineteenth century challenged people’s beliefs and thoughts. Jimmie’s companion’s pronouncement: “if he should ever meet God he would ask for a million dollars and a bottle beer” (14) explains the effect of capitalism on the poor persons reducing them into slaves for the rich. Capitalism promotes the plights of the poor and empowers the upper-class people. In fact, this is what made the novel specific and dangerous in the same time. Crane attacks the prescriptions of the established church and rebels against cultural and social norms that were blindly deified. The woman in the saloon says:

Not a damn cent more of money will yehs ever get, not a damn cent.

I spent me money here fer t’ree years an’now yehs tells me yeh’ll

sell me no more stuff! T’hell wid yeh, Johnnie Murckre! ‘Disturbance’?

Disturbance be damned! T’hell wid yehs, Johnnie-- (29).

It seems that Crane is criticizing the capitalist private ownership. He shows how the rich are not controlled by the government. Business owners have a free-decision taking to do whatever they want, thus workers are not financially secured.

In writing the play, Williams’s objective is to produce a social drama confronting the problems of an ordinary man in a capitalistic social system. The post-Depression era is a fundamental phase which shaped the economic atmosphere of anarchic. It is the core theme of the play that depicts the problems of lower-middle-class. To show the awkwardness of capitalism in the American society, the narrator Tom declares while describing Jim:

He was shooting with such velocity through his adolescence that would logically expect him to arrive at nothing short of the White House by the time he was thirty. But Jim apparently ran into more interference after his graduation from Soldan. His speed had definitely slowed. Six years after he left high school he was holding a job that wasn't much better than mine. (51)

Despite his education and intellectual level, Jim possesses a worthless occupation that does not correspond with his potential abilities. As a result of the capitalist ideology, wealth and fortune are only for the benefit the successful business men. The poor are left marginalized and enslaved. Amanda's declaration, "Well, in the South we had so many servants. Gone, gone, gone. All vestige of gracious living! Gone completely! I wasn't prepared for what the future brought me" (70), would classify the Great Depression's events as being a factor of economic collapse and plight for indigent people and as an empowerment for the rich. Prosperity is not brought to everyone in America and the lower class people found themselves unable to realize their dreams in America. Tom works in the warehouse, in a dispute with his mother. He angrily proclaims:

That God damn 'Rise and Shine!'- I say to myself, 'how lucky dead people are!' But I get up. I go! For sixty-five dollars a month I give up all that I dream of doing and being ever! And you say self- selfs' all I ever think of. Why, listen, if self is what I thought of, Mother, I'd be where he is -G O N E !
[Pointing to fathers picture] (20).

The financial difficulties for the low-paid people lead to psychological troubles such as mental troubles and shocks. Thus, it initiates a new trend of reasoning as Tom's choice to desert as his father's did. People are incapable to adapt with the new societal atmosphere of America. Tom announces that:

TOM: Look ! –I’ve got no thing, no single thing !

AMANDA: Lower your voice!

TOM: In my life here that I can call my OWN! Everything is-

AMANDA: Stop that shouting (17).

It seems that Williams is criticizing the capitalist system that is characterized by the private ownership and free market of tools of production. The new historicist clue that economy is a critical element in shaping and fashioning people’s lives is perfectly applicable in Tennessee’s *GM*.

Conclusion

After summarizing the two selected works *MGS* and *GM*. We have tried to analyze them in the light of the New Historicist tenets for the sake of highlighting the influence of the authors’ biographical elements, socio-cultural context and economic events in interfering with the process of their literary productions. We started with the self-fashioning tenet which focused on how major powerful powers adhere in shaping American’s identity. Then, we discussed religion as a fragile establishment and as being a source of hypocrisy that destroyed American selves and nourished their identities with egoism and selfishness. Under the principles of Greenblatt’s New Historicism, we referred to some anecdotal references in the novel and the play to unveil certain bordered occurrences. Finally, we attempted to make a link between the economic atmosphere of the period and the plot of the works under study.

General Conclusion

General Conclusion

The present research attempts to study Crane's *MGS* and Williams's *GM* according to some new historicist tenets as proposed by Stephen Greenblatt. The first chapter foregrounds the biographical sketches of the two writers. Besides, we inserted the historical-literary background of the periods in which both works were written. The literary influences that helped to pave the way to their literary innovations, styles, and techniques are, also, discussed. Crane's and Williams's depiction of Americans' lives during two sensitive periods in the history of America agree with the New Historicist principle that any given text exists within the frame of its context.

The period of modernism is the initial subject matter of the second chapter. We clarified the different literary circumstances that led to the appearance of New Historicism. Moreover, we have tried to provide a short overview of the New Historicist theory and some of its critical tenets which are, anecdotes, self-fashioning, religion and capitalism. Besides, as the research is dealing with a novel and a play, we tackled the application of the notion of experimentation in novels and plays respectively.

The third chapter begins with the summary of the selected literary works. In fact, this chapter is dedicated to the application of the New Historicist notions. Thus, self-fashioning is introduced through the characters of Jimmie, Maggie, Amanda, Laura, and Tom. It communicates the lives of the Americans in the Gilded Age and the Post-Depression eras. Through the self-fashioning tenet, which is the prevailing subject in our analysis, we attempted to highlight the role of society, family, and culture in generating, poverty, inferiority, and crisis in the process of personality formation, as almost all the characters are living a double identity. Religion in Crane's and Williams's compositions is shown as deviating from its spiritual framework. Through The Stout gentleman in *MGS* and Amanda in

GM, it is proved that Christianity with its established churches adhered in promoting corruption and hypocrisy. Furthermore, anecdotes are used as a tool to shift from the past into the present. We have revealed how anecdotes participate in reviving farther events by shedding light on some neglected and marginalized histories. The last point to be discussed is capitalism. Based on the Greenblattian view concerning the power of economic ideologies in designing people's lives, we discussed how capitalism subverts Americans financially and maintains their plights.

After analyzing *MGS* and *GM* in relation to the some new historicist principles which appear in these selected works, we can conclude some of the outcomes of our study. Self-fashioning tenet is the power to control or fashion one's life and thoughts through authoritative powers. The strength of this tenet is on the characters' mannerism and identity building. In the selected works, this can be clearly noticed in Maggie's, Jimmie's, Laura's, Tom's, Mary's and Amanda's personalities which are instable and affected in various external powers. Then, religion is deviated from its sacred role to a more corrupted atmosphere. Clergymen acts does not offer a moral help for the characters, instead, it spreads negative attitudes which leads a devastating consequences on peoples' lives. Meanwhile, anecdotes role for new historicists is unquestionable, for, it adheres in making the story as close as possible to reality. In *MGS* and *GM*, this tenet is achieved by using some historical and biographical events that marked the periods in which the works were produced. These two works unveil the importance of writers' biographies and historical circumstances in the understanding of literary works. Their continuous life struggles fueled and inspired them to write novels and plays where they externalized some private, yet sensitive memories of their childhood. Capitalism as a new historicist tenet shows the ravaging results of this ideology on the poor in losing hope either in finding jobs, future opportunities and even to live secured in a community that does not care for capacities as in the case of Maggie in *MGS* or Jim in *GM*.

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