NATURALISTIC ELEMENTS IN HAMLIN GARLAND'S

MAIN-TRAVELLED ROADS

A thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in English

by

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May, 1975
The thesis of Mary Magdalena Chavarria is approved:

California State University, Northridge
May, 1975
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ABSTRACT

NATURALISTIC ELEMENTS IN HAMLIN GARLAND'S
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In 1891, Hamlin Garland, a student of literature from South Dakota, published a volume of short stories entitled Main-Travelled Roads. The stories depict the people and way of life on the frontier that Garland came to know well, being himself a member of a pioneer family. With these stories, Garland intended to present a true and complete picture of life on the frontier. Garland had become disillusioned with the romantic and sentimental notions that totally dominated frontier literature, as they came to dominate all of popular American fiction by the 1880s. But in the early 1800s, a literary realism began to gain a foothold in American fiction as literature began to reflect the changes in America's economic and social structures that developed after the Civil War, and to feel the wave
of scientific and literary theories from abroad. Among serious writers, William Dean Howells assumed a commanding position in the struggle for the acceptance of literary realism. The development of realistic frontier literature contributed a solid foundation for the emergence of a literary realism. The works of Edward Eggleston, Edgar Watson Howe, and Joseph Kirkland best represented Mid-West realistic writing.

Before Garland published Main-Travelled Roads, Joseph Kirkland's Zury (1887) was the leading example of realistic Mid-West literature. Although Garland had praised Zury for being "the best picture of pioneer Illinois life yet written," he still felt it necessary to go beyond Kirkland's realistic account of frontier life. While studying for a career as a teacher of literature, Garland formulated a critical system based on an evolutionary theory of literary values. With this critical system, Garland found Howells to be the one significant evolutionary writer of the time. Howells' works dealt with contemporary social life and the average rather than the exceptional--the characteristics of an evolutionary literature Garland had identified. Garland wished to become the next significant evolutionary writer after Howells. He developed for himself a completely new alternative to realism that he called veritism. Veritistic writing combined the writer's sincere and powerful emotional response to the life around him and
impressionistic technique used to convey that response to others. Thus by writing veritistic art Garland perceived himself becoming the next evolutionary writer of significance while presenting a more faithful account of life on the Mid-West prairie than Kirkland had done.

The thesis argues that as Garland's deeply felt emotions concerning the prairie and its people gain substance in Main-Travelled Roads, the stories take on a naturalistic perspective of the frontier. Through a comparison between Kirkland's treatment of the frontier in Zury and Garland's treatment in Main-Travelled Roads one can see that a movement from realism to naturalism did, indeed, evolve.
Chapter I

EMERGING LITERARY MODES

In early July, 1887, after a four year retreat in Boston, Hamlin Garland returned to his native Middle Border with the intention of gathering material he would later use in fiction. His desire to refamiliarize himself with the people and places he already knew well stemmed from a literary theory he had formulated while in Boston, which, as a synthesis of the literary and scientific theories prevalent in America during the 1880s, stressed that literature convey an accurate picture of the particular conditions and way of life the writer knows best. In addition, Garland's view of literary techniques and purposes was strongly influenced by his need to refute the romantic and sentimental notions about the Middle West that had thoroughly dominated frontier literature. Garland was especially angered by the rampant idealization of the West because his family, having been lured West by the accounts of instant prosperity and security, had become disillusioned by the realities of pioneer life. Encouraged by Joseph Kirkland to write fiction, and by William Dean Howells to write from experience and personal knowledge, Garland published Main-Travelled Roads in 1891, a collection of stories
truthfully portraying the people and conditions of the prairie.  

Although such respected and influential writers as Kirkland and Howells praised Garland's achievement in Main-Travelled Roads, the harsh view and grim tone of the stories, plus the unmistakable veracity in description and detail, represented a deliberate affront to the literary sensibilities of the day. By the 1880s, sentimentalism had established itself as the major thrust behind popular literature. Realism, as a literary mode, was a reaction against the false ideals and values depicted in popular fiction, and was embraced by a few serious writers who perceived literature's potential as more than just providing a means of escape from the problems of daily life. Still, realism, as defined by the realists themselves, did not sufficiently meet the needs Garland felt must be fulfilled by good literature. Realism, especially Mid-West realism, failed to depict actual human pain and suffering; these areas of experience were glossed over, if mentioned at all, and Garland needed to emphasize just these elements if a true picture of the West was to be presented. Thus Garland's development of an alternative philosophical basis and narrative technique indicate a movement away from the realistic writers of the Middle West and the realism that had originated with Howells in the East.
Before Garland published *Main-Travelled Roads*, Joseph Kirkland's novels, *Zury: the Meanest Man in Spring County* (1887) and its sequel *The McVey's* (1888), were the leading examples of realistic Mid-West literature. The conditions Kirkland depicted in his novels, however, did not correspond to Garland's knowledge of life in the West, and he felt it essential to delineate frontier life more faithfully than even Kirkland had done. In *Main-Travelled Roads* Garland carried the tenets of realism beyond Kirkland; and the elements that Garland used in this effort signal, in the opinion of most critics, the change in the development of serious Mid-West literature from realism to naturalism. Indeed, a comparison between Kirkland's *Zury* and Garland's *Main-Travelled Roads* based on distinctions in literary theory and narrative technique will, as we shall see, certainly demonstrate an evolution in literary modes from realism to naturalism.

Literary realism, as exemplified by Howells and later by Kirkland, developed in the last part of the 19th century. Before the Civil War, the prevalent view of literature was that it should concern itself exclusively with the ideal, that its sole function was to present ideal types. But after the War, America began to change from an agrarian based society to an urban, industrialized nation. Serious literature began to reflect these vast changes in America's economic and social structure and to feel the
wave of scientific and literary theories from abroad. Thus as the American social structure grew in complexity and an unscrupulous business ethic began to supplant a previously upheld Christian ethic, a new literary theory emerged to explain the relationship between man and his environment.

In Europe, particularly in France, during the early 1800s developments in science and literature started to blunt the thrust of Romanticism. Emphasis shifted from penetrating reality in an effort to explore its mysteries and thus understand its meaning and worth, to studying objective reality for its own sake. Literature reflected this new interest in physical phenomena so that, influenced by ideas set forth by the Age of Reason that humanity be the primary concern of man, "all of humanity's activities became fit subjects for literature." As literary modes, realism and naturalism developed in France beginning with Balzac in the 1830s and culminating with Zola in the 1870s. Although Balzac's works appeared earlier, the French literati did not consider him the leader of the realistic movement until the late 1850s, a few years after his death. Realism as an aesthetic mode gained recognition first through art, and secondly through literature. Its origins are traced to Courbet, whose exhibition of paintings depicting humble life gained prominence in 1855. The term "realism" finally won acceptance in 1857—the year of Madame Bovary—when critics Duranty and Champfleury
published articles discussing and clearly defining the new mode. French realism, the realism of Balzac and Flaubert, can be defined as "the art of representing actuality, viewed largely from the material standpoint, in a way to produce as closely as possible the impression of truth."  

Balzac's position as the father of literary realism stems from his introduction of the new mode through which he elevated the ordinary, everyday occurrences of life to a new level, and also raised the novel to a higher level of importance. With his emphasis upon members of society and their daily lives, the "true literary function of the novel" became "the abridged representation of ordinary life"--an achievement his predecessors had failed to gain. Balzac's objectivity and attention to detail in the treatment of his material lend historical and documentary significance to his works. His works are also credited with having generated a "lasting psychological value" through his method of description that is a "fusion between idea and reality." His characters develop out of the essence and limits of their surroundings, yet they become individuals by rising above those surroundings. 

Flaubert, like Balzac, maintained the objectivity of the realist, but he fused realistic style with a personal view of human experience. For him the real was a "world in which human feelings and ideas are not of any
real significance." 14 As Anthony Thorlby has observed, in Madame Bovary

his stylistic detachment subtly undermines the significance of personal experience and destroys the illusions of love, adventure, heroism—in fact, of the "reality of poetry in life." Flaubert's style may be objective, but it shows that the objective world has really nothing to say for itself. 15

His achievement as a realist comes from joining content and form in such a manner that his personal view of experience, as perceived through the objective style of the realist, is accepted as objective truth. 16 Whereas the realists followed Balzac, the naturalists "paid homage" 17 to Flaubert whose stark, amoral vision of human experience anticipated the deterministic view of society that grew out of Zola's clinical studies of Parisian life.

Zola's naturalism combined the positivism of Auguste Comte with the principles of Darwinian evolution. 18 Positivism involved both a means of discerning truth and an explanation of the sources of the changes in society that led to a new way of evaluating social institutions. As a scientific method, positivism stressed accuracy and objectivity, and affirmed that the only significant reality is the content of experience. It outlined the function of science as the observation of facts and the formulation of laws that will explain those facts. Applying positivism to society, Comte was able to formulate a theory of the evolution of human institutions. The human intellect, he believed, develops according to "a fundamental Law to
which its progress is necessarily and invariably subjected."
The basis of the Law is that the "intellectual system of man . . . passes through three successive phases, the Theological, the Metaphysical, and the Positive or scientific." Individual effort was no longer the basis for the growth of the mind, but natural law. With both man's intellect and his society reduced to phenomena, Comte proposed a new science for their study--sociology. Through sociology, Comte traced the development of thought by a theory of movement toward perfectibility. In America toward the last part of the 19th century, the idea of social progress gained added significance as the new industrial boom signaled a renewed prosperity and an obvious movement toward a better way of life.

Comte's ideas were later applied to literature by his disciple Hippolyte Taine, who used them to explain the relationship between a literature and the particular society that produces it. A society's "moral disposition," as a physical phenomenon, is the ultimate cause or force behind the cultural phenomena produced by that society. Should the initial cause change or vanish altogether, the cultural aesthetics would, of course, mirror the change. Hence, literature evolves and changes in direct relationship to the changes in the social milieu.

Taine taught Zola, and later taught Garland much the same, that above all the novelist must have a
philosophical position on which to base and frame his work. Essentially, the novelist must first understand the character of his own society and formulate the basis upon which he, his art, and that society justify one another. Through Dr. Prosper Lucas, a follower of Darwin, Zola discovered the impact of heredity and environment on the individual, and, together with the scientific method exemplified by Dr. Claude-Bernard, he set forth his philosophy of naturalism in *The Experimental Novel*.

In *The Experimental Novel* Zola adhered completely to his theory that the experimental scientist and the naturalistic novelist perform the same function using similar techniques. Zola defined the novel as "a real experiment that a novelist makes on man by the help of observation." The experiment the novelist performs is an investigation of the effects of heredity and environment on the individual. Like the scientist who sets up the conditions for his experiment, the novelist also sets up certain conditions in the novel and observes how heredity and environment determine a character's reaction to those conditions. Imagination no longer maintains a significant role in the novel, as all factors are determined solely by the demands of the experiment. Descriptive writing, in such a system, serves only to set up the experiment, to "account for the environment which determines and completes man." The design of the experiment determines the events of the novel. The novelist
no longer manipulates the events, artificially conforming them to his wishes, but allows them to proceed strictly out of the conditions he has established. This is the principle of determinism as defined by Claude Bernard. Zola, using Bernard's definition, distinguished between determinism and fatalism. "Fatalism assumes that the appearance of any phenomena is necessary apart from its conditions, while determinism is just the condition essential for the appearance of any phenomena, and such appearance is never forced." 23

But Zola was also in principle a moralist, 24 and the ultimate purpose of the naturalistic novel was to outline the possibilities for social reform. In tracing the inevitable effects of heredity and environment upon members of a family in the Rougon-Macquart novels, Zola still charged man with some ethical responsibility for social phenomena. He equated social maladies with biological diseases, and equated the scientist's fight to prevent these diseases with the novelist's desire to eliminate the cause of social disorders. As the scientist provides the means for combating disease, so, too, the experimental novelist can determine the most favorable social means to combat social disorder. Zola called himself and other naturalistic writers "experimental moralists" whose goal is searching out the determinism of social phenomena, and leaving to legislators and to men of affairs the care of controlling sooner or later these
phenomena in such a way as to develop the good and reject the bad, from the point of view of their utility to man. 25

Thus Zola's naturalistic novel is a social novel that uses scientific method and scientific theory to demonstrate the need and feasibility of social reform within the deterministic framework of heredity and environment. The duality of Zola's naturalism that envisions man as a helpless creature trapped by heredity and bound by amoral instincts but that also imparts to him the ability to consciously manipulate his environment gave rise to the double vision of naturalism in later American fiction. 26

By 1893 a few American writers had begun to adopt some of Zola's narrative theories (an English version of The Experimental Novel had been published in America in 1893). They found Zola's theories especially adequate in dealing with the question of man's behavior and his inherent ability to control his own fate within the social realities emerging in an industrialized nation. The philosophy of determinism and positivism remained the same, 27 but the focus had shifted to depicting man as a biological phenomenon within an indifferent universe with his actions determined solely by instinct. Novels such as Crane's Maggie, a Girl of the Streets (1893) and The Red Badge of Courage (1895), Norris' McTeague (1899) and The Octopus (1901), and Dreiser's Sister Carrie (1900) depict individuals controlled by natural, sociological, and economic
forces. Society, as explained by evolutionary theory, was spiritually void, and any effort to withstand its deterministic forces defied moral judgment. American literary naturalism, differing technically from French naturalism,\textsuperscript{28} is an artistic response to a view of individual existence that denies any spirituality or any other essence but physical reality, placing the emphasis on man's primitive instincts as the true basis for all motivation. This pessimistic view, supported by evolutionary theory and the distinctly changing way of life American society was experiencing, perceived the individual relying on his own animalistic strength to survive the natural and social forces that preyed upon him.

Yet within the very scheme of an individual arbitrarily denied free will, there emerges a positive, alternative view that if he could only perceive the true nature of his circumstances and understand the deterministic relationship between himself and his environment, he would be able to counteract the forces around him. This new outlook does not imply control by the individual, but survival by other means. Unlike Zola, whose moral purpose was clearly evident in his novels and critical theory, the American naturalists do not hint at any moral stance. Instead, their novels achieve a moral perspective through the ambivalence that emerges in the novels' depiction of social truth between pessimistic and optimistic views of human nature.
Garland, an early naturalistic writer, did not fully understand the value of Zola's theories in terms of his own work. Garland's work found impetus by opposing the current wave of romantic fiction, and by extending the realism of William Dean Howells and Joseph Kirkland to a harsher realism or "experimental naturalism" that could adequately delineate the themes Garland had in mind.

Howells' earlier campaign for a realistic literature also stemmed from a dissatisfaction with sentimental fiction "which was not teaching men the truth," and, more importantly perhaps, contributed to the re-evaluation of the novel as a literary form. Popular American fiction continued to be a literature of escapism, whose sole value lay in providing entertainment through the "techniques of sentimentalism" that demanded a gross stereotyping of character and a striving for effect. Howells attempted to raise literature to a higher level of significance, and the development of both a literary realism and naturalism helped to bring about a more serious view of the novel. In his criticism Howells set forth the relationship between a realistic fiction and a scientific, industrialized America, and his arguments for realism measurably reflect the major social, scientific, and literary ideas prevalent at the time.

Between 1885 and 1891 Howells used "The Editor's Study" of Harper's Monthly as a platform to voice his
opinions on the literary scene and to plead for realism in American fiction. His concern for a viable literature that could faithfully portray the essence of American life attracted other conscientious writers who followed his lead, and whose works he praised in his essays. He was also mainly responsible for introducing such European realists as Flaubert (whose Madame Bovary was published in an American edition in 1881), Valdes, Turgenev, and Ibsen to the American reading public while at the same time praising the value of their works.

The writings of other European thinkers, philosophers, and scientists were readily available and quite well-known at the height of Howells' influence. Twenty years after Darwin's theory was published in 1859, the American periodicals of the day continued to explain the implications of his theory to their audience. Spencer's theory of cosmic evolution was in the bookshelves of public libraries by 1884. In 1870 Edward Eggleston, a local color realist, reviewed Taine's Philosophy of Art in the Netherlands, and by 1872 Howells had reviewed Taine's principle work, History of English Literature.

In his influential and far-reaching efforts to gain a foothold for realism in American fiction, Howells outlined literature's role and concern in an age of science. Like other realists, he found Taine's philosophy most sympathetic to his literary goals, and it is not surprising
that soon after writing his review, Howells embraced Taine's philosophy completely. A work of literature, defined as "a transcript of contemporary manners," must "represent a mode of being of a whole nation and a whole age." With this as a central idea, Howells stressed realism as being "especially suited to picturing the American habit, character, and mores." Literature functions as the "principal method by which society and men are observed, analyzed, and classified." Such a scientific method emphasized accuracy of observation; and Howells found this accuracy, through which people and their actions are truthfully portrayed, most valuable, because "out of these truthful impressions would flow a general significance." Howells found the serious, realistic novel rather than the artificially created world of the romance as "the mode best suited to an age of empiricism and science." The novel would no longer adapt itself to the conventions of sentimentalism but become a source of truth through which men may know themselves and one another better. The responsibility of the writer, Howells stated in 1887, is to make men "know one another better, that they may be all humbled and strengthened by a sense of their fraternity." Howells also outlined the relationship between the realistic writer and his material. He further advised the writer that once he has chosen the novel as his mode of
writing, he is "dedicated to re-creation of life by selec-
tion and arrangement from the materials he knows." Howells, above all, wanted truth in fiction. He defined realism as "nothing more and nothing less than the truthful treatment of material." With the novelist being true first to himself and secondly to his "knowledge of things," the novel would achieve a new significance as a source of truth in human relations. The realistic novel would also gain an aesthetic dimension as an equal source of beauty in that Howells equated truth with beauty. He was not concerned so much with a photographic representation of life as with an aesthetic response to life. Howells wanted art, and his definition of realism describes the method by which the novelist achieves art. In this way, he thought, writers would capture in literature the true quality, moral reality, and beauty of American life—the "mode of being of a whole nation."

But in 1886-1887 Howells began to significantly alter his theory of realistic literature in that he clearly moved away from aesthetic concerns to moral ones. Howells is often accused of qualifying the content of realistic literature by his own experience and knowledge of American life as a member of the prosperous middle class. The infamous passage from Criticism and Fiction in which Howells appears to be calling for only the "smiling aspects of life" in realistic fiction is almost always used to
criticize Howells for not perceiving the implications of realism that the more horrible aspects of life must be at least equally presented with the beautiful. But in his statement Howells clearly laments tragedy's fate in American literature. Howells was fully aware that owing to the singular nature of the American national character, social or personal tragedy was inconceivable. Therefore, the depiction of tragedy in literature in any form, either as suffering, injustice, or poverty, would be denounced. American writers are thus forced to portray only the smiling aspects. Howells, too, found himself in this position until the injustices of the Haymarket Affair gave him the opportunity to depict the tragic side of American life in A Hazard of New Fortunes (1891). Howells' realism now became critical realism, and truthful portrayal of society came to mean depicting the injustices of society. In fiction, critical realism would serve to direct attention to these injustices so that they could be recognized and eliminated. With this new critical perspective, Howells later praised the local color realists in their efforts to delineate the unsavory conditions on the frontier.

Influential as Howells' efforts were to establish a realistic trend in American fiction, the development of literary realism is also said to owe "a good deal to the literature of local color." Local color represents the "agrarian wing" of realism, and like realism broke away
from convention and emerged as a serious mode of literature, evolving from the early sentimental tales of Bret Harte. Local color developed into a hardy Mid-West realism in the late 19th century as young writers "found less and less reason to idealize" rural America. The best representative writers of realistic local color are Edward Eggleston, Edgar Watson Howe, and Joseph Kirkland, all of whom Garland acknowledged as conscious theorists of the literary movement. The significant change from the sentimentalism of early local color to the later realism of Eggleston and Howe is the use of regional background "as an actor and force within the drama of everyday life."

This all-important evolution in the treatment of background in serious regional literature reflects again the influence of Hippolyte Taine. Edward Eggleston, whose novel The Hoosier Schoolmaster (1871) is the earliest example of frontier realism, recognized and embraced Taine's philosophy of literature two years before Howells did. Like other writers who read Taine, Eggleston also formulated a philosophical position on which to base his work. Eggleston responded to Taine's definition of a great artist, better yet a conscientious artist, as one who expresses "one's own times, and the attitudes of one's own people." Eggleston's landmark works--his second novel, The Circuit Rider, appeared in 1874--attempted to portray the character
of his native Indiana and, at the same time, opened up the literary significance of the frontier.\textsuperscript{57}

Though Eggleston's works occasionally lapse into sentimentalism, his novels, nevertheless, are said to demonstrate a "concern with the exact texture of the life he is describing."\textsuperscript{58} The influence of Taine's philosophy is evidenced in the development of character in \textit{The Hoosier Schoolmaster}. Eggleston completes and explains his characters by their environment that makes them "dull, crude, and uncouth."\textsuperscript{59} Thus Eggleston gained recognition as an early developer "of a native school of realism"\textsuperscript{60} by perceiving the function of literature as serving "humanity by writing its truthful personal history," and attributing to good fiction the service of undoing the "harm wrought by the sentimental lie."\textsuperscript{61}

Ed Howe's \textit{The Story of a Country Town} (1883) represents, in part, the "regionalism of disillusion"\textsuperscript{62} that was brought on by a disenchanted, bitter view of western life. \textit{The Story of a Country Town} is a piercing story detailing "a grim picture of Midwestern life with its smugness, narrowness, and spiritual poverty."\textsuperscript{63} In this, Howe's novel foreshadowed Garland's subsequent treatment of these same themes in the next decade, and also contributed to the critical acceptance of Kirkland's social realism and Garland's naturalism.\textsuperscript{64}
Howells' review of The Story of a Country Town appeared shortly after its publication and illustrated the vital transition in Howells' critical values mentioned earlier. Although Howe's novel is far from being technically praiseworthy, Howells found this fact insignificant compared to the intrinsic worth of the novel's depiction of truth. Quite simply, Howells' aesthetic stance, in terms of The Story, reflected his new concern for ethical and humanitarian values--truth to real life became more important than technical skill. For this reason, he praised the works of Kirkland and Garland in later reviews, demonstrating a greater concern for honesty and accuracy than for literary finesse.

Both Kirkland and Garland, chronologically the next Mid-West realists of importance, followed the realistic trend of Eggleston and Howe. But in their literary theories, to be discussed next, Kirkland and Garland deviated significantly from the earlier realists. Kirkland, surprisingly, wanted to limit the writer's range in his depiction of truth, and used his novels to illustrate moral values. Garland, on the other hand, showed a more "scientific" interest in literature. He used the local color movement and his own works as proof of the evolutionary development of literature.
Chapter II

KIRKLAND, GARLAND AND LITERARY THEORY

Among serious writers, Howells assumed a commanding position in the struggle for the acceptance of a literary realism that was strongly influenced by the local color realists. The frontier realists, whose literature, above others, best exemplified the qualities Howells most admired, seemed to contribute a solid foundation for realism's newfound significance. While Garland found their success and the favorable reviews they received from Howells encouraging, he was still unsatisfied and sought to call attention to the plight of the farmers by using different literary techniques. Garland based his critical system on an evolutionary theory of literary values and on impressionistic technique. In a sense, Garland felt that previous writers, especially Joseph Kirkland, presented an incomplete picture of the West in their works—they were true, yes, but not true enough—and the theory and technique Garland devised would make his attempt more successful. For the most part, Garland rejected the self-imposed restrictions that Kirkland advocated, and devised for himself a completely new alternative to realism that he called veritism.

Kirkland's own literary theory, though simplistic, reaffirmed the value of realistic literature within a
profound understanding of the progressive society. He formulated his theory along lines similar to those of Howells and serious local color writers, but his conclusions as to method varied considerably. Yet, realism became for him the means through which literature would function as studies of social character yet having the appearance of art.

As with most of the serious writers of the '80s, Kirkland based his literary theory upon the philosophy of Hippolyte Taine. Following the ideas set down by Taine, Kirkland wrote about what he found in his own immediate surroundings. Thus in his work he created a sense of belonging to his own times and to a native way of life. His desire to capture in fiction the very essence of frontier life formed the heart of his so-called mature, healthy literature. Writing to Garland in 1887, Kirkland expressed his strong convictions about the nature and role of fiction in his own time. Fiction, he said, is a social study, but the study must be concealed in art; it must appear as art though function as a study. To achieve this, Kirkland advised Garland to "eliminate self" in his work, and make the "characters seem to act and talk with perfect spontaneity." Kirkland perceived this "art" of concealing oneself in art as the "one indispensable thing in realism."  

In 1893 Kirkland published an article setting forth completely his literary aesthetic. The basis of his
critical theory is contained in his introductory statement: "Let only truth be told, and not all the truth. These ten words seem to me the true creed-and-ten-commandments for modern prose fiction." Kirkland's statement calling for less than all the truth is, at first, surprising and apparently inconsistent since in his works Kirkland strove to achieve authenticity. But the apparent inconsistency stems less from the substance of his theory than the bluntness of his statement. In developing his ideas, Kirkland showed a marked concern for realism's success as an effective technique for revealing the truth, and he seemed to measure that success by the reader's acceptance of realistic writing. Although Kirkland went to a great length not to offend the sensibilities of his reader, the concessions he made to his audience did not undermine his support for realism. Kirkland perceived the realistic movement in literature as indicative of "moral progress" as mankind's preoccupation moved from foolishness to wisdom, from cloudland to solid ground,--at the same time that it has come step by step from darkness to light, from slavery to freedom, from penury to plenty, from cruelty to kindness; in short, from lower to higher.

Earlier works of fancy were now being replaced by realistic works, that began to destroy the artificial world of the romance and to direct men to the truth.

Within Kirkland's scheme, the role of the realistic writer gained special significance. Kirkland stated that
realistic writing, in the hands of a conscientious writer, becomes a major source of truth, and that, in fact, truth can only be acknowledged and accepted through the work of genius. Kirkland justified the need for the realistic writer in these terms:

Those others [who oppose realism] cry out that what we [the realists] are driving at is mere naked, crude materialism. Nonsense again! for the strong truth itself is not digestible until it has passed through the alembic of genius.74

But Kirkland also cautioned the writer that he must establish strict limits for himself as to the truth he chooses to reveal in his work. The writer must be aware that he has the responsibility of directing attention to the truth by using his art in such a way that his audience, it seems, would unconsciously digest it. He must realize that he is obligated to sustain the illusion that his art is a social study and thus do nothing to upset the reader's experience:

Not all the truth should be told. Much that is true is not worth telling; more is not proper to be told. Who shall draw the line? Each for himself and at his own peril. The nearer he comes to the limits, the nearer he comes to success; the moment he over steps them he is lost.75

He admired Daudet and Maupassant for the success they achieve: "Daudet seems infallible, Maupassant inimitable." But "Flaubert is blind to the line of propriety" and "Zola is a great and glowing failure." Tolstoy also fails in his work, but Hardy, whose craft Kirkland wished to emulate,76 and Howells wrote the kind of literature all people could enjoy.77
By the time Kirkland had stated his literary aesthetic, his method had already proved successful in his novels. Howells praised Zury for the strength of its characterization: "We cannot say that any of the people in his fresh and native story are weakly conceived; on the contrary, they all have the air of life, and they are racy of their time and place." Garland, too, valued Zury "as the best picture of pioneer Illinois life yet written"; but his criticism was based on an evolutionary theory of literature that perceived local color writing as the next stage in the progression of American literature.

While corresponding with Kirkland in 1887, Garland had already begun formulating his literary system based on the laws of evolution. Garland's thinking was greatly influenced by evolutionary theory and its application to literature as demonstrated in the writings of Taine, Herbert Spencer, and H. M. Posnett. The works of these three, Taine's History, Spencer's First Principles, and Posnett's Comparative Literature, formed the nucleus of Garland's system. Garland's attempt to include their ideas in one critical system reflected a determined effort in interpreting their ideas and using them to explain the value and significance of the new realism in American fiction. The main purpose of his critical system was to explain the development of literature in terms of the progressive stages in the development of the nation.
In preparing himself for a career as a teacher of literature, Garland began gathering material in the Boston Public Library. There, he set to work "determined to go to the bottom of the laws which govern literary development," to base himself "profoundly in the principles which govern a nation's self-expression." Following his personal inclinations, Garland came upon the prominent evolutionary writers, especially Herbert Spencer. In Herbert Spencer, Garland discovered a system of evolution that could account for the development of literature. Spencer defined evolution as "the integration of matter and concomitant dissipation of motion." He characterized the evolutionary process as a "progressive differentiation," that is "a change from an incoherent homogeneity to a coherent heterogeneity." Of special concern for Garland was Spencer's view of the arts in an evolutionary framework. Spencer pointed out that the arts evolve in direct relationship to the progression of society: "Alterations of structure in human beings, and concomitant alterations of structure in aggregates of human beings, jointly produce corresponding alterations of structure in those things humanity creates. . . ."

Utilizing the theories of both Taine and Spencer, Garland concluded that the modern American novelists were less concerned with emotions and psychological depths than with description and incident. Because of this, the
mainstream of serious American fiction did not convey the "deeper life" of America, Taine's "sentiments" of a nation. But newly emerging local color, as studies of character and scenery, seemed to be filling in the "gap" Garland noted in American fiction. While Bret Harte, Joaquin Miller, Mary N. Murfree, and E. W. Howe unevenly represented local color's potential for being a significant and progressive mode of national expression, Garland considered the movement as a positive one. From Taine and Spencer, Garland formulated the two central ideas of his critical system: "that literature must be examined as a product of the conditions of its own time and that it is constantly progressing in accord with certain natural laws." Garland further developed his theory as to the evolutionary importance of local color writing after reading H. M. Posnett's *Comparative Literature*. Posnett's theory drew upon and extended the ideas of Taine and Spencer. Posnett identified two distinct forces that contribute to the evolution of literature: the static force that includes the climate, soil, animal and plant life of the country; and the dynamic force, that is, the prevailing social condition at the time. Both forces "condition literature and the law of its progression." Posnett's central argument is "that literary ideas are relative, that there are no absolutes in literary form or content."
From Posnett Garland derived a "coherent critical pattern by which to examine the progress of literature." Grateful for the much needed clarifications Posnett's theory provided, Garland used his critical method in his "Evolution of American Thought," that was to be a full study of American literature based on the theories of Taine and Spencer. In "The Evolution of American Thought," that he wrote in 1886-1887, Garland attempted to study the phases of American history by examining in detail their physical and social backgrounds, noting the effect of these conditions on the writer and the literature produced. In this way, Garland traced the progress from incoherent homogeneity to coherent heterogeneity in social and intellectual life. Though the social and intellectual features of the early periods of American history did not lend themselves easily to the development of a national literature, defined as "a literature reflecting the race, environment, and epoch of America," the increased heterogeneity of modern America emphasized the possibility and need for a national literature. In a modern, democratic society like America, the function of a national art is "to represent the great heterogeneity, and complexity and diversity of life as it really is, so that truth and, with it, understanding and sympathy shall prevail and progress be assured." Garland advised the modern writer that the only American literature of worth was that which "reflected contemporary
American life truthfully, a literature of the present, dealing with the primary characteristic of the present, the common, normal experiences of the people." In other words, a literature that keeps pace with evolution.

With this perspective, Garland found the local colorists to be the foremost representatives of a national literature. Local color writing was intrinsically valuable because it was the only literature that could picture the increased heterogeneity of the country. As Donald Pizer observed, "America was so complex, so diverse, that it could be truthfully described only piecemeal." Only those writers producing realistic and detailed accounts of the life they knew from birth could adequately present the truth of that life to the rest of the nation.

During 1886 and early 1887, Garland continued studying the works of contemporary critics, further solidifying his own critical ideas. The critic of importance here is Eugène Véron, whose Aesthetics (1879) led Garland to adopt impressionism in his advocacy of local color. Véron defined true art as the "manifestation of individual impressions" because "the determinant and essential constituent of art is the personality of the artist." Véron further stressed the significance of these elements in art: "Truth and personality: these are the alpha and omega of art formulas; truth as to facts, and the personality of the artist." His ideas allowed a certain flexibility in
evaluating works of art. The critic now had to allow for variations in material, mood, and attitude in judging an acutely personal response to environment. 100

With a concern for truth and individual personality, Garland incorporated "almost all the vital figures in American fiction . . . into a working critical formula," 101 and re-evaluated the evolutionary significance of William Dean Howells. Garland had earlier found American writers overly concerned with plot. Now that he had a clear critical theory by which to judge current fiction, and had distinguished between rural and urban local colorists, Garland "elevated Howells to the supreme place among local colorists, finding in him qualities he was to recommend to all other practitioners of the genre." 102 In an 1887 review of The Minister's Charge, Garland, ignoring the psychological concerns of the novel, praised Howells for dealing with a contemporary social phenomenon, in this case the current migration from rural areas to the big cities. 103 Garland characterized Howells' work as dealing with contemporary social life and the average rather than the exceptional; thus his fiction was an evolutionary literature and Howells was the one significant evolutionary writer of the time. His opinions of other contemporary writers seemed to be based on how well their works compared with the qualities Howells' work so clearly demonstrated. In 1886, Garland made this observation: "Only Howells achieved the
normality and contemporaneousness required of an evolutionary literature." Later, when Garland himself began to write fiction, he tried to achieve an evolutionary significance equal to Howells'.

In a sense, Garland perceived his local color fiction of the Middle Border as representative of the next evolutionary step in literary development after Howells. With Howells, realism had evolved into the dominant, serious mode of national expression; with Garland's work, realism would further evolve into impressionism, a more personal and sincere literary response to contemporary social conditions. Because Garland intended to become the next significant evolutionary writer after Howells, he found it necessary to go beyond Kirkland in depicting pioneer life in fiction. In his opinion, Kirkland's work did not demonstrate the qualities of an evolutionary literature. Thus when Garland set down to write his accounts of the Middle Border, he had two specific goals in mind. He wished to achieve in his art the same evolutionary qualities he had identified in Howells' work, and at the same time illustrate the next evolutionary phase in the progress of American literature by writing veritistic art, using the technique of impressionism.

Garland's final statement of his critical system appeared in 1894 as a small volume of essays entitled Crumbling Idols. Although the volume was published three
years after Main-Travelled Roads, understanding Garland's treatment of impressionism and veritism will help in perceiving the kind of art Garland tried to create in his stories of the Middle Border. The essays in Crumbling Idols are taken from four articles Garland published separately between June, 1890 and October, 1893. The principal thrust behind Crumbling Idols is Garland's ideas as to the nature of good art and the method used in its creation. Quite simply, Garland noted that success in art or literature consists in two equally important elements: first, "in a powerful, sincere, emotional concept of life . . . and, second, in the acquired power to convey that concept to others." The first obviously comes from the depth of the writer's own personality, reflecting upon the life around him. The second is achieved with impressionistic technique, which, when used in fiction, results in veritism. Impressionistic technique is described as involving scenes succeeding each other consecutively, with descriptive passages reduced to a minimum, just enough to crystallize the writer's impressions. Impressionism also "discredits plots and formal complications" emphasizing instead "characters and the relation of groups of characters." The result is veritism, defined as "a truthful interpretation of life based on an individual reaction to fact." Garland summed up the essence of veritism in this advice to other writers: "Write of those
things of which you know most, and for which you care most. By so doing you will be true to yourself, true to your locality, and true to you time."¹¹⁰ Garland no longer identified local color as realistic but as veritistic, a depiction of native life using the impressionistic technique. Local color remained for Garland "a natural and unrestrained art."¹¹¹ Yet the step from literary critic to a serious writer of fiction remained a difficult one for Garland, and one he might not have taken except for the direction given him by Kirkland and Howells. Taken together, their advice outlined for Garland the serious need to portray in fiction the life he knew, because that area of American life was not receiving the literary attention it deserved.¹¹² Garland soon believed that the responsibility of revealing the truth of that life to the rest of America fell on him. Needless to say, the result of this new determination was Main-Travelled Roads. Though the technique Garland used in his stories is impressionistic, the stories demonstrate a clear movement toward naturalism.
Chapter III

MAIN-TRAVELLED ROADS

The six stories that make up the original volume of Main-Travelled Roads present a naturalistic vision. Doubtless, the strong feelings Garland had for the prairie and its people both motivated his writing and influenced his perception of the frontier. The fierce anger and bitter frustration that characterize Garland's view of the Middle Border began to swell in him during his early, painful experiences on his family's farm, and remained the compelling factor in his first attempts at fiction in which he tried to reveal the complete truth about frontier life. Yet Garland's deep feelings did not take on a literary significance until his return to the Middle Border in the summer of 1887. Howells and Kirkland had taught him to perceive the literary potential of his frontier experiences, but the direction his stories would take was determined by the renewed "emotional relationship" he began to share with his native way of life upon his return. Thrust once again into the harsh routine of frontier life, Garland found that he no longer responded to the pioneer's way of life with a monotonous concern for daily chores and duties, but with a writer's vision and insight:
I perceived now the tragic value of scenes which had hitherto appeared merely dull or petty. My eyes were opened to the enforced misery of the pioneer. . . . As a writer I was beset with a desire to record in some form this newly-born conception of the border.113

As Garland's clearly defined emotional response to life on the Middle Border directed the re-creation of that life in his stories, the scenes and events portrayed assume a naturalistic point of view. Thus Garland's intimate and poignant conception of the Middle Border moved him from the objective realism of Kirkland's Zury and resulted in the naturalistic elements of Main-Travelled Roads.

Kirkland and Garland attempted, in their work, to chronicle the lives of the pioneers they each knew, and together, Zury and Main-Travelled Roads present a comprehensive picture of Western life. Zury, based on early life in Illinois, traces the rise of Usury "Zury" Prouder from the poverty and hardships attendant on his family's move West, to his subsequent acquisition of land that makes him the richest man in the area. The bulk of the narrative details the community affairs of the growing frontier towns of Danfield and Springville.114 The early part of the novel, the most significant one for this discussion, narrates the Prouder family's confrontation with the demands of frontier life.

Garland's treatment of the frontier in Main-Travelled Roads sharply contrasts with Kirkland's limited treatment in Zury. Garland's stories deal exclusively with
the lives of the farmers and their families as they try to eke out a living on the prairie. The scenes and events in the stories were those Garland lived and saw during his own experiences as a member of a pioneer family. The constant labor and small reward that typified his family's way of life and that of their neighbors form the focal point of the lives of the people in Main-Travelled Roads.

Without exception, the piercing images that recur throughout Garland's stories, those images that had a significant meaning for him, represent the common events of the prairie life Garland knew so well. His literary aesthetic compelled him to perceive his native way of life in a sincere and emotional way, and to convey that perception to others. Incensed by the tragic outcome of the pioneers' physical labors and awed by the sheer force of their stamina, Garland impressionistically conveyed these emotional responses. But the world that Garland creates is, on the whole, a naturalistic world, void of spirituality and one in which individual survival is the greatest concern. As Oscar Cargill contends, Garland's naturalism, the "gloom" in his works, results from "the depression of a mood and not a settled way of looking at life." Garner is, indeed, making a statement about frontier life, and the result of the images illustrates a world of physical and spiritual degeneracy that indicates a naturalistic perspective.
Literary naturalism defines both a narrative technique and a specific view of human nature and existence. The specific view of existence depicted in naturalistic writing has generated much critical controversy. Oscar Cargill has observed that to some minds the scientific and analytical method Zola formulated is naturalism itself. The naturalistic writer sought to interpret and explain the seemingly amoral and mechanistic world he perceived around him. Within the mechanistic framework of naturalism, the individual was found to be controlled by his heredity and the external forces of his environment. The controversy stems from the ambivalence with which the individual was perceived, whether he was seen in a pessimistic or optimistic light. Naturalism can be "pessimistic determinism" that perceives the human race as "hurried toward ignominious ends" and degeneracy as "the common history of man." This view emphasizes the degeneracy of man's spirituality, focusing on his bestial qualities as he attempts to survive the effects of his environment. Or naturalism can present an optimistic view of the individual that reasserts humanistic values, individual dignity and importance, and discovers a possible means of escape from the controlling forces through hope. I suggest that Garland's treatment of life on the frontier more than adequately illustrates naturalism's pessimistic view of existence. In Main-Travelled Roads, Garland depicts the
individual farmer struggling against the malignant economic and natural forces inherent in the frontier. In his hopeless battle with the land, the pioneer experiences a desperate loss of his spiritual essence as his endless struggles arouse in him an animalistic and impotent rage. The selections I have chosen from Main-Travelled Roads will illustrate the naturalistic elements of Garland's stories.

Garland characterizes life on the prairie as a confrontation between two forces. Nature and the individual will are pitted against one another with nature almost always victor. The natural elements are perceived as impersonal and at times even hostile. In "Under the Lion's Paw," the story that is most often anthologized, the itinerant Haskins relates to Stephen Council how his family and farm fell victim to the 'hoppers:

"Eat! They wiped us out. They chawed everything that was green. They jest set around waitin' f'r us to die t' eat us, too. My God! I ust t' dream of 'em sitt'n' 'round on the bedpost, six feet long, workin' their jaws. They eet the fork handles. They got worse 'n' worse till they jest rolled on one another, piled up like snow in winter."

The final note of "The Return of a Private," though melodramatic, clarifies Garland's idea as to the relationship between the farmer and the land:

He is a gray-haired man of sixty now, and on the brown hair of his wife the white is also showing. They are fighting a hopeless battle, and must fight till God gives them furlough.
The meaning that echoes through this passage, as in numerous others in *Main-Travelled Roads*, is that the farmer becomes hopelessly bound to the land. As it emerges from the images and analogies Garland uses in detailing the agonizing side of prairie life, the farmer's life achieves significance only through the bitter hardships he must endure to survive.

In *Zury*, Kirkland, too, indicates that settling the prairie demands much from those who attempt it, but he does not emphasize the dramatic confrontation depicted in *Main-Travelled Roads*. Instead, the emphasis is upon Zury's ability to withstand whatever may befall him, and to succeed well in all his endeavors. Kirkland focuses, in other words, on the pioneer's accomplishments rather than the sufferings that mark his efforts. To begin with, the prairie itself is described as a fertile, life-giving entity that will reward the farmer's labors generously:

Spring County is one of those highly-prized and early-sought-for localities where both prairie and timber awaited the settler. . . . For countless years the soil has lain fallow; crop after crop of prairie grass has grown up in summer strong and rank, and then in winter has lain down and decayed; the result of the process being a soil of great general fertility, suggestive of a thick layer of cream on a gigantic milkpan. Lucky the pioneer who has such woods behind him and such prairie before him at the onset of his battle with the elements.

In their "battle" hard work is necessary, but Zury and his family find a satisfactory reward in the progress of their
labors. The following selection depicts Zury and his father working steadily in the construction of their new house:

Before "sun-up" Ephraim and Zury were stirring about in the heavy dew, freeing one of the colts which had got entangled in its tether and nearly ruined for life (vastly to Shep's perturbation), gathering sticks and hickory bark for a fire, bringing up water, and so forth. Then, for the rest of the day, and for many days thereafter, the axes of father and son were heard from dawn to dark, felling, trimming, and notching logs, joists, and rafters for the hut. Next, by the help of the new refreshed team, they had to be "snaked" up through the grass to the place selected for a building site.

After the raising, the rafters had to be covered with "clapboards," split from straight logs selected and cut square for the purpose. These boards were held up by stringers laid across the rafters, and held down by poles laid on them and weighted with sticks and stones; and, to do them justice, a very poor roof they made, after all.

Next, the chinks in the walls had to be filled up with split pieces of wood, and wet clay daubed in all the crevices within and without, and a stick chimney built and similarly plastered. Next--hang up some spare bed clothing over the door and window openings; and next, move into the floorless, lightless shelter, pile your few household belongings on the bruised sod of the interior, and sit down and be thankful.

Zury and his father do indeed accomplish much and we perceive their movements by the amount of work completed. In maintaining a proper aesthetic distance, Kirkland gives no details as to the physical effort involved in their work. We thus perceive them objectively, making no assumptions as to the nature of their existence.
But it Garland's detailed passages of the working farmers, the pain and exhaustion that was a real part of their lives is conveyed through his careful selection of seemingly minor details, ordering them in such a way that makes impressionism successful in his stories. For example, his description in "A Branch Road" of Will Hannan pitching hay conveys not only Will's strength but the nature of physical strain:

Will had worked unceasingly all day. His muscles ached with fatigue. His hands trembled. He clenched his teeth, however, and worked on, determined not to yield. . . . It seemed as if each bundle were the last he could raise. The sinews of his wrist pained him so, they seemed swollen to twice their natural size. But still he worked on grimly, while the dusk fell and the air grew chill.

Like Will, the other farmers in Main-Travelled Roads find little satisfaction either economic or spiritual in their work. Kirkland, though, seems to perceive this kind of manual labor as beneficial to the human spirit. Zury himself is seen as "a natural worker, a seeker after chances to be useful, his ambition always outrunning the demands made on him. . . . Achievement sprang from his mind and muscles like petroleum from a flowing well: the only thing needful was to provide channels for it." But Haskins and his wife in "Under the Lion's Paw" are so beset by their work that it does not allow for any satisfaction at all:

Haskins worked like a fiend, and his wife, like the heroic woman that she was, bore also uncomplainingly the most terrible burdens. They rose early and toiled without intermission till the darkness
fell on the plain, then tumbled into bed, every bone and muscle aching with fatigue, to rise with the sun next morning to the same round of the same ferocity of labor.

Further on in the narrative, Garland describes the nature of Haskins' drive. It is not the incentive for accomplishment that motivates him as it motivates Zury, but the fear of hunger and want:

When he sank into his bed with a deep groan of relief, too tired to change his grimy, dripping clothing, he felt that he was getting nearer and nearer to a home of his own, and pushing the wolf of want a little farther from his door.

There is no despair so deep as the despair of a homeless man or woman. . . . It was the memory of this homelessness, and the fear of its coming again, that spurred Timothy Haskins and Nettie, his wife, to such ferocious labor during that first year.

The obvious difference between the meaning of work to Zury and its meaning to Haskins vividly conveys the writers' very different conceptions of frontier life. Adding to their complete view of the West as it develops in their works is the depiction of women and children and the effects this life has on them.

Garland was especially concerned about the effects the harsh prairie life had on the young women and children. Remembering well his own experiences, Garland poignantly details their hardships, which had the most dehumanizing results. In "Up the Coulé," Garland describes the small farm boy as having "bent shoulders making him look like an old man." The young women divide their time between working in the house and helping in the fields. In "Among
the Corn Rows," Julia Peterson, considered by her father as no more than a farm hand, is seen laboring in the corn fields:

Julia Peterson, faint with fatigue, was toiling back and forth between the corn rows, holding the handles of the double-shovel corn plow while her little brother Otto rode the steaming horse. Her heart was full of bitterness, and her face flushed with heat, and her muscles aching with fatigue. The heat grew terrible. The corn came to her shoulders, and not a breath seemed to reach her, while the sun, nearing the noon mark, lay pitilessly upon her shoulders, protected only by a calico dress. The dust rose under her feet, and as she was wet with perspiration it soiled her till, with a woman's instinctive cleanliness, she shuddered.

A recurrent theme of the stories, the subjugated woman, is cited by Åhnebrink as an example of Ibsen's influence on American writers and especially on Garland himself. But Garland's response to the plight of the women on the prairie stems from the changes that life effected in his own mother. He notes that he watched her lose the glow of young womanhood through her constant labors. Garland provides a very stark example of what the prairie does to the young, spirited woman in "A Branch Road." He describes Agnes through the eyes of Will Hannan. He hasn't seen her for seven years and he remembers her as a vibrant and radiant girl. The details Garland sketches reveal the painful truth about her life:

She was worn and wasted incredibly. The blue of her eyes seemed dimmed and faded by weeping, and the old-time scarlet of her lips had been washed away. The sinews of her neck showed painfully when she turned her head, and her trembling hands were worn, discolored, and lumpy at the joints.
The women in Main-Travelled Roads succumb to a spiritual death through the painful drudgery that has become the essence of their lives. The monotony of their work that drains them of any hope is best explained by Grant McLane's wife in "Up the Coulé":

"I hate farm life," she went on with a bitter inflection. "It's nothing but fret, fret and work the whole time, never going any place, never seeing anybody but a lot of neighbors just as big fools as you are. I spend my time fighting flies and washing dishes and churning. I'm sick of it all."

In Zury, the life of the pioneer women is also marked by pain, sorrow, and even death, but Kirkland, sensitive to the activities of his female characters does not endow his narrative with the aura of hopelessness evidenced in Garland's treatment of women. Like their men, Kirkland's pioneer women quietly endure their tasks satisfied in the help they can provide their families. Such is the case of Selina Prouder:

When the "raising bee" took place, the refreshments for the little band of friendly workers had to be cooked by Selina over a chip fire in the open air. The feast consisted of boiled pork, crackers, molasses and water with a dash of ginger, coffee sweetened with molasses, and, alas! the last of the cherished dried apples they had brought from "home."

Kirkland describes the meal Selina Prouder prepares for her men but does not detail the trouble she went through in cooking it. For Selina as with all the Prouder family, the tasks she is forced to undertake do not cause the physical and spiritual degeneracy evidenced in Garland's stories. They do not represent the essence of their lives.
After the death of his younger sister, Zury's natural zeal and energy for hard work undergo a curious change:

After Zury's outburst of feeling, he settled down into a stony hardness. Those tears for his "baby" sister were the last tears he shed for many a year. It was as if the fountain had filled up the run over a few drops, and then frozen solid. All this poverty, toil, and distress, and the terrible need for money, made a deep impression on the forming mind of the youth; and being of a logical turn, he "put this and that together," and drew conclusions fitted to the premises as he saw them. Money was life: the absence of money was death. "All that a man hath will he give for his life;" ergo all that a man hath will he give for money.

The drive with which Zury eagerly labored on the prairie now becomes, in his new perspective of things, a drive for money. Zury is again successful, this time in acquiring land and money and eventually becoming the principal money-lender and holder of mortgages in Spring County. Kirkland's perception of Zury's mental outlook and the influences that both frame his mind and determine his actions is an example of the psychological realism that is a hallmark of Kirkland's work. Zury's ambition, his mean streak, develops out of the man himself as he attempts to rationalize the nature of his circumstances and effect a means of changing it. Later, as a successful businessman, Zury is seen as an important member of the community who goes about his affairs in an orderly and businesslike way.

Garland also provides a look at the frontier businessman in Main-Travelled Roads but from the farmer's
point of view. For Garland's prairie settlers, a mortgage on the land becomes as much an obstacle to survival as the natural elements, a force as devastating as the 'hoppers. Butler, the mortgager in "Under the Lion's Paw," is perceived as an agent of oppression. In an effort to help Haskins, Stephen Council considers asking Butler to let Council have the Higley place. Garland's details of what happened to Higley before confirm his perception of the landowner:

A fine farm, known as the Higley place, had fallen into his hands in the usual way the previous year, and he had not been able to find a tenant for it. For Higley, after working himself nearly to death on it, in the attempt to lift the mortgage, had gone off to Dakota, leaving the farm and his curse to Butler.

Haskins, encouraged by Butler's offer and his eventual self-sufficiency, pushes himself to the limits of his ability like Higley, and with the help of his wife and son seems about to make a success of the farm. Yet the ultimate irony befalls Haskins as Butler later turns around and imposes a stiff mortgage on him. He justifies his action to Haskins as the law, the regular thing, everybody does it. One immediately perceives the mortgaged farm as an additional burden forced upon the farmer. The controlling image of the story, an image of animal survival, conveys the nature of the farmer's struggle against both natural elements and human injustice. Haskins' futile efforts are
poignantly drawn here as are those of other farmers in Main-Travelled Roads. 

Early in his life, Garland perceived the futility of the farmer's labors through his own father's experiences. His father's "bitter revolt and impotent fury" at the loss of a crop caused Garland to perceive nature as an enemy that could destroy a man financially and spiritually. The loss of a spiritual essence in the Middle Border is the most tragic side of pioneer life. Garland emphasizes this loss by juxtaposing the beauty of the prairie with the harshness of the pioneers' lives. Because of the spiritual void in which they live, the farmers do not experience any satisfaction in the beauty that surrounds them. The beauty of the plains is sterile; as the pioneers have lost the ability to respond to the beauty around them, that beauty serves only to point out the drudgery of their lives even more. The gradual loss of spirituality goes hand in hand with the loss of hope. Still young and hoping that she can escape the farm, Julia Peterson can find a satisfaction in the beauty around her:

And now as she rested, the beauty of the scene came to her... The tired girl forgot her work. She began to dream. This would not always last. Someone would come to release her from such drudgery. But for others who have come to realize that there is no escape, hope is no longer a part of their lives. Agnes cannot look forward to happiness. As Garland describes her: "She hadn't power to look forward at all."
Garland himself came to realize the true spiritual poverty of life on the prairie upon his return after a four year absence. And in Main-Travelled Roads the most poignant and revealing scenes of prairie life occur in "A Branch Road" and "Up the Coulé," stories that deal with a return and illusions of hope in a hopeless world. As seen through the eyes of Will Hannan and Howard McLane, the spiritual degeneracy of the prairie takes on a special meaning. Their hopeful anticipations give way to the harsh realities of the prairie and the effect it has on the people who were forced to stay. The drabness of their lives is reflected in their houses that do not even provide adequate shelter from the elements. The effect Agnes' house has on Will is obvious:

The room was small and very hot; the table was warped so badly that the dishes had a tendency to slide to the center; the walls were bare plaster grayed with time; the food was poor and scant, and the flies absolutely swarmed upon everything, like bees. Otherwise the room was clean and orderly.

Howard McLane, returning to visit his mother and his brother's family after ten years, is still able to find some aesthetic pleasure in the beauty of the prairie. But that beauty quickly fades at the sight of the family's home:

It was humble enough--a small white house, story-and-a-half structure, with a wing, set in the midst of a few locust trees; a small drab-colored barn, with a sagging ridge pole; a barn-yard full of mud, in which a few cows were standing, fighting the flies and waiting to be milked.
An old man was pumping water at the well; the pigs were squealing from a pen nearby; a child was crying. Instantly the beautiful, peaceful valley was forgotten. A sickening chill struck into Howard's soul as he looked at it all.

When he sees his mother again, Howard is clearly affected by the scene:

Howard went slowly around the corner of the house, past a vilely smelling rain barrel, toward the west. A gray-haired woman was sitting in a rocking chair on the porch, her hands in her lap, her eyes fixed on the faintly yellow sky, against which the hills stood dim purple silhouettes and the locust trees were etched as fine as lace. There was sorrow, resignation, and a sort of dumb despair in her attitude.

Howard stood, his throat swelling till it seemed as if he would suffocate.

As Howard comes to learn the real essence of their lives, he is filled with guilt at not having helped them financially. Their home emphasizes to him the full scope of their existence:

There were no books, no music, and only a few newspapers in sight—a bare, blank, cold, drab-colored shelter from the rain, not a home. Nothing cozy, nothing heartwarming; a grim and horrible shed.

Stanley R. Harrison, in discussing the naturalism in Garland's Main-Travelled Roads, points out that the prairie folks find a "haven of liberation" through "hope in the possibility of eventual escape." But this contention is valid for only a very few persons in Main-Travelled Roads like Julia Peterson, and yet the impression is that her hope will not last very long. It will eventually be consumed by the bitter hardships that will mark
her life. For the others there is no hope at all. Garland brings this point across very clearly in a conversation between Howard and his brother, Grant. In trying to make amends for his neglect, Howard offers to help Grant by giving him the money now that he should have given him before. Grant answers him:

"Money can't give me a chance now."
"What do you mean?"
"I mean life ain't worth very much to me. I'm too old to take a new start. I'm a dead failure. I've come to the conclusion that life's a failure for ninety-nine per cent of us. You can't help me now. It's too late."

Grant's bitter yet truthful words eloquently define the way of life endured by the overwhelming majority of pioneers, a life without hope.

In evaluating his own work, Garland would have been the last to call Main-Travelled Roads an early example of naturalistic writing. Garland was an impressionistic writer who wanted to delineate the truth of his own frontier life in his fiction. In attempting to go beyond Kirkland's realistic treatment of the frontier in Zury by detailing more accurately the scenes and events peculiar to the prairie and its people, Garland moved toward a naturalistic point of view. Life in and around Spring County is depicted with no indication of the essence of life there. In Garland's stories we come to perceive the nature of existence on the frontier. The truth that emerges testifies to the effectiveness of Garland's
technical skill. The world he creates in his stories illustrates the bitter reality of the prairie and makes a statement about the human spirit that must contend with that world. In essence, humanity is pitted against exterior forces in a naturalistic world that denies the individual a spiritual self.
Chapter I

Garland details the events of his early literary career in two autobiographical volumes, *A Son of the Middle Border* (New York: Macmillan, 1924) and *Roadside Meetings* (New York: Macmillan, 1930). He mentions the scientific and literary theorists who influenced his view of literature in *A Son of the Middle Border*, pp. 322-324, and in *Roadside Meetings*, p. 65. His disillusionment with romantic writing is discussed in *A Son of the Middle Border*, p. 129 and in *Roadside Meetings*, p. 90. He describes his meeting with Howells in *A Son of the Middle Border*, p. 386, and in *Roadside Meetings*, p. 60. His meeting with Kirkland is detailed in *A Son of the Middle Border*, p. 354, and in *Roadside Meetings*, p. 112.


Carter, p. 28.

See Harry Levin, "What Is Realism?" *Comparative Literature*, 3 (Summer, 1951), 197.


9 Brunetière, p. 453.

10 Brunetière, p. 450.

11 Dargan, p. 5.

12 Ibid.


14 Thorlby, p. 8.

15 Thorlby, p. 38.

16 Thorlby, p. 8.

17 Levin, p. 197.

18 Cargill, pp. 10-11 and Walcutt, pp. 6-7.

19 Cargill, p. 10.

20 Cargill, p. 50.


22 The Naturalist Novel, p. 86.

23 The Naturalist Novel, p. 17.


25 Quoted in Meyer, p. 567.


27 Ahnebrink, p. 22.

28 Ahnebrink, p. 414.

29 Ahnebrink, p. 19.
30 Carter, p. 59.

31 Carter, pp. 40-41.

32 Carter, p. 60.

33 Carter, p. 92.

34 In A Son of the Middle Border, pp. 322-324 Garland states that while in Boston between 1884 and 1887 he read Spencer in the Boston Public Library. See also Donald Pizer, "Herbert Spencer and the Genesis of Hamlin Garland's Critical System," Tulane Studies in English, 7 (1957), 153.

35 Carter, pp. 95-96.


39 Carter, p. 96.

40 Carter, p. 217.

41 Carter, p. 194.

42 Quoted in Carter, p. 191.

43 Carter, p. 194.

44 Criticism and Fiction, section XV.

45 Criticism and Fiction, section XXIII.


47 Bernard R. Bowron, Jr., "Realism in America," Comparative Literature, 3 (Summer, 1951), 273.

48 Criticism and Fiction, section XXI.

49 See, for example, Bowron, p. 268.

50 Carter, p. 183.
51 Bowron, p. 273.
52 Ibid.
53 Bowron, p. 278.
55 Bowron, p. 274.
56 Carter, p. 95.
58 Smith, p. 486.
59 Ahnebrink, p. 52.
60 Carter, p. 96.
61 Carter, p. 68.
62 Bowron, p. 278.
63 Ahnebrink, p. 53.
64 Ahnebrink, p. 56.
66 Stronks, p. 476.
67 Stronks, pp. 476-477.

Chapter II

"Realism Versus Other Isms," Dial, 14 (February 16, 1893), 99-101.


Joseph Kirkland, p. 88.

Dial, p. 100.

Dial, pp. 100-101.

Dial, p. 100.

Flanagan, p. 280.

Ibid.

"The Editor's Study," Harper's Monthly Magazine, LXXVII (June, 1888), 152.

Roadside Meetings, p. 106.


A Son of the Middle Border, pp. 306-307.

A Son of the Middle Border, pp. 322-324.


First Principles, p. 330.

First Principles, p. 360.

First Principles, pp. 318-319.


Ibid.

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Quoted in Garland's Early Work and Career, p. 22.

Ibid.

Garland's Early Work and Career, p. 23.

Garland's Early Work and Career, p. 28.

Garland's Early Work and Career, p. 27.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid.


Crumbling Idols, p. 21.

Ahnebrink, p. 149.

Crumbling Idols, p. 76.


Crumbling Idols, p. 30.

Crumbling Idols, p. 52.

See Roadside Meetings, pp. 60, 110-112.
Chapter III

113 A Son of the Middle Border, p. 375.

114 For additional background details of Zury see Clyde E. Henson, "Joseph Kirkland's Novels," Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society, 44 (1951), 142, 144; and also Flanagan, p. 280.

115 Cargill, pp. 82-83.


117 Cargill, p. 53.

118 Cargill, p. 13.


120 Ahnebrink, p. 366.

121 See A Son of the Middle Border, pp. 304, 365.

122 Benjamin Lease, "Realism and Joseph Kirkland's Zury," American Literature, 23 (January, 1952), 466.

123 A Son of the Middle Border, p. 128.

124 Harrison, p. 549.
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