

Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o) to critical anxieties over lack of established national canons in countries such as Canada, and the consequent activity of creating them rapidly and from scratch (Lecker). The fiction of national literatures was hardest to sustain in these circumstances in the postcolony, in part because of the clear artifice of the nation itself in countries produced as a result of colonial misadventure rather than through centuries of the development of land, language, and people (e.g., Nigeria, which contains myriad languages, ethnicities, and peoples). The category of postcolonial literature for this reason has from its inception productively unsettled the Eurocentric idea of national literature; the category of the "postcolonial" challenges the limits of the national and points toward the necessity of considering literary developments on a global scale.

In the era of globalization, it is Goethe's *Welt* rather than Herder's *Volk* that has dominated attempts to map literature into its contexts and circumstances. Though literary studies remain organized into national literatures, the literatures studied within this framework now often focus on multiple, extranational spaces and imaginations (e.g., within the U.S., ASIAN AMERICAN literature, LATINA/O literature). Comparative literature (see COMPARATIVISM), which has implicitly relied on national spaces across which to deploy its critical strategy of comparison, has set out in new directions, best exemplified in Gayatri Spivak's arguments for a transnational literary criticism in *Death of a Discipline* (2003). Most intriguingly, scholars such as Franco Moretti (1998) and Pascale Casanova (2004) have sought to reimagine literary geography entirely, by looking past the nation to the spatial coordinates of literary genre, reading publics, and marketplaces, and to the place of cities in the development of fiction.

SEE ALSO: Anthropology, Comparativism, History of the Novel, Regional Novel.

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Naturalism

DONNA CAMPBELL

The term *naturalism* refers to a late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century literary movement whose practitioners used the techniques and theories of science to convey a truthful picture of life. The characteristics of naturalism include a carefully detailed presentation of modern society, often featuring lower-class characters in an urban setting or a panoramic view of a slice of contemporary life; a deterministic philosophy that emphasizes the effects of heredity and environment; characters who act from passion rather than reason and show little insight into their behavior; and

plots of decline that show the characters' descent as the inevitable result of the choices they have made. The critic George Becker once defined naturalism as "pessimistic materialistic determinism" (35), but its elements are more complex than that phrase would suggest. For example, David Baguley identifies naturalistic novels as those that treat sociological or scientific subjects, often to expose individual or cultural pathologies, through a combination of dysphoric plots of decline and minutely detailed settings; they also "undermine parodically the myths, plots, idealized situations, and heroic character types of the romantic and the institutionalized literature to which they are opposed" (21). In its frank presentation of violence and SEXUALITY, naturalism broke free from earlier and more genteel conventions of REALISM and revealed a vision of life previously considered too brutally graphic for middle-class audiences. It tested the limits of what publishers would print and what audiences would read, thus setting a new standard for serious fiction and paving the way for later authors (see PUBLISHING).

The origins of naturalism lie in the biological, economic, and psychological discoveries of the nineteenth century, all of which relied on the intensive application of scientific empiricism. The most significant of these discoveries were the evolutionary theories of Charles Darwin (1809–82) and Herbert Spencer (1820–1903). In *On the Origin of Species* (1859), Darwin reported his observations of the manifestations of hereditary traits in successive generations, and in *The Descent of Man* (1871) he described the processes of sexual selection in animals. Such theories gave credence to the naturalists' belief that a submerged, primal animal nature revealed itself in human beings when the veneer of civilization was shattered by the stress of extreme circumstances. Another naturalistic idea borrowed

from evolutionary theory is Herbert Spencer's phrase "survival of the fittest," which naturalist authors embraced as an interpretive paradigm for their study of the desperate lives of the poor. Among the first to understand the potential that these scientific ideas had for fiction was Émile Zola, whose preface to *Thérèse Raquin* (1867) is generally considered the earliest naturalist manifesto since it expresses Zola's intention to subject his characters to scientific study. A more complete statement of naturalism is his *Le Roman expérimental* (1880, *The Experimental Novel*), which elaborated on the idea that the experimental method should be applied to characters in novels: "Naturalism, in letters, is equally a return to nature and to man; it is direct observation, exact anatomy, the acceptance and depiction of what is." The twenty-volume Rougon-Macquart series of novels follows this pattern as Zola traces several generations of inherited character traits, such as a propensity toward alcoholism, avarice, prostitution, or obsessive behavior. For example, one descendant of the Maquart family, Gervaise Coupeau of *L'assommoir* (1877, *The Drunkard*), shows the lack of self-awareness and the impulsive behavior of a typical naturalistic character; her son, Paul Lantier, is plagued by an obsessive need to paint and repaint his masterpiece in *L'Oeuvre* (1886, *The Masterpiece*); and her daughter, Nana, slips into prostitution and dissolution in *Nana* (1880). As is evident in Zola's attacks on dysfunctional social and industrial systems in *L'assommoir* and *Germinal* (1885), naturalism often implies a social critique, yet promoting reform was not the goal; as his *Roman expérimental* admonished his readers, "like the scientist, the naturalist novelist never intervenes." The idea that art should be morally impersonal and that the depiction of evil actions need not be automatically followed by scenes of punishment stirred outrage, since

it violated the principle that a failure to punish evildoers would influence readers to imitate the actions they found on the page. What Zola saw as objectivity, the critics saw as immorality, and despite Zola's protestations that "it is not possible to be moral outside of the truth," naturalism was routinely vilified as indecent and immoral.

EUROPE

The furor over Zola and naturalism spread throughout Europe and Latin America during the 1880s and 1890s, following a consistent pattern of condemnation of naturalism's supposed excesses by some critics and the adoption of its principles by novelists and dramatists who saw it as a means of expressing social truths. In France, the birthplace of the movement, the ranks of naturalists included Edmund and Jules de Goncourt, whose novel *Germinie Lacerteux* (1864) traces the descent into death of a servant who leads a double life of devotion to employer and after-hours dissipation; and Guy de Maupassant, whose first novel *Une Vie* (1883, *A Woman's Life*) and short stories such as "Boule de Suif" (1880, "Butterball") exemplify naturalistic principles. The line between realism and naturalism was less firmly drawn in Spain, but Benito Pérez Galdós 1886–87, (*Fortunata y Jacinta*, 1881, *La desheredada*; 1881, *The Disinherited Lady*), Leopoldo Alas 1884–85, (*La Regenta*, *The Regent's Wife*), and especially Emilia Pardo Bazán wrote novels with naturalistic elements such as a frank treatment of sexuality, factory scenes, investigations into the plight of the working poor, and indictments of hypocritical social institutions. Pardo Bazán's novels *Los pazos de Ulloa* (1886, *The Son of a Bondswoman*) and *La Tribuna* (1882, *The Tribune of the People*) depict a family in decline and the

lives of the working-class urban poor, respectively, yet she disavowed Zola's determinism in her influential series of essays *La cuestión palpitante* (1883, *The Burning Question*).

In Italy, Giovanni Verga's *I malavoglia* (1881, *The House by the Medlar Tree*) and Luigi Capuana's *Il Marchese di Roccaverdina* (1901, *The Marquis of Roccaverdina*) are examples of *verismo*, a variant of naturalism opposed to some of naturalism's vulgarity but committed to its ideal of objective representation and the erasure of the author's intrusions into the text. Gerhard Hauptmann's drama *Die Weber* (1892, *The Weavers*) and Thomas Mann's *Buddenbrooks* (1900) typify German naturalism, although according to Lilian Furst, the latter is only "the closest approximation to a native German naturalist novel" (1992, "Thomas Mann's *Buddenbrooks*," in *Naturalism in the European Novel*, ed. B. Nelson, 244), given the dominance of forms other than prose fiction in Germany at that time. In England, debates over naturalism became conflated with those over CENSORSHIP, the New Woman, and the frankness of the New Fiction (Pykett), for there as elsewhere naturalism was seen as a threat to propriety and the established social order. After publishing "Literature at Nurse" to protest the prudery of English booksellers who would not stock his earlier realist works, George Moore wrote *Esther Waters* (1894), a sympathetic treatment of a housemaid who becomes pregnant out of wedlock and refuses either to give up her child, or, in the tradition of romantic fiction, to die of shame at having borne it. Unlike Moore, Thomas Hardy dismissed the influence of Zola on his novels, yet *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (1891) and *Jude the Obscure* (1895), emphasize naturalistic elements, adding the pressures of rigid class structures to those of biological determinism as forces opposing the individual will.

THE AMERICAS

Zolaesque naturalism was also an important literary movement in Latin America, where naturalistic novels directly confronted issues of class, race, and social upheaval. Argentina's Eugenio Cambaceres explored classically naturalistic sexual themes in *Sin Rumbo* (1885, *Without Direction*), but his treatment of immigration in *En la sangre* (1887, *In the Blood*) departs somewhat from naturalist practice to express anxieties about the large influx of Italian immigrants into the country. Like Zola, the Mexican novelist Arcadio Zentella protests the abuses of a social system—in *Perico* (1886), the hacienda system—and Federico Gamboa's *Santa* (1903) features as its title character a prostitute, a common feature in naturalist novels such as Stephen Crane's *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets* (1893) and Zola's *Nana*. Turn-of-the-century Brazilian naturalists include Aluísio Azevedo, Júlio Ribeiro, Adolfo Caminha, Raul Pompéia (1888, *O ateneu, The Boarding School*), and Manoel de Oliveira Paiva (wr. 1897, *Dona Guidinha do Poço, Dona Guidinha of the Well*). As David T. Haberly notes, Brazilian naturalists not only responded to great social changes, such as the emancipation of African slaves in 1888 and the proclamation of the Republic in 1889, but also treated sexual themes in stronger terms than did their European counterparts: "Nothing comparable to the most extreme examples of Brazilian Naturalism, Júlio Ribeiro's *A carne* [1888, *Flesh*] or Adolfo Caminha's 1895 novel of interracial homosexuality *Bom crioulo* [*The Black Man and the Cabin Boy*], could have been published and marketed in England or the United States before the middle of the 20th century" (88). Another novel with a racial theme, Azevedo's *O mulato* (1881, *The Mulatto*), is generally considered the first Brazilian naturalist novel; his *O cortiço*

(1890, *The Slum*) addresses not only race, but, like novels by Zola and Crane, topics such as female sexuality, slum life, prostitution, and suicide.

Outside of France, naturalism had its most lasting impact in the U.S., with Crane, Frank Norris, Jack London, and Theodore Dreiser acknowledged as naturalist writers and others such as Edith Wharton, Kate Chopin, and Paul Laurence Dunbar writing for a time in a naturalistic vein. Of these figures, Norris provided the most extensive explanation of naturalism for American audiences. Norris believed that naturalism was not simply a more extreme form of realism but revealed a different kind of truth. Contending that genteel realism "stultifies itself" and "notes only the surface of things" (1166) by striving for accuracy rather than an essential truth, Norris claimed that naturalism, being essentially romantic rather than realistic, could "go straight through the clothes and tissues and wrappings of flesh down deep into the red, living heart of things" (1165) and portray a truth inaccessible to realism.

For many naturalist authors, including Crane, Zola, Dreiser, and Dunbar, the setting for discovering the "red, living heart of things" was the modern city. The city in naturalism is at once an urban jungle, a site of spectacle, a space of sexual desire and capitalist exchange, a testing ground for adaptation, and a place of transformation in which identity can be dissolved, reshaped, or lost; in novels featuring female characters, the theme of the city as contributing to prostitution is common. For example, Crane's *Maggie* describes the brief, poverty-stricken life of Maggie Johnson, whose dreams of romance crumble before the reality of prostitution. The city erases one identity—her name—as it gives her another, for as a prostitute, she is only an anonymous "girl of the painted cohorts of the

city” (chap. 17). Lacking Maggie’s revulsion against selling herself, Zola’s character Nana gleefully embraces the life of the streets as a child in *L’assommoir* before turning to acting and prostitution in *Nana*. The city that had drained individuality from Maggie supplies multiple identities for Dreiser’s Carrie Meeber of *Sister Carrie* (1900), who, like Nana, takes to the stage and makes a living from the admiring gaze of men in the audience. Her ability to adapt to her surroundings stems from a desiring self: she is both stimulated by the city and never satisfied by what she finds there. In Dunbar’s *The Sport of the Gods* (1901), a desire for city pleasures destroys the family of Berry Hamilton, whose daughter, like Carrie, takes to the stage, and whose son, a kept man, kills his wealthy lover. In naturalistic fiction, the only certainty that the city affords is that it will be an overpowering force for transformation, and, in keeping with the pessimism of most naturalistic fiction, the change will not be for the better.

Heredity, for the naturalists, was not a simple biological construction or chart of descent; rather, it included ideas of inheritance since proven false, such as atavism, the reversion of the individual to type, or to an earlier state of the RACE through unconscious race memories; the inheritability of acquired characteristics; and hierarchical distinctions among desirable racial characteristics, with minute differences in ethnic identity used to characterize “races” such as Anglo-Saxons. The themes of reversion to type and the brute within were particularly common in naturalistic fiction. For example, the protagonist of Frank Norris’s *McTeague* (1899) struggles between his better self and a brutish nature that propels him into sexual experience, drunkenness, and violence. After he kills his wife, McTeague meets his end in Death Valley, urged on by an “obscure brute instinct” that hints at a prehistoric, apelike past (chap. 21). Jack

London’s *The Call of the Wild* (1903) also illustrates a reversion to ancestral type: “instincts long dead [become] alive again” as Buck rediscovers the forgotten lessons of his wolf ancestors and finally answers the call of the wild (chap. 2). Kate Chopin’s *The Awakening* (1899) shows Edna Pontellier shedding portions of her constructed persona as a well-to-do wife and mother in favor of an identity as an artist and as a sexual being, a transformation symbolized by her pleasure in swimming. In each case, the “call” of heredity is wordless, felt or heard within the body and processed by the “primitive” rather than the rational brain (see ANTHROPOLOGY). In establishing the primacy of the physical, emotional self and granting its dictates legitimacy, the naturalists theorized that by understanding primitive, impulsive human actions they would be better able to identify the primary rules of human behavior.

THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

Although the classic phase of naturalism ended before WWI, novels influenced by naturalism were published throughout the twentieth century. The theories of William James and, later, Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung increased understanding of powerful PSYCHOLOGICAL forces such as habit, obsession, sexual desire, and the collective unconscious, and they added psychological determinism to the social and material determinism of classic naturalism. In the U.S., Sherwood Anderson’s *Winesburg, Ohio* (1919) combined a modernist simplicity of style with a subject matter in which psychological repression and the social constraints of the small town contributed to the characters’ predetermined fates. Decades later, the Depression-era (1930–39) fiction of John Dos Passos, James T. Farrell, and John Steinbeck infused the

determinism of classic naturalism with a social critique and political consciousness born of the times. Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939) is naturalistic in its study of the deterministic forces arrayed against its migratory family, the Joads, but its overt politicizing makes it more akin to the proletarian novel of social protest than to classic naturalism. Like Ellen Glasgow's *Barren Ground* (1925) and Edith Summers Kelley's *Weeds* (1923), it focuses on rural subjects; in this way, it recalls the "neo-naturalism" of Latin American fiction of the 1930s, which brought naturalist methods to the study of the land and its "foundation myths" (Morse 47). Using naturalism to explore racial tensions in the U.S., Richard Wright's *Native Son* (1940) and Ann Petry's *The Street* (1946) chronicled urban despair and posited racism as a determining environmental force, with Petry's Lutie Johnson, like Wright's Bigger Thomas, as a character driven to violence by the incessant degradation and constricted opportunities she suffers. Although some writers, including Don DeLillo and Joyce Carol Oates, continued to employ naturalistic themes well into the twentieth century, the rise of MODERNISM and postmodernism, with their emphasis on subjectivity, or the critique of pure scientific objectivity, rendered naturalism a diminished rather than a vital force in the literary landscape.

SEE ALSO: Decadent Novel, Ideology, Modernism, Romance, Surrealism/Avant-Garde Novel.

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- Neorealism** see Italy; Realism
- New People Novel** see Russia (18th–19th Century)
- Newspaper Novel** see Journalism
- Nonfiction Novel** see Journalism; Fiction

North Africa (Maghreb)

NOURI GANA

The Maghreb is the name that Arab writers and geographers gave to the region north of the Sahara which, for Europeans, corresponded to Barbary or Africa Minor, and for Ibn Khaldoun, to the Berber zones before the seventh-century Arab conquest. Nowadays, the term is much more specific but not fully unequivocal. As opposed to the Mashreq (i.e., the place of the rising sun), which covers all Arab lands east of Egypt, the Maghreb (i.e., the place of the setting sun) refers to the westernmost fringes of the Arab world in northwestern Africa. At the height of Arab Muslim rule in the medieval Mediterranean, the Maghreb used to denote not only northern Africa but also Sicily and