REALISM IN THE SHORT STORIES OF HAMLIN GARLAND

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PREFACE

It is a customary practice, and, we may add, an enlightening one, in the field of English and American literature, to relate a writer's literary theory to his works. In the case of Hamlin Garland, there is no full length study which relates his practice of realism in his short stories to his theory of fiction, although there have been articles and essays concerned with his short stories. Finding no such study, and realizing, after studying both Garland's stories and his theory, that the possibility of such a relation does actually exist, the present writer purposes in this extended essay to indicate those realistic attributes which the stories of Garland have in relation to his literary theory. In order to do this, the writer has sought, in the first chapter, to discover those facets of realism which Garland propounded in setting forth his literary theory. The three subsequent chapters are concerned with the relationship that exists between the characters, themes, plots, and settings in Garland's short stories and his literary theory.

Garland's short stories of realism are included in Main-Travelled Roads (1891), Prairie Folks (1893), and Other Main-Travelled Roads (1910), the latter being a collection of stories from Prairie Folks along with some others which are regarded by him as resulting from the same impulse as those stories found in Main-Travelled Roads, although they do not treat exclusively farm life. For purposes of this study, therefore, the stories observed will be those included in Main-Travelled Roads and Other Main-Travelled Roads. In order to determine his theory of fiction, employment is made of his volume entitled Crumbling Idols (1894), a
collection of critical essays on the art of fiction largely written by Garland between 1891 and 1893.

In a study of this nature nearly every paragraph is shaped by the conscious or unconscious influence of writers in the field of literature. To the many writers, therefore, who are quoted in this study, the writer expresses his sincere appreciation for their share in his task. For laying the foundation for increasing his knowledge of American and English literature, the writer expresses gratitude to the members of the faculty in the Department of English at Atlanta University, Dr. Nathaniel P. Tillman, Dr. Thomas D. Jarrett, and Mrs. Lucy C. Grigsby.

For careful reading of this thesis and for valuable assistance in its revision, special acknowledgement is extended to Dr. Thomas D. Jarrett.

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CHAPTER I

VERITISM

Often, in the course of literary history, a writer may take incidents from real life, put them in artistic form, and present works of lasting value to humanity. Such is the case of Hamlin Garland, who wrote Main-Travelled Roads in 1891 and Prairie Folks in 1893, two volumes of short stories concerned with Midwestern farm life.

The author of these two volumes may be classified as a realist of the local color school, with some reservations, for although his short stories are in the "mordantly realistic vein," when one considers his total work, he might easily be called "a thwarted romantic." He himself, however, in preference for a stronger term than realism, chose the term "veritism," which he coined after reading Eugene Vernn's Aesthetics and Max Nordau's Conventional Lies. This coinage is in keeping with his literary creed, which this chapter purposes to investigate, for it will be found that Garland, in a volume of essays entitled Crumbling Idols (1894), sets forth the proposition that the writer of fiction should aid the cause of truth by giving realistic effects to his art, these effects being achieved by the artist's fidelity to truth in the interpretation of characters, themes, plot and setting. Garland's

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3Ibid., p. 291.

4Oscar Cargill, Intellectual America (New York, 1941), p. 83.
definition of the term "veritism" and his ideas about how it is to be achieved in treatment of characters, plot, and setting will be discussed in the order mentioned.

The origin and definition of the term "veritism" are obscure. It is possible that the term is related to the Italian verismo, the name applied to a literary movement marked by interest in dialect, provincial life and local color. However, no evidence suggests that Garland took the word from this European source, and because the word was not widely used in literary discourse, its definition cannot be given by tracing its usage, although it occasionally appeared in literary criticism published in an Eastern magazine, the Arena. As the editor, B. O. Flower, used the term, it appeared to denote "that which is real, or, if ideal, is in perfect alignment with the eternal verities as found in life."¹ The usage here suggests that "veritism" signifies realism, but with spiritual content. Garland's coinage, along with its overtones of "the verities" and the "verifiable," underlies his concern with the terminology of realism, and his alliance with those who, in the manner of Howells, contended that the truthful depiction of American life presented a scene more healthy, fortunate, and moral than other literatures afforded. In the final analysis, however, Garland admitted that "realism," "veritism," and "Americanism" were "practically the same thing."²

As has been noted, Garland's preference for "veritism" over "realism,"


as a more appropriate name for his literary theory, was due mainly to his desire for a stronger term. In applying this term to his literary creed, he defined it in terms of the artist's truthfulness to himself and to the life he delineates in his attempt to augment the cause of truth. In Crumbling Idols, for example, he states:

This theory of the veritist is, after all, a statement of his passion for truth and for individual expression.... the theory rises from the love of the verities.... The veritist...is occupied in stating his sincere convictions, believing that only in this way is the cause of truth advanced.1

In another paragraph he refers to this truthfulness as the law of the realist. "The realist," he states, "has only one law, to be true to himself; only one criterion, life. He must love genuinely what he depicts and be true." Furthermore, the realist is not to be discouraged if the general public "does not love the same fact as himself," for he will eventually find some who will sympathize with his endeavors.

It is obvious, then, that Garland's definition of the veritist reveals his personal dogmatic contention that the writer of fiction should employ truthfulness in his fiction. This truthfulness, we will find, extended to the fictionist's interpretation of characters, plot, and setting. Let us now observe how truthfulness is to be achieved in the treatment of characters.

Since the veritist is to employ truthfulness in his interpretation of life, Garland contended, then he must truthfully interpret the primary components of life—living men and women. In order to achieve this truthful interpretation of characters, he believed that the fictionist

1Hamlin Garland, Crumbling Idols. All subsequent references are to this edition, p. 21.
should employ a realistic approach to the kind of characters chosen and

to the manner in which these characters are presented.

An assurance that the kind of characters would be realistic is pro-
posed by Garland when he suggests that they be actual characters, chosen
from among the plain people by original contact, and that they be indi-

gualized. In Crumbling Idols, for example, he makes the following
statement concerning the use of actual characters:

As fiction has come to deal more and more with men and
less with abstractions, it will be safe to infer that this
will continue. Eugene Veron covered the ground fully when
he said, "We care no longer for gods or heroes; we care for
men." This is true of veritism, whose power and influence
augment daily; even the romance writers feel its influence,
and are abandoning their swiftly running love-stories for
studies of character.

In another passage, concerning those writers who would imitate the writers
of the Old World, he again urges the use of actual characters.

O Sayers and Doers of this broad, free island America
of ours! to you is given the privilege of being broad and
free in your life and letters. You should not be bound to
a false and dying culture, you should not endeavor to re-
enact the harsh and fierce social dramas of the Old World.
You should not turn your face to the east, to the past.
Your comment should be that of free men and women, loving
equality, justice, truth.

Though these characters, as the foregoing passage suggests, are to
be actual free men and women, Garland further asserts that they should
be localized and chosen from among the plain people. In his essays he
expresses this view while he is endorsing localism in general. Localized
literature, for him, is to be

...a literature from the plain people, reflecting their un-
restrained outlook on life, subtle in speech and color,
humane beyond precedent, humorous, varied, simple in means,
lucid as water, searching as sunlight.

A still further assurance that these characters will be realistic
is proposed by Garland, for he states that the life of these characters will be represented in literature after original contact with men.

This realistic literature, he states,

...is to be a literature, not of books, but of life. It will draw its inspiration from original contact with men and with nature. It will have at first the rough hewn quality of first-hand-work.

Finally, concerning the use of realistic characters, Garland contended that they should also be individualized. The literature, he believed, is vitalized by the use of individual characters rather than by types. "It is," he states,

the difference in characters, not their similarity, which is forever interesting. It is the subtle coloring individuality gives which vitalizes literature and makes it its own.

If, as we have seen, Garland believed that a truthful interpretation of characters in fiction is to be achieved by a choice of actual characters, chosen by original contact from the plain people, he also asserts that the manner of presentation should be realistic. Realistic presentation, he believed, is achieved by objectively presenting the characters through their use of realistic language and by allowing them to dominate the plot.

Concerning the use of realistic speech, Garland expresses bewilderment over the fact that the use of it has been neglected for so long. "The closer I studied the early history of American literature," he states in *Crumbling Idols*,

...the more I wondered at the aloofness of fiction and poetry from the realities of common speech. For two centuries our colonial authors wrote as if from the most violent distaste of their surroundings, finding pleasure and poetic exaltation only in...the memoirs of their former English homes...the speech of hunters, carpenters, drivers, and sailors was considered beneath the level of literature.
Though colonial authors neglected the use of common speech in presenting their characters, Garland announced that the intention of the veritist or realist would be otherwise:

We propose to use the speech of living men and women. We are to use actual speech as we hear it and record its changes. We are to treat of the town and city as well as of the farm, each in its place and through the medium of characteristic speech. We propose to discard your nipping accent, your nice phrases, your balanced sentences, and your neat proprieties inherited from the eighteenth century. Our speech is to be as individual as our view of life.

This individualized speech mentioned here would necessarily embrace colloquialism where found, if an authentic presentation of characters is to be made; consequently,

Both drama and novel will be colloquial. This does not mean that they will be exclusively in the dialects, but the actual speech of the people of each locality will unquestionably be studied more closely than ever before. Dialect is the life of a language, precisely as the common people of the nation form the sustaining power of its social life....

In addition to the use of actual language in the realistic presentation of characters, Garland also felt that realism is achieved by presenting them in such a manner as to allow them to dominate the plot. Hence, the plot should spring from the realistic, unpredictable changes in the life of the characters. This view is expressed in Garland's praise of Ibsen, whom he cited as an exemplar of veritism. He states, for example, that the plot in Ibsen's plays

...springs from the characters, and unrolls mysteriously, with all the unforeseen changes of life itself. Nothing can be foretold any more than in a novel of life. At his best he takes a common man...and follows him through a moral or mental change, with all his logical connections, and leaves him as abruptly as he began.

The lives of real characters, as this passage suggests, are unpredictable, consequently, the unforeseen episodes in the lives of the
characters must be presented and the character's moral or mental re-
action to these changes recorded. Having been thusly presented, the 
life of the character is left as abruptly as it was begun.

We have seen thus far how Garland's literary creed, "veritism," 
was extended by him to include a truthful interpretation of characters. 
This truthful interpretation, we saw, was to be achieved by first choos-
ing actual, individualized characters from among the plain people by 
original contact, and secondly, by a realistic presentation of the 
characters through their use of realistic, native speech. A third 
factor in realistic presentation was that of allowing the unforeseen 
changes in the lives of the characters to dominate the plot. This same 
truthfulness to life, Garland contended, was also to include a truthful 
and realistic presentation of the plot itself.

In applying this same truthfulness of life to the presentation of 
plot, therefore, Garland contends that the selection of themes for plot 
should be realistic if they are to promote the cause of truth and that 
the manner in which the plot is presented should be realistic.

If the veritist, Garland asserts, is to achieve realism, then he 
must choose a theme for plot which is itself realistic. Hence, the 
veritist writes of, or chooses actual themes of the present. "To the 
veritist," Garland states in his essays, "the present is the vital 
theme," and only by treating present themes is a truthful delineation 
of life to be attained. The realist or veritist, he contends,

...sees life in terms of what it might be, as well as in 
terms of what it is; but he writes of what is, and, at his 
best, suggests what is to be, by contrast. He aims to be 
perfectly truthful in his delineation of his relation to 
life....

By writing of the present or of "what is," therefore, the veritist must
omit nothing. Furthermore, it is only by including all the conditions of the present, unpleasant though they may be, that the writer is able to augment a more pleasant future. Garland states, for example, that the realist

...aims to hasten the age of beauty and peace by delineating the ugliness and warfare of the present; but ever the converse of the picture rises in the mind of the reader. He sighs for a lovelier life. He is tired of warfare and diseased sexualism, and Poverty, the mother of Envy. He is haggard with sympathetic hunger, and weary with the struggle to maintain his standing place on this planet,...With this hate in his heart and this ideal in his brain the modern man writes his stories of life. They are not always pleasant, but they are generally true, and always they provoke thought.

In his hope for a more peaceful social life, the fictionist is able to courageously embrace the events of his present as the preceding and the following passage suggests:

Because the fictionist of to-day sees a more beautiful and peaceful social life,...therefore he is encouraged to deal truthfully and at close grapple with the facts of his immediate present....Because he is sustained by love and faith in the future, he can be mercilessly true.

As might be suggested by his interest in the conditions of the immediate present, Garland necessarily embraced local color, the treatment of the features and peculiarities of a particular locality and its inhabitants. "Local color--what is it?" he asks, and then proceeds to answer: "It means that the writer spontaneously reflects the life which goes on around him." This is in keeping with his belief that "the near-at-hand things are the dearest after all." Local color further means "that it has such quality of texture and background that it could not have been written in any other place or by any one else than a native." Therefore, it is unquestionably an element in the choice of realistic themes for the writer who would add realism to his fiction.
Although the themes for plot are to be realistic as a result of the writer's choice of present, actual themes, the manner in which they are presented is also a factor in the achievement of its realistic quality if the writer is to be true to the life he represents.

The manner in which the plot is presented, Garland believed, was also to be realistic. To be realistically presented, it must be presented in such a way that the plot is subordinate to the characters and, in addition, must be simple and clear.

In reference to subordination of plot, we have already noted that the characters are to dominate it, springing naturally from the unforeseen changes in the lives of the characters.\(^1\) Further evidence of Garland's interest in the subordination of plot to character is evidenced by the following passage, which also expresses his interest in simplicity and clarity in plot.

Verity demands, also, simplicity of plan. Observe this in "The Doll-Home," in "Ghosts," in "Rosmersholm." No complications, no external intricacies, hardly anything approaching a plot, the interest depending entirely upon the characterization and the thought. The pursuit and not the end (as in the novel) the leading motive.

Here, we observe Garland's interest in simplicity and subordination in presentation of plot. His concern for simplicity and clarity is further evidenced by his plea to Western writers that they

\[\text{...should work in accordance with the fundamental principles of good writing; that is, (they) should seek to attain the most perfect lucidity; expressiveness, flexibility, outline, ...ready to be submitted to the world,...} \]

Thus we observe that Garland's veritism embraced a realistic presentation of plot as a means of rendering a truthful delineation of life.

\(^1\text{Supra, pp. 6-7.}\)
This presentation, we have seen, involved the choice of actual themes from present events and surroundings, and, as a result, the use of local color. By subordinating the plot to the characters, we have also observed, Garland contended that a more natural and realistic presentation of the plot could be made. This realistic rendering is necessary, we found, if the fictionist is to be truthful in his delineation of life. There is a final necessity which the veritist must include in his art for a truthful delineation of life, however, and that is an authentic presentation of setting.

Truthful interpretation of setting, as of plot and characters, contends Garland, is achieved by use of realistic material from first-hand observation on the part of the fictionist and by realistic presentation of this material in his art. Here again, just as the characters spring from original contact with men, so fiction is to draw its setting from "original contact with...nature." Local color, also, is again embraced in the treatment of setting, not merely for the sake of picturesqueness, but because of its necessity to a truthful statement of life. Local color means

...a statement of life as indigenous as the plant growth.
It means that the picturesqueness shall not be seen by the author,—that every tree and bird and mountain shall be dear and companionable and necessary, not picturesque;....

From this it follows that local color must not be put in for the sake of local color. It must go in, it will go in, because the writer naturally carries it with him half consciously, or conscious only of its significance,....

This interest in the use of local color in scenery is again embraced by Garland when he observes how modern European writers "are writing novels and dramas as naturally as the grass grows," because they are "rooted in the soil," and "stand among the corn-fields and...dig in the
Garland also notes the realist's care for truth in presentation of scenery when he refers to the dramatist's and novelist's use of localism in the scenery of this country.

...the drama will join the novel in this study of local conditions...in many cases the dramatist and novelist will be the same person. In all cases the sincerity of the author's love for his scenes...will find expression in tender care for truth, and there will be made to pass before our eyes wonderfully suggestive pictures of other...landscapes....

From the foregoing it is obvious, therefore, that for Garland, fidelity to setting is a necessary element in the truthful depiction of life on the part of the realist. This, then, is the final element in the fictionist's realistic and truthful depiction of the life he represents.

We have observed in this chapter that Hamlin Garland's theory of fiction is classified as realism, which he called "veritism," and sets forth the proposition that the "veritist's" aim is to enhance the cause of truth by giving a truthful delineation of the life he presents, this delineation being made true by the artist's truthful interpretation of characters, theme, plot, and setting. In subsequent chapters, we will observe that this literary creed, veritism, was exemplified in Garland's two volumes of short stories, *Main-Travelled Roads* and *Other Main-Travelled Roads*.
CHAPTER II

REALISM IN THE TREATMENT OF CHARACTERS

In the previous chapter, we have seen that Garland embraced a realistic treatment of characters through the selection of them from real men and women, presenting them realistically through the portrayal of their real speech and their individuality, and by presenting them in such a manner that they will dominate the plot. Therefore, in keeping with his literary creed that the writer of fiction should give a truthful depiction of the life he represents, he exercised this creed in the treatment of the characters in his two volumes of short stories, Main-Travelled Roads and Other Main-Travelled Roads.

These two volumes are concerned with life on the Western frontier. They evince the author's especial interest in frontier life. Consequently, the characters studied will be representative of people living on the Western frontier.

Garland's choice of men and women from the Western frontier sprang from his passion for the lot of the frontier farmer, having himself come from the West to study in Boston.\textsuperscript{1} It was while he lived in Boston, Parrington states, that he wrote his first short stories of frontier life.

The burdens of the Western farmer were heavy on his shoulders and he could foresee no time when they would be lighter. Depression had settled on the Middle Border, and Hamlin Garland returning to the familiar fields from his Boston studies felt the depression in every fiber of his being. This was his

\textsuperscript{1}Hamlin Garland, Main-Travelled Roads (New York, 1956), p. xii; from a preface by B. R. McElderry, Jr.
land and his people.¹

He reasoned, therefore, "that as other writers told the truth about the farm life they described, so he should tell the truth about the farm life and the barn-yard's daily grind which he described."² As a result of his desire to "tell the unheeded truth about the frontier farmers and their wives,"³ he wrote in such a manner that "his passions and his doctrines joined hands to fix the direction of his art."⁴

Garland's interest, then, lay in truthfully describing the lot of the frontier farmer. To truthfully do this, he had to make his characters realistic. Consequently, the first method by which he arrives at realism in characterization is the selection of his characters from real men and women, by original contact. This fact is substantiated by Goldstein, who, in observing the realistic nature of Garland's characters, states,

His (Garland's) characters are real men and women. He has lived with them, toiled with them, suffered and resented wrong with them. It would be impossible for him to write anything else than those dreary, hopeless stories of life upon the Western ranches. His shabby work-worn characters live in Coules and he has no power to make them dress attractively and pose in pleasant places, while he paints their pictures for waiting critics.⁵

¹Parrington, op. cit., p. 290.


⁴Ibid.

Here, we observe that Garland, in his attempt to present real characters, selected them by original contact, having actually lived with them. He does not bother to dress them prettily or make them unshabby, but presents them as he knows them. This stark reality of his characters was also noted by W. D. Howells, a contemporary of his, who states:

The stories are full of those guant, grim, sordid, pathetic, ferocious figures, whom our satirists find so easy to caricature as Hayseeds, and whose blind groping for fairer conditions is so grotesque to the newspapers and so menacing to politicians. They feel that something is wrong, and they know that the wrong is not theirs. The type caught in Mr. Garland's book is not pretty; it is ugly and often ridiculous; but it is heart-breaking in its despair.¹

The realistic nature of these characters, as the first passage suggests, sprang from Garland's selection of them from real men and women by original contact with them. Even his earliest stories were the result of his own personal experience with people living on the frontier. As Van Doren states,

In that first brilliant cycle of stories, this downright pioneer worked with the material which of all materials he knew best and over which his imagination played the most eagerly...those vivid early stories had come from the lives of his own family or the lives of their neighbors.²

Parrington also notes the first-hand selection of these characters by Garland out of his own experience.

The blight laid upon men and women and children by the drab pioneer life was a familiar fact to him. The Garlands and McClintocks had suffered from it as their neighbors had suffered, and a rebellious wrath filled his heart as he contemplated the Middle Border—the barnyards where tired men did the evening chores,

¹William Dean Howells, "The Editor's Study," Harper's Magazine, LXXXIII (September, 1891), 639.

the ungainly houses where tired women stood over hot stoves....

Finally, this view that Garland selected his characters by original contact is shared by Lovett, who states that

Closeness to experience gives parenial charm to these (Garland's) books of the Middle Border...the guant features of men and women, their clipped speech and awkward ways, all these were part of Garland's life. He rendered it in the two volumes of Main-Travelled Roads.2

Thus far, we have observed that Garland, in keeping with his literary creed, sought to make his characters realistic by choosing them from real men and women by original contact. Also, in keeping with his literary creed, the characters in his short stories are given realistic presentation by their use of local speech habits, by their being individualized, and by their domination of the plot.

In presenting the real speech of his characters, Garland selected that speech that was characteristic of the two classes of people in his short stories, the class inhabiting the frontier, or the farm people, and the class made up of visitors to the frontier from the East, or city people. B. R. McElderry, in this connection, notes the naturalness of the farmers' dialogue when he states that the dialogue is "solid and unforced"3 and cites the following example:

'Waal, now, I'll tell ye,' said Council from his side of the stove, silencing everybody with his good-natured roar, 'I'd go down and see Butler, anyway, if I was you. I guess he'd let you have his place purty cheap; the farm's all run down. He's ben anxious t'

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1Parrington, op. cit., pp. 290-291.
2Robert Morss Lovett, "The Two Frontiers," New Republic, XXXII (September 27, 1922), 16.
3Garland, op. cit., p. xv.
let t' somebuddy next year. It'ud be a good chance fer you.\textsuperscript{1}

This example of farm speech is typical; however, examples abound throughout all the stories. There is, for example, the speech of Ethan in "Mrs. Ripley's Trip."

'I've ben a-thinkin' things o'er kind o' t' day, mother, an' I've come t' the conclusion that we have ben kind o' hard on yeh, without knowin' it, y' see. Y' see I'm kind a easy-goin,' an' little Tuke he's only a child, an' we ain't c'nsidered how you felt.'\textsuperscript{2}

We may also observe this farm speech in the speech of Lucretia, who, in "Lucretia Burns," is startled at the realization that Sunday has come so suddenly. Made aware that it is Sunday, she states,

'Why, yes, so it is! Wal! Now, you jump up an' dress quick's y' can, an' Bob an' Silie, you run down an' bring s'm water.'\textsuperscript{3}

Finally, by way of example, there is the farm speech of the dying Matilda in "Before the Low Green Door."

'I'm dyin', Marthy, without ever gittin' to the sunny place we girls--used to think--we'd git to, by-an'-by. I've been a-gittin' deeper 'n' deeper--in the shade--till it's most dark. They ain't been no rest--n'r hope f'r me, Marthy--none. I ain't--'\textsuperscript{4}

True to his creed of presenting the actual speech of city people where they are encountered, the speech of the characters from the city or those influenced by urban speech in Garland's short stories are

\textsuperscript{1}Garland, op. cit., p. xv.

\textsuperscript{2}Hamlin Garland, \textit{Main-Travelled Roads} (London, 1892), p. 252.

\textsuperscript{3}Hamlin Garland, Other \textit{Main-Travelled Roads} (New York, 1910), p. 93.

\textsuperscript{4}Ibid., p. 296.
almost devoid of the frontier dialect, as the speech of Howard McLane in "Up the Coule" indicates.

'I went to New York. People liked my work. I was very successful, Grant; more successful than you realize. I could have helped you at any time. There's no us lying about it....'¹

Will Hannan, the lover of Agnes in "A Branch Road," also typifies the employment of urban speech on the part of Garland. Will entreats Agnes to go away with him,

'Now I've got some money, I've got a third interest in a ranche, and I've got a standing offer to go back on the Santa Fee road as conductor. There is a team standing out there. I'd like to make another trip to Cedarville—with you—'²

Finally, Lily Graham, the school teacher in "Lucretia Burns," illustrates Garland's portrayal of urban speech where encountered. Lily greets the husband of Lucretia with these words:

'Good morning, Mr. Burns. I am just going down to see Mrs. Burns. It must be time to go to dinner,—aren't you ready to go? I want to talk with you.'³

The second method by which Garland achieves realism in the presentation of the characters in his short stories is the individualization of them, although they represent types of the Middle Border. This, too, is in keeping with his literary creed and is attained by presenting the authentic feelings of the characters, objectively, through their actions, dialogue, and appearances, as well as subjectively by explanatory comment.

¹Garland, Main-Travelled Roads, p. 144.
²Ibid., p. 67.
³Garland, Other Main-Travelled Roads, p. 108.
Although the characters represent types, vivid description of their actions exemplify their true feelings and thereby aid in the individualization of them. Haskins and his wife, for example, in "Under the Lion's Paw," are typical of the economically crushed prairie family of the Middle Border; however, Garland individualizes them by portraying their courageous feelings, which they clung to in spite of adverse conditions. This he does by a description of their actions at industrious toil.

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 ferocity of labor.  

In another instance, Haskins love for his son is depicted in an action of his which he makes in restraining himself from the murder of his oppressor, Butler—and action made for the child's sake.

Butler shrank and quivered, expecting the blow; stood, held hypnotized by the man (Haskins) he had a moment before despised—a man transformed into an avenging demon. But in the deadly hush between the lift of the weapon and its fall there came a gush of faint, childish laughter...he saw the sun-bright head of his baby girl....His hands relaxed; the fork fell to the ground; his head lowered.  

Another example of actions serving to indicate the feelings of characters is found in "Lucretia Burns," where the actions of Lucretia, the work-worn wife of Sim, illustrate her tired and dejected mood.

Having strained the milk and fed the children, she took some skimmed milk from the cans and started to feed the calves bawling strenuously behind the barn. The eager and unruly brutes pushed and struggled to get into the pails all at once,

1Garland, Main-Travelled Roads, p. 231.

2Ibid., p. 240.
and in consequence spilt nearly all of the milk....This was the last trial; the woman fell down on the damp grass and moaned and sobbed like a crazed thing....Then the mother rose wearily to her feet, and walked slowly back toward the house.¹

In "William Bacon's Man," the lonely, forsaken feelings of William Bacon are portrayed by his actions when he discovers that his daughter, Marietta, has eloped with Lyman Gilman, his hired help. Receiving no reply from the eloped girl's room,

He knocked heavily again and got no reply, and, with a white face and shaking hand, he flung the door open and gazed at the empty bed. His hands dropped to his side; his head turned slowly from the bed to the open window; he rushed forward and looked out on the ground, where he saw the tracks of a man.²

Then, apparently after becoming aware of the situation,

He fell heavily into the chair by the bed, while a deep groan broke from his stiff and twitching lips.... For a long half-hour the iron-muscled old man sat there motionless....³

In addition to portraying the actions of his characters in his attempt at individualization, Garland also used the dialogue of his characters to portray their individuality. Grant McLane, for example, in "Up the Coule," expresses his resentment to work on the farm and his envy of city dwellers, of which his brother, Howard, is representative, when he sarcastically states to Howard:

'Singular we fellers here are discontented and muelish, ain't it? Singular we don't believe your letters when you write, sayin', 'I just about make a live of it'? Singular

¹Garland, Other Main-Travelled Roads, p. 83.
²Ibid., p. 21.
³Ibid.
we think the country's goin' to hell, we fellers, in a two
dollar suit, wadin' around in the mud or sweatin' around
in the hayfield, while you fellers lay around New York and
smoke and wear good clothes and toady to millionaires?"¹

Again, Julia Peterson describes her own resentment at farm work and
her parents, who force her to it, when she states to her lover, Rob
Rodemaker,

'I c'd stand the churnin' and house-work, but when it
comes t' workin' out-doors in the dirt an' hot sun, gettin'
all sunburned and chapped up, it's another thing....I've
tried t' go out t' work, but they won't let me. They'd
have t' pay a hand twenty dollars a month f'r the work I do,
an' they like cheap help; but I'm not goin' t' stand it
much longer, I can tell you that.'²

Another instance is taken from "William Bacon's Man," where
William Bacon states his adamant feelings against Lyman Gilman's in-
tention of marrying his daughter.

'I've worked an' scraped, an' got t'gether a little prop'ty
here, an' they ain't no sucker like you goin' to come 'long
here, an' live off me, an' spend my prop'ty after I'm dead.
You can jest bet high on that.'³

A final instance of the character's feeling portrayed through
dialogue is taken from "Lucretia Burns," in which Lucretia's true feel-
ings against her hard work and conditions are revealed by her conver-
sation with Mrs. Council. When told that her husband doesn't understand
why she is acting so moody, she replies,

'He don't know why! Well, then, you just tell him what I
say. I've lived in hell long enough. I'm done. I've
slaved here day in and day out f'r twelve years without

¹Garland, Main-Travelled Roads, p. 103.
²Ibid., p. 174.
³Garland, Other Main-Travelled Roads, p. 13.
pay,—not even a decent word. I've worked like no nigger ever worked 'r could work and live. I'm wore out. My strength is gone. I'm done with it,—that's a part of what's the matter.'¹

Finally, in addition to the use of dialogue and actions in the revelation of his characters' feelings, Garland used explanatory comment, which also added individuality to his characters. Lovett notes, for example, that the vivid "rendering of Julia Peterson's feelings as she glides her plough between the corn rows in the terrific heat, came from Garland's own suffering as a ten year old boy, breaking the sod of Iowa."²

An example of the author's use of explanatory comment in rendering her feelings follows:

Julia Peterson, faint with fatigue, was toiling back and forth between the corn-rows, holding the handles of the double-shovel corn-plough....Her heart was full of bitterness...and her muscles aching with fatigue. The heat grew terrible....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....³

Emma Smith's feelings of impatience in waiting for the return of her husband are described by explanatory comment in "The Return of a Private."

...she had watched the road so long that it had become unconscious, and as she stood at the well, or by the kitchen door, her eyes were fixed unthinkingly on the road that wound down the coule. Nothing wears on the human soul like waiting....It was this waiting, hoping, on the edge of despair, that gave Emma Smith no rest.⁴

¹Garland, Other Main-Travelled Roads, p. 96.
²Lovett, op. cit., p. 16.
³Garland, Main-Travelled Roads, pp. 162-3.
⁴Ibid., p. 200.
Lucretia Burn's feelings of utter despair over her farm-life sufferings are focused for the reader by explanatory comment when the author states:

There was an awful feeling at her heart as she sat there and the house grew quiet. She thought of suicide in a vague way; of somehow taking her children in her arms and sinking into a lake somewhere, where she would never more be troubled, where she could sleep forever, without toil or hunger.¹

We now come to the third method which Garland used in attaining a realistic presentation of characters, that of focusing the characters so that they dominate the plot. In attaining this end, first, the personalities of the characters in his short stories are given more focus than the situation, and secondly, the plan, or unforeseen changes in the lives of the characters, spring from the characters themselves.

The preference for emphasis on the personalities of his characters rather than on situation was observed by W. D. Howells, who censured Garland for what he termed the "tragical sublimity"² of the situation in "A Branch Road," in which Will, the lover of Agnes, quarrels with his betrothed, goes away and, upon coming back, finds her mismated and mistreated. He then tempts her away from her home. Howells, in noting Garland's possession of "a fine courage to leave a fact with the reader, ungarnished and unvarnished,"³ states that

It is all morally wrong, but the author leaves you to say that yourself. He knows that his business was with those

¹Garland, Other Main-Travelled Roads, p. 85.
²Howells, op. cit., p. 640.
³Ibid.
two people, their passions and their probabilities. He shows them such as the newspapers know them.  

From this we observe that Garland's interest here lay with portraying the personalities of the characters rather than primarily with the situation, a situation which Howells called "morally wrong," and which B. R. McElderry, while regarding the situation as improbable anyway, doubts "whether Agnes would have really deserted her husband for her returned lover, Will." McElderry also doubts the probability that Julie, in "Up the Coule," would have so readily accepted "the almost casual proposal of Rob, just returned from his Dakota claim." He notes, however, just as Howells had noted, that Garland's interest lay in the personalities of these characters as revealed in their plight, which, he states, "is made real enough."

Another example in which the personality of the character is emphasized over the situation is "Mrs. Ripley's Trip," in which the situation involves the occasion of a trip taken by Mrs. Ripley, after many years, to visit her daughter in Georgetown, the trip having been prolonged by the poverty of the visitor. Though the situation here is simple and uninvolved, it is the personalities of Mrs. Ripley and her husband, Ethan, which holds the interest of the reader. Mr. Ripley is featured as a kind, tolerable old man. In spite of the cold, bitterness

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1Howells, op. cit., p. 640.


3Ibid.

4Ibid.
of winter, he "kept his cheerfulness," and though very tired, "was softened in temper." His kindness is revealed by his decision to sell two of his treasured pigs to sponsor his wife's trip to Georgetown, after becoming aware of her unwavering desire and determination to go. "These heroic sacrifices having been determined upon, he put them into effect at once." Mrs. Ripley is featured as a woman of a kindly, devoted, dutiful nature, but of determined will. She tolerates conditions on the farm for twenty-years "without a day or a night off," while all the time determined to eventually take her trip to Georgetown, the funds for which, she states, "I just saved it—a dime at a time—see?" Her trip over, however, she realizes her duty to her husband and grandson. When asked, for example, if she has had a lovely time on her trip, she states, "Pretty good. But I kep' thinkin' o' Ripley an' Tukey all the time....Good-by. I must be gittin' home to Ripley." With these words, ...off up the road the indomitable little figure trudged, head held down to the cutting blast. Little snow-fly, a speck on a measureless expanse, crawling along with painful breathing and slipping, sliding steps—"Gittin' home to Ripley an' the boy."
It is this type of characterization, that of two individuals, dominating an uninvolved, simple situation, a trip to Georgetown, which is typical of Garland's method of presenting the characters in such a way so as to allow them to dominate the plot. This method of character description is found in other stories of Garland, the presence of which was recognized by Taylor when he observes that it is the portrayal of the characters that presents the futility of their lives rather than situation.

There is power in portrayals such as these, (Sim Burns and Lucretia in "Lucretia Burns") the unforgettable power of a profound indignation which has found adequate voice. And these two are reinforced by other descriptions of equal force--that of Grant McLane in "Up the Coule," those of "A Day's Pleasure" and the dying Matilda in "Before the Low Green Door"--descriptions that say all that need be said about the futility of lives, women's lives especially, that never escape the imprisonment of poverty.¹

This emphasis on characterization is in keeping with Garland's literary creed that, for verity, interest should depend upon the characters. He further states that the plan should spring naturally and unpredictably from the lives of the characters themselves,² the second method by which he, in keeping with his creed, allowed his characters to dominate the plot.

The natural evolvement of the plan or plot from the lives of the characters is exemplified in nearly all of Garland's short stories, with the exception of those flaws already mentioned, that of Agnes going away with Will, and that of Julia so readily accepting the proposal of Rodney; however, we have noted that the interest in these two cases lay

¹Taylor, op. cit., p. 161.
²Supra, pp. 6-7.
with the passions of the personalities involved rather than the plan, which, even here, was made "real enough." Better examples of how Garland allowed the plan to spring from the characters are observed in such stories as "Up the Coule," "Under the Lion's Paw," "William Bacon's Man," and "A Stop-Over at Tyre."

In "Up the Coule," for example, the plot concerns the effects which poverty has in causing a conflict between two brothers, Grant and Howard McLane, and involves the ill will of Grant toward Howard, an ill will which grew out of Grant's envy for the good-natured, successful Howard, who had returned to the farm for a visit after making a success in the theater in New York, while Grant had remained, toiling on the farm against nature and an unjust society, and had become nearly poverty stricken. The conflict arises when Grant, envious of Howard's success and sensitive of his own poverty, rejects the offers of assistance made by Howard, who senses the dire need of his brother, while at the same time, realizing his own superior achievements over those of his brother. The plan, therefore, in accordance with Garland's creed, is unravelled naturally from the characters themselves, or their own passions and reactions to their peculiar predicament.

Again, in "Under the Lion's Paw," the plan springs from the characters themselves. Here, the plan involves the plight of the poverty stricken Haskins family, driven out of their Iowa farm by grasshoppers, to maintain a farm which is rented from Butler, a land speculator, for a term of three years, during the course of which, Haskins greatly improves the farm with hopes of buying it for the originally quoted price;

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1 Supra, pp. 22-23.
however, when he offers to buy it, Butler raises the price to include all the improvements made by Butler. The plot, therefore, concerned with the theme of economic injustice, arises from the desire of Haskins to ascertain his own farmland by his own hard work and is counterbalanced by Butler's desire to get as much out of the Haskins as possible, even though the proposed contract involves morally wrong conditions; hence, the plan again springs from the characters themselves, in keeping with Garland's creed.

The plot in "William Bacon's Man" also arises from the characters themselves, and concerns the plight of Lyman Gilman and Marietta Bacon to get married against the wishes of William Bacon, who, in thinking of his own loneliness and necessity for companionship and help in his daily toil on the farm, does not want to let Marietta take marriage vows. We, therefore, again find the plot springing from the desires and passions of the characters themselves.

In "A Stop-Over at Tyre," as a final example, the plot springs from the characters, concerning itself with the attempts of young Albert Lohr to get funds for the continuation of his education by selling books in the little town, Tyre, only to be doomed to a life of toil when his ambitions are thwarted by his love for and decision to marry Maud, the girl whom he encounters while selling books at Tyre. Albert's conflict of interest in both his education (which is the only thing that will liberate him from a life of toil and poverty) and his love for Maud is intensified by Maud's love for him. This is what gives rise to the plot; consequently, in accordance with Garland's creed, the plan, which concerns the effects of a premature marriage in preventing a man from his intended career, arises from the characters themselves, and, as the
foregoing examples illustrate, is characteristic of Garland's method of allowing the plot to spring naturally and unpredictably from the characters themselves, in arriving at a satisfactory degree of verity concerning the hardships of farm life.

In this chapter, we have surveyed Garland's employment of realism in his treatment of characters which, we noted, consisted of choosing his characters from real men and women by original contact and presenting them realistically by the use of authentic speech and feelings, and by allowing the plot to spring naturally from the lives of the characters themselves. Thus, in doing this, we found that Garland adhered to his principles of verity as observed in the first chapter. In the next chapter, we will turn our attention to Garland's treatment of realism in the themes and plots of his short stories.
CHAPTER III

REALISM IN THEME AND PLOT

In this chapter, the writer will be concerned with Hamlin Garland's employment of realism in the treatment of the plots in his short stories. As with his treatment of characters, discussed in the preceding chapter, Garland's treatment of plot was in keeping with his literary creed, veritism, and consists of choosing the themes for plot from real and present situations, and presenting these themes in a realistic fashion. These two methods of arriving at realism, the selection of and presentation of themes for plot, will be discussed in the order mentioned.

As we have already seen, Garland set forth the literary proposition that the themes utilized in the development of plots should represent real and present conditions or situations. In keeping with his literary creed, therefore, the themes in his short stories are real and of the present, for they treat of the hardships confronting farm life in the eighteen eighties, and generally portray the struggles and toil of the farmer in maintaining the farm, or the struggle of the farmer against an unjust society.

That Garland's themes for his plots are taken from real situations is emphasized by him when, in speaking of the realistic descriptions of

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1 Supra, pp. 7-10.

2 Parrington, op. cit., p. 292.

3 Taylor, op. cit., p. 160.
the hardships of the farmer in his short stories, he states his qualification for and fidelity to the description of the farmer's daily struggle to maintain the farm. In *Roadside Meetings*, he states:

What do you know of the farm realities I describe? You are the daughter of the banker in the county town riding up our lane in a covered buggy....But I happen to be one of those binding the grain. I have been at it for ten hours. I have bound my half of eight acres of oats. My fingers are worn to the quick and my wrists are full of briars. I know Western farm life. No one can tell me anything about it. I have been stung by hail, and smothered in dust behind the harrow. I have spaded manure in the rain and husked corn in November's mud and snow. I have risen at dawn month after month to milk cows and curry horses, and I have stood at the tail-end of a straw-carrier till I was black as a negro (sic) and half blind with sweat.¹

These first-hand experiences of Garland were also observed by Goldstein, who commented on Garland's use of them for the attainment of material which went into the themes for his plots.

One peculiarity of Mr. Garland's style is its freshness and for this we easily account: he goes into the fields every summer to work; he sees the same grinding poverty, the same inequality in conditions that existed years ago, and his wrath is rekindled, his enthusiasm as a land reformer renewed. No wonder he is a "veritist."²

Van Doren, in an article published in the *Nation*, also recognized Garland's first-hand knowledge of the themes which he employed when he states that "In that first brilliant cycle of stories, this downright pioneer worked with the material which of all materials he knew best."

Howells, too, had noted that Garland's "treatment of country life is...


²Goldstein, op. cit., p. 154.

³Van Doren, op. cit., p. 597.
authentic."\(^1\)

That these themes, concerned with the hardships of the farmer in maintaining the farm, were from real, present situations, is further illustrated by the newspaper's reaction to them, for the author's "emphasis of the grinding toil of the men, women, and children on the farm, the unceasing round of plowing, threshing, milking, cooking, sewing, and scrimping to meet interest payments on the mortgage...brought down a storm of editorials.\(^2\)

Bowden also noted that the themes for Garland's stories were taken from real, present themes. Speaking of Main-Travelled Roads, he states that the volume "as was intended, showed up the seamy side of life on a western farm, and this was ground for provocation of the hostile critics of that section.\(^3\)

B. R. McElderry, in support of the authenticity of Garland's descriptions, notes the accuracy with which they were set down. "Main-Travelled Roads," he states, "is Garland's best-known book. It is also his best one---

the most original, the most enduring. The stories are most valuable, no doubt, as a fictional record of midwest farm life as it was in the 1880's, but the record is set down with insight and skill...\(^4\)

Finally, Parrington, in speaking of Garland's desire to tell of the

\(^1\)William Dean Howells, "Mr. Garland's Books," North American Review, CXCVI (October, 1912), 525.


\(^3\)Bowden, op. cit., p. 421.

\(^4\)Garland, op. cit., p. ix; from the preface.
hardships of Midwest farm-life, relates Garland's intention to adhere to the real circumstances surrounding the farmer's life. The Middle Border, he states,

...had no spokesman at the court of letters and if he could gain a hearing there he must not betray his father's household by glossing ungainly reality; he must depict the life of the western farmer as it was lived under the summer sun and winter cold, what harvests were brought to crib and what sort of wealth was finally gathered.\(^1\)

This, then, was Garland's intention, and he "succeeded greatly"\(^2\) in describing these hardships of farm life. We see it, for example, in the struggles of Grant McLane in "Up the Coule," in the toil of Lucretia in "Lucretia Burns," in the industrious toil of the Haskins in "Under the Lion's Paw," and in Julie Peterson's toil in "Among the Corn-Rows."

The second category of themes which Garland chose to employ are also realistic and of the present, for they concern the struggle of the farmer against an unjust society. Society has been unjust, these themes suggest, in allowing the existence of land monopoly by land speculators, who rented the land to farmers to till while the speculators, themselves, reaped the benefits of the farmer's toilsome labor. The treatment of themes concerned with the injustice of society was recognized by Parrington. "Main-Travelled Roads and Prairie Folks," he states, "are the protest of one oppressed with the meanness of a world that takes such heavy toll of human happiness."

This theme of the "meanness" of society against the farmer in Garland's stories is also noted by Granville Hicks, who regarded Garland

\(^1\)Parrington, *op. cit.*, p. 292.

\(^2\)Ibid., p. 296.
as a literary rebel of the late eighties and early nineties. He states that Garland,

Fresh from the soil of the Middle Border, only just released from the plow and the stable, with the lives of his parents and their neighbors before him as proof of the bitter lot of the pioneer,...wrote some of the finest fiction we have---direct, comprehensive, moving, and savagely honest. Scarcely a word of it is propaganda, but it draws its power from the author's conviction, irresistibly communicated to the reader, of the desperate injustice of the farmer's situation.¹

Howells, too, a contemporary of Garland, early recognized the themes of injustice in the stories of Garland, when he commented on those stories found in Main-Travelled Roads. "These stories," he states, are full of the bitter and burning dust, the foul and trampled slush of the common avenues of life: the life of the men who hopelessly and cheerlessly make the wealth that enriches the alien and the idler, and impoverishes the producer. If any one is still at a loss to account for that uprising of the farmers in the West..., let him read Main-Travelled Roads and he will begin to understand....²

Here, again, the themes treated, as observed by Howells, are concerned with the injustice placed on the farmer or "impoverished producer" by the land speculator or "alien and idler," who reaps all the wealth while the farmer suffers.

Garland, himself, had thrashed out the problem of social injustice with Howells, who saw a different remedy for the situation from the one proposed by Garland. Garland believed that land monopoly was the primary cause of the farmer's poverty. He states that Howells was deeply moved by the social injustice which we had all recently discovered, and often as we walked and talked he spoke of Bellamy's delineation of the growing contrasts

¹Granville Hicks, "Garland of the Academy," Nation, CXXXIII (October 21, 1931), 436.

²Howells, op. cit., p. 639.
between the rich and the poor, while I dilated upon Henry George's statement of the suffering and deprivations of the proletariat....He was always for some communistic reform, while I was perfectly clear that land monopoly was the fundamental cause of poverty and must be destroyed first of all.¹

The depiction of social injustice in the short stories of Garland was also observed by Van Doren, who states that the overtones, vibrating through the words of Garland,

...cry out that the earth and the fruits of the earth belong to all men yet a few of them are turned tiger or dog or jackal and snatched what is precious for themselves while their fellows starve and freeze.²

In at least nine stories, Taylor observes that Garland has taken themes from prevalent injustices or society. He notes that

...the need for reform and the influence of economic conditions are major themes in...nine stories: "A Branch Road," "Up the Coulee," "Among the Corn-Rows," "Under the Lion's Paw," "A Day's Pleasure," "Sim Burn's Wife," "A Stop-Over at Tyre," "An Alien in the Pines," and "Before the Low Green Door."³

and he proceeds to explain the nature of this injustice expressed in them, which he, too, sees as resulting from monopolistic holdings in land.

The economic creed expressed in these nine stories is as simply conceived as it is powerfully driven home. That because of economic injustice rural life is now barren and intolerably painful; that such suffering must be relieved, and such barrenness enriched; and that these gains may be had by the one thoroughgoing act of destroying all monopolistic holdings in land---this is Garland's platform.⁴

³Taylor, op. cit., p. 160.
⁴Ibid.
Finally, Donald Pizer, although labeling Garland's stories as single-tax stories, recognized that these stories present themes taken from the farmer's conflict with an unjust society:

It is this crushing of individual opportunity by land speculation which is stressed in Garland's stricter single-tax work, such as "Under the Lion's Paw"....But all the stories conceived during this period which present hardship, poverty, and lack of "culture" in the West are intrinsically single-tax stories, as Garland viewed these conditions as derived from current land conditions, and though he did not directly indicate the remedy, such a method defeating his purpose, he exhibited the feelings of contemporary life in single-tax terms.¹

Thus far, we have seen that Garland was true to his literary creed, veritism, in the selection of his themes from real, present sources, since he chose themes which concerned the hardships of Mid-west farm life in maintaining the farm, as he knew it, and themes concerned with the economic injustice placed on the farmer by society. We have also noted in the first chapter, however, that Garland contended, in expressing his literary creed, that the manner in which the plot is presented should be realistic, the criteria for realistic presentation being simplicity and clarity, on the one hand, and subordination to characters on the other. That Garland subordinated his plots to the characters in his short stories has already been discussed in the chapter on characters; therefore, any discussion here, the writer feels, would be repetitious. We will now turn our attention to a consideration of how Garland exemplified simplicity and clarity in the plots of his short stories.

That the plots in Garland's short stories are simple and clear is substantiated by B. R. McElderry, who in speaking of the accuracy with

which Garland recorded descriptions of Midwest farm life, states that these stories "are unsubtle but the reader, unless he is extremely pre-
judiced in favor of sophisticated complexity, will respond to these stories...."

From this, it is obvious that Garland did not allow "sophisticated complexity" in plot to blur the truthful descriptions which he attempted to make. An analyses of some of the stories themselves, however, will more clearly reveal Garland's adherence to simplicity and clarity in presentation of plot.

The story, "A Branch Road," for example has a simple plot, uncomplicated by the complexity of subplots. In this story, Will is in love with Agnes, whom he encounters while working as a hired thrasher for Mr. Dingham, the father of Agnes. The county fair comes to town, and when Will does not show up on time, Agnes goes with Ed McKinney. Embittered, Will goes away for three years, only to return to find Agnes mismated and overworked, upon which he lures her away with him from her unhappy home and overworked condition. This is the only plot in the story and is not complicated by subplots; hence, its simplicity.

The plot in "Under the Lion's Paw" is also simple and clear. The Councils give a night's lodging to the Haskins family who have been driven out of their Kansas home by grasshoppers. The next day, a rental of Butler's farm is made, which Haskins greatly improves in three years. However, when he offers to buy it, he is forced to accept the hard terms of paying for his own improvements. Aside from this, there is no other plan in the story.

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1Garland, op. cit.; from the preface.
"Lucretia Burns," also, has a simple and clear plot. Here, the protagonist, Lucretia, tired and overworked, borders on the point of insanity. For several days she does not speak to her husband, Sim, feeling that he is inconsiderate toward her. Finally, Lily Graham, the local school teacher hears of this family situation from Sadie, one of the Burns' children. She, therefore, intercedes between Sim and Lucretia and successfully ameliorates the hard feelings on the part of both by extracting and delivering apologies for them both. This constitutes the entire plot and is devoid of other plans or plots, again characteristic of Garland's avoidance of complexity in plots.

A final example, "Before the Low Green Door," will illustrate the simplicity and clarity which is characteristic of Garland's plots. In this story, Matilda Bent, the protagonist, lies dying in her bedroom from cancer. Mrs. Martha Ridings, a friend since childhood, arrives at the scene and discovers this fact from the doctor just as he is departing, upon which, she enters the room to offer any possible assistance to the dying woman. The only assistance she can give, Martha learns from Matilda, is to sit by the dying woman's bedside until death, which, of course, she does. The waiting provides occasion for Matilda to ruminate on her happy childhood experiences with Mrs. Ridings and to contrast those experiences with present, unhappy, experiences of farm life. Simple and clear, therefore, the plot in this story, just as all the foregoing examples indicate, is typical of the simplicity and clarity in presentation of plot which Garland believed was essential to verity, or a truthful delineation of life.

In this chapter, we have surveyed Garland's employment of realism in the treatment of the themes and plots of his short stories. We have
found that his treatment of realism in theme and plot was in keeping with his literary creed, veritism, as expressed in the first chapter, since he chose his themes for plot from real, contemporary events, and presented his plots in a simple and clear manner, devoid of any subplots, and free from complexities. In the final chapter, we will turn our attention to a consideration of Garland's employment of realism in setting and observe how closely this treatment approximates his literary creed concerning setting in fiction.
CHAPTER IV

REALISM IN THE TREATMENT OF SETTING

Hamlin Garland, in keeping with his literary creed, veritism, employed realism, not only in his treatment of characters, theme, and plot, but also in his treatment of the settings in his short stories. As has already been stated, he contended that the settings in fiction, if they are to be true to the life they represent, should be derived by first-hand observation on the part of the fictionist and, therefore, should be authentic. In keeping with this contention, description being a common fictional method with him, he employed realism in his settings by giving authentic descriptions of Middle Border scenery and weather conditions.

We note, first of all, that Garland employed authentic detail in descriptions of Middle Border scenery, which included not only detailed descriptions of pleasant, beautiful scenes, but, because he would be true, included detailed descriptions of unpleasant, desolate places as well, these descriptions having been derived from first-hand observation on the part of the author, as was observed by Bowden in a review of Garland in the Sewanee Review, which reads in part,

When young Hamlin was seven years old, his family moved from Wisconsin to Iowa, taking up their abode in Winneshiek County. It was here that young Hamlin received that vivid impression of nature which is reproduced in his stories with so much freshness and vigor. He has given us a graphic

1 Supra, p. 10.

2 Taylor, op. cit., p. 162.

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picture of his Iowa farm in his fascinating story, "Up the Coulee." He begins his description thus: "A farm in the valley. Over the mountains swept jagged..." These descriptions...come from his own experience.1

Pattee, too, supports the contention that Garland wrote of Middle Border scenery from an authentic point of view, noting that these descriptions were not written with any thought of local color, which is also in keeping with Garland's creed that local color should not be included merely for the sake of picturesqueness, but because it must be included as a result of the author's love for it.2 In this connection, Pattee states that the distinguishing feature of Garland's stories...

...lies in their genuineness and their spontaneous freshness. They are photographically true to the Middle Western environment in the decade immediately following the war, but for the most part they were not written with thought of local color. They were written with passion by one who knew.3

Again, in this connection, B. R. McElderry notes the authenticity of Garland's description of scenery when he flatly states, "The description is authentic,"4 and cites the following example:

The muck of the furrows on the wet fall day was "black" and "tenacious as tar," yet as the wheat ripened it began "to wave and rustle and swirl in the winds of July."5

We have already stated that these authentic descriptions extended to authentic detailed descriptions of pleasant, beautiful scenes in the short stories of Garland. We may observe such descriptions throughout most of the stories, but for purposes of exemplification, we will refer

1Bowden, op. cit., p. 412.

2Supra, p. 10.


4Garland, op. cit., p. xv; from the preface.

5Ibid.
specifically to "A Branch Road," "Up the Coulee," "Among the Corn-Rows," "William Bacon's Man," "Lucretia Burns," and "A Division in the Coolly."

In "A Branch Road," we note the description of a pleasant, beautiful scene as the story opens with Will Hannan walking in a lane on his way to Mr. Dingham's farm to help with the thrashing:

Above the level belt of timber to the east a vast dome of pale undazzling gold was rising....Jays called in the thickets where the maples flamed amid the green oaks, with irregular splashes of red and orange. The grass was crisp with frost under the feet, the road smooth and gray-white in color....

As Will continued to walk, the beauty of the scenery became even more beautiful:

And the east bloomed broader. The dome of gold grew brighter, the mist clouds here and there flamed with a flush red. The frost began to glisten with a reflected color.

This beauty of scenery is again caught up in its majesty in "Up the Coulee," as Howard McLane observes the scenes from his seat on the train going from Milwaukee to the Mississippi.

The ride from Milwaukee to the Mississippi is a fine ride....To...whirl away in a breezy July day, past lakes, groves of oak, past fields of barley being reaped, past hayfields, where the heavy grass is toppling before the swift sickle, is a panorama of delight, a road full of delicious surprises, where down a sudden vista lakes open, or a distant wooded hill looms darkly blue, or swift streams, foaming deep down the solid rock, send...cool breezes in at the window.

As Howard arrives in his hometown, he notices the charm of the wooded

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1Garland, Main-Travelled Roads, p. 9.
2Ibid., p. 11.
3Ibid., p. 75.
hills that surrounded the town, and "took off his hat to them as he stood there," observing them, for they,

Richly wooded, with gently-sloping green sides, rising to massive square or rounded tops with dim vistas...glowed down upon the squalid town, gracious, lofty in their greeting, immortal in their vivid and delicate beauty.¹

In "Among the Corn-Rows," this beauty of scenery is mentioned as

Seagraves walks out on the prairie in Boomtown to enjoy it:

The scene was characteristically, wonderfully beautiful... the level plain was green and yellow, and infinite in reach as a sea; the lowering sun was casting over its distant swells a faint impalpable mist,...The whistle of gophers,...or the quack of a lonely duck, came through the shimmering air...No other climate, sky, plain, could produce the same unnamable weird charm.²

The opening scene in "William Bacon's Man" affords another example of Garland's detailed description of beautiful scenes. The time of year being in the Spring, the description begins,

The yellow March sun lay powerfully on the bare Iowa prairie, where the ploughed fields were already turning warm and brown, and only here and there in a corner or on the north side of the fence did the sullen drifts remain, and they were so dark and low that they hardly appeared to break the mellow brown of the fields.³

"Lucretia Burns," despite its melancholy tone resulting from the descriptions of the drab life led by Lucretia, has vivid descriptions of beautiful scenery as the following indicates:

The wind sang in her ears; the great clouds, beautiful as heavenly ships, floated far above in the vast, dazzling deeps of blue sky; the birds rustled and chirped around her; leaping insects buzzed and clattered in the

¹Garland, Main-Travelled Roads, pp. 77-8.
²Ibid., p. 148.
³Garland, Other Main-Travelled Roads, p. 3.
grass and in the vines and bushes. The goodness of God was in the very air,...

Finally, "A Division in the Coolly," affords examples of the detailed descriptions which Garland employed in presenting the beauty of Middle Border scenery. A typical description of the Wisconsin landscape begins, "Saturday was

deliciously warm and springlike, the hens woke in the early dawn with a jocund note in their throats, and the young cattle frisked about the barn-yard, moved to action by the electrical influences of the south wind....The ponds crashed and boomed in long reverberating explosions, as the sinking water heaved it up and let it fall with crackling roar; flights of ducks flashed over, cackling breathlessly as they scurried straight into the north.

Again, in Chapter IV, the description of the Wisconsin landscape is presented. "It was mid-spring," the description begins, and goes on,

Everywhere was the vivid green Wisconsin landscape; the slopes were like carefully tended lawns, without stumps or stones; the groves rose up the hills, pink and gray and green in softly rounded billows of cherry bloom and tender oak and elm foliage. Here and there under the forest tender plants and flowers had sprung up, slender and succulent like all productions of a rich and shadowed soil.

Although the foregoing are descriptions of beautiful, pleasant scenery, not all descriptions are in this vein, for some are descriptions of unpleasant desolate places. Examples of such descriptions may be observed in "Up the Coule," "The Return of a Private," "A Stop-Over at Tyre," and "An Alien in the Pines."

The first of these unpleasant scenes is noted in "Up the Coule,"

1Garland, Other Main-Travelled Roads, p. 95.

2Ibid., pp. 211-12.

3Ibid., pp. 231-32.
and is a description of Howard McLane's hometown, with its drab scenery.

How poor and dull and sleepy and squalid it seemed! The one main street ended at the hillside at his left, and stretched away to the north, between two rows of the usual village stores, unrelieved by a tree or a touch of beauty. An unpaved street, drab-colored, miserable, rotting wooden buildings, with the inevitable battlements—the same, only worse, was the town.¹

The second of these unpleasant scenes is noted in "A Return of a Private," where the description is rendered of Mrs. Smith's farm, which lay at the head of a coule or narrow gully, made at some far-off post-glacial period by the vast and angry floods of water which gullied these tremendous furrows in the level prairie—furrows so deep that undisturbed portions of the original level rose like hills on either side,—rose to quite considerable mountains.²

In "A Stop-Over at Tyre," the description of the unpleasant scenery is given with a tone of desolation. In fact,

No more desolate place could well be imagined. A level plain, apparently bare of houses, swept by a ferocious wind; a dingy little den called a station—no other shelter in sight; no sign of life save the dull glare of two windows to the left, alternately lost and found in the storm.³

This same type of desolation is featured in "An Alien in the Pines," in which a description of a Wisconsin landscape is given. "On every side were the evidences," the passage goes, "of a ruined forest land. A landscape of flat wastes, of thinned and burned and uprooted trees. A desolate and apparently useless land."⁴

¹Garland, Main-Travelled Roads, p. 77.
²Ibid., p. 198.
³Garland, Other Main-Travelled Roads, p. 148.
⁴Ibid., p. 265.
From the foregoing it is obvious that Garland employed detailed description not only in the treatment of pleasant scenes, but unpleasant scenes as well. This same type of description, as already intimated, extended to his descriptions of the weather conditions on the Middle Border, treating not only pleasant, beautiful weather, but unpleasant and sometimes extremely harsh weather as well.

In order to illustrate Garland's realistic description of weather, we shall observe examples of Garland's detailed descriptions of beautiful, pleasant weather on the Middle Border in the stories entitled "A Branch Road," "Up the Coule," "The Return of a Private," and "A Division in the Cooly."

Observing, first, "A Branch Road," we note that the story opens with, "In the windless September dawn—the ideal day for a ride...."1 In Chapter III, the cloudless sky is spoken of, which was

...deeply blue, with only here and there a huge heavy, slow-moving, massive, sharply-outlined cloud sailing like a berg of ice in a shoreless sea of azure.2

Again, in "Up the Coule," we notice the description of pleasant, beautiful weather where the scene opens with "a breezy July day,"3 as Howard rides on a train from Milwaukee to the Mississippi, and "swift streams, foaming deep down the solid rock, send cool breezes in at the window."4

1Garland, Main-Travelled Roads, p. 9.
2Ibid., p. 41.
3Ibid., p. 75.
4Ibid.
In "The Return of a Private," we observe the description of a fair day on Sunday in the West.

...Sundays are usually fair in harvest-time. As one goes out into the field in the hot morning sunshime, with no sound abroad save the crickets and the indescribably pleasant, silken rustling of the ripened grain, the reaper and the very sheaves in the stubble seem to be resting, dreaming.\(^1\)

We observe in "William Bacon's Man" a description of a fair night in March on the Western prairie with the south wind full of "wonderful odor" while "Overhead, to the West, the stars were shining in the cloudless sky, dimmed a little by the faint silvery veil of moisture in the air."\(^2\) Also we observe the description of a beautiful spring day:

...the sun burst up from the plain, the prairie-chickens took up their mighty chorus on the hills, robins met them on the way, flocks of wild geese, honking cheerily, drove far overhead toward the north, and, with these sounds of a golden spring day in her ears, the bride grew cheerier, and laughed.\(^3\)

A description of the coming of spring in the western town, Tyre, is given in "A Stop-Over at Tyre."

At the end of the fifth week...a suspicion of spring was in the wind as it swept the southern exposure of the valley. March was drawing to a close, and there was more than a suggestion of April in the rapidly melting snow which still lay on the hills and under the cedars and tamaracks in the swamps. Patches of green grass, appearing on the sunny side of the road where the snow had melted, led to predictions of spring from the loafers beginning to sun themselves on the salt-barrels and shoe-boxes...\(^4\)

\(^1\)Garland, Main-Travelled Roads, p. 197.

\(^2\)Garland, Other Main-Travelled Roads, p. 18.

\(^3\)Ibid., p. 19.

\(^4\)Ibid., p. 186.
This description of pleasant weather is finally observed in "A Division in the Cooly," when Sarah asks a neighbor, "Ain't it a nice day?" She evidently felt the power of the day's beauty, but

That was as far as she could carry the utterance of her feeling, but all the morning she had felt the wonder-ful power of the air. The sun had risen incredibly warm. The wind was in the south, and the crackling, booming roar of ice in the ponds and along the river was like winter letting go its iron grip upon the land.

Though the foregoing are descriptions of agreeable, beautiful weather, not all of Garland's descriptions of weather are of this nature, for in an effort to be true to the scenes which he described, he also gave descriptions of unpleasant and often severe weather conditions, as is verified by examples from "Up the Coule," "Among the Corn-Rows," "Mrs. Ripley's Trip," "Daddy Deering," "A Stop-Over at Tyre," and "An Alien in the Pines."

An extreme unpleasantness of weather is described in "Up the Coule," as Grant is pitching hay into the barn.

It was windless there. The sun fell through the white mist with undiminished fury, and the fragrant hay sent up a breath that was hot as an oven-draught....The sweat poured from his (Grant's) face like rain, and he was forced to draw his dripping sleeve across his face to clear away the blinding sweat that poured into his eyes.

In chapter four of the same story, there is a detailed description of the unceasing rain, which was falling...

...around the house drearily. It ran down into the tubs placed to catch it, dripped from the mossy pump, and

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1Garland, Other Main-Travelled Roads, p. 214.

2Ibid.

3Garland, Main-Travelled Roads, p. 112.
drummed on the upturned milk-pails, and upon the brown and yellow bee-hives under the maple-trees... The barnyard showed a horrible mixture of mud and mire,...

The heat of the sun can also be a menacing, unpleasant factor in the weather. Garland renders its power in "Among the Corn-Rows."

A corn-field in July is a hot place. The soil is hot and dry; the wind comes across the lazily murmering leaves laden with a warm sickening smell drawn from the rapidly-growing, broad-flung banners of the corn. The sun, nearly vertical, drops a flood of dazzling light and heat upon the field over which the cool shadows run, only to make the heat seem the more intense.²

Cold weather, also, is vividly described by Garland as being unpleasant and severe on the Western prairie. In "Mrs. Ripley's Trip," for example, Ethan Ripley braves the winter weather. He walks among the corn-rows,

...the cold wind piercing to the bone through his threadbare and insufficient clothing. The rising wind sent the snow rattling among the moaning stalks at intervals. The cold made his poor dim eyes water, and he had to stop now and then to swing his arms about his chest to warm them.³

This severe cold weather is again described in detail as Ethan takes his wife to the station for her trip.

There is no ride quite so desolate and uncomfortable as a ride in a lumber wagon on a cold day in autumn, when the ground is frozen, and the wind is strong and raw with threatening snow. The wagon-wheels grind along in the snow, the cold gets in under the seat at the calves of one's legs,...⁴

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¹Garland, Other Main-Travelled Roads, p. 135.
²Ibid., p. 162.
³Ibid., p. 250.
⁴Ibid., p. 255.
Again, in "Daddy Deering," the severe weather was instrumental in causing his death as he enters the snow in a delirium:

The wind was blowing the snow, cold and dry, across the yard, but the sun shone brilliantly upon the figure in the snow as they came up to it. There Daddy lay. The snow was in his scant hair and in the hollow of his wide, half-naked chest.¹

Finally, in "A Stop-Over at Tyre," Albert thinks of the brakemen braving the winter weather on the train which he is riding:

Albert shuddered with a sympathetic pain as he thought of the heroic fellows on the tops of the icy cars, with hands straining at frosty brakes, the wind cutting their faces like a sand-blast.²

In this, the final chapter, we have seen that the descriptions which Garland made of Middle Border scenery and weather conditions, detailed and authentic in their presentation, were the primary means by which he arrived at realism in setting, having made these descriptions from first-hand observation of Middle Border scenery. This realistic treatment of setting, then, is the final means by which he attained realism in his short stories, and it, too, just as his treatment of characters, theme, and plot, was in keeping with his literary creed of realism, which, out of his utter disdain for the term, realism, he chose to call "veritism."

¹Garland, Other Main-Travelled Roads, p. 139.

²Ibid., p. 147.
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