

The Decline of Social Inter-relationships
in the Family, the Church, and Traditions in
American Life as Seen in James T. Farrell's
Trilogy Studs Lonigan

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TRILOGY STUDS LONIGAN

1. DEFINITION OF NATURALISM

Naturalism has emerged in American literature as one of the primary philosophies in the twentieth century. American fiction has shifted away from the traditional literary philosophies of classicism, rationalism, and romanticism to the genre of naturalism. In the progression of contemporary American literature there has also been a transformation to include the philosophy of existentialism. The purpose of this project is to demonstrate that naturalistic elements are incorporated into James T. Farrell's Studs Lonigan trilogy in such a way as to show the decline of social inter-relationships in the family, the Church, and traditions in American life. Farrell is an American author who is identified in the American naturalistic tradition. In order to comprehend and evaluate the importance of Farrell in American literature, the reader should have a succinct knowledge of the philosophy he accepts, for naturalism is a dominant perspective throughout the Studs Lonigan trilogy.

There are essential elements which govern the existence of naturalism in literature.¹ As a philosophy, naturalism proposes an

¹The secondary sources which contributed to the consideration of the nature of naturalism and its development in American literature are

investigation of the real world. The naturalist accepts fact and invades the world of reality. In naturalism there is a deep concern with nature and the laws which govern it. Consequently, the naturalist acts as a scientist in his penetration into the world of natural law. The identification of nature is considered through the relationship of phenomena in given conditions by the naturalist. Naturalism excludes the interference of any divinity as the ruling force in the regulation of events in nature. In this scientific approach, the naturalist thinks of nature as a machine which has no dependence upon a supernatural divine order. It is as if nature were to be considered a kind of "cream separator" machine. Nature then may be viewed as a machine which has governing forces which are able to bring the strong to the top, thus obtaining survival, and at the same time exterminating the weak who cannot endure in the circumstances set up by this force.

Charles Child Walcutt's American Literary Naturalism, A Divided Stream, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1956), devoted to the treatment of American naturalism through the emphasis that the naturalistic literature in America flows in two streams by partly defying and partly submitting to nature; Alfred Kazin's On Native Grounds, (New York: Reynal and Hitchcock, 1942), an interpretation of modern American prose literature through the movements of realism and naturalism; Yervant H. Krikorian's Naturalism and the Human Spirit, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1944), a conscious and articulate work which treats the naturalistic tradition in literature as a protest against the prevailing supernaturalism which threatened it; Oscar Cargill's Intellectual America: Ideas on the March, (New York: MacMillan Company, 1941), a treatment of the invading forces which established the naturalistic tradition in America.

Therefore, the naturalist does not take into account or give much weight to human ethics in his acceptance of the governing laws of nature as the "cream separator".

There is an assertion by the naturalist that the existence of man is dependent upon the particle apportionment in nature. Scientific exploration of nature is a major influencing factor in naturalism. The universe of the scientist and the naturalist can be depicted as a variety, complex but viewable, of the conglomeration and separation of matter, particles and energy. What is controlled by the combination of particle arrangements for the naturalist is conceivably the mind, nature and the universe. The importance of this axiom is that in all matter there is an arrangement of chemical compounds. The naturalist, accepting this premise, realizes that the imagination and mind are, and must be, controlled by the order and arrangement of this matter. What disturbs the naturalist is his knowledge that through a chance fixation in nature the mind becomes arranged both structurally and functionally.

The naturalist in his acceptance of science employs a number of basic assumptions. There must be organic conditions which allow the human body to exist. The determination of the state in which a particular being exists is linked directly to the condition and state of the nervous system of that body. In Freudian psychology the subconscious drives and blind urges in man become the determining factor of his existence. The strange degree by which the naturalist shuns religion can be viewed by his acceptance of the real world. For the naturalist religion is accepted by man in an attempt to secure

some form of supernatural reality. In the philosophy of naturalism, religion becomes an institution which accepts the wish that heaven and God overrule the existence of certainty in the universe as nature. The naturalist because of his touch with the reality of the physical world opposes the supernatural in religion.

Another point through which the naturalist strikes against religion is that he conceives of himself as a being who has dignity by and in itself. His life must have meaning and dignity and be independent of a superior deity. His being is great in itself. This particular point will shift in the naturalistic tradition and become formalized in the philosophy of existentialism.

In naturalism experience must be meaningful. There can be no supernatural order in the universe. Within the universe there is an ordered arrangement which is governed by impersonal and natural laws. Contained in the boundaries of the arrangement are biological, chemical, and physical properties which become conditioned to the forces within nature. Nature or the universe, therefore, becomes the governing agent of man since he is a part of the evolutionary processes which are ruled by natural and universal laws. Man becomes a victim in nature when matter in the universe and the laws which govern its existence determine him to be so. There is no escape from the law in which nature permits man to exist. Nature may change, may fluctuate, may mutate her laws; but for the naturalist, man will have to suffer the consequences for any change brought about.

American fiction during the late nineteenth and early twentieth

century shows a notable degree of freedom and boldness. In American naturalism the writers deal with varieties of life and character. Boldness becomes a form of esthetic value for the naturalistic writer. Human nature in American literature, as well as in world literature, is conceived of as ruthless and cruel. The naturalist presents his truth nakedly. Based upon the construction of a Puritan heritage in American society, subject to and governed by Puritan law, this truthful presentation by the naturalist is thought to be either unkind or immoral, dependent upon the time of the author. The Bible, God, and the Church traditions weighed heavily against the production and distribution of the literature in American naturalism.

American naturalism is a conscious and articulate exploration into the intellect of a rude young country. The naturalist protested the prevailing supernaturalism in his society. By linking himself to his surroundings, the naturalist was able to penetrate into the corruption which had germinated through the explosion of materialism in the American environment. For the naturalist there is a turning away from supernaturalism wherein man negates God for power and wealth.

In the philosophy of naturalism man is either controlled or doomed to defeat by the arrangement of the phenomena in the universe. Because of the forces in nature controlling man, the naturalist expresses both a pessimistic and fatalistic view of life. In naturalism there is usually a high degree of fatalism with the non-acceptance of free will. The naturalist studies man as an animal who becomes a product of forces which work upon him. In this observation of man by the naturalist there appears a constant fluctuation between the genetic and environ-

mental forces which penetrated into the genre of naturalism at the beginning of the twentieth century.

A significant consequence which occurred in American naturalism was the exposure of the decay of traditionalism which evolved during the years of World War I. The naturalist then revolted against the post-war scene of European exhaustion. The American myth of Puritanism became the target for the naturalist in this post-war period. The result of naturalism during this decade was the presentation of each author as a specialist in anguish. The naturalist became alienated from his society, and in the case of an author like Hemingway his world became a perpetual state of war. Society was no longer comfortable in her gin, in her sexual freedom, and in her gambling. America was in a series of afflictions with the shock of panic becoming the tone of the nineteen-thirties.

The collapse of rational values was the climax to the crash of the stock market. The American naturalist sees man now as being menaced and physically victimized by the external development of society. There is a sickening paralysis which takes place during this crisis. Naturalism becomes a strong literary revolution which would work for the improvement of man in the American society. The naturalist becomes a strong force depicting the destruction and disintegration of man in the time of the machine age. He will show how the traditions in American life are no longer valued by the individual in the machine age. Naturalism evolved as an emotional protest against the attitudes of its society. Naturalistic literature will express disgust and a

need to shock. The naturalist will attempt to seek in man a truth for his freedom with the obsession of pain and cruelty obstructing this search. Naturalistic authors such as John Steinbeck, John Dos Passos, and William Faulkner demonstrate their affliction by presenting the destructive elements of commercialism in America. The naturalist presents in his literature a catharsis by terror, if not by pity. In naturalism there is a wish for man to combat the forces which surround him, even though he is doomed to those forces.

2. NATURALISTIC QUALITIES EXISTING IN FARRELL'S STUDS LONIGAN

One important feature in American fiction today is that it has been produced by authors who have witnessed two world wars. The scope of the disaster of war greatly affected the theme of man's depravity by the world which surrounds him. There is usually horror and dismay when viewing war and doubt as to the ideology that inspires it. The naturalist expresses disgust in man participating in war and in the worldwide commercial spirit which germinated in it. In naturalism, one can see a loathing for human nature which has been allowed to be dominated by the commercial spirit. In the civilized world of the twentieth century, the naturalist sees man disillusioned with human nature. One of the claims which a critic such as Joseph Warren Beach makes in his American Fiction: 1920 - 1940 is that the naturalists are actually "uncompromising realists in the historical sense of that term. They are determined not to be taken in by the claims of the heart and

imagination, by man's pretensions to be heroic."²

As a reader examines the naturalistic chronicles composed by the outstanding American authors, Steinbeck, Dos Passos, Hemingway and Farrell, he realizes that the authors do not judge human nature according to their own standards. What the author presents to the reader is conduct which is shocking and a presentation of life which does not enable the reader to focus upon his moral and traditional values in a comfortable way. In naturalism the author will not be polite. He will not romanticize and make life gay. What the naturalist will do in his literature is to expose the rationalizations of the bourgeois in the business and political worlds. He will not cover fornications and adulteries with chivalrous valor. The naturalist will make his reader encounter in his books the descriptive language used by the man on the street. What is now to be considered in this study is the naturalistic qualities which James. T. Farrell expresses in his Studs Lonigan trilogy.

Farrell's fiction of the poolroom loafer, Studs Lonigan, is a pure form of the 'scope-of-life' method. In Studs Lonigan the viewer is able to reflect upon the folly, despair, and desperation of life in America after World War I. The essential character, Studs, is totally defeated by the society in which he exists. Farrell in this important work penetrates and absorbs into his literature the events which accented and molded the American society of the early post-war period. He extends

²Joseph Warren Beach, American Fiction: 1920-1940, (New York: Russell and Russell, 1960), p. 12.

this picture of a man doomed to destruction by the forces surrounding him up to the days of the great depression. Studs, who typifies this modern man, is irreverent, youthful, falsely patriotic, negative in ideals, without hope, and quite ready to accept sex as a means to exist in his environment without contention. There is a vacuum in his life because of the loss of human values. What Farrell presents to his audience in Studs Lonigan is an urge by a spokesman of the American public to believe that either man must revolt against the social patterns extinguishing him, or be left in a world of complete futility.

In literary naturalism, life has no melodrama. What the author does in his work is to observe and record the surroundings about him. Farrell will not evaluate the events which surround Studs. For him the supernatural moral absolutes represent terms having no definition. This construction breaks away from the traditional approach of supernaturalism in the American tradition. The stress by the naturalist can be placed upon either environment or heredity. The seamy side of life will be insisted upon with full play being given to shocking effects of sensations. There will be an all-encompassing blinding force which will drive a man to his end. The naturalist will become and must become objective in the presentation of his characters. In Farrell's naturalism there is no critical evaluation of why and how a character reaches a particular consequence. For the naturalist, man will be caught in the vise of his society and by being gripped by a particular social value he will be presented as an individual in a particular class. What the naturalist will do is

to allow his character or victim to be able to see visions of greatness before he pulls him down. In naturalism there are usually expressions of statistics which can be gathered from the social and political scene. The style of the naturalist is flat, objective, and frequently bare of imagery. Naturalism will be, in some way, connected to the environments of either war, slums, or industry. In naturalism the author will stress the brutal, sordid, and savage relationships which man has to outside forces. There is a strong degree of contempt for the church, the family, and the school structures in his environment. God does not exist in the naturalist's world. The ability to penetrate into the workings and laws of matter becomes the idea of God for the naturalist. Unlike the romanticist who will make the ideal appear before that which is, the naturalist will present only the actual. Naturalism conveys the commonality of the world.

Farrell's Studs Lonigan trilogy is a record, an observation of a man from childhood to death. There is a minuteness of detail in each chapter in the trilogy. What the character observes is of interest to the naturalist. Farrell exposes his reader to this observation by Studs in Young Lonigan when he has his hero noticing the people around him:

The ugliest guy in the world passes. He was all out of joint. His face was colorless, and the jaws were sunken. He had the most Jewish nose in the world, and his lips were like a baboon's. He was round-shouldered, bow-legged and knock-kneed. His hands were too long, and as he walked he looked like a parabola from the side, and from the front like an approaching series of cubistic

planes. And he wore colored glasses. Studs looked at him, laughed, even half-admired a guy who could be so twisted, and wondered who the old plug was, and what he did.³

This passage illustrates the close observation by Studs of a man who is ugly. Studs only records the image of that which he sees. He can see and even laugh at the "twisted" plug in front of him. Except for the possibility of chance playing the major role, there is no evaluation of how this figure attained his physical state of existence.

The reader must remember that the naturalists will be objective in their presentations. Naturalism has no critical evaluation of characters. What is of primary concern to them is to focus upon the actions and events with which the character comes in contact. Consider the passage where Studs looks at his father as an old man:

He was getting along in years now, and it was showing, his gray hair thinning out, wrinkles coming into the blown red face, bags under the eyes, the look of all-around tiredness on it. Pretty tough, too, having worries in old age. He heard a faint wheeze with every breath his father took, and he continued to glance at the relaxed face. Tough!⁴

The reader can see only objective presentation by Farrell in this instance. His language is cold, hard and gives evidence of the state in which his father resides. Farrell lets Studs describe himself

³ James T. Farrell, Studs Lonigan, (New York: The New American Library, 1965), pp. 108-109. The trilogy is composed of Young Lonigan, (1932), The Young Manhood of Studs Lonigan, (1934), and Judgment Day, (1935).

⁴ ⁸⁴
Ibid., p. 584.

later on when the world is destroying him:

Jesus, if he only could walk along with her on a sunny spring morning like this one and not have acwoxy in his head, no worry about his dough sunk in Imbray stock, about his health and weak heart, and the possibility of not living a long life, and not wondering would he, by afternoon, feel pooped and shot. And then it was so gloomy at home that it could be cut with a knife, and it was bound to affect him, the old man's business going to pot, his dough lost and going fast, his expenses, unrented apartments, the mortgage.⁵

What the viewer sees in this description is a man who wishes to get out of the environment which is strangling him. Farrell stays in the background and puts his character on a platform for the reader to see. It is as if he is a scientist who takes a sample of some form of life and puts it on a petri dish and lets the microscope describe his sample.

In naturalism man becomes captured by the social forces around him. There is a grip in some form to lead him in a particular direction. Farrell has Studs caught up in the forces of society by his dependence upon the stock market. Not only he but also his family comes to rely upon chance that stock will get him in a comfortable position:

And there were so many wrinkles now in his mother's face, and the circles under her eyes, too, made her seem old. She was the kind who must always be wearing herself out doing things for other people, for the old man, for himself and Martin, for the girls, and Phil and Carroll. And she would go on

⁵Farrell, op. cit., p. 522.

doing things for her home and her family until the end.
 Suppose the old man did lose everything? How tough it
 would be on her? God, if his stock would only
 go up and hold them from such troubles!

It becomes pathetic to see man's reliability on an outside force which controls his fate. The total dependence upon social acceptability of something, in this case stock, is the ruling force which determines whether or not a man survives or is destroyed. Throughout the trilogy, social forces keep Studs away from improving his future life. It becomes almost repulsive to witness a man struggling against something that he can not see or touch.

The personification of the social forces surrounding Studs is imbued in the social structure in which he belongs. His language, his family, his manners, and his financial instability demonstrate throughout the book that he is a member of a low middle-class Irish family living in Chicago. What lacerates the audience is the experiences which Studs enjoys in his class. Consider the reaction of Studs Lonigan's brother, Martin, in his concept of what life is:

"You bet, Studs, this idea of sweating your tail off with work and carefulness is the undiluted crap. With me, a bird in the hand and a cutey in a bed is worth dozens of them in a bush you can't reach."⁷

The crudeness of language and manners gives the reader a clear view of Martin's class. His brother Studs can be placed in this social order

⁶ Farrell, op. cit., p.522.

⁷ Ibid., p.526.

when he thinks about what his brother said and what the future holds for him:

Cocky punk, too! Well, in his day Studs Lonigan had shown them plenty. The kid would have to do plenty of travelling if he even wanted to catch up to where he could see the dust Studs Lonigan had left behind him. But that was behind him, and it was ahead of Martin. Martin didn't realize what a break he had gotten by being born later, having so much more ahead of him.⁸

Here is a form of pessimistic determinism being expressed by Studs for his brother. The life of a man is being broken by outside forces which he has no control over and yet he thinks these forces will not affect his brother. Both are doomed to their social order in this sense. Man is de-emphasized in his universe. There is no longer uniqueness in man's individuality when he becomes embodied in his social order.

The naturalists employ the thesis that man is pulled down from his vision of greatness. Farrell sees one man as good as another in his fiction. He allows his characters, particularly Studs, to grasp a faint hope of greatness throughout the trilogy, but only shocks them back into the cold realization of the life which surrounds him:

He took her arm and led her forward, thinking of how he felt like a new man, wishing that they were already married. He realized that he was chilled, and turned up his coat collar. Worry about his health fell over his thoughts, smothering them like a wet blanket. He felt, as if in a prophecy, that he would never live to have the things he had just been thinking about. . . . Oh, Jesus Christ! he silently exclaimed

⁸Farrell, op. cit., p.526.

with pity for Studs Lonigan.⁹

The conflict which Studs had throughout his life is to contemplate his former greatness in the society in which he lived while at the same time realizing he has become insignificant to those which surround him. Again and again it must be stressed that Lonigan never attains greatness in his social structure. He will think and react to his thoughts about greatness but never will accomplish them. This is possibly the most stinging factor in Studs' realization of his insignificance in the world:

Studs Lonigan, Phil Rolfe's brother-in-law. That it would ever come to the time that he was known as Studs' brother-in-law. He suddenly felt out of everything. A new corner. A new bunch. Out of it. Others pushing along, to be where he used to be.¹⁰

In the passage there is a total deprivity of the individual which Studs thought he used to be. He is no longer grand or appreciated but rather as he says "out of it".

In the trilogy Farrell is methodical in presentation and quite powerful in revealing objective data bare of imagery. He has Studs contemplate his life and penetrate into the reader's reactions by the use of words alone. Regard the following passage when Studs is on the verge of losing his life fortune:

⁹Farrell, op. cit., p. 495.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 534.

But suppose the old man asked for money. Well, he could sell, pocket his loss, and let him have the rest. He asked himself why a guy's life had to have one damn thing to worry about after another, and why wasn't a guy never done with deciding things. Always, time after time, as soon as one thing was settled, and the worry erased, another thing popped up. A guy no sooner skirted out of one pickle than he had fallen into another one. It seemed as if almost every minute of a fellow's life a knife was swinging over his neck, ready to slash into him at any unsuspected moment.¹¹

What is pictured in this passage is the futility of Studs to determine how his life is governed. There is anger at the social forces which keep him in his class. The flatness of style substantiates this fatalistic philosophy in Studs in his view of the world which surrounds him:

...his eyes wandering about the parlor, at the baby grand piano, the legs scratched, the cabinet radio, the mirror, the subdued gray wallpaper, the ornate floor-lamp, the family pictures hung about the wall, and then at his father, brooding and corpulent.¹²

The significance of this passage is that it illustrates that Farrell can shock and humiliate his audience by the pure force of words. There is no debating on what has occurred for Studs, but rather a presentation of the pneumatic dull pounding of his mind.

In the Studs Lonigan trilogy Farrell uses the vehicles of the newsreel, newspaper, radio and movie to express the metamorphosis of the political and social structures in America. In his milieu he

¹¹ Farrell, op. cit., p.538.

¹² Ibid., p.539.

treats the former traditionalism in America in a profound way. His book is a "form-of-life" documented novel which reproduces details in physical reality. We can see revelations being made in the newsreels of the nineteen-thirties. Consider Farrell's presentation of Studs listening to a news brief in a movie:

"A business depression is a reaction. For every action, there must be a reaction, and then a counter action, because that is the law of life and economics. The business depression is a reaction to over-production. We are now through the worst of it, and have slowed down our processes of production in consonance with the law of supply and demand. We are again on a solid footing, and we shall see, in the next six months, another commercial upswing. In my recent visit to the White House, I found this same hope prevailing in official circles, and I concluded that what we all must do is to get behind our president and push forward, to the next period of prosperity. And when our next period does return, let us all be wiser than we were in the years of 1928 and 1929."¹³

In being exposed to the consequences of the depression in Studs Lonigan, Farrell's audience witnesses the futile hope that the conditions in the United States will change for the better. There seems to be an addiction by the public to sensory stimuli, in this case the news man and his hopeful remarks.

In naturalism the brutal, the sordid, the vicious, and the savage are stressed in man's existence. Farrell organizes his trilogy for presentation rather than explanation. His truth is in the physical fact which encompasses man and the response which man makes to a world of such facts. Even a thought of death will become cold and strange to Studs in his early youth. Listen to what he says about his future:

¹³Farrell, op. cit., p.506.

Suddenly he thought of death. He didn't know why. Death just came into his thoughts, dripping black night-gloom. Death put you in a black coffin, like it was going to put Izzy Hersch. It gave you to the grave-diggers, and they dumped you in the ground. They shoveled dirt on you, and it thudded, plunked, plump-plumped over you. It would be swell if people dddn't have to die; if he, anyway, didn't have to;¹⁴

There is a sordid truth about the presentation of death in this manner. One does not become romanticized by free flowing speech in Studs Lonigan's life. Brutality and recognition of what death is permeates this naturalistic description by Farrell.

In naturalism there is an impersonal order which is all-controlling in the universe. This arrangement becomes the governing force for man's existence and rules him in place of the traditional God. Manner and energy are equated with the bad and become either positive or hostile in force through specific combination. Chance is the responsible force which determines the combination and the belief in a supernatural agent. Studs complies to this quality in naturalism when he speaks to Catherine concerning his loss on his stock venture:

"I thought that things would get better and it would be a good investment. I took a chance," he said shrugging his shoulders in an ineffectual gesture.

"There's still a chance. Imbray, you know, is a smart man. and the stock is based on things that everybody needs, and they should be good investments in the long run. A man like Imbray can't fail when he's got stock backed by almost all the public utilities of the Middle West. I still I'm going to get more money out of my investments than I put into

¹⁴ Farrell, op. cit., p. 121.

them."¹⁵

Nature is postulated in this form as God. The reality of Studs' state is due to some type of malfunction which chance has played upon him. For Studs there is truth in what is determined by forces away from him. His condition has relied upon these forces throughout his life and in all probability will be responsible for the destruction of his being at a later point.

In naturalism there can be no positive value in any moral absolute. Goodness, hope, love mercy are only words in the naturalistic tradition. Farrell illustrates the strength of man who denies these absolutes by giving prominence to experience in the world. In the Young Manhood of Studs Lonigan the friend of Studs, Danny O'Neal, comments about the importance of life without morality:

An exultant feeling of freedom swept him. God was a lie. God was dead. God was a mouldering corpse within his mind. And God had been the center of everything in his life. As his past was now like so many maggots on the mouldering conception of God dead within his mind. He jumped up, and went outside to stand on the gravel service-station driveway, and shook his fist at the serene and brilliant March sky.¹⁶

In this passage, the viewer is able to see Farrell's approach to moral questions. He negates God in order to come to an evaluation of his self. God becomes nothing but a lie and a "maggot" within his mind. Danny will reject God as not being a part of his environment. It is

¹⁵Farrell, op. cit., p. 703.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 429.

only ignorance and superstition for man to conceive of the world in Christian ideals when he has to beg for bread. One can look at the tone in the early part of the trilogy to see Farrell's emphasis on the denial of moral absolutes. Farrell's illustrates this harsh tone against the moral structure of his time in the episode in which Studs' mother wishes to put his brother, Martin, into the priesthood:

"Martin, don't you think you'd like to be a priest when you grow up, and serve God!"

"I want to be a grave digger," Martin answered sleepily. She left the room, her cheeks slightly wet with tears. She prayed to God that he would give one of her boys the call.¹⁷

The reader can see a rejection of God by a youth even at this early age. Later on Martin will present only a semblance of the nominal Catholicism which surrounded his environment.

In naturalism there is a concern by the author with the common class. He emphasizes the experience of man with things and senses. What happens physically is what the naturalists insist upon. The raw world of fact is the only valid reality in the naturalistic tradition. Therefore, he will have contempt for traditional institutions. In the Studs Lonigan trilogy Farrell observes the common class in Studs' mother's response to the plans for his marriage to Catherine:

"God forbid me from saying anything against the girl, because she's a decent Catholic girl who has good, hard-working parents. But I can't make myself believe she's good enough for a boy with the bringing-up and family and the educated,

¹⁷Farrell, op. cit., p. 55.

refined sisters that you've got. God forbid that I would run her down, but it's the truth that she's a little bit common."¹⁸

Farrell's presentation of Studs' mother judging one who is in her class epitomizes the commonality of the entire scene. There is an impersonal force which surrounds the Lonigan family with expressions such as this when Studs' response to his mother takes the form of "looking bored and wanting to get out".

In naturalism the common must not be changed in presentation. There must be no fancy or romanticism surrounding any truth witnessed by the author. In Judgment Day Farrell shows a prostrate economy that not only terrifies but demoralizes those who are dependent upon it. Morality and sex become concrete to Farrell. There can no longer be a dream world for an author such as Farrell when he is presented with the following scene:

Studs was reminded of the gang shag they had once had at Iris' on Prairie Avenue, when he had lost his cherry. Since then he never had it and gotten as much out of it as he hoped for, except maybe once with the little bitch from Nolan's who had dosed him. He wished he was only as old as when they'd gang-gang-shagged Iris, and going into this woman.¹⁹

The sex taboo is touched upon by Farrell in this passage. What is real and common for the society in which he writes is therefore presented to an audience for what it is. Farrell's honesty and

¹⁸Farrell, op. cit., pp. 650-651.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 644.

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¹⁸ Farrell, op. cit., pp. 650-651.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 644.

courage in presenting truth throughout the trilogy permits his audience to see an author's indictment of an American civilization which was on the verge of total collapse.

The heredity of a human being is often linked to his social position. As was discussed previously, the dilemma within the boundaries of naturalism is whether heredity or environment plays the major factor in determining the existence of an individual. When one reviews the early part of Studs' life, particularly passages dealing with his father, Paddy, he will realize that there is actually no difference between that which he is doing and that which his father has accomplished. The inheritance of his individualism from his father demonstrates that there is a questioning of hereditary laws which are generated in man. Regard the similarity between Studs and his father in the early passage when "old man Lonigan" thinks about his youth:

Spike Kennedy, Lord have mercy on his soul, he was bit by a mad dog and died, would get up on one of the cars and throw coal down like sixty, and they's scramble for it. And many's the fight they'd have with the gangs from other streets. It's a wonder some of them weren't killed throwing lumps of coal and ragged rocks at each other like a band of wild Indians. To live some of those old days over again!
Golly!²⁰

One can be assured that later on when Studs thinks about his life, he too will have the same concepts of his youth. This similarity of the stress on heredity appears vividly in a passage from Studs' life thirty years later:

²⁰ Farrell, *op. cit.*, pp. 19-20.

He hadn't remembered his childhood in years as he was remembering it today. Poverty, the cold house in winter with the wind breaking through the cracks. Days without food. His father, a big strong man, worrying, coming home drunk. He remembered his father once staggering in with not a cent of pay left. His mother had cried and cursed him. The old man had punched his mother and she had fallen, and Catherine, like a little tigress, had ripped into the old man until she'd gotten a whaling. And then for two weeks his parents hadn't spoken. He could remember his mother, day after day, working and slaving, washing, scrubbing, cooking in their crowded little home. Ah, life was a funny thing.²¹

There must be doubt in Studs' mind at this time as to what importance heredity had on his life. One can wonder if Studs is thinking that he is committing the same actions that his father had performed previously. This is a matter of inheritance for him rather than of environment.

In naturalism there is an insistence on the stress of the seamy side of existence. Farrell supplies his entire trilogy with abundance of detail which supports the movements of his figures. The emphasis of the motion picture as a means of communication in Studs Lonigan asserts the coarse and sensuous element in life. Farrell's method is to detail Studs' observations of his social structure by either the cinema or the news photograph. In Judgment Day, Studs contemplates what the stature of an American hero Lindbergh may be after reading a newspaper:

He thought that Lindbergh was a fearless-looking brute, all

²¹Farrell, op. cit., p. 793.

right, and tried to imagine what it would be like to be the hero of the nation and to have been the first man to fly alone across the Atlantic, winning twenty-five thousand dollars, a society wife, and undying fame. Lucky boy! Realizing what Lindbergh was, he began to feel measly and insignificant, and turned away from the picture.²²

There is a significant insight into the thoughts of Studs in this passage. Farrell's use of the seamy language which appears almost for its own sake enables the viewer to examine the grimness about the material world. It is an application of structure by Farrell that shows the insignificance of man in the world around him. Farrell reveals Studs' total dependence upon the forces in nature which mold existence in an unsympathetic world.

In Studs Lonigan the expression of life through the process of sensations is given full play by Farrell. There is no mildness in tone whenever an unpleasant or crude event occurs. Even his description of news editorials will exhibit sensationalism:

A fleeing man in overalls was clubbed by a policeman, and as he fell groggily forward, a special deputy smashed him on the shoulder with a truncheon. He lay face forward in the center of the picture, blood oozing from his head, and the struggling crowd surged over his body....

Guarded by policemen with drawn guns, a sick-faced, injured, bleeding group of strikers sat dazed in the dusty street, and one full-faced policeman turned to smile into the camera....

"Poor bastards," Pat mumbled.²³

²²Farrell, op. cit., p. 478.

²³Ibid., pp. 502-503.

Whatever Farrell presented in his literature can never be considered to be restrained. He gives his audience a true slice of the life he sees. The effect of the shock method gives strength to his naturalistic presentation. Even his idea of sex will be employed to shock the traditionalism of the American public:

He glanced at the next photograph showing a young girl, seated, blond, with crossed legs and one knee in sight, who had just married a sixty-eight-year-old millionaire. Good legs. Nice. Poor old bastard of a husband, too old for such nice stuff.²⁴

There is a close regard by Farrell for the actual vision of life which he presents in Studs' life. Throughout the trilogy the reader seems to be carried along through the sensationalism of brutal acts which occur in the forms of a family quarrel, a fight between members of the poolroom gang, and an acknowledged rape.

In the Studs Lonigan trilogy there is a naturalistic preference for slums, machinery and war. What jolts the reader in Farrell's consideration is that Studs is not permitted to go into battle because of social restrictions. He does not meet the qualifications for an American killer due to physical handicaps, and yet broods about it. He even links himself to the machine age in which he lives and realizes that he cannot combat these forces when they are set in motion against him. Farrell attacks the structure of the dehumanizing machine age during the depression years in America through the brooding tone of Studs' language:

²⁴Farrell, op. cit., p. 537.

"I'm not throwing up the sponge. I'm just learning things, and I've learned, this last winter, that a guy like me isn't worth any more than a rusty piece of machinery."²⁵

There is a sad plight to Studs' existence in this passage. He becomes a man who is no longer unique to his fellow man. The machine plays the larger role in his life and keeps him from becoming unique. There is a natural reaction against the strength of outside forces controlling man's destiny in Studs Lonigan. What the reader realizes is man trying to defeat overwhelming forces and using anything in his means to do so. The tragic note in Studs is that he has from the beginning no chance to become victorious in his fight.

With an emphasis on sensationalism Farrell is able to reveal the blinding forces which drive man. Vulgarity of speech and manners goes against traditional ethical thoughts in the trilogy. No longer can the reader see individuality in a hero in this fiction. Studs is taken throughout his life without the concept of freedom. The events which occur usually appear as chance happenings in his universe. One can see this degree of chance holding Studs in check when he purchases stock at the advent of the stock market crash:

Maybe his dough was, after all, just as safe in stock as the banks? Hell, if it went on like this where would a guy's dough be safe? If he kept it home he might be robbed. If he socked it in a bank, the bank might go under. If he bought stock, the market might crash. Christ, what a goofy world it was becoming.²⁶

The reader can see that there is a lack of individuality and freedom

²⁵Farrell, op. cit., p. 600.

²⁶Ibid., p. 551.

expressed by Studs in this passage. What is reflected is his play with chance. Even later when Studs has to conform to society it is not his choice but chance that makes him do it. After making Catherine pregnant, he thinks about his future life:

He felt himself trapped like a rat in a cage. All this life around him, the sky, everything, were bars, and here he was, and here she was in this cage.²⁷

At the conclusion of the work when Studs dies, his father will give support to the idea that man is not ruled by himself. It is chance and fate which determines his existence. Listen to Paddy Lonigan speaking to his son Martin after Studs' death:

"Boys, I can get home," Lonigan said, looking at them with shrewd suspicion. "I can take care of myself. Paddy Lonigan has always taken care of himself. He's pulled himself up by his own bootstraps, and he'd still be on top but for fate. Fate and the international Jew bankers. Lads, my son died today. He's dead. He was a regular fellow, like you boys are, chip off the old block, a man's man, a fighter. All Lonigans are fighters, fighting hard, even when it's a losing battle," he drooled.²⁸

There is a lack of certitude by the father in this statement. The unknown values of nature give evidence to the blind drives which man encompasses in his life. The idea of faith in God becomes shaken when Farrell presents this grim view of man's life being dependent upon forces in nature. In Studs there is an inevitable loss of the battle between Studs and the forces which surround him. He is doomed to defeat from the beginning. And nothing he can do will change it.

For the naturalist, the rationality of man is linked to a direct

²⁷Farrell, op. cit., p. 716.

²⁸Ibid., pp. 812-813.

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revelation of what nature has in store for him. The mind will not permit man to shape the forces around him, rather it will only reduce him to a knowledge that he is an accidental combination of atoms. That is why the naturalists have the mind embedded in matter. Mind is only a part of matter and not outside it. In Studs there is a passage which illustrates his knowledge that he cannot go outside of the forces which control him when he thinks about his death:

Studs, because of his heart attack, had the feeling of being divorced from life and from the things that other people did. He was unsure of himself, and in his weakness asked himself would he be alive tomorrow, next week? He looked at people on the sidewalk, thinking that he didn't know how he would still be a part of all this. He saw himself as if Studs Lonigan was already limping with one foot over the grave. But no, he knew that he wouldn't die. He knew that. He knew that he would pull through everything. Still, he could not shake away the feeling that he was cut off from life as if he was only half alive himself.²⁹

These lines by Farrell indicate that Studs has knowledge of the power from nature. Farrell's literature does not respond to the romantic insistence that through death man's salvation can be attained. What is presented in the trilogy is a plea by Studs to ascertain a satisfactory reason for his death. His question is never answered.

In review of the naturalism expressed in the Studs Lonigan trilogy, the reader should be aware that nature is the major force which tones the lives of men. The veritables in society change only through natural law. There can never be an absolute criteria for man to

²⁹Farrell, op. cit., p. 727.

act upon. In naturalism what Farrell has expressed in Studs Lonigan is that man is not in a state of unceasing regularity in terms of nature. An individual who is brought up and exists in a society such as Studs did, will be shaped from the desirability of outside forces. The chain of events in nature will supercede the life of a man such as Studs. What becomes a certainty for Studs is only violence, love, depression and death. Farrell's major character is assured that the only power which shapes his life is not his own but rather the indifference of the natural laws surrounding him.

3. THE DECAY OF THE FAMILY, THE CHURCH, AND TRADITION IN AMERICAN LIFE PRESENTED IN FARRELL'S STUDS LONIGAN TRILOGY

In the Studs Lonigan trilogy there is a creation of a character by James Farrell who at first appears to be a boy full of natural promise representing the average adolescent youth. Studs is strong, healthy in body and emulous in character. He has a passion to be admired. The shock for the reader is the knowledge that Studs had a capacity for rising above his condition and, under favorable circumstances, might have done so.

Because Farrell is a serious literary artist in the school of naturalism, he consciously intends to tell the unvarnished truth about the world around him. It is this objectivity in his naturalism which permits the trilogy to function as a slide or record of truth. Farrell's literature becomes a criticism of life presenting judgments on actions and attitudes through the means of the naturalistic tradition. His story is not to be entertaining or witty. The characters of his

trilogy do not represent people with fine feelings and noble aims coming at odds with a cynical and cruel world, and in the end triumphing over it. Rather they are people of a particular class in their environment who take on its prevailing color, and who, after being subjected to the ugliness and vileness of their social state, become inevitably reduced to the same uniform color of vileness and ugliness.

The normality of Farrell's characters is invested with degrees of instincts and intentions. The impression which is gathered at the completion of the work is that had these particular people in a novel been given a different set of stimuli they might have developed into something different. The degradation processes of Studs and the other members in his society are long and gradual ones. Farrell adequately presents this decay in society through his extended narrative. He sets down scene after scene of talk and gross action, often brutal, dreary and repelling in its scale of ugliness. What Farrell does to the reader is to catch him in the web of his narrative. His people become so real and their plights so overwhelming that the reader fully comprehends that there can be no escape.

The world is presented as a cruel thing by Farrell, and the viewer becomes shocked and cries out against such a presentation. But at the same time he is held in check by the fatal fascination of its existence. There is a sense of pathos in the ugliness which is encompassed in his fiction. The characters appear as bewildered humans caught up in a variety of circumstances who are condemned to live in their own form of hell on earth. When the reader can get a proper perspective, the Lonigan trilogy appears solid in structure and

monumental in proportion. Farrell's work is significant in this sense because of a deep underlying current of the decay and decline of morality, the family structure, and tradition presented in it.

In the Studs Lonigan trilogy there is a general attitude of scorn for religion. Farrell usually has his women without imagination and dependent upon the supernatural offerings of the Catholic Church. Many of the men are either indulging in alcoholism or in the breaking of moral codes in the Church. Usually what the Church forbids for its members comes to mean something which involves either shame or filth. In Young Lonigan there is a passage which shows the youthfulness and innocence of a Catholic boy who is first familiarized with the taboo placed upon sex by the Church. Studs is asked to get water for his sister Fran;

He got the water. It wasn't cold enough. She asked him to let the water run more. He did. He handed the water to her. As she rose to drink, she bumped her small breast against him.

She drank the water. He started out of the room. She called him to get her handkerchief.

"I'm not at all tired," she said.

He left, thinking what a bastard he must be.³⁰

The reader becomes aware that something shocking to the boy has been presented through a form of physical contact with his sister. The moral structure of Studs is dependent upon the staunch traditional teachings of the Catholic Church and any degree of sin makes him "afraid that God may punish him, make him die in the night." The youth

³⁰Farrell, op. cit., p.57.

is already troubled and worried about some moral codes which he has broken or been tempted to disregard.

The early part of Studs' life illustrates a boy with pent-up sexual yearnings. Farrell's literature is not genteel in its language and treatment of sex. The sexual behavior of both the lower and middle class Irish penetrate and disturb the Catholic dogma which is supposed to be their moral foundation. There is a strong response by Studs in the beginning of the trilogy to counteract the moral codes of his society when he speaks to Helen about the acceptance of a shameful girl:

Nothing had seemed wrong in his asking, he guessed. So they sat there and talked. Helen asked him if he knew this Irish who took all kinds of guys up to her house when her mother wasn't home, and let them all have a gang-shag. Studs said he didn't know Iris, but he'd heard of her. Helen said that was going too far; it was like being a whore. Studs said yes.

But he wished he could horn in on one of those gang-shags.³¹

The account of this teenage sex life in a big city such as Chicago shows a true recognition by Farrell of the mores of his society. When reading Farrell, one is reminded of the dissection of the Irish life presented in James Joyce's literature. In the presentation of sex both men picture honestly the morality structures which no longer seem to function in each of their particular societies. Sex and booze are associated with the roaring 1920's and directly linked to Studs' life. What becomes the code of the moral structure in the Lonigan trilogy is presented as

³¹ Farrell, op. cit., p.69.

a decay of morality. The poolroom gang becomes codified in its existence, and one of the acceptable laws is immorality. Consider Studs listening to his brother Martin's acceptance of sex:

"By the time Saturday rolls around, a guy's seen all the shows he wants to see for a week, and he hangs around with the boys, feeling dumb, wanting something to happen, tired of everybody's bum jokes that he's heard before. So he figures, well, the way to make things happen is to get a bottle, and he does. So he gets snozzled and has some fun. And last Saturday, the cutey I had! Umm! I made her, too, only I was so cockeyed it wasn't no fun. But I'm figuring to fix that baby again..."³²

What we can see in this passage is almost a fatalistic view of man in his social order. For Studs it becomes a day to day existence with the possibility of his rising in society linked only to a game of chance. The boredom and viciousness engendered in the poolroom society is taken out in either the form of the "bottle or the babe."

The Church itself is not excluded from this decaying moral structure. Father Gilhooley, a parish priest in the novel, decays along with his parishioners:

"Gilly was always a puzzle to us altar boys. When he said mass, he always drank so much more wine than the other priests did. We always expected him to go staggering off the altar," Martin laughed.³³

If the reader looks closely at the passage it is possible to see the moral decline of the priesthood and the parish. The acceptability of this decline of the Church and its members is continually laughed at by Studs and his society. The hope of a world protected by a God who is good is

³² Farrell, op. cit., p.526.

³³ Ibid., p.527.

substituted by the drunkenness of a priest and the realization that a God may just remain away from his flock. Farrell implies that not only the Catholic but all forms of religion are attacked for their moral decline. Listen to Paddy Lonigan talk about an immoral Methodist minister during the days of the depression:

"A break in the stock market, and it looks like they got the goods on that Methodist Minister who's mixed up in that divorce suit out in California."

"The dirty Protestant A.P.A. Fooling around with a decent little girl who sings in his choir. Stringing him up would be too good for him. You wouldn't find a Catholic priest doing a thing like that," the father said with venom.³⁴

There is a feeling of anger by Studs' father for such an occurrence taking place in American society. The decay of the moral structure of the nation is slowly transferred from the people to the religious bodies themselves. Even ministers, priests and nuns are caught up in the whirlpool of the depression.

What is illustrated in a newspaper about the minister's immorality is later brutally brought out when Studs is in on a gang-shag. The language by one of the group illustrates the decay into which it has fallen:

"We're not the ape kind. It's just going to be a nice little party, with everybody cooperating to have the best time we can. You're married and know what it's all about, and know it's not going to hurt you. Just a little party to add to the glory of mankind," Cohen said, and they laughed.³⁵

³⁴ Farrell, op. cit., p.594.

³⁵ Ibid., p.640.

In order to attain minimal stability in a home a woman will use her body. The men who participate in the immoral act see it as a game and something which will only "add to the glory of mankind." Adultery is no longer shocking for the depression era. American society in order to eat will become adulterous if it has to. Listen to the rationalization of the housewife:

"What he doesn't know will be no skin off his ears. I got to have money, that's all there is to it. I've never done a thing like this before, and I wouldn't be doing it if I didn't need the money right away."³⁶

The moral code of the puritanical tradition in American life has been completely swept away due to economic struggle. Forces which control society seem to have no need for morality in it. Even the marriage state becomes something which hampers the existence of man in the height of the depression years. Studs Lonigan, due to the forces of nature, opposes the Church's moral codes when he makes Catherine pregnant. The reader can view the effect of sex on Studs in his speech:

Lonigan, a father already! He didn't want to do that, and he didn't know what to do about it. And how could they afford it? There he would be in the future with cords about him, hand and foot.

Join the Navy now, brother, he told himself sardonically. He remembered how he used to hear fellows around the poolroom kidding about it, and how he'd razed fellows like Wils Gillen when they were worried about girls they'd knocked up. Goddamn it, it wasn't anything to laugh over, Jesus Christ, it wasn't.³⁷

³⁶Farrell, op.cit., p. 641.

³⁷Ibid., p. 702

Morality has drastically been shifted in this passage. Studs, along with the rest of America, gives evidence of the complete disregard for moral codes. He does not want to be dictated to by the laws of the Church and society in his sexual gratification. There is a deep sense of guilt expressed by Studs in the trilogy when his link with puritan tradition in America is broken. There is no hope in the future for him. It is as if his moral offenses force Studs to grope through a maze with no end in sight.

The culmination of the moral shift is evidenced in Judgment Day when Studs' mother refuses to accept the pregnant Catherine into her home as Studs is dying. The taboo of morality is touched upon by the daughters of Mrs. Lonigan when they ask for Catherine's acceptance into their mother's house:

"But Mother, it could have happened to anybody. She and William loved each other. You know you were young once," Fran said.

"Why, my own daughter saying such a thing," Mrs. Lonigan exclaimed, looking at Fran outraged. "My own daughter. Well, I'll have you know that I went to your Father's marriage bed a decent woman."

"Oh, Mother, times have changed a little, and Studs and Catherine were...well, they were going to be married," Fran said.³⁸

The laws of the Church are thrown out due to the decaying environment surrounding this family. The mother is both staunch and greedy in her refusal to accept the moral shift in her household. However, the final movement for the Church's disengagement from the Lonigan environment is witnessed when Studs' sisters Loretta and Fran speak in Mrs.

³⁸Farrell, op. cit., p.813.

Lonigan's house concerning what should be done about Catherine's condition:

"We must be kind to Catherine. Poor thing. She never would have let herself get into such a condition if she didn't love William."

"I know it. Poor thing. Won't she do something to prevent it?"

"I tried to talk to her. She said that an abortion is murder," Fran said.

"God couldn't want her to have the baby now."³⁹

Later Loretta will state that "even God would prevent the child from being born." Abortion becomes the necessity for Catherine continuing to live in this hungry environment. The values of religion are thrown out in the face of the tragedy which faces the Lonigan's existence. The social uncertainties force man to do away with traditions of his God and moral codes. Man tries to live by bread alone in this society.

In Studs Lonigan one can also see a slow decay of the structure of family life in America. From the age of fifteen until his death Studs seems to swagger through life. He often resembles a gangland bully in his youth and one who tries to get away with pranks and practical jokes. The stark terror which his life unfolds is that his pranks are not useful but rather become destroying factors in his life. In his home life there is nothing to do except to contradict its values.

During the evenings Studs is usually found on a poolroom corner winning a place in the gang society through brutality in talk and physical action. As his life progresses he will generally wind up

³⁹ Farrell, op. cit., pp. 814-815.

getting drunk on bootleg gin and sneaking into his home after his family is asleep. Not only Studs but his father, mother and other members of the family move away from the traditions in the American home. Studs' father gives the reader an idea of how the decay can take place when he thinks about his own former family life:

He'd been a fool, all right! Poor Jack! And Mike had run off and married a woman older than himself, and he was now, in the east, and not doing so well, and his wife was an old crow, slobbering in a wheel chair. And Joe was a motor-man. And Catherine, well, he hadn't even better think of her. Letting a travelling salesman get her like that, and expecting to come home with her fatherless baby; and then going out and becoming...a scarlet woman. His own sister, too! God! Nope, his family had not turned out so well.⁴⁰

From the outset of the trilogy one notices that the formal ties of family life are shattered by chance happenings. There seems to be a lack of regard for respectability for the importance which this social institution once held. The puritan ideas of love and brotherhood are disengaged from family life. As a young man Studs falls into the same pattern that his father did in the utter disregard of what family ties should be:

The world was full of places and things he had never seen and would probably never see. If only, when he'd been younger, he'd bummed around and seen something of the world, gone through many towns and cities, and even villages, like the one they had just passed, seeing the stores and movie shows, and houses, listening to the people talk, meeting the girls. He might have made girls all over the country, and like a sailor leaving a girl in every port, he could have left a sweet little lay behind him in every town of the good old U.S.A.⁴¹

⁴⁰ Farrell, op. cit., pp. 21-22.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 464.

The years of the depression have forced the youth to become hard against traditionalism of home life. Alcohol, fights and women replace the values of the love concept in home life.

What forms the decay in the Lonigan family as well as in the American order is materialistic values. People become hard when faced with the cold reality of money. Economic conditions seem to determine the state in which a family can be shifted. Farrell demonstrates this shift in Judgment Day in his description of family life:

"His old lady cursed the poor paralyzed girl and spit in her face, and the sister, Fran, was so keen and such a teaser, she called her a whore, " Red said.⁴²

The ruling forces in social order for family life are no longer discipline and compliance to parent knowledge. Rules are dictated by the necessity for money and food. In our previous discussion we could see that morality was shunned when it confronted a challenge for life. What has occurred in the American society during the early nineteen thirties is a need to get away from the responsibilities of the family life. Much of the living for this generation is dependent upon corrupt ideals. Farrell notes this corruption in a bar scene when Studs' speaks?

...you come to a time in your life when you realize that there's no place for everything. Barney and Mickey, the only thing they got a place for in their lives is booze and female bums. Drunk and whoring all the time, with no ambition. And as I said, speaking straight from the shoulder, there's something more than that in living.⁴³

⁴²Farrell, op. cit., p. 469.

⁴³Ibid., p. 470.

Here is the strength of family decay which occurs in Farrell's trilogy. The high ideals of family life are usually thought of, but never accomplished. Marriage is no longer significant when the disease of economic existence is unfolded. Man places sexual pleasure over the frustrations which are engendered in the institution of family life. Studs' association with his gang friends gives evidence of this disregard of the marriage state:

There's plenty of dames walking the streets, keen babies, and a fellow looks at them, gets hot in the pants, takes them out and throws a little necking party, and he begins to think, now, well, here's the gal who's got just what it takes, and is the answer to all my prayers, and she's got everything plus. Well, what he really wants is a piece of tail, and she won't put it out without the ring on her finger, so he puts the ring on her finger for a piece of tail, and after that he gets tired, and finds out that she's got everything minus, and a tongue, and things like that. So he finds out that he hasn't gotten any bargain after all. You can't always tell a guy's reasons when he takes a runout powder.⁴⁴

The significance of this passage will be noted later on in the trilogy when Studs is faced with the same problem of being forced into the marriage state. Farrell's naturalism focuses on the sordid realities of male and female relationships, obviously ignoring any of the romantic qualities. Even the regard for his sister Loretta changes when Studs no longer thinks of her as a woman brought up in the Church's traditions. She becomes for Studs:

Far different from the virgin sister who used to squeak with embarrassment if he accidentally saw her in the hallway in her underthings. She'd been a stranger to him then, but now

⁴⁴Farrell, op. cit., p.533.

she seemed like even more of a stranger.⁴⁵

The depression leads people into a new fear. Their actions in terms of relationships to family ties are often broken by chance events in the stock market. People often resolve upon immoral actions in an attempt to preserve the family tradition during this period, although such actions do not prevent the decline in the family tradition. Farrell explicates this delusion in family life in the days of the stock market crash by having his character's actions becoming dependent upon outside forces:

"I've lost all my house money, and if my husband finds out, he'll kick the devil out of me. I promised not to bet any more, but I had to. He doesn't understand. I have to have more house money than he can give me in these times, and he doesn't understand. And I haven't one cent for groceries for the rest of the week."

"Gee, D'I'm sorry."

"I simply must have money to preserve my happy home," she said, with a sudden and forced half-smile.⁴⁶

The dream world of happiness is cast aside for the cold reality of not having money in home life. A wife will prostitute her body to put groceries on the table and Studs becomes the means for the wife to obtain commodities and stability for her home life. Nature forces him here to attempt to keep a family together through the consequence of his immorality. In the conclusion of Judgment Day Farrell demonstrates how the poison of the depression has infiltrated into the family structure in American society. What becomes the dictating

⁴⁵Farrell, op. cit., p. 542.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 639.

force for family ties is no longer love and respect but rather fright or shame. Mrs. Lonigan has a chance to grant Catherine's entrance into her household after finding out that she is pregnant and carrying Studs' child. Instead of offering sympathy to the girl in distress she gives her fear:

"You know we shan't be able to do anything to help you. Mr. Lonigan's bank has just failed, and he is, poor man, near bankrupt. And if William dies, with his Order of Christopher insurance made out to you, he will have on his shoulders the extra burden of a funeral. So I am afraid we shan't be able to do anything to help you," Mrs. Lonigan said with a calculation made doubly vicious by her even voice.⁴⁷

There is viciousness in the passage above. What Farrell does in this naturalistic presentation is to show how family ties have become ostracized due to the fear of social mores. This divorce of love from a family tie which should have been culminated in a time of stress is substantiated in Studs' mother's speech when he is dying:

"And if he does pass away, you will not be able to save your name by a marriage at the last minute, because he is too weak, and he might never even regain his senses."⁴⁸

The girl Catherine is shamed at the threat of scandal. There is a total disregard by the mother in this instance to aid someone who is in distress. The strength by which the family decay can be illustrated takes place in a number of other passages throughout the book.

What is perhaps the most significant event to culminate this

⁴⁷Farrell, op. cit., p. 791.

⁴⁸Ibid.

destruction of family life in the Farrell trilogy occurs during the death of Studs. Both the father and brother of Studs come home drunk to witness the victim's death. The total disregard for any sympathy by the brother Martin evinces the reality of what has occurred in the decay of the Lonigan family tradition. Martin speaks about his brother's death:

"Now Fran, you know I like Studs. Always did. Studs was a great guy. It ain't right for him to be sick like this, and he's my brother, you know. I hate to see him kick the bucket....die. I want to see him alive. He's my brother, and I respect him. Don't want to see him sick. We all like Studs, don't we?" Martin said, lighting a cigarette.⁴⁹

There is a conscious pattern by Farrell in this paragraph to show the objective state of the American public. Despair and disgust are prevalent in Martin's spirit in this episode. The reader is aware at the conclusion of the trilogy that decay has engulfed the family structure in America.

The concluding section of this monograph will trace some of the specific declines in the tradition in the society presented in the Studs Lonigan trilogy. Farrell illustrates throughout his work people who have an unconscious disease of boredom. This boredom which usually penetrates their lives drives the people in the Lonigan trilogy to either attain brutal pleasure or some form of nostalgic melancholy. A Puritan conscience irritates American traditionalism in the thirties. In the early sections of Young Lonigan there is a deep concern by the parents to bring their children up as decent men and women. What

⁴⁹Farrell, op. cit., p.818.

becomes a good motif soon turns into an unfortunate movement because the goodness which they want their children to obtain no longer appears attractive. The conclusion of the trilogy will find wasted efforts by parents to enable their children to grow up and support their family traditions.

There is a deep craving by Studs to dominate people and to make others respect him. One of his first impulses to attain this respect is to make himself strong by force and violence. This is the way of the gangster in the prohibition era. Whenever an attempt to achieve recognition fails by force there is compensation through the method of boasting. What dominates their conduct is the ideal of the tough guy. The Irish youth Studs is no longer transformed by generosity and gentility. Rather he sees himself in the public eye only through the brutal and cynical methods of the hoodlum.

Studs Lonigan, along with the other major characters in the trilogy, will oppose American traditionalism. He will become corroded through the poison of having to make himself a person of distinction. Even in his youth he will deter the ideals of the American society by going against the ordered educational processes of the parochial school:

The old dump was St. Patrick's grammar school; and St. Patrick's meant a number of things to Studs. It meant school, and school was a jailhouse that might just as well have had barred windows. It meant the long, wide, chalk-smelling room of the seventh- and eighth-grade boys, with its forty or fifty squirming kids. It meant the second floor of the tan brick, undistinguished parish building on Sixty-first

Street that had swallowed so much of Studs' life for the past eight years.⁵⁰

Studs defies the strict regulations which he was forced to follow. Not only does Studs see in school a means to stop his identification in the public eye but he is also disturbed about thoughts concerning infallible dogma which the Church places upon its parishioners. By being a member of the poolroom society he accepts the code that school cannot offer anything worthy to his manhood. Action is more valid than ideas, and when one reads through the youth of Studs he will see that ideas are taboo in his South Side environment in Chicago.

There is a constant state of idleness, boredom and vice in the early stages of Studs' life. Tedium and his cynical code often drive him to indulge in brutal and violent acts. At the same time there is an insistence upon force ruling the actions of himself and those around him. What Farrell sees in the life of Studs is a continual turning away from the Irish Catholic traditionalism of the acceptance of God's will. In the Young Manhood of Studs Lonigan religious traditionalism is done away with by one of the members in Studs' society. An atheist speaks about what the possibility of God holds for him:

"I'd like to see God. I'd like to tell him a few things. I'd like to say, 'God, why do you create men and make them suffer and fight in vain, and live brief unhappy lives like pigs, and make them die disgustingly, and rot? God, why do the beautiful girls you create become whores, grow old and toothless, die and have their corpses rot so they are a

⁵⁰Farrell, op. cit., p.11.

stench to human nostrils? God, why do you permit thousands and millions of your creatures, made in your own image and likeness, to live like crowded dogs in slums and tenements, while an exploiting few profit from the sweat of their toil, produce nothing, and live in kingly mansions? God, why do you permit men to starve, hunger, die from syphilis, cancer, consumption? God, why do you not raise one little finger to save man from all the turmoil, want, sorrow, suffering on this human planet? That's what I'd say to God if I could find him hiding behind a tree. But God is a wise guy. He keeps in hiding."⁵¹

Here is a strong note by Farrell to consciously support the difficulty of man's escaping from the environment in which he exists. God no longer plays a part in determining the state in which man can reside. There is a strong note that some force outside of man commits the world to its particular end. Without God in American Puritanism, the restriction of man's reliance on some supernatural being is punctured. Farrell's movement is slow but penetrating into this concept of natural forces, not God, ruling man.

Farrell's literature demonstrates that the brotherhood and communion of man are no longer upheld in American culture. Rather man sets himself up as a force to combat the traditional constitutional freedoms upon which the American heritage was based. Consider the anti-Negro feelings by the so-called Christian Irish Catholic when politics threaten to disfigure their traditions:

"Thompson is dead politically and he deserves it. He's a demagogue, and he goes campaigning down in the black belt, kissing nigger babies and playing up to shins. Any man who does that ought to be run out of town on a rail. The jiggs in Chicago are dynamite, and if they ever break loose, it's

⁵¹ Farrell, op. cit., p. 385.

going to be hell to pay. And right now the dirty nigger-loving Reds are playing up to them to stir them up, and Thompson, Kissing nigger babies, is playing right into their hands."⁵²

At this time, Farrell saw a fire which was slowly engulfing the American public. The bigotry and prejudice of the Lonigan group was universal in this sense.

Through naturalism Farrell exposes the hardness which penetrated into the hearts of men during the depression years. Traditional Puritanism was slowly being castrated in the wake of the stock market crash. Studs is in turn changed by this anti-traditionalism during his life. A man is out of work and hungry and asks for aid from Studs. Here is his response:

"Sorry, But I haven't got anything," Studs replied in a voice of controlled and even cautious surliness.

"Christ, Lad, only a nickle or a dime for a warm cup of coffee. I'm hungry!" the bum said, doggedly following on Studs' heels.

Wheeling around, Studs snapped, "Listen, fellow, I haven't got it." He perceived a craven look come into the man's face, and frowning, his own courage mounted. "For Christ sake, Can't you understand English?"⁵³

The threat of violence and action again overrules the traditional values which were being destroyed in the nineteen thirties. Man could not learn how to live with these values and exist if he were controlled by something outside of his reason. There is total disregard for a sense of honesty and compassion in dealing with problems. Studs will

⁵²Farrell, op. cit., p.471.

⁵³Ibid., p.479.

even admit that gangsterism can be valid in replacing traditional honest labor. He talks to his mother and discusses the method by which his brother-in-law Phil obtains money:

"What could anybody do in real estate these days? Look at us with our building, and what Dad says about nearly all the big hotels and buildings being busted and in the hands of receivers. There's more money today in running a race-track book, like Phil does, than in such rackets."⁵⁴

What has occurred in this talk with his mother is a gradual acceptance of gangland brutalization ruling society. Studs sees that in order for a man to survive he will sometimes have to take hold of the forces which are directed toward him. Farrell notes that gangsterism is actually a procession of the American environment. What occurs to Studs is that his rise and fall is dependent upon how well this uncontrollable force will take care of him.

The idea of American traditionalism as being a positive force in Studs' existence is completely shattered in Farrell's fiction. The bubble of the crash in nineteen twenty-nine destroys unmercifully men caught up in its web. The futility of this traditional enterprise for an American to make money is witnessed in Paddy Lonigan's speech to his son at the advent of the crash:

"Bill, I hope to be able to give you much more than that when you're married, if I only get some good breaks. But I won't take this yet. You bank it. I'll get out of this hole, all right, and there has to be a pickup. America is too great and too rich a country to go to the dogs. And we'll ride right back up on the waves."⁵⁵

⁵⁴Farrell, op. cit., p. 517.

⁵⁵Ibid., p. 596.

With this staunch conviction of the greatness of America and her traditions, Paddy Lonigan attempts to go through life. Both he and Studs are determined to ride out the wave of the depression with a form of despairing hope that they will succeed. The tragic note of both men is that they could have faced the reality of the market and possibly survived. But rather than sell their stock at a loss, Paddy and Studs would be crushed through their insistence upon not leaving the market traditionalism. In their attempt to make money, both father and son place their lives in the hands of fate. Fate and the destruction of free enterprise in traditionalism are responsible for their defeat.

The work Studs Lonigan culminates with Studs dying in vain. He has been completely destroyed by his insistence on the American way of life. What has occurred to Studs cannot be found in any single dramatic incident, but in the total accumulation of the declines which have occurred in American traditionalism.

Studs' defeat and frustrations are symbolic of what Farrell thinks the state of man is. The manner in which Farrell places events in his trilogy is depressing to the reader. In Farrell's naturalism there is no profound faith being expressed that man can live through the forces of nature. What Farrell implies is that the fate which man must have is in the improvement of himself within these forces. Humanity can challenge nature without denying its human values. As Philip Friedman states in his "Afterword" to the Studs Lonigan trilogy "death's defeat of men will not be the defeat of man."⁵⁶

⁵⁶Farrell, op. cit., p. 837.

We can be sure that the naturalistic fiction which Farrell creates is more than a recording of truth. His work can be praised for a criticism of life which hopes to mold desirable patterns for man to exist in. The Studs Lonigan trilogy is not entertaining in the ordinary manner of literature. The literature which has been discussed is possibly the most straight-forward from any living naturalist in the American tradition. Simplicity rules the actions and thoughts of the characters, and this simplicity has a deathly earnestness about it. Neither of the language used in the trilogy is real. There is no delicacy in Farrell's presentation of Studs. This magnificent production of fiction may be considered one of the purest forms of naturalism presented to any audience in the world. The prodigious documentation permits the reader to go beyond the scene of suffocating profusion of the world. Beach states that Farrell performs this suffocation until "the reader cries out for mercy."⁵⁷

In reading Studs Lonigan the reader becomes disturbed by Farrell's strength in his naturalism. We can see an outrage at man's inherent right to self-development and justice which is denied to him. The Studs Lonigan trilogy is depressing. For Studs, his consciousness, his personality, and his economic status are three strands of life that seem to move as if they were in total waste. There is a purposelessness in his life. It is abhorrent for man to realize that he too can be destroyed by the same forces which annihilated Studs Lonigan. This is one reason why Charles Walcutt could state that the Studs Lonigan trilogy is the most "terrifying book written in America."⁵⁸

⁵⁷Beach, op. cit., p. 303.

⁵⁸Walcutt, op. cit., p. 161.

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