





ARAŞTIRMA MAKALESİ | RESEARCH ARTICLE

REPRESENTATIONS OF SOCIAL DARWINISM IN STEPHEN CRANE'S
THE OPEN BOAT AND GUY DE MAUPASSANT'S *BALL OF FAT*

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Abstract

Social Darwinism is a concept coined by British philosopher Herbert Spencer, who apply biological concepts such as natural selection and the theory of "survival of the fittest" to politics and sociology. In his essay, *The Social Organism* (1860), Spencer likens society to a living organism and suggests that as biological organisms develop via natural selection, society also develops and increases in complexity through similar processes. However, since Spencer's theories in sociology bear many similarities to Darwin's theories in biological science, the term 'Social Darwinism' is still referred to Charles Darwin in today's scientific world. For this reason, Spencer has been acknowledged by most Darwinists for preceding Darwin's scientific theory and applying his ideas in ways that Darwin would have strongly agreed on. In this context, this study aims to examine representations of Social Darwinism in selected short stories to highlight the victimizing nature of its practices in modern society. For this, first, Stephen Crane's *The Open Boat* (1897) will be analyzed to show the struggle for survival in a wild natural environment and its symbolic similarity with the competitiveness of man in the capitalist social order. Then, Guy De Maupassant's *Ball of Fat* (1880) will be examined to show the greedy nature of human beings and the theme of hypocrisy in 20th century French society. In both examples, the main purpose of this study will be to highlight depictions of how the consequences of Social Darwinism lead to tragic ends and victimize those deemed least fit for modernizing society.

Keywords: Social Darwinism, *The Open Boat*, *Ball of Fat*

STEPHEN CRANE'IN *THE OPEN BOAT* VE GUY DE MAUPASSANT'IN *BALL OF FAT* ESERLERİNDE SOSYAL DARWİNİZM TEMSİLLERİ

Öz

Sosyal Darwinizm, doğal seçim gibi biyolojik kavramları ve "en uygun olanın hayatta kalması" teorisini, sosyoloji ve politikaya uyguladığını iddia eden 19. yüzyıl İngiliz filozof Herbert Spenser tarafından ortaya atılan bir terimdir. Spenser, *The Social Organism* (1860) adlı makalesinde toplumu yaşayan bir organizmaya benzetir ve biyolojik organizmaların doğal seçim yoluyla gelişmesi gibi, toplumun da benzer süreçler yoluyla geliştiğini ve karmaşıklığının arttığını savunur. Ancak Spenser'in sosyolojideki teorileri, Darwin'in biyoloji bilimindeki teorileriyle pek çok benzerlik taşıdığından, günümüz bilim dünyasında 'Sosyal Darwinizm' terimi hala Charles Darwin'e atfedilmektedir. Bu nedenle, çoğu Darwinist, Spenser'in, Darwin'in bilimsel teorisini öncelediğini ve Darwin'in fikirlerini onun kesinlikle kabul edeceği şekillerde uyarladığını kabul etmektedir.

Bu bağlamda, bu çalışma, modern toplumdaki uygulamalarının mağdur edici doğasını vurgulamak için, Sosyal Darwinizm'in seçilmiş kısa öykülerdeki temsillerini incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Bunun için öncelikle Stephen Crane'in *The Open Boat* (1897) adlı eseri, vahşi bir doğal ortamda hayatta kalma mücadelesini ve bunun kapitalist toplumsal düzende insanın rekabet gücüyle sembolik benzerliğini göstermek üzere analiz edilecektir. Daha sonra, 20. yüzyıl Fransız toplumunda insanoğlunun açgözlü doğasını ve ikiyüzlülüğünü göstermek amacıyla, Guy De Maupassant'ın *Ball of Fat* (1880) adlı eseri incelenecektir. Her iki örnekte de bu çalışmanın temel amacı, Sosyal Darwinizm'in sonuçlarının nasıl trajik sonlara yol açtığına ve modernleşen topluma en az uygun görülenleri nasıl mağdur ettiğine dair tasvirleri vurgulamak olacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Sosyal Darwinizm, *The Open Boat*, *Ball of Fat*

Introduction

Social Darwinism simply means "extending Darwinism to human social evolution" (Hodgson, 2005.) In a broader sense, it refers to the transference of the biological laws of the struggle, which was discovered by Darwin and still dominate the world of animals and plants, to the sphere of social relationships, including class struggle (Grace and Montagu, 1942). Although Halliday (1971) claims that there is no common consent on the definition of Social Darwinism regarding research practice (p. 389), he further suggests it "holds social evolution to depend upon the operation of the law of natural selection of favorable heritable variants" (Halliday, 1971). Henceforth, it can be argued that Social Darwinism is a theory which likens society to a living organism and claims that as biological living things evolve by natural selection, community develops and gets more complex via similar procedures. Michael Ruse (1980) claims that "a search for the roots of Social Darwinism yields two sources" (p. 23). These are British natural scientist Charles Darwin and sociologist Herbert Spencer. However, in discussion of the roots of Social Darwinism, scholars get divided right down the middle regarding who the more important and influential was (Ruse, 1980). Herbert Spencer is wrongly regarded as a scientist who followed in Darwin's footsteps. On the contrary, Darwin is a natural scientist who followed in Spencer's footsteps. In fact, Spencer's main study, *Progress: Its Law and Cause* (1857), was published a couple of years ago before Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* was released. The idea of evolution and "survival of the fittest" theory was first expressed by Spencer in as early as 1852 (Rogers, 1972). Darwin was his successor. Thus, Spencer both preceded and greatly influenced Darwin. Rogers further suggests that "the effect of Darwin on the cluster of ideas later called Social Darwinism thus becomes coincidental rather than instrumental" (p. 265). Still, many critical studies on Social Darwinism attributed the concept to Charles Darwin rather than to Herbert

Spencer. The main reason for that is clarified by Richard Hofstadter in his study titled *Social Darwinism in American Thought* (1944). Hofstadter simply argues that the time is ripe for Darwinism in America as “the competitive American society of the latter half of the nineteenth century saw its own image in the tooth-and-claw version of Darwin's theory of natural selection” (Rogers, 1972). However, considering the evolutionist paradigm that became increasingly widespread in the social and human sciences after Charles Darwin, one can certainly attribute “Social-Darwinism” to Spencer as it was Spencer who first referred to evolution in the spheres of industry, trade, religion, art, and literature in his book *Progress*.

Similarly, speculating on the origins of Social Darwinism, Gregory Claeys (2000) claims that it is not accurate to presume that “much of the social and political theory which nominally invoked Darwin was fundamentally derived from the principles of natural selection” (p. 225). Instead, he suggests that “what was specific about much of Social Darwinism resulted from several shifts in thought in mid-Victorian Britain to which Darwin himself also responded and which therefore also vitally influenced his own development” (Claeys, 2000). Walter M. Simon (1960) also suggests that “the conception of society as an organism is of ancient vintage” (p. 294). However, the term Social Darwinism gained popularity in the Victorian era as biological analogy was applied to society and society, in turn, was seen as “an organism subject to universal laws and therefore susceptible of analysis by scientific methods” (Simon, 1960). Thus, both British and American societies in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were keen on understanding cultural-ideological paradigms that determine human social evolution.

For Herbert Spencer, one of the pioneers of the term Social Darwinism, who brilliantly characterized the intellectual matrix of 19th century Victorian England, two basic cultural-ideological criteria become evident. These are evolutionism and liberalism. By adapting biological themes of natural selection and introducing ‘survival of the fittest’ concept to politics and sociology, Herbert Spencer simply argues that the weak are diminished and their culture is defaced whereas the strong grows in power and gains a cultural superiority over the weak. However, Jack Jones (1982) argues that this ideology has received much criticism as it led to wars, economical destruction, and social upheaval when it was revisited in the early twentieth century (p. 239). For instance, Mary Midgley (1983) laments at Spencer’s full confidence in the phrase ‘survival of the fittest’ and argues that the damage, which Spencer has resulted in by giving the explicit scientific blessing of evolutionary theory to the wilder excesses of free-enterprise capitalism, is deep and lasting, which remains to plague us today, as well (p. 366). Moreover, there are further studies in the field of sociology which highlight a qualitative difference between the development of the human society and the biological laws of development of the organic world.

In fact, Spencer is not only criticized by contemporary researchers in the field of sociology in the 20th century. The studies, which mainly focus on the uniqueness of the inherent laws in human’s development and underline its difference from biological spheres include certain forms of literary studies, as well. Particularly, at the turn of the century, when corresponding ideologies such as unbridled capitalism, human competition in a laissez-faire economy, ethnic cleansing, racism, and imperialism began to emerge in European and North American societies, many prominent creative writers of the era were, too, highly concerned with naturalizing effect of social

Darwinism on human's cynicism, hypocrisy, greediness, and selfishness that led to battles for superiority. In these contexts, the present study sets out to examine how the ideology of Social Darwinism is represented in the Western literature in the late nineteenth century, an era when Western imperialism and expansionism reached at its heyday. It further seeks to understand how the consequences of Social Darwinism for modernizing European and North American societies are depicted in the selected works of the Western literature. To do so, the study keeps a close reading on major works of Stephen Crane and Guy De Maupassant, two of those literary figures who represent their criticism for social Darwinism in their respective narratives. Thus, while designing the research, the paper adopts a new critical approach to the texts – Crane's *The Open Boat* (1897) and Maupassant's *Ball of Fat* (1880) – and seeks to find textual evidences for addressing its research questions. Moreover, within the framework of cultural studies and Social Darwinism, this research paper also connects the texts to its social context in order to elaborate on how discourses relate to the issues of power, class, race, and some other spheres of human society.

As the textual findings demonstrate, the study argues that both Crane and Maupassant reflect that applying Social Darwinism to human communities leads to tragic ends and victimize those deemed least fit for modernizing societies. In addition, the paper also hypothesizes that, in the portrayals of contemporary societies, the competitiveness of man in the capitalist social order, the greedy nature of human beings, and the theme of hypocrisy are mostly highlighted by both short story writers to challenge basic concepts of Social Darwinism's most popular theory 'survival of the fittest'. By doing so, they hope to problematize Social Darwinist understanding of social evolution in human communities.

1. A Relentless Struggle for Survival in *The Open Boat*

The *Open Boat* is built on Stephen Crane's real-life stories of being struck for thirty hours in a small boat on the Atlantic Ocean. The characters in the story all correspond to the men who were aboard the dinghy with Crane in real-life. Stephen Crane set off from Florida, heading for Cuba, to observe the emerging clashes as a journalist. The actual captain injured himself when the ship sank and William Higgins, the actual oiler, really died on the coast. Even though all of Crane's figures in the short story have their counterparts in reality, he switches them with some archetypes of humankind and serves them to the caprices of nature. Max Westbrook (1962) argues that many critics contend that Stephen Crane believed in social determinism (p. 587). His style and theme also appear to represent his ideology of social determinism in his fiction. According to Westbrook, Crane is presupposed with "a universal principle which holds all men responsible for doing the best they can with what they have been given" (p. 588). This social determinism challenges Spencerian concept of Social Darwinism as it opposes to natural processes of social evolution and highlights individuals' will and choices as well as societal codes. As will be illustrated below, this determinist approach can be observed in Crane's work *The Open Boat*, as well.

There are many reports regarding the sinking of the dinghy which carried Stephen Crane and three or four other men during the Cuban War of Independence in the 1890s. William Randel (1962) argues that despite many newspaper reports, Charleston Montgomery's, the newspaper correspondent, ignoble testimony on the incidence have caused enough trouble regarding the

reliability of the sinking account (p. 411). Actually, Crane recounted the facts of the experience in the *New Work Press* on 7 January 1897. However, he saved the thirty hours that passed in a small boat for his short story titled *The Open Boat*. Likewise, Spofford (1979) claims that “a careful examination of the story in relation to Crane's earlier fiction, poetry, journalism, and letters reveals that Crane had articulated his themes and had formulated his motifs and images long before the incident” (p. 316). He further argues that “his recounting of the thirty hours in an open boat merely provided the vehicle for these materials to come together” (Spofford, 1979). Fact or fiction, *The Open Boat* serves as a good means of materials to examine Crane's social ethic and determinism, which contrasts with Darwinian socialism.

In *The Open Boat*, being struck in the currents of an immense ocean, the crew of the boat have to contend with furies of the nature so as to come ashore safe and sound. However, the nature is cruel and ferocious and compels them to face her violence in every single occasion. The waves are “most wrongfully and barbarously abrupt and tall” (Crane, 2016) and there is even a “shark playing around” the dinghy (Crane, 2016). Moreover, the nature is indifferent to the crew's cries for help and mercy. People envisioned by the crew on the shore either seem unconcerned or make fun of them. So, they are left alone on their struggle for survival throughout the whole journey. Robert Shulman (1978) suggests that corresponding to the unfriendly whims of nature as the antagonist, the group on the boat involve in a human community (p. 448). Thus, the brotherhood of the people on the dinghy becomes their basic resource while facing the attacks of the nature. The democratization and subtle bond felt by men who suffer and endure together challenge the nature and its rules that base the theories of Darwin and Spencer. For, by revealing each character's personal desire and the communal strength that arises out of this community, it clashes with linear biological procedures of evolution and their simplistic adaptation to society.

This noticeable comradeship of men that is created on the seas and dwelt also in the boat is the only thing that they can cling to for survival. Crane (2016) suggests that “each man felt it warm him” (p. 13). The oiler is the lynchpin of this comradeship, bringing all together by his loyal heroism. Moreover, he keeps a portrayal of power, friendship, and honesty. By echoing the captain's commands, he reinforces the communal pattern of the crew and instils trust in the other people. However, he is the single man from the boat to die in an eventual attempt to reach shore. This controversial end is also a clear signification of Crane's criticism for social Darwinism in terms of ‘survival of the fittest’ theory. For, both physically and socially, the oiler represents the fittest figure for the survival according to Herbert Spencer's hierarchy. Accordingly, when the men first tumbles into the sea, it is the oiler who “was ahead in the race”. He is “swimming strongly and rapidly” (Crane, 2016). However, as they come closer to the shore, a naked man with a halo who shines like a saint helps the cook, the captain and the correspondent reach ashore. However, in the shallows, face downward, lies the oiler, dead (Crane, 2016).

The sea and the shore have metaphorically different symbols in Crane's short story. While the sea represents nature, fate and destiny, the shore is a symbol for social order of the things and human intervention. Therefore, terms and conditions of the life apply disparately within these two different realms. At the sea, according to the Herbert Spencer's ‘survival of the fittest’ theory, the oiler's biological existence that includes strength, vigour and vitality guarantees safety and

survival. But, as a result of the hypocrisy of the other members of the crew, the oiler is made to work a double shift in the machine department and he is most probably tired in the boat. However, still relying on his physical strength and experience, the oiler feels neither fear nor worry when the captain announces his verdict that they will jump off the boat and swim to shore.

On the other hand, the shore is a place where competition determines social relations. In this laissez-faire capitalist order, not the fittest, but the most useful and suitable one survives. Taught to be the most cynical of the men, the correspondent represents media power that resembles the Church's ecclesiastical power in the Middle Ages. So, his survival is a pre-requisite for the human race. The captain is from the super-class. His ruling abilities are required, thus his presence is already guaranteed. The cook functions as the one that satisfies the human's appetite. Therefore, he is also useful within the framework of Spencer's social Darwinist perspective. As a result, they are all welcomed by the beach population and rewarded for their success with blankets, cloths, flasks, coffee-pots and remedies (Crane, 2016). However, the oiler symbolizes the common man, someone that Crane attempts to liken the average man most likely. Therefore, his commonness and mediocrity does not provide him any chance of survival. As a result, in Crane's portrayal, the saint with a halo, who, in fact, is an antagonist in the social Darwinist system, considers the oiler as an unsuitable figure to the shore society and abstains from granting him a rescue. Thus, the victimizing nature of the Social Darwinism is criticized by such an end.

Actually, the tragic end in *The Open Boat* is foreshadowed within the story. Crane (2016) suggests that

“for it was certainly an abominable injustice to drown a man who had worked so hard, so hard.... When it occurs to a man that nature does not regard him as important, and that she feels she would not maim the universe by disposing of him, he at first wishes to throw bricks at the temple, and he hates deeply the fact that there are no bricks and no temples” (p. 22).

By foreshadowing the oiler's disposal, Crane actually challenges the pre-determined fate, which is a main principle in Social Darwinism. In *The Open Boat*, Crane (2016) simply claims that “the whole affair is absurd” (p. 16). This argument complies well with the existentialist belief, which became popular in early twentieth century, that the globe itself is “absurd” and that one can find no meaning in the common ordeal of natural happenings. In fact, Crane implies that this absurdism in the nature leads to existentialist crises for many individuals. The oiler is one of them. The existentialist crisis that stems from nature's social injustice and determinism brings about the oiler's death. However, Crane illustrates that since the oiler cannot find either a stone or a temple to throw at, he has to hold his peace, which proves men's despair against the nature's almighty power reigning among societies and communities in the early 20th century.

In brief, by formulating a tragic end for one of the main characters in his fiction and centring his story around him, Stephen Crane seeks to highlight men's free will and individual choices against fate and social determinism. Moreover, through illustrating absurd consequences of nature's determinist principle, he also hopes to challenge basic concepts of Social Darwinism, which became really popular among Western and North American societies in the late 19th century.

2. French Hypocrisy and *Ball of Fat*

Another victim of the Darwinian social system that is commonly renown in the Western literature is Elizabeth Rousset, better known as Ball of Fat, in Guy de Maupassant's famous short story *Ball of Fat*. The novella is named after the main character, the prostitute Ball of Fat, who carries this nickname because of her physical properties:

“Small, round, and fat as lard, with puffy fingers choked at the phalanges, like chaplets of short sausages; with a stretched and shiny skin, an enormous bosom which shook under her dress, she was, nevertheless, pleasing and sought after, on account of a certain freshness and breeziness of disposition. Her face was a round apple, a peony bud ready to pop into bloom, and inside that opened two great black eyes, shaded with thick brows that cast a shadow within; and below, a charming mouth, humid for kissing, furnished with shining microscopic baby teeth. She was, it was said, full of admirable qualities” (Maupassant, 2010).

The vivid description of Ball of Fat's physical appearance clearly signifies her staunch, solid and stout body. However, in the short story, this idealized unfeminine body is disposed of by her covetous and hypocritical countrymen on a run-away journey to Havre, where the travellers hope to find peace. Her bodily strength and physical beauty are tested in this tour that they have to take due to German occupation of her city, Rouen, during the Franco-Prussian War of 1870. The entourage consists of two nuns, the rigid Democrat Cornudet; a rich upper-bourgeoisie owning a factory and his wife, M. and Mme. Carré-Lamadon; shop owners from the small bourgeoisie, M. and Mme. Loiseau; and the Comte and Comtesse of Bréville. Therefore, the coach that embraces a group of ten people, constitutes a small part of French community, portraying various components of the French people in the late 19th century.

In the novella, Maupassant represents the residents of the carriage in different criticizing manners. The aristocratic Comte and Comtesse are portrayed as fragile and coward despite their occupation as the main dignitaries of Rouen. The tradesman and his wife are continually represented to be avaricious and materialist, and the tradesman's wife, particularly, is mostly illustrated to be bewildered every time her husband spends money. The small bourgeois who makes money out of selling wine and his wife are portrayed as dishonest and morally deplorable, the most probable of the group to trait their country for going back to a life of avarice in quiet. The two sisters being in the carriage are firstly represented to be at peace and obedient to God. But, they later demonstrate themselves to be ardent, public-hearted, considering their country more than any other person in the carriage. Cornudet is continually illustrated to be a person that is not more than an alcoholic, womaniser, and coward man. Moreover, he does not stand up for his repellant anti-German ideas when the time arrives. Contrary to all these figures stands out Ball of Fat, portrayed as the most ardently public-hearted, kind, and morally creditable character, whom Maupassant compares to the hypocrisy and snobbery of the other people travelling within the coach.

However, her patriotism, kind-heartedness and morality are not welcomed by the sinister accompanies in the carriage. As soon as she is recognized, such words as 'prostitute' and 'public shame' are whispered among the members of the bourgeoisie. As a joke, they even propose to eat the fattest of the passengers when their growing appetites trouble their minds after hours of hunger and thirst strike them all. They do not eat Ball of Fat's body literally, but they abuse every

part of it for their own sake.

In fact, Ball of Fat is the only one who prepares provisions for the journey. She has a food basket filled with two whole chickens, patés, fruits, sweetmeats, biscuits, hard bread, wafers, pickled gherkins, onions, and even four bottles of wine (Maupassant, 2010). The food is abundant enough to serve the whole group and the sophisticated whore provides her supercilious accompanies with nourishment and beverages as the people come near fainting from starvation. The petit bourgeoisie, in response, begin to establish intimidate relations with her. However, this is, of course, due to their hypocrisy and insincerity. When they satisfy their appetite and exhaust her provisions for their own good, the conversation continues “a little more coldly” (Maupassant, 2010) and then fades away.

The bourgeois group of people that accompany Ball of Fat during the journey are not contented with the food that she provides. They exploit her body, as well. First, Cornudet wants to have sex with her on the night they stop by the hotel in Totés for a break. This, she refuses. Moreover, the German officer who is in charge of the town also demands Ball of Fat sleep with him. Or else, they would not be allowed to continue their travel (Maupassant, 2010). This offer, too, is repeatedly rejected by Ball of Fat, who features her patriotism as an excuse. However, the hypocritical group of people, who are bored with waiting, first request the German officer hold only Ball of Fat and let them go. However, the German is obstinate. Then, they begin to insist with vivacity that Ball of Fat consent to the officer’s lascivious desire. They use every argument to persuade this sophisticated prostitute. Each takes some role to play. The women argue that serving her body will be a patriotic heroism, the nuns claim that, from a theological perspective, depraved behaviours for a better act can still be regarded as religious. At last, Ball of Fat surrenders and has sex with the German soldier.

Making such a utilitarian sacrifice, which saves her companions, damages Ball of Fat emotionally. However, she is even more emotionally hurt as they turn against her, once again considering her and her behaviours as depraved. While returning from Tôtes, Ball of Fat gets in a hurry and does not have time to prepare any food, but none of the other people in the carriage shares their provisions with her, talks to her, or thanks her in any manner. Duncan (1999) argues that these acts of contempt are consequences of “repressed admiration” (p. 103). Some of the female passengers on the stagecoach, including Carre-Lamadon, repudiate Ball of Fat as a way of avoiding awareness that they, too, are capable of prostitution (Duncan, 1999). Therefore, they become her accomplices rather than protesters in the act of harlotry. This blind hypocrisy and cynicism proves, once again, how utterly shallow and self-interested, all the characters, except Ball of Fat, are. So, she feels herself devastated in the scorn of these dishonest villains, who have first sacrificed her and then turned her down, like an inappropriate or incompetent article. As a result, Ball of Fat “wept continually, and sometimes a sob, which she was not able to restrain, echoed between the two rows of people in the shadows” (Maupassant, 2010).

The tragic end is, in fact, a realist description of the whole structure of bourgeois hypocrisy in the late 19th century French society: communal, sexual, spiritual, political, and economic. But, with a very lively and picturesque language, Maupassant seems to illustrate how “being the fittest” does not ensure survival in contrast to Social Darwinism theory. Both physically and morally, Ball of

Fat is the fittest to endure the long and tough journey. She has a full basket of provisions, and she is courageous and decisive on account of her national pride. However, her provisions are exploited and her patriotism is abused by the hypocritical and cynical group of the French bourgeoisie. As a result, her body is decomposed and her dignity is defamed. Contrary to the pre-determinist nature of Social Darwinism, Ball of Fat becomes the only one to suffer throughout the whole journey as she is regarded to be improper or useless by the petit bourgeoisie. Consequently, similar to *The Open Boat*, the whole story is centred around the basic principle that Social Darwinism does not actually ensure survival for the common men although they are the fittest and most endurable. In contrast, it abuses and victimizes them through social misconceptions and limitations that arise out of human's ill-tempered nature.

Discussion and Conclusion

Based on the famous theory of society as an organism, Social Darwinism presupposes 'survival of the fittest' in social and political relations. According to the 19th century British philosopher Herbert Spencer, society evolves and increases in complexity through certain processes analogous to Darwinian biology. However, since society is composed of men rather than animals and deals with human relations, interpretations of Spencer's theory has received much criticism from prominent scholars of the era. Similarly, after certain ideologies such as capitalism, human competition, racism, and imperialism emerged in European and North American societies in the 1800s, victimizing nature of social Darwinism was also criticised in many prominent works of the late 19th century Western literature. In this context, this study examines two short stories from the Western literature to illustrate critical evaluations of Social Darwinism through the representations of two miserable characters. In both stories, within the framework of Social Darwinist theory, the protagonists are the fittest for survival during the journey that they embark on. However, in contrast to implications of the theory, they both get victimized by the members of their small community and face a similar tragic end.

Many critical studies on Stephen Crane's *The Open Boat* and Guy de Maupassant's *Ball of Fat* focus on the authors' deviation from common principles of Social Darwinism. For example, in an article which discusses why the oiler in *The Open Boat* perishes, Oliver Billingslea (1994) challenges social Darwinian readings of the short story, which mostly take the oiler as a type that is not fit for mixing with the water and thus fades away, and instead underlines nature's ignorance of the individual (p. 28). According to Billingslea (1994), "it is Billie's prodigal nature that determines his fate" (p. 29). Therefore, although the oiler relies on brotherhood - that basic society which differs us from the apes, he gets abused by the members of this small circle and perishes in the end (Billingslea, 1994). In another study on postmodern readings of Stephen Crane's works, James Colvert (1995) differentiates between natural determinism and freedom of will and argues that the concept of society is created as a fiction by man "as a defense against an alien and inhuman nature", a common motif in postmodern literature (p. 19). Thus, in contrast to interests of Spencer's survival theory, the nature's determinist threats are faced with a primitive society of four men, which is built upon brotherhood and free-will, in *The Open Boat* (Colvert, 1995). Similarly, John Dudley (2002) suggests that constructing a narrative world that consists of the struggle of men against the nature coherently represents the social context of turn-of-the-century America (p. 102). Thus, in his short story, Crane underlines a masculine unity of the ideal of

brotherhood against Darwinian view of warring nature and the Spencerian idea of the survival of the fittest (Dudley, 2002). On the other hand, in a different study which focuses on human's experiences as the central theme in *The Open Boat*. Bert Bender (1979) principally suggests that man's self-awareness may challenge nature's indifference to him – a theme which is mostly repeated in the acts and behaviours of the small circle in the dinghy (p. 75). In particular, in Bender's article, the correspondent's experience or inexperience is linked with his cynicism that leads to the oiler's death.

The results drawn in this study are mostly compatible with the literature discussed above. As illustrated before, the oiler in Stephen Crane's *The Open Boat*, in fact, maintains an image of strength, warmth, and integrity. But, although he swims fast and is ahead in the race when the boat capsizes, the oiler is the only refugee from the ship to die in the final attempt at reaching land. With his physical strength and sailing experience, the oiler is fit for survival at sea, where only nature reigns. Therefore, in accordance with the doctrines of Social Darwinism, he is able to survive as many biological organisms do in maiden Nature. But he becomes just a kind of everyman on the shore, where human beings set the rules. Unlike the correspondent, the captain and the cook who bear peculiar qualities useful for the society, the oiler is simple and common. Thus, since he is regarded to be not appropriate and useful for the shore society, he is simply disposed of by the rescuing men. Consequently, via this tragic end, Crane hints at the idea that human interventions disrupt natural rules and thus can not be directly adapted to implications of natural theories, such as Social Darwinism. In Crane's constructed social world – or a "written" world in postmodernist context – humans are free and their choices are not limited by the crucial issue of mere survival.

Similarly, the prostitute Elizabeth Rousset in Guy de Maupassant's *Ball of Fat* is, both physically and morally, well-prepared for the long and dangerous journey she takes with a circle of men and women. With her prudence, courage and patriotism, she seems to be able to survive in harsh conditions during the travel, which she sets off in order to flee from distracting attitudes of the Prussian occupants in her hometown. However, she is accompanied by a small group of French bourgeoisie who abuse her both physical and moral strength. Through hypocrisy, cynicism and insincerity, they first eat up all the provisions that Ball of Fat brings with her for the journey. Then, they also sacrifice her body for the sake of the German officer's pleasures. And when they do away with Ball of Fat, they reject her, like some improper or useless article. As a result, contrary to her fitness in Social Darwinian perspective, Ball of Fat's body is decomposed and her dignity is defamed at the end of the novella. Therefore, Maupassant's short story clearly shows that societal rules set by human communities are mostly different from those determined by the nature. No matter how fit one can be for the challenges faced in natural order, one still can not be able to survive if this natural order is defied by human's dark features including hypocrisy and cynicism.

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