Pamukkale Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi (2009) 2/1

A SOCIO-ECONOMIC APPROACH TO THE CASE OF THE MIGRATION OF IRISH WOMEN TO THE UNITED STATES

Zennure KÖSEMAN*

Keywords: Ireland, Immigration to the United States, Emancipation of Women, Social Status, Socio-Economic Structure.

Anahtar Kelimeler: İrlanda, Amerika'ya Göç, Kadınların Özgürleşmesi, Sosyal Statü, Sosyo-Ekonomik Yapı.

Abstract

This article deals with the reasons for the Irish women migration to the United States as well as the changes in their social status. In this study, it is indicated that most Irish women left Ireland in order to attain social ascendancy and monetary wealth. However, as a result of the socio-economic circumstances, their dreams of upward mobility turned into a nightmare. Although migration meant emancipation and an escape from the disastrous economic circumstances of Ireland for some women, there were others, such as Maggie in Stephen Crane's *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets,* (1893), who associated it with poverty, inequality, and inadequacy in sanitation. Crane's *Maggie* depicts the difficulties in socio-economic living conditions of Irish women immigrants in the United States and portrays the undesirable consequences of Irish migration in the lives of the fictional characters.

Özet

AMERİKA'YA GÖÇ EDEN İRLANDALI KADINLARIN GÖÇ EDİŞLERİNE SOSYO-EKONOMİK BİR YAKLAŞIM

Bu çalışma, Amerika'ya göç eden İrlandalı kadınların göç etme sebeplerinin yanısıra onların yaşadıkları sosyal statü değişikliklerini de ele almaktadır. Çalışmada, Amerika'ya göç eden her İrlandalı kadının toplumda statü atlama ve zengin olma hayaliyle yola çıktığı, fakat, Amerika'da karşılaşılan sosyo-ekonomik sebeplerden dolayı bu hayalin sadece bir kabus haline dönüştüğü ele alınmaktadır. Her ne kadar göç, birçok İrlandalı kadın göçmen için kadınların özgürleşmesi ve İrlanda'daki ekonomik zorluklardan kurtuluş/kaçış anlamına gelse de, Stephen Crane'nin *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets* (1893) adlı romanındaki Maggie gibi bazı kadınlar için ise fakirlik, eşitsizlik, ve sağlıksız yaşam koşullarından başka anlam ihtiva etmemiştir. Crane'nin *Maggie* adlı romanı Irlanda'ya göç eden kadınların yaşadıkları sosyo-ekonomik zorlukları en iyi şekilde sergileyen bir roman olduğundan, göçün sebep olduğu istenmeyen sonuçlar karakterlerin yaşamlarında irdelenebilecektir.

1. INTRODUCTION

This article intends to deal with the reasons for the Irish women's need to migrate to the United States and the consequences of their migration in terms of socio-economic perspectives. This study also notes that although Irish migration to the United States basically represents the emancipation of women as well as an escape from the changing social, economic, and political life in Ireland in the

*Öğr. Gör. Dr. A.K.Ü. Fen-Ed. Fak. İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı. Bl. e-posta: zennurekoseman@yahoo.com.tr

19th and the 20th centuries, it also signifies the beginning of the miserable times facing Irish women in the United States. Although most Irish women gained social ascendancy through migration, there were some who were influenced by the socio-economic situation of the New Land especially because of their inability to adjust to the new living conditions. Rather than experiencing better living circumstances in the States when compared to their homeland, some Irish women encountered inadequate sustenance, sanitation, accommodation, security, and employment. Such was the case with the fictional characters of Maggie and her mother in Stephen Crane's *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets* (1893). A sociological study of Irish immigration and a socio-economic approach to the consequences faced by Crane's fictional characters in *Maggie* illustrate how Irish immigrant women as well as their family members experience deplorable living conditions in the United States.

2. STRONG IRISH NATIONALISM OF IRISH-AMERICAN IMMIGRANT WOMEN

The United States had the policy of accepting immigrant groups who were generally poor and tired of social, economic, religious, and political circumstances in their own countries. One of these groups was the Irish who migrated to the United States in great numbers during the pre-Civil War Era. The Irish migration to the United States was predominantly a female movement since great numbers of females continued to immigrate during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Many young unmarried women left Ireland to avoid the economic and social consequences of the Great Potato Famine, which resulted in starvation and poverty[8].

Since the Irish migration to the United States in the nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries was mainly a female movement, it is necessary to find the answers to questions regarding who these young Irish women were. Why had they migrated to America? What were their expectations? How did their previous lives affect the choices they made in America? The answers lie, not in America, but in Ireland. The Irish began to leave their homes in great numbers early in the 1840s due to starvation, high rents paid to the landlords, widespread poverty,

---

[8]As indicated in "The Potato Disease" article, the potato crops were extended far and wide, causing great fear amongst the peasantry. The poor people had misery and consternation because of the famine (Internet Irish Archives, 1845). That's why thousands of people were sent to America, Scotland and Canada at the expense of the landlord, who had made arrangements to provide them with a comfortable passage. However, these immigrants were forced to have a check up before immigration, as was explained in "The Population of Ireland" article:

> By the terms of the New Passenger Act, 12 & 13 Vict., c. 33 no passenger-ship is allowed to proceed until a medical practitioner appointed by the emigration office of the port shall have inspected the medicines and passengers, and certified that the medicines are sufficient, and that the passengers are free from contagious disease . . . (1851).

religious discrimination, penalty systems and fewer opportunities for social improvement. The Irish people in Ireland used the land for tillage rather than as pastures due to high grain prices. The consequent break up of large pastures into small farms resulted in greater reliance on the potato as the only source of food for peasants. There was the decline in the domestic industries and growth in population. Survival in rural Ireland for most peasants meant growing potatoes was imperative. By 1841, the subdivision of holdings over generations reduced most peasants' land to fewer than five acres. Many of these poor small landholders survived on potatoes, and had to work to pay their rent. Thus, seasonal migration to harvest crops became a necessity for many men and some women during that period (Miller, 1985: 48-49). Following all these consequences of the Great Famine, Irish women were probably fed up with their rural life in Ireland, and migration to the United States—the land of opportunity—seemed a way out.

As a result of deleterious circumstances, most Irish women migrated towards urban cities in America to have better living circumstances. There is another reason why they predominantly preferred to depart Ireland – they did not have the equal rights with men in Ireland, because Irish men were known to be violent toward their wives. The lack of adequate opportunities in Ireland for social ascendancy increased their desire for working opportunities abroad such as in the United States. As the patriarchal system was dominant in Ireland, fathers were the decision makers at home and, so Irish women hated the social system at home. Therefore, they were consciously or unconsciously feminists without being aware of their feminism at that time. This is the main reason why "*dob eigan dome imeacht go meiricie*" meaning "going to America was a necessity for me" was the most common saying for an Irish-speaker to describe the need to migrate.

Women in Ireland, who had domestic daily jobs on small farms, were often spinners, weavers, seamstresses cloth makers especially in the cottage industries of the northern and eastern part of Ireland. When these woolen and cotton industries declined in the early nineteenth century, some of these women migrated to the industrial cities such as Boston, London, Toronto, Sydney, Melbourne, and New York. Most of these women did not work on farms, many of them worked in areas similar to their jobs in Ireland as domestic servants, peddlers, boarding-house keepers when they settled abroad (Diner, 1983: 20; Rhodes, 1992: 129).

Immigrant Irish women searched for their relatives and fellows from Ireland so that they would be in contact with them in their new work places in the United States. Immigration made most Irish women psychologically and socially powerful than they had been in Ireland, because they were able to work as book binders, printers, store keepers, and flower makers. Their daughters also worked in the hotels and in the boarding-houses of the big cities. More than 25 % of the Irish working population was employed as domestic servants (Miller, 1990: 99). By the mid-nineteenth century, Irish immigrants who left a preindustrial agrarian society behind were beginning to provide the labor force for the factories in the

United States. The work power was the young women and children in 1840s in New England[9] (Williams, 1990: 20, 93). When the ages of the Irish immigrants to the United States are considered beginning from 1861 until 1910 (as seen in the Table below) it is obvious that those immigrants were mainly very young individuals who made a living and supported their families (qtd. in Rhodes, 1992: 247).

Ages of Immigrants, 1861-1910

	15-19	20-24	25-29	15-29
1861-1870				
males	8.4%	33.7 %	20.1 %	62.2 %
females	13.1 %	34.0 %	13.3 %	60.4 %
1871-1880				
males	10.2 %	31.7 %	20.9 %	62.9 %
females	17.9 %	33.8 %	13.7 %	65.3 %
1881-1890				
males	15.1 %	38.3 %	15.5 %	68.9 %
females	26.0 %	35.5 %	10.0 %	71.5 %
1891-1900				
males	11.0 %	41.6 %	23.4 %	76.1 %
females	22.1 %	44.1 %	14.1 %	80.3 %

From the Table above, it can be observed that especially the girls aged 15-29 were sent to America between 1861 and 1900 to make a good living, to get an education, and to get married to a suitable man as well as to support their families by sending money back to their hometowns. By working in factories and domestic service, those young girls were the hopes of their families in Ireland. In addition to their economic roles, despite being young not to work in hard working conditions, most of those young girls kept up their interactions with their family members. Because of their homesickness and nationalistic feelings, they often brought their parents and relatives over to America in addition to maintaining their connections with their native country. Margaret McCarthy, being a young Irish immigrant, wrote to her "Dear Father, Mother Brothers, and Sisters" in 1850 with her original spelling:

Come you all Together Couragiously and bid adieu to that lovely land of our Birth, that place where the young and old joined Together in one Common Union, both night and day engaged in Innocent Amusement. But alas, I am now

[9] Nearly three-quarters of the Irish population went to America in family groups. 86 % of the population lived at least with an individual from relatives or family members. Most of the population 93% lived by having an extended family and 75 % of the Irish over 60 years old vied with relatives. This shows that the strong bonds of duty and reliance to parents were not depraved by immigration (Miller, 1985: 32).

Told it's the gulf of Misery oppression Degradation and Ruin of evry Discription which I am Sorry to hear of so Doleful a History to Be told of our Dr. Country. This my Dr. Father induces me to Remit to you in this Letter 20 Dollars . . . until you might Be Clearing away from that place all together and the Sooner the Better for Believe me I could not Express how great would be my joy at seeing all here. Together where you would never be at a loss for a good Breakfast and dinner (qtd. in Pozetto, 1991: 53-54).

As a person in her teens, she expresses how she misses her previous life. She realizes that her family's situation is much worse than when she left. In fact, it seems that they are practically starving. This is the reason why she suggests that they leave as soon as possible. She continues:

I have Eryr Reason to Believe that we will all do well. Together So as that I am sure its not for Slavery I want you to Come here no its for affording My Brothers and sisters An I an oppertunity of Showing our Kindness and Gratitude and Comeing on you Seniour days that we would be placed in that possession that you my Dr. Father and mother could walk about Lesurily and Independly without Requireing your Labour an object which I am Sure will not fail even by Myself if I was obliged to do it without the assistance of brother or sister for my Dr. Father and Mother.

She kept her kinship relations although she was in America and sent 20 dollars by her letter to her family as a responsible adult female. By the means of her letter, she advised her family to leave their hard economic and social life of Ireland and have adequate opportunity of a better living in the States. She wanted to be united with her family in America and was willing to work hard to provide pleasant days for her parents in their old age. The desire for freedom was also a main reason for most individuals such as McCarty to migrate to the United States. McCarthy also explained her Irish cultural identity by "showing our Kindness and Gratitude." From her letter above, it is clear that she had strong national feelings. She includes a list of family and friends to be remembered to not forgetting any of her family members and remembering her neighbors as well. Her homesickness, her patriotism and national ties with her own country is clearly observed in her letter as "I am Raptures of Joy when I think of one day Seeing you all at the dock in New York and if I do not have a good Bottle of Brandy for you Awaiting your arrival as a Causion." Although she stresses her hard living circumstances in Ireland several times, her affection to her native country is evident as she mentions the good old days. From bringing/inviting her parents and relatives to the United States, it is obvious that McCarthy would live by the hope of joining her family one day. As John D. Beukner also states in his article "Irish Americans," family ties were the most powerful influence on Irish migration (1992: 81). Margaret McCarthy was only one of the Irish-American immigrant women in the United States who hoped to be reunited with her relatives and family. Like McCarthy, the other Irish immigrants would probably be full of national feelings when they had their famous "Immigrant Farewell:"

Farewell to the, Ireland the land of our birth
The pride and the glory, the gem of the earth

We sail with sad hearts to a land far away
In search of that bread that may fail if we stay (Irish archives, 1850).

These girls and other women were helped to go to America by the Law Guardian which paid the passage of nearly 650 out of 900.000[10]. Some landlords helped their tenants leave. 2,847 women in 1850 left Ireland for America with the help of the Poor Law Guardians. In the 1850s, Ere Foster, an English philanthropist, organized the Irish Pioneer Immigration Food and a Women's Protective Immigration Society to help many women get to the United States. In 1860, a female middle class immigration society organized by Marie Rye worked to select young educated women to be sent to America (Miller 1985: 308, 329). The reason why all these schemes helped women to migrate would probably be to save the women from undesirable consequences of the Famine. After accumulating wealth in the United States they would often return to Ireland to be helpful and beneficial for the Irish economy and Irish people.

As a response to the helping schemes, Irish women in the United States became good patriots and originated some of the most important orders of service in Ireland such as the Presentation Sisters, and the Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur who established an industrial school in 1858 to improve the employment opportunities of working girls, the Sisters of the Good Shepherd and the Sisters of Mercy whose aims were to save the "fallen women," and the Sisters of the Holy Cross. Wherever they went, they established Mercy Houses for women in trouble, employment agencies especially for domestic servants, and training schools for young women hoping to move into clerical and nursing work, and day nurseries for children of working mothers. They helped women to have job training as well as a place to work (Diner, 1983: 130).

Irish women were very important in a labor force, by securing their personal goals and they were active in trade unionism in order to improve wages. They earned money and sent it to their families in Ireland while also contributing to the Catholic Church. In this case, migration for Irish women meant an improvement in income and status for women. The mother, not the father, represented the centrality of family members, so she had the economic power. In this aspect, the United States was quite different from Ireland for women. They had different problems in the States when compared to their lives in Ireland. Widowhood became a more common life experience for Irish women than it had been in Ireland since they achieved supporting the family through their efforts (Diner, 1983: 96). It was an upgrading in women's social status by bringing them

[10] "The Law Guardian" is explained in the Law Guardian Internet Voucher as follows:
The Law Guardian Program provides legal services for children in Family Court proceedings and Supreme Court custody matters. More than 6 attorneys in private practice are designated by the Appellate Division as members of country law guardian panels, and are then appointed by Family Court Judges and Supreme Court Justices to represent children on a case-by-case basis. Representation is also provided in five countries by law guardian offices under agreements between the Appelate Division and qualitified attorney.

to a society with greater opportunities followed by respectability and an active life. Moreover, migration meant Irish women's liberation. They left a society of fewer opportunities and immigrated to a society promising abundance and better living conditions. As women suffrage writers thought, Irish men and women shared equality after the migration to the United States. Having rights in the family matters, women participated in the decisions and kept the family budget (Diner 1983: 147). As Diner expresses in *Erin's Daughters in America:*

Irish men generally experienced a decline in status and power within their families as a result of migration, pushing women—wives and mothers—into authoritative roles far greater than they had experienced in the countryside. The daughter in the Irish family no longer occupied the lowest reign of importance and respect, and the comparatively open range of economic options for young Irish women—in domestic work, in white-collar employment, and in the professions of nursing and school teaching—made her someone of note in her family and, by extension, in her community (1983: 46).

In addition to their social ascendancy, Irish women preserved their cultural values and Irish heritage. They maintained their social and Catholic religious characteristics. This is why they stood upright in an Anglo-Saxon Protestant Society. They had a strong sense of community which resulted in many sisterhoods. With their distinctive Catholic identity, they preserved their national, cultural, and religious values in the places where they settled (Beukner 1992: 83). They especially showed their strong sense of community by expressing their nationalistic ideas via letters and the newspapers.

Their dependence on their strong national, cultural, and religious values caused feelings of alienation and homesickness to emerge when they left Ireland for a long time to earn their living in the United States. Those who left Ireland for America in the half of the nineteenth century suffered the pain of leaving home besides the problems of settlement in the New World. Irish Americans became homesick for their previous lives because most of them were poor country people, unprepared for urban industrial life or employment in the New World (Fanning 1990: 74). There was a strong Irish-American homesickness, patriotism and nationalism in America rooted in a traditional Irish Catholic world view. In addition to their desire for social ascendancy and better living conditions, Catholicism united Irish women, their relatives and their family members, giving them a strong sense of community in America.

3. THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES IN STEPHEN CRANE'S *MAGGIE: A GIRL OF THE STREETS* (1893)

In an attempt to secure prosperity and social position, many Irish women migrated to the United States, as depicted in John McElgun's *Annie Kelly* (1873), Mary Anne Sadlier's Bessy *Conway; or, The Irish Girl in America*, (1861), *Elinor Preston: or, Scenes at Home and Abroad,* (1861), and *Confessions of an Apostate* (1864). However, since *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets* was written at the

time of the rapid industrial and urban growth, the undesirable socio-economic circumstances of the new residence will be most clearly observed in this story.[11]

When the socio-economic circumstances are evaluated, although the United States had been a place for social ascendancy for most Irish women, there were some other women such as Maggie and her mother, Mary, who experienced miserable days in the slums of the Bowery, the Lower East Side of New York. That is, the movement towards emancipation from their difficult lives in Ireland followed a different pattern in the United States for some Irish girls and women, such as Maggie and her mother, Mary. Hence, in *Maggie*, Crane recounts the results of social and economic changes in the Johnsons' living conditions after they leave Ireland and move to New York City.[12]

As the socio-economic aspects of their way of life changed, Maggie and her family were disappointed as a result of the hard social and economic circumstances in the slum districts and as well as their inadequate adjustment to the necessities of the urban world, New York City. As Katherine M. Eagan indicates, many Irish immigrant women could not adjust to the new environment due to pursuing a "peasant simplicity" and "provincial scholasticism" and, thus, experienced disappointment in the new hard slum living conditions (2003, 43). Maggie was not ready for the way of life in the urban world of Uptown which Pete, her so-called lover drew her into. She was eager to find the same opportunities and life conditions as the wealthy of the Uptown:

She wondered if the culture and refinement she had seen imitated, perhaps grotesquely, by the heroine on the stage, could be acquired by a girl who lived in a tenement house and worked in a shirt factory (Crane, 1995: 25).

Maggie compares her living conditions to those of other people. Being discontent with her poor life, she wants to escape from her miserable life and wants to achieve something in her life. In *Maggie,* there is concentration on the poverty and unequal economic conditions in the slum districts.[13] In his most

---

[11] Stephen Crane's *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets* is hereafter abbreviated as *Maggie* both in the parenthetical sources and the context of this article.

[12] The period Maggie was written in was the beginning of the Progressive Era in American history. The time between 1890 and 1930 was the period of progress in every field of life in the United States. This period was marked by a migration from rural regions to city centers. One might characterize this period of mobilization toward cities with the term "transformation," a fundamental trait of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that indicates an alteration in the old ways of life. Transformation results from the progress in technology, industry and urbanization. Characterized mainly by its rapid urban growth, rise in immigration, and progressive reforms, this period was a time of increase in wealth, development in education, improvement in technology and the awakening to a new scientific way of thinking, pragmatism (Martin, 1967: 11).

[13] Although the Irish women are quite active in the family after the exodus from Ireland to the United States, *Maggie* is an exception because of Stephen Crane's approach with respect to socio-economic circumstances. Crane analyzes the society in accordance with the depravity in social and economic life to give readers a slice out of life with a realist and naturalist point of view.

noted tale of urban life and the Bowery, Crane depicts in *Maggie* the violence and disorder among the Irish poor in a slum setting that drive a young Irish woman to prostitution. Despite her yearning to attain adequate living conditions in the United States, deplorable social and economic circumstances drive Maggie into being a fallen woman rather than a successful person in social life. Her failure indicates how environmental factors overwhelm individuals. The influence of miserable living conditions on individuals can clearly be observed in her mother's attitudes and behavior towards her husband and children. Her parents are cruel towards their children. The mother is like a giant who tries to kill Jimmie. She treats him like an animal:

The mother's massive shoulders heaved with anger. Grasping the urchin by the neck and shoulder she shook him until he rattled. She dragged him to an unholy sink, an soaking a rag in water, began to scrub his lacerated face with it. Jummie screamed in pain, and tried to twist his shoulders out of the clasp of the huge arms (Crane, 1995: 5).

The parents, especially the mother, occasionally complain about their impoverishment. She is aggressive because of her despair in adjusting to urban life. Maggie and her family have to survive in their poor living conditions whereas people in Uptown do not have such problems since they have enough property and money. It is clear that their aggressive states are the outcomes of living in the Bowery. The way of life in slum districts –the inadequate sanitation and poor health practices and social isolation – is the reason why individuals have an escapist attitude towards their environment.

In *Maggie*, it is obvious in the bad socio-economic circumstances of the 1890s that Darwin's philosophy of "the survival of the fittest" applies to the competitive slum life; i.e. economically weak individuals were overwhelmed by the wealthy and powerful ones in life. This discrepancy in the socio-economic situation resulted in moral degeneration and in some cases, such as Crane's *Maggie*, the quarrels continue to affect family life. No sense of respect, love, and interaction exist in family households, as the parents become vicious, brutal, and aggressive drunkards as a result of their inadequate budgets. They become indifferent to each other as well as to their children and their environment. Hence, the absence of a central family life in *Maggie* indicates the influence of urban living conditions on the decline in the family interactions and moral values. Maggie's domestic life is like a battlefield where her parents are continuously attacking each other:

The children scrambled hastily. With prodigious clatter they arranged themselves at table. The babe sat with his feet dangling high from a precarious infant chair and gorged his small stomach. Jimmie forced, with feverish rapidity, the grease-enveloped pieces between his wounded lips. Maggie, with side glances of fear of interruption, ate like a small pursued tigress (Crane, 1995:6).

Stephen Crane also criticizes the loss of innocence and purity as individuals migrate from a rural to an urban life as is the case in *Maggie*. At the beginning of the novel, Maggie is a naïve girl, who "blossomed in a mud puddle." Although Crane appreciates her innocence and professes, "None of the dirt of Rum Alley

seemed to be in her veins.[14] The philosophers, upstairs, downstairs, and on the same floor, puzzled over it." Crane expresses others' anxiety about what will happen to Maggie, who is ignorant of the dangers in the Bowery district. She is described as a beautiful girl, the "wonderful production of a tenement district" (Crane 1995: 14). She is innocent and beautiful like a flower; she is doomed to have bad luck, because she has grown up in a "mud puddle." One critic, David Halliburton, compares Maggie's innocence with her environment and expresses, "For while Maggie's innocence is not in itself enough to see her through, it stands in vivid opposition to her environment" (1989, 42). Although she survives in her environment, Maggie has inadequate information about the slum life because of her ignorance and illiteracy. Her position in society changes dramatically due to their relation with Pete, whom she was introduced in their house by Jimmie, her brother. Although she idealizes a happy and prosperous life, she fails to acquire it and at the end commits suicide. Everyone rejects her in society and she has no one to rely on. Her hopelessness is the primary cause of her suicide. Here, Crane puts the blame for Maggie's end more on the social and economic conditions more than the individuals. Crane is a social critic who put the blame on class struggles and other problems such as the moral degeneration and social corruption in Maggie's society.

Maggie depicts the American social structure in a realistic and naturalist mode. In contrast to the widespread belief in achievement and progress, Maggie and her family are depicted as the ones who have lost all their hopes of improvement in their social and economic situation.[15] Although they migrated from Ireland in order to gain social ascendancy in the United States, they experienced just the opposite; therefore, they wanted to escape from the poor slum living conditions. Crane depicts the miserable life of the Irish oriented Maggie and her family by contrasting Uptown with the Bowery, Lower East Side, the immigrant and the working district of New York (Hurm, 1991: 112). Crane portrays the influence of the slum world on individuals' escapist attitudes in the opening of the second chapter in *Maggie* and portrays the undesirable consequences of migration from rural to urban setting:

---

[14] Crane may have been influenced by Jacob A. Riis's "The Reign of Rum" chapter of *How The Other Half Lives* in his usage of Rum Alley.

[15] The general policy of industrialists and the statesmen toward progress and achievement give the period from the 1890s till 1920s its name the Progressive Era. *Maggie* was written in the 1890s, just after the Gilded Age in American history. "Self-made" economic achievement is the main ideal during the Gilded Age. There are the "captains of industry who could ignore the clamor of public opinion and rise to truly national power and prestige by economic means alone" (Bellah, 1985: 43). These industrialists aimed to recreate the frontier ideals of success, progress, mobility, change, optimism, pursuit of wealth and equality in obtaining opportunities in urban life. That is, they strove to liven up the myth of success, achievement, progress, equality of opportunity and pursuit of happiness.

Eventually they entered into a dark region where, from a careening building, a dozen gruesome doorways gave up loads of babies to the street and the gutter. A wind of early autumn raised yellow dust from cobbles and swirled it against a hundred windows. Long streamers of garments fluttered from fire-escapes. In all unhandy places there were buckets, brooms, rags and bottles. In the street infants played or fought with other infants or sat stupidly in the way of vehicles. Formidable women, with uncombed hair and disordered dress, gossiped while leaning on railings, or screamed in frantic quarrels. Withered persons, in curious postures of submission to something, sat smoking pipes in obscure corners. A thousand odors of cooking food came forth to the street. The building quivered and creaked from the weight of humanity stamping about in its bowels (1995: 4).

In *Maggie*, Stephen Crane emphasizes why the individuals are unable to achieve success and progress due to the influence of the urban environmental conditions on individuals' lives and their personal traits. He expresses this point to one of his contemporaries, Hamlin Garland, in 1863:

It is inevitable that you will be greatly shocked by this book but continue please with all possible courage to the end. For it tries to show the environment is a tremendous thing in the world and frequently shapes lives regardless. If one proves that theory, one makes more in heaven for all sorts of souls (notable an occasional street girl) who are not confidently expected to be there by many excellent people (Wertheim and Sorrentino, 1988: 53).

In *Maggie*'s time, "environment is a tremendous thing" that shapes individuals' lives because the materialistic and the individualistic formations in social life change individuals' living circumstances as individuals find fewer opportunities to display their abilities in the competitive life. As the economic structure produces social differentiations in life, individuals change with respect to the amount of wealth they accumulate. As Donald Pizer states in his article "Stephen Crane's 'Maggie' and American Naturalism," most individuals, such as Maggie and her family, lack such an accumulation of wealth, so the Bowery becomes "a battlefield and a prison" for them (1970: 82)

Some focus on the influence of the environmental circumstances and urban way of life on the decline of family, religious and humanitarian values. They basically express that in the materialistic and the individualistic style of urban life, the individuals lose their conventional ties with family, religion, and social life. Lee Bennett, in the "Introduction" to Maggie, expresses Stephen Crane's aim to show the destructiveness of environmental forces on human beings. Bennett states that the individuals become "helpless creatures whose fates [are] determined by their environment." Bennett also expresses his view that urban life influences the "traditional values of family, practicality and moral restraint" (1995: ii).

Crane emphasizes that individuals such as Maggie and her parents experience depression because of their inadequacy to adjust to city life by finding work and achieving progress in their lives. He indicates that most immigrants and the working class people become depressed under poverty in slum regions because they are not equipped with the necessary working skills. The deficiencies in

Maggie and her family are their inability to support themselves in the urban world since they have no education, professional skills or financial means. Their inevitable fate is to experience poverty and bear the miserable slum conditions. Similar to the muckrakers of his period, such as Lincoln Stephens, Ray Stanard Baker and Ida Turbell, Crane tries to criticize and reform the social structure of the slum world of New York with *Maggie*. In a way, he calls on the authorities to reform society and provide equal opportunities for all people. He explains the main reasons for the moral depravity in society. In his analysis of the poor in the late nineteenth century, he writes about the weakening of the Christian moral values and emphasizes the necessity for spiritual renewal.

For Maggie, her family, her living conditions and her tenement house are parts of the chaotic world, which is full of problems. She is ashamed of her own life, her "broken furniture, grimy walls, and general disorder and dirt of her home." She assumes Pete is an "aristocratic person" who may help her escape from her poor life (Crane, 1995: 16). When she finds her "ideal man" who will help her possess wealth in life, she begins to question her own living conditions full of social and economic problems. Being suppressed and limited under the poor living conditions in the lower middle class slum life of New York, the fictional characters in *Maggie* are "psychologically problematic" people, as Crane describes them. They become aggressive and hostile towards each other in their domestic lives. The members of Maggie's family fall into depression because they are unable to earn enough money. Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, as described by Thomas Jefferson in the early stages of the foundation of the Republic, are dreams they cannot achieve. The parents have no hope of a better future and are indifferent and rude toward their children. However, they not only criticize their own lives and manners, but also observe their own miseries. They evaluate their own actions, cry over their situation and describe their home as "hell." Hatred, disgust and fear of the social environment become inevitable in the Johnsons' household as a result of their migration from Ireland.

4. CONCLUSION

Although Irish women migrated to the United States in order to achieve better living conditions, socio-economic living factors made their life intolerable and most of these Irish women dreamt of returning to their native countries. Most Irish-American women were in an escapist mode as a result of their disappointment at not experiencing better living conditions in the New Land. Despite some Irish women were active in social life, some others were doomed to failure due to their inadequate adjustment to the circumstances of urban life. The existence of inequalities and poor living conditions even caused the rise in the number of suicides committed by young girls such as Maggie in Crane's *Maggie*. Moreover, alienation and isolation from the outside world became the inevitable consequences of the existent social and economic conditions as women became depressed due to the extreme poverty and inequality. *Maggie* portrayed how newcomers' American Dream of social ascendancy became just an illusion in an environment of rapid industrial and urban

growth. The story also implied that migration based on the hope of acquiring better living conditions would end up as a nightmare in the United States

WORKS CITED

Bellah, R. N. **Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life**. Harper and Row: New York, 1985.

Bennett, L. **"Introduction." Maggie: A Girl of the Streets and Other Stories. Stephen Crane.** Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Edition Ltd., 1995.

Buekner, J. D. and Lorman A. R. (1992). **"Irish Americans." Multiculturalism in the United States: A Comparative Guide to Acculturation and Ethnicity**. London: Greenwood Press.

Crane, S. (1995). **Maggie: A Girl of the Streets.** Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Edition Ltd.

Diner, H. R. (1983). **Erin's Daughters in America: Irish Immigrant Women in the Nineteenth Century**. London: The John Hopkins University Press.

Eagan, C. M. (2003). **"White, If "Not Quite": Irish Whiteness in the Nineteenth Century Irish-American Novel." New Directions in Irish-American (Ed.) History.** Kevin Kenny, http://books.google.com.tr/

Faming C. (1990). **"The Irish Voice in America." Irish American Fiction from the 1760s to the 1980s.** Minnesota: The University Press of Kentucky.

Halliburton, D. (1989). **The Color of the Sky: A Study of Stephen Crane. Cambridge**: Cambridge University Press.

Hurm, G. (1991). **Fragmented Urban Images: The American City in Modern Fiction from Stephen Crane to Thomas Pynchon**. New York: Peter Lang.

Internet Irish Archives. (1845). "The Potato Disease." *The Illustrated London News*. October 18.

_____. (1851). "The Depopulation of Ireland." *The Illustrated London News*. May 10.

Law Guardian Internet Voucher. (2008). "State of New York Supreme Court, Third Judicial Department Law Guardian Program." http://www.courts.state.ny.us/ad3/lg/.

Martin, J. (1967). **Harvests of Change: American Literature 1865-1914.** Prentice Hall: Englewood Cliff.

Miller, A. K. (1985). **Emigrants and Exiles: Ireland and the Irish Exodus to North America**. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

_____. (1990). "Class, Culture, and Immigrant Group Identity in the United States. The Case of Irish-American Ethnicity." *Immigration Reconsidered: History, Sociology and Politics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Pozetto, E. G. (1991). **Ethnicity and Gender: The Immigrant Women.** New York: Garland Publishing, Inc.

Rhodes, R. M. (1992). **Women and the Family in Post-Famine Ireland: Status and Opportunity in a Patriarchal Society.** New York: Garland Publishing, Inc.

Williams, R. (1990). **Hierarchical Structures and Social Value: The Creation of Black and Irish Identities in the United States.** New York: Cambridge University Press.