

ARTISTIC PECULIARITIES OF "SISTER CARRIE" BY T.DREISER

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Annotation: Theodore Dreiser is an important figure in American literature, known for his groundbreaking work in the naturalistic movement. His novel "Sister Carrie," published in 1900, offers a deep look at ambition, desire, and the complexities of human life in a tough society. This approach creates a rich mix of viewpoints that reflect the complexities of human nature. The naturalistic style of the novel emphasizes how a person's environment and background shape their behavior, showing characters as products of their circumstances rather than just victims of fate.

Key words: Artistic peculiarities, characters in the novel and narrative style, themes and urban life

Introduction: Dreiser's narrative style in "Sister Carrie" is one of its most notable features. Unlike many writers of his time who presented life in a romantic or idealized way, Dreiser chose to depict human life more realistically, often in a raw and unfiltered manner. His use of detailed descriptions and an unflinching gaze at the social conditions of the time allows readers to immerse themselves in the gritty realities faced by his characters. This commitment to realism is evident in the way he meticulously outlines the struggles of Carrie as she navigates the challenges of urban life, from her initial innocence to her eventual moral ambiguity. By adopting this approach, Dreiser not only paints a vivid picture of the era but also invites readers to reflect on the broader implications of societal expectations and personal choices.

Artistic peculiarities : Dreiser was the ninth of ten children in a family that often struggled with poverty, leading them to move frequently between small towns in Indiana and Chicago to find cheaper living conditions. His father, a German immigrant, mostly worked as a millworker but was often unemployed and held strict Roman Catholic beliefs. In contrast, his mother had a kind and caring nature, influenced by her Czech Mennonite roots. Dreiser became a prominent novelist known for his naturalistic style, which focused on real-life issues rather than the polite themes common in Victorian literature. His books often tackled the social challenges that emerged during America's rapid industrial growth. Later in life, Dreiser associated religion with his father's inability to provide for the family, which contributed to their financial struggles. However, he always spoke fondly of his mother. His own tough experiences with poverty and his desire for wealth and success were key themes in his novels. The difficulties faced by his siblings in their early adult lives also inspired many of his characters. Dreiser's education was inconsistent, attending both parochial and public

schools before spending a year at Indiana University from 1889 to 1890. He began working as a newspaper reporter in Chicago in 1892 and eventually moved to the East Coast. While writing for a Pittsburgh newspaper in 1894, he read works by scientists like T.H. Huxley and John Tyndall, which influenced his thinking, along with ideas from philosopher Herbert Spencer. Through these readings and his own experience, Dreiser came to believe that human beings are helpless in the grip of instincts and social forces beyond their control, and he judged human society as an unequal contest between the strong and the weak. In 1894 Dreiser arrived in New York City, where he worked for several newspapers and contributed to magazines. He married Sara White in 1898, but his serial affairs doomed their relationship. Dreiser began writing his first novel, *Sister Carrie*, in 1899 at the suggestion of a newspaper colleague. Doubleday, Page and Company published it the following year, thanks in large measure to the enthusiasm of that firm's reader, the novelist Frank Norris. But Doubleday's qualms about the book, the story line of which involves a young kept woman whose "immorality" goes unpunished, led the publisher to limit the book's advertising, and consequently it sold fewer than 500 copies. This disappointment and an accumulation of family and marital troubles sent Dreiser into a suicidal depression from which he was rescued in 1901 by his brother, Paul Dresser, a well-known songwriter, who arranged for Theodore's treatment in a sanitarium. Dreiser recovered his spirits, and in the next nine years he achieved notable financial success as an editor in chief of several women's magazines. He was forced to resign in 1910, after having an affair with the teenage daughter of a colleague.

Characters in the novel and Narrative Style :*Sister Carrie*, first novel by Theodore Dreiser, published in 1900 but suppressed until 1912. *Sister Carrie* is a work of pivotal importance in American literature, and it became a model for subsequent American writers of realism. *Sister Carrie* tells the story of a rudderless but pretty small-town girl who comes to the big city filled with vague ambitions. She is used by men and uses them in turn to become a successful Broadway actress, while George Hurstwood, the married man who has run away with her, loses his grip on life and descends into beggary and suicide. *Sister Carrie* was the first masterpiece of American naturalism in its grittily factual presentation of the vagaries of urban life and in its ingenuous heroine, who goes unpunished for her transgressions against conventional morality.

Dreiser's commitment to naturalism is evident throughout "*Sister Carrie*." He portrays life with stark realism, focusing on the influence of environment, heredity, and social conditions on human behavior. The characters are often shaped by their circumstances, reflecting the naturalistic belief that individuals are products of their environment. In *Sister Carrie*, Dreiser objectively relates the narrative without pronouncing judgment on his characters. Carrie often internally wars over whether to follow conventional moral

standards or her instinctual desires, and she almost always succumbs to the latter. Where a typical Victorian novel might render Carrie's narrative as that of a woman falling from grace and being shunned by society, Dreiser portrays Carrie as a woman who rises to the upper echelons of society as a result of instinctual decisions that might be considered morally questionable. For Dreiser, instinct is neither morally good nor bad—it simply exists and wields considerable influence over human life. And because Carrie manages to climb the ranks by following her own instincts and desires rather than adhering to society's rigid moral code, Dreiser also subverts the Victorian idea that life rewards people for morally upstanding behavior. According to the society that she lives in, Carrie's behavior is thoroughly immoral. Although she starts out with pure intentions, traveling to the city in hopes of finding honest work, she quickly feels unsatisfied with the low pay and slow grind of hard labor and instead chooses to become a kept woman. By the standards of turn-of-the-century America, such a decision stamps Carrie as a moral failure. Minnie's reaction to Carrie's departure reveals as much: suspecting that Carrie has become dependent on a man for financial support, Minnie remarks to her husband Hanson that Carrie "doesn't know what she has done poor Sister Carrie!" Minnie then has a nightmare in which Carrie is drifting out of her reach and feels "more inexpressibly sad than she had ever been in life." From Minnie's reaction, readers can gather that Carrie's becoming a kept woman morally reprehensible by society's standards. Later, Drouet, out of a sense of propriety, introduces Carrie to Hurstwood as his wife, further suggesting that having a mistress is not kindly looked upon by proper society. And when Carrie decides to leave Drouet for Hurstwood, she insists that Hurstwood marry her, demonstrating her understanding that being a mistress is an undesirable and shameful thing, and that respectable society does not consider extramarital relations morally acceptable.

Themes and Urban Life :At its heart, "Sister Carrie" tells the story of a young girl's journey from a small town to life in big cities. Caroline "Carrie" Meeber moves from her hometown of Columbia City, Wisconsin, to Chicago and then to New York. With each move, Carrie experiences the challenges and complexities of urban life. She is eager to fit in and adapt to her new surroundings, becoming more sophisticated as she transitions from one city to another. However, this growth comes at a cost; Carrie loses her innocence along the way. She starts as an excited girl from the countryside but eventually becomes a weary city woman. Through Carrie's experiences, Dreiser shows that while moving to the city is often seen as a step forward, it can also lead to a loss of innocence, morals, and spirit. Ultimately, Carrie learns that the glamorous aspects of city life don't necessarily bring true happiness. Towards the beginning of the novel, Dreiser briefly theorizes as to what dangers may befall a young woman when she moves from the countryside to the city, painting the city as a dangerous place brimming with temptation and corruption. According to Dreiser, only two things can

possibly happen when a young woman leaves her home: "Either she falls into saving hands and becomes better, or she rapidly assumes the cosmopolitan standard of virtue and becomes worse.

Conclusion

"Sister Carrie" by Theodore Dreiser is a deep look into the challenges of city life and the human experience in late 19th-century America. The story follows Carrie Meeber, a young woman who moves from a small town to the bustling city, exploring themes like ambition, social class, gender roles, and the tough realities of consumerism and materialism. Carrie's journey highlights the pursuit of the American Dream and the sacrifices that come with it.

Dreiser's natural writing style shows how a person's surroundings and circumstances can affect their choices, demonstrating how societal pressures can shape individual lives. The relationships Carrie builds with characters like Charles Drouet and George Hurstwood reveal the complicated power dynamics in romantic relationships, often driven more by financial needs than true love. This examination of love mixed with materialism raises important questions about what relationships mean in a rapidly changing world. Overall, "Sister Carrie" tells the story of Carrie's rise and fall as she moves from her modest beginnings in Wisconsin to the challenges of city life, starting off with nothing. Furthermore, the novel reflects a broader critique of urbanization and its impact on human connections.

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