

Chapter 1: Theodore Dreiser's *Sister Carrie*

Sister Carrie, a history making novel by America's notable novelist, marks the fruition of a feminist credo, in which its heroine struggles against the naturalistic forces of nature yet succeeds to make a victory over it. Dreiser's first novel *Sister Carrie* is taken as an example to analyze the features of Dreiser's naturalism, a Darwinian principle in which an individual is shown to have a struggle with the hostile force of nature. The leading character of the novel-Carrie's destiny has a great connection with Dreiser himself and the decline of Hurstwood is a result of Dreiser's fear of failure, but Dreiser attributes Carrie and Hurstwood's unhappiness to their insatiable desire for life or they are doomed to be unhappy etc. The 1900 publication of the novel *Sister Carrie* by American author Dreiser met with a poor reception due to its perceived vulgarity and loose morals. The story of the rise to fame and fortune of a showgirl and her subsequent disillusionment runs counter to the popular rags-to-riches stories that idealize the American dream of material success. Dreiser tells the story of Carrie, a small-town girl who arrives in Chicago with dreams of becoming rich. While living with one man, Drouet, she begins an affair with the promise of marriage with another, Hurstwood. Carrie and Hurstwood move to New York City, where Hurstwood fails in business and commits suicide while Carrie rises to the heights of fame as a stage performer.

The novels of Theodore Dreiser were deeply imbued with an understanding of the brutal injustices of social class, and they rank as magnificent examples of 20th-century American naturalism. *Sister Carrie* depicts the downfall of a young woman who moves from small-town America to Chicago and then to New York City. Dreiser is a novelist who was the outstanding American practitioner of naturalism. He was the

leading figure in a national literary movement that replaced the observance of Victorian notions of propriety with the unflinching presentation of real-life subject matter.

Among other themes his novels explore the new social problems that had arisen in a rapidly industrializing America. He and his characters did not attack the nation's puritanical moral code: they simply ignored it. In *Sister Carrie*, the heroine, Carrie Meeber, leaves the poverty of her country home and moves to Chicago. She is completely honest about her desire for a better life: clothes, money and social position. Dreiser himself had been born in poverty, and therefore does not criticize her for this. Nor does he criticize her relationships with men. On the one hand, the author says that "the world only moves forward because of the services of the exceptional individual" (Vanspankeren 6). But on the other hand, Cowperwood is also a "chessman of fate" (9). Like Carrie, his success is mostly the result of chance.

Theodore Dreiser is one of the most influential American writers of critical realism, but many of his works referred to the description of naturalism and weakened his critical spirit. *Sister Carrie* revealed the financial disparity and the moral decline of American society and thus regarded as forbidden book. But now the book becomes one of the best-sellers of American literature because of the naturalistic features in it. Then Dreiser is regarded as a pioneer of American naturalism and as a naturalist Dreiser expresses the characteristics of naturalism in most of his works. The themes of Darwinism and Determinism are the common features of Dreiser's story which also characterize *Sister Carrie*.

With the publication of *Sister Carrie*, Dreiser committed his literary force to opening the new ground of American naturalism. "His heroes and heroines, his settings, his frank discussion, celebration, and humanization of sex, his clear dissection of the

mechanistic brutality of American society”(Randal9). All were new and shocking to a reading public reared on genteel romances and adventure narratives. Dreiser's genius was recognized and applauded by H. L. Mencken, who encouraged him, praised his works publicly, and was always a valued editorial confidant, but the general reaction to Dreiser has always been negative. Dreiser was the ninth of 10 surviving children in a family whose perennial poverty forced frequent moves between small Indiana towns and Chicago in search of a lower cost of living. His father, a German immigrant, was a mostly unemployed millworker who subscribed to a stern and narrow Roman Catholicism. His mother's gentle and compassionate outlook sprang from her Czech Mennonite background. In later life, Dreiser would bitterly associate religion with his father's ineffectuality and the family's resulting material deprivation, but he always spoke and wrote of his mother with unswerving affection. Dreiser's own harsh “experience of poverty as a youth and his early yearnings for wealth and success would become dominant themes in his novels”, and the misadventures of his brothers and sisters in early adult life gave him additional material on which to base his characters (9).

Sister Carrie, the story of how an innocent girl develops from a state of innocence to the career of a successful actress, marks Dreiser's development as the development of the heroine. When Carrie first comes to Chicago, she is a wide-eyed innocent and has little understanding of the urban landscape she encounters. Enthralled by it, she plunges headfirst into this exciting new culture and finds herself in many situations, most of them negative. Throughout all the events of the novel, one might expect that she has learned something deeper than the lessons taught by her series of life events but by the end of *Sister Carrie*. Carrie has not grown—only had

experiences. “*Sister Carrie* completely reiterates America’s obsession with money because there is not one character whose own status is not determined economically” (Ward 2-3).

Clyde Griffiths, the hero (or anti-hero), has the same dream as Carrie: he thinks money and success will bring him happiness. When a pregnant girlfriend threatens to destroy this dream, he plans to kill her. At the last moment, he changes his mind, but the girl dies accidentally anyway. Since Clyde had decided not to kill her, is he really responsible for her death? This becomes the main question during his trial. The trial itself is not really fair. The newspapers stir up public anger against him. In the end, Clyde is executed. Clearly, Dreiser believes that “Clyde is not really guilty. Society and its false moral code are far guiltier (Larzer 26). Dreiser calls his novel a tragedy, and in certain ways it is similar to classical Greek tragedy. It concentrates on a single individual, which gives it unity; and this individual is eventually destroyed by forces which he cannot control. Dreiser's novels were very long. They were filled with details about factories, banks, cities and business life. Some people complained about his style. There were too many details, they said, and his language was not clear. But nobody could deny his importance. He and his books were like a huge mountain. In a sense this was a problem for younger writers. Each of them had to find his or her way around the mountain of Dreiser's naturalism. Some of them rejected the whole tradition of naturalism in literature.

When most novels deal only with the smiling and beautiful aspects of life, Dreiser advocates truthful reflection of life in his fiction. It is not an exaggeration to say that Dreiser's *Sister Carrie* clears the way for the development of American fiction. Since 1900, American critics have never ceased their study on Dreiser. The early research

was mainly based on the writer's life experience. It provided with lots of useful information about the writer. The study witnessed a transition from the author himself to the text in 1960s. From 1980s, scholars employed new devices of Freudianism, Feminism and Post-Structuralism in their studies. These new methods help us know Dreiser and his works from different angles. However, one thing they share in common is that they lack macroscopic analysis.

Sister Carrie was written at the time when Darwinism was prevalent. Many of *Sister Carrie*'s themes-struggle, survival and desire-derive directly from the evolutionary views. The usage of symbolism is the main writing style in this novel. By probing into the usage of symbolism, we can understand and appreciate the novel better. The common theme in this novel is the use of newspapers to represent people who are no longer able to look forward. The newspaper represents old news and things that have already happened. People who rely on the newspaper therefore fall into the category of has-beens, who no longer look into the future and expect to rise to the top of society. Hurstwood is reading the newspaper for the first time. The paper symbolizes the past, and an "inability to rise in the future. We already see his wife making the decision concerning future, their children's future, and the future vacation" (Walter 56). This contrasts with Carrie, who only reads the paper to see if she is mentioned. Newspaper becomes an even stronger image and is used more frequently by Hurstwood than ever before. "Each day he could read in the evening paper [...]" (Dreiser 261). Later Dreiser informs that Hurstwood spends his time reading newspapers. This again represents that Hurstwood is only able to look at the past rather than forward into the future. The newspaper symbolism reaches its final moment in chapter 43. Carrie is now in the newspaper, being written about much the way all the famous people are, while

Hurstwood merely reads about her. This is the ultimate distinction between the forward moving youth and the backward looking aged.

Despite these innumerable researches on Dreiser, the issue that this researcher wants to probe remains a new and probably extendable area of research. The researcher of this thesis reads the novel intensively so that evidences can be dug out to demonstrate Dreiser's naturalism. The conclusion shows that Dreiser is not only a criticizer of capitalism, but also a builder of American cultural system.

Chapter 2: Existential Feminism

Existentialism

Existentialism refers to the movement originating with Soren Kierkegaard and continuing later with Karl Jaspers Gabriel Marcel, Martin Heidegger, Jean-Paul Sartre and various others, though it has had little influence in English-speaking philosophy. Fyodor Dostoevsky and Friedrich Nietzsche are sometimes included. According to David Mikics for existentialists

[...] our strange awareness of our existence challenges pre-conceived beliefs, forcing us to confront the fact that we are not at home in the world. The sheer fact of existence precedes any possible essence: so that life is incapable of being defined in its essential nature, as previous philosophers often tried to do. (113)

The main idea is to distinguish the kind of being possessed by humans - called "Dasein" or être-pour-soi from that possessed by ordinary objects. Partly it is "an actual condition of humans and partly something to be pursued, is essentially open-ended and free from determination", by any already existing essence: 'existence precedes essence' (Langiulli 8). Hence the emphasis on freedom, choice and responsibility, evasion of which by relapsing into a 'thing-like' state is Sartian 'bad faith'(Sartre 9).

Consciousness of this total open-endedness leads to despair, anguish, angst, angoisse etc. In studying being, existentialists have been influenced by phenomenology. Highlighting this relationship, Irish Murdoch writes: "[...] the conscious that seeks to rise freely toward completeness and stability is continually sucked back into its past and the messy stuff of its moment-to-moment experience" (qtd. in Mikics 113). Søren Kierkegaard is regarded as the father of existentialism.

According to him, the individual is solely responsible for giving his own life meaning and living that life, in spite of “many existential obstacles and distractions including despair, angst, absurdity, alienation, and boredom” (9).

Subsequent existential philosophers gave focus to the emphasis on the individual, but differ, in varying degrees, on how one achieves and what constitutes a fulfilling life, what obstacles must be overcome, and what external and internal factors are involved, including the potential consequences of the existence or non-existence of God. Many existentialists have also regarded traditional systematic or academic philosophy, in both style and content, as too abstract and remote from concrete human experience.

Existentialism became fashionable in the post-World War years as a way to reassert the importance of human individuality and freedom. Many philosophers of existentialism clung to literary forms to pass their thought. Existentialism has often been viewed as a vital and extensive movement in literature. Fyodor Dostoyevsky, the 19th-century Russian novelist, is probably the greatest existentialist literary figure. In *Notes from the Underground*, the alienated antihero rages against the optimistic assumptions of rationalist humanism. The view of human nature that emerges in this and other novels of Dostoyevsky is that it is unpredictable and perversely self-destructive; only Christian love can save humanity from itself, but such love cannot be understood philosophically. As the character Alyosha says in *The Brothers Karamazov* “We must love life more than the meaning of it” (25).

In the 20th century, the novels of the Austrian Jewish writer Franz Kafka, such as *The Trial* (1925; trans. 1937) and *The Castle* (1926; trans. 1930), present isolated men confronting vast, elusive, menacing bureaucracies; Kafka's themes of anxiety,

guilt, and solitude reflect the influence of Kierkegaard, Dostoyevsky, and Nietzsche. The influence of Nietzsche is also discernible in the novels of the French writers André Malraux and in the plays of Sartre. The work of the French writer Albert Camus is usually associated with existentialism because of the prominence in it of such themes as the apparent absurdity and futility of life, the indifference of the universe, and the necessity of engagement in a just cause. “Sartre sometimes insists on the utterly arbitrary character of every human action. Yet at the same time Sartre finds in each act a fateful moment of responsibility, since it testifies to an existential project” (Mickis 113).

Existentialist themes are also reflected in the theater of the absurd, notably in the plays of Samuel Beckett and Eugène Ionesco. In the United States, the influence of existentialism on literature has been more indirect and diffuse, but traces of Kierkegaard's thought can be found in the novels of Walker Percy and John Updike, and various existentialist themes are apparent in the work of such diverse writers as Norman Mailer, John Barth, and Arthur Miller.

Feminism

The term ‘feminism’ refers to the belief systems that lay focus to women’s rights and women’s position in culture and society. It is used for the women’s rights movement, which began in the late 18th century and continues to campaign for complete political, social, and economic equality between women and men. In the words of David Mickis:

Feminist critics study the ways women have written, and read, literature through the centuries, in an effort to recover this history. Such a project must battle against the force of patriarchy, which has so often proved

determined to repress or destroy the evidence of women's writing and reading. (117)

The common idea that brings the feminists together is their study of women's position in society being unequal to that of men. They believe that society benefits men to the political, social, and economic area. However, feminists have used different theories to explain these inequalities and have advocated different ways of redressing inequalities, and there are marked geographic and historical variations in the nature of feminism. M H Abram says :

[...] ideology pervades those writings which have been traditionally considered great literature, and which until recently have been written mainly by men for men. Typically, the most highly regarded literary works focus on male protagonists- Oedipus, Ulyssus, Hamlet, Tom Jones... the female characters, when they play a role, are marginal and subordinate, and are represented either as complementary to or in opposition to masculine desires and enterprises. (89-90)

Although the word *feminism* was not used until the end of the 19th century, recognizably feminist beliefs began to emerge in the late 18th century. The earliest form of feminism was concerned with equal rights for women and men: this meant equal standing as citizens in public life and, to some extent, equal legal status within the home. These ideas emerged in response to the American Revolution (1775-1783) and the French Revolution (1789-1799), both of which advocated values of liberty and equality.

Feminists in France argued that the revolution's "values of liberty, equality, and fraternity should apply to all" while women activists in America called for an extension

of the principles of the Declaration of Independence to women, including rights to citizenship and property. (Delphy 8)

By the 1920s, feminists began to turn their attention from questions of equality between women and men to issues that mainly concerned women. They called, for example, for improved welfare provisions for mothers and children. These issues would become stronger in the second wave of feminism.

A potent tress of feminism concerns with the ways in which men have controlled and subordinated women's bodies. For example, American scholar Mary Daly argued in *Gyn/Ecology* that patriarchy "coerced women into heterosexuality, using violence to suppress women's powers and sexuality"(14). Feminists have argued that sexual and domestic violence are not isolated incidents but are central to the subordination of women by patriarchy. In response to these threats, feminists asserted women's legal rights to their own bodies, including the importance of the right to choose motherhood. They have also looked at ways in which women might use motherhood as a source of strength and as a way of influencing future generations, rather than as a means of reproducing patriarchy. Linda Brannon asserts that "[r]esearch on gender differences in responsiveness to babies has shown differences in self-reports, but not in psychological measures, of responses to babies" (24). In particular, some feminists have advocated different forms of parenting, as single mothers or within lesbian relationships.

Feminism has got criticism for being Eurocentric by black women and by women in the developing world. For example, Indian critic Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak has accused Anglo-American feminist theorists of making women of the developing world "the Other" by imposing Western perspectives on them. However, women from

non-Western cultures have taken up feminist ideas and accommodated them to their own situations. For example, some black feminists have developed a perspective which takes account of the fact that they are doubly marginalized, by race and by sex.

[...] black women... made in establishing artistic and literary traditions of any sort, and to understand their qualities and sensibilities. Such understanding requires a consciousness of the oppression these artists faced daily in a society full of institutionalized and violent hatred for both their Black skins and their female bodies. Developing and maintaining this consciousness is a basic tenet of Black feminism. (Bethel 178)

By contrast, some Asian, Caribbean, and African American feminists have developed politics which draw on their ethnic origins as a source of strength. Feminism in Latin America has looked at oppression across gender, class, and racial lines, although it has recently begun to focus more closely on women's issues. In Islamic countries a secular, liberal feminism has developed that seeks to eliminate discrimination against women and to outlaw practices such as polygyny (multiple wives), purdah (seclusion in the home), and limitation of the right of divorce to the husband. In India, feminists have organized opposition to the dowry system and subsequent "dowry deaths," where continuing demands of the groom's family are not met and result in the murder of the bride.

The Meeting Point of Existentialism and Feminism: Existential Feminism

The term 'existential feminism' derives from the school of thought of Simone de Beauvoir. In her world-view, "the basic trait of woman: she is another in a totality of which the two components are necessary to one another" (Beauvoir 205). Beauvoir not

only interprets woman from the perspective of otherness but also how she exists in the society. The woman is not always powerless and does not always need to be dependent in a male-female relationship.

Prostitution allows women an avenue of escape from dependency on men in a way that does not leave them victims, but empowered women. Equality of rights and freedom between the sexes is desirable. However, if they are not forthcoming, prostitution can provide the woman with the kind of liberty that is immediate, affirming, and temporally rewarding.

(191)

She appears to exalt all women as possessing the capacity to realize their innate power in the sense of the feminine warrior spirit. In the existentialist view, the power of a competent woman over a man is not an illusion. The sense of otherness haunts both men and women.

He is the Subject, he is the Absolute—she is the Other. The category of the Other is as primordial as consciousness itself...The Other is posed as such by the One in defining himself as the One. But if the Other is not to regain the status of being the One, he must be submissive enough to accept this alien point of view. (204)

Existential feminism is a part of feminism, a collective term for systems of belief and theories that pay special attention to women's rights and women's position in culture and society. The term feminism tends to be used for the women's rights movement, began in the late 18th century and continues to campaign for complete political, social, and economic equality between women and men. Developing further Beauvoir, develops the concept of existential feminism. As M.R. Habib remarks:

Her existentialism, while influenced by Sartre, was also influenced by Marxism, psychoanalysis and Hegel. Her view of freedom is distinguished from Sartre's view by its Hegelian emphasis on mutual recognition: it is through acknowledging another person's humanity that I confirm my own humanity and freedom. (683)

Showing the influence of many criticisms on existentialism, Habib tries to prove this movement as a multi-faceted movement as if distinct from the mainstream feminism rather than a part of this. Focusing on the Marxist side Habib further says

According to Hegel, human consciousness strives for recognition and mastery, placing itself initially in a posture of hostility toward every other consciousness to risk everything in a life and death struggle. The consciousness that takes this risk becomes the "master", reducing its opponent to the status of a slave. (683)

A man may think he is in charge of a situation by virtue of his power to degrade and subdue a woman, but with a woman of competence and spirit this power is not incontrovertible. In Carol Pateman's words directed towards the role of a woman as a prostitute, "The man may think he 'has' her, but his sexual possession is an illusion; it is she who has him...she will not be 'taken,' since she is being paid" (qtd. Jagar 191). The spirit of entrepreneurship prevails here instead of the darker concerns of Marxism, which views employment as exploitative and oppressive. To her the prostitute is not the fallen and oppressed victim, rather the "quintessential liberated woman" (191). While believing that women are oppressed by an inequality between the sexes, she also believes there is an escape by economic means. So, on the one hand a prostitute is

viewed as an oppressed woman, and on the other, a liberated one by way of a successful economic strategy for her own survival.

Critics praise de Beauvoir for her clear distinction between sex' and 'gender'.

Selden, Widdowson and Brooker remark

De Beauvoir's work carefully distinguishes: 'One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman... it is civilization as a whole that produces this creature... Only the intervention of someone else can establish an individual as an Other'. It is the systems of interpretations in relation to biology, psychology, reproduction, and economics etc. which constitute the (male) presence of that 'someone else'. (130)

They further highlight how Beauvoir helps to deconstruct the patriarchal canon making a distinction between being and constructed. Biology is related to her 'being' whereas psychology related to her 'construction'. This is what mars the distinction between a woman and a female.

Making the crucial distinction between 'being female' and 'being constructed as a woman', de Beauvoir can posit the destruction of patriarchy if women will only break out of their objectification. In common with other 'first wave' feminists, she wants freedom from biological difference, and she shares with them a distrust of 'femininity' - thus marking herself off from some contemporary feminist's celebration of the body and recognition of the importance of the unconscious. (130)

This distinction between sex and gender and Beauvoir's stress on womanhood associated with cultural context is an important concept in Feminism. Contemporary

feminist writings are influenced by the gender-conscious essays by *The Second Sex*, a book-length plea by Beauvoir against the second-class treatment of women.

Feminist criticism explores issues relevant to women as authors, as readers, and as fictional characters, and also raises the controversial question of the possible existence of distinctly female writing—recognizably different in the character of its language from discourse shaped by male patterns of thought. Beauvoir has brought a widespread consciousness on the women, pointing to the socio-historical construction of women. She contends the socialization that persuades women to be sexy and to be flesh for the mere entertainment of male ego. Rather, she creates a mentality for women to be self-assertive and determinate to tackle with impediments and to liberate them from the social construction of femininity. Torril Moi says that her "destination between biological sex and the social creation of the 'eternal feminine' is a precursor of the distinction between sex and gender that is common in much feminist theory" (14).

Walking almost in the Beauvoir path, Charlotte Perkins Gilman focuses on economically beneficial occupation for women. She refutes the childcare and housework, which deprive them of opportunity and the development of their genuine potentiality. Cott speaks of Gilman:

She proposed [...] the socialization of remaining home employments such as cooking and laundry and argued that housecleaning and childcare would be better performed by specialized paid employees than by housewives and mothers not necessarily suited and not paid for the tasks. (41)

Shulamith Firestone proposes a world dichotomized by biology: male and female, where women are the unpaid means to social production of offspring. And

males are the owners of the labor market; females are no more than the workers to the reproductive system. Oppression upon women due to the productive function is a historical act, and the emancipation of women depends on the escape from the biological destiny. Firestone denies the emotional attachment of parents with their children and spoke for undoing family unit. Freedman further displays her: "Firestone maintains, to the dissolution of the family unit, with children being brought up by 'households' made up of about 10 adults and set up to bring up children over a period of time. Children would develop no special bonds with their 'parent's but would instead form love ties with people to their own choosing, whatever their age and sex" (70). Her revolutionary modification of familial structure throws doubt on the "masculine", roles and that woman always has the subordinate, or "feminine", ones. This ideology is particularly powerful because through conditioning, men usually secure the apparent consent of the very women they oppress. They do this through institutions such as the academy, the church and the family, each of which justifies and reinforces women's subordination to men with the result that most women internalize the sense of inferiority to men. (96)

Rosemary Tong's book, *Feminist Thought: A More Comprehensive Introduction*, also concerns on existential feminism. She talks about this topic through an analysis of Simone De Beauvoir's book *The Second Sex*. She starts out talking about how De Beauvoir views Freud's explanation for woman having a feeling of "otherness", as incomplete (Tong 211). De Beauvoir believes that woman's low social status is not only due to a woman's lack of having a penis but because they also lack power. Beauvoir also regards that woman

[...] lack a concrete means for organizing themselves into a unit ...

They have no [collective recorded] past... no religion of their own...

They live dispersed among the males, attached through residence, housework, economic condition, and social standing to certain men- fathers or husbands- more firmly than they are to other women. (11)

Tong goes on mentioning that De Beauvoir also disagrees with the Marxist idea that because woman perform tasks such as cleaning, cooking and child bearing and men perform tasks of hunting and fishing, men represented the class of "bourgeois" and woman represented the "proletariat" (Tyson 54). She says that a move from capitalism to socialism would not necessarily change the relationship for the better. She continues to say that as a result women are just as likely to remain on the bottom side of society, due to an original aspiration of the male sex to dominate over the female sex.

Beauvoir also believes that men have created myths about women. The ideal woman is a woman who believes it is her duty to sacrifice herself for her man. She believes what makes the myth so horrible is that many women come to internalize this thought as an accurate reflection of what it means to be a woman. "The truth is that for man she is an amusement, a pleasure, company, an inessential boon; he is for her the meaning, the justification of her existence. The exchange, therefore, is not of two items of equal value"(213).

She goes on talking about how this sense of "otherness" is cemented in the institution of marriage and motherhood. She believes marriage transforms freely given feelings into mandatory duties. De Beauvoir mentions how she believes three kinds of women role-play the woman to an extreme, the prostitute, narcissist, and the mystic. The worst part about all of these roles played out by women, (mother, wife, prostitute,

narcissist and mystic), are constructed by man. The marriage is like a “contract” with male (Tyson 99). This contract puts a limit to a woman and curtails her right as well. Women are used by men as unpaid labourer. She is a “ the social tool assigned to those tasks” (Guillamin 79). According to Beauvoir, there are four ways that women can overcome this oppression. Women should: go to work, become intellectuals, work towards social reform, and refuse to internalize the "otherness" that has been created. However, many women do not even know that these are the facts. Many other might not have a dare to fight against the patriarchy’s hard fixed regulations. Beauvoir objects that Freud, Adler and other psychoanalytic “allot the same destiny to woman”(36).

The feminists' pride lies in being a female and they have made it a vital tool to secure their existence. Evaluating the discrimination and domination upon women by patriarchal culture and society, Toril Moi writes, "Feminist criticism, then, is a specific kind of old political discourse, a critical and theoretical practice committed to the struggle against patriarchy and sexism not simply concern for gender in literature" (204).

According to French law, obedience is no longer included among the duties of a wife, and each woman citizen has the right to vote; but these civil liberties remain theoretical as long as they are unaccompanied by economic freedom. A woman supported by a man--wife or courtesan--is not emancipated from the male because she has a ballot in her hand; if custom imposes less constraint upon her than formerly, the negative freedom implied has not profoundly modified her situation; she remains bound in her condition of vassalage. It is through gainful employment that woman has traversed most of the distance that separated her from the male; and nothing else can guarantee her liberty in practice. Once she ceases to be a parasite, the system based on

her dependence crumbles; between her and the universe there is no longer any need for a masculine mediator.

The curse that is upon woman as vassal consists, as we have seen, in the fact that she is not permitted to do anything; so she persists in the vain pursuit of her true being through narcissism, love, or religion. It is quite understandable, also, that the milliner's apprentice, the shopgirl, the secretary, will not care to renounce the advantages of masculine support. The existence of a privileged caste, which she can join by merely surrendering her body, is an almost irresistible temptation to the young woman; she is fated for gallantry by the fact that her wages are minimal while the standard of living expected of her by society is very high. If she is content to get along on her wages, she is only a pariah: ill lodged, ill dressed, she will be denied all amusement and even love. Virtuous people preach asceticism to her, and, indeed, her dietary regime is often as austere as that of a nun. Unfortunately, not everyone can take God as a lover; she has to please men if she is to succeed in her life as a woman. She will therefore accept assistance, and this is what her employer cynically counts on in giving her starvation wages. This aid will sometimes allow her to improve her situation and achieve a real independence; in other cases, however, she will give up her work and become a kept woman. She often retains both sources of income and each serves more or less as an escape from the other; but she is really in double servitude: to job and to protector. For the married woman her wages represent only pin money as a rule; for the girl who makes something on the side it is the masculine contribution that seems extra; but neither of them gains complete independence through her own efforts. A woman is the victim of what Guillaumin calls "direct physical appropriation" (74). A

woman's appropriation refers to the usurpation of her time, women's sexual obligation and the appropriation of the products of her body.

There is one feminine function that is actually almost impossible to perform in complete liberty. It is maternity. In England and America and some other countries a woman can at least decline maternity at will. In France, she is often driven to painful and costly abortion or she frequently finds herself responsible for an unwanted child that can ruin her professional life. If this is a heavy charge, it is because inversely, custom does not allow a woman to procreate when she pleases. The unwed mother is a scandal to the community, and [an] illegitimate birth is a stain on the child;

[...] only rarely is it possible to become a mother without accepting the chains of marriage or losing caste. If the idea of artificial insemination interests many women, it is not because they wish to avoid intercourse with a male, it is because they hope that freedom of maternity is going to be accepted by society at last. (Delphy 46)

In spite of convenient day nurseries and kindergartens, having a child is enough to paralyze a woman's activity entirely; she can go on working only if she abandons it to relatives, friends, or servants. She is forced to choose between sterility, which is often felt as a painful frustration, and burdens hardly compatible with a career. Thus the independent woman of today is torn between her professional interests and the problems of her sexual life; it is difficult for her to strike a balance between the two; if she does, it is at the price of concessions, sacrifices, acrobatics, which require her to be in a constant state of tension.

The free woman is just being born; when she has won possession of herself perhaps. It is not sure that her ideational worlds will be different from those of men,

since it will be through attaining the same situation as theirs that she will find emancipation; to say in what degree she will remain different, in what degree these differences will retain their importance--this would be to hazard bold predictions indeed. What is certain is that hitherto woman's possibilities have been suppressed and lost to humanity, and that it is high time she be permitted to take her chances in her own interest and in the interest of all.

Second wave feminism focused rather exclusively on the needs of women, which was quite understandable considering the seriousness of sexism at that time. Reproductive choice, well-paying jobs, even merely getting independent credit were simply not possible for the majority of women. And so the second wave set about the demanding, exhausting task of securing these basic rights for women. Kate Millet further lays the women's revolution making a connection between the personal and the private world. Maggie Humm presents her remarks: "The personal is political" (195). It is by scrutinizing the personal level internally at home that we can comprehend suppression on women at broader level, and it is by addressing the collective issues related with men's power and upper position that we can reconstruct and reform the structure, which ultimately influences women's life at personal level. She does not find any difference between the personal and the public level. The decisions made by the public sector regarding women, childcare, and family planning ultimately affects the private life of women.

Gillbert and Gubar began an extensive study of women writers and set up a feminist literary tradition. Their influential work, *The Mad Women in the Attic*, explores pressure of psychology under which females are writing. It describes several developments in the history of women's writing. Reading the works of female novelists

Like Jane Austen, Charlotte and Emily Bronte and Mary Shelley to George Eliot and Emily Dickinson- it traces the evaluation of a distinctly feminine narrative style that has come as a reaction to male dominated literary discourse prevailed in the time when these authors wrote. Gubar and Gillbert argue that women writers grew both afraid of that they lacked the ability to express themselves artistically and angry that the patriarchal attitudes toward women trapped them in such a position. Briefly, *The Mad Women in the Attic* demonstrates that by channeling those emotions and experiences into language, the nineteenth century women writers have developed not only a uniquely feminine style but also a language that subverts patriarchal ideology. For them

[...] anxiety of authorship that resulted from the stereotype that literary creativity is an exclusively male prerogative, effective in women writers a psychological duplicity that projected a monstrous counter figure to the heroine [...]; such a figure is usually in some sense the author's double, an image of her own anxiety and rage. (236)

As the feminist movement expands and develops, discussion about various issues come to front. What is indisputable is that feminism is a broad church, one within which many different emphases and persuasions can be found. Existential feminism is, thus an item under this big umbrella.

Chapter 3: Sister Carrie's Struggle for Female Individuality in Theodor Dreiser's

Sister Carrie

Sister Carrie centers on a young woman Carrie, involved in illegal affairs with two different men while pursuing her dreams of success and fortune. With the financial decline of her second lover, Carrie rises to wealth and fame. In the work, Dreiser realistically portrays the social and economic factors of the society. It is for this quality of realism that the novel and its author have become so well known. In addition to representing consumerism, Carrie is a symbol of American middle class. Carrie's personality reflects the material desires of the growing American middle class as she longs to accumulate material possessions because she knows that it is the surest route to high status. Drouet's follow-up installments seal the contract. He buys clothing for Carrie and takes her out for entertainment. In return, she moves in with him and becomes his mistress. Stripped of all the trappings, the relationship between Drouet and Carrie is one of prostitution. Carrie is paid far more for her body than she is for her labor; in this world, a woman's most marketable product is sex.

Sister Carrie is mostly known for being the American example of the Naturalist School of writing. Centering around Carrie, a girl who comes to Chicago to live the good life in the big city, it follows her action from being a factory worker to a companion to a housewife, and finally to fame and fortune on the stage in New York City. The most striking element of the novel is realism, used in describing commerce and money. The industry and economy in Chicago at that time are a major element in the novel.

It was a characteristic of Chicago then, and one not generally shared by other cities, those individual firms of any pretention occupied individual buildings.

The presence of ample ground made this possible. It gave an imposing appearance to most of the wholesale houses, whose offices were upon the ground floor and plain view of the street. (35)

Employment is also a large part of the plot as many of the characters' actions reflect their career choices. Dreiser goes into great detail when describing such topics as employment, money, and industry in his novel. Dreiser's novel is an example of a naturalist text because it integrates the ideals behind the American literary realist movement, particularly in terms of precise descriptions and rational observations, yet also contains elements that make the reader understand that characters are simply the products of environment and outside influences. It should also be stated that the urban landscape marks departure from traditional realist texts and this urban sea of humanity forms the basis for the actions of both the protagonist as well as her society as a whole. Very few authors have managed to have the crude power that Dreiser does over five hundred or so pages of *Sister Carrie*. It is amazing how much of the human experience he has put into this book, contradictory as they often are- that drive ordinary people. During Carrie's initial search for employment, every aspect of the job-hunting process is specifically covered. The very opening of the novel shows two choices in a life a girl in this cosmopolitan society. "When a girl leaves her home at eighteen, she does one of two things. Either she falls into saving hands and becomes better, or she rapidly assumes the cosmopolitan standard and of virtue and becomes worse. The city has its cunning wiles, no less than the infinitely smaller and more human temper" (7). Through the characters and their story, *Sister Carrie* illustrates the effects of the changing economic structure on American culture. Dreiser's characters possess a depth and complexity of feeling that one rarely finds in fiction. Dreiser has a melancholy,

fatalistic sense that the world may be too vast and impersonal for people to live in it comfortably, and yet his world is vibrantly human as well. Carrie Meeber is one of thousands of wage seekers converging on Chicago during the economic boom that followed the Civil War. In one of sections section of *Sister Carrie*, the narrator states:

We see man far removed from lairs of the jungle, his innate instincts dulled by too near an approach to freewill, his freewill not sufficiently developed to replace his instincts and afford him perfect guidance. He is becoming too wise to hearken always to instincts and desires; he is still too weak to always prevail against them. (61)

Here freewill and desire are not matters of nature or feeling, but are rather symptoms of the environment. It is this emphasis on characters being shaped by their surroundings that defines this text as a naturalist versus a realist text. This distinction is subtle and at times the lines between the two are dulled, but it is clear that the focus is not necessarily how the individual responds in a natural way to surroundings, but so how the environment shapes perception and even reality.

The novel's success lies in presenting the nation in its true form. One of the biggest changes that capitalists brought to American culture was an overwhelming emphasis on "conspicuous consumption," or the purchasing of goods and services in such a way that one's buying power becomes immediately evident (18). Dreiser carefully catalogues in specific detail everything Carrie owns: a cheap imitation alligator-skin satchel, a yellow leather snap purse, and four dollars. Because Carrie cannot afford a real alligator skin satchel, but still wants the status that conspicuous consumption would give her, she owns the cheap imitation. In effect, conspicuous consumption of genuine luxuries produced a market for cheaper imitations. From the beginning Carrie seems to be the

very emblem of a consumer driven materialistic society, and there seems to be no doubt about this as the plot continues on. She seems possessed by the inanimate, and seems too completely disregard anything other than the right clothes, the right place to work, and her appearance. Carrie is seemingly vapid, and, as she struggles to make it by letting Drouet take care of her and give her his money, she hardly acknowledges the fact he has helped pull her and give her out of poverty. Once she is able, she throws him away in order to be with Hurstwood, a man of even more wealth and connection. However, it needs to be said that Carrie is not stupid.

Because we know so little about Carrie's identity, our first impression of her is formed not by her actions or her opinions but by her belongings. Dreiser's description of her ends with the exact amount of money she holds. This emphasis on money will be a primary theme throughout the rest of the novel. *Sister Carrie* is a fascinating tale, beautifully written. It shows how one climbs and descends the social ladder of life. The two main characters Carrie and Hurstwood's are truly victims of circumstances- Carrie's never ending unhappiness and Hurstwood's downward spiral. As the readers go through life, there are so many events and choices that will guide the life to what they are. When one stops and thinks about this, it is really quite fascinating. Dreiser seems aware of this fact of life.

When Carrie notices Drouet's interest in her, she wavers between pleasures and reserve.

There was pride in his voice. He felt that it was something that is connected with such place and he made her feel that way.

“What is your address?” He began again, fixing his pencil to write.

She looked at his hand [...] How true is that words are but the vague shadows of the volume we mean. (9-10)

She hesitates to give Drouet her address in Chicago, and she does not want Minnie to see her with Drouet at the station. Although she seems to want to pursue a relationship with Drouet, she feels compelled to hide her desire because such a relationship would be improper according to conventional values. Carrie's attraction for him lies largely in his buying power. His expensive, flashy clothing and adornments promise her the pleasures of material wealth. This is the first of many instances in *Sister Carrie* in which we see a consumer's mentality govern characters' interpersonal relationships.

Carrie's job search demonstrates the dehumanizing side of capitalist values.

Employers eye her as they would any other sort of commodity, deciding whether or not she is worth her cost. “[...] Have you tried the department store?” She acknowledged that she had not. “well if I were you,” he said, looking at her rather genially “ I would rather try the department store. They often need young women as clerk” (46).

This ‘department store’, therefore is a place where young women are required because they are the commodities who can sell their beauty by smiling and welcoming their male customers. A woman is allocated such professions because these are the only places where they fit. They find their existence in such places. The capitalist economy manipulates the desire of the consumer without ever completely satisfying it. Carrie's visit to the department store shows her fascination with conspicuous consumption. All of the trinkets and fancy clothing seem to call out to her, even though she cannot afford any of them; The unsatisfied desire drives the consumer to continue buying more material goods, and the desire to buy drives the consumer to work long hours at unpleasant jobs. Carrie's dreams of satisfying her desire for material things are abruptly

disappointed when she realizes that she only has fifty cents of her weekly wage at her disposal.

That worthy gave up just four Dollars less toward the household expenses with a smile of satisfaction. He contemplated increasing his Building and Loan payments. As for Carrie, she studied over the problem of finding clothes and amusement on fifty cents a week. She brooded over this until she was in a state of mental rebellion. (115)

Most of her time is spent in thinking about the things she cannot afford to buy, such as clothing and car fare. The greatest irony of her situation is that she cannot even afford to buy the shoes she produces at her job. The constant frustration of her consumer desires makes her miserable.

One of those forlorn impulses which often grow out of a fixed sense of defeat, the last sprouting of a baffled and uprooted growth of ideas, seized upon her. She walked deliberately through the door and upto the gentleman, who looked at her weary face with partially awakened interest. (58)

Sister Carrie also shows how money and earning power can come to govern the relationship between family members and they can sacrifice a woman in the altar of material. Minnie and Hanson do not invite Carrie to live with them out of desire for the presence of a close family member; rather, they hope to profit from her labor by charging her for board. Here, Carrie becomes a customer, not a person. Hanson and Minnie's commodification of Carrie is, however, somewhat pathetic; they are not gaining enough money from her stay to make much of a difference in their bare-bones

existence, and their frugal lifestyle marks them as members of the crowd of people who are too poor to be serious consumers.

Carrie does not delay learning that men treat her as a commodity. As a young, single wage-earner, she is not respectable; since she already sells herself to her employers; many men fail to see why she should not be available to them for other purposes. Her status as a wage-earner marks her as available, illustrating that the position of poor, unmarried, female workers in the new world of consumerism is tenuous at best.

Despite her fascination with consumption, Carrie's concept of wealth is undeveloped. For her, there are "haves" and "have-nots," and nothing in-between. Hurstwood, long associated with the wealthy, is keenly attuned to the various degrees of wealth. He belongs to the upper middle class, not to the luxuriously wealthy, and his relationship with other people is governed by his relative wealth in comparison to theirs: people who have more money get more respect. The moment Carrie no longer represents an opportunity for profit; Minnie and Hanson want her to leave their flat. This is the most appalling aspect of the capitalist society. The existence is not only in money but in power as well. *Sister Carrie* shows the problems not of Carrie, a girl but Carrie a prototype of female figures of the society. Circumstances might be the different. But the feelings remain the same. The problem that she bears does not deviate from the problem that the majority of women are facing in the world we live in. we encounter these problems in every face of the society. Carrie resents the fact that they benefit from her labor while she herself cannot. However, she is unwilling to leave Chicago and go home; to do so, would be to leave behind the consumer world she is so eager to join. "She was glad to be out of the flat, because already she felt that it was a narrow, humdrum place, and that interest and joy lay elsewhere. Her thoughts now

were of a more liberal character, and she punctuated them with speculations as to the whereabouts of Drouet” (71).

Many of the central characters in *Sister Carrie* are acting according to the capitalist pressures in their urban society. Through such a setting, the characters are often compared to elements of the sea, mostly in the sense that are just tiny “wisps” in a sea that is vast beyond comprehension. This sea is not only representative of the swarms of people, but of forces stronger than man, in this case capitalism. It is inescapable and all the lives of the characters revolve around either the acquisition of money or the blatant showing off of it. In such a world, feelings are emotions and secondary to the tide of rampant capitalism and there is always another opportunity in the sea of people. It should be noted that Carrie is moved along with the tide through a short series of relationships, none of them lasting, everything always changing. It is almost against her will, but if one views the sea image as the tide of capitalism then it is clear she is merely following the promise of material comfort and not love. It is thus also remarkable that *Sister Carrie*, despite its frequent scenes featuring lovers, is hardly a love story. It is rather a tale about the loss of innocence and the giving up of one’s mind to the powerful sea of capitalist forces and selfish desires.

The main character Carrie’s place in the urban sea begins to change with added capital and after she meets Drouet she encounters a girl she’d known from the shoe factory. At this moment, the narrator remarks, “Carrie felt as if some great tide had rolled between them” (64). It is clear now that even though the sea of the city had swept her away initially, she is quickly learning what it takes to swim above the rest. After all, as Hurstwood eventually notices, “She possessed an innate taste for imitation and no small ability” (125). She adapts to this new world by immediately learning the

importance of capital and the appearance of wealth in this sea of a city and accommodates because of her skill at pretending—a skill that will actually earn her true capital later when she takes up acting. It should also be noted that even Hurstwood recognizes the sea and realizes how much his environment has shaped all that he is. After he leaves his hometown to start “downstream” with Carrie, the narrator remarks, “Whatever a man like Hurstwood had been in Chicago, it is very evident that he would be but an inconspicuous drop in an ocean like New York. In Chicago, whose population still ranged about 500,000, millionaires were not numerous”(232). If it was not yet clear to the reader, the sea is simply about population and survival as well as about staying afloat through the ability to conform to capitalist desires and thus “adapt” to the urban environment.

It would seem that the only time one is able to escape the sea is through excessive capital and the ability to manipulate the environment. As Carrie begins to understand the sea and how she can survive within it, it is clear that every once in a while she steps out of its waters and attains individuality. This only occurs when she has a great deal of wealth, no matter whom or where she got it from, and there is a remarkable line, which demonstrates this. “In the view of a certain stratum of society of society, Carrie was comfortably established—in the eyes of a starveling, beaten by every wind and gusty sheet of rain she was safe in a halcyon harbor” (74).

Throughout much of the text, the imagery has been about the sea, and finally, she has stepped off the rocky seas with “wind and gusty sheet[s] of rain” to enter the shore and a “halcyon harbor” thus showing that perhaps the sea allows for some escape Those “starvelings” without the capital, however, are forced to tread water for as long as possible with only glimmering of a distant harbor in sight.

Carrie's impoverished situation incites genuine pity, but Drouet's offer of money is touched with something other than simple compassion. Handing her the money gives him the opportunity to touch her hand, the first step in establishing physical intimacy with her. In a world, the women go through thousands of exploitations, even sexual, by this or that excuses. In essence, he is buying the opportunity for sex. The lunch and the loan are only the first step in getting it. Once he presses the twenty dollars into her hand, Carrie feels bound to him by a "strange tie of affection"(130). Again, relations between individual people, especially between men and women, are shown to be governed by the consumer mentality. With his money, Drouet has purchased the right to initiate physical intimacy with Carrie. Lest there be any boldness or any vibrant nature, the males do not spare any opportunity to make a consumption of women in the way they like.

Carrie serves as a symbol of the social values of the burgeoning American consumer culture. To her, money represents raw power; one almost gets the sense that she would be happy to be stranded on a desert island if only she had a large bundle of money. She has not yet learned the lesson that money alone is worth nothing. Only in relation to consumer goods represents anything of value. "Even after all her depressing conclusions, she could sweep away all thought about the matter and then delightful thing. Ah, money, money, money! What a thing it was to have. How plenty of it would clear away all these troubles"(140).

The encounter between Hurstwood and Carrie highlights the conventional social attitude towards feminine desire. Carrie's relationships with Drouet and Hurstwood demonstrate reluctance on the part of the men, and Carrie herself, to recognize the existence of female sexual desire. Carrie's habit of imitating the mannerisms that

Drouet remarks in other women makes her the reflection of masculine sexual desire; she is never allowed to express any desire of her own--except for her desire for conspicuous consumption.

Carrie's consumer mentality drives her to buy clothing, trinkets, and jewelry as a way of satisfying her desire. In her relationships with other people, however, she feels pleasure for being desired rather than for feeling desire of her own. "Carrie felt that she needed more and better clothes to compare [...] for Carrie had now developed an equally pleasing figure, and had grown in comeliness until she was a thoroughly attractive type of her colour of beauty"(615).

When Hurstwood declares his love for Carrie, he begs her to state her own love for him. Instead, she kisses him. Although this implicitly answers Hurstwood's demand, it is also a way for Carrie to avoid asserting her own desire. Julia's protest of Hurstwood's neglect does not take the form of sexual jealousy. Once again, a woman is denied the possibility of expressing her own sexual desire, even as a form of negative response to a man's neglect of her. She demands, rather, that Hurstwood show his appreciation for her by buying her a season ticket to the races. Like Carrie, she expresses her desire through consumerism. Moreover, she wants the ticket so she can take her daughter out in public and show her off; by displaying Jessica, she hopes to excite the desire of a wealthy young man who might provide the opportunity for social advancement by marrying her.

Carrie's assumption of a new name extends a theme that recurs throughout *Sister Carrie*: that women lack fixed identities of their own. Moreover, Drouet is the one who provides Carrie with the opportunity to act in the first place, and he even chooses Carrie's stage name, thereby demonstrating his power over her identity. Ever since

meeting Drouet on the train to Chicago, she has played a role according to his desires, imitating the mannerisms he remarks in other women and acting as his mistress and "wife." She felt thoroughly bound to him as a wife, and that her lot was cast with his, whatever it might be; but she began to see that he was gloomy and taciturn, not a young, strong and buoyant man (660). Here, she again finds herself playing a role for him.

Purchasing power and capital determine the stature of characters in this novel and in many respects; this would be a realistic impression for turn-of-the-century readers. The marketplace and ability to consume was an overwhelming pressure and thus shaped the motivations of characters. The sea of people appeared infinite in an urban landscape thus the desire for characters to both stay afloat and eventually rise above the water and reach the "halcyon harbor" of wealth and luxury was paramount to other interests. Although there are characters such as Carrie's sister, for example, who do not aspire to reach the shore but rather live at subsistence level, these are characters that are only given meager description and are not as full as others. In this world that Dreiser depicts, the ability to consume defines the stature and if one considers the "survival of the fittest" paradigm that can be found throughout realist texts, this is still functioning if only in the economic sense. Carrie's desire to attain greater wealth and purchasing power allowed her to survive while Drouet and Hurstwood sank into the depths of the great sea of humanity and this message, while not exactly hopefully, defines naturalism.

Hurstwood's continuing belief that he deserves the absolute power to make decisions for his family leads to his downfall. He refuses to speak with Julia's lawyers because he is unwilling to recognize her claim to make demands on him. He chooses

not to negotiate, so she sues him for divorce. We have seen ample evidence that conventional values construct woman's identity as entirely the performance of a role. The exposure of Hurstwood's power as the function of a role and not an intrinsic quality opens the possibility for reading masculine identity as a performance as well. Here, the novel seems to say that power is not a natural masculine right.

Drouet's break-up with Carrie further highlights the performative origins of masculine power. He has been playing a charade of planning to marry her all along. However, when his promise to marry is exposed as a performance, he loses his power over her. As with Hurstwood, when his power is exposed as a function of the performance of a role, Drouet loses control. He plans to win Carrie back with a performance, returning to their apartment under the pretense of gathering his remaining belongings. When he discovers that she is not home, he waits for her, planning to pretend as though he has just arrived when she eventually returns. However, Drouet never has the opportunity to put on his performance to win Carrie back; Hurstwood beats him to it. He lures Carrie away with a magnificent performance of anxious concern for Drouet's "injury" (449).

When she parts ways with Drouet, Carrie is once again forced to think about the means of her support. Her immediate thought is to work in the theater. She has learned that her value is determined through performance. Carrie's early days in Chicago represented the experience of the working poor. The most basic costs of food, transportation, clothing and shelter were matters of concern. Carrie's life was governed entirely by the prices of these things. Hurstwood's wealth, in contrast, allowed him to concern himself with only the prices of luxury items, and only seldom even then. In New York, although Hurstwood is forced to think about the prices of basic

commodities, he is still able to keep up the show of luxury. Carrie maintains the illusion of him as someone who can free her from the need to constantly worry over the prices of things.

Once Hurstwood arrives in New York, the fact that he must think carefully about small expenditures like cab fare, rent, and small trinkets for Carrie, hits him with full force. He has ample money to invest in another business, but he turns down many opportunities because they are too low-class or because they involve some measure of illegality. He does not want to risk another scandal by which he might lose his respectability in New York as he did in Chicago.

Hurstwood resumes the old game of playing the husband role, once he settles on a business, taking complete control of the financial reins. He never consults Carrie about household expenses because he is eager to preserve the illusion that his buying power is as large as it has always been. His attempt to play the role of provider is not entirely successful, however, because Carrie notices that he no longer provides her with the kind of expensive entertainment he did in Chicago.

Hurstwood pays careful attention to Carrie during the first two years of their marriage. Carrie notices that Hurstwood cannot offer her the lavish entertainment and clothing he had in Chicago, but his care to show appreciation for her keeps her happy for a while. However, he repeats the same cycle of neglect he went through with Julia, forgetting to play his role as Carrie's husband. Carrie must depend on Hurstwood to give her money for entertainment. Her access to the public sphere is mediated through him, and he neglects to take her out in the evenings because he believes she enjoys her domestic role.

Carrie's experience in New York symbolizes the impersonal modern experience in which families can live in the same building for years without speaking to one another. In a city teeming with people, it takes her two years to make her first friend. Her life is characterized by an intense isolation. Her only relationship is with Hurstwood; he comprises her entire world.

Carrie's first encounter with Hurstwood teaches her the difference between taste and flash. Drouet displayed his wealth obviously, but Hurstwood was more subtle. He managed to appear wealthy without drawing too much attention to the money itself. Carrie's encounter with Ames exposed her to a further refinement of wealth and prestige. Ames represents a world of discerning artistic taste that attracts Carrie. Whereas Hurstwood represented the wealth needed to regularly attend shows in the theater, Ames represents the artistic taste necessary to assume a critical attitude toward the entertainment.

Besides it has made a naturalistic, Darwinian study of the characters of the novel. By applying these important social currents of thoughts, such as Naturalism and Social Darwinism to explain Carrie's fate, it also points out that environment and heredity have played indispensable and decisive roles in one's life. But naturalism also has its limitations, such as pessimistic determinism and the concept of human beast. Facing the devastating environmental factors and hereditary factors, we can exert the courage, the intelligence and the perseverance to overcome difficulties and change those disadvantageous factors into favorable ones. In addition, the paper also points out that the concept of human best should not be justified and the confining and regulating effect of morality should not be neglected, otherwise our human society will turn into a chaotic jungle-like place.

This way thus, Theodor's *Sister Carrie* focuses on the shallow and superficial needs of characters, major and minor, to constantly acquire more material goods and as a result, a higher representation of class. Materialism, capitalism, and consumerism are the main driving forces behind the action in the novel.

Chapter 4: Conclusion

The researcher came to conclusion that Theodor Dreiser, *Sister Carrie* is an important achievement in existentialist feminism. The research found out how naturalism and realism intertwined to make shape the future and destiny of a female character in this bitter world of harsh Darwinism. Carrie Meber's quest and her doom is the point where these elements of realism, naturalism, existentialism and feminism meet.

The research explored how *Sister Carrie* employs many techniques to show the shifting attitude of the characters towards their stations in life. Because money is a sensitive subject for people in general, the use of it as a literary device in Dreiser's classic novel is wise and heartbreaking.

At the time that *Sister Carrie* appeared, fiction seldom touched upon the darker side of human endeavors and relationships. Prostitution, for example, might occur in the real world, but authors did not make it an overt part of their plots. For Dreiser's Carrie, though, prostitution was a way of life. She would not have been able to survive without using men to get to her next level of existence. Dreiser writes about Carrie's lifestyle in a matter-of-fact manner. The public was appalled that Dreiser viewed it so lightly. While readers may not approve of it, they understand how a woman of that period might feel compelled to seek her independence in this manner.

Critics have often noted the artistic passion in Dreiser's writing. Dreiser has the same ability to create stories from his sense of the world around him. While Dreiser possessed a sense of the world around him and could write about it realistically, he

lacked the ability to create beauty with his words. His writing style is highly criticized by experts as being too verbose, and the words too commonplace.

Carrie's eventual turn to wealth as a Broadway actor comes too late to mark a change in the novel's tone, and the final image of Carrie sitting alone depressed in a hotel room comes as no surprise, nor does the final narrative overture about how happiness cannot be bought. The theme of people misunderstanding the power of money begins on the first page and carries through to the last.

The novel's stresses on how a woman attempts in a world which is her own but is bizarre because of the male domination. Her existence is shaped by her persistent struggle with both cosmic forces and the human beings. These males are no less than the beasts and the harsh forces of the nature. This researcher has probed the way Dreiser has made a successful blend naturalism, realism, existentialism and feminism. The most striking aspect found in the novel is the admixture of all these elements. However, the main finding is based on the Sartian view of existence especially related to women.

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