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METHODOLOGICAL JOURNAL**<http://mentaljournal-jspu.uz/index.php/mesmj/index>**THEODORE DREISER'S FIRST NOVEL "SISTER CARRIE": A
GROUNDBREAKING EXPLORATION OF AMERICAN AMBITION****Navruzbek M. Soybnazarov**

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E-mail: navruzsoybnazarov@jdsu.uz**ABOUT ARTICLE**

Key words: Theodore Dreiser, Novelist, Sister Carrie, Debut book, Deliberate approach, Thorough writing, Unhurried style, Mastery of storytelling, Human psychology, Distinctive stylistic abilities, Seminal work, American literature, Global realistic literature, Profound understanding.

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Abstract: This article focuses on Theodore Dreiser's exceptional skill as a novelist, with particular emphasis on his debut book, "Sister Carrie". "Sister Carrie" stands as a testament to his exceptional skill as a novelist. It showcases his deliberate writing approach, profound understanding of human psychology, and distinctive stylistic abilities. Through this novel, Dreiser's deliberate, thorough, and unhurried approach to writing becomes evident, showcasing his mastery of storytelling. "Sister Carrie" not only reveals Dreiser's profound understanding of human psychology but also displays his distinctive stylistic abilities. Considered a seminal work, the novel holds a significant place in both American and global realistic literature of the 20th century.

INTRODUCTION

Before delving into the novel itself, it is essential to understand Theodore Dreiser's role as a literary revolutionary. Dreiser's naturalistic approach challenged the prevailing literary norms of the time, breaking away from romanticism and embracing a raw and unfiltered depiction of human nature and societal realities. "Sister Carrie" exemplifies Dreiser's commitment to portraying the complexities of life with unflinching honesty.

MAIN PART

Theodore Dreiser's debut novel, "Sister Carrie," published in 1900, stands as a seminal work in American literature. This article delves into the significance of Dreiser's novel,

examining its exploration of American ambition, the complexities of urban life, and the evolving societal norms of the time. Through its compelling characters and vivid depiction of early 20th century America, "Sister Carrie" captures the essence of the American Dream and the pursuit of success against the backdrop of a rapidly changing society. Within his first novel, "Sister Carrie," Theodore Dreiser demonstrates his prowess as a profound psychologist and stylist. The deliberate and thorough manner in which he crafts the narrative exemplifies his mastery of storytelling. Dreiser's ability to delve into the depths of human psychology and his unique style set him apart as a writer of great skill. "Sister Carrie" stands as a landmark in the history of American literature and the global landscape of realistic literature in the 20th century. Its impact is twofold, as it not only left an indelible mark on American literary history but also influenced the development of realistic literature worldwide. The novel's enduring relevance and contribution to the literary canon cannot be overstated.

"Sister Carrie" can be considered autobiographical in nature. The story unfolds in the cities of Chicago and New York, both of which Dreiser was intimately familiar with and held a fondness for. The novel's protagonist, Caroline Meeber, shares similarities with Dreiser himself, as both ventured to Chicago at a young age in search of a better future. Caroline's experiences of navigating the city, her fears, and her shyness echo the sentiments Dreiser himself felt during his initial encounters with urban life.

The foundation of the novel draws upon Dreiser's sister, Emma, whose own life inspired elements of the story. Emma's decision to flee to Canada with a married cashier from a restaurant serves as a basis for the narrative. In this investigation, we aim to explore the influence of the social realities prevalent during Dreiser's life and career on the development of his characters. Additionally, we will examine how these characters reflect the lives of both impoverished and wealthy individuals, who become notable figures within Dreiser's remarkable novels.

"Sister Carrie" as a social novel:

"Sister Carrie" can be regarded as a social novel, highlighting the stark contrast between the rich and the poor. Theodore Dreiser emphasizes the tragic circumstances faced by individuals of limited means. The character of Carrie is meticulously depicted, with Dreiser initially highlighting her natural and inherent qualities, such as her egoism and selfishness.

At the start of the book, Carrie's self-centeredness is relatively harmless and benign. Like any young girl, she desires to be well-dressed and feels ashamed of her poverty. She yearns for the luxurious life enjoyed by the wealthy. Dreiser describes Carrie as a

representation of the middle-class American, a few generations removed from their immigrant roots. She lacks interest in books and knowledge, and her refinement is still underdeveloped. Despite these traits, she is aware of her charms, quick to grasp the pleasures of life, and ambitious for material wealth.

Initially, Carrie is inexperienced and naive. She endures a period of suffering, working in a shoe factory and realizing that such labour dashes her dreams of a better life. Dreiser demonstrates the cruelty of life to Carrie and subsequently portrays her own cruelty toward others, such as Hurstwood. The author firmly believes that the path to success often leads to moral degradation. This theme, explored in world literature by writers like Stendhal ("The Red and the Black") and Balzac ("Lost Illusions"), is given an American twist by Dreiser, linking it to the pursuit of business. Carrie becomes Drouet's mistress and later Hurstwood's, devoid of genuine emotions.

The novel concludes with Carrie as a successful actress in a variety show. She leaves Hurstwood, who ultimately commits suicide. Carrie's perception of art undergoes a transformation. However, despite her glittering facade, she remains unhappy. Dreiser presents her as a lonely figure, disillusioned with the superficiality of the world and isolated from those who refuse to partake in its follies.

"Sister Carrie" delves into the social dynamics of early 20th-century America, examining themes such as ambition, materialism, and the consequences of societal expectations. Theodore Dreiser presents a nuanced portrayal of Carrie's journey, exploring the impact of her choices and the influence of external forces on her life. As the narrative progresses, Carrie evolves from an inexperienced young girl to a woman who navigates the complexities of relationships and societal pressures. Her pursuit of a better life leads her to become involved with Drouet and later Hurstwood, both of whom offer her financial security and social status. However, Dreiser depicts these relationships as lacking genuine emotional connections, portraying Carrie as a passive participant driven by her own self-interest. The novel also delves into the disparity between the rich and the poor, highlighting the harsh realities faced by those living in poverty. Dreiser exposes the cruelty of society and the challenges faced by individuals striving to improve their circumstances. Carrie's journey reflects the struggle of many who are caught between their aspirations and the limitations imposed by societal norms. One of the central themes explored in "Sister Carrie" is the corrupting influence of materialism and the pursuit of success. Dreiser argues that the relentless pursuit of wealth and social status often leads to moral compromises and personal dissatisfaction. Carrie's own experiences illustrate the fleeting nature of happiness and the emptiness that can accompany material success.

The novel concludes with Carrie achieving success as an actress but finding herself emotionally unfulfilled and detached from genuine human connections. Dreiser suggests that the pursuit of external validation and material gain ultimately leaves individuals isolated and discontented. Through its exploration of social dynamics, ambition, and the consequences of personal choices, "Sister Carrie" offers a thought-provoking critique of American society during the early 20th century. Dreiser's characterization and storytelling skilfully depict the complexities of human nature and the struggles faced by individuals in their pursuit of happiness and fulfilment.

"Sister Carrie" as a Landmark in the History of American Literature:

"Sister Carrie" holds a significant place as a landmark in the history of American literature. Theodore Dreiser's novel broke new ground and made a lasting impact on the literary landscape for several reasons. Firstly, "Sister Carrie" challenged prevailing literary conventions of its time. Published in 1900, the novel defied the traditional moralistic and sentimental narratives popular in the 19th century. Dreiser's realistic portrayal of characters and their struggles, along with his exploration of social issues, marked a departure from the romanticized storytelling prevalent in American literature up to that point. Furthermore, "Sister Carrie" tackled themes and subjects previously considered taboo in literature. Dreiser fearlessly delved into topics such as sexuality, ambition, and the pursuit of personal happiness, which were controversial and unconventional for the era. By pushing these boundaries, the novel opened up new avenues of exploration for future American writers.

Dreiser's writing style in "Sister Carrie" also contributed to its landmark status. He employed a naturalistic approach, emphasizing the influence of social and environmental factors on his characters' lives. This emphasis on depicting the complexities of human behaviour and the impact of societal forces distinguished the novel from its contemporaries and set a precedent for a more psychologically nuanced and socially aware form of storytelling in American literature.

The impact of "Sister Carrie" extends beyond its initial reception. The novel paved the way for a new generation of writers who sought to challenge established literary norms and explore the realities of American society. Dreiser's unflinching portrayal of the struggles faced by individuals, particularly women, in a rapidly changing urban environment resonated with readers and influenced subsequent works of American literature. In addition to its significance within American literature, "Sister Carrie" also holds a place in the history of world literature. Its realistic and socially conscious approach positioned it as a precursor to the development of global realistic literature in the 20th century. The novel's exploration of

universal themes and its impact on literary techniques and narrative strategies have cemented its status as a work of enduring relevance and influence.

In "Sister Carrie," Theodore Dreiser indeed reveals the harsh realities of capitalist America by faithfully depicting the lives of common people filled with toil, misery, and deprivation. The novel traces the journey of Carrie, a factory girl whose relentless pursuit of material well-being leads her to become unscrupulous, selfish, and callous. The novel concludes with a melancholic scene where Carrie is depicted sitting alone by her window, dreaming of a happiness she may never truly experience. This sombre ending underscores the tragic nature of Carrie's life, highlighting how society has extinguished the essence of her humanity and rendered her pursuit of wealth ultimately meaningless.

The social critique embedded in "Sister Carrie" made it a controversial and banned novel for a considerable period. Some critics attempted to disparage its quality and significance. However, others recognized the exposure of Dreiser's distinctive method and the novel's adherence to realistic principles. Realism is evident in various aspects of the novel. It manifests in the social motivations driving the characters' actions, the portrayal of the urban landscape, and the meticulous depiction of realistic details. An exemplary instance of Dreiser's realism is his vivid description of a snowstorm in New York, which effectively contrasts the affluent areas like Broadway with the impoverished Bowery. This stark portrayal of the contradiction between wealth and poverty emphasizes the stark divide within society. Dreiser employs realistic details to underscore the stark contrast between the rich and the poor. For instance, he describes Fleischman's bakery, where for a quarter of a century, the baker has given a loaf of bread to those who line up at midnight. This detail highlights the desperate circumstances of the poor, with hundreds of individuals relying on this meager act of charity for sustenance. Through these realistic depictions, Dreiser exposes the stark disparities and social injustices prevalent in capitalist America. "Sister Carrie" serves as a powerful social critique, shedding light on the struggles and sacrifices endured by the working class and questioning the meaning and value of material wealth.

Overall, "Sister Carrie" stands as a landmark in American literature for its unflinching portrayal of the human condition, its social sharpness, and its contribution to the realistic tradition. It sheds light on the dark underbelly of American society and remains a significant work that continues to resonate with readers today.

"Sister Carrie" as a Novel-Biography:

The composition of "Sister Carrie" indeed reflects Theodore Dreiser's writing style and characteristics. The novel can be considered a novel-biography due to its focus on the main heroine, Carrie Meeber, and her transformation from a factory worker to a successful

actress. The entire plot revolves around Carrie's journey and development. Dreiser's writing style is deliberate, detailed, and thorough. He takes his time to describe settings, such as restaurants, factories, or the circumstances surrounding a tram workers' strike. His descriptions are analytical and comprehensive, adding weight and epic range to the narrative without becoming tiresome or fatiguing for the reader. Contrary to the claims of some critics, Dreiser's style is not monotonous. He displays his versatility as a writer, particularly in his first novel, by showcasing his skills as a deep psychologist. The scene in which Hurstwood steals money exemplifies this. Dreiser delves into Hurstwood's inner thoughts and emotions, capturing his fear, hesitation, and the internal struggle between honour and temptation. The victory ultimately lies with the voice of seduction, as Hurstwood decides to take the money. Dreiser's ability to trace the inner movements of his characters' souls and depict their doubts and conflicts contributes to the psychological depth of the novel. By exploring the complexities of his characters' minds, Dreiser adds layers of depth and realism to their actions and decisions. While "Sister Carrie" is a work of fiction, it does contain elements that can be interpreted as resembling a novel-biography. A novel-biography, also known as a fictionalized biography or biographical novel, is a genre that blends elements of both biography and fiction. It presents the life story of a real or fictional individual, incorporating factual events and details while also filling in gaps with fictionalized elements. In the case of "Sister Carrie," while the story itself is not based on an actual person, it can be seen as a fictionalized account of the struggles and experiences faced by many young women during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The character of Carrie Meeber embodies the aspirations, challenges, and growth of a young woman navigating the urban landscape of Chicago and New York.

The novel traces Carrie's journey from her small hometown to the bustling city, where she encounters various individuals and experiences that shape her life. While Carrie is a fictional character, her experiences reflect the broader social and cultural context of the time, including the changing roles of women, the allure of the city, and the pursuit of material success. "Sister Carrie" vividly portrays the urban landscape of early 20th century America. Dreiser captures the energy, opportunities, and challenges of city life, depicting the stark contrast between the glamorous allure of success and the harsh realities faced by those striving to achieve it. The novel explores the price one must pay for upward mobility and the compromises individuals make in pursuit of their dreams. Dreiser's portrayal of the city as both a symbol of hope and a breeding ground for disillusionment reflects the changing dynamics of American society during the era of rapid industrialization and urbanization. "Sister Carrie" exposes the underbelly of urban life, highlighting the struggles, moral

ambiguities, and societal pressures faced by individuals striving for success in a rapidly transforming world. Furthermore, "Sister Carrie" incorporates elements of realism, which further contribute to its resemblance to a novel-biography. Theodore Dreiser's writing style emphasizes the depiction of realistic details, the exploration of social issues, and the psychological development of characters. These elements lend a sense of authenticity to the narrative, making it feel like a biographical account. In addition, the novel explores the inner thoughts, motivations, and struggles of Carrie, providing readers with insights into her personal growth and transformation. This introspective aspect, often associated with biographical accounts, adds depth to the characterization and contributes to the novel's biographical-like qualities. However, it's important to note that "Sister Carrie" is ultimately a work of fiction, and while it may reflect elements of real-life experiences and social conditions, it does not represent a specific individual's biography. It fictionalizes the experiences of its characters to explore broader themes and societal issues.

In summary, "Sister Carrie" showcases Dreiser's deliberate and thorough writing style. The novel's concentration on the main heroine and its exploration of characters' inner lives align with the characteristics of a novel-biography. Dreiser's ability to capture psychological nuances and portray internal struggles adds depth and complexity to the narrative. "Sister Carrie" can be seen as a novel-biography in the sense that it presents a fictionalized account of a young woman's journey and development, drawing from the social realities of the time. It incorporates elements of biography, such as the exploration of personal growth and the reflection of broader social contexts, while still being a work of fiction that uses storytelling techniques to engage readers.

CONCLUSION

The publication of Theodore Dreiser's first novel, "Sister Carrie," marked the emergence of a new and intriguing writer. The novel's exploration of social realities reveals the complexity and contradictions within Dreiser's work. The following statements highlight some of these contradictions:

1. Dreiser embraces a biological conception of life, viewing it as a struggle between the strong and the weak. This conflict between strong individuals and society forms the basis of his first novel and many others. Simultaneously, Dreiser demonstrates a social approach to analyzing human actions and motivations.

2. The writer displays sympathy for the poor and downtrodden, stemming from his own experiences of hardship during his childhood. This democratic sentiment is evident in his novels, where he sharply contrasts poverty and wealth. However, alongside this sympathy, Dreiser also reveals an admiration for strong personalities, regardless of their goals. He

tends to favour individuals with strength of character, such as Carrie, over weaker characters like Hurstwood.

3. Dreiser acknowledges the importance of human reason and intellect, often portraying his characters as intelligent individuals. However, he also emphasizes the authority of external and internal forces that shape human lives. These forces can manifest as societal rules and expectations or the power of one's own temperament, suggesting that individuals are not solely governed by rationality.

These contradictions contribute to the complexity and richness of Dreiser's writing. They reflect his exploration of the multi-faceted nature of human existence and the tensions that exist within society. Dreiser's work encompasses both the individual struggle against societal expectations and the recognition of external and internal forces that influence human lives.

Theodore Dreiser's "Sister Carrie" remains a timeless and powerful novel that captures the essence of the American Dream and the human desire for success. Through its honest depiction of urban life, complex characters, and unflinching exploration of societal norms, the novel stands as a testament to Dreiser's pioneering role in American literature. Over a century since its publication, "Sister Carrie" continues to resonate with readers, inviting them to contemplate the universal themes of ambition, love, and the pursuit of happiness in an ever-changing world.

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