

Conflict Between Individual and Society in *Sister Carrie*

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Abstract

In *Sister Carrie*, Dreiser drew a vivid picture of American life in the late 19th century. In this paper, the author tried to give a detailed analysis of Carrie's rise and Hurstwood's fall, and pointed out the description of all these things indicated that there was a conflict between individual and society that, to Carrie, she wanted to leave countryside for big cities for a better life through her own effort, but couldn't refuse the help and attraction from others in materialistic society so that she lost herself, and, to Hurstwood, he was also honest to his desire and left for a big city to begin a new life with Carrie, but he couldn't adapt himself to the environment where everyone couldn't escape the law of jungle that the weak was the prey of the strong. In the end, life was so hard for him that he had no choice but commit suicide to escape the reality.

Key words: *Sister Carrie*; Theodore Dreiser Conflict

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INTRODUCTION

Theodore Dreiser was one of American's greatest writers, and a great naturalist writer. He and his characters did not attack the nation's puritanical moral code, they simply ignored it, and this attitude shocked the reading public when his first novel, *Sister Carrie*, came out in 1900.

Although we saw it as a masterpiece, it was suppressed until 1912.

The violent attacks upon *Sister Carrie* in the early part of 20th century were caused by its presentation of a woman who had "sinned" and not been punished for it. Worse yet, she did not even become aware that she was sinning, and simply did what she had to do to make life more tolerable—to gain a little good future with the only gift at her command. There was no agonized struggle with her conscience in Carrie when she decided to become Drouet's mistress, similarly there was no serious moral problems involved when she decided to leave him for a more sensitive and intelligent man. The only internal conflict was occasioned by an act of unkindness rather than a sexual misdeed. When Carrie decided she must save herself by deserting Hurstwood, she was unhappy, because she did not want to make anyone who had been good to her to feel bad. But self-preservation determined her action, for which Dreiser did not blame her any more than he earlier blamed Hurstwood for leaving a cold unloving family, or for the trick by which he persuaded Carrie to elope with him. Even later Carrie rose and Hurstwood declined, in Dreiser's view, both of them were victims of society, in which there were no real equality and equilibrium, but only people moved up and down. Dreiser didn't document the man's rise and fall in the long and detailed sequence, yet it was precisely through an extended contrast that readers saw both Carrie and Hurstwood were torn between the society's moral codes and their own desires.

This essay attempted to interpret the conflict between individual and society through analysis of Carrie's rise and Hurstwood's fall. By means of analysis of the background of the time when they lived, this essay tried to arouse audience's sympathy for the tragic figures—Carrie and Hurstwood.

1. THEODORE DREISER

1.1 The Background of Dreiser's Family

Theodore Dreiser was one of the American's greatest writers and a pioneer of naturalism in American writing. He wrote many works in his life, his masterpiece was *Sister Carrie*.

Theodore Dreiser was born in a large and impoverished German-American family in Terre Haut, Indiana, on August 27, 1871. His father, John Paul Dreiser was a weaver and wooden worker, then he became a production manager of a factory and saved enough money to built a mill of his own, but this burnt down, and he was never again able to get a good or even a steady job, and by this time Theodore was born, his father was a broken man of fifty, and felt himself too old and discouraged to have any hope of improving the family situation. His mother, Sarah Dreiser, was full of tender sentiment and not subject to the husband's adamant morality, quite by nature, sympathetic and gentle, and she was nonetheless endowed with endless strength and patience, eager to be helpful and stood by aiding any children with whom the father was angry, the children were attached to her.

During Theodore Dreiser's childhood and early youth, the family moved countless times, his father was always looking for job, and he could not shoulder the task of supporting the family. Soon the elder children were driven away from home despite strong attachment to their mother.

1.2 Dreiser's Working Experience

In 1887, at the age of sixteen, Theodore Dreiser announced that he was going to Chicago, His mother characteristically gave six dollars of her saving and her blessing, and Theodore was on his way to the most wonderful and serious city to seek his fortune.

As a sixteen-year-old boy, alone in Chicago, like Carrie Meeber, Dreiser could only find menial labor, as a dishwasher, a porter, slipping clerk etc. In 1889, one of his schoolteachers recognized his talent and paid his tuition at Indiana University. But Dreiser left college after a year because he felt it did not concern ordinary life at all and learnt too little and then returned to Chicago again. In Chicago, he had various job experiences: washing dishes, shoveling coal, working in a factory and collecting bills which he later used in his writing. In 1895, his oldest brother who had become a successful popular songwriter under the name of Paul Dreiser persuaded him to join him in New York working at the musical periodical as an editor. There at twenty-seven, he seemed to find himself and thought that a man could write truth and still find success, At that time he read heavily, and deeply influenced by Balzac, Hardy and Tolstoy and so on, Then he began to think of becoming a short story writer, Dreiser's overwhelming desire was to record his observation and conclusions about life, a friend of

Dreiser's, who hoped establish himself as a writer of a fiction, persuaded him to try his hand at the novel as well.

1.3 Dreiser's Works

In the April of 1900, Dreiser sat down to write the novel—*Carrie Sister*. It was said that he was no conception of the plot of the novel when he began to write, but soon after recalling the tragedies of his youth—injustices that he had seen, chance, ignorance and passion played upon those whom he had known first and, he began to write furiously. In *Sister Carrie*, Dreiser succeeded in pointing out the tragic possibilities inherited in the conflict between individual and society. In 1900, Dreiser published his masterpiece—*Sister Carrie*, There were also many other works in his life. His most famous novel was *American Tragedy*, he also wrote trilogy, it composed of *The Financier* (1912), *The Titan* (1914), and *The Stoic* (1974), his other novels were *The Genius* (1915), *The Bulwark* (1947), and so on .Even at end, he was writing on the *Stoic*, the last of the Cowperwood trilogy, it was unfinished business. Dreiser died in Hollywood on December 28, 1945.

2. SISTER CARRIE

2.1 Main Story of the Novel

The heroine, Carrie Meeber, left the poverty of her country home and moved to Chicago with a strong desire for a better life: food, money and social position. Dreiser himself had been born in poverty, and therefore did not criticize her for this, nor did he criticize her relationship with men. Carrie was quite modern in the way she moved from one relationship to another, she tried to be faithful to them, but circumstances made this impossible. Almost by accident, she became a success as an actress, and lived the life she had been longing for, but she learned that even money and success was not the key to true happiness.

As in all of his novels, Dreiser's real theme in *Sister Carrie* was the purposelessness of life, looking at the individual with warm, human sympathy, and he also saw the disorder and cruelty of life in general. While one character, Carrie, gained fame and comfort, another character in the novel, Hurstwood lost his wealth, social position and pride. Hurstwood's tragedy was just as accidental as Carrie's success, through which we could see no one could predict the ups and downs in the life.

2.2 Dreiser's Own Experience in the Novel

Theodore Dreiser came from the bottom of American society. He had deep impression on the ordinary people's life, and he understood their wish, hope, disappointment and sufferings. And the family's affections were so strong in the process of his character-forming that he had been made to feel so opposed in the youth and early manhood. The experience provided many rich and essential materials for his writing, in the figure of his brother, Dreiser found

a concept of fortune in the affairs of man. The strongest coincidence seemed to him to be the origin of a powerful arbitrary, interfering fate. The life impressed him most was the brutality and the necessity of a blind fate, so he came to hate the ill luck and blind chance and was so overpowered by the experiences and the sights of human suffering which he saw it as a universal principle. The concept of fate found expression throughout all of Dreiser's novels.

Most of the figures in the novels came directly out of Dreiser's own background, events in the novels closely based on Dreiser's personal or family's experiences, *Sister Carrie* was based on his own sister-Emma, who had run off to New York with a married man, who had turned out to have stolen money from his employer, just like Carrie's lover George Hurstwood did. Dreiser's own frustration and desires also found voices in the novel.

2.3 The influence of Naturalism

Dreiser was the leading American exponent naturalism in fiction, influenced by Spencer, Zola, Thomas Hardy and Darwin; they believed that man was dominated by his physical drives, social position and financial situations, to him life was "so sad, so strong, so mysterious, and inexplicable" (1981, p.103). As a naturalistic writer, Dreiser stressed determinism in his novels. He believed that it was human's instinct, desire and all other social factors that controlled and affected human's action. In the novel, no matter Carrie's rise or Hurstwood's fall, they were all driven by their natural instinct. It was obvious that Carrie was controlled by desire to materialism, while Hurstwood was controlled by his sexual desire. In Dreiser's eye's, man was merely an animal driven by greed and lust. Through Carrie's rise and Hurstwood's fall, Dreiser wanted to clarify that it was social mobility that could entails movement not only up to the ladder of success but also down it. In the conflict between individual and society, there was a theory of "survival of the fittest".

3. AN ANALYSIS OF CARRIE'S RISE AND HURSTWOOD'S FALL

3.1 Carrie's Rise and Hurstwood's Fall

Man was the victim of the instinct, social force, economics and chance. Carrie rose and Hurstwood fell, but neither of them could answer the question: "What is happiness?", "What is beauty?" Dreiser used the counterpoint of the Carrie's rise and Hurstwood's fall as the irony of the novel to express the theme.

Carrie was an innocent countryside girl from the nether world, with dream of fortune; she came to the mysterious city—Chicago. So it was inevitable that she would experience the unpredictable hardship and sufferings as a job seeker and fortune maker.

At that time, Chicago had a population of more than a million with fifty thousand more people moving there

each year. Chicago was in the process of expanding, and Carrie, as a complete job seeker, was overwhelmed by the scale of the city, and in the process of finding a job she encountered many humiliating rejection and was hurt by repeated contemptuous refusal and total indifference of the crowds among whom she walked in the street and waited for an interview in the factories and stores. But she did not lose her courage, instead she was encouraged by her first attempt to gain a work as a sticker with the wag 3.5 dollars-a-week. The wag was disappointingly low, and her further inquires were unsuccessful until she arrived at a saleroom of a shoe store and was hired as a sticker with wag of 4.5 dollars-a-week. This change in fortune changed Carrie's attitude toward the city, the city in her eyes began to become more lovely and she believed that she could live in the Chicago and had a better time than she had ever had before—she would be happy. But her enthusiasm did not last long when she noticed that the work was made intentionally different and uncomfortable. One day, before she saved enough money to buy a new jacket, she was caught in the rain, came down with the flu and lost three day's work. It was taken for granted that she lost her job and her situation became more critical. For three days, she looked unsuccessfully for a job. At this desperate moment, she met Drouet again, a salesman whom she encountered on the train of Chicago. Drouet took her to the expensive restaurant and gave her 20 dollars to buy clothes. In Dreiser's eyes, money should be considered stored energy not a statue symbol begetting privilege. Carrie, in contrast, saw money as "something everybody else has and I must get" (1967, p.57). So in her predicament, she hesitated between returning the money and allowing Drouet convince her to keep it. She eventually gave into the pull of her desire for staying in "the great, mysterious city which was still a magnet for her" (1967, p.65). Dreiser believed that, "We have the consolation of knowing that evolution is even in the action, that ideals are a light that cannot fail" (1967, p.67).

Ideals would be realizable in time, from the point view of Dreiser, humanity was in the halfway house between fully developed reason and animal instinct: "We see man far removed from the lairs of the jungle, his innate instincts dulled by too near an approach to free-will, his free-will not sufficiently developed to replace his instincts and afford him perfect guidance" (1967, p.66)

Carrie's moral confusion stemmed from her inability to disentangle this jumble of conflicting motives, and she was presently dominated by her desires, and obviously taken over by two forces; the first was the force of Drouet's personality and presence, the second was the force of the city itself "she was again the victim of the city's hypnotic influence" (1967, p.70). Carrie became mistress of Drouet when Drouet promised to marry her. The meeting with Drouet was a very important turn to Carrie's life, but all of this was changed forever by Drouet's invitation to Hurstwood.

In the world of *Sister Carrie*, comparison between objects or between object and person became the basic

for determining value. Hurstwood was an “ambassador” sent from the world of the wealth and fashion and fine manners. He was a manager of a bank; he had job, house, family, reputation and position. His fine manners and wealthy appearance showed him to be very much a man of his times; he knew that his place was well near to the top in a carefully ordered society. Upon Hurstwood’s arrival, Carrie was taken by his superior presence in comparison to Drouet, with his superior attentiveness, Hurstwood won Carrie’s affection.

Carrie was moved by desire when she imagined herself in new clothes. She might have moral reservations, but her material pursuits put an end to them. So as her taste broadened, she became less impressed with Drouet, and found that Drouet was not an ideal figure as she had first imagined, he was egotistical and insensitive. While, when Hurstwood took them to the theatre, Carrie was “hypnotized by the environment, the trappings of box, and the elegance of her companion [Hurstwood].” (1967, p.83). She was struck by the superior presence of Hurstwood, and became aware of the contrast between the opulence of the estate and her more modest situation. At this moment, Hurstwood’s chance was coming. When Hurstwood confessed his love for her, she responded favorably. Carrie gradually rose from the poverty and the lower position.

Hurstwood believed that he could accommodate his family and had Carrie on the side as an addiction to his present “pleasure”. (1967, p.29) He could dally with her and still kept his reputation, but which was proved wrong. His wife, who was an ambitious, cold woman who directed her attention more to her children than to her husband noticed that he had affairs and initiate with Carrie. Hurstwood’s relationship with his family deteriorated further with the divorce action taken by her wife against him, and which strengthened his decision to steal the money from his employers and fled to Montreal and then New York with Carrie.

Carrie had serious doubt about her promise to run away with and married Hurstwood, when she remembered Drouet’s kindness and felt guilty and insecure about leaving him. But Carrie lost some of this resolve when Drouet came to question something about her and Hurstwood. At the same time, she also noticed that Hurstwood was married. Carrie, now, responded with confused emotions: guilt over having encouraged Hurstwood, shame over his deception, and anger over Drouet’s moral superiority. Even so she resolved not to live again with Drouet, and her pride battled with her anxiety over being alone as her fund diminished. For two days, she looked for a position but no success, encouraged only by a manager who hoped to seduce her. Without job and Drouet’s support, Carrie’s life began to be critical again.

Now, Hurstwood’s relationship with his family declined to the point that her wife wanted to divorce him. It was a chance for Carrie to move affectionately toward Hurstwood, and Hurstwood also saw there was a new life

waiting for him if he could convince Carrie to go with him for Montreal.

Dreiser, who felt that most lives were determined by accident rather than intention, made one significant change in his story. Hurstwood did not plan, or really wanted to steal the money he took with him. One evening, Hurstwood spent drinking with his friends to the extent that his inhibitions were lowered. When he was about to lock and leave, he found his surprise that the safe-containing more than 10,000 dollars in cash-was unlocked, what ensured was a moral battle of conscience in which Hurstwood struggled with his desire to take the money and his sense that he should leave it and locked the safe. There appeared to be an even balance in the choice confronting him between duty and desire. Twice he took the money out of the safe, the second time putting it in his hand satchel, only to return it to the safe. Believing he put the piles of money in the wrong boxes, he once again took the money from the safe, but this time “the lock clicked, it had sprung” (1967, p.205), the lock’s clicking shut supposedly determined Hurstwood’s fate, but despite the war that went on in his thought, it revealed that he had unconsciously made up his mind to take the money once he found the safe open. All of the matters revealed an unconscious desire to steal the money—a desire further identified by the fact that his affection for Carrie developed simultaneously with his wife’s suit for divorce. He thought that the money would ensure him a better life and future with Carrie, but he never knew that once the money was in his satchel and his fate sealed. Hurstwood determined to flee with Carrie by tricking her into boarding on the train with him for Montreal. Although once again reluctant after she knew the truth, Carrie unconsciously made up her mind to continue on the journey when Hurstwood promised to marry her. Here, she was perhaps convinced—based on her inability to find a position on the stage and her fear that Drouet had moved out—that Chicago offered her less opportunity than Hurstwood was promising. Dreiser, here, as in his novel, felt that people simply did what, being made as they were, they had to do, and that they were, in general, better than circumstances.

Hurstwood’s fate was foreshadowed in New York by contrasting that city with Chicago. New York was much larger, with many more avenues of commerce and trade, “The sea was already full of whales, a common fish must need disappear wholly from view—remain unseen. In other words, Hurstwood was nothing” (1967, p.26). Intimidated by the gigantic city, Hurstwood lacked the youthful energy needed to do business there: “it was an awesome place to him, for here gathered all that he most responded on this earth—wealth, place, and fame.” (1967, p.27) So in New York, Hurstwood’s new business arrangement encountered many drawbacks and he became more and more preoccupied by his business and grew introspective and secretive, to the extent that his relationship with

Carrie changed as Carrie became more intoxicated with New York and dissatisfied with being a housewife, as the Hurstwood's business picked up to the point that nets 150 dollars a month and he became more preoccupied with his business, he began to take Carrie for granted "Carrie begins to feel... in various sensory ways" (1967, p.35). At this time, she found a new comer Mrs. Vance who had moved in the next door, after the two women got known each other, Carrie was distressed to find that her own clothes were not as nice or as fashionable as Mrs. Vance's, and when Mrs. Vance took her to a Broadway Martinet, Carrie realized that the women around her, especially Mrs. Vance, were dressed more attractively than she was: "with a start she awoke to find that she was in fashion's crowd, on parade in a show place-and such a show place!... The whole street bore the flavors of riches and show, and Carrie felt that she was not of it. She could not, for the life of her, assure the attitude and smartness of Mrs. Vance, who, in her beauty, was all assurance. She could only imagine that she was the less handsomely dressed of the two, which cut her to the quit, and she resolved that she would not come here again until she looked better. At the same time she longed to feel the delight of parading here as an equal. Ah, then she would be happy!" (1967, P.239)

Carrie's attendance with Mrs. Vance at the play awakened the memory of her dramatic success in Chicago and a desire to be in the stage again, and after witnessing such splendor "women were spending money like water" in Broadway, Carrie began to dissatisfied with her flat: it now "seemed a common place" (1967, p.241)

Carrie was intent on living a more luxurious life until she met Robert Ames, a cousin of Mrs. Vance's and electrical engineer from Indianapolis. Ames suggested that an intellectual plane should offer values superior to materialism, when he disparaged recent melodramatic fiction, Carrie began to question her own literary taste. When she felt that Ames was a man with more intellectual powers than Drouet and Hurstwood, in her rocking chair contemplating what Ames told her, Carrie was "beginning to see" (1967, p.251). Now that she met Ames, Carrie "had an ideal to contrast men by" (1967, p.260).

Carrie and Hurstwood were living in New York for three years, Hurstwood had a turning point in his life, and that is, he was beginning to decline. In order to save money, Hurstwood and Carrie gave up their flat and moved to a smaller, cheaper apartment on Thirteen Street. The situation took on crisis proportions and Hurstwood's depression grew more intense. When the saloon was torn down, Hurstwood lost most of his money he invested and had no promise of another business.

Carrie, now, had been exposed to the good life by the Vances, but lacked the means to attain it; she had also been exposed to more individual values by Ames. At the same time, Carrie gradually grew aware that Hurstwood's financial situation was serious, he lost his saloon, but Hurstwood, at forty-three, with an impressive

wardrobe still locked prosperity. He also felt that his superior background made him too good for a job such as battenning. But as winter settled in, Hurstwood's energy began to flag. The weather discouraged him from walking in the city looking for a business opportunity. He began to pass time by sitting in the hotel lobbies or at home rocking in his chair by the radiator. Here, Dreiser told us his belief in the cyclical nature of human life that was the movement from youth and health to old age and sickness and eventually death, the spirit of both aspiration and desperation was built into the human condition. No one could embody this dual spirit more truly than Hurstwood. As he sat in the hotels looking out at scenes such as the exciting Broadway panorama, he was reminded of how far removed he was from youth and the point of a career.

When Carrie learned that Hurstwood was down to his last 100 dollars, she decided to take action herself and landed an acting part. Carrie's persistence paid off, and she obtained a job in the chorus with salary 12 dollars a week. She bought new dresses in order to become more complete part of the world that luck and fate brought to her. While Hurstwood who stayed in home sat idly rocking back and forth in the chair, he began to see himself outside "the walled city". The delight of the love was also slipped away, he became even more depressed with his own lowly state, and he watched the world pass before him. Here Dreiser underlined his philosophy of fate and fortune, Hurstwood slipped from the very high social position to a position below the register, like before, he was forced to walk in the street and realized his own inexperience in the ways of the working world.

While in New York, Carrie had nowhere but go up, because she never ceased trying to find jobs for better life even though she encountered many difficulties and painful struggles. Hurstwood had nowhere but go down, because a middle-aged man in a state of depression and without skills had no chance of finding work in New York when 80,000 people were unemployed,

At this time, Carrie discovered again and again that she simply couldn't support two people, she took advantage of every opportunity to be out of the house away from Hurstwood, who made mild and ineffectual protest against her absence, and which only served to widen the gap between them. As Hurstwood slipped down into decadence, Carrie became more and more independent and detached from him; she did not fall with him but remained a "soldier of fortune" and always accepted the dictates of fate without question. The fantasy became more vivid; it also became more and more realistic. At one moment, she drifted along on a tempestuous sea, the next moment she found herself on the crest of a wave riding towards success. Looking over shoulder, she saw Hurstwood slipping beneath the stormy surface.

Dreiser also used the device of irony to describe Hurstwood's attempts to struggle with his fate by playing pokers to make money, it was significant and forceful:

Hurstwood watched a while, and then, seeing an interesting game, joined it. At last, the fascinating game took a strong hold on him; he began to his luck with him. Time passed and it came to twelve o'clock. Hurstwood held on, neither winning nor losing much. Then grew weary, and on a last hand lost twenty more, he was sick at heart. (1967, p.281)

He was no longer a master of the bluff, but a pawn of fate. He did not "introspect", consequently, he failed to see that he was not "the old Hurstwood—only a man arguing with the divided conscience and lured by a phantom" (1967, p.310). He still struggled hard with his fate; the strike of the motormen and conductor offered himself an opportunity he wanted to prove that he was "not down yet". At last, he went to the office to seek his fortune and found a job to operate the streetcar. But the condition did not prevail for long, when the manager of the trolley line asked him: "What are you—a motorman?" he was forced to answer, "No, I am not anything." In his eyes, he was nothing but the ghost of what he once had been. Again Hurstwood lost his "job" and he felt that each particular day was not the day. "His eyes are no longer sharp and keen; his hair is beginning to turn gray; his hands are flabby and his face show great weariness"(1967, p.345). He went down and was beaten by chance.

Hurstwood lost in the game of life, while Carrie's career improved day by day. Now, he only depended on Carrie for sustenance, and which gradually caused Carrie to learn deeply that she couldn't support two people at all. Even though Carrie at first hesitated, feeling guilty about the way she left Drouet and even deeper guilt at the prospect of abandoning Hurstwood, but because of her need and desire for new clothes, she moved out of their flat, leaving Hurstwood a note and \$ 20—the same sum Drouet gave her in Chicago when he convinced her to move in with him. When Hurstwood returned after a day of wandering, he read the notes and was struck by a powerful sensation of coldness. He felt that Carrie was selfish and had been lost in the city of wealth and influence, purposely leaving him out of the gate. The indignity of his situation was made more severe by the remnants of pride that were left to him. He was weakened in body and mind, through a series of reversals, he became a panhandler.

Carrie got success and acquired a reputation among the public as a mysterious and withdraw figure and she also came to realize that there was no equivalence between work done and money received and that in a market economy the value of work was determined by public whim. Bob Ames urged her to alter her repertoire to include more serious dramas, "if I were you ,I'd change" (1967, p.369), Carrie couldn't escape from the influence of Bob Ames, believing that Bob held a key to the future, she idolized the man and hanged his every word,

Most people are not capable of voicing their feelings. They depend upon others that are what genius is for, one man expresses his desire for him in music; another one in poetry; another is in a play. Sometimes nature does it in a face, it makes

the face representative of all desire. That's what has happened in your case. (1967, p.368)

Ames further observed that Carrie would lose this quality if she persisted in expressing only personal desire and neglected the desire of the rest of humanity. It was then that Carrie retired to her rocker in the attempt to root out her personal desire: she hoped to find the "better thing".

Hurstwood spent his time wandering helplessly from one charity line to another, crying, begging, and he was indeed at the bottom of society. He was in a very special state which people took him for a chronic type of bum and beggar: police hustled him along; restaurant and lodging-house keepers turned him out promptly the moment he had his diet; pedestrians waved him off. He had nothing in the world, finally, Hurstwood into "blackness" (in contrast to the light of Chicago), committed suicide by sealing off his room and turning on the gas without lightning it, waiting to be reclaimed by the kindness which was the night. Carrie, now, gained everything she had craved; she could look about on her gowns and carriage, her furniture and bank account:

Friends, there were, as the world takes it—those who would bow and smile in acknowledgment of her success. For these she had once craved. Applause there was, and publicity—once far off, essential things, but now grown trivial and indifferent. Beauty also—her type of loveliness—and yet she was lonely. In her rocking chair she sat, when not otherwise engaged—singing and dreaming. (1967, p.380)

"Chicago dawning, she saw the city offering more of loveliness than she had ever known, and distinctly by force of her moods alone, clung it" (1967, p.381). This discontent was the fruit of "blind striking"; such was the fate of Carrie, caught up in the flux of life.

3.2 The Theme of the Novel

"Oh, Carrie, Carrie! Oh, blind striving of the human heart! In your rocking chair, by your window, dreaming, shall you long, alone, in your rocking chair, by your window, shall you dream such happiness as you may never feel" (1967, p.382). This famous closing passage revealed Dreiser's attempt to gather the major theme of the novel—nobody could predict the ebb and flow of life. Some, like Hurstwood, fell along the way; he became part of the class, which simply flooded and drifted every wave of people washing up once, as breaker to drift upon a stormy shore. Some, like Carrie, rose, always grasping for the next narrow ledge, but never knew the happiness of which they dreamed. Others, like Drouet and Hurstwood's wife and daughter, simply continued along the same dead run, never knowing what the future may bring to them.

Dreiser turned his attention to Carrie as a representative of the universal striving of humanity. Facing the Clothes, the money and the fame, she couldn't be satisfied, she felt lonely. There must be a new world to conquer, new goals

to achieve. Chicago, New York, Drouet, Hurstwood, the world of fashion and the world of stage-these were but incidents, not that they represented, she longed for. "Time proves the representation false!" (1967, p.381) In the sharp and complex conflict between individual and society, a man was merely an object that was battered about by society; he was just a pawn in the game.

CONCLUSION

Dreiser's achievement was that he was the first in the novel to describe truthfully and forcefully the America when it entered the stage of monopoly capitalism, he vividly depicted the phenomenon of the cruel struggle for existence and of that the weak was the prey of the strong, he subtly exposed the tragedies that people couldn't control their own fate in the unpredictable future. In *Carrie Sister*, Dreiser drew a picture of the American life in the late nineteenth century; he took his central characters from the three classes of American economic life. He showed how they were harmed and corrupted by the fraudulent claims of the spurious American dream. The blame fell on the society that compelled its individual to become hideous and grotesque parasites of them.

Carrie was completely honest about her desire for a better life: clothes, money, social position, she was quite modest in the way, she moved one relationship to another, she tried to be faithful to them, but the circumstances made it impossible. In the end, she learned that even fortune and success was not the key to the true happiness. She still had tragic ending just like Hurstwood, so that we could realize that a man's fate was unpredictable in

the capitalist society, the certain circumstances and social system controlled a man's fate, and nobody could predict what the future would bring to him.

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