

Weighting the Forces Among *Sister Carrie* Under the Perspective of Naturalism

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Abstract: In the light of the novel *Sister Carrie*, the panorama of the whole American society skips the readers' eyes, and the exhibition of the protagonists has exerted intense impact upon the cliché of the common readers. To probe deeply into the reasons, which shall lead to negative or positive forces upon the transformation of the protagonists, the analysis on each protagonist who is equipped with the characteristics of challenging the authority and stereotype is of great significance and necessity. Exactly by virtue of the choice of the theory Naturalism, the potential traits of the primitive animal shall be reflected by characters and further elucidated from several facets.

Keywords: *Sister Carrie*; Naturalism; Darwinism; Social Darwinism

In the light of the directivity of exposing the hypocrisy of America, *Sister Carrie* can be crystallized to refract the dark side of America, in which it is usually hidden by mass's disenchantment. In the light of the significance of disclosing the veiled images of America, the analysis on the transformation of Caroline Meeber's predisposition is more fatal. Through the naturalism, the thesis harbors the propensity to profoundly uncover the the forces pushing her to behave. With the purpose of grasping the distinctive characteristics of *Sister Carrie*, the naturalistic factors in it shall be appropriately expounded.

1. Historical Vein of American Naturalism

The typical proposition^[2] (1859) alleges the species will survive if the mutation can conform to the unrelentingly changeable circumstances, or they tend to disappear. It is explainable to the influential factors of protagonists in the literary works during American realistic period: forced by the external environmental motivation, human beings are escorted to the powers-chasing. Besides the emphasis on the external influence, the internal alternation of animals (Spencer^[5]) can be explained by "the descent with modification", the human beings persist dogmatic rules and finally evolved as another "standardized" man in a commercialized world.

2. Reflection on Naturalism within *Sister Carrie*

The following analysis will be illuminated as the kernel on the basis of the theory of the naturalism. *Sister Carrie* is composed by great influences of the personal genuine experiences of the novelist in that the living environment has stirred up an upheaval from both of the physical and psychological aspects. The scholar Robert Forrey^[4] maintained (2021), notwithstanding the frustration of the worship of the Catholicism, Dreiser's personal experiences has exerted intense impact on his literary creation and paved the way for accumulating the writing materials.

2.1 Primitive Forces under Social and Natural Circumstances

Albeit each person possesses personified mood, steered by the primary impulsion, instinct and heredity, they are acted just like animals.

"When a girl leaves.....she does one of two things.....there is no possibility." (Dreiser 1)

At the very beginning, Dreiser uses the omniscient perspective to point out two inverse path for Carrie. The reverse ways in metropolis represent a moral dichotomy, which connotes Carrie's fate in the future—whether she will be deteriorated or elevated. From the word "balance", the reference is as the balance between the "standard of virtue" and "saving hands"; and from the phrase "no possibility", it displays Carrie must determine her fate either by "saving hands" or "standard of virtue", which highlights the corruption and immorality in America.

At the very beginning of the novel, the first encounter of Carrie and Drouet rapidly refracts one person's lust. As for Carrie, the most "spontaneous overflow of powerful feeling" (Wordsworth^[6] 1798) is laid in her superficial chase and "lured" by Drouet. Especially when it comes to the commercialized society in America, the physical behavior has been paralyzed and the psychology has been twisted (Wang^[9] 2006). Exactly in the light of the expectation on the metropolis, Carrie has involuntarily made decision to climb to a higher ladder. In the meantime, Drouet is approaching and speaks to her, which can be symbolized as the words from the Satan.

After the elopement of Carrie and Hurstwood in New York, the living status and figure identity change subversively (Lv^[7] 2003). Caroline Meeber has become an illustrious actress whereas the worst fate befalls Hurstwood. As for Carrie, when it comes to the first meet with Hurstwood, the most intense motivation only consists in a balance of the living status and sensory enjoyment. By contrast, Hurstwood's desire is a rather sentimental feeling. Thus the essential chase can predict the finale, which resembles the rules of heredity in natural world (Ma^[8] 2004).

2.2 Elucidation by Ideological State Apparatuses

To reach the total governance, the state machine (Zhou and Yang^[10] 2017) is functioned as one typical target, which is composed of the obligatory approaches from upper to the lower and the intangible approaches reversely. A Structuralist Marxist philosopher Althusser^[1] (1971) explained, the maintenance of the nation's operation is forced by the production-related factors, and the intertwined factors are followed by some invisible operative rules: the capitalist class occupies the higher social stratum and predominates the lower one.

The ideological state apparatus on Meeber is reflected on the family of Meeber, the family of Hurstwood and the the family of Drouet differently. In the family of Meeber, there exist sparse mention of Meeber's past for the motif is based on the unceasing pursuit for the impenetrable objects, which is accessible to her dream place. And the core ideology conforms to the stern rules by her elder sister and brother in law, when it comes to going away from her sister's house, the first family of Meeber totally breaks down. The following excerpt can concisely refract the usual situation in the family of Meeber.

"On the first morning it rained [Carrie] found that.....though she did not reply.....they need not think it, either." (Dreiser 39).

Through the dialogue between Meeber and Minnie, the perspective on spending money indicates differently. Meeber views the umbrella as one symbol of the vanity and pride, while Meeber is accustomed to make a family budget.

By contrast, in the family of Hurstwood establishes competitive love. For Hurstwood, he attaches the personal preference to the superficial love by immediate physical impulse. Through Hurstwood's whole life, his male forces feeble away (Zhang^[11] 2010), despite the predominating chauvinism in the western world. However, Carrie treats all exterior factors as precise presupposition to the subsequent behaviors. From this facet, the incentives to take actions by Hurstwood and Carrie is thoroughly in discrepancy.

"That night he felt a cold coming on and took quinine. He was feverishbut something about the man held her aloof." (Dreiser 246)

Based on the phrases "haggard" "old" "aloof" etc. above, the love flames between them feeble away. Exactly in the light of the magnified transformation of Hurstwood's manners and life attitudes, Carries seizes it as one key to keep distance from him, which can be seemed as one cause-to-effect structure. And another exposition of the naturalism can be unrolled from Dreiser's positive tone towards Carrie, in spite of her indifference and heartlessness, which is alike to the primitives in the nature.

In the family of Drouet, the encounter forecasts the incomplete finale of them based on their distinctive motivation.

"To [Carrie], and indeed to all the world, [Drouet] was a nice, good-hearted man.....He was the creature of an inborn desire." (Dreiser 45)

The grandiloquent appearance and generosity is acted as a magnetic to Carrie by visual stimulus, whereas the charisma of Carrie triggers off his physical love respectively. The origin of their relationship is out of the superficial link skirting purest love, which forms a basis of the naturalism: the primitive instinct rather than psychological or essential impulse on person's intercourse.

3. Conclusion

Pertain to the analysis on forces influencing each protagonist, this thesis probes into both of the external and internal factors related to the naturalism. In the realistic America, the whole nation is a contour of camouflage and hypocrisy, which is disclosed in Dreiser's novel *Sister Carrie*. Even though the main traits of all characters in the novel have born negatively immoral colors, Dreiser himself does not apparently impose his own viewpoints on them, which strengthens the ambience of the naturalism in the novel.

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