

**BUXORO DAVLAT UNIVERSITETI**  
**FILOLOGIYA FAKULTETI INGLIZ TILI BO`LIMI**

**MAGISTRLIK DISSERTATSIYASI**

Mavzu: The means of describing spirituality in the works  
“Sister Carrie “ and “Gennie Gerhardt” by  
Theodore Dreiser

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**2012**

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## **INTRODUCTION (GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE WORK)**

## PART I THE CONTRIBUTION OF THEODOR DREISER TO AMERICAN LITERATURE.

### **1.1 Theodore Dreiser is one of the greatest American writers of the XX century.**

Theodore Herman Albert Dreiser was born in Terre Haute, Indiana in 1871 , August 27, in a strict Catholic family. His father, Johann Paul had emigrated from Mayen, Germany in 1844, worked briefly in New England wool mills, and then moved to the Midwest, where large numbers of Germans had settled. He went first to Dayton, Ohio, where he met Sarah, the daughter of a Mennonite family that had come to Ohio from Pennsylvania. Since he was a Roman Catholic and her family was strongly anti-papist, religious tensions forced the couple to elope. When they married in 1851, Sarah was seventeen and Johann twelve years her senior. They moved to Indiana, first to Fort Wayne and then to Terre Haute. Johann became a moderately successful wool dealer and prospered enough to be able to strike out on his own and become the proprietor of a wool mill in Sullivan, Indiana. In 1869 their fortunes changed for the worse when a fire destroyed the mill, leaving Johann with a debilitating injury. The fire, the downturn of the wool industry after the Civil War, and the national economic depression of the early 1870s resulted in long periods of unemployment. As Dreiser recorded in memoirs, the family never recovered financially or psychologically from this economic fall from grace.

Theodore was the twelfth of thirteen children. The popular songwriter Paul Dresser was his older brother. Dreiser's childhood coincided with the family's hard

times. Consequently, his earliest memories included the joblessness of his father and older siblings, as well as the constant search for economic stability. In his first sixteen years he lived in five different towns in Indiana , at times relocating only with his mother and the two other younger children, Ed and Claire. As a result, his youth was emotionally unstable, and he had few educational opportunities, which was a special hardship for such a bookish boy. This time was further darkened by the strict Roman Catholic training he received in German American parochial schools, an experience that informed his later critique of Catholicism and deeply influenced his quest for alternative forms of religious experience.

*Dawn* (1931), an autobiography dealing with his first twenty years, is a classic of German American literature. In it Dreiser gives a vivid picture of his German-speaking, Roman Catholic, downwardly mobile family and offers a moving chronicle of the financial, social, and emotional pressures facing working-class families in the late nineteenth century. He was sensitive to the plight of his mother, who took in boarders, washed clothes for her more prosperous neighbors, and suffered over her inability to feed and clothe her children properly. He often blamed his father for their condition, particularly as Johann often reacted to adversity by turning to prayer and a belief that true happiness was to be found only with God in the afterlife. After graduating from High School in Warsaw Theodore attended Indiana University in the years 1889-1890 before dropping out. Within several years, he was writing for the *Chicago Globe* newspaper and then the *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*. He wrote several articles on writers such as Nathaniel Hawthorne, William Dean Howells, Israel Zangwill, John Burroughs, and interviewed public figures such as Andrew Carnegie, Marshall Field, Thomas Edison, and Theodore Thomas. Other interviewees included Lillian Nordica, Emilia E. Barr, Philip Armour and Alfred Stieglitz. After proposing in 1893, he married Sara White on December 28, 1898. They ultimately separated in 1909, partly as a result of Dreiser's infatuation with Thelma Cudlipp, the teenage daughter of a work colleague, but were never formally divorced. Dreiser also lived with the actress and painter Kyra Markham who was much younger than him, in

the 1930s. In 1919 Dreiser met his cousin Helen Richardson with whom he began an affair with sado-masochistic elements. They eventually married on June 13, 1944. As we speak about his literary career, Theodore Dreiser was an American novelist and journalist of the naturalist school. His novels often featured main characters who succeeded at their objectives despite a lack of a firm moral code, and literary situations that more closely resemble studies of nature than tales of choice and agency. Dreiser's best known novels include *Sister Carrie* (1900) and *An American Tragedy* (1925).

His first novel, *Sister Carrie*, published in 1900, tells the story of a woman who flees her country life for the city Chicago and there lives a life far from a Victorian ideal. It sold poorly and was not widely promoted largely because of moral objections to the depiction of a country girl who pursues her dreams of fame and fortune through relationships to men. The book has since acquired a considerable reputation. It has been called the "greatest of all American urban novels." He witnessed a lynching in 1893 and wrote the short story, *Nigger Jeff*, which appeared in *Ainslee's Magazine* in 1901. His second novel, *Jennie Gerhardt*, was published in 1911. His first commercial success was *An American Tragedy*, published in 1925, which was made into a film in 1931 and again in 1951 as *A Place in the Sun*. Already in 1892, when Dreiser began to work as a newspaperman he had begun "to observe a certain type of crime in the United States that proved very common. It seemed to spring from the fact that almost every young person was possessed of an ingrown ambition to be somebody financially and socially." "Fortune hunting became a disease" with the frequent result of a peculiarly American kind of crime, a form of "murder for money", when "the young ambitious lover of some poorer girl" found "a more attractive girl with money or position" but could not get rid of the first girl, usually because of pregnancy. Dreiser claimed to have collected such stories every year between 1895 and 1935. The 1906 murder of Grace Brown by Chester Gillette eventually became the basis for *An American Tragedy*. Though primarily known as a novelist, Dreiser published his first collection of short stories, *Free and Other Stories* in 1918. The collection contained 11 stories.

Another story, "My Brother Paul", was a brief biography of his older brother, Paul Dresser, who was a famous songwriter in the 1890s. This story was the basis for the 1942 romantic movie, "My Gal Sal". Other works include *Trilogy of Desire*, which was based on the life of the Chicago streetcar tycoon Charles Tyson Yerkes and composed of *The Financier* (1912), *The Titan* (1914), and *The Stoic*. The last was published posthumously in 1947.

Dreiser was often forced to battle against censorship because his depiction of some aspects of life, such as sexual promiscuity, offended authorities and challenged popular opinion. Politically, Dreiser was involved in several campaigns against social injustice. This included the lynching of Frank Little, one of the leaders of the Industrial Workers of the World, the Sacco and Vanzetti case, the deportation of Emma Goldman, and the conviction of the trade union leader Tom Mooney. In November 1931, Dreiser led the National Committee for the Defense of Political Prisoners to the coalfields of southeastern Kentucky, where they took testimony from coal miners in Pineville and Harlan on the violence against the miners and their unions by the coal operators. Dreiser was a committed socialist, and wrote several non-fiction books on political issues. These included *Dreiser Looks at Russia* (1928), the result of his 1927 trip to the Soviet Union, and two books presenting a critical perspective on capitalist America, *Tragic America* (1931) and *America Is Worth Saving* (1941). His vision of capitalism and a future world order with a strong American military dictate combined with the harsh criticism of the latter made him unpopular within the official circles. Although less politically radical friends, such as H.L. Mencken, spoke of Dreiser's relationship with communism as an "unimportant detail in his life," Dreiser's biographer Jerome Loving notes that his political activities since the early 1930s had "clearly been in concert with ostensible communist aims with regard to the working class."

Dreiser died on December 28, 1945 in Hollywood at the age of 74.

Dreiser had an enormous influence on the generation that followed his. In his tribute "Dreiser" from *Horses and Men* (1923), Sherwood Anderson writes:

Heavy, heavy, the feet of Theodore. How easy to pick some of his books to pieces, to laugh at him for so much of his heavy prose ... The fellows of the ink-pots, the prose writers in America who follow Dreiser, will have much to do that he has never done. Their road is long but, because of him, those who follow will never have to face the road through the wilderness of Puritan denial, the road that Dreiser faced alone.

Alfred Kazin characterized Dreiser as "stronger than all the others of his time, and at the same time more poignant; greater than the world he has described, but as significant as the people in it," while Larzer Ziff remarked that Dreiser "succeeded beyond any of his predecessors or successors in producing a great American business novel."

Renowned mid-century literary critic Irving Howe spoke of Dreiser as "among the American giants, one of the very few American giants we have had." A British view of Dreiser came from the publisher Rupert Hart-Davis: "Theodore Dreiser's books are enough to stop me in my tracks, never mind his letters — that slovenly turgid style describing endless business deals, with a seduction every hundred pages as light relief. If he's the great American novelist, give me the Marx Brothers every time."

One of Dreiser's strongest champions during his lifetime, H.L. Mencken, declared "that he is a great artist, and that no other American of his generation left so wide and handsome a mark upon the national letters. American writing, before and after his time, differed almost as much as biology before and after Darwin. He was a man of large originality, of profound feeling, and of unshakable courage. All of us who write are better off because he lived, worked, and hoped."

His second book *Jennie Gerhardt* that he modeled the Gerhardt family on the Dreisers in Indiana. In this and other works one finds the themes of the memoirs: the figure of the foreign-born father who fails to understand his children's American ways and loses authority over them; the second generation's rebellion against Old

World religious and moral values; the role of the public school in the Americanization process; and the isolated, beleaguered mother who attempts to mediate between traditional values and the emotional needs of her children. Dreiser eventually extended these motifs to his portraits of other American families, such as those of the evangelical preachers in *An American Tragedy* (1925) and the Quakers in *The Bulwark* (1946). Although Dreiser was a serious student, he never finished high school. The conduct of his siblings, especially the sexual adventures of his sisters, entered into his decision to leave school. Depressed over his family's poor social standing in the small northern Indiana town of Warsaw, he decided at age sixteen to seek work in Chicago. There he held a number of nondescript jobs, until he was rescued by a former teacher, Mildred Fielding, who paid his way to Indiana University at Bloomington for one year (1889-90). Another kind of education began when he landed a job as a reporter in Chicago. In June 1892, two months before his twenty-first birthday, he wrote his first news story for the *Chicago Globe*. Three years later, he abruptly abandoned journalism by walking out of Joseph Pulitzer's *New York World*, where as a space-rate reporter he was being paid, like the garment worker in the city's sweatshops, by the inch. As a journalist, Dreiser never came close to realizing his dream of having his own by-line, a column the public would read because his name appeared above it. But he showed enough talent to get decent assignments--as drama critic, special feature writer, investigative reporter--for the *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, the *St. Louis Republic*, and the *Pittsburgh Dispatch*. Dreiser found material for his later fiction in his observations as a big-city reporter in the 1890s. He was adept at writing special feature stories, in which he was able to experiment with local color settings, dialogue, and character sketches. He was known even then as, in the words of one editor who knew him, "a writing machine." Naturally, he was encouraged by his fellow newspapermen to write fiction. He wrote poetry; he worked on a script for a comic opera called "Jeremiah I," of which only a fragment survives; and he began to experiment with short stories. He continued to educate himself, as did another famous autodidact, Benjamin Franklin, by reading widely in fiction, science, natural history, and

philosophy. After a brief stint on the *World*, Dreiser went to work in the office of Howley, Haviland & Co.--a music production firm that published the popular songs of his brother, Paul Dresser, remembered today mainly as the author of the Indiana state song, "On the Banks of the Wabash." Dreiser became the editor of the company's publication, *Ev'ry Month*, which billed itself as "The Woman's Magazine of Literature and Popular Music." As editor, he wrote reviews, editorials, and a "Reflections" column. In all these forms he expressed for the first time his ideas about books, social problems, art, and philosophy. His columns reflected his general reading in world literature, particularly the writing of the High Romantics and Victorians; among the authors who had a special impact on him were the naturalist thinkers, such as Charles Darwin, Herbert Spencer, and Thomas Huxley, as well as the novelists Thomas Hardy and Honoré de Balzac. In 1897 Dreiser left *Ev'ry Month* and spent the next three years as a free lance writer for national magazines such as *Munsey's Metropolitan* and *Harper's Monthly*. For O. S. Marden's *Success* he interviewed the celebrities of his day: among others, Andrew Carnegie, Thomas Edison, Marshall Field, William Dean Howells, and Philip Armour. For other magazines he wrote articles on a wide range of subjects: America's fruit growing industry, the meatpacking business in Chicago, modern art, the making of stained glass windows, and the photography of Alfred Stieglitz. He continued to experiment with poetry and fiction. His early short stories--"Nigger Jeff," "Butcher Rogaum's Door," and "The Shining Slave Makers"--are still readable today and reflect both urban and rural life in the last decade of the century. With his wife's encouragement and that of his friend Arthur Henry, a novelist and former editor of the *Toledo Blade*, Dreiser began writing his historic first novel, *Sister Carrie*. Among other sources for the novel was the story of his sister Emma's affair with L. A. Hopkins, a married man who had run off with funds embezzled from his Chicago employer. In the pages of what is now considered the first great urban novel in America, Dreiser mixed philosophical speculations about the nature of existence together with scenes that presented much of the gritty details of city life. As even his first reviewers understood, Dreiser at the age of twenty-nine

had created in George Hurstwood one of the most memorable characters in American literature. The Doubleday company published *Sister Carrie* under protest on November 8, 1900. It is perhaps the most famous story in American publishing history. Frank Doubleday had been on a business trip to Europe when his firm accepted the book on the strong recommendation of one of its editors, the novelist Frank Norris. Norris convinced the company's junior partner, Walter Hines Page, that he should offer Dreiser a contract--a document that was discussed but not drawn up at the time. Norris wrote privately to Dreiser that *Sister Carrie* "was the best novel I have read in M. S. since I have been reading for the firm," and that "it pleased me as well as any novel I have read in any form, published or otherwise." When Doubleday returned and read the new work, he strongly disagreed with Norris. Moreover, he protested. He considered the book "immoral" because of its depiction of a "fallen" woman as a success story. He tried very hard to abort the verbal agreement, but Dreiser refused to take the book to another publisher. It was rumored (but later denied by Doubleday) that Mrs. Doubleday was the person most adamant in her opposition to the novel. Over the years Dreiser developed the incident into a legendary story of censorship and "puritanical" repression, and the book became a symbol of literary freedom for an entire generation. Since Dreiser refused to give in to the pressure, Doubleday's lawyer advised the company to publish the novel or risk losing its good name. An "agreement to publish" was drawn up and signed by Dreiser and Doubleday. The firm, however, did nothing to promote the sale or distribution of *Sister Carrie*. Working for the fledgling author behind the scenes, Norris wrote to English publishers in an attempt to market the book, and in 1901 a truncated version of the novel was published by William Heinemann. It was received with considerable critical acclaim by the English reviewers. It was this British edition that in fact established the international reputation of the novel. Attempting to put the Doubleday incident behind him, Dreiser began a second novel, *Jennie Gerhardt*, which he started to write on January 6, 1901, less than two weeks after the death of his father. It tells the story of a German American girl compelled by economic forces to support her family by

entering the larger American world of her lover, Lester Kane, the son of a wealthy Irish immigrant. Dreiser based the character of Jennie in part on his sister Mame, Lester on her husband Austin Brennan, and Jennie's father was modeled after Dreiser's own father, who, like Old Gerhardt in the novel, disowned one of his daughters after she had become pregnant outside the bounds of marriage. Within five months Dreiser had written forty chapters of the novel. Then began a severe writer's block that virtually halted his career as a novelist until 1910. The inability to write was the result of an extended nervous breakdown, brought on, Dreiser later claimed, by the suppression of *Sister Carrie*. Dreiser's disability lasted nearly three years, after which he recovered enough to seek employment in editorial jobs with the *New York Daily News*, the publishers Street and Smith, and the magazine *Broadway*. In 1904 he wrote an account of his crisis that remained in manuscript until the Pennsylvania Dreiser Edition published it as *An Amateur Laborer* (1983). By 1907 he had worked his way up to become editor-in-chief of the prestigious *Delineator*, an organ of the Butterick Company, which specialized in women's fashions. In the meantime *Sister Carrie* was enjoying an underground reputation, particularly after the Dodge Company reissued it in 1907. Dreiser continued at Butterick until 1910, when a platonic infatuation with the seventeen-year-old daughter of one of his associates cost him his job. With the encouragement of his friend, the critic H. L. Mencken, Dreiser returned to his writing desk and completed *Jennie Gerhardt*. Once again he had become a full-time writer. He made up for lost time with a burst of creative energy that resulted in the publication of fourteen books between 1911 and 1925. Dreiser's life changed dramatically in this period. In 1912 he took his first trip to Europe as the guest of the British publisher Grant Richards and wrote about his adventures there in *A Traveler at Forty* (1913). Shortly after, he separated from his wife, moved into the artistic community developing in Greenwich Village, and began the life-long practice of what he called "varietism," a term he used to describe his habit of being sexually involved with more than one woman at the same time. Dreiser had close relations with the liberal thinkers and artistic avant-garde of the 1910s. He associated with leading political

radicals like Max Eastman, Daniel DeLeon, and Floyd Dell; supported the birth-control movement of Margaret Sanger; befriended the anarchist Emma Goldman; and wrote for leftist journals such as *The Masses*, as well as for magazines with more purely aesthetic goals, like *Seven Arts*. Dreiser was eclectic in his interests, and although generally progressive in his social thought, he was too eccentric and independent a thinker to fit into any one ideological mode. After 1911, H. L. Mencken became the most visible publicist on the American scene, and his reviews in the *Smart Set* promoted Dreiser as America's greatest living realist. Despite such support, the threat of censorship haunted Dreiser for over two decades. Publishers often refused to print manuscripts as Dreiser wrote them. Editors substantially cut both fiction and non-fiction before publication. For example, the Century Company severely truncated the original text of *A Traveler at Forty*, omitting over forty chapters and diluting many of the sequences that did appear in print. Censorship was not limited to publishers and editors. The New York Society for the Suppression of Vice caused *The "Genius"* (1915), an autobiographical novel, to be removed from the bookshelves, precipitating a court battle that lasted for years before the book was finally reissued in 1923. Dreiser faced other challenges during the period of the first World War, when his German name caused critics to attack his "barbaric naturalism" and unconventional writing style as representative of "a new note in American literature, coming from the 'ethnic' element of our mixed population." Dreiser wrote prolifically through all this turmoil. It is worth noting that although he is remembered primarily for his novels, he wrote in many genres. In fact, of his twenty-seven published books only eight are novels--and two of these, *The Bulwark* and *The Stoic* (1947), were published posthumously. Besides journalism, which he wrote throughout his life, he published volumes of poetry "*Moods, Cadenced and Disclaimed*" (1928), "*Moods, Philosophical and Emotional*" (1935); short stories "*Free and Other Stories*" (1918), "*Chains: Lesser Novels and Stories*" (1927) ; plays "*Plays of the Natural and Supernatural*" (1916), "*The Hand of the Potter*" (1918)]; travel books "*A Traveler at Forty*", "*A Hoosier Holiday*" (1915), "*Dreiser Looks at Russia*" (1928);

autobiographies “*Newspaper Days*” (1922), “*Dawn*” (1931); philosophical essays “*Hey Rub-a-Dub-Dub*” (1919); social criticism “*Tragic America*” (1932), “*America is Worth Saving*” (1941); character sketches [*Twelve Men* (1919), *A Gallery of Woman*, 2 volumes (1929)]; and *The Living Thoughts of Thoreau* (1939). Although much of this writing has received scholarly attention, Dreiser's novels remain the focus of critical inquiry and the main source of his reputation. His first novels, *Sister Carrie* and *Jennie Gerhardt*, portray women who battle poverty and the conventional prejudices of society. Dreiser turned to a very different subject for his next novel: the career of an American financier, Frank Algernon Cowperwood, a character based on the Philadelphia and Chicago traction magnate Charles T. Yerkes. Dreiser decided that he needed a trilogy to explore this figure, and it came to be called “The Trilogy of Desire.” The first book, *The Financier* (1912), was followed by *The Titan* (1914), but Dreiser had difficulty completing the third book and was still working on the final chapter of *The Stoic* when he died in 1945. The trilogy is generally considered to be among the finest historical novels in America. The head of the censor reared up once again when Dreiser's publisher, Harper and Brothers, decided that *The Titan* would be too risky to publish, due in large part to the depiction of Cowperwood's promiscuous sexuality. Fearing a repeat of the *Sister Carrie* incident, Dreiser withdrew the book and signed on with the English publisher, the John Lane Company. His experiences with censorship led him to become a leading spokesman --in articles, interviews, and correspondence-- for the idea that the artist in America was limited severely by conservative conventions that had a crippling effect on all creative expression. He wrote on this theme classically in his essay “Life, Art, and America” (1917). All the controversies surrounding Dreiser's novels did not sell books; they enjoyed critical esteem rather than high sales. Dreiser's distrust of publishers, born of his mistreatment at the hands of Doubleday, kept him constantly embattled in contractual disputes. To make ends meet, he repeatedly turned out minor work for the magazines, and he wasted considerable energies on money-making schemes, such as writing film scripts, most of which were unsuccessful. His road was made considerably easier

after 1917 when he met Horace Liveright, a publisher who supported the kind of writing Dreiser wanted to do and, with great patience, endured his distrust of publishers. Nevertheless, the war years and the poor sales of his books took its toll on him. By 1919, he was at a low point financially and mentally. Then he met Helen Patges Richardson, whose grandmother was a sister of Dreiser's mother. She was young, strikingly beautiful, and set on pursuing a career as an actress in Hollywood. When she appeared one day at the door of his apartment, they immediately began a stormy twenty-five year relationship that survived periods of separation, estrangement, and many romantic affairs on Dreiser's part. In 1919 he traveled to Los Angeles with Helen, settled in a small bungalow to write, and watched her walk off each day to work in films that are now footnotes in motion-picture history. In the charged atmosphere of Hollywood Dreiser tried to write *The Bulwark*, the story of a Quaker family whose children and traditional values are exposed to the corrupting forces of modern American life. He did not get much writing done, however, partly because he spent himself in attempts to cash in on the big money offered in Hollywood for movie scripts. His time in California, nevertheless, was not altogether fruitless. While there he began to focus on a story that was rooted in a type of sensational crime that he believed characterized American life. He first observed these crimes as a young reporter in 1892, and he continued to take notes on such cases for years. They consisted of murders in which the motive is not personal hatred but the desire of a socially marginal man to escape from a romantic entanglement in order to marry another woman who brings with her upper-class position and wealth. Dreiser had a brilliant insight into this condition: such an aspiration "was really not an anti-social dream as Americans should see it, but rather a pro-social dream. The defendant was really doing the kind of thing which Americans should and would have said was the wise and moral thing for him to do had he not committed a murder. His would not ordinarily be called the instinct of a criminal; rather, it would be deemed the instinct of a worthy and respected temperament." Dreiser began experimenting with this story, as well as researching certain cases that seemed to fit his scenario. By 1922 he had written twenty chapters

of a novel, but shortly after he realized that they constituted a false start. His research led him to the Chester Gillette murder of Grace Brown in 1906, an upstate New York case that had been given extensive coverage in the newspapers. The Gillette-Brown trial sparked his imagination enough for him to leave Helen and return to New York, where he felt the atmosphere was more suited to the mood he wanted to capture in the novel. There the story took hold of him again. He isolated himself for nearly a year in a Brooklyn apartment, where Helen joined him until he finished the book in 1925. A huge manuscript, it was cut by editors nearly in half before it was published by Horace Liveright in two volumes as *An American Tragedy* (1925). Although the novel was a critical and commercial success (in fact, Dreiser's only best-seller), he was not yet finished battling such literary vice crusaders as the Watch and Ward Society. The novel was banned in Boston, where the sale of the book led to a trial and an appeal that dragged on in the courts for years. This, however, was now an isolated instance. Dreiser seemed finally to have won over even his most severe critics, many of whom were now applauding the book as the Great American Novel. Dreiser soon sold the motion picture rights; the first film version appeared in 1931, followed in 1951 by a remake entitled *A Place in the Sun*. For the first time Dreiser could afford to live something of the high life he had desired since his youth. He moved into a fashionable Rodin Studios apartment at 200 West 57th Street, across from Carnegie Hall. There he held open house gatherings on Thursday evenings at which he entertained famous and talented celebrities from every walk of life. In addition, he built a country home at Mount Kisco, in upstate New York.

By the late 1920s Dreiser had become famous as an old warrior in the battles for literary freedom in America, a war that in fact had been won by this point. Despite his new-found security, he championed an array of public causes in the last two decades of his life. Although the Great Depression and the threat of American involvement in another World War were strong stimulants to social activism, this was not a new direction for Dreiser. He had always prided himself on being what he

called "radically American," which for him had included his freedom to defend the rights of speech of socialists, anarchists, and other radical groups who had criticized American capitalist values. A dramatically new phase of Dreiser's activism began in 1927, when the Soviet government invited him to be present at the celebration of the tenth anniversary of the October Revolution in Moscow. He agreed to go upon condition that he be allowed to extend his stay and tour the Soviet Union to see what he called the "real, unofficial Russia." He arrived as an American "individualist," eager to question the reality of an ostensibly humane economy that claimed to have abolished social hierarchies. He left not totally convinced of the value of the new experiment, but when he returned to America in 1928 to find the first breadlines he had seen since 1910, he was outraged and began to compare the efforts of the Russians to what he perceived to be the neglect of an American government controlled by monied interests.

The personal significance the Russian program eventually came to have for Dreiser appeared in a muted way in the first newspaper articles he wrote after returning to America in early 1928. He speculated in the *New York World* that in the new Russia it might "be possible to remove that dreadful sense of social misery in one direction or another which has so afflicted me in my life in America ever since I have been old enough to know what social misery is." This aspect of his feelings about Russia emerged more powerfully in the 1930s, a decade in which Dreiser was one of many American intellectuals whose idealization of the Soviet Union was stimulated by the economic breakdown and social malaise of the Depression years. Dreiser wrote little fiction in the 1930s. He devoted much of himself to political activities. A partial list provides an idea of the range of his social interests: he fought for a fair trial for the Scottsboro Boys, young African Americans unfairly accused of rape in Alabama; he contributed considerable time to the broadly-based political and literary reforms sponsored by the American Writer's League; he spoke out against American imperialism abroad; he attacked the abuses of the financial corporations; he went to Kentucky's Harlan coal mines, as chairman of the National

Committee for the Defense of Political Prisoners, to publicize the wrongs suffered by the striking miners; he investigated the plight of tobacco farmers who were cheated by the large tobacco companies; he spoke on behalf of several antifascist organizations and attended an international peace conference in Paris; he became an advocate in America for aid to the victims of the Spanish Civil War. Dreiser attempted to collect his thoughts and research on the social problems of the day in *Tragic America*. This volume of over four hundred pages is an argument against the organizations that Dreiser felt were responsible for the lack of economic equity in American society. Gathering together a large amount of raw data, he focused his attack on large corporations, religious and educational institutions, the depositories of wealth, and the leisure class in the United States. In 1932, he thought he had found a vehicle for his views in the *American Spectator*, a new journal whose editorial board included Eugene O'Neill and George Jean Nathan. Dreiser withdrew after a year, protesting that the magazine was too literary and not concerned enough with the vital social issues of the day. Before he left, he became embroiled in a public debate with the author Hutchins Hapgood on the question of what Hapgood felt were anti-Semitic remarks Dreiser and the other editors made in an "Editorial Conference (with Wine)" article in May 1933. Always contentious, Dreiser responded angrily with a combination of Zionist remarks and ethnic slurs which haunted him for the rest of his days. He believed, he said, that the Jews should establish a national homeland and that they should otherwise assimilate completely into American life. In listing the unassimilated characteristics of American Jews, he used racial stereotypes that convinced many that he was either anti-Semitic or, at the least, totally insensitive to the events occurring in Europe at the time. Although he publicly retracted his statements, he never could redeem himself completely. Besides politics, Dreiser's other passion in the 1930s was a scientific-philosophical study for which he gathered information from various sources. He went to famous scientific laboratories such as the Marine Biological Laboratory in Woods Hole, Massachusetts; he read in physics, biology, chemistry, and philosophy; he discussed the organization of matter with Jacques Loeb of the

Rockefeller Institute and with such kindred spirits as John Cowper Powys and George Douglas; he employed researchers to investigate the latest sciences and pseudo-sciences and to collect data that supported his mechanistic view of existence; and he began to organize these materials into essays with titles like "The Myth of Individual Thinking," "The Force Called Illusion," and "The Emotions." Dreiser died before completing his book, selections of which were later published as *Notes on Life* (1977). Although the text he left behind suggests his book would not have revolutionized modern philosophy, this work is an important key to understanding Dreiser's thought in the last two decades of his life. Dreiser left New York in 1938 and permanently settled in California, where he lived his final years with Helen Richardson, whom he married in 1944. For many readers today, the most important work of his last seven years are his last two novels, *The Bulwark* and *The Stoic*. Although the literary quality of these books is not equal to that of the novels he wrote between 1900 and 1925, they reflect the final stages of his thinking and, in a sense, help us to understand more fully the implications of his earlier works. In their time, however, they were seen as the product of an author who had outlived his literary generation. Readers in the 1940s knew Dreiser as much through his public statements as through his creative writing. His political views, although not always popular, were not atypical among intellectuals before the bombing of Pearl Harbor. In early 1941 he responded to the prospect of American involvement in the European war with *America is Worth Saving*, in which he argued against coming to the aid of English imperialists and against the prospect of putting money into the pockets of wealthy Americans who would profit from war. In these years, Dreiser's infatuation with the Russian social regime reached its apogee. He aligned himself with radical political groups and supported many of the goals of the Communist Party. Until Hitler invaded Russia, Dreiser had feared that if Americans went to war against Germany, they would also fight the Russians. His public statements, therefore, expressed the ideals of such organizations as the Committee for Soviet Friendship and American Peace Mobilization. The accolades from the literary establishment that he had sought most of his life came to him late. In 1944

he traveled for the last time to New York to receive the Award of Merit from the American Academy of Arts and Letters. They cited *Sister Carrie*, *Twelve Men*, and *An American Tragedy* as his greatest books. There were other signs of recognition. He sold the movie rights to *Sister Carrie*, which was made into a film with Jennifer Jones as Carrie and Lawrence Olivier as Hurstwood. Another movie, *My Gal Sal*, was a popular version of Dreiser's story of his brother Paul, who had composed the hit song of that name. The aging writer laughed at the portrait of himself in the film, a scene showing the young Theodore in Indiana breaking into tears over some minor incident. In July 1945, five months before his death, Dreiser made his last dramatic gesture of public protest by joining the Communist Party. He had been considered by Earl Browder, the leader of the Party in the 1930s, to be too ideologically independent to be a card-carrying member. But in the public statement he issued in 1945, he tried to sum up his reasons for his decision: "Belief in the greatness and dignity of Man has been the guiding principle of my life and work. The logic of my life and work leads me therefore to apply for membership in the Community Party." While this action did nothing to increase his popularity with the general public, he was at the time of his death generally recognized as the greatest realist-naturalist in American literary history--and among the best novelists in world literature. Moreover, his many feuds with censors and conventional publishers gained him a legendary reputation as an advocate for freedom of expression. These judgments have sustained the test of time. Dreiser was buried in Hollywood's Forest Lawn Cemetery on January 3, 1946.

For a commemorative service in 1947, H. L. Mencken wrote a eulogy in which he stuck by the argument that he had been making for over thirty-five years: despite Dreiser's flaws as a stylist, "the fact remains that he is a great artist, and that no other American of his generation left so wide and handsome a mark upon the national letters. American writing, before and after his time, differed almost as much as biology before and after Darwin. He was a man of large originality, of

profound feeling, and of unshakable courage. All of us who write are better off because he lived, worked, and hoped.

## **1.2. Critical reception and Theodor Dreiser`s view in women on “Sister Carrie and “Jennie Gerhardt “.**

As *Sister Carrie* and *Jennie Gerhardt* earned Dreiser a reputation in literature, quite different comments on them focus on the general studies, description of characters and writing techniques etc.

In terms of the general studies, Samuel Sillen illustrated in “*Notes in Dreiser*” (1955) Dreiser`s writing style was influenced by Balzac. Both on *Native Grounds* (1942) written by Irving Howe and *Theodore Dreiser* (1946) composed by Carl Van Dorgen gave brief introductions to Theodore Dreiser`s life and his literary creations.

In terms of the description of characters William Marion Reedy viewed that Carrie was “real “ but paradoxically... shadowy in his book “*Sister Carrie* “.

Words like “shadowy” and “ paradoxically expressed uneasiness of early critics felt about the character .

Behind this judgement lies a more general sense that Dreiser possess very little of the psychologist`s skill in portraying the inner life of his characters”. Certainly Dreiser`s way of assigning motivation to characters lends itself to this circumstance.

In terms of the writing technique researches , James Donal Adams explored how Dreiser portrayed characters in a “verbose” way but achieved a complex “effect” in “Heavy hand of Dreiser”(1945)

Besides critics paid close attention to the influence of naturalism on Theodore Dreiser`s writing. In “The Barbaric Naturalism of Mr.Dreiser”(1945) Stuart P Sherman explained that Dreiser showed his view on women from the perspective of naturalism.

Most people consider that there are similarities between these two books. The description of two characters show the every aspect of American society. However

both Carrie and Jennie have different endings. It seems that, to Philip L. Gerber, in Jennie Gerhardt, Dreiser shows his belief on the honesty and kind of laboring people, and those people are much greater than the capitalist class.

### Dreiser's View on Women Reflected in "Sister Carrie"

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century the prevalent views on women are that they should keep good qualities as a caring, sacrificial, content and grateful angel in the house.

Minnie's (Carrie's elder sister) manner was one of trained industry, it seemed that Minnie had the good qualities as a traditional woman, but Carrie considered that "it was a steady round of term with her". This image can be accepted to the common, but Dreiser portrayed the Carrie who disobeyed the traditional values.

Firstly, Minnie lost her independence. Her husband Hanson was a silent man, when he was at home, the home atmosphere should be very depressive. Under such peaceable temperament. She avoided quarreling with her husband even she talked to Carrie "in Minnie's life was "colored by her husband and fast hardening into duty". Although Minnie was praised by the society, she had lost to her independence and submitted to the patriarchal society.

Secondly, even though Minnie worked as her husband, her field was confined to the family: she had no right of decision in family. When Carrie came in Chicago at first she lodged in her sister's home, and she must pay for four dollars a week. As Carrie just gained four and a half dollars a week, Hanson didn't think about the difficulty for Carrie, his mind was full of economic considerations. Despite Minnie had sympathy on Carrie, she didn't dare to oppose her husband. When Carrie suggested that they should go to the theater together, Hanson rejected her so that Carrie gained a clearer feeling of their life.

"It weighed on her", but she didn't show her opposite idea definitely. As winter swept the city, Carrie worried about her clothes, but she didn't have enough money.

When she asked Minnie whether she could pay less money in order to buy some clothes even though Minnie agreed, she worried about the situation which the withholding of Carrie's money would create.

All above results showed that Carrie disagreed with Minnie's attitude toward life, it indicated that Dreiser had negated the traditional values on women. Although "Sister Carrie" published in 1900, many critics attacked on either good or bad aspects. In order to live a better life, Carrie went to travel and then she got married with the man who already had his own family. This behaviour was not accepted by society, and such a woman would have no good fate.

As William Dean Howells said directly to Dreiser: "I don't like Sister Carrie at all". Dreiser created Carrie as a famous actress in Broadway at last. The reason why he arranged such a conclusion seemed that he declared his new values and women on women to the society. At that time most heroines in literature must be gentle and timid, so the story had a happy ending. Men, who disobey, the morality could be understandable, but if the same thing occurred to women, they must get the due retribution: even though they were punished with death.

The destiny of women such as Carrie had been determined by the traditional values. Dreiser considered that his dogma was just built by the patriarchal society, which was unfair to women. People lived in a poor condition would not concern about the morality. They tried their best to survive in the society by the various ways. Dreiser used his philosophy of naturalism to explain Carrie's immoral behaviours. So he used naturalistic approach to break the absolute values.

The reason why did Dreiser use naturalistic approach to break the obsolete values is that he was greatly influenced by Darwinist idea of survival of the fittest " so that it was not surprising to find in his works a world when there was full of the law "kill or killed". For animals existence is the high principle, so morality was no position in nature. Such a philosophical idea can be clearly reflected on Carrie.

In the story Carrie was in dilemma whether should go back to hometown or not. "On that failure!" said the voice. "Why?" she questioned. "Look at those who are good. How would they scorn to do what you have done. Look at the girls; how will

they drown away from such as you when they know you have been weak. You had not tried before you failed”

Dreiser considered that if people insisted on morality under such circumstance, it meant self-destruction. It is difficult to balance the morality while people were lacking in adequate food and clothing made Carrie escaped the moral responsibility by means of naturalistic view of human nature. Carrie always had various excuse to forgive her, which was demonstrated in the story”.

“There was always an answer “Always December days are threatened. She was alone, she was desirefull; she was fearful of whistling of the whistling wind. The voice of need made the answer for her”.

Now a conclusion can be drawn that people lived under great pressure could not be measured with traditional values. Goodness and virtue could not change people’s fate. Dreiser thought that people were “as a wisp in the wind” and they moved by their instincts and wills. So Dreiser’s moral values were based on human being’s desires and instincts, nature. He made feel of use naturalistic view of human nature reasonably to oppose the traditional values, and he provided the theoretical basis for women to break the restriction of patriarchal society.

#### Dreiser’s View on Women reflected in Jennie Gerhardt

Jennie Gerhardt is another work that reflected Dreiser’s view on women. Dreiser created Jennie as a perfect woman in every man’s heart. She was molded with goodness and mercy. However, in order to make family have a good life she became Ladylove of Brander and Cester. Attractive in appearance and strong will, Jennie represents the combined power of good daughter, good”wife” and pursuing mother.

“What seems more astonishing about Jennie is her capacity for tolerating torment to carry out her own life plan.

Dreiser demonstrated his view on women through Jennie’s love tragedy. Jennie was a representative of the poor; her great desire was to make her family live a better

life. Without doubt Jennie was such a pure girl: "I the world of the material, however a nature is a lost invariably an anomaly".

Although Brand fell in love with Jennie, Jennie's father who was a believer of religion considered that Brand was too old to marry with Jennie. His view on her daughter who was like this "for a chastity unstained, or for the parents who by negligence had permitted him to fall". Despite Jennie accepted the doctrines "The assent was little more than nominal"

For Mr. Gerhardt, when Brander first began to be part of their family, the conventional standards of father Gerhardt proved untrustworthy. He could not judge such a character whether he was a good or bad man. On the one hand Brander helped their family and gave money.

On the other hand love relationship between Brander and Jennie can not be accepted by his father. So it can be clearly conferred that Jennie's tragedy resulted from traditional values on women, which is an important reflection in realistic fictions. When Jennie's brother was arrested her parents had no idea what to do.

Finally Jennie went to see Brander and got the help. Although Jennie's father brought her a restraint of religion, she had broken it. So Jennie was accused of being an immoral woman, however Dreiser had different view on her. The Descriptions are as follows:

"Virtue is that quality of generosity which offers itself willingly for another's service and being this, it is held by society to be nearly worthless. Sell yourself cheaply and you shall be used lightly and trampled under foot. Hold yourself dearly, however unworthily and you will be respected. Society in the mass lacks woefully in the matter of discrimination. Its one criterion is the opinion of others"(Theodore Dreiser).

From the mentioned above the readers can see that Dreiser created Jennie as a girl who "Had no thought to hold herself dear, Innate feeling in her made for self-sacrifice".(Theodor Dreiser).

She devoted herself helping her family but his father drove Jennie away home at last. Mr. Gerhardt represented the traditional values, so he could not endure her

behavior. For Jennie she felt happy because she won the love and also helped her family, although Dreiser didn't make them get together. Dreiser's view on the society illustrated as follows:

“In this world of ours the activities of animal life seem to be limited to a plane or circle, as if that were an inherent necessity to the creatures of a planet which is perforce compelled to swing about the sun. A fish, for instance, may not pass out of the circle of the seas without creating annihilation; a bird may not enter the domain of the fishes without paying for it dearly. From the parasites of the flowers any monsters of the jungle and the deep we see clearly the circumscribed nature of their movements- the emphatic manner in which life has limited them to a sphere; and we are content to note the ludicrous and invariably formal results which attend any effort on their part to depart from their environment”(Theodore Dreiser)

Dreiser indicated that it was an objective law for human beings, at the same time it represented Dreiser's moral values, living in such an environment, people survived in a suitable environment and could not change it, and they also could not control the morality.

Women in such a society couldn't control their life, just like Jennie and Brander. They were different people in different class and they were like ends that lived in a habitual environment, if they broke, it must lead to tragedy. The sea tragedy happened on Jennie's second lover, Lester. Lester was superior to Jennie in wealth and social position ;he was attracted by the “softness of her pre-eminent femininity”(Theodor Dreiser)

To face such an enthusiastic man Jennie was moved but she must take her family into consideration. Jennie would not commit the same sin again. She repeatedly told Lester her decision. “But I mustn't do anything wrong” she insisted, ”I don't want to. Please don't come near me anymore. I can't do what you want”. Lester didn't take Jennie's consolidation seriously, because he eagerly wanted her to yield to him spiritually and physically. From the love for wealth people was instinctual, it was based on their wealth and social position.

After Jennie left home, she worked as a maid servant on a large residence for Mrs. Bracebridge. What's worse, Jennie's father was hurt in an accident; Jennie thought that she had duty to take care of her family. But she herself could not change the poor condition of the family. So she cohabited with Lester in order to make her family break away from poverty. Despite that Lester wanted to marry with Jennie, their social position and family, background had decided that their love would not get a happy ending. When Lester was confronted by the pressure from being deprived of the huge heritage. He had to two alternatives:

Deserting Jennie or deserting his right to the huge legacy. Jennie was too kind to let Lester go. Dreiser gave a description like this:

“Admitting that she had been bad-locally it was important, perhaps, but, in the sum of civilization, in the sum of big forces what did it all amount to? They would be dead after a little while, she and Lester and all these people. Did anything matter except goodness of heart? What else was there that was real?”

As a result, Jennie did not marry with Lester, but she found contentment in her spirit. Dreiser believed that in such a mass society, moral values on women made Jennie far from catching her alone. And Jennie's nature she was a traditional woman, but her behavior broke the edge of morality. Whether Jennie' was a good woman or not, most people just saw what immoral things Jennie had done. However, they didn't understand why Jennie did these things. Dreiser did not criticize what Jennie had behaved, he felt great sympathy on Jennie. It was a heaven for the wealth and a hell for the poor. Women like Jennie would not be accepted by society, let alone, they get happy ending.

## EVOLUTION OF SPIRITUAL THOUGHT IN THE NOVELS OF THEODORE DREISER.

Classifying Dreiser as a pioneer of naturalism and an "irredeemable

naturalist", most critics were reluctant to accept the sincerity and validity of his affirmation. Even as late as 1944, Chauncy B. Tinker described him as "an acknowledged leader of the naturalistic school in America" . A close study of his novels shows that, though Dreiser shared many features common to naturalism, he also exhibited characteristics, which are totally different from those of naturalism and even opposed to it.

Professor Lars Ahnebrink has made an elaborate study of the naturalistic movement both in America and Europe. As he defines it:

Naturalism is a manner and method of composition by which the author portrays life as it is in accordance with the philosophic theory of determinism (exemplified in Zola's *L'Assommoir*). In contrast to a realist, a naturalist believes that man is fundamentally an animal without free will. To a naturalist man can be explained in terms of forces, usually heredity and environment, which operate upon him .

Though Dreiser's novels conform partly to this definition, they are not strictly in accordance with the theory of determinism. Determinism is a vital principle in naturalism. The naturalists believe that man's action is controlled and determined by external forces such as physical, social and environmental factors. They do not believe in the exercise of free will. Dreiser partly accepts the principle of determinism, but differs from them in their view of free will. Dreiser's acceptance of the existence of free will is clearly seen even in his first novel, *Sister Carrie*. He also believes that man is not completely an animal. While describing the mental state of Carrie, Dreiser says that "Our civilisation is still in a middle stage, scarcely beast, in that it is no longer wholly guided by instinct; scarcely human, in that it is not yet wholly guided by reasons" (70). Man is essentially a different creature from, for example, the tiger which possesses 'no responsibility', and which is 'aligned' by natural forces and without thought or reasoning and is protected by nature. Man, on the other hand, is 'far removed from the lairs of the jungles' and has free will. However, man has not quite sufficiently developed his will to replace his

instincts and afford him perfect guidance, "In this intermediate stage", Dreiser writes, He wavers - neither drawn in harmony with nature by his instincts nor yet wisely putting himself into harmony by his own free will. He is even as a wisp in the wind, moved by every breath of passion, acting now by his will and now by his instincts, erring with one only to retrieve by the other, falling by one, only to rise by the other creature of incalculable variability. We have the consolation of knowing that evolution is ever in action, that the ideal is a light that cannot fail. He will not for ever balance thus between good and evil. Where this jungle of free-will and instinct shall have been adjusted, when perfect understanding has given the former the power to replace the latter entirely, man will no longer vary. Dreiser's characters are not denied the exercise of their free will. Carrie is not created a helpless creature in the hands of the controlling forces. Her experiences in Chicago and later her sufferings and success reveal a depth of human consciousness and will power. Carrie is not blindly drawn to Drouet and later to Hurstwood. She is calculating, and reasons out everything. Dreiser says that, in Carrie, "instinct and reason, desire and understanding, were at war for the mastery" (71). The description of the stealing episode shows that Hurstwood is not devoid of free will. His stealing is shown as 'accidental' but his troubled state of mind, his hesitation, his indecision, his prolonged debate whether he should steal or not, his fear of the police and the law testify that the act was not committed blindly by the compulsion of external force or chance and circumstance. Dreiser's style also differs from that of other naturalists. It is not flat, objective and bare of imagery. There is often little distinction between Dreiser and his characters, and his view of life tends to be subjective like that of a romantic. R.L.Duffus describes him as a "romantic, a realist and a mystic all in one" (quoted in Ross 233). He often thought of himself as a romantic and had a pronounced streak of sentimentality. He was always wondering at the "mystic something of beauty that perennially transfigures the world! The freshness of dawns and evenings!" (Dreiser, Dawn 198-199). He is compassionate towards

his characters. His addresses to his characters - fully in the tradition of the sentimental novelists - are very revelatory:

Oh! Carrie! Carrie! Oh, blind striving of the human heart. Onward, onward, it saith, and where beauty leads there it follows (458).

Such passages recur frequently in his novels. He thinks also like a romantic. In *Jennie Gerhardt*, he writes: We may tremble, the fear of doing wretchedly may linger, but we grow. Flashes of inspiration come to guide the soul. Nature is not ungenerous. Its winds and stars are fellows with you. Let the soul be but gentle and receptive, and this vast truth will come home - not in set phase, perhaps, but as a feeling, a comfort, which after all, is the least essence of knowledge. In the universe peace is wisdom .

Quoting this passage in his book *R.N.Mookerjee* very perceptively remarks that "these hardly seem to be the words of a naturalist as the term is generally understood; if it is naturalism at all, it is the naturalism of Wordsworth asserting the peace and harmony that exists between man and nature (47).

Dreiser's experiences, views and ideas find expression in his novels. As Robert E.Spiller says, "all that Dreiser wrote was a single long autobiography" (171). *Sister Carrie* is based on the facts of his sister Emma's life. Her elopement with Hopkins, a married man, who stole money from his employers, is akin to Carrie's and Hurstwood's elopement. *Jennie Gerhardt*, *Elvia Griffiths* and *Berenice* are portrayals of his kind, good and noble hearted mother. *William Gerhardt* and *Asha Griffiths* have traits in common with his father. Critics have also compared Dreiser's father to *Solon Barnes*. "Both men" says *Philip L.Gerber*,"are strongly religious fathers who attempt to raise their families according to the codes they have accepted for themselves. Both see their sons and daughters seduced into a world . *The Genius* is generally considered an autobiographical novel.

The most important difference between Dreiser and other naturalists is his open proclamation of faith in God. The critics who labeled him as a "barbaric naturalist" were puzzled at his affirmation. Obviously they have failed to notice the

religions streak in Dreiser even during his childhood. His early writings such as "Water-work Extension" serve as a record of his faith in God. W.A.Swanberg, his biographer, has given ample evidence for his early belief in God.

His mind was always filled with the thought of God. Whenever he talked to any person, he usually wanted to ascertain his or her view of God. One day in an interview with Annie Besant, he asked her whether she did not recognize a controlling principle - a God. She replied in the negative. Mentioning this incident, Swanberg remarks: "For all of Annie Besant . . . he was not ready to dump his religion, reasoning that the world's ills might not be attributable to God but to man's inability to understand God (43).

The major influences that suppressed his early spiritual concern were the over-righteous religious background of his youth, his poverty-stricken childhood and his enthusiasm for science. But obviously, they could not suppress it for ever, for it asserts itself progressively and increasingly in the course of his work. Dreiser was driven to hate the dogmatic principles of institution a listed religion, even early in his life. Dreiser's father, John Dreiser, a blind adherent to the Catholic faith and its rituals, who believed that God would reveal Himself through the ceremonies of the Church, was the first to affect Dreiser strongly\* Dreiser's description of his father as a "narrower, more hidebound religionist," a crank," " a tenth rate Saint Simon or Francis of Assisi" (A Hoosier Holiday 284), shows how strongly Dreiser had reacted against the strict code of his father which sowed seeds of bitterness and hostility.

The strict discipline of the parochial school in which he was admitted added fuel to this burning hatred. The hostility against all religious ceremonies and the Church was further intensified when the priest refused to perform the funeral rites of his mother.

It should be noted that Dreiser's anger was only against the crippling dogmas, creeds and customs of the Church and its priests but not against basic religious teachings or against God.

Poverty was also one of the determining influences, which shaped his thought. Dreiser's early poverty ridden life made him yearn for wealth and prosperity. He observed in life that religion and poverty go hand in hand. His father was a good example. He came to believe that the worship of God and the adoption of the religious ceremonies were in no way helpful to prosperity and a successful career. An instinctive resistance to formal religion was an understandable reaction. Science, too, played its role in restraining his early spiritual feelings, his reading of Huxley's *Science and Hebrew Tradition* and *Science and Christian Tradition* affected him most profoundly. Huxley made him believe that Christianity was one of many dogmas, and the Bible was merely a record of the experiences of individuals and not revealed Truth. Dreiser was still more shocked, when he read Spencer's *First Principles* in which the author disposed of religion simply as being the concern of the "unknowable". Spencer, Dreiser said to Frank Harris, "nearly killed me, took every shred of belief away from me". As Swanberg says, the extent of his hurt shows how deeply he had cherished the belief in God" . In spite of these hindrances, his spiritual predilection was never suppressed completely. His longing for ultimate satisfaction and happiness which could not be afforded by worldly success, his attraction for the virtue of charity, his belief in superstitions, his emotionalism and sentimentalism, his ceaseless quest for beauty and the ideal, and his realization of a superior power very slowly developed into a deep faith in a benign Divine Force.

The first stage in his spiritual growth is his realisation of a spiritual vacuum in material success. His personal observations and experiences in life made him realize the futility of worldly success and pleasures. The first four novels. *Sister Carrie*. *Jennie Gerhardt*. *The Financier* and *The Titan*, are reflections of his realization that material success were bound to lead to disillusionment. *Sister Carrie* is the story of a poor village girl, Carrie Meeber and her pursuit of material success. Her aim in life is money, luxury and success, but when she has her

"gowns and carriage, her furniture and bank account (486), her inner feeling is still one of longing and incompleteness. "Amid the tinsel and shine of her state" (457), she is lonely and unhappy.

Dreiser's second novel, *Jennie Gerhardt* is an illustration of his realization that material success leaves one with discontentment and dissatisfaction, by contrasting the attitude of two characters. Jennie is simple, unselfish and kindhearted. She gives no importance to money and material success; she sacrifices her life for the welfare of others. Even though conventional society does not recognize her noble heart and ill-treats her, she has no ill feeling towards people. She loves all, and is happy and contented. But, Lester, her lover, gives importance to wealth and luxury and finally expresses his dissatisfaction and unhappiness over the achievement of these aims.

Dreiser further illustrates this idea by portraying the life cycle of Cowperwood in *The Financier* and *The Titan*. These two novels reveal that even the strong are not free from disillusionment if they give importance to material success and pleasure in their life. Material success is "a mulch of darkness" and in it "are bedded the roots of endless sorrows" (*Titan* 552).

Dreiser was a great lover of beauty and he was particularly devoted to beauty in nature, art and women. It was physical beauty, which attracted him first, but it turned soon into a quest for an ideal. The individual's search for beauty which is always a quest for the ideal, for better things, is the underlying theme in his novels.

Carrie in her quest for an ideal is misdirected. Cowperwood and Eugene Ulitla are relentlessly searching for beauty in women. This quest is completed only in *The Stoic* where this quest for an ideal is identified with the divine design, the face of 'Brahma' shining through.

Love is a dominant theme in all his novels. Dreiser loved human beings as a part of nature. His autobiographical works show how greatly he had loved his mother, brother, sister and others. In his essay "Confession of Faith", he declared: "I believe in the compelling power of love. I do not understand it. I believe it to be

the most fragrant blossom of all this thorny existence" .He began his novelistic career with selfish characters like Carrie and Hurstwood, who loved themselves. After identifying the selfish love, he proceeded to portray selfless love from Jennie to Solon Barnes and Berenice. He ended his career advocating universal love and the brotherhood of all men. Dreiser's pity and sympathy for the poor and the weak turned him into a humanist. His sympathy with the striking workers, the description of the charity houses and the selfless service of the «x-soldier who believes that his service to the poor is service to God, are examples of his early humanistic concern. He made Jennie adopt two orphans, Cowperwood allot money for the construction of a hospital for the poor, and Berenice serve the orphans. Dreiser himself made provision for orphans in his Will.

Dreiser's realization of the futility of material goals led him to believe in the existence of a superior force but he was not able to decide whether the external force is well intentioned or malicious. After more conflicts and observations, he began to believe in a benevolent creative force. This belief made him still ore emphatic in his view that material success would not only lead one to disillusionment but also to destruction. In *The Genius*. Eugene Wilta realises his error in pursuing pleasure in wealth and sex after his wife's death in childbirth. He begins to understand the meaning of life. He discards his view that God is malicious, and believes in the benevolence of the supreme being and regain his peace.

Dreiser's belief in the benevolent supreme being is confirmed in *An American Tragedy*. The introduction of deeply religious characters like Elvira Griffiths and Mc Millan the emphasis on repentance and salvation and the employment of Biblical quotations are the result of his later belief. Dreiser shows in this novel that the pursuit of wealth and pleasure is the cause of the tragedy and emphasized the need for repentance for salvation. The last few chapters are completely devoted to the task of making Clyde accept the existence of a benevolent God. Clyde's doubt and his later belief are in no way different from

Dreiser's own. The years that followed the publication of the *An American Tragedy* were the most important years in his life. He began to see order and meaning in all creation and had come to understand the limitations of science. He became tolerant even of organized religions. He saw the presence of God in each and everything. He was even ready to prove the existence of God. Dreiser's deep faith in God and his advocacy of universal love are reflected in his novels *The Bulwark* and *The Stoic*. His belief in the benign creative force is identified with the 'Inner light' of the Quakers in *The Bulwark*. Dreiser transferred his own experience to Solon in the later part of the novel. Solon's "awe and wonder", his realization of the presence of the "Creative Divinity" in all things are reflections of Dreiser's own experience, Dreiser's faith in God is confirmed in *The Stoic*.

Dreiser's use of Quaker and Hindu beliefs and ideas in his last novels is itself a reflection of his spiritual concerns and convictions at this stage of his career\* As in *Woolman*, "His religion, was love. His whole existence and all of his passions were love," and this was a love that first turned toward God and thence spread out over all people and things - a love that extended to the poor, the weak, the slaves, the miners" (Dreiser, *The Bulwark* 331).

Apart from the intrinsic and the independent merit of Dreiser's novels, they trace, together in their sequence, what may be called a spiritual journey from doubt and hesitant faith to something like total conviction and commitment. From the evidence available of that author's own life, it is naturally tempting to assume that the progress of his different protagonists is really a parallel to his own. What Eliot says of the good dramatic poet is just as true of the good writer of fiction - that in his work, he is "somehow dramatizing, but in no obvious way, an action struggle for harmony" in his soul. The body of Dreiser's work does record such a "struggle for harmony" in his inner life .

### Ethnicity in *Jennie Gerhardt*

German in *Jennie Gerhardt*

The German language plays an important role in Jennie Gerhardt. On no less than ten different pages in the novel (37, 38, 55, 56, 57, 64, 82, 86, 118, 148) it is made very clear that German is being used. A briefly-worded overview:

- p. 37: "Mother," he called in German, and then not seeing her, came to the door of the front room and looked in. (William Sr.)

- p. 38: "Oh yes," he said with a considerable German accent. (William Sr.)

- p. 55: 1) "What is this about Senator Brander coming out to call on Jennie?" he asked in German. (William Sr.)

2) "Why nothing," answered Mrs. Gerhardt, in the same language. (Mrs Gerhardt)

- p. 56: "There is nothing the matter," she declared suddenly, using an effective German idiom. (Mrs. Gerhardt)

- p. 57: "What difference?" cried Gerhardt, still talking in German, although Jennie answered in English. (William Sr.)

- p. 64: "Oh my!" said Gerhardt, "Ach Gott" He actually wrung his hands in distress. (William Sr.)

- p. 82: "What is it you say?" he inquired in German, his voice straining to a hard note. (William Sr.)

- p. 86: "I shall tell you what for," said Gerhardt, still speaking in German. (William Sr.)

- p. 118: "She must be heavy", he said in his characteristic German. "Let me take her." (William Sr.)

- p. 148: It was time for the regular weekly remittance, but this time, instead of the regular fatherly communication, written in German and telling of his condition and enclosing five dollars [...]. (William Sr.) These are the eleven instances (on ten pages) in which the narrator explicitly states that

German is being used as main language, except for p. 38, which only states that William Sr. spoke with a considerable accent. What immediately strikes one when

looking at these short extracts is that in eight of the ten examples it is William Gerhardt Senior who is talking<sup>21</sup> in German. This corresponds with what Riggio writes in his essay on Theodore Dreiser as a hidden ethnic. He argues that the character of the father in multi-ethnic literature loses parental authority and „sadly fails to understand his children"s American ways [...]." (Riggio, "Hidden Ethnic" 54). One component of the fact that William Sr. is not in touch with the American ways of his children could be found in him not speaking German all the time. If we look at the seven (leaving out p. 38) instances in which the use of German by William Gerhardt is mentioned, one can see that in five of these William Sr. is, to say the least, irritated, if not mad. Accordingly, one could state that for William Sr., German has become a language that he almost always only uses when he is vexed or cross. But, the other instances could be used to prove that this is not always the case. On p. 37 one can find no clues to claim William is angry. What the text does say, however, is that William „was given to speculation these days" (37). So, one might add that William also uses German when he is feeling somewhat gloomy and worried.

One also learns that William writes his family in German. There are some possibilities here. Either William Sr. cannot write English sufficiently to use it in letters or him writing in German can be seen as a sign of him talking German almost all the time to his family and not only when he is cross, irritated or worried. There is no solid reason however to suggest that William Sr. speaks German to his family all the time. One could say that the fact that narrator stresses the fact that German is being used on these occasions is a sign that these are the only occasions he speaks German. The book, however, gives no clear answers to this question. Another angle of incidence can be found with Giles. He argues that by looking at Dreiser"s style of writing, one can

conclude that the whole novel is actually translated from the German spoken in the Dreiser home (56). Dreiser's tendency toward compound words, as Giles puts it, „gives the reader the curious impression that the whole of Jennie Gerhardt, and not just Gerhardt's own speeches, might almost have been translated from the German" (56). Casciato also addresses this problem. He argues that all of William Senior's words are spoken in German (173). Giles thus says every member of the family may talk German, while Casciato claims all of Gerhardt Senior's words are translated from German. In my view this is impossible to prove without knowledge of the author's intentions; I find no evidence that Gerhardt would speak German throughout the entire novel.

Furthermore, although the narrator almost never mentions whether William speaks German rather than English, it is stressed several times that William speaks English. At one point in the novel, it says: "No," Gerhardt would sigh immediately, "my stomach don't do right [...]." (343). Here, the narrator, in emphasising the estranging use of English of William Sr., stresses the fact that he is speaking English. This happens in two other instances of the novel. The first one reads: „He (Lester) answered the old man's querulos inquiry as to what was wrong "with them shoes" by saying they weren't comfortable anymore." (265). And some pages before that: "What has she done!" exclaimed Gerhardt, his excitement growing under the strain he was enduring, and speaking almost unaccented English in consequence." (59). Furthermore, Gerhardt teaches his granddaughter prayers, and he does this in English. This is made very clear by the text itself:

"Say „Our Father,"" he used to demand of the toddling infant when he had her alone with him. "Ow Fowvah," was her vowel-like interpretation of his sounds.

"Who art in heaven." "Ooh ah in aven," repeated the child.

(183) So, one could argue that Gerhardt does not want his granddaughter to be able to speak German, or he would have taught her these prayers in his native language. He knows that she will get more opportunities in life with a thorough knowledge of English. Carnevale, in her article on immigration and language, mentions how the immigrant can be stuck in between private and public life (475). For William Sr. then, German would be the language of the home, of safety and English the language of the outside world, the language also he wants his granddaughter to master. But again, there is no reason to assume William almost exclusively speaks German, or English for that matter, he seems to speak the two at the same time. After reading the novel carefully, something else, which is also mentioned by Carnevale thus seems to be more plausible for the case of William Gerhardt Senior. Carnevale claims that „many first generation immigrants were not able to make a complete transition from one language to another.“ (474). She adds that immigrants would rely on their own mixture of their native language and the language of their new country. This could go as far as the development of a creole. The latter is probably not the case for William Gerhardt, but one can undoubtedly argue in a plausible way that he did not undergo a complete transition from German to English. In my view, the narrator seems eager to make clear to the reader that William Gerhardt Senior is not completely assimilated to life in the United States. From what follows, one will be able to conclude that Gerhardt's wife is more assimilated, also in language. This, among other things, ensured that their children, being second generation immigrants show a higher degree of assimilation because, for one thing, „psychoanalysts have drawn the connection between language and the mother“ (Carnevale 473). If the mother speaks English to her children, these are prone to establish a connection with their mother in English.

Mrs. Gerhardt`s Germanic language

Mrs. Gerhardt thus also uses German. There are two instances in the book where it is said this woman speaks German and in both cases, she is talking to her husband. This could suggest that she only speaks German to her husband, not her children. This claim also fits in with the text by Riggio. He writes about the mother in multi-ethnic narratives as an „isolated, beleaguered mother who attempts to mediate between old-world customs and the emotional needs of her children“ (Riggio, “Hidden Ethnic” 54). Seen in this light, Mrs. Gerhardt mediates between her husband (the Old World) and her children (United States of America or the New World) through language<sup>22</sup>. Conzen argues that „language change, often bitterly fought [...] was a key indicator of the transition, as was a pronounced focus upon American concerns rather than old world issues.“ (Conzen, “Invention of Ethnicity” 12). The novel seems to suggest that the Gerhardt-children do not speak German, but understand it. Again, there is little proof of this in the narrative itself, but one can read : “What difference?” cried Gerhardt, still talking in German, although Jennie answered in English.” (57).

suggests that Jennie (and with her probably also her siblings) understands German, but does not speak it, or at least chooses not to speak it. Language change can thus be seen as characteristic of the second generation; typical of assimilation to the New World (Conzen, “Invention of Ethnicity”12).

## **Conclusion**

Theodor Dreiser occupies an important position in modern American Literature.”Sister Carrie” and “Jennie Gerhardt” are his two representative works.

At first both Carrie and Jennie are two pure girls who want to change their poor life. However, both of them become mistresses in order to change their terrible situation, and their behaviors disobey the traditional values which refer to moral codes and mores that are passed down from generation within a community. However, making a comparison between Sister Carrie and Jennie Gerhardt's ending, while Carrie becomes a successful actress by her efforts and opportunities, she is disillusioned spiritually. Dreiser changes his view on women from affirmation of female self-sacrifice; it was a sign of his regressive feminine consciousness.

Theodor Dreiser occupies an important position in modern American literature. Alan Tate regarded Dreiser, Hemingway and Faulkner as the most important novelists in American realism literature. Because of the publication of *Sister Carrie* in 1900, Dreiser committed his literary force to opening the new ground of American Realism.

With the use of simple and direct language Dreiser is a pioneer in telling a series of stories about "The mechanistic brutality of American society". Theodor Dreiser's work has its distinct characteristics.

A famous American literary critic said "Many American writers have a common characteristic for a time, that is, their works are read like natural and smooth writing without tenderness, but Theodor Dreiser's works are read like "Unbearable pain" (Fred Kazin, 1955).

"He the first novelist to capture the modern American literature" as Marcus Cunliffe stated (Marcus Cunliffe, 1975-2005).

Theodor Dreiser was born in Indiana on August 27, 1871; into a German immigrant family. Living in a poor and intensely religious family, his father demanded the kids to behave in conformity as Catholic. At the late 19th century to early 20th century New York, Philadelphia, Boston and Chicago had become an international metropolis in America. Thousands of people came in flocks in order to find a job. At fifteen Dreiser fled from home and went to Chicago. Dreiser dreamed of wealth and social success in the great metropolis.

When he was 18, a sympathetic teacher helped him enter the University of Indiana, but he quitted after a year and returned to Chicago.

Later he became a journalist on the Chicago Globe and worked in St.Louis and Pittsbury before arriving in New York in 1894.

After school education Dreiser read voraciously by himself . He immersed himself and Dickens and Thackeray, Emerson and Mark Twain, but his true literary influences were from Balzac, Charles Dickens and Herbert Spencer the ideas from those books. He embraced social Darwinism. Dreiser barked to regard man as merely an animal driven by greed and lust in struggle for existence in which only “the fittest”, “the most ruthless, survive”(Everett Carter, 1963-).

\_Robert E. Spiller once noted in his book”The cycle of American literature”.

“To Dreiser, man is only “mechanism” reacting to chemic compulsions and Human tragedy comes as a result of the collision between man’s biological needs and society’s ruthless manipulation. Life is predatory “ a game” of lecherous and heatless a jungle struggle in which manbeing “a waif and an interloper in nature”, a wisp in the wind of social forces , is a mere pawn in the general scheme of the things, with no power whatever to assert his will.

Noone is ethically free; everything is determined by a complex of internal chemism and by the forces of social pressure”(Robert E. Spenser” His literary Achievements”).

In the early period, Dreiser began to publish his first novel “Sister Carry” in 1900, one of the most famous works in American literary history followed by “Jennie Gerhardt”(1911) and two volumes of his “Trilogy of Desire”, “The Financier”(1912) and “The Titan”(1914).

Dreiser’s other works include “The Genius”(1915) which told us a story about a misunderstood artist who can be considered as Dreiser himself. It was condemned for “Obscenity and blasphemy” (Liu Shusen, 2006)

In the middle period Dreiser’s greatest work “An American Tragedy”(1925) was published. In 1927 Dreiser and American Delegation were invited to Russia and then he wrote “Dreiser books at Russia”(1928) and “Tragic America(1931) to

express his new faith. In later stage Dreiser published "The Bulwark" in 1945. "The Stoic" one of his "Trilogy of Dreiser" published in 1947 posthumously.

In his book "Sister Carrie" Caroline Meeber known as Carrie leaves her home at the age of eighteen and takes the train to Chicago. Carrie meets a man named Drout and she is attracted by the way he treats her. So she agrees to allow him to rent an apartment for her. Drout then introduces Carrie to his friend. Hurstwood, a manager of one of the top bars in the city. Hurstwood is far more refined and elegant than Drout. He falls in love with her and starts to think of getting her to run away with him. One evening Hurstwood steals ten thousand dollars from the unlocked safe of his workplace. Without thinking he takes the cash and rushes to Carrie's apartment and they leave for New York City.

At last the novel traces Carrie's rise and Hurstwood's fall.

Hurstwood becomes a homeless beggar, whereas Carrie becomes an overnight star. Although Carrie has been successful she becomes unhappy with his state in the world. In this book Dreiser made no moral judgments on his characters' behaviour. The author wrote about infidelity and prostitution as natural occurrences in the course of human relationships. He wrote about his characters with pity, comparison, and a sense of self-esteem.

Jennie Garhardt is a story about a poor girl, Jennie.

While working in a hotel in Columbus Jennie meets Senator George Brander who becomes infatuated with her. He helps her family and wants to marry her, Jennie is thankful for his behaviour and agrees to marry him.

Unfortunately the Senator dies, leaving her pregnant.

She gives birth to a daughter and moves to Cleveland where she finds work as a lady's maid to a renowned family. Consequently she meets Lester Kane, a prosperous manufacturer's son.

Jennie falls in love with him and is impressed by his strong will and generosity. Lester doesn't know that Jennie has a child and he wishes to marry her but his family disapproved, so he decides to treat her as his mistress. They live together successfully in Chicago, even though Lester finds that Vesta – Jennie's daughter's after three years, he does not leave Jennie by the reason of the pressure given by his family business unless he discards her. Finally he separates from Jennie with the agreement of Jennie.

At the end of the story, Jennie loses her daughter to typhoid and adopts three orphans. Lester becomes ill and he tells Jennie he still loves her and she accompanies him until his death.

In this book Dreiser portrayed a brave and pure girl in order to show that women like Jennie could seek love. On the other hand it was lucky to Jennie that she could meet two persons from upper classes and won their love and she brought benefits for her poor family. On the other hand she was unlucky. Because of poverty, Jennie had little chance to make a decision. It is destined that she would lose her love.

In this novel, we not only saw Carrie who was driven by desire, but also saw how Carrie moved from negative to positive and at last she became independent. Indeed, Carrie sold herself for surviving, but before this she had tried to earn her own living and she failed. But even more important was she succeeded at last. She ends her life of depending on men and became a real independent woman.

From this novel, we can learn Carrie's persistence. No matter in Chicago or in New York she never changed her dream on stage. From an unknown actress to a famous star, only Carrie can realize the hardship of these experiences. It is her persistent heart that supports her to achieve success at last. In the other hand, Carrie's spirit was worth to learn. When she came to Chicago, she tried hard to find a job though she was shameful for her poor clothes. In New York, when they were

broke to the world, Carrie worked in an opera house, her salary rose from 15 dollar at first to 35 dollar, and even reached 150 dollar at last. Although Carrie's success depended on men, we can learn the spirit of hard work from her.

Also the narrator had a feeling that if at the beginning Carrie lived by her own exertion to become an actress and gradually reached the highest point of her career. Maybe, Carrie did not feel alone at the end of the novel. Similarly, in holy university or in muddy society the kind of people exist in modern society. They got satisfaction of desire. Meanwhile, could lose the priceless friendship, even the relationship between families. Those were the lamentable sides of the heroine--- Sister Carrie.

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