

Naturalism in sister carrie

Literature



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and Number, and Naturalism in Sister Carrie Sister Carrie, as other works by Theodore Dreiser represent the movement of Naturalism in theater, film, and literature that seeks to replicate a believable everyday reality, as opposed to such movements as Romanticism or Surrealism, in which subjects may receive highly symbolic, idealistic, or even supernatural treatment. (Wikipedia)

In the novel the main character, Carrie, begins to adjust to the changes in her life after she breaks away from the life she is dissatisfied with in Wisconsin. Her first adventure is that of taking the train to Chicago where her older sister, Minnie lives with her husband Sven. Even as she travels there her life takes on a new meaning. This begins to happen when she meets a fellow passenger by the name of Drouet. Drouet finds Carrie attractive and befriends her and a day or so later she leaves her sister's to move in with him.(1)

In comparison to the literary qualities of Naturalism found in the character representations of Carrie and Drouet, the literary qualities of Realism would depict the two individuals in a more pragmatic fashion. For example, if Carrie were approached by Drouet through the eyes of a writer of Realism she would probably rebuff him. No doubt, he would not get in the way of her settling in with her sister. Instead, she would leave him behind to get on with finding an ordinary job and living an ordinary life.

The novel, by virtue of its characters, represents a break from the world of Realism where characters act as they should. Dreiser's characters are not, like products of scientific representations of life, destined to live lives mapped out for them. Instead, they can and do change.

Like Drouet, Carrie is continually reinventing herself. If they were realists,

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the two of them would have remained in a fixed state. Their avoidance of new places and new things would have kept them from leaving their locations and they probably would never have met.

The choices made by the people in this book, their opinions and the beliefs inherent in them, have much to do with heredity and social environment. On the other hand, the characters in works of Realism see and act only in a physiological sense without embellishment or interpretation. (Expedia)

Dreiser, like other 19th and 20th century naturalism writers was affected by the proponents of Charles Darwin (2). As one of these proponents he was a pioneer in Naturalism in American literature and it is in works such as *Sister Carrie* he shows that conventional morality is unimportant and that consciously virtuous behavior has little to do with material success and happiness.(3)

Dreiser believed that the world and the characters in it were much more complex and their nature's much darker than those found in works by writers of Realism. His novel is one that opposes the thoughts of such writers as Everett Ruess in *Howells and the Age of Realism*, who believed writers should write only what was real but should also be against something for something and must feel that the world means intensely, and means good. (4)

Dreiser had no desire to write about purity. Instead, he wrote about the complexities in the personalities of his characters and about how they created the intricacies in their lives, including their successes and their failures.

Works Cited

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