



W&M ScholarWorks

Dissertations, Theses, and Masters Projects

Theses, Dissertations, & Master Projects

1986

Temperament as Destiny: A Study of Theodore Dreiser's "Sister Carrie" and "An American Tragedy"

Christine H. Seifert

College of William & Mary - Arts & Sciences

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.wm.edu/etd>

 Part of the [American Literature Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Seifert, Christine H., "Temperament as Destiny: A Study of Theodore Dreiser's "Sister Carrie" and "An American Tragedy"" (1986). *Dissertations, Theses, and Masters Projects*. Paper 1539625358.

<https://dx.doi.org/doi:10.21220/s2-xp3a-8657>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Theses, Dissertations, & Master Projects at W&M ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Dissertations, Theses, and Masters Projects by an authorized administrator of W&M ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact scholarworks@wm.edu.

TEMPERAMENT AS DESTINY: A STUDY OF
THEODORE DREISER'S
SISTER CARRIE AND AN AMERICAN TRAGEDY

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of English
The College of William and Mary in Virginia

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts

by

Christine H. Seifert

1986

APPROVAL SHEET

This thesis is submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

Christine H. Seifert
Christine H. Seifert

Approved, April 28, 1986

Elsa Nettels
Elsa Nettels

William F. Davis, Jr.
William F. Davis, Jr.

Joanne M. Braxton
Joanne M. Braxton

DEDICATION

Dedicated to my husband, Bob Seifert, who was
behind me all the way.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The writer wishes to express her appreciation to Professor Elsa Nettels, under whose guidance this investigation was conducted, for her patient and thoughtful assistance in planning, researching, and writing this paper. The author is also indebted to Professors William Davis and Joanne Braxton for their careful reading and criticism of the manuscript.

ABSTRACT

This paper explores the significance of the fact that two of Theodore Dreiser's major characters experience such different fates. Caroline Meeber, in Sister Carrie, survives the hurdles her life presents while Clyde Griffiths, in An American Tragedy, is destroyed by his.

The purpose of such an examination is to postulate the theory that Dreiser regarded a specific temperament as an important prerequisite for survival. Both Carrie and Clyde are confronted with similar environments, and both seek the similar goals of financial success and material pleasure. Temperamentally, however, the two differ. Carrie, by nature passive, succeeds financially and attains her goal; Clyde, by nature sensuous and dreamy, fails to realize his.

Dreiser suggests implicitly that Carrie's emotionally neutral, sexually undriven temperament helps her succeed. Clyde's emotionally urgent nature, however, results in the forfeiture of his life for his goals.

TEMPERAMENT AS DESTINY: A STUDY OF
THEODORE DREISER'S
SISTER CARRIE AND AN AMERICAN TRAGEDY

I

A close examination of two of Theodore Dreiser's major novels reveals that the author felt strongly that certain personality characteristics contribute significantly to the successful survival of the individual. For Dreiser, success meant that the individual was able to devise a strategy for coping with a universe which offered few assurances of happiness and many assurances of woe. Within such a system, personal moral considerations sometimes had little value. Caroline Meeber, in Sister Carrie, survives the various hurdles her destiny presents while Clyde Griffiths, in An American Tragedy, is destroyed by his. What differences in temperament existed in these two characters and how those differences determined their respective fates is the subject of this examination.

Although Dreiser wrote Sister Carrie (1900) and An American Tragedy (1925) twenty-five years apart the two works reveal no fundamental philosophic differences in viewpoint.¹ It was Dreiser's belief, throughout his writing career, that one could do little to significantly alter his future existence. Burdened by his biological and environmental heritage, one could only struggle blindly against the larger manipulator of action and events--chance.

In 1894, while still very young, Dreiser was shocked to discover that there were those who seriously questioned traditional Christian

values. W. A. Swanberg, Dreiser's most influential biographer, writes of Dreiser's startled reaction to the works of Thomas Huxley and Herbert Spencer.² Thomas Huxley's works Science and Hebrew Tradition and Science and Christian Tradition assert that the Bible is based upon erroneous dogma and as such should be regarded as superstition. Herbert Spencer, through his work, First Principles, further jolted Dreiser's equanimity by his coolly logical argument against any form of ultimate meaning for the individual. According to Spencer, man was of little import in the greater evolutionary cycle of things, the individual a mere particle of energy.³ The effect of this philosophy upon Dreiser was profound, for it caused him to question beliefs he held very intensely. Was man, then, no more than a stray collection of atoms, bumping here and there entirely without purpose or meaning? "Spencer," writes Swanberg, "snatched God away, turned him into an impersonal force."⁴

Though Dreiser's early reading of Huxley and Spencer left him shaken and sad, he was able to continue to reflect with compassion upon man's predicament in a universe of such complexity. In 1920 he recorded his thoughts in a volume of philosophical essays which he titled Hey Rub-A-Dub-Dub! and subtitled A Book Of The Mystery And Terror And Wonder Of Life. In essence, this work reflects Dreiser's attempt to understand life and to decipher exactly what, if any, meaning man's existence had. The personal characteristics of the individual intrigued Dreiser. Was man a victim of his emotional strengths and weaknesses? Through the persona of John Paradiso, Dreiser questions man's ability to experience contentment when his internal forces are often at odds with society's rules. "Take a case

where temperament or body needs or appetites fly in the face of man-made order, where a great spirit-thirst stands out against a life-made conviction. Here is a man-made law, and here is dire necessity. On which side is Right? On which side God?"⁵ Paradiso cannot comprehend why people attempt to cling to social and moral laws when his observations have led him to suspect "that there is scarcely a so-called 'sane', right, merciful, true, just, solution to anything."⁶ "Can you doubt," he continues, "when you observe the exact laws that govern in mathematics, chemistry, physics, that there is an intelligent, kindly ruling power, truthful, merciful . . . I can and do."⁷ For all his painful doubt concerning man's reason for being, Dreiser was still able to glimpse a small beauty in nature's quiet order. But cosmic harmony had little to do with temperamental man; all the illusions man held were evidence, to Dreiser, that dreams were "all too frail perhaps against the endless drag toward nothingness."⁸

With the somber pronouncements of Huxley and Spencer still influencing the corners of his thoughts, Dreiser began work on Sister Carrie. "He wrote," states Swanberg, "with a compassion for human suffering that was exclusive with him in America. He wrote with a tolerance for transgression that was as exclusive and as natural."⁹ Into Sister Carrie Dreiser poured the results of the suffering he had seen in his family, of poverty which forced an alteration of morals, of helplessness which bordered on despair. His religious beliefs, shaken by Huxley, caused him to wonder if morality was even appropriate for such a soul-less bit of matter as man. Perhaps in response to the moral plight of his sister Emma, who traded virtue for a way out of her family's poverty-stricken existence, Dreiser created his protagonist

Carrie with a type of temperament that virtually guaranteed her financial success.

Carrie Meeber becomes one of the few Dreiser characters who "win." Carrie wins because Dreiser endows her with a temperament especially suited to survival in a world which, it seemed to him, granted no reward for honest struggle. But, again perhaps with his own sister in mind, Dreiser qualifies Carrie's successful attainment of her desires for fine clothing, wealth and personal ease. In the process of success Carrie loses her spiritual peace; she has only the bleak comfort of material splendor to warm her hours. But her original goals are met; Carrie, because she is temperamentally suited to do so, realizes her wish for wealth and the privileges it provides. What she trades for this coveted position is her virtue, a condition, like honor, which Dreiser gradually realized was of minimal value to the individual or society.

Twenty-five years after the publication of Sister Carrie Dreiser published An American Tragedy. This work examines even further the conclusions Dreiser arrived at through his reflections on the role of the individual in a universe full of "mystery and terror and wonder." The story of Clyde Griffiths, however, does not end in success. Clyde's temperament, so different from Carrie's, contributes greatly to his destruction. Born of poverty as was Carrie, Clyde inherits a nature less able to withstand the temptations of sex. Chance determines temperament for both Carrie and Clyde, but luck and temperament decide that Carrie is not controlled by the sexual passion which dominates and destroys Clyde's life.

II

"Her total outfit," Dreiser writes of Carrie, "consisted of a small trunk, a cheap imitation alligator-skin satchel, a small lunch in a paper box, and a yellow snap purse . . . and four dollars in money."¹⁰ This initial description of Sister Carrie is suggestive of her characteristics. Her trunk is pitifully small and wanting; her meager meal will sustain her only temporarily, and her purse holds but a few dollars. Her satchel, of an imitation skin, suggests a desire for the genuine article. Dreiser provides Carrie with an essential condition for her struggle in the city--the determination born of a sharp appreciation of contrasts. With her humble equipment, Carrie arrives ready to fight the dragon of poverty and win for herself her dream of wealth, fame, and personal ease. Chicago is to be her battlefield and material progress her banner. Having left her rural home with hardly a backward glance, Carrie is prepared to succeed. Chicago beckons and instinctively Carrie follows. "There was the great city,"¹¹ and there lay her dreams.

Commenting upon the future of such young women as Carrie, Dreiser writes that "When a girl leaves home at eighteen, she does one of two things. Either she falls into saving hands and becomes better, or she rapidly assumes the cosmopolitan standard of virtue and becomes worse. Of an intermediate balance, under the circumstances, there is no possibility."¹² The certainty which is underscored here is that young

women who assume "cosmopolitan" ways will naturally fare worse than those who fall "into saving hands." But for Carrie the opposite happens, and this irony is at the root of Carrie's successful city adventure. In order to succeed Carrie decides she must learn the cosmopolitan way of survival, a way which will depend upon how willing she is to become sexually involved with men.

But Carrie does not become controlled by sexual passion. That Carrie even possesses a sexual drive is uncertain. Her reaction to men, as exemplified by her first experience with Charles Drouet, is a neutral one. Her emotion is a mingled one of "self-protection and coquetry,"¹³ but not of dislike. She enjoys Drouet simply because he is likeable and able to provide her with the necessities which will enable her to proceed toward her goal. Love and passion do not complicate her relationship with Drouet. While Dreiser is careful to describe the symptoms of sexual arousal in his male characters, Carrie is never overtly associated with feminine passion. For example, the initial response Carrie has to Drouet is one of envy, not sexual attraction. And her decision to leave Drouet for George Hurstwood is not motivated by sexual yearnings for Hurstwood but by a desire for materialistic and status advancement. Because she is sexually neutral she is able to leave each man when the opportune time arrives.

Money is equated with sex for Carrie. In exchange for her decision to allow Drouet to take care of her, she receives money from him: "There were some loose bills in his vest pocket--greenbacks . . . he got his fingers about them and crumpled them up in his hand."¹⁴ Money produces a sensuous experience for Carrie, and when she accepts the greenbacks Drouet offers her, the feeling of the bills in her hand results in thoughts of what they will buy: "she now held in her

hand--two soft, green ten-dollar bills";¹⁵ "Now she would have a nice new jacket . . . buy a nice pair of pretty button shoes."¹⁶ Social and financial advancement depends, she knows, upon how well she looks. "Fine clothes to her were a vast persuasion; they spoke tenderly and Jesuitically for themselves."¹⁷ Money results in the possession of long-coveted finery for Carrie; sex is simply a means of its obtainment. Carrie's inclination toward men and toward relationships in which she participates in sexual activity cannot be correctly described as the result of sexual passion; it is the result of materialistic longings.

That Carrie's participation in sexual relationships is but a means to an end is exemplified by her first contact with a city man, Charles Drouet, who has ambitions of making her acquaintance. As Drouet initiates a conversation, Carrie becomes "conscious of an inequality"¹⁸ between the two. Drouet, as dapper as he is motivated to succeed with her, represents all the glitter and opulence of the city on which she has set her sights: "So much to see--theaters, crowds, fine houses,"¹⁹ he tells her. Here Carrie is beginning to experience feelings of insignificance in the presence of the gloriously outfitted salesman, and sudden realizations begin to take shape. "She realized that hers was not to be a round of pleasure, and yet there was something promising in all the material prospect he set forth."²⁰ Carrie, conscious of Drouet's "good clothes,"²¹ begins to yearn for the life he and the waiting city represent.

Carrie's first home in the city reinforces her determination to succeed, at any cost, on her own. Again by way of contrast, Carrie is made aware of what virtuous standards reward one with. Her sister Minnie's flat in a run-down Chicago neighborhood is stark and devoid of

pleasure; her sister old before her time. Carrie, in contrast to the golden world she had briefly envisioned on the train with Drouet, here with Minnie "felt the drag of a lean and narrow life."²² Her sister's existence demonstrates a somber and "settled opposition to anything save a conservative round of toil."²³ But the city Carrie had seen through the windows of the hurrying train still beckons: "how much the city held--wealth, fashion, ease . . . she longed for dress and beauty with a whole heart."²⁴

The failure of her first small job in a shoe factory to bring about any noticeable improvement in her life discourages Carrie. When she becomes ill because she cannot purchase warm clothing with her earnings, she loses her position and sets out to find another. Unemployed, alone and hungry, she mingles on the street with Chicago's hurrying inhabitants and experiences a profound wretchedness until "a hand pulled her arm and turned her about."²⁵ As if in answer to her misery, Drouet appears from the crowd of lunchtime pedestrians and smiles at her. Drouet is "not only rosy-checked, but radiant . . . the essence of sunshine and good humor."²⁶ When he insists she join him for a lunch of "Sirloin with mushrooms,"²⁷ Carrie does not resist. With Minnie and her husband Carrie had felt the burden she was upon the small struggling family. With the well-fed salesman Drouet she feels "looked after and cared for."²⁸ And with only "the slightest air of holding back,"²⁹ she eats her first meal with Drouet.

To Carrie, a "half-equipped little knight,"³⁰ Drouet appears as a savior in bright armor with dazzling promises. Here is warmth, good food, jolly company, money and a means to further her own ambition. "Carrie smiled and smiled."³¹ The first gift Carrie receives from Drouet is the enticement of money with which to buy new clothing. As

he covers her small hand with his large warm one and asks to be allowed to help her find her way, Carrie relents and accepts the bills Drouet gives her. The seduction is complete. Fear and cold and hunger have thus easily turned to warmth and contentment and hope.

Carrie subsequently trades sex and affection for the benefits of food, housing, and a higher social level as she and Drouet become lovers. Carrie does this instinctively, however, to preserve her well-being and to further her desire to obtain wealth and comfort for herself. Her sharp appreciation of contrasts--what she has as opposed to what "others" have--helps her overcome any feeling of regret she may experience over the loss of her virtue with Drouet. Although she is, by definition, a fallen woman by late nineteenth century standards, she is not a victim of her fall, as her financial success makes clear. Instead of suffering social or psychological repercussions from her blighted moral state, Carrie blossoms. Her relationship with Drouet enables her to develop a confidence and attractiveness which, in turn, allows her to realize a potential she might not have otherwise been capable of. Her confidence, charm, and talent help her succeed as an actress, and eventually, she no longer needs the help of others to enjoy success. Her complete emotional and sexual independence results.

Carrie's neutral sexual temperament is thus a characteristic which allows her to enjoy a certain amount of success. Unhampered by guilt or great sexual passion, Carrie drifts from circumstance to circumstance. Her involvement with George Hurstwood comes about, ironically, at Drouet's insistence. Feeling the need to show off his prize, Drouet invites the saloon-manager home. Carrie is again attentive to contrast: "Hurstwood's shoes were of soft, black calf, polished only to a dull shine. Drouet wore patent leather . . . She

noticed these things almost unconsciously."³² Compared to the boisterous, good-natured Drouet, Hurstwood is a man of quiet elegance and charm. Hurstwood gives Carrie the "impression that he wished to be of service only--to do something which would make the lady more pleased."³³ As "an apt student of fortune's ways,"³⁴ Carrie is captivated by Hurstwood; Drouet simply begins to lose his original luster.

Again made aware by the contrast of what she has, compared to what others have, Carrie's instincts take control after she meets Hurstwood. "The constant drag to something better," writes Dreiser, "was not to be denied."³⁵ When the two men begin to sense each other as rivals for Carrie's attention, however, "the object of this peculiarly involved comedy was not thinking of either. She was busy adjusting her thoughts and feelings to newer conditions, and was not in danger of suffering disturbing pangs from either quarter."³⁶ Carrie, realizing that she has managed to arouse Hurstwood's feelings toward her, begins to perceive of him as yet another opportunity for her advancement.

Carrie's full awakening to ambition occurs on Chicago's North Shore Drive, where she has gone for a carriage ride with a friend of hers and Drouet's. The mansions and landscaped lawns "appealed to her as almost nothing else could";³⁷ "She was perfectly certain that here was happiness."³⁸ Having been previously content with Drouet, the vision of wealth Carrie now sees causes a disturbing reflection: "What, after all, was Drouet? what was she?"³⁹ Carrie's awakening to the fact of solid, touchable wealth in the form of Chicago's more elegant neighborhoods coincides with the appearance of Hurstwood at her doorstep. As a conversation begins, Carrie hears "instead of . . . words, the voices of the things which he represented . . . How

feelingly did his superior state speak for itself."⁴⁰

Prodded by instinct, Carrie cautiously allows Hurstwood to assume that they can be friends. He has become aware of her desire for a life better than the one she shares with Drouet; he has even made reference to the mansions along Chicago's North Shore.⁴¹ When Hurstwood's visit is over, Carrie's mind is made up; she will allow him to court her. Dreiser contrasts Carrie's minor moral confusion over Hurstwood's probable intentions with her actions after the saloon-manager leaves her flat. As she reflects upon her desire for a wealthy lifestyle, she gazes into her mirror and begins to undress. "I don't know," she says, "what can I do."⁴² Her decision to allow the admiring Hurstwood to befriend her at the risk of sexual involvement with him disturbs her only briefly. Carrie senses, instead, the inevitability of such a relationship as she carefully removes the articles of clothing and accessories that resulted from her similar involvement with Drouet. The fact that Carrie disrobes immediately after Hurstwood leaves her is psychologically suggestive of what she is willing to do to enjoy her craving for luxury. Hurstwood, having recognized Carrie's longing for material pleasure, implicitly promises to fulfill her desire. The seduction complete, they part.

The fact of gender allows Carrie to become a kept woman, thus enabling her to exist comfortably while she builds a foundation for success. As a mistress to Drouet and then Hurstwood, Carrie has her basic needs for food, housing and clothing met, thus freeing time for other pursuits. Because of her two lovers, Carrie is introduced to the world of the theatre and her career as an actress begins. As an actress Carrie is sheltered from a condemning society; the actual world of prejudice and moral condemnation cannot injure her

substantially because, for an actress, the social rules differ from those to which conventional society adheres. As an actress she exists outside the realm of orthodox society and conventional moral codes. Carrie is able to live as a mistress in exchange for sex and affection and simultaneously nurture her personal career success. Gender provides this social leverage.

The structure of her private life, coupled with her career, protects Carrie from the reality of what she is in the mind of late nineteenth century American society, a fallen woman. Her sex and the specific advantages it entails provide her with economic and social security. The admiring solicitations of men who watch her perform both on stage and behind represent a distinct gender advantage for her. Carrie's ability to remain sexually and emotionally neutral spares her damaging entanglements with men and situations which may thwart her goals. Carrie's temperamental impartiality allows her to move from circumstance to circumstance with a relatively clear idea of her destination.

Carrie's appreciation of the contrasts between rich and poor also impels her toward success. Having arrived in Chicago with the mere basics for a short survival, she quickly comprehends, through Drouet, how little virtue will benefit her if she is to meet her goals. Unhampered by guilt and unimpeded by strong passion, Carrie, because she is temperamentally equipped to do so, progresses toward success.

III

Clyde's progress toward the realization of his financial and social goals is different from Carrie's for several reasons. Though temperament is the result of chance for both Carrie and Clyde, Clyde's characteristically weak and ineffectual nature, combined with his sexual passion, prevents him from achieving the success Carrie does. While Carrie's lack of sexual passion contributes to her success in meeting her financial goals, Clyde's sexual intensity thwarts the attainment of his goal.

Clyde is also more a victim of his past than is Carrie. Carrie is able to leave her family's home with physical and emotional finality; Clyde is never free of the influence of his father's failures. Clyde is as much haunted by his heritage as Carrie is oblivious of hers. While Carrie's childhood environment does not especially influence the majority of her actions, Clyde is motivated in his actions by much of what has happened during his childhood. Carrie arrives in Chicago naive, and fresh and in anticipation of great fortune. Clyde's arrival in Chicago is the result of a desperate act for which he is only indirectly to blame.

Finally, the social aspirations of the two differ. Because Carrie finds fulfillment as an actress, she realizes a certain amount of personal and career satisfaction. She has peers with whom she can relate and money with which to satisfy material cravings. She is

accepted by the theatre world and tolerated by society because she exists successfully outside its formal structure. Clyde finds no means of creative self-expression; and his relationship with his contemporaries is tenuous because of his shabby past. The roots of Clyde's social ambitions are therefore more complex.

Because of his experiences of deprivation, alienation and inferiority, Clyde aspires to become part of the social class of his wealthy uncle. Clyde strives to enter a monied class which never tempts Carrie. Carrie's desire is for the glamour of expensive dresses and fine accessories. She longs to become like the prosperous women she sees buying attractive clothing in Chicago's department stores. The stores represent a lifestyle of luxury, ease, and fashion for her, and to possess such articles as she sees displayed would bring her great pleasure and satisfaction in themselves. So long as she is later able to dress in a fine style as Hurstwood's mistress, she is content with his social level.

The initial emotion Dreiser associates with Clyde is loneliness. Within his large family group and within his larger social group in Kansas City, Kansas, he is a figure of alienation. Clyde's isolation will reach its most painful depth when he sits alone in his Death Row prison cell and simply weeps out of fear and confusion; the genesis of his separation from others, however, has its roots in his own family. Forced to participate with his family in religious street singing, Clyde moves "restlessly from one foot to the other, keeping his eyes down"⁴³ and his lips barely moving. He is aware of the hurrying, half-curious, half-mocking crowd of city dwellers who pass their small family group. More painfully, he has heard other youths jeer at his father and himself.

His parents' fervid belief in the rightness of their public evangelism contrasts with what Clyde sees as a result of their devotion--poverty: "God did not show any very clear way, even though there was always an extreme necessity for His favorable intervention in their affairs."⁴⁴ Bewildered and ashamed, Clyde concludes that "Plainly there was something wrong somewhere . . . [however] He could not get it all straight."⁴⁵

Clyde's alienation within his family causes him to escape the frustration and humiliation he is daily subjected to by obtaining a job. His position as a bellboy in a gaudy hotel results in an enticing experience; he is supplied with a crisp uniform and a promise of fifteen dollars a month plus tips. And his place of employment, the Green-Davidson Hotel, is nothing less than paradise: "Above him a coppered and stained and gilded ceiling. And supporting this, a veritable forest of black marble columns."⁴⁶ Clyde's realization that such a splendid world as the Green-Davidson exists within the same city as his family's drab mission-house results in a first stirring of wonder: "Could it be possible that he would be admitted to such a grand world as this--and that so speedily?"⁴⁷

Clyde's removal from his family to the garish surroundings of the Green-Davidson Hotel is significant because it awakens his curiosity about life beyond his family's safe street corner and it brings him independence and money. The most meaningful result of this change of environment, however, is more subtle. The hotel, with its impressive sense of self-importance--its shiny floors and plant-shaded alcoves, its hurrying clerks and chattering patrons--imparts a sense of belonging to Clyde. Suddenly he is not an insignificant street singer, eyes averted, mind elsewhere; now he is someone of importance, someone

who is needed and wanted, even liked. Clyde's job as a bellboy induces a psychological transformation. No longer is he a solitary outsider; instead, now, "he was to live and move always in the glorious atmosphere of this hotel."⁴⁸

Clyde's employment as a bellboy also results in his sexual awakening. His bellboy friends, sophisticated youths his own age, introduce him to the seamier side of the hotel's life, as lovely young women slip mysteriously in and out of rooms. One such woman catches his eye and affects Clyde particularly; he feels, upon sight of the blond girl, a "tingling [to] the roots of his hair."⁴⁹ Clyde is initiated into the worldly sexuality of society through wide-opened eyes; "he was insanely eager for all the pleasures which he . . . imagined he saw swirling around him."⁵⁰ When he joins his more experienced friends for a night out which is to end at a local house of prostitution, his transformation from alienated nobody to someone of significance is nearly complete. The effect of this visit upon Clyde is profound; he feels as though he has been transported to a pagan paradise: "here was beauty of a gross, fleshly character, revealed and purchasable . . . It was really quite an amazing and Aladdin-like scene to him."⁵¹ He resolves to find a "pagan girl of his own."⁵² When he meets and begins to court the opportunistic Hortense Briggs, Clyde is "thrilled and nourished by [his] mere proximity to her."⁵³ His transformation into someone of importance seems to be complete; he has the requisite pretty girl and the means with which to buy her things.

His sense of inferiority, however, continues. Hortense does not allow Clyde the sexual gratification he so desires from her; she regards him as insignificant and not worth her time. Clyde is thrown into a cycle of emotion. His sensuality causes him to yearn for

Hortense even though he realizes that she is using him selfishly; her flirtation with other young men causes him jealous anger and further sexual frustration. Finally, his barely healed feelings of inferiority surface and fester again. Clyde becomes a victim of his agitated emotions; he suffers alone and in tormented silence. His transformation is short-lived.

The turbulence Clyde experiences because of his sexual nature is due to a complex series of pre-conditions. His deprived home life inspires Clyde's nearly all-consuming hunger for pleasure and stimulation. His religiously zealous parents, eager to steer him from the very temptations he has given in to, fail to comprehend Clyde's somewhat dreamy nature. "Plainly pagan rather than religious," writes Dreiser of Clyde, "life interested him";⁵⁴ and "He was too young, his mind much too responsive to phases of beauty and pleasure"⁵⁵ to be involved for long with the stern dictates of his parents' fundamentalism. His family's moral and religious earnestness, their poverty, their dismal failure to provide even the basics, at times, for daily survival produce in Clyde a desire to escape the reality of the mission house he calls his home.

Thus the unfolding of the Green-Davidson's golden panorama of lush surroundings--easy money, good food, generous guests and fun-loving friends--activates a desire for still more pleasure in Clyde. No longer content to gaze at passing girls, he must now possess one of his own. No longer content to exist penniless, he must now purchase what he craves with the money which comes so easily. And, no longer able to bear the ridicule of other youths, he finds new friends, friends who already possess the keys to delight. Just as his mother Elvira, upon her marriage to Clyde's father, had become "inoculated with the virus

of Evangelism,"⁵⁶ so does Clyde become inoculated with the virus of pleasure: "This, then, most certainly was what it meant to be rich, to be a person of consequence in the world--to have money."⁵⁷

For Clyde sexual indulgence is a means of procuring for himself the cumulative pleasures he has craved since childhood. His affair with Hortense, however, ends in prophetic tragedy. During a gay automobile ride on an icy winter night, a small child is run over and killed. Instinctively alive to the realization that legal apprehension would mean the end of his carefree pleasure, Clyde runs from the accident scene and eventually settles in Chicago. A chance encounter with a former bellboy friend results in Clyde's obtaining of another such position, this time, however, at a professional businessmen's club. In the prestigious Union League Club Clyde is affected by the unostentatious conservatism of an establishment so unlike the Green-Davidson Hotel. In this club Clyde experiences another transformation. He feels for the first time "more subdued, less romantic, more practical."⁵⁸ He again begins to dream, but this time he dreams of becoming someone of consequence like the men he sees enjoying the understated elegance and quiet of the Union League organization. So fervently does Clyde, now three years older, wish to become such a success that he decides that sex is a "disgraceful passion,"⁵⁹ and one to which he must become indifferent. He yearns to be transported "into a world such as he had never known."⁶⁰

It is at this point in his development, his awakening to the pangs of social ambition for a lifestyle he feels is of greater value than any other, that he is most temperamentally opposite to Carrie. Carrie simply does not aim as high socially because she finds satisfaction and a sense of creative expression in the world of theatre. Clyde longs

for entrance into a paradise of social acceptance, prestige, money, and pleasure--a privilege which is reality only for those born under different stars. Because of a series of previous conditions, Clyde's aspirations to the social level he sees exemplified before him at the Union League Club are futile. Unable to perceive that his background is far too incompatible to fit in with the results of educated hard work and business acumen represented by the various club members, Clyde falls to characteristic dreaming and then belief in illusion. Although able to exist as a competent fringe member of such a social group, Clyde, because of his lack of education, money, and family influence, can only hope to become a part of it by marrying into it. Unable to perceive the full negative thrust of his biological, sociological and temperamental legacy, Clyde blunders forward. His soul, writes Dreiser, "was not destined to grow up."⁶¹

Clyde's financial and social ambitions are further stirred when he learns that, by chance, his long envied wealthy uncle, Samuel Griffiths, has arrived as a guest at the Union League Club. After a meeting is arranged, in which Samuel Griffiths is cautiously impressed with his nephew's good looks and charm, Clyde is invited to Lycurgus, New York. Having been offered a minor position in his uncle's shirt collar factory, Clyde accepts and readies himself for success. His coincidental resemblance to his cousin, Gilbert Griffiths, whets his appetite for acceptance by the New York Griffiths even more. Clyde now feels particularly destined to possess money and prestige and the freedom from responsibility those conditions of wealth represent.

Clyde's sudden good fortune in Lycurgus results in the development of two powerful forces within him, each demanding dominance. First, Clyde quickly learns that he must appear as respectable as his uncle's

family if he is to be accepted by them. The result of this perception is pride which turns to vanity. Opposed to this force which prods him into zealous respectability is his newly urgent sexual drive. Clyde's failure to understand that these two forces cannot, for him, both be satisfied if he is to succeed in Lycurgus is due to his temperamental and intellectual heritage. After he is said to have become indifferent, "cool, cold even"⁶² to the idea of sex, he is described as possessing "a disposition easily and often intensely inflamed"⁶³ by it. Thus his pride demands the pleasure of association with the wealthy Griffiths while his vanity and sexual yearnings urge him toward the women he must avoid. As a result of the two opposing forces within him, Clyde becomes caught between social expectations and internal desires for sexual fulfillment.

The "noblesse oblige" extended by his uncle produces a prophetic series of events which combine to bring about Clyde's destruction. His physical resemblance to Gilbert Griffiths opens communication with a Lycurgus socialite, Sondra Finchley, the reincarnation of the trim and lovely blond who prompted his sexual awakening at the Green-Davidson Hotel. The same Griffiths family association precipitates Clyde's affair with a factory girl, Roberta Alden. Hindered by his inability to fully anticipate the consequences of such a step, Clyde consequently becomes involved with these two very diverse women. Sondra epitomizes all the ambition-related pleasures Clyde longs for; she is a representative of the gilded world of Lycurgus wealth. Roberta represents all the pleasures which he cannot, ironically, experience with Sondra--sexual intimacy and class identification.

Clyde's renewed feelings of isolation in Lycurgus prompt his need for feminine company. Having won a coveted position with his uncle's

business, his ambition for acceptance as a member of the New York Griffiths family causes him anxiety and impatience; he continues to feel alienated. As a poor relative excluded from the circle of his uncle's family and acquaintances, Clyde "was not only puzzled but irritated by the anomalous and paradoxical contrasts which his life here presented."⁶⁴ His loneliness and frustrated vanity lead him to a solitary canoe outing on Crum Lake, which results in his meeting with Roberta. Roberta, a pretty but poor factory girl who works under Clyde's supervision at the Griffiths company, provides a temporary solace for his social and emotional pain. Clyde's deep involvement with her, however, presents a threat to his new-found respectability. With Roberta, Dreiser demonstrates the futility of Clyde's desire for inclusion in the upper class realm of Lycurgus' wealthy. For a young man of Clyde's temperament, Roberta's sweet willingness is fatal: "While Roberta was not of that high world to which he now aspired, still there was that about her which enticed him beyond measure."⁶⁵

Nowhere else in the work does Dreiser burden his protagonist with as much temperamental weight as in Clyde's relationship with Roberta Alden. Clyde's emotions toward Roberta are complex; he recognizes her innocence and her rapidly developing love for him and yet he coolly rationalizes that the friendship will not end in marriage, no matter what the consequences of their pairing. Haunted by the coquettish Hortense Briggs, Clyde yearns to become Roberta's lover against specific company rules, "For his was a feverish, urgent disposition where his dreams were concerned."⁶⁶ When Roberta offers love and affection but hesitates to become sexually involved with him, Clyde immediately becomes angry, suspecting that Roberta is teasing him as did Hortense. So infuriated is he when Roberta refuses to satisfy his

sexual cravings that he threatens to leave her. The memory of Hortense and the feelings of sexual inadequacy she inspired fuel his determination to conquer Roberta sexually: "All this, as he saw it, smacked of that long series of defeats which had accompanied his attention to Hortense Briggs."⁶⁷

Clyde enters into his relationship with Roberta with the abandon of one who knows that to be found out would be socially fatal, and to refrain would be physically agonizing. Caught between his internal drives not only for sexual satisfaction but for acceptance and intimacy--balms for his isolation--Clyde nevertheless maintains control over his heart. Though he responds to Roberta's affectionate regard for him, and though he freely indulges his sexual appetite for her, he cautiously reminds himself of his "station." Clyde's ambition does not stoop to love for Roberta; "the Griffiths would think it beneath him to be troubling with her."⁶⁸ An internal struggle ensues in which Clyde's past--his failures, his deficiencies, his deprivations--wars with his future in Lycurgus. Characteristically, Clyde blindly remains in the middle: "So great was the temperamental and physical enticement of Roberta that in spite of a warning nudge . . . that seemed to hint that it was dangerous for him to persist,"⁶⁹ he persists with her, "the desire . . . being all but overpowering."⁷⁰ And his fate is set into motion.

Clyde's sexual triumph over Roberta's pleas for moderation results, again, in a transformation: "I am no longer the inexperienced, neglected simpleton of but a few weeks ago, but am an individual of import now,"⁷¹ says Clyde of his new-found confidence. His characteristic tendency to conform to what Dreiser refers to as "the Don Juan or Lothario stripe"⁷² is even more of a misfortune for

him when he meets, by chance, Sondra Finchley. Because she mistakes him for his cousin Gilbert Griffiths, Sondra initiates a meeting with Clyde. This event catapults his emotions to further heights, for the sparkling Miss Finchley is the personification of all that Clyde has desired since his earliest materialistic remembrances. Sondra is "the one girl of this upper level who had most materialized and magnified for him the meaning of that upper level itself."⁷³ As Sondra elicits from Clyde the devotion and attentiveness of one who worships an ideal, her emotion toward him changes from one of curiosity to one of guarded affection. In return, as Clyde is taken cautiously into the giddy circle of Sondra's wealthy friends, Clyde begins to believe that his dream of social rising and wealth will come true. Again, Clyde experiences the heady emotion of acceptance: "he felt," writes Dreiser, of Clyde's association with Sondra, "as though he were slowly but surely being transported to paradise."⁷⁴

Through the two women, Roberta and Sondra, Clyde experiences the full effects of his temperamental burden. Unable to stay free of the sexual satisfaction which Roberta provides, Clyde gives in to his passion. Unable to resist the siren call of a possible future marriage in to the Finchley family should Sondra's vanity request it, he gives into the illusion that he can possess both Roberta and Sondra simultaneously. When his feelings for Roberta finally erode in light of Sondra's growing affection, he discovers Roberta's pregnancy. Desperation and panic ensue; Clyde feverishly begins to contemplate murder. On an isolated mountain lake where he has tricked Roberta into joining him for a boat ride, the canoe accidentally overturns and Roberta falls into the deep water. Heedless of her pleas for help Clyde allows Roberta to drown. Later, bewildered and once again alone,

Clyde is condemned to die in the electric chair.

IV

"We're moved about like chessmen by circumstances over which we have no control . . . The best we can do is to hold our personality intact."⁷⁵ This conclusion, from Dreiser's Jennie Gerhardt, that the individual is helpless, except for his or her own character strengths and weaknesses, forms the backbone of both Sister Carrie and An American Tragedy. Carrie very quickly understands that to live virtuously and honorably, to struggle humbly and honestly, may reward her only with poverty. Her sister Minnie's dismal existence in Chicago demonstrates this fact only too graphically for her. If she is to surmount the obstacles of her past, her family's poverty, her lack of education and money, she must become like those who seem so successful. And once she arrives in Chicago, Carrie proceeds on the premise that success will come if she plays a more sophisticated game; she assumes the cosmopolitan standards of the city she has fallen in love with.

Donald Pizer, in an analysis of Dreiser's naturalism, reflects upon the underlying assumption Dreiser had formulated by the time he composed Sister Carrie. "Individuals," states Pizer, in reference to the universe Dreiser created for his characters, "counted for little in this process, but individuals of different temperaments might respond to the mechanism of life in different ways."⁷⁶ Carrie, arriving in Chicago and ready to confront her dream, possesses a virtual "tabula

rosa" temperamentally. She has suffered some small regrets at breaking ties with home and childhood, but so strongly is she determined to immerse herself in the glorious city which beckons to her with lights and sounds and pulsations of success that she is never unduly influenced by her disadvantageous former environment. The first emotion she experiences, after rural Wisconsin recedes into her past, is envy. On the train heading for Chicago, as she studies the colorful attire of the young salesman who has been gazing at her, Carrie feels the first of many twinges of shame and envy. She is outfitted so poorly, the eager young man so splendidly. What will it take for her to dress so becomingly, to appear so confident and polished? Temperamentally able to decide quickly what she wants and how to obtain it, Carrie enters the city with her mind set to succeed.

Carrie attains her desires for wealth and social status because she is able to compromise her moral beliefs. The sight of Drouet's fashionable attire, his general air of success, and his obvious possession of money convince her that shyness and reluctance may cause her to lose his attention. With the loss of Drouet would go the chance of proceeding toward her desire for luxurious possessions. Thus she becomes Drouet's mistress, although she wants him to marry her. When Hurstwood implicitly offers her finer rewards plus marriage in exchange for her affection, Carrie is ready to leave Drouet. Carrie does not learn until later in their relationship that Hurstwood already has a wife in Chicago. Carrie modifies her moral beliefs in order to obtain her goals, but always with the desire to become a married woman.

A stranger to the sophisticated see-and-be-seen strategies for success and social advancement of Drouet, Carrie simply progresses without complex maneuvers. She speaks little; reflective and

introspective powers are not a part of her temperament. Carrie listens, however, and observes, and therefore learns that by participating in certain situations she can move always closer to her goals. Thus, she avoids agonizing soul-searching over her decisions to become Drouet's and then Hurstwood's lover. When she sees that her initial reluctance to accept Drouet's two ten dollar bills was foolish in light of what such action subsequently earns for her, she can accept Hurstwood's tactful promise to take care of her more readily and far less self-consciously.

Carrie's apparent lack of sexual passion is also a positive aspect of her temperament. Her seeming innocence encourages the admiration of her two lovers; her child-like lack of sexual sophistication combined with her uncalculating allure for successful Chicago men serves her well. "Carrie," suggests F.O. Matthiessen, "is passive rather than active, receptive rather than aggressive."⁷⁷ Her adventure in Chicago benefits her materially and socially because, with her flexible temperament she is able to follow wherever and however success calls to her. She attempts no perilous entrance into social circles which might reject her; she obtains her income as an actress honestly. She makes no demands of the men who willingly support her, and once she leaves them she remains unhostile toward them. Carrie is never victimized because she interacts so neutrally with those in the best position to victimize her. If she is a victim of anything, it is of the illusion that money guarantees happiness, for, as Dreiser points out, happiness and success are not the same.

In 1920, five years before the publication of An American Tragedy, Dreiser reflected that "the most effective illustration of the essential nothingness of man is his plain individual weakness . . . as

contrasted with his mass ideals and huge vanity or tendency towards romance which causes him to wish to seem more than he really is or can ever hope to be."⁷⁸ In 1925, Dreiser would epitomize this philosophy with Clyde Griffiths, the protagonist who strives to step out and away from a biological and environmental heritage which clings to him with fatal tenacity.

In contrast to Carrie, Clyde is a dreamy sensualist who despises the ineffective idealism of his family while he participates in the same type of illusion. He leaves his home with no bargaining tool with which to make his way in a society which seems to run effortlessly its course toward success. His arrival in Chicago is not highlighted, as is Carrie's, with a sense of breathless excitement and anticipation of fortune. Clyde, in Chicago, is a fugitive; he has run from the scene of an accident in which a person was killed. His first weeks in the city of Carrie's dreams are spent in hiding and misery.

Clyde's temperament, by the time he escapes the stifling frustration of Kansas City, has already damned him. Because he mixes his craving for material goods with the desire for sexual satisfaction, he becomes involved with Hortense, the first of several women who will reinforce his feelings of desperate inferiority and desire for physical mastery. His humiliation with Hortense haunts him and results in his eventual avenging of sexual anger with Roberta. When he meets Sondra, his desire for money and acceptance by her and the privileged class to which she belongs has virtually replaced the need for sexual satisfaction and physical affection; Clyde is, in Lycurgus, a reckless puppet of Mammon. His fervid worship of money and the goddess, Sondra, who represents it, drives him to contemplate murder. Almost before he realizes it, Roberta is dead and Sondra is gone.

With Sister Carrie and An American Tragedy Dreiser establishes his contention that beauty and cruelty can simultaneously exist in life when it is ruled over by such an incalculable element as chance. Because of the temperament he has inherited, Clyde is, as Ellen Moers refers to him, "a static, sterile creature incapable of growth."⁷⁹ Carrie's temperament, however, allows her to experience a measure of growth and self-expression which tempers the materialistic longings she possesses in common with Clyde. Thus Carrie is able to blossom while Clyde remains in bondage to his ambition for position and money. To Dreiser, writes Donald Pizer, "there was only the reality of distinctive temperaments."⁸⁰ Pizer concludes by observing that "Dreiser's infamous philosophical inconsistency is thus frequently a product of his belief that life is a 'puzzle' to which one can respond in different ways, depending on one's makeup and experience."⁸¹ A comparison of Sister Carrie and An American Tragedy thus illuminates the central importance of Dreiser's philosophy of temperament.

NOTES

¹James Lundquist, in his chapter on "Dreiser's Men", notes a slight change in Dreiser's style and viewpoint after Sister Carrie (1900) and Jennie Gerhardt (1911). Lundquist writes that Dreiser first wrote of himself and his family "only indirectly, choosing women as his central characters, and developing his stories with some measure of control, if not absolute economy." After his first two works, which feature women as protagonists, "Dreiser puts more of himself in his books, choosing men as central characters and writing much more prolixly." Lundquist infers from this shift of point of view from feminine to masculine that it "brought out a side of Dreiser that is not so apparent in his early work--his sentimentality. This trait is, of course, a factor in the duality basic to Dreiser's life and accomplishment; he was a sentimentalist despite the moral detachment he strove to affect . . . Dreiser's reactions to the feelings of his protagonists undergo a change in the direction of increased sympathy." James Lundquist, Theodore Dreiser (New York: Frederick Unger Publishing Co., 1974) 54.

²Thomas Henry Huxley, 1825-95, and Herbert Spencer, 1820-1903, English biologist and educator, and English philosopher, respectively. Together with Charles Darwin, they popularized and encouraged the acceptance of the theory of evolution. Spencer's work, Synthetic Philosophy, applies the principles of evolutionary progress to all branches of knowledge. Huxley, an agnostic, questioned the validity of all things not open to logical analysis and scientific verification.

³W. A. Swanberg, Dreiser (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1965) 60.

⁴Swanberg, 61.

⁵Theodore Dreiser, Hey Rub-A-Dub-Dub! A Book Of The Mystery And Wonder And Terror Of Life (New York: Boni and Liveright Inc., 1920) 8-9.

⁶Dreiser Rub, 10.

⁷Dreiser Rub, 10.

⁸Dreiser Rub, 18.

⁹Swanberg, 83.

¹⁰Theodore Dreiser, Sister Carrie (New York: The New American Library Inc., 1961) 7.

- 11 Dreiser Carrie, 7.
- 12 Dreiser Carrie, 7.
- 13 Dreiser Carrie, 9.
- 14 Dreiser Carrie, 61.
- 15 Dreiser Carrie, 63.
- 16 Dreiser Carrie, 63.
- 17 Dreiser Carrie, 99.
- 18 Dreiser Carrie, 11.
- 19 Dreiser Carrie, 11.
- 20 Dreiser Carrie, 11.
- 21 Dreiser Carrie, 11.
- 22 Dreiser Carrie, 17.
- 23 Dreiser Carrie, 18.
- 24 Dreiser Carrie, 27.
- 25 Dreiser Carrie, 58.
- 26 Dreiser Carrie, 58.
- 27 Dreiser Carrie, 59.
- 28 Dreiser Carrie, 58.
- 29 Dreiser Carrie, 58.
- 30 Dreiser Carrie, 8.
- 31 Dreiser Carrie, 59.
- 32 Dreiser Carrie, 95.
- 33 Dreiser Carrie, 94.
- 34 Dreiser Carrie, 99.
- 35 Dreiser Carrie, 101.
- 36 Dreiser Carrie, 106.
- 37 Dreiser Carrie, 112.
- 38 Dreiser Carrie, 113.

- ³⁹ Dreiser Carrie, 113.
- ⁴⁰ Dreiser Carrie, 115.
- ⁴¹ Dreiser Carrie, 115.
- ⁴² Dreiser Carrie, 117.
- ⁴³ Theodore Dreiser, An American Tragedy (New York: The World Publishing Company, 1948) 17.
- ⁴⁴ Dreiser Tragedy, 18.
- ⁴⁵ Dreiser Tragedy, 18.
- ⁴⁶ Dreiser Tragedy, 41-42
- ⁴⁷ Dreiser Tragedy, 44.
- ⁴⁸ Dreiser Tragedy, 50.
- ⁴⁹ Dreiser Tragedy, 60.
- ⁵⁰ Dreiser Tragedy, 61.
- ⁵¹ Dreiser Tragedy, 78.
- ⁵² Dreiser Tragedy, 82.
- ⁵³ Dreiser Tragedy, 98.
- ⁵⁴ Dreiser Tragedy, 17.
- ⁵⁵ Dreiser Tragedy, 17.
- ⁵⁶ Dreiser Tragedy, 25.
- ⁵⁷ Dreiser Tragedy, 58.
- ⁵⁸ Dreiser Tragedy, 189.
- ⁵⁹ Dreiser Tragedy, 189.
- ⁶⁰ Dreiser Tragedy, 189.
- ⁶¹ Dreiser Tragedy, 189.
- ⁶² Dreiser Tragedy, 258.
- ⁶³ Dreiser Tragedy, 263.
- ⁶⁴ Dreiser Tragedy, 280.
- ⁶⁵ Dreiser Tragedy, 280.

⁶⁶ Dreiser Tragedy, 320.

⁶⁷ Dreiser Tragedy, 326.

⁶⁸ Dreiser Tragedy, 322.

⁶⁹ Dreiser Tragedy, 324.

⁷⁰ Dreiser Tragedy, 324.

⁷¹ Dreiser Tragedy, 329.

⁷² Dreiser Tragedy, 329.

⁷³ Dreiser Tragedy, 338.

⁷⁴ Dreiser Tragedy, 353.

⁷⁵ Jennie Gerhardt (1911) is Dreiser's story of a young woman who is victimized by the accident of her low birth. Though intelligent, sensitive, and loving, Jennie is defeated by forces which Dreiser attributes to the nature of the universe of which man is a part. Jennie Gerhardt, as well as Sister Carrie and An American Tragedy, demonstrates Dreiser's belief that the individual is at the mercy of external and internal forces which deprive him of his freedom to control his life. Theodore Dreiser, Jennie Gerhardt A Novel (New York: Schocken Books, 1982) 342.

⁷⁶ Donald Pizer, "American Literary Naturalism: The Example of Dreiser," Studies in American Fiction 5-6 (1977-1978) 58.

⁷⁷ F. O. Matthiessen, "A Picture of Conditions," Critical Essays on Theodore Dreiser, ed. Donald Pizer (Boston: G. K. Hall & Co., 1981) 176.

⁷⁸ Dreiser Rub, 242.

⁷⁹ Ellen Moers, Two Dreisers (New York: The Viking Press, 1969) 229.

⁸⁰ Pizer Studies, 58.

⁸¹ Pizer Studies, 58.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Dreiser, Theodore. An American Tragedy. New York: The World Publishing Company, 1948.
- _____. Dawn: A History of Myself. New York: Horace Liveright, Inc., 1931.
- _____. Hey Rub-A-Dub-Dub! A Book Of The Mystery And Wonder And Terror Of Life. New York: Boni and Liveright Inc., 1920.
- _____. Jennie Gerhardt A Novel. New York: Schocken Books, 1982.
- _____. Notes on Life. ed. Marguerite Tjader and John J. McAleer. Alabama: The University of Alabama Press, 1974.
- _____. Sister Carrie. New York: The New American Library Inc., 1961.
- Elias, Robert H., ed. Letters of Theodore Dreiser. 3 Vols. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1959.
- _____. Theodore Dreiser: Apostle of Nature. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1970.
- Forrey, Robert. "Theodore Dreiser: Oedipus Redivivus." Modern Fiction Studies 23 (1977): 341-354.
- Gerber, Philip L. Theodore Dreiser. New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1964.
- Hussman, Lawrence E. Jr. Dreiser and His Fiction A Twentieth-Century Quest. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983.
- Kazin, Alfred and Charles Shapiro. The Stature of Theodore Dreiser. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1955.
- Lehan, Richard. Theodore Dreiser His World And His Novels. Carbondale Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 1969.
- Lundquist, James. Theodore Dreiser. New York: Frederick Unger Publishing Co., 1974.
- Lydenberg, John. ed. Dreiser A Collection of Critical Essays. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1971.

- Matthiessen, F. O. Theodore Dreiser. N.p.: William Sloane Associates, Inc., 1951.
- McAleer, John J. Theodore Dreiser Introduction and Interpretation. New York: Barnes and Noble, Inc., 1968.
- Moers, Ellen. Two Dreisers. New York: The Viking Press, 1969.
- Morgan, H. Wayne. American Writers in Rebellion From Mark Twain to Dreiser. New York: Hill and Wang, 1965.
- Orlov, Paul A. "The Subversion of the Self: Anti-Naturalistic Crux in An American Tragedy." Modern Fiction Studies 23 (1977): 457-472.
- Pizer, Donald ed. Critical Essays on Theodore Dreiser. Boston: G.K.Hall & Co., 1981.
- _____. "American Literary Naturalism: The Example of Dreiser." Studies in American Fiction 5-6 (1977-1978): 51-63.
- Riggio, Thomas P. ed. Theodore Dreiser American Diaries 1902-1926. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1982.
- Salzman, Jack ed. The Merrill Studies in An American Tragedy. Columbus Ohio: Charles E. Merrill Publishing Co., 1971.
- Spiller, Robert E. The Cycle of American Literature An Essay in Historical Criticism. New York: The New American Library, 1963.
- Swanberg, W. A. Dreiser. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1965.
- Thorp, Willard. Afterword. Sister Carrie. By Theodore Dreiser. New York: The New American Library Inc., 1961.
- Westbrook, Max. "Dreiser's Defense of Carrie Meeber". Modern Fiction Studies 23 (1977): 381-393.

VITA

Christine H. Seifert

Born in Nuremburg, West Germany, March 10, 1949. Graduated from Christopher Newport College in May 1984 with B.A. in English. M.A. candidate, College of William and Mary, 1984-1986 with concentration in English and American Literature. Selected for membership in Who's Who Among Students in American Universities and Colleges in 1984.