

English Department
Faculty of Arts
Ain-Shams University

**A Comparative Study of
Thomas Hardy and Theodore Dreiser
With Reference to
Tess of the D'Urberville\Sister Carrie
and
Jude the Obscure\An American Tragedy**



A Thesis
submitted to the Faculty of Arts,
Ain Shams University
for the Degree of Master of Arts

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By

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Under the Supervision of

**Professor
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To the Soul of My Beloved Father

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Preface

This study attempts to examine and analyze four novels of two eminent novelists, namely Thomas Hardy and Theodore Dreiser, with the object of finding out the similarities and dissimilarities between them, especially their attitude towards the dilemma of human existence. Owing to their complexity and rich symbolical suggestiveness, the novels of these two writers have presented a field of interest to contemporary critics and readers.

The subject of this thesis required an extensive reading and study of British as well as American background and literature. What seemed intriguing about the similarity between Hardy and Dreiser was the fact that the two novelists' life-long interest was oriented towards the depiction of one situation : that is, the helplessness of human nature. Also the analogy between the two novelists required the necessity of delving into many aspects of their personal lives. The study of their biographical data reveals many other aspects of their lives which, in turn, affected their intellect and mode of expression.

Dreiser and Hardy shared a pessimistic view; both faced certain personal problems as well as social frustrations. Throughout their novels, they emphasized the maladjustment between man and his surroundings, and his vain attempt to achieve his aim. They were made conscious of man's helplessness and responded to human sufferings. They both agreed that human miseries and calamities were fated beforehand by an unknown power. According to Hardy and Dreiser man's purpose always clashes with the motives of a mysterious unknown fate. He is doomed to face unpredictable circumstances which reveal his weakness and lead to misfortune. He struggles against forces which rule the world, and meanwhile are passive and indifferent to his frustration and disappointment. Thus

they both stressed determinism and depicted human existence as a tragedy determined by power beyond the individual's control, in particular pressures of society and the compulsions of character.

The thesis aims at unravelling the idiosyncrasies and special qualities of these two great novelists especially with regard to their particular views in *Tess of the D'Urberville* / *Sister Carrie* and *Jude the Obscure* / *An American Tragedy*. The four novels selected for this study are all to a certain extent naturalistic novels, which offer common ground for the elucidation of principles and methods of composition. These particular novels have been selected for discussion because of their glaring pervasive determinism which reveals the two writers' views of human behavior.

The study of the personal background of each writer reveals the dimensions of the tragic deterministic vision. The thesis has been divided into four chapters which aim at giving a detailed thematic, character and technical examination of the four novels under discussion. Each chapter deals with the two novelists together with the intention of facilitating the process of comparison and contrast.

Chapter One, "*Thomas Hardy and Theodore Dreiser Background and Literary Influences*" proceeds to examine carefully the direct and indirect influences related to the personal and public life of each novelist. It deals with literary influences, the social environment and the family members giving a comprehensive impact of all these elements on shaping their views on life and the human dilemma.

Chapter Two, "*The Fallen Woman in Tess of the D'Urberville and Sister Carrie*," holds a close comparison between the two novels and discusses the concept of "The Fallen Woman". The two writers were interested in the subject of the simple village girl who falls a victim of sin, yet each one has his own angle of

treatment.

Chapter Three, "*Rebellion and Alienation in Jude the Obscure and An American Tragedy*," explores the two writers' concern in the psychological complexities of modern man in an industrialized materialistic society. The social, economic and cultural changes have a profound effect on the modes of the characters. In their search for identity, and in their attempt to attain a goal, they are hampered by fixed social norms, which they try to fight against.

In order to reach a more accurate and comprehensive appreciation of the two novelists, the thesis traces the development in technique, especially in the four novels mentioned above. Chapter Four performs this task. It also attempts a comparison and a contrast between the main technical features characterizing the two writers, such as the structure, the dominant imagery, the choice of language and the symbolism employed throughout their works.

