Frederic Jameson's Determinism and Modern Antiheros: A Case Study of Theodore Dreiser's Novels

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Abstract

Frederic Jameson one of the greatest philosophers with so many ideas about postmodern society, determinism and social situations has a great influence on the modern and postmodern literary criticism which have mingled and mixed with social, psychological, and economic views. The theme of determinism and existence of antihero are not separable from socialistic, Marxist ,postmodern literary criticism since these elements are the main structures of modern and postmodern literatures which their heroes are adoptable with Aristotelian views about traditional and cliché heroes such as Oedipus ,Ulysses and others. The characters of T. Dreiser's masterpieces (An American Tragedy and Sister Carrie) can be analyzed for showing that these characters in modern literature do not follow Aristotelian patterns and frameworks about traditional and cliché heroes and they are dominated and social, psychological, economical and ethical restrictions and can be called gods' modern puppets

Keywords: Antihero, Determinism, Jameson, Deriser, American Tragey, Sister Carrie

INTRODUCTION

The study tries to answer to this question about effect of determinism on heroes' real life and antiheroes of modern and postmodern literary characteristic can be socially analyzed according to the Fredric Jameson postmodern sociological ideas. Since American literature and naturalism in American literature has an outstanding position and has a great influence on next century literature, this study tries to show its important impact based on modern, postmodern, Jameson's sociological ideas and according to new concepts that rarely has been studied by Iranian students. Concepts such as antiheroes, determinism and somehow existentialist views that the readers can find in Dreiser's masterpieces: *American Tragedy* and *Sister Carrie.*

Sister Carrie and American Tragedy as modern literary American masterpieces have been chosen for studying and analyzing of some new concepts such as determinism which are dominant. On antiheroes (not as traditional heroes) who are not a common theme of

study in Iranian foreign language collogues .The aim of this study is clarification and in detail analyzing of the modern concepts that Dreiser has used in his two literary masterpieces which are known as literary criteria in literary studying. This study tries to highlight the main features of postmodern social forces which have been dominated on antiheroes' (heroes) lives. It thoroughly applies: Jameson's philosophical and sociological ideas on these masterpieces .The focus of this study is on elaborating on the themes of antihero and determinism.

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). In 1930 he was nominated to the Nobel Prize in Literature. John Dreiser was a German immigrant from Mayen in the Eifel region, and Sarah was from the Mennonite farming community near Dayton, Ohio. Her family disowned her for converting to Roman Catholicism in order to marry John Dreiser. Theodore was the twelfth of thirteen children (the ninth of the ten surviving). After graduating from high school in Warsaw, Indiana, Dreiser attended Indiana University in the years 1889– 1890 before dropping out. After proposing in 1893, he married Sara Osborne 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 colleague, but were never formally divorced. In 1913, he began a romantic relationship with the actress and painter Kyra Markham (who was much younger than he). Dreiser later became an atheist.

In *Sister Carrie*, Dreiser portrayed a changing society, writing about a young woman who flees rural life for the city (Chicago) and struggles with poverty, complex relationships with men, and prostitution. It sold poorly and was considered controversial because of moral objections to his featuring a country girl who pursues her dreams of fame and fortune through relationships with men. The book has acquired a considerable reputation. It has been called the "greatest of all American urban novels."

Determinism

To ask about the meaning of life seems, at least in part, to ask something about the purpose or point of human existence and many philosophers have thought that, absent a particular theistic metaphysics, the answer to such questions is fairly obvious. Only God, it might be claimed, could give meaning to life in this sense and, of course, this is not a line of thought that is attractive to secular philosophers. Moreover, Honderich explicitly rejects the idea that his talk of life-hopes or more generally, of a philosophy of life is supposed to address the question of the meaning of life.

When introducing the 'problem of determinism' to readers, many philosophers highlight the fact that, pre-philosophically, one may be inclined to see the truth of determinism as a threat to important conceptions of our lives, and of ourselves, including the conception that his/her lives can be meaningful. At first glance, at least, the truth of determinism seems to entail that we are but cogs in a larger causal machine and one

seems to invest nothing in our actions and in our lives; our lives will turn out just as they will turn out.

The traditional view makes it rather easy to understand the philosophical problems surrounding freedom and determinism, for free will is also a likely candidate for the more basic metaphysical freedom. According to the traditionalist, there are not three distinct kinds of freedom—metaphysical freedom, moral freedom, and free will. There is only one kind of freedom, free will, and it is essential to moral praiseworthiness and blameworthiness. So far we have been discussing various problems for what is considered free will.

In Sisyphus there is a combination of the requirements of transcendent accounts of meaningfulness with the kind of agential involvement suggested by real-self theories. Unlike Sisyphus, where Sisyphus's desires, intentions, and motivations were at odds with his activity, in Sisyphus we have exactly the right kind of 'mesh' between Sisyphus's motivational and evaluative structures that real-self theorists would suggest is sufficient for
the relevant activities to be meaning-conferring to Sisyphus's life.

What 'freedom' means here is nothing but the absence of certain conditions the presence of which would make moral condemnation or punishment inappropriate. They have in mind conditions like compulsion by another, or innate incapacity, or insanity, or other less extreme forms of psychological disorder, or the existence of circumstances in which the making of any other choice would be morally inadmissible or would be too much to expect of any man.

Antihero

The hero was a character who behaved "in an extraordinary fashion, acting outside, above, or in disregard to normal patterns of behavior, especially in putting his or her life at risk". (Miller, 2000: 1) The traditional hero was, therefore, synonymous of moral value and generally speaking, had the law on his side. The anti-hero, instead, cannot exactly be considered a virtuous figure, but not even as completely opposed to the hero. Indeed, as Cristopher Vogler states in "The Writer's Journey, Mythic Structure for Writers."

Anti-hero is a slippery term that can cause a lot of confusion. Simply stated, an Anti-hero is not the opposite of a Hero, but a specialized kind of Hero, one who may be an outlaw or a villain form the point of view of society, but with whom the audience is basically is sympathy. (Vogler 1998, 34)

An Antihero is the principal character of a modern literary or dramatic work who lacks the attributes of the traditional protagonist or hero. The anti-hero's lack of courage, honesty, or grace, his weaknesses and confusions, often reflect modern man's ambivalence toward traditional moral and social virtues. According to the Wikipedia In fiction, an anti-hero is a protagonist who is lacking the traditional heroic attributes and qualities, and instead possesses character traits that are antithetical to heroism. Typically, the anti-hero acts heroically, in scale and daring, but by methods, manners, and intentions fair and foul, even underhanded and deceitful.

An antihero is an outsider - a figure in a particular conflict with the generally accepted norms and forms of social life, the term s "antihero" and "outsider" are not interchangeable. The latter word has extensive sociological and philosophical connotations .the antihero is not simply a rogue or villain devoid of principles. If the antihero is antiheroic, then this heroism is not just negated, but also affirmed. In this case, the lack of heroic traits reveals a longing for heroism; undermining of generally accepted moral principles at the same time shows a longing for these principles.

American Tragedy

Dreiser created a poignant yet powerful novel of youthful loneliness in industrial society and of the American mirage that beckons some of the young to disaster.

Ambitious, but ill-educated, naïve, and immature, Clyde Griffiths is raised by poor and devoutly religious parents to help in their street missionary work. As a young adult, Clyde must, to help support his family, take menial jobs as a soda jerk, then a bellhop at a prestigious Kansas City hotel. There, his more sophisticated colleagues introduce him to bouts of social drinking and sex with some of the hotel's female guests and with prostitutes.

Fredric Jameson is an American literary critic and Marxist political theorist, that his theories are usable in multicultural and multilevel society of America. He is best known for his analysis of contemporary cultural trends—he once described postmodernism as the spatialization of culture under the pressure of organized capitalism. As Dreiser`s novels cannot be analyzed without socialist analysis, Fredric Jameson is one of the best critic. Jameson's best-known books include Postmodernism: The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism, The Political Unconscious, and Marxism and Form.

Fredric Jameson and postmodernism

Postmodernism describes a broad movement that developed in the mid- to late-20th century across philosophy, the arts, architecture, and criticism and that marked a departure from modernism .The term has also more generally been applied to the historical era following modernity, and the tendencies of this era.

 While encompassing a disparate variety of approaches, postmodernism is typically defined by an attitude of skepticism, irony, or rejection toward the meta-narratives and ideologies of modernism, and often calls into question various assumptions of Enlightenment rationality.

Modernism was the culture of monopoly capitalism. Postmodernism is the culture of multinational late capitalism. Jameson titled his major book on the subject. This does not mean that everything in our culture today is postmodern. There are still many leftover elements of modern culture with us. There may also be newly emerging seeds of some future cultural forms beyond postmodernism. But postmodernism is the dominant force in our culture. It is a force that everything—and everybody—must deal with. Just as capitalism tries to bring all the forces of production under its control, so postmodernism is trying to bring all of culture under its control. In fact postmodernism is the cultural arm of today's capitalism.

Postmodern society

It was in 1984 that Jameson's article "Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism" for the first time appeared in The New Left Review. Later on, it was published in the book form with adequate enlargement in 1991. It is here that he has attempted to give a clear image of a postmodern society.

It is a superficial and depthless society: Jameson says that the postmodern society lives on the surface images for a while. Whatever is produced by this society are largely surface images. They do not go deep into underlying meanings. When Baudrillard says that it is simulation or carbon copy society, it means that this society has no reality. Jameson is in close company with Baudrillard when he labels this society as lacking in depth.

Jameson has thus tried to give an image of a postmodern society. There is nothing stable in this society. Basically, the postmodern society is a capitalist society. This society has developed a pattern of culture, which is specific to it only. When Jameson talks about capitalist culture, he often cites the examples of paintings and buildings He is fond of mentioning pastiche, only to show that postmodern culture involves a lot of purchasing power. Commenting upon the image of postmodern society given by Jameson, Ritzer (1997) writes:

Jameson has tried to give an image of postmodern society in which people are adrift in, and unable to comprehend, the multinational capitalist system or the explosively growing culture in which they live. Thus, for Jameson, postmodernity is adrift and multinational capitalist system.

Fredric Jameson and Marxism

Marxism is a method of socioeconomic analysis that frames capitalism through a paradigm of exploitation, analyzes class relations and social conflict using a materialist interpretation of historical development and takes a dialectical view of social transformation. It originates from the works of 19th century German philosophers Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels.

Fredric Jameson and Determinism

Kant's critical philosophy had already assigned its ultimate limits to the universality to which middle-class rationalism had aspired. (For Kant, of course, these limits are not those of middle-class thought alone, but of the human mind in general: but this ahistorical manner of posing the problem only marks his profound identification with the type of thought he is studying.)(pishkar,2007) According to Kant, the mind can understand everything about external reality except the incomprehensible and contingent fact of its existence in the first place: it can deal exhaustively with its own perceptions of reality without ever being able to come to terms with noumena, or things-in-themselves.

F. Jameson find ways to challenge isolation and solipsism, and attack the hiding places of exploitation and boredom. And both hint that the fuzzy, almost shapeless anxieties they name — a pervasive loneliness, entrapment, complacency, the surprising ways alienation can sneak up on them — are the emotional resonance of a much larger contradiction, an echo of changes in the world that have outpaced the techniques for describing them.

When Caroline Meeber boarded the afternoon train for Chicago, her total outfit consisted of a small trunk, a cheap imitation alligator-skin satchel, a small lunch in a paper box, and a yellow leather snap purse, containing her ticket, a scrap of paper with her sister's address in Van Buren Street, and four dollars in money. (p.7)

There is loss of historicity: The pastiche gains importance:

Postmodernity, Jameson says, rejects history. Take the case of texts which talk about the past. But modernity abandons the past and gives new meaning of texts. Post-modernity does not believe in the continuity of history and, therefore, all history is an end in itself Instead of history, postmodernism often refers to pastiche. Pastiche means a literary, artistic, musical work that imitates the style of a previous work.

The figure of the antihero does not come from nowhere: i.e., it possesses a wide literary historical tradition. The Russian scholar Valentin Khalizev cites as the first antihero Thersites from Homer's Iliad - the opponent of Achilles and Odysseus, a caricatured and tragicomic character appearing against the aristocratic order in the name of the deprived rights of the commoners. it should be pointed that the first historical feature of the antihero would have been a carnivalized image. This is something that certain protagonists of ancient or later hero-comic poems and comedies have. One perceives the way of thinking and characters of these characters in clear opposition to the model of culture applying in the given historical period. Aristotle emphasized the sphere of their actions through which the character (ethos) and ways of thinking (dianoia) of the heroes are externalized. The antihero is passive.

She was eighteen years of age, bright, timid, and full of the illusions of ignorance and youth. (p.7) Whatever touches of regret at parting characterized her thoughts; it was certainly not for advantages now being given up. (p.7) until her swifter thoughts replaced its impression with vague conjectures of what Chicago might be. (P.8)

Due to Aristotle's theory about hero, the characters should be so dignified and distinguished in the society but Carrie is not in this frame and does not follow these patterns so she is not a heroine and she is a common, young, beautiful individual who has not any features to be a heroine.

Determinists believe that much of what happens to us is outside of our control. A specific set of circumstances shapes each and every one of our actions, which in turn determines what happens to us. Determinists tend not to believe in the concept of free will, or our ability to make our own choices and guide the course of our lives. With free will, we can choose
outcomes. Determinists believe that this is not possible because our outcomes and circumstances are already decided for us. When a girl leaves her 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. (p.8) (determinism-Jameson) of an intermediate balance, under the circumstances, there is no possibility. The city has its cunning wiles, no less than the infinitely smaller and more human

A sense of cultural apocalypse deals with modern man who tries to be hero but cannot because she lacks the Aristotelian's features of hero and because of this Carrie lacks these features and she is considered as a half knight who "is dreaming wild dreams of some vague."

He is a Marxist cultural theorist. Marxism is not about how one vote; it's about how one sees the world and its modes of production. He believes that reading and interpretation must take place from a political perspective. Jameson produced many important critiques of opposing theoretical. Jameson believes that neo-Marxist theoretical perspectives are dominant features of modern society. Jameson argues that it is a mistake to evaluate a phenomenon without also understanding its relationship to the social circumstances where it first arose, what he calls its "original polemic situations."

He came within the meaning of a still newer term, which had sprung into general use among Americans in 1880, and which concisely expressed the thought of one whose dress or manners are calculated to elicit the admiration of susceptible young women—a "masher."(p.11) (Determinism)

He was, for the order of intellect represented, attractive, and whatever he had to recommend him, you may be sure was not lost upon Carrie, in this, her first glance. (p.12) (Determinism- Jameson)

There is another line at which the dress of a man will cause her to study her own. This line the individual at her elbow now marked for Carrie. *She became conscious of an inequality*. Her own plain blue dress, with its black cotton tape trimmings, now seemed to her shabby. She felt the worn state of her shoes. (P.13-14)

In modern society intellectuality and wisdom will not be considered as the features and characteristics of modern heroes who they must encounter with modern social problems and barriers because these heroes are common Man who lives in common society without any special features which need to produce superhuman to solve super problems (Pishkar,2012).

Jameson argues for the primacy of Marxism on the grounds that its horizon - history and the socio-economic totality - provide the most comprehensive framework in which gender, race, class, sexuality, myth, symbol, allegory, and other more limited concerns can be explored and interpreted. His work as a whole should be read as a series of attempts to provide a Marxian method of interpretation and aesthetic theory.

Jameson has characteristically appropriated a wide range of theoretical positions ranging from structuralism to post-structuralism, and psychoanalysis to postmodernism into his theory, producing a highly eclectic and original brand of Marxian literary and cultural theory. Jameson's Marxism is far from conventional.

There was a little ache in her fancy of all he described. Her insignificance in the presence of so much magnificence faintly affected her. 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. There was something satisfactory in the attention of this individual with his good clothes. (P.14-15)

According to Jameson's Marxist theory it is the society that considers restrictions and limitations for Man who lives in the postmodern condition which is psychologically surrounds Man and prevents him to be a real hero and this hero is completely out of real accepted gender , race, class, myth and allegorical norms which are in the modern society.

The concept of antihero therefore belongs to what one understands broadly as a literary figure (a relationship of belonging). The fact that the question of the anthropomim ethically and anthropologically (e.g., existentially) oriented category of the literary figure was marginalized for decades is one of the main reasons why the question of the antihero has gone unnoticed in literary theory.

CONCLUSION

T. Dreiser's characters are symbols of modern Man in the modern society who are pulled everywhere by gods' strains as modern puppets who has no free will to choose what they like to choose. F. Jameson believes (his email to me): I would rather say social determination, as what sets limits to our possibilities of action and creation in a given historical situation. "Determinism" seems to me a rather old-fashioned word, as when levi-strauss tells us that we will be able to connect up parts of the brain to specific thoughts. I don't think this kind of mind/body parallelism is very useful anymore; but we must certainly continue to think mediations between the spiritual or mental and the physical or material. Literature is one of the places where these philosophical dramas can be seen at more most clearly: the limits of language and form trying to meet the demands of the Real (and failing, owing to the "determinations" of the social and historical moment.

Clyde and sister Carrie as the main and outstanding literary American characters that both according to Jameson's ideas about postmodernism and sociological are determined to live in these situations and are considered as antiheroes because none of their characteristics and personalities are not adoptable with Aristotelian frame. both according to Intellectual systems are not here opinions which can be tinkered with, adjusted, manipulated until we somehow manage to fit them together properly; and such an operation is all the more ironic when it takes as its object two philosophical approaches which explicitly deny the priority of thought over being (existentialism with the principle that existence precedes essence, Marxism with the teaching of the determination of consciousness by social realty). That danger is real, for the middle classes fear the mass of workers and react preventively to what is felt to be a working-class threat.

The first example of social preventive warfare is still the classic one .This initial crime, this founding violence as one might call it, has grave consequences for the formation of the middleclass character as well; and it is at this point that the dimension of genuine history, the succession of the generations, the dialectical change and development from one moment to another, begins to come into view. In *Sister Carrie*, Dreiser portrayed a changing society, writing about a young woman who flees rural life for the city (Chicago) and struggles with poverty, complex relationships with men, and prostitution.

The Antihero probably existed first (before conventional Heroes), perhaps pre-dating the sanctifying influence of organized religion. Many of the protagonists of Western and

Eastern classical and mythological stories fit into the broad Antihero mold, especially those who are shown as having turbulent, violent backgrounds and conflicting motivations. Frequently, it is this mental conflict that serves to link the discrete episodes which compose such stories. Such a connector was necessary due to the oral storytelling tradition that persisted until fairly recently. On the secular front, the Antihero has fared better, used at times as a mirror for social commentary and political critique.

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