CHAPTER V

CHARACTERS AND CHARACTERIZATION
A novel tells a story, and a character is a "person" in a story. Characters are one among many necessary ingredients of a novel. Characterization is the author's depiction of a character by a choice of images that present the persons, his actions, his ways of thinking and living. Above all, the author presents a character's qualities of mind, heart and will through characterization. Generally speaking, nothing matches the role played by the character in importance in a narrative. In the novel, it is the characters, who generate the action and dialogue, carry the conflict, engage the sympathies or aversions of readers, and in their march to a denouement produce the suspense that holds the readers to the story. Hence, says Nancy Hale: "Characters that seem to live, are the most important single element in the novel. No one remembers novel, plot but remembers the characters."¹ Therefore, an attempt has been made in this

Chapter to analyse the characters in detail for the right understanding of Dreiser's novels and Dreiser the novelist.

It has been pointed out in an earlier Chapter of this study that the naturalists usually select characters of three different kinds: characters of marked physique and small intellectual activity, having strong animal drives; characters with physical defects and excited neurotic temperament, at the mercy of moods driven by forces that do not allow them to analyse; characters who occasionally display a strong will. And all the characters are 'type', treated externally and mechanically. They too do not engage the reader's interest because they have no dignity. As Dreiser's novels belong to the naturalistic tradition, it has been pointed out that his characters are only 'type', human animals devoid of morality and hence, are most uninteresting. But a compassionate and close inspection of his novels reveals that his characterization is more than what naturalistic theory demands. "Dreiser", says Alexander Kern, "both individualizes his minor characters and successfully shapes his major characters in the round. That, this does not seem obvious is due to his habit of constantly generalizing about how certain types of characters react in certain situations. Yet these generalizations are based upon specific, often brilliant insights which transcend the technique by which they are conveyed".

It has also been said that the naturalists can not treat intellectuals, that they are limited in depiction of character

2. See Chapter III of this study.
to externals, and that they can not handle internal monologue. It is true of other naturalists, but these assumptions do not hold good always for Dreiser's characterization. His chief figures are neither intellectuals nor fools out and out. In *Sister Carrie*, Carrie Meeber, for whom academic knowledge is a sealed book, defeats all those who come into her contact with her wit. Frank Gowanwood, the hero of the Financier Trilogy, having basic education and by his "natural talent" masters the big business world of Philadelphia, Chicago and England; in *The 'Genius'*, Eugene Witta, once a poverty-stricken and a condemned artist succeeds by his genuine "skill" in painting nude paintings and creating fine arts; Jennie, in *Gennie Gerhardt* seems to be foolish because she is purely innocent; and in the case of Clyde Griffith, Dreiser replaces the word "intellectual" by "moral coward". Similarly, not all his characters are handled to develop solely from an external point of view, some light has been thrown on their psychological conflicts. Carrie's inner conflict when she accepts money and becomes Drouet's mistress; Roberta's desperate reflections when she is waiting for a letter from Clyde and can not show her feelings to her parents; Clyde's mental tension when he fails to get an abortionist and thinks of Roberta's murder; Sondra's worries about whether she should write to Clyde in the prison; Jennie's concealment of Vesta's identity from Lester Kane, when he asks her to stay with him; Eugene's mental conflict when he stays with Ruby Kenny leaving his wife Angela; Cowperwood's weariness when he hears about the Chicago fire — are surely memorable examples of Dreiser's
presentation of internal experiences of the characters. Dreiser is not tactful enough in handling internal monologues and soliloquies like Browning and Shakespeare, but such thoughts are put into a form of indirect discourse, which make it seem described rather than reported.

Dreiser's characterization has sometimes seemed mechanical because he depends on chemism or chemic compulsions to explain the motives of characters. Frank Cowperwood professes love to Lillian Semple, five years senior to him, and in his maturer years he indulges in sex-activities with several other teenager girls. So also Eugene Witla and Clyde Griffith are characters of sex impulse. Dreiser calls this sex impulse as a chemical reaction of the body-politic and men and women. Despite their age and status, they are attracted towards each other magnetically. By doing this, he searches not only into the sordid aspects of the character's private life, but also determines their motives. At times, these characters are given positive qualities of life. Cowperwood is at once a womanizer, a tactful businessman, an admirer of art and architecture and a believer in christianity. Eugene Witla, though a sex-monger, sometimes appears as a true lover and a good student of fine arts. Clyde Griffiths though a weakling, a moral coward, aims at prosperity through marriage, understands the true ethics of christianity before he goes to the electric chair. Thus, the characters are attributed both positive and negative qualities and their motives are diverse as Alfred Kazin has aptly observed Dreiser has the "gift for searching an individual life to its depth". 4 Therefore, it is

not important whether he determines the characters' motives and
classifies his discoveries in terms of humours, chemisms, or
Freudian complexes. What is important is the clear observation
of these motives in action within the perspective of the novel
as a whole.

Dreiser's characterization covers a wide range of
characters. He takes millioners like Edward Malia Butler and
beggars like William Gerhardt, and within this range he puts
politicians, lawyers, artists, businessmen, missionaries, and
middle class people from different strata of the society. The
"haves" and "have nots" are treated alike. He feels for these
characters and makes the readers also feel for them. They are
treated in such a sympathetic manner that they engage the
reader's emotions. This is even true of Cowperwood, the
superman financier, who draws sympathy when he is caught with
some six hundred thousand dollars from the city treasury. Carrie
and Jennie are "bad women", a type we disapprove of, yet we are
deeply moved by their individual plights. Clyde's predicament
and his dilemma, draw our sympathy as we find him more an
individual of our society than his own. This ability to project
characters with sympathy, which Dreiser shares with Tolstoy and
Dostovsky, is rare quality among his contemporary novelists.
Crane, Norris; London, Dos Passos, J.B. Cabell, who are the
contemporaries and helped Dreiser in the documentation of his
novels, lack such powerful characterization.

What is important and more interesting in Dreiser's
characterization is his transmution of autobiographical elements
into the characters. His ambitious effort to identify himself with his fictional characters, makes the characters fully alive and pulsating with vitality. Though he attributes to them his own personal feelings and emotions, and handles them sympathetically, he maintains sufficient objectivity while portraying them. Their appeal lies in their versimilitude to life. Carrie's sufferings, poverty and ambitious mission to find a job resembles Dreiser's early life, her elopement with Drouet is an event no other than Emma's (Dreiser's sister) elopement with a wealthy dandy in real life. So also Jennie's illegitimacy parries with Mamme, Dreiser's another sister in real life. Religious William Gerhardt and poor Asha Griffiths, an itinerant missionary, are prototypes of Dreiser's own father in their attitude towards life. Mrs. Gerhardt, Mariam Witla and Mrs. Griffiths (Clyde's mother), are mothers with their all enduring power and affection for their sons and daughters. They are like Dreiser's mother, Sarah. Dreiser, being poor and powerless vicariously seeks wealth, women and power through the character of Frank Cowperwood. He himself is the genius in The 'Genius'. Eugene's private and artistic life is only self-dramatization of Dreiser's own marriage, intellectual crisis, and final spiritual resolution. Solon Barnes is an aesthetic representation of Dreiser, who is a bulwark of faith in real life. Lillian Semple, Aileen and Angela Blue resemble Dreiser's wife Sarah White. Of course, such an identification is not always well-sustained, but supports realistic representation of human life with its disposition, bearing, manners and accomplishments.
As a journalist, Dreiser had the opportunity to see the squalor and splendour of life of his times. He takes characters from low middle class people who were neglected and had not found their place in literature then. He perceived the authenticity of reality in their lives. Therefore, as a realist he slips into their dialects and reproduces the naive logic which guides them. He is submerged in their sensibilities detachedly. He understands them and by understanding all, Dreiser pardons all. If at all, there is anything beyond his reach about the characters, it is the "misunderstanding" or "miscalculated gesture" of the characters. It is a gesture says John J. MacAleer, "sometimes of defiance, sometimes of compassion, sometimes of affection but a gesture predicated always on man's futile desire to be understood by his neighbours".\(^5\) In The Titan, Aileen tries to dissuade Frank from his sexual relationship with others by taking a lover. Her defiant gesture arouses only the disdainful pity of her neighbours. In the same work when she attempts suicide to take revenge on Frank by casting shame on him she becomes a character of contempt before others. Carrie's break with Drouet, her first benefactor, Aileen's estrangement from her father, and Solon Barnes's dispute with Etta and Stewart, are the best examples of this miscalculated gesture. Therefore, in Dreiser's novels, there is no sustained relationship maintained by the characters and there is no mutual understanding among them. For example, Frank Cowperwood's relationship with

Aileen and Lillian are not sustained as husband and wife till the end of the novel. So also Eugene's relationship with Angela and Clyde's relationship with Roberta and Sondra. In each and every case, the characters fail to understand each other and as a result complications arise leading their lives to an unhappy end. Thus, Dreiser's characterization borders on realism, as he tells a truth about human relationship in real life.

Dreiser's characterization is marked by depiction of minute details. Exactly like a miniature painter, he builds characters through piling infinite details about them. He gives the life history of almost all his chief characters from birth to death. He studies their birth parentage, childhood, adolescence, career, marriage, varietism, success and failure, and finally their death. Such a detailed presentation of life seems exaggerated in the first instance, but its relevancy is realised only when one finishes reading the novels. Cowperwood, Clyde, Eugene, and Solon's characters are portrayed in such a manner that the reader's disbelief is suspended and he exclaims by saying "here is the man".

Dreiser's minor figures are all types, 'flat' characters. They do not grow, they do not surprise. They are fully developed when they appear in the novel. Drouet appears in *Sister Carrie* as a drummer, and he remains as a drummer throughout with change in his character. So also Mr. and Mrs. Hale, Gilbert Griffiths, Samuel Griffiths, Edward Malia Butler, William Gerhardt, Justus
Wallin and the bellhops named Doyle, Sparser, Ratterer and Kinsella. These characters are interesting when they talk in their colloquial languages which reminds us of Mark Twain's Connecticut Yankee-dialects. Clyde as a bellhop joins Union League Club hotel and one of the bellhops introduces him into the nature of works in a hotel and behaviour of a bellhop in a typical dialect:

"'Say—de tips in dis hotel is as big as you'll git anywhere, I know dat. An' what's more, dey's nice people working here. You do your bit by dem and day'll do right by you. I been here now over a year an' I win't got no complaint. Dat guy Squires is all right if you don't cause him no trouble. He's hard, but he's got to look out for hisself, too—dat's natural .... And for de rest dere's no trouble. An' when your work's troo, your time's your own. Dese follows here ... I been with' em now, lots of times." 6

Similar use of dialect is also seen in The Financier. Edward Butler chastises his daughter Aileen when she defies him by marring Frank Cowperwood. Butler expresses his deep anguish through his Irish accents:

"'Ye'll marry him, will you?' ...'So ye'll wait for him and marry him? Ye'll take him from his wife and children, where, if he were half a man, he'd be stayin' this minute instead of gallivantin' around with you, ... ye'd disgrace your father and yer mother and yer family. I that have raised ye, cared for ye, and made somethin' of you? Where would ye be"

if it weren't for me and yer poor, hard workin' mother, she
min' and plannin' for yer year in and year out? Ye're smarter
than I am, I suppose.... Talk about me not bein' able to
understand, and ye lovin' a convict - to-be, a robber, an
embezzler, a bankrupt, a lyin', thavin...."

Through these dialects Dreiser unfolds the psychology of
his minor characters and makes them interesting figures.

The major Dreiserian characters are dynamic, in comparison
to minors. They grow till they reach a climax. Their actions
and motives sometimes make them complex figures. But whether
minor or major figures, all characters are perfectly discrimi-
nated. Dreiser never repeats a Carrie or a Cowperwood exactly
in his eight novels. This is a completely realistic
characteristic of his art of characterization as in the world,
two individuals are not at all alike. Herein lies the greatness
of Dreiser as a realist.

Dreiser's characters are naturalistic as they are not
granted free will. Their 'will' is determined more by the
environment than by their biological impulses. Their plight is
social, not fated. They are "conventionalists" or "liberated",
only because they are transgressors of the laws of the society
and religion. Their disillusionment is an outcome of the general
indifference of nature and society. But they try to overcome this
indifference by their purposeful struggle. Therefore,
inspite of their 'defeat' in life's struggle, they are not
pessimists, rather they are meliorists in search of a new hope.

It is sometimes observed that Dreiser's failure to develop children as characters in his novels suggests an area of deficiency in his understanding of human nature. It is true that Dreiser was childless and that children are assigned no major parts in his works. The early life of Solon Barnes's five children is memorialized in a few words. Russell, the illegitimate son of Esta, in An American Tragedy is a shadowy and symbolic character. Only Jennie Gerhardt's Vesta is developed partially as a character, yet her words are few and her queer behaviour is like Hester Prynne's Pearl (in Hawthorne's The Scarlet Letter). She is a personified abstraction, a reminder of her mother's fall from virtue.

But, the general exclusion of children from Dreiser's works is positive rather than negative in function. Dreiser enjoyed the company of children and found an easy comradeship with them. Yet, as a realist, he saw all men as "waifs" or 'orphans', to portray children could only have diverted attention from his major theme that all men, in this world, are bewildered children, dolefully seeking their rightful abode. Nevertheless, the child's view is well represented in Dreiser's works. Dreiser himself never lost a child's capacity for wonderment. His mind was ever open to life and to nature just as a child's would be. To the best of his characters, he extends this same quality.

Since children are the least important characters, Dreiser's fictional world is dominated by grown up men and
women. Moreover, Dreiser as a naturalist studies the growth and decay of the characters in relationship with their occupations and sex experiences. When sex is the dominant functional aspect of life we can observe his method of characterization from primarily the biological angle. Therefore, Dreiser's characters can be classified broadly as Men and Women. His first two novels are dominated by women and they are featured in the title. From the chronological point of view, our first preference goes to the women characters.

Alfred Kazin observes that American literature is "notoriously poor in portraits of good women". In his study of women characters in contemporary novels and plays, he finds only sexually unprincipled or sexually frigid, spoilt, selfish and irresponsible women characters who have made male characters victims of moral ruin. They are impotent to move their audience or reader, but he finds in Dreiser, though not all, some believable and mature women, who are too submissive, tender women like Jennie, and for that matter Carrie Meeber and even Roberta Alden have such power to move us.

All women in Dreiser's novels are beautiful. Their physical beauty is revealed through photographic representation of their face, body, hair and attire. Men are attracted towards them as moths to fire. They are loving and lovable.

Carrie Meeber is the protagonist of Sister Carrie and the main action of the novel centres round her. She appears in the

novel when she is eighteen years old. Her past life shows that she comes from a low middle class family and her father is a mere Miller. She is poor, but mentally alert. Her poverty leads her to seek fortune in Chicago. Her character is presented through a direct narration. Dreiser studies her physical appearance and temperament:

"Caroline Meeber or Sister Carrie as she had been half affectionately termed by the family, was possessed of a mind rudimentary in its power of observation and analysis. Self-interest with her was high, but not strong. It was, nevertheless, her guiding characteristic. Warm with the fancies of youth, pretty with the insipid prettiness of the formative period, possessed of a figure promising eventual shapeliness and an eye alight with certain native intelligence, she was a fair example of the Middle American Class (sic) — two generations removed from the emigrant. Books were beyond her interest — knowledge a sealed book. In the intuitive grace she was still crude. She could scarcely toss her head gracefully. Her hands were almost ineffectual. The feet, though small, were set flatly. And yet she was interested in her charms, quick to understand the keener pleasures of life, ambitious to gain in material things. A half equipped little knight she was venturing to reconnoitre the mysterious city and dreaming wild dreams...."

With this physical prettiness and alertness of mind she meets Drouet, becomes his mistress, who for the first time gives

her the taste of material pleasure through sumptuous dinner and fine dresses. Hence-forward she yearns for beauty and pleasure through money and matter. She comes across "pomp and luxury of urban life through her neighbour. Once she visits Chicago city in the evening along with Mrs. Hale. She sees the splendour of a beautiful city with material affluence. Her mind fills with awe and wonder. She feels the softness of the evening air which speaks about pleasure, luxury and position "with an infinite delicacy of feeling to the flesh as well as to the soul". Thus, she thinks always about money and social position and this intense desire for material prosperity is her only motive. This motive leads her to bartering sex.

Carrie's love for Drouet and Hurstwood is not passionate, nor does she need to be loved passionately by them. 'Love' in her case is limited to sex. She let herself be used to save herself from poverty and to rise up socially. She possessed a superior talent than those two men whom she met. Carrie, says her creator is "superior, mentally. She came fresh from the air of the village, the light of the country is still in her eye. Here was neither guile nor rapacity". She should not be condemned for her infatuations and immorality. Because, "she still looked about her upon the great maze of the city without understanding". She is too ambitious to be rich. Hurstwood, an opportunist takes the advantage of her simplicity

and philanderers. Hurstwood, says Dreiser, "felt the bloom and youth. He picked her as he would the fresh fruit of a tree. He felt as fresh in her presence as one who is taken out of the flash of summer to the first cool breath of spring". Hence, Hurstwood is to be condemned for her disgrace, not Carrie.

Carrie's character is delineated sympathetically and she is also sympathetic by nature. Dreiser sympathises with her by describing her physical disposition: "Carrie was indeed worth loving if ever youth and grace are to command that token of acknowledgement from life in their bloom. Experience had not yet taken away that freshness of the spirit which is the charm of the body. Her soft eyes contained in their liquid lustre no suggestion of the knowledge of disappointment. She had been troubled in a way by doubt and longing, but these had made no deeper impression than could be traced in a certain open wistfulness of glance and speech. The mouth had the expression at times in talking and in repose, of one who might be upon the verge of tears. It was not that grief was thus ever present...a formation as suggestive and moving as pathos itself.

There was nothing bold in her manner. Life had not taught her domination — superciliousness of grace...."

Carrie having such physical disposition and mild temperament, is not suitable for naturalistic characterization. But, Dreiser's 'naturalism of compassion' prepares her to be a naturalistic character.

Since Carrie comes from the "under-world of toil" — the peasantry and industrial labour class, she understands them best. Therefore, her sympathy goes to them and she pines for them:

"Sorrow in her was aroused by many a spectacle — an uncritical upwelling of grief for the weak and the helpless." 15 Whenever she sees any poor or ragged man, she pities from the depth of her heart.

But, this sympathetic nature of Carrie seems to be incompatible with her character when she avoids meeting Hurstwood, who needs her support to live. It is true, Hurstwood introduced her to the theatrical world but it is also true that her own talent is responsible for her rise. She suffers a lot in her life before her stardom. Now, she does not want to 'come low' by meeting Hurstwood, whose movement she has marked to be downward. Here, Dreiser implies that man or animal struggle for existence in this world, and the world is moving from good to better always. Carrie, being an individual tries for betterment. Therefore, if any one is to be blamed, the pathway to success in life has to be condemned not Carrie.

Carrie is not evil, she is merely weak. The circumstances in which she is placed give her false values. She symbolizes well, much of innocent America. "Not evil, but longing for that which is better, more often directs the steps of the erring. Not evil, but goodness more often allures the feeling mind unused to reason". 16 Carrie's tragedy is more complex than it

appears to be. She is not extraordinarily intelligent, and she does not long for the superficial appearance of worldly success, but she can not reason, what she feels through her own personality. She resents life's apparent complexity without fully understanding it. She senses that the world is indifferent, that people are selfish and cruel. Her tragedy lay in not knowing what to do about it. She feels "as though she should be better served, and her heart revolted". She has no mind for facts or systematic thought, and she is doubly at the mercy of events and people.

Carrie is a sympathetic woman, but she is not tragic. It is hard to sympathise with her, since everything that happened seems logical. Tragedy involves bitter struggle against fate, and Carrie does not fight. Everything that comes to her seems predestined, and she moves through events without touching them.

Carrie is left alone at the end of the novel and she rocks in her chair in a dreamlike state, dimly aware that her world is beyond definition. She is lonely in the midst of friends, wealth and fine clothing. She is disillusioned and baffled with "life's objects". She is unhappy. Dreiser reveals her pathos in the following words:

"Sitting alone, she was now an illustration of the devious ways by which one who feels, rather than reasons, may be laid in the pursuit of beauty. Though often disillusioned, she was still waiting for that halcyon day, when she should be led forth among dreams become real..., but still on and on

17. Sister Carrie, p. 46.
beyond that, if accomplished, would lie others for her. It was forever to be the pursuit of that radiance of delight which tints the distant hilltops of the world." 18

From the naturalistic point of view, Carrie is a less successful character. No doubt, she possesses marked physical beauty, but that beauty is not marred by her "superciliousness". She is rather compassionate having her own practical moral point of view. Her actions, except the bartering of sex are humanly. It is the poverty and the social forces that lead her to such an uninhibited life. If she were not poor, she would not have fallen a prey to others' sexual desire. In the case of Crane's Maggie, sexual desire is provoked by alcoholism and she surrenders herself only to satisfy her sex hunger without any prime motive. But for Carrie, the prime motive is to achieve success in life and sexual desire is secondary.

Therefore, it is safe to conclude that she is more lifelike than what the critics think of her.

Jennie Gerhardt is the most interesting and lovable woman among Dreiser's women characters. She is introduced to us in the novel as a young girl of eighteen. She is poor by birth but has an "uncommon prepossessing appearance". 19 She, says the novelist "was a product of the fancy, the feeling, the innate affection of the untutored but poetic mind of her mother combined with the gravity and poise which were characteristic of her father". 20 With this natural inheritance she grows to

her maidenhood. While working in the hotel her beauty catches
the eyes of Senator Brander. Dreiser observes her physical
appearance through Brander's eyes: "He noted the high white
forehead, with its smoothly parted and plaited hair. The eyes
he saw were blue and the complexion fair.... the mouth and the
cheeks — above all, the well rounded graceful form, full of
youth, health and that hopeful expectancy which to the middle
aged is so suggestive of all that is worth begging of
Providence".21

Jennie's character is shaped by nature. She is a mere
bud of nature, innocent and unawakened. Her spirit is
inexpressible. Dreiser admits that she is "a creature of a
mellowness of temperament which words can but vaguely suggest".22
Even when she gives birth to Vesta, she is still a woman of
trust: "There was always that saving sense of eternal justice
in life which would not permit her to be utterly crushed. To
her way of thinking, thinking, people were not intentionally
cruel. Vague thoughts of sympathy and divine goodness permeated
her soul. Life at worst or best was beautiful — had always
been so".23 As she is simple, an unalloyed product of nature,
she is vulnerable to be easily corrupted by the society in
which she lives. And this society by its conventional standard
of judgement condemns her as a bad woman. Father Gerhardt,
the upholder of social convention, with his conventional
understanding of right and wrong misunderstands her as a

22. Ibid., p. 28.
23. Ibid., p. 106.
fallen woman and lets her suffer for her 'sin'. In the long run, when he realizes her true nature, he tells her in his death bed; "You have been good to me. You are a good girl".  

Jennie is portrayed as a "rare flower". She is a perfect maiden whose personality is made out of the precious things of earth and air. She combines the traits of an ideal woman — "sympathy, kindliness of judgement, youth and beauty". She loves both Brander and Lester, but not as Carrie and unlike Carrie, she feels for them. Brander dies and Lester marries Letty Pace inflicting destitution on her, yet, she holds patience and finds solace in nature. Dreiser writes: "She is like the wood dove, she was a voice of sweetness in the summer time.... She was content to sit in the quiet meditation, the marvel of life holding her as in a trance. When she was hardest pressed to aid her mother, she would sometimes find herself quietly singing.... Always she was content to face the future with a serene and unfaltering courage".  

Jennie is more a mythical mother than a lover. Unlike Carrie, she sacrifices her life for other's good. Carrie "defeats" and "takes" from Drouet and Hurstwood for a better life, but Jennie only "gives" and "suffers". Jennie gives herself to Senator Brander because he saved her brother, Bass from imprisonment. She also gives herself to Lester to procure means to provide shelter and clothing to her family. Thus, both  

25. Ibid., p. 136.  
26. Ibid., pp. 105-106.
the girls are victims of social forces but while ambition
betrays Carrie, Jennie is undone by her sense of duty.

Jennie's simple and non-evasive nature is better revealed
in her confrontation with Lester concerning his inheritance.
She knows well that Lester can not marry her, yet she tries to
convince him. She says that if he marries her, he will get only
ten thousand in a year, and if he does not marry her and
remains with her still unmarried, he will get nothing. And if
he leaves her (Jennie) and marries Letty Pace (Mrs. Gerald), he
will get back everything from his father. She also assures
Lester that she will be glad to leave him for his betterment.
This reveals her perfect innocence and moral courage, and with
such strength of character, she rises above the drabness of her
surroundings.

Lester, though fails to marry Jennie, praises her: "She's
a woman of curious temperament. She possesses a world of
feeling and emotion. She's not educated in the sense in which
we understand that word, but she has natural refinement and
fact. She's a good housekeeper. She's an ideal mother. She's
the most affectionate creature under the sun. Her devotion to
her mother was beyond words. Her love for her daughter — She's
hers, not mine — is perfect. She has not any of the graces
of a smart society woman. She isn't quick at repartee. She
can't join in any rapid-fire conversation. She thinks rather
slowly, I imagine. Some of her big thoughts never come to the
surface at all, but you can feel that she is thinking and that
she is feeling". 27 Thus, Jennie's character is represented realistically, and at the same time, Dreiser sympathises with her. He is careful enough to use words to define her character and manner. For instance, when he uses the word 'bold' to define her habits, immediately, he says that "bold is scarcely the word to use in connection with Jennie", 28 and he replaces the word "bold" by "venturesome". This shows Dreiser's sympathetic treatment of her character.

Through Jennie, Dreiser glorifies womanhood. Jennie is an "angel", she is the "sister of mercy". She spends her whole life in serving others. Even in her last days of life she adopts two orphans and rears them like "natural flowers". She feels that little of what one does in life has permanent value. Only love, regard for others, endures. She asks herself: "Did anything matter except goodness — goodness of heart? What else was there that was real?" 29

At the end of her life she is left alone and like Carrie she observes from the "iron grating" of life; "Days and days in endless reiteration, and then — ?" Thus, she sojourns over her misfortune and evokes our sympathy and admiration, indeed, she is the most fascinating of all Dreiser's women.

Jennie's character is naturalistic in the sense that she is a victim of her environment. She is "fallen" in the eyes of the society which measures personality in terms of

conventional morality. She has not given her body to Brander or Lester willingly to satisfy her carnal desire. Rather, it is the massive compulsion of environmental forces from which she is unable to escape. Poverty sends Bass to steal coal from the railway wagon and to jail. Jennie feels compelled to rescue her brother. She goes to the hotel at midnight and surrenders herself sexually to Brander only for his help. Likewise, in order to escape the infamy of Columbus society, she goes to Chicago and serves Mrs. Bracebridge where she meets Lester as a guest of the family. Lester takes advantage of her timidity as a maid servant and promises a better life to her than the present one. Further, her family conditions with a handicapped, jobless father and her thought to build Vesta's future excentuate her condition in the guise of environmental forces to become Lester's mistress. Thus, she falls from the height of an ideal woman to a mere woman — a victim of forces, hence, she is naturalistic. Finally, it can be said of Jennie that to condone her may be infamy but to condemn her will be blasphemous.

Roberta Alden and Sonora Finchley are two contrastive women characters in *An American Tragedy*. The difference between them lies in their role as beloved of Clyde Griffiths and their attitudes towards him. In Clyde's estimation, Sonora is "with everything, offering all — asking nothing of him" whereas Roberta is "with nothing, asking all". 31 Like Jennie,

Roberta suffers and her innocence leads her to death — to be murdered by her would-be husband, but Sondra escapes from sufferings by her wealth and social position. Both the characters are naturalistic, in a way they are at the mercy of forces within and without.

Roberta's representation is realistic. She, like Carrie and Jennie, has a humble birth. Poverty compels her to take up a job. After serving in her native place Blitze, she comes to Lycurgus for a better job. She finds a post in Samuel Griffiths's collar factory. She works in the stamping section under the supervision of Clyde. She is distinguished from other working girls in the factory by her uncommon beauty. She possesses "a face that was small and regular and pretty and that was haloed by bright, light brown hair. Her eyes were of a translucent gray (sic) blue. Her little suit was common place, and her shoes were not so very new-looking and quite solidly-soled. She looked practical and serious." 32 Clyde is enticed by her graceful appearance. To Clyde, temperamentally she is "more intelligent and pleasing — more spiritual — though apparently not less vigorous .... a certain wistfulness and wonder combined with a kind of self-reliant courage and determination which marked her at once as one possessed of will and conviction to a degree." 33

Roberta falls in love with Clyde, but it is Clyde who has initiated the move first. Roberta's past life shows that

33. Ibid., p. 241.
she has not been loved by anybody and she dare not love anybody as she is poor. When Clyde shows interest in her, she reciprocates. Being poor she is "seized with the very virus of ambition and unrest" to attain her dream of success through marriage. She loves Clyde in order to be married, but Clyde loves her only to have sex without marriage. Such a difference in motives complicates their love affair. Roberta is born to parents who are "honest, upright, God-fearing and respectable", and her personality is "a reflection of the religious and moral notion", of her parents. Being young, she possesses "a certain exuberance and gayety (sic) that was not only emotional but in a delicate way sensual". Yet, her sensuous temperament is repressed by her guiding religious principles. Though Clyde has a religious background, he is liberated. His experience with hotel girls has already made him uninhibited in his approach to women and sex. In comparison to Clyde, Roberta is less responsible for their sordid love affair.

For Roberta, sex is "sinful, low and dreadful". Therefore, at the time of her seduction she is "terrified and sickened". When Clyde tempts her sexually, she protests by saying:

"oh, isn't it? Well, may be not in your set. But I know what's right and I don't think that's right and I won't do it".

This, no doubt, reveals her moral integrity, but soon such defiance melts into submission when she is caught within

34. *An American Tragedy*, p. 244.
35. Ibid., p. 251.
36. Ibid., p. 290.
her "dream of success" She thinks that refusal to please Clyde may lead him to think of her otherwise and she may lose him. Therefore, suddenly she changes her tone and tells him with pleading persuasion:

"oh, please, Clyde, don't be mad with me now, will you? You know what I would if I could. I can not do anything like that.... And how would you feel if some one were to see us or recognize you?"37

But all her resistance becomes futile before the artful Clyde. She yields and gets herself pregnant. She tolerates her sufferings silently in order to marry Clyde. Her feelings and her awkwardness in expressing her desire before others makes her character tragic. She could have exposed Clyde's identity as the father of her yet to be born baby, but she does not do so. This shows her patience and endurance, and her depth of love for Clyde. Finally, she is drowned to death — this lends tragic intensity to her character.

The "flow" in her character is her credulity. Though she knows about Clyde's affair with Sondra, she casts her entire lot over-confidently on him. She, like Desdemona, sees only the bright side of love, blinded by her dream of success. She knows Clyde's "strength" in love making, but does not know his "weakness" for wealth and status. She believes in Clyde so much that, she takes Clyde's pretentious trip to the lake districts as a honeymoon trip. Clyde's second

with Sondra, by "chance" makes her death inevitable. If the coquettish Sondra would not have ignited Clyde by sending him the invitation for the winter-dinner-dance, he would not have changed his attitude towards marriage. Clyde might have given his consent to his marriage with Roberta when he fails to get her aborted. Dreiser as a naturalist might not have accepted the "chance" factor. Here, "chance" is replaced by socio-economic and partly biological forces which make the tragedy inevitable.

Even though, Roberta fails to get the status of a true tragic heroine, her drowning scene reminds us of Desdemona's strangling. She draws sympathy for her premature death in the form of a cold-blooded murder. When Jennie and Carrie are left to suffer, she escapes by death.

Sondra Finchley is the daughter of a wealthy vacuum-cleaner manufacturer of Lycurgus. She is equally beautiful like Roberta. Clyde surveys her: "she was so delicious,—her nose so tiny and tilted—her upper lip arched so roguishly upward her nose%. She is fashionable, attractive and practical like Roberta. But, unlike Roberta, her beauty is marked by her "coquettishness". To Clyde, She is the "most adorable feminine thing". Apart from her local position, means, and taste in dress, she "was of the exact order and spirit that most intrigued him — a somewhat refined (because

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38. Characters of a naturalistic novel are not "tragic", they are "pathetic". For elaborate discussion, see Chap. III of this study.


40. Ibid., p. 219.
of means and position showered upon her) less savage, although scarcely less self-centered, Hortense Briggs. She was, in her small, intense way, a seeking Aphrodite, eager to prove to any who were sufficiently attractive the destructive power of her charm, while at the same time retaining her own personality and individuality free of any entangling alliance or compromise. With such physical beauty and temperament, she attracts Clyde.

Sondra's love for Clyde is casual at the first meeting. But, her plan to get Gilbert Griffiths as her lover makes her to love Clyde. She loves Clyde only to satisfy her desire for sex. But, Clyde's love for her is like Roberta's for him. Clyde takes her as his passport to the privileged class to which she belongs. If Sondra were passionately in love with Clyde, she could have saved him when he was convicted for Roberta's murder.

Sondra is not 'liberated' in the Dreiserian sense. She lacks the courage to profess her love openly. She surrenders to social conventions and society lest her liaison will be disclosed publicly. Had she been truly in love with Clyde she would have taken the risk of rescuing him by her wealth and high connection. Rather, she is persuaded to cut off relations with Clyde after his indictment. Her selfishness and weak personality is revealed when she writes a letter in third-person without mentioning her name to Clyde in the prison. Thus Sondra is not malignant in her actions towards Clyde, but her passivity affects his life.

Lillian Semple, Aileen Butler and Berenice Fleming are three different women who find place in the Trilogy — The Financier, The Titan and The Stoic. They are discriminated from each other. While Lillian and Aileen are completely naturalistic characters, Berenice combines both naturalism and spiritualism. They are all important as they have dominated different phases of Cowperwood's life. They are a contrast to each other in a peculiar way. In The Financier, Lillian is the wife and Aileen is the mistress; in the Titan, Aileen becomes wife when a divorce is granted by Lillian and Berenice enters as a mistress; in The Stoic, Aileen does not grant him divorce, continues as wife but Berenice plays the role of wife, being mistress.

Lillian's character has been developed casually. She seems to be a 'type' rather than a 'round' character. She appears in the novel as the widowed and issueless wife of Alfred Semple. She has read a little and is "habitually brooding by nature", but this brooding is not based on any deep thought. Young Cowperwood gets entangled with her "curious beauty of body, though that made her somewhat like a figure on an antique vase or out of a Greek Chorus". She is charitable and religious. She is tender and affectionate, but her intellectual poverty makes her dispassionate in love making. When Cowperwood professes his love passionately, Lillian thinks passively that "he would make some woman a splendid husband".

42. The Financier, p. 71.
43. Ibid., p. 72.
Her love for Cowperwood ends in marriage and that is all, that she has become his wife and begets children.

Aileen Butler, the daughter of a wealthy parent, is young and beautiful when she meets Cowperwood. She is much above the average girls in "force" and intelligence. She has had convent education, but this education has no effect on her character. She is too "haughty". She runs with "high ambition" and always wants to be praised by her lover for her physical beauty. She flirts to show off her "juggerant-fashion". She is artistic in her attitude toward things. When she meets Cowperwood for the first time at her father's residence, she is drawn toward him "out of pure temperamental affiliation", because Cowperwood shows his love for the fine arts during the conversation. Cowperwood finds Aileen's beauty an indented mixture of "fire and song". In fact, these two words sum up Aileen's true nature as a beloved. Occasionally she meets Cowperwood in the hotel before finally she elopes with him to New York.

Thus, in The Financier, the wife is Lillian Semple and the mistress is Aileen Butler, and the general description of wives and mistress is, at least to some extent, a report of their respective personalities. The difference between a wife and a mistress, according to Dreiser, is the difference between a woman who gives her love in a "sweet bond of agreement and exchange — fair trade in a lovely contest" and a woman who loves without thought of return; "sacrificial, yielding, solicitous," she is motivated only by "the desire to give".

44. The Financier, p. 218.
45. Ibid., p. 117.
46. Ibid., p. 173.
Aileen is excessive in everything; her innate love of "lavishness" leads her particularly to admire the "rather exaggerated curtseies", the nuns teach her in convent school. She wears "far too many rings", and her choice of clothes is always "a little too emphatic". Lillian's charm, by contrast, is "phlegmatic"; where Aileen's excesses are the products of a "burning vitality", Lillian's fundamental characteristic is "indifference". These psychological differences between the two women naturally extend to their relations with Cowperwood. The mere thought of losing him causes Aileen to announce with a "passion" that makes him "a little afraid" that if he deserts her, she will "go to hell". Lillian, however, reacts to Cowperwood's actual infidelity with comparative equanimity: "Hers was not a soul that ever loved passionately", Dreiser says, "hence she could not suffer passionately". Having risked little, she has little to lose.

Dreiser prefers Aileen's love as a mistress in The Financier, but in The Titan, when she becomes Cowperwood's wife, his admiration shifts from her to Berenice Fleming and others as mistresses. Aileen as a wife remains constant with her "passionate" love for Cowperwood and asserts her feminine possessiveness on him. She wants to be loved by Cowperwood passionately and singularly as it was before. But his rapacious sex appetite and constant search for beauty through "sweet-

47. The Financier, p. 88.
48. Ibid., p. 124.
49. Ibid., p. 47.
50. Ibid., p. 291.
51. Ibid., p. 243.
teenagers" cause anguish to her. She, like Mrs. Hurstwood and
Angela Blue, tries to erect barriers on the way of his
varietistic interest. As a result, she suffers a lot. As a
mistress she declared that if she loses him, she will go to
hell, indeed, her life as the neglected wife of Cowperwood is
not less than sufferings in hell fire. She, being married,
takes gigoloes to satisfy her sex desire and to create a sort
of sexual jealousy in Cowperwood. But Cowperwood is too liberal
to be jealous, rather he provides several occasions for her to
make use of. When Aileen's efforts go in vain she ruins herself
by taking intoxicants and attempting suicide.

Lillian and Aileen, though different in many respects,
are sexually impulsive. Both meet their doom only because of
their desire to satisfy their sex instinct, and hence, they
are naturalistic characters.

Berenice Fleming is an exception among Dreiser's women.
When other women characters meet their doom being disillusioned,
Berenice maintains equanimity and without being disillusioned,
finds solace in spiritualism. When Jennie seeks the "spirit"
in nature, Berenice seeks through Yoga and Indian philosophy.
Her portrayal in The Stoic is an artistic necessity. Dreiser
finds her character suitable to give expression to his
spiritualism and he does not want his Darwinian superman,
Cowperwood to die disillusioned. Through Berenice, Cowperwood
realises spiritualism.
Berenice's birth is lotus like from the filth of prostitution. In her teens, she meets Cowperwood. Her physical beauty is "unmistakably praiseworthy" with blue eyes, which "enveloped him (Cowperwood's) as might a warming cloak or a dissolving ether". 52 She is "self-seeking, poised, ironic, but less brutal and more poetic...." She is temperamentally "delicate, sensitive, evasive, mysterious". 53 Here Dreiser adds the word "mysterious" to show Berenice's mysticism. Her personality and its hold on Cowperwood is best expressed in the words of Cowperwood himself:

"Just the same, an ideal to me. And more so now than for ever. I have known many women, of course I dealt with them according to my light and urge at the time. But apart from all that, I have always had a certain conception of what I really desired I have always dreamed of a strong, sensitive, poetic girl like yourself". 54

Berenice's love for Cowperwood is two fold — physical and spiritual. She gives herself physically to Cowperwood as he saves her and her mother from poverty. Cowperwood enjoys Berenice sexually and at the same time he says that he needs her "less physically, more spiritually". It is true that with the increase of age, he needs the moral support which Berenice only can give him. After his first attack of Bright's disease when he meets Berenice, Dreiser says that now Cowperwood is

52. The Stoic, p. 3.
53. Ibid., p. 7.
54. Ibid., p. 8.
lover incarnate father. Here Cowperwood's attitude towards Berenice changes from "sex" to "support".

Cowperwood's death changes Berenice's life completely. She feels scared of materialism. Incidentally she comes across a volume of Bhagavad Gita, gathers information about Indian philosophy and determines to visit India. She visits India and becomes the disciple of a 'Guru'. Acquiring sufficient spiritual knowledge she returns to her native land and does charitable deeds and preaches Hinduism in order to be reedemed from her sins.

Thus, Berenice is a 'nun' among the woman characters.

Esta, sister of Clyde in *An American Tragedy* and Etta Barnes, daughter of Solon Barnes in *The Bulwark*, are two "little women" in Dreiser's characterization of women. They are not rendered fully, but they strike the reader's attention as two naturalistic characters. Their final reconciliation with life and their expression of wonderment at life's mysterious moves on earth make them typical Dreiserian characters.

Esta and Etta, inspite of their religious and spiritual background, are victims of their passion and instinct. When they find life dull, sticking to religiosity, they revolt and move away from a strict code of morality. Their "spirits" are suppressed by hard principles of religion. They have no chance of displaying their emotions and feelings freely. Therefore, when they get an inkling of material pleasure through theatre and fine arts, they are attracted to them.
Esta flees away with an actor and Etta with an artist, impelled by their "chemic witchery". Both are abandoned by their so-called lovers, but unfortunately Esta gets herself pregnant. However, both are reconciled to life. When Clyde meets Esta secretly in the rented house where she stays to give birth to Russell, she expresses her wonderment at life:

"Gee, life was tough; what a rough world it was anyhow. How queer things went?" 55 Likewise, when at Solon's funeral Orville blames Esta as the cause of her father's death and asks her why she cries now. She answers: "oh, I am not crying for myself or for father — I am crying for life". 56

These two statements resemble Carrie's and Jennie's expression of wonderment at life's moves. Jennie and Carrie remain unreconciled whereas Etta and Esta are reconciled to life by their parental religion.

The mothers form a special class in Dreiser's women characterization. They are the most idealized and sympathetic figures in Dreiser's novels. As a "motherly child" Dreiser is very careful in depicting mothers. Among the mothers, Mrs. Gerhardt, Mariam Witla, Elvira Griffiths and Benicia Barnes, are the first names to be taken up. All these mothers are sympathetic by nature, affectionate, enduring and sacrificial for the cause of their sons and daughters. Since their sons and daughters are transgressors of society and religion, they do not get sympathy and shelter in this world. The mothers

55. *An American Tragedy*, p. 21.

are for them, the only 'shelter'. They are harmonizers of all ills.

Mrs. Gerhardt and Elvira come to rescue their daughters—Jennie and Esta, at the time of their pregnancy, they shielded their daughters' guilt by rearing their illegitimate children. Elvira Griffiths, even goes to the law court to fight in favour of her son Clyde. She, with her knowledge of the Bible, argues before the judge that her son cannot be convicted on the ground of adultery. She courageously says that Roberta is three years senior to Clyde and it is she, who initiated first for adultery as Eve in the garden of Eden. When she fails, she provides religion through McMillan as the panacea for his disillusionment. And she prepares her son morally to meet death.

Marriam Witla inspires Eugene to be an artist and sacrifices her life for the betterment of her son. So also Benecia Barnes dies when she hears about Stewart's death and Etta's depravity and moral degradation. Thus, the mothers with their minor role are significant characters.

From the naturalistic point of view, Dreiser's male characters can be classified into three separate groups. They are amoralists, who defy conventions openly; moral weaklings, who defy conventions surreptitiously; and persons having self-sacrificing qualities and self-integrity. 57 Frank Cowperwood, Hurstwood and Eugene Witla are amoralists; Lester Kane and Clyde Griffiths are moral weaklings; and Solon Barnes seems

57. Here the classification is made according to John J. McAller's interpretation. See John J. McAller op.cit., p. 112.
the only male character who possesses self-sacrificing integrity. All these men are "liberated" in some way or the other. They are all individualised, being given qualities of real man. Therefore, sometimes they transcend the narrow classification of naturalism.

Among all the male characters, Frank Cowperwood draws our attention first, as he is the only man who heroically leads the trilogy. Dreiser builds his character through direct narration, giving massive details of his parentage, his early life, his business experiences, his varietism and finally celebrates his funeral in such a grand manner that lifts him to the real stature of a hero in the Aristotelian sense. Frank grows up as a "natural born leader". He looks practical and vigorous. Dreiser displays Frank's physical strength by arranging a fight with McGlathery, a young protege to prove the brutal power of a naturalistic hero. Dreiser's presentation of Frank's boyhood appearance is realistic:

"He was a clean, stocky, shapely boy with a bright, clean cut, incisive face; large clear gray eyes; "wide forehead; short, bristly, dark brown hair. He had an incisive, quick motioned, self sufficient manner, and was for ever asking questions with a keen desire for a brief and intelligent reply. He did not know what sickness was, never had an ache or pain, ate his food with gusto and ruled his brothers with a rod of iron"."^{58}

From the early age Frank is too intelligent and inquisitive about the ways of life. He ponders over life; "one thing astonishing him quite as much as another thing for he could not figure out how this thing he had come into—this life—was organized". He also puts some fundamental questions: "How did all these people get into the world? What were they doing here? Who started things, any how?"  

To these questions, Frank gets answers to his satisfaction when he sees an unequal combat between the Lobster and the squid in an aquarium. Frank sees, that the mighty Lobster devours the defenseless squid, and derives his world view that the world to which he belongs is characterized by struggle for existence and existence is only possible for them who are well armed like the lobser rather than the armless squid. He becomes the 'Lobster' in his real life.

Frank's pragmatism is revealed through his attitude towards education. He cares least for academic education. For him "grammar was an abomination. Literature silly. Latin was of no use. History — well, it was fairly interesting." He likes "book keeping and arithmetic", and his true interest lies in finance: "Finance fascinated him much as art might fascinate another boy, or literature another. He was a financier by instinct, and all the knowledge that pertained to that great art was as nature to him as the emotions and subtleties of life are to a poet."  

59. The Financier, p. 10.
60. Ibid., p. 26.
61. Ibid., p. 18.
Frank proves his latent talent in business and finance when he wins the first soap case auction bid with hundred percent profit, at the age of thirteen. This early age is also remarkable for his "puppy loves" for Patience Barlow and Marjorie Stafford. Thus, Dreiser provides Frank with all the qualities of a "natural man"\textsuperscript{62} to let him evolve as a Darwinian superman.

As Frank matures in age, again Dreiser gives a realistic picture of his youth as a rising businessman: "His hair was rather a neutral shade, dark brown as crisp as it had been years before and thicker. His head was large shapely; notably commercial in its aspect and fixed on a square pair of shoulders and stocky body. Nature had destined him to be about five feet ten inches tall. His eyes already had the look that subtle years of thought bring, but they were more inscrutable than ever.... He walked a light, confident, springy step. Life had given him no severe shocks or rude awakenings".\textsuperscript{63}

Thus, with full vitality and strength of a businessman he endures many risks in the business world and in the world of beautiful teenager women. His irresistible ambitious nature has not been satisfied with one job or one woman. He searches for better jobs and better women. He breaks through conventional morality and religion to assert his own practical sense of morality. He marries Lillian Semple for "money" and for "beauty". Later on, he finds Aileen, a better prospect than Lillian and

\textsuperscript{62} Here "natural man" is used to emphasise naturalistic qualities of Cowperwood.

\textsuperscript{63} The Financier, p. 47.
Courts her. Such open defiance of convention makes him a true naturalistic figure. Being married, to justify his love for Aileen he argues: "It was a dangerous world, anything but monogamous. And anyhow, was a man entitled to only one wife? Must he never look at any other woman? Supposing he found someone". He also comments on "character": "The most futile thing in this world is to attempt exact definitions of character. All individuals are a bundle of contrarieties — none more so than the most capable. In the latter subtlety enters to conceal so that we can not always — see. Policy surrounds the great like a mystic veil. We can not know, because it is not expedient for us to know. Power identifies a man or woman with great consequences, and the result of exposure is most carefully guarded against by all".

Thus, Frank, by his intellectual weapons murders convention. He, unlike McTaegue is an unconscious and unintellectual sex monger. He is comparable to McTaegue on the ground of his sexual promiscuity, otherwise, he is more crafty and sane—a real representation of the Gilded Age robber-baron.

Frank is a master artist in business, who knows the trade secrets. He starts his business career as a "stockbroker" and when he finds it insecure and less profitable, he changes by taking to bill-brokering, a business which he observes to be very profitable and which involves no risk so long as he has

capital for investment. He takes his father's help and other bankers of Philadelphia to run the business smoothly. He misuses the public fund, bribes political leaders and intrigues his fellow businessmen by his socio-political connections to succeed in business. Whenever he apprehends his defeat or failure in his business, immediately he changes the places. For example — after his imprisonment for embezzlement in Philadelphia, he goes to Chicago. In Chicago he runs business till he loses the long-term franchise for street-car railways and finally he shifts his attention to London where he continues his business upto his death. He follows Machiavelli in his business policy. In The Financier and in The Titan, he emerges as a mythical Titan defeating everyone he meets in the realm of business. In Chicago, he adopts a new policy. When public opposition rises against his monopoly and newspapers become hostile publishing his amorous affairs with teenagers, he begins a series of public benefactions. The most prominent of these is the gift of a costly telescope to the University of Chicago. Thus, he affirms his position as a tactful and seasoned businessman.

Frank, the man of business is also "a man of letters". He has an aesthetic sense. His love for fine art is almost "art for art's sake", and explains his licentiousness. But Frank is not always amoral, he has love for old Gothic and Greek art and architecture. In The Financier, when he accumulates wealth, his desire for beauty manifests itself in the decoration of his newly built mansion with ancient
architecture. He also starts collecting paintings and other "objects d'art". The desire for beauty through pursuit of art and architecture continues till the end of his life, as do his desire for money and women. In The Stoic, he erects a new mansion in New York especially designed for the art gallery and hoards, various paintings, statuary and rare tapestry which he has collected throughout his life, from different countries. This substantial collection of art is recognized as being one of the foremost in the world. And after his death he wills the art gallery to the city of New York with the hope of achieving immortality after his death.

Thus, Frank has the characteristic of a tragic hero. He is like Marlow's Tamburlaine or Dr. Faustus, the stuff of which kings are made. He has an overvaulting ambition. His rising stature, his power over men and women, and his skillful handling of the situation gives him the air of a tragic hero. As far his ability to act, he is will incarnate in action but his death is not a tragic catastrophe. He dies merely of Bright's disease which is an outcome of his sexual over-indulgence without creating sense of pity and terror. Dreiser himself comments on Frank's character to avoid misinterpretation. He writes:

"Frank Cowperwood was not a weakling given to wild ideas of financial properties; he was not of the kind who in prosperity cut throats indiscriminately and in disaster sit down and weep over their own woes. Whatever he was, he was neither a hypocrite nor a fool. He did not delude himself concerning
himself or others. He did not capitalize the future.... He would have agreed with Machiavelli that, other things being equal, fortune is always with him, who plans. He was no fatalist, or if he was, he would not give fate the opportunity to say that he had not put up a good fight — had not taken advantage of every single opportunity. He was no coward; and, above all, he was no moralist suffering from an uneducated time conscience. He saw no morals anywhere — nothing but moods, emotions needs and greeds.... He knew he had a magnetic and dominating will. Few people, in extremes could, face him out. By his steady eye, his set jaw, and his urgent will to achieve a victory, he could almost, in the face of defeat, snatch success from hands of fate. He had done it time and again".66

Thus, Frank seems to be an ideal Dreiserian hero, an artist of power.

Eugene Witla, the hero of The 'Genius' is the second version of Frank Cowperwood but with a slight difference. When Frank dominates the financial world, Eugene reigns in the world of art and artists. Eugene, as an artist needs money for perfection and prosperity whereas Frank as a financier feels the need of art and wants to be immortalized by art. Both the characters stand on the same footing so far as their varietism, married life and inordinate desire for beauty are concerned. However, Eugene's character is completely individualised and discriminated from Frank's character.

66. The Financier, p. 432.
Eugene, among all the protagonists of Dreiser, is most autobiographical. Appending all his personal feelings and emotions, Dreiser rendered Eugene's character sympathetically, he recapitulates the hurdles of his own life, his marriage and his thwarted ambitions. Like Dreiser himself, his early life is spent in a "dingy and shabby" environment. He is "timid and shy" by nature. He is physically 'frail', not handsome, but temperamentally ambitious and poetic. He grows up to his youth with "unnoticed" incidents in his life. He is more attracted towards his mother than his father, and also has an affinity for nature and natural elements. While nature for Jennie is a shelter and an inarticulated store of beauty, for Eugene, it is an articulated form of beauty in the form of bird's song, blooming of a rose and a tree swaying in the wind. He likes to lie hours together in the "hammock at home". This affinity for beauty indicates that he may one day become an artist. As he matures, this perception of beauty manifests itself in a strong sex urge. He, like Frank develops a fixation for lovely teenaged girls. This does not diminish till the end of his life.

Witla is a man of intense feeling rather than intellect. Though he defies convention by painting nude pictures and having sexual relationship with teenagers other than his wife, he lacks the force of Frank's personality. He fosters duality without any firm conviction of life which reminds us more of Dreiser himself than any other of his fictional characters.
Hurstwood's character in *Sister Carrie*, is one of the distinctly distinguished characters among all the men and women characters. While all other characters have dreams of material success in life and rise up to prosperity, Hurstwood has no such dream and he deliberates his fall from prosperity by seducing Carrie. He, like Frank is an amoralist, and openly defies morality.

Hurstwood is introduced to us as an economically established manager of a Saloon in Chicago. His friendship with Drouet gives him opportunity to meet Carrie. Carrie finds him a more suitable match to realise her dream. Hurstwood, if he has any dream, it is only the desire to satisfy his sex-hunger by making Carrie his mistress. Hurstwood, though married, has sufficient reason to be attracted towards Carrie sexually. His marriage is a wreck. His sturdy wife asserts her possessiveness on him. He is tied to her socially by marriage and thinks of her as a burden to him. Like Frank, he feels a growing distance between himself and his wife. Therefore, he boldly takes the decision to live with Carrie and his real predicament begins. He steals money from the safe, deceives Carrie by giving the news of Drouet's illness and takes her to New York to make her his mistress. He lives in New York, suffers a great deal, does many petty jobs and ruins himself pathetically, impelled by his desire to have Carrie. Thus, his actions make him a true naturalistic character.

But, in spite of these, Dreiser sympathises with him. He gives enough reasons to justify Hurstwood's theft. If he
were a thief, he would not have returned the money when the detectives followed him. He robs money to annoy his wife and his theft is an action of jealousy rather than one of malice.

Perhaps, Dreiser created Hurstwood's character to comment on Carrie's prosperity. Hurstwood being fed up with his worldly success prefers the life of a libertine and 'falls' whereas Carrie dreams of material success and rises. Hurstwood's failure, poverty and suicide is relatively contrasted with Carrie's success, position and prosperity, both "poverty" and "prosperity" point to one end — discontentment and disillusionment.

Though it would be absurd to expect from naturalism the Aristotelian ethical concept of character, we do obtain a definite notion of the dignity of human nature from Hurstwood's character. He has dignity in a higher sense that he is a fellow sufferer, one among us in real life. He retains his dignity by turning on the gas-light jet instead of accepting death passively.

Clyde Griffiths heads the list of "moral weaklings" in Dreiser's male characters. His character is created with a scrupulous accretion of details. He is born to parents who are missionaries, believers of christianity. He grows in a society which is characterized by success through material prosperity. As a boy he is not so pragmatic like Frank, rather he inherits from his parents "a certain emotionalism and exotic sense of romance" and "a more vivid and intelligent imagination to (sic) things". 67 His intelligent imagination to things, is not

characterized by any action as it were in the case of Frank. What he thinks, is how he can better himself in an easy way. He seeks pleasure and luxury through money and sex without having any definite idea about success. As soon as he matures and earns money he searches for a "free pagan girl" meets Hortense Briggs, "a heartless flirt" who uses him for money. He escapes situations cowardly without taking any bold step to face it. Thus, if Frank stands for heroism, Clyde is for cowardice.

Clyde’s physical appearance as a young man is realistic in delineation. Dreiser dexterously exposes his character through the dialogue of Samuel Griffiths. He is a youngman of twenty, "a little taller and more firmly but scarcely any more robustly built". He possesses "a straight, well cut nose, high white forehead, wavy, glossy black hair, eyes that were black and rather melancholy at times". His personality receives mixed estimation: While Bella and Samuel Griffiths approve of him as "good-looking and well mannered", Gilbert comments and says; "If he were not the dullest, certainly he was not the most interesting person in the world, either". Dreiser by his usual authorial comments sums up Clyde’s character: "Clyde had a soul that was not destined to grow up. He lacked decidedly that mental clarity and inner directing". Thus, these comments reveal Clyde’s character as a naturalistic hero of the novel.

68. An American Tragedy, p. 159.
69. Ibid., p. 31.
70. Ibid., p. 191.
71. Ibid., p. 169.
Among all of Clyde's physical assets, his eyes play a vital role in his material success and sex appeal. It is those "deep and rather appealing" eyes that put him on the path of his success. When he goes for the first time to a brothel, the prostitute finds a sort of "eye-magnetism" in him. She says, "I like your eyes. You are not like those fellows. You're more refined, kinda." Sondra and Roberta also feel the particular attraction of his eyes. Roberta becomes aware of the "darkness and meloncholy and lure of his eyes" when he kisses her the first time. She finds beauty in his eyes and these eyes attract her so much that later on she surrenders to him by confessing that she is truly in love with him. Thus, throughout the novel, Dreiser builds the image of eyes which has a "magnetic-force" to bind lover and beloved sexually. It is because of Dreiser's conviction that the men who have "eye-magnetism", are sexually powerful. By showing powerful sex stirrings of Clyde, he gives him the status of a naturalistic character.

Clyde is a passive yearner for love, who wants "things done for him". His love for Roberta and Sondra, is limited to sex and money. He loves Roberta to quench his thirst for sex, but when he sees Sondra, his attitude towards love changes by adding another factor, that is money. He prefers Sondra to Roberta for an easy success through marriage. Frank's "love" for all the women, is assertive and domineering and being

72. McAleer Studies that "eye-magnetism" as a power of establishing sexual contact between man and woman, has special significance for Dreiserian characters. See John J. McAleer, op.cit., p. 12.
73. Ibid., p. 68.
74. Ibid., p. 274.
self-sufficient economically he "makes his way" for them, where as Clyde's love for women is marked by "subservience" and instead of making his way to the women, the women made their way to him. His subservience to women is due to his cowardly and passive nature.

Clyde is not a villain. He commits the murder in a fit of desperation. He is caught between reality and his dream of success. His self-introspection and self-debating before committing the murder raises him to the height of a tragic hero. Dreiser, through a weird bird symbol and it's warning voice — "Kit, Kit, Kit, Ca-a-a-ah", makes him conscious of his guilt. He loses his courage in a "cataclysmic moment". He should have acted courageously to hide his guilt, but his "sudden palsy of will" lets him leave clue after clue for the proof of a sure murder case. He read about the accidental murder in a newspaper which gave him only the idea, but not the courage to do it. His intention was to murder, but the manner, he and Roberta were thrown into water, was "accidental". This "accidental" again reminds us of his cherished desire — "things should be done for him". In fact, it is not chance rather his cowardice and weak personality that led Roberta and himself to change their positions in the boat, and let Clyde swim upto the shore, leaving Roberta to drown. He, thinks more and acts less. Therefore, his tragedy, if it is so, is due to inaction or involuntary action. He is not wicked but weak.

Belknap, one of the jurors argument sums up the real flaw in Clyde's character:
"... the individual who is on trial hero for his life is a mental as well as a moral coward — no more and no less — not a down right, hard-hearted criminal by any means. Not unlike many men in critical situations, he is a victim of a mental and moral fear complex". 75

Clyde possesses a dual personality. His mind hangs between the poles of self-identity and illusion or dream. In this connection, Nicholson's presentation of two books — Robinson Crusoe and Arabian Nights, helps us in understanding Clyde's character. Nicholoson, a co-prisoner of Clyde introduces two characters named Robinson Crusoe and Alladin. Robinson Crusoe represents a self-reliant, self-seeking individual who makes a success of any situation. Alladan is a dreamer and is attracted by wealth. Nicholoson advises Clyde to read the books and strike a golden mean between the two extremes — self-identity and illusion.

Clyde Griffiths is essentially different from the heroes depicted in Dreiser's previous novels. Carrie possesses an actress's talent, Jennie is striking for her spiritual qualities, Cowperwood is even likened to Lucifer, Witla is a talented artist, but Clyde has neither Witla's or Carrie's talent, nor Cowperwood's strength and shrewdness, nor Jennie's spiritual beauty and purity. He is the most ordinary and typical American youth, who is "true to the standard of the American youth, or the general American attitude toward life". 76 He is the very

75. An American Tragedy, p. 669.
76. Ibid., p. 14.
incarnation of all that is ordinary, and in this sense, he is also typical.

Lester Kane is also one among the moral weaklings. He is a lover like Hurstwood, but lacks the courage of Hurstwood. He is a liberated character to a certain extent. He is a man of thirty six years of age, "above the medium in height, clear eyed, firm jawed, athletic, direct and vigorous". But nevertheless, "an essentially animal man pleasantly veneered by education and environment". His meeting with Jennie is accidental. He comes on a business trip to Youngstown and stays with Mrs. and Mr. Bracebridge where Jennie works as a maid servant. As a bachlor, he feels an "instinctive interest" in Jennie's personality and is attracted toward her for her "pre-eminent femininity". He falls in love and stoops to Jennie. Jennie also finds in him a "force personality" and yields herself to him. Here Lester shows the strength of a naturalistic character by discarding conventions as he loves Jennie, a socially outcast woman.

Lester is kind and generous towards Jennie. He loves her blindly without asking her about her past life. He knows well that society will not accept Jennie as his wife, still he wants her by his side and admits that his love for Jennie is a "passion, a comfort, an appetite". He also admits that Jennie's love for him transcends the love of his parents, brothers and sisters. Dreiser says, "His mother loved him,

77. Jennie Gerhardt, p. 132.
78. Ibid., p. 138.
79. Ibid., p. 133.
80. Ibid., p. 216.
but her attitude toward him had not so much to do with real love as with ambition. His father well, he was a man like himself. All of his sisters were distinctly wrapped up in their own affairs; Robert (Liester's brother) and he were temperamentally uncongenial. With Jennie, he had really been happy, he had truly lived". 81

Thus, Jennie's love for him is pure and spiritual. Lester fails to materialize this love into marriage as he is laden by pressures from his father, who threatens to deprive him of his parental property. He proves himself to be conventionalist. He loses his strength as a libertine, and accepts conventions by marrying Letty Pace. Here, he comes out as a naturalistic figure whose way of life is determined externally by society and internally by sexual instincts.

Lester's character is perhaps intended by Dreiser, to excentuate Jennie's virtue as an ideal woman. Jennie, though deprived of conjugal happiness in her life, loves Lester till his death. Lester's selfishness, worldly love and sensuality are indeed, pitted against Jennie's selfless, spiritual love. Lester would have been a man of strong moral character without his affair with Jennie.

Among all the male characters of Dreiser Solon Barnes is the strongest, though he is unique. While others are amoralists or moral weaklings, he is a moralist. If Cowperwood and Clyde are rogues, Solon is the priest. He seems to be attributed with a will power but his will is broken by some unseen power

which is beyond his comprehension and power.

Dreiser depicts Solon's character with logical details as he did in the case of Frank and Clyde. He is the son of poor but devout Quakers. He is less afraid of poverty than the Quaker faith. His early life taught him that by faith and faith only, he can win life's battle. Upto the tenth year of his boyhood, he and his family stick fervently to Quakerism. But, when his uncle wills him the legacy of Thornbrough estate, his estrangement from faith to disillusionment begins.

Solon's boyhood is marked by his innocent behaviour and simplicity. He, like Jennie, grows up in the lap of nature. His calmness, sobriety and gentility of behaviour establishes him as an ideal "little Quaker" in the Trenton Quaker society. He is not hasty in his affairs with women. As a young man, he feels love for the opposite sex, loves one, marries her, and lives with her till the end of his life. He meets Benecia in her teens and they are attracted to each other not sexually, but by their temperamental affinity for Quakerism. He dreams of success in life combining both materialism and spiritualism. He is sufficiently courageous and industrious in his efforts for success. He is not a Clyde who dreams for material success through marriage. Justus Wallin offers him a job in the bank and builds his career as a banker not because he has blood-relationship with him, but because, he is a believer in Quakerism. Solon and Benecia meet each other before marriage in the Quaker's conference hall instead of a hotel and they do not propose marriage on their own, but wait until their parents
get them married. Among all the marriages, Solon's marriage is the only successful marriage. His marital bliss leads him to success in business life as well as in private life. He and Benocia prosper materially and yet, they determine to conform to their Quaker principles and they do.

Solon's adherence to Quakerism makes him a Dickensian character like Bounderby, in The Hard Times. He is hard bound to bring up his children like himself, completely dedicated to quakerism. He believes in the facts of life and facts only. He teaches his sons and daughters the hard facts of Quakerism without caring for their emotions and feelings. Etta and Stewart grow up to adolescence in luxury and material opulence. Their school education and friends provide them secular ideas to taste the pleasures of life. Solon's busy business life separates him from his children and family life. He loses his balance between materialism and spiritualism. Etta's elopement and Stewart's imprisonment followed by death make his disillusioned.

To his Quaker belief, he is intimidated by the growing corruption in the bank. He thinks that it is his moral duty to resign his post as a director. These things happen, as he is blinded by the ideals of Quakerism. If he had been a bit considerate and flexible in his belief of Quakerism, he would not have had trouble. His disillusionment springs from his incapacity to consider things other than Quakerism. At the end of his life he realises the truth and confesses: "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I but
christ liveth in me. And the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me".82

With this faith he dies peacefully.

Finally, the 'Fathers' make a considerable group of characters in Dreiser's novel. They are contrast figures with the 'mothers'. While the mothers are sympathetic, self-giving, poetic, and harmonizers of life, the fathers are apathetic, harsh, calculating, judicious and practical in their approach to life. They may be rich or poor, they represent social conventions in terms of religion and morality. They sacrifice their filial love for the sake of society. Above all, the fathers are morally strong characters.

In Sister Carrie, there is absence of such a father, but we are told that Carrie's father is a miller by profession. Coming to Jennie Gerhardt, we find two fathers — William Gerhardt and Archibald Kane. William Gerhardt is poor and Archibald Kane is rich, but their fanatical allegiance for the cause of social conventions has made them sacrifice their daughter (Jennie) and son (Lester) respectively. William Gerhardt realises and reconciles himself with Jennie in the end, but Archibald Kane dies before reconciliation with Lester. In the Financier Trilogy, Henry Worthington Cowperwood and Edward Malia Butler are two fathers. Henry Worthington is not so harsh to Frank. Whenever he finds any moral breach in Frank, he remains silent and for that matter he repents in the end.

82. The Bulwark, p. 472.
Edward Malia Butler is a loving father, yet strict in his principles. When he discovers Aileen's liaison with Frank, he reacts furiously but before correcting his daughter, he dies. In *An American Tragedy*, Ashe Griffiths, Clyde's father, is apathetic toward his son's plight, he loses his control over him as a poor father, who is unable to give his son what he likes. Titus Alden, father of Roberta, is similar to William Gerhardt in his role. Thus, the fathers, though minor figures, have played an important role in providing functional morality to the naturalistic novels of Dreiser.

Dreiser's characters are realistic in the sense that they are drawn with photographic details. They are naturalistic in so far as their attitude towards life is concerned. The readers feel that these characters are no other than his neighbours or friends in real life. They are unidealised and impersonal characters drawn carefully to the best of Dreiser's ability as a realist.