CHAPTER TEN

CONCLUSION:

PARADIGM OF DREISER'S PATTERN AND PERCEPTION
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Dreiser's disillusionment with science and his quest for metaphysical answer did carry him to the comfort and security offered by conventional systems of belief. He stood midway between the twilight of the Gilded Age and the dawn of the Age of Science and Technology. Dreiser's response to this transitional period was in tune with the shift from Utopian optimism to disillusioned frustration. He got varied interpretations of life - the muted mysticism of Tyndall, the glaring spiritualism of Wallace, the apologetic pantheism of Haeckel, the psychogenetic moralism of Gates, the Agnostic attacks of Huxley on the Bible and Loeb's mechanistic assaults on vitalism. However, he evolved a metaphysical vision of the universe in seeking to interpret this business of life to himself. His perception was as unique as his pattern in the novels and stories. What prompted Dreiser to write fiction was his overwhelming desire to understand human beings and no less so to understand human life. This inspires him to go beyond any religious or scientific philosophy and innovate new forms to express new ideas. The naive wonder at the magnificent beauty combined with the disappointment at the terror of life decided the tone of Dreiser's writings.

Dreiser's fictional method is inseparable from his conception
of life. In fact, it is from the conception of human experience he attempted to give a shape to his fictions. He was not a theorist like Henry James with whom he was traditionally compared. But we usually ignore that the social facts out of which James was able to imagine the conscious and moral life were not available to Dreiser. In Stephen Crane's *Maggie* or Norris' *McTeague* we get an aloof clinical observation of the unconscious life. This was not possible for Dreiser whose artistic purposes made no strenuous demands upon his style. He did not pile up his materials in solid slabs but his materials in solid slabs but separates and stretches it out in minute gradations. The naturalistic novels provide occasion for the method of documentary determinism by making the characters overwhemed, and by the sheer weight of accumulated details. The solid slabs of experiences are presented in a naturalistic novel while Dreiser gets the whole sequence mirrored continuously throughout the larger dialectic. A Jamesian concern with the conscious life was alien to Dreiser but he writes with a similar intensity of focus upon the primary stuff of experience. The experience presented is continuous, but it is broken up and alternated in a precisely elaborated pattern where two main groups of details are paralleled. Through the use of various narrative devices such as irony, parallels, juxtaposition and the narrative voice, Dreiser impressed his style on the readers. Even those critics who did not earlier agreed to regard him anything better than a naturalistic writer gradually accorded recognition to his craftsmanship. J. A Bryant Jr. pointed it out:

Then in 1971 to the astonishment of friends and admirers, he published *Homage to Theodore Dreiser on the Centennial of his*
Birth and so welcomed into the circle of respectability a writer whose work many of the better critics, including, himself had previously found leaden and plodding.

Dreiser's narrative in *An American Tragedy* is omniscient and it turns upon the very antithesis of authentic identity of Clyde and his elusive dreaming self. The constant references to mirrors at several significant moments in Clyde's life are meant to suggest the boy's inclination to confuse outward features with the inner self. In BK 1 chap 2 Dreiser describes:

Casual examination of himself in mirrors whenever he found them tended rather to assure him that he was not so bad-looking — a straight, well-cut nose, high white forehead, wavy, glossy, black hair, eyes that were black and rather melancholy at times. And yet the fact that his family was the unhappy thing that it was, that he never had any real friends, and could not have any, as he saw it, because of the work and connection of his parents, was now tending more and more to induce a kind of mental depression or melancholia which promised not so well for his future. It seemed to make him rebellious and hence lethargic at times. Because of his parents, and in spite of his looks, which were really agreeable and more appealing than most, he was inclined to misinterpret the interested looks which were cast at him occasionally by young girls in very different walks of life from him— the contemptuous and yet rather inviting way in which they looked to see if he were interested or disinterested brave or cowardly. (AAT 8-9)

Elsewhere in the novel Dreiser refers to the mirror for heightening the antithetical tone of his narrative:
And so it was that Clyde, returning from the factory one early December evening about two weeks after his encounter with Sondra, was surprised by the sight of a cream-colored note leaning against the mirror of his dresser. It was addressed in a large, scrawly and unfamiliar hand. He picked it up and turned it over without being able in any way to fix upon the source. (AAT 312)

It is here Clyde was to become amazed and thrilled to get invitation from Sondra Finchley. The dreaming self of Clyde is described:

Quite amazed and thrilled, Clyde stood and stared. For ever since that second contact with her, he had been more definitely fascinated than at any time before by the dream that somehow, in some way he was to be lifted from the lowly state in which he now dwelt. How marvellous, really (AAT 313)

The irony is apparent in Clyde’s illusion regarding the elevation “to be lifted from the lowly state”.

Clothes are also important to his mental set in figurative as well as literal terms. Clyde observed the pretty girls and the fine clothes worn by them. At one point the narrative is very revealing:

And very often one or another of these young beauties was accompanied by some male in evening suit, dress shirt, high hat, bow tie, white kid gloves, and patent leather shoes, a costume which at that time Clyde felt to be the last word in all true distinction, beauty, gallantry and bliss. To be able to wear such a suit with such ease and air. (AAT 29)
Clothe imagery is used by Deiser to stress the illusion in Clyde’s mind and also to heighten his dreaming self which gradually makes him alienated from his surrounding. Then these are the imageries of parties, dances and hotel. The orgy of pleasures which engender illusions in Clyde’s mind is represented by the dinner parties. The loss of Clyde’s real identity is ironically described by Dreiser in one part of the novel where the invitation of Sondra came to Clyde:

Now here was this—a social invitation issued by the “Now and Then” club of which even though he had never heard of it must be something, since it was sponsored by such exceptional people....... So astonished was he that he could scarcely contain himself for joy, but now on the instant must walk to and fo looking at himself in the mirror, washing his hands and face, then deciding that his tie was not just right, perhaps, and changing to another—thinking forward to what he should wear and back upon how Sondra had looked at him on that last occasion. (AAT 313)

Here Dreiser relates the clothe imagery to the mirror imagery. The Green--Davidson hotel seemed to Clyde “fantastic, Aladdinish reality.” When he tries to be romantic with his first girl, the imagery that sprang to his mind are of the ornate furnishing in the hotel. Thus the images of clothes and mirror got matched with the image of hotel. The society in which Clyde lived was the society where hotels were more real than home, and roles were more real than identity. But in all these images, a glimmer of transcendence is always visible. The naturalists, when they show a character being ruined by overwhelming forces, more often than not leave us with
a sense of littleness and helplessness. Dreiser is concerned with the possibility of magnitude. Clyde is pitiable, Sister Corrie is pitied and Gennie deserves mercy but at the end we feel a sombre exaltation. Through a sustained pattern of imagery Dreiser highlights the antithetical pattern of counter-romance. The naturalitic premises gradually become anti-naturalistic statement almost the self's intrinsic importance.

Shifting perspectives and background is more than a literary device for Dreiser. He does not use the narrator to relocate his characters in a society. The characters are seen from the inside world of the novel. Thus Gennie does not see Lester Kane first as an individual. He is a typification of certain aspects of a world about which she already has certain beliefs and assumptions. His presence is not simply his own self, but it is borrowed from society. He is the incarnation of the distant dreams of Jennie. This is also true about Carries encounter with Drouet and Hurstwood. Later in Clyde's encounter with Sondra we find a similar perspective of transcendence. These are the great expectations of a member in a society where the dreams are more real than reality itself. Dreiser through his narrative carries his notion of implication toward an idea of upliftment and transcendence. All these are again placed in a sharp contrast with a progressive stripping away of identity. Clothes were used in An American Tragedy to highlight the illusious of Clyde's mind. In The Financier too clothe imagery is used for a different purpose.

Convict number 3633' Kendall called to the clerk, handling him at the same time a yellow strip of paper on which was written Cowperwood's full name.... (TF 384)
And in a stroke Frank Algernon Cowperwood becomes another, or no one at all. Next the prisoner must strip off his farfashionable clothing and replace it with regulation prison garb so that no “individual” inmate is distinguishable from any other. Cowperwood “felt degraded impossible in these clothes and he knew that looked it” (p.388, TF)

Robert Elias rightly remarked:

The criminal lawyer Clarence Darrow concluded after reading the novel that Clyde Griffiths could never have been convicted in real life on the basis of the evidence given.²

The reality of the newspaper report is transmuted into fiction. Dreiser the novelist was certainly not the man that he had been in his newspaper days. Dreiser transforms, transmutes and translates reality into fiction in the most artistic way.

In The Prefaces which James wrote for the New York edition of his book, James rediscovers the process of creation as organic and thereby imputes something of a historical necessity to the works. Dreiser’s recollections were shaped by his present and the recollective process advanced by opening up of a new horizon. Dreiser was the hero of the tales which he told. Self consciousness not only makes the self a hero and experiences a relegated whole but it also involves the same reverse of time that characterizes life as represented in literature. For a Dreiserian hero, an event happens twice and what he says or does has already happened in the consciousness of the artist himself. Dreiser’s greatness lies in his inward mastery of the outward experience. He is both a hero and a historian, conscious and introspective. The image of a mirror
which Henry James continually uses to describe the consciousness of his characters, reflects Dreiser's position as well. He made of himself a mirror in order to reflect and represent all he saw. Nevertheless, he was more than a social realist, he was a maker. Donald Pizer in his introduction to the critical essays on Dreiser wrote:

Dreiser is not merely a documentary social realist in the manner of turn-of-the century muckrakers or 1930-s proletarian novelists. He is rather a profound observer of the underlying myths and emotional realities of the American experience.

This artistic passion is, however, the outcome of his ambivalence. We have come to know of Dreiser's own involvements and his own experiences as a writer of Magazine fiction. The alternating attachment to and detachment from the fictional materials need to be studied fully in order to understand this artistic passion of Dreiser. The search for a romantic mode by which Dreiser could open 'realism' as a mode of self-realization was clear even from the days of *Sister Carrie*. In spite of the gigantic shadow of Zolaesque naturalism Dreiser searched for a pattern to fictionalise his perception. In the rigorously mimetic ambitions of militant naturalism of Zolaesque fictions craftsmanship had no place, but Dreiser' was engaged in a search for pattern through craftsmanship. There was at the most obvious level a standard model for the Dreiser novel inherited from Balzac and Zola roughly made up of a passion or conflict of passions in a given milieu out of which consciously or unconsciously Dreiser had to fashion his own characteristic design. Dreiser sets up a deliberate tension between
subjective and the objective perspectives. To Zola the voice of science conveyed the word of ultimate truth and he applied earnestly the methods of science to literary productions. On the other hand, wanted to explore the plurality and receptiveness of the genre of fiction by playing upon appearances and illusions and by producing inexhaustible elaborate effects contained within a pattern of alternating divergence and convergence. This reinforces the problematics of the form both conforming to its inherited patterns and departing from them but undeniably adding to the inexhaustible potentialities of the most capacious of genres. Many of the main characteristics of Dreiser’s fiction largely resulted from his commitment to two partly incompatible sets of artistic goals. It is impossible to form a clear notion of the problems that Dreiser faced as a craftsman or to grasp the overall structure of his works without taking this dichotomy into account and how he coped with it. Quite contrastedly with the naturalistic writers, he not only populated his fictions with part-time and full-time mouthpieces, realistic or idealized veiled self-portraits, he embodied himself in his works — his whole self. He imparted a strongly autobiographical quality to the narratives in which many characters appear. Dreiser’s novels therefore bring about an extraordinary reversal of aesthetic values transforming naturalistic reality into illusion and illusion into reality. The mimetic mode was insufficient to satisfy his appetite for absolute knowledge and he portrayed reality with the desire to portray the entire reality including the reality beyond reality. Dreiser tried hard to solve the problems engendered by the tensions between centripetal and centrifugal goals of his novels. He sets up a deliberate tension between the subjective and the objective
perspectives so that the entirety of vision can be offered. Herein lies the need for going beyond the narrative mode that Spencer, Balzac and Zola helped him to develop.

Lionel Trilling in his essay "Reality in America" questions the notion of ideal reality and distinguishes between the narrative modes of Jamesian modernism and Dreiserian naturalism. Usually naturalist writers do rarely care for the narrative discourse. But in spite of his personal involvement, Dreiser is able to detach himself from the narrative discourse. Critics were puzzled over the "generic relations between romance and realism" in the novels of Dreiser. They saw *Sister Carrie* the book as a battleground of styles of genres of ideologies.

Richard Lehan interpreted Dreiser's treatment of reality in his novels as one of the varieties of literary naturalism. But Lehan too refers to "the dilution of the narrative voice" in Dreiser's novels. The use of repetitive sequences is a feature of naturalism as a narrative mode which Dreiser preferred—the cyclic pattern to the linear pattern in his novels. Even Lehan too stresses on Dreiser's ability to detach himself from the narrative discourse.

In diluting the narrative voice with its philosophical message, Dreiser distances himself from the story.

However, as a romantic tragedian Dreiser viewed life only to discover in his own self a Carrie, a Jennie, a Clyde or a Cowperwood. Dreiser shapes the reader's response and sharpens the narrative forms by filtering much of the plot of his novels through the consciousness of the protagonist in whom Dreiser had
always put out of himself. It is not absolute identification but an imaginative rapport between the author and his characters. The symbols and images of vitality and energy are, in fact, predominant in the novels of Dreiser and the surging tempo of the onward motion is predominant in the images. Broadly speaking, Dreiser's novels and stories centre around an urban world and the images of city life give meaning to his writings enriching the romance pattern and its subversion. First, Dreiser uses images and symbols which prove larger than individual. The flow of the city's movements is like a rolling sea. Broadway symbolises stage and theatre. By conquering Broadway, Carrie conquers the city itself. Broadway becomes the metonymic equivalent. The light and darkness imageries are used frequently in nearly all the novels by Dreiser with a decisive purpose. Night embodies city's energy in *Sister Carrie* or in *An American Tragedy*. Chicago is made to symbolise a realm of desire for Carrie.

Recent studies reveal the importance of the recurring patterns of images and actions — imagery of water, weather, doors, windows, rocking chairs and acts of drifting, glimpsing, rocking etc. add to the meaning of the novels of Dreiser. Dreiser meant us to see the hero of the Cowperwood Trilogy in terms of the social symbolism. He has depicted the social forces which conditioned him. The financial adventures of this sort of hero are the talk of the town:

Young Frank listened to the story of these transactions with a greedy ear. They seemed wonderful to him; but this whole world
of money was like a fairy land full of delight. (TF 20)

But in the second group of novels *The Genius*, *The Bulwark* and *The Stoic*, this delight was transcended to a symbolical level of ecstasy, a kind of spiritual meditation. Cowperwood is made aware in *The Stoic* of a richer kind of existence. He realizes that his "quest for power fame prestige" (TS 2) has really taken him nowhere that in fact his mind has moved "treadmill fashion." (TS 230) going nowhere and yet in perpetual motion as Berenice puts it,

*like some big engine, or machine that's tearing full speed somewhere, but does not know exactly where.* (TS 11)

In *Sister Carrie* the struggle for existence was more than the struggle of the lower beasts that struggle merely to maintain their lives. In *Jennie Gerhardt*, life is a battle for self-preservation. In *The Financier* Cowperwood’s financial struggle to acquire fortune is more than the mere pursuit of money. It symbolises his limitless aspirations. This is also true of Clyde’s struggle in *The American Tragedy*. Solon Barnes, the protagonist of *The Bulwark* has won regeneration through Inner Light and before he dies he is able to impart faith to his daughter Etta. Berenice Fleming learns in *The Stoic* that life repeats itself and all motion is circular. Bodies serve as vehicles for higher forms of consciousness. The Creative Intelligence to whom Berenice gives consent is really an extension of the greedy self. At odds with the physical world, Dreiser created a transcendental world wherein an idealized self could find fulfillment. Eugene Witla and Frank Alegernon Cowperwood are single-minded in their rush to realize an essential self, while Clyde Griffiths overestimates his possibilities, and Solon Barnes is unable (at least
at first) to reconcile Witla and the Cowperwood that battle within him. The fundamental impulse of romanticism was a shift from staticism to dynamism. Underlying and motivating all these inconsistent articles of conscious faith was a deep brooding and abiding conviction of life. Change and movement in world and in human experience made the static moral codes irrelevant or relatively harmless. Dreiser had no direct way of expressing this abiding conviction, but he did not let fear of self contradiction keep him from trying to express it as best as he could. The sea imagery, the symbol of rocking chair and the railway journey give us an impression of motion and vitality almost Whitmanesque in spirit. Throughout the "Song of Myself" movement and energy are depicted:

Myself moving forward then and now and forever, —/ Gathering and showing more always and with velocity. (Sec. 32)

Or as in Section 24

Walt Whitman, a Kosmos, of Manhattan the son,/ Turbulent, fleshy, sensual eating, drinking and breeding.

The urge was repeatedly expressed:

Through me the afflatus surging and surging through me the current and index.

In Section 40 Whitman reiterates;

I dilate you with tremendous breath, I bouy you up, / Every room of the house do I feel with an arm'd force.
His imagery of the energy of youth leaves us breathless:

Oh span of youth! ever pushed elasticity! O manhood balanced florid and full.

A similar vitality urges Dreiser and his protagonists through and through — be it love for wealth, love for woman or love for God. Dreiser was aware of the brighter aspects of Emersonian "Self Reliance". The raging vitality of egoism is on one level an intuition that carries us beyond morality into cosmic piety.

Percy Lubbock's concern was with 'point of view' and in his *Craft of Fiction* he raised the question of the relation in which the narrator stands to the story. This is very important in the case of Dreiser's method of narration. He makes what Lubbock calls "the self-enactment of the events of the story." The narrative itself stands for Dreiser's viewpoint as a novelist. The imaginative rapport between Dreiser and his characters will be the chief issue in the problem of the narrator's relation to his materials.

Livingston argues that Dreiser leaps over Howells and Mark Twain to the American romancers, particularly Hawthorne, seeking a 'romance' mode by which they might open 'realism' to desire and the provisionality of theatrical identities as modes of self-realization. Livingston's argument encourages us to reconsider sources in American romantic writing for Dreiser's innovative treatment of his narratives to allow a freer discursive role for the narrator's voice and for the narrator's own discharge of desire as expression of his own self-realization. William L. Philips established a coherent body of imagery guiding involvement of the readers with Dreiser's characters. Many other writers and critics established that Dreiser was
capable of a subtle craftsmanship. Julian Markels described Dreiser's ability to introduce an underlying thematic rhythm through the juxtaposition of scenes in the novels. Ellen Moers also analyzed the 'finesse' of Dreiser in various scenes of the novels. It is undoubtedly assumed that Dreiser's style became more mature and precise in the novels of the later period. These novels clearly show that the critical emphasis should not be on one particular aspect as to whether there is a presence of a crude and monolithic determinism in the novels.

The richness of the novels themselves became the main theme in Robert Penn Warren's *Homage to Theodore Dreiser* and Donald Pizer's *The Morals of Theodore Dreiser*. Penn Warren extolled the beautiful precision of Dreiser's prose style. But above everything, one aspect of Dreiser's novels from the point of view of narrative art that becomes important is the way in which Dreiser as narrative voice deeply involves us in the complex yoking of social information and individual consciousness in the novel. An examination of the novels reveals that Dreiser's protagonists move and develop in a systematic and logical manner which we may call the 'heroic pattern' which is again attuned to the 'Counter-Romance' theme. What emerges from the analysis of the fictional pattern of Dreiser's novels in the earlier chapters is that the hero's or heroine's consistent development had three phases: "initiation—involvement — alienation" bearing resemblance to the mythic hero's movement pattern of "separation-initiation-return" as discussed by Joseph Campbell in his book *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*.

Campbell determines the archetypal pattern of a mythic hero. He sets forth from his common hut or castle and this stage is
indicative of separation. He reaches the world of adventures and undergoes an ordeal or series of ordeals. This is the stage of initiation. The final stage is the return of the glorified hero. The earlier two stages are transparent in Dreiser's novels.

In *Sister Carrie*, *Jennie Jerhardt*, and *An American Tragedy*, we see the protagonists setting out from their common hut and undergoing a series of ordeals. They, however, do not emerge victorious in the end but get alienated from the rest of the world. They make a painful transition from adolescence to maturation by undergoing a trauma of (a) sexual promiscuity (b) pursuit of wealth and position (c) crimes or immoral activities. The adolescent goes through painful experiences and subsequently gain knowledge, lose childhood illusions and enter the adult world. The discovery of delusion being the chief motif, Dreiser shows that the hero is initiated into the system with youthful docility, dependence and naivete being lost. The involvement stage depends upon the nature, the effect of the initiation and the corresponding sensitivity of the individual. In the earlier novels the protagonist culminates in a corresponding form of alienation and gets alienated from his own self. In the second category of novels, *The Financier* and *The Titan*, Dreiser stresses the involvement part more intensely. It implies the meaningless and fruitless effort of an individual in the vast expanse of a spiritually barren world. The third or the final phase of Dreiser's literary career is marked by a renewal of spiritual faith and the protagonists of the novels of this period emerge victorious like the glorified heroes of the romances.

Dreiser's method of narration also confirms this pattern. In *The
Financier such an alienation scene is portrayed which remains etched in our memory with their poignant pathos and symbolic significance. The three witches that hailed Macbeth upon the blasted heath might in turn have called to Cowperwood:

Hail to you Frank Cowperwood master of a great railway system!
Hail to you Frank Cowperwood, builder of a priceless mansion!
Hail to you, Frank Cowperwood patron of arts and possession of endless riches! You shall be famed hereafter.” Dreiser’s account continues. “But like the weird sisters they would have lied for in the glory was also the ashes of Dead Sea fruit—an understanding that could neither be inflamed by desire nor satisfied by luxury, a heart that was long since wearied by experience, soul that was bereft of illusion as a windless moon........ (TF 502).

The ordeal is described and it is followed by ecstasy:

To have and not to have! All the seeming and yet the sorrow of not having! Brilliant society that shone in a mirage yet locked its doors love that eluded as a will-o-the-wisp and died in the dark. (TF 503).

The sense of alienation is transcended and like the mythic hero the Dreiserian heroes also emerge victorious, bringing the wheel of heroic pattern to a full circle.

What a great difference between Carrie disillusioned at the end, the disillusioned Cowperwood, but with a great difference. The natural splendour of the Norwegian sea-side, mountains and man’s peaceful existence which are fully opposed to the false ideals of
luxury and snobbery, make Cowperwood realize the emptiness of his mode of life. He comes to admit that these people had more from life in sheer beauty simple comfort and charming social customs than he and thousands of others like him who were so strenuously engaged in accumulating money. Through this experience and realization of Berenice who is led away from the whole western materialsitic viewpoint we come to understand Dreiser’s own viewpoint that the vicious circle of “meretricious beauty” as Fitzgerald called it, can be broken and also Dreiser’s conviction that one must live for something outside of one’s self.

This is the romance of religious ecstasy which can counter the romance of wealth effectively:

Sister Carrie was the half-equipped little knight.... venturing to reconnoitre the mysterious city and dreaming wild dreams of supremacy. (SC 2)

Cowperwood was also a knight. Dreiser’s novels reflect the vision of life which money represents to the poor, to the middle class and to the wealthy. The Financier trilogy exposes some of the illusions generated by money in the American metaphysic, and in the final analysis. Cowperwood who entered the business world as a knight in search of a Grail passes out of that world little more than a Christian, with a dream, turned nightmare. His adventures gradually appeared to be pious at least for the wisdom gained. His city was not the “walled city”. It was the city of light, which Cowperwood finally reached.

Dreiser’s use of the counter-romance in his novels is related
to the Knight theme. Even in *Sister Carrie* we see the knightly adventures. James Mulqueen considers the metaphor of pilgrimage to be a deliberate inversion of Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress.*

Dreiser's satiric thrust becomes even clearer in his portrayal of Drouet as "A Knight of Today." Dreiser's business-man knight is very much unlike Norris' businessmen who are described sincerely in overblown heroic imagery. Dreiser's mock heroic tone is apparent:

> He appeared to great advantage behind the white nappery and silver platters of the table and displaying his arms with a knife and fork. As he cut the meat his rings almost spoke. (SC 45)

Later in the novel, the tone of satire is still more distinct:

> A madame Sappho would have called him a prig; a Shakespearean would have said "my merry child". Old drinking Caryoe thought him a clever, successful businessman. (SC 49)

Dreiser also describes the businessmen who gathered at the club as

> rotund rosy figures silk-hatted starchy bosomed, beringed and bescarfpinned to the queen's taste. (SC 121).

Dreiser symbolically compares Drouet to Belshazzar in Chapter XXXII entitled "The Feast of Belshazzar : A Seer to Translate."

This is how a distopia is created and the utopian vision is inverted. The love of money-making diverts the attention of Eugene Witla from art in *The Genius.* It is not for nothing that F. Scott Fitzgerald praised the novel so enthusiastically. He found in it
elements which he himself was later to use in Tender is the Night.

Dorothy Dudley thinks that Fitzgerald was so taken with The Genius, perhaps because, he identified himself there with the protagonist as in Sister Carrie. Eugene’s journey also began like that of Carrie in romance. Dreiser makes out of Eugene a mythic archetype. The landlady seeing Eugene thinks:

This was what Chicago did to the country. (TG 39)

Eugene gets into Chicago’s great banks, great office, buildings, great retail stores, great hotels — the four invincible fortresses in Dreiser’s novels which overawe his characters. The visions of a thrilled Eugene multiplied and the readings of Carlyle, Emerson, Thoreau and Whitman did not work “vanity and deep egotism.” (TG 61)

Dreiser did not want to make Eugene an ascetic. Rather he is a knight who has accepted the challenges of the ‘walled city’:

He had marveled at wealth and luxury in Chicago but here it took his breath away..... Here one felt intuitively the far reaches which separate the ordinary man from the scion of wealth. (TG 103)

Interestingly enough Dreiser mingles the illusions with disillusionment in the mind of Eugene:

He had come here with a pretty high estimate of himself but daily as he looked, he felt himself crumbling (TG 103).

The awareness slowly dawned upon him, when he thinks:

If one failed of strength in any way, if life were not kind in its bestowal of gifts, if one were not born to fortune’s pampering care
the rest was misery. (TG 251)

This consciousness was deepened when he came back to New York in the defeated state. The city depressed him greatly,

for he had always hoped to be an integral part of this magnificence and display and now he was not — might never be again. (TG 299).

Eugene gives up his ultra artistic appearance abandoning his flowing tie and the rather indiscriminate manner he had of combing his hair" in favour of "severe simplicity" (TG 394) His hat was unbusinesslike. (TG 414).

Eugene dids not find the happiness which he expected to find in the Franklinesque pursuit of material prosperity. He realized that wealth is powerless to provide the happiness of the mind. This quest for satisfaction of the mind linked Dreiser's novels to the Franklinesque romances.

Although Dreiser wrote The Stoic as a part of the Trilogy of Desire and bracketed it with The Titan and The Financier yet in spirit it was closer to the last two novels wherein the Dreiserian concern with 'Mind' and 'Spirit' was more important. In a sense it was the first step taken by Dreiser towards spiritualism that denounced the craze for crass materialism of American life. Richard Lehan also tried to explain the shifting back and forth of Dreiser between The Genius and The Trilogy of Desire.

From another viewpoint, however, there is a justification of phantasies of dream-self which recurred again and again in the
Dreiser novels.

Thus in a sense, *The Genius* can be called a "Novel of Transition". In fact, from this novel the sense of dissatisfaction with material possession started pouring into the novel of Dreiser. In *An American Tragedy* this note of warning about the unhappiness resulting from material possession was heard when Clyde's mother wrote:

I had hoped and prayed that you would return to the straight and narrow path—the only path that will ever lead you to success and happiness of any kind. (AAT 183).

For the first time Dreiser mentioned of the beautiful heaven and the voice of the Lord! Clyde's mother wrote:

Will you stop and listen to the voice of our Lord that is ever with us guiding our footsteps safely up the rocky path that leads to a heaven more beautiful, than we can ever imagine here? (AAT 184)

But Dreiser had yet a long way to go to realize the serenity of Solon or Berenice. Clyde or Carrie were vitally egoist almost Ozymandian in their boasts and aspirations till the realization dawns upon them: "Nothing beside remains." But Dreiser gradually moves to the Keatsian serenity from restlessness of the earlier stage, from the image of motion towards the static and constant. Love of Jennie for Brander or Kane, or of Clyde for Roberta and Sondra changed. But in *The Bulwark* Etta sensed love that is not fitful or changing:
In this love and unity with all nature, as she now sensed, there was nothing fitful that glowed one minute and was gone the next. This love was rather as constant as nature itself everywhere the same sunshine or in darkness the filtered splendor of the dawn, the seeded beauty of the night. It was an intimate relation to the very heart of being. (SC 331)

Contrasted with this is the fear for change and impermanence voiced by Dreiser in his earlier novels such as *Sister Carrie*. On hearing the advice of Ames to give up comedy, Carrie muses:

You have this quality in your eyes and mouth and in your nature. You can lose it, you know, if you turn away from it and live to satisfy yourself alone; it will go fast enough. The look will leave your eyes. Your mouth will change. Your power to act will disappear. You may think they won't but they will. (SC 465)

This awareness of the changing nature, was Carrie’s final attainment, with a poignant tragic note ringing. Even the illusion about money also changed. Most of her life Carrie’s desires were in fact in the realm of money. But now that her experience with Ames had transformed them into desires for affection, now that money had shown its impotence, she decided she must not have more money.

Near the end of the novel Dreiser says:

It does not take money long to make plain its impotence providing the desires in the realm of affection. With her one hundred and fifty in hand, Carrie could think of nothing particular to do. (SC 463)
The ineffectiveness of money and the power of imagination were the majestic concerns of Dreiser in nearly all his novels. The consciousness of Etta and Solon in the mammon-worshipping society gave them the power to survive.

Really, consciousness survives the illusions which crumble down in the money-seeking world. Dreiser analyses this consciousness against a city background.

A young man or woman from the country coming to enter the gates of city, as Dreiser himself did it, is faced with the harsh realities that engender illusions of money.

The more the story develops, the more critical becomes the attempts to save the consciousness. The yearning for innocence and the realities of the ordeals clash till the resolution either in defeat or victory is achieved.

The mimetic realism of the city life partakes of the romance conventions just as the romance tropes are contextualized within the bounds of mimetic mode. It is this interrelationship that defines the meaning of the Dreiser novels. Eliseo Vivas beautifully remarks:

Dreiser is a bigger and more faithful artist than his philosophy permits him to be. As editor he is always telling us that the picture he paints is meaningless. But within his novels his men and women always find life had a driving significance which overpowers them. Sometimes the meaning it has is sinister; sometimes pathetic; sometimes tragic. In Dreiser we find in his enormous pity and in his sympathy a vision of life not altogether impossible to
realize in which some at least of the darkness he records could be eliminated.\textsuperscript{8}

It is necessary here to emphasize the nature of the mode that Dreiser adopted for illuminating his meaning.

Since the romance was a devolution of the mythic or epic mode, "the novel which counterpointed the romance can be schematically categorized into the mimetic mode." Theorists of the romantic genre therefore emphasize its anti-mimetic nature, its greater freedom in both form and content. By definition the romance and the novel contradict each other. Thus the novel which accommodates the romance mode is therefore characterized by an internal tension. It is one thing to admit as Hawthorne clearly does to write romance but another thing to structure the romance mode within an "anti-romance" genre that the novel is. In Dreiser's novels the function of the romance mode is extended to serve a more problematic relation, because mimetic realism partaking of romance conventions and romance tropes contextualized within the mimetic mode are neatly inter-related.

Dreiser was not a conscious theorist like James or Joyce but he was doing his job as a novelist sincerely and consistently, chiefly because the inter-related genre of anti-romantic romance gave him adequate scope for depicting the reality of his time which otherwise was much difficult. There were the lures of naturalistic and the realistic methods, Dreiser's greatness as an artist chiefly consists in his reluctance to conform to any oversimplified category. He did not want to impose any given method on the meaning of life that he wished to convey. In Zola's world of fictions the narrative is
controlled by an observer—not the scientific observer of the experimental novel, nor the whimsical cosmic observer of Hardy, but a more philosophical observer. Dreiser's narrative is different. The narrator of his novel is partly involved and partly detached like the Greek chorus. There was the need to out ground the narrative mode that Spencer and Balzac helped him to develop.

Dreiser wanted to say new things in a new way and he realized that the existing mode required modification so that it suited well his own artistic temperament.

As idealist Dreiser's treatment of that reality was totally new. It is a great mistake to think that Dreiser the reporter of a newspaper was the same man as Dreiser, the writer.

The creative writers do not wait for the critics to evolve a thesis regarding the style which they will follow. The form of romance that Dreiser created for expressing a view of life new to his society was hardly understood by the critics of his day.

Dreiser never imposes on his readers his own perceptions. He writes what he feels as a participant partly involved and partly detached in the ebb and tide of the national scene - America in the pre-Depression period, the America of the Boom period and America of the post-Depression period. His record was a faithful, artistic representation of life. Hussman rightly points out:

Dreiser was among the first of American artists to try to make sense of a world in which science and religion seemed hopelessly split, a chasm which was to prove to be the foremost cultural fact of the first half of the 20th century.
He shows us the American dream unrealized and turned sour. He was one of the first American novelists to do so and certainly none before him had done so with anything like his power. The faith he seems to have reached is possible after a series of spiritual ordeals, after a lot of tensions in his own mind. The conflict of the human heart within itself revealing the artistic tensions alone can make good writing. Dreiser’s novels record the attempts of his characters to resolve profound conflicts that he deeply felt himself. Dreiser achieved success in perceiving the tragic undercurrents of unhappiness underlying the exterior dreams and romance extravaganza and fantasies. He did not conceal facts. He was not opposed to the romances which the American Dream inspired but as a seer and visionary he also realized the inherent weakness of the civilization and its glitter.