PREFACE
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I ventured into this work without full realisation of the vastness of the subject. While I was doing my M. Phil dissertation on an inter-textual study of Charles Dickens' *Great Expectations* and Francis Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, my curiosity had been stirred by their use of the romance pattern in its subverted form. Later I worked on Fitzgerald and found that the chief motif of his fictions is "the discovery of delusions", as Professor Bhabatosh Chatterjee commented in the foreword to my book "*Francis Scott Fitzgerald : The Quest for Meaning and Form* (2000). Since then I thought that the subject needed further analysis and study. I mused on the inadequacy of the mimetic mode and the use of counter-romance pattern in the fictions written by F. Scott Fitzgerald's predecessors and contemporaries.

An article written by Doody Terence comparing Fitzgerald's *Gatsby* with Clyde of Theodore Dreiser's *An American Tragedy* instilled in me the desire to explore the pattern of Dreiser's fictions. During my stay at ASRC, Hyderabad I came across a few essays and books which argued that Dreiser was not to be bracketted with Norris, the avowed disciple of Zola. As Dreiser did not believe in the analysis of the extreme of human behaviour in terms of heredity or in the illustration of scientific laws of animalism and determinism, I found to my utter surprise that even in his first novel *Sister Carrie* (1900) branded by the critics of the time as "a masterpiece of naturalism" Dreiser went beyond naturalism. I read Dreiser's later novels too and started getting convinced that to pigeonhole Dreiser's art within the naturalistic movement is to stop far short of an understanding of his art at its deepest. But
the task of reconciliation was difficult. The constant subversion of the romance pattern gave to Dreiser’s writing an antithetic quality. Rolf Lunden’s thought-provoking book *The Inevitable Question: The Antithetic Pattern of Theodore Dreiser’s Thought and Art* (1973) inspired me to deliberate on the antithetical counter-romance pattern in Dreiser’s novels. Other inspiring critical works on Dreiser that encouraged me initially were Louis J. Janine’s book, *Mechanism and Mysticism: The Influence of Science on the Thought and Work of Theodore Dreiser* (1993), Heuston Dustin’s essay “Theodore Dreiser: Naturalist or Theist”, Holmes Norman Person’s “Idealist in Conflict with Society”, M. Goodfellow Donald’s essay “Theodore Dreiser and the American Dream” and Miyoko Takeda’s thought-stirring book *The Quest for Reality: Theodore Dreiser’s Spiritual and Esthetical Pilgrimage* (1991). In course of my study I also read the important volume of critical essays edited by Miriam Gogol *Theodore Dreiser: Beyond Naturalism* (1998) which helped me immensely in giving final shape to my thesis. Since my thesis is aimed at exploring the paradigm of perception in Dreiser’s fiction and also the fictional mode he used to convey that perception, I felt the need to conduct a textual probe into the symbols and images to show how the counter-romance pattern was operative in all the novels collectively and individually. One seminal book available to me was Juhani Rudanko’s *Linguistic Analysis & Text Interpretation: Essays on The Bill of Rights and on Keats, Shakespeare and Dreiser*. I am also immensely indebted to L. Phillips William for his essay “The Imagery of Dreiser’s Novels” and E. Spiller Robert’s essay “Dreiser as Master Craftsman”.

Nevertheless, I have to confess that our study of literature in India is very eclectic and we hardly have the scope to penetrate into the hinterland of thought beyond what is available in a few libraries keeping books on American literature. As a research scholar as well as a teacher of English
literature in a Calcutta college, I feel my inadequacy in understanding to my full satisfaction the issues related to Dreiser's perception and pattern. I have realized Dreiser's immense importance as a pioneer in his subversion of the romance pattern in his fictions. Dreiser lived in a critical era that saw the great historical events of the world — the World War I, the Bolshevik Revolution, the Boom Period, the Wall Street crash and the World War II. He wrote in the heyday of naturalism and found the naturalistic mode of writing inadequate to offer his vision of a new reality. The parameters of my study being large, I have been constantly under the apprehension of the work getting diffuse. But I have tried my best to minimize some of the limitations that may have found their way into my work.

I would like to close this prefatory note by acknowledging the help I have received in doing this work. My debt is immense to Dr. Laxmi Parasuram, Professor of English (Retd.) of Burdwan University, who initiated me to this work and guided me with utmost patience. She has been a strict taskmaster to keep me moving to complete the work. I am grateful to Thomas P. Riggio of International Theodore Dreiser Society of America, Dr. Debnarayan Banerjee, Head, Dept of English B. U., Late Dr. Bhabatosh Chatterjee, Sir Gooröödas Banerjee Professor of English, University of Calcutta, and Prof. Asoke Sengupta (my former M. Phil supervisor) of Kalyani University and to all others who encouraged me in various ways to proceed with my work.

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