CHAPTER VI

A DREISERIAN TRIPTYCH

The protagonists of the stories discussed in the previous chapter are actuated by the American Dream of wealth and success. The protagonists of the three stories—"Chains," "Sanctuary," and "Typhoon"—which will be discussed in the present chapter—are excited by the dream of love. And like the dream of success and wealth, the dream of love proves to be ironic—it leads to the protagonist's aloneness and alienation, even death. Dorothy Dudley truly comments: "The obsession of one for money, of another for excitement, of another for love or beauty ... these preside like apparitions in [Dreiser's] short stories."¹ The idyllic moments of the protagonists of these stories are short-lived, for in the meantime Cupid has rung the bell of their sad, pathetic fate. Dreiser's Foreword to the Chains volume reads: "The inevitabilities of our fate are: Love and hope, fear and death, interwoven with our lacks, inhibitions, jealousies and greeds." The inevitable fate of the protagonists of the stories to be discussed in this chapter has been to love and to hope; however,

¹ Dudley, p. 387.
as they realise later, they have been more or less fools of love, or as Dreiser puts it succinctly in "Sanctuary": "Love was their star as well as their bane." Dreiser's protagonists function through their emotions rather than through their minds. After their dream of love is frustrated, they all suffer from a curious sense of personal isolation. Their dream of personal happiness and fulfillment remains elusive at the end of the story as it was at the beginning. They realise the irony and futility of their hopes and dreams. Mookerjee truly observes that "the stories (in the Chains volume) portray the struggles of persons fighting not only against a hostile and indifferent society but life itself. But this struggle is in vain."^2 The protagonists of the first two stories—"Chains" and "Sanctuary"—learn to live with their inevitable pathetic fate; the protagonist of the third story—"Typhoon"—is not able to endure her fate, and drowns herself. These stories indeed make a triptych because love is their subject and common, cataclysmic fate chains their protagonists who are beaten by life. The stories have considerable affinity among themselves.

Chains

The protagonist of this story, Brainard Garrison,

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^2Mookerjee, Theodore Dreiser, p.104.
is forty-eight years old; his wife, Idelle, is just twenty-four. Garrison is making a long train trip home after a business tour to another city. During this enforced idleness he becomes particularly sensitive to the unsatisfactory nature of his life with Idelle. The source of Garrison's tension lies in the fact that he is, on the one hand, magnetically tethered to Idelle's "youth, the eternal lure of beauty and vitality," and, on the other hand, incessantly sensitive to his emasculation by her. On reaching home Garrison finds that Idelle has not kept her promise to meet him there. He inwardly denunciates her and decides to leave her. However, as he fumes and glares, his eye falls on his favourite photo of Idelle—"young, rounded, sensuous,... an air and a manner flattering to any man's sense of vanity and possession" (p.97). She is "in her queer way, a child of fortune, a genius of passion and desire, really" (p.70). When such ideas come to him, his resolve to leave her weakens and goes to see her at the Gildases.

II

There is a deeper reason for Garrison's attachment to Idelle than just that of vanity; she represents to

[3]Dreiser, "Chains." Chains, p.97. All future references to this story are to page numbers in this edition, cited parenthetically in the text.
him—and her name symbolises this—some fond hope of youthful rejuvenation. In this story Dreiser has represented dramatically the workings of the subconscious mind. According to McAleer, this story mirrors Dreiser’s wish for a return to youth.⁴ He observes: “Over and over again in Dreiser’s books, a middle-aged man who feels that he is losing that vital urgency of spirit that allies him to the flux of Nature, renews himself in a love affair with a girl of eighteen.”⁵ Indeed, Garrison’s love for this hoyden rests on a deeper base of biological need.

III

Garrison and Idelle are incongruous in their appearance. This incongruity is emphasised in the opening pages of the story:

Those eyes! That hair! That graceful figure, always so smartly arrayed! To be sure, she was a little young for him. Their figures side by side were somewhat incongruous—he with his dignity and almost military bearing, as so many told him (and so called Garrison), she with that air of extreme youthfulness and lure which always brought so many of the younger set to her side wherever they happened to be. (p.66)

⁴McAleer, p. 35.

⁵Ibid., p.11.
Different reasons bring them together. Whereas Garrison marries youth, Idelle marries money. "He had heard it—that she had married him for his money, position, that he was too old, that it was a scandal, etc. Well, maybe it was. But he had been fond of her—terribly so—and she of him, or seemingly, at first" (p.66). Later on, he meets with disappointment with the resultant build-up tension.

Already she had proved a giant scoffer at the conventions, a wastrel, only then he did not know that. Where he thought he was making an impression on a fairly unsophisticated girl, or at least one not roughly used by the world, in reality he was merely a new station to her, an incident, a convenience, something to lift her out of a mood or a dilemma in which she found herself. (pp.69-70)

Quite early in the story he thinks: 'What a pleasure it was, indeed, anywhere and at all times, to have her hanging on his arm, to walk into a restaurant or drawing-room and to know that of all those present none had a more attractive wife than he, not one" (p.66). A certain attitude is unveiled here which signifies, indeed, that Idelle is fastened to Garrison's dependence on social standing. However, it is this utility of his wife as a status symbol that makes the reader withdraw a part of his sympathy for Garrison.

Dreiser's basic concern in his study of Garrison is not to explore questions of morality but to show his
psychological profile. In the final analysis, one becomes more aware of the intolerableness of his position than of his egotism and vainglory. His character exemplifies the pathetic mode. Wadlington rightly says that "in pathos, suffering is primarily the cause and result of the unsuccessful attempt by the unified personality to reach an accommodation with his world either by submission or conquest, and suffering is endless, never to be transcended, ceasing only in death."6

IV

In the last pages of the story, a beautiful image occurs which captures the quintessence of Garrison's predicament. When he reaches home, he finds that Idalle is not there. He becomes aware of a "fly buzzing in the window there, trying to get out" (p.93). Like the fly, Garrison also is altogether prevented from escape. He is, in the image of the story's title, chained to an unbearable situation to which he can find no solution.

V

In "Chains" Dreiser makes use of a distinctive narrative form to render the consciousness of his central figure. The structure of the story enables the reader

to concentrate on the protagonist's consciousness; brief italicised statements run in between paragraphs of interior monologue which indicate the immediate, present reality outside the mind of the protagonist. Garrison's tension is communicated through his interior monologue which in technique closely resembles the interior monologue of Haymaker and the unnamed protagonist of "The Old Neighborhood." Like their interior monologue, Garrison's interior monologue first discloses his relationship to Idelle in the past as also the period before they had met. With each repetition more and more light is thrown on the protagonist. The intrusion of the present reality in his interior monologue makes emotional reverberations keen.

The distinguishing feature of this story consists in the use of typographical differentiation. The problem Dreiser faced in this story is how to keep apart the interior activity and exterior events, or how to establish which parts are to constitute monologue and which outside narration. Taking into account this problem, it can be said that the use of typographical differentiation is the right solution to this problem. This technique enables Dreiser to record Garrison's consciousness knowing that intrusions can easily be arranged outside the context of the monologue—that is to say, by differentiating them typographically. If this is Dreiser's objective it is admirably realised,
for in "Chains" there is the feeling of sustained interior monologue not seen before in his stories. It is only towards the end of the story, especially in the last two pages, that the differentiation between interior activity and exterior events is blurred. Perhaps this has been done intentionally to suggest the shift of Garrison from the thought-oriented world of his train trip to his emergence into the world which Idelle inhabits.

The inter-paragraphs of the story (relating to events outside the context of the monologue) are italicised. These inter-paragraphs take different grammatical forms, the majority of which are exclamatory sentences or noun phrases, or at times a combination of these. Sometimes inter-paragraphs consist of Garrison's own words spoken to another person. The point to be noted is that whatever the form of these inter-paragraphs, they represent Garrison's moods and attitudes. As compared to the conventional length of the other paragraphs, the inter-paragraphs are generally brief. They are often put into a rhetoric that seems especially awkward. The pattern seen in the following sample, for instance, cannot be said to get near the normal way in which observations are made:

That flock of pigeons on the barn roof! (p.73)

That little cabin on that slope, showing a lone lamp in the dark. (p.85)
The condition of these washrooms in the morning: (p.86)

That brown automobile racing this train! How foolish such automobilists were: (p.90)

No doubt, these phrases are clumsy in the repetitiveness of their grammatical form, but they do serve an important function in the story. The peculiar grammatical construction of these phrases signifies that they are not very prominent in Garrison's awareness; they touch only the edges of his consciousness, and do not disturb in a conscious way his train of thought. It can be generalised that the inter-paragraphs, whether exclamatory sentences, noun phrases or Garrison's spoken words are rather automatic reactions to sights and situations than well thought-out assertions.

These italicised sections discharge some other functions in this story. Their most conspicuous function is to indicate the passage of time by placing Garrison nearer and nearer home and rejoining his wife. In this way an element of suspense is built up which is quite rare in Dreiser's interior monologue.

There is a more subtle connection between the italicised inter-paragraphs and the main paragraphs. A whole range of relationships exists between the italicised sections and the details of Garrison's monologue. Sometimes, the attitude they demonstrate appears to be induced by the nature of the thoughts
he has just been brooding. In the following juxtaposition one can see that Garrison has passed on his antagonism for Idelle to the nearest comparable object:

Yes, she has played her game fair enough, no doubt, only he was so eager to believe that everything was going to be perfect with them—smooth, easy, lasting, bliss always. What a fool of love he really was:

What a disgusting fat woman coming in with all her bags. (p. 69)

Often the subject matter of the italicized sections gives rise to certain trains of thought in the protagonist which betoken segments of the past and present experience unsealed by the monologue. It is clear from the examples given below that Garrison's moods and thoughts have been prompted by certain outside phenomena. The woman referred to is Jessica, his first wife:

The sun, breaking through for just one peep at this gray day, under those trees:

... Then, for the first time really he had realized the delight of having a truly beautiful girl interested in him, and him alone, of being really attracted to him— for a little while. It was wonderful. (pp. 72-73)

The smothered clang of that crossing bell:

But also what a failure! How painful to hark back to that.... Although it had seemed to end so favorably—he having been able to win and marry her—still in
reality it had ended most disastrously, she having eventually left him as she did. (p.73)

The italicised sections are functional in one more way; their function is to characterise Garrison in broad strokes. They reflect a man who takes for granted the comforts and amenities that his social and financial status provides; he cannot tolerate anything that tries to upset the stability that his social position confers upon him. He complains about "these heavy forks" in the diner (p.77), "these poor countrymen loitering about their village stations" (p.74), "those traveling men in this smoking room" (p.80). The way he commands servants reveals his confidence and brisk manner. Obviously, his social position has conditioned him to a certain lifestyle and becomes impatient the moment he thinks it is threatened.

VI

There is a superficial resemblance between the Garrison-Idelle relationship and that of the Carrie-Hurstwood in *Sister Carrie*. However, unlike Carrie and Hurstwood, Garrison and Idelle are married. The situation in "Chains" is perhaps closer in a reverse way to the post-idyllic period of the Frank Cowperwood-Eileen Butler marriage as portrayed in *The Titan*. In *The Titan*, Cowperwood outwardly retains Eileen; however, while
keeping up appearances he lets her alone as she ceases to be a meaningful entity in his life. In "Chains" Idelle treats Garrison the way Cowperwood treats Eileen. One can stipulate that Dreiser was perhaps examining another side of a theme that had already captured his heart.

VII

"Chains" was first published under the title "Love" in May 1919 in New York Tribune before it was collected in the Chains volume. The editor lost his job for publishing such "advanced fiction." Earlier, on August 7, 1918, Douglas Z. Doty rejected this story, writing: 'I still believe personally that it is one of the best things you've done.' And on September 13, 1918, Everybody rejected the same story, saying 'It is immeasurably far away from Everybody's type of fiction.' The trouble Dreiser had with the middle-class magazines was minor compared to his trouble with the upper-class and more genteel journals.

7Pizer, Dreiser...Bibliography, p.45.
8Swanberg, p.236.
9Lehan, p.258.
Sanctuary

Madeleine Kinsella, the protagonist of this story, is brought up in a social and familial atmosphere which is injurious to healthy, normal growth. A passionate girl, she is deserted by one lover after the other. She is later arrested for being a street girl and put into the House of Good Shepherd for reformation where she remains for a year. Thereafter she is out in the world to be disappointed again in love. She moves from one job to another. After a lapse of four years, she reenters the House of Good Shepherd—the sanctuary, with a mind never to come out of it. In its recording of Madeleine’s plight and her ultimate shelter in the House of Good Shepherd, "Sanctuary" is one of Dreiser's most imaginative and arresting fictional statements.

II

The theme of deception by superficiality is emphasised in this story. Like many other characters in Dreiser, Madeleine is attracted by "a rather sophisticated gallant somewhat above the world in which she was moving."10 Another theme which is incidental to the first theme is that she is not so much fated by some mysterious force as neglected and victimised by her fellow human beings.

10Dreiser, "Sanctuary," Chains, p.18. All future references to this story are to page numbers in this edition, cited parenthetically in the text.
This makes her to meditate on "the cruelty and inscrutability of life" (p.38).

III

Madeleine is born into a poor family. When she is in her thirteenth year, she is without any definite knowledge or skill. Her drunken mother is more or less dependent upon her, her father having died of pneumonia and her brother and sister having "disappeared to do for themselves" (p.14). She performs menial jobs to support herself and her mother; at times her mother's drunkenness becomes the cause of her dismissal. When Madeleine is struggling to make her living at the very same time life, sweetened by the harmonies of youth in the blood, was calling—that exterior life which promised everything because so far it had given nothing. The little simple things of existence, the very ordinary necessities of clothing and ornament, with which the heart of youth and the inherent pride of appearance are gratified, had a value entirely disproportionate to their worth. Yes, already she had turned the age wherein the chemic harmonies in youth begin to sing, thought to thought, color to color, dream to dream. (pp.17-18)

A new and seemingly realizable dream of happiness is implanted in her young mind. Her romantic interlude with the sophisticated gallant is short-lived: "His mind was of that order which finds in the freshness of
womankind a mere passing delight, something to be deflowered and put aside" (p.19). Thereafter her life is suffused with gloom and tragedy.

At the age of seventeen, she has to become a street girl, although "it was difficult for her to accommodate herself to this fell traffic. She was not of it spiritually" (p.20). She is arrested and arraigned before a judge. The testimony of the officer, Detective Amundsen, is "as it had been in hundreds of cases before this; he had been walking his beat and she had accosted him, as usual" (p.21). This falsification of facts vitiates justice and she is turned to the care of Sisterhood of Good Shepherd where some corrective measures are to be applied to her life.

In the House of Good Shepherd, she meets some Sisters and a young girl, Viola Patters. For them also, "love was their star as well as their bane" (p.28). They also had come to this institution in the past with a history not different from Madeleine's. With the passage of time there, Madeleine's crash of original hopes echoes less and less loudly and her faith in life revives:

... she could not help thinking of the clangor and crash of the world without. It had been grim and painful to her, but in its rude, brutal way it had been alive. The lighted streets at night! The cars! That dancing pavilion in which once she had been taught to dance by the great blue sea! (p.29)
After her probation period of one year in the House of Good Shepherd, Madeleine comes to serve in a moral and religious family. An undercurrent of disapproval on the part of the omniscient narrator runs in the portrayal of the religious family which is more interested in form than in substance. Madeleine is disenchanted and wishes to better herself. She meets a beau who tells her that "her flower-like life was being wasted on so rude a task. She should marry him" (p.35).

And she does. Madeleine thinks that love will make her life "flower at last" (p.36). Shortly her fantasy turns into a phantom with the swift and disconcerting "awakening" (p.36). Under the surface charms of her lover is hidden his "thin, tricky soul" (p.36). He is one of those creatures "who change their women as they would their coats" (p.36). He talks to her of his losses and asks her to resort to "the easiest and swiftest way of making money" (p.36). This is not her conception of love and her soul withers within. One dark, wintery night he dashes her out of the house which marks the vanishing of "the dream of love that never, never could be again, for her" (p.38).

Meditating on the cruelty of life, she wavers between death and hope, between "the swift, icy waters of the river, glistening under a winter moon" and the peace and quiet of the House of Good Shepherd (p.38).
Hills remarks that "in every short story a fork in the road is encountered" by the protagonist. This is quite true of the protagonist of this story. Ultimately she chooses the House of Good Shepherd.

Mother Superior who emerges in the story as a Christ-like figure has great sympathy and compassion for people beaten by life and hurt and manipulated by the wolves of human society. Her attitude towards Madeleine is profoundly Christian. Her acceptance of Madeleine symbolises, ironically, the first genuinely human love she has ever received.

IV

The function of the House of Good Shepherd as a sanctuary for the exploited girl is, of course, accentuated by the institution's name. "The thin and flickering flame" (p.41) of the vigil lamp burning before the Virgin's statue over the bed which is provided to Madeleine becomes an image of her resignation to a life of sanctuary in the institution. She has failed to attain the "star" of human love, "the admiration and ministering care of some capable and affectionate man" (p.32). Now "star" has been replaced by the "flickering" lamp, which becomes an emblem of the warmth and

understanding she is to receive in the House of Good Shepherd. The walls and bars of this institution now serve not to imprison her as they did when the judge sent her here, but rather to guard her from the bitterness and betrayal of life on the outside. Devoid of glamour and glitter of the world outside, this prison-like building is for Madeleine "the only home or sanctuary she had ever known" (p.38).

V

The description of the milieu is written not only objectively but evocatively. The richness of detail is suffused with an evocativeness that derives from the sympathetic attitude of the omniscient narrator. The object of the opening paragraphs is to create "the miasmatic atmosphere" that envelops Madeleine's formative years (p.10). The narrator begins with "the crowded, scummy tenements," the streets outside and the people who fill them. The technique in presenting the setting is movement from the general to the particular, from 'shot' to 'close-up.' The streets are "stifling in summer, dusty and icy in winter; decorated on occasion by stray cats and dogs, pawing in ashcans, watched over by lordly policemen, and always running with people, people, people—who made their living heaven only knows how, existing in such a manner, as their surroundings
suggested" (p.9). The environment, in short, is seen as "dung-heap" (p.10). Against this background is shown Madeleine who is depicted in the image of a flower, "a flower of sorts—admittedly not a brave, lustrous one of the orchid or gardenia persuasion, but a flower nevertheless" (p.10). This juxtaposition makes the narrator raise a question as to whether in such a dung-heap a flower can blossom to any glorious maturity or, for that matter, can people blossom in such environments. Conceivably they cannot.

VI

The general narrative method in this story is that of an omniscient narrator who, while in sympathy with the protagonist, maintains a control and does not slip into sentimentality in a situation that might have readily degenerated into that abuse. A lesser writer might have been waylaid by this pitfall, but Dreiser sees to it that his narrator keeps to this side of the thin line that separates genuine emotion from sentimentality. The story achieves credibility by the solidity of specification.

The story is divided into eight sections, each section throwing light on a particular facet of the protagonist. The narrator describes in Section I the atmosphere that surrounds Madeleine's early life. Section II opens with a temporal gap of five years;
Madeleine is in her thirteenth year. A part of this section is devoted to Madeleine's romantic life. At the age of seventeen, she has to become a street girl. This facet of her life is dealt with in Section III. The description of the House of Good Shepherd, which has an important function as already noted, is given in Section IV. In Section V the life and background of the inmates of the House of Good Shepherd is dealt with. Madeleine's life after she comes out of the House of Good Shepherd on the expiry of her probation period is narrated in Section VI as also her meeting with a new beau. Her married life with this beau is detailed in Section VII. The timespan of this section is "a year and a half" (p. 38). Her journey to and entry into the House of Good Shepherd is the theme of Section VIII in which narrative and dramatic methods are combined.

VII

The story is rich in imagery. The implied animal/prison imagery recurs in the story. When Madeleine comes to the House of Good Shepherd for the first time in the air-tight cage, she has the feel of being thrown into a naturalistic world: "Like some frightened animal faced by a terrifying enemy, she had thus far been able to think only of some darksome corner into which she might slip and hide, a secret place so inconspicuous and minute that the great savage world without would
not trouble or care to follow" (p.24). The animal imagery is pervasively used to strengthen the naturalistic bias of the story. Madeleine and others who people the story are regarded as animals, as inhabiting "the slime in which primarily and without any willing of their own they had been embedded and from which nearly all were seeking to crawl upwards" (p.28). Madeleine is victimised as an animal because she is a meek and submissive one. She never grows much beyond the image of her youth when she looked at life with "wide, lamb-like eyes, wondering at things, often fearfully" (p.10). The animal imagery reappears in Section VII where her second lover is a "hawk of the underworld" (p.35).

The flower imagery is used to characterise Madeleine, as already noted in the section on setting. When she is "deflowered," the flower imagery assumes a different function (p.19). This imagery reappears in Section VI when her beau says that "her flower-like life was being wasted on so rude a task" (p.35).

Star is a symbol of hope and aspiration in Dreiser. Madeleine wishes to reach the star of human love. The happy routine home life which she imagines to be operative in the lives of others—for her "it glimmered afar, like a star" (p.35). Such images are not only functional in the over-all structure of the story, but also they have an evocative appeal.
"Sanctuary" is closely related to Stephen Crane's *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets* in characterisation, plot, themes and imagery. In both the works the locale is New York slum setting against which are imposed the struggles of lower class Irish families harassed by poverty. The protagonists, Madeleine and Maggie, lead a miserable life. They are seen as flowers amidst surrounding squalor. They are seduced by flashily dressed young males and turn subsequently to prostitution in the aftermath of their deluding, harrowing experience. As newspaper men, both Dreiser and Crane were well-acquainted with the squalor prevalent in a certain quarter of American life. Obviously, Dreiser's story is a fictionalised account of this experience.

"Sanctuary" was first published in *Smart Set*, edited by H.L. Mencken and George Jean Nathan, in its issue of October 1919.12 Earlier, it had been rejected by the Saturday Evening Post, Cosmopolitan, and the New York Tribune.13 Roy Long of Cosmopolitan admitted while rejecting it: "This is a very exceptional piece of work, but I do not believe that it is a story that we should

12 Fizer, Dreiser...Bibliography, p.45.
13 Swanberg, pp.234-235.
print." Burtn Rascoe of the New York Tribune praised it as "forcible and crushingly truthful" but admitted that 'it might get me scalped if I published it in this polite family journal.' By publishing the story, Smart Set proved its name. Dreiser later included it in the Chains volume.

Typhoon

Like the protagonist of "Sanctuary," the protagonist of "Typhoon," Ida Zobel, has been brought up in a conventional, restrictive environment. At the age of sixteen, she falls in love with Edward Hauptwanger, a flashy youth who, when she becomes pregnant, refuses to marry her. One day two pistol shots fired by her finish him. In the subsequent trial, the jury does not hold her guilty because she has already gone through much mental agony and also because they do not want to deprive the yet unborn child of its mother. However, the memory of her lover haunts her. One day she proceeds to King Lake Park which was their rendezvous for romantic meetings, and walks slowly into the water to meet with her death. McAleer has called this story "a coda to An American Tragedy." According to him, "both Roberta and Ida die seeking a love they might have found, if

14 Swanberg, p.235.

15 Ibid.
arbitrary goals and decrees of society had not blocked access to Nature, thrusting them thereby into inhospitable liaisons."16

II

As in the case of "Sanctuary," the theme of "Typhoon" also is deception by superficiality. The glamorous sights and exciting sounds of the city are for Ida, to borrow the title of the first chapter of Sister Carrie, "The Magnet Attracting." The city's large forces allure her with all the soulfulness of expression. Ida is impressed by Hauptwanger when she sees his "opal ring" and his "wrist smartly framed in a striped pink cuff."17 Moers rightly observes that Dreiser's universe "throbs with the passion of desire for trivialities, each as precious and as worthless as the jewels of Aladdin's cave."18 The appeal of glittering things is so immense and immediate to girls like Ida because they have led a narrow, limited life. Hauptwanger's suave manners, fine clothes, and keen eyes exercise an influence over her because her home life has been conservative and restrictive. In fact, even Ida's

16McAleer, p.146.

17Dreiser, "Typhoon," Chains, p.191. All future references to this story are to page numbers in this edition, cited parenthetically in the text.

18Moers, p.303.
father becomes a victim of Hauptwanger's superficial appeal when the latter comes to meet him: "While listening to Hauptwanger's brisk and confident explanation he was quite consciously evaluating the smart suit, new tan shoes and gathering, all in all, a favorable impression" (p.192). He starts thinking that Hauptwanger could be the prospective husband of his daughter.

III

Ida, like Madeleine Kinsella and Theresa Rogaun, is magnetised by the flashy kind of young man one so often comes across not only in Dreiser's short fiction but also in his longer fiction. Ida is fascinated with the superficial pleasures of a gay world. "She lived in a mental world made up of the bright lights of Warren Avenue, of which she caught an occasional glimpse. The numerous cars speeding by! The movies and her favorite photographs of actors and actresses.... The voices, the laughter of the boys and girls ... arms linked and bodies swaying...." (p.183). As in the case of Theresa, the German family milieu puts a curb on the budding sensitivity of Ida.

Ida's German father and step-mother "were at odds with the brash gayety and looseness of the American world in which they found themselves" (p.181). They are critical of the groups of restless, seeking, eager,
rather scandalous young men and women who parade the neighbourhood streets. William Zobel does not want his daughter to grow up like them. Therefore he prescribes

the strictest rules with regard to Ida's upbringing. Her hair was to grow its natural length, of course. Her lips and cheeks were never to know the blush of false, suggestive paint. Plain dress. Plain underwear and stockings and shoes and hats. No crazy, idiotic finery, but substantial, respectable clothing. Work at home, and when not otherwise employed with her studies at school, in the small paint and color store which her father owned in the immediate vicinity of their home. And last, but not least, a schooling of such proper and definite character as would serve to keep her mind from the innumerable current follies which were apparently pulling at the foundations of decent society. (pp.181-182)

Although Ida's father is critical of the moral corruption of the world in which he finds himself, he does not offer his daughter a suitable alternative. When the time comes he himself becomes the victim of the glittering appeal.

IV

Ida's father thinks Hauptwanger, who is the son of a coal merchant, to be the beau of the right kind and so Hauptwanger is permitted to call on Ida to take her to visit Pack's Beach nine miles below the city. However, her father, despite his "stern, infiltrating supervision,"
cannot prevent "the progressive familiarities based on youth, desire, romance" (p.194). Then one summer night under the shadow of the trees in King Lake Park, Hauptwanger attempts "familiarities which scarcely seemed possible in her dreams before this" (p.195). Thoughts of torture and impending doom come to her by sudden ejection from paradise. However, there follow between them many a rendezvous of a similar nature. During all this time her one yearning is that he would never desert her. But Hauptwanger once satisfied—his restless and overweening ego comforted by another victory—turning with a hectic and chronic, and for him uncontrollable sense of satiety, as well as fear of complications and burden—to other phases of beauty—other fields and relationships where there was no such danger. For after all—one more girl. One more experience. And not so greatly different from others that had gone before it.(p.197)

After a time when Ida makes the fatal complaint, he attempts "to extricate himself as speedily and as gracefully as possible from this threatening position" (p.199). Time and again Ida tries to persuade him to marry her, but he is adamant. Once he strikes her with a blow that "was sufficient at the moment to half unseat the romantic and all but febrile reason of this girl, who up to this hour had believed so foolishly in love" (p.200). Hauptwanger steps away briskly and vigorously. But the stricken and shaken Ida
still loitered under the already partially denuded September trees. And with the speeding street and auto cars with their horns and bells and the chattering voices and shuffling feet of pedestrians and the blazing evening lights making a kind of fanfare of color and sound. Was it cold? Or was it only herself who was numb and cold? He would not marry her! He had never said he would! How could he say that now? And her father to deal with—and her physical condition to be considered! (p.201)

Many days of agony pass for Ida. She meets him again to prevail upon him to marry her and when he refuses, she shoots him with her father's pistol. In the trial that follows the jury does not "attempt to 'further punish' a girl who had already suffered so much" (p.213). A woman of extreme wealth and social position, deeply stirred by the pathos of the drama of Ida's life, offers her the peace and quiet of her own home to await the outcome of her physical condition. She tells Ida that she also has suffered like her, that "her heart had been torn, too" (p.213). Meanwhile, Ida often contemplates the inexplicable chain of events which her primary desire for love has brought about. There is a weight upon her soul: "She had sinned! She had killed a man! And wrecked another family—the hearts of two other parents as well as her father's own peace of mind and commercial and social well-being ... as well as that of her stepmother" (p.214).

After the birth of the child (a boy) and her final
acquittal by the court ("with loud public acclaim for that verdict also, since it was all for romance and drastic drama"—p.216), Ida moves to her father's "new home and store which had been established in a very different and remote part of the city" (p.216). But her thoughts constantly go back to King Lake Park and the old neighbourhood. At last one Saturday she "calmly stepping into the water and wading out to her knees— to her waist—her breasts—in the mild, caressing water—and then to her lips and over them—and finally, deliberately—conclusively—sinking beneath its surface and without a cry or sigh" (pp.217-218).

V

The effectiveness of the story lies in its strength and intensity. Critics, however, are in disagreement about the merit of this story. According to Matthiessen, it is "one of Dreiser's most powerful short stories." On the other hand, for Ray B. West it represents an "over-simplified view of life." Notwithstanding these divergent views, one thing is clear: the story has an indisputable merit from one angle at least—the way Dreiser handles the typhoon motif.

19 Matthiessen, p.214.

West is especially critical of the story because "the suggested image of the title is not developed within the story, but it implies a corollary between the natural elements and human emotions." A deeper analysis of the story shows that Dreiser makes an artistic use of the typhoon motif. In fact the image ultimately was to form an important part of the conception of the story. Dreiser purposely changed the title from "The Wages of Sin" to "Typhoon"; however, when Dreiser revised this story for the Chains volume, he added the following typhoon image to it: "For the time being, in order to save herself from too much publicity, she began to move on—walk—only slowly and with whirling, staggering thoughts that caused her to all but lurch" (p.205). Not only does the whirling motion that the word typhoon connotes metaphorizes Ida's troubled mental state, it functions at a deeper level as it becomes a metaphor for the protagonist's thought process, for the monologue itself, as these lines show: "And so other days and nights—all alone. And with blazing, searing, whirling disordered thoughts in unbroken procession stalking her like demons" (p.202).

The typhoon image is relevant in another way. The following passages demonstrate this aptness:

Her face was still lily white. And her hands. Her eyes flashed with transcendent and yet helpless and

21 Ibid., p.27.
defeated misery. And yet, despite her rage—in the center of this very misery—love itself—strong, vital burning love—the very core of it. (pp. 203-204)

... ...

But then, in spite of her desire not to give way, fury, blindness, pain—whirling, fiery sparks, such as never in all her life before had she seen—and executing strange, rhythmic, convoluting orbits in her brain—swift, eccentric, red and yet beautiful orbits. And in the center of them the face of Hauptwanger—her beloved—but not as it was now—oh, no—but rather haloed by a strange white light—as it was under the trees in spring. (p.209)

In these passages Ida sees her lover as the eye of the typhoon, as the inner realm of wafting winds and fine weather at the heart of the storm: "in the center of this very misery—love itself." The "haloed" vision of Hauptwanger provides her the motive force to do the final deed, for in her frenzied mental state she views suicide as reunion with him.22 The drowning scene is described in erotic terms and events of one short summer before are suggested with restraint:

And then a girl in the silence, in the shadow, making her way down to the

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22 This event reminds Dreiser's "The Lost Phoebe." Old Reifsnelder who cannot reconcile himself to solitude jumps over a cliff to his death thinking that he is seeing the vision of his wife as a beautiful young girl as she was at the time of her marriage.
very spot that the nose of their boat
had nuzzled but one short summer
before. And calmly stepping into the
water and wading out to her knees—to
her waist—her breasts—in the mild,
cressing water—and then to her lips
and over them—and finally, deliberately—
conclusively—sinking beneath its surface
and without a cry or sigh. (pp. 217–218)

There is, in brief, a psychological configuration
in this story, a configuration in which Ida’s dream of
love forms the tranquil circle around which blows the
typhoon of her broken world. Her regular pilgrimages
to King Lake Park that foreshadow her suicide there
symbolise her intense wish to get herself freed from
the terrible, excruciating experience. Her visits to
this place are aptly juxtaposed against “the busy,
strident, indifferent, matter-of-fact world” which knows
little about such things (p. 217). Similarly, her usual
retreat to the fountain statuary on the estate of the
wealthy woman (where Ida lives for some time) has the
same function. The typhoon image is indeed functional;
it is a controlling device throughout in vocalising the
dream-reality tension from which emanates Ida’s
predicament.

VI

The Lorelei motif also as represented by the
statuary on the estate is, again, functional. The statue
shows
a Rhine maiden of the blonde German Lorelei type, standing erect and a-dream, in youth, in love. And at her feet, on his knees, a German lover of the Ritter type—vigorous, uniformed, his fair blond head and face turned upward to the beauty about whose hips his arms were clasped—his look seeking, urgent. And upon his fair bronze hair, her right hand, the while she bent on him a yearning, yielding glance. (pp. 215-216)

The story carved here is the story of Ida and Hauptwanger. Ida is a kind of Lorelei blonde for him. The irony in the situation is clear: Ida's beauty becomes ultimately the cause of his destruction. But the statue has another symbolic dimension. It suggests that the lure and glamour personified by Hauptwanger are the very things that have wrought her ruin. The statue symbolizes yet another way in which it has influenced Ida. It strengthens the romantic image of Hauptwanger that holds Ida in her misery and actuates her to take the fatal step. Moreover, it shows her propensity to idealize Hauptwanger: she lacks the capacity even now to see him in his true colours. When she comes to this statue, she sighs, "'Oh, Edward! Oh, love! Spring!'" (p.216). She resolves not to come out here any more. And yet evening after evening in early December, once the first great gust of this terrific storm had subsided and she was seeing things in a less drastic light, she was accustomed to return to look at it.... To be sure, he had cursed her. He had said the indifferent, cruel
words that had at last driven her to madness. But once he had loved her just this way. It was there, and only there, that she found spiritual comfort in her sorrow. (p.216)

VII

Dreiser employs the changing seasons as background and symbol in this story. The major events in Ida's life are played out against the backdrop of nature. Spring gives rise to Ida's romantic yearnings; they come to fruition in summer. In September she is deserted; in November she kills her lover. Through winter she broods and mourns; in spring her baby boy is born. In summer—a full year after the sexual consummation of her relationship—she commits suicide. Apart from these broad symbolic dimensions of the seasonal cycle, there are other references to nature. Early in the story, nature imagery is contiguous with the sights and sounds of city life that so attract Ida. The "tulips, hyacinths, honeysuckle and roses," "the stars shining above Warren Avenue" are juxtaposed with "the cars, the crowds, the moving-picture theatres and restaurants which held much charm for her" (p.187). Further, when Ida's story begins to take on tragic colouring, the same juxtaposition assumes ironic overtones: "arc lights blazing in the distance, the sound of distant cars, distant life, the wind whipping crisp leaves along the ground" (p.208). The purpose of this subjective use of nature in the
story is to highlight Ida's zest for life and love. She is conscious of nature surrounding her and her lover, making their contact beautiful. However, urban sights and sounds have a greater hold on her than nature.

VIII

Another important feature of this story is its deft use of the element of time. In the second half of the story, the focus is on Ida who recollects the chain of events beginning with her disclosing the news of her pregnancy to Hauptwanger and her subsequent realisation that he has no mind to marry her. This part of the story reads like an interior monologue in which the stricken and shaken Ida relives chronologically the last year of her life. Dreiser captures the intensity of her anguish through the manipulation of time, and it is this manipulation of time that adds effectiveness to the story. The description of Ida's shooting of Hauptwanger (p.209) is an illustration.

Dreiser imparts a sense of the flow of events through the manipulation of language. He discards the conventional sentence structure in favour of sentence fragments employing verbals, especially present participles to create the illusion of events fleeting by. For example, in the following fragment, such as, "And herself turning, and in spite of the push, jumping before him" (p.209). Dreiser purposely omits predicates
and juxtaposes participles. Such a fragment of sentence contributes effectively to produce the illusion of fleeting but clearly perceived experience. This effect is strengthened in another way. Dreiser employs loose constructions. For instance, in the beginning of the second paragraph of the account of Ida's shooting of Hauptwanger (p. 209), noun phrases are piled up one upon the other to show the evanescent nature of Ida's thought. Again, Dreiser chooses certain words to begin paragraphs, sentences, or sentence fragments. For example, paragraphs on pages 212 through 215 begin as follows: "Yet," "But then," "And so," "Yet," "And so." Such words bestow not only a sense of flow but also knit together various events into one unified action.

IX

One point of criticism is to be noted, however. There are unnecessary authorial intrusions on the last pages of the story. While chronicling the final day of Ida's life, authorial intrusions alternate with portions of the story proper. The author laments Ida's tragedy as also the world's attitude to hers: "The world does not understand such things. The tide of life runs too fast. So much that is beautiful—terrible—sweeps by—by—by—without thought—without notice in the great volume" (p. 218). The author needlessly expresses explicitly what the story itself has already dramatised.
There is a general similarity in the pattern of *An American Tragedy* and "Typhoon." Dreiser tells of the many cases that had caught his interest. Most of these cases deal with a young man who kills his pregnant sweetheart because he has come across a wealthier and more beautiful girl in the meantime. Dreiser saw this pattern from time to time. "Typhoon" is a variation of the same pattern. The Grace Brown-Chester Gillette case of 1906 inspired Dreiser to write *An American Tragedy*. He saw somewhat of this pattern again in 1909 in the famous William Orpet case which became the basis for his story "The Wages of Sin" (later entitled "Typhoon").  

"Typhoon" was first published under the title "The Wages of Sin" in Hearst's *International-Cosmopolitan* in its issue of October 1926. After the publication of *An American Tragedy* in 1925, Dreiser was much applauded. He became very popular and money rolled in. "Cosmopolitan paid a stiff price of his story

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25 Pizer, *Dreiser...Bibliography*, p.46.
'Typhoon.' When Dreiser included the story in the "Chains" volume, he changed the title to "Typhoon." The story is indeed given more point by a change of title and especially by additional imagery.

XII

The stories discussed in this chapter show that Dreiser's young women who go out into the world become so engrossed in the affairs of life and love that they are not able to judge aright the men they meet and love. They fail to evaluate young men properly because their lives are governed by superficial values. Their dream of love ultimately proves ironic. The middle-aged men also, who fall in love with young girls, fall in love; their love turns into gall. Like the dream of wealth, the dream of love also proves ironic.

A study of Dreiser's stories shows that themes are well-woven into the texture of stories; imagery and symbols enrich them; characters vibrate with life and their interior monologues reveal and release the tension stored in their minds; the functional use of backdrop and the architectonics of stories—all these characteristics show that the shaping imagination of an artist is at work.

26Swenberg, p.316.