CHAPTER III

Treatment of Love and Women
Love is a cosmic phenomenon and opens to man the fourth dimensional world, 'the world of the wondrous.' Without love we are 'as sounding brass and tinkling cymbals.'

Aldous Huxley had proposed that the word love should be sent to laundry to be disinfected because of its indiscriminate use and its hysterical overstatement by modern novelists. The word has become encrusted with middle class myths about courtship and romance. Its meaning has declined into a pale shadow of its original force. It has become anaemic. The matter of sexual relationships has over the years received the minutest attention from advice columns, Freud, porno-writers and modern novelists. Bed-room gymnastics are dragged in to fill up the empty spaces of a lapsed imagination even when they are in no way connected with the structure of the work. Modern novelist has guillotined love and enthroned sex making extensive claim to discoveries about

1. The Bible.
men and their motives. Because of the influence of Herbert Spencer and Freud, love has been treated as an animal passion only. Consequently, love is 'so often on the level of the mating of frogs' in modern American fiction. The sexually liberated modern women believes in giving herself freely. Modern man is also lost in the unbridled satisfaction of his libido in order to assert his manhood.

Mrs. Forrester in Willa Cather's A Lost Lady (1923) is in fact a lost lady. She is sexually insatiable and does not suffer from any twinge of conscience in experiencing sex with different men.

In Scott Fitzgerald's novels, there is 'little consummated genital love.' His women are sexual aggressors and are frustrated as they do not get satisfaction from their male partners. They move from 'The kiss to the Kill with only the barest suggestion of copulation between.' They are more masculine than their male counterparts are. They suffer from 'the will to power, the will to

4. idem.
immolation and to annihilation. Daisy in The Great Gatsby is a woman who can keep half a dozen dates a day with half a dozen men.

Faulkner laments a general decay of morals and replacement of love by sexuality. His women become violators themselves when they do not get sexual satisfaction from men. They are indomitable. Faulkner’s views of such women expressed in Absalom! Absalom! are very revealing.............. the indomitable woman blood ignores the man’s world in which the blood kinsman shows the courage or cowardice, the folly or lust or fear. He warns against the total degeneration and complete break-up of society in which lust and rape are the ruling passions.

Hemingway also felt it imperative to warn the present generation against the emergence of the domineering female. The presence of the fatal woman is always there in his novels. His women are also aggressive and dominating like those of Fitzgerald


and Faulkner. His works mirror the decadent society in which break-ups and divorces are common occurrences. Hemingway realised the importance of love as one of the basic urges of man. His frank and undiluted treatment of love and sex, therefore, should not be construed as a propagation of sexual love. Hemingway is, in fact, no champion of vice. The immoralities and profanities that he has described in his novels are simply scenes from life.

Heredity and Social Environment play a vital role even in matters of love and sex in the novels of Dreiser. Dreiser did not believe in the repression of sex. He knew the importance of sexual urge in normal human life. He believed that no authentic or rounded picture of human activity is possible without taking full cognizance of its ubiquitous pressure. "Love or lust (and the one is but an intellectual sublimation of the other) moves the seeker in every field of effort," he wrote in Hey Rub-A-Dub-Dub. Dreiser's attitude towards the problems of love and sex was in fact the same in

All of his novels from 1900 to 1925. His characters do not experience love; they experience sex. Carrie 'is never a woman in love.'

Sex in the novels of Dreiser has been treated as a prop for getting social recognition, besides biological urges. His women treat their love-objects as rungs of the ladder for getting success and social recognition. The ambitious pursuit of his sexually liberated women is matched by the libidinous search of men. Sexual liaison with a man of taste and culture, or with a man of superior achievement gives a sense of fulfilment to them.

The status of women has been uncertain in the eyes of the artist precisely because it has been uncertain in society and in woman's own heart and mind. Both male and female writers have always faced difficulties in the characterization of women because of the secondary or inferior position they occupied in some phases of history and also because of their ambiguous position in supposedly more enlightened eras.

Whether in or out of brothel, many of our writers depict for us women of the most avid and voracious lubricity. These ladies of perpetual heat are no more than erotic hauntings. Dreiser does not belong to such a class. He has depicted women in the background of the forces of heredity and those of social environment. Generally, they fall an easy prey to the all-powerful forces of social environment.

Dreiser connects sex with money and social ambition. He saw that the rich and powerful are able to buy what everyman needs and the poor man often becomes the outcast or the criminal. Yet, all men are driven by the same necessities. Love and beauty become commodities subject to wealth and one's identity becomes the consequence of power relationships.

Sex, in fulfilment, is not fun, but is ecstatic, a condition of exaltation and pleasure at the threshold of pain, so that conversely, sex without a true union and fulfilment can be at least a desolation and at worst an agony. It is not a monologue but a dialogue. A matured and fulfilled sexual bond is an I-Thou relationship. Women in Dreiser's novels find no true existence as human, individual entities. They are vessels for male's use.
In *Sister Carrie* (1900), Drouet was a great womanizer. Woman was a weakness of Drouet. His love for women was not platonic. It was simply meant for the gratification of his sexual urge. The forces of heredity were largely responsible for his libidinous search of women. He did not suffer from any moral scruple while trying to seduce and innocent girl like Carrie. He was drawn by his innate desire to pursue her. He could not help what he was going to do. The forces of magnetism and chemism impelled him to entice her. His love for pleasure and colour in life was a hereditary trait as he was half-French from his father’s side. Moreover, the prevailing gay environment acted as a stimulant to his hereditary qualities. Dreiser has defended Drouet’s natural pursuit of women by suggesting that his conscience was shaped by the prevailing social environment. His conscience, it may be added, was shaped not only by the prevailing social environment but by the forces of heredity also:

“He would need to delight himself with Carrie as surely as he would eat his break-fast. He might suffer from the least rudimentary twinge of conscience in whatever he did and in just so he was evil and sinning.”⁹ Drouet’s conscience

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⁹. *Dreiser,Theo*
was shaped and fortified by the unique combination of the forces of heredity and those of social environment in him.

Hurstwood whose decline and fall took place because of his helplessness in adjusting himself with the environment of New York, was more polished in the art of love-making than Drouet. He succeeded in winning women by his attentiveness and deference whereas Drouet was successful with innocent and inexperienced ones only. He failed dismally with the experienced and refined woman:

"Drouet had ability in this line himself when the game was worth the candle but he was too much of the egotist to reach the polish which Hurstwood possessed. He was too buoyant, too full of ruddy life, too assured. He succeeded with many who were not quite schooled in the art of love. He failed dismally where the woman was slightly experienced and possessed innate refinement." ¹⁰

The female protagonists of the novels of Dreiser take recourse to unconventional means in their struggle for success. The portrait of Carrie outraged the people of his times for awarding her with success, when she deserved punishment for her act of 'transgression.' ¹¹

¹⁰ ibid. p.110.
from Susanna Rawson to Hemingway have portrayed the characters of fallen women who have to pay for their sin through 'dependency', servitude and ignoble death. Dreiser's women defy social norms by adopting unconventional means for getting success and recognition.

Carrie was not a fallen woman in the eyes of Dreiser. Her poor hereditary background and her love for pleasure were instrumental in her seduction. The contrast between the dull life of Columbo, her native village and the gay life of Chicago was yet another factor which lured her to the company of Drouet. Drouet introduced her to the life of pleasure. He took her round the city and to the theatre which she loved so much and bought her new clothes which she craved. If we study the character of Carrie carefully, we will see that besides biological factor, it was economic compulsion also which caused the moral downfall of Carrie. Her poor hereditary background and the social environment in which money was everything paved the way for her moral degeneration. Had she not been poor and placed in an environment in which morals had nothing to do

with life, it was just possible that she might not have bartered her soul for the sordid boon of material comforts.

Carrie did not belong to the class of domineering and supercilious women. She lacked self-assurance. She was not bold because of her poor heredity. She wanted pleasure; she wanted social position, she wanted everything since she had nothing. She was unable to fix priorities.

Although Carrie had the feeling that she was in love with Hurstwood, she was more drawn towards him for getting protection and sympathy than for sexual gratification. She knew that Hurstwood was incapable of that majesty of passion which is an attribute of youth:

"The longing to be shielded, bettered, sympathised with is one of the attributes of the sex. This coupled with sentiment and natural tendencies to emotion often makes refusing difficult. It persuades them that they are in love." 13

The biological urge and her loneliness combine in Carrie's further submission to Hurstwood. Her yielding, therefore, was natural as well as circumstantial:

"Now, however, this feeling had changed to one of opposition, which rose feebly. It mastered her for a moment, and then, held close as she was, began to wane. Something else in her spoke. This man to whose bosom she was being pressed, was strong, he was passionate, he loved her, and she was alone. If she did not turn to him—accept his love—where else might she go? Her resistance half-dissolved in the flood of his strong feeling." 14

The sins and defects in the characters of Hurstwood all disappear before the magnetism exercised by him:

"She found him lifting her head and looking into her eyes. What magnetism there was, she could never know. His many sins, however, were for the moment all forgotten." 15

While delineating his characters, Dreiser was always conscious of the fact that they are human beings prone to natural urges. His characters are neither puppets nor monstrosities of human virtues or vices. Carrie was, after all,

15. idem.
a young girl. It was, therefore, quite natural for her to be attracted towards Hurstwood. The characters of Dreiser are impervious to the feeling of love; they experience sex. Neither Drouet nor Hurstwood were able to arouse the feelings of true love in Carrie. The repeated assurances given by Hurstwood to Carrie about his sincerity and faithfulness, the explanation offered in defence of his conduct evoked in her heart the feelings of pity more than the feelings of love, for 'true love she had never felt for him.' 16

Carrie was not an Amazon. She was a passive and receptive woman. She had a natural liking for good clothes. The contrast between her clothes and those of Mrs. Vance, her neighbour in New York, made her gloomy and augmented dissatisfaction with her state. The colourful gentry at the theatre set her heart pounding. She felt the delight of parading there as their equal. After living first with Drouet and then with Hurstwood she came in contact with Ames who was stronger and better than Drouet and Hurstwood. She was fascinated by his idealism more than by his physique.

16. ibid. p. 282
The vagaries of fortune are curious. Carrie reached the summit of material success by her dramatic talent. She commanded money and the respect of the top-notches of the city. To Carrie, Drouet and Hurstwood acted as spring-boards for getting success and social recognition. But her experience with Drouet and Hurstwood made her indifferent to the overtures of money-barons in the end. She was left as a disillusioned soul realizing ultimately that real happiness does not come through material prosperity only:

"Chicago, New York; Drouet, Hurstwood, the world of fashion and the world of stage - these were but incidents. Not them, but that which they represented, she longed for. Time proved the representation false." 17

In his portrayal of Mrs. Hurstwood, Dreiser has described the character of a sexually frigid woman. There was no love-lost between her husband and Mrs. Hurstwood. Judged by any standard she could not be called an ideal housewife. She gave neither emotional nor sexual satisfaction

17. ibid. p.474.
to her husband. She was entirely responsible for causing the feeling of drift and loneliness in Hurstwood whose life was ruined because of his uncontrolled biological urges.

Dreiser believed that women are the humanizers of man’s harshness. They have the power in them to move us. Dreiser speaks of "the wondrous sea of feeling" in Jennie Gerhardt. His young women like Sister Carrie, Jennie Gerhardt, and even Roberta Alden in An American Tragedy make an indelible impression on our hearts by their tenderness and meekness.

There has been no serious writer in America since Henry James whose heroine’s fate is intended to move her audience. Women in America have been sexually unprincipled or sexually frigid. Dreiser created woman-characters who were too submissive. The effect of Jennie Gerhardt on the men who loved her was different from the kind we have learnt to associate with the standard bitches in contemporary novels. Senator Brander who befriended mother and daughter was captivated by the simplicity of Jennie when he saw her timidly cleaning the staircase in the Columbus Hotel for the first time:

"She was a significant type emotionally, that he knew. There was something there - artistically and temperamentally - which was far and beyond the keenest suspicion of the herd. He did not know himself quite what it was, but he felt a largeness of feeling not altogether squared with intellect or perhaps better yet, experience, which was worthy of any man's desire. "This was a remarkable girl", he thought, seeing her clearly in his mind's eye."19

In The Genius (1915), Stella Appleton belongs to that class of women who suffer from no moral inhibitions. She was gay and debonair. She liked to flirt with boys because it gave her pleasure. She had no feeling of love for anyone in particular. At a party given by high school girls, she did not hesitate in calling the name of Harvey to kiss her instead of Eugene's while playing the game of 'Country Post Office' because of a 'Coquettish desire to see what he was like.'20

On reaching Chicago, Eugene became involved in a relationship which established a precedent in his experiences.

with women. He was introduced to a little Scotch girl Margaret Duff and was captivated by her simplicity and comeliness of features. He had never known a girl physically before this. Margaret Duff was also a philanderer. But this relationship could not last for long as it was purely physical. There was no emotional or intellectual hiatus between them. In their search for the impossible She or the impossible He, the characters of Dreiser go on co-habiting with the persons of the opposite sex. There is no permanent faith in them for anybody. They simply hop from one love-object to another. It is simply a sip here and a sip there. Stella, Margaret, Ruby and Angela came in the life of Eugene Witle one by one. Eugene was a genius in experiencing one woman after another besides being a genius in art.

Eugene was, so to say, in love with love, Eugene loved women, the beauty of their curves. The more he tried to get fulfilment, the more powerful his sex-appetite became. He was always eager and insatiable. In Christina Channing, a singer by profession, Eugene found a woman of more sensual and lovable type. She had several love-affairs and had gone through various experiences. A whole constellation of society
women started swimming into the ken of Eugene without abating his libido. He realized that still there were many things to learn about women. After experiencing wild pieces of fire like Margaret and delicate beauties like Stella, he was again caught up by the honesty and simplicity of Angela Blue.

Of all the female characters in this novel, the character of Angela Blue is the only conventional character. Angela believed in the sacredness of marriage. She had absolute faith in one love and one life and thought it dangerous and disgraceful to break it. Dreiser upholds the conventional values in her portrayal. But, in spite of her conventionality and strong heredity, she had to pay a heavy price because of being placed in the welter of unsympathetic forces of social environment. She had to face misery in life because of the conflict between the forces of heredity and those of social environment.

Heredity plays a vital role in matters of love and sex. There is less likelihood of the moral downfall of the boys and girls whose parents are strong in character. Angela remained virtuous because of her strong heredity whereas other female characters like Stella, Margaret, Ruby, Suzanne were
quite free and uninhibited in their approach towards sex. They were all sex-maniacs. They saw no harm in satisfying their sexual hunger by mixing freely with their male counter-parts.

In a materialistic social environment, true love is a casualty and sex is linked with money. Eugene realized that he had never experienced the feelings of love in his affairs with different women. This shows the power of money in a materialistic society in which everything can be had by money. In such a society the marriage of true mind seldom takes place. One can have free sex but one cannot experience true love. Taking stock of his situation Eugene felt:

"And as for love - what had he ever had of love before? When he went back in his mind, it seemed that all, each, and everyone, had been combined in some way with lust and evil thinking. Could he say that he had ever been in love truly? Certainly not with Margaret Duff or Ruby Kenny or Angela - though that was the nearest he had come to true love - or Christina Channing. He had liked all these women very much as he had Carlotta Wilson, but had he ever loved one? Never." 21

Angela had also observed this wavering nature of Eugene. She knew that he was incapable of real love because of his selfishness and helplessness in doting on any one woman:

"You don't love anyone, Eugene. You can't, you are too selfish. If you had any real love in you, some of it would have come out to me, for I have tried to be all that a good wife should be, but it has been all in vain. I've known you haven't liked me all these years. I've seen it in your eyes, Eugene, you have never come very close to me as a lover should unless you had or you couldn't avoid me."

The influence of the forces of heredity and those of social environment is also perceptible in the Cowperwood Trilogy (The Financier, The Titan and The Stoic) in the approach of different characters towards love. There is a noticeable difference between a materialistic society and an ethical society in their attitude towards love. In a materialistic society, the very definition of love undergoes a change. One-love, one-life is a myth. Love is connected with money. Money plays a decisive role in man-woman relationship. Men who do not have money, try to acquire it so that they may

enjoy the dizzying pleasures of life and loves of different kinds of women. Women who are poor, try to get material riches by establishing sexual contacts with affluent persons. Dreiser was a naturalist. He had observed that society is at bottom conventional and hypocritical. But the realities of life are different. The conquest of the host of women by Cowperwood, the chief protagonist of the trilogy of desire, (The Financier, The Titan and The Stoic) was just like winning several trophies in the game of love.

Dreiser's treatment of love was not idolatry. He neither idealized it nor romanticized it. He treated it simply as a chemic force. He was not obsessed with the problem of chastity. Hardy had to defend his Tess who was a victim of the forces of heredity and those of social environment before the Victorian society by telling them that loss of physical chastity is no loss of chastity if there is no complicity in the act. Tess was, therefore, a pure woman in the eyes of Hardy. Dreiser did not feel it necessary to defend his woman-characters on this ground. He was a naturalist and unlike Victorians, did not taboo sex. In his view, there was nothing wrong in sex-relationship between mutually compatible persons.
Dreiser has treated sex as a biological necessity. Meetings and matings go side by side in his novels. No ethics are involved in this. Lillian Semple, the widow of Mr. Semple, yielded to Cowperwood because 'there was a deadly persuasion to his caresses' and he 'aroused a force of feeling in her which had not previously been there.' She was not sexually satisfied with her husband for 'he was not the kind of man who could arouse a notable passion in any woman.'

The characters of the individuals can be modified or changed to a certain extent, but the force must be quite strong enough. Aileen, despite her religious upbringing, had no religious fear like Cowperwood. Of course, it is somewhat difficult to say which is greater determinant of a person's performance - Nature i.e. what is inherited, or Nurture i.e. environment. Aileen was a victim of her temperament. She had a craving for love and self-conscious vigour, vanity and tendency to over-ornament. She was unable to resist the influence of the forces of social environment. She could not tolerate the melting of passion in Cowperwood for her. She was not a passive, submissive and tolerant woman.

The desire for love and full sex life and urgency to give a lesson to Cowperwood for his insincerity to her, encouraged Aileen to respond to the overtures of another man, Lynde, though the spell of Cowperwood was still on her:

"It was just possible that she could come to love a man like this, although it would be hard. It would serve Cowperwood right for neglecting her. Yet, even now the shadow of Cowperwood was over her, but also the desire for love and a full sex life." 25

Aileen was easily entrapped by Lynde who, like Cowperwood had what Gibbon was wont to call 'the most amiable of our vices', a passion for women. Lynde, like Cowperwood was a great womanizer. His methods in 'so far as women were concerned, were even more daring.' 26 Aileen fell an easy prey to his guiles because 'never was there a vainer or more sex-troubled woman?' 27 as she was at that time. It was, therefore, because of her vanity and biological need that this

25. idem.
27. ibid. p.231.
relationship with Lynde developed. Thus we see an ideal combination of the forces of heredity and those of social environment in shaping her attitude towards life, her motivations and patterns of behaviour.

Nature and Nurture, both were in harmony with each other in the character of Stephanie Platow. The instincts and impulses of Stephanie got a suitable environment which responded to them favourably. She was an 'unstable chemical compound' and free lover. She was not the least concerned with the emotional aspect of love. Affection, for her, had nothing to do with physical loyalty. She was not a passive, sought after female but, on the other hand, she used men for sexual satisfaction. She experienced sex with different persons - Gardner Knowles, Cross, Cowperwood etc.

"Forbes Gurney, alive to beauty in all its forms, ventured finally to touch her hand - she of Knowles, Cross and Cowperwood - and she thrilled from head to toe. This boy was so sweet." 29

28. ibid. p.231.
29. idem.
Cowperwood was conscious of Stephanie's 'heavy lizardish animality.' He cautioned her against this lest it might wreck her career as an actress for her free style of living was against the mores of a conventional society. It was, therefore, not socially advisable for her to be a free lover: "You are a good actress. Stick to your profession. You may shine in it if you do not merge it completely with your loves. As for being a free lover, it is not incompatible with what you are, perhaps, but it isn't socially advisable for you."  

Sex has been used as a prop for getting social recognition and money by the female characters of Dreiser. Fear of social ostracism due to poverty is the root cause of permissiveness in a materialistic society. Behind the sexploits is muffled the agony of a poverty-stricken soul. Bernice Fleming was the last woman to be seduced by the 'woman hungry' Cowperwood. She was lured more by his wealth and social status than by his physique as she was much younger than him in age. In her case, it was not so much a biological necessity as economic compulsion which helped her seduction:

30. ibid. p. 224.  
31. ibid. p. 239.  
32. ibid. p. 483.
"Poverty, Ostracism" she thought. "And should she marry rich? Of course, if she could."33

Bernice might have been successful in repulsing the persuasions of Cowperwood who had acquired considerable experience of judging woman by his long trifling with different kinds of women, had the forces of heredity been stronger than the forces of social environment in her. Her mother, we know, was a woman of easy virtue and was trafficking in immoral trade with persons of different professions in a separate apartment. Bernice was, thus, conceived in an environment of cheap sexuality.

Nature and Nurture, thus, continue in Bernice's seduction. The forces of heredity and those of social environment, both, facilitate this unnatural alliance between Bernice and Cowperwood - the former becoming 'herself weary, yet brilliant turning to others as recompense for her lost youth', the latter becoming 'resigned and yet - not loving, understanding, doubting, caught at last by the drug of personality which he could gain say.'34

33. ibid. p.459.
34. ibid. p.552.
Dreiser's treatment of love and women in An American Tragedy (1925) is also based on the interplay of the forces of heredity and those of social environment. In an environment of crass materialism, love is confused with free sex. People are devoid of the feelings of love. Sex without love is reduced to the level of animal passion only. Men and women co-habit with one another without any inhibitions. Sex and money are the main ingredients of a materialistic society. Besides sex, the characters of Dreiser suffer from insatiable lust for money, which gives them social recognition and means to enjoy life. Money is the sole motivating force behind all their actions.

Roberta Alden, like Clyde, considered her life a great disappointment. She had seen little but poverty since her childhood. She was the daughter of conventional and God-fearing parents. Although she was compelled to share a 'depriving and toilsome poverty' yet 'because of her innate imagination, she was always thinking of something better.' Despite her religious upbringing, the forces of heredity were weakened in her by the powerful forces of social environment.

Like Carrie and Jennie, she was also meek and submissive by nature. She was drawn towards Clyde because of the charm of his personality and his superior economic status:

"And so it was that Roberta after encountering Clyde and sensing the superior world in which she imagined, he moved, and being so taken with the charm of his personality, was seized with the very virus of ambition and unrest that afflicted him." 36

Roberta was conscious of the deep wedge between her poverty and better monetary condition of Clyde. She was doubtful of Clyde's sincerity and his legitimate interest in her because of his high family connections. Her strong religious heredity had cautioned her against the overtures of Clyde who might be using her for the gratification of sex only. Her morally trained conscience forbade her to encourage the advances of Clyde:

"On the other hand was he not beginning to push too ardently toward those troublesome and no doubt dreadful

36. ibid., p. 275.
liberties and familiarities which her morally trained conscience would not permit her to look upon as right? How was she to do now? What to say?"

'No, I won't do that', I mustn't. I can't. I will be a bad girl if I do so. I should not do that for him even though he does want me to, and should threaten to leave me forever in case I refuse, he should be ashamed to ask me.'

In spite of the warning nudge, Roberta had to yield to Clyde because of the strong chemical or temperamental pull. Moreover, Roberta was infatuated by Clyde because of his being the nephew of a business magnate, Samuel Griffiths, besides the magnetism of his personality.

The characters of Dreiser use sex as a means for getting money and social recognition. Roberta wanted to marry Clyde because of his better social and economic status. Clyde, on the other hand, wanted to marry Sondra Finchley because, by marrying her, he would be able to acquire both wealth and high position. 'Sondra, Twelfth lake, society,

37. ibid. p.251.
wealth, her love and beauty, haunted him like a passion.

Roberta, therefore, in the eyes of Clyde, was an obstacle in the fulfilment of his dream. The murder of such a poor and innocent girl like her was a murder of human values in a materialistic society. It was a reflection upon the mores of such a Mammon worshipping society. Roberta, like Clyde, had also fallen a prey to the prevailing social environment of selfishness and greed. Heredity and environment are inter-related with each other. Man cannot develop his hereditary qualities without a proper environment. The forces of heredity were curbed by the adverse forces of social environment in the case of Roberta.

Sondra Finchley, on the other hand, represented a gay world. Unlike Clyde and Roberta, she was not the victim of the contemporary American dream. The congenial environment in which she was placed acted as a stimulant to her hereditary qualities. She imbibed in her the very spirit of the milieu.

38. ibid, p. 460.
She responded to the advances of Clyde not because she loved him but because of the fact that he was the cousin of Gilbert Griffiths. She enjoyed love and happiness in life because of the harmony between the forces of heredity and those of social environment in her.

Submissiveness and pride are the outcome of the poor and the rich heredity. Persons who have poor family background are generally submissive and polite; conversely, those who have rich hereditary background are mostly self-conceited and arrogant. Roberta's submissive and yielding nature was essentially hereditary whereas the pride and superciliousness of Sondra reflected upon her rich heredity.

To sum up, in a materialistic social environment, the very concept of love undergoes a change. Love is confused with sex which is connected with money and social ambition. The characters of Dreiser experience sex, not love. They use sex for acquiring material comforts and social status. The sexual promiscuity of the female characters of Dreiser is largely due to the banal influence of the prevailing social environment. But heredity is also to blame. The female
characters who have weak heredity give up easily when tested whereas those who have strong hereditary background are able to resist the hostile forces of social environment.