

CHAPTER – III
THEODORE DREISER'S AN AMERICAN TRAGEDY-
A DREAM GONE SOUR

The decade after the Civil War, new literature began to appear in the U.S. Its forms were dedicated to a single theme; the life in America was a fluid and wide open race in which every one competed on equal basis, i.e. *winner takes all*. The 1920s were the salad days of great American novel, which includes the pervasiveness of ambition from Lewis, William, Hoyed Dell and Sherwood Anderson. On the editorial side, Horace Liveright put that authority to effective use.

Theodore Dreiser (1871-1945) was the first American writer, who is not of the old American tradition. He was peculiarly nebulous, emotional and a traditionless character, who asserted with the blunt directness, that no other American writer at the turn of the century could match. Since the beginning, his mother urged him the need of strength, ambition, practical approach in life, and to defend himself. Further, he prepared himself for the battle of life. Like her, he was very much optimistic and a dreamer. For him success could mean *burning with desire*. He dreamt of the mansions that "should belong to me [...] the beauties who should note and receive

me.”¹ Pluck and luck meant success, and success meant wealth and women.

In the summer of 1920, when he was living in Los Angeles, Dreiser began writing An American Tragedy. It is difficult to establish in a systematic way as to when did he first contemplate to write this book, but the structure, and idea were in his mind long before he was compelled to write it. He said, “I carry my plots around with me year after year before setting pen to paper,” while answering an interrogator. “By the time I am ready to write, I see the book as plainly as if it were a tree rising up before my eyes. Root, trunk, branches, twigs, so to speak are all there; it is only the leaves that require to be sketched in.”² He worked steadily through the fall and in June 1921 stopped this work and put it aside for two years. Then in 1924, he began writing book two and finished it in December. It was published in two volumes by Boni and Liveright on December 17, 1925. He made no changes on subsequent printings of the novel. Its a culmination of his powerful fictional art. It is a mythic force and sometimes brutal and heart breaking.

Throughout Dreiser’s work, the forces behind the scenes are identified with various theories of the day; instinct mechanism, the fittest, mystical directness, a trajectory towards death, sexual compulsion, social conformity, dream to get rich--all are supported

somewhere in An American Tragedy. This novel reflects the prevailing society in the world, preferably the world of the Green-Davidson Hotel, the social world of Griffiths, the world of condemned prisoners at the penitentiary, the rural world of Robertta and the sexually languid world of the girls who work for Clyde. These are the islands of varieties of aura, some glamorous and some contaminating.

In his real life, Dreiser was very much anxious and fascinated by the concepts of *American Dream* and parameters of success. Even in his death, he had chosen success. At his request, he was buried in Southern California, in the most glamorous of American Cemeteries, the place where all the Hollywood Moguls are buried, "the most beautiful resting place" (Lynn 74), he had ever seen. To understand this novel, it is best to look into Dreiser's personal life that contributes a lot to the plot construction in the novel. His father was John Paul Dreiser from Germany, a weaver by trade who came to America before the Civil War and was running a woolen mill that burnt down. Then, with his family of ten children and an illiterate wife, came to Indiana. Dreiser in his autobiographical work Dawn says that his "mother was the opposite of John Paul [...]--beyond or behind good and evil."³ Here, she resembles very much Clyde's (who is a protagonist of the novel) mother throughout

her life. She tried to hold the family together, but it was a losing battle against poverty and starvation. Clyde's mother also tries her best to hold the family together against poverty and bring about a meaningful family interaction within the range and learn to be happy against all the odds in life.

Dreiser took the material from his own life and used it in the novel and a little bit from a murder incident. One of his brothers was being jailed for forgery, one sister was seduced by a politician in Terre Haute, and when she became pregnant, she was discarded. Later when another sister bore an illegitimate child, it fell to the care of his mother. Later, Dreiser took up the job of a stock boy in a hardware store in Chicago, as Clyde does it in a collar factory. Like Dreiser, he takes the job step by step and finally from the small sponsor goes to a higher profession of journalism and editorial section, Clyde also moves up the ladder of success methodically. One of the most telling characteristics of Dreiser reflected in Clyde was his education, which was miserable and "blazing with sex" (Dreiser, *The Moderns* 1878) consumed by yearnings for wealth, display and power. The best way to achieve these, was to marry into the charmed circle of wealth. He had an image of a girl in his life, who would be both rich and sensual. Meanwhile not finding her, he used to meet destitute girls as he

could find to his purpose and disposed each one of them when they had served his need. This concept serves as the main theme of the novel leading to disaster.

The structure of Dreiser's work entirely depends on the temper of the age. It depicts the money panics, the increasing violence in the labor wars, the growth of the great slums, the fear of the middle-class, with the concentration of wealth on one hand and the threat of wealth on socialism on the other. With all these, he also viewed business as a crucial concern of American life. In general, Dreiser said that "America is not great because of, but in spite of her pieties and her moralities--because the great business men had been strong enough to do as they pleased" (Dreiser, *The Moderns* 1887). In fact, here it is necessary to note that America developed as a nation because of her industries and technology that yielded high productivity.

As a famous author, Dreiser took the material and ideas for his writings from Machiavelli, Spencer, Huxley, and Darwin. *Illusion* is the key word for him and on this basis we may observe the deeper relationship between his predator's self-assertion on one hand, love and art on the other. Balzac gave him a way to look at the cities and the life. Though he strongly evoked the possibilities of the modern city, he also felt in it what may be called a peculiar

American emptiness and loneliness; which is felt in the American city as well as in the small towns. The final scene of chapter one in Sister Carrie (1899) has projected this loneliness. Carrie has just stepped off the train from her home in the country and stands on the platform of the Chicago station. In the train, she had briefly befriended another passenger, a man named Drouet. The train pulls out, leaving Carrie on the platform. Drouet was looking back. When he saw that she was safe with her sister, he turned to go, sending back the shadow of a smile. Only Carrie saw it. She felt emptiness as he moved away. When he disappeared, she felt his absence thoroughly. She was alone, a lone figure in a tossing, thoughtless sea. In this novel, he further depicts the yearnings of his sisters and how they had been caught by the glitter of the world beyond them. Here, he depicts the Darwinism, the idea of *psychosomatic* relation between the hard world of economic competition and the psychological face. There are sex, love, and affection prevailing against the cold mechanisms of success and failure. There is a yearning of *wanting and nothing*. Dreiser in his another novel The Financier (1911) was undertaking to give the true *inside* story of the Financier, to show the working of his mind and soul, his acquisitiveness, sex and art, flow of his dreams one by

one, to place him not only in society but in nature, in the economy of the universe. It affirms the values of the practical world.

Dreiser in his life was always unstable in love and friendship, could not be sure of his own feelings. Even the relationship with his wife went from bad to worse and made him to send her back to her parents. This concept contributes a lot in making the plot structure of the novel and much else in that amuse mirabiles at the center of what deserves, like the 1850s to be called an *American Renaissance*. Here, he wrote splendidly about the delights of the metropolis. He translated the language of the stones, kept himself expressing the powerful emotions aroused by the city, with its grand hotels, dark paneled restaurants and bars, its glitter under the night sky, its palpable sexuality, its theaters, cigar smoke, and its money. Between all these he constructed an incident of a murder that serves as the heart of the novel. And more interesting truth about this incident that he connected, is the murder of the pregnant woman Grace (Billie) Brown by young Chester Gillette in 1906. To give shape to this concept in the novel, he began to collect clippings on a murder case where a girl is killed by her lover.

Chester was the son of a fanatically devout couple who ran a missionary. He was born in the West and was at Oberlin College in Cortland. There his uncle owned a shirt factory, where Chester got

a job and seduced one of the girls named Billie employed there. He was a man of high dreams. At this juncture, Billie announced her pregnancy and wrote to him the letters that were to bring jurors to tears. While insisting on marriage, Chester saw only one solution. He persuaded her to go on a trip with him, presumably to be married. At big Moose Lake, he took her out in a rowboat, hit her on the head with a tennis racket, and when she fell into the water, left her to drown. A straw hat floated on the water to announce her death. He was captured and executed in 1908. This objective story of Chester is very much close to that of Clyde. Dreiser, rather than trying to disguise similarities, often insisted on them. He has given the initials of Chester Gillette as Clyde Griffiths, Grace Brown as Robertta Alden (Bert) and for Clyde he kept the pseudonym of Carl Graham, which Chester had used during the time of murder. Instead of tennis racket, he uses the camera. This is the only modification he made, when compared to the actual murder sketch.

Further, Dreiser made a preparatory tour of the region where Chester had acted out his sleazy drama, saw the place where he was convicted, the lake where he drowned his lover, and even heard the sound of wier-wier bird. By this time, his imagination fed out on the fact and started acting upon the comparison between this wild incident and the American social class and the great *American*

Dream, which according to Dreiser leads one to destruction and a wasteful life. Here, Dreiser looks backward from the distance of middle age and evaluates his own experience of success and failure. The novel begins and ends with the images of contrasts and the pathos of personal life experience, with the changing trends in the world.

The novel begins with the family of the street preachers and the boy Clyde Griffiths, who is the protagonist, and in the end of the novel with the illegitimate son of Clyde's sister Esta, who stands lost between the "Tall walls of the commercial heart of an American city" (Dreiser, *The Moderns* 1895). Clyde looking up at the tall walls of the world, is the key image in the novel and of Dreiser's life. Clyde was constantly thinking of how he might better himself, if he had a chance; places to which he might go, things he might see, and how differently he might live, because he thinks his parents' profession looks deglamourised to the eyes of others. He even feels humiliated, when people look at him and his family in this miserable condition.

It is here, the sapling of his dream to achieve something, to become somebody and to secure a good position in the society emerges. Further, his uncle Samuel Griffiths, a rich businessman himself becomes an ideal of his dreams. Clyde was fascinated by

all the strappings of enjoyment and luxuries of life. It is clear that like Clyde, his sister Esta too might be exhausted by her parents who were unable to fulfill the requirements of their children due to poverty. Hence, she elopes with a man, being fascinated with the glitters of the world, the social class and the related prestige. But the difference between Esta's and Clyde's dreams are that she suffers a lot throughout her life, Clyde also suffers critically and waits for his death, every minute till the end of the novel. Both tried to be successful in their own way to be independent and have fabulous life but end up as failures. It stresses on the fact that along with the efforts, to choose the right way is also an important component to achieve success. Clyde realizes his dream when he secures a bell-boy job in the great Green-Davidson Hotel, where his earning was also raised with some tips from the guests of the hotel. Here, the dream blooms stage by stage. In the hotel he sees some of the young boys and girls of his age enjoying parties. He hates himself and his parents for not even talking about worldly passions of love and forcing only to act on the religious sermons with Bible and hymns. Getting out of the clutches of his parents, he slowly learns all the sophisticated and high-class etiquettes; like alcoholism, sex and lavishness. Being with his friends, he comes very close to Hortense and feels, enjoys her touch, and at the same

time wonders at her behavior, selling herself to the men for the sake of money.

When he discovers his sister Esta in the secret room, pregnant and abandoned, he feels disgusted. This investigation shows his character of scrupulous accretion of detail. His mother asks money to aid Esta and at the same time Hortense asks for the coat. Here, there is a clash between the sentiments, emotions of his mother and an affair with Hortense that may affect him psychologically. His actions in this incidence make the readers to think of Clyde as a person who is cheating his mother and irresponsible in family matters by not spending for Esta, instead bringing a coat for Hortense.

Dreiser constructed the novel from his own experience. Here, we see Clyde yearning for love, was blazing with sex and desire for material and social supremacy, to have wealth and a position in society. He comes to Lycurgus and established himself in his uncle's collar factory in a well-designated position. It is here, his desires, dreams, and fabulous attraction for the glitters of the world emerges and is fascinated towards Sondra. It gives the picture of the organization and the perspective on life and fate of Clyde. Here, he is also attracted towards Robertta, a very simple and innocent girl who is working under him in the factory. In the end,

she is the carrier of Clyde's destiny. He is allured by her beauty and blandishes her. When she becomes pregnant, he leaves her and again shifts his mind to Sondra, who belongs to a rich class. This incident makes the readers to believe that Clyde is not a true lover and has a character like "Chameleon"⁴ which changes its color to its surrounding. Clyde also changes his mind from Robertta to Sondra and to Hortense. When he gets a substantial position in the factory, he gets more attracted towards wealth and the desire to have and want more emerges, where, in that heat, he kills his dear love, Robertta. This is the stage where he is influenced by great irresistible forces and kills Robertta in the crest of ambition. He is not a character of wild sexual passion or jealousy, but a weak, irresolute, scarcely capable of choice. Dreiser's early short story Nigger-Jeff is the one, where he exhibited his fascination with this kind of crime and which he brought later to this major novel. Arguably as Donald Pizer says in his article, "Nigger Jeff is primarily an initiation story, the coming into knowledge of the tragic realities of life by the viewer."⁵ Further, Clyde intended not to be identified in the society as a seducer for which he thinks will affect his relation with Sondra. Due to this reason he conceals his name and uses Carl Graham as his new identity during his stay in the hotel and during the murder.

It is the tragedy at its most, where Dreiser draws a co-relation between social and sexual mobility. He himself finds blocked, frustrated on one hand by his desire to marry the rich girl and on the other by his inability to extricate himself from the predicament. His real trouble begins when the premeditated thoughts becomes a real one. The illusion scene of a platform on Fonda is compared to the character of Frank Norris' McTeague, which is mentioned by Robert Funk.⁶ "Why was that old man in that old brown winter suit and hat carrying that bird cage in a brown paper looking at him so? Could he sense anything? Did he know him? Had he worked in Lycurgus or seen him before?" Here, this old man is expected to provoke Clyde's nervousness, where he assumes that this old man knows everything of his plan to kill Robertta and watching him in suspicion. This is just an illusion of Clyde that Dreiser has mentioned in this scene. This sight also shows the "miseducation of Clyde"⁷ says Jeffrey Hart. In the novel McTeague, McTeague has murdered his wife, Clyde is about to murder his beloved and because of this, both are involved in a form of flight. The bird cage is the most unique feature in both the scenes. In McTeague, this cage owned by McTeague is a central image in the work; and it is the novel's final image. He leaves San Francisco after murdering his

wife Trina, he walks into the mountains while in his left hand swung the bird cage wrapped in sack.

In An American Tragedy, the inclusion of the question “could he sense anything?” is just a casual attempt to reflect Clyde’s fear of having his plot discovered. This technique of illusion in the novel underscores the determinism Dreiser and Norris have shared as Naturalistic authors. Richard Lingeman notes in his biography, Dreiser first read McTeague and called it “the first real American book I had ever read”⁸ which gives us an impression that while writing An American Tragedy, he might have been influenced much by McTeague. May be he confined a lot of ideas in the main scene to depict as Norris in McTeague.

Dijkstra classifies Dreiser’s male characters as members of the “cult of manhood”⁹ who knew that it was every good woman’s fondest dream to have a real man come along in her life that is the concept of *American Dream* for women.¹ In an insightful study of An American Tragedy, John Clenndening corroborates Dijkstra’s analysis arguing that Dreiser’s protagonist Clyde is motivated by a fear of phallic women who can destroy men. He interprets Clyde’s

¹ The American Dream for women in American context explains the acquisition of a prosperous and attractive husband who would ensure a life time of social prominence and economic security.

dream as a *Vicious Black Dog* and finds that Clyde's flight results because of "a deep distrust and fear of woman."¹⁰ Dreiser in his fiction as in his editorial columns explores the effect that women have on men, and his depictions of women are complex working on two levels. On a personal level he creates women whose beauty, intelligence, kindness, sexuality, passivity and power that affects men causing them to experience both fear and desire. But on social level, he creates female characters whose power, not only influences men but also shapes the very structure of society.

It is evident from the novel that Dreiser is much influenced by the myth of Diana and Actaeon in creating his characters. He exemplified the power that women have in regulating endogamous sections. After a day of hunting, in a valley sacred to Diana, Actaeon (a male devotee of Diana) sets camp with his dogs and then suddenly he enters a beautiful vale Gargaphie which was unknown to him where the virgin goddess bathes. When the naked Diana notices his presence, she fails to reach for her bow and arrows and so throws water on Actaeon, transforming him to a stag with the words; "now go and tell, if you can, that you have seen Diana unapparalled."¹¹ In other words, he is destroyed when he goes beyond the bounds of acceptable courtship by approaching a woman



who is socially and metaphysically superior to him. This myth dramatizes a gender struggle found throughout Dreiser's fiction.

In the novel An American Tragedy, when Clyde first arrives in Lycurgus, "a mythical town with a Greek name, he, like Actaeon accidentally wanders into a place of beauty, Wykeagy Avenue, the street that is lined with spacious gardens."¹² Clyde pauses to observe the Griffiths mansion and garden, a residence that he describes as the most admirable and beautiful, with fountains and statues including the cast iron stag pursued by dogs (p-203). It resembles Dreiser's feelings, when he visited New York city in 1895, and was awed by the architecture of Stanford White: Across Madison Square, its delicate golden brown tower soaring aloft and alone, no huge building, stood Madison Square garden, Diana, her arrow pointed to the wind, giving naked chase to a mythic stag, her mythic dogs at her heels, high in the blue air above."¹³

This allusion to the myth of Actaeon and Diana in the form of cast iron lawn and decorations foreshadows Clyde's future. He like Actaeon, is pursued and devoured for daring to enter the confines of those who are superior to him. Later when he enters the Griffith's mansion, these allusions to Diana are further corroborated when Bella Griffiths arrives lately accompanied by Sondra Finchley and Bertine Cranston. As they enter the room, Clyde finds Sondra so

different to any girls he had ever known and so superior. He is *agonized* and *tortured* by Sondra's presence. He treats her as a goddess like figure on whom it is difficult to gaze and not to gaze. In fact for Dreiser, Diana became a model whose complex, ambivalent and contradictory nature informs his realistic characterizations of women. In this sense, each of Dreiser's female characters become Diana, a goddess with powers that men fear and admire, so also Sondra resembles Diana with power. As willful Diana who presides over the haunt, Sondra also invites Clyde to his first society function and seldomly for dinner and dance, where she is described as a Goddess in her shrine of gilt and tinsel. He too is curious about how Sondra looked in bathing suit, riding, playing tennis or dancing. Sondra's beauty, grace, power, wealth and social position enslave Clyde. Their relationship develops as Clyde assumes the role of an eager devotee, a submissive attendant who will gladly follow Sondra on the hunt. Even after the seduction and murder of Robertta and his capture, when asked by his lawyer, whether he had sexual relations with Sondra, Clyde remains a devotee to the virgin goddess by expressing disgust.

Like Actaeon, Clyde literally becomes a prey for other creatures when he runs and is captured in the woods by District Attorney Mason. And this occurs after he like Actaeon, sets camp

and enters the lake where Sondra was bathing. As soon as he enters the water near Sondra he hears signal shots of mason and sheriff, and like Actaeon he is forced to flee. By this it is acceptable, that all women in Dreiser's novels become Dianas, and the male characters become devotees following them on a hunt to satiate their desires. This very terminology of the "hunt and the desire reveals Dreiser's selfish attitude towards women, whose characterizations are complex, contradictory, ambivalent, ironic and realistic."¹⁴ There is a swing movement of *women* and *Dream* throughout the novel. Clyde is characterized as a dreamer of luxury, upward mobility, women, who is totally dedicated to all the glitters of the world. Scene after scene, stage by stage his dreams multiply which in turn pushes him towards disaster. His relation with the rich Sondra itself brings an end to his life.

The darkest and the weakest side of Clyde poses the question-- "would he escape from the demands of Roberta?" He passes through the feeling of doing and accepting. At the time of murder, his inner voice echoes him not to kill her, but he has come well prepared and planned to kill while his conscious is not accepting to commit the deed, which shows his dual nature. He says "But I don't want to kill her or injure her in anyway, if she will but let me go and she her own way, I will be glad not to see her anymore" (p-

534). While discussing the murder committed by Clyde, it forces us to think that Dreiser was impressed by the idea of Freud's description of "typical dreams."¹⁵ The dreams of passing through narrow valleys, or a whole suite of rooms, dreams of burglars, dreams of being chased by wild animals or threatened with knives, daggers and lances, these are the so-called anxiety dreams, dreams that disturb sleep, where the wish is obscured and suppressed by terror. This dream concept exemplifies the relatory comparison between the dream of Clyde with the character Raskolnikov in Dostoevsky's novel Crime and Punishment. Raskolnikov, tormented by his plan to murder the pawnbroker, had a sadomasochistic nightmare. He dreams that he is a child again, a boy of seven years, walking with his father through their old village towards the cemetery, where his grandfather and younger brother is buried. When they were passing, they observe Mikolka, a drunkard, offers to give everyone a ride in his cart, pulled by his broken-down old nag. When the mare does not budge, Mikolka whips her; the others join him, exasperated Mikolka tosses his whip aside and begins to beat the horse with a wooden shaft, then with an iron crowbar. She falls as if her legs have been cut away. The child rushes to defend her, kissing her mouth and eyes--panting, sweating, feeling as if his whole body were battered and bruised, Raskolnikov awakes and

immediately recognizes the dream's compelling horrible wish and says, "God, is it possible, is it possible that I really shall take an axe and strike her on the head, smash open her skull [...]. No, I shall not do it, I will not do it [...]. He prays Lord, show me the way, that I may renounce this accursed [...] fantasy of mine."¹⁶

Like Raskolnikov, Clyde too has a dream where he is tempted to murder Robertta Alden. At the same time he receives two letters, one is a seductive baby talk letter from Sondra demanding that he "come" to her at Finchley summer home; "[...] so when Sondra says come, you come, you hear, else Sondra whip hard. You baddie, good boy" (p-500). The other letter is an anguished appeal from Robertta; "I feel too upset and uncertain about everything [...]. You are going to come to me as you said [...]. But you will come for me, won't you, dear? (p-501-503). Presented with these contradictory demands, Clyde reads a newspaper account of the double drowning accident at Pass Lake--and immediately sees murder as the solution to his dilemma, presented by Robertta's pregnancy and Sondra's growing infatuation. Like Raskolnikov, he is also repelled by the thought. "He was not that kind of person, whatever else he was. He was not. He was not [...]. He must never think of it again--never, never, never (p-507). Falling asleep, he found himself dreaming of a savage black dog that was trying to

bite him. And then, horrified and crying out in hopeless desperation once more he awoke--not to sleep again that night. This is the psycho-analytical influence seen in Dreiser's work which moves with what Louis J. Zanine writes "Although [...] Dreiser did employ some Freudian elements in 'An American Tragedy', his portrayal of Clyde Griffiths was not a consistent Freudian and his experimentation with literary techniques like the stream of consciousness were minimal."¹⁷

Here, the above statement dismisses the influence of psychoanalysis, which is a recent study of science in the thought and work of Theodore Dreiser. But soon it has been proved by the examples of dream connections, how Dreiser was motivated by Freud and his theories. Even at the end, tragedy is figured to an "Oedipal Tragedy"¹⁸ in which Clyde is tempted and then punished by the patriarchal order; his powerful uncle and cousin Samuel and Gilbert Griffiths. And the most influential reason for the crime is *desire* which is again a psychological concept. Leonard Cassuto has observed "the engine of desire"--not some external force is a driving force of Dreiser's best work.¹⁹ Murder is the method Clyde chooses and is driven to choose. The point of tragedy is that loathing Clyde's motives and his methods, we can still understand

and sympathize with the boy in his predicament. The death scene is so neatly balanced between guilt and innocence.

Dreiser, in the novel sketched the women characters as a modified one against the traditional way of characterization. Thus showing Feminism and women as carefree and independent to decide their lives. He has created the working women conditions from 1880s to 1920s, where increasing numbers of women living and working outside the home, like Robertta and the changing attitudes towards sexuality is shown. (Robertta's overtures to the sexual contacts with Clyde without any marriage bond or the consent of law, and even more, when Clyde rejects to marry her in pregnancy she threatens him to reveal this secret in the factory). This reflects the changing attitudes of women towards life by creating their own identity and enjoying an economic independence in the society. These changes are due to the spread of industrialization and factory system offering job opportunities to women. This era of 1925 also displayed the competence of women who were more courageous and ingenious than their predecessors. They attended the nightclubs, cabarets, and even engaged in premarital sex and occasionally became prostitutes. Mary Catherine says, "both Thomas Hardy and Theodore Dreiser presented the 'bold heroines' representing both Victorian and early modern eras by

tracing several millennia of the development of a dichotomous sexual ideology of women."²⁰

In An American Tragedy, Dreiser's two heroines: Robertta represents the little based traditional family and Sondra represents fully a modern family culture. Even between the two Griffiths, Clyde's mother and Gilbert's mother, there are lots of differences and these differences are due to the pressures and modes of society they lived in. "Clyde's mother is represented by the older generation of puritanical and Gilbert's mother, of the younger generation and the nouveau riche."²¹ And this explains, why she prohibits Bella, her daughter from marrying one of the scions of the Bacon and Vacuum Cleaner manufacturers. At the end of the trial, the comparison of two mothers can be seen. Here, the *mother image* serves a lot of importance and at the end when the court gives its verdict the "two mothers are weeping and praying"--where this situation resembles a ballad collected by Tristram Potter Coffin's last stanza of Grace-Brown and Chester-Gillette Ballad.

Two mothers were weeping and praying;
 One prayed that justice be done,
 The other Asked for mercy,
 Asked God to save her dear son.²²

Here, the two mothers are praying for their own satisfaction. One is Clyde's mother who is asking God to save her son from the punishment of death. And the other, Robertta's mother asking God to punish the offender. Both the mothers are praying for the justice to be done. The judgment is done at last in favor of justice. These two are the delineated figures of grieving mothers who plead for their children.

Throughout the novel, the women characters are attracted towards Clyde, his eyes being central for this image. It is those 'deep and rather appealing eyes' that when a girl earlier in a drug house notices him, puts him in the way of his first good job in the Green Davidson Hotel. And it is Hortense who says, "I like your eyes, your'e more refined one" (p-74). His *eye* image plays a prominent role at the time of murder too. In a boat Robertta trailing her hand in the water, asks Clyde, if they might find some water lilies or wild flowers somewhere on the shore. But Clyde was thinking and searching for a place where he can bring about Robertta's destruction and death. It shows the innocence of Robertta and the wicked nature of Clyde. In the meantime, the pupil of his eyes grows larger and lurid. The stillness of his position, the balanced immobility of the mood suggests a brutal, courageous power to destroy her. Suddenly she notices this

strangeness on his face and painfully exclaims, "Why, Clyde! Clyde! What is it? What is the matter with you anyhow? You look so--so strange--so--why, I never saw you like this before" (p-563). Even to the last breath of her life, murmuring for Clyde, she is violently thrown into the water, her lips parted to shout for help. "I'm drowning, I'm drowning. Help! Oh, my God! Clyde! Clyde!" (p-564) Throughout the novel Robertta remains very innocent. Her letters to Clyde beg for life and security for her child about to take birth.

Many others, including Sondra and her friends, daughters of Samuel Griffiths also feel the peculiar attraction of Clyde's eyes, but it is most obviously important in his affair with Robertta. There is a moment when she first becomes aware of the darkness and melancholy and lure of his eyes at the first kiss. The "dark, hungry eyes held very close to hers." But she refused to let him come to her room and leaves him standing in the dark street, "she in the first, flashing, blinding, bleeding stab of love," thinks of "his beautiful face, his beautiful hands, his deep blue eyes" (p-304).

Even Clyde feels of himself --"I was too cowardly to make my way with women readily rather they made their way with me " (p-490). Hortense and Sondra, making their way with Clyde; they have reasons for using him. Hortense for money, Sondra to spite the

Griffiths of Lycurgus, Robertta to better her position as Dreiser put -“She has been seized by the very virus of ambition and unrest that affected him” (p-286). Clyde, in his shadowy inner world of self-concern and self-deception can dominate Sondra; rather he remains very passive yearner with her. This is because, to Sondra he feels socially inferior and this feeling of social inferiority is fusing with his utter weakness. But he has sensed that Robertta accepts him as a social superior and stoops to him.

In the concept of the great *American Dream*, the adjective *American* is best explained by a remark in A. Hoosies Holiday, about the atmosphere of American cities; “the crude, sweet illusion about the importance of getting on” (Dreiser, *The Moderns* 1904). Dreiser puts it in the epilogue to The Financier, the *Prince of the world of dreams whose reality was disillusion* and here Clyde is another Prince of Dreams. His other novels, The Genius, Sister Carrie, An American Tragedy--all play out the similar fantasies of upward mobility and success. This is all because of the new economy that is confirmed by the accumulation of wealth implying power, social superiority, and social domination. To understand what fuels Clyde’s desire, one must gain an understanding of how Dreiser understood money, the main component of *American Dream*. Walter Benn Michaels goes into great detail about Dreiser’s

thoughts on money and labor in an essay titled Sister Carrie's Popular Economy. Both the novels have a great deal in common in relation to what money stands for in Dreiser's fiction. Dreiser says that "money stands for [...] stored energy and hence should be paid out honestly and not as a usurped privilege. When this is understood, many of the social, religious and political troubles will have permanently passed."²³ The true meaning of money as honestly stored energy has to relate to a labor theory. The theory hinges on the idea that labor alone can never vary in its own value. Money is a symbol of labor, and labor is the determinant of value. To better understand this concept, where stored energy as opposed to that of relative value, one might have an example with the fact that all economies have commodities. Those commodities that are exchanged at the amount of labor required to produce them is always an equal exchange theory. Thus, a power, privilege or unequal exchange is impossible. Here, Clyde fits into this equation for the first time when he considers a great deal about money.

But some of the critics are of the opinion that Dreiser does not recognize the discrepancy between money and labor. In Sister Carrie, Carrie sees money as power. She sees others with money and decides that she must have some. Here, Clyde gives a similar

reaction, he thinks of Hortense or Sondra and where they could go and spend the money.

The trial of Clyde occupies the most important chapter throughout the novel. It becomes a “media event and the public one” (Karagaganis 28). It starts developing into a ritual of social cohesion that transcends both the narrow question of guilt and the boundaries of social community. It assembled through the general public from court to coast; by newspapers everywhere. In this context, Dreiser points a prosecuting awareness of the eyes of all the citizens of the U.S. upon him. His arrest is certainly an end to his dream. Here, the public opinion is the true justification of any trial. Dreiser has brought about the tragedy at first stage by the death of Robertta and the second stage by the execution of Clyde, which relates and develops the idea that, American Dream is slowly going sour.

In the court scene, Jephson defending Clyde creates a version of the accident and then he is persuaded, without much resistance to testify a lie and put it as the truth. All the lawyers try their best to save him but Clyde could not be rescued. Though the justice cries out that he die for his crimes against Robertta, we experience a last sense of affinity with him. We join him in the democratic and stable society of death. Clyde’s emphasis on material and spiritual

desire shows how the *American Dream* and *Nature* have left a lasting impression upon his mind.

Added to this, the novel even shows that the society is still influenced by the Puritans and Bible reading as it is shown with the Griffiths, who carried the Bible and preached religious rhymes to the public and even viewed life through religious spectrum. And even at the end of the novel, the Bible is seen in the hands of Clyde, for the redemption/salvation of his soul. The young preacher, Macmillan prepares Clyde for repentance and salvation. Seeing Clyde's eyes very sad and strained behind the bars, he said

Clyde you needn't worry I'll come to see you again within a week, because now I see you need me. I'm not asking you to pray because I think you are guilty of the death of Robertta Alden. I do know you need spiritual help and He will give you that--'The Lord will be a refuge for the oppressed; a refuge in time of trouble.'

(p-897)

Further, he even says:

"Enlightenment and peace are surely going to come to you. Open the Bible and read the 51st, 91st, 23rd and read it all over. Think and pray--and think on all the things about you--the moon, the stars, the sun, the trees,

the sea--your heart, your body and strength--and ask yourself who made them. Just ask yourself what of the maker of all this certain reality. Ask him to tell you how and what to do. Don't doubt. Just ask and see.

Bow your head and pray and see." (p-897)

These lines truly gives Clyde a lot of inspiration to accept his sin and even it bears a lot of importance from religious context and how it has prevailed firmly from the era of *Pilgrim Fathers* and *Puritans*. At last he was forced to accept the religious bindings that he had discarded in the beginning of the novel. "All men are sinners in the light of the Lord", says Asa Griffiths "Unless they repent, they accept Christ" (p-8).

After these soul-searching words uttered by Macmillan, Clyde hears the chanting of the Jew and joins him silently and murmurs:

I have been evil. I have been unkind. I have lied. Oh!
 Oh! Oh! I have been wicked. I have joined with those
 who have done evil things. Oh! I have been false. I
 have been cruel. I have sought to murder. Oh! Oh!
 And for what? A vain--impossible dream! Oh! Oh! (p-
 907-908)

It is here, he realizes his deed and the futility of his dream. In the jail, he meets a man by name Nicholson, a lawyer, who poisoned his

client to gain control over his estate. When he is to be executed, he sends two books to Clyde *Robinson Crusoe* and *Arabian Nights*-- which provides Clyde the courage to accept his sins. *Robinson Crusoe*, gives the image of a man who is totally self-reliant, who loves and can create a life for himself in the world. This influences him a lot to realize his *self* and unmask the false identity. In Dreiser's novels, so many fragile and delicate transient worlds exists because the root meaning of world here is anything outside the body that if seen by another, contaminates and glamorizes the self. In this novel, An American Tragedy, the force of collective identity can be visualized. It is more substantial than individual identity. Being "one of the" Green Davidson bell-boys or "one of the Griffiths" or "one of the prisoners" condemned to death, is a more precise matter than being Clyde Griffiths. Experiencing oneself as *one of this* or *one of that* is the primary way of constituting a self in a novel. The self is more concerned with the set of places. These explain the collective identity of Clyde. But in the last scene, when he accepts his deed, his individual identity or inner self is exposed.

The trial has another function as well. It opens up the work between the inarticulable subjective experience of the protagonist and the social values of guilt and innocence. It is claimed that

Clyde finds satisfaction in his death, but Dreiser powerfully, if not clearly, appreciates Clyde's suffering which is inseparable from death. Even though Belknap and Jephson try a lot to save Clyde, his destiny is fixed to experience this punishment. At last, he accepts his deed and repents a lot. He writes a confirmation note before the day of his execution and says to disclose it after his death. It contains:

There is not one thing I have left undone which will bar me from facing my God, knowing that my sins are forgiven, for I have been free and frank in my talks with my spiritual advisor and God knows where I stand. My task is done, the victory is won. (p-927-928)

This final note was handed over to Macmillan who, heartened by this triumph, exclaimed: "And the victory is won, Clyde. You have his word. Your soul and your body belong to Him. Praised, everlastingly, be His name" (p-928). With a strong faith in God Clyde believes that God has heard his prayers, and has given strength and peace to face the difficulty of death.

Robert Shafer, finds the novel "skillfully," "faithfully" and "consistently" executed on the naturalistic level."²⁴ In the sense, naturalism is seen through the characters who have come very near to the life, and diverted towards their own ways as the fate takes

them to its side. Here, Dreiser makes the reader to think that money/richness can corrupt simple and innocent lives and at most, poor are the victims, who always dream of seeking something better. Dreiser, the naturalist asserts the doctrine that humans are struggling endlessly to survive in an uncaring world where they are victims of heredity, environment and chance. His theory of life is basically mechanistic. He invented the term *Chemism* to explain the chemical forces that he believed propelled humanity to act in a certain way. He believes that a human is a mechanism, undevised and uncreated and a badly and carelessly driven one at that. Clyde is such a character who is driven to his final destruction by Chemism.

This explanation describes that it is an accusation against America that it is too materialistic. It suggests that by the ruthless and unfair monopoly system, America holds up to people, the one and only ideal of making money for themselves. For poor the money cannot stop haunting throughout their life, as they suffer badly from lack of basic needs. Actually, "money is not the love of the poor man's life but the curse of his life."²⁵ Money is not really anything in itself. It does not reproduce itself, it does not provide thought, taste, wisdom, humor, kindness or a sense of beauty. Dreiser's two other novels The Financier and The Titan, follow a

classic naturalistic trajectory in linking success with the dream of economic mobility. Further, Dreiser says, "There is our America in the year of disgrace 1940, poverty in the midst of plenty" (Dreiser, *The Moderns*. 22). Rather, it is the situation at which the whole civilized world has arrived. The only difference is that here and here alone, plenty already exists. America today reads about how much of man's created wealth has been destroyed by high explosive, how much food has been plowed under or thrown into the sea, how many millions of her own people are on relief, and how many hundreds of millions face starvation, the outcome is poverty. Robertta's life is the mere illustration of poverty that ends up in disaster. It promotes a national obsession with wealth and fame until it leads to murder.

The novel also throws much light on the spread of industrialization in the nineteenth century and how it affected women throughout society. Women worked long hours in the factory and were increasingly isolated at home, all were subject to an ideology that preached new gender definitions for both men and women in accordance with the developing class structure and the growing split between the work life and home life. As Foner explains:

The lady had always been the ideal for upper-class women. What was new, was the possibility for middle class women to aspire to the status formerly reserved for upper-class women. A life style of leisure became a status symbol and was held up as an ideal for all women.²⁶

The novel in depth also concentrates on the twentieth century period, the scarcity of birth control requirements, which kept the reproductive order and its requisite female chastity firmly in place and by the limited economic opportunities that gave women few chances of survival outside the patriarchal family. Robertta's experience of working away from home, in a factory is very deplorable as compared to her situation at home. Even when she becomes pregnant and goes to a doctor for abortion, he refuses because she was unable to pay the fees. And at the same time Clyde brings the medicine for abortion without consulting the doctor that exposes his savageness.

Dreiser, in his article, 'I find the real American Tragedy' published in 1935, describes a particular kind of murder that has intrigued him for more than forty years. He writes:

It seemed to spring from the fact that almost every young person was possessed of an in growing ambition

to be somebody financially and socially [...]. In short, the general mental mood of America was directed toward an escape from any form of poverty [...] we breed the fortune hunter deluxe. Fortune [...] hunting became a disease [...].²⁷

Moreover, defined in terms that upward mobility is represented as worth killing for in America, where no ties of affection not even maternal ones, are strong enough to bind the ambition.

Dreiser was fluctuating about the ideas of social forces as being dominant elements in shaping the course of man's life and well being while he was engaged in an ambitious novel An American Tragedy. He was making an attempt to present in fictional form, the effects of the shabbiest and most degrading doctrine on his countrymen and the destruction it caused. He follows his familiar theme that in the face of vast, uncontrollable forces, man finds himself helpless and that the human being is an insignificant creature in the vast cosmic scheme. As he himself wrote that the novel "Seemed so truly a story of what life does to the individual is against such forces."²⁸ He is more concerned with social forces and the human tragedy, its causes, rather than with the fate of heroic individuals pitted against the fate and giving a tough fight, where Clyde belongs to the same class of an average

humanity. Dreiser chooses to concentrate on the individual's struggle against one particular force: society and its institutions. In each of the novel's three sections, Clyde strives against neither God nor a malevolent fate but against the unyielding structure of his culture--a culture which promotes the concept of *American Dream*. The novel depicts that the only way to survive in the U.S., is to be masterful, to have material goods and status. American culture tempts Clyde with its powerful business, its glittering social affairs, and its promises that anyone who deserves can share in these riches.

Dreiser's complaint in the novel is not against God, but it is directed against the society, (precisely to American society) and its false, degrading values and unnatural restrictions. He himself said:

It has been said of my novel 'An American Tragedy' that in it the idea of economic stratification, the wealthy members of society super imposed upon the poor and the tragic results of the same to the less fortunate were more implied than argued, and with this I agree that a reader could see for himself the determining social and economic forces surrounding the individuals of all classes and within which they move to their comfort and destruction.²⁹

This *American Dream* of acquiring wealth and social position has been pointed out in the early 1920s by Dreiser. The murder of some poorly placed girl by a young and ambitious lover who wanted to get rid of her in order to marry a rich and socially better placed girl. As a support to this point, Mrs. Helen Dreiser, remarks that "he had been forced on his mind not only by the extreme American enthusiasm for wealth contrasted with American poverty, but the determination of so many young Americans [...] to obtain wealth by marriage."³⁰ Overall, Dreiser held society to be ultimately responsible for the tragedy of these people. Including crime, particularly sexual crimes were the favorite topics for the both balladry and journalism attracted the special attention and people could not help becoming curious to the point of morbidity. He argued, they were not really murderers in an ordinary sense but were made so by the false values set by society. Hence, they were the victims of a degrading doctrine. All these societal pressures are much on Dreiser that made him to change the original title "Mirage to An American Tragedy" (Mukharjee R.N 30), thus implied the tragedy portrayed was typically produced by the American society. Dreiser's center of interest was mainly as Francis Matthiessen has rightly pointed out "to be sure, was not in crime and its detection, but in contemplating a victim of the contemporary American

Dream.”³¹ He purposely gives much attention to depict the formative period of Clyde’s life, the effect of environment and circumstances on the subsequent events of his life and how he tries to achieve a great dream and how he collapses with everything--parents, love, and society.

Charles Shapiro explains that “Why? For Clyde Griffiths and others tragedy exists in America.”³² It is because he is an ordinary person and faces every day situations. Sex and wealth does form a fatal attraction and what he achieves at the end--failure of business, the failure of religion, failure of love and most importantly the failure of his family life (which is again the failure of *American Dream*--Clyde’s dream). To realize this concept of dream he put utmost exertion, but in a negative way. Most important of all, he creates the very essence needed to form a dream concept, a frame of *self*, which is again false and untrue. Elias in his recent essay in “prospects” sees the novel as Dreiser stated “the tragic consequences of a society in which the individual believes his self-realization is possible only in the isolation of confettered self-reliance.”³³ In pursuit of his dreams, Warren says, “Clyde entails an attempt to repudiate his own identity and to create a dream-self possessing wealth and social distinction.”³⁴ He frames an identity of his own, by concealing the identity of his parents as street

preachers. What Clyde is doing here is concealing his *real* identity and exposing a *false* one. Regarding this concept and theme, Irving has observed that it results from "Clyde's quest to create a fantasy, self is not in any precise sense, a self at all, but rather the beginning of that poisonous fabrication which in America we call a Personality."³⁵

The novel encloses the great economic structure of society. There is a wide distinction between the two economies or the economical classes of rich and poor. One, society is a venue for struggle over money and economic power by the poor class--like Clyde and Robertta. And the other is a rich class which has already achieved and gained over the power and money like Samuel Griffiths and Gilbert Griffiths--which can also be called the *leisure class*, and the value attached, bears some relation to Thorstein Vablen's definition of leisure, as the "non-productive consumption of time."³⁶ In fact these two economies produce the social hierarchies which are much more penetrable in the society. This *leisure class* is also included in the concept of great *American Dream* apart from money and status. This is evident in the novel when we see Bella Griffiths and Finchleys spend time attending the rich parties, consuming drinks and dancing. Even Clyde and Sondra take long rides to Biltz to spend time in leisure mood. The family

of Finchleys and Griffiths enjoy *leisure* by visiting casino, playing golf, tennis, swimming and wearing attractive clothes. All these are recreational activities.

Dreiser considered Edgar Allan Poe as "our first and greatest literary genius."³⁷ More to this point, Poe stood out for Dreiser as the one American who had mastered the techniques of portraying criminal obsessions and mental disorders. When Clyde realizes and accepts his deed, and punishment, it can be referred that he has come back to the realistic world that is socially acceptable from the dream world where he commits the crime. This chasm between the "dream and reality, those cloudy areas where responsibility for human action blurs in the shadow land, is the idea taken and found in Poe."¹¹ His dream commences from the desire of women and ends up with women. This is what Dreiser mentions in his autobiography--"success, power, place, wealth, art, religion, love--in one way or the other, goal of American Dream" (Dreiser, *The Moderns* 1901). But for Clyde it has turned into *An American Tragedy*, that is, a story of an individual without identity, whose responsible self has been absorbed by the secularized society and a machine of modern industrial upper class abstraction. Finally, it is

¹¹ *The Mystery of Marie, The Black Cat, The Important of the perverse*—are Edgar Allan Poe's other novels where he worked on dream and reality.

in his acceptance of crime, Clyde achieves a great admiration from the readers. It is totally from the humanistic context where he really wins the concept of *Great American Dream*.

Dreiser himself has stated in his *ideographic plan of the novel*-- "An American Tragedy focusing attention on the catastrophic effect of the myth of the dream of success on an average man"(Mookerjee R.N. 24). The whole novel depicts the challenges between success and failure. It provokes the desire in Clyde, for which he tries to reach out but fails. Somewhere, he considers Robertta as an obstacle to his dream of luxury with Sondra and murders her--here is the failure that begins for him. He is not prepared to do so, but the circumstances make him to commit the deed. This is what Claude Bowers records as Dreiser saying to him--"I call it that An American Tragedy, because it could not happen in any other Country in the world."³⁸

The last chapter of the novel is projected by Dreiser in a peaceful, calm note amidst a routine life, as though nothing has happened and no disaster has befallen the Griffiths family. He gives the description of Mr. and Mrs. Griffiths with Esta, Julia and Frank again passing through the roads as *Street Preachers*. The main attraction here is Esta's illegitimate son *Russell* asking his grandma the money to buy an ice cream. This is a very essential

•

scene that provides a meaning to the whole plot. It goes back to the same picture as seen in the beginning, Clyde with his family. Here Russell represents Clyde and can be said to be a continuation of the *American Dream*. The comparison between the two, Clyde and Russell, can be identified. Clyde was a small boy, his parents were street preachers, and he always *desired* for the thing to which he was denied at home. He was a carrier of small dreams in his own binding, as Russell's asking the money for ice cream, has also a desire within his binding and necessity. But in Clyde, this necessity grows beyond reach and begins to have a reverse effect on him, when he faces failure. The contradictory point that can be discussed is that, the opening and the last chapters deal with the religious prelude of facts with the street preachers and the germination of the dream for money. For Clyde, after all his sufferings and repentance before God, with the Bible in hand, is the ultimate salvation. Dreiser brings in the solace of religion and does not end the novel with any scientific dependence. This is done just to unfold before the readers that people in America, even the most elite group of any generation, believe in God and redemption to get salvation through prayers and worship.

The whole novel represents the *status of society* at the time of its publication. It clearly and thoroughly depicts the culture of the

day with the status of women and men in relation to the environment of the society. The critics, David Brion Davis and Charles Child Walcott agrees that "Dreiser's fiction, including *An American Tragedy* have characters who reveal in the mode of transcendentalism as well as humanism."³⁹ In this regard, Joseph Wood Krutch said in his review that this novel is "the greatest American novel of our generation."⁴⁰ It is Dreiser's most important work that evoked the keen critical attention, and its reception of the society mixed with all the ups and downs in a very neat, natural, and clear manner. It had evolved out of Dreiser's keen interest in the cultural phenomena that he saw in America in 1890s and the following decades. This concept of dream is not an end in itself, restricted to this novel alone, but can be viewed and analyzed in other literary works which throws much light on the existing status or reflection of society.

Dreiser, Theodore. An American Tragedy. United States of America: Penguin Putnam Inc., 2003.

All page references will be from this edition.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- ¹ Lynn, Kenneth S. The Dream of Success. U.S.A.: Little Brown and Company, 1955.19.
- ² Gerber, Philip L. Theodore Dreiser. Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1964.129.
- ³ Dreiser, Theodore. The Moderns: Founders and Beyond. Realism and the American Dream. N.p.: n.p., n.d.1877.
- ⁴ Karaganis, Joseph. "Naturalism's Nation: Toward An American Tragedy." American Literature 72(2000): 28 pgs. March 2000<[http://proquest. Umi.Com](http://proquest.umi.com)>.
- ⁵ Pizer, Donald. "Theodore Dreiser's Nigger Jeff: The Development of an Aesthetic." American Literature 41(1969): 336.
- ⁶ Robert, Funk. "Dreiser's An American Tragedy." The Explicator 51.4 (1993): 234.
- ⁷ Hart, Jeffrey. "Dreiser in 1925." The New Criterion (2003): 26-31.
- ⁸ Lingeman, Richard R. Theodore Dreiser: At the Gates of the City (1871-1907). New York: G.P. Puttnam's Sons, 1986.
- ⁹ Dijkstra, Bram. Evil Sisters. New York: Knopf, 1996.398.
- ¹⁰ Clendenning, John. "Desire and Regression in Dreiser's An American Tragedy." Dreiser Studies 25 (1994): 27.
- ¹¹ Bulfinch, Thomas. Bulfinch's Mythology: The Age of Fable. New York: International Collectors Library, 1968.

-
- ¹² Rusch, Frederic. "Lycurgus and Dreiser's *An American Tragedy*." American Literature 3. (1984): 144.
- ¹³ Dreiser, Theodore. A Book About Myself. New York: Premier Books, 1965.369.
- ¹⁴ Mulligan, Roark. "Running with Diana: Dreiser's Hunt of American Endogamy." American Literary Realism 32.2 Illinois Press, (2000): 150.
- ¹⁵ Freud, Sigmund. The Basic Writings of Sigmund Freud. Ed and Trans. A.A. Brill. New York: The Modern Library, 1938.391.
- ¹⁶ Dostoevsky, Feodor. Crime and Punishment. Trans. Jessie Coulson, Ed. George Gibian. New York: Norton, 1959.48-51.
- ¹⁷ Zanine, Louis J. Mechanism and Mysticism: The Influence of Science on the Thought and Work of Theodore Dreiser. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1993.93.
- ¹⁸ Rusch, Frederic E., ed. Dreiser Studies Vol. 25., iss. 2. Hartford: University of Connecticut, 1995.33.
- ¹⁹ Cassato, Leonard. Lacanian Equivocation in Sister Carrie, The Genius and An American Tragedy: Theodore Dreiser Beyond Naturalism. Ed. Miriam Gogol. New York: New York University Publication, 1995.112-33.
- ²⁰ Greb, Mary Catherine. "Tragedy Transformed: The Fallen Women in the Novels of Thomas Hardy and Theodore Dreiser." DAI. University of Kansas, UMI, 1998.
- ²¹ Spindler, Michael. American Literature and Social Change – William Bean Howells to Arthur Miller. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983.149.
- ²² Murayama, Kiyohiko. "Two Mothers Weeping and Praying: A Formula recycled in Theodore Dreiser's Fiction." Quarterly Journal of College Language Association (1996): 380-393.
- ²³ Michaels, Walter Benn. "Sister Carrie's Popular Economy." Critical Inquiry 7 (1980): 373-390.

-
- ²⁴ Shafer, Robert. An American Tragedy: Critical Essays on Theodore Dreiser. Ed. Donald Pizer. Boston: G.K. Hall, 1981.286.
- ²⁵ Dreiser, Theodore. America is Worth Saving. New York: Modern Age Books, 1941.279.
- ²⁶ Philip, Foner S. The Factory Girls. Urbana: Illinois, 1977.21.
- ²⁷ Donovan, Nancy M. "Representing Grace Brown: The Working Class Woman in American Tragedy Murder Narratives." Dreiser Studies 31 (2000): 4-5.
- ²⁸ Mookerjee R.N. "Victims of a Degrading Doctrine: Dreiser's An American Tragedy." Indian Journal of American Studies 1.3 (1970): 23-31.
- ²⁹ Dreiser, Theodore. "Four Cases of Clyde Griffiths." New York Times n.d.
- ³⁰ Dreiser, Helen. My Life With Dreiser. Cleveland: n.p., 1955.71-72.
- ³¹ Mattheissen, Francis. Theodore Dreiser. New York: n.p., 1950.191.
- ³² Shapiro, Charles. Theodore Dreiser: Our Bitter Patriot. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1962.91.
- ³³ Elias, Robert. Theodore Dreiser and the Tragedy of the 20's in Prospects. Ed. Jack Salzman. New York: Burt Franklin, 1975.9-16.
- ³⁴ Warren, Robert. Homage to Theodore Dreiser on the Centennial of His Birth. New York: Random House, 1971.96-139.
- ³⁵ Howe, Irving. Dreiser and Tragedy: The Stature of Theodore Dreiser-A Collection of Critical Essays. 20th Century Views. Ed. John Lyndenberg. Englewood: Prentice Hall, 1971.150.
- ³⁶ Vablen, Thorstein. Theory of the Leisure Class. Toronto: Dover Publication, 1994.28.

³⁷ Riggo, Thomas P. "American Gothic: Poe and An American Tragedy." A Journal of American Literature 49. 4 (1978): 515-532.

³⁸ Bowers, Claude. My Life. New York: n.p., 1962.156.

³⁹ Davis, David Brion. Dreiser and Naturalism Revisited in The Stature of Theodore Dreiser. Eds. Alfred Kazin and Charles Shapiro. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1955.225-236.

⁴⁰ Krutch, Joseph Wood. "Speaking of Books." Rev. of New York Times. Feb 16 and April 6 (1958):2.