

THE SUPERNATURAL NATURALISM OF DREISER'S NOVELS

THE first chapter of *The Financier* includes a passage commonly identified as the epitome of Theodore Dreiser's naturalism. Frank Cowperwood, an intelligent schoolboy filled with curiosity about the world, having rejected the story of Adam and Eve, prefers to learn about life from a tank of sea specimens in front of a fish-market. There, day by day, he watches the losing life-and-death struggle of a squid against a devouring lobster.

"That's the way it has to be, I guess," he commented to himself. "That squid wasn't quick enough." He figured it out.
(p. 4)

This dramatic event in Cowperwood's childhood obviously is an important clue to his adult attitudes and behavior: the observed ruthlessness of nature sets a compass to his personal unscrupulousness—

Lobsters lived on squids and other things. What lived on lobsters? Men, of course! Sure, that was it! And What lived on men? he asked himself. Was it other men? . . . He wasn't so sure about men living on men; but men did kill each other. . . . Sure, men lived on men. Look at the slaves. They were men.
(*ibid.*, p. 5)

The lifetime motto of Frank Cowperwood, "I satisfy myself," is not, however, a master key to unlock the total meaning of even his story, far less of the Dreiser novels in general. The epilogue of *The Financier* opens with a kind of meditative essay likewise drawn from sea life:

There is a certain fish, the scientific name of which is *Mycteroperca Bonaci*, its common name Black Grouper, which is of considerable value as an afterthought . . . That very subtle thing which we call the creative power, and which we endow with the spirit of the beatitudes, is supposed

to build this mortal life in such fashion that only honesty and virtue shall prevail. Witness, then, the significant manner in which it has fashioned the black grouper. . . .

Mycteroperca moving in its dark world of green waters is as fine an illustration of the constructive genius of nature, which is not beatific, as any which the mind of man may discover. Its great superiority lies in an almost unbelievable power of simulation . . . You cannot look at it long without feeling that you are witnessing something spectral and unnatural, so brilliant is its power to deceive. . . .

What would you say was the intention of the overruling, intelligent, constructive force which gives to Mycteroperca this ability? To fit it to be truthful? To permit it to present an unvarying appearance which all honest life-seeking fish may know? Or would you say that subtlety, chicanery, trickery, were here at work? An implement of illusion one might readily suspect it to be, a living lie, a creature whose business it is to appear what it is not, to simulate that with which it has nothing in common, to get its living by great subtlety, the power of its enemies to forefend against which is little. The indictment is fair.

Would you say, in the face of this, that a beatific, beneficent creative, overruling power never wills that which is either tricky or deceptive? Or would you say that this material seeming in which we dwell is itself an illusion? If not, whence then the Ten Commandments and the illusion of Justice? Why were the Beatitudes dreamed of and how do they avail? (pp. 501-502)

This passage offers one of the most useful guides to Dreiser's curiously supernatural naturalism,¹ and thereby to his conception of evolution. Like many or most of the creative writers of the preceding half or three-quarters century, he takes for granted a teleological, vitalistic explanation of the evolutionary process, but he forges his special interpretations upon the anvil of his own mind. For Tennyson, the horror of "Nature, red in tooth and claw" is compensated by the promise of immortality for the individual, and for the race by the vision of an era "a hundred thousand, a million summers away" when men shall "lay/The Ghost of the Brute that is walking and haunting us yet."² Browning agrees that

Nearer we hold of God
 Who gives, than of His tribes that take, I must believe.

A brute I might have been, but would not sink i' the scale.
 ("Rabbi Ben Ezra," ll. 29-30, 42)

To George Meredith, a philosophical view of the orderly march of the stars affords both a resolution of the problem of evil ("Lucifer in Starlight") and an awareness of the evolutionary unity of a universe interpenetrated by divinity:

The spirit leaps alight,
 Doubts not in them is he,
 The binder of his sheaves, the same, the right;

That there with toil Life climbs the selfsame Tree,
 Whose roots enrichment have from ripeness dropped.
 So may we read and little find them cold;
 Let it but be the lord of Mind to guide
 Our eyes . . .

("Meditation under Stars," ll. 50-52, 57-61)

Theodore Dreiser is too good a Spencerian not to differentiate between Appearances and Actuality, but by the same token he is too much a Huxleyan agnostic to share the optimistic predisposition of Meredith, Browning, and Tennyson. In effect, they beg the question that is central to his investigation of the nature of things, for they not only posit a spiritual basis of ultimate reality, but also assume by faith an essential harmony with man's highest ethical nature. For Dreiser, the question of "the intention of the overruling, intelligent, constructive force" remains an eternal riddle. On the evidence of Appearances, the creative power seems to be "subtle, cruel, crafty, and malicious"; or, at best, "a dual personality or a compound of good and evil—the most ideal and ascetic good, as well as the most fantastic and swinish evil . . . a God of storms and horrors as well as of serenities and perfections" (*The "Genius,"* pp. 694, 726). Nevertheless,

to interpret Dreiser's novels as an elaborately documented rejection of "the spirit of the beatitudes" would be the greatest possible error. His life work, to be sure, was an inquiry into overwhelming outward evidence that "the constructive genius of nature . . . is not beatific," and in Cowperwood he drew the portrait of a materialist who built his career upon that judgment. But Theodore Dreiser, far more closely akin to Eugene Witla than to Frank Cowperwood, never loses sight of a radically different, yet equally tenable, interpretation of the same evidence: "that this material seeming in which we dwell is itself an illusion." Undoubtedly thinking of himself, Dreiser describes Witla as "introspective, imaginative, psychical" (*ibid.*, p. 694). Although Eugene oscillates between views of the universe as an expression of evil, of good, and of mixed good and evil, until he finally reaches a dead-center of uncertainty, at his nadir of spiritual distress he is cheered to learn from his reading that evolutionary theory does not "shut out a conception of a ruling, ordaining Divinity." A writer on biology explains the cellular basis of life as "God's instrument and mediator in materiality"; a physicist, describing the world newly revealed by the ultramicroscope, concludes that "every motion is controlled by mind. . . . This micro-universe is rooted and grounded in a mental base." (*Ibid.*, pp. 696-697.) More especially, an article by Alfred Russel Wallace interests Eugene Witla "as a proof that there might be, as Jesus said and Mrs. Eddy contended, a Divine Mind or central thought in which there was no evil intent, but only good" (*ibid.*, p. 697), and thus bears most directly upon the focal Witla-Dreiser problem of the moral quality of the universe. Because it is quoted in the novel at considerable length and with evident approval, the article is an important index to Dreiser's own evolutionary thinking.

"It is very necessary to presuppose some vast intelligence, some pervading spirit, to explain the guidance of the lower forces in accordance with the preordained system of evolution we see prevailing. Nothing less will do. . . .

"If, however, we go as far as this, we must go further. . . . We have a perfect right, on logical and scientific grounds, to see in all the infinitely varied products of the animal and vegetable kingdoms, which we alone can make use of, a preparation for ourselves, to assist in our mental development, and to fit us for a progressively higher state of existence as spiritual beings." (*ibid.*, p. 698)

A difficulty with the term "Darwinism," in any context, is that even Charles Darwin was not a perfect Darwinite. As is well known, he harmonized his authorship of *The Origin of Species* with Christian orthodoxy, and could "see no good reasons why the views given in this volume should shock the religious feelings of any one" (Ch. XV: "Recapitulation and Conclusion"). It is perhaps not so often remarked that, much in the same spirit, he sought to reconcile his theory of natural selection with certain older principles of Lamarckism; indeed, he sharply protested against a "steady misrepresentation" to the effect "that I attribute the modification of species exclusively to natural selection" (*loc. cit.*)—so that with some plausibility Lysenkoism has been known as "Darwinism" in Russia. If A. R. Wallace, fifty years after he had helped Charles Darwin to set the doctrine of evolution upon a firmly naturalistic base, could reinterpret it in mystical-teleological terms, it is not surprising to find Theodore Dreiser's fictive naturalism often strikingly un-"Darwinian."

Another severe difficulty is that the first generation of Darwinists, both biological and literary, lacked a sound theory of inheritance. Conceivably, had Theodore Dreiser been more alert to the twentieth-century developments of Mendelian genetics, he might have advanced significantly beyond the imaginative, intuitive determinism of Zola and

Strindberg; but actually his conception of heredity, far from being scientifically rigorous, scarcely rises above the level of folklore and family gossip. For instance, Frank Cowperwood questions the potentialities of the Negro for development under freedom: "He had observed that race from his boyhood with considerable interest, and had been struck with virtues and defects which seemed inherent and which plainly, to him, conditioned their experiences." (*The Financier*, p. 85.) Jennie Gerhardt "was a product of the fancy, the feeling, the innate affection of the untutored but poetic mind of her mother combined with the gravity and poise which were characteristic of her father" (*Jennie Gerhardt*, p. 1). Of the father, in turn, Dreiser reports:

[H]is honesty, like his religious convictions, was wholly due to inheritance. He had never reasoned about it. Father and grandfather before him were sturdy German artisans, who had never cheated anybody out of a dollar, and this honesty of intention came into his veins undiminished.

(*ibid.*, p. 54)

Eugene Witla is significantly attracted to his future father-in-law:

Eugene was drawn to old Jotham as a fling to a magnet. His was just the type of mind that appealed to him, and Angela gained by the radiated glory of her father. If he was so wonderful she must be something above the average of womanhood. Such a man could not help but produce exceptional children.

(*The "Genius,"* p. 179)

The close physical resemblance of the first cousins, Clyde and Gilbert Griffiths, controls the plot of *An American Tragedy* by first making Clyde's uncle "want to do a little something for him" (p. 176) and later causing the mistaken encounter with Sondra Finchley "which in so far as he and the Griffiths were concerned was destined to bring about a chain of events which none of them could possibly have fore-

seen" (pp. 331 ff.). Nevertheless, for all his interest in the "chemism" of life processes, Theodore Dreiser evidences no awareness of the submicroscopic genetic mechanisms that may account at once for likenesses and dissimilarities within families, and he is almost as surprised as a midwife at the distance offspring sometimes overleap their ancestral stock. Minka Nowak, who calls herself Antoinette, "had blossomed forth into something exceptional, as American children of foreign parents are wont to do."

"I don't know how it is," she said, quite solemnly. "I have a brother who is quite as American as I am. We don't either of us look like our father or mother."

(*The Titan*, pp. 129, 131)

Like his predecessors of the nineteenth century in naturalistic fiction, Theodore Dreiser has a much clearer understanding of the effects of environment, which can be more or less directly observed and experienced, than of heredity upon human personality. He is pre-eminently the novelist of city life. His characters do not merely work out their destinies in cities; they are largely the creatures of those cities: New York, Philadelphia, above all the Chicago of Dreiser's own formative years.

The city has its cunning wiles, no less than the infinitely smaller and more human tempter. There are large forces which allure with all the soulfulness of expression possible in the most cultured human. The gleam of a thousand lights is often as effective as the persuasive light in a wooing and fascinating eye.

(*Sister Carrie*, p. 2)

Claudia Carlstadt . . . was . . . as ruthless and unconsciously cruel as only the avaricious and unthinking type—unthinking in the larger philosophic meaning of the word—can be. To grasp the reason for her being, one would have had to see the spiritless South Halstead Street world from which she had sprung—one of those neighborhoods of old, cracked, and battered houses where slatterns trudge to and fro with beer-cans and shutters swing on broken hinges.

(*The Titan*, p. 332)

No American author has been more aware of the shaping power of special environments, such as that of the hotel in which Clyde Griffiths learns the way of the world, or even of private houses—

We think we are individual, separate, above houses and material objects generally; but there is a subtle connection which makes them reflect us quite as much as we reflect them. They lend dignity, subtlety, force, each to the other, and what beauty, or lack of it, there is, is shot back and forth from one to the other as a shuttle in a loom, weaving, weaving. Cut the thread, separate a man from that which is rightfully his own, characteristic of him, and you have a peculiar figure, half success, half failure, much as a spider without its web, which will never be its whole self again until all its dignities and emoluments are restored.⁸

When Caroline Meeber is induced to accept Charles Drouet as protector, the voice of her conscience—"only an average little conscience, a thing which represented the world, her past environment, habit, convention, in a confused way"—is unable to assert itself in the teeth of poverty and a Chicago winter: "It was somewhat clear in utterance at first, but never wholly convincing. There was always an answer, always the December days threatened. She was alone; she was desirous; she was fearful of the whistling wind. The voice of want made answer for her." (*Sister Carrie*, pp. 103-104.)

Lester Kane is explained as "the natural product" of "an age in which the impact of materialized forces is well-nigh irresistible; the spiritual nature is overwhelmed by the shock" and "of a combination of elements—religious, commercial, social—modified by that pervading atmosphere of liberty in our national life which is productive of almost uncounted freedom of thought and action" (*Jennie Gerhardt*, pp. 132-133). Mrs. Gerhardt, confronted with Jennie's decision to go to New York with Kane, "acquiesced from sheer force of

circumstances" (*ibid.*, p. 170); and the eventual dissolution of the liaison is treated as an instance of "mutual compatibility broken or disrupted by untoward conditions which in themselves have so little to do with the real force and beauty of the relationship itself" (*ibid.*, p. 368).

"I want to tell you something, Jennie," said Lester . . . "I've thought of you right along since I left. . . . It isn't myself that's important in this transaction apparently; the individual doesn't count much in the situation. I don't know whether you see what I'm driving at, but all of us are more or less pawns. We're moved about like chessmen by circumstances over which we have no control."

(*ibid.*, pp. 400-401)

At the end, Jennie sees her life as "a patchwork of conditions made and affected by these things which she saw—wealth and force—which had found her unfit . . . This panoply of power had been paraded before her since childhood. . . . Lester had been of it. Him it respected. Of her it knew nothing." (*Ibid.*, p. 430.)

Eugene Witla, particularly in his conduct with Suzanne Dale, "was no subtle schemer and planner, but rather an easy natured soul, who drifted here and there with all the tides and favorable or unfavorable winds of circumstance" (*The "Genius,"* p. 602). Clyde Griffiths "was as interesting⁴ an illustration of the enormous handicaps imposed by ignorance, youth, poverty and fear as one could have found"; likewise, his unfortunate sister Esta "as he now saw it, had been brought no lower than he by circumstances over which she probably had no more control"; and their father, Asa Griffiths, "was one of those poorly integrated and correlated organisms, the product of an environment and a religious theory . . ." (*An American Tragedy*, pp. 418, 180, 22).

Must, then, the simple conclusion be reached that Theodore Dreiser was literary spokesman for a Determinism of

which heredity (somewhat poorly understood) and environment (considerably better comprehended) were the mutually operative determinants?⁵ Many passages, in addition to those already noted, weigh heavily in that balance. Words like "fate" readily flow from his pen: "Here was this boy [Bass Gerhardt] arrested and fined for what fate was practically driving him to do." (*Jennie Gerhardt*, p. 75.) "So much for the effect of wealth, beauty, the peculiar social state to which he [Clyde Griffiths] most aspired, on a temperament that was as fluid and unstable as water." (*An American Tragedy*, p. 338.) "That worthy [Drouet] had his future fixed for him beyond a peradventure. He could not help what he was going to do." (*Sister Carrie*, p. 85.) "What he [Cowperwood] was now planning must be as it was because it sprang out of conditions which life itself, operating through him and others, had created and shaped, and in any event not to be changed now." (*The Stoic*, p. 47.) The authentic Dreiserianism of these quotations, even read out of context, is unmistakable.

And yet there is no way to make Dreiser consistent with himself except to interpret him, like Ibsen, as more an asker than an answerer of questions. Never was an eager seeker for truth more poorly equipped with technical skills and information, or indeed with any positive qualifications for the search save honesty, courage, and earnest persistence. He had read or, rather, read in—how widely or deeply is difficult to estimate—the skeptical and pessimistic science, philosophy, and literature of the second half of the nineteenth century and the early years of the twentieth. Negatively, his religious upbringing had made him suspicious of dogmatic truths and logical certainties. Battling the world from the wrong side of the tracks, he finally surmounted both the

stumbling-blocks of personal deficiency and the barricades of censorship and derogation, to achieve a universally recognized eminence in American letters. The struggle gave him to think furiously, though not systematically. All his writings were variations upon a single theme, which he named in the second part of the title of *Hey Rub-a-Dub-Dub: A BOOK OF THE MYSTERY AND WONDER AND TERROR OF LIFE*.⁶ Until one has pondered well the implications of that awesome subtitle, one had best not try to generalize the intellectual attitude and philosophical conclusions of Theodore Dreiser. He was, himself, certain of only what experience taught Solon Barnes: "Life was very strange." (*The Bulwark*, p. 128.) His rule-of-thumb for personality was that there is no rule:

The most futile thing in this world is any attempt, perhaps, at exact definition of character. All individuals are a bundle of contradictions—none more so than the most capable.⁷

The variety of temperament and behavior of the five Barnes children illuminates his view of the impossibility of referring human character to a simple formula of heredity and environment.

As for Etta and Stewart, both Solon and even Benecia eventually found them enigmas, and so they remained. They had both begun dimly to suspect that they might not easily be encompassed in any given theory of life. During Etta's infancy and early youth, Solon was compelled to realize that she was the most individual and peculiar of all . . .

There are natures which, unlike those of a practical or materialistic turn, are early taken with the virus of the ideal and can never escape it. They are born so. To them the world is never the material practical thing which many take it to be, but always colorful, symphonic, exquisite—only their own adjustment to it is unsatisfactory, without that sympathetic understanding and relationship with others which they so greatly crave. Indeed from her very youngest days Etta was

a dreamer, stricken with those strange visions of beauty which sometimes hold us all spellbound, enthralled, but without understanding. In no way in which her father, her sisters, and her brothers were wise was she wise. There is a wisdom that is related to beauty only, that concerns itself with cloud forms and the wild vines' tendrils, whose substance is not substance, but dreams only, and whose dreams are entangled with the hopes and the yearnings of all men.

Etta was such a one. From her earliest days of understanding or feeling, she was living in a world quite apart.
(*The Bulwark*, pp. 129-130)

The "virus of the ideal" infects Sister Carrie, Jennie Gerhardt, and Eugene Witla as well as Etta Barnes. Readers who find Dreiser's novels only a record of human automation have altogether missed the implication of such plain statements as the following, and of the fictional episodes that give them point: "Life rises to a high plane of the dramatic, and hence of the artistic, whenever and wherever in the conflict regarding material possession there enters a conception of the ideal." (*The Titan*, p. 485.) That profound and poetic sense of the Ideal, coupled with an unflagging interest in the physical circumstances of experience, baffles every effort to assimilate Theodore Dreiser and his fiction to any "ism." His lack of philosophical system and of verbal concordance is a further discomfort to the classifiers, for he jostles almost shoulder-to-shoulder, as in *The "Genius,"* phrases like "survival of the fittest" and "evolution of the race" with looser talk about "dark forces moving aimlessly" and "the race spirit," description of human relationships as "chemical affinities," and quotations of Christian Science—not to mention the somewhat petulant demand by Eugene Witla:

Were there any fixed laws of being? Did any of the so-called naturalistic school of philosophers and scientists whom he had read know anything at all? They were always talking about the fixed laws of the universe—the unalterable laws of chemistry and physics. Why didn't chemistry or physics

throw some light on his peculiar physical condition, on the truthful prediction of the astrologer, on the signs and portents which he had come to observe for himself as foretelling trouble or good fortune for himself[P]^s

With all allowance for the limitations of his education, and for the fact that his fictional characters are entitled to speak dramatically for themselves as well as didactically for their author, the confusions of Theodore Dreiser about evolutionary science run deep. His partial grasp is often firm enough, but partial it remains; like the blind men with the elephant, he has no encompassing vision of the whole science, or of Science as a whole. With Solon Barnes, he was "arrested by the various vegetative and insect forms obviously devised and energized by the Creative Force . . ."

Here now . . . was . . . an exquisitely colored and designed green fly so green and translucent that it reminded one of an emerald, only it was of a much more tender and vivid texture. . . . And what was more, . . . his mind was swiftly filled with wonder, not only at the beauty of the fly, but at the wisdom and the art of the Creative Impulse that had busied itself with the creation of this physical gem. . . .

Then, after bending down and examining a blade of grass here, a climbing vine there, a minute flower, lovely and yet as inexplicable as his green fly, he turned in a kind of religious awe and wonder. Surely there must be a Creative Divinity, and so a purpose, behind all of this variety and beauty and tragedy of life. For see how tragedy had descended upon him, and still he had faith, and would have.

(*The Bulwark*, pp. 316-317)

In *Sister Carrie*, he hopefully viewed the process of evolution as a transition from the beast's instinctive harmony with the forces of nature, through the unsatisfactory "middle stage" of man's present situation, to an assured future state in which by reason acting through free-will man will recover the pristine perfect harmony with nature.

We have the consolation of knowing that evolution is ever in action, that the ideal is a light that cannot fail. He will not

forever balance thus between good and evil. When this jangle of free-will and instinct shall have been adjusted, when perfect understanding has given the former the power to replace the latter entirely, man will no longer vary. The needle of understanding will yet point steadfast and unwavering to the distant pole of truth. (pp. 83-84)

Eugene Witla, on the contrary, "once stood in a morgue and saw human bodies apparently dissolving into a kind of chemical mush, and he had said to himself then how ridiculous it was to assume that life meant anything much to the forces which were doing these things. Great chemical and physical forces were at work, which permitted, accidentally, perhaps, some little shadow-play, which would soon pass. But, oh, its presence—how sweet it was!" (*The "Genius,"* pp. 681-682.) Though less "metaphysically inclined" than Witla, Lester Kane arrived at much the same conclusion:

In distant ages a queer thing had come to pass. There had started on its way in the form of evolution a minute cellular organism which had apparently reproduced itself by division, had early learned to combine itself with others, to organize itself into bodies, strange forms of fish, animals, and birds, and had finally learned to organize itself into man. Man, on his part, composed as he was of self-organizing cells, was pushing himself forward into comfort and different aspects of existence by means of union and organization with other men. Why? Heaven only knew. . . . Why should he complain, why worry, why speculate?—the world was going steadily forward of its own volition, whether he would or no. Truly it was. And was there any need for him to disturb himself about it? There was not. He fancied at times that it might as well never have been started at all. "The one divine, far-off event" of the poet did not appeal to him as having any basis in fact. (*Jennie Gerhardt*, pp. 404-405)

As the preceding quotation makes evident, Dreiser's mind passed easily from physical to social evolution; apparently, he had no sense of a theoretical division or even distinction between the two. In a meditation upon the evolution of human marriage, Eugene Witla traces the institution to the rais-

ing of young by mated animals and concludes that the begetting of children is a demand laid upon him by both the "race spirit" and the "whole American spirit" (*The "Genius,"* p. 690). *The Titan*, like *The Financier*, closes with a semi-detached epilogue that glances philosophically at the career of Frank Cowperwood. It begins with an attack on professional moralists and religionists, and proceeds to a somewhat cloudy identification of the social contract with the *élan vital*:

At the ultimate remove, God or the life force, if anything, is an equation and at its nearest expression for man—the contract social—it is that also. Its method of expression appears to be that of generating the individual, in all his glittering variety and scope, and through him progressing to the mass with its problems. In the end a balance is invariably struck wherein the mass subdues the individual or the individual the mass—for the time being. For, behold, the sea is ever dancing or raging.

In the mean time there have sprung up social words and phases expressing a need of balance—of equation. These are right, justice, truth, morality, an honest mind, a pure heart—all words meaning: a balance must be struck. The strong must not be too strong; the weak not too weak. But without variation how could the balance be maintained? Nirvana! Nirvana! The ultimate, still, equation.

(*The Titan*, pp. 550-551)

If the words "Only in" are supplied before "Nirvana!" the meaning will become a little clearer. For Theodore Dreiser, life was the bittersweet material-seeming and shadow-play of an unknowable and inconceivable reality. Tormented like Diogenes Teufelsdröckh in the Rue Saint-Thomas de l'Enfer, like the Wanderer he made answer with emphasis: "Canst thou fix thine eye on the morning? Be glad. And if in the ultimate it blind thee, be glad also! Thou hast lived." (*Ibid.*, p. 552.)

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NOTES

Page references are made to the following editions of the novels of Theodore Dreiser:

Sister Carrie (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1926).

Jennie Gerhardt (Cleveland and New York: The World Publishing Company, 1951).

The Financier, rev. ed. (Cleveland and New York: The World Publishing Company, 1940).

The Titan (Cleveland and New York: The World Publishing Company, 1925).

The "Genius" (Cleveland and New York: The World Publishing Company, 1946).

An American Tragedy (Cleveland and New York: The World Publishing Company, 1948).

The Bulwark (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1946).

The Stoic (Cleveland and New York: The World Publishing Company, 1947).

1. Cf. J. D. Thomas, "The Natural Supernaturalism of Dreiser's Novels," *The Rice Institute Pamphlet*, XLIV, No. 1 (April, 1957), 112-125.
2. *In Memoriam*, lvi, st. 4; "The Dawn," st. 5.
3. *The Financier*, pp. 107-108. The reference is to the Philadelphia house of Frank Cowperwood, who is always much influenced by his houses. (Cf. *The Stoic*, pp. 255-256.) One might mention, also, the effect upon Clyde Griffiths of his first view of his Uncle Samuel's residence in Lycurgus, as well as Clyde's distaste for "the shabby home world" of Roberta Alden ("that rickety house! those toppling chimneys!") that plays a considerable part in forcing his determination to have done with her. (See *An American Tragedy*, pp. 209, 471, 473.)
4. This word ("interesting") is Dreiser's characteristic expression for what is known in literary criticism as pity and terror.
5. Recently, with special reference to *An American Tragedy*, Randall Stewart has reaffirmed the deterministic interpretation of Theodore Dreiser in "Dreiser and the Naturalistic Heresy," *Virginia Quarterly Review*, XXXIV, No. 1 (Winter, 1958), 100-116: "In the naturalistic view . . . , man is ruled by forces from without, or forces from within, or both. Some novels stress environment more than heredity . . . and some stress heredity more than environment . . . Some novels emphasize the two about equally. Social and economic conditions are very important in Theodore

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Dreiser's 'An American Tragedy,' for example, but so is heredity or temperament." "The naturalistic novelist who perhaps came nearer than any other American writer of stature to going the whole way was Theodore Dreiser, and the novel which I think best exemplifies this statement is his 'American Tragedy' . . . because it is probably the most completely naturalistic of all American novels." "An American Tragedy' illustrates perfectly the complete amoralism of the naturalistic philosophy. . . . Clyde is not responsible, in the last analysis, because he didn't make himself. And this, I fear, is the gospel according to Theodore Dreiser."

6. New York: Boni and Liveright, 1920.
7. *The Financier*, p. 90. The particular reference of this passage is to Eileen Butler at the time Frank Cowperwood began to become interested in her.
8. *The "Genius,"* pp. 361, 689, 157, 198, 690, 688 ff., 292.