

DREISER SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

OF THE INTERNATIONAL DREISER SOCIETY

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VOL. 3, NUMBER 1

SPRING 1994

**American Literature Association
Theodore Dreiser Sessions
San Diego, CA
June 3-5, 1994**

Session One: Influences from the Past
Saturday, June 4, 9:00 a.m.
Chair: James Hutchisson, The Citadel

"Sister Carrie's Tragic Hero: An Aristotelian Perspective"
Loren F. Schmidtberger, Saint Peter's College

"Style, Psychology, and the Ambiguities of 'Fate' in Jennie Gerhardt"
Paul A. Orlov, Pennsylvania State University, Delaware County Campus

"Alladinish Dreams and Alnascharian Nightmares: Dreiser's Romantic Means to a Realistic End"
Roark Mulligan, University of Oregon



Session Two: Psychological Approaches
Saturday, June 4, 10:30 a.m.
Chair: Philip Gerber, SUNY Brockport

"Dreiser's Muldoon and the Strenuous Rhetoric of Repa(i)ration"
Kathy Frederickson, Quinsigamond Community College

"Dostoyevsky, Freud, and Dreiser"
John Clendenning, California State University, Northridge

"Son and Mother in Dawn"
Stephen C. Brennan, Louisiana State University, Shreveport

A Message from the Society's President

Members of the Dreiser Society.

I'm sorry I can't be with you at the ALA meeting, but I am finishing up a highly enjoyable Fulbright year at the University of Warsaw. You will be pleased to know that Dreiser is greatly appreciated over here. When I asked my classes at the beginning of each semester who the greatest American writer is, the name that came up most often was Dreiser's, followed closely by Hemingway's. And my students, who are stunningly bright, have enjoyed reading and discussing *Sister Carrie* and *An American Tragedy*.

Have a successful meeting and do discuss my proposal to hold a Dreiser event in honor of the 125th anniversary of his birth in 1996.

Best Wishes,
Larry Hussman

What Happened This Year in Japan by Kiyohiko Murayama

Kiyohiko Murayama teaches in the Department of English Language and Literature at Tokyo Metropolitan University. He serves on the International Advisory Board of the International Dreiser Society.

Two events happened in 1993 in Japan which might be worth reporting to the International Dreiser Society. One is a symposium entitled "100 Years Since *Maggie*: Naturalism Reconsidered," that was held on May 16 at the University of Tokyo as one of nine symposia scheduled for the 65th Convention of the English Literary Society of Japan. Although a few years ago another smaller organization, the American Literature Association of Japan, presented a symposium of a similar question for its convention, this was possibly the first time that American literary naturalism had ever been made a

subject in the annual program of this, the largest academic organization in the field of literary studies in Japan.

The panel of this year's session consisted of four members: Yoshie Itabashi, who organized it, on Stephen Crane; Koji Oi on the general background of the age; Masashi Orishima on Frank Norris; and Kiyohiko Murayama on Theodore Dreiser. The symposium attracted some 200 scholars and drew many comments and questions from the floor. All in all, the symposium can be regarded as a success.

The fact that this Society held such a symposium reflects the increasing, if yet languid, interest among Japanese scholars in American literary naturalism. It is in turn being stimulated by the new development of literary studies in the United States. It may be said in this connection, however, that disappointingly there was no paper read about Dreiser at this fall's convention of the American Literature Society of Japan.

The other notable episode is the publication of Itaru Mouri's posthumous book, *Doraisa Kenkyuu* (*A Study of Dreiser*), published in 1993 by Osaka Kyoiku Tosho. Itaru Mouri was a professor of American literature at Konan University in Kobe when he died at age 55 in 1989. He was one of the most productive Dreiser scholars in Japan. After his death, his colleagues and friends collected all his articles that had been contributed to a few books and various academic journals, and out of them made a book of more than 450 pages. This becomes the fourth book-length study of Dreiser in Japan.

According to the list of his publications, the late Professor Mouri published 33 articles in his life, out of which this book contains 24, all related to Dreiser and published in Japanese. The earliest one was published in 1964 and the last in 1988. The book consists of three parts and appendices.

The first part comprises mainly his research on "chemism," which Mouri repeatedly discussed as one of the most significant terms in Dreiser's philosophy. The articles in the second part are his treatments of Dreiser's works: some of his short stories as well as all his novels except *The Stoic*. He wrote the most on *Sister Carrie*--four articles--with an increasing tendency to emphasize the role of

Robert Ames as the character embodying Dreiser's altruistic impulse. The third part consists of two articles, both of which are his attempts to explore the relationship between Dreiser and Thoreau (Thoreau was another of Mouri's interests.) "Nippon niokeru Theodore Dreiser [TD in Japan]" in the Appendices is a historical survey of Dreiser studies in Japan which was as exact and exhaustive as possible at the time of its publication (1978).

From these writings emerges Mouri's view of Dreiser as a writer. Mouri was so curious about Dreiser's naturalistic philosophy that he studied carefully the origin and meaning of Dreiser's peculiar neologism "chemism" as it seemed to him to represent his naturalism; he wrote three articles dealing exclusively with this question and examined it in almost all his articles. On the other hand, he maintained that the tragic sense, resulting from Dreiser's "altruism" and compassion for the weak and the poor, permeates his fiction, no matter how much it appears to conflict with his professed worldview, and that it is this contradiction that makes his literary works intriguing.

Fascination with Dreiser's contradictory sentiments may now sound familiar, but Mouri reached this viewpoint by working on his own during the difficult times when Dreiser was disparaged in Japan. Even seen from the advantage of today's hindsight, some of his articles contain remarkable insights: for example, the paper on Dreiser's marginalia in the typed manuscripts of *The Living Thoughts of Thoreau*, which he read at the University of Pennsylvania's Dreiser collection.

There are some infelicitous expressions and awkward structures in Mouri's writings, and his method of documentation and quotation is not only inconsistent but also unspecified. If he had lived to do so, he certainly would have revised his previous publications before publishing them in book form. The present book as it is, however, is rich enough to show that Mouri was a most dedicated scholar of Dreiser. This posthumous book enables us to view his work on Dreiser all together and to appreciate it anew.

The woodcut of Dreiser is used by permission of Harold Dies and the Dreiser Trust.

NEWS FROM NEMLA

April 8-9, 1994
Pittsburgh, PA

New Directions in American Literary Naturalism

Chair: Caren J. Town, Georgia Southern University

Secretary: Miriam Gogol, University of Hartford

"Toward a New View on the Issue of Individual Responsibility in American Literary Naturalism: The Example of Dreiser's *An American Tragedy*"

Paul A. Orlov, Pennsylvania State University, Delaware County Campus

"Gut by Association: Gold and Gender in *McTeague* and *Greed*"

Elena Sharnoff, University of Massachusetts

"Neo-Naturalism in the Novels of Charles Bukowski"

Russell T. Harrison, Hofstra University



NEWS FROM SOCIETY MEMBERS

L. Jeganatha Raja is General Secretary and Treasurer of the newly-inaugurated Theodore Dreiser Society of India. Philip Gerber has just completed an extended lecture tour of India, where he helped inaugurate the Society.

The Theodore Dreiser Collection at Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia

Soon after moving to Atlanta, Theodore Dreiser's niece, Dr. Vera Dreiser, donated her personal collection of books, correspondence, family photographs, clippings, and other research materials to the Robert W. Woodruff Library of Emory University. This collection has now been processed and is open for research use.

It includes materials Vera Dreiser used in writing her 1976 memoir, *My Uncle Theodore*, as well as other family papers that she collected as a result of her lifelong fascination with her late-uncle. The letters discuss such matters as Dreiser's refusal to contribute to his brother Paul's funeral expenses and his subsequent handling of Paul's estate. Also of note is a seven-page letter from Dreiser's attorneys outlining his objections to Paramount's plans to adapt *An American Tragedy* to film. (Dreiser had hoped the Russian director Sergei Eisenstein would produce it instead.)

The collection also includes many fine photographs. One picture was taken while Dreiser was traveling in Russia; another shows him meeting with striking miners in Harlan County, Kentucky. Of special note is a series of portraits taken by Carl Van Vechten in the early thirties. There is also an amusing caricature of Dreiser by the cartoonist Edmund Duffy (see below). And there is, as well,

Dreiser's own death mask. (In her memoir, Vera Dreiser describes accompanying the artist Edgardo Simone while he prepared the cast for this mask.)

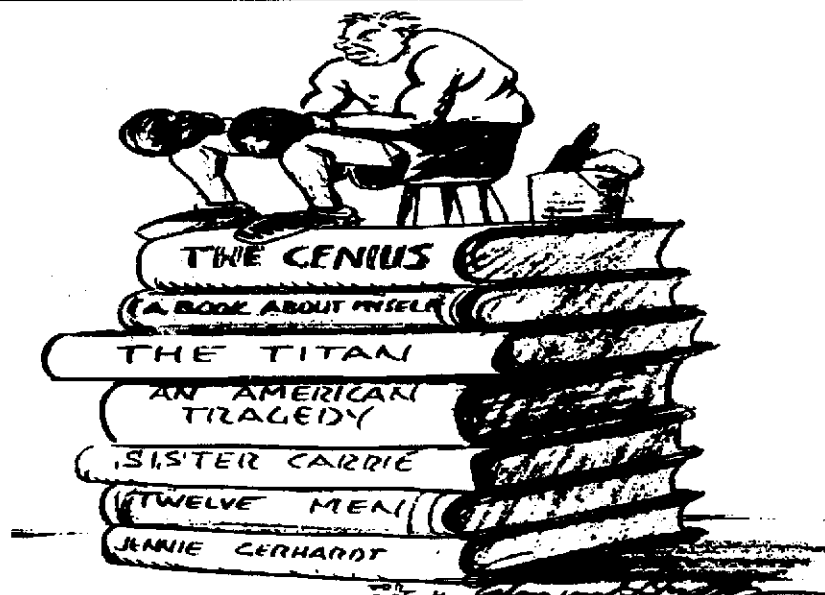
Since the initial donation, Emory's Dreiser Collection has been supplemented with additional gifts from Dr. Dreiser and others, as well as through purchases. Among the most recent acquisitions are a series of letters to the novelist Orrick Johns and an eleven-page typescript of his philosophical essay "My Creator" (unpublished during his lifetime).

Researchers seeking more information should write:

Special Collections Department
Robert W. Woodruff Library
Emory University
Atlanta, GA 30322

(404) 727-6887 or
internet librse@emuvml1.cc.emory.edu

You can contact the *Dreiser Society Newsletter* by telephone at (910) 521-6246 or by internet at nwb@pembvax1.pembroke.edu



Memories of Dreiser by Patricia Lievow

Patricia Robinson Lievow grew up in Dreiser's Midwest where, like Sister Carrie, she did odd jobs in Chicago. She had two years of college from 1940-42, quit because of financial problems, then served in the Navy during World War II. There she began her lifelong love of the novel. She worked in journalism briefly before having a family and later was employed as the Executive Director of a physicians' organization which worked for universal health care coverage. The family bought their first TV in 1955 when her daughters were five and seven; reading was the most important part of their family life. So she raised two more readers and she is crossing her fingers for her grandchildren.

Someone has said that there is no English Balzac just as there is no French Dickens. Could Tolstoi be other than Russian? And how could Dreiser be anything but American? What they all have in common is to make us feel, to get inside their characters and to help us broaden our understanding so that we are "there." This is not cheap identification. We come away understanding a whole society at a particular time as we could in no other way. And they all wrote "big" books.

When my husband died two years ago, I was faced with the prospect of getting rid of three-fourths of my books because of moving to a smaller place. On my 30th birthday (I am now 70), my husband had given me almost everything Dreiser ever wrote. He had spent months collecting these books which were located by a famous New York book store which is no longer there. I am not a collector, nor do I read everything a famous writer has written. Life is too short and I prefer to climb the highest mountain. I made room, reluctantly, for these books and dusted them, on the same shelf for 39 of our 45-year marriage. His gesture was beautiful and they symbolized the pleasure of reading, for both of us, in our youth before television. I couldn't just dump them, but I knew that I wouldn't "dare" read them again. I didn't want them to be "spoiled" since they were such an important part of my inner life. Luckily, they are now in the possession of Professor Nancy Barrineau, editor of the *Dreiser Society Newsletter*. But the day they left the house, just

before I moved, I cried all day. Now, why should Dreiser excite this kind of emotion?

I don't think it is possible to communicate to young people today how powerful were *Sister Carrie*, *Jennie Gerhardt*, *An American Tragedy*, and the trio about Frank Cowperwood. Those times had to be in living memory. We were a big Puritan nation when Dreiser first wrote at the turn of the century, and in the quarter century from *Sister Carrie* to *An American Tragedy* (1900-1925), the world turned over. In the almost 50 years since his death, the battles he fought for "the joy of sex" have been largely won. However, the economic problems, although ameliorated in the West, because of the welfare state, continue to haunt us and supply the experiences he described. It has been said that we don't learn from experience because we are never the same people having the experience. Today's poverty has shifted to new ethnic groups. The next Dreiser will be a foreigner but probably not from the dominant group as Dreiser was. People of German descent were once the largest group in the U.S.

One Saturday night in the early 1970s we had some friends in. They saw the books and it turned out that everyone had "loved" Dreiser. There were two physicians (one female and one male) and two college professors (one female and one male), all born, like me, after the First World War. My husband, being older, had read *An American Tragedy* when it first came out in the Twenties. I had not read him until after the Second World War. But we were all products of the Depression. We spent an hour or so talking about what the books had meant to us. Now my husband and I were not professionals, just well read. We were serious readers, and some of the brightest people (readers) we knew had not been to college. In fact the college people said Dreiser couldn't write. We knew better.

I think Dreiser will continue to be read because of the power of his voice. That has not been challenged. The big problem remains, will people continue to *read*?

My thanks to Sara Oswald and the students in PRE 345 for desktop publishing assistance with this issue.

Indian Work on Theodore Dreiser
by D. Sudarsana Reddy and L.
Jeganatha Raja

D. Sudarsana Reddy teaches at the American Studies Research Centre at the Osmania University Campus, Hyderabad. L. Jeganatha Raja, who teaches in the Department of English at Annamalai University in Annamalainagar, is a member of the International Advisory Board of the International Dreiser Society and General Secretary and Treasurer of the newly-inaugurated Theodore Dreiser Society of India.

(I have included only items which are not already listed in *Theodore Dreiser: A Primary Bibliography and Reference Guide* [1991]. Ed.)

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FORTHCOMING

The paperback classroom edition of the Pennsylvania *Jennie Gerhardt* is scheduled to be released by Penguin USA in July. It will include a photo-offset reproduction of the Pennsylvania text and its historical notes, as well as an introduction by James L.W. West III.



Dreiser's Jennie Gerhardt: New Essays on the Restored Text, a collection of scholarly and critical readings of the Pennsylvania *Jennie Gerhardt*, is scheduled for production by the University of Pennsylvania Press for the fall of 1995 in both cloth and paper. Included in the volume are interpretive essays, examinations of historical contexts, investigations of autobiographical elements in the novel, and studies of influence. Among the contributors are Robert Elias, Philip Gerber, Richard Lingeman, Yoshinobu Hakutani, Lawrence Hussman, Susan Albertine, Leonard Cassuto, Clare Eby, Christopher Wilson, John Humma, James Hutchisson, Nancy Warner Barrineau, Valerie Ross, Miriam Gogol, Arthur Casciato, Judith Kucharsky, Emily Clark, and James L.W. West III, editor of the collection. The volume is intended to begin a critical conversation on the new *Jennie Gerhardt* and to assist those who wish to teach the novel.



NEW AND NOTEWORTHY

Mechanism and Mysticism: The Influence of Science on the Thought and Work of Theodore Dreiser, by Louis J. Zanine. University of Pennsylvania Press, 244 pages, \$34.95.

Theodore Dreiser: An American Journey, by Richard Lingeman. One volume, abridged. John Wiley & Sons, 651 pages, \$19.95 (paper).



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