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DREISER'S INVESTIGATIONS OF NATURE

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Dreiser had followed the development of science in its phenomenal rise at the beginning of our century. His speculative mind was constantly searching for truth, first in the lives of human beings, but after the soul-probing and fearless portrayal of his characters in his first great novels, he began to examine the new facts and revelations of science and made up his first philosophic study, *Hey Rub-a-Dub-Dub*, with its provocative sub-title: *A Book of the Mystery and Wonder and Terror of Life*. It was published in 1920.

After this time, although his most successful novel, *An American Tragedy*, and later *The Bulwark* further increased his stature as a novelist, he never stopped collecting facts and pondering over the wonders of science. He wrote a number of pseudo-scientific articles and filled voluminous files with essays and isolated notes, intending to weave them into a final philosophy, but the search for facts and new discoveries of science was never finished; they kept coming along on the conveyor-belt of time. When Dreiser died in 1945, he left his papers to the University of Pennsylvania, and over 40 cases containing his files and material prepared for his philosophy were sent to the University. He had made a number of outlines and done much preliminary thinking along the lines he wished to pursue.

In 1974, the University of Alabama Press recognized the

value of these essays and notes and had the courage to publish them. Since I had worked with Dreiser on some of this material and understood his general intentions, I was permitted to make a reader's selection of the most important notes and completed essays. John J. McAleer, of Boston College, collaborated with me on the editing of this material. We followed Dreiser's original outline, but to avoid a book of unmanageable size, we included only about half of the filed writings.

Dreiser had first thought his philosophy should have the title *Formulae*, but finally preferred the modest name of *Notes on Life*. These included facts of astronomy, medicine, biology, and psychology, in all about 50 chapters. Scattered through all of them were simple nature notes, on bees, ants, birds and flowers, fitted into the theme of each main subject.

When Professor McAleer and I edited this material, many colorful observations on nature had to be left aside; yet, I have always felt that they should be preserved as a separate volume, for they can stand alone as examples of Dreiser's curiosity and sense of beauty.[1] They show Dreiser's great love of nature and his affinity with Thoreau and other writers who have taken the facts of natural phenomena to open the eyes of the reader to the wonders of creation.

The Life of the Bee, by Maurice Maeterlinck, had early intrigued Dreiser. Indeed, he enjoyed all of Maeterlinck's imaginative flights. (The name of the fairy Berylune, which Etta fancied in *The Bulwark*, was taken from his play *The Betrothal*, sequel to *The Blue Bird*.) Maeterlinck, in his study, describes in great detail the habits and mating procedures of the bee, such as its fantastic "Nuptual Flight." By contrast, Dreiser made no exhaustive study of one insect, but reported on many. Spiders, for example, inspired many notes and ruminations. Here the work of Henry Fabre was his source.

Jean Henri Fabre was an obscure French entomologist, a teacher in a southern province, too poor to own a microscope. When he could finally afford one, he also bought a small rundown piece of land, where he spent the rest of his life, devoting countless hours to the observation of insects and spiders, trapping them with clever ruses for his experiments and gradually arousing the attention and admiration of scientific circles. His *Marvels of the Insect World* and *The Life of the Spider* are now classics. This small, perceptive man, with his bland, beardless face and penetrating gaze, gained the friendship of many, including John Stuart Mill, the English economist who resided for a while in his province, and Maeterlinck himself, who wrote a glowing preface to Fabre's book on spiders:

"Waiting for chance or a God to enlighten us, Fabre is able, in the presence of the unknown, to preserve that great religious and attentive silence which is dominant in the best minds of the day. There are those who say: 'Now you have reaped a plentiful harvest of details, you should follow up analysis with synthesis and generalize the origin of instinct in an all-embracing view.'

"To these Fabre replies with the humble and magnificent loyalty that illumines all his work: 'Because I have stirred a few grains of sand on the shore, am I in a position to know the depths of the ocean? Life has unfathomable secrets. Human knowledge will be erased from the archives of the world before we possess the last word that the gnat has to say to us.'"

These two men were philosophers after Dreiser's own heart, natural observers aspiring only to accuracy, a direct experience of curiosity satisfied and wonder, which did not demand explanation, even when arousing speculations of great sweep. For instance, Fabre in his study of spiders is led to question how they can exist for weeks without apparent food and concludes that they may obtain nourishment directly from the sun, or even from inert matter.

Dreiser follows the description of Fabre's spiders only as far as necessary to make a certain point and to fit into his projected chapter "The Theory That Life Is a Game":

"For this same mother spider that slays so ruthlessly is the mechanism whereby there appears a hundred other spiders, first as eggs that have to be pocketed in a silken purse, and watched over until they hatch and can go their own way--and often at the cost of the mother's life. More, these very young are in their turn often the food of other insects, and when grown, the slayers of others. Actually it has the appearance of a game.... *Tag*, you're *it*. You tag me. I tag you. You fight and breed a certain number of children which are good for me to eat and I will fight and slay and breed and so provide a number of eggs or children which are good for you to eat and by which you can live. Thus, all of us, with the sun and the earth and light and dark and cold and heat as our aids and abettors will be (ultimate atoms of energy though each and all of us be) able to masquerade as wasp, worm, moth, fly, mosquito, grasshopper, animal or man, and as such walk, or crawl or fly or swim about in the sun, before we return to our ancient mother, father, the changeful but undying force called the universe."

So Dreiser, departing from the consideration of a spider, raises the reader up into a cosmic view of all life. It is a

typical flight of his imagination, having nothing to do with scientific research but arising out of it. Maeterlinck and Fabre and Thoreau, to mention only a few of the naturalists whom Dreiser read, also made digressions, had enthusiasms arising from their studies. But they did not range over the wide fields of science that Dreiser explored, almost at random. Nor were they carried away so readily from their primary subjects.

Another essay on spiders, drawn from Fabre, appears in the published *Notes on Life* in Chapter 61, "The Factor Called Chance." It begins: "The entire spider family with its webs and traps (to say nothing of the entire human family), its evolutionary divisions and species, is nothing if not an illustration of the operation of chance and, at the very same time, an excellent and exact illustration of the law of cause and effect.... There is no such thing as a cause without an effect. At the same time, it is also true that involved with the probability of a given effect is the element of chance."

Dreiser goes on to describe how spiders build and place their webs to trap an insect, so that they can eat and survive; yet it is not certain that any particular insect will be trapped in any particular web at any given time, even though billions are so trapped. The factor of chance intervenes. Again, with one of those ascents to a wider view, he states: "If it were possible for a spider or a human being to know the exact operations of the entire universe in advance, it would be possible to say which insects at what time in what way would fall into what particular spider's web or trap. But since such prevision is seemingly not granted to any life form, there intervenes the factor called chance."

Here, from the simple consideration of the ways of the spider Dreiser rises to the plane of those eternal questionings which he was always turning over in his mind, approaching them through so many facts of natural life and human behavior--What is chance and its relation to pre-determination? Destiny? Free Will? He regarded these from a thousand different angles and experiences, viewpoints never exhausted, sometimes cynical, but never doctrinaire. Dreiser was as open to change as he was open to doubt.

Reflecting the diversity of his nature notes, Dreiser includes many about plant life, fish, birds and animals. His projected chapter "Varieties of Force" includes several on *instinct*, one concerning birds, another, cows. Pondering the migration pattern of ducks, Dreiser wrote: "The ducks will be seen--thousands of them--rising and getting ready to migrate. First, they mill around as though in confusion. Then they

begin to break up into small, geometric designs....Endless V's of so many ducks to a V--one out in front as leader; the others making the two converging lines of the V behind their leader, incidentally, and either intentionally or mechanistically stream-lining their particular group for easier flying against the wind. Is that V-forming system inherited instinct or natural individual wisdom? If it is inherited instinct and at the same time conforms to the last or ideal engineering principle for flying, how did the first group of ducks come by that principle or instinct? Was it chemically installed in the duck? And if so, by what? Something in the atom which makes the electric chemicals which make the duck?" And so on. Dreiser is off again, on a universal speculation.

Dreiser was also intrigued by an account from New Zealand, where cows were reported standing deep in clover, yet not eating it. A few who did eat the clover became sick. It was discovered that the soil of the field was deficient in cobalt, and upon adding cobalt salts to the food of the sick cows, they recovered. But the great problem, according to Dreiser, was "*how* did the organism of the animal know or react to the fact that there was no cobalt in the clover? They are not supposed to *think* nor to have any psychic reactions which would detect the cobalt's absence. Their blood, by some type of chemical reaction, *might* disturb the organism of the cow to such a degree as to cause her to retreat. We retreat from smoke, cold, heat, amonia, a great wind, a disagreeable odor, a loud noise--though we do not call that thinking." Then Dreiser jumps ahead into his consideration of man as a mechanism. "How different are we to the animals? Can it be that we, as well as they, are chemical and physical products of the same mechanistic forces that govern the universe and that therein function?"

It is also interesting to find that Dreiser has a note on the *herd*, observing that a group of cattle left on a cold moor will circle around, the coldest animals working their way toward the center, until they are sufficiently warmed; then they will fan outward so that the latest-comers can have a chance at a restoring heat, and so the whole herd moves continually, exercise also doing its part to defeat a killing chill. In his book on *The Life of the Bee*, Maeterlinck describes the same instinct or process in the hive, closed in for the winter months. Their circular movement is more delicately described, as they are centered around their Queen mother. Dreiser also reports that the molecules of boiling water follow the same pattern of motion!

Such subjects illustrate only a fraction of the nature notes scattered throughout his files and turning up in the

most unexpected places. For instance, in his published *Notes*, under the subject of "Problem of Genius," Dreiser considers various great writers, musicians, and the whole process of creative work; then he suddenly introduces the subject of "Genius in Nature," which seems to belittle the accomplishments of human beings. Here Fabre and his spiders come again to the fore: "Unlike men, on its arrival on earth, the spider appears, mechanistically to *know*. It has distinct understanding of, or reactions to, the forces of nature. In building its net, it appears to take into consideration not only the direction of the wind, but its force, also the particular angles at which a net must be strung....the tensile strength of the threads which it tests and doubles or triples as the force of the wind or weight of itself and its victim may require.... The spider must take its web-building opportunities just as it finds them, just as any engineer or architect or excavator does. And so it does and effectually, generation after generation but without visible instruction. Read me this riddle if you can."

Under "Varieties of Force," Dreiser considers the power of telepathy, even as it may be present in animals. "Consider how animals sense the friendliness or unfriendliness of people. Cats, dogs, honey-bees, lady-bugs, cows, horses - They do not talk but they know. Do they register--as do radios--energy waves emanating from things, from people, stones, distant storms, earthquakes--or from something less material--immaterial spirit from which matter-energy takes its rise.... The cat that understood an earthquake was coming....The little sparrow that couldn't keep up and beat its wings in order to evoke sympathy in the other members of the flock....Is so much language necessary?

"Apparently, *the vaporized atoms* of a person or animal can change physically with the differing mental condition of the person from whom they emanate. Fear of a dog, say, will affect the vaporized atoms or odor of the person from whom they emanate in such a way and to such an extent, as to cause the dog to detect the fear of the person and so feel encouraged or free to attack him. On the other hand, the vaporized odor-atoms of a brave, a fearless person convey to the nose of a dog that fearlessness and cause it to avoid the person, or at least give no sign of enmity."

A lovely piece about flowers was found under "Mechanism Called Life." It is one of many showing Dreiser's delicate appreciation of plant life: "Water-Lily buds burst open as the direct light of the morning sun strikes them. Morning-glories, opening with the early gray of dawn, close when the heat of the morning sun begins to absorb too much of the

moisture that makes their delicate textures displayable. Moonflowers burst open with the same force as water-lillies when the heat of the day ceases and the cool and moisture of the evening reaches a point where their textures are impinged upon and forced to absorb more (moisture) than their restraining green covering can resist."

A much longer note from the same chapter, unpublished for lack of space, illustrates how Dreiser delved into the very origins of plants and flowers, noting that only after insects developed, flowers could be inseminated, and so evolve their own beautiful varieties.

"The totalitarian insects got a lucky break from the vegetable kingdom and accidentally (?) gave one in return. The fossil wasp nest that tumbled into the mud 80,000,000 years ago did so at a time known to geologists as the *upper Cretaceous* period, when the monster dinosaurs were coming to the end of their reign. Up to that time, flowering plants had played an insignificant role in nature, but now, an evolutionary outburst of them started. Only a few million years later, in the Eocene or 'Dawn' age, according to Dr. Roland W. Brown of the U.S. Geological Survey, they had achieved the dominance which they have held to this day. 'It now seems likely,' Dr. Brown states, '*that blossoms and social insects, long indispensibly partners, developed at essentially the same time*.' (!) Presumably the blossom with its pollen requiring transportation to another plant of the same kind, for fertilization, came first, but it would have been of little advantage to the plant and probably would have soon disappeared had pollen-carrying insects not come into the world at the same time. It was an accidental (?) combination but it has determined the face of Nature, ever since.

"Up to that time, the plant world had managed to use the air to carry seed and some pollen, but only by the wasteful, haphazard method of letting these sparks of life drift where luck took them. They had neither motor or guidance. Now the insect, travelling from one flower to the next, was almost as reliable in delivering the pollen to another plant of the same kind, as a letter-carrier. Other plants conveniently used birds as rural free delivery for distributing their seeds.

"Thus the plants took passage, on the first motorized animal fliers, just as insects today are unsolicited passengers on aeroplanes. There is the difference, however, that the plants paid for their passage in the form of honey, fruit or other delicacy. The insects, except the bee, of course, not only paid nothing for their ride, but, like the (modern day) bomber, usually spread destruction."

In this note there is both humor and that sweep toward an evolutionary view that lifts Dreiser's observations beyond his nature studies in particular. Here is the same larger view in his study of hybrids:

"Hybrids, the rare crosses between existing varieties of plants and animals, are often the pioneers of evolution, for it is from hybrids that new and different strains of plants and animals develop. But often, because nature is so wasteful (mass production) in its beauty, these differing varieties are worthless, mere novelties of life comparable to the giants or dwarfs or freaks of the side-show at the circus. Yet because the hybrids are pioneers there is always the chance that some new and valuable plant or animal (man, for instance) will develop. And that is plainly the goal, the jack-pot in the gamble of evolution which plant breeders are now playing."

Sometimes, it is simply beauty which inspires a nature note such as this from the projected chapter on "Beauty and Ugliness": "What is the force that draws such beautiful frost flowers on a window pane or on the stone slab of a sidewalk? It is art. It is beauty. If a human being did it, he would be counted an artist--possessed of a fine mind. But this energy that does it--Is it mental? Is it immaterial?"

Dreiser's constant questioning, however, is the factor which sets his notes apart from those of Thoreau, the great Naturalist of Walden, who influenced Dreiser deeply in his formative years. Certainly, the older writer encouraged his already-strong love and reverence for nature.

In 1939, Dreiser was asked to write an *Introduction to the Works of Thoreau*, with selections from his writings; published by Longmans Green, this was a splendid tribute and illustration of the appreciation which Dreiser felt for the smallest of Thoreau's observations. But he quoted very few of these in his *Notes on Life*. He, however, did make excellent use of certain philosophical statements of Thoreau which appear elsewhere in a frame not specifically naturalistic.

Thoreau's world was Walden and the forests and the rivers of New England. Dreiser did not keep that same concentration; his mind travelled all over the world of information, seeking natural phenomena wherever it appeared in his reading and seemed appropriate to make some point of his own philosophy. I quote only parts of a longer note under "Material Base of Form: Protective Coloration."

"Ceylon boasts some of the most astonishing insects in the world--*the walking leaves*. Their bodies are shaped and

veined like leaves. When in danger, they simulate the quiver of foliage, and to make the similarity even more striking, their feet look very much like a leaf's ragged edges.

"There are, among others, the spiny stick insect of Borneo, also the walking stick. Here it is that an insect copies the form rather than the color of a vegetable. Brightly-colored tropic birds are thought to be imitating flowers and leaves. The Grouper family of fishes change their color at any time to suit their environment and so conceal themselves. The night-mare insect of Central America.... though terrifying in form, is harmless....

"The Japanese used masks to terrify the enemy....So did the Chinese and many Asiatics. Farmers use scarecrows to frighten birds from their fields....But all this, especially in insects and animals, implies not only thought on the part of the user or the creator of the user, but implies understanding and the presence of the emotion called fear in insects and many creatures not supposed to have emotions, in short, mental processes of a high order."

Again, Dreiser is always looking for the force behind the fact, the whole picture of life, behind the quivering of a leaf.

In conclusion, I would explain that some of these notes have appeared in the handsome edition of the University of Alabama Press, but because the work is little known, they are repeated, for their relevance here. Others, as yet unpublished, and so marked, can be found in the files of the University of Pennsylvania. Many provocative fragments and short essays are waiting in these files. Dreiser's observations reach as far as the starry heavens, which he had often surveyed from the giant telescope of Mt. Wilson, not far from his home in Hollywood, California. Forty years ago, he had written of solar heat and energy. He was fascinated by the mystery of the Black Dwarfs, dead stars, whose fire had been extinguished and which had shrunk to hard cores of invisible matter. He raised the possibility that certain twin stars or binaries might have their own life or ability to move. Such speculations are beyond the scope of this present study, but the door might be opened on other unpublished material from these nature notes, illustrating Dreiser's insatiable quest for knowledge.

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[1]The present article is a chapter from my new book, "The Lust of the Goat is the Bounty of God: Dreiser's Philosophy of Love and of Life," now ready to submit to interested publishers. The title is taken from Wm. Blake's *Proverbs from Hell*.

THE BULWARK: A CHRONOLOGY

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Dreiser's shifting of dates in the action of *The Bulwark* has caused comment by critics, among them James Farrell, Granville Hicks, and Donald Pizer. In his long letter to Dreiser before publication Farrell observed that no reference was made to World War I. In his review Hicks complained that most of the details applied to the pre-war period, though the latter part of the story is "said to occur in the twenties."[1] Mr. Pizer, who also observes these anachronisms, notes that in the pre-1942 drafts the date of Solon's wedding was 1875, that in 1944 it was moved to the "turn of the century," and finally in response to Farrell's criticism it became "late in the nineteenth century" in the printed book. But Mr. Pizer goes beyond others in offering specific dates, "approximately 1865-1925" for Solon's life span.[2]

Though other critics--fewer than might be expected--have also observed the anachronisms, they mostly bear with them easily, perhaps because it is not hard to make an adjustment for such matters as street railway franchises and two-step dancing, especially when the novel blurs details. But the novel is quite insistent on time from its eleventh line of the "Introduction"--"in June, late in the nineteenth century"--to Solon's death at the end. There are indeed about ninety pages with chronological references in the novel or an average of one for every four, with the result that even casual readers sense that the novel has the effect of thrusting time upon them. Thus if I border on pedantry in what follows, or more likely find myself in the thicket of it, I can perhaps excuse myself by saying that as the novel appears, time needs some attention if not as much as I give it.

In view of the multiple authorship, so that with some truth we can say that the book is by Dreiser, Harris, Campbell, and Elder (with additional consultants), it hardly surprises that dating the action has problems. On the other hand, the last three of the authorial quartet were professional editors from whom one might expect at least an internal chronological

consistency. Such consistency emerges most clearly with the fourth child Etta, though it extends to the other characters as well. Etta is "over eighteen"[3] when she goes to Wisconsin and in the fall leaves for Greenwich Village of the "early twenties" (p. 223). If I may make two somewhat arbitrary but reasonable hypotheses, she is just past her eighteenth birthday at Wisconsin and goes to the Village in 1922 (a halfway point between 1921 and 1923, "early" as distinguished from 1920, which would be at the beginning, and from 1924 or later, which would be in the middle of the twenties). Soon after Stewart's death Etta returns to Thornbrough in the late spring of 1923, and Solon is diagnosed as having cancer probably in October, for he dies about three months later in early January, having weakened when the days are shortening (pp. 332, 327), presumably before the winter solstice.

From Etta we can also go back to the marriage of her parents. The novel tells us several times that the children are born at two-year intervals (pp. 108, 111, 122), with however a slightly longer space of "over two years" between Dorothea and Etta. But since we are not told when the first child was born after the June wedding, again we must arbitrarily guess that she came promptly on a nine-month schedule. Let me propose then that Isobel, Orville, and Dorothea were born in March, 1898, 1900, and 1902 respectively, with Etta and Stewart in June, 1904 and 1906. The "over two years" between Dorothea and Etta appears very little "over," since two years between all of them is elsewhere validated. Etta thus appears seven years after the marriage, which took place twenty-five years before she went to Wisconsin (7 + 18) or in June, 1897. That puts us fairly close to the "turn of the century" though not exactly there. And since the most specific dating for Solon is that he was eleven when his father moved from Maine to Dukla and that the marriage took place ten years after the move (pp. 10, 33--some problems emerge elsewhere), Solon's birthdate comes out at 1876. The year is corroborated by Solon's "nearing his fortieth year" (p. 134), which I take to be 39, in what appears to be 1915. All these dates can be justifiably moved one year either way in view of my choosing 1922 for the early twenties in the Village. Thus Mr. Pizer's date for Solon's death is acceptably close to what I propose, but his approximate birthdate of 1865 does appear to be a decade earlier than it should.

For those who want it, here is a fairly complete chronology, with page references not previously cited:

1876	Birth of Solon.
1878	Birth of Benecia.
1887	The Barnes move to Dukla.

1895, June	Informal engagement of Solon and Benecia, who is 17 (pp. 66, 73).
1895, June	Solon joins the Philadelphia bank (pp. 77, 96-97).
1897, June	Marriage of Solon and Benecia.
1897, Dec.	Death of Solon's mother (pp. 107-108).
1898, March	Birth of Isobel.
1900, March	Birth of Orville.
1902, March	Birth of Dorothea.
1904, June	Birth of Etta.
1906, June	Birth of Stewart.
1912, Summer	Stewart plays Indians at 6 (p. 132).
1912, Sept.	Isobel goes to Oakwold at 14 (p. 126).
1915	Solon becomes acting treasurer of the bank at 39.
1916, Sept.	Isobel goes to Llewellyn at 18 (p. 154).
1918, June	Orville leaves Oakwold at 18 (p. 149). Solon has been in the bank for "some twenty-two years," i.e. 23? (p. 149).
1918, Sept.	Etta goes to Chadd's Ford at 14 (p. 159).
1919, Sept.	Dorothea goes to Llewellyn at 17 in Isobel's last year (p. 156).
1921, May 25	Dorothea goes to her first dance (pp. 181, 183).
1921, Sept.	Isobel returns to Llewellyn as an assistant at 23 (pp. 193, 194).
1922, June	Marriage of Orville (p. 197). Etta goes to Wisconsin.
1922, Sept.	Etta goes to Greenwich Village. Stewart goes to Franklin Hall at 16 (p. 195).
1922, Oct.	Marriage of Dorothea (p. 240).
1923, Spring	Death of Stewart (p. 310). Return of Etta to Thornbrough (p. 312). Death of Benecia (p. 315).
1923, Sept.	Return of Isobel to Llewellyn (p. 320).
1923, Oct.	Diagnosis of Solon's cancer "in the weeks following Isobel's departure" (p. 323).
1924, Jan.	Death of Solon.

There are several unresolved inconsistencies over which I think even the reader without this chronology will wonder. From marginal notes in my own copy, presumably made when I bought it in November, 1949, I find that I was startled by Solon's mother telling Benecia's father that the Barnes have been in Dukla only a year and a half (p. 44) when they had been there at least six years. By this time Benecia as well as Solon's sister has gone to Oakwold (pp. 46-47), while Solon, probably 17 or 18, has left school and is working for his father (pp. 36, 55). Solon was more likely 11 (p. 33) than 10 (p. 1) when his father settled at Thornbrough, and we have a number of references to his being in Thornbrough from

the age of 12 on (pp. 25, 30, 36 most specifically). Next, on facing pages (pp. 194-195) Stewart is announced by the novel as "just past sixteen" and spoken to by his father as "nearly sixteen." Finally, Etta brings Solon "the last yellow chrysanthemums that had survived the frost" at the most a week before his death, sometime after the winter solstice (p. 333). That two of these contradictions result from the remarks of truth-speaking Quakers is curious--perhaps Solon's mother is upset by just having given her testimony in the Dukla meeting house, though she appears serenely self-confident; and Solon with his five children may not have kept count of their ages carefully. If the Dreiserian novel indulged in wit, we might suspect that Quaker-truth is pitted against the narrator's authority; but at best that seems remote.

Besides these, some less apparent lapses may result from the multiple authors not wanting to provide as neat a time-scheme as I have attempted. Orville is mentioned as Stewart's "senior by only five years" (p. 142), when all other references suggest a six-year difference. A slight difficulty also concerns the year when Isobel entered Llewellyn--at a rather late 20 in one place (pp. 147-148), though more consistently at 18 (p. 193 and elsewhere). Another problem may face Isobel. Presumably when Etta is 17, her third year at Chadd's Ford, Benecia reflects on her twenty years of observation of Solon (p. 167). But if Etta is 17, then Isobel is 23, predating the marriage by three years. Apparently the "twenty" is just rounding off the number, for it is qualified nine pages later by restatement of the marriage as "over twenty years before" (p. 176) and then by dating the informal engagement as "twenty-five years before" (p. 185).

On another occasion we are provided with a tempting date that might reveal the exact chronology of the novel--Saturday, May 25, the day that Dorothea attends a party in 1921 (pp. 181, 183); but Saturdays on May 25 occurred only in 1901, 1907, 1912, and 1918 during the possible span of the book. A 1901 date would roughly conform with the early marriage date of 1875--26 years versus 24. The year 1912 could reflect another earlier time-scheme, close to Dreiser's meeting Anna Tatum, who provided the background for the early version of *The Bulwark*, or his moving to the Village in mid-July, 1914.[4] It would also shift the novel back nine years, coming close to Mr. Pizer's birthdate for Solon though having him die nearly a decade before the date that we both closely agree upon.

Still, unless earlier texts are eventually published, we have to deal with the novel in its present printed form. In that form at least one meaningful chronological development emerges. Solon's father dies "in the seventh year" of Solon's

"married life" (p. 121). Since "in the seventh year" signifies that only the sixth anniversary has been celebrated, when we learn that he dies at least three months before Etta's birth, his death may be fixed in February or March, 1904. Thus his age comes close to 57, for he was at least 40 by the time he left Maine (p. 3) and his son's marriage took place ten years later (40 + 10 + 7). At his death he is about ten years older than Solon at his own death unless Solon was born in January. It may be in anticipation of Solon's death at 47 that Solon meditates that his father died "in the prime of life, when he still had so many years in which he could have been happy and useful" (pp. 127-128). That this meditation could serve as a pathetic foreshadowing of Solon's younger death is reinforced by Solon's connecting it with the misdeeds of the earlier Quaker son, Walter Briscoe, which openly anticipate Stewart's downfall. Thus when Solon in a delirium twice refers to himself as "that poor old man" (p. 332), we should be aware that by count of years he is even more in the "prime of life" than was his father.

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[1] Both Farrell's letter and Hicks's review are summarized and quoted in Jack Salzman, "The Curious History of Dreiser's *The Bulwark*," *PROOF*, 3 (1973), 38-41.

[2] Donald Pizer, *The Novels of Theodore Dreiser* (Minneapolis, 1976), pp. 312-313.

[3] *The Bulwark* (Garden City, 1946), p. 208. Hereafter citations appear in parentheses.

[4] W. A. Swanberg, *Dreiser* (New York, 1965), pp. 162, 175.

A DREISER CHECKLIST, 1979

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This checklist covers the year's work on Dreiser in 1979 plus a number of publications omitted from previous checklists. I wish to thank Shigeo Mizuguchi for providing the information on Dreiser studies published in Japan.

I. NEW EDITIONS, TRANSLATIONS AND REPRINTS OF DREISER'S WORKS

Amerika no Higeki [*An American Tragedy*]. Trans. Yôkichi Miyamoto. 2 vols. Tokyo: Shûei-sha, 1978.

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DREISER NEWS & NOTES

Starting with this issue, Howard Waltersdorf will serve as Managing Editor. Frederick E. Rusch will remain on the *DN* staff as Bibliographer. It is our plan to bring out Fall, Winter and Spring issues over the next two years in an effort to be back on schedule by Spring 1983. . . . *Theodore Dreiser: The American Diaries, 1902-1926*, edited by Thomas P. Riggio, James L. W. West III, and Neda Westlake, is scheduled for January 1982 publication by the University of Pennsylvania Press. . . . Professor Robert H. Woodward, of San Jose State University, writes: "It will surely be of interest to many readers of the *Newsletter* to learn that Lorna D. Smith, who was a researcher for Dreiser from 1938 to 1945, and who donated her collection of letters from Dreiser to the Los Angeles Public Library, died in San Jose, California, on January 11, 1981, at the age of 83. Mrs. Smith's close association with Dreiser is documented in the last book of Swanberg's *Dreiser*. According to Swanberg, the last photograph of Dreiser in life was taken on December 21, 1945, at the wedding of Mrs. Smith's son George, who survives her."

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