

# DREISER STUDIES

Volume Twenty, Number Two

Fall, 1989

---

---

## Table of Contents

Dreiser's "Jeremiah I": Found at Last ..... 2

Richard Lingeman

Dreiser vs. Terre Haute, or  
Paul Dresser's Body Lies a-Molderin' in the Grave ..... 9

Richard W. Dowell  
Indiana State University

Lillian Nordica and Sister Carrie ..... 21

Nancy Warner Barrineau  
University of Georgia

Dreiser's "Country Doctor": Dr. Amos Woolley of Warsaw ..... 25

Robert Coltrane  
Lock Haven University

The Theme of Hinduism in The Stoic ..... 28

Miyoko Takeda

### Reviews:

Realism in a Paradoxical World ..... 35

Clare Virginia Eby  
University of Connecticut at Hartford

The Co-opting of Sister Carrie ..... 38

Philip L. Gerber  
State University College at Brockport, N.Y.

Dreiser News & Notes ..... 42

# DREISER'S "JEREMIAH I": FOUND AT LAST

Richard Lingeman

Theodore Dreiser's first creative work, aside from "The Return of Genius," a fable he concocted for the Chicago *Daily Globe* in 1892<sup>1</sup>, and random imaginative flights labeled as journalism—was a comic opera (or operetta) called *Jeremiah I*. Until recently, the manuscript of this play was considered lost, and biographers have relied on Dreiser's description of it in *Newspaper Days*. While searching through unrelated material in the Dreiser Collection at the University of Pennsylvania Library, I happened upon what is surely a fragment of the play.<sup>2</sup>

Inspired by his frequent playgoing as dramatic critic of the St. Louis *Post-Dispatch* and such recent hits as *The Isle of Champagne* and Reginald De Koven's *Robin Hood*, Dreiser "roughed out" the plot of the opera in 1893. Lacking confidence in his ability to finish it, he outlined the idea to his friends Peter McCord and Dick Wood, illustrators on the paper. They encouraged him, and he wrote furiously, completing a draft libretto within a week. This he read to his two cronies, who received it with "much partial applause of course. What else could they do?"<sup>3</sup> McCord later made drawings of sets and costumes, and the new playwright fancied that he was fairly launched on the road to Broadway fame and fortune.

But after that initial burst, *Jeremiah I* disappears from Dreiser's own recorded history. His move to New York City in 1894 probably revived his dramaturgic ambitions, but as the loftily idealistic voice of *Ev'ry Month*, a magazine he edited for a music publishing company with which his brother Paul Dresser was affiliated, he deplored the tawdriness of Broadway. In the January 1897 issue, for example, he bemoans in his "Reflections" column the paucity of "high-class drama" on the contemporary stage, and attributes it to "a rush for that which is light and trivial. The people seem to want vaudeville."<sup>4</sup> And in April he published an article by his friend Arthur Henry titled "It Is to Laugh: A Little Talk on How to Write a Comic Opera," which sarcastically enumerated the cheap gimmicks employed in the genre and included a picture of a scene from *Lost, Strayed or Stolen*, a farce in which his brother Paul Dresser was playing.<sup>5</sup> Dreiser probably shared Henry's sentiments, for he was quarreling with Paul at this point and took a contemptuous view of the latter's songwriting and theatrical efforts.

But not completely. His letters to his fiance, Sara Osborne White, reveal that he maintained a lively interest in the commercial stage and laughed at low comedians with the rest of the audience. And in an 1898 letter to her he mentions that he has written a play but has no time to revise it according to "a manager's suggestions" and have it typed.<sup>6</sup> This could have been *Jeremiah I*. If he was telling Jug the truth, he had interested a theatrical manager in it. And he seems to have had the handwritten version typed, though neither draft has survived.

All that remains of *Jeremiah I* are six pages of what seems to be a revision of the comic opera, written on stationery-quality white sheets in pen, except for part of a speech that was typewritten and pasted in (see illustration overleaf). This suggests that Dreiser was dissatisfied with the version that he had typed, and set about rewriting it—or at least Act I. From the handwriting, I would date this version in the late 1890s.

The text breaks off in mid-page in the middle of the words being sung by the chorus. Possibly Dreiser tired of writing doggerel; the lyric shows a distinct falling-off in quality at the end. And the dialogue that precedes it is not much better. Dreiser may have sensed that his attempts at humor were feeble, although he had originally conceived what he considered "a fairly humorous plot," concerning Jeremiah Peaskin, "an old Indiana farmer of a most cantankerous and inquisitive disposition," who is transported back in time to the Aztec kingdom in Mexico. The king has died, and the priests declare Jeremiah their new ruler. He becomes a despot, until the love of an Aztec maiden redeems him. As Dreiser puts it, "She eventually persuaded him to change the form of government from that of a despotism to that of a republic, with himself as candidate for President."<sup>7</sup>

A reasonably comic premise then—a rustic plopped down in an ancient, exotic culture—but judging from what survives Dreiser couldn't do much with it, beyond some labored jokes about "dudes" (his strike-throughs are included in the transcript, below). Thus when he took up the play again, he may have at last faced the truth—that what he had written was not very funny—and given up. Even if he did not consciously abandon the play, he had come a long way from St. Louis and was gearing up his mind to write *Sister Carrie*. Although Dreiser did have a sense of humor and in his newspaper days had scored a minor success with a series of joshing articles on a charity baseball game, he had decided that "Mere humor" was too trivial and turned to tragedy.<sup>8</sup>

The failure of *Jeremiah I* did not permanently cure him of the playwrighting bug, for he wrote several dramas in later years—but no more comic operas. His inability to complete *Jeremiah I* was one small event



among many that turned him to writing realistic novels. If nothing else, the fragment, reprinted below, demonstrates beyond a reasonable doubt why Broadway lost a comic opera librettist and the world gained a novelist.

## ACT I

SCENE: Throne room of Royal Aztec Palace, City of Mexico. Columns to the left side hung with tapestry and parted showing white walls and turrets of the city. Right, a huge gilded throne set on dais, with immense sword leaning against it. Step leading up. Columns and arch in background lining with parted tapestry, showing open verandah and the palace grounds below.

Sound of doleful music, faint, from the distance. Stage empty. As the music progresses the brim of a straw hat and a hand holding a carpet bag becomes alternately visible and invisible from behind tapestry of arch. Center. Lapse of moments discovers Jeremiah Peaskin carefully edging his way in.

Enter Peaskin from verandah.

PEASKIN. (Looking curiously about) A man can't ever tell whut durn fool things people ull do, no Siree! Not until he gits out an' around like I've been. Why its jest tarnation marvelous, thets whut it is. (Sound of music he hesitates) Uh! Aint thet doleful music fur your life. Whut in the name of goose grease people wanten parade aroun in long robes en sing is mor-en past my reasenon. Ets worse en our old choir et a funeral. It is be-gosh! (Listens again) Suthin's up. Suthin's up!

Enter (running) Iave.

IAVE. (falling towards Peaskin who beats hasty retreat-up the throne steps. Iave falls at the step, her head near his feet.) Great Spirit—save me, otherwise I must die.

PEASKIN. Huh? Whats that there?

IAVE. Great Sovereign of my people, since you have come, deign to command that my life be spared.

PEASKIN. (Viewing her doubtfully) Deign that your life be spared? Course I'll deign it. Well I'll be plum cursed!

IAVE. (sobbing) Most masterful Spirit!

PEASKIN. Who? Me? (descends steps) Say, look up here. Whats ailin' you? Be you sick? Git up?

IAVE. (standing) They came. Oh my master, they came!

PEASKIN. Who came? (jumping fearfully about) How came? Where came? Don't skeer me.

IAVE. (pointing through open columns. L.) Yonder. Yonder. (She hunches at his feet)

PEASKIN. Well durn me, I dunno what ter do. (emphatically) Dont be hangin around my legs! She's outen her mind.

IAVE. You will save me?

PEASKIN. Course I'll save you if I kin. I don't know whether I kin er not. Haven't stole nuthin hev ye?

IAVE. No your majesty.

PEASKIN. Didn't, didn't kill no one, I reckon?<sup>9</sup>

IAVE. Oh no Great Spirit. I am pursued.

PEASKIN. By Jinks I did'n know they had dudes down here. One a thems Pursued eh. One a them villains, huh? By Jinks I did'n know they had any dudes around here. Tain't no dude is it? (Sound of music stirs afresh and grows louder) Say what's agoin on here today. Parade or suthin.

IAVE. Oh know Great Spirit Dude. Great Spirit--?

PEASKIN. I though maybe you had heard on em. Well it dont matter. Whut is this here that youre so skeered on.

IAVE. The preists Great Spirit. They have prayed for days in the hopes of you coming and today they were about to burn me in offering to the Sun that it might hasten your arrival. Only now when my fetters were loosened I arose and fled. Here I have come to you great Spirit and here they will pursue me. I shall burn unless you will it otherwise.

PEASKIN. Preists prayed fer my comin? She<sup>10</sup> outen her mind! Burn you to git the Sun to rush me along. He! he! Shes outen her mind! He! he! Durned if she aint got right smart of beauty though. (Putting his

hand on her shoulder) Come, little gal. Dont git skart. Run up behind that there cheer there and sit down. Nobody ull tech ye I guess-Shes outen her mind. (Iave ascends to back of throne).

[Enter right, CHORUS]

CHORUS. Dead is the king to his people and kingdom that mourn him

Dead to the earth and its glories, to life and its pleasures  
Fled to the Sun has his soul-to his father the sun light  
Lone and forlorn without ruler are we his poor children.

\*

[VIZIER ALONE]. Sing to him oh my children a song of repentence  
The realm is no kingdom, the palace no palace without thee longing  
Forsaken the land and forgotten thy subjects who mourn  
Ask of the father, the Light[,] that he send us a ruler.  
Let him but send us the stranger and he shall be welcome  
He shall be King and our Master who comes by the morrow.

\*

GRAND VIZIER. Call me the guards, the guards of the tomb now call

The score of Preists who by the dead king wait.  
Let them appear that I may bespeak them all  
That I may command and the wrath of the Sun abate.

[PEASKIN]. Good people all, where be I at  
What am this here I see.

You speak like me, United States  
And still its queer to me.

Way back in Indiana  
Where I lived for 40 years  
Theres no sich thing as trailin robes

Nur none of them-there spears  
CH. Oho! he yah! He yah! Oh ho! This is a king indeed  
Who never hath a robe yet seen nor yet a spear decreed.

[PEASKIN]. You poky tribe!! Darn critters you!!  
Dont mock me, I'm no joke!

You aint so bully smooth yerself.  
To stand there and to poke  
Your fingers at a stranger,  
Fer by gum if I'm alone  
I aint afeered an I kin lick  
Ye all, come one by one.

CH. Oho, He Yah! he yah-oho, this is our king indeed  
He can us lick, come one by one, this now he hath decreed.  
[PEASKIN.] The good book sez, sez it (scratches his head) sez it  
Dont cast no rocks en sich  
Unless yer purty white yerself  
And youuns aint  
No golddinked saint  
As I kin see. So drop complaint.  
[CH.] Oho! He yea He ya Oho. This is a king indeed.  
We are no saints, We've no complaints. This much he hath decreed.

#

[end of transcript. NB: all spellings and punctuation are *sic*]

---

<sup>1</sup>See *Theodore Dreiser: A Selection of Uncollected Prose*, ed. Donald Pizer (Detroit: Wayne State Univ. Press, 1977), pp. 33-35. *Chicago Daily Globe*, October 23, 1892, p. 4. Signed "Carl Dreiser."

<sup>2</sup>It was in a file folder marked "Miscellaneous," in Box 186, which mostly contains film scripts, including versions of the musical *My Gal Sal*.

<sup>3</sup>*Newspaper Days*, p. 195.

<sup>4</sup>*Theodore Dreiser: A Selection of Uncollected Prose*, p. 100. *Ev'ry Month*, January 1897, pp. 5-6.

<sup>5</sup>Vera Dreiser, *My Uncle Theodore* (New York: Nash Publishing, 1976), p. 76.

<sup>6</sup>Dreiser to Sara Osborne White, March 2, 1898. (Lilly Memorial Library, Indiana University).

<sup>7</sup>*Newspaper Days*, p. 194.

<sup>8</sup>*Newspaper Days*, p. 415.

<sup>9</sup>In the margin above this line are the words "dont [aint?] belong Dem. Party"-presumably an idea for a joke, i.e., belonging to the Democratic Party is worse than murder.

<sup>10</sup>Above this appear the words "got the willys."



# DREISER VS. TERRE HAUTE, or PAUL DRESSER'S BODY LIES A-MOLDERIN' IN THE GRAVE

Richard W. Dowell  
Indiana State University

W.A. Swanberg's *Dreiser* includes a photograph of the historical marker in Terre Haute identifying the birthplace of Paul Dresser, a modest two-story structure now standing in Fairbanks Park on Dresser Drive. The caption for that photograph reads: "The far greater brother is forgotten in Terre Haute" (331). It has escaped few literary historians that Terre Haute has been most generous in its tributes to songwriter Paul Dresser while virtually ignoring Theodore Dreiser. The reasons for this disparity, however, are less clear. Dresser's popularity, of course, is easily understood. His music had tremendous mass appeal; he authored Indiana's state song; and during his years of greatest success, he enjoyed returning to Terre Haute to entertain in the hotel lobbies, stroll along Wabash Avenue and generously share his celebrity with old and new friends. As all who knew him readily attested, Dresser liked Terre Haute, and the city of his birth has responded in kind.

Dreiser, on the other hand, lacked this common touch both personally and literarily. Yet, the cause of Terre Haute's reaction to him, ranging from seeming indifference to near hostility, appears to lie deeper. It has been suggested that the city was merely retaliating for Dreiser's attacks in his literature. If so, these attacks were more imagined than real. Certainly the eight years Dreiser spent in Terre Haute were filled with poverty and despair, and he made it no secret in *Dawn* and other writings that the memories were often painful. Still, Dreiser was too much the fatalist to vilify the city for his family's misfortunes. Terre Haute was to his mind the setting, not the cause. In fact, in 1915, when Dreiser made his only return visit—an unannounced and completely unheralded stopover of about twelve hours—his impressions recorded in *A Hoosier Holiday* were quite positive. He noted the city's great vitality and praised the "young, hopeful, seeking atmosphere" that characterized a community on the rise (396). If many Indiana readers found *A Hoosier Holiday* offensive, Terre Hauteans had little reason to complain.

What then caused this cold war that seems to have existed during much of Dreiser's lifetime and beyond? If those interested in this question were to drive westward out of Terre Haute across the Wabash

River and continue about three-hundred feet past the bridge, they would come to a decaying monument—two circles on either side of the highway. The brickwork is virtually gone—probably the work of vandals. The commemorative plaques have been removed, leaving only weather stains to show they ever existed. In the middle of the circle on the right stands a rusty pole, out of which hang a few disconnected electric wires. An observer would need a fertile imagination indeed to realize that this was once intended to represent a giant candle gleaming through the sycamores. Within a few more years, the grass and weeds will have completed their task of obscuring this landmark—the Paul Dresser Memorial—a memorial that was over twenty years in the planning stage, caused a definite rift between Dreiser and Terre Haute's civic leaders, and may well be a contributing cause of Dreiser's relative obscurity in the city of his birth.

Much of the story behind this rift can be found in the correspondence, newspaper clippings and other records of Terre Haute's long-defunct Paul Dresser Memorial Association.<sup>1</sup> Among the correspondents were such notables as Irving Berlin and movie mogul Will Hayes, but by far the most conspicuous celebrity was Theodore Dreiser, who kept directly or indirectly in contact with the Memorial Association for nearly twenty years, starting in 1922.

The story actually began, however, on January 29, 1906, when Paul Dresser died at forty-eight years of age. As his obituary noted, Paul during his lifetime had made several fortunes through his songs, and in his Falstaffian manner he had predicted until the very end that there would be money for everyone. Yet, Paul died impoverished. Changing tastes in music, some unfortunate business decisions, and Paul's generous, free-spending nature had all taken their toll. Ironically, Paul's last popular song, "My Gal Sal," had hit the market, but it got off to such a slow start commercially that his estate realized no immediate benefits. Thus, the expense of the funeral and burial fell to the family, who, including Theodore, were too hard-pressed financially to bear it. Ultimately, the cost of what turned out to be a lavish Catholic funeral was borne by the White Rats, a fraternal organization of New York actors, and a benefit was planned to defray the expenses of the burial—but that benefit was never held. Finally, Edward Dreiser's mother-in-law, Margaret Shelly, stepped forward to arrange the burial in New York. Then the plot began to thicken. Paul's oldest sister, Mame, started to brood because Paul was not buried next to his "Mother Dear" in the St. Boniface Cemetery in Chicago. So, after a year, she forged the benevolent in-law's signature and had the body exhumed and transferred to Chicago. This subterfuge caused considerable unpleasantness within the family, but Paul was next to his mother, where he remained in

obscurity for seven years.

Then in 1913, when the Indiana legislature chose Paul's "On the Banks of the Wabash" as the state song, some stirring of interest developed to move his body to Terre Haute. Dreiser was contacted by a Terre Haute group and asked to get the family's permission to transfer Paul, which he did, but soon he found himself being drawn into a tug-of-war between Terre Haute and Indianapolis for the honor of being Paul's final resting place. Rather than become embroiled in what he regarded as a local quarrel, he withdrew his support from both cities. Soon, however, the interest waned, and nothing materialized regarding the disposition of Paul's body until early October 1922, when Indiana Governor McCray recommended that Paul's body be transferred to a site along the Wabash near Lafayette, where a memorial would be erected. Paul had no Lafayette connections, but seemingly the memorial would help justify the state's contribution to the construction of a park there. To prevent Lafayette's usurping its claim to Paul, Terre Haute was galvanized into action. The Paul Dresser Memorial Association, under the leadership of local druggist J. Bruce Bindley, was founded. Shortly thereafter, companion state and national organizations were set up. The national group, led by former Terre Hautean Robert Heinel, had its headquarters in New York City, where Dreiser was then living, and included among its membership the aforementioned Will Hayes and Irving Berlin.

The first action of the Memorial Association was to appoint an Art Committee, made up of civic leaders throughout the state. The task of the Art Committee was to plan a suitable Dresser Memorial in Terre Haute. The next action was to get Eugene V. Debs to encourage Dreiser once again to support Terre Haute's claim to the body. Debs wrote Dreiser, but in the meantime, Dreiser had been contacted by those who proposed the Lafayette project and also by the Chicago Indiana Society, who saw themselves losing the body and now sought family permission to erect a belated monument over the grave in the St. Boniface Cemetery.

Seeing that he was again likely to be caught in the middle of a Hoosier controversy, Dreiser sought Debs' advice. In the only correspondence known to exist between these famous Terre Hauteans, Dreiser wrote on October 17, 1922: "The logical place for a memorial is Terre Haute--and on the banks of the Wabash there. Paul liked Terre Haute. He liked to go back there." Dreiser then went on to summarize Terre Haute's earlier failure to finalize its earlier plans to move Paul's body and to note the current promise of the Lafayette project. He then concluded:

Personally I favored & do now Terre Haute, as do the other members of the family. But if a quarrel is to develop which will mean no monument for a long time, I would rather see the Lafayette project go through. Actually, in this crisis I would like your sincere advice. I do not know Indiana very well & you do. What do you suggest. I am writing [the head of the Lafayette project] that personally I prefer Terre Haute—as would Paul. He was born there & always liked it. But also I hope that no delaying quarrel arises. (Constantine 2-3)

Clearly Dreiser was doing all he could to support the Paul Dresser Memorial Association and within two weeks wrote the Terre Haute branch that "all the living members of the Dreiser-Dresser family favor Terre Haute as the site of the proposed monument to Paul Dresser." One unidentified sister wished to know which project would prove most ambitious, but Dreiser found such concerns unbecoming and promised to "obtain the united consent of the living members of the family for the transfer of the ashes from Chicago." He needed to know only when and to whom such consent should be sent. Presumably, at this point, Dreiser was under the impression that Paul's remains were to be cremated.

In November of 1922, Dreiser sent the Memorial Association his recommendation for the design of the monument. "I favor a fountain with an urn on top—containing Paul's ashes. It would add to the charm & beauty of the monument if a life-size relief of Paul's face were set into the front face of the shaft—with his name—and the chorus or—all of the lines of the song, cut into the marble below. Or—face & song might be cast in bronze & set into the face of the marble. The fountain part could be below all this." He also noted that he was sending Governor McCray the signatures of all family members favoring the transfer of Paul's remains to Terre Haute.

Despite his caution, however, Dreiser found himself unexpectedly and quite innocently the focus of a controversy. Hearing of Indiana's plans to honor Paul Dresser, the *New York Times*, in an item titled "Out in the Byways," took the occasion to attack Hoosiers for their neglect of Dreiser. Accusing Indiana of provincialism, the *Times* concluded its editorial: "And yet, Dreiser's book, *A Hoosier Holiday*, is an indispensable document for the study of the peculiar Indiana civilization, worth for that purpose a dozen native Indiana novels [by Tarkington or Gene Stratton-Porter]. Dreiser made the mistake of mentioning a few things that all Hoosiers see but none talks about; but Indiana would be a better educated state if that book were appreciated at home." The *Terre Haute Tribune* was quick to respond, quoting the *Times* attack but taking its

anger out on Dreiser himself. "As far as Mr. Theodore Dreiser is concerned," ran the *Tribune* editorial, "we will wager a doughnut that 'On the Banks of the Wabash' will still be sung when on-coming generations have forgotten there ever was a *Hoosier Holiday*, a *Carrie Gerhardt* [sic], or any other of Theodore Dreiser's brisk bits of realism. Illinois earth may cover Paul's bones, but all of Hoosierdom is his monument--and it ill becomes his brother to knock any chips there off" ("About Paul Dresser" 4).

Dreiser perceived that his active participation was likely to complicate plans for a memorial and impede progress; thus, in a letter to Debs he announced his decision to withdraw, also taking the opportunity to admonish Terre Haute for the unfairness of its attack on him and its own lack of progress in honoring Paul. As he wrote Debs on December 26,

I have no influence with the *New York Times*. It has never been friendly to me. And why it should rise at this inopportune moment to say a good word for me is beyond me. I might even suspect a subterranean vein [sic] of malice if I were given to suspecting. But I didn't start this Terre Haute or Indiana business, and having gotten the family consent for Terre Haute, I certainly may be permitted to back out. My sketch of Paul in the book *Twelve Men* will certainly clear me of any desire to rob him of his worthy fame and there's an end on't. I wish they would erect a memorial as they planned since they stopped another city from doing so--but beyond that I have nothing to say. (Constantine 4)

Dreiser's having communicated to Governor McCray the family's wishes that a memorial be erected in Terre Haute, the Lafayette project fell by the wayside, and the Paul Dresser Memorial Association launched a massive fund-raising campaign, one that would hopefully generate between \$250,000 and \$500,000. Terre Haute Mayor Ora D. Davis proclaimed April 23, 1923, Paul Dresser Day in Terre Haute, and to mark the occasion, poet Max Ehrmann drafted a proclamation for Governor McCray, asking that Paul's remains be returned to the place of his birth. That proclamation read in part:

The remains of Paul Dresser are to be conveyed to a lovely spot on the banks of the Wabash at Terre Haute, Indiana--a spot which in his life was for him sacred ground, oft trodden by his boyish feet, and which in later years his memory hallowed by his immortal song....On a beautiful

bank of the gentle Wabash, beside the National Highway, where thousands of travelers may see the place, will his body rest. A beautiful memorial will be erected to mark this site. Here will sleep forever all that was mortal of Paul Dresser, composer of popular ballads, lover of people.

On April 24, this proclamation was signed by McCray, who asked all Hoosiers and former Hoosiers for contributions. In Terre Haute, there was a whirlwind of activity. Programs recalling Paul's life were planned for the area schools; the local theaters agreed to have three-minute speeches about Dresser, slide shows, a playing of "On the Banks of the Wabash" and occasionally a sing-along between movies; the newspapers ran full-page pleas for public support; and a contract with the Victor Company was signed for a "Wabash record," featuring "On the Banks" and "Way Down in Old Indiana." The money began to roll in, at least in Terre Haute. The City Council contributed \$10,000; Eli Lilly added \$500; and Elks Lodge #86 boasted a 100% response to honor brother Paul. Within a relatively short period, the Terre Haute organization had raised \$35,000, and plans for the memorial were becoming increasingly ambitious. However, the state and national response was discouraging. In fact, Robert Heintz, national chairperson, was beginning to have misgivings about the emphasis of the Terre Haute group. On April 11, 1924, he wrote Terre Haute chairman J. Bruce Bindley to urge restraint, doubtless at Dreiser's urging.

If I may suggest it, in the drive I would lay stress upon the fact we want to bring Paul home and bury him where he so richly deserves to rest, 'On the Banks of the Wabash.' I think there will be greater appeal in this than in talking of erecting a great memorial. To my own way of thinking, the finest thing we could do would be to restore [Paul's birthplace] and move it intact, perhaps creating a little park with sycamores....Monuments are cold and the less of this we could have, the better it would suit me. This, I believe, also expresses the view of Mr. Dreiser, Mr. Dresser's brother.

This suggestion was apparently ignored in Indiana, for on June 2, 1924, newly appointed interim Governor Emmett F. Branch issued a proclamation that June 15 through 30 would be designated State Song Fortnight. Branch expressed the hope that during such a period each Indiana county would conduct drives to support the Paul Dresser Memorial Fund, which would be used to finance a commemorative park and boulevard in Terre Haute. Seemingly, however, State Song Fortnight did not do a great deal to stimulate a waning state-wide interest in the

project.

Then in December 1924, the Art Committee made its recommendation, a recommendation that stressed modesty and good taste. The Art Committee unanimously rejected Terre Haute's desire for "a monument of imposing size and grandeur." Rather they operated on the rationale that Paul Dresser was "not a man of affairs, nor a great constructive leader, nor a statesman; [he was] a plain man of the people....The idea has therefore persisted that the memorial, in order to be appropriate, must be simple like the song itself. An elaborate, ostentatious monument would seem out of harmony." Perhaps not coincidentally, the Committee supported Heinel's wishes in the matter. They recommended that Dresser's birthplace be moved to the juncture of the Wabash River and National Highway. In that location, it would be furnished and landscaped in a manner consistent with the family's lifestyle during the 1860's. On the bank of the river, in a sanctuary made up primarily of trees and bushes, Paul's grave would be placed.

The Terre Haute chapter, which by 1925 was the only viable branch of the Paul Dresser Memorial Association, was disappointed by the Art Committee's proposal and turned to the state legislature for support in realizing an even more grandiose project—the Paul Dresser Memorial Park on the west side of the Wabash River. As planned, the park would cover approximately one thousand acres and would feature a lake of 400, on which there would be boating, fishing and swimming. Bisected by the National Highway and thus immediately accessible to tourists, the park would be maintained by a ten-cents-per-person charge for all visitors. On January 19, 1925, House Bill #62 was introduced and referred to the Ways and Means Committee. It asked for \$150,000. The Terre Haute Memorial Association lobbied vigorously for the bill's passage, but the opposition was considerable. Dreiser, who had grudgingly supported the park proposal, was heartened by the "sensitive and poetic understanding" of the Art Committee's recommendation and now strongly endorsed it. "You know what I thought of the [park] scheme at the time," he wrote Heinel in January 1925. "I accepted it solely to get something done and not to seem obstreperous. No monument in the center of a glaring highway has ever appealed to me. [The Art Committee's proposal] conveys my mood in regard to such things exactly. Yet just how to arrange matters so as to please all I do not know. If the [birthplace] should be moved and [the Committee's] plan carried out to the letter it would please me immensely. If modifications are to be made I would rely on the taste and obvious artistic judgment of [the Committee] to make them as acceptable as possible." Responding to Dreiser's wishes and its own aversion to the gaucherie of the Terre Haute plan, the virtually defunct National organization withheld its support from Bill #62.

On the home front, a few disgruntled Terre Haute citizens expressed fear that the enthusiasm of the park promoters was running away with their judgment and would result in a tremendous loss in tax dollars. They pointed out that the proposed area had always been and would continue to be a dumping ground infested by squatters. An adjacent park would only attract more squatters. Also, the seepage problem would make it impossible to control the water level of the proposed lake, resulting in low water during the summer and floods every spring and fall. Financially, the project was, according to one skeptic, an act of "pouring water into a rat hole." Despite its opposition, House Bill #62 narrowly passed in March 1925 and was sent to newly elected Governor Ed Jackson, whose concern for the state's shaky economy caused him reluctantly to veto it.

Denied state aid by Governor Jackson's veto, the Terre Haute Memorial Committee scaled down its plans and decided to use the \$35,000 already donated to build a memorial circle, appropriately landscaped and designed, along the National Highway some 300 feet west of the Wabash River Bridge. The circle would have a diameter of approximately 600 feet. The birthplace and grave were apparently *not* to be a part of this memorial. An effort was made to enlist Dreiser's support for this new project, but he had become so disgusted by the delays and what he considered the city's attempts at self-aggrandizement that he refused to show any interest. "The truth is...that I am in no way emotionally interested in this particular scheme which [the Paul Dresser Memorial Association] insists on indulging in in connection with Paul's memory," Dreiser wrote Bindley in February 1927.

My suggestion...was that so little as \$15,000.00 be secured wherewith the cottage in which Paul was born could have been purchased, as well as one or two adjacent lots surrounding it to give it a small park form, and his body brought down from Chicago to be buried there. In addition, his musical effects, which chance to be in my possession, were to be transferred to the interior of the cottage. This inexpensive plan was vetoed by individuals who happen to be interested only in a crossroads monument.

It may be that [a showy monument] will be of greater advantage to Terre Haute as an up-and-growing American city. As a sensitive memorial to a man who added glamour and emotion to the name of Indiana, it is in my judgment nil.

I am sorry to be indifferent, but under the circumstances, the state is unavoidable.



Bindley was obviously offended by Dreiser's tone and responded with equal disdain. "Personally, I am in no way emotionally interested in the old homestead or its location," he fired back, "and if we developed this into the memorial it would become obscure and very few people would receive any advantage whatsoever from the scheme." He continued:

There is no sentiment to me in the musical instruments, or the material belongings of your Brother. I am not trying to perpetuate the old home-stead or the musical effects, but I am trying to immortalize something which is larger. And that something is the spiritual side or the soul of Paul Dresser....Our plans for a memorial are not at all as you suggested, a cross-road monument, but it is near the Wabash River, where hundreds of thousands of people are obliged to pass annually. This memorial will be, I hope, of such a nature that the weary may rest, the traveler will be refreshed, and inspiration will come to those who pause.

In closing, Bindley expressed regret at Dreiser's indifference but predicted that when Terre Haute's dream became a reality, such indifference would become admiration.

As it turned out, however, the \$35,000 was an insufficient amount to allow construction of the memorial to begin, particularly in view of the land fill that was necessary to make the area suitable. At one point, the Memorial Association approached the city about using the site as a public dump until the land fill was achieved, but this offer was not acted upon. By 1931, Bindley admitted that the memorial remained a "vague idea" and if accomplished would be modest because of a lack of funds.

In 1933, the drama took a somewhat unexpected twist, when Paul Dresser Gormley, Paul's nephew and son of Claire Dreiser, wrote Bindley to inquire about the money collected and the plans for its use. In a guarded way he suggested that he might be able to cooperate in such a way as to make the memorial a "living monument." Encouraged by what he took to be an offer of financial assistance, Bindley responded that the Association would be indeed interested in Gormley's thoughts on the matter. Gormley then presented his suggestion that the money be spent to build an eight-room house, four rooms to be used as a Dresser museum to house Paul's personal effects, including the organ on which he wrote the state song, the other four to be a residence for Paul's brother Rome and his surviving sisters, who would literally be "living monuments" of a sort. Gormley noted that they were at the time "dependent," presumably on him, and the family would be most grateful if such an arrangement could be worked out. Bindley politely but firmly

rejected this plan to return a part of the Dreiser clan to Terre Haute.

Other than Gormley's suggestion, there were no appreciable developments over the next five years. Sporadically, the Memorial Association investigated the possibilities of purchasing the birthplace and returning Paul's body to Terre Haute, but overall the organization lapsed into inactivity. Finally, in 1936, the WPA came to the rescue, providing \$21,000 to allow construction of the memorial west of the river to begin. The following year, a federal grant of \$67,000 became available to finish the project. With the completion of the Dresser Memorial, talk of bringing Paul's body to Terre Haute resumed, but no action was taken. Ironically, upon hearing of the soon-to-be-completed memorial, a New York newspaper again tried to undercut the celebration. This time the New York *Post* pointed out that although Terre Haute was honoring Paul Dresser as the composer of "On the Banks of the Wabash," Theodore Dreiser was in reality the author of the song's lyrics.

Even though Dreiser had claimed in "My Brother Paul" that the idea for the song was his and that he had dashed off the first verse and chorus in a moment of frivolity, he was on this occasion quick to minimize his participation. Demanding a correction from the *Post*, he wrote:

I would like this correction made for the reason that at this time the city of Terre Haute is planning to dedicate a memorial to my brother, as the author of this song, and I most certainly do not want the impression made and left that I was trying in any way to detract from his fame as the author of the song in toto. After all, I [claimed authorship of the first verse and chorus] somewhere between 1907 and 1911, most certainly before he was selected as the song laureate of Indiana. At the time I published the [account], I was certainly not conscious of the thought that this explanation would be necessary or that I thereby would in any way be looked upon as detracting from his full credit, which I certainly was not. I was not interested in song writing myself, but solely in his fame and success in that field, which I have in many other ways acknowledged.

Terre Haute's response to this exchange was not recorded; however, Dreiser was *not* invited to participate in the dedication of the memorial, even though he had expressed a willingness to attend.

Then, four years later, the Memorial Association got its opportunity to show indifference to Dreiser's own plans to honor Paul. In February 1940, it was contacted on behalf of Theodore Dreiser and asked to

participate in "Paul Dresser Day," marking the 83rd anniversary of Paul's birth in Terre Haute. Indiana's Governor Townsend had set aside April 22 and the Mutual Broadcasting Company was carrying the celebration live from coast to coast. It was hoped that a portion of the program could be devoted to Terre Haute's tribute to a favorite son. The celebration was admittedly an attempt to create national interest in Dresser for an upcoming movie. As the appeal to the Memorial Association concluded: "This [celebration] would naturally be of great value to Terre Haute and would be a fulfillment of one of Mr. Dreiser's greatest ambitions: to see his brother eulogized on the screen" ("Plan Observance of Paul Dresser Day" 12). Terre Haute, apparently having no interest in the fulfillment of Mr. Dreiser's ambitions, chose to boycott the celebration. The Terre Haute *Star* expressed shock. "Terre Haute Content to Listen as Nation Honors Paul Dresser" ran a headline. The story continued: "In Terre Haute, where the gleam of the candle lights through the sycamores is simulated by tall electric candles in a memorial dedicated to the memory of the bard, there will be no formal observance" (2).

That was essentially the last volley in the skirmish between Dreiser and Terre Haute. In July 1940, after some futile attempts to develop a park around the Dresser Memorial, the Association turned the area over to the Park Board, and the monument gradually fell into its present state of decay. In 1945, Dreiser died, and Bruce Bindley followed him the next year. Twenty years later, in 1966, as Dreiser had desired, Paul's birthplace was restored by the Vigo County Historical Society and moved to Fairbanks Park overlooking the Wabash. The next year, it was designated a State Shrine and Memorial by the Indiana legislature. Paul's body remains in its "temporary" grave in St. Boniface Cemetery, marked by the monument placed there in 1922, with Dreiser's permission, by the Chicago Indiana Society. In a curious bit of irony, Dreiser's estate donated Paul's previously rejected piano to the Memorial Association, sending it C.O.D. in 1949. It is now housed in the birthplace. In the final analysis, Dreiser's wishes prevailed, but in the process, he earned the ill will of prominent Terre Hauteans who might one day have headed a Theodore Dreiser Memorial Association.

---

<sup>1</sup>The papers of the Paul Dresser Memorial Association are part of a private collection and at present are not accessible to scholars. Sources not otherwise documented are from this collection. Portions of Dreiser's letters are quoted with permission of the Trustees of the University of Pennsylvania, who hold the copyright to Dreiser's unpublished literary remains. Carbon copies of Dreiser's 8 February 1927 letter to J. Bruce

Bindley and his 17 March 1936 letter to the New York *Post* are available in the Dreiser Collection at the Van Pelt Library, University of Pennsylvania.

#### Works Cited

- "About Paul Dresser." *Terre Haute Tribune*, 20 December 1922, p. 4.
- Constantine, J. Robert. "Debs and Dreiser: A Note." *Dreiser Newsletter*, 5 (Spring 1974) 1-5.
- Dreiser, Theodore. *A Hoosier Holiday*. New York: John Lane Company, 1916.
- "Plan Observance of Paul Dresser Day." *Terre Haute Tribune*, 23 February 1940, p. 12.
- Swanberg, W. A. *Dreiser*. New York: Scribners, 1965.
- "Terre Haute Content to Listen as Nation Honors Paul Dresser." *Terre Haute Star*, 22 April 1940, pp. 1-2.

## LILLIAN NORDICA AND SISTER CARRIE

Nancy Warner Barrineau  
University of Georgia

The two and a half years Dreiser spent free-lancing for the 1890s ten-cent magazines—cheap, usually short-lived periodicals like *Success*, *Truth*, *Ainslee's*, *Metropolitan*, and *Demorest's*—was the last phase of an apprenticeship which slowly transformed him from a hack journalist to the author of an American classic. Many of his early non-fiction articles (a large number of them based on interviews) were about artists—painters, photographers, sculptors, stained-glass window makers, harpists, pianists, violinists, and singers—and frequently his subjects, like his first protagonist, were women. This early experience was important because it helped him to develop an aesthetic and determine what it meant to be an American artist in the last decade of the century. It was also significant because in the process, often quite by accident, he stumbled across people and settings which he could later mine as sources for his fiction, especially *Sister Carrie*. That was precisely what happened in 1899 when he interviewed Lillian Nordica, a successful American opera singer who very likely inspired him to transform Carrie Meeber into a famous stage star.

Dreiser interviewed Nordica sometime before he published "The Making of a Great Singer. A Conversation with Lillian Nordica" in May 1899.<sup>1</sup> This article (like many of his other early pieces on artists) gave him a chance to explore and celebrate American art forms which were slowly gaining independence from European models. He filled pages with Nordica's praise for the cultural milieu in Germany, Italy, and France, but he concluded the article with a blatantly nationalistic conclusion. Here Nordica praised American youth, especially young women, and predicted that each year more of them would be attracted by increasingly bigger rewards (both fame and money) to choose careers in opera. Despite the evidence she had already presented, she insisted that "America will yet produce great singers." because "it is too large and too generally intellectual not to" (445).

As Carrie began to take shape, Dreiser must have remembered Nordica's lengthy comments about women artists. When he asked, "Do

you think [opera] is a superior profession for women?" she replied,

"Yes, one of the very best. It is calculated to prove agreeable to women because it gives them that which they most desire, applause. More than any other calling it satisfies a woman's heart. It satisfies her sentiment and sympathies. It allows her to dress and to gain recognition of her taste, and lastly, it gives her an audience, that delightful thing which so many crave." (445)

This passage, which sounds suspiciously like a male interpretation of what every woman must want, may have been added by Dreiser, not Nordica. Still, it suggests that he recognized "an audience" as "that delightful thing which so many"—both men and women—"crave." On one level he was writing about Lillian Nordica, but he was also laying bare his own aspirations and those which would drive Carrie.

In fact, the statement identifies many of the desires which motivate Carrie. Though she begins her career as a chorus girl in New York because Hurstwood cannot pay the rent, performing on the stage fulfills some of her deepest longings, precisely those which Nordica's comments describe. Like Lillian Nordica, Carrie wants to dress well, express her inner emotional life, and find an audience which will applaud her artistic genius. She even changes her name from Meeber to Madenda, perhaps in imitation of Nordica, whose family name was actually Norton. As Ellen Moers points out, Dreiser is at his best as "the novelist of the inarticulate hero."<sup>2</sup> Carrie, who is unable to verbalize her desires, can only act them out, but Dreiser knew what they were because Nordica had articulated them to him.

Because of her limited background, education, and experience, Carrie obviously cannot become an opera singer. For a woman in her social position, though, the stage represented the same kind of achievement as the opera did for the wealthier, more privileged Nordica, who had told Dreiser earlier in the interview that to her New England parents a musical career was "about as reprehensible as a stage career, and for that they had no tolerance whatever" (439). The path Carrie chooses also had a much broader appeal for the democratic audience which Dreiser was hoping to attract to his first novel. And, of course, his own background (his relative lack of exposure, at least until much later, to the kind of culture represented by opera, and his experience covering the theater for the *St. Louis Republic* and later editing *Ev'ry Month*, a magazine designed to market popular music) ultimately determined Carrie's career. In short, Dreiser was ill-equipped to dramatize the rise of an opera star, so he chose, instead, to make his protagonist an actress in musical dramas.

Dreiser published "The Making of a Great Singer" anonymously in *Ainslee's*, one of his favorite early free-lance markets.<sup>3</sup> But it is certainly his, for the following January he republished essentially the same piece as "The Story of a Song-Queen's Triumph" in Orison Swett Marden's *Success*. He sold over thirty similar pattern interviews to Marden between January 1898, when the first issue appeared, and April 1902, so it makes sense that, while casting about for yet another subject, he remembered the anonymous interview with Nordica which he had written less than a year before.<sup>4</sup> The revised article, which describes the circumstances of the interview, provides another source for *Sister Carrie*. This time Dreiser explained that Nordica was presently in New York, "fulfilling her part in the most brilliant operatic season the city has ever known. She lives in sumptuous style at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel, where I met her by appointment."<sup>5</sup> Their meeting may very well have been the genesis of Carrie's move into first the Wellington and then the Waldorf, luxury hotels which symbolize her success on the New York stage. At the very least, the interview was an early entrance for Dreiser into the wealthy, glamorous world portrayed at the end of the novel.<sup>6</sup>

To repackage the article, Dreiser changed the ending's tone and emphasis considerably. Once again they discussed the possibilities offered by American opera, but this time, when Dreiser asked whether "there ought to be a number of our American women singers rise up in the future," Nordica replied, "There ought to be, but it is a question whether there will be." Young American singers, she claimed, "are not cut out for the work which it requires to develop a good voice" (48). Then, at Dreiser's prompting, she acknowledged that "many young people have genius," but she also warned him:

"The world gives very little recognition for a great deal of labor paid in; and, when I earn a thousand dollars for a half hour's singing sometimes, it does not nearly average up for all the years and for the labor much more difficult which I contributed without recompense." (49)

The shift in emphasis seems curious considering the makeup of *Success's* audience, which surely expected the interview to center on the inevitability of American achievement. Perhaps Dreiser was becoming more skeptical as he churned out one interview after another with various celebrities, or he may have been reflecting on how little recognition most geniuses, including himself, were getting "for a great deal of labor paid in."

At any rate, the differences between the two articles are important because they indicate that Dreiser was not merely copying down Nordica's

words and quoting them verbatim, but instead was arranging his material for artistic effect (sometimes even fictionalizing it), getting ready for the time when he would create his own characters and dialogue, still based on actual people and speech patterns. The interview with Nordica is one indication that as he moved toward the end of the century he was, whether consciously or not, gathering the sources which would ground his first novel firmly in the social and artistic atmosphere of the 1890s.

---

<sup>1</sup>*Ainslee's* 3 (May 1899): 438-45.

<sup>2</sup>"The Finesse of Dreiser." *American Scholar* 33 (Winter 1963-64): 109.

<sup>3</sup>During 1899 Dreiser published articles in *Ainslee's* in the February, March, April, June, July, August, and October issues. For all but one of these (which he signed Herman D. White) he used his own name. Why he did not sign the Nordica interview is not clear. Perhaps he thought he needed to lower his profile: in the September 1896 *Ev'ry Month* he had criticized Stephen Crane for "writing night and day" ("The Literary Shower" 23). Or perhaps his friend Richard Duffy, *Ainslee's* editor, wanted to downplay Dreiser's contributions to the magazine.

<sup>4</sup>Marden must have been pleased with the interview, for he used it twice more without Dreiser's knowledge, first as "Nordica: What It Costs to Become a Queen" in *How They Succeeded* and then as "A Great Vocalist Shows That Only Years of Labor Can Win the Heights of Song-Lillian Nordica" in *Little Visits with Great Americans*. (See John F. Huth, Jr., "Theodore Dreiser, Success Monger." *Colophon* 3 (Winter 1938): 120-33.)

<sup>5</sup>*Selected Magazine Articles of Theodore Dreiser*. Ed. Yoshinobu Hakutani. Rutherford: Fairleigh Dickinson UP, 1985, 1987. Vol. II: 37.

<sup>6</sup>In August 1897, a few months before Dreiser quit, *Ev'ry Month* published "A Mammoth Hotel," an anonymous article about the Waldorf (6). Dreiser probably did not write it, but it may have brought the new hotel to his attention as an effective symbol of fame and prestige.



## DREISER'S "COUNTRY DOCTOR": DR. AMOS WOOLLEY OF WARSAW

Robert Coltrane  
Lock Haven University

When Theodore Dreiser was a teenager living in Warsaw, Indiana, in the 1880s, he and his family were provided medical treatment by Dr. Amos Woolley, a man famous locally for his generosity. Dreiser was later to remember this generosity when he wrote about Dr. Woolley, first in the lengthy piece that would be included in *Twelve Men* (1919), and again in the brief anecdotes found in *A Hoosier Holiday* (1916) and *Dawn* (1931).

In conducting research for the Pennsylvania Edition of Dreiser's *Twelve Men*, I have found that a few of the subjects—such as Dreiser's brother Paul—have been thoroughly identified. However, the identification of the others has been limited mainly to an indication of the subject's correct name, as is the case with "The Country Doctor," whom Dreiser called Dr. Gridley but who was really Dr. Woolley.

Born in Philadelphia on 1 March 1829, Amos Woolley moved with his parents to Cincinnati at age four.<sup>1</sup> At age seventeen he went to Miami County, Indiana, to work as a blacksmith with his two older brothers in a wagon and carriage-making business. When health problems forced him to give up blacksmithing, he began to earn his living as a schoolteacher while studying medicine under Dr. B. Henton, one of the first physicians to practice in Peru, Indiana. After several years of apprenticeship in Gilead, Indiana, he practiced medicine for twelve years in the village of Palestine, in Kosciusko County. In October 1865 he married Martha Bunker and the following year assisted in organizing the medical college at Fort Wayne, Indiana, from which he was graduated with honors. In 1869, he moved to Warsaw, where he remained for the rest of his life.

When the Dreisers moved to Warsaw in 1884, Dr. Woolley was fifty-five years old, rather than the sixty-five Dreiser makes him in *Dawn*. In *Twelve Men*, Dreiser suggests he is even older by having him tell a patient: "I have been your physician now for fifty years."<sup>2</sup>

Probably late in 1901 or early in 1902, Dreiser composed the detailed

portrait of Dr. Woolley which he called "Samaritan of the Backwoods." This piece was rejected by *McClure's* on 30 July 1902 and by *Harper's* on 1 August 1902.<sup>3</sup> In December 1917, when Dreiser began assembling the portraits for *Twelve Men*, he revised this piece and published it in the July 1918 issue of *Harper's Monthly*.<sup>4</sup> Later it was included in *Twelve Men*, with several textual additions. Though the published version was called simply "The Country Doctor," the central character exemplified the ideal of the Good Samaritan suggested by the original title.

When Dreiser prepared "The Country Doctor" for inclusion in *Twelve Men*, he added several passages which may have been cut from the *Harper's* version: a description of the young Dreiser frightened at night (114-15), two paragraphs of description and dialogue that reveal the doctor's sympathy with his natural surroundings (122), and a passage of more than two hundred and fifty words depicting the doctor's grief over the death of a patient (126). These added passages deepen the characterization of the doctor as a sensitive and sympathetic person.

In both the *Harper's* version and in *Twelve Men* the doctor is named Gridley; however, a comparison of this portrait to the details found in *A Hoosier Holiday* and *Dawn* reveals that the doctor was Amos Woolley. The identification is also confirmed by Dreiser in his 8 April 1919 letter to H. L. Mencken, in which he provides the real names for most of the twelve men.<sup>5</sup> In Chapter 47 of *Dawn*, Dreiser mentions having to obtain fresh peach twigs for a tea which Dr. Woolley prescribed as a remedy for John Paul Dreiser's gallstones (262), an incident described in detail in *Twelve Men* (111-12).

Dreiser also characterized Dr. Woolley briefly in *Dawn* through an incident not included in "The Country Doctor." When his sister Sylvia was made pregnant by a prominent young man whom Dreiser calls Don Ashley, Dr. Woolley examined her. Dreiser describes how the doctor lectured Sylvia on her duty to have the baby.

In *A Hoosier Holiday*, Dreiser presents a condensed version of an incident from "The Country Doctor." Dreiser's return visit to the house where he had lived as a boy in Warsaw reminds him of the time his sister Theresa was ill and he was sent to fetch Dr. Woolley.<sup>6</sup> He remembers, "Once from this room, at two in the morning, I had issued forth to find our family physician, an old grey-bearded man, who, once I had knocked him up, came down to his door, lamp in hand, a long white nightgown protecting his stocky figure, his whiskers spreading like a sheaf of wheat, and demanded to know what I meant by disturbing him." As in "The Country Doctor," the young Dreiser convinces the doctor to come out into the cold night because his sister is very ill, and Dr. Woolley agrees to

come, while "fussing and fuming at the inconsiderateness of some people." In the earlier portrait, Dreiser remembered that he felt Dr. Woolley's reluctance to come to Theresa's aid to be "just the least bit harsh for the doctor, although, as I reasoned afterwards, he was probably half-asleep and tired." In *A Hoosier Holiday*, his attitude has softened: "I always think of old Dr. Woolley as being one of the nicest, kindest doctors that ever was."

Dr. Amos Woolley died in Warsaw on 3 April 1899 at the age of seventy. Survivors included his wife and one son; a daughter, Mrs. J.M. Taylor of Mishawaka, formerly Jessie Woolley; and a brother, W.A. Woolley. At the conclusion of "The Country Doctor," Dreiser quotes at length from the local obituary which praised Dr. Woolley as a "Samaritan of the medical profession."

---

<sup>1</sup>The facts in this paper about Dr. Woolley's life and the records of his death were provided courtesy of the Warsaw Community Public Library. A brief biographical sketch, written by Col. J.B. Dodge, appears on page 65 of the *Combined Atlas of Kosciusko Co., Ind.*, published by Kingman Brothers in 1879.

<sup>2</sup>*Dawn* (New York: Horace Liveright, 1931), p. 261; *Twelve Men* (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1919), p. 129.

<sup>3</sup>This portrait is similar in style and attitude to other pieces Dreiser wrote in 1901-02 about men who selflessly worked for the benefit of their fellow man, such as "A Mayor and His People" and "A Doer of the Word" (also included in *Twelve Men*). The rejection letters are in the Dreiser Collection at the University of Pennsylvania.

<sup>4</sup>Dreiser began revising this portrait on 16 December 1917, debated on 26 February 1918 about accepting the price offered by *Harper's Monthly*, and delivered the manuscript to the magazine on 1 March. See *Theodore Dreiser: American Diaries, 1902-1926*, ed. Thomas P. Riggio (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1982), pp. 231, 250, 253.

<sup>5</sup>See *Letters of Theodore Dreiser*, ed. Robert H. Elias, 3 vols. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1959), I, 263-64; or *Dreiser-Mencken Letters*, ed. Thomas P. Riggio, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1986), II, 343-44.

<sup>6</sup>*A Hoosier Holiday* (New York: John Lane, 1916), p. 303; *Twelve Men*, pp. 113-14.

## THE THEME OF HINDUISM IN *THE STOIC*

Miyoko Takeda

Critics of *The Stoic* have often objected to the introduction of Hindu mysticism in the last chapters on the grounds that it weakens the story and is inconsistent with Dreiser's naturalistic view of life. Or they assert that the interpolation of Hinduism was not the result of Dreiser's own persuasion but instead reflects the influence of Helen Dreiser, who had enthusiastically responded to Indian mysticism in her husband's last years. Yet, I believe the introduction of Hinduism is a natural development of Dreiser's search for the ultimate reality, a search that long pre-dates the conclusion of his last novel.

Oriental philosophy was introduced to America in the middle of the nineteenth century, and by 1900 Hinduism had become popular among Americans. Originally, the religion was flexible and had no dogma, but in the Western world it has been explained rationally (Pitt 1). Hal Bridges explains the fundamental idea in a simplified way. He says, "God is both transcendent and immanent." "God transcendent" is called Brahman, and "God immanent," Atman. "Brahman and Atman are one God." Man is "a bodily temple in which divine spirit dwells" (74). Dreiser, who was much concerned with the problem of the absolute Existence and human existence, was greatly attracted by these notions.

As noted above, however, most critics do not approve Dreiser's introduction of Hinduism at the end of *The Stoic*. Marguerite Tjader attributes it to Helen's influence on him (230-31). Richard Lingeman regards it as Dreiser's "ghost ending" and Helen's "small triumph" (xii). James T. Farrell also commented negatively, suggesting in a letter to Dreiser that he shift "the emphasis from details of yoga to Berenice's feelings about yoga and to the ironic inadequacy of her efforts" (Elias 1034). Donald Pizer agrees that Farrell's suggestion would have countered the "artificiality and superficiality" of the conclusion (339). R.N. Mookerjee points out that Dreiser misrepresented Hinduism and apparently had little familiarity with it. Mookerjee found Dreiser's copy of *The Bhagavad-Gita*, with Charles Johnson's introduction and

commentary (New York, 1908), and noted that Dreiser's pencil marks and comments were on only a few pages (273). Philip L. Gerber also suspects Helen's influence on Dreiser, saying that the novelist would have changed the conclusion, if he had been left to "his own devices" (230).

Yet, Dreiser must have been more intensely concerned with Hinduism and more familiar with *Veda* and *Upanishad* and *The Bhagavad-Gita* than his critics assume. *Veda* and *Upanishad* are not listed in "Occasional Reference," but rather in "Extensive Reference" in the "Bibliography of Quotations in Dreiser's Notes" by Horovitz in 1935 (Box 394).<sup>1</sup> Also, "Dreiser's heavily underlined copy" (Pizer 372) of Harendranath Maitra's *Hinduism* (New York, 1922) is to be found in the Dreiser Collection.

Dreiser wrote to Farrell of his wish to rewrite the two last chapters (Elias 1035). Yet this intention does not necessarily mean that he had given up the idea of including the theme of Hinduism, for he had been interested in Oriental thought from his early years, as some of his poems, autobiographical articles and fiction indicate.<sup>2</sup> Especially the philosophical articles in *Notes on Life* show his interest in Hinduism in connection with science (16, 147, 285) and Christianity (6, 113, 208). These articles also demonstrate his favorable attitude towards Hinduism (NL 176, 322).

Moreover, two other considerations positively support the assumption that Dreiser was willingly involved with Hinduism when he wrote the ending of *The Stoic*. One is his intention to make the millionaire's life worth having been lived. To this end, he makes Cowperwood's funeral procession completely different from that of his model Yerkes by emphasizing the clear expression of people's appreciation and love for the deceased magnate, though some of the description is cut from the published version. Madison C. Peters gave a heart-chilling report of Yerkes' funeral procession in the newspaper, January 8, 1906. The two carriages preceding the hearse were filled with detectives, and the participants were only the "six beneficiaries of the will." No tear of genuine sorrow was shed, not even by the family (typewritten notes on *The Stoic* 511). On the other hand, Cowperwood's funeral is very dignified. So many people want to attend the service that Aileen limits the number of those who may come to their mansion, while accepting whoever wants to join the procession (271). There is a great deal of "seeming demonstration of public interest, sympathy, even affection" (typescript 832). The introduction of Hinduism through Berenice at the end is consistent with Dreiser's intention to make Cowperwood's life more meaningful than Yerkes' was portrayed to be.

The second consideration is Dreiser's intention to use "Concerning Good and Evil," an article based on Hinduism, as the epilogue, though it was never done. In this article, Dreiser reveals his view of the relativity of good and evil, a view based on his understanding of "Nirvana-no life" ("Problem"). This would justify Cowperwood's, and consequently Dreiser's own, so-called immorality. These two intentions presumably validate the theme of Hinduism in the last chapters.

In the published version of *The Stoic*, Dreiser employs his own conception of Hinduism. He enumerates a number of Hindu terms concerning yoga. He presents the concepts of Brahman, which is the supreme Reality, of man, which is a manifestation, of transmigration and of many divine incarnations exactly as *The Bhagavad-Gita* appended by Aldous Huxley's explanations teaches (Prabhavananda and Christopher Isherwood 80, 83, 113, 132, 133). Besides these authentic teachings, Dreiser adds original notions of his own.

The term "inner truth" (*The Stoic* 291), which Dreiser uses for "Atman," shows his understanding of the Hindu concept merging with his knowledge of Quakerism, in which he was greatly interested, especially in the 1930s. The "inner" may be taken from the "inner Light," which Rufus Jones in Dreiser's day used to mean the Spirit inside man (*Studies* 276, 351), and "truth" from the "Truth," by which George Fox in the seventeenth century particularly meant Christ or Spirit (Nickalls 302, 574).

Dreiser presents the notions of man's immortality, of love's irresistibility, of charity and of the beauty in the human world in the convergence of Hinduism with science or with Christianity. He expands the concept of man's immortality in Brahman to that of the human body's immortality. He presumes it possible for a body to reappear in the same combination of atoms as it had before, comparing it to the combination of numbers coming up repeatedly on dice thrown innumerable times (*The Stoic* 296). This presumption is related to the idea expressed in one of his philosophical articles: a table set on fire might be made to reappear by some unknown forces in the same form as the table possessed before its burning (*Notes on Life* 146).

Dreiser attributes the irresistibility of love among human beings to Brahman's attraction. Brahman, "the great magnet," attracts all things to Himself. Man, "like iron filings" (*The Stoic* 297), is drawn to Him. Dreiser expands the notion of Brahman's attraction to the compulsion of human love. Human love is a manifestation of the Divine Love through "Atman," the God inside the man. In a previous article, Dreiser attributed the irresistibility of human love to the mechanical attraction of

chemisms (*Notes on Life* 80). In *The Stoic*, however, he shows the change in his idea of love. He regards human love as the attraction worked by "divine love" and not the attraction of "material molecules" (297). In *The Gita* there is no reference to mutual human love. Only the love that Brahman demands from man to Himself and the love that Sri Krishna, a divine incarnation, shows towards Arjuna, his consultee, are mentioned (96, 128-29).

Dreiser sometimes refers to the Biblical texts, equating Hinduism and Christianity. To tell about Brahman's command of man to follow the way to Himself, Dreiser quotes Matt. 6:33, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God" (*The Stoic* 299). To explain the act of charity he uses the line, "It is not the receiver that is blessed but the giver" (297). The notion of being blessed for doing something is completely Christian. Consequently, Dreiser's interpretation of Hindu charity is modified by the injunctions of Christianity.

In *The Gita* charity is represented by "almsgiving" and usually mentioned together with "sacrifice" and "austerity" as "a means of purification" (97, 117, 120). The act of Hindu charity comes from super-consciousness that all in the universe are one and there is no separation. This notion of the annihilation of "separateness" (*The Stoic* 295) is suggested in *The Bulwark*. Solon awakens to the universal fellowship through the communication with a snake, the barrier between them having disappeared (318-19).

In *The Stoic*, however, the concept of the annihilation of "separateness" is blurred by Berenice's charitable activity in the sense of social reform. The guru teaches her that almsgiving is a "worship" (297) of Brahman. Yet she herself reasons that Brahman expects her to change the world for the better, seeing the actual misery of people in general and particularly in India, the land of the sublime philosophy of "All Existence, Bliss" (301). The idea of changing the world to fit man, trying to make it better, is Occidental or Christian. The Oriental or Hindu attitude toward the world where good and evil coexist is to take it as the place for man to be disciplined to fit himself to the Reality behind appearances.

Dreiser's unique interpretation is his esthetic concept of Brahman as the source of beauty. He merges it with Rufus Jones' notion of God as "the eternal Beauty," which makes life "radiant" when it "shines into" life (*Radiant* 2). In *The Gita* the idea of Brahman's beauty is suggested only by the expression "beautiful speech" in His declaration of Himself (90). In another copy of *The Bhagavad-Gita*, translated by Swami Nikhelanda, "a new life with its own beauty and grandeur," explaining the stage of superconsciousness, is the only reference to "beauty" (19).

For Dreiser, beauty was the cardinal virtue of life. In *The "Genius"*, he shows his concern with beauty through Eugene Witla, who is attracted by beauty in any form, especially in woman. He etherealizes female beauty and makes it the essence of his paintings. In *The Stoic* Dreiser merges this beauty of woman with that of art through Cowperwood, who regards his lover Berenice as his supreme "artistic achievement" (typescript 79.3). By his love and generosity, her sense of beauty is cultivated. Since her esthetic sense responds to his love of beauty, she thoroughly understands Cowperwood, whose personality is nothing but passion for beauty (*The Stoic* 263).

In India Berenice is spellbound by the beauty of the scenery. The "distant sounds of steady chanting of the Hindu mantrams," in sight of Hill Ramtek with its white temples, bewitch her. She feels her heart beating at "the pulse" rate of the "God-seeking, spirit-loving land" (293). She finds out from the guru that Brahman is beauty, which shines through "all forms and designs" (297). Beside Cowperwood's grave in America, she reflects on her lover, who must know in death that "his worship and constant search for beauty in any form," especially "in the form of woman," was nothing but "a search for the Divine design behind all forms—the face of Brahman shining through" (305).<sup>3</sup> In this light Dreiser's fleeting female relationships as well as Cowperwood's could be excused.

In *The "Genius"*, Eugene regards life as beautiful "at bottom," in spite of "all its seeming terrors" (695). In *The Stoic*, Cowperwood, meditating on his approaching death, feels himself facing some "change" which involves him with "great and beautiful mystery" (247). Each character's grasp of life's mystery as related to beauty through intuition and feelings is metaphysically and religiously justified in the light of Brahman, the source of existence, which Dreiser regards as Beauty.

Berenice's involvement with Hinduism ultimately makes Cowperwood's life meaningful, expanding it even after his death. His esthetic sensitivity surviving in her has made her understand Brahman as the source of beauty. Prompted by her knowledge of Brahman, she eventually succeeds in founding a charity hospital, which Cowperwood had so earnestly wished to build. Berenice works in the hospital, devoting herself to nourishing and caring for neglected children. Her knowledge of the Reality of Brahman is combined with the worthy act in the world of unreality.

Hinduism, or Dreiserian Hinduism, at the end of *The Stoic*, which was written in the last stage of Dreiser's life, is not a casual or sudden development in the novelist's thought. Whether or not it might reduce the novel's effectiveness as a literary achievement, whether or not Dreiser



was influenced by Helen, the theme is a significant and appropriate literary finale for Dreiser. It is the reflection of his comprehensive view, the outcome of his lifelong struggle to find the meaning of life and Reality.

---

<sup>1</sup>Box numbers refer to locations in the Theodore Dreiser manuscript collection, Special Collections, Van Pelt Library, University of Pennsylvania.

<sup>2</sup>e.g. "Karma," "Brahma," "Sutra," and "The Hidden God," in *Moods, Philosophic and Emotional Cadences Declaimed* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1935); *A Book About Myself* (New York: Boni and Liveright Publishers, 1922), p. 150; *A Hoosier Holiday* (New York: John Lane Company, 1916), p. 3; *Dawn* (New York: Horace Liveright, Inc., 1931), pp. 528, 529. *An American Tragedy* (New York: A Signet Classic, 1981), p. 489; "The 'Mercy' of God," *Chains* (New York: Boni & Liveright, 1927), pp. 371, 391.

<sup>3</sup>Jeremiah MacDonald, an astrologist, said that for Dreiser "to love is to worship." Lingeman, *Theodore Dreiser*, 363.

---

#### Works Cited

- Bridges, Hal. *American Mysticism: From William James to Zen*. New York: Harper, 1970.
- Dreiser, Theodore. *The Bulwark*. New York: Doubleday, 1946.
- - -. *The "Genius"*. New York: John Lane, 1916.
- - -. *Notes on Life*. eds. Marguerite Tjader and John J. McAleer. University, AL: U of Alabama P, 1974.
- - -. "Problem of Morality," *Theodore Dreiser Papers*. Box 401.
- - -. *The Stoic*. New York: Doubleday, 1947.
- - -. Typescript of *The Stoic*. *Theodore Dreiser Papers*. Box 63.
- - -. Typewritten copies of notes on *The Stoic* written in Theodore Dreiser's handwriting. *Theodore Dreiser Papers*. Box 54.

- Elias, Robert H. ed. *Letters of Theodore Dreiser: A Selection*. Vol. 3. Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1959.
- Gerber, Philip L. "The Alabaster Protege: Dreiser and Berenice Fleming." *American Literature* 43 (May 1971): 217-30.
- "Horovitz Notes 1." *Theodore Dreiser Papers*. Box 394.
- Jones, Rufus M. *The Radiant Life*. New York: Macmillan, 1946.
- - -. *Studies in Mystical Religion*. London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1909.
- Lingeman, Richard. "Foreward" to *The Stoic*. New York: Signet, 1981.
- - -. *Theodore Dreiser: At the Gate of the City 1871-1907*. New York: Putnam's, 1986.
- Mookerjee, R. N. "Dreiser's Use of Hindu Thought in *The Stoic*." *American Literature* 43 (May 1971): 273-78.
- Nickalls, John L. ed. *The Journal of George Fox*. Cambridge: The University Press, 1952.
- Nikhelanda trans. *The Bhagavad-Gita*. New York: Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center, 1952.
- Pitt, Malcolm. *Introducing Hinduism*. New York: Friendship, 1955.
- Pizer, Donald ed. *The Novels of Theodore Dreiser: A Critical Study*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1976.
- Prabhavananda and Christopher Isherwood trans. *The Bhagavad-Gita*. New York and Ontario: Mentor.
- Tjader, Marguerite. *Theodore Dreiser: A New Dimension*. Norwalk, Conn.: Silvermine, 1965.

## REVIEWS

### REALISM IN A PARADOXICAL WORLD

*The Social Construction of American Realism* by Amy Kaplan.  
Chicago: U. Chicago P., 1988. 187 pages.

In *The Social Construction of American Realism*, Amy Kaplan intelligently approaches the vexing question of what "realism" in literature means, by investigating how William Dean Howells, Edith Wharton, and Theodore Dreiser define this term for themselves in their works. Hence, rather than forcing the authors to fit under an umbrella thesis, Kaplan grants each one his or her own definition of "realism." Kaplan discusses not only the expected novels but also diverse texts such as Howells' essays, Wharton's *The Decoration of Houses* (written in collaboration with Ogden Codman), and Dreiser's interviews for Orison Swett Marden's *Success* magazine. Kaplan's idea of realism includes the representation of society, but she insists on the elusive quality of that rapidly changing external world. Indeed, she believes that "the production of the real . . . [is] an arena in which the novelist struggles to represent reality against contradictory representations" (7). Class conflict and an emerging mass culture figure prominently in Kaplan's book as centers of competing realities against which the realist defines his or her art.

*The Social Construction of American Realism* is clearly written, uninfested by jargon, and so structured as to permit one to read sections on individual authors. The introduction takes issue with the persistence of the "romance thesis" in the criticism of American literature and urges that we shift the discussion from the "success" or "failure" of realistic fiction to depict the external world to the more productive ground of "what realistic novels do accomplish and how they work as cultural practice" (8, her emphasis). Kaplan then provides two chapters on each author: an introductory section incorporating several texts followed by a detailed reading of one novel (*A Hazard of New Fortunes*, *The House of Mirth*, *Sister Carrie*).

Kaplan enjoys paradoxes, locating them, transforming them, and constructing new ones. Paradox is, indeed, implicit in her introductory statements on the novels. *Hazard* depicts the potential for revolution while its "narrative . . . works to quell" revolution. *House* reveals "novelty as the status quo." In *Carrie*, "the threat of and desire for revolutionary change are pitted against the monotony of change as the quotidian" (10).

True to her promise, Kaplan also takes on another sort of paradox:

contradictory readings of the authors which tend to perpetuate the "success" or "failure" dichotomy. In her discussion of Dreiser, for instance, she urges "the inadequacy of opposing Dreiser's hack work written for the mass market to his realistic art written to defy marketable conventions" (140). The chapter on *Carrie* discusses the sentimental "versus" realistic components of the novel. This paradox Kaplan attempts to resolve: "the critical opposition associating sentimentalism with consumption and desire, and realism with work and deprivation, is already generated by the narrative strategies of *Sister Carrie*, as a way of imagining and managing the contradictions of a burgeoning consumer society" (143). Kaplan urges that rather than privilege Hurstwood's "realistic" fall over Carrie's "sentimental" rise, "we might see them constructing competing versions of the real" (151).

Kaplan repeatedly confronts the problematics of realistic fiction. Rather than bewail the confusion of the apartment hunting scene at the beginning of *Hazard*, for instance, she suggests that "the city disrupts narrative continuity as something unwieldy that must be brought under control" (48). As to the notoriously problematic endings of many realistic novels, Kaplan asserts that "Realistic novels have trouble ending because they pose problems they cannot solve, problems that stem from their attempt to imagine and contain social change" (160). In such ways she suggests how value judgments on realistic fiction can give way to locating the sources of what seem to be narrative failures. As she suggests, "Stylistic inconsistencies and problematic endings" may be read "as narrative articulations of ideological problems" (5).

Kaplan's close attention to details in a wide variety of texts compels respect, and her use of these details to construct a definition of "realism" for each author is much more convincing than trying to lump together Howells, Wharton, and Dreiser. However, Kaplan could better address a problem which beleaguers much criticism of American realism: why she chose the group of authors and texts that she did. While it is clear how Howells, Wharton, and Dreiser fit into her thesis, it is less clear why other writers have been excluded. That these three authors "have become critical touchstones in the debate about the viability of realism in American fiction" (8) seems an insufficient principle of selection.

I also take issue with her tendency to read so many details as self-reflexive comments on realism or on the author. For instance, the idea of Bartley Hubbard in *A Modern Instance* and Sem Rosedale in *The House of Mirth* as "demonic realist[s]" (27, 103) in contradistinction to their authors is more clever than convincing. Nor am I convinced by claims such as that Howells "kills off Lindau at the end of the novel [*Hazard*] to uphold this assumption" that "all Americans speak a common

language" (58); or that "By having Lily miss her chance to play this role [as bride] in the beginning of the novel [*House*], Wharton rejects marriage as the narrative teleology of the domestic novel, and implicitly calls attention to her own narrative as realistic" (93-94). Indeed, such equations of characters and the aims of their authors seem surprising given that Kaplan takes issue with the tendency of many feminist critics to overemphasize character (174, note 37). Similarly, I do not think that in *An Amateur Laborer*, "By posing as a laborer, and labeling himself amateur, Dreiser implies the oppositional term 'professional author'" (132). Kaplan's point is intriguing, but an idea does not necessarily "imply" its opposite.

If in occasional details Kaplan may stretch her point, she is convincing in both her general conception of realism and in her specific definitions of this term for each author. Kaplan argues that struggle is implicit in realistic novelists' relation to the "real" and also that struggle is embedded in each author's construction of a personal definition of "realism." She reads Howells as defining himself against both the tradition of romance and the emerging mass culture. According to Kaplan, Howells "validates realism, in contrast [with both romance and mass culture], as productive work" (16). Howells' realism, then, embraces the idea of character and the work ethic. Like Howells, Wharton's realism incorporates the idea of productivity, but for Wharton the poles she defines herself against are different: on one hand, the aristocratic model of a lady of leisure, on the other, the voluble tradition of sentimental women writers. According to Kaplan, Wharton creates a position for herself, and a definition for her art, by embracing writing as a profession.

The chapters on Dreiser appropriately end the study, for Kaplan suggests his relationship to, and his difference from, both Howells and Wharton. If Howells and Wharton validate realism in part by aligning it with productive work, Dreiser wants to distinguish writing from labor; in fact, he "sought in writing an escape from work into the glamorous world of wealth and power" (110-11). Unlike Wharton who fears the status of "celebrity," Dreiser embraces it. Dreiser's realism also involves defining himself against both the gentility of Howells and the sentimentality of brother Paul Dresser. And, more than Howells or Wharton, Dreiser is at home in the new consumer culture: "Dreiser did not reject the market in favor of a transcendent genius but redefined genius as the celebrity who could beat the market at its own game, who could compete so thoroughly as to defeat any competition" (115). I believe that Dreiser would approve of the paradox.

Clare Virginia Eby

## THE CO-OPTING OF SISTER CARRIE

*The Gospel of Wealth in the American Novel* by Arun Mukherjee. Totowa, N.J.: Barnes & Noble Books, 1987, 229 pp.

The appearance of Arun P. Mukherjee's *The Gospel of Wealth in the American Novel* provides continuing assurance, not merely of the persistence of attention to Theodore Dreiser, but of the active spread of interest beyond national boundaries, especially into nations of the Third World. Interestingly enough, Professor Mukherjee has written me (10/3/89) that her own introduction to Dreiser occurred at the University of Toronto. In her native India, in the American Studies program for which the USIS supplied free textbooks, the name of Dreiser "never figured even once." But in Canada Mukherjee was encouraged to read *Sister Carrie*, *Jennie Gerhardt*, *The Financier Trilogy*, and *The "Genius"* in a course concerning the city-novel.

She was somewhat amazed, happily so, to discover Dreiser not at all what the critics had led her to expect: a "contradictory, untutored, uneven writer who might as well have written his books during unexplainable fits of inspiration." Rather, she discovered in him a consistent pattern of political ideology and an equal consistency as regards the major concerns addressed in his fiction. What continues to attract, she states, is Dreiser's "awareness of the power of elite ideology and how it shapes the subjectivity of the members of a society." He remains, for her, one of the extremely few American (or world) writers given to placing his characters within a social nexus and then exploring their socialization. To her, this quality is Dreiser's chief claim to uniqueness.

For some time, homage has been paid Dreiser by Indian writers, their interest often stimulated by the novelist's fascination with eastern philosophical thought, demonstrated most explicitly, perhaps, in the conclusion of *The Stoic* (1947). But Mukherjee quite understandably begins, not here, but with the gulf that separates the commonly-exported image of America from the rather different perspective to be gained from a closer vantage point, Canada, where she teaches at York University.

Mukherjee takes as her theme the literary reaction to the capitalistic system, with its inborn inequities. More specifically, she feels impelled by a wish "to explore the way American novelists respond rhetorically to

the discourse of the American businessman and his apologists." She is interested in those writers who allow themselves to be co-opted by the system as well as those who have worked subversively to undermine it. In the process she deals with names as familiar as William Dean Howells, Frank Norris, and Robert Herrick, as well as with writers less well remembered. Her treatment of George Horace Lorimer and his *Letters From a Self-Made Merchant to His Son* is most welcome, considering the rarity with which Lorimer and his book are recalled. But unmistakably, with three of her five chapters devoted to Dreiser's novels, it is he who fascinates her and who quite logically becomes the "big gun" of her engaging study.

Mukherjee succeeds rather well in recapitulating the methods by which the rough-and-tumble, essentially cutthroat nature of laissez faire capitalism was transformed by nineteenth-century authors from the raw Darwinianism that it truly was into a modern analog of the medieval jousting tournament—what Elbert Hubbard referred to as the "romance of business." That glorification of commerce and finance continued almost unabated into the 1920s (to be halted as it were, only by a great natural force: the Crash of 1929).

As late as 1928, Ernest Elmo Calkins could write, without a perceptible blush, that business was the profession of the day, offering to moderns the same glory which in the past had gone to the crusader, the explorer, the martyr. He found it easy to defend Dupont, Chrysler, Ford, and a platoon of others against the charge of money-grubbing and hail them instead as dragon-slayers like hero-knights of old. In his eyes they became the modern defenders of humanity for whom Business had replaced the Field of the Cloth of Gold.

Mukherjee employs this metaphor in order to protest the turning of the profit motive into a glorious and even heroic adventure, "a new test of manliness" in which all disturbing questions of ethics and morality could be conveniently brushed aside. The prevailing turn-of-the-century view of businessmen as knights and pilgrims leads Mukherjee directly into an interpretation of *Sister Carrie* which is suggested and abetted by Dreiser's own description of his heroine as a "half-equipped little knight" advancing in her adventurous pilgrimage upon the "walled city" of her quest. Thus, *Carrie* is interpreted as being a parody of popular notions regarding commerce and its "heroic concepts," a parody whose dominant tone is one of irony ("savagely ironic," says Mukherjee at one point). Altogether, the novel becomes Dreiser's "strategic response to the 'gospel of wealth'" being preached everywhere in the world he inhabited between 1880 and 1900.

In accord with this thesis, Carrie herself, says Mukherjee, is presented by Dreiser as being the total product of her environment, "swayed by the spectacle of wealth and its reports in the media," and very early on the girl is seduced into mimicry of the prevailing modes. So profound a co-opting occurs that Carrie is forever frozen into a phantom chase through "a frightening social Darwinian jungle" in search of promised rewards which will turn into the ashes of Dead-Sea fruit. Of the ambiguous final chapter of *Carrie*, the heroine discovered in her rocking chair, wondering, debating, dreaming, Mukherjee writes:

Instead of reading the last chapter as a sentimental outburst, a paean to the emergence of a young artistic sensibility. . . . I read it as a bleak prophecy about the fate of an individual gifted with artistic talent in the turn of the century America. . . . Dreiser shows that Carrie will never become an artist; she continues to work in the popular theatre that he so thoroughly condemned. (130, 131)

The co-opting of Carrie by the world of commerce is also what happens to Eugene Witla in *The "Genius"* and to Clyde Griffiths in *An American Tragedy*. Both men, from this viewpoint, are limited, if not destroyed, by the prevailing socio-economic environment.

Given Mukherjee's thesis and her emphasis upon the shaping force of environment, it comes as no great surprise that the Cowperwood Trilogy should occupy a central position in the study or that the financier should be interpreted as being Dreiser's microcosmic symbol, invented to represent that "lawless and most savage" (Dreiser's words) American society of the Gilded Era, Cowperwood himself replete with the excesses and lack of insight which characterize that society, his career determined at every stage from birth onward by the "universal aspirations" of his place and time.

Mukherjee disagrees with what she takes to be the prevailing critical interpretation of *The Financier*, *The Titan*, and *The Stoic* as constituting a straightforward and serious fictional version of the American success story. Instead, Frank Cowperwood is seen here as a parody of the economic superman and not the superman himself, just as Carrie and others become parodies of the knight errant. The Trilogy is dealt with as being ironic in its intent, a most interesting view to take and one for which Mukherjee marshalls an impressive array of evidence.

Mukherjee reminds us of Dreiser's ubiquitous comparisons of the "titans of industry" with animals—beginning with the famous lobster-squid encounter and progressing from there to pigs and sheep and panthers and leopards, Cowperwood himself "a canny wolf." Stuart Sherman in 1917



cited just such a Dreiser bestiary as constituting certain evidence of the author's intrinsically animalistic (and therefore clearly improper) view of human existence. But here the array of beasts is taken as a detail in a literary method whereby Dreiser works "to explode the rags-to-riches myth" via whichever tools of irony, parody, and satire may lie at hand. Cowperwood is far from being a builder or a creator (as Mukherjee suggests that critics such as Donald Pizer have tended to see him). Instead, the financier never rises above his dastardly role as an exploiter whose nefarious deeds and baleful influence it is Dreiser's purpose to disclose and to condemn.

In his fiction generally, Mukherjee believes that Dreiser is, above all, a writer of protest literature and that his motivation is to shock his readers into a change of attitude and even to galvanize the public into taking action in re-shaping a society that has plunged off the rails. Within such a context, the much-debated conclusion of *The Stoic* makes a good deal of sense. Berenice Fleming, here serving as surrogate for the deceased Cowperwood, encounters in India a society which forces upon her consciousness (and perhaps upon that of the readers of the novel) a realization that life in the West can indeed be organized in a fundamentally different, better, and more altruistic manner than it has been to date.

Philip L. Gerber

## DREISER NEWS & NOTES

With the Spring 1990 issue, Frederic E. Rusch will assume the editorship of *Dreiser Studies*. All correspondence and manuscripts should be sent to him at this address: Department of English, Indiana State University, Terre Haute, Indiana 47809. . . . The Dreiser Edition of *Newspaper Days*, edited by T. D. Nostwich, is scheduled to go to the press this winter. That volume will restore 30,000-plus words cut by Liveright. . . . Thomas Riggio, General Editor of the Dreiser Edition, indicates that a long-range plan to publish Dreiser letters is beginning to take shape. He asks anyone with knowledge of unpublished Dreiser correspondence to get in touch with him. . . . Donald Pizer's edition of *Jennie Gerhardt* will appear this winter in the Penguin American Classics series. Also, during 1990, Norton will publish a second and revised edition of his *Sister Carrie* for their Critical Editions series. And Cambridge University Press will publish a collection of new essays on *Sister Carrie*, edited by Pizer, in their American Novel series. This volume is also scheduled for 1990. Contributors will be Blanche Gelfant, Richard Lehan, Barbara Hochman, Thomas Riggio, and Alan Trachtenberg. . . . Harold Dies, of the Dreiser Trust, informs us that Citizen Productions has taken out an option to produce a TV series of "The Lost Phoebe." . . . Professor Miriam Gogol is soliciting manuscripts on Theodore Dreiser for a collection of essays. An academic press has expressed strong interest in essays of an interdisciplinary nature (psychoanalytic, sociologic, feminist, etc.). Please send such essays to Professor Miriam Gogol, Department of English and Speech, Fashion Institute of Technology, 227 West 27th Street, New York, NY 10001. The deadline for essays, abstracts of 250 words or inquiries will be 1 May.



