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Gender, Language, and Self in *Jennie Gerhardt*

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The Pennsylvania edition of *Jennie Gerhardt*, says its editor James L. W. West III, "opens up the question of how a canonical author like Dreiser may be viewed in relation to issues of gender" (x). For West, the restored text better reveals Dreiser's original intention to "balance" Lester the "pessimistic determinist" and Jennie the romantic "unreasoning mystic" (446). This notion of balance, however, does not adequately convey the book's complex treatment of gender. There is, Dreiser asserts, a "vast process dual" driven by the "passions hymeneal" (92). But this process is itself one of the "processes of the All-mother, the great artificing wisdom of the power that in silence and darkness works and weaves...." In *Jennie*, Dreiser not only presents the feminine half of the vast process dual; he ultimately makes the invisible All-mother visible in a woman whose artifice—the power to lie and to create—includes the masculine. In doing so, he has produced a searching critique of patriarchy.

In *This Sex Which Is Not One*, the French feminist Luce Irigaray argues that, because the phallus is visible and singular, a patriarchal society "privileges phallogormorphism"; it values "the *one* of form, of the individual, of the (male) sex organ, of the proper name, of the proper meaning." From such a perspective, the female sex organ represents "*the horror of nothing to see*," and thus men become scopophilic, deriving pleasure from gazing on the female body as a unified form, as "beautiful object of contemplation" (26), as well as in creating "systems that are self-representative of a 'masculine subject'" (74).

Lester embodies similar attitudes. He possesses a "naturally observing mind" (*Jennie* 125) and at the point of death clings to the belief that "the best we can do is hold our personalities intact" (392). He equates integrity of self with integrity of language and meaning, though his "instincts for plain speech and direct statement of fact" are less instincts than imprints of his father's "impressing...maxims": "'Never lie,' was Archibald's constant, reiterated statement. 'Never try to make a thing look different from what it is to you. It's the breath of life—truth—it's the basis of real worth...it will make a notable character of any one who will stick to it'" (292-93). For the Kanes, truth is single and self-evident; a true thing *looks* the same as it *is*. The Kane's and their kind reduce life to deadly sameness—to repetitions, to "reiterated" statements and representations, to "notable characters" who resemble bits of movable type.

Lester is hardly more capable of original expression than his father. In speaking to Jennie, he repeatedly falls back on his "favorite expression": "Listen to me, Jennie...I tell you you belong to me" (134). He thinks romantic love "a hollow proposition" (130), yet he lures Jennie to their first assignation with a written proposition as hollow as the "unconsidered assertions and poetic flights of fancy" (129) he despises in others: "There is a flower on my table which reminds me of you very much—white, delicate, beautiful. Your personality, lingering with me, is just that. You are the essence of many things beautiful to me. It is in your power to strew flowers in my path if you will" (146). It's hard to find any evidence of Jennie's unique "personality" in a letter composed of borrowed phrases which represent a flower which represents a woman who represents many other "beautiful things." It's equally hard to find much evidence of Lester's own highly valued personality. Mr. Bracebridge says more than he intends when, just before Lester first appears in the novel, he says, "I like Lester.... But he's too *indifferent*" (120, emphasis added).

While seeming to rebel against it, Lester fully participates in the patriarchal closed system of representation, in which beauty is a static ideal form. "You're the first one to insist on perfection," Letty chides him, "—to quarrel if there is any flaw in the order of things" (406).

He must incorporate flaws into what Irigaray calls "*the economy of the Same*" (74). When he stumbles on evidence of Jennie's past sexuality, he can deal with her "divided" love only by ordering events in his mind until "they fitted together perfectly" and Jennie "stood before him beautifully convicted" (207). He can accept Jennie's illegitimate daughter Vesta only when she emerges from invisibility as a "revelation" of "irrepressible individuality" (221), that is, as an image of his own ideal male subjectivity.

The masculine world of ideas and visual representation—in which persons become figures, pictures, characters, and types—is a world outside of time. It thus resembles what William James calls a "block universe" except that it possesses only two dimensions. Lester wants both Jennie and the pleasure of "his own plane" (129), forgetting for the moment "the peculiar stratification of life... which fixes the lives of people almost beyond their volition" (263). In reality, he believes that no individual action makes a difference in the larger scheme of things. He tours the world with Jennie to see what it "had to show" but all the while thinks the "world was much the same everywhere" (306). He points out moral "differences" between ancient and modern civilizations only to conclude how "pointless" the individual's beliefs and problems are in "light of the sum of things" (307-308).

This light that absorbs differences recalls an earlier passage. In modern life, written language—"the whole art of printing"—has produced "a kaleidoscopic glitter" in representing the many and conflicting beliefs of science and religion, a glitter similar to that produced by "the multiplicity of evidences of things." The "cup-big minds" that try to contain "the wisdom of the infinite" are quickly wearied and confused by a superficial play of colors that glitter "too white" for human intelligence to penetrate (125). Radically different things have become radically alike in their inability to represent a single underlying truth, and so the world appears a meaningless blank, Melville's "colorless, all-color of atheism."

Unable to reconcile the world as text and the texts about the world, Lester turns to Letty Pace not only for "comfort" but "forgetfulness" (376), trying as far as possible to make himself a mere "figure," a

“personage” (259) without a personal history. Like a character in Hawthorne, the moment he reduces himself to a pure representation, he dies. Life, he believes, is “prescribed” (403) at three-score and ten, and so he stuffs his gullet with rich food and drink until he becomes a “material manifestation” (404) of a mere “biblical formula” (402). Such is the end of a man who had hoped that truth was the breath of life.

The repeated references to Jennie’s white face connect her with the “too white” surface of words and things masking life’s meaning. Vesta is the “stigma” (182) that Jennie suppresses by “misrepresentation, or nonrepresentation” (178) while remaining Lester’s beautiful object of contemplation, without “any outward marks of her previous experience” (122). For years, Lester takes her to be one thing—“Jennie! The white-faced! The simple!” (204)—but eventually discovers the “truth” that she has been “living a lie” (206).

But her artifice, the duplicity that Lester takes to be “evil” (206) is actually more akin to Jennie’s goodness. As Irigaray conceives it, the feminine is a unifying power released by recognizing a rupture in the self. Women, she argues, should not simply seek a “female imaginary” in the womb as opposed to the phallus, for the unity of the enclosed space would represent only “a phallic maternal,” and a virginal one at that. By discovering herself in the “*nonsuture of her lips*,” however, a woman would know the joy “*of never being simply one*” and would experience the world as a “sort of expanding universe to which no limits could be fixed and which would not be incoherence nonetheless.” Such a woman would enter into “a ceaseless exchange of herself with the other without any possibility of identifying either” (30-31). This dream of a feminine self as the dynamic form of sexual dualism fairly approximates Dreiser’s All-mother.

Dreiser, however, emphasizes more than Irigaray does the function of pain in initiating this exchange of self and other. “What is the breath of life?” Dreiser asks in *Notes on Life*. His answer is “a constant interflowing exchange” of energy that can never occur in a block universe. The “totality” must be “broken up”; otherwise, there can be “no life, no individuality,

no thought, no beauty, no love, no hate, no pleasure, no pain—nothing” (14-15).

Jennie, too, suffers a fragmentation leading to the “interflowing exchange” with others that paradoxically constitutes her “individuality.” Significantly, what is fragmented is her life on the plane of visual representation. At the moment that the Hyde Park household, the “scene” of her and Lester’s most pleasant times, is “literally going to pieces,” Dreiser describes Jennie this way:

On her part [this time] was one of intense suffering, for she was of that stable nature that rejoices to fix itself in a serviceable and harmonious relationship and then stay so. For her, life was made up of those mystic chords of sympathy and memory which bind up the transient elements of nature into a harmonious and enduring scene. (364)

If the mystic chords make up Jennie’s “life,” the “breath of life” for her is not the integrity of truths that kill, but a mysterious power that flows through the wounds created by existence in the world and that leads to *living* a lie.

Dreiser’s pun on cord and chord has both spatial and aural components, which reappear in the phrase “harmonious and enduring scene.” The third component is time—the scene is enduring. The passage thus recalls another moment of rupture, Jennie’s seduction by Senator Brander, which Dreiser hides from view behind a long quotation from the nature mystic Richard Jefferies, who equates the “perfect maiden” with the cyclic birth and death of nature “thrice a hundred years repeated.” Jennie’s perfection, her “preciousness,” is, we are to assume, like the perfect maiden’s, a “chronicle unwritten and past all power of writing,” an inner “preciousness” emerging in “the rhythm of time unrolling” (73). Things fall apart, Dreiser implies, but the mystic chord of sympathy binds things separated on the spatial plane, while the mystic chord of memory binds those separated on the temporal plane. To make another pun out of Dreiser’s, one might say that, as opposed to the largely silent, superficial masculine world of

world of representation, the feminine world has volume—a depth in which resonate the rhythms of time and the harmonies of human love.

Like the All-mother, Jennie is “a silent spirit” (258), yet Dreiser equates her artifice, her power to weave a single fabric out of the warp and woof of life, with sound. In Walter Ong’s words, “Sight isolates, sound incorporates. Whereas sight situates the observer outside what he views, at a distance, sound pours into the hearer,” who is established “at a kind of core of sensation and existence” (72). Cast out by her father, Jennie momentarily feels on the “outside,” but “a vast surge” of “unutterable feeling” overflows the boundaries of herself, teaching her that “in nature there is no outside” (88). Jennie’s surging emotions affect Lester as would “an undertone of natural force that was like an organ-tone heard afar off” (264). As volume, or sound, Jennie is present even in her absence, inside even while outside.

While the mystic chord of sympathy overcomes separation in space, the mystic chord of memory overcomes separation in time, giving the self “volume”—the three dimensions of a true individual. Unlike Lester, Jennie has a history. That is, she recognizes that her present self differs from her past self while yet repeating it. In *Notes on Life*, Dreiser says that to be “a reality” a thing must be repeated and that man’s memory “is nothing more than a mechanism devised to register and re-register whatever is, in order that...it can continue to be” (23). In Jennie’s case, “her history” exists because of the “presence of her child” (110). Vesta as “stigma,” as mark of difference, has meant a radical separation between the old Jennie and the Jennie who takes up a “new life” (87), but Vesta is also the “one transcendent gripping theme of joy and fear” in her life (110). Like a musical or literary motif, Vesta turns what would have been just one damn thing after another into the history that makes Jennie herself. Accepting the “marked divergence” (393) between herself and Lester but never losing her “associated memories” (389), she turns her face toward the future, adopting a child and changing her name from Kane to Stover. Continuously the same woman while continually becoming a new woman, Jennie displays a vitality that overcomes whatever wounds life inflicts. She might, in her suffering, remind Senator Brander of

"cut lilies" (71), but as long as memory and sympathy endure, she can never become, as Vesta has become in death, a "pale, lily-hued shell" (388).

Because of this capacity to grow, Jennie is not merely Lester's opposite, for mirror reversal is only another form of representation. Lester's "big woman," she comes to resemble the All-mother who reconciles sexual oppositions. Lester recognizes her "growing...acumen" and ability "to see things quite as clearly as he did," and thinks she reflects his "own point of view softened and charmingly emotionalized" (292). True, Lester has introduced Jennie into the masculine realm of visual representation and writing, but she eventually assumes not his but her own larger point of view.

From Jennie's perspective the world has the form Lester cannot see with his "steady, incisive stare" (121). Lester cannot see what the world "was all about" because it lacks the linear movement he could reduce to some axiomatic truth. The "union and organization" of the evolutionary process does not point to "one divine, far-off event," so he becomes almost entirely passive, consoled by gazing into the mirror of his wife Letty, who "was of very much the same opinion" (395). In contrast, Jennie looks at the world with "wide eyes" (68) and thus "had seen a great deal, suffered a great deal, and had read some in a desultory way." She arrives at no "fixed conclusion as to what life meant" and is not disturbed by the lack of teleology in a world she feels "moved in some strange, unstable way" (395). Still, the world is not without form. For her it is "beautiful," meaning that it is the dynamic form of life's contraries. What moves is also "beauty persisting." The world shares her own nature, whose gaps and empty spaces are filled by sympathy and memory: "And color, tones, feeling, laughter, the joy of character, the beauty of youth—how these softened in between the harsh faces of hunger, cold, indifference, greed" (396). Jennie herself fills the gap Vesta's death creates by adopting a child, whose name—"Rose Perpetua"—expresses her sense of the world as enduring process, a world of color and growth, not the white glitter Lester sees.

Jennie does find an axiom to express the truth about life. But while Lester falls victim to a rigid biblical formula, she finds "solace" in "a phrase she had once heard quoted," Hamlet's words to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern explaining why the world is to him a prison: "There is neither good nor ill, but thinking makes it so" (396). Paradoxically, Jennie has found, contained in a repetition of written words representing the spoken words of a man who does not exist, the truth that truth and value are not self-evident, that they are something added, something given by the perceiver. And so Jennie is able to read meaning into the world. At Lester's funeral, a "show" (414) for casual spectators and a meaningless ritual for the "nominally Catholic" Kanes (413), Jennie sees an image of "beauty persisting": "The gloom, the beauty of the windows, the whiteness of the altar, the golden flames of the candles impressed her." The ritual, for the Kanes merely a sign of Lester's absence, resonates within her, touching "the deep chord of melancholy" that incorporates what is lost into a greater fullness: "She was suffused with a sense of sorrow, loss, beauty and mystery. Life in all its vagueness and uncertainty seemed typified by this scene" (414-415). What Jennie sees and feels is Jefferies's "chronicle unwritten" and "past all power of writing"—the presence of the past that lies within herself and the world.

George Santayana once wrote that "the universe changes its hues like the chameleon...for everything in nature is lyrical in its ideal essence, tragic in its fate, and comic in its existence" (56). Jennie's universe is equally chameleon. Born into an ideal world whose essence is the lyrical "song of goodness," Jennie is last seen bidding Lester's corpse good-bye at the railroad station and contemplating life as tragic fate. The "iron grating" at the station "which separated her from her beloved" (416) suggests Hamlet's subjective prison, and the "great black engine" taking Lester to his place of burial images death's inevitability. Moreover, Jennie seems trapped on the flat plane of visual representation in which everything collapses into a repetition of the same. The train throws up "a great black plume of smoke that fell back over the cars like a pall." Jennie is left "staring into the wonder of this picture," the blackness of the smoke merging with the

whiteness of a pall reflected in her "white face" as she contemplates a "vista of lonely years" (417-18).

But in her grief, she does not hear what we hear, "the voice of a passing stranger, gay with the anticipation of coming pleasures": "Yes.... We're going to have a great time down there. Remember Annie? Uncle Jim's coming and Aunt Ella" (417-418). This oral exchange breaks up the scene of representation to remind us that life goes on. Lester's "mighty sentences" (195) once determined Jennie's fate, but now, while attempting to articulate her future, her own sentence breaks off, becoming an open question: "Days and days, an endless reiteration of days, and then—?" Grief at Lester's going will be followed, "in the rhythm of time unrolling," by coming joys. When she turns to life "in its existence," Jennie, like the stranger, will remember, the mystic chords will bring back the "enduring scene" of what is lost, and life will be beautiful and good again when thinking makes it so.

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Voicing the Tragedy: Narrative Conflict in Dreiser's *An American Tragedy*

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The narrator of Theodore Dreiser's *An American Tragedy* is often seen as the primary spokesperson for Dreiser's naturalism,¹ yet an attention to the narrative complexity of this novel reveals many other voices that both complement and compete with the narrative voice. Interspersed with, woven into, and even occasionally displacing the narrator are the voices of the main character, Clyde Griffiths, and those interested in him (his girlfriends—both rich and poor—and his mother), and also the impersonal (but personally interested) voices of authority: his wealthy uncle, a doctor, lawyer, and judge. As a result, it becomes hard for the reader to decide to whom he should listen at any given moment, since no voice—even the narrator's—rises above the others and assumes control.²

This lack of a single authoritative perspective, however, does not lead to confusion but instead moves readers toward an increasing awareness of the difficulties of interpretation and a growing suspicion of totalizing, supposedly disinterested solutions. The conflicting voices in the novel—and the conflicts within the voices themselves—also make it hard for readers to stand apart from the narrative and render moral, ethical, or legal judgment. This appears to be what Dreiser wanted—for readers to finish *An American Tragedy* unable, unlike the lawyers or judges or other “authority” figures, to decide whether (or in what sense) Clyde is guilty of the deliberately accidental death of his pregnant lover.³

My emphasis on multiple voices and conflicting ideologies in Dreiser's text obviously has many affinities with Mikhail Bakhtin's theories of novelistic language. In *The Dialogical Imagination*, Bakhtin says that the novel is "multiform in style and variform in speech and voice" (261). The language of a novel, he says, is "a contradiction-ridden, tension-filled unity of two embattled tendencies," (272) the social and the linguistic, with the former pulling the novel outward into the world of changing historical and political realities and the latter drawing it inward toward a (finally unrealizable) dream of a unitary language. The social dimension is also connected to the intentions of the author, who "merely ventriloquates" his "refracted" intentions onto the characters (299).⁴ Interplay between the refracted intentions of the author and the speech of a character, tensions between social and linguistic forces, and competition among voices in the novel (what Bakhtin calls "heteroglossia") become the "basic distinguishing feature[s] of the stylistics of the novel" (263).

In *An American Tragedy*, the various voices do "constitute a second language for the author," as Bakhtin says, and allow Dreiser, who is committed to realistic representation and naturalistic philosophy, to comment indirectly on both the tragic and pathetic aspects of Clyde's life. Through his employment of a variety of narrative perspectives, Dreiser can realistically represent his world, which he believes to be determined by the forces of nature, and he can offer a fundamental critique of such a theory.⁵ His placement/displacement of voices provides a crucial step toward that critique, demonstrating the determinism of a given character's background while at the same time undercutting such determinism through the strategic employment of the character's unruly desires.⁶

Clyde's voice is the primary example of this conflict between clear-eyed realism and romantic pathos, as his desires represent both fruitless dreaming and potential escape from a determined universe. Although not explicitly distinguished from the narrator's voice by the signs of direct discourse, Clyde's style is clearly present within the objective narrative voice:

And yet, before he had ever earned any money at all, he had always told himself that if only he had a better collar, a nicer shirt, finer shoes, a good suit, a swell overcoat like some boys had! Oh, the fine clothes, the handsome homes, the watches, rings, pins that some boys sported; the dandies many youths of his years already were! (I, 15)

Even in this early passage, the distinctions between and within voices are obvious. Clyde speaks with exclamation points and question marks; his characteristic “and yet” gives his voice the quality of perpetual motion. His hallmark is the indefinite but inviting future, and his voice is filled with vague (and likely unrealizable) longing for material success, which projects him into a world larger and (perhaps) less constricted than his own. Without ever having earned a penny, Clyde longs for the signs of prosperity; while desperately poor, he looks beyond himself to those who appear to have wealth—the “dandies” with fine houses, clothes, shoes, overcoats.

His further meditations on overcoats continue that struggle between desire and determinism:

And once he did attain it—was able to wear such clothes as these—well, then was he not well set upon the path that leads to all the blisses? All the joys of life would then most certainly be spread before him. The friendly smiles! The secret handclasps, maybe—an arm about the waist of some one or another—a kiss—a promise of marriage—and then, and then! (I, 26)

Here the reader recognizes once again the naked longing for material goods, the naive confidence in the power of appearance, and the romantic belief in the magical powers of wealth as the hallmarks of Clyde’s discourse. This exclamatory, breathless, and always hopeful voice celebrates the endless possibilities of the future, thus undercutting the grim naturalism of the narrative. Conversely, the reader is drawn into Clyde’s desires, while always recognizing the impossibility of their fulfillment.⁷

In another example, the narrator explicitly undermines Clyde's dreaming voice. Clyde, who is "constantly thinking of how he might better himself, if he had a chance" (I, 10), has embraced the romance of the American Dream with no realistic idea of how to achieve it. He thinks that being rich means merely "that you went how, where and when you pleased" (I, 45). The narrator, whose shifting voice alternates between sharing and excoriating Clyde's desires, points out that Clyde's ideas of luxury are the "mere wanderings of a repressed and unsatisfied fancy, which as yet had nothing but imaginings to feed it" (I, 33). He later acknowledges that Clyde "lacks decidedly that mental clarity and inner directing application that in so many permits them to sort out from the facts and avenues of life the particular thing or things that make for their direct advancement" (I, 174). Either through relentlessly naturalistic narrative movement or smugly realistic moralizing, Dreiser indicates the ultimate failure of Clyde's aspirations, while simultaneously encouraging the reader to share in his soon-to-be-shattered dreams.⁸

In contrast to Clyde's voice of indefinite desire and romantic day-dreams is the voice of definite wealth and pragmatic capitalism, the voice of Clyde's uncle, Samuel Griffiths. As Clyde's longing seeped into the narrative earlier, the following description of the Griffiths' house quickly takes on the voice of its owner:

The home of Samuel Griffiths in Lycurgus, New York, a city of some twenty-five thousand inhabitants midway between Utica and Albany. Near the dinner hour and by degrees the family assembling for its customary meal. On this occasion the preparations were of a more elaborate nature than usual owing to the fact that for the past four days Mr. Samuel Griffiths, the husband and father, had been absent attending a conference of shirt and collar manufacturers in Chicago, price-cutting by upstart rivals in the west having necessitated compromise and adjustment by those who manufactured in the east. (I, 151)

Although this passage appears at first to be merely a description of the Griffiths mansion and lifestyle, it also represents Samuel Griffiths' per-

spective—a voice that knows the proper place of things and speaks in the measured accents of the world of commerce, a voice that speaks of “up-start rivals” and “customary meals.” Much different from Clyde’s voice, which represents a mind filled with unfulfilled longings, it is the voice of “compromise and adjustment.”

Unlike Clyde’s chaos, the world of Samuel Griffiths is an extremely orderly one. Later in this same passage, Griffiths greets his wife “in due order”; she orders lamb for dinner “after due word”; one of his daughters is too studious “as a rule,” and so on (I, 151). And for a while order and security reign, but Clyde—bringing his disruptive desire—has come to Lycurgus, and that stability is soon threatened. Yet such order is not an unqualified good: it is Griffiths’ sense of class hierarchies (he makes Clyde prove himself first, holds his family aloof, and forbids relations with employees) that leads ultimately to Griffiths’ disgrace and Clyde’s tragedy.⁹

This narrative shift—from Clyde’s working-class enthusiasm for wealth to Samuel Griffiths’ elitist insistence on order—are evidence of Bahktin’s claim that the novel form “orchestrates all its themes... by means of the social diversity of speech types and by the differing individual voices that flourish under such conditions” (263). Clyde’s struggle to succeed is juxtaposed to Griffiths’ maintenance of the status quo. Yet neither voice is given a privileged position in the novel: Clyde’s is undone by the plot; Griffiths’ by Clyde’s legitimate desire for equal treatment.

If Clyde’s desires represent disorder for Samuel Griffiths’ (suspect) order, they result in dishonor (and finally death) for his lover, Roberta Alden. When the lovers-to-be meet, each has a different response: Clyde’s voice, as usual, is filled with insecure longings; Roberta’s is shot through with misgivings. Clyde speaks first, complaining that his precarious position in his uncle’s business limits contact with other people (especially women) to casual encounters:

What was that? Just nothing really. And yet as an offset to all this, of course, was he not a Griffiths and so entitled to their

respect and reverence even on this account? What a situation really! What to do! (I, 255)

In this passage, Clyde's characteristic questions, exclamations, and vague future projections signal to the reader that Roberta has already become another object of his continually unfulfilled desire. By listening to Clyde, the reader becomes aware of both the realistic limitations of Clyde's position and the disruptive desire that will lead him relentlessly toward disaster.

Roberta's voice, when she first considers getting involved with Clyde, is profoundly different from his:

Religious, moral and reserved girls didn't do it. And again, as she soon discovered, the lines of demarcation and stratification between the rich and the poor in Lyncurgus were as sharp as though cut by a knife or divided by a high wall. (I, 255)

At this point, Roberta (unlike Clyde) has no desire for the world of the upper classes; she feels it to be surrounded by an insurmountable wall. In fact, her voice throughout this passage is restricted by walls of social status, morality, and convention. Like Griffiths' voice, it emphasizes the realistic limitations Clyde's voice ignores, while showing how those limitations deny social change and individual progress. Still, after Roberta and Griffiths have entered the novel, it is impossible not to filter Clyde's voice through their perspectives, to hear Clyde's longings without thinking of the practical and moral consequences of such desire.

Although Roberta's voice shows how she is protected by conventional morality, she finds Clyde's sensual voice (at least temporarily) impossible to resist. Shortly after she encounters Clyde, Roberta is 'seized with the very virus of ambition and unrest that afflicted him' (I, 256). This "virus" infects her speech and poisons her vision of her world.¹⁰ Still, although Roberta has internalized Clyde's version of the American Dream, she recognizes that Clyde was so "highly connected"

that he could not have “any legitimate interest in her” and resolves to “be on her guard in regard to him” (I, 260).

Instead of paying attention to these realities, however, Roberta is seduced by the sentimental romance that she and Clyde are now producing together. The fire of romance is fueled by her false impression of his social status, and the two dreams—the American one of success and the romantic one of Prince Charming—merge when he teaches her to dance:

Carried away by a bravado which was three-fourths her conception of him as a member of the Lycurgus upper crust and possessor of means and position, he led the way into a corner and began at once to illustrate the respective movements. (I, 288)

Clyde has become to Roberta a “possessor of means and position.” Yet, unfortunately for her, his sense of *himself* as a “member of the Lycurgus upper crust” also entitles him to think he can abandon Roberta when better social opportunities present themselves.

This heady combination of romance and ambition, of love and success story, overwhelms Roberta’s initial caution, and she soon becomes pregnant. Various desperate remedies fail, and when she goes to a doctor to seek an abortion, another conflict-ridden voice enters the novel. Although he has performed abortions for wealthy women, the doctor refuses to help Roberta because he sees himself (when confronted with a poor patient) as a guardian of morality:

Nevertheless, this business of contraceptual operation or interference with the normal or God-arranged life processes, well, that was ticklish and unnatural business at best which he wanted as little as possible to do with. (I, 414)

The voice of this small-town physician represents another problematic voice of authority and shows how morality drained of empathy can be used to justify self-interest. In the same way that Samuel Griffiths’ orderly

voice allowed Clyde no place in the Griffiths' family, so the doctor's false morality denies Roberta humane treatment. Like the voice of "compromise and adjustment," this voice does not represent the moral stance of the novel; instead, it casts doubt on the possibility of a moral stance untainted by personal or class bias.

This detached morality will appear later in the novel in the voices of the courtroom, and the complex relationship between truth and fiction established by the doctor foreshadows the district attorney's attitude toward Clyde. In this as in the later cases, the reader sees that opinions are rendered on the basis of incorrect, incomplete, or patently false information and founded on suspect motives. Ultimately, the competition between the authoritative voices and the voice of Clyde's desires raises profound questions about authority and morality.

With nothing yet resolved about Roberta's pregnancy, Clyde nevertheless directs his desires toward a new object—the wealthy socialite Sondra Finchley. Although he is completely outside her social class (and has a pregnant girlfriend to boot!), Clyde imagines that Sondra's parents would "acquiesce and take them into the glorious bosom of their resplendent home at Lycurgus or provide for them in some other way" (II, 8). Clyde's hope that the wealthy Finchleys would accept the Griffiths' poor relation as a future son-in-law appears at best naive and at worst dangerous, as his dreaming of life with Sondra allows him to postpone making plans for helping Roberta and ultimately results in the need for desperate action.

As Clyde dreams about Sondra and has nightmares about Roberta, both women write him letters. These letters show a striking contrast between the two women's voices, and the difference in their literary self-presentation plays a significant role in Clyde's choice of Sondra over Roberta. The letters will also be a crucial link in the chain of circumstantial evidence that connects Clyde to Roberta's murder and will accentuate the importance rhetorical power plays in his conviction. Sondra's letter appears trivial and anecdotal:

Clyde Mydie:

How is my pheet phing? All whytie? It's just glorious up here. Lots of people already here and more coming every

day. The Casino and golf course over at Pine Point are open and lots of people about. I can hear Stuart and Grant with their launches going toward Gray's Inlet now. You must hurry and come up, dear. It's too nice for words. Green roads to gallop through, and swimming and dancing at the Casino every afternoon at four. (II, 19)

One of Roberta's letters, written on the same day, and appearing on the same page of the novel, is sincere but depressing:

Dear Clyde:

I am nearly ready for bed, but I will write you a few lines. I had such a tiresome journey coming up that I was nearly sick. In the first place I didn't want to come much (alone) as you know. I feel too upset and uncertain about everything, although I try not to feel so now that we have our plan and you are going to come for me as you said. (II, 19)

While her baby talk is cloying, Sondra's prose is lively and her narrative interesting, and the reader notices the letter's vigorous word choice, vivid imagery, and confident manipulation of stylistic conventions. The letter's persuasive power is in large part due to the unconventional ways in which she controls her language, the product of the skill and confidence that comes with a good education and financial security. Roberta's letter, on the other hand, is poignant in subject matter, but her voice is whining and manipulative, and her style, probably resulting from her minimal education and practical worries about the future, is plain and unconvincing.

The subjects of the two writers *should* undercut these stylistic differences—Roberta's letter tells of her feelings of betrayal and abandonment, while Sondra's innocently recounts the pleasures of the rich and care-free—but the reader nevertheless is drawn, as is Clyde, toward Sondra's lively recounting of fairly trivial events. This is a crucial step in the process of evoking sympathy for Clyde's later actions; the reader responds, in this as in many other cases in the novel, not to the situation of a particular

character but to his or her rhetorical force. The power of voice overrules the pathos of situation.

The persuasive power of Roberta's letter is also undercut by the narrator's frequent interruptions describing Clyde's reaction to reading it, while Sondra's letter is left intact. As a result, the reader's response to Roberta's letter is qualified by other interpretations, by conflicting desires, while the response to Sondra's letter is left unmitigated. The characters that suffer in this novel—Roberta and Clyde in particular—are those characters whose voices fail to remain uniform, those characters whose desires conflict with their realities.¹¹

The prosecution in Clyde's trial treats the letters in a manner similar to the narrator. Sondra's letters are again kept inviolate by not being read at all (to protect the wealthy girl's privacy), while Roberta's letters eventually become public property. District Attorney Mason, who is "over-awed by the wealth of the Finchleys and the Griffiths," doesn't allow the letters—or Sondra's name—to become public, although he is willing "to show the bundle of letters carefully tied with a ribbon by Clyde." He turns them into an icon—unavailable for public consumption. Roberta's letters, on the other hand, are "described in detail—even excerpts of some of them—the more poetic and gloomy being furnished the Press for use, for who was there to protect her" (II, 67). Roberta's letters are once again offered up for interpretation; her writing is public property—both for the narrator and for the court.

Ironically, the publicity and poignancy of Roberta's letters (caused by her lack of social power and rhetorical skill) help to convict Clyde. The jury sees through the dull prose and hackneyed phrases to the "truth" of the injustice Clyde has done to her. Her language, as Bakhtin says, is "ideologically freighted," (333) carrying the force of American middle-class morality and exploited by the district attorney for that very reason. Sondra's letters, on the other hand, could have helped the jury see how irresistible she was to him, to see another sort of truth.¹²

The reason the letters play such a large part in the trial is because there are no eyewitnesses to the "crime," and the only evidence, a camera, has been tampered with by the prosecution. Even the readers who witness the events on Big Bittern Lake (Clyde takes Roberta out intend-

ing to drown her but loses his nerve, hits her accidentally with the camera, and lets her drown) remain uncertain about his motives and increasingly unsure about what it might mean—legally and morally—to say that Clyde *intended* to kill Roberta. In the absence of objective proof, all one has is conjecture fueled by personal prejudice.¹³

Before he has even caught Clyde, however, District Attorney Mason is sure of his guilt:

[H]e was convinced that in all likelihood this man or boy, whoever he was, had seduced her and then later, finding himself growing tired of her, had finally chosen this way to get rid of her—this deceitful, alleged marriage trip to the lake. And at once he conceived an enormous personal hate for the man. The wretched rich! The idle rich! The wastrel and evil rich—a scion or representative of whom this young Clyde Griffiths was. (II, 108)

The district attorney's personal interests—resentment of the wealthy and desire for political advancement—have transformed Clyde, the son of itinerant preachers, into “a scion or representative” of the “idle rich.” Clyde's voice has been subsumed here by another voice of (suspect) authority; his vague desire for success with no thought for the consequences has become, through the district attorney's desire for vengeance (and success), a deceitful seduction, the product of an evil and corrupt class. The deliberate misinterpretations made here reinforce the misreadings of the earlier authority figures (Griffiths and the doctor) and anticipate those to come (the appeals court judge). Unfortunately for him, Clyde's fate rests, precariously, on such misinterpretations.¹⁴

One of the last voices in the novel is the voice of the appeals court that denies Clyde's appeal. While it admits that “some of these facts standing by themselves” were “subject to doubt,” it asserts that

[T]aken all together and considered as a connected whole, they make such convincing proof of guilt that we are not able to escape from its force by any justifiable process of

reasoning and we are compelled to say that not only is the verdict not opposed to the weight of evidence, and to the proper inference to be drawn from it, but that it is abundantly justified thereby. (II, 394)

This is ironic, given that there is no "connected whole" in this novel, no one story that will help the reader decide if Clyde is guilty or innocent, only a tissue of self-motivated rhetorical stances. If the reader attempts to take the various voices "all together and considered as a connected whole," it becomes impossible to accept the smug judgment of the appeals court.

Throughout the novel, the multiple perspectives call the possibility of objective judgment into question, which makes Clyde's execution at the end seem all the more horrible since it is based, ultimately, on a single, and hence limited, perspective. Thus Dreiser has used his complex narrative structure to question the very nature of innocence and justice, realistic representation and romantic aspiration. What moves readers, and keeps them coming back to this long and sometimes cumbersome novel, is that Dreiser has created characters and situations that test their (and his own) faith in scientific objectivity, single viewpoints, simple answers. Dreiser's "contradiction-ridden, tension-filled unity" leaves its readers grieving for a loss that feels both inevitable and avoidable, determined and unnecessary, which is, of course, the definition of a tragedy.¹⁵

¹For analyses of Dreiser's commitment to naturalism and consequent reliance on real-world sources see Moers, Gerber, Mattheissen, Lehan, Warren, McAleer, and Hussman. For more recent theoretically informed discussions of Dreiser's naturalism see Howard and Kaplan.

²Paul A. Orlov discusses Dreiser's use of indirect discourse, claiming that "Dreiser's own capacity for sympathetic understanding of the yearning self that is Clyde—dramatized by meaningful manipulation of point-of-view—is set against the nature of the very social forces his novel scrutinizes

and reveals, in all *their* judgmental indifference” (83). While I agree with Orlov that there seems to be such a split perspective in the novel, I disagree with him on two points: Orlov sees the narrative voice as merely double, while I attempt to expose a multiplicity of voices, and more significantly, he sees this narrative technique serving a theme of “the figurative destruction of Clyde’s selfhood by false values” (76). I find his claims for Clyde’s “actual identity” and “true selfhood” (78) unwarranted in a novel that systematically undermines the very notion of fixity such a concept of self implies.

³Janet Holmgren McKay has aptly demonstrated the need to focus on voice in realistic fiction. “What we will see in the realistic novel,” she says, “are narrators increasingly involved with and affected by the characters and the action of their stories. This involvement results in a loss of authority and reveals itself in a mingling of voices—the narrator’s and the characters’—and ultimately a representation of multiple perspectives” (36).

⁴Michael Davitt Bell has commented astutely on the relationship between Dreiser’s narrators and his characters:

Dreiser begins, again and again, on the outside, but he always moves inward—even and maybe especially when he seems to *mean* to keep his distance—toward an affective stylistic identification with the sensibilities of his characters. He does not impose his obsessions on them; instead, he mimics their sufferings and aspirations, even ventriloquizes their inarticulateness, and if this is sloppiness it is sloppiness that mostly works. (162)

⁵What Sandy Petrey says about *Sister Carrie* applies, I believe, to *An American Tragedy* as well. The novel, he says, “refutes a number of ideologically significant myths” and “denounces as inherently invalid the linguistic forms which perpetuate myths. In addition to exposing certain lies, the novel made a certain way of lying so patent that it does not need exposure” (113).

⁶Another way to read Clyde’s desires can be found in recent psychoanalytic criticism of *An American Tragedy*, in particular Leonar

Cassuto, John Clendenning, and Miriam Gogol. Cassuto's approach, with its emphasis on a Lacanian linguistic reading of the psyche, pays the most attention to the complex character representation I have been exploring here.

⁷Much of my approach to reading Dreiser has been influenced by Walter Benn Michaels' work on *Sister Carrie*, in which he shows that Dreiser identifies character with desire, with "an involvement with the world so central to one's sense of self that the distinction between what one is and what one wants tends to disappear" (381). Michaels has also noted the paradox in this ethics of desire: "[T]he capitalism of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries acted more to subvert the ideology of the autonomous self than to enforce it" (389).

⁸As Shelley Fisher Fishkin has observed, for Dreiser "fact is fate." Dreiser insists throughout *An American Tragedy* that "there is no turning away from the concrete events which shackle one's past to one's future" (120). Clyde's tragedy is in part "the tragedy that stems from denying life its untidy complexity" (128).

⁹Walter Benn Michaels speaks insightfully of the "slippery class erotics" of Clyde's attraction to Sondra, which is a consequence of his resemblance to Samuel's son Gilbert. He also notes that the enforced class structure of the factory leads to Clyde's affair with Roberta: "Juxtaposing the classes, the factory creates the sexually charged atmosphere of cross-class desire.... Insisting that the classes be kept apart, it requires and so produces the secrecy of Clyde's and Roberta's relations, the enforced privacy that leads to the intimacy of the sexual relations" (190).

¹⁰Lee Clark Mitchell comments on this mingling of Clyde's and Roberta's characters, although he constructs it primarily in terms of personality instead of voice. He concludes, perceptively, that "[i]n a world already 'in place,' with its fixed categories of selfhood, will and desire, the heterogenous energies that make up Clyde can hardly survive" (56). For a fuller treatment of Dreiser's naturalism, see Mitchell's *Determined Fictions*.

¹¹While little has been said about the letters in *An American Tragedy*, aside from Clendenning's recent psychoanalytic reading of them, James L. McDonald has noted their rhetorical differences. Sondra, he says, "is

able to move outside herself, to set up an image she can try to emulate but, more important, can lead Clyde to admire and desire." Roberta, however, cannot: "Trapped within her own wounded ego and unable to cope with her physical predicament," he says, she "cannot see the image she presents to Clyde." Roberta has, by the time she writes the letters, "degenerated into a pregnant lump" (5-6). While this reading concentrates on the relative persuasive powers of each letter, it fails to make connections to the larger issues of persuasion functioning in the novel.

Ellen Moers also comments about the letters, saying that "Roberta's cries of entreaty and despair move us only indirectly in the novel. There they are merely part of the accumulated weight of horrors pressing down upon the soul of Clyde Griffiths" (213). Moers seems most interested, however, in the status of the letters as historical documents rather than in their rhetorical power to convict.

¹²As Richard Lehan says, "There is a continuing irony in *An American Tragedy* stemming from the fact that while the novel is told from the omniscient point of view, Clyde never understands the meaning of events which befall him" (190). Clyde may never understand what happens to him, but the reader, thanks to the point of view which is not so much omniscient as omnivocal, sees that the judgment rendered is finally incomplete and incorrect.

¹³Phillip Fisher points out that Clyde's murder of Roberta is "the first murder in literature in which the weapon is a camera" (152). This is especially important because Clyde's fate—in the narrative—rests on the prosecution's use of the camera as false evidence (they put strands of Roberta's hair into the camera lens to prove that Clyde struck her with it) and his guilt—in the mind of the reader—rests on how well Clyde represents various images of action, on how convincing a "picture" of innocence he can create for the reader.

¹⁴As Susan Mizruchi says,

Clyde's narrative befuddlement—his inability to narrate his past experience—allows others to empower themselves through it. Clyde's role as a political pawn is replicated in his

role as a literary pawn, the main character in the proliferating versions of his life. Thus, political and narrative power become one, as Clyde is shown to be a protagonist whose lack of control over his own tale proves fatal. (279)

¹⁵Haskell M. Block has noted that "Dreiser so presents Clyde's trial and conviction as to convey the appearance of a fair trial; the outcome of the proceedings, however, appeals to the reader's sense of injustice, heightening his indignation and his feeling of sympathy for the helpless victim" (65). And Irene Gammel says that "[T]he verdict marks the triumph of a monolithic discourse that manages to absorb, appropriate, and render ineffective all potentially oppositional voices" (139). On a slightly more positive note, Mizruchi says, "the novel's sustained reflection on the social and political effects of its own determinism stands as a form of resistance to that vision. And that resistance reveals, above all, a faith in human powers to change the world" (294).

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Dreiser Looks at Longfellow

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This text of "The Homes of Longfellow" is a transcription of an unpublished manuscript housed among the Dreiser Papers in the University of Virginia's Department of Special Collections.¹ The manuscript is written in pencil on small (9" x 5 3/4") yellow sheets of paper. Although the piece is undated, both the paper and the contents leave little doubt that it was one of many similar sketches Dreiser wrote for magazine publication in the late 1890s.² The University's Dreiser collection also contains a similar sketch called "The Home of William Cullen Bryant"³ which was published in *Munsey's* in May of 1899.

Longfellow, as one of the most beloved American poets of his time, was an appropriate subject for the new monthlies like *Munsey's*, *McClure's*, *The Saturday Evening Post*, and *The Ladies Home Journal*, in which most of Dreiser's free-lance pieces appeared.⁴ These low-priced magazines looked for articles that would have wide appeal for a general audience.⁵ To the present-day reader, jaded by decades of critical overkill branding Dreiser the leading American naturalist, "The Homes of Longfellow" may well look like little more than Dreiser's attempt to sell his work by pleasing the growing readership of these popular periodicals. Given the critical dismissal of Longfellow as hopelessly naïve and sentimental, it is difficult to see what else might have prompted Dreiser to choose him as a subject and to write so glowingly about him. Dreiser was certainly interested in earning his living as a writer, but at no point in his career can he be accused of compromising his own convictions simply to please an audience. As he makes plain here, Dreiser genuinely admires Longfellow.

Clearly, Dreiser was taken with the man whose politeness and gentility he begins his sketch by describing. One of the most telling and touching lines in this portrait is Dreiser's pronouncement that Longfellow "had a

heart for the world." It is worth remembering while reading this piece, that Dreiser was not only the author of the great American business novel and creator of the ruthless Frank Cowperwood; he created, and clearly "had a heart" for more sympathetic characters like his long-suffering heroine Jennie Gerhardt, the charitable Charlie Potter ("Twelve Men"), and the title figure in "My Brother Paul" (Twelve Men"). These characters were drawn from life and represented people who, like Longfellow, were burdened by "sensibilities of conscience" and "tenderness of heart." It is not surprising, then, that this piece should emphasize the personal qualities in Longfellow that fascinated Dreiser and that he prized, and maybe even envied in others.

What perhaps is surprising, though, is Dreiser's admiration for the "excellent poems" that "sprang out" of Longfellow's meditations on the lovely and inspiring scenes outside the window of Craigie House. We are so accustomed to the critical commonplaces about naturalism, that it is difficult not to look for some irony in Dreiser's praise of Longfellow's rhymes. But the ever un-ironic Dreiser seems to have truly liked Longfellow's comforting sentiments. If Longfellow was constitutionally unable to "dive into abysses of abstraction," or rise "to the heights of speculation," he could speak to "the facts of ordinary homely life"—facts that Dreiser was committed to detailing in his own fiction. Of course, Dreiser's praise, if not ironic, is not unqualified. Longfellow's poems are not for "thinkers" or "poets," but for the "day-laborer." Dreiser was sympathetic to Longfellow the man and to his poems; but he was not blind to the poet's limitations. And, possibly, there was some satisfaction for Dreiser in knowing that even a fortunate son of a member of Congress who lived a life of ease and comfort was not necessarily a greater artist than the son of a poor German Catholic immigrant. In an interesting and generous reversal of the usual course of praise and merit, Dreiser applauds Longfellow not for pulling himself up by the bootstraps and achieving success, but for rising above the "misery" of responsibility that comes with being well-born.

On its own, this sketch reveals Dreiser's sympathetic response to a poet whose work would seem to be antithetical to his own. As an addition to the body of published work from this period in Dreiser's career, "The

Homes of Longfellow" serves as a reminder that Dreiser was as much a product of the nineteenth century as he was a literary maverick in the twentieth.

The manuscript is not a polished essay. It is obviously a draft and, as such, perhaps reveals more about Dreiser's thinking and early writing habits than a revised, published piece might. For purposes of clarity, however, it has been edited much as Dreiser might have expected it to be edited for magazine publication. Spelling errors have been silently corrected; punctuation has been regularized; repeated words have been eliminated. I have intruded minimally, though, in Dreiser's prose. Substantive changes have been made only where necessary for purposes of clarity and the original version has been included in a footnote. All editorial intrusions are in square brackets; those which are italicized are explanatory notes. For Dreiser, the focus of this sketch was Longfellow, for us, it is Dreiser. Therefore, annotations regarding Longfellow's letters and poems have been kept to a minimum. I have, where possible, indicated Dreiser's sources. Although some of the anecdotes were available to Dreiser from more than one source, he frequently took enough of the surrounding language (and in the case of the final paragraph, simply transferred Eric Robertson's language to his own page) to identify at least two of his sources with certainty.

¹Accession #6220. Published with permission of the trustees of the University of Pennsylvania Dreiser Collection who own the literary rights to the essay and the Department of Special Collections at the University of Virginia at which the document is housed.

²Thomas P. Riggio has established that Dreiser stopped using these small sheets of paper and began using standard-size typewriter paper around 1910. See Riggio's introduction to *Theodore Dreiser, American Diaries, 1902-1926*. ed. Riggio, James L. W. West III, and Neda M. Westlake (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983), 8n.5.

³Dreiser may have been experimenting with a genre popularized by G. P. Putnam who, in 1853, published a collection of essays called *Homes of American Authors*. G. P. Putnam's Sons reprinted the collection in

1896 as the second group of their *Little Journeys* series. The volume contains an essay on Longfellow by George William Curtis—an imaginative account of the poet's days at Craigie House—but it bears no resemblance to Dreiser's sketch.

⁴In fact, the July, 1896 issue of *McClure's* (Vol. VII, No. 2) published "Portraits of Longfellow, Age 25-71" with an accompanying article by Elizabeth Stuart Phelps entitled "Longfellow, Whittier, and Holmes, passages from their Talk and Correspondence." And one of Dreiser's sources was, almost certainly, one of two versions of an article by Annie Fields (wife of James T. Fields, head of the publishing house Ticknor and Fields). The first was called "Glimpses of Longfellow in Social Life" and was published in *The Century Magazine* in 1886 (Vol. XXXI, 1885-86, pp. 884-893); a variation appeared in a volume of collected essays entitled *Authors and Friends* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1896).

⁵For more on Dreiser's magazine work during this period, see *Selected Magazine Articles of Theodore Dreiser*, ed. Yoshinobu Hakutani, (Rutherford: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1985).

The Homes of Longfellow

by

Theodore Dreiser

It is a common remark that Longfellow was singularly fortunate; that Providence treated him with indulgence, and spared him the struggles and disappointments which attend the lot of most literary men. Hence is it generally concluded that sorrow with him was affectation, that faith which usually shows itself in times of stress was with him unnecessary, and all his expression of it, therefore sentimental, unreal, and literary. But, to say nothing of such afflictions as are so tenderly hinted at in "Voices of the Night,"¹ the multitude have yet to learn what these have to suffer, who, along with success, popularity, honor, and worldly competence, are endowed with sensibilities of conscience and tenderness of heart. Not all suffering vanishes with the arrival of a full purse. Many a man, I think, has found, to his grief, that there are worse kinds of luck than poverty. It is true that opulence bears more heavily on genius than poverty does, for opulence has no aim and poverty has not only an aim but a whip wherewith to impress the importance of it. Equally, responsibility entails more misery than toil does—misery in form of regret, uneasiness, dissatisfaction, a sense of weakness, failure, and the cares of others. When, in spite of ease, men of talent labor, it is something worth talking about, and Longfellow did this very thing. Success stimulated him to toil; praise made him modest; popularity threw him back on self-knowledge; privilege kept him mindful of duty; honors educated him in charity; and the perpetual presence of a world filled with pain drove him to a faith and confidence in divine love. Conditions which might have encouraged a self-conscious man to think this (according to his own narrow greed) the best possible order of things, and a morbid man to regard it as the worst possible, simply rendered Longfellow submissive and thoughtful. Where he had plenty without toil, he is to be complemented for doing anything at all. There are some who with equal means have done less.

He was not a great thinker—perhaps he did not choose to think, being constitutionally ordained to feel; but feeling is as insistent and harrowing sometimes as thought. Whoever, in a world like this, can maintain a still heart, is quite as much to be marveled at as he who can preserve a calm intellect. And with a moderate degree of prosperity, Longfellow was both energetic and sympathetic—had heart for the world.

It is scarcely within the province of the literary pilgrimage to settle the points of an accepted author's character, but it is, nevertheless, pleasant in revisiting the haunts of one so famous, to recall familiarly the chief chorus of the honored dead, and to see the remaining relics through a mist of favorable prejudice. If it be only possible to reinvest the once life-filled halls with the glamour of the old sunlight and moonlight, to shut out the garish modernity and see again things as they were—literary pilgrimages become worth while. It needs, however, a clear remembrance on the part of the pilgrim—a distinct memory of the firelight that brightened this room, the shadow that marked this corner. He must see with that "inner eye which no calamity can darken" the long since departed figures in their accustomed places, must hear the hum of the long since silent voices and mark how the rain falls and the wind whistles though it be brightest day. He must come and restore the past and it shall be pleasant for him.

So with Longfellow one must come thinking of the days when he was a professor at Cambridge, well-dressed, scholarly-looking, and serenely good-natured. He moved among a host of friends, the distinguished of his city. His wife was both intellectual and beautiful. His accepted guests were Hawthorne, Lowell, Curtis, Holmes, and the score of names now foremost in American literary annals. Of a naturally buoyant disposition and fond of pleasure, he was the first to know when the opera season began and to plan for the possession of a box with his friends. His residence was a place for daily social affairs, and he moved in them as one suited in temperament to the lighter side of things. He was gay, debonair. On the occasion of one little social affair he writes a note to a friend which tells more of his social side than anything a biographer might say:

I have been kept home by a little dancing party tonight... I write this arrayed in my dress-coat, with a rose in my but-

ton-hole, a circumstance, I think, worth mentioning. It reminds me of Buffon, who used to array himself in his full dress for writing "Natural History." Why should we not always do it when we write letters? We should, no doubt, be more courtly and polite, and perhaps say handsome things to each other. It was said of Villemain that when he spoke to a lady he seemed to be presenting her a bouquet. Allow me to present you this postscript in the same polite manner, to make good my theory of the rose in the buttonhole.

Thus we catch the intoxication of some of his little festivals.

More of the same [*two unreadable words*] shines through a letter which he wrote to explain why he could not attend a Burns festival:

I am very sorry not to be there. You will have a delightful supper, or dinner, whichever it is; and human breath enough expended to fill all the trumpets of Iskander for a month or more.

I behold as in a vision a friend of ours, with his left-hand under the tails of his coat, blowing away like mad; and, alas! I shall not be there to applaud. All this you must do for me; and also eat my part of the haggis, which I hear is to grace the feast. This shall be your duty and your reward.²

And there is another touch which will serve to set him in the light in which he looks best—a note with the flavor of the poet and the patrician in it:

I have just received your charming gift, your note and the stately lilies; but fear you may have gone from home before my thanks can reach you. How beautiful they are, these lilies of the field; and how like American women! Not because they neither toil nor spin, but because they are elegant and "born in the purple."

This is the atmosphere which it is best for one to recall—the atmosphere surrounding a gentleman and in which he moved doing good. That he was generous and charitable, that he always welcomed and assisted new and struggling authors, gave away most of his valuable time to the curious and the celebrity chasers, with imperturbable good temper, was sentimental and right-wishing, other things than these go to show. But that he moved gracefully through a social and artistic life we must learn direct. It makes not only the sentiment of his poetry but the places wherein he dwelt stand forth in a new way.

His life journey began at Portland, Maine. The old house where he was born still stands near the water-front at Portland, Maine, yellow and showing signs of age though not of decay. There are railroad tracks lying between the street which it faces and the waters of the bay. It is a district of iron foundries and growing big industries and the ruck of scrap-iron is over it all. The birthplace of Thomas B. Reed, right at back of it, is equally weather-beaten, and all the trees and poetry and beautiful scenery suggested by the verses of “My Lost Youth” are no longer here.

I asked in jest of a little boy carrying a dinner pail,

“Whose house is that?”

“Longfellow’s,” he replied.

“Who is Longfellow?”

“I don’t know.”

A laborer inside the great board fence of the iron-company’s reserve hearing this came to an opening. He presumed that my question was really serious.

“Longfellow was a poet,” he said, “that’s where he was born.” So I had to thank him without the shadow of a smile.

As a matter of fact Longfellow never lived in the house. His parents were stopping there with friends a few weeks at the time, before removing to the mansion in [blank space]³ street, which General Pelig about this time made over to them. This latter place is where the poet was born [and]⁴ also is now much encroached upon, charming in its old tree-guarded appearance and its memories of the youth who dwelt there until his college days, but set about with the traffic of the busiest street, and passed by trolley and a constant procession of wagons. It is all the more antiquated

therefore, all the more redolent of days now long gone by and one such as Hawthorne might have peopled with weird, exclusive old souls, pattering out the remainder of lives no longer in touch with the rush and hurly-burly of modern trade. You read, with a strong sense of the shift and decay of things, the lines in "My Lost Youth"⁵ in which Longfellow long ago described the town and his earliest home:

I can see the shadowy lines of its trees,
And catch, in sudden gleams,
The sheen of the far-surrounding seas,
And islands that were the Hesperides
Of all my boyish dreams.

These things are still, but not in the places where Longfellow was wont to abide and ramble. The

black wharves and the slips
And the sea tides tossing free
And the Spanish sailors with bearded lips

are no more. Instead, there are very modern docks and mostly steam-vessels with scarcely any Spanish sailors to speak of. The town is more like Dayton or St. Joseph of the West and other such places, and the throng of people who come from other American cities to summer on the island of Casco Bay make the place exceedingly modern and summer-resortish.

In 1822, when but fifteen years old, Longfellow left Portland for Brunswick, Maine, the seat of Bowdoin College, where he began his college studies. During his first year he encountered Hawthorne, who was there also, and a friendship, which afterwards became stronger, sprang up between them. Hawthorne accounted him a "tremendous worker" and no doubt he was, for he graduated with honors in three years (1825). Mrs. Fields once wrote, concerning these days, that it was in the little room numbered twenty-seven in Maine Hall in Bowdoin College "that the young poet of nineteen wrote many of those beautiful earlier pieces now col-

lected in his works. These early poems were all composed in 1824 and 1825, during his last years in college, and were printed first in a periodical called 'The United States Literary Gazette,' the sapient editor of which magazine once kindly advised the ardent young scholar to give up poetry and buckle down to the study of law. 'No good can come of it,' he said, 'don't let him do such things; make him stick to prose!' But the pine trees waving outside his window kept up a perpetual responsive melody in his heart, and he could not choose but sing back to them."⁶

However this may be, some sixteen poems were thus published, all but seven of which were subsequently abandoned by the poet later in life as unworthy of his maturer genius. He gained college fame by them, however, delivered the "English Oration" at graduation, and young as he was, was elected Professor of Modern Languages, though he was not quite prepared to take the position. Relations of his comfortably situated father had something to do with it, though the trustees had come into a knowledge of his talent and did not count themselves unwise in giving him the place. He was directed to proceed to Europe and equip himself by study there, for this task. During the fall of 1825 and the spring of 1826 he rested, and then, with money provided by his father, proceeded to France, where he traveled, as well as to Spain and Italy. He had the natural gift of acquiring languages and on his return to Bowdoin in 1829, was fully equipped for the work expected of him. Here he remained until 1834, rising constantly in the esteem of the educational world. In 1831 he formed a literary connection with "The North American Review," and in September of the same year married Mary Storer Potter, the second daughter of one of his father's neighbors—a young lady who has been written down as one attractive in appearance, possessed of an affectionate disposition and more than ordinary learning. The poet took her back with them to the college town and began housekeeping in a cottage which still stands under its elms in Federal Street. Here he remained until Harvard called him to the Smith Professorship of Modern Languages.

He had done literary work in this time, chiefly papers describing his impressions of Europe which he contributed to "The New England Magazine," and then combined into a pamphlet, in 1833, called "Outré Mer: a Pilgrimage beyond the Sea." He had done some translating also, but his

efforts had done little more than better his reputation as a teacher. The call extended him by Harvard provided that he might take a year in Europe to prepare himself before entering upon his duties, and so he did. His young wife accompanied him, and while they were in Rotterdam she died. For distraction he traveled through Germany and Switzerland, studying the German celebrities of the day: Goethe, Herder, Tieck, Hoffman and Richter. His grief was sharp, of course, but he was only twenty-eight, and in youth, time and new scenes are excellent restoratives. He met other young women, particularly a Miss Francis Appleton, who with her parents, a very wealthy couple, was sojourning at Interlaken. She interested him and as time passed fascinated him, though he returned to America without making any explicit attempt to advance his suit. He had no reason to suppose that she either understood or reciprocated his affection, but he did have the consolation of knowing that she hailed from Boston, whither he was returning, and that he could renew the acquaintance and social intercourse when the family came home. So he was fortunate, after his manner, but he was never aggressive, and once they were in Boston again he began his courtship by signs rather than declarations. As once Orlando hung his odes to Rosalind on hawthornes and his elegies on brambles, Longfellow prefigured and revealed the state of his feelings to his beloved by a novel. Yes, *Hyperion* is a disguised picture of himself and his passion intended for his fair lady. But it was four years after the death of his first wife that his engagement was announced. Then he married and fixed upon Craigie House in Cambridge as his home, a house with which he was identified from 1837 to the day of his death. This house alone usually makes an excellent Longfellow story, for almost all that was worthwhile in his life was here enacted.

It was on an afternoon in the summer of 1837 that Longfellow first came to the home which is now most celebrated as his own, the house on Brattle street. It was then known as the Craigie House and will probably be revered as long as its walls can hold together. It was already celebrated for the great functions held there by its wealthy occupants in the colonial days, and, too, Washington had dignified it by dwelling there sometime during the revolution; an honor, however, shared by many another house from Germantown to Boston. It was occupied, when he came, by

the last relic of its former glory, a Mrs. Craigie, tall, erect, and turbaned, as befits an old lady, and prim withal. She did not fancy the dandified air of the young professor, and remarked that she no longer lodged students, but he made other protestations of merit and was admitted.

The room which he was permitted to occupy was upon the front of the house and looked over the meadows of the Charles River and the river itself. It was, indeed, the room once occupied by Washington. The elms of an avenue now no longer present shaded his window, and he could look away to where the sunlight sleeps on the [*unreadable word*] hills, and witness the beauty of the water beneath the moon. Indeed, he took delight in it, as we have in the lines,

Oft in sadness and in illness
I have watched thy current glide,
Till the beauty of its stillness
Overflowed me, like a tide.

And many another excellent poem sprang out of the meditations which the pleasant scene excited.

Though things today have changed in a measure, there is a chorus about the street and the house for we are in the center, seemingly, of much that he did. The poems which over all others have endeared him to Americans were written there: "Voices of the Night," "Hiawatha," "The Village Blacksmith," "The Rainy Day," and so many others. It is easy to imagine the ivy which covers the west entrance suggesting, of a rainy day, the lines—

The vine still clings to the moldering wall
But at every gust the dead leaves fall,
And the day is dark and dreary.

A day might readily seem so, looking out those wide windows, but it would be pleasant still, and the poetry of the scene, however wet and gloomy, would always suggest such a conclusion as, "Behind the clouds is the sun still shining."

It is just such a comfortable old place as would cause one to delight in rainy days and a great fireside. It has fine old windows and a broad lawn, a distant scene with a projecting spire. Longfellow's poetry is a comfortable kind of poetry and the old house smacks of it. In bad weather he could draw near to the great blaze and conjure up such lines as,

The ceaseless rain is falling fast,
And yonder gilded vane
Immovable for three days past
Points to the misty main.

It drives me in upon myself
And to the fireside gleams
To pleasant books that crowd my shelf
And still more pleasant dreams.

From which one of the old fire-lighted rooms could he not amusingly look out and sing:

The day is done and the darkness
Falls from the wings of night
As a feather wafted downward
From an eagle in its flight.

I see the lights of the village
Gleam through the rain and mist.

Indeed the story of his life runs exactly through such pleasant circumstances. He was possessed of ample means; he had leisurely and artistic employment; he could travel. The old house was luxuriously furnished, friends he had by scores, and a fine name. His wife was both cultured and beautiful and the village in which he lived, bound up as it was with Boston, possessed all of the classic flavor by the presence of so great a university as Harvard, and so much of colonial history as took place thereabouts.

The social characteristics of Longfellow have often been noted. He was a man of society; an adept in the graces of the drawing room; a lover

of the theatre; a connoisseur of good dinners; and a patron of the fashionable tailor. Charles Dickens once wrote him, "McDowell, the boot-maker, Beale, the hosier, Loffin, the trousers maker, and Blackmore, the coat cutter, have all been at the point of death, but have slowly recovered. The medical gentlemen agreed that it was exhaustion, occasioned by early rising—to wait upon you." His circumstances were always easy and, in his later years, affluent. His views of life were optimistic, and not colored by those melancholy intuitions which seem so often to govern the brilliant but poverty-stricken writers of the world. All was sunny, fair, and harmonious. Consequently when we came upon such lines as:

Come read to me some poem
Some simple heart felt lay
That shall soothe this restless feeling
And banish the thoughts of day

they are not fraught with a sense of suffering that excites pity, but rather the pleasant wistfulness which comes to the contented, born of a sense of the passing of things.

All about the old house are places and things made familiar by his verse. You can cross the Charles by the old bridge, of which he wrote,

I stood on the bridge at midnight
As the clocks were striking the hour
And the moon rose in the city
Behind the dark church tower.

A little way on and the stranger possesses the beautiful grounds and quiet old halls and chapels of Harvard College, where Longfellow was once a professor. Here he was wont to meet his class in literature and talk familiarly upon the finest things in the world of letters. The ordinary lecture room being occupied, Longfellow met his classes in a kind of parlor, carpeted and furnished with comfortable chairs. The comparative elegance was so completely in keeping with the teacher and his topics that the peculiarity was not noticed at this time, and for the hour seemed to be no

peculiarity at all. The professor sat and read his lecture in a singular manner, showing an entire familiarity with whatever concerned the literature of the subject, never discussing points of philosophical difficulty, never diving into abysses of abstraction or rising to heights of speculation, but fully equipped for the task of translation and exposition, especially the former in which he excelled. His style of writing was flowing, picturesque, and abounding in literary illustration, exuberant in imagery, more than pleased the prosaic members of the class, but none too florid for the imaginative and enthusiastic.

Farther up Brattle street, leading out from the college campus to his house, stands a great spreading tree which marks the site of the village smithy. It is not the same tree under which the blacksmith of the poem had his stand, but so near it that none of the sentiment is lost. A house now occupies the exact site, but it is easy to conjure up the charm of the scene visible in the days when Longfellow passed along the old street to the college and noted the old forge under the green branches. Yet a little way and the arches and steeple of the St. Julius church appear, set down in a broad green lawn. Ivy creeps up the sides and often, through the doors and windows set wide in summer, the strains of an organ voluntary may be heard. This is the St. John's of the sonnet beginning:

I stand beneath the tree, whose branches shade
Thy western window, Chapel of St. John.

There after comes the home which is the centre of all things pertaining to Longfellow, and then, out the wide street it is but a little way to the Cambridge cemetery where the poet lies buried. All the places are included in a cordon and company of elms, which from a distance seem to make up Cambridge. They are strung along the wide street which lies cool and inviting of a summer day beneath the broad branches. The river Charles winds from the graveyard past the house and the old bridge to the sea, and over all broods the spirit of the one who celebrated them in his songs.

The best things to be remembered are told of him here. On one occasion (Sept. 19, 1863) Longfellow and his friends George W. Greene, Charles Sumner, and Dempster the singer, came in for an early dinner. A

very cozy, pleasant little party. The afternoon was cool and everybody was in a kindly humor. Sumner shook his head sadly when the subject of the English iron-clads was mentioned. The talk prolonged itself upon the condition of the country. Longfellow's patriotism flamed. His feeling against England ran deep, particularly because of the policy she pursued towards the United States at this time. As the evening approached, the company left table and came to the library. There in the twilight Dempster sat at the piano and sang, beginning with Longfellow's poem, "Children" which he gave with a delicacy and feeling which touched everyone. Afterward he sang the "Bugle Song" and "Turn Fortune," which he had shortly before leaving England sung to Tennyson; then after a pause he turned again to the instrument and sang "Break, Break, Break." It was very solemn, and no one spoke when he had finished, only a dry sob was heard from the corner where Longfellow sat. Again and again, each time more uncontrolled, was heard the heartrending sound. Presently the singer gave us another and less touching song, and before he ceased Longfellow rose and vanished from the room, in the dim light without a word.⁸

Day by day he was besieged in this old home by every possible form of interruption which the ingenuity of the human brain could devise; but his patience and kindness, his determination to accept the homage offered to him in the spirit of the giver, whatever discomfort it might bring to himself, was continually surprising to those who watched him year by year. His friend Mr. Fields wrote: "In his modesty and benevolence I am reminded of what Pope said of his friend Garth: 'He is the best of Christians without knowing it.'"

In one of his notes, Longfellow alludes humorously to the autograph nuisance: "Do you know how to apply properly for autographs? Here is a formula I have just received on a postal card: 'Dear Sir: As I am getting a collection of the autographs of all honorable and worthy men, and think your such, I hope you will forfeit by next mail. Yours, etc.'"

When a refusal of any kind was necessary, it is wonderful to see how gently it was expressed. A young person having written from a western city to request him to write a poem for her class, he said: "I could not write it, but tried to say 'no' so softly, that she would think it better than 'yes.'"⁹

His love for children was not confined to his poetic expression or to his family, and the incidents in which they figure with him are not only numerous but beautiful. One of the most humorous (and really true) related to a little boy of whom he was very fond, and who came often to see him. One day the child looked earnestly at the long rows of books in the library, and at length said: "Have you got 'Jack the Giant Killer?'"

Longfellow was duly humbled in confessing that his library did not contain that venerated volume. The little chap looked very sorry indeed, and presently slipped down from the poet's knee and went away; but early the next morning Longfellow saw him coming up the walk with something tightly clasped in his fist. It proved to be two cents, as a present, with which he was [to] buy a "Jack the Giant Killer" to be his own.¹⁰

His daughter, the "grave Alice" of "The Children's Hour," still abides in the old house and preserves its precious relics, while "laughing Allegra" (Anna) and "Edith with golden hair"—now Mrs. Dana and Mrs. Thorp—have dwellings within the grounds of their childhood home, and their brother Ernst owns a modern cottage a few rods westward, on the same street. Everything is preserved, and one may see the chair vacated by him but a few days before he died; his desk; his inkstand which had been Coleridge's; his pen with its "link from the chain of Bounivard"; the antique pitcher of the "Drinking Song"; the fire-place of "The Wind Over the Chimney"; the arm-chair carved from the "spreading chestnut tree" of the smithy, which was presented to him by the village children and celebrated in his poem, "From My Arm-Chair"—indeed all but himself. He only, of all that was so much related to the composition of his excellent verse, is no more.

Much as we must reverence and rejoice in the purely artistic work of men like Keats and Shelley, the world still needs folks of another sort to warm ordinary blood. Rossetti poems are for poets alone. The thinkers will rejoice in Whitman, but the day-laborer who once stopped at the poet's carriage door in London to shake the hand of the man who wrote "Voices of the Night" is a type of the men for whom Longfellow wrote. The facts of ordinary, homely life—our cradling, our childish sorrows, our youthful temptations, the struggles of maturity, the helpfulness of friends, the decay and regrets of old age, the daily deeds of death—must we not ever have new poets to sing about these things to us, and hearten us for our work?¹¹

¹"Voices of the Night," a collection of Longfellow's earliest poems, was published in 1839.

²This quotation as well as the one that follows were probably taken from one of Annie Fields's sketches (See Introduction n. 4). The first anecdote appears in *Authors and Friends* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1896) on p.49, and the sentence that follows the quotation is similar to Fields's. The story of the Burns festival appears on pp. 29-30.

³One of Dreiser's sources, Eric Robertson's *Life of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow* (London: Walter Scott, 1887) claims that Longfellow was born in the house in Portland on the corner of Fore Street and Hancock Street where his parents were staying briefly with friends. Dreiser seems not to have remembered the story clearly. See Robertson, p. 13.

⁴There is some ambiguity about the structure of this sentence. Dreiser inserted the words "This latter place is where" above the line, and "the poet was born" below the line. There is no period to indicate the end of the sentence, and "also" is lowercase. The reconstruction here links the phrases with "and" in an attempt to reproduce as closely as possible the word order in the manuscript.

⁵In the manuscript, this phrase reads, "the lines entitled in 'My Lost Youth.'"

⁶In her article (see n. 2) Mrs. Fields attributes this quotation to her husband, James Fields, head of the publishing house Ticknor and Fields, and friend of Longfellow's. See Fields, p. 6.

⁷This anecdote is related in Robertson, p. 70.

⁸This is obviously a quotation, though there are no marks indicating as much in the manuscript. The story is related at greater length by Annie Fields; it is a quotation from her own diary. See Fields, pp. 37-8.

⁹This paragraph is taken verbatim from Fields, p. 32.

¹⁰This story, too, is in Fields, pp. 39-40.

¹¹This paragraph is taken, almost word for word, from Robertson, p. 176.

Review

Review of *Dearest Wilding: A Memoir*

Dearest Wilding: A Memoir, by Yvette Eastman. With Love Letters from Theodore Dreiser. Edited by Thomas P. Riggio. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995. 240 pp. 14 b/w illustr.

Yvette Szekely Eastman was sixteen years old when she met Dreiser in 1929; he was fifty-eight. Within a year, they became lovers, and for the following sixteen years, until Dreiser's death in 1945, the strong bond that existed between them was never broken. Eastman's narrative of her relationship with Dreiser ("Dearest Wilding" was a term of affection Dreiser used to address her) is a candid and enlightening book—a living account of the past—from an important figure in Dreiser's life who is largely absent from the existing biographical record. Following the memoir is a selection of 114 letters from a total of 229 that Dreiser wrote to Eastman between 1929 and 1945; none of these letters, acquired by the University of Pennsylvania in 1993, has been published previously. They too constitute a valuable new primary source for Dreiser scholars.

The memoir is part of a full-scale autobiography by Eastman that has not yet been published. Her troubled, fascinating life reads in part like a Dreiser novel. Probably the only reason that Dreiser did not use it as material for fiction (as, for example, he used Anna Tatum's family experiences as the partial basis for *The Bulwark*), was his respect for the delicate psychal nature of Eastman's experience. Reared in the broken home of parents who were upper-middle-class intellectuals in Budapest, at the age of eight Eastman journeyed with her mother to

New York and became part of the key artistic center of urban American in the 1930s. Eastman recreates with vividness and accuracy an important era in American literary history. We see Dreiser presiding over his renowned open-house Thursday evenings at his Rodin Studios apartment on West 57th Street. We get impressions of a succession of players in American literary affairs of the time: Burton Rascoe, Max Eastman (whom she was to marry some thirty years later), Arthur Davison Ficke, Rex Stout, Floyd Dell. Such scenes remind one of Hutchins Hapgood's *A Victorian in the Modern World* or Alfred Kazin's *Starting Out in the Thirties*.

Other sections of the narrative focus on her father's lack of understanding and her mother's alternating indifference and ultimate jealousy when, as Yvette grew older, her mother began to distrust her and see her as competition in her various relationships with men, among them Dreiser. Eastman describes a series of icily distant surrogate fathers with whom her mother had affairs and her own mistreatment by some of these men, who molested her. Her story culminates with her discovery that her actual birth mother was not the woman who raised her, but rather her father's jilted bride, whom she eventually went to meet in Switzerland.

One can see that Eastman's fascinating personal history laid the foundation for her attraction to Dreiser, who variously fulfilled much-needed roles in her life as lover, father-figure, and mentor. Eastman's attempt to understand her bond with Dreiser forced her back to early memories and experiences, primal moments that determined the course of her life and, it would seem, almost made inevitable, certainly made natural, her encounter with Dreiser.

The portrait of the private Dreiser that emerges from this book is of an emotionally complex man—often troubled, suspicious, and deeply jealous, but also of someone who had an empathetic understanding of the young woman. One senses from this account that Dreiser's relationship with Eastman was more lasting and more fundamentally crucial to his happiness than his relationships with other women. What that something is remains as enigmatic as ever and, as Thomas P. Riggio remarks in his introduction to the book, "Biographers eventually will have to explain why

Dreiser, for all his unsavory reputation as a careless philanderer, has inspired more such reminiscences [by women] than any other American writer" (ix). This volume is a valuable primary source for investigating these women's attraction to Dreiser. There is abundant new material here for psychoanalytic critics.

Readers will find much of interest in the correspondence as well. No mere love letters, these documents tell us much about Dreiser in the last phase of his career, especially his stewardship of the *American Spectator*, his fame as a public figure, his crusades against such social injustices as the Harlan County incident, his research for "The Formula Called Man," and his on-again, off-again work on *The Stoic* and *The Bulwark*.

The letters also show us Dreiser in many moods and roles. The mentor to youth exhorts Eastman to "read now—and at once" if she wants "to be in on" the "enormous social changes here in the U.S.A." (121). A perhaps over-idealistic Dreiser predicts that "the movies are going to provide an enormous field for educational ideas. People are going into Hollywood...to construct social and scientific documents in film form" (121). Later, a sardonic Dreiser describes Los Angeles as an "intellectually...barren place. Actors have no brains" (164), and elsewhere complains that the Guggenheim Foundation "hands out scores of awards every year to dubs who are never heard of afterwards" (189). We also see Dreiser the embattled oracle. At one point he describes his daily routine to Eastman as follows: "I listen to all sorts of people [sic] woes.... I fight all my various battles as best I may.... I go on and on—inexplicable impulse to be doing something guiding me...rebegetting myself in endless forms.... And yet I am not unhappy" (141).

These new letters are important additions to our knowledge of Dreiser's activities and emotions in the 1930s and 1940s. Eastman's account of her early life and her experiences with Dreiser is complex, fascinating, moving. It gives us much to talk about and new evidence with which to study Dreiser's relationship to women.

—James M. Hutchisson
The Citadel

News and Notes

Nancy Barrineau reports that her *Theodore Dreiser's Ev'ry Month* is now available to Dreiser Scholars. Published by the University of Georgia Press, it is a collected edition of the columns Dreiser wrote for *Ev'ry Month* while he edited it, October 1895 through September 1897, along with an introduction and historical notes.... *Dreiser's Russian Diary*, edited by Thomas P. Riggio and James L. W. West III has been announced for publication in October as part of the University of Pennsylvania Dreiser Edition.... Lenny Cassuto has returned from a Fulbright to Tanzania. His *The Inhuman Race: The Racial Grotesque in American Literature and Culture* will be published by Columbia in early 1997.... Dreiser's *Twelve Men*, edited by John Coltrane, has gone to press, and an edition of the 1911 edition of *The "Genius"* is in the works. Both will appear as part of UPenn's Dreiser Edition.... Tom Riggio's "Following Dreiser through Russia, Seventy years Later," will appear in the Autumn 1996 *American Scholar*.... The first collection of original scholarly essays on Sinclair Lewis, edited by Jim Hutchisson (and featuring many Dreiserians) will be published by Whitson in Spring 1997.

Forthcoming issues of *DS* will feature essays by Kathy Frederickson, James L. W. West III, and Andrea Wolff. Persons wishing to report news or notes of interest to Dreiserians in these issues can write or e-mail the editors. Clare Eby's e-mail address is eby@uconnvm.uconn.edu; Fred Rusch's is aafred@amber.indstate.edu.

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