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"Gold Teeth": A Minor American Tragedy

Thomas P. Riggio
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Such gold as in my wildest thoughts
I had not hoped to find---

Theodore Dreiser--"Gold"

Moods: Cadenced and Declaimed

On 14 July 1922, Dreiser read a report in the *New York World* of a murder committed not far from the city of Birmingham, in Walker County, Alabama. A moonshiner named Monroe Hill had killed a deputy sheriff who had promised to protect the man's whiskey still from the law. The dead man, Earl Truitt, seems to have reneged on the agreement, allowing the distillery to be seized and destroyed. Truitt had a distinguishing feature--a set of gold front teeth--that proved to be the undoing of Hill. When whispers of gold in the region circulated among the people, Hill began to be haunted with the idea that a prospector might stumble on the buried body when his divining rod detected Truitt's gold teeth. His fear drove him to dig up the body and pull out the teeth with pincers. He found a new burial place for the corpse, but in his excited state, he failed to cover the old grave and thereby left a trail that led to his arrest, trial, and conviction.

Dreiser was so impressed with the incident that he began to write a short story based on it. This was a familiar procedure for him. As a journalist in the 1890s, he wrote feature specials that taught him a great deal about the drama and human interest inherent in the daily news. From his early short story "Nigger Jeff" to the Cowperwood trilogy to *An American Tragedy*, news reports figured centrally as imaginative sources for his fiction. The following story is a good

example of the ways Dreiser reimagined and gave new meaning to the images he found in the newspapers.

What interested Dreiser in this particular news story? It may be that he was first attracted to the Poe-like aspect of Hill's obsession with gold and teeth. The psychology and imagery of Poe's writing are found in Dreiser's best work in this period, notably in Clyde Griffiths' compulsion to murder in *An American Tragedy* (1925).¹ His interest in the Hill-Truitt story reflects his preoccupation with murder cases in the early 1920s, particularly as they came to seem representative of important aspects of American life. In addition, the strange gold teeth might have reminded him of the gold motif and the gilded molar in Frank Norris's *McTeague*, a novel that six years earlier he had called "the first real American book I had ever read--and I had read quite a number" (Dreiser to H. L. Mencken, 13 May 1916). In *McTeague*, as in Hill's case, there is the mysterious magnetic pull of gold on the characters, who fixate on it to the point of murder and madness, making them all victims of gold fetishes.

Whatever his initial attraction to the story, Dreiser quickly made it his own. The extant manuscripts reveal that he made a number of false starts before he settled on the story that is printed here for the first time.² This version survives as a typescript of fifteen pages, with only one sentence altered in Dreiser's hand. In it we encounter a number of familiar Dreiserian themes that were not part of the newspaper report.

In the story that Dreiser read in the *World*, Hill was convicted on the evidence of a son (interestingly, named Clyde) who testified that he had overheard his father and two brothers discuss Truitt's fate. They were, the son stated, angry at the lawman's "treachery": he had promised to protect their still, and when it was raided, they blamed him. It was not the loss of the property, however, that infuriated them. The still was cheap enough to remake easily; but they could not abide the "violation of the code, the breaking of faith" that held their "world together." Because of this the father and sons lured Truitt to a designated spot and killed him. The murder, therefore, was a premeditated act in what amounted to a family vendetta against the sheriff.

In Dreiser's story, Monroe Hill becomes John Hillman, Sheriff Truitt becomes Crawhide, a marshall; and the locale of the murder is transferred from Alabama to West Virginia. More important, Dreiser changes his source in three ways.

First, he moves from a sensational family feud centered on backwoods codes of honor to a more psychological story focused on the inner life--and the mental collapse--of one man. Hillman is a lone killer. The murder preys on him and becomes a "subconscious permanence." He is subject to a "complete breakdown," and his macabre dreams hint at the source of his anguish. The basis of Dreiser's loosely Freudian analysis of the mind of a murderer in "Gold Teeth" is consistent with his method in *An American Tragedy*. In part, then, the story becomes a study of the psychic deterioration caused by guilt-ridden anxiety. Repressed anger overflows in symptoms such as Hillman's eating disorder, in which his compulsion to eat "grew on him as a nervousness."

The second change Dreiser makes is to give a social dimension to Hillman's motive for killing: the real evil is the "law" in the person of Crawhide, who is a "blood-sucking grafter" who causes Hillman's family to descend "from poverty to destitution." Nowhere in the newspaper account is there the sense that the sheriff stalks his victim with "six hideous gold teeth," extorting more money than he can pay and destroying all chances that he can make a living. Hillman becomes "like a wild animal" because of the "degeneration of his family." He feels that Crawhide "degraded me in front of my family." Dreiser makes Hillman the head of a family as large as the one he himself had as a child, and he emphasizes the poverty that drives him. As a father, Hillman is haunted by the sight and memory of his nine-year-old daughter Jennie. Dreiser gives his character's downfall a number of (too many in such a limited space) related familial causes: loss of income and food, marital conflict, and stress between father and children.

Third, unlike the real-life case, the murder is not premeditated in "Gold Teeth." Dreiser introduces an element of ambiguity: Hillman

strikes out in a blind rage as Crawhide demands of him more money than he can afford. As in the cases of Hurstwood in *Sister Carrie* and Clyde Griffiths in *An American Tragedy*, Dreiser forces the reader to address the question of responsibility for a crime that is placed in the context of powerful external and inner forces that influence the act itself.

One final point: the two false starts that remain among the Dreiser papers give us a better sense of the complexity of his intentions for the story. One is a handwritten manuscript, and the other is a typescript that contains three holograph pages, as well as handwritten emendations and additions in the margins of the typescript. Both of these texts are incomplete. They show that Dreiser's first instinct was to tell the story of Truitt/Crawhide, not that of the murderer.

He portrays Crawhide as an emotionally warped character, a part of his personality that is left out of the final version. An introspective man, the marshal contemplates the "brutalities, tricks, and indecencies of his own in youth." Evidently Dreiser wanted to dramatize the way the formative life experiences of Crawhide led to his "sadistic temperament" and his subsequent "desire for the chase and the kill even among those among whom he had been reared." Dreiser imagines this as the basis for Crawhide's compulsion to go after his poor neighbors who make some whiskey on the side. Crawhide allows the occasional jug or two to be sold, but he will not tolerate a true business. With time, he begins to think about profiting from the illegal distilleries in the region. He reasons that those who make money this way should kick back some to him. Money, however, is not his main motivation; he takes greater enjoyment from his power to frustrate those who cannot pay.

Dreiser was not able to find a resolution to his story as long as he kept the focus on the sadism of the lawman. His final version turns on the suffering of his victim, but it omits the reasons for the marshal's treachery and torture of Hillman. Dreiser appears to have been on the verge of portraying the subconscious relationship of two

psychologically maimed men. If he had been able to incorporate that complexity into "Gold Teeth," he might have written one of his more memorable works--a story worth comparing to the chapters in *An American Tragedy* that describe the intricate psychic interaction between the District Attorney Orville Mason and Clyde Griffiths.

- ¹ See Thomas P. Riggio, "American Gothic: Poe and *An American Tragedy*," in Harold Bloom (ed.) *Modern Critical Interpretations: "An American Tragedy"* (New York: Chelsea House, 1988), 69-84.
- ² The University of Pennsylvania kindly gave permission to publish "Gold Teeth," which is housed among the Dreiser papers in the Theodore Dreiser Collection at the Van Pelt Library.

GOLD TEETH

by

Theodore Dreiser

John Hillman, a West Virginia mountaineer moonshiner, felt braced by what he reckoned as a new step in life. He drew himself up with the courage any man who had never made a change in his life would experience upon completing one which he looked upon with genuine hope.

Hillman had just moved his still from his backyard to a secluded incline on his 20-acre farm.

"I've certainly put it over on Crawhide this time. The blood-sucking grafter'll never find me here. I'll tell him I've sold the still and then I'll be out of that bastard's clutches," thought Hillman, almost gnashing his teeth with hatred.

During the preceding two years, Crawhide, the Marshal, had extracted so much of Hillman's meagre income from the corn whiskey which he sold that the latter's family had steadily descended from poverty to destitution. The laws of the state demanded a tax upon the manufacture of liquor. This levy, as small as it was, constituted a burden upon independent, one-horse moonshiners which they could not bear. Before Crawhide had been made Marshal two years before, Hillman had never paid either tax or graft. His uncle had long held the office of Marshal. This old fellow, although he had taken a little on the side from other people, had never asked more from Hillman than the latter's occasional gift of a gallon of corn.

Crawhide's grafting and the consequent degeneration of his family in a constant and torturing method had so preyed upon Hillman as now to make him like a wild animal let loose, with the hope of shaking off so great and vicious a leech.

"The --- ---- swine!" rang through Hillman with the hatred of two years' accumulation and the lustiness of a man never taught or having recognized self-control.

Then as Hillman adjusted the copper coil of the still through which the gas passed to cool and distill into liquor, he swelled with

pride and achievement. That certainly was a good old copper vat, small as it was, which his father had left him. Hillman, too, was pleased with the new fire box under it. He had spent a week building it of stone. His little shanty, housing it, seemed so much more secure down here. He thought he had really put something over on Crawhide now.

"That grafting skunk. The way he's drained me -- degraded me in front of my family -- 'cause I can't make my old woman understand the situation, -- nearly broken up my home. He ain't fit to be called a man. Lousy, leering --- of a ----. Yes, he can afford to have a mouth full of gold teeth because he robs every decent man in the country. Well, he's not going to plaster his ugly mug with gold any more at my expense. Gold, gold, when I can't afford to buy -- a bag of salt. Gold teeth! He dares to march around showing six solid gold teeth to men like me. Someone ought to knock 'em down his --- throat. He hasn't a right that the devil would recognize. But he's not so smart as he thinks he is. He didn't know I could hide my still. A man like him without a brain in his head can't get away with treatin' me like a dog."

As Hillman's glance caught motion outside the window, he stared at Crawhide's bull-like face shining against the darkness of the night. Crawhide's jaws hung loosely; his fatty lips were grinning. Those gold teeth glittered as would emerald in a powerful, oriental idol. Hillman's blood froze. The next minute he hurled himself out of the door and around the shack. Only to get at Crawhide! Crawhide, however, lumbering around the other side of the shanty, gained the upper hand by bestriding the entrance with his arms folded over his portly chest and his shoulders thrown back as Hillman, perspiring, reached the door.

"So you tried to double-cross me, eh? You can never put anything over on the law. Ha, you thought I wouldn't find you, didn't you?" snarled Crawhide, contorting his lips over those six hideous gold teeth.

"You spy, you sneak, traitor! So you're the law, are you? Crawling around on my property, spying on me!"

In his furor and anger Hillman gave him a crack in the jaw that reeled him wobbling against the wall.

"You can't do this. I can put you in jail or tax the moonshine you make. The law wants peace. Now let's talk this over sensibly," yelled Crawhide.

Hillman, licked yet infuriated, made an effort to hold back the cyclone of feeling within himself.

"Now you're all fixed up to do more business than ever. Of course, you realize my position. I can take care of this for you so you'll have no trouble at all, for \$20."

"Twenty dollars, twenty dollars! What do you mean by asking twice as much as before. I haven't got twenty dollars!"

"Well, then, you'll have to take the consequences. The law is all powerful."

"But won't you come down. Come down, I tell you. I can't pay it."

"I have one price. Twenty dollars!"

In a rage Hillman hurling a sledge hammer lunged toward Crawhide whose sickening smile seemed to be immutable.

Hillman hit one mighty blow on Crawhide's head. As the latter fell unconscious, Hillman, miraculously drained of all energy apparently, dropped the hammer. He sank into a chair where he sat for many minutes until he heard a rap at the door. While in a terror whether or not to answer it he heard his little nine year old Jennie call, "Pa."

He went to the door and roughly told her that he had to work late and that she should go back to the house. Jennie was going to tell him that she had come to walk home with him and that she was afraid to go back alone. Hillman so frightened her, however, that she didn't say anything. She looked fresh, pale, and smooth in the faint light.

"I'm a --- of a ----," said Hillman to himself as he closed the door.

Crawhide was not breathing nor could Hillman hear Crawhide's heart beating. Hillman decided to bury him in the sand pit across Leary's place. Hillman, although in constant fear of being discovered, waited as much as forty minutes to make sure that Crawhide was not

alive. Hillman could not bury a man, unless dead, no matter if it were the hated Crawhide. Then he dragged and carried Crawhide down the hill and across the valley to the sand pit where he buried his body about three feet deep.

The horror of it shook Hillman. The moonlight night, ghost-like with streaks of lime on the ground above the sand-pit, and Crawhide's gold teeth glistening as he lay hunched in his impromptu grave.

Hillman shuddered at returning to the shanty for the night. In the end he crept back home to bed to avoid suspicion. Since his first few hours in bed were sleepless, he awoke late the following morning.

Charlie Bower, Hillman's brother-in-law with whom he had long been somewhat at odds came for dinner that noon. The whole family were blunt and unsparing of one another.

"Nothing around here for you to do, eh?" sputtered Charlie to Hillman.

"Why yes, I was cuttin' that hay out in the back yard."

"I could have done it in an eighth the time," put in Hillman's son, Mark, a fresh, fifteen year old husky, "if I had used the old mowing machine on it."

"Oh, your Pa is lazy. He spent half of the mornin' on the couch. He always does," ejaculated Mrs. Hillman.

Then from Mark, the oldest of the nine children, "Nuthin' ever would get done around here if it weren't fer me. Do you 'spose Pa'd plant an acre of corn? No, the old cow would starve winters if it weren't for me."

Hillman, long battered in this fashion, rose only weakly to defend himself, saying, "I know from long years of experience that you can't raise corn on these mountains. It's too stony and there ain't enough sun and warm air. The corn is only about a quarter grown when the frost hits it."

One of Hillman's habits, which for years had caused distress in the family, was a ravenous appetite. In fact, Hillman was known rather as a man given to excesses and lustiness. By his direct way of talking, often scaring people with petty fears and other complexes, he conveyed to friends what seemed to them a lustiness in himself.

Besides, his nine children formed the basis of many so-called jokes and stories of this nature all over the countryside.

But on this particular day, Hillman, very nervous, ate even more than usual.

"You hog," barked Mark to his father, "that's your fifteenth potato. What do you expect the rest of us to eat? For Christ's sake, that's a nice way to treat your family."

"Your Pa has always eaten everything up away from the young'ins. All my life I been tryin' to get 'em enough to eat," Mrs. Hillman bemoaned.

This started a whole tirade. Charlie Bower, relishing this as right in line with his moral outlook, delivered a harangue to Hillman. Bower gaining momentum in his excitement, proclaimed that since Hillman couldn't earn a living for his family they would be better off without him.

All of this seemed to Hillman like merely a gentle breeze after what he had gone through the night before. Little Jennie had him by the trouser leg. He felt too exhausted from the last night's disaster to quarrel over this rather stale family stuff. Although Bower had never come out quite so maliciously before, Hillman, not in a mood to be drawn into the fray, sat down and Jennie crawled onto his lap.

As worn as Hillman was by his hideous experience, he was still pitched to a state of considerable worry. Supposing someone had seen him. Hillman hadn't gotten out that day yet to see what the neighbors were talking. Maybe the Learys had seen someone going across the little valley to the sand pit. But they couldn't have known who it was. On the other hand, Tom Blake often came to Hillman's of an evening. Usually instead of coming around by the road, he cut right across lots in a route that might have taken him near the shanty. To ease his mind, Hillman asked his wife whether Blake had been there the night before. Yes, he had. He had come over the hill across the pasture and fields. Had anyone seen in the shack? God! Jennie hadn't noticed Crawhide and gone home and told, had she? No, Hillman didn't think the little girl had been impressed with anything strange. There was, however, that uncovered window. Anyone could have seen in. Oh, if Mark had been around there! That was a real

worry to Hillman. He felt as if the kid had it in for him anyhow. Maybe Mark had discovered him. It certainly seemed as if Mark attacked him more brutally today than previously. Was the murder of Crawhide, the reason for this onslaught of Mark? Very likely it was. Hillman had no thought of giving himself up. His one hope was that he would escape detection.

The next morning Jennie and the oldest girl, Lizzie, having returned from driving Marble to the creamery, reported that down at Jim Burnett's store "they were atalkin' that Crawhide ran away from his wife night before last." Lulabell Crawhide was so peculiar that the moment she announced the disappearance of her husband, the gossipers, due to their own personal reaction to Lulabell, thought Crawhide must have been running away from her. This news was a tremendous relief to Hillman. If only no one had seen him! Then everyone would believe that Crawhide had run away. It was a good thing to get rid of such preying beasts as Crawhide. Even his wife must have been glad to have him out of the way. How could anybody look at that vile mug with six gold teeth every day?

In fact, if it hadn't been for this nervousness, Hillman would have felt free from the Crawhide whom he had so intensely hated. The report concerning Mrs. Crawhide calmed Hillman considerably. Yet how different the situation really was.

Mrs. Crawhide immediately went to the sheriff and told him that she didn't believe Crawhide had run away from her or his home. She disclosed that he had made a confidant of her, revealing his many enemies among the moonshiners upon whom he "had to practice law." Whereupon her friends concurred that since the Crawhides had been on good terms with one another, in their opinion, some other occurrence -- maybe a disaster -- had befallen Crawhide.

The story circulated that Sheriff Jones suspected all moonshiners in the Crawhide case. Charlie Bower, Hillman's brother-in-law, upon being told this by some farmer, said that it sounded reasonable, that Hillman himself had said a dozen times that men like Crawhide shouldn't be allowed to live and that Crawhide had some awful fights with the moonshiners, particularly with Hillman. The sheriff, hearing this repeated, said that he was going to call Hillman up before him,

which story likewise circulated. Tom Blake, Hillman's friend, came to the latter and told him what Bower had said, and Sheriff Jones' intention to act on it. When Blake finished, Hillman, white with feeling, said, "Thanks, Tom," and walked, stiff with tenseness, outside of the house.

He would tell Sheriff Jones how Crawhide had bled him -- sucked the very life out of him until he couldn't buy shoes or stockings for the children. Sheriff Jones would understand that no self-respecting man could do anything but hate such a spying thief as Crawhide. But that, thought Hillman, would bring up the whole question of the evaded tax. Maybe Jones would put him in jail. And then it occurred to Hillman that if he told Jones what a wretch of a man Crawhide was, Jones would certainly look upon him with suspicion as if he knew something further of Crawhide's fate. Fears and the inability to think straight threw Hillman into a frenzy. What should he do?

Why should he have become involved in a thing like this? It seemed not so much like a tragedy as the fall of his life -- not a moral fall, but a terrible accident he would have given his foot to have avoided. But there had been no other way out. What would any decent man do with a swine like Crawhide on his back -- Crawhide deserved all he got. God, how he hated him.

He wouldn't be in this mess with the sheriff now if it weren't for Bower. Some brother-in-law! A nice way for relations to act! Traitors! Why had he ever married into those ignorant Bowers, anyhow? Not more than one or two of them ever had any brains. As time went on, however, the very fact that his relative betrayed him dragged on Hillman and made him feel more like a criminal and less like a human being.

Finally Hillman thought out that, to appear innocent, he must tell Sheriff Jones nothing of his hatred for Crawhide, but rather that he knew nothing of the latter. In discussing this with Sheriff Jones, Hillman came out all right. The sheriff knew nothing and so did Hillman, apparently.

There was another outcome, however. News of Hillman's being called before Sheriff Jones was on everybody's tongue.

Mrs. Hillman being an ignorant woman and in no way equipped to judge whether her fears were correct, looked upon this gossip as an insult. Hillman had insulted the whole family; his wife and children were in disgrace. So great a fuss was made over this by Mrs. Hillman that on top of the other reasons for contention she, getting every one else at the bursting point of feeling, finally threw her husband out of the house altogether. So great was their feeling and numerous their complaints that Hillman couldn't do a thing. First he had said that he had never been put out of the house yet and that he wasn't going to be now. Then Bower had spoken up and said that he always had to look out for his sister ever since she had married and he supposed he always would. That was a lie and Bower knew it. What had he done? Nothing.

Hillman, in the meantime, cast out upon his own, went down to Glendale where the Jackson's enormous lumber mill was running. He stood there by the railroad tracks surveying with his eye the building, 300 feet long, and the expansive yards piled with freshly sawed lumber exuding a hardy aroma. An automobile with railroad wheels came down the track. As it stopped by Hillman and the Jacksons got out, Hillman heard them say that the camp which they had been visiting on the private railroad, needed a cook. Hillman, considering himself "in on the ground," immediately went to the Jackson's general manager who hired him as a cook for this lumber camp. Thus Hillman, on the next day, walked twenty-two miles through brush, huckleberries and forest to the camp in the neck of the mountains.

His life up here made Hillman realize what a catastrophe had struck him. As poor as his home had always been, it wasn't as bad as this tight, over-crowded cottage with old, greasy tin plates and other revolting accessories. The men were so brutal. Hillman had always had a little respect for things. Then, too, because these lumberjacks were younger, thus somehow seeming to take things differently from himself, he didn't fit into this life. No, it had been a calamity for Hillman to have lost his home. How he missed little Jennie -- she was the best one of the lot.

About this time Hillman went back to the village to spend a day. Late in the afternoon, Hillman, sitting by the stove in the general store, overheard the following conversation, between two women:

"Poor Mrs. Crawhide. Her husband was such a wonderful man, too. Went to church every Sunday. A better man never lived."

"And he was rich, too -- all of them beautiful gold teeth. Yes, he was certainly a good man."

This injustice so enraged Hillman that he rushed out of the store and began to walk furiously toward the camp. On the way, he experienced a frenzy of anger within himself that subsided only as each additional mile's walk further weakened his body by fatigue.

In two weeks the lumber camp was to be moved to Straight Point gulley -- cabin, horses, equipment, railroad and all. The present site would not be used again for twenty years when a new growth of lumber could be cut. All of these areas were owned by the Jackson Mill. Hillman, no longer needed as cook, went back to Glendale, the mill town, looking for work. He walked up and down it several days. It was a gay spectacle. Many houses as well as sidewalks were built of freshly sawed lumber, still retaining its natural golden yellow. Around them grew asters, dahlias and other late summer flowers of brilliant color. How picturesque it all looked against the crest of the green mountain. Yet Hillman in no way felt like a part of this life. He was an outcast sleeping in stables and barns.

In the fall, however, Hillman was able to get a few days' work helping different farmers harvest.

During this time when Hillman was working for a day only now and then, he had a great deal of time to brood over his woes. His mind could dwell on nothing but Crawhide. Day after day, Hillman went over in his own mind the whole story. How Crawhide had abused him for two years! All unjustly. Certainly the government had never intended that its officials graft off the people. His increasing troubles with his wife--the last two children born without a doctor. What right had Crawhide to force a self-respecting man to indecency. He wasn't human. If it hadn't been for Crawhide, he wouldn't now be an outcast among his children. Crawhide had ruined his life; had defeated and destroyed him utterly.

Hillman, a man of emotion, was torn, thrown and hurled into a crazed misery at these thoughts. They were always accompanied by great anger. During the fall months these thoughts so obsessed and preyed on him that they became habitual or in some way ingrown. The moment his mind was not accompanied with something else (which was most of the time) the dull pain of these thoughts arose until finally the passion of hatred so shook him that he fell into a sound sleep.

One morning he saw Jennie and Lizzie at the creamery. They had on new winter coats and looked so joyous that his pain was greatly augmented.

Hillman's mental attitude was almost approaching insanity in that he dwelled on and feared almost continuously, forces inimical to himself. He had been treated inhumanly -- more than his share -- everything and everybody was against him.

His disaster and wrath grew to be so constantly on his mind that they became like a sub-conscious permanence. This mental scourge was always tormenting him in one degree or another. Many a night sleeping in a barn or the kitchen bedroom of some farmer for whom he was doing a little work, Hillman alone with his own thoughts, experienced fits of passion and often nightmares. His complete breakdowns, emotionally, became more and more frequent when he was alone. His dreams always concerned Crawhide. Invariably Crawhide glowered and overpowered him as a giant or demon. In one case Crawhide, a man as high as a barn, was walking fast and leading or, as it turned out, pulling Hillman by the hand. Hillman was so little he couldn't keep up; besides, being whirled and dragged through the air by one arm was very painful. Crawhide permitted Hillman only occasionally to run a few steps on the ground and this was over burning grass.

In another dream -- a nightmare really -- Hillman saw only Crawhide's head. It, as high as the great roof, filled one end of the whole structure. It was chewing; within the mouth was a tongue rolling powerfully to place everything within the grate of his teeth. As the head chewed, the gold teeth opened wide enough to let a man in. Hillman, horrified by the sight, wanted to leave. He found himself,

however, instead being drawn into this monster's jaws and finally under those chewing gold teeth. Hereupon he awoke.

Here was Hillman at least temporarily demented. Would he ever recover? If he were younger and treated well -- perhaps. Nevertheless, maybe --

At this point two additional matters of importance came into Hillman's life. The Chases, an old couple living alone on a farm wanted him to work for them. The arrangement looked quite promising on both sides. Hillman didn't have to spend the rest of the winter as a tramp; he had a good home, plenty to eat and \$1.00 a day wages. The old people, on the other hand, didn't have to get out in the cold to do chores or cut wood and their children were relieved that they were not alone in case something happened to them.

Although Hillman might have gotten somewhat better under this regime of living, something else arose to counteract this. In the early spring, the report went around that there was gold in the sand pit beyond Leary's. Hillman was terrorized at the thought of any attention, even, being called to the sand pit. Many doubted that the gold was there. Since the property belonged to a man then out of the country, Hillman didn't know whether or not it would be mined. If gold were really to be mined, Crawhide's body must be removed from the sandpit at once.

Hillman asked everyone, who came to the Chases, about it. No, there was no gold up there, they reiterated. It was all a pipe dream.

During these months, however, when this was even though casually in the air, Hillman suffered agonies. Along with the other accumulated tortures having their source in Crawhide, Hillman blamed his present worry and anxiety upon Crawhide. If it hadn't been for him, of course, Hillman would not now be so troubled. The strain was so great upon Hillman that sometimes during these spells of thought and hatred, he felt as if he could stand no more. Oh, if something would only snap to relieve that tension! His thoughts induced these fits of anger, more frequently and uncontrollably. Sometimes he would have to leave the table and go for a walk, or to the stove and retire, or leave old man Chase in the barn while he went up in the hay mow till his emotional turbulence passed.

Although most of these attacks had no origin outside himself, every once in a while occurrences at the Chases brought them upon him. Early in his life there, one old farmer, staying to dinner, said to Hillman, "Your brother-in-law thought you done something to Crawhide, didn't he?"

Hillman left the room immediately, supposedly to go to work, so he was not definitely even suspicioned in any way. Then one evening Chase's son and granddaughter came. The little girl recited HOME SWEET HOME which she had learned in school. Hillman took out his red handkerchief and wiped tears from his eyes. After he went to bed that night the whole incident reviving his entire family life, ended by Crawhide, brought another spell of maniacal hatred. On another occasion an evening caller suddenly announced that he himself was going to work the pit for gold. After coming out of another exhausting spell produced by this information, Hillman evolved a plan for moving Crawhide's body, only to give up the task at the announcement by this man that he had decided not to work the sand pit.

During this time Hillman's appetite never receded one iota. In fact, it rather grew on him as a nervousness. He ate more, not less. He was looked upon as having something wrong with him. Always a thin man, Hillman was now becoming gaunt. The Chases, however, didn't care how much he ate. It was as easy for old Mrs. Chase to boil 20 potatoes with the skins on as five. Besides, Mr. Chase saw that potatoes couldn't be given away that spring and summer.

One summer day Chase came home with the news that old Fred Scott was going to send away for a divining rod. This would detect whether or not there was gold underground. Fred wanted to use it on the sandpit.

This made Hillman realize that he was compelled to act. If the diving rod showed gold, they would certainly dig and, in all likelihood, find Crawhide's body. My God, Crawhide's very teeth were gold! The diving rod would be attracted by a part of his very carcass. He must remove it immediately!

Thus on two different nights, Hillman stole out of Chase's house about midnight and went to the sand pit. Each time he walked all

around it in great fear and nervousness for several hours. Each time he gave up the project of removing Crawhide's body. Although Hillman told himself that after all it might not be necessary to do so, actually within he suffered deadly fear at the thought of looking upon the ugly head of Crawhide, now so long buried.

He learned that Fred Scott didn't know where to get ahold of a divining rod.

Then immediately it was reported that some boys had dug up a skeleton in the sand pit. The boys having heard the stories that gold might be there, had not been so slow in their quest as the men.

Upon hearing this news, Hillman went to his room and temporarily collapsed. He had so lost strength; he felt like an old man.

When he slowly regained consciousness, his thoughts soon boiled into a tumult. He would run away. No, he couldn't do that. They would find him and bring him back. That would certainly arouse suspicion. Oh, how awful to be suspected, suspected everywhere! Why had he gotten into this? How he hated Crawhide with every fiber in his body! It was Crawhide who had ruined his home and his business!

It didn't seem as if Hillman, with no meat whatsoever on his frame, could stand such bodily violence as these thoughts subjected him to. He fairly crystallized with hatred.

The skeleton was immediately identified by the six gold teeth as Crawhide's.

When Crawhide had disappeared, Hillman had been the only moonshiner who was definitely suspicioned. That feeling of doubt concerning Hillman had grown among the community. There was something peculiar about his wife getting rid of him just at that time, they thought. Maybe she knew he had perpetrated something against Crawhide. Besides, the whole community had seen Hillman become thin, peculiar and nervous.

Under the circumstances Sheriff Jones immediately questioned Hillman. The latter just managed to carry that interview off without anything unusual. He merely stated that he had nothing to do with it.

Jones asked a few questions which later excited Hillman. The latter, tense and negative, portrayed no feeling at the moment, however.

One fall evening soon after the interview with Jones, Hillman was sitting alone by the stove. The old folks had gone to bed and taken the lamp with them. Mrs. Chase had left a candle for Hillman.

The stove emitted streaks of red light. Hillman had lapsed into his usual state of terror from which he found it almost impossible to extricate himself these days.

A knock was heard at the door by the stove. Hillman let in Jones who was carrying a large package wrapped in newspaper. Jones strode in. Hillman had scarcely become aware of him, when Jones tore the newspaper from his package and held Crawhide's skull before Hillman's eyes.

"What did you do to this man?" charged Jones in attack.

"I killed him, he killed me, he robbed me," roared Hillman.

The fire light dancing on those gold teeth in the skull, plus his confession because of them, caused Hillman to lunge at the skull, seize it and crack it over the stove innumerable times until he sank to the floor with the drain upon his energy.

Humanism in Dreiser's *The Bulwark*

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In the closing chapters of *The Bulwark*, published posthumously in 1946, Dreiser's Quaker patriarch Solon Barnes discovers that his faith has not been a bulwark against the forces of change, for his children have fled their rural Pennsylvania home to seek wealth, love, and beauty, and inside traders and boodlers have invaded the bank he has served for decades with almost religious devotion. Driven to the point of despair by his son's suicide and by his wife's death, Solon has an epiphany in his garden that leads to "a kind of religious awe and wonder" at nature's beauty and a conviction that "behind all of this variety and beauty and tragedy of life" is a benevolent, purposeful "Creative Divinity" (317).

Given that Dreiser himself had similar mystical experiences in 1937, *The Bulwark* has frequently been read as a partly autobiographical work representing a break from his earlier naturalism, though critics disagree on whether the break is for the good. Donald Pizer faults Dreiser for introducing "religious miracles," arguing that the "psychological characterization and emotional texture of the work have [not] prepared us to accept the reality of the supernatural" (330). Lawrence Hussman, on the other hand, admires the book's "mystical conclusion" (163) for dignifying Solon as "a child of the Creative Force" and providing "a compatible philosophic context" for Dreiser's compassion, which is "merely gratuitous" (177) in his earlier work. Despite their disagreement over the artistic merits of *The Bulwark*, both Pizer and Hussman conclude that Solon's new faith represents Dreiser's own optimistic state of mind in his final years.

Solon, however, speaks only for Dreiser in his most hopeful moods. "The mystery and misery and incidentally the futility of life weighs on me not a little," he wrote Yvette Eastman in March 1943, while he was hard at work on *The Bulwark*. "I'm always wishing to

feel better physically and mentally about it than, as a rule, I do" (Eastman 199). Solon too is weighed down by sorrow, but, as Richard Lehan observes, his "consent" to the possibility of the transcendentalists' oversoul "cannot and does not change the physical world in which he lives . . . [where] the struggle is fierce and man is fragile. . . . *The Bulwark* still reveals a world of force and counterforce" (235). Just so. Dreiser does not fail to prepare us for "the reality of the supernatural," for there are no supernatural events in the novel. What he prepares us to recognize is that Solon is the father, as well as the child, of the benevolent God he worships. *The Bulwark*, I contend, is Dreiser's fullest expression of humankind's "merely gratuitous" power to humanize a world of conflicting forces.

I

Though we should ultimately trust the tale not the teller, what Dreiser says elsewhere about life and art can help us in reading the novel. For one thing, he seems not to have believed in the supernatural, in the sense of forces above the natural world. He has often been ridiculed for his interest in telepathy, spiritualism, Christian Science, and the crackpot theories of Charles Fort, but in all of these he hoped to find rational explanations of life's mysteries. Early in the century he had encountered in Ernst Haeckel's *The Riddle of the Universe* authority for a belief that matter itself contains a mind and a will that drive evolution. This book remained a favorite, and he continued to be attracted to similar theories. For example, among his notes for the philosophical book he was working on concurrently with *The Bulwark* and *The Stoic* are lengthy typed excerpts from William James's *A Pluralistic Universe*, which posits "a strung-along unfinished world" that is "everywhere alive and conscious."¹

As Dreiser conceives such an unfinished world in *Notes on Life*, the title given the 1974 collection of his philosophical speculations, human beings contribute emotion and morality to what would otherwise be only a well designed, beautiful evolving mechanism. Man, he writes, has evolved from the "Creative force or forces" and

has come to view these same forces "as a God--certainly functioning in the place of one." This God is no unmoved mover, for the world is always "changing, changing, changing, both the Creative forces and this which they create." As embodiments of force, human beings are not merely creatures but also creators helping to drive the endless "revolving process of change" (284-85). Dreiser himself at times anthropomorphizes this Creator as a "supreme genius" (332) constantly at work improving his design, but ultimately he reserves his "awe" and "reverence" not for a supernatural person but for the "esthetic and wondrous process" (333) of which he is part. God as a person and not merely a process exists only as a dream "in the troubled heart of man. . . . Nature, machine-like, works definitely and heartlessly, if in the main beautifully. Hence, if we, as individuals, do not make this dream of a God, or what He stands for to us, real in our thoughts and deeds, then He is not real or true. If you wish a loving and helpful God to exist and to have mercy, *be* Him. There is no other way" (283).

That he was thinking along similar lines while working on *The Bulwark* is evident in a 1939 letter to Rufus Jones, the Quaker historian who helped guide his researches into Quakerism: "I feel the Quaker faith is the only true exposition, and . . . realization of Christianity in the modern world. However, when I say Christianity, I mean social ethics and equity introduced into life according to scientific principles as I now, at last, understand those to be" (quoted in Hussman 155). In one of the passages Dreiser marked in Jones's autobiography, an important source for the novel, the Quaker declares himself "suspicious of 'revelations' that reveal things contrary to the facts and laws of the universe" (68). We should not be surprised, then, that the "revelations" Dreiser recounts in *The Bulwark* have a rational explanation while at the same time demonstrating how love and values are "introduced into life" by the human capacity to dream them.

In describing man's involvement in the "revolving process of change," Dreiser frequently draws upon Christian imagery. We "are an integral fraction" of the "primal essence," a portion of its incarnation: "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was made

flesh--or stone or oxygen or hydrogen or protoplasm or suns or sidereal systems" (*Notes* 14). Man is thus microcosm: "'I and my father are one,' cries the new testament of Jesus. And the laboratories of science can say no less . . ." (13). To live creatively is to be endlessly crucified in imaginative self-division; the universe is a "vast bleeding, dreaming machine" with a "will to transmute itself" and thus create "significance or meaning" (5) by introducing "contrast or variety . . . into the total of itself" (6). Unity is death, for without its sundering there is "no life, no individuality, no thought, no beauty, no love, no hate, no pleasure, no pain--nothing" (14-15). By this logic, the single meaning of the universe is that there is no single meaning. Near the end of *Dawn*, Dreiser urges us to immerse ourselves in the destructive element. It is futile to hoard wealth, he asserts, since life alters "all original values" and leaves us with "a destroying sickness of the heart and of the flesh." We should spend, not save. Though rashness must teach us "what the sting of existence really means," we should nevertheless "substitute necessity and energy for security and sloth and live!" (577).

These ideas are deeply implicated in Dreiser's conception of artistic form. Art, he claims, produces "comforts," a "restful feeling of resignation, tinged with melancholy," as it "merges all of the contrasts of life in a rhythmic unit of one kind or another--the never absent rhythm of the universe, which at long last makes a song, poem, art form out of everything" (*Notes* 195). Although Dreiser does not explain why the restful feeling should be tinged with melancholy, he implies that a sense of formal completion means a kind of death, the end of life's invigorating play of contrasts. A novel that truly embodies the "never absent rhythm of the universe" must suggest the eternal recurrence even as it achieves a momentary point of balance. Carrie will continue to rock and dream, Cowperwood will rise from the ashes in order that he might fall again, little Russell will struggle against the same forces that have destroyed his uncle Clyde. And, as Solon dies at the end of his spiritual journey, his daughter Etta will set out on her own journey "crying for *life*" (337).

II

Because it continues his lifelong effort to avoid the "sting of existence," Solon's vision represents only a momentary point of balance in the rhythmic alternation of faith and doubt that characterizes *The Bulwark*. The problematic nature of his faith in the Creative Spirit is evident in Dreiser's treatment of the source of that faith, the Quaker Inner Light. In the book's introductory chapter, depicting the marriage of Solon and Benecia, Dreiser says this light is "presumably to each [Quaker] the indwelling consciousness of the Divine Creative Spirit, the true union of God with human beings, His children" (v). But a presumption is not a fact, and Dreiser goes on to contrast the modern Quaker of "small mind" and "small heart" with the sect's founders, "the dreamers and poets of Quakerism" (vii) who strove to turn life's "rough and imperfect balance" (vi) of opposites into a "true balance without flaw or shadow or error" (vii). Dreiser thus sympathizes with the ability of some Quakers to imagine a perfect world beyond the rhythmic play of life's contraries while at the same time he implies the impossibility of attaining the ideal.

Solon's mother is an intuitive Quaker poet. When he is five, Solon thoughtlessly throws a rock at a catbird, accidentally killing it. Tortured by guilt, he asks his mother about the nature of God, whom he suspects is "all inside our head." His mother is herself "not a little puzzled" about God and offers in definition a series of similes:

He is like the light which is everywhere or the air thee
breathes, or the sounds thee hears . . . He is . . . like
something that thee thinks about--something that
comes to thee as a feeling more than anything else--a
warming feeling. For thee knows that if thee does
anything wrong, it is God--not thyself--that makes
thee know it and makes thee feel sorry. (15)

What we immediately see, however, is the true source of Solon's "warming feeling": "What is it, Solon darling," his mother asks, "that makes thee cry? Tell Mother.' . . . [A]nd again and again she

kissed him, holding him close to her breast and repeating that he must cease and tell her" (15-16). A loving God is present in this scene only because Mrs. Barnes makes Him real in her thoughts and deeds.

God is also present in her voice. As Dreiser noted in his researches on Quakerism, the Inner Light expresses itself in human speech. "Vocal prayer," he writes, is "a weighty matter with Friends," who bow their heads in silence until "a kneeling suppliant," moved by the spirit, "voice[s] the needs of the whole group" (324). Dreiser marked a number of passages in Jones's autobiography emphasizing the importance of silence and speech in family life. Silences, Jones writes in a paragraph that caught Dreiser's eye, "were very important features of my spiritual development," for he and his family

were feeling our way down to that place from which living words come and very often they did come . . .
My first steps in religion were thus *acted*. It was a religion which we *did* together. We all joined together to listen for God and then one of us talked to Him for the others. In these simple ways my religious disposition was being unconsciously formed. . . .
(21-22)

While elsewhere in his autobiography Jones asserts the separate personhood of God, this passage certainly supports Dreiser's contention that God exists in the actions of individual men and women. It also helps explain why Solon's mother first defines God as light, then as air (the medium of sound), then as sound itself. The *inner* light, paradoxically, becomes a thought and finally a warm feeling only when the voice and touch of a fellow human being overcome the isolation of an individual in need.

One of the formative moments in Solon's religious life involves the "living words" of his mother, and the "place" that they come from is her loving heart. At about age seven, Solon wounds himself in the leg while chopping wood and almost dies from infection. However, he is soon healed as a consequence of his mother's gazing into his eyes and speaking these words: "Do not cry, Solon, my son, thy life

and health have only now been given into my keeping. This is not the end for thee--it is but the beginning. . . . Thee will live to serve Him in love and truth" (20). For Solon, then, "in the beginning" of his moral life is his mother's spoken word, and it is into *her* keeping that his life is given. She may think that God has done the work, but Dreiser suggests that the healing results from the power of the human mind over the body. Though Solon sees in her face only her characteristic "reverent pallor," Dreiser tells us that there were "strength and faith" (20) in it as well. Her living words, along with the warmth of her hand on his forehead, make Solon believe he will live, and it is this belief that heals his body.

Like Rufus Jones, Solon is "unconsciously formed" by this experience, though not in an entirely positive way. He is "not as active mentally or as inventive" (14) as other boys and thus is insensitive to the poetry of the God his mother defines. She has told him that it is God who "makes thee feel sorry," but in forcing him to confess his killing of the bird and in providing his only comfort, she has assumed the place of God in his mind. Having received from her the spiritual "daily income" (324) the Friends pray for, Solon reveals his smallness of mind and heart, an incapacity to spend himself in the economy of human love. She, not God, becomes the "something" Solon "thinks about." Her "sincerity and goodness" become

an ever present thing to him. He desired never, either in her presence or absence, to do anything that he felt she might not approve of. Always she seemed to come first in his thoughts, and yet throughout her life and his, . . . he indulged in exceedingly few expressions of his deep affection and regard. (20)

In the silence of Solon's mind, the word made flesh in the person of his mother becomes the flesh made word. For him, as for other Quakers of a new generation, the original poetic dream has been reduced to "a thin formalistic trace" (vii). As a static ideal of goodness, his mother becomes a judging superego.

If the spirit giveth life, the letter killeth. Unfortunately for young Solon, though he is "permanently imbued" with the "social and religious atmosphere" in his home, this atmosphere is characterized more by the "weighty silence" (3) following his mother's reading of the Bible than by the "weighty" spontaneous "vocal prayer" of Quaker worship. Consequently, as an adult he comes to depend too much on static, written texts. Desiring "a pleasing stability" in "a changing world," he responds to the death of his mother-in-law by giving his wife Benecia a framed motto: "In honor preferring one another" (172). In the motto's biblical source, Romans 12:10, Paul exhorts Christians to extend their love to all fellow Christians: "*Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another.*" In its truncated form in the novel, however, the motto signifies Solon's dependence on his wife and his limited ability to expend himself emotionally. By themselves, the words are not informed by the Inner Light; they "glowed vaguely in the evening light" and momentarily "seemed to convey the spirit of this house" only after Benecia, "with tear-filled eyes," has "read the words aloud" (175) in a spirit of love tinged with sunset melancholy.

For the most part, the Barnes home lacks spiritual warmth, though it has a "perfect home atmosphere" resulting from Solon's "putting his ideas into operation." "Always a stickler for law and order," Solon has tried to make his children "perfect examples of well-brought-up children" (108-09) by following the Quaker Book of Discipline to the letter. The Barnes household is largely devoid of living human speech; it is "too fixed, too still . . . too well ordered, too perfect for frail, restless, hungry human need" (185). The result is that Solon and Benecia become the flesh made word--"symbols of communal respectability and prosperity" -- and Solon becomes "one of the nation's bulwarks" (124) in his moral uprightness.

All of the Barnes children attempt to escape this death-in-life perfectionism. Intellectual Isobel pursues a career in psychology, society-loving Dorothea and materialistic Orville marry well, artistic Etta seeks the bohemian life, and sex-driven Stewart chases girls. Dreiser, however, gives most of his attention to Etta and Stewart, who

are equally "eager for life" (249) but whose efforts at intellectual and sexual liberation lead to radically different outcomes.

Stewart is destroyed not only because he is "more impetuous" (249) than Etta but because, despite his rebellion, he is the mirror image of his father. While Solon tries to teach him the virtues of economy and disciplined attention to the Inner Light, Stewart follows the flashing lights in the eyes of pretty girls and spends all the money he can borrow or steal from his parents on seducing the girls he and his friends pick up in the city. Like Carrie Meeber and Clyde Griffiths, he projects his sexual and spiritual desires onto a world of tawdry material goods and gross physical pleasures. Having been stirred by pornographic books, he transforms a dancer in a "crude" burlesque show into a vision of loveliness "dancing over the fields, running in the woods, bathing in the glistening eddies of a stream, or whispering to him in the secret chambers of his mind" (170). Solon, too, will project his need for love onto nature, but as a parodic inversion of a Quaker, Stewart is "brightened" (244) more by lust than by the spiritual Inner Light, a lust that whispers in the solitude of his mind rather than connecting him to others in living speech.

Like Solon's slavish attendance on the Inner Light, Stewart's burning desire for outer "delights" collapses into deadly formalism. Stewart seems to want to spend himself in varietistic excess, for he is "not definitely interested in one [girl], but in all" (244). Yet from early adolescence, girls "took on a meaning that they had never had before. The prettier ones he ravaged in his thoughts" (170). In *Notes on Life*, Dreiser says that a person "can get as much from the form [of a work of art] as he has himself to give" (180). Because he is "burning" with lust, his first conquest's feminine beauty--"the mystic formula which expresses itself in line and form and color"--can have but one meaning: ". . . she represented satiation to his fevered senses" (267). When Stewart joins his friends in the rape of Psyche Tanser--the embodiment of the dancing spirit--he brings no spirituality himself. Having reduced all women to a single "meaning" (sexual gratification), having merely "gathered her *body* to his" (287; emphasis added), he finds himself embracing a corpse .

Like his father, Stewart has transformed his mother into something of a superego. Tormented by his failure to follow the "simple dictates of his own conscience" (293), he stabs himself in the heart with a penknife while "thinking of his beloved mother" (294). The *penknife* in the heart suggests the spiritual death that follows from turning the flesh into word. Fittingly, in the glare of the press, Stewart's crime "*spelled* disgrace" (310; emphasis added).

III

His son's suicide and his discovery of corruption at his bank leave Solon without access to the Inner Light, his already limited ability to bring meaning to the world. He confronts a world of "*unbroken silence*" (312), and "the stern light" in his eyes seems covered by a "gray, sightless veil" (313). When Benecia dies, her spirit "broken" (313) by Stewart's death, the world becomes an empty form; its beauty can no longer "mean" as much as it once has because it now bespeaks the "absence" of Benecia's love (316). He will fill it again with meaning only when the power of human love regenerates his imagination.

This regeneration begins when Etta, rejected by her lover, determines to "*create an atmosphere that would take his mind off his sorrows*" (312). At the sight of her broken mother, Etta experiences an upwelling love that transforms the "stern" and "repressing" home into a "warm and beautiful" place filled with "an all embracing love, sympathy, and understanding" (313). Embracing her mother and exchanging tender words with her, Etta "knew that all her sins were forgiven by her mother" (313). Thus Solon is simply wrong when, a few moments later, he tells Etta that "God and God alone can forgive" (314), just as he will be wrong in attributing other human qualities to the creative forces of nature.

Eventually, Etta and Isobel infuse Solon with sufficient creative energy to find meaning in the beautiful multiplicity suddenly sprung out of the "unbroken silence." "Nature always wears the colors of the spirit," proclaims Emerson in *Nature*, and Solon's epiphany follows

Etta's commitment "to make more comfortable and colorful this torn and shattered home" (314). Energized by his two daughters' "constant thought . . . to strengthen him" (316), Solon perceives a Nature "energized" by the Creative Force into an "apparently endless variety of designs and colors" (316). He does not yet find meaning in this variety, but, as Dreiser writes in *Notes on Life*, "significance or meaning" becomes possible when "contrast or variety" is introduced into the "total" of life.

Solon's revelation actually occurs in two stages roughly approximating the "revolving process of change" described in *Notes on Life* by which a heartless artist-God becomes humanized. The first stage involves Solon's encounter with an "exquisitely colored and designed green fly" (316) devouring a beautiful bud. Although Solon feels "wonder" at "the wisdom and the art of the Creative Impulse," he at first finds little human relevance in the bug, a disturbing and surreal "physical gem" (317) that devours beauty. But Solon begins to impose a human conception on the world when he links the "variety and beauty and tragedy of life" (317) to his own shifting fortunes. He is prepared for an even more profound revelation when, "thinking of Benecia," he begins "to pray to this Creative Spirit" for the "peace" of her soul (318).

Under the influence of his daughters and with Benecia resurrected in thought, Solon reconceives the Creative Spirit as a loving God. Encountering in his garden a seemingly vicious puff adder, he is moved to speak words of benign intention that appear to cause the snake to turn and crawl across his shoe. Solon concludes from this event that "good intent is of itself a universal language" (318), that God is a "universal presence," and that God's "loving charity" reveals the "need of love toward all created things" because all things are "a part of Himself" (319). What he does not recognize, and what the book dramatizes, is that the universal "need" marks an absence that becomes a presence only when individual human beings make themselves part and particle of an evolving God.

But surely, it might be objected, Solon's mystical communication with the puff adder proves the existence of a loving divine spirit *in* nature. Dreiser, however, has prepared us for a more rational

interpretation. One striking thing about this event is his untypical handling of point of view. The event is first rendered from the perspective of Etta and Isobel, who are watching Solon through the dining-room window. What they see is a series of rapid motions, as Solon pauses and turns--"the only quick movement that they had seen their father take in a long time"--turns again to his left, takes a few steps, pauses, takes a few more steps, pauses again, and then seems, "by the motion of his lips" (318), to be talking. When Solon tells his daughters about the event, he emphasizes his speaking and the intention behind it, not his physical movements.

Because this doubling of the experience exposes the subjectivity of Solon's account, we should question Etta's belief that the snake "had so miraculously and yet plainly understood his tenderness through his voice" (331). "Life," Dreiser writes in *Notes*, "is literally a tissue of illusions" (143), a conclusion frequently reinforced in his reading. For instance, among his notes for the philosophical work are four pages headed "On the Credibility of the Senses" and consisting of extensive quotations from T. H. Huxley's essay "On Sensation and the Unity of Structure of Sensiferous Organs." Huxley emphasizes the difference between "sensations themselves" and the "inferences we draw from them either as to their causes or meaning." We cannot doubt a "fact of consciousness," but "[i]ncredibility comes into the picture . . . when we are considering the senses of others as others report" or when memory plays us false in recollecting our own sensations. We must test our sensations and inferences "by means of so-called 'common' sense" rather than rely on our own minds. Still, Huxley writes, there is no mind so practical that it does not need "metaphysics" when trying "to explain what we do not understand."

Telling himself that life has "cast him into a furnace" (296), practical-minded Solon certainly finds himself in need of some consoling metaphysics to explain what he does not understand. And from the beginning of the novel, Dreiser has prepared us to question his credibility by presenting a world in which good intentions, far from being a universal language, simply have no significance. As a child, Solon has been traumatized by accidentally killing the mother catbird, an event that shakes even his mother's faith since it suggests

an amoral world in which "so much ill could come about accidentally when plainly no cruelty or evil was intended" (18). Solon himself cannot recognize the spiritual yearnings that underlie his children's rebellion. Stewart intends to realize a "bright dream" (248), for instance, but Solon sees only his plunge into "the depths of the hell of so-called pleasure"(297). Stewart has not intended to kill Psyche, yet he dies despairing of escaping "the jury of his own mind, of his father's mind: the judgment of the Inner Light" (294). Moreover, all of Solon's own good intentions for his family have seemingly come to naught. No wonder, then, that his deepest psychic need is for a meaningful world in which good intentions matter.

As for his conversation with the puff adder, common sense should tell us that intentions matter no more to snakes than to catbirds. As Dreiser would likely have known given his long interest in biology and his close acquaintance with numerous biologists, snakes, with their poor hearing and eyesight, are much more sensitive to ground vibrations and moving objects than to sound and stationary objects. "A loud sound above a snake," *Britannica* tells us, "does not elicit any response provided the object making the sound does not move or, if it does, the movements are not seen by the snake. On the other hand, the same snake will raise its head slightly and flick its tongue in and out rapidly if the ground behind it is tapped or scratched. Snakes undoubtedly 'hear' these vibrations by means of bone conduction." By giving us Etta and Isobel's perspective first, Dreiser suggests that in his walk Solon has crossed the path of the puff adder, which responds aggressively to his rapid movements and the ground vibrations they cause but resumes crawling when the threat seems to disappear, that is, when Solon pauses to speak words the snake cannot even hear. The snake's crawling across Solon's foot is just as random and morally neutral an event as Solon's killing the mother bird. His belief that "good intent is of itself a universal language" arises from a "troubled heart" dreaming of a world filled with love and meaning, not from the world of "force and counterforce" Lehan recognizes in the novel.

IV

Solon's faith in a God of light "in Whom there is no shadow of turning" (315) marks the intersection of two basic rhythms: the rise and fall of Solon as patriarch and banker and the departure and return of his children. The novel thus "merges all of the contrasts of life in a rhythmic unit" and produces the melancholy "restful feeling of resignation" as Solon closes his eyes for the last time "in seemingly restful slumber" (334). But as Dreiser has told us in the introductory chapter, life is only a "rough and imperfect balance." As the concluding chapters "seemingly" bring us to a point of rest, they expose the ongoing process of change and evolution, that "never absent rhythm of the universe."

This rhythm appears as Solon reverses the pattern revealed in the life of John Woolman, whose *Journal* Etta reads to him after his epiphany in the garden. Woolman's faith was "a love that first turned toward God and thence spread out over all people and things" (331); Solon's love, which has briefly spread out over the creation, quickly narrows into a desire once again to deny the principle of change. He at times acts as though Benecia "were still alive" (332) and seeks the comfort of written words, inquiring about "certain documents" from the bank and calling for the "golden motto" (333) that has represented his conservative spirit.

But in Dreiser's world, nothing gold can stay; the motto actually consists of "yellow wool lettering" (333), suggesting perhaps the perishable nature of the Lamb, who is also the Word. Despite his efforts, Solon's last days are marked by the disintegration of his body, his mind, and his words. As cancer eats at the core of his body, he loses the sense of personal integrity. "Daughter," he asks Etta, "what has become of that poor old man who was dying of cancer?" (332). No longer speaking a "universal language," he begins to utter "expressions often without significance, often with profound meaning" (333). Ironically, at his death he becomes a univocal sign of integrity in the minds of his Quaker neighbors, whose religion represents only "a thin formalistic trace of all that Fox had believed and dreamed" (vii). "Daughter," a Friend tells Etta after Solon's death,

"thy sorrow is justified, for truly thy father was a bulwark of our faith, and his memory will strengthen us, wherever his name is known" (334). Solon achieves an enduring name only as the "dream" of a loving, changeless God fades into the past.

Above all, it is Etta who reveals the ongoing rhythm of life. Of all the Barnes children, she is most like her father, so it is fitting that the end of his spiritual quest initiates her own spiritual journey. Their underlying identity is revealed in the "still, speculative, examining" (160) look in both their eyes and in their emotional needs. "Never," Dreiser writes, "was there a child more eager [than Etta] for someone to lavish affection on her" (160), that is, unless it were young Solon, whose mother "had always made much of him--her only boy" (14). When Etta returns home late in the novel she is able to lavish affection on Solon largely because her mother and sister Isobel have lavished it on her. The family becomes, in fact, a closed system of spiritual "warming." Etta and Isobel are "warmed by each other's affection and understanding" (322), and both are touched by the "outpouring of affection" (330) from Solon that has followed from their lavishing affection on him. As a child, Etta imagines "a realm of her own so beautiful that it was a thing for tears" (130); as a woman filled with love she still possesses the imagination to accept as true the miracle in the garden.

But since life is an evolutionary process, Etta goes beyond her father. While Solon resists change, Etta promises to spend herself emotionally and to experience the "sting of existence." Possessing a "wisdom . . . related to beauty only" and having dreams "entangled with the hopes and yearnings of all men" (130), she, not Solon, fulfills the ideal established by John Woolman--moving from the love of God to the love of humankind in all its diversity. It is her loving spirit that transforms Woolman's words into living flesh: "As Etta began reading [Woolman's *Journal*] to her father, the figure of this early American saint emerged slowly but clearly . . ." (327). But even her God is a human God. She first loves the painter Willard Kane, an artist who creates in her the "illusion" that he is one of those "superior beings, possessed of some special essence of life" (209). Stifled by Etta's single-minded love, Kane tries "to communicate to her the

necessity for . . . change" (307), forcing her into the world of pain and loss. By the novel's end, Etta's "completeness of . . . experience" (321) has taken her into the depths of "both love and sorrow" (311). She still wants to believe that "the very heart of being" contains "nothing fitful or changing" (331); her saving grace is that she cannot rest in certainty.

In the concluding chapter, "*Finis*," Dreiser depicts the rhythmic swing from faith to doubt as Etta, at her father's funeral, sobs over the Barnes's "sad family history." She fully accepts "her compulsive share in this tragedy" (336), but she is too imaginative to be trapped by her guilt. Unlike Stewart and her father, she has not transformed her mother into a stifling superego despite Benecia's best efforts. Told by her mother that "thee had better always be a good girl" because fairies "reward good children and punish bad ones," Etta, as a child, has responded only by giving a vaguely theological coloring to her dreams of fairies flying "toward gardens where bloomed flowers of paradise" (131). As an adult imbued with the atmosphere of love she has largely created, she reveals the same poetic temperament as she senses love in "the seeded beauty of the night" as well as in "the filtered splendor of the dawn" (331). Looking back at her brother's death and "[h]er own erratic, impulsive career," she is led not to certainty about life's single meaning but to a question: "[W]hat had all this meant and what did it mean now?" (336). Always "eager for life," she yearns for more experience, knowing intuitively that joy and sorrow are one. "Oh, I am not crying for myself, or for Father," she responds to her brother Orville's hateful accusations, "I am crying for *life*" (337).

As the book attains formal completion, it becomes a "rhythmic unit" offering a "melancholy" comfort. Touched by Woolman's exemplary life of service, Etta wonders if happiness might not lie in striving "to answer human need." "What love, what beauty," she asks herself, "might not lie there?" (331). Solon's last words, addressed to Etta, have posed a question: "If thee does not turn to the Inner Light, where will thee go?" (334). The answer is implicit in the book's last sentence, as Isobel takes her sister by the arm and urges, "'Come, Etta, don't cry darling--we must go,' with which they passed Orville to take

their place among the Friends who were moving *out* toward the carriages" (337; emphasis added).

¹All of Dreiser's notes quoted in this essay, as well as his marked-up copy of Rufus Jones's autobiography, are in the Theodore Dreiser Papers at the University of Pennsylvania Library. I wish to thank Nancy Shawcross, Dan Traister, and the rest of the staff of the Special Collections at Penn for their generous assistance in carrying out my research.

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The Chapter Titles in *Sister Carrie*: A Problem in Dating

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Richard W. Dowell, in a recent and comprehensive narrative of the making of *Sister Carrie*, has mentioned a small disagreement over the chapter titles.¹ The disagreement has to do with when they were added to the typescript of the novel. Philip Williams, in "Chapter Titles of *Sister Carrie*" (*American Literature* 36 [November 1964]: 359-65) maintained that the titles were put in at the last minute, after the novel had been accepted by Doubleday, Page & Co. They were pencilled in, he speculated, in an effort to raise the literary level of the book, which Frank Doubleday believed to be rather low. Williams writes: "The titles were added as a device to strengthen the appeal of the story--perhaps, even, as a last-ditch attempt to assure the acceptance of a book whose early plight and subsequent history are now legendary" (pp. 359-60). Also implied in the article is the possibility that the titles might have been urged upon Dreiser by the publisher, though Williams acknowledges that there is no documentary evidence to support that argument.

Donald Pizer, in *Novels of Theodore Dreiser* (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1976), maintained to the contrary that the chapter titles were "added by Dreiser and Henry during the process of cutting the typescript, before the book was submitted to Doubleday, Page" (p. 52). Pizer noted that the "principal inspiration" for their inclusion was likely Arthur Henry, that Dreiser later had second thoughts about having used these titles, but that he never had them removed from the text.

In the 1981 Pennsylvania Edition of *Sister Carrie*, I operated on Williams' assumption that the chapter titles were added *after* the book had been accepted by Doubleday, Page. It was a moot point, though, in so far as including the titles in the reading text was concerned. The

text of the Pennsylvania Edition did not incorporate the titles; they were instead printed in an appendix. The Pennsylvania Edition restored the original fifty-chapter structure of the novel, and it was therefore impossible to use these chapter titles, since the cut and edited text published in 1900 by Doubleday, Page had only forty-seven chapters--this because Dreiser and Henry collapsed six of the original chapters into three in the process of cutting and revising. We editors would have had to invent three new chapter titles (Pennsylvania Edition, p. 671).

With all this said, I believe it is nonetheless possible at least to solve the question of *when* the chapter titles were added. One can do this by examining the top of the first page of the surviving typescript --called the Mallon Typescript in the Pennsylvania Edition after Anna Mallon, Henry's romantic interest, at whose typing agency the document was prepared. This typescript, which Dreiser saved, is among his papers in the Van Pelt-Dietrich Library Center at the University of Pennsylvania. This was the typescript submitted to Doubleday, Page & Co. and read there by Frank Norris; it was also the text from which the type was set for the 1900 first edition. The Mallon Typescript bears printer's markings and cast-offs for the galley proofs. It also gives evidence of the cutting and revision done by Dreiser, Henry, and Sara Dreiser--partly on their own and partly in response to blue-pencillings by an editor at Doubleday, Page.

One should now look at the facsimile that accompanies this article.² Someone (presumably at Doubleday) has written a note about the length of the novel in the upper right-hand corner of the leaf, indicating that the book is "about 150,000 words" long. (The first rough estimate, written underneath, was for "100,000 words.") The revised estimate would be approximately right for the Doubleday text, which was around 174,000 words long, in contrast to the restored text, published in the Pennsylvania Edition, which runs to approximately 210,000 words. In the upper left corner of the leaf someone else has written a note about the title. (Clearly the two hands are different.) This second note reads "Question t[i]tle on proof". We know that Doubleday, Page wanted Dreiser to change the title of his novel from "Sister Carrie" to "The Flesh and the Spirit,"

Sister Carrie

When Caroline Keeter boarded the afternoon train for Chicago, her total outfit consisted of a small trunk, ~~which was~~ ~~carrying~~ a cheap imitation alligator skin satchel, ~~carrying~~ a small lunch in a paper box and a yellow leather snap purse, containing her ticket, a scrip of paper with her sister's address in Van Buren Street, and four dollars in money. It was in August, 1894. She was eighteen years of age, bright, firm and full of illusions, ignorant and youth. Whatever touch of regret at parting characterized her thoughts, it was certainly not for advantages now being given up. A gulp of tears at her mother's farewell kiss, a touch in the throat when the cars clacked by the flour mill where her father worked by the day, a pathetic sigh as the familiar green environs of the village passed in review, and the threads which bound her so lightly to girlhood and home were irretrievably broken.

To be sure ~~she~~ ~~was~~ ~~not~~ ~~conscious~~ ~~of~~ ~~any~~ ~~of~~ ~~these~~ ~~things~~ ~~at~~ ~~the~~ ~~moment~~. There was always the next station where one might descend and return. There was the great city bound more closely by these very trains which came up daily. Columbia City was not so very far away, even once she was in Chicago. That journey is a few hours - a hundred miles? ~~Amidst~~ ~~the~~ ~~noise~~ ~~and~~ ~~confusion~~ ~~of~~ ~~the~~ ~~train~~ she locked at the little sly bearing ~~the~~ ~~address~~ ~~and~~ ~~waited~~. She gazed at the green landscape, now passing in swift review, until her swift thoughts replaced its impressions with vague conjectures of what Chicago might be like. ~~When~~ ~~she~~ ~~arrived~~ ~~at~~ ~~Chicago~~

the title which appears on the contract that they sent to him. Dreiser refused, however, and the novel was published under his original title. It therefore is likely that "Question title on proof" was written by someone at Doubleday, Page, probably before the contract or galleys went to Dreiser. That seems the single possible conclusion: the only other publisher to handle this typescript was Harper & Brothers, which rejected it. Hence it is illogical to think that anyone there would have written a note about a proof query or a title, since Harpers had no intention of publishing the text.

Now one should look at the tear in the typescript leaf. It is the kind of tear often made when a paper clip is pulled from a piece of paper. Note that the tear has taken away part of the note about the title. Thus the tear must have been made *after* the note was written. Next, one should examine the title of the chapter, written in Dreiser's hand: "The Magnet Attracting: A waif amid Forces." Dreiser wrote "The" to the left of the tear, then continued with the rest of the chapter title to the right. The logic is that Dreiser must have inscribed this title on the leaf *after* the tear was made. The sequence must therefore have been as follows: (1) "Question title on proof" was written on the leaf at Doubleday, Page; (2) the tear was made, removing part of the word "title"; (3) Dreiser wrote the chapter title on the leaf. This would necessarily mean that Dreiser added at least this first chapter title after *Sister Carrie* had been submitted to Doubleday, Page & Co., and after someone there had expressed doubt about the title of the novel, and after the tear had been made. Probably the titles for the other chapters were added at the same time on the other pages of the typescript, though there is no physical evidence to prove it.

Just what this bit of analysis means for the interpretation of the chapter titles is up in the air. Pizer's belief that the titles were added under Henry's inspiration seems reasonable to me. Henry's handwriting is present in several of the other titles in the typescript, showing that he collaborated with Dreiser in composing them. There is nothing in the correspondence between and among Dreiser, Henry, and various persons at Doubleday, Page & Co. to suggest that the titles were forced upon Dreiser. My own suggestion on p. 583 of the Pennsylvania Edition--that the titles were added in "an attempt to

restore the philosophical message of the book after the typescript had been cut"--was only a speculation. Dreiser's motives for adding the titles are still not entirely clear, but at least we now know when they were likely added. They were probably written into the Mallon Typescript *after* the novel had been submitted to Doubleday, Page--likely during the last round of revision, and not before.

¹Richard W. Dowell, "'There Was Something Mystic about it': The Composition of *Sister Carrie* by Dreiser et al.," in *Biographies of Books: The Compositional Histories of Notable American Writings*, ed. James Barbour and Tom Quirk (Columbia: Univ. of Missouri Press, 1996), pp. 131-59; esp. p. 154.

²This page is facsimiled also as the frontispiece to *A "Sister Carrie" Portfolio* (Charlottesville: Univ. Press of Virginia, 1985), and is reproduced on the dust jacket of that book.

Reviews

Dreiser in the Land of the Commissars

Dreiser's Russian Diary. Edited by Thomas P. Riggio and James L. W. West, III. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996. xiii + 297 pp.

In 1927, the communist government of the Soviet Union invited some 1500 foreign dignitaries to Moscow to observe the week-long commemoration of the tenth anniversary of the revolution--the Bolshevik Revolution--that had brought it to power in October 1917. Among those invited was American novelist Theodore Dreiser, considered by Soviet authorities the outstanding literary figure in the United States. Although uninterested in the scheduled official celebrations, Dreiser accepted the invitation when promised that he could stay for up to six weeks, could go where he wanted, accompanied or unaccompanied, and would have all his expenses paid by the communist regime. Thus originated Theodore Dreiser's sojourn to the world's first socialist society.

Arriving in early November 1927, Dreiser took maximum advantage of his host's offer to allow him to see "the real unofficial Russia." Spending seventy-seven days in the land of the commissars, he visited Moscow, Leningrad, Ukraine, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Armenia, and the Crimea and engaged in discussions with a host of political, cultural, and religious personages, including Nikolai Bukharin and Karl Radek, both of whom were destined to fall victim to Stalin's purges of the 1930s. During the course of his excursion, Dreiser personally recorded certain of his observations and impressions, while his secretary, Ruth Kennell--a thirty-four-year-old American expatriate who had lived and worked in Moscow for more than five years--maintained her own record of the novelist's daily adventures and activities. Upon his return to the United States in mid-January 1928, Dreiser combined his handwritten notes with

Kennell's typed account to produce a diary detailing his visit to the Soviet Union.

In 1996, nearly seventy years after its writing, *Dreiser's Russian Diary* was at long last published as part of the University of Pennsylvania's Dreiser Edition. The editors, Thomas P. Riggio, Professor of English at the University of Connecticut, and James L. W. West, III, Professor of English at Pennsylvania State University, are to be commended for taking on the task of seeing this interesting and significant primary source into print. Moreover, they are to be praised for their effective editing job, presenting the diary as both the private document and collaborative work that it is. By preserving misspellings, grammatical errors, and factual mistakes, and by employing different typefaces (italic face for Dreiser's script; roman face for Kennell's typing) to distinguish between the entries written by Dreiser and those by Kennell, the editors allow the reader to see *Dreiser's Russian Diary*--in terms of its content--in what amounts to its original form without having to visit the Special Collections Department, Van Pelt-Dietrich Library at the University of Pennsylvania.

For the historian of Soviet Russia, Dreiser's diary, while interesting, is of relatively limited value. Simply put, it is too narrowly focused on Dreiser's experiences and idiosyncratic views to be of much value to anyone looking for a larger picture of the state of the U.S.S.R. ten years after the revolution. However, for the Dreiser scholar, especially the scholar interested in the great author's views on the socialist experiment then underway in Russia, the diary is a significant source that raises questions about the novelist's true perspective. Throughout the diary, Dreiser displays a critical and frequently negative attitude toward the things he saw in the Soviet Union and the direction in which he perceived the country was headed. By itself, this is not problematical. Yet, when contrasted with the almost totally positive perspective on the Soviet experiment offered in Dreiser's *New York World* articles (published in March 1928) and in his travelogue *Dreiser Looks At Russia* (also published in 1928), questions about the novelist's real views spring forth.

Without question, Professors Riggio and West have performed an important service by making available to a wide audience an extremely well done, published edition of *Dreiser's Russian Diary*. It can only be hoped that a wide readership will repay the effort expended.

Bruce J. DeHart
University of North Carolina at Pembroke

A Dreiser Cornucopia

Theodore Dreiser's Ev'ry Month. Edited by Nancy Warner Barrineau. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1996. 347 pp. \$50. cloth.

Scholars of the caliber of Richard Lingeman and Ellen Moers have written on the significance of the youthful Dreiser taking over the editorship of a little-known piano music monthly from October 1895 to September 1897. They have pointed out how Dreiser transformed the magazine into a periodical for middle-class women interested in music, literature, art, and the sartorial and ideological trends of the day. Yet Nancy Warner Barrineau in her beautifully written introduction to this exhaustive collection of Dreiser's *Ev'ry Month* articles, which she has annotated with thoroughness and expertise, and which includes rare covers, advertisements, sheet music, and the opening pages of articles, provides the most detailed analysis of its importance. Her prefatory essay reveals her impressive dual expertise in the history of journalism and in Dreiser's literary development to provide a cornucopia of information about his acolyte years. She explains how, far from the "gimcrack journal" Swanberg called it, *Ev'ry Month* engaged Dreiser's intellect and empowered the future novelist. His contributions illuminate the way he was "beg[inning] slowly to transform the dialectic created by his own passions into fictional pairs such as Carrie and Hurstwood," and to

articulate the gender and economic ideologies that he would recast in all of his fiction.

He planned and wrote most of the early issues almost single-handedly, deepening and expanding the "women's magazine" purpose of the thirty-page monthly, sometimes over the opposition of the publishers. As "The Prophet," "Edward A1," the author of a "Reflections" column and other aliases, he covered literature, public events, social conditions, the Woman Question, and the myriad possibilities of American popular culture. He often sounded like the sermonic philosopher who prefaced so many chapters of *Sister Carrie* with thoughts about the unpredictability of existence or the perils of urban life for young women, or as in his August 1896 "Reflections" column, American materialism. There he muses on the country's "gnawing, ceaseless desire to be better than others," as apt a description as any of what propels Carrie Meeber, Frank Cowperwood, and Clyde Griffiths.

The reader of this chronological collection of such early writings is struck by the way in which, ostensibly to reach his bourgeois female readership, Dreiser enters the mind of the literate but not intellectual middle-class woman who was anxious, as was his own Carrie "Wheeler" newly arrived in New York, to talk Mrs. Vance's talk and walk her walk. Just as, later in the novel, the self-reinventing Carrie tries to deepen her understanding of life and art, Dreiser plays Ames in a number of *Ev'ry Month* pieces. He is filled with righteous indignation (and some unintended irony about his own journal's commercial drives) about the superficial lives of American wives in a September 1897 column by "The Prophet." "Women waste years," he rails, "in . . . ridiculous and useless labors, and, furthermore, are taken up and exploited by our brainy American press. The result is that we are engendering vanities and follies of all kinds in the tender sex."

Those in search of the Dreiser compassionate to the poor, fascinated by money, condescending to women, advocating feminism, expounding advanced social theories, defending Victorianism--in sum, the contradictory man of letters he remained to the end of his life--will find here a rich trove of data. Most of the pieces are written

quite well; all in some way--from his odd August 1896 "S.J. White" article, the "Woes of Cats," to his November 1896 praise of the vastly popular sum-gamin "Yellow Kid" cartoon series (signed "Th.D"), to his April 1896 "Edward Al" review of a minor Howells novel, advance our understanding of this complex artist. The Barrineau collection is a real contribution to Dreiser studies.

Laura Hapke
Pace University

NEWS AND NOTES

With this issue, Fred Rusch retires from *DS* after serving the journal in various capacities for over 25 years. Clare Eby will assume the editorship, joined by Keith Newlin as managing editor. In addition, beginning with the spring 1997 issue, *DS* will move from Indiana State University to the Department of English at the University of North Carolina at Wilmington. Henceforth, correspondence concerning subscriptions and back issues should be sent to: Keith Newlin, Managing Editor, *Dreiser Studies*, Department of English, University of North Carolina at Wilmington, 603 S. College Rd., Wilmington, NC 28403-3297. Keith can be reached by e-mail at newlink@uncwil.edu, by phone at (910) 962-3615, and by fax at (910) 962-7186. The new editor invites readers to submit manuscripts on any subject likely to be of interest to Dreiserians. All manuscripts will be read promptly. Any critical or theoretical approach is welcome, as are biographical or historical treatments, short essays on the teaching of Dreiser, and discussions of people in Dreiser's circle. Manuscripts can be of any length, and discussion of "minor" works as well as "major" works is welcome. . . . The Dreiser Society will have two sessions, Friday and Sunday, at the upcoming meeting of the American Literature Association in San Diego, May 28-31, 1998. One session tentatively will focus on "Dreiser as Autobiographer"; the other session will be open. Please send proposals for papers, by December 15th, 1997, to James L. W. West III, Inst. for Arts & Humanities, Ihlseng Cottage, Penn. State Univ., University Park PA 16802 or via e-mail to JLW14@psu.edu. For information about the conference check the ALA website at <http://english.byu.edu/cronin/ala.htm>.