

## Communications\*

To the Editor of the *Indiana Magazine of History*:

Many thanks to you and John Flanagan for reviewing my anthology *The Indiana Experience* and for saying "there is much here worth reading and rereading." I only wish that Mr. Flanagan had not made the following mistakes and misrepresentations:

1. The farce play he refers to: *The Double Doctor*, is NOT "by George Ade" but by George Barr McCutcheon.

2. Far from being "naive," it does NOT "focus on mistaken identity" but is rather a *parody* of that convention! What it does focus on is certain suburbanites' superficialities. Although McCutcheon's Graustarkian romances remain naive, his hitherto unpublished plays are quite sophisticated, as my forthcoming collection of ten of them should make more obvious.

3. David Graham Phillips' *The Worth of a Woman*, with its Indiana setting, is one of the earliest feminist plays in modern times. After its production in New York it elicited the author's assassination—not by a critic—but by a chauvinist fanatic. Even if that play were not timely (and many readers have said it is) to call it "dated" is as equivocal as putting that tag on any other historical first.

4. Another of Mr. Flanagan's equivocations: Cole Porter's songs are NOT "under the rubric of poetry." They are under the rubric of "Poetry and Songs," although such poets as William Blake and Robert Burns regarded the distinction as purely academic.

5. Brendan Gill's biographical essay on Cole Porter is NOT "a truncated section." It is rather the essay whole as it appeared originally in THE NEW YORKER. Later it was expanded as the opening section in the huge book *Cole*, the rest of that coffee-table artifact being devoted to his songs. (Mr. Flanagan may have been thinking of that book.)

6. Whether William Vaughan Moody was "the best poet that Indiana has produced" is a matter of opinion. The critic and poet Robert Lowell, with whom I was privileged to collaborate on the Harbrace *Modern Literature* series, judged (when I consulted him) that "Moody, like Joaquin Miller, may deserve to be resurrected, but Woods, Wagoner, Appleman, and

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\*All letters to the editor are printed verbatim. A communication will be published only if it relates to an article or review that has appeared in the *Indiana Magazine of History* and only if, in the editor's judgment, it serves a worthwhile scholarly purpose. Authors of reviews and articles are provided an opportunity to respond. The editor reserves the right to impose space limitations on communications.

Stefanile are your best poets from Indiana." Lowell's wife, Elizabeth Hardwick, added "Don't leave out Jean Garrigue." If Mr. Flanagan is willing to transfer his epithet "dated" to Moody-as-poet, I will gladly concur. (The poetic *prose* in Moody's *plays* is another matter, and I intend to represent Moody as playwright in my Second Edition.)

7. Since my anthology was designed primarily for *literature* courses, such distinguished *sociologists* as Robert and Helen Lynd are outside its scope. However, my chief criterion for selection would exclude not only *Middletown* but also any other piece lacking aesthetic appeal. That rationale also prompted me to sort the pieces I did select under *literary genres* rather than socio-historical "themes." To students of literature, as Mr. Flanagan well knows, *genre* and *mode* (e.g., a satirical farce) signal meaning.

Still, I am grateful that Mr. Flanagan took the time to notice my book at all.

A. L. Lazarus

To the Editor of the *Indiana Magazine of History*:

Thank you for sending me the copy of A.L. Lazarus's letter to you relative to my review of his book *The Indiana Experience*. I shall try to reply to his comments.

I must begin by admitting an error. For some reason I attributed the play "The Double Doctor," by George Barr McCutcheon, to George Ade. All I can say is that some gremlin must have interfered with my typewriter keys. I apologize to Mr. Lazarus and to the shade of George Ade. But I still see no reason for changing the adjective naive and I still think that mistaken identity is the basic mechanism of the play. My feeling about both this play and the one by David Graham Phillips, "The Worth of a Woman", is that they take up too much space, which might have been better used for other selections.

Mr. Lazarus is of course privileged to include some of Cole Porter's songs in his section "Poetry and Songs." All I can say is that the words are trivial and without the music they add little to the artistic or literary value of the anthology in question.

I think it is immaterial just where the original essay on Cole Porter by Brendan Gill appeared since it is obviously material which the writer later incorporated in his biography of the song writer. More important is the fact that the essay deals with an Indiana composer and was written by somebody without any connection with the Hoosier state. Mr. Lazarus's anthology supposedly is a collection of writings by Indiana writ-

ers. Brendan Gill does not belong here at all no matter how good his piece is.

I won't quarrel with Mr. Lazarus about William Vaughn Moody's artistic position. His middle name, by the way, is not spelled Vaughan, pace Mr. Lazarus. But Moody does appear in almost every history and anthology of American literature, and I can think of no Indiana poet who has received similar recognition.

Finally, Mr. Lazarus insists that his anthology was designed for literature courses so that he was obliged to omit all material of a more mundane or routine nature. My point here was that some of the writing of historians, scientists, and perhaps even sociologists can have as much aesthetic value as some of the second rate work that Mr. Lazarus does include. I have always had admiration for the little book by Logan Esarey called *The Indiana Home* and I wish it were better known. Surely Esarey's writings and probably writing by other Indiana historians deserve inclusion in a book entitled *The Indiana Experience*. Indiana has always been a writing state; the literary spectrum of the Hoosier commonwealth needs full representation to be truly satisfactory.

Thank you for this opportunity to explain my review of Mr. Lazarus's book.

John T. Flanagan

## Papers Requested

"The Face of Battle: Visions of the Indiana Volunteer Experience" will be the subject of the Indiana Historical Society's 1979 Military History Section Conference to be held November 2-3 in conjunction with the Society's annual meeting in Indianapolis. The conference seeks contributors who will employ varied sources and methodologies to describe and assess the behavior of Indiana volunteer citizens and units in any period. All papers will be considered for publication in the conference *Proceedings*. One page proposals for papers are solicited by April 10 and should be sent to: George W. Geib, Department of History, Butler University, Indianapolis, Indiana 46208.