

seriously enough to offer religious explanations that could account for the elder Rapp's rationalization of such an heinous act.

All this induces the leading Harmonist authority, who in 1980 revived the Harmony Society Press to complete his publications, to lament that "the most disappointing, disillusioning and yet undeniable result of my long and thorough research into the history of Rapp's determination to build the City of God on earth is the inescapable fact that an element of doubt and uncertainty, if not premeditated 'pious' fraud, clings to most of the important documents of Rapp's Society as far as its honesty toward the members of the Society is concerned" (*Harmony on the Wabash*, p. 597).

Indiana State University Evansville

Donald E. Pitzer

Dreiser and His Fiction: A Twentieth-Century Quest. By Lawrence E. Hussman, Jr. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983. Pp. viii, 215. Notes, index. \$22.50.)

So many elements in Theodore Dreiser the man and Theodore Dreiser the artist elude satisfactory intellectual explanation and seem to embody the very essence of contradiction: Dreiser was the man who strenuously attacked the Soviet system in print but who also referred to Stalin as the "White Christ" and who, almost on his deathbed, applied for membership in the Communist party; the creator of books at once harsh in their indictment of the American system and sloppily sentimental about underlying religious and moral values; and the sometimes incisive thinker who was also the often impossibly awkward, almost inarticulate writer.

In *Dreiser and His Fiction* Lawrence E. Hussman, Jr., sees these and other problems as parts of an underlying unity—the effort of an engaged mind to respond to the chaos in himself and in the world and to make sense of both. Treating in chronological order all of the novels and significant stories and essays as well, Hussman proposes that Dreiser's life was a struggle toward solution: "Having cut himself off from religious beliefs at the outset of an increasingly skeptical, materialistic age, he was nonetheless plagued by a gnawing need to believe in some transcendent reality. His personal search and the art that flowed from it represented an anguished attempt to find not only a worthy worldly ideal but also a method of living that could guarantee secular salvation in the form of fulfillment" (p. 194). Those readers who know only *Sister Carrie* and *An American Tragedy* may not easily accept this notion of a religious goal in Dreiser's thinking; but those who also know *The "Genius," The Bulwark*, and *The Stoic*

will appreciate its value as a reconciliation of the apparent dissimilarities in idea and attitude in Dreiser's fiction.

In addressing his topic, Hussman makes several significant contributions of other kinds: he uses all of Dreiser's fiction, not just selected works, to see the life and work whole; he provides close critical readings of the fiction and draws not only upon the published versions but also upon the manuscripts; and he takes Dreiser out of the narrow confines of literary naturalism to perceive his sometimes mechanistic and Social Darwinistic ideas as part of a larger effort to understand, an effort that also embraced Quakerism, Hinduism, even traditional Christianity.

The only flaws in this otherwise very sound book are an occasional plodding dissertation quality: some patches of biography which have no clear function, stiff catalogs of other critical opinion of books and issues, bits of awkward and inefficient prose. The sensible reader, however, will forgive these faults for the valuable organizing insight about Dreiser lying beneath.

Indiana University, Bloomington

David J. Nordloh

On the Banks of the Wabash: A Photograph Album of Greater Terre Haute, 1900-1950. Edited by Dorothy Weinz Jerse and Judith Stedman Calvert; photography editor, Kenneth W. Martin. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983. Pp. 128. Illustrations, index. Clothbound, \$20.00; paperbound, \$12.95.)

Terre Haute entered the twentieth century alive with urban potential. Varied industries, good transportation, attractive agricultural surroundings, and a confident booster spirit all favored growth. The Vigo County seat nearly doubled in population between 1900 and 1920, while its downtown area mirrored the aggressive business expansion of other successful trade centers. After 1920, however, Terre Haute's urban prospects faded. Population growth ended, local business began to falter, and rude "sin city" barbs began to be hurled by outsiders. Individual success stories stood in contrast to community problems and invited study and explanation.

Between 1979 and 1982 the Vigo County Historical Society conducted an elaborate photographic history project designed to collect and interpret materials of the years from 1900 to 1950. Grant funding permitted the society both to collect materials and to use those photographs as the basis for interpretive public programs. The resulting book contains over three hundred examples of the scenes and portraits assembled during the search.