

Theodore Dreiser's "Heard in the Corridors" Articles and Related Writings. Edited by T. D. Nostwich. (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1988. Pp. xxiv, 155. Illustration, notes. \$22.95.)

As the critical battle over the works of Theodore Dreiser becomes less polemical and more analytical, even those scholars and critics who attack his clumsiness and crudeness cannot deny his power or his place in American literary history. Books and articles on Dreiser's life and writings proliferate, and interest runs high. This volume of Dreiser's newspaper writings, edited by T. D. Nostwich and published by Iowa State University Press, will serve as both an important contribution to and catalyst for Dreiser scholarship.

If the road to critical acceptance in American literature has been a rocky one for Dreiser, the one he travels to be welcomed by fellow Hoosiers is rougher still. Remembered primarily for naturalistic novels that scrutinized human frailty, revealed the potential for corruption in all social classes, and failed to draw proper moral conclusions about the value of rural and small-town life, Dreiser was never considered a part of Indiana literature's "Golden Age" and has seldom been counted as an Indiana author. In *A History of Indiana Literature*, written by Arthur W. Shumaker and published by the Indiana Historical Society in 1962, Dreiser was excluded from any kind of treatment "because of insufficient residence and Indiana influence in [his] works" (p. 18). Among the virtues of the Nostwich volume, at least for Hoosier readers, is its depiction of a young reporter relying heavily on Indiana experiences to fulfill the demands of a daily newspaper column.

Although Nostwich includes a few pieces that Dreiser wrote for newspapers in Chicago and Pittsburgh, the focus of the book, as its title indicates, is a selection of the "Heard in the Corridors" columns written for the St. Louis *Globe-Democrat* from November, 1892, to April, 1893, when Dreiser was twenty-one. Ostensibly interviews with guests at St. Louis hotels, the columns are actually the inventions of Dreiser. "Taken together," says the editor, "they constitute his first significant body of creative work" and "anticipate such characteristic motifs, sounded . . . later in his novels, as the inherent inequality of men, the function of instinct in behavior, the role of luck in achieving success, the all-importance of money in American life, the saintliness of the loving mother, the nature of literature, and the character of the artist-writer" (pp. xxii-xxiii). Those looking for a connection between Dreiser's mature work and his Indiana experience need look little further than these columns, and those who maintain, as some recent scholars do, that Dreiser's artistic vision and fictional technique are a direct result of his journalistic experience will find much support in the work of Nostwich.

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