

from a pre-war Thirteenth Amendment that, if ratified, would have all but guaranteed slavery's permanency to a series of postwar amendments that not only ended the institution but expanded civil rights and the franchise to include freedmen? Answering these difficult questions requires an appreciation of the diverse methodologies and approaches needed to account for the complex intersections of racial ideas and the institution of slavery with republican institutions and political practices.

The Union War calls for a reassessment of some of the foundational assumptions that we bring to these and other questions.

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Beyond the Cabbage Patch
The Literary World of Alice Hegan Rice

By Mary Boewe

(Louisville, Ky.: Butler Books, 2010. Pp. xix, 411. Illustrations, sources, notes, index. \$34.95.)

Meticulously researched and written in a conversational style, *Beyond the Cabbage Patch* details forty years of the life and career of bestselling novelist Alice Hegan Rice, from the publication of her first and most famous novel *Mrs. Wiggs of the Cabbage Patch* in 1901 to the suicide of her husband Cale Young Rice in 1943, one year after Alice's death. Biographer Mary Boewe provides summaries of Alice's nineteen books along with notes about their popular and critical receptions. Additionally, Boewe spends ample time discussing the work of Cale Young Rice, author of more than twenty plays and books of poetry. Cale's efforts to achieve international fame as a serious artist and his defensive arguments with review-

ers who criticized or ignored his work provide a tragicomic motif in the story of this prominent Louisville-based literary couple.

The work of both writers has fallen out of fashion—indeed, it was already unfashionable during their lifetimes, after the coming of Modernism to American letters (heralded by the publication of T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* in 1922). Boewe explores this transitional moment, the shift from Victorian customs (and artistic styles) to the radical uncertainty of Modernism (and dramatic change of artistic styles) accelerated by World War I. Throughout the Modernist era, Alice continued to publish tragicomic stories about Louisville's tenement-dwelling poor and sentimental

whimsical fictions heavily influenced by her travels and family life, while Cale continued to publish poetry that, in the words of fellow Kentuckian Robert Penn Warren, was marked by “sentimental clichés” and even “ineptitude” (p. 291)—and this was an assessment of Cale’s *final* book of poetry, *High Perils*, published in 1933. Throughout the biography, Boewe makes clear that she believes Alice to be the major talent in this literary marriage. She was the primary breadwinner, as the highly successful *Mrs. Wiggs of the Cabbage Patch* continued to produce the royalty checks that financed their multiple trips to Japan and England, in addition to voyages to China, India, Korea, and Egypt, and holidays in California, Florida, and New York. The well-traveled socialites lived highly until the stock market crash and declining literary success strained their bank accounts during their last decade of life, necessitating longer stays in Louisville, even during the sultry months of summer when they preferred to flee to more comfortable climates.

One such retreat was Martinsville, Indiana, where Alice summered in 1901 to soak in the “57,000 gallons of medicinal water that flowed daily from an artesian well” (p. 33). While taking the waters at the Home Lawn Sanitarium, Alice learned of a colorful local gardener named Miss Celestina R. Phelps, who grew magnificent flower beds and gave tours in which “she pointed out that each type

of flower had the characteristics of a religious denomination” (p. 34). Inspired, Alice wrote her second novel, *Lovey Mary*, which includes the chapter “A Denominational Garden,” in which a character called Miss Viny gives Lovey Mary a tour of the garden and notes how Baptist irises need much water, while Methodist phlox easily falls from grace and needs revival. After the publication of *Lovey Mary*, the Martinsville Republican newspaper noted that literary tourists were coming to town to visit the famous garden of “Aunt Tiny” Phelps, who welcomed the attention.

Reading *Beyond the Cabbage Patch* is like reading the society pages of American culture during the early decades of the twentieth century. Alice and Cale visit President Teddy Roosevelt at the White House; they meet famous writers such as Mark Twain, Edith Wharton, and William Dean Howells, and have a close relationship with outspoken newspaper editor Henry Watterson; they voyage to China and meet foreign dignitaries. Boewe captures the flavors of the decades—especially in Louisville—with reviews of social balls and theater events, excerpts from Alice’s correspondence with editors and friends, and news of the world beyond Louisville, as when the big war begins in Europe. As a Kentuckian, I enjoyed learning more about recognizable names in Louisville: Watterson, as well as the Speed and Seelbach families, to name a few. This highly readable critical biography is

no mere homage, though. At one point Boewe notes the “cardboard characters” of one of Rice’s novels (p. 157). Boewe writes lovingly about her main subject, Alice, while offering an honest evaluation of her (and Cale’s) literary work as they struggled to remain relevant against the swift-turning tide of modernity.



Theodore Dreiser
Political Writings

Edited by Jude Davies

(Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2011. Pp. xxix, 321. Illustrations, notes, index. \$50.00.)

Meticulously edited and annotated, this new volume of the Dreiser Edition deserves accolades from author-centered and historicist scholars alike. The volume draws on fifty years of Dreiser’s social and political commentary, tracking his evolution from sentimental sympathizer of the downtrodden in the 1890s to World War I pacifist; from stridently leftist public intellectual in the late 1920s to Soviet apologist in the 1930s and ’40s. Editor Jude Davies has judiciously selected and divided Dreiser’s writings into four periods, providing historical introductions to each. He has framed each selection with detailed, informative, and illuminating annotations.

Indeed, with this publication Davies may win more admirers than Dreiser. Scholarly disinterest prevents me from wishing Dreiser had heeded the advice Hutchins Hapgood offered him, as documented in this volume: “Dreiser, go back to your novels; cease

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to occupy yourself with ‘labor’ or with any other broadly social activities” (p. 183). The insult appears in the acrimonious 1933 exchange that he and Dreiser had over the latter’s public statements about Jews. We see in this exchange that Dreiser’s attempts to clear himself of the charge of anti-Semitism served only to implicate him further. Davies includes Dreiser’s 1936 letter to *The Nation*, titled “Mea Culpa,” which has been “previously neglected” by biographers and scholars (p. 118). Here Dreiser acknowledges his prejudices but “think[s] today that the sufferings and persecution which this question entails are inevitable; that it is a kind of war, perhaps, which increases in fury until some final solution.... There is nothing anyone can do. Social life, economic life, for all of us, whether in connection with the Jews or any other group, runs a bitter, unsettled course” (pp. 206-207). The editor seems to believe that the document helps to lift