

# Contributions to American Literature by Hoosiers of German Ancestry<sup>1</sup>

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In the formative period of Indiana, the major portion of its foreign-born population was composed of Germans. These early immigrants and their descendants have made valuable contributions to the life and culture of the state in many fields. They have been among the state's most loyal and most prosperous citizens. In every field of endeavor these thrifty, peaceful, and ingenious people have served their adopted home without reservation. Conditions similar to those that exist today in Germany caused a large number of these people to come to this country. They came because they could obtain here freedom to pursue life, liberty, and happiness. They have fought for democratic principles with tongue and pen, and thousands have laid down their lives that these principles might be preserved.<sup>2</sup>

Their work has been particularly noteworthy in the field of literature, a field in which the significance of Indiana artists has been recognized. The great number of writers that Indiana has produced and the thousands of volumes created by their pens has led historians of literature to speak of a Hoosier school of writers.<sup>3</sup> Many of these are of Ger-

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<sup>2</sup> The following table indicates the importance of the German element in Indiana:

Year	Natives of Germany	Total Foreign Born	Total Population
1850	29,324	54,426	988,416
1860	66,705	118,184	1,350,428
1880	80,756	144,178	1,978,301
1900	73,546	142,121	2,516,462
1930	28,152	135,134	3,238,503

These statistics are taken from the census reports of the United States: *Seventh Census, 1850*, p. xxxvii; *Eighth Census, 1860*, I, 130; *Tenth Census, 1880*, I, 492-93; *Twelfth Census, 1900*, I, 732-33, and *Fifteenth Census, 1930*, 720-21. The latter report is for foreign-born whites. See also Theodore Stempfel, *Fünfzig Jahre Unermüdlichen Deutschen Strebens in Indianapolis* (Indianapolis, 1898).

<sup>3</sup> Minnie O. Williams, *Indiana Authors* (Indianapolis, 1916), on an unnumbered page in the front of the book, lists about 150 Indiana writers; Edward J. Hamilton (comp.), *Indiana Writers of*

manic descent. Many have made distinct contributions to American literature.

Perhaps the first German writer and scholar to make his contribution to the cultural life of Indiana was Dr. Joseph Neef, who attempted to introduce and popularize the teachings of the famous Johann H. Pestalozzi. Neef came to the United States about 1806, and two years later published his *Sketch of a Plan and Method of Education*.<sup>4</sup> He founded the first Pestalozzi School in America at the Falls of the Schuylkill in Pennsylvania in 1809. Four years later, in the same year that his second book, *Method of Instructing Children*,<sup>5</sup> appeared, he moved his school to Village Green, Pennsylvania. In 1826, at the request of Robert Owen, Dr. Neef moved his school again, this time to New Harmony, Indiana. When the New Harmony project failed, he left the state for a few years, but returned in 1834 to spend the remainder of his life in New Harmony. He was an ardent follower of Pestalozzi and did his best to spread and establish his master's ideas through publications and lectures. Many of the accomplishments of the Owen family were the outgrowth of Neef's ideas, and his influence assumed national proportions.<sup>6</sup>

In this early pioneer period, Lexington, Kentucky, was for many years the literary capital of the West. Cincinnati and St. Louis gradually drew this leadership to themselves, especially in the publishing and dramatic fields, but the creative literary center shifted to Indiana.<sup>7</sup>

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*Poems and Prose* (Chicago, 1902), includes 200 Indiana writers; Blanche F. Boruff (comp.), *Women of Indiana* (Indianapolis, 1941), lists more than 400 women writers of Indiana. At the Pan-American Exposition the Indiana Building contained about 15,000 volumes by Indiana writers.

<sup>4</sup> *Sketch of a Plan and Method of Education, founded on an Analysis of Human Faculties and Natural Reason, Suitable for the Offspring of a Free People and for all Rational Beings* (Philadelphia, 1808).

<sup>5</sup> *Method of Instructing Children Rationally, in the Arts of Writing and Reading* (Philadelphia, 1813).

<sup>6</sup> Meredith Nicholson, *The Hoosiers* (New York, 1915), 105-07, 115; Robert F. Seybolt, "Francis Joseph Nicholas Neef," in *Dictionary of American Biography* (20 vols., New York, 1928-1936), XIII (1934), 402; Robert D. Owen, *Threading My Way* (New York, 1874), 283-84; Charles H. Wood, "First Disciple of Pestalozzi in America," in *Indiana School Journal* (Indianapolis, 1856-1900), XXXVII (1892), 659-65.

<sup>7</sup> William T. Coggeshall (ed.), *The Poets and Poetry of the West* (New York, 1864), 14; Nicholson, *The Hoosiers*, 246-47; "Literary and Artistic Enterprises in Cincinnati," by "A Septuagenarian," in *Genius of the West* (Cincinnati, 1853-1856), IV (1855), 193-97; William T. Coggeshall, "Literary Enterprises in Cincinnati," in *ibid.* V (1856), 97-100 and 130-33; Ralph L. Rusk, *The Literature of the Middle West*

Among the first poets to sing about pioneer life in the Hoosier state was Amanda Louisa Ruter. She was born on a farm in Indiana, and here, while she played on the "knobs," rhymes came to her before she could read. A precocious child, she used her father's library, taught herself Latin, and expressed her thoughts in verse. After teaching school for a few years she married Oliver Dufour. A child of the West by birth, education, residence, and culture, Mrs. Dufour found time, despite cares and hardships, to write "out of the fullness of her heart." Many of her poems were of a devotional nature, containing graceful imagery and breathing the spirit of genuine emotion. The undaunted optimistic spirit of the pioneer, his steady faith in himself and in the eternal goodness of the universe were ever present in her poetry.<sup>8</sup>

During the period before 1850 a considerable portion of the population of southern Indiana migrated from the southern states northward across the Ohio River.<sup>9</sup> In the field of literature, Maurice Thompson was the chief Hoosier representative of this great movement. Although born in Indiana, he was by tradition a southerner. His father, the Reverend Matthew Thompson, had migrated to Indiana and married Diantha Jaeger, a young woman of German extraction. Soon after the birth of Maurice the family moved to Georgia, where in a schoolless region, the boy's education was acquired from a mother of unusual talents and from nature. At seventeen he joined the Confederate army and served with distinction. After the war he studied law and civil engineering until the rigors of reconstruction drove him penniless to Crawfordsville, Indiana. For several years he worked on a railroad construction project and prac-

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*ern Frontier* (2 vols., New York, 1925), I, 131-203 and 303-51; Orah C. Briscoe, *The Hoosier School of Fiction, Part I; Indiana Fiction before 1870* (M. A. thesis, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana, 1934), 3; Fred L. Pattee, *The New American Literature* (New York, 1930), 73.

<sup>8</sup> Her mother was Harriett Haas whose family had migrated from Germany to Virginia. Amanda was born near Jeffersonville, Indiana, in 1822. Her father was a Methodist circuit rider. Coggeshall, *Poets and Poetry of the West*, 404-10. Shortly before the death of Alexander von Humboldt in 1859, Mrs. Dufour wrote a commemoration to him addressing him as the king of science, the latchet of whose shoe other kings were not worthy to unloose.

<sup>9</sup> By 1850 Virginia had sent 41,000 persons to Indiana; North Carolina had sent 33,000; Kentucky, 68,000; Tennessee, 12,000; and South Carolina, 4,000. *Seventh Census, 1850*, p. xxxvi.

ticed law, with writing as his avocation. In later life, except for those years when he was a member of the state legislature or when he served as state geologist, he devoted his entire time to literature.<sup>10</sup>

His southern background enabled him to understand the difficulties with which Hoosiers chose sides during the slavery controversy and the Civil War.<sup>11</sup> His dual sentiments were expressed in such books as *A Tallahassee Girl*, *His Second Campaign*, *A Banker of Bankerville*, and *A Fortnight of Folly*. Thompson's verses and prose offerings were accepted by such publications as *Scott's Monthly Magazine*, the *New York Tribune*, and the *Atlantic Monthly*. During the last twelve years of his life he was non-resident literary editor of the *Independent*. Critics have called Thompson the poet naturalist of the West. He saw as a naturalist, imagined as a poet, and painted as an artist. His reputation for letters was the most outstanding of his generation in the Middle West. But it was his novel, *Alice of Old Vincennes*, that climaxed his career with nation-wide popularity. It was an historical romance based on the George Rogers Clark Expedition and one of the few novels treating that outstanding historical event.

William Vaughn Moody, a representative of the classical school of literature, was another Hoosier who gained wide recognition. He was born in the southern part of the state, the son of a river boat captain. His father's death, when the lad was seventeen, threw him entirely upon his own resources. With courage and determination that would not be denied, he prepared himself to teach in the rural schools. There was not a youth in the entire West who longed more for culture and education than did young Moody. For him culture was only to be found in the East, in the Boston of Emerson, Longfellow, and Lowell. He believed that Harvard University was the only school that fostered this culture. Finally he succeeded in finding a position in New York City where he prepared himself for Harvard. There

<sup>10</sup> Frank H. Ristine, "James Maurice Thompson," in *Dictionary of American Biography*, XVIII (1936), 460-61. For William Dean Howells' tribute to Thompson see *National Cyclopedia of American Biography* (29 vols., New York, 1892-1941), XI (1901), 521-22.

<sup>11</sup> Edward C. Smith, *The Borderland in the Civil War* (New York, 1927), 323, 333-38; Albert L. Kohlmeier, *The Old Northwest as the Keystone of the Arch of the American Federal Union* (Bloomington, Indiana, 1938).

he feasted his soul on Latin and Greek classics, while completing the university course in three years. He continued his education in Germany, Switzerland, Italy, and Greece. Upon his return to America, he took his Master's Degree and became a member of the English department at Harvard. From 1895 until his death in 1910 he was a member of the faculty of the University of Chicago.<sup>12</sup>

Despite the fact that Moody grew up in a section of the land where Christianity was the dominant religion, Greek mythology at first ruled his mind. Early in life he conceived the idea of a trilogy of poetic dramas dealing with the ways of God, and gods, with men. *The Firebringers*, *The Masque of Judgement*, and the unfinished *Death with Eve* are the results of his interest in this dual struggle between deities and human beings. Marguerite Wilkinson declared that "Pandora's Song" from *The Firebringers* was the finest short lyric ever written by an American.<sup>13</sup>

Moody's life was a strange duality, for although born in the West, he found himself, like William D. Howells, more at home in the East. His residence in Chicago he considered an exile. Frequently he condemned that great city in flowing superlatives, stating on one occasion, "Chicago is several kinds of hell."<sup>14</sup> In 1901, however, he was induced to spend some time with Hamlin Garland in the Rocky Mountains, and Garland's enthusiasm and the gorgeous splendor of the Rockies made an impression upon him. The literary result was *The Great Divide*, a prose drama wherein the poet at least became neutral and described the clash between two phases of American democracy—the headlong flamboyant iconoclastic West dashing itself against the Puritanic, rock-bound New Englandism, the conscience and culture of the East. But the West with its youthful daring and charm seemed to be gradually reclaiming him, for just before he died, in the *Faith Healer*, he even condescended to dip over the Rockies into California.

Another proof of his amenability may be seen in his statement: "I am an ancient—an irreconcilable enemy of

<sup>12</sup> John M. Manly, "Introduction," in *Poems and Plays of William Vaughn Moody* (2 vols., Boston, 1912), I; Norman Foerster, "Later Poets," in *Cambridge History of American Literature* (3 vols., New York, 1936), III, 62-65; Montrose J. Moses, "The Drama, 1860-1918," in *ibid.*, III, 290-91.

<sup>13</sup> Pattee, *New American Literature*, 203.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 201-02.

the Whitman verse mode; but your handling of it goes far to prove me wrong and to baptize me into the new dispensation."<sup>15</sup> The new verse modes, however, would never withstand his methods of polishing and tonal testing. But the events of the far Eastern situation at the turn of the century did find expression in his "Ode in the Time of Hesitation," "On a Soldier fallen in the Philippines," and "The Quarry." According to Fred L. Pattee, "Unquestionably for twenty years he [Moody] was the leading American poet, the laureate of the 'Time of Hesitation.'"<sup>16</sup>

The broad expanse of the sparsely settled territory and the frontier life produced a type of culture in the West of the nineteenth century that was very unique. Discovering its possibilities and its powers, the West lost no time in telling the world about its land, its resources, its people, and its opportunities. Many of the current expressions were crude, jangling, and vigorously democratic. The whole procedure formed a distinct break with the traditions of the East as expressed by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, William Cullen Bryant, Oliver Wendell Holmes, and Ralph Waldo Emerson, who were college-bred men—"Boston Gentlemen." Motivated with all the power of a tornado, the western literary surge could not be denied or ignored. It found expression through such westerners as Walt Whitman, Mark Twain, Joel Chandler Harris, James Whitcomb Riley, Brete Harte, John Hay, and Joaquin Miller—men who were graduated from the farm, the mine, the printer's shop, and the frontier. Two of these men who made a distinct impression upon nineteenth-century literature were from Indiana and of German ancestry.

James Whitcomb Riley found his subjects in the rural life and the small towns of Indiana which the frontier of the far West had left behind. He was born of pioneer stock, his grandmother, Margaret Sleek, being of German-English parentage.<sup>17</sup> Spending several years as an itinerant sign-painter, entertainer, and assistant to patent-medicine venders, he learned the intimate life of the rural folk. He was a graduate of the "University of Hard Knocks." It was a hard struggle to keep the wolf from the door, but again that

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 201.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 203.

<sup>17</sup> Marcus Dickey, *The Youth of James Whitcomb Riley* (Indianapolis, c. 1919), 6-13; Will D. Howe, "James Whitcomb Riley," in *Dictionary of American Biography*, XV (1935), 611.

characteristic American spirit of optimism and heroism that has conquered mountains, streams, fever, and distance, and has wrested the precious treasures from the depths of nature, would not be defeated. Perhaps the hard way along which he arose to prominence and his great need of seeing the humorous side of a situation gave to many of his poems an optimistic or even a humorous character. Although pathos is the prevailing note of his work he may be considered one of the school of Hoosier humorists whose writings have added another chapter to American literature.

His knowledge and love of his fellowmen were reflected in such poems as "The Old Swimmin' Hole," "An Old Sweetheart of Mine," and "The Boys in the Old Glee Club." And who has not gone "Out to Old Aunt Mary's" and helped himself to the contents of the cookie jar? His poems have a sentimental and moral basis and have attracted to their author the love of the people. He made for himself a permanent niche in the literature of America. His poems found their way into every hall of learning, into every library, and into most of the homes of the Middle West. Professional critics did not worry him. He appealed to the millions, not the few, and he became the "People's Laureate."<sup>18</sup>

In contrast to Riley was John Hay, a native of Indiana, who was born near Salem, and whose father was of German extraction.<sup>19</sup> The family moved to Illinois during his youth, and from there he advanced to positions of greater and greater importance. Concerning his training he said, "I was born in Indiana. . . , educated in Rhode Island; . . . learned . . . my politics in Washington, [and] my diplomacy in Europe, Asia and Africa."<sup>20</sup> His period of activity extended from the presidency of Abraham Lincoln, whose secretary he was, to Theodore Roosevelt and the Treaty of Portsmouth. He was the trusted advisor of Grant, Garfield, and McKinley. His genius, wisdom, and tact were demonstrated by the

<sup>18</sup> Norman Foerster, "Later Poets," in *Cambridge History of American Literature*, III, 59; and Marcus Dickey, *The Maturity of James Whitcomb Riley* (Indianapolis, c. 1922). Riley's birthday is a state holiday. His home in Greenfield is now a national shrine.

<sup>19</sup> "When I look to the springs from which my blood descends the first ancestors I ever heard of were a Scotchman, who was half English, and a German woman, who was half French." *Addresses of John Hay* (New York, 1906), 220; Alfred L. P. Dennis, "John Milton Hay," in *Dictionary of American Biography*, VIII (1932), 430-36.

<sup>20</sup> *Addresses*, 219-20.

variety of situations in which he proved himself so capable and the greatly differing personalities whose confidence and esteem he held. Few secretaries of state have made such a great impression upon the chancellories of the world as Hay. His "Open Door Policy" in China and his diplomatic acumen displayed in foreign affairs generally rendered great service to American commerce and were important in securing the good will of other nations.<sup>21</sup>

Like his life, his early work was related to the Middle West, for he became known as a poet through his *Pike Country Ballads*. His poems "Little Breeches" and "Jim Bludso" appeared in publication after publication.<sup>22</sup> His literary activities wandered as far from Indiana as the career of their author, and indeed from rural life in the central West to the courts of foreign countries. While in Spain as secretary of legation, Hay wrote *Castilian Days*, a book that reflected his experiences at the Spanish court and brought about much-needed reforms in the American diplomatic service. Between his appointments to various government posts at home and abroad, he was night editor of the *New York Tribune*, and had a contract with *Century* for \$50,000, which was an exceptional figure in those days.

His publication, with John G. Nicolay, of *Abraham Lincoln, A History* was a work of importance. Few were closer to Lincoln or understood the great man better than his private secretary, who having the mind of a man of letters, could adequately express this intimate knowledge. This work was a monumental contribution to a better understanding of this critical period.<sup>23</sup>

His interest in the conflicts engendered by the coming of the Industrial Revolution was illustrated by his first venture in prose, *The Bread Winners*. One of that class of works generally known as economic novels, it appeared anonymously in 1884 and Hay's name was not placed on the title page until 1915. The prevalent spirit of commercial and political opportunism, and the levity of the public mind

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<sup>21</sup> The career of John Hay has been well told in William R. Thayer, *The Life and Letters of John Hay* (2 vols., Boston, 1915).

<sup>22</sup> For the position of Hay as a poet see Sister Saint Ignatius Ward, *The Poetry of John Hay* (Washington, D. C., 1930).

<sup>23</sup> John G. Nicolay and John Hay, *Abraham Lincoln, A History* (10 vols., New York, 1890); John S. Bassett, "Later Historians," in *Cambridge History of American Literature*, III, 182.

appeared to be dangerous to the author, who defended the right of the individual to hold property against the "dangerous classes." Some authorities have called it a satire upon labor unions, but the Hay family has always insisted that Hay's statements were directed against the disorganization and demoralization of labor by unscrupulous leaders and politicians who used labor to enrich themselves. In defense of Hay it may be said that he was an ardent advocate of the new humanitarianism that became the striking development of his time, and that he always thought highly of the American working man.<sup>24</sup>

H. L. Mencken has classified the works of such writers as Gene Stratton Porter, Richard Harding Davis, Emerson Hough, Robert W. Chambers, Edna Ferber, and Mary Roberts Rinehart, as the middle layer of American literature.<sup>25</sup> The elements entering into the "best sellers" of these authors included a moral basis, a romantic and sentimental love interest, an optimistic outlook on life, and a liberal sprinkling of specialized nature study.

Mrs. Porter, who was a Hoosier of German extraction, placed her stories in the great open spaces of the Middle West.<sup>26</sup> Her works involved applied psychology, sociology, mental hygiene, religion, and homespun philosophy. The problems of the selfish, crowded, and artificial society of the cities, where personalities were crushed, did not exist. Nature and time brought about happy solutions. This was especially true of *Freckles*, *The Girl of the Limberlost*, and *Pollyanna*. This last title added a new word to the nation's vocabulary and a new song, "Smile, Smile, Smile." Such books were not written for the intellectual and the sophisticated. They were earnest, spontaneous, and safe. They spoke the language of the people, who craved this idealistic unfolding of human personality, despite the unfavorable comments of critics. They told of the "good old times," and

<sup>24</sup> Thayer, *Life and Letters of John Hay*, II, 1-15; Vernon L. Parrington, *Main Currents in American Thought* (3 vols., New York, c. 1927), III, 173-79. Hay had seen a great strike in 1877 and in this book he expressed his reaction to the situation. The book caused a nation-wide controversy and was continually quoted both for and against Hay by labor as well as by capital.

<sup>25</sup> Henry L. Mencken, *Prejudices: Second Series* (New York, 1920), 32.

<sup>26</sup> Mrs. Porter's mother was a Schallenberger.

offered an escape from the rising social problems, disillusionment, and gloom of the twentieth century.<sup>27</sup>

For many the twentieth century ended the romantic conception of life which was based upon the individualism of the frontier, the dreams of the boundless opportunity of the "Golden West," the appeal of the unexplored richness of this vast land, and the belief in a personal Providence. The founding of the United States Steel Corporation in northern Indiana, around which grew the city of Gary, may be considered symbolic of the firm establishment of the machine and the victory of the industrial era in the Middle West. Everywhere there was a reassessment of values. The Industrial Revolution was changing the whole spirit of American life. It was the age of applied science, of big business, of interchangeable parts, and of mass production. Labor became highly technical, and the individual a cog in a huge machine. The first thirty years of the twentieth century have sometimes been called the age of growing disillusionment.

From the Hoosiers of German ancestry came the central figure of the new school of fiction called extreme realism, who expressed the current mode of life and the spirit of this time of disillusionment. Theodore Dreiser was born in Terre Haute, August 27, 1871. His father was a bourgeoisie immigrant from Germany, who like thousands of others, had fled from Germany *via* Paris to escape compulsory military training. He married and finally settled in Terre Haute, where he became the owner of a small woolen mill. With the destruction of this mill by fire the family became penniless and the father lost his personal initiative. "He worked, ate, played, slept, and dreamed religion," said the son later.<sup>28</sup> He described his mother as a perfect mother, who had embraced the Catholic faith at marriage. She was a poetic

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<sup>27</sup> It is estimated that during the 20 years preceding her death Mrs. Porter's twenty books sold more than 3,000,000 copies. Mrs. Porter herself called her books "Nature studies sugar-coated with fiction." *The Girl of the Limberlost* was translated into Arabic to be used as an introduction to American methods of nature study in the College of Cairo, Egypt. Her work was so authentic that it won for her an appointment as editor of the camera department of the magazine *Recreation*. Later she became a member of the national history staff of *Outing*, and also of the *Photographic Times Almanac*. The *Indianapolis Sunday Star* for April 5, 1942, contains some new and interesting sidelights on Mrs. Porter and her work.

<sup>28</sup> Theodore Dreiser, *Hoosier Holiday* (New York, 1916), 284 and 392.

mother, imaginative, frank, dreamy, helpful, happy, who loved flowers, trees, clouds and the winds.<sup>29</sup>

Into this pious home thirteen children were born, two of whom, Paul and Theodore, later became prominent. Theodore was educated in the parochial schools of Terre Haute and Evansville, in the public schools of Warsaw, and at Indiana University.<sup>30</sup> At home the lad early learned the meaning of work. Fired with the ideal that in the land of opportunity success would come to him who worked, he tirelessly forced his way forward. He was taught to be kind, frank, thrifty, industrious, and moderate in his habits. When he left his native state he was full of dreams and hopes, honestly believing that the world was good, that it was fundamentally kind, that the meek inherit the earth, and that God's in his Heaven, all's well with the world. But after four years as observer and recorder of the "garbage" of city life, his romanticism sickened in Chicago and St. Louis, and his idealism died in New York. Like the age that produced him, he became cynical, impersonal, and scientific in his attitude.<sup>31</sup>

Dreiser was deeply stirred by the work of Honoré de Balzac and Emile Zola, and he longed to do for America what they had done for France, but editors would not publish his accounts of life as he found it. Finally he wrote a novel, *Sister Carrie*, in the only way he could write it. It began its long journey from publisher to publisher until it came to Doubleday where Frank Norris was the manuscript reader. His exuberant enthusiasm persuaded the firm to print it, but the public was not ready for it, and in consternation the publishers withdrew the entire edition from circulation.<sup>32</sup> The battle, however, was now on in earnest, for the public took sides. A new era in literary production was born, a new style created, and a new method of analyzing American life formulated.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 286-87 and 394. In a letter to the writer, Mr. Dreiser, who has read these remarks about himself, insists that no one has yet adequately given his mother the credit she deserves for her part in his life. Theodore Dreiser to Oscar L. Bockstahler, Hollywood, California, January 19, 1942. The relationship between Dreiser and his mother undoubtedly deserves further study.

<sup>30</sup> *Who's Who in America*, XXII (Chicago, 1942), 707.

<sup>31</sup> Victor F. Calverton, *Liberation of American Literature* (New York, 1932), 406-13.

<sup>32</sup> Pattee, *New American Literature*, 186-87; Fred B. Millett, *Contemporary American Authors* (New York, 1940), 30-31; Millett also gives a complete bibliography of Dreiser's works.

At least one of Dreiser's books, *Jenny Gerhardt*, dealt with the life experiences of a German family that were strikingly similar to those of the Dreiser family.<sup>33</sup> Both Jenny and her mother, like Dreiser's mother, loved trees, flowers, and meadows. They longed for nature—to hear the wood doves, and to wonder how it would feel to float among the clouds.<sup>34</sup> Herr Gerhardt, like Dreiser's father, had escaped from German conscription and settled in the Middle West.

In a manner similar to Goethe and many other writers, Dreiser's work was largely of a confessional nature. *Dawn*, *The Genius*, *A Book about Myself*, *The Titan*, and other biographical books confirm that Carrie Meeber, Jenny Gerhardt, Roberta Allen, and Eileen Butler had their counterparts in his mother and sisters. When Clyde Griffiths died, the old Dreiser died, as was true of Goethe and his character Werther.<sup>35</sup> Griffiths was what Dreiser might have been. All of Dreiser's fables and motifs were deeply rooted in the experiences of his childhood and adolescence. Ludwig Lewisohn may have stated the truth when he said that a strong mother fixation resulted in an unquenchable rage against his father's fanatical religion. The pleasure-loving and sex-starved boy either had to defend his sisters' conduct against his father or admit that his father was right and that he and his sisters were wrong.<sup>36</sup> Because the desire for freedom was condemned as sinful, Dreiser resorted to every known device to prove that he was right. He tried to show that millions of men and women have "sinned" simply because they broke the man-made conventions enforced by the church and obeyed the pure and sacred impulses of nature placed there by the Creator.<sup>37</sup>

Perhaps nowhere in American literature has this conflict between human desire and social codes been so vividly portrayed as in Dreiser's works. He went to irrational lengths in siding with the mere looseness and crass dishonor of Gerhardt and Berchansky. In *The Titan*, *The Financier*,

<sup>33</sup> Theodore Dreiser, *Jenny Gerhardt* (New York, 1911).

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 15-18.

<sup>35</sup> Theodore Dreiser, *An American Tragedy* (2 vols., New York, 1925).

<sup>36</sup> Ludwig Lewisohn, *Expression in America* (New York, 1932), 477-78.

<sup>37</sup> Theodore Dreiser, *A Book About Myself* (New York, 1913), 427. Theodore Dreiser, *Hey Rub-a-Dub-Dub* (New York, 1920), 126-43.

and *The Genius* he sought to justify his career and to break his father's moral system. Despite all of his efforts, however, Dreiser has neither broken the hold of moral laws on society, nor clarified his own ethical and metaphysical thinking. In some respects this latter fact is the most important fact in Dreiser's life, for having abandoned his father's, that is, the church's plan of salvation, everything has become vain and empty and without purpose, according to his own admission.

Dreiser laid great emphasis on the influence of John Tyndall, Thomas H. Huxley, and John Spencer, Balzac and Zola, and American writers like Walt Whitman in his own life. He neglected or ignored his German heritage. He frequently emphasized the Americanized type when speaking of Germans in the United States.<sup>38</sup> Much was made of the fact that these Germans left Germany because they differed radically with what was then current practice in the Fatherland. In his *A Traveler at Forty* he said:

I suffered a strange mental revolt at being in Germany at all. . . . A little while later I recognized that while there is an extreme conflict of temperament between the average German and myself, I could yet admire them without wishing to be anything like them.<sup>39</sup>

What a characteristic sentence for millions of Americans of German descent!

Thus it seems that despite his German ancestry, Dreiser has resolutely striven to be thoroughly and fundamentally American. He looks upon New York as the capital of the world. He thinks democracy is glorious. It is true that he recognizes "dark places" in our social and political system, but he said in *A Hoosier Holiday*: "How wonderful it all is! It isn't English, or French, or German, or Spanish, or Russian, or Swedish, or Greek. It's American, 'Good Old United States.'" <sup>40</sup>

In Indiana, with her population from all points East and South, as well as from abroad, the cultural idealism of the German met the moral idealism of the Puritan.<sup>41</sup> The

<sup>38</sup> E. g., Dreiser, *Hoosier Holiday*, 455.

<sup>39</sup> Theodore Dreiser, *A Traveler at Forty* (New York, 1913), 462.

<sup>40</sup> Dreiser, *Hoosier Holiday*, 512.

<sup>41</sup> Paul F. Douglass, *Story of German Methodism* (Cincinnati, 1939), 4; Perry Miller and Thomas H. Johnson (eds.), *The Puritans* (New York, 1938) present a rather comprehensive and readable study of the whole ideology of Puritan life.

German heritage, tempered and reinforced by southern contacts, was transmitted through literature, philosophy, and religion.<sup>42</sup> Puritan principles were standards of conduct for escaping from the sin of worldliness. The resulting combination produced some of the best of American institutions, as well as some of the sharpest cleavages.<sup>43</sup> Dr. Albert B. Faust has well said: "German culture has shaken the young American giant out of his stupor . . . and awakened in him a soul capable of thinking the thoughts and thrilling to the emotions of all humanity."<sup>44</sup> The Germans had a respect for authority, a fine sense of honesty and promptness in business obligations, dogged determination, a devotion to industry and a trait of economy as rigorous as the New England thrift, but in other respects a more liberal and metaphysical conception of life. "Arbeit macht das Leben süß." To the Germans, morality was the first step to patriotism, and as good followers of Kant they believed that patriotism and religion were always companion virtues, and that righteousness exalts a nation.

It was this combination of pietism, Kantian metaphysics

<sup>42</sup> In general the people of Indiana have had very strong religious convictions. In fact the churches were so strong that it was only after 1850 that theatres and operas were able to make an appreciable headway. As further evidence of their influence, it may be noted that no other state in the Union has more schools and colleges in proportion to its population than Indiana, and with the exception of the state schools almost all of them were founded by a religious group. Ever since the days of the circuit rider, Peter Cartwright, the Methodist Church has wielded a greater power here than in most other states. The German Methodist Church was strongest in this and adjoining states. For a general discussion of the subject, see Albert B. Faust, *The German Element in the United States* (2 vols., Boston, 1909). The history of each denomination and of each institution contains more detailed information.

<sup>43</sup> In discussing this subject it is not intended to slight the southern influence in Indiana institutions. The close relationship that exists between Indiana and the South has been recognized earlier in this discussion. This relationship is of sufficient importance to merit a discussion in its own right. Cf. John D. Barnhart, "Sources of Southern Migration into the Old Northwest," in *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* (Cedar Rapids, 1915—), XXII (1936), 49-62; *idem*, "The Influence of the South in the Formation of Indiana," in *Indiana Magazine of History*, XXXIII (1937), 261-76; and *idem*, "Southern Contributions to the Social Order of the Old Northwest," in *North Carolina Historical Review* (Raleigh, North Carolina, 1924—), XVII (1940), 237-48. An excellent example of how the incoming Germans adopted southern customs is to be found in the old-fashioned camp-meeting that once flourished so gloriously in southern Indiana. This is certainly not a German institution, yet was very prominent in a number of German communities in the Middle West.

<sup>44</sup> Faust, *German Element in the United States*, II, 377.

and the Bible that was emphasized by Dr. Gustav E. Hiller, long a pastor of one of the churches of Indianapolis, in *The Christian Family*.<sup>45</sup> Dr. Hiller reemphasized these facts in *A Believer's Critique of the Bible*, and in a manuscript entitled: "God and This Agonizing World." These works are a part of the vast amount of literature called forth by the bitter struggle between the fundamentalists and the moderns. Dr. Hiller did not seek to explain the troublesome theological controversies, but rather sought to show that it is the inner man or woman that makes for better living, individual and collective. Society is composed of individuals, and the heart of the individual must be right before men can live together in peace and harmony. Despite all of the rude disillusionment, he still firmly believed in the ultimate triumph of Goodness. The close association of life and religion was the theme of all of the prose and poetical works of Dr. Hiller.

Max Ehrmann, who is widely known as a scholar, poet, playwright, and novelist, was born in Terre Haute soon after his parents, Max and Margaret von Ehrmann, had arrived from Germany.<sup>46</sup> He was graduated from De Pauw University and undertook graduate work in law and philosophy at Harvard University. His first literary success came in 1905 with a poem in blank verse, "Breaking Home Ties," suggested by the famous Hovenden picture by the same title. Shortly after this he became ill and in his suffering wrote "A Prayer." It was rescued from the waste basket by a friend and since that time far in excess of one million copies of it have been sold. It is second only to the "Lord's Prayer" in popularity. In its simplicity and majesty, it epitomizes the thirteenth chapter of First Corinthians.

*David and Bathsheba* is rated as Ehrmann's best work. According to Vandervoort Sloan, the author

Is a rare combination of high moral purpose, sound health, and great sensitiveness to sensuous beauty. . . . At unity with his subject matter the author is free to give himself over to its effective expression.<sup>47</sup>

Much of Ehrmann's prose is clothed in sonorous words and

<sup>45</sup> Dr. Hiller was born in Germany, but spent most of his life as pastor of German Methodist churches in Indiana. All information pertaining to Dr. Hiller was given to the author by Dr. Hiller's family, or taken from the private files of the Indianapolis *Star*.

<sup>46</sup> See *Who's Who in America*, XX (Chicago, 1938), 822.

<sup>47</sup> J. Vandervoort Sloan, "Max Ehrmann," in *The Drama* (Chicago, 1911-1931), VII (1917), 490.

moves with such a melodious cadence that it is more truly poetry than rhyming syllables could have made it. A master of the English language, he is unusually successful in the difficult allegorical and parable form of literature.

Ehrmann's poems are vivid and impassioned. They belong to the new school of verse and to the classics. One cannot help but feel the charm of the mind that created them. Ehrmann is a mastercraftsman, and originality is the most notable feature of his work. He has struck out fearlessly for himself into untried paths. His writing shows a rare insight into human nature. Everywhere he cries out against greed, hypocrisy and artificiality. A crusader for social welfare and human rights, he is fearless and relentless in his demands for social and moral reform. He states his arguments in facts and figures with irrefutable logic. The remarkable part of it all is that disillusionment has not made him cynical or skeptical. On the contrary, it has deepened his love for humanity and strengthened his desire to better the lot of his fellow Americans. His poems radiate passion and sympathy for mankind.

Evaleen Stein, another Hoosier author of German descent, came of a family of writers. Her father died when Evaleen was twenty-three, and her mother became librarian of the Lafayette Public Library. Here Evaleen lost herself in books. For fourteen years she contributed to the *Indianapolis Journal*, *St. Nicholas*, and other publications. Her first volume of poems, *One Way to the Woods*, appeared in 1897, and five years later a second volume was published. Miss Stein's best work, however, was done as a writer for young people. *Troubadour Tales* won for her a recognized standing among writers in this field. *The Little Count of Normandy* was followed by a series of *Little Cousins of Long Ago*. She also excelled in the turning into English verse of poems translated from foreign languages. Her *Little Poems from Japanese Anthologies* was beautifully illustrated by Japanese artists. She also turned into English verse a literal translation of a volume of poems by Giovanni Pascoli.<sup>48</sup>

Eletha Mae Taylor of Indianapolis has been writing

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<sup>48</sup> Stanley J. Kunitz and Howard Haycraft (eds.), *The Junior Book of Authors* (New York, 1934), 344-45. While Miss Stein was a student at the Art Institute of Chicago, she specialized in illuminating and decorative design of manuscripts and mottoes. Her work was

poetry since she was fourteen years of age.<sup>49</sup> About one thousand of her poems have been printed in journals, books, and magazines here and abroad. Her first volume of poems, *Friendship Petals*, was published in 1925. In addition to her own works, she has compiled a book of poems by Hoosier writers. One of her most popular books is a volume of poems and stories for children.

In one of her volumes Miss Taylor says:

Poetry is woven of many fabrics, dreams, visions, imaginations, spiritual and physical emotion, smiles, tears, laughter and thoughts of many moods. Just as some poetry is like finely spun silk, or woven gold shining with a radiance of beauty and faith that lives on, passing through death to spiritual victory, so other poetry is like plain home spun, touching the hearts of the lowly folks in common every day life and bringing pleasure and comfort to all to whom it appeals.<sup>50</sup>

Her poems flow tenderly and rhythmically along in beauty of thought and spirit.

In recent years the Germanic element in Indiana has been noticeably strengthened by the coming of Mrs. Bertita von Leonarz Harding, who was born in Nuremberg and educated by private tutors in Germany.<sup>51</sup> She continued her schooling in Mexico City and the United States. While at the University of Wisconsin, she says that she failed a Greek examination and acquired an engagement ring. In 1927 she was naturalized as an American citizen. Her ancestors were connected with the courts of Vienna and Budapest. From them she heard many stories and tales about the royal families. Chiefly there was the familiar Grossmutter from whom she absorbed the romance and tragic destiny of the Hapsburg throne. Her early education emphasized the study of languages. Even the family parrot swore in five languages!

While Bertita was still a young girl, her father, who

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exhibited in New York, Chicago, and at the Pan-American Exposition. Many of her poems and prose works are embossed on parchment with border designs that reflect the work of many months.

<sup>49</sup> In a personal interview with Miss Taylor, the author learned that one of her grandmothers was of German descent. Miss Taylor is the president of the Indiana Poetry Society, the Indiana representative member of the American Literary Association, a member of the Press Reporting Syndicate, a Book Fellow, a member of the International Writer's League, and editor of the *Indiana Poetry Magazine*.

<sup>50</sup> Eletha M. Taylor (comp.), *Indiana Poetry* (Indianapolis, 1925), 16.

<sup>51</sup> All quotations and references to Mrs. Harding and her works are used by courtesy of Bobbs Merrill Company, whose private files were placed at the disposal of the writer.

was an engineer, became general director of the Mexican Steel and Iron Company, and the family moved to Mexico City. Here they lived in the shadow of Chapultepec Castle, and the maid who attended the little girl had served in the tragic household of the imperial Maximilian and Carlotta. Hearing endless stories of the ill-fated rulers, and living through the siege of Mexico City by Pancho Villa, made the attacks on Maximilian seem very real to her. She also accompanied her mother when the latter returned to the aged Franz Joseph the jewels and decorations that had been worn by Carlotta and Maximilian in their brief hour of glory. At this time Bertita made the acquaintance of the royal monarch. Thus it seems that fate almost compelled her to write *Phantom Crown*.<sup>52</sup>

Claude Bowers, Hoosier author, scholar, and diplomat, said: "the author of the *Phantom Crown* writes a fascinating drama in which the characters stand out as real personalities and she has done the work with scholarly thoroughness." Meredith Nicholson, another author and diplomat from Indiana, wrote from Paraguay where he was United States Minister:

I stayed up all night until dawn that I might soak it [*Phantom Crown*] up; I'm an old skipper, but I read every word in that book. The style is just right for the matter. It's an achievement to take history and make it live in this fashion. The only fault I could find with the book is the use of the slang phrase "fed up."

Mrs. Harding does not subscribe to the western opinion that considers Maximilian an intruder and Carlotta a cold-blooded and ambitious usurper. Nor does she share the general European opinion that Maximilian was a genius wronged by unenlightened savages, while his empress, far from breaking under the tension of her typically European nerves, fell a victim of the deadly marihuana drug. Mrs. Harding steers a middle course, and shows the scholar's independence in the conclusions that she reaches.

While *Phantom Crown* is considered by many to be Mrs. Harding's best work, the *Golden Fleece* is also a favorite. This may be due to the fact that she has spent many days

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<sup>52</sup> *Phantom Crown* has been published in England and in France as well as in the United States.

in Munich, Vienna and Budapest, and is more familiar with the ground covered in the latter book. Although Mrs. Harding follows the generally well-known facts, she also reveals much that has never been published before. She has without doubt caught the spirit of her characters. She has resurrected personalities and events from the grave of the official archives and has given them the full light of reality. The ramifications of the story of the Golden Fleece are tremendous and involve most of the events and personalities of Europe during the long reign of Franz Joseph. Without prejudice, but with an all-seeing eye, we enter into the brilliant Hapsburg court at its height. With sympathetic understanding we are shown the tragic struggle in the lives of the Queen Mother, the Empress, and the Emperor. The pictures are surprisingly intimate and the knowledge displayed is amazing. But the author has not neglected the humorous sidelights with which even the story of the ill-fated Hapsburgs abounds.

In *Imperial Twilight* we have the story of Karl and Zita, last of the Hapsburgs, and *Farewell 'Toinette* describes the departure of Marie Antoinette for France. *Royal Purple* deals with King Alexander and his wife and their murder in Serbia, while *Amazon Throne* gives an authentic picture of the period of the three Braganza kings in Brazil.

Mrs. Harding's books are unique contributions to our literature. No student of history can afford not to read them, and writers of history can learn much from her style.<sup>53</sup> But the books are also ideal reading for those who do not like history and who cannot enjoy biography. Mrs. Harding is at her best when she deals with personalities. She interweaves folklore and fact, adventure and intrigue, and then spices the combination with the technique of a dramatic novelist.

Since the early pioneer efforts of Joseph Neef and Mrs. Dufour, writers of German ancestry have played an important role in Hoosier literature. Many phases of the life of the state have been represented by these authors—the migration of southerners north of the Ohio by Maurice Thompson,

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<sup>53</sup> One of the valuable features of Mrs. Harding's books is the extensive bibliography and list of documents.

the classical school by William Vaughn Moody, the rural life of Indiana by Riley, the scholarly career of statemen by John Hay, sentimental romanticism of the early twentieth century by Gene Stratton Porter, revolt and disillusionment of the same years by Theodore Dreiser, and modern historical fiction by Mrs. Harding. Although other racial and population groups no doubt also have made significant contributions, the Hoosiers of German descent have a record of distinction in Indiana's literary history.