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The Case for American Literary Manuscripts

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Comments

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4 *The Case for American Literary Manuscripts*

Nancy M. Shawcross

Modern literary manuscripts, such as the personal papers of a writer or the records of a publishing house, serve an important function in the historical analysis of American letters. They tell the story—if one is studious enough to compile it—of how and when an author conceived her project, with whom she consulted, and the alterations made to the text from the first draft to the final printing. It is every Renaissance scholar's unfulfilled dream to consult the personal papers of William Shakespeare: to be able to read his letters or at least those written to him. What if he had kept a diary, describing his friends, his enemies, his plays, the actors, the Queen? The increased accessibility of the instruments of writing—pen and paper—as well as the increased literacy of the Western world and competence of its postal systems has made possible an enormous body of documentation for investigating the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The trick, however, is for both author and research institution to recognize in a timely fashion the value of unpublished material for future scholars. Here is where the story of Penn's substantive manuscript holdings in American letters begins with the acquisition of the Theodore Dreiser Papers.

It is no accident that the University of Pennsylvania became the home for Dreiser's papers. Historically, the study of American literature was undervalued by English literature departments, which often exhibited a provincial subservience to English letters.¹ At the University of Pennsylvania, however, pioneers like Arthur Hobson Quinn began teaching courses in the American novel in 1912 and in American drama in 1917. Quinn believed that one reason for the neglect of American writing in colleges was that "the literature had been approached as though it were in a vacuum, divorced from unique historical and economic conditions which had produced it."² Emphasizing the necessity for an historical approach to the subject, he was instrumental in the adoption in 1939 of a curriculum in American studies by the graduate school of the University of Pennsylvania and in 1942 by the undergraduate school.

Others, such as E. Sculley Bradley and Robert Spiller, shared Quinn's assessment of American studies and were instrumental in

¹In *American Literature and the Academy* Kermit Vanderbilt reviews in depth "the embattled campaign to build respect for America's authors and create standards of excellence in the study and teaching of our own literature." His book was published in 1986 by the University of Pennsylvania Press.

²Neda M. Westlake, "Arthur Hobson Quinn, Son of Pennsylvania," *The University of Mississippi Studies in English*, Volume 3, 1982, p. 15.

Opposite page: The first page of the typescript setting copy of *Sister Carrie*. Theodore Dreiser Papers, Rare Book & Manuscript Library.

Question
on proof

Sister Carrie.

99
length ~~day~~
about 150,000 words

CHAPTER I

The Maquet attracting: a waif and forces.

When Caroline Meeber boarded the afternoon train for Chicago, her total outfit consisted of a small trunk, which was checked in the baggage car, a cheap imitation alligator skin satchel, holding some minor details of the toilet, a small lunch in a paper box and a yellow leather snap purse, containing her ticket, a scrap of paper with her sister's address in Van Buren Street, and four dollars in money. It was in August, 1894. She was eighteen years of age, bright, timid and full of illusions, ignorance and youth. Whatever touch of regret at parting characterized her thoughts, it was certainly not for advantages now being given up. A flush of tears at her mother's farewell kiss, a touch in the throat when the cars clacked by the flour mill where her father worked by the day, a pathetic sigh as the familiar green environs of the village passed in review, and the threads which bound her so lightly to girlhood and home were irretrievably broken.

To be sure, she was not conscious of any of this. Any change, however great, might be remedied. There was always the next station where one might descend and return. There was the great city bound more closely by these very trains which came up daily. Columbia City was not so very far away, even once she was in Chicago. What, pray, is a few hours - a hundred miles? And then her sister was there. She looked at the little slip bearing her sister's address and wondered. She gazed at the green landscape, now passing in swift review, until her swifter thoughts replaced its impression with vague conjectures of what Chicago might be like. Since infancy her ears had been full of its fame. Since the family had thought of



Arthur Hobson Quinn (1940).
Courtesy University of Pennsylvania Archives

the acquisition of the papers of Theodore Dreiser and many other twentieth-century American writers. These faculty were keenly aware that published volumes did not provide the whole story for many American authors. Dreiser, in particular, remained a heavily edited author throughout his lifetime. His contemporary audience did not see his works as he had conceived and written them. Only by consulting the original manuscripts and subsequent revisions

might scholars arrive at a genuinely critical evaluation of Dreiser or of so many other American writers of his time.

But who was Theodore Dreiser and why would an emerging American Studies Department be so interested in acquiring his papers? Dreiser is uniquely tied to and intertwined with the development of the modern American novel. During the Congress on Literature at the Chicago World's Fair of 1893, Hamlin Garland expressed America's need for a new kind of literature which Garland called "veritism" and "local color"—a literature authentically American rather than derivative of Europe. At the same time, 22-year-old Theodore Dreiser was in Chicago covering the World's Fair as a reporter for the *St. Louis Republic*. Although Dreiser did not attend the Congress on Literature, he was to play a principal role in the fulfillment of Garland's dream for American literature in the decades that followed.

Dreiser's intense investigative journalistic style was well suited to a literature of "veritism." In 1892 he began his career as a journalist, working for the *Chicago Globe*. In 1893 he went to St. Louis to work for the *Globe-Democrat* and the *Republic*. In both places Dreiser became known for his human interest pieces and "on-the-scene" reporting style: his articles were written in a manner that put the reader at the tragedy of a local fire or the action of a public debate. In 1894 Dreiser moved to Pittsburgh, where he immersed himself in research and articles concerning labor disputes that had culminated earlier in the Great Strike of 1892 at Homestead. From there he went to New York and received a job at Joseph Pulitzer's paper, *The World*, which led the fight in the yellow journalism war against William Randolph Hearst's *Journal*. He covered a streetcar strike in Brooklyn by going out and riding the rails during the strike to see angry workers confronting scab drivers. He later incorporated these impressions into his first novel, *Sister Carrie*, published in 1900.

Dreiser was drawn to the contrasts between the wealthy and the poverty-stricken in New York. He quit his job at the *World* after only a few months, because he wasn't being allowed to produce the type of human interest stories that he thought should be told. He then lived, partly by choice and partly by necessity, on the streets of New York, where he took in the life of the downcast. By 1895 Dreiser had become "Editor-Arranger" for *Ev'ry Month*, "the Woman's Magazine of Literature and Music," although it turned into a losing venture in 1897. He then freelanced articles for various periodicals and was one of the original contributors to *Success* magazine, interviewing the likes of Andrew Carnegie,

Marshall Field, Philip D. Armour, Thomas Edison, and Robert Todd Lincoln, son of the United States president and head of the Pullman company. As the twentieth century approached, Dreiser wrote articles on the advances of technology, with titles like “The Horseless Age” and “The Harlem River Speedway.” He compiled the first article ever written about Alfred Stieglitz.

In the summer of 1899, Dreiser left New York for the Ohio home of his friend Arthur Henry. Henry encouraged Dreiser to work on his fiction. Together the two men spent the summer churning out articles and splitting the money that they earned fifty-fifty, thus giving each the time to work on his literary endeavors. It was here that Dreiser began *Sister Carrie* in earnest. At the same time he became interested in the plight of workers in the South. He did a series of special articles for *Pearson's Magazine*, including investigations of a “Model Farm” in South Carolina, Delaware’s “Blue Laws,” and Georgia’s “Chain Gangs.” All three dealt with society’s punishment of those who transgressed, a theme which Dreiser would investigate thoroughly in his novels. In addition, Dreiser wrote six special articles on the inventor Elmer Gates, who had invested the money gained from his inventions on a facility for psychological research called the Elmer Gates Laboratory of Psychology and Psychurgy. Gates’s studies of learning, perception, human will, and the physiological effects of the emotions underlay the ways in which Dreiser shaped Hurstwood’s actions in *Sister Carrie*.

Journalism remained a steady source of income for Dreiser throughout his life and supported his literary endeavors. The events that led up to the publication of *Sister Carrie* in 1900, however, began a new phase in Dreiser’s career—that of the heavily edited novelist. Before the book was published, Dreiser was forced to change all names that could be attached to any existing firms or corporations. All “swearing” was to be removed. One of the publishers, Frank Doubleday, demanded that the novel have a more romantic title, and on the original contract the work bears the name “The Flesh and the Spirit,” with Dreiser’s “Sister Carrie” penciled in beside it. More editing followed Dreiser’s return of the author’s proofs to Doubleday, Page & Co. When Doubleday read the final draft, he pronounced the book “immoral” and “badly written” and wanted to back out of its publication, although his partner, Walter H. Page, had already signed the contract with Dreiser. Dreiser, however, held Doubleday, Page to its word: *Sister Carrie* was printed, but only 1,000 copies rolled off the presses, 450 of them never bound.



Theodore Dreiser, silver gelatin black-and-white print, sepia-toned. Photographer unknown. Inscribed on the back by Theodore Dreiser: "Taken about the time I wrote *Sister Carrie* – 1900." Theodore Dreiser Papers, Rare Book & Manuscript Library.

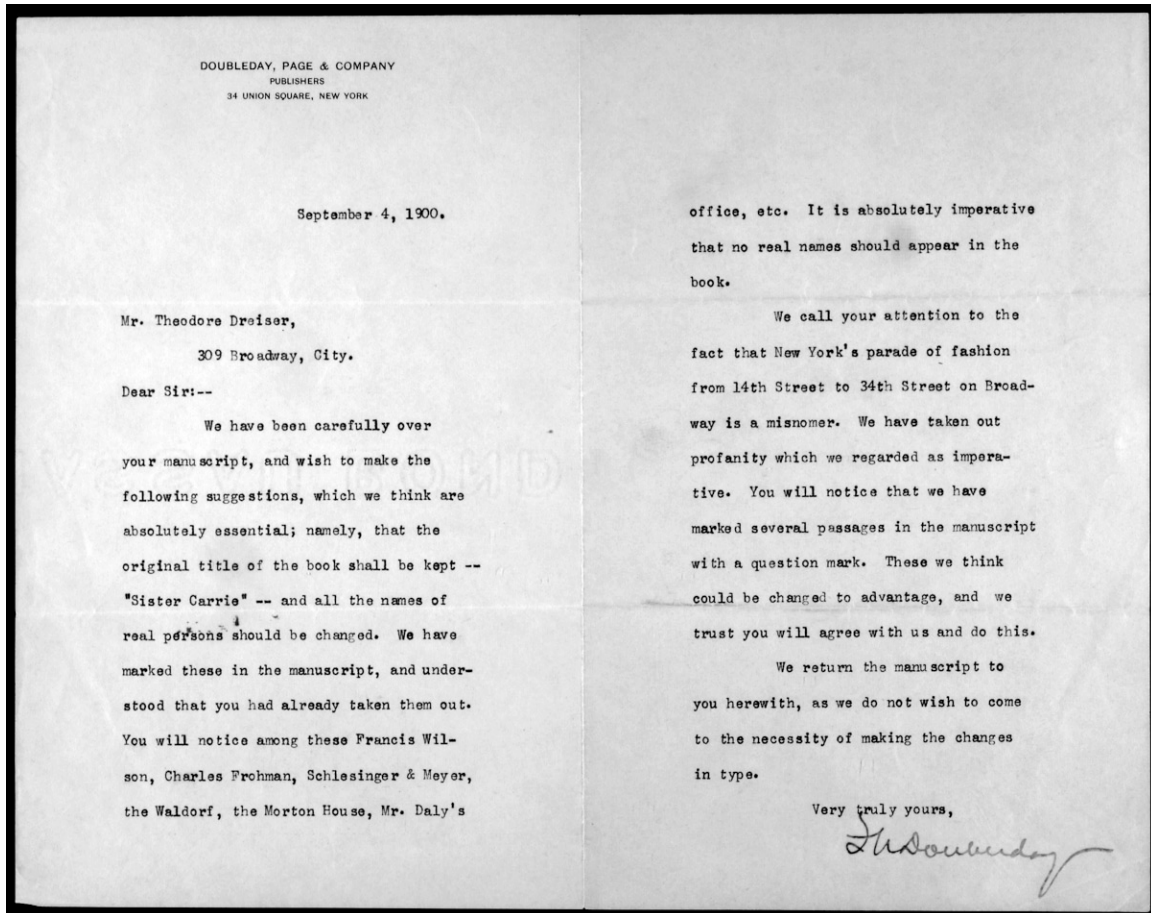
In addition, it was not listed in the Doubleday, Page catalog. In fact, the firm refused to advertise the work in any way. Still, a London edition of *Sister Carrie*, published in 1901, did well and was reviewed favorably. The *London Daily Mail* said: "At last a really strong novel has come from America."

Dreiser spent his entire literary career struggling with editors, publishers, and various political agencies, all of whom desired to make his works "suitable for the public." Although Dreiser began his second novel, *Jennie Gerhardt*, upon completion of *Sister Carrie*, his intense dissatisfaction with his publishers'

complaints and editorial changes, coupled with Doubleday, Page's neglect of *Sister Carrie*, seriously weakened his health and delayed completion of *Jennie Gerhardt* for nearly ten years. In 1916 Dreiser, along with H. L. Mencken, fought the decision of the New York Society for the Suppression of Vice to force the withdrawal of Dreiser's *The "Genius"* from bookstore shelves. The fight dragged on through 1918, and *The "Genius"* remained in storerooms until 1923, when it was re-issued by Horace Liveright.

Liveright became involved in Dreiser's biggest battle for freedom of literary expression in 1927, when Dreiser's *An American Tragedy*, the story of the Chester Gillette-Grace Brown murder case, was banned in Boston. Clarence Darrow was a witness for the defense. The case lingered in the courts, at great expense to both Dreiser and the Liveright firm. In 1951, six years after Dreiser's death, Paramount made *An American Tragedy* into the

Frank Doubleday. Typed letter signed to Theodore Dreiser, 4 September 1900. Theodore Dreiser Papers, Rare Book & Manuscript Library.



highly successful motion picture, *A Place in the Sun*, starring Montgomery Clift, Elizabeth Taylor, and Shelley Winters.

Dreiser championed freedom of expression in all aspects of life. In 1926, while visiting Europe, he commented on the events occurring in Germany: "Can one indict an entire people?" The answer, he believed, was yes. In 1927 Dreiser was invited to the U.S.S.R. by the Soviet Government. The Soviets thought that Dreiser's opinion of their nation would have weight in America and that he would be favorable to their system of government (Dreiser's books with their frank depiction of American capitalism sold well in the Soviet Union). During the visit Dreiser met with Soviet heads of state, Russian literary critics, movie directors, and even Bill Haywood, former American labor leader. Dreiser kept extensive journals of the trip, in which he stated his approval of the divorce of religion from the state, his praise for new schools and hospitals, and his concern for the condition of so many stray children scattered about the country. In 1928 Dreiser visited London, where he met with Winston Churchill, with whom he discussed Russia's social and military importance. During the visit he also took time to criticize the working conditions of millworkers in England.

Dreiser was politically involved throughout his life. He helped bring former Hungarian premier Count Michael Karolyi to the United States after the Communist takeover in 1930. During the 1930s he addressed protest rallies on behalf of Tom Mooney, whom he visited in San Quentin, where Mooney was serving a term for alleged participation in a bombing incident connected with "Preparedness Day" in San Francisco on 22 July 1916. Dreiser met with Sir Rabindranath Tagore in 1930 to discuss the success of the Soviet government and the hopes of India. In 1931 Dreiser cooperated with the International Labor Defense Organization and took an active part in the social reform program of the American Writers' League, of which he later became president.

In that same year, as chairman of the National Committee for the Defense of Political Prisoners, Dreiser organized a special committee to infiltrate Kentucky's Harlan coal mines in order to investigate allegations of crimes and abuses against striking miners. Dreiser's life was actually threatened for calling attention to the matter. In addition, Dreiser, John Dos Passos, and others on the "Dreiser Committee," as it was called, were indicted by the Bell County Grand Jury for criminal syndicalism, and a warrant was issued for Dreiser's arrest. Franklin D. Roosevelt, governor of

New York at the time, said he would grant Dreiser an open hearing, and John W. Davis agreed to defend the Committee. Due to widespread publicity and public sentiment, however, all formal charges against Dreiser and the Committee were eventually dropped.

After this incident Dreiser became even more involved with social reform. In 1932 he met with members of the Communist Party in the United States, which he criticized for being too disorganized. That year he was invited to write for the *American Spectator*, a new literary magazine that printed no advertisements. Dreiser later became associate editor of the *Spectator* but resigned when other editors agreed to accept advertising. Because of his intense interest in the outcome of the Spanish Civil War, Dreiser attended the 1937 international peace conference in Paris. When he returned from Europe, he visited President Roosevelt to discuss the aftermath of the war and to persuade him to send aid to Spain. In 1939 Dreiser traveled to Washington, D. C., and to New York to lecture for the Committee for Soviet Friendship and American Peace Mobilization. He published pamphlets at his own expense regarding his political views and made radio addresses. He also published *America Is Worth Saving*, a work concerning economics and intended to convince Americans to avoid involvement in World War II. In 1945, just before his death, Dreiser joined the Communist Party to signify his protest against America's involvement in the war.

Until he was contacted by the University of Pennsylvania in 1941, Dreiser had made no arrangements for the disposition of his extensive library and manifold cartons of personal papers. But there can be little doubt that at least by the late 1890s until his death, he had his eyes open to posterity. He cared about his legacy and recognized the value of preserving his unpublished letters, diaries, and writings. From the late 1890s not only did Dreiser conscientiously begin to save all letters received—in addition to drafts of his writings—he also began to keep carbons of the letters that he sent both to publishers and to friends. As a result, the Theodore Dreiser Papers at Penn comprise 360 linear feet of material documenting nearly every literary venture, philosophical exploration, political undertaking, and personal relationship of his adult life. Given the very public and social nature of Dreiser's interests, this collection has proven a remarkable resource for the study of the development of American literature in the twentieth century, as well as a vivid record of the political climate of his time.

Cognizant that the Dreiser Papers provided such a strong foundation for research, the faculty and library staff at Penn undertook an ambitious campaign to acquire as many related manuscript collections as possible. Overtures were made to Dreiser's friends, relatives, correspondents, editors, and publishers in the hope that letters written to them by Dreiser would be added to the Library's holdings. Many responded favorably and donated their Dreiser material. More interesting perhaps was the fact that this solicitation led to the acquisition—often through donation but sometimes through purchase—of the personal papers of other American writers, publishers, and editors. In fact, this period of intensive acquisition—from 1945 through the early 1970s—yielded a body of primary sources in twentieth-century American letters that comprises more than half of the 12,000 linear feet of manuscripts currently held by the Rare Book & Manuscript Library.

In 1949, for example, Penn English professor Robert Spiller convinced Van Wyck Brooks to leave his correspondence and literary papers to the University of Pennsylvania Library. In 1952 the Library shipped a steel filing cabinet to Brooks' home in Connecticut so that he could fill it with his letters and "mark it and its contents clearly as the property of [Penn's] Library."³ The transfer of the Brooks Papers was completed by his widow in 1964, a year after his death. Best known for his books, *The Flowering of New England*, which was a Modern Library edition, and *The World of Washington Irving*, Brooks considered his home in Westport, where he settled in 1920, "a true culture center." One day, for example, he saw Luigi Pirandello on main street "peering into a perambulator and playing with a baby's toes."⁴ Among his later publications were autobiographical works that described his numerous friendships with American and European writers of his day. His correspondence files offer researchers frank discussions of aesthetic, philosophical, and personal concerns by some of the most famous literary names of the 1920s, 30s, and beyond. For example, in a letter to Brooks dated 20 February 1922, Dreiser asks him to consider promoting a book by John Maxwell that "relates to the question of who Shakespeare was"—a work, Dreiser writes, that is "remarkable alike for the clearness with which it restates the Shakespeare problem and then proceeds to point to the probable author of the plays."⁵ John Dos Passos, creator of the trilogy *U.S.A.*, writes to Brooks on several occasions: in 1930 he seeks advice on a publishing project; in 1953 he agrees to become "a member of a committee to award a gold medal to Ernest Hemingway"⁶; and in 1955 he observes, "I can't

³ Typed letter signed "Bob Spiller" to Charles David, Director of Libraries, dated 16 July 1952.

⁴ Quoted in Carlos Baker, "In the Twenties, A Coming of Age: Mr. Brooks Recalls Names and Faces That Heralded a New American Dawn," *The New York Times Book Review*, 17 March 1957, Section 7, p.1.

⁵ Typed letter signed "Theodore Dreiser" dated 20 February 1922, Van Wyck Brooks Papers, Rare Book & Manuscript Library.

⁶ Autograph letter signed "John Dos Passos" dated 14 November 1953, Van Wyck Brooks Papers, Rare Book & Manuscript Library.

write a tribute to Thomas Mann because I think he was an old bastard. I don't like German novels anyway."⁷

Brooks was friendly with sociologist W. E. B. Du Bois, the most important black civil rights leader in the United States during the first half of the twentieth century and co-founder of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). At one point Brooks sent Du Bois a copy of his book on Helen Keller. Du Bois notes in his response: "When I was a graduate student at Harvard I visited Helen Keller then a girl of about 12, and saw the 'Teacher.'"⁸ The poet and Penn alumnus Ezra Pound corresponded with Brooks. In an angry letter from 1938 Pound expresses his frustration with the meager dissemination of authors' works, suggesting that a bulletin should contain current information about important writers' publications. "At present," Pound expounds, "there is NO god damned life in America because whenever a serious essay appears it is hidden in some mag/ with a circ/ of 400." At the end of his diatribe, Pound notes: "pardon brevity/ but if I dont abbreviate I cant get thru days work AND days letters."⁹

Another American novelist whom Brooks befriended was James T. Farrell, author of the trilogy *Studs Lonigan*. An Irish-American born in Chicago, Farrell published the first volume—*Young Lonigan*—in 1932. It was followed by *The Young Manhood of Studs Lonigan* in 1934 and *Judgment Day* in 1935. The series traces the self-destruction of a young man who has been spiritually crippled by the morally squalid urban environment in which he lives. Farrell was influenced by Dreiser's naturalism and even wrote to his idol. Like Dreiser's work, Farrell's frank depiction of the language, depravity, violence, and immorality of the city upset staid America, and his books became subject to censorship. In a 1943 letter to Brooks one can sample the sentiments that made Farrell so controversial in his early years.

I am very sorry that I will be unable to do this [join with other writers in the informal meeting to be held by the Conference on Science, Philosophy and Religion]. . . . I am of the opinion that there is no ground for bringing science and religion together and that whenever any such efforts are made, the result will be that of weakening science and strengthening religion, i.e., organized religion. The consequence of this will in the long run be that of strengthening the Holy Roman Catholic Church.¹⁰

⁷ Typed letter dated 3 November 1955, Van Wyck Brooks Papers, Rare Book & Manuscript Library.

⁸ Typed letter signed "W. E. B. Du Bois" dated 5 May 1957, Van Wyck Brooks Papers, Rare Book & Manuscript Library.

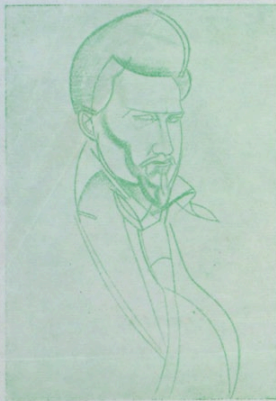
⁹ Typed letter signed "E. P." dated 25 May 1938, Van Wyck Brooks Papers, Rare Book & Manuscript Library.

¹⁰ Typed letter signed "Jim Farrell" dated 29 July 1943, Van Wyck Brooks Papers, Rare Book & Manuscript Library.

As a result of an obscenity suit filed by Philadelphia's Cardinal Dougherty against Farrell's novels in 1948, Farrell made the acquaintance of E. Sculley Bradley, Professor of American Civilization and later Vice-Provost of the University of Pennsylvania. Their friendship led to the donation of several of Farrell's manuscripts to the Rare Book & Manuscript Library. Farrell had already sought a repository for his papers at the Newberry Library in Chicago, after a 1946 fire in his apartment destroyed many manuscripts. In 1954 he decided to deposit subsequent papers at Penn, which eventually purchased most of the Newberry's Farrell collection; the arrangements were finalized in 1957. Farrell encouraged his relatives and friends to donate their own correspondence and memorabilia. In addition, the Library has acquired Farrell letters and manuscripts, when they have been offered for sale. Penn's collection is thus authorized, comprehensive, and unique. It contains virtually everything Farrell produced since 1946 and the whole of what survived the fire: chiefly diaries and correspondence with some literary manuscripts.

The Farrell Papers open onto a wide range of currents in American and international life from the 1920s to the 1970s, with particularly rich documentation from 1935 to about 1955. The diaries and correspondence offer accounts of the gossip at Yaddo in the 1930s; doggerel verse by both Ezra Pound and Kenneth Burke; how Mary McCarthy met Philip Rahv; the Trotsky hearings of 1937 in Mexico City with Diego Rivera; Katherine Dunham's synopsis for a film on voodoo in Haiti and her views on the politics of the "black bourgeoisie"; the political observations of the dying H. L. Mencken; Meyer Schapiro's reactions on first viewing Picasso's *Guernica*; the financing of Broadway plays during the Depression; editorial conflicts at the *New Masses*; Simone de Beauvoir's first visit to Harlem; Alla Nazimova in Hollywood; the first assembly of the Congress for Cultural Freedom in Berlin in 1949; McCarthy-era tensions between different factions of anti-Stalinist intellectuals; Israeli political arguments in 1956; Bruno Bettelheim's views on art in psychoanalysis; worker education projects in the AFL and the UAW; Katherine Anne Porter's reflections in old age on the hardships of a writer's career; a white working-class family's reaction to the Democratic National Convention in 1968; and much more.

Although the 1993 movie entitled *Six Degrees of Separation* (based on the John Guare play) suggests that any two people on the planet can be connected by at most six links, the connections among the modern manuscript collections in Penn's Rare Book



[Jan. 1934]

EZRA POUND
VIA MARSALA 12-5
RAPALLO
ANNO XII

Dear Farrel

Thanks for yr' Xmas greeting.
also thanks for the damn good story in Dynamo/
Began like azif just same old some more of same
but packed the punch in the end/

I wrote "Aakon Chevalier/ for the whole Dynamo group
and hope you will take the trouble to see the article .
also fer garZake tell me if any of the LEFT wing
UNDER(goddamn it) stand that the Revolution(American
revolution can not occur in 1918 in Moscow.

I have been trying to get it into Mike G/ for YEARS/// god damn it
we aint mujiks/ Lenin had a POLICY/ and the machinery
of the Bolsheviki was a MEANS to an end/

Mike, the damn fool, writes me " Bolehevism is the dictatorship
of the proletariat "
without knowing more than Mrs Casey's
GOW/ WHAT they are to dictate.

I have sent the end to "New Democracy and hope they print it.
But if it isn't printed there (you can phone Munson. New
Democracy. 425 Fourth Ave.)
please see that it gets into
print.

So far/ one tolerates F/D/ but whether he is IT/ or only
a "sort of " Kerensky, remains to be seen.

IF he busts the god damn bank of France/ that is for humanity
and heaven bless him. But up to now / he has shown NO conception
of contemporary econ// all old stuff/ debasement of coinage as
old as Roman empire// sacred name of Andy. Jax.
Jackson abolished the national debt/ but americans including
communists are too god damn unmeddicated to KNOW that
so Frankie gets away wiff it.

" Every birth certificate a share certificate " is communism
UP TO DATE for a people that has been mostly to grammar school
not mongolian nomads/ that have to parcel
LAND.

Hope th wife is in good shape/ and things a bit easier.

Ezra Pound. Typed letter signed and annotated to James T. Farrell, ca. January 1934. Ezra Pound Research Collection, Rare Book & Manuscript Library.



James T. Farrell as a young man.

& Manuscript Library are usually direct or at most within two degrees of separation. Letters from James T. Farrell, for example, can be found in the Waldo Frank Papers. Also among the correspondence files in the Frank Papers are letters from Theodore Dreiser and Van Wyck Brooks. In 1916 Frank co-founded the literary magazine *seven arts* with the poet James Oppenheim and co-edited it with Brooks. They opened the magazine's columns to Sherwood Anderson, Robert Frost, Floyd Dell, Dreiser, Carl Sandburg, D. H. Lawrence, John Dos Passos, Amy Lowell, Walter Lippmann, Max Eastman, Randolph Bourne, John Dewey, Romain Rolland, Padric Colum, and Eugene O'Neill. Described by one admirer as "a bonfire burning in a depressing gray fog," *seven arts* did not survive the backlash created by its opposition to World War I.

As from: 50 Deepwood Drive
New Haven, Conn.

THE CENTURY ASSOCIATION
7 WEST FORTY-THIRD STREET
NEW YORK

Sept 18 1940

Dear Mr. Brooks

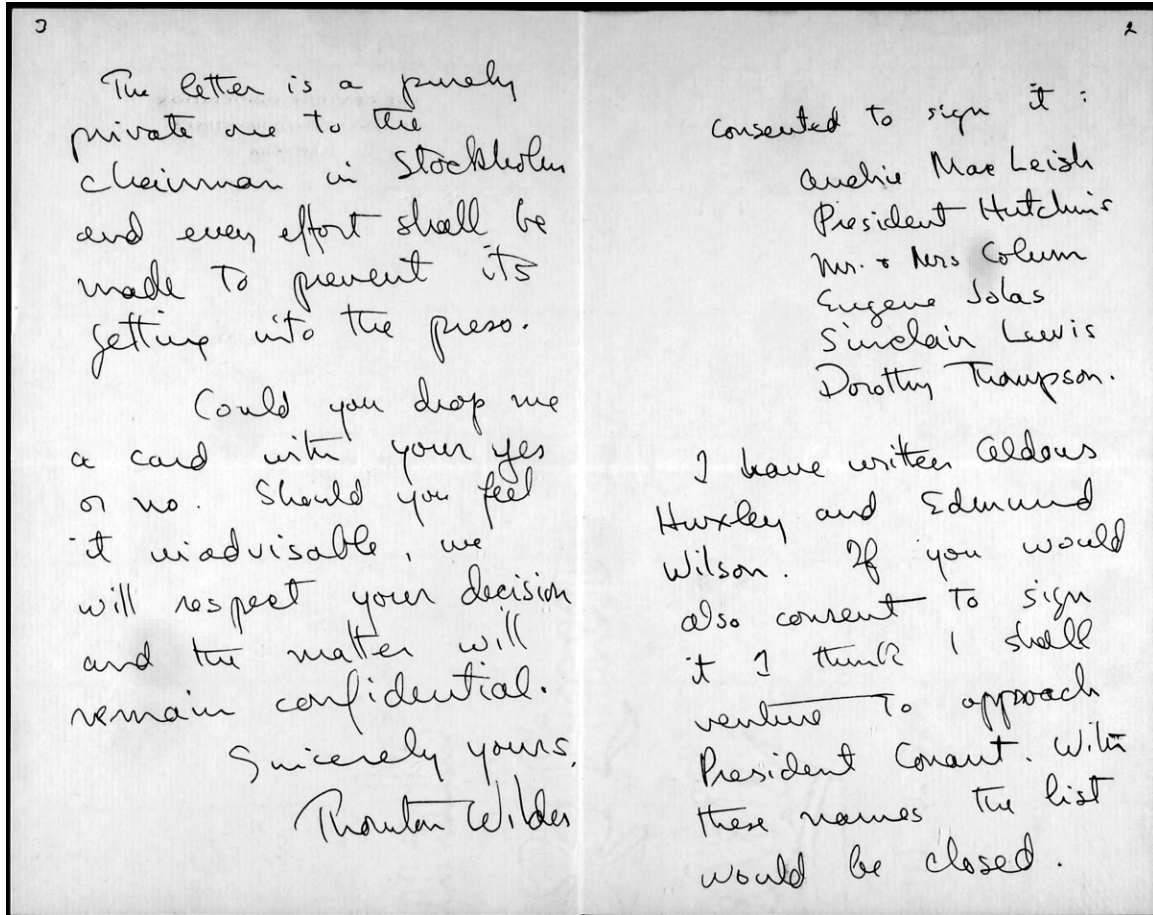
James Joyce is in
very straitened circumstances
in the South of France. He
has begun a new novel.
Padraic Colum is collecting
a few names to append
to a letter to the Nobel
Award Committee in
Sweden. It will be
brief and not make
large claims for its
nominee -

The following have

(left and right): Thornton Wilder.
Autograph letter signed to Van
Wyck Brooks, 18 September 1940.
Van Wyck Brooks Papers, Rare
Book & Manuscript Library.

Frank (1889–1967), however, was soon to find his true passion in life. A bus trip in 1919 to a steel plant in Pueblo, Colorado, sparked his lifelong interest in Spanish culture and Latin America. His fellow passengers were Mexican laborers who lived in an adobe village across from the plant. “It came to me,” Frank stated, “that these men and women had something to tell me, that they had roots very deep in the earth, that they knew a quiet, a wholeness that I did not know.”¹¹ In his lifetime Frank was feted as a major writer abroad for his work on Hispanic culture, although his literary reputation in the United States never quite equaled his reputation in Latin America. Among his books are the 1926 publication *Virgin Spain, South American Journey*, issued in 1943, and *Birth of a World: Bolivar in Terms of his People*, a 1951 biography of the South American liberator. In the United States he was active in social protests and denounced mass-produced culture. Among his publications as a caustic critic

¹¹ Quoted in *The New York Times* obituary, 10 January 1967, p. 39.



of the American scene were *Our America* in 1919 and *The Rediscovery of America* in 1929.

In Waldo Frank's obituary in *The New York Times* a so-called "friendly critic" was quoted as saying that Frank "demands vital efforts on the part of his reader." That friendly critic was Lewis Mumford. In 1966 Mumford began to deposit his papers at the University of Pennsylvania, when Robert Spiller was editing *The Van Wyck Brooks-Lewis Mumford Letters*. The University of Pennsylvania would have seemed an appropriate repository for the collection for other reasons: Mumford had spent many of the academic semesters between 1951 and 1961 as a visiting professor at Penn, and the University's Library had already acquired the papers of Brooks and Waldo Frank, two of Mumford's intellectual peers.

Lewis Mumford (1895-1990) described himself as a "generalist." Believing that knowledge had become too fragmentary in

the modern age, he sought to build bridges across academic disciplines and to synthesize information from various specialties. Mumford's audience was the educated layman; in his numerous writings, which included over two dozen books and nearly one thousand articles and book reviews, he challenged his public to think in new ways. Mumford's first book, *The Story of Utopias* (1922), is a broad survey of utopian thought, ranging from Plato to H. G. Wells and concluding with a call for the renewal of communities on a regional basis. During the 1920s he wrote for several journals, contributing articles and reviewing books on a vast array of topics, including the literary and visual arts, sociology, politics, and philosophy. For some of these journals Mumford assumed the post of critic-at-large, reviewing plays, art exhibitions, and architecture with equal facility. Mumford's byline was associated most frequently with *The Freeman*, *The New Republic*, *The American Mercury*, and the *Journal of the American Institute of Architects*, but after 1931 he became most closely identified as a journalist with *The New Yorker*. His witty and often irreverent style found immediate favor with the magazine's editor Harold Ross, and he was soon assigned to regular departments. From 1931 to 1963, Mumford was *The New Yorker's* architectural critic, writing under the heading "The Sky Line." The column reached a sophisticated, general audience in addition to architects and planners, and Mumford consistently used it as a forum to promote humanistic values over the purely technological in modern design. From 1932 to 1937 he also held the post of art critic for *The New Yorker*, for which he wrote reviews of museum exhibitions and gallery shows on an almost weekly basis. In addition, two of Mumford's earliest and most successful attempts at autobiography first appeared in the magazine under the titles of "A New York Childhood" and "A New York Adolescence."

Mumford's literary career was quickly established through an early string of publishing successes following *The Story of Utopias*. His next four books were thematically related to the rediscovery of the American past, an interest that he shared with his literary colleagues Van Wyck Brooks and Waldo Frank. Brooks had initiated this process of rediscovery, which he called the "usable past," and exerted a particularly strong influence on Mumford at this stage of his career.

"The Renewal of Life" series followed and was Mumford's attempt to chronicle the history of Western civilization and to chart a course for its future survival; its composition occupied him for almost twenty years. *The Culture of Cities*

(1938)—volume two of the series—was an analysis of urban history, from the medieval synthesis to the contemporary state of disintegration on the eve of World War II. Mumford’s point-of-view had been influenced by his association with the Regional Planning Association of America (he had been a member since the 1920s), and he promoted the progressive views of this group of architects in his writing. As a result, *The Culture of Cities* catapulted Mumford into prominence as an international authority on city planning. His *magnum opus*, however, was *The City in History* (1961), for which he was given the National Book Award (1962). While essentially an updating of *The Culture of Cities*, the book expanded his analysis of urban history to the very dawn of civilization. Mumford made extensive use of archaeological data in this study to argue that it was the female-oriented container rather than the male-oriented tool that was responsible for civilization’s advancement.

The Lewis Mumford Papers contain drafts and final edits of nearly all of Mumford’s writings. They also include over 4,000 distinct correspondence files of letters received as well as over 500 separate correspondence files containing letters written by Mumford. All of these correspondents—architects, novelists, philosophers, essayists, artists, educators, students, city and regional planners, editors, publishers, friends, and family—can be searched on-line. So, too, can the 3,700 plus correspondence files of the Dreiser Papers, as well as many other such files from the modern manuscript collections.

The correspondence files, for example, of publisher Horace Liveright have been cataloged on-line. In 1916 Liveright met Charles Boni in New York. The latter discussed with Liveright his publishing ventures and ideas for a series of reprints that would include only modern classics by European writers. Intrigued, Liveright offered himself as a partner and proposed to finance a publishing venture. In the spring of 1917 Boni & Liveright announced the first volumes of the Modern Library. In the same year Liveright acquired the rights to reissue Dreiser’s *Sister Carrie*. Thus began a sometimes strained but ultimately successful thirteen-year partnership between Dreiser and Liveright. Boni left the company in July 1918, after a coin toss with Liveright for “majority owner.” In 1920 Liveright sold a vice presidency to Bennett Cerf, and by 1925 Cerf had talked Liveright into selling him the Modern Library. A financially disastrous endeavor in theatrical producing—coupled with losses in the stock market—led in 1930 to Liveright’s ousting as president of the recently renamed

Horace Liveright, Inc. He fled to Hollywood where he hoped to sell to the film studios the movie rights to books in which he had an interest. In 1931 Liveright's contract with Paramount was not renewed, and he returned to New York jobless but nonetheless discussing grand, new schemes, mostly involving Broadway plays. During this period of time, Liveright retrieved many correspondence files from the publishing house in anticipation of writing his memoirs. They remained in his home at the time of his death in 1933 and today comprise Penn's manuscript collection entitled "Correspondence, 1918-1934, of Boni & Liveright and Horace Liveright, Inc." William Faulkner, Ernest Hemingway, and Eugene O'Neill represent a mere three of the 490 files found in this collection.

Another correspondent located in the Liveright Collection is Burton Rascoe, whose papers the Library purchased in 1957 after his death. Born in Kentucky in 1892, Rascoe may not be a well-known name today, but in the 1910s through the 1940s, he was an influential figure on American cultural scene as literary and drama editor of the *Chicago Tribune*; associate editor of *McCalls*; literary editor of the *New York Tribune*; editor of Johnson Features, Inc.; editor of *The Bookman*; associate editor of *Plain Talk*; literary critic of the *New York Sun*; literary critic of *Esquire*; literary critic of *Newsweek*; literary critic of *American Mercury*; and finally, drama critic and editorial writer for the *New York World Telegram*. In 1925 he published a book on Theodore Dreiser and went on to author seven more monographs. In addition to drafts of his own writings and his unpublished diaries and notebooks, the Rascoe Papers include letters from many prominent writers. Among his correspondents were Conrad Aiken, Sherwood Anderson, Dreiser, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Ellen Glasgow, Ben Hecht, Ring Lardner, D. H. Lawrence, Sinclair Lewis, Archibald MacLeish, Edgar Lee Masters, H. L. Mencken, Christopher Morley, Ezra Pound, Carl Sandburg, William Saroyan, Upton Sinclair, Gertrude Stein, John Steinbeck, Thornton Wilder, and Tennessee Williams.

Another man who was part of the American publishing scene for more than fifty years was William Charles Lengel (1888-1965). His career had already begun when in 1910 he went to work for Theodore Dreiser, then editor of *The Delineator*, and it was not to conclude until the mid-1960s, when he held the post of senior editor at Fawcett Publications. In the intervening years he served under Ray Long as his chief editorial associate during the latter's tenure as editor of *Cosmopolitan*; he was a motion picture story editor, as well as the operator of a successful literary agency; and

filled various senior editorial posts in the Hearst, Macfadden, and Fawcett organizations. As an author in his own right, he published five novels, numerous short stories and articles, and had several plays produced. A portion of the Lengel Papers were donated to the Library in 1961 and the balance purchased in 1970. The files include a rather extensive correspondence with the great and near-great literary figures of the day, dating primarily from Lengel's European trip of 1925-26 as representative of the Hearst organization's International Magazine Corporation. In addition, the Dreiser folders in the correspondence supply much valuable data, stemming from a personal and professional relation between the two which spanned the years 1910 to 1945 (the year of Dreiser's death). The Lengel collection in its entirety, however, supplies a distinctly useful and fascinating insight into American book and periodical publishing: the day-to-day operations, the relations of authors and publishers, and the changing tastes of American readers.

The modern literary papers held today by the Penn Library were collected as a response to an academic need and centered for several decades around the figure of Theodore Dreiser. I have tried to highlight the paths that these acquisitions took through the discussion of a handful of writers, publishers, and editors whose papers reside at Penn. This outline, however, does not fully represent the wealth of material held by the Library. Overlooked in this essay have been the papers of nineteenth-century American playwright and Penn alumnus Robert Montgomery Bird; a small but important collection of Walt Whitman letters, writings, memorabilia, and photographs; the papers of Philadelphia-native Agnes Repplier (1855-1950), a prolific essayist and biographer noted for her common sense, courage, and sense of artistry in crafting an essay; a collection of letters that Ezra Pound wrote to Mary Moore (later Mary Cross), to whom he was once engaged to be married; the papers and research files of George Seldes (1890-1995), investigative journalist, crusading press critic, and founder of *In Fact*; the papers of Penn faculty members Arthur Hobson Quinn, E. Sculley Bradley, and Robert Spiller; and related collections in the arts and politics.

In addition, the Library has sought to augment its manuscript holdings with the collections of writers and publishers working today. The Library has become the repository for the papers of Howard Fast (b. 1914) and Harry Mathews (b. 1930) and the records of the *American Poetry Review*. Fast's writing career spans seven decades and includes seventy-five books ranging

from mystery novels (under the pseudonym E. V. Cunningham), science-fiction, an abundance of newspaper and magazine articles, short stories, plays, screenplays, and poetry. He is the author of the best-selling Lavette family saga, beginning with *The Immigrants* (1977) and concluding with *An Independent Woman* (1997). Previous work includes the novels *Spartacus*, *Citizen Tom Paine*, *Freedom Road*, *April Morning*, and *The Last Frontier*.

Winner of the America Award for Fiction for his most recent novel, *The Journalist*, Harry Mathews is the author of *The Conversions*, *Tlooth*, *The Sinking of the Odradek Stadium*, *Cigarettes*, and other fictions. As the only American member of the Oulipo—a group of predominantly French writers whose members have included Raymond Queneau, Italo Calvino, and Georges Perec—Mathews has played an active role in researching and developing new structures for literary expression and in exploring the relationship between literature and mathematics. Dividing his time since the 1950s between France and the United States, Mathews has developed many close friendships with key figures in contemporary art and literature on both continents. He has translated works by Raymond Roussel, George Batailles, and Marie Chaix, and his correspondence includes detailed exchanges with John Ashbery, Robert Graves, Joseph McElroy, Niki de Saint-Phalle (his former wife), and Perec, among others.

Since its inception in 1972, the Philadelphia-based *American Poetry Review* has been one of the foremost literary publications in the country. A nonprofit organization with a circulation around 26,000, it strives to publish the best of a wide cultural range of both new and established writers of poetry, fiction, and essays. In addition, the *Review* has also served as a forum for social commentary, lively literary debate, and new translations of foreign writers. Despite difficult financial troubles in its early days, the APR is now well established and on firm fiscal footing, due to the sacrifices and intense work of its editors and staff, its loyal readers, and contributions from sources both public and private.

In a letter to his sister Mary in 1966, James T. Farrell wrote: “Nothing I leave will be as important as my archives shall be.” Tastes in reading and critical evaluation of texts can shift dramatically over time. But the human struggle to create and to contribute to the cultural, political, or social dialogue of one’s time remains a compelling story and an important backdrop to the history of a nation. Farrell realized that perhaps his greatest and most enduring accomplishment was his life—his dreams, his background, the variety of people that he knew and with whom he shared ideas,

and his travels and experiences. Much of that life is represented in his published writings, but much more can be gleaned from his archives and from the multitude of archival collections that survive in libraries and historical societies. The University of Pennsylvania Library forms a part of that network of repositories that welcome, care for, and make available to researchers the loose ends, false starts, inchoate plans, and candid expression behind the names, titles, and dates of American literature.