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HOMAGE TO THEODORE DREISER

On the Centennial of his Birth

(August 27, 1871)

*Oh, the moon shines fair tonight along the Wabash,
From the fields there comes the breath of new mown hay.
Thro' the sycamores the candle lights are gleaming,
On the banks of the Wabash, far away.*

The Refrain of "On the Banks of the Wabash, Far Away"
Words by Theodore Dreiser and Paul Dresser
Music by Paul Dresser

I. PSYCHOLOGICAL PROFILE

Who is the ugly one slump-slopping down the street?
Who is the chinless wonder with the potato-nose?
Can't you hear the soft *plop* of the pancake-shaped feet?

He floats, like Anchises' son, in the cloud of his fine new clothes,
Safe, safe at last, from the street's sneer, toward a queen who will fulfill
The fate devised him by Venus—but where, oh when! That
is what he never knows.

Born with one hand in his pants and one in the till,
He knows that the filth of self, to be loved, must be clad in glory,
So once stole twenty-five dollars to buy a new coat, and that is why still

The left eye keeps squinting backward—yes, history
Is gum-shoeing closer behind, with the constable-hand that clutches.
Watch his mouth, how it moves without sound, he is telling
himself his own old story.

Full of screaming his soul is, and a stench like live flesh that scorches.
It's the screaming, and stench, of a horse-barn aflame,
And the great beasts rear and utter, their manes flare up like torches.

From lies, masturbation, vainglory, and shame,
He moves in his dream of ladies swan-necked, with asses ample and sweet,
But knows that no kiss heals his soul, it is always the same.

The same—but a brass band plays in the distance, and the midnight cricket,
Though thinly, asseverates his name. He seeks amid the day's traffic a sign—
Some horseshoe or hunchback or pin—that now, at last, at the end of this street

He will enter upon his reality: but enters only in-
To your gut, or your head, or your heart, to enhouse there and stay,
And in that hot darkness lie lolling and swell—like a tumor, perhaps benign.

May I present Mr. Dreiser? He will write a great novel, someday.