

SEXUALIZING POWER IN NATURALISM:

THEODORE DREISER AND FREDERICK PHILIP GROVE

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**SEXUALIZING POWER IN NATURALISM  
THEODORE DREISER AND FREDERICK PHILIP GROVE**

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## ABSTRACT

Focusing on gender relationships of power, this dissertation examines the representations of power in Dreiser's and Grove's fiction. Deeply informed by poststructuralist feminist and Foucaultian theory, this study targets those textual sites in which power and sexuality intersect: e.g. in the construction of the body, the sexual confession, the representation of women's resistance. By exploring Canadian and American naturalistic fiction during a period of social transition, this dissertation places the discussion of power relationships in a comparative context by pointing to significantly diverging American and Canadian literary perspectives on personal and intersocietal power relations.



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## INTRODUCTION

The "Theodore Dreiser of Canada" or the "Canadian Dreiser" is the label given to Frederick Philip Grove by the critics of the country he decided to make his home after leaving Germany, the country of his birth. When Canadian critic Robert Ayre introduced this epithet in 1932 (17), and Northrop Frye repeated it in the obituary for Grove in 1948 ("Canadian Dreiser" 186), it was clearly meant as a tribute for the renowned Canadian writer of prairie fiction, part of whose writing has been received in the established canon of Canadian literature. No doubt, it has been the critics' desire to place Grove in a "recognized tradition" in order to help his canonization as a Canadian author, an author who during his life time had always bemoaned what he perceived as the lack of an appreciative readership.

The epithet of Grove as "Canadian Dreiser" is by no means unproblematic but implies a relationship of superiority and inferiority, teacher/student, father/son, mentor/disciple relationship, and thus a relationship of power. The implication is that Grove's writing is to be measured against a larger and more important tradition. It also implies that there might be a relationship of influence, thus dependency. It is, therefore, not astonishing that Grove claimed emphatically in a letter to Carleton Stanley: "I am glad you defend me against Dreiser. I can't stand the man. Nor Sinclair Lewis. The more I dislike them, the less I say about them" (*Letters* 504). To be sure, Grove's emphatic tone reveals more of his own "anxiety of influence" than of his actual knowledge or ignorance of Dreiser's works. And since Grove has taken so much pleasure in deceiving his Canadian readership about his real identity as the German writer Felix Paul Greve, we are bound to be all the more suspicious of such vehement protestations.

It has almost become a critical commonplace to juxtapose Grove's name with Dreiser's, especially in short introductions and afterwords in Grove's reprinted works (e.g. Kristjana Gunnars in her "Afterword" to *Settlers of the Marsh*; and R.E. Watters' "Introduction" to *The Master of the Mill*, a work which he places beside Dreiser's *The Financier* and *The Titan*). But there is no serious study that juxtaposes the works of the two authors in a fruitful interpretive dialogue.<sup>1</sup>

Both authors lived during the same time period (Dreiser from 1871 to 1945; Grove from 1879 to 1948), both had German backgrounds and have often been accused of Germanic, even awkward writing styles. Both had leftist affinities and did not share their countries' popular euphoria for the big wars. While Dreiser was the son of a German immigrant from Mayen near Coblenz and a German speaking mother, Sarah Schänäb Dreiser,<sup>2</sup> Grove was a first generation immigrant. Grove fabricated his suicide in Germany to escape huge debt payments and start a new life in Canada, an adventurous personal history that has been meticulously pieced together by Douglas Spettigue in *FPG: The European Years* (1973). Canada became a new homeland for an immigrant-teacher-writer who had burnt all his bridges in Germany and for whom English, a second language, became soon his *lingua franca* in which he would write most of his novels and recreate new fictional identities for himself.

<sup>1</sup> The only exception is Jennie Wilson's M.A.-thesis (1962), which is limited in its scope and approach.

<sup>2</sup> For Dreiser's biography, see W.A. Swanberg (1965) and more recently Richard Lingeman's two-volume biography (1986, 1990).

According to Spetigue's study on the European Grove, the prolific young poet, writer and translator Grove belonged to Munich artist circles at the turn-of-the-century and thus became part of the "three-sided critical struggle still raging among the supporters of literary Naturalism, Neo-Romanticism and Impressionism" (FPG 62).<sup>3</sup> In Europe and Canada, Grove was not only a voracious reader with a university education but also a critic who theorized what he claimed to be his favourite genres--the tragedy and realism. Dreiser, in contrast, was not very well read and had a more or less basic education.<sup>4</sup> He is generally acclaimed to be the forerunner of American literary naturalism, but he never produced any theory of writing, although in his later life he turned to philosophical inquiries which were published posthumously under the title *Notes on Life* (1974).

Grove's fiction reflects a strong interest in Nietzschean philosophy (Knönagel 1-15), while Dreiser's writing is strongly influenced by Herbert Spencer and Thomas Huxley (Moers 134-41; Pizer 10-14). In their works both authors thematize similar motifs and are deeply concerned with changes in values and attitudes in Canadian and American society during the transition from agrarian producer to modern urban consumer economies. While Dreiser is mainly concerned with the new urban spaces and a new world in flux, Grove focuses on the old world that is disrupted and left behind. Both authors thematize women's striving for independence in the big bustling cities and the rapidly changing country. Emphasizing the role of money, they

<sup>3</sup> In Munich, the German Neo-Romanticist school of Stefan George inspired and strongly influenced Grove's poetry, published as *Wanderungen* in 1902.

<sup>4</sup> See for example H.L. Mencken's comments on Dreiser's ignorance of German, French and English literature (*Prefaces* 79).

explore the new emphasis on desire in what is to become a modern consumer economy, and, above all, they dramatize the seductive quality of power in modern society. Although influenced by the cultural critique of Henry David Thoreau,<sup>5</sup> both are deeply skeptical of the transcendental idealism of the nineteenth century; in their novels, selfhood appears always already fragmented, even shattered.

Dreiser and Grove are deeply interested in the margins and marginalized figures such as the immigrant, the criminal, and women who yearn to break out of traditional roles. Their fictional representation of the outsider motif moves in different, but at times in interesting complementary directions. In Grove's works, the immigrant's outsider status often leads to victimization but as often it is portrayed as a privileged position that allows for a better critical perspective on the social centres. Many of Dreiser's characters, in contrast, find themselves on the margins and desperately yearn to become "normalized" and to merge with what they see as the social "centres of power" that exclude them.<sup>6</sup> Repeatedly, Dreiser and Grove portray characters who imitate new languages and discourses but who are really voiceless and nameless in their societies. Dreiser's and Grove's fiction demonstrates that language has no absolute meaning but has powerful consequences, often

<sup>5</sup> Obviously influenced by Thoreau's account of a "war" between ants in *Walden* ("Brute Neighbors" 151-63), Dreiser wrote a story on ants entitled "McEwen of the Shining Slave Makers" and Grove wrote a novel on ants, entitled *Consider Her Ways* (1933). See Graham's "Dreiser and Thoreau" and Stobie's "Grove and the Ants" for a discussion of the authors' antstories in the context of Thoreau's writing.

<sup>6</sup> The authors also share a similar petit bourgeois background which they dramatize in more or less autobiographical works, both dreaming of rising in their society and both deeply paranoid of falling socially.

entrapping characters in the social networks of power, while at other times providing a tool for resistance.

In my selection and juxtaposition of Dreiser's and Grove's works in this study, I am particularly guided by Michel Foucault's concern with uncovering "buried" historical knowledges that were disqualified at some point in history in the name of a supposedly higher, more important knowledge. Foucault theorizes this strategy of searching for lost or disqualified knowledges as a highly subversive "*insurrection of subjugated knowledges*" (*Power* 81). Guided by this methodology, I find it paramount to introduce Grove's German work into this study--*Fanny Eßler* and *Maurermeister Ihles Haus*. After Greve/Grove left Germany, these two early novels were forgotten in Germany until Spettigue re-discovered them in the course of his search for the "real" FPG and had them translated into English. But the works have remained marginalized in scholarship on Grove's writing: "Strictly as a novel this book should have remained unknown in Canada as it had been forgotten in Germany," writes K.P. Stich in a condemning review of the translated *Master Mason's House* ("German Trails" 149). It cannot be coincidence that Grove has become canonized as the creator of tragic prairie patriarchs (*Pacey Grove*) and as a literary con-man (*Spettigue FPG*) and that the only two novels of Grove's that present female protagonists should be dismissed so easily. Reviewer Stich's language is in fact very revealing of his own bias, when he describes the patriarchal family tyrant as "the only character with traces of warmth and individuality" in the novel (149).<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> See Robin Mathews' criticism on the critics' negative evaluation of Grove's fiction ("Grove" 241). Margaret Stobie for example argues that Grove deserves attention only "because of a couple of [his novels]" (*Grove* 18), and Spettigue confirms that only "few of his books are satisfying" (*FPG* 19). In his discussion of "The German Novels of FPG," Anthony Riley's tone is clearly dismissive. It is also telling that Grove's "Jane Atkinson," a novel on

With my emphasis on relationships of power, it is precisely these two novels which will provide a rich textual resource for an analysis of gender relations of power and for an exploration of women's strategies of resistance. It is my intention to shift the critical focus in Grove scholarship from the patriarchal prairie pioneers, or the "tragic failure" of the producer artist, or the artist as "con-man" to the techniques Grove develops to deal with more marginalized issues and characters: women, the immigrant arriving in Canada, the social outsider.

Thus this thesis is not an influence study. Rather, its aim is to be a thoroughly intertextual analysis of Dreiser's and Grove's fiction with a special focus on the authors' techniques for representing particular aspects of power relations, such as gender, generational, and economical relations of power. I will explore the authors' fictional representations of modern techniques of power, their anticipation of what Foucault has theorized as "panopticism," "normalization," and appropriation. Starting from the "microcosm," that is from individual relationships, this study proposes to analyze the numerous hierarchically structured power relations that the authors set up in their works. As a result, not the large framework of society, nor a discussion of classes, nor the state apparatus will be in the foreground of this work, but individual characters tied up in networks of power relationships which construct their subjectivities.

a Canadian feminist has not even been published. "Jane Atkinson" provides numerous intriguing comparisons with *Fanny Essler*. Exceptions to these negative evaluations are studies that focus on issues of marginalization, such as E.D. Blodgett's "Ersatz Feminism," Terrence Craig's study on Grove's "alien immigrant," and Robert Kroetch's exploration of Grove's "narrative of the ethnic experience."



At the same time I am also aware of the trap inherent in such a comparison, namely, that of lumping very different texts together under the same headings and thus, in an effort to show a certain "tradition" of writing, reducing the complexities and differences between the texts and enforcing what Michel Foucault has criticized as "the tyranny of the same." By applying Foucault's theory to my comparison I hope to be reminded not only of the specificity of each fictional text but also of the historical and social background of its production.

Foucault's theories are especially helpful to analyze the authors' explorations into the sexualization of power in modern society. In *The History of Sexuality* Foucault theorizes the notion that sexuality and power deeply intersect, that sexuality has become the site in which power is most intense. This view will help in a discussion of Dreiser's apparently uninhibited celebration of sexual desire, and it will create a framework for a discussion of Grove's concern with sexual repressions and sublimations, as well as his portrayal of sex as a deterministic/fatalistic force. Although taking different attitudes toward sexuality, the fact is that both authors are preoccupied, if not to say obsessed, with sexuality in their works, Dreiser by celebrating it, Grove by cursing it. Both create heavily sexualized texts in which sexuality is inscribed as a strongly motivating force that determines the characters' lives. While numerous critics have interpreted this sexual concern in literature in terms of "liberation" and "frankness," a discourse that has been supported and encouraged by the authors themselves, Foucault and post-structuralist feminists--e.g. Chris Weedon (107-35), Kornelia Hauser, and Mary Lydon--teach us that sexuality intersects with power and is thus far from constituting a "liberating" force.

More recently, Dreiser scholars have become very interested in Dreiser's treatment of desire (Michaels 1987), of consumer culture (Bowlby 1985), and the creation of subjectivity through role playing (Fisher 1985), concerns that intersect in interesting ways to crystallize new questions on the techniques of modern power, questions that I propose to explore in this study. Other Dreiser scholars interpret desire as the protagonists' ultimate quest for a "higher," spiritual ideal (Hussman; Mukherjee), or distinguish between real and enacted desires (Moers). New historicist Walter Michaels has given Dreiser scholarship new impetus by discussing desire as a force that does not work against but for capitalism and consumerism (see also Howard; Bowlby). Although much of my argument is stimulated by this second line of thought, it will be my task to explore the more specific question how much the creation of a desirable subjectivity implies an apparently paradoxical "voluntary subjection" to the norms and power networks of society.

Foucault argues somewhat polemically that it is desire that has taken centre stage in modern western culture, while the sexual act itself and pleasure have been marginalized: "Acts are not very important, and pleasure--nobody knows what it is!" ("Genealogy" 243).<sup>8</sup> While this polemical critique provides a critical framework for an examination of Dreiser's overt eulogy of desire, it relates to Grove in a different way. Grove's writing appears to anticipate this Foucaultian critique, as he dramatizes desire as a ruling force in modern society in *Fanny Essler* but also in his later works, *Settlers of the Marsh* and *In Search of Myself*. Even as Grove's characters

<sup>8</sup> Foucault separates sexual behaviour into three poles: a) "act," i.e. the actual intercourse; b) "pleasure," or sexual enjoyment, release of tension and satisfaction; and c) "desire," or the sexual yearning that precedes the sexual act ("Genealogy" 243).

are propelled by desire, Grove also presents desire as a force that seduces the individual in the power structures of society, that induces him or her into a "voluntary subjection," a point that will be explored in detail in this study.

In chapter one I will demonstrate Grove's and Dreiser's connections with ultra-realism, or naturalism, and I will explain how feminist theory and Foucault's philosophy on power can be successfully applied to a revisionist reading of Dreiser's and Grove's works. While I am not suggesting that the relationship between a male philosopher and feminist theory is unambiguous and without contradictions, it is my contention that Foucault's theory intersects with feminist theory in important points to make for a very fruitful debate that in turn makes it possible to find a new interpretive vantage point into Dreiser's American and Grove's Canadian fictional explorations of the sexualization of power in modern society.

Many naturalist novels present women as the "inevitable prostitute," as a victim, or as its complementary opposite, the *femme fatale*. In the second chapter I will examine how much Dreiser and Grove stereotype their female characters in such roles and I will focus on Dreiser's and Grove's early protagonists, Carrie Meeber and Fanny Essler, both of whom become spectacular objects of sights as actresses in New York and Berlin. In the 1890s Berlin and Chicago open their arms to the female protagonists, luring them with the seductive promise of female independence and artistic self-creation. Carrie Meeber and Fanny Essler rise in the big cities by inscribing the cities' norms and hierarchies on their bodies and by becoming metonymic representations of the metropolis: like the city they are all-desiring and insatiable; like the city they are beautiful objects of sight. By applying Michel Foucault's study on the "eye of power," or panopticism, I will explore how the

women's bodies, like the cities, becomes sites in which specular power and sexuality deeply intersect and thus also point to the limits of women's independence.

In my discussion of Dreiser's *Sister Carrie*, *Jennie Gerhardt* (1911), *The Bulwark* (1946), and Grove's *Fanny Essler*, *Master Mason's House*, and *Our Daily Bread* (1928), I will explore the relationship between gender, discourse, and power by examining how women, through the language they speak, become caught in networks of power they hope to escape. In this context, French feminist Luce Irigaray's claim that women "have no social and linguistic ways which is appropriate to them" ("Irigaray" 71) intersects in interesting ways with the entrapment in language that is so characteristic of Dreiser's and Grove's female protagonists. Not only will I pay particular attention to the engendering of discourses in these novels but I will also attempt to explore questions such as: How can female characters resist through language? And how do women's linguistic patterns change with their growing consciousness of female independence?

Many Dreiser critics who have recognized his focus on power have discussed the work in Marxist or Christian socialist terms which seemed especially apt since Dreiser joined the Communist party toward the end of his life. And yet, these models are limited not so much because Dreiser was far from being an orthodox Marxist, but because such approaches have failed to deal with crucial questions that arise out of Dreiser's fiction. How are we to explain, for example, the numerous examples of "victims'" resistance in his novels that does not lead to the reversal of the power relationship, a feature that the Marxist two-class model does not adequately explain. And how are we to explain the sexualization of modern power or the fact that modern

power seduces rather than represses, aspect that are dramatized so effectively in Dreiser's works.<sup>9</sup>

In order to address these unanswered questions, I intend to analyze, discuss, and place in a Foucaultian perspective the relationships of power that Dreiser and Grove set up on an individualised, microcosmic level. In this analysis I will be especially guided by Foucault's notion that "power is not an institution, and not a structure; neither is it a certain strength we are endowed with; it is the name one attributes to a complex strategical relationship in a particular society" (*History* 93). This protean, ever-changing quality of modern power and its effective strategies of appropriation are best illustrated in the speculator-capitalists of Grove's and Dreiser's works that will be the focus of my analysis in chapter three, a comparison of Grove's *The Master of the Mill* with Dreiser's *The Titan* (1914).

Chapter four on the "Aesthetics of Power" is mainly concerned with capitalism's power of self-representation and the artist's role in a modern consumer society, aspects that Dreiser and Grove dramatize in their (semi)autobiographical *Künstlerromane*, *The "Genius"* and *In Search of Myself*. The aim of this chapter is to query the received notion that realist or naturalist authors are automatically outside of, or critical of, their society.<sup>10</sup> At the same time I also question new historicist Walter Michaels' more recent

<sup>9</sup> For a discussion of Dreiser's treatment of power relations from a Christian socialist perspective, see especially F.O. Matthiessen's *Theodore Dreiser* (1951). As Frederick C. Stern has pointed out in his study on *F.O. Matthiessen*, Matthiessen's detailed study of Dreiser's fiction is limited because "Matthiessen neglected the treatment of sexuality that was at the center of Dreiser's belief" (202).

<sup>10</sup> See for example Richard Poirier who initiates his discussion of Dreiser's fiction by asserting that "To be 'outside American society' is of course to be in the great American literary tradition" (237).

assumption that there is no outside of capitalism, that everything in Dreiser's novels is inevitably ruled by the omnipotent marketplace and that, therefore, we shouldn't even raise the question whether Dreiser approved or disapproved of capitalism (*Gold Standard* 17-20). Rather than accepting either the idealistic position that writing is automatically different from other discourses and thus constitutes a resisting act or the deterministic position that writing is automatically ruled by the laws of the market place, I will address more qualifying questions, such as: How much is the modern artist in Dreiser's and Grove's fiction seduced by the power structures of his/her society and to what extent does the artist manage to create strategies of resistance through artistic representations? How does the modern artist prevent his/her aesthetic products from becoming appropriated into the power machine he/she (perhaps) set out to critique?

In chapter five my focus shifts to the "technologies of self" and the construction of subjectivity in power in my discussion of Dreiser's *An American Tragedy* and Grove's *A Search for America*. Dreiser's ironic tragedy and Grove's ironic romance of "Americanization" turn into "fables of identity" in which Dreiser's protagonist Clyde Griffiths ultimately vanishes like a nobody in America, while Grove's hero creates his identity as a new Canadian immigrant who finds his voice not in the centre but on the margins of the new country. Both narratives explore how their protagonists engage in a quest to constitute themselves as subjects, which in turn engages them in a very complex relationship with the laws and norms of their respective societies, as they find themselves inevitably moving towards the margins of society. Both narratives not only criticize the American laws, norms, and popular icons to varying degrees, but also anchor their criticisms in different

values and ultimately point to different evaluations of a life on the margins of North America.

In the last chapter I will analyze the limits of (discursive) resistance in Dreiser's early *Jennie Gerhardt* and his late *The Bulwark*, as well as Grove's early German novel, *Maurermeister Ihles Haus* and his later Canadian prairie novel, *Our Daily Bread*. On the surface all four novels focus on generational conflicts between parents (especially fathers) and their children. But more importantly, the novels are concerned with the difficulties in creating new resisting discourses that can effect significant changes within the family's network of relations. I will discuss the novels as a struggle to break out of the vicious circle of discursive determinism that is so pervasive in all four novels. Thus I aim at a revisionist reading of novels whose deterministic and fatalistic discourses have often been accepted at face value, as part of their "tragic" structure.

Instead of accepting the omniscient or semi-omniscient commenting voices in Dreiser's (and to a lesser degree in Grove's) texts as expressing a standard whereby to judge the characters, I suggest seeing such male, commenting voices just as one voice among many. Rather than submitting to their judgement, as many critics have done, I will raise questions such as: What are the bias and underlying ideology of this narrating voice? How is this narrating voice contradicted by other voices in the text? Or how does it contradict itself? How successful are Dreiser's and Grove's texts in undermining the legitimacy of such "master discourses"? Rather than submitting to the tyranny of what is to be "seen" on the texts' surface level, I will be interested in what is relegated into the margins of the texts, into its gaps, into the not-to-be seen.

Finally, I would like to return to Grove's designation as the "Canadian Dreiser." This epithet evokes a relationship of power on a larger, national level. The power relationship between Dreiser and Grove mirrors the political, economical and cultural supremacy of the United States in its relationship to Canada, a relationship Grove explores in *A Search for America* (1927). The narrator of this novel deliberately turns his back to America and turns to Canada because, he argues, America has betrayed the ideal embodied by Lincoln, Thoreau, and Lowell. Grove was aware of America's cultural supremacy in relation to Canada and in *It Needs to Be Said...* (1929) warned strongly against it.

It is not astonishing that even nowadays Grove's fiction seems to be a relatively unknown entity in American naturalistic and realistic criticism. So far only Canadian critics have pointed to the connection between these two authors. How are we to explain this silence or gap in the American canon of literature and criticism if not by their sense of ideological supremacy and their general ignorance of Canadian culture? While it seems "natural" to speak of Grove as a "Canadian Dreiser," why should it seem so inappropriate to label Dreiser an "American Grove"?



Chapter 1  
A NEW LOOK AT POWER AND SEXUALITY IN  
DREISER AND GROVE

A. Dreiser and Grove in the Realistic-Naturalistic Context

"Naturalism is not a fashionable genre," June Howard acknowledges in her study on *American Literary Naturalism* (xi). And yet, this critical unpopularity did not prevent naturalism from being ultimately absorbed into the literary canons, albeit in the position of the *enfant terrible* of literature, occupying a marginal position. In an early article entitled "The Barbaric Naturalism of Theodore Dreiser," Stuart Sherman dismissed Dreiser's works because of what he termed the "animal behavior of [his] characters" (71-80). Although subsequent critics uncovered many non-naturalistic elements in Dreiser's writing, the canonization of Dreiser as *the American naturalist* seemed inevitable in the two following decades. In *Main Currents in American Thought* (1930), Vernon Louis Parrington labels Dreiser "the chief of American naturalism"; Oscar Cargill in *Intellectual America* (1941) describes Dreiser's work as "the very quintessence of Naturalism" (107); and Robert Spiller in *The Cycle of American Literature* (1955) has Dreiser's naturalism coincide with "America's second literary renaissance" (162).

Similarly, despite Grove's rejection of the naturalistic label for his writing and despite his claim that he was, above all, a realist,<sup>1</sup> numerous

<sup>1</sup> Clearly opposed to Zola's naturalism, Grove admits to being "naturalist" only in the most literal sense of the word. In a chapter entitled "Realism and Literature" Grove refers us to a definition of a "naturalist" drawn from the French Littré: "Celui qui s'occupe spécialement de l'étude des productions de la nature" (*It Needs* 55). A naturalist, Grove argues, is a

critics (e.g. Sutherland, Riley, Bader) have traced naturalistic elements in Grove's fiction. In the most recent study on Grove's naturalism, Rudolf Bader argues that Grove's novels undergo a development "from a psychological interest in the individual to the social quest, on to the limits of social determinism, and from there back to the origins of naturalism in scientific writing" (231). Also, in an attempt to situate Grove's German novels in the European tradition, Anthony Riley concludes that Grove's German "novels are still too firmly anchored in Naturalism" ("German Novels" 65).<sup>2</sup>

In a tone reminiscent of the early critics of Dreiser's work, Riley appropriates the term "naturalism" to discuss *Fanny Essler* in very traditional terms, evoking all the keywords of nineteenth-century old-fashioned naturalism. Not only does Grove have an "eye for detail," his novels are "tranches de vie" (57) and he furthermore presents a very traditional omniscient narration in the third person. Riley makes no effort to hide his negative bias but itches to tell us how "fumbling" Grove's German art is in comparison to the symbolic brilliance of a writer such as Thomas Mann.

scientist and an observer, and this definition makes *Over Prairie Trails* (1922) and *The Turn of the Year* (1923) naturalistic works. But according to this definition of the word, Grove is a naturalist in the same sense that Henry David Thoreau and John Burroughs are naturalists.

<sup>2</sup> In Riley's words, "Greve is derivative, not innovative. It was perhaps Greve's misfortune to have produced his first novels at the end of an epoch, or at a water-shed in German literature." (65). This "watershed," according to Riley, is the transition of German literature from nineteenth-century naturalism to twentieth-century expressionism, whose beginning may be seen in Rainer Maria Rilke's *The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge* (1910).

And yet, presenting itself in complex forms and themes, literary naturalism has evolved as a term with many faces. While most literary critics remind us that it has grown out of the realistic tradition of Honoré de Balzac and Gustave Flaubert (cf. Bagulay 12-13), some, like Frank Norris, have insisted on its proximity with romantic elements (1106-1108). Others have established a connection between naturalism and modernism (Lukács); between naturalism and existentialism (Brown); and between naturalism and humanism (Pizer *Naturalism*). While Zola was by no means the originator of this term, he was the one to popularize it: "Naturalist' was the term that Zola succeeded in persuading the public to give to his followers and which, with less excuse and less success, he extended to his predecessors, from Balzac to the Goncourts" (Hemmings "*Naturalisme*" 109).<sup>3</sup> In fact, traditional French literary naturalism became so strongly linked to Zola's name that polemical voices insisted at the time that the word was indeed a misnomer: "Mais le naturalisme, je ne le vois pas, moi! Je ne vois que Zola!" (quoted in Hemmings 109).

It should be noted, though, that naturalism à la Zola is a methodology rather than a particular style or genre. Zola's belief in predictable biological laws and his somewhat dogmatic postulate that only empirical facts should form the basis for the creation of a novel are deeply rooted in the philosophy of Auguste Comte, who claims in his *Cours de philosophie positive* (1864): "La caractère fondamentale de la philosophie positive est de regarder tous les

<sup>3</sup> According to Hemmings, Victor Hugo was indeed the first Frenchman to use the term in the Preface of *La Légende des Siècles* to describe a realist penchant in poetry and philosophy. It was most likely Hippolyte Taine who prompted Zola to appropriate this term when he pointed to the parallels between "Balzac's methods and choice of subjects and those of the *naturaliste*" (Hemmings 111).

phénomènes comme assujettis à des lois naturelles invariables" (quoted in Furst and Skrine 19). Equally influential was Hippolyte Taine's emphasis on the determination of the character by "le race, le milieu et le moment."<sup>4</sup> Embracing the scientific spirit of the nineteenth century (including its problematic hereditary laws), Zola celebrates the naturalistic novel as a medium for scientific case-studies:

Dès ce jour, la science entre donc dans notre domaine, à nous romanciers, qui sommes à cette heure des analystes de l'homme, dans son action individuelle et sociale. Nous continuons, par nos observations et nos expériences, la besogne du physiologiste, qui a continué celle du physicien et du chimiste. Nous faisons en quelque sorte de la psychologie scientifique, pour compléter la physiologie scientifique. (*Roman* 70)

Although Dreiser never conceives of the novel in terms of a Zolaesque experiment, Dreiser's desire for authentic case-studies (that connect fiction with empirical reality) is as strong as Zola's in some of his novels. Dreiser worked as a journalist before he turned to fictional writing, very much like Zola forty years earlier. Before writing *An American Tragedy* Dreiser not only studied but collected journalistic accounts on various murder cases. He even visited the settings of his novel, including a Sing-Sing prison in New York to be able to describe the death house in which Clyde Griffiths spends the last year of his life.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Taine was the first to apply this Comtian postulate to literature in his *Histoire de la littérature anglaise* (1877). Zola follows these scientific postulates and even adopts Taine's moral determinism in his first--and probably most naturalistic--novel, *Térèse Raquin*, in which he not only quotes but dramatizes Taine's famous sentence: "Le vice et la vertu sont des produits comme le vitriol et le sucre."

<sup>5</sup> For a detailed discussion of how "fact" is transformed into fiction in Dreiser's *An American Tragedy*, see Shelley Fisher Fishkin's "From Fact to Fiction."

While in this example, Dreiser's methodology is close to Zola's, Grove is opposed to it. Grove sees his novels as products of his "imagination," at the same time that he emphasizes that the conception of his characters is rooted in "real" life observation. In *In Search of Myself*, Grove demonstrates that the appearance of a "real" man prompts the narrator-author's creation of one of his literary characters, Abe Spalding: "This man, a giant in body, if not in mind and spirit, had furnished the physical features for a vision which had, so far, been incomplete because it had been abstract" (260). In this passage, even the description of the "real" man has a mythical quality to it, so that the boundaries between fiction and reality become inevitably blurred, a technique that is characteristic for Grove's writing. In *A Search for America* and *In Search of Myself*, for example, autobiography turns into fiction and fiction into autobiography.

Also, Grove's *Fanny Essler* is not only a *roman à clef* on Grove's contemporary German artist friends, but, like *Maurermeister Ihles Haus*, it is biographical fiction based very strongly on Grove's German wife, the later Else Baroness von Freytag-Loringhoven, as the Baroness confirms in her (unpublished) autobiography:

Felix had written two novels. They were dedicated to me in so far as material was concerned, it was *my life* and persons out of my life. He did the executive part of the business, giving the thing the conventional shape and dress. He esteemed Flaubert highly as stylist...so he tried to *be* Flaubert... He took it all outwardly as mere industry, except for the material in it. They

must be fearful books as far as art is concerned.  
(*Autobiography* 34-35)<sup>6</sup>

The Baroness's reference to Flaubert is very appropriate. Grove had not only translated Flaubert's letters into German but had also written a critical article on Flaubert's art, and references to *Madame Bovary* recur in Grove's Canadian fiction, so that it should come as no surprise that Grove adopts Flaubert's aesthetic and ideological position. Flaubert did not hide his disdain for Zola's pseudo-scientific theories, despite the fact that he was a "figure tutélaire" for Zola and the contemporary French naturalist circle (cf. Baguley 22). Commenting on Zola's *Roman expérimental*, Flaubert wrote in a letter to Guy de Maupassant: "Ne me parlez pas du réalisme, du naturalisme ou de l'expérimental! J'en suis gorgé. Quelles vides inepties!" (quoted in Baguley 237). The translator Grove appropriates and emulates this position, especially in *It Needs to Be Said...*, where he polemically disqualifies Zola's naturalistic theories as "pseudo-science" based on the "current aberrations of the day" (58, 64).

While Dreiser made contact with the French naturalistic tradition primarily by reading his friend Hazard's unpublished "Zolaesque" novel (*Myself* 112-13; also 108), Grove's connection with naturalism is rooted in the *fin-de-siècle* German culture. The years 1893-95 may be considered the

<sup>6</sup>The Baroness's dismissive tone is probably the result of a very understandable resentment against a husband who not only appropriated her life story but also dismissed her own writing with contempt (*Autobiography* 105) and who, after having faked his suicide in Germany to start a new life in North America (probably with her help), left her alone "in the midst of the county of Kentucky in the small farm country."

"official" end of literary naturalism in Germany (cf. Mahal 26),<sup>7</sup> but Jens Malte Fischer argues that naturalism continued to have a strong influence on turn-of-the-century writers. In fact, many writers would appropriate naturalistic elements, at the same time that they tried to overcome this tradition.<sup>8</sup> Thus the boundaries between naturalism, the psychological novel, and decadent writing are rather fluid, especially in its presentation of characters: "determiniert und präformiert, zerrissen und oft leidenschaftlich egoistisch bildet [der naturalistische Charakter] die Vorstufe zum Nervenmenschen der *décadence*, zum Hypersensiblen des *Fin de Siècle*" (Mahal 93).<sup>9</sup> Conversely, the figure of the *femme fatale*, so typical for the *fin-de-siècle* literature (cf. Fischer 59-65), is anticipated by nineteenth-century naturalistic characters, for example, by Zola's *Nana*.

In 1891, writer and critic Hermann Bahr theorized German-Austrian naturalism in terms of a "Zwischenakt":

<sup>7</sup> According to Mahal's study on German naturalism, 1885 marks the beginning and 1889 the climax of literary naturalism in Germany (24-26). While literary naturalism in France became particularly strong in the genre of the novel, the predominant mode of German naturalism was the drama of Gerhard Hauptmann (1862-1946) and Hermann Sudermann (1857-1928), at the same time that German naturalism was also strongly interested in literary theory (Arno Holz, Michael Georg Conrad).

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Fischer: "So wie Huysman deutlich an Zola anschloß, war auch bei den deutsch-österreichischen Autoren die 'Überwindung des Naturalismus' keineswegs so stringent, wie dies Hermann Bahr wahrnehmen wollte" (83). "Just as Huysman distinctly interlocks with Zola, so the German-Austrian 'movement beyond naturalism' is by no means as stringent, as Hermann Bahr wanted to see it" (my translation).

<sup>9</sup> [D]etermined and pre-formed, ripped-apart and often passionately egotistical, [the naturalistic character] is the forerunner of the decadent neurotic and the hypersensitive character of the *fin-de-siècle*" (my translation).

Man kann den Naturalismus als eine Besinnung des Idealismus auf die verlorenen Mittel betrachten. ...  
Oder man kann den Naturalismus als die hohe Schule der Nerven betrachten: In welcher ganz neue Fühlhörner des Künstlers entwickelt und ausgebildet werden, eine Sensibilität der feinsten und leisesten Nuancen, ein Selbstbewußtsein des Unbewußten, welches ohne Beispiel ist.  
Der Naturalismus ist entweder eine Pause zur Erholung der alten Kunst; oder er ist eine Pause zur Vorbereitung der neuen: jedenfalls ist er Zwischenakt. (105)<sup>10</sup>

A caricature published in 1896 in *Ulk* (a satiric weekly in Berlin) makes a similar point. It shows the German naturalists Hauptmann, Sudermann and Fulda entering through an *Ultrarealisten*-door and exiting through the *Märchendichtung*-door, thus transformed into the apparent opposite, into *Neuromantiker*. The caption reads: "Sie kehren doch alle wieder zum idealsten Ideal zurück" (in Hürlimann 175).<sup>11</sup> Given Bahr's emphasis on naturalism as a "Zwischenakt," the naturalistic label appears to have some justification for Grove's writing, a writing that is characterized by stylistic and generic heterogeneity and contradictions, a writing that gives expression to the subconscious and that satirizes, and at the same time affirms, romantic yearnings.

While Zola was primarily interested in hereditary determinism, German *fin-de-siècle* writers turned their attention to psychological issues (Fischer 75-76). Deeply informed by psychoanalytic theories, Grove's early

<sup>10</sup> "We can regard naturalism as idealism reflecting on its lost means....

Or we can regard naturalism as the *haute école* for the nervous sensibility in which the artist develops and cultivates completely new sensors, a sensibility of the unconscious that is unparalleled.

Either naturalism is a pause for the old art to recover itself, or it is a pause that prepares the way for the new art; in any case it is an *entr'acte*" (my translation).

<sup>11</sup> "Yet they all return to the most idealistic ideal" (my translation).



German and Canadian fiction images what Baguley describes as the typical "maladies" of the naturalistic character, "the throes of hysteria, the spasms of sexuality, the paroxysms of madness" (108). To be sure, Grove with his emphasis on psychological realism never uses a naturalistic, pseudo-scientific jargon of Greek and latinized words; nor does he introduce the long philosophical and scientific comments that we find in Dreiser's works for example. But his work intersects with Dreiser's where he creates his characters as deeply psychologized subjects, many of whom are constituted on the basis of their sexualities and their parental relationships.

Like Dreiser's, Grove's writing is dominated not by a sense that natural and social sciences give ultimate answers, but rather by a sense of "not knowing" and "wondering." Grove expresses this sense of wonder in an almost typically Dreiserian vocabulary in *Our Daily Bread*, where John Elliot reflects about life and death at the deathbed of his son-in-law: "And there, too, was what would perhaps explain the unexplained and inexplicable mysteries of this seemingly senseless life into which we drift like birds of passage passing over some strange land" (343). This passage echoes the "mystery and wonder and terror of life" that is so characteristic of Dreiser's thinking and writing.

Dreiser and Grove present highly introspective characters, thus following the tradition of Stendhal, Flaubert, and Dostoevsky rather than Zola's tradition, where introspection is always externalized in and placed in a network of social relationships (Hemmings *Realism* 189). Dreiser's Clyde Griffiths, for example, engages in long, torturing, mental struggles to decide whether he should kill Roberta Alden or not, and later to find out whether he is guilty of murder or not. Similarly, Grove's Len Sterner, Niels Lindstedt,

and John Elliot are more often involved in introspection than in externalizing their thoughts, although more often than not this introspection leads into dead-end streets. This introspective quality does not really help these characters to "transcend their given natures." On the contrary, the characters' stories are deeply submerged in deterministic discourses, at the same time that they themselves resort to discourses of determinism.

Focusing on this interweaving of language and subjectivity in a recent study on American naturalism, Lee Mitchell (1989) has re-iterated the claim that naturalistic texts are "determined fictions," in which the authors use "stylistic strategies that serve to defamiliarize our sense of the 'self'" (xii). Mitchell emphasizes the closeness between naturalism and post-structuralism in that naturalism anticipated the "attacks on the 'subject' that have become an integral part of the philosophical tradition in this century" (123). Also, naturalism's most interesting innovation is precisely what has generally led the critics to dismiss naturalistic novels as bad writing, namely, "its disruptive narratives and estranging styles" through which "naturalists challenged us to reconceive certain long-standing premises about the 'self'" (123). Naturalism's narrative form and language--its repetitions, its doubling of characters, its awkward styles--draw attention to the fact that "the closer one attends to the self, the less it tends to cohere--as if the very process of depiction somehow dismantled subjectivity, breaking the self apart piece-by-piece and absorbing it into an indifferent world" (17).

Like nineteenth-century naturalistic theories, contemporary studies on literary naturalism head in many different directions, some dismissing naturalism, others, like Mitchell's, trying to show its relevance for the twentieth century. Very much like the "theorist" Grove, Marxist critic Georg Lukács,

in *Realism in Our Time* (1964), creates a somewhat arbitrary binary division between a positive realism and a negative naturalism. Like Grove's, Lukács' intention is obviously to dismiss naturalism as a freak of literature, an excrescent of capitalist oppression, in order to elevate what he calls "realism" using naturalism as a negative foil. Lukács' arbitrary, binary division culminates in what he perceives as "the decay from *realism* to *naturalism* and as the "decline of the French novel after Stendhal" (Steiner 13). According to Lukács, the realist (e.g. Stendhal and Balzac) selects, whereas the naturalist (e.g. Flaubert and Zola) enumerates, with the result that "the novel declines to photographic reportage" (Steiner 13). (It is ironic, though, that Lukács should dismiss Grove's hero of realism, Flaubert, as a "mere" naturalist.) While Grove labels Homer, Shakespeare and Goethe as the most important realists (*It Needs* 65) because they give "universal" responses to the outside world and present characters who are "neither angels nor devils," Lukács celebrates Shakespeare's, Balzac's and Stendhal's characters because their passions, though "violent and extraordinary are still within the range of a socially normal typology" (31).<sup>12</sup>

Everything in these definitions hinges on the words "universal" and "normal," words which seem to have very precise meanings for Lukács and Grove but whose meanings are very problematic, as well as highly questionable in Lukács' and Grove's discussions because it is so easy to find counterexamples. Stendhal's Julien Sorel (*Le Rouge et le Noir* 1831), for

<sup>12</sup>Lukács also sees "a continuity from naturalism to the modernism of our day," a modernism he rejects as vehemently as naturalism. Modernism, Lukács argues, is characterized by a "flight into psychopathology", which also characterizes naturalistic writing, and which he ultimately sees as a flight into existential nothingness (29).

example, places himself deliberately outside the "norm," while numerous "typically" naturalistic characters such as Gervaise Macquart, Carrie Meeber and Jennie Gerhardt have very "normal" aspirations and yearnings and are by no means psychopathological characters. Dreiser attempts to show the normalcy of a character such as Clyde Griffiths, even as Clyde plots murder and is executed (very much like Lukács' paragon of realistic "normalcy," Julien Sorel).<sup>13</sup>

While Lukács' theory clearly marginalizes "naturalism," Donald Pizer's theory of American literary naturalism has the opposite effect. Pizer "elevates" the status of naturalistic writing, by discussing it as a modern variant of the old, respectable "tragic" tradition. Where Aristotle emphasizes "the fall of the noble man," American naturalism focuses on "the waste of individual potential" (*Naturalism* 6). Where the tragic hero achieves a sense of *anagnorisis* or (self)-recognition, the naturalist hero "is alone and doubtful in an unknown world of struggle" in which knowledge is "elusive, shifting, and perhaps even non-existent" (7). The tragic emphasis that Pizer discovers "at the heart of American naturalism" (6) has without a doubt helped its "canonization" as a semi-respectable form of literature.

Given the fact that Dreiser sets a tragic emphasis in *An American Tragedy* and Grove insists on the "tragic" failures of his male heroes, such a focus has some validity, but for many critics (and for the authors themselves) it appears to have become a convenient *passe partout* approach to the

<sup>13</sup> See also Eric Sundquist's characterization of naturalism in which "the abnormal becomes the barely submerged normal" ("Introduction" 13).

novels.<sup>14</sup> Following Pizer's theory, Ronald Sutherland argues that it is the tragic tone that makes Grove a naturalist, and he quotes Grove's own vision of the tragic fall: "To have greatly tried and to have greatly failed" (*It Needs* 87). But the same critics who discuss Grove's writing in terms of "tragedy" often deplore that Grove's writing is not "consistently" tragic, as Thomas Hardy's is for example, who is generally held up as a model against which to measure Grove. Similarly, in early scholarship on Dreiser, it seemed to be Dreiser's curse to be criticized because of the "inconsistencies" in his writing.

A refreshing aspect in modern American naturalist theory is, therefore, its growing acknowledgement of the inconsistencies and antinomies in naturalist writing, which are no longer seen as a flaw but as part of its fictional complexity. In *Form and History in American Literary Naturalism* (1985), June Howard theorizes American naturalistic writing in terms of the following antinomies: the opposition between beast and human, between free will and instinct, between human understanding and passion.<sup>15</sup> Rather searching for elusive tragic elements, Howard identifies the plot of decline as a typical naturalistic structure. This plot describes the casting out of the "Other" who becomes a scapegoat or *pharmakos* figure.

<sup>14</sup> See Matthiessen for a discussion of the tragic elements in Dreiser see. See Pacey (*Grove* 23) and Sutherland ("Grove") for a discussion of Grove's male characters as tragic heroes. According to Sutherland, Grove is, like most other naturalists, a "feeling humanist" in whose writing the individual becomes "a victim of circumstances," who is "afloat upon a great wave of evolution" ("Grove" 6). See also Blodgett's more convincing counter argument that "while Grove's males are comic-figures involved in tragedies, the more frequent tragic-figures are his women who are usually overlooked or underplayed by his critics" (*Configuration* 126).

<sup>15</sup> For similar approaches, see Charles Walcutt's *American Literary Naturalism: A Divided Stream* (1956); and John Conder's *Naturalism in American Fiction* (1984).

Highlighting naturalism's generic heterogeneity, David Baguley recent study discusses naturalism in the context of Northrop Frye's ironic mode: "In a sense, everything in the naturalistic world tends in time toward degraded repetition, which is the essence of satire or parody" (143). Dreiser and Grove make use of such patterns of repetition,<sup>16</sup> and much of Grove's art is energized by literary appropriations and parodic transformations. Much of Grove's fiction is satiric invective directed against extratextual realities, or a deliberate parodic play with other works of art.<sup>17</sup> Equally informed by Northrop Frye's theory, E.D. Blodgett's generic approach emphasizes the comic quality of Grove's fiction. Grove's works follow a comic structure, with the male characters--"unchanging and hopelessly teleological" (*Configuration* 126)--acting as blocking characters with a ruling passion, while the female characters disrupt the static systems of order set up by the males. Since this disruption does, however, not lead to the advent of a new order, Blodgett concludes that Grove's "new sense of form appeared to be frustrated comedy," whereby "all value-systems hang in suspense" (*Configuration* 147).

<sup>16</sup> Spettigue discusses *Fanny Essler* by linking it to Frye's ironic mode ("Master" 62).

<sup>17</sup> See E.D. Blodgett's discussion of *Fanny Essler* as a parody of German *Neuromantik* (*Configuration* 112-153). Also, Grove's *Wanderungen* (1902) is, if we follow the Baroness's autobiography, a parody of Stefan George's poetry: "a very apt imitation of 'Stefan', but done purposely thus - as Felix told me - to impress the 'circle' on the surface, but hitting it by stealth on the sore spot of its utter artificiality" (*Autobiography* 165-66). Much of Grove's Canadian work can be seen in the same framework: *In Search of Myself* is a parody of an autobiography; *In Search for America* is a parody of the innocent immigrant myth and a satire against American graft and materialism.

It is this sense of frustration, the ultimate denial of liberation, and the quiet triumph of the reality principle that places Grove's works in a framework of ultra-realism, or naturalism. Where traditional naturalistic fiction demonstrates that freedom is an illusion, Dreiser and Grove's fiction emphasizes a more qualifying (Foucaultian) idea, namely, that there is no "ultimate" liberation: human beings can only resist in the power network in which they are placed but this resistance will eventually be appropriated by the dominant power principle. At the same time, Dreiser's and Grove's works never plunge into extreme irony--or the "unincremental repetition" of absurdity. Instead, they always present a touch of social criticism and encourage a resisting position by keeping up a "realistic" hope for possibilities of social change.

Thus it has not been the aim of this chapter to create arbitrary boundaries between realism and naturalism, nor to show that Dreiser and Grove are naturalistic writers through and through. Far from it. Both authors not only move through different stages of writing, but Grove continually oscillates between a Nietzschean philosophy with its ideals of self-creation and a will to power on the one hand and a deterministic notion of the individual who is crushed by outside forces--by norms, institutions, discourses, on the other. As many critics have pointed out, Dreiser moves from a naturalistic-scientific interest in his early works to more transcendental issues in his later works. In this section, I have placed Dreiser and Grove in a naturalistic context *not* to show that they follow the tradition of nineteenth-century naturalism but to set them up for a critical exploration of what have traditionally been focal points of naturalist theories and writing: relationships of power, the influence of the outside world on the individual, and the self that is constructed from outside.

### B. Liberating Sexuality Or Sexualizing Power?

Roger Seamon has argued in a recent article that what characterizes the world of American naturalistic fiction is "a deep, endemic and pervasive joylessness," a world in which the Freudian reality principle reigns so that the usual sources of delight "*do not yield real pleasure*" (51). According to Seamon, the pleasurelessness of the naturalistic writing style is to deny the audience pleasure in order to rouse "guilt in the complacent bourgeois reader" (56). These insights into the "pleasurelessness" of naturalistic fiction are very helpful for this study. In Dreiser's fiction we meet characters who are obsessed with sexuality but seldom experience any lasting satisfaction, while Grove dramatizes that sexuality in any form means entrapment and ultimately denies pleasure.

Surrounded by an aura of what Dreiser often calls a "pagan" sensuality, many of his female characters paradoxically also exude a strange sense of sexual abstinence, almost chastity. Philip Fisher has commented on Carrie Meeber's absence of sexual desires and eroticism in her love relationships at the same time that she enacts desires and Eros very successfully on the theatre stage (*Hard Facts* 165-66). In *An American Tragedy* (1925), Roberta Alden briefly electrifies the protagonist Clyde Griffiths with her "poetic sensuality," only to haunt him and the reader for the rest of the novel in the image of the corpse recovered from the depths of Big Bittern Lake, whose sexuality and desires are recreated in strangely intimate detail by pathologists and prosecutors in a spectacular murder trial. Similarly, Aileen



Butler in the *Trilogy of Desire* (1912, 1914, 1947) is presented as the incarnation of sensual vitality indulging in a short-lived, clandestine carnival of sex with her partner in the first volume of the trilogy, only to turn into a neglected wife, in the next two volumes, whose mature, untapped sexuality, reduced to occasional pleasureless adulteries with men who turn out to be lesser doubles of her husband, leaves a sense of waste, ruin and sterility in her life, an impression that is further emphasized by the slow decay of her body. Leslie Fiedler, commenting on the chastity of the "unchurched nun" Sister Carrie and on Jennie Gerhardt's almost asexual mothering of her two lovers, irreverently draws the conclusion that Dreiser "could never portray, for all his own later hectic career as a lover, any woman except the traditional seduced working girl of sentimental melodrama" (47).

And yet, despite this *penchant* for the gender stereotypical seduction theme and despite this strange absence of any active women's sexuality in his fiction, Dreiser has been embraced and canonized as the sexual liberator in American Literature. In *The Sexual Revolution in Modern American Literature* (1971), Charles Glicksberg writes that "Dreiser led the revolt against the hypocritical moral conventions that were crippling the intellectual and spiritual development of America" (46). According to Glicksberg, the "sex impulse" for Dreiser is not only "normal" but is also a fundamental stimulus in human life: "The primal source of beauty, the mother of the arts, [sex] provides the vital incentive that makes for progress and achievement" (35). Glicksberg's discourse suggests that sex itself brings with it change, exploding old conventions and revolutionizing life. "Dreiser came to be, for his restless contemporaries, the representative writer of the age, a liberating force of great importance for the times" (27), writes Thomas Riggio in the introduc-

tion to Dreiser's Diaries (1982). And to give some legitimacy to the new, "unexpurgated" Pennsylvania edition of *Sister Carrie* (1981), a work that is sexually more explicit than the original Doubleday edition, Alfred Kazin writes in the introduction: "To the always alienated and radical Dreiser, Carrie represents the necessity of transformation, sex as revolution" (ix).<sup>18</sup>

It was probably this idea of Dreiser as the "liberator" of American Literature from "Puritanism" that the critics had in mind, when they labelled Grove a naturalistic "Canadian Dreiser." In the introduction to the New Canadian Library edition of Grove's *Settlers of the Marsh* (1966) Thomas Saunder's uses a very telling discourse to describe Grove's achievement in literature: "On the subject of sex, it is the frankest of all of Grove's novels and, in a puritanical Canada, it was condemned as obscene" (viii), an opinion that has been repeated by many critics.<sup>19</sup> Saunder's discourse implies that Grove's writing has a sexually liberating effect in a morally backward or misguided country. Grove himself would probably have shared this opinion, as he explained the bad sales of the book with its sexual honesty, comparing it to

<sup>18</sup> This view of Dreiser as a sexual liberator has originated very early on. H.L. Mencken (1917) sees Dreiser plodding against "Puritan suspicion and opposition" (*Prefaces* 20) a term which in twentieth-century popular vocabulary has been associated with sexual restrictions. Similarly, John Cowper Powys writes in book devoted to the topic of *Sex in the Arts* (1932): "The dominant 'motif' of Dreiser's books is the tragic opposition offered by economic pressure, social conditions, and public opinion, to the free flow, backwards and forwards, between people, of this primeval sex magnetism" (54). Similarly, Richard Poirier (1967) writes that "Dreiser was determined that sex should be recognized as 'the controlling and directing force that it is'" (245)

<sup>19</sup> Austin Bothwell argued in a review in 1925 that with *Settlers of the Marsh*, "Freud penetrates Canada" (109). Discussing Grove's treatment of sex, Pacey writes: "He has had the courage to treat the subject more frankly than any other Canadian writer--and in the face of our continuing puritanism it demanded courage" (*Grove* 127-28).

the realism of Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*.

To be sure, Grove's treatment of sexuality is very different from Dreiser's in that he often images sexuality--whether sexual activity or repressive abstinence--as a force that enchains characters in compulsive actions, a point that the critics have been quick to note. According to Margaret Stobie, Grove links sex to slavery (*Grove* 81, 100), and Lorraine McMullen writes: "In Grove we see that an essential feature in the attainment of freedom is the liberation of oneself from sexual passion" (71). Similarly, John Moss notes a "grim response to sex in all of Grove's fiction, [reflecting] his determination to directly confront and subdue in his art the imposing Canadian environment" (13). According to Moss, "[a]fter a graphic start in *Settlers of the Marsh*, Grove's deployment of sex and violence became much more refined in sweeping social visions of farm and industry that, in retrospect at least, were the dominant voice of Canadian fiction in the 1920s and 1930s" (22-23).

Despite these differences in the two authors' approaches, many of Grove's works, like Dreiser's, demonstrate that characters are constructed on the basis of their sexualities. In *Fanny Essler*, Grove describes in detail a woman's sexual problems, as the female protagonist is compulsively driven from one partner to the next in her search for sexual fulfillment. Grove's parodic treatment of the quest for the ultimate female orgasmic satisfaction finds its counterpoint in the unpublished "Jane Atkinson" where Grove describes a woman's revulsion against sex. Jane Atkinson gets married to the man she has fallen in love with only to refuse sexual intercourse with her husband on her wedding night. Later, after acquiescing to sexual relations she feels degraded and begins to despise her husband. In *Settlers of the Marsh*, the male protagonist's doom is created by his own and his loved one's

sexual repressions. In the same work, Grove also draws explicit attention to rape in marriage. In many of the prairie novels, it is the "leaven of sex" that enchains the characters in an apparently deterministic life course, as the chain of children is the inevitable result of sex in *Our Daily Bread* and *The Yoke of Life* (1930). Even in *In Search for Myself*, the narrator-artist not only dramatizes his childhood experiences in repeated Oedipal triangles but as an adult he carries with him his mother's "Cassandra warnings," namely that "women make men weak." The work is saturated with accountings of (sexual) energies, with obsessive castration fears, and overt images of castration. Here, the narrator's negative obsession with sex is highly evocative of Otto Rank's theory of "an antisexual creative impulse that seeks to bring forth the world and itself from itself and without help" (225).

To be sure, Dreiser and Grove are not the first to sexualize human life in literature and to create their characters as desiring or sexually "repressed" subjects. When we think of sexualization in literature we think first of much more obvious examples, namely the extollers of *libertinage*: Marquis de Sade, Rétif de la Bretonne, or D.H. Lawrence, authors who present more explicit (and more overtly misogynistic) examples of literary sexualization. But the fact remains that Dreiser and Grove's writing sexualizes its characters' lives almost systematically and does not limit sexuality to conventionalized sexual places such as the *boudoir*, or the dark woods. Rather, both authors show that sexuality pervades all domains: the factory in *An American Tragedy*, the prairie farm in *Settlers of the Marsh*, the department store in *Sister Carrie*, but also the street, the theatre, the restaurant, the kitchen, and thus almost every domain of everyday life. Sexualization is no longer a "privilege" of aristocracy or upper bourgeoisie; in Dreiser and Grove it infiltrates all

sections of society and all moments of life. Sexuality becomes a phenomenon that cannot be escaped, as it inevitably constitutes each character's subjectivity and inevitably involves the subject in internal and external conflicts.

Donald Pizer and Ellen Moers have pointed to Dreiser's usage of Freud's theory, his incorporation of Freudian language such as "sublimation," "a psychic sex scar," "repression," etc., and his usage of dreams and fictional doubles, especially in *An American Tragedy*.<sup>20</sup> Dreiser repeatedly shows the force of sexuality as a "compelling magnetism" and "a chemism," a term he borrowed from Sigmund Freud, thus recreating sexuality in a literary discourse that not only emulates a pseudo-scientific discourse but also makes sexuality appear as an almost material reality. Although Grove is much more skeptical in applying a psychoanalytic language, many of his narratives show overt traces of psychoanalytic theory. Anthony Riley writes that a Freudian reader of Grove's German works could "enjoy a critical banquet of Father figures, feast on Oedipus complexes, and relish ids" ("Greve/Grove" 42). Or, as Spettigue puts it: "Felix's attention was drawn to the sexual emphasis in Freud's teaching, to the interest in parental attachments, in guilt repression and in abnormal violence, all of which figure prominently in FPG's prose. But the commitment to Freud was not complete; it remained an uncertain element within his Naturalism, lacking a focus" (*FPG* 149). Given Flaubert's (rather than Zola's) influence on Grove and given Grove's outspoken

<sup>20</sup> On Dreiser's reading of (and deep interest in) Sigmund Freud's theory, see Ellen Moers' *Two Dreisers*, 262-66 and Frederic Rusch's "Dreiser's Introduction to Freudianism." For a detailed discussion of Dreiser's usage of biological and physiological theories (especially Jacques Loeb's theory of "tropism"), see Ellen Moers, 240-55 and Louis Zanine's unpublished Ph.D.-thesis on Dreiser entitled "From Mechanism to Mysticism."

suspicion and skepticism of the ultimate truth value of such scientific theories,<sup>21</sup> it should not come as a surprise that "his commitment to Freud was not complete." Rather, this refusal to assign any theory an absolute truth value puts in relief his texts' implicit ideological critique of the power effects of such theories, as I will show later in this study.

At the same time, Dreiser and Grove profess to deal with sexuality in "codified" and "clean" discourses in order to relate the "truth" of sexuality. According to Grove, the only way to deal with sexuality is "realistically": "I advocate frankness in matters of sex; clean, searching, unimpassioned, and unprejudiced discussions of their bearings and their importance. Sex is real; as real as mountain tops and barren sea" (*It Needs* 52-53). For Dreiser, sex is no less "real" but his tone is less unimpassioned, when he describes his youthful sexual urges in his autobiographical *Dawn*: "That sex drive was developing with great strides was a biological fact far beyond my ken. Or that, as ever, it was associated with ease, luxury and beauty, was all beyond me" (197-98). And yet, such discourses of sexual frankness and truth-telling are problematic not only because they may re-inscribe old stereotypes in a new language, as Fiedler's critique of Dreiser's fiction implies, but also because these discourses innocently assume the existence of sexuality as an innate, bodily fact, a fact that is presumed to be recoverable like a *Ding an sich* underneath layers of psychological repressions and literary censorship. Dreiser's discursive scientificity, underlined by his characteristic usage of images from physical sciences such as "magnetism" and "chemism" especially

21. Grove distinguished between a) a concrete truth, which is the factual truth of science; b) an abstract truth, by which Grove understands the truths of religion and metaphysics; and c) a subjective/emotional truth (*It Needs To Be Said* 49-77).

in his evocation of sexuality, strengthens the impression of the body as an easily graspable, physical, or "natural" entity, whose existence is presumed to have been hidden behind veils of conventions. The tacit implication behind such language is that "lifting the veil" and transcending conventions with a discourse of "frankness" will make the "real thing" automatically appear "as it is" and grant it a place in literature in its own right.

Since Dreiser and Grove have come to epitomize two different extremes of the discursive explosion on sexuality in early twentieth-century American and Canadian literature, a new perspective on sexuality, as it is expressed in *The History of Sexuality* of French philosopher Michel Foucault, provides an excellent framework to re-examine the accepted views on the authors' sexual "truthtelling" as well as on Dreiser's discourse of sexual liberation. Foucault rejects, debunks, and caricatures discourses of sexual liberation arguing that what we nowadays subsume under the term "sexuality" is by no means "innate" or "natural" but rather a complex historical construct, created over the last two centuries in our institutionalized discursive practices. Discourses of "sexual liberation" have their origin in what Foucault subsumes, questions and ultimately criticizes under the term of the "repressive hypothesis," a theory of sexual repression that is associated above all with the name of psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud.

To understand the implications of this repressive hypothesis (and Foucault's critique of it) it may be useful to take a brief detour via Freud's theory. According to Freud, an infant is a bundle of pleasure seeking drives and nothing more than a polymorphous sexual state, a state of wild libidinal energies which are channeled and "repressed" in the course of each individual's socialization. Freud points to society's restrictive and controlling

measures which we carry in our psyches as internalized "superegos" ("Überich") a function of inhibition and control which leads to "frustration" for the individual and society as a whole. Freud theorizes what he sees as the malaise of a civilized, and thus repressed, society in *Civilization and its Discontents* (1930), where he writes: "[I]t is impossible to overlook the extent to which civilization is built up upon a renunciation of instinct, how much it presupposes precisely the non-satisfaction (by suppression, repression or some other means?) of powerful instincts" (34).

For Freud and his followers, the politics of sexual repression are deeply intertwined with capitalism and a Protestant work ethic. The channeling of sexual energies is necessary to produce a well-behaved work force that has internalized civilization's requirement of "[b]eauty, cleanliness and order" (30). In Freud's words, "civilization is obeying the laws of economic necessity, since a large amount of psychical energy which it uses for its own purposes has to be withdrawn from sexuality" (41). Thus it is in the name of civilization that sexual repressions are inscribed in the social order through taboos and laws, through the "No of the Father," inscribed in the "symbolic order" of our language.

It appears to follow logically from this "repressive hypothesis" that a dissemination of the "truth" about sexuality is ultimately a subversive political act which could lead not only to the liberation of the individual psyche but also to social liberation. Herbert Marcuse is one of the latest Neo-Freudian philosophers to conjure up Eros as the ultimate force of human liberation, when he writes in *Eros and Civilization*: "The historical possibility of a gradual de-controlling of the instinctual development must be taken seriously, perhaps even the historical necessity--if civilization is to progress to a higher stage of freedom" (122).



While such Neo-Freudian "common-sensical" assumptions about sexuality have led the critics of Dreiser's and Grove's works to praise the writers for their efforts as "sexual liberators," it has been Foucault's "revolutionary" achievement to critique the repressive hypothesis by turning it virtually upside down. Stipulating that there is no such thing as an innate "sexuality" that could be liberated, Foucault argues that the "repressive hypothesis" created by psychoanalysts has become so popular and widespread that we have come to accept it as a "natural" fact of our lives. Reacting against Freud and his followers, the project of Foucault's *History of Sexuality* has been to show that "sexuality" is an historical construct created over the last two centuries in our discursive practices, above all medical, scientific and psychoanalytic discourses, and one might add, literary discourses. In this process, sexuality itself has not become "liberated," but has become deeply intertwined with power.

Since the eighteenth century, people have not really shaken off sexual "repressions" and become more active sexually, but they have become obsessed with the pleasure of talking and writing and theorizing about sexuality, with putting sexuality in linguistic and scientific categories. In this process, sexuality has been policed, because talking about sexuality in regulated, "authorized" discourses helps control it: "[S]ex was taken charge of, tracked down as it were, by a discourse that aimed to allow it no obscurity, no respite" (20). In this process of transforming sex into discourse, sexuality has not only *not* become liberated but it has become the primary target for power:

Sexuality must not be described as a stubborn drive, by nature alien and of necessity disobedient to a power which exhausts itself trying to subdue it and often fails to control it entirely. It

appears rather as an especially dense transfer point for relations of power: between men and women, young people and old people, parents and offspring, teachers and students, priests and laity, an administration and a population (*History* 103).

Western societies have become obsessed with registering the scientific truth about the body and its sexualities, a process in which "the hysterical woman," the social pervert, the criminal, and the masturbating child have become the primary targets of examination.

The desire for new (scientific or empirical) knowledges has led not only to new techniques and apparatuses of extracting information, but also to the distinction between "normal" and "abnormal" behaviours, psyches, and bodies. This binary distinction in turn entailed the creation of new sophisticated techniques to deal with the "abnormal" through "orthopedic correction" and "normalization" of the human psyche and body. This process of discursive sexualization has brought with it a revival of a very ancient religious technique of truth-telling: the "confession" of sexuality. The confession of one's secret pleasures or problems now occurs through bureaucratic apparatuses, through scientific and medical studies and the explosion of psychoanalytic techniques which probe into the individuals' lives in order to extract and register information, to interpret and to pass judgements about the normalcy or abnormalcy of the confessing person.

Thus, in the process of discursive sexualization, Western society has equipped itself not so much with an *ars erotica* but with a *scientia sexualis* (*History* 67-68), not with an "art of love" whose interest is a maximization of pleasure but with a sexual science whose interest is to find the "truth" of sexuality. Naturalism brings this quality to the fore. Despite its emphasis on sexuality, naturalism usually marginalizes sexual pleasure, for its emphasis is on

the "truth" of sexuality. But Foucault also points to an ironic duplicity in the realm of such sexualizations when he raises the rhetorical question "whether, since the nineteenth century, the *scientia sexualis*--under the guise of its decent positivism--has not functioned, at least to a certain extent, as an *ars erotica*" (70-71). Foucault's criticism is well taken. It appears that under the guise of cleanliness and truthfulness, Dreiser and Grove inscribe in their text a sublimated and sanitized, and in Grove's case also a ritually purified, sexual "pleasure."

Poststructuralist feminist critics have recognized with Foucault (and even before Foucault) that it is the recognized discourses of truth that carry with them power effects. We often like to think of power as something that "prefers to hide," and all too often we trust the popular myth that power works better and gains advantages by distorting reality. Granted "power is tolerable only on condition that it mask a substantial part of itself" (*History* 86), but Michel Foucault's theory teaches us that modern power is interwoven with discourses of truth, with knowledge: "The important thing here is that truth isn't outside power, or lacking in power" (*Power* 131). Rather, "truth" is created in, transmitted and controlled by, important apparatuses such as universities, news media, research industries, and the judicial systems. But as such, institutional discourses of truth also "induce regular effects of power" (*Power* 131). Just as De Beauvoir has recognized in *The Second Sex* that "antifeminists" have used "science--especially biology and experimental psychology"--to prove women's inferiority, so poststructuralist feminists have demonstrated that social roles are "constructed" through scientific, especially (socio)-biological and psychoanalytic, discourses. Such sanctified discourses create and perpetuate hierarchically structured gender relationships of power.

French feminist Luce Irigaray's theory intersects with Foucault's in her polemical critique of the "truths" produced by psychoanalysis: "La psychanalyse tient sur la sexualité féminine le discours de la vérité" (*Ce sexe* 85). She accuses Freud of having theorized sexuality in exclusively masculine parameters and thus of having created a masculine rather than a feminine "truth" of sexuality: "he takes masculinity as the yardstick against which all objects and actions are assessed, constructing women as deviations from the norm" (Hauser paraphrasing Irigaray 188-89). The result of this bias is that in the field of psychoanalysis, a typically women's sexuality becomes erased: "Son lot serait celui du 'manque', de l'atrophie' (du sexe), et de l'envie du pénis' comme seul sexe reconnu valeureux" (Irigaray *Ce sexe* 23). According to Irigaray, the ready acceptance of Freud's discourse of truth in our culture has led women to mimic male desires: "La femme ne vivrait son désir que comme attente de posséder enfin un équivalent du sexe masculin" (23).

Also, the psychoanalytic emphasis on the phallus implies not only a binary division between masculine activity and feminine passivity-- "l'opposition activité clitoridienne 'virile' / passivité vaginale 'féminine'" (23), but also entails for women a wish to be possessed by the phallus, a wish to be acted upon and in the extreme, it might lead to the female fantasy to be raped (as we find it for example in *Fanny Essler*). Through this inscription of phallic penetration (and the phallic gaze) as the "normal" form of sexual behaviour, women's sexual pleasure is always already in danger of becoming a vicariously passive, even a "masochistic pleasure" for women, a pleasure that is not really her own: "Ne sachant pas ce qu'elle veut, prête à n'importe quoi, en redemandant même, pourvu qu'il la 'prenne' comme 'objet' d'exercice de son plaisir à lui" (25). Irigaray draws the conclusion that

through normalizing cultural practices, women are made to love that which really subjugates them (the phallus), which in turn ensures the perpetuation of the "normal" hierarchically structured gender relations.

Similarly, poststructuralist feminist Chris Weedon emphasizes that often it is "empirical" knowledge that helps to perpetuate relationships of power. In most societies it is, for example, "women [who] have primary responsibility for childcare," an empirical fact that is often used to back up the (socio)biological (and patriarchal) claim that women are "naturally suited to these roles." This claim in turn helps to perpetuate the gender status quo (Weedon 128). From a poststructuralist feminist perspective, however, there is no such thing as a purely biological, "natural" body that exists prior to culture. The body, always already submerged in and imbued with culture, is in fact "constructed" through discourses, social practices and norms which the individual inscribes on his/her body. To give an example. It is a biological fact that women have wombs, but it is a social construction that women's bodies and subjectivities should become identified with, and be defined on the basis of, the womb, a cultural phenomenon which Foucault has termed the "hysterization of women's bodies" (*History* 104).<sup>22</sup>

To illustrate the social "normalization" of a sexualized femininity, German feminist Kornelia Hauser describes how advertisement often invites women to realize their particular, individual "type" by buying a particular product. This product that promises to make a woman "different" from the next person also draws her into the "normalizing" machinery:

<sup>22</sup> Even before Foucault, Simone de Beauvoir has drawn critical attention to the social identification of the female with the womb, when she writes in *The Second Sex*: "But first we must ask: what is a woman? 'Tota mulier in utero,' says one, 'woman is a womb'" (xv).

There is a mode of individualization specific to women; it operates above all through the field of sexuality. (Whole sectors of industry devote themselves to offers of individualization: a perfume which is one woman's own, the exclusive scent of a certain soap, that 'certain something' of a cigarette made for women only. (202)

Not only femininity but the female body itself is a social construction, created on the basis of norms that ask for a particular female body language, for particular figures and bust sizes, and for particular hair styles. Flabbiness, sagging breasts, and fat tummies are equated "with a negative deportment of the body" and are signs for "letting oneself go" (Hauser 127), and thus become signifiers of "bad character" and lack of self-discipline, which in turn prompts women to exercise, to diet and to wear clothing that emphasizes desirable, or hides undesirable, features.

To be sure, norms do not tell women that they have to conform to one ideal type of femininity; norms are much more flexible in that they ask each woman to improve her *particular* type, to work on her *particular* problems in order to achieve her own ideal of femininity through self-discipline and constant work on her body. Thus at the same time that women buy into these individualizing norms, they become also thoroughly sexualized and "normalized." This explains the apparently paradoxical fact that women orient "themselves toward the same standard" at the same time that they "individualize" themselves as "different" from each other on the basis of the same norm. According to Foucault norms and normalization go side by side with their apparent opposite, the construction of the individual and individualization.

As we can see from the example above, normalizing power does not force the individual into submission: "In mediating to the masses a set of

values, norms, attitudes, beliefs and so on, ideology cajoles them into 'voluntary' submission," is how Kornelia Hauser describes the effect of normalizing power. As social practices and rules are assimilated by individuals in the process of socialization, these rules "take on a semblance of 'naturalness', and constitute what is known as individual 'character'" (Hauser 198). It is this notion of normalizing power that will be important in order to discuss the construction of subjectivity and the female body in works such as *Sister Carrie* and *Fanny Essler*. None of her lovers forces Carrie to look, speak, or act as she does, and yet in everything she does we have to question her "freedom," because she always acts in imitation of a pre-given model; she is in "voluntary" submission to the often unspoken behavioural norms of her society.

Thus it is in these points where feminism deeply intersects with Foucault's writing<sup>23</sup> that we arrive at a theory that will provide a revisionist angle into Dreiser's and Grove's inscription of sexuality and power in their texts. With the help of Foucault and feminism, I will explore the techniques Dreiser and Grove develop in their fiction to point not only to the construction of individual subjectivities through social norms and practices, but, above all, I will point to the fact that subjectivity often means subjection, since the subject is constructed through disciplinary control and normalization.

<sup>23</sup> For a theorizing of this fruitful intersection of Foucault's and feminist theories, see especially Chris Weedon (107-35) and Irene Diamond's and Lee Quinby's collection of essays, *Feminism and Foucault*. See Nancy Hartsock for a feminist argument against the linkage of feminism with Foucault's philosophy.

To be sure, the norm is nothing radically new in the twentieth century. A norm is whatever is practiced most often in a society and every society has norms that change in the course of time. And yet, as Foucault's analysis shows, in the last two centuries, the norms have proliferated in an unprecedented way so that they have become more important than the less flexible apparatus of the law. In this process the norms have become the most prominent "technologies of self." As a result, the subject can no longer be seen as a transcendental self or a metaphysical substance but rather as a being that is constructed through social norms and practices, which explains why Foucault equates the birth of the subject with its subjection. The subject is always already tied into the social norms and practices and thus it is inevitably part of a network of power (*History* 60).

This notion of a constructed subjectivity is very different from traditional assumptions about the individual's inborn soul or unified self, as we find it in Dreiser scholars Robert Penn Warren (1971) and more recently Paul Orlov ("The Subversion of Self" 1977) and Lawrence Hussman (1983), all of whom have argued that Dreiser's characters become alienated from their own selves in the framework of a hostile, fundamentally materialistic society. From a feminist and poststructuralist perspective, I tend to agree with Philip Fisher (1985) and Lee Mitchell (1989), who argue that Clyde Griffiths has no (innate) self to which he might be true.

Dreiser and Grove are concerned with what their narrators and characters perceive as "normal" subjectivities. Dreiser's narrators and numerous male characters justify unconventional actions with the claim that the action is based on the body's "natural" urge or desire. Just as Dreiser's narratives appear intent on proving the normalcy of their characters' actions



even as these characters transgress laws, conventions, and taboos of their society, so Grove makes a case for the "normalcy" of the realistic author in a very telling language: "[A]n *exceptional, abnormal* personality, a *morbid* personality can never be a realist. His emotional reactions would be incapable of becoming universal. Therein lies the supreme and ultimate *sanity* of realism" (*It Needs* 63; emphasis added). It is precisely this claim for the "normal," "the universal standard," or "the natural," a discourse that critics have generally accepted at face value, that will be the target for closer scrutiny in this study in order to demonstrate that wherever characters (or narrators) use discourses of the "normal" or the "natural," these discourses are also deeply submerged in relations of power. If anything, poststructuralist theory has taught us to be suspicious of whatever is claimed to be "natural" or "normal."

### C. Power and Subjectivity

In order fully to understand Foucault's theory of normalization and disciplinary power, it is important to realize that Foucault's notion of power is by no means identical to the "common-sensical," traditional approach to power of most Grove and Dreiser scholars. Many Dreiser and Grove critics have described the authors' concern with power in terms of superiority and inferiority, of exploiters and exploited, of parasites and victims. In the critics' discourses, supermen such as Dreiser's Cowperwood or Grove's "master of the mill" are usually balanced by seemingly successful, ineffectual and suffering characters, the Clyde Griffiths of this world. Donald Pizer speaks for many Dreiser and Grove scholars when he puts "power" in the following "common-sensical" context:

Naturalistic writers found that the poor--in education, intellect, and worldly goods--are indeed pushed and forced, that the powerful do control the weak, that few men can overcome the handicaps imposed upon them by inadequacies of body and mind.... (*Naturalism* 6)

The understanding of power in this quotation is deeply rooted in traditional theories of power which assume that power is an essential property; that it is the capacity to work for a desired end; that it is a disposition or a potential, which we either possess or do not possess and which consequently creates classes of strong and weak.

This traditional notion of power is deeply rooted in philosophies as old as Thomas Hobbes' *Leviathan* (1651), a work that distinguishes between "Naturall Power" (or individual potency), "Instrumentall Power" (such as fortune or good luck), and the supreme power of the body politic, "the Power

of a Common-wealth" (66), distinctions that we still readily accept in everyday discourse. Power in the last instance is linked to authority, to questions of might and right, of legitimacy and illegitimacy. It is these traditional, common-sensical concepts of power that Foucault challenges by claiming somewhat provocatively that power as such does not exist: "Power is not something that is acquired, seized, or shared" (*History* 94), since "it exists only when it is put into action" (Dreyfus 219). Power is "less a property than a strategy" and "it is exercised rather than possessed" (Deleuze *Foucault* 25, 30). Similarly, Foucault's theory reacts against the Marxist assumption on power, the idea that power is located in a centre such as the bourgeoisie as the ruling class or the state apparatus.<sup>24</sup> Foucault critiques these traditional notions of power because they entail almost automatically a binary system of oppressors and oppressed, of victors and the victimized. Furthermore in this traditional approach, power is assumed to work from the top down. For Foucault, "power comes from below; that is, there is no binary and all-encompassing opposition between rulers and ruled at the root of power relations" (*History* 94). Power is furthermore "exercised from innumerable points, in the interplay of nonegalitarian and mobile relations" (*History* 94). Foucault defines power in very general terms, to indicate that he does not want to discuss it in terms of coercion: power is "a way in which certain actions modify others," so that actions act upon other actions and not directly on persons ("Genealogy" 219).

<sup>24</sup> Even a fairly modern-Neo Marxist and Neo-Freudian popular theorist such as Erich Fromm remains within the same traditional framework when he distinguishes between a positive power, or innate potency, and a negative power, in the sense of obtaining power over somebody else (*Heart of Man* 30-31).

In *Discipline and Punish* (1977) Foucault discusses in detail his understanding of the technologies of modern power by analyzing Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon, a theoretical prison model in which the prisoners' cells surround a tower. A particular window arrangement makes it possible for the supervisor in the tower to see the prisoners, while the prisoners cannot see the supervisor in the tower, and therefore continually suspect that the supervisor's gaze is on them. Feeling him/herself continually under a supervising gaze, the prisoner will inevitably interiorize this supervising gaze, and as a result also internalize the prison rules. Ultimately this system means the internalization of a more "normal," less deviant behaviour. The juxtaposition of isolation with useful work is aimed at producing a more docile body, which is easier to predict and to control and is therefore more reliable.

In *An American Tragedy*, Dreiser examines the literal effect of the prison system's re-structuring power on the personality of Clyde Griffiths, who has striven all his life to reject the religion of his parents, but accepts religion in the death house, where it is offered as a last "normalizing" technology for those sentenced to death. Clyde even writes a letter in which he admonishes the American youth not to follow his own path; even his death is thus placed in the service of "normalization." Following the tradition of Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*, Grove's *Settlers of the Marsh* goes even a step further in presenting the prison system as having a therapeutic, hence normalizing, effect on the prisoner. For Niels Lindstedt, who has killed his wife, the prison wardens become friends who help him back to a normalized life: "And yet, even here a human heart beats, human sympathy plans the welfare of others: the heart of the warden" (194). When Lindstedt leaves the prison he is reconciled with a society that, in his mind, has not only punished him fairly but has also "cured" him of his obsessions.

But Foucault's emphasis on the Panopticon as a model of power goes far beyond the realm of the literal prison system. As Bentham's Panopticon is built on a clever usage of visibility, so modern power relies on the visibility of every individual and a whole apparatus of mutual surveillance, a power principle that Foucault terms "panopticism." In the eighteenth century, "panopticism" infiltrated the social institutions—army, schools, medical field etc., ultimately prompting the formation of a modern, disciplinary society. As the prisoner in Bentham's Panopticon internalizes the supervisor's gaze, so every individual in society internalizes disciplinary norms. Discipline therefore becomes synonymous with self-discipline, with the analysis of one's own action and the control of one's body which increases individual efficiency and thus makes the individual and society as a whole more productive. Disciplinary power is how Foucault characterizes modern power in that this power does not act primarily through violence and laws but through the much more sophisticated technologies of normalization.

Just as Dreiser refuses to inscribe power as an exclusively demonic, evil force in his works, so Foucault's theory reminds us that power is not exclusively negative but highly productive. After all, the individual's subjectivity is constructed through power; the child is raised in a relationship of power with its parents; it is subjected to power relations in school and is initiated in the order of language which transmits the normalizing rules. Foucault captures modern power in the term of "bio-power" to emphasize that its commitment is to improve and sustain life, that it does not work primarily through the threat of repression, punishment and death, as the law does, but has much more sophisticated techniques that convince the individual that submission to the norm is in his or her best interest.

Power, according to Foucault, is omnipresent in human actions. Since it is exercised from numerous points, there is no real binary division or opposition between rulers and ruled. Foucault goes even so far as to maintain somewhat provocatively that power never exists without resistance: "It would not be possible for power relations to exist without points of insubordination." For Foucault, "[e]very power relationship implies, at least *in potentia* a strategy of struggle" ("Genealogy" 225). If we accept the logic of this argument we have to acknowledge that resistance will not automatically change the nature of the power relationship but is really intrinsic to this same power relationship. A power relationship can be reversed--patriarchy can shift into matriarchy, but this does not mean an ultimate liberation but only a reversal of positions in the same power relationship.

And yet, as feminist theorists teach us, this logic does not imply that resistance is without value, but the contrary. Many modern feminists celebrate the margins as a privileged locus of struggle against and subversion of patriarchal and capitalist power structures. In Dreiser's and Grove's works, it is often the female characters or the social outsiders who are linked to resistance and subversion, often however, without being very effective. As Dreiser's and Grove's female characters grope in the dark in their searches for appropriate resisting strategies, so modern feminists move in many different directions and propose individual strategies rather than a single magic formula of "liberation" (see Biddy Martin 9). The major question that feminists (and Dreiser's and Grove's characters) face is the following: If power is intensified through sexuality, how can women (or men) effectively resist the seductive appeal of sexualized power?

Dreiser's texts are concerned with tracing the characters' creation of feminine or masculine subjectivities, a process that inevitably involves the

characters' becoming deeply submerged into the norms and languages of their societies. It will be fruitful to examine to what extent these characters become "normalized," that is subjected to the power networks of their society and to what extent they develop effective strategies of subversion and resistance. Do these characters manage to cross boundaries and to empower themselves on the margins to which they have been relegated by patriarchal and capitalist societies? How effective is their resistance and where/how does their resistance become re-appropriated into the machinery of power? And what techniques do Dreiser and Grove develop to draw attention to "normalizing power?"

Instead of celebrating Dreiser and Grove as sexual liberators who ventured to deal with repressed subject matters in a discourse of frankness, I will analyze the authors' textual strategies and narrative techniques that draw attention to the intersection of sexuality and power in their works, that draw attention to normalizing power, to relationships and discourses which individualize and normalize at the same time. It will also be fruitful to examine the male and female characters' search for new resisting discourses, discourses which often force these characters to walk the fine line between parodic imitation of, and dangerous slippage into, the patriarchal, deterministic language, between the never-ending struggle for change and the everpresent trap of co-optation by the dominant discourses.





## Chapter 2

### THE CITY'S EYE OF POWER: *SISTER CARRIE AND FANNY ESSLER*

Visibility is a trap.  
*Discipline and Punish* (200)  
Michel Foucault

#### A. Panopticism and the City Prostitute

To go to the city is the changeless desire of the mind. To join in the great, hurrying throng; to see the endless lights, the great shops and stores, the towering structures and palatial mansions, becomes a desire which the mind can scarcely resist.  
Theodore Dreiser  
"The City" (95)

Chicago and New York--Dreiser's celebrated New World cities--not only energize the movement of author, narrator and characters with their raw, sensualized drive, but they also imbue the newcomer to the city with a sense that it is right, and even necessary, to base one's life on a principle that can be summarized in just two words: "I want." Evoking the big city in female terms, Dreiser presents it as the illusory fulfillment of all dreams, as a fictional cornucopia of pleasure, beauty, and sex in a framework of moral laxity. In a newspaper article written in 1896, Dreiser allegorizes this seductive potential of the city in the figure of the prostitute, a figure who appeals to the pleasures of the eye and titillates the scopophilic voyeur: "Like a sinful Magdalen the city decks herself gayly [sic], fascinating all by her garments of

scarlet and silk, awing by her jewels and perfumes, when in truth there lies hid beneath these a torn and miserable heart, and a soiled and unhappy conscience" ("The City" 97). Mary Magdalene is the traditional icon of the virtuous prostitute with the compassionate heart, who "holds up a comforting mirror to those who sin and sin again, and promises joy to human frailty" (Warner 235). This analogy between the city and Mary Magdalene fits the title heroine of *Sister Carrie* (1900) who innocently (and almost unknowingly) leaves victims in her wake.

"Yet amid all, men starve," Dreiser continues in his article on "The City" (98), deliberately disrupting the initial image of peace and compassion by cataloguing the "misery," the "hunger," the "isolation and loneliness," and "the rummaging in garbage cans" of the "wild-eyed shrunken outcast" (98), who lives in the midst of the city glamour. Like George Hurstwood in *Sister Carrie* who ends as a Bowery Bum, the suffering outcast in this earlier article is "a wretched, dwarfed specimen of masculine humanity" (98), and thus Dreiser evokes the image of the male as metaphorically "castrated" by the female city. Here, the earlier image of the city-prostitute inevitably slips from the compassionate Magdalene to the Whore of Babylon, who carries death already in her body.<sup>1</sup> The city turns into a female threat, an aggressive freak, a destructive monster; she is the man-destroyer, a paralyzing Medusa-figure, whose seductive and destructive aspects are unified in the image of the city-prostitute, a figure who may turn around to hunt and haunt the unsuspecting newcomer. Given the female city's potential for destruction, it

<sup>1</sup> For a discussion of Dreiser's Chicago as Babel/Babylon, see Christa Drescher-Schröder's *Das Bild Chicagos in der Cowperwood-Trilogie Theodore Dreisers*.

is a space where "man" can only survive by entering into it like a conqueror or like the ancient Dragon slayer Perseus. For this city-dragon slayer, "looking" is one of the weapons to slay the dragon, or as Peter Conrad puts it in his discussion of Dreiser's own experience of New York, "seeing the city is for Dreiser an acquisition of power over it, a visual annexation of terrain" (179).<sup>2</sup>

From this angle of the city's sexual, specular power play I suggest a comparison of *Sister Carrie* with Grove's first novel, *Fanny Essler*. In the latter, the female protagonist-actress is also identified with the modern metropolis and becomes a desirable object of sight for the male gazer at the same time that, endowed with an insatiable body, she is also the incarnation of desire.

*Fanny Essler*--published only five years after *Sister Carrie* under the author's German name Felix Paul Greve and rediscovered by Douglas Spettigue in his search for the "real" Grove--is closely based on the early life of Grove's German wife, Else Ploetz, the later Else von Freytag-Loringhoven, whose own (as yet unpublished) memoirs overlap closely with Grove's novel.<sup>3</sup> The Baroness's memoirs and letters trace her flight to Berlin at the

<sup>2</sup> Peter Conrad also points to the female quality of Dreiser's city, albeit in a different sense from the one outlined above: "Dreiser's city is ruled over by a Darwinian matriarch, an indiscriminately fecund 'Mother Nature,' who spawns (as Eugene in *The 'Genius'* marvels) 'such seething masses of people; such whirlpools of life!'" (183).

<sup>3</sup> See Spettigue *FPG* 80-81, 133-139 on the rediscovery of *Fanny Essler* as well as a brief synoptical discussion of the work. In 1976, Desmond Pacey identified Grove's German wife as Else Hildegard Ploetz who divorced the architect August Endell in 1904 in order to marry Grove, presumably in the same year (*Letters* 524, fn. 3; 552, fn. 1). Discovering the Baroness's memoirs amongst the Dunya Barnes papers, Lynn DeVore makes the connection between the Baroness and the Canadian Grove. The Baroness wrote her autobiography in English and sent it to Barnes who (unsuccessfully) tried to get it published. ("Selections From the Letters" written by the Baroness to Barnes were, however, published in *transition* in 1928). When the Baroness committed suicide in Paris in 1927, the autobiography was still very fragmentary and incomplete. The memoirs

age of eighteen, her posing for "Marble Figures," her "trying to do art" (quoted in Reiss 93) and her attachment with artist's colonies in Munich and Berlin. It is therefore not surprising that in her autobiography Else should accuse Grove of having appropriated "*my life* and persons out of my life" in his novel (*Autobiography* 34-35). Similarly, Grove's contemporaries would recognize the connection between Else and Fanny Essler,<sup>4</sup> although Grove had, in significant ways, transformed and fictionalized Else's life story in his first novel.

According to the Baroness's memoirs, she had performed in very successful roles at the Central Theatre in Berlin, the "most fashionable stage" (quoted in Reiss 93). Grove's Fanny Essler, in contrast, never moves seriously beyond the amateur stage because she lacks the money to buy the expensive wardrobe necessary for a successful acting career. Also, while Else started posing for Marble Figures before she had any formal training at all, the Marble Figure episode in Grove's novel follows rather than precedes Fanny's formal training and thus shows a social fall rather than a rise. Not only does Grove diminish his wife's status as a serious artist in his fictional

recount her life with Grove in Germany and America, her experiences as an artist and model in Greenwich Village (from 1915 to 1923, after Grove had deserted her in Kentucky), and her return to Germany in 1923. Quoting extensively from unpublished "memoir material left at the time of her death in Paris" (92), Robert Reiss' recent article "My Baroness" discusses her as "the embodiment of Dada to the marrow of her bones, an advocate of personalized dress reform code, a sought after artist's model depicted by ashcan artists, Dadaists, Surrealists" (99-100). For a discussion of the similarities between the Baroness's memoirs and *Fanny Essler*, see Paul Hjartarson's "Of Greve, Grove, and Other Strangers"; see also his "Autobiographies" for a comparison of Grove's *In Search of Myself* and the Baroness's memoirs in terms of autobiographical discourse.

<sup>4</sup> See for example Behmer's mean-spirited letter to Hardt (19 February 1907), rpt. in Riley "Greve/Grove" (48).

transformation of her story, but the Fanny Essler that emerges from Grove's novel is also more strongly victimized compared to the woman that emerges in the Baroness's memoirs of her Berlin years.

The city of Berlin has inspired the novels of many writers from Wilhelm Raabe and Theodor Fontane to Hans Fallada and Alfred Döblin (cf. Sibley Fries; Riha). *Fanny Essler* is in the tradition of the city novel, and the translated version of *Fanny Essler* (1984) appropriately provides a Berlin street map on the end-papers of the book, thus emphasizing the importance of the cityscape in the novel. *Fanny Essler* fits into this tradition, but the novel also introduces some of the city motifs to which Grove later returns in his Canadian novels. In *A Search for America* for example, he explores Toronto and New York. Berlin at the turn of the century was, as Anthony Riley has pointed out, the "thriving, vibrant centre of Bismarck's reunified Germany" ("Grove/Greve" 43). Through Fanny's eyes Berlin is presented as "Großstadt" (Metropolis) in contrast to Munich which appears to Fanny "kleinstädtisch" (small-town like), so that Munich is in relation to Berlin, what Chicago is in relation to New York in *Sister Carrie*. Through Fanny's eyes, Berlin appears not so much as the political and economic heart of a rapidly industrializing Germany; rather, the city becomes closely identified with its artistic circles. Fanny's first contacts with Berlin are her drawing lessons at the Arts Academy, which fill her with memories and a yearning for Berlin at the novel's opening when she is back in Pomeranian Kolberg. In 1892, the nineteen-year-old Fanny not only returns to Berlin to learn acting but also to become acquainted with various lovers and friends--painters, a stain-glass artist (Nepomuk Bolle), a sculptor (Heinrich Stumpf), and playwrights (Ehrhard Stein, Eduard Barrel). As Dreiser's New York is linked to the

theatre, in particular to the world of popular melodrama, so the emphasis in Fanny's Berlin is also on *the visual arts*, with the result that both cities are represented as cultural meccas through the eyes of the female protagonists. Heinz Ickstadt's description of Dreiser's New York also applies to Grove's Berlin; both cities present a "Welt des schönen Scheins" in which Carrie's spectacular rise is based on the "Identität einer Ästhetik des Wünschens mit der theatralischen Essenz der Stadt" (118).<sup>5</sup>

On her first day in Berlin, Fanny is, in fact, seduced by her first lover in a spontaneous theatrical street performance. Window shopping on Berlin's fashion street, Fanny becomes self-conscious when she recognizes a man gazing through his monocle at her reflection in a store window: "At that point the man flung his head back, which forced the hat to slip down his neck, his eyes and mouth popped open, the monocle fell and he stared at her. ... Fanny saw all of this in the window and it was so comical that she turned away and giggled" (I, 71).<sup>6</sup> As the voyeur-exhibitionist Axel Dahl seduces Fanny in this specular encounter played out in the glass of a store window, so the city itself seduces Fanny by drawing her into its imaginary realm. Dreiser explicitly draws attention to this imaginary quality of the city in his autobiographical *Dawn*: "The city of which I sing was not of land or sea or any time or place. Look for it in vain! I can scarcely find it in my own soul now" (156). As actresses Carrie and Fanny become icons for the cities which are spaces of

<sup>5</sup> Both cities present "a world of beautiful appearance" in which "the aesthetics of desire become identified with the theatrical essence of the city" (my translation).

<sup>6</sup> The quotations in German refer to the original German work; the quotations in English are taken from the translation by Christine Helmers *et al.*

role-playing, theatrical cities, in which the stage and real life become interchangeable.

Dreiser critics have generally discussed the theatricality in *Sister Carrie* in negative terms of "deception" and "inauthenticity," a discourse which tacitly assumes the existence of an "essential self" which is claimed to be lost in the process of role-playing.<sup>7</sup> But the critics' discourse glosses over the fact that the "theatrical" cities also invite the female protagonists to search for new identities, to become an artist or a "Künstlerin," to create themselves through art, so that the cities as centres of art, constitute, in fact, a promise for female self-creation and for female independence. Both novels present female protagonists who defy middle class conventions of sexual behaviour and who transcend the notion of a fixed, pre-given identity, as they enter the modern metropolis. Like the big cities, Carrie and Fanny are protean, always in transition and flux.

"Grove's Female Picaresque" is the title of E. D. Blodgett's review of the translated Fanny Essler (152). Just as Carrie has been identified as a twentieth-century *pícaro* (Monteser 109-10), so Fanny is a true picaresque survivor in numerous (mis)adventures.<sup>8</sup> She is a character whose ultimate death at the end of the novel appears as arbitrary as Don Quixote's in Cervantes' picaresque, and we recognize her death as a fictional convention that

<sup>7</sup> For a discussion of the theatrical world of *Sister Carrie* in terms of "illusion," "game-playing" and "deception" see Ellen Moers 100-112. Also, Philip Fisher argues that "the more successful one [is] at acting the less one [has] a sense of self" (*Hard Facts* 165).

<sup>8</sup> In his discussion of *The Picaresque Element in Western Literature*, Frederick Monteser emphasizes that the typical *pícaro* and *pícaro* are survivor figures: "Along with her male counterpart, she is just trying to survive, and would much rather use legitimate means if they were available to her" (18).

enforces the closure of a narrative that otherwise has no end. Like the typical *pícaro*, Fanny is an outsider, who never stands still but always moves on to new adventures and spaces. Arriving in Berlin in May 1892 after an adventurous flight from the home of her tyrannical father in small town Kolberg, Fanny is imbued with a sense of *Selbständigkeit*, a sense of standing on her own feet, a sense of independence especially when she walks alone through the streets of Berlin. "Spazieren" (going for a walk) is what connects Fanny to Berlin, and Grove's novel gives us a sense of the streets and the places she connects with: the Brandenburger Tor, the Tiergarten, Friedensallee, and Leipzigerstraße. She always returns to Friedrichstraße, the street with the fashionable stores, where she is riveted to the display windows, or where she goes to Café Kranzier to sit at the window to see and to be seen, a scene that evokes Carrie's pleasure and obsession with sitting at windows and gazing outside. Later in the novel, Fanny comes to identify herself and her sense of independence with the city of Berlin: "Sie war Berlin" (282):

This large network of streets belonged to her; she considered it her own: this was Berlin, and the fact she owned it was thanks to no-one else but herself; she owned it as her realm and she wouldn't have given it up for the easiest, most carefree life. (II, 8)<sup>9</sup>

Here the city connotes a breaking of spatial boundaries and social mores; it connotes the transition of the female from domestic into public space. Fanny

<sup>9</sup> "Diese große Straßenflucht gehörte ihr: sie empfand sie als ihren Besitz: sie war Berlin: und daß sie dies Berlin besaß, es als ihr Reich besaß, verdankte sie niemand als sich und sie hätte es nicht für das sorgenfreieste, glatteste Leben gegeben (282).



has entered a new realm, adopting a new role, a new identity, and a new language for herself.

In her celebration of Berlin in the quotation above, Fanny deliberately uses masculine, territorial terms, terms of appropriation to describe her newly found freedom in the city. On one level, Fanny's language indicates that as a woman she is working within--she is adopting--the masculine terms that rule and structure the (female) city. But just as the city of Berlin cannot really be appropriated, Fanny's words have an ironic, parodic twist, especially since nothing is as foreign to Fanny as notions of ownership and possession. If anything, Fanny is ruled by the feminine economy of the gift that Hélène Cixous describes as following: "If there is a 'propriety of woman,' it is paradoxically her capacity to depropriate unselfishly, body without end, without appendage, without principle 'parts'" ("Medusa" 259). Or as Luce Irigaray puts it: "Le propre, la propriété sont, sans doute, assez étrangers au féminin. Du moins sexuellement. Mais non *le proche*" (*Ce sexe* 30). In her usage of the terms of appropriation to describe her closeness with the city spaces, Fanny subverts the masculine language from within and implicitly signals that like the city, she herself cannot be (completely) owned or possessed by anyone.

Although partly dressed in a parodied sentimental language, the search for a new women's independence in *Sister Carrie* is also submerged in a masculine discourse, namely a military language. It is the narrator who dresses Carrie's striving for independence in a discourse of war, especially the vocabulary of knighthood and the Trojan War. New York becomes the "walled city" (360), whose "gates" remain closed for George Hurstwood (363), but open for Carrie (495), the "half-equipped little knight" (3) and "little

soldier of fortune" (84). "Leadership," "control," "authority" and "domination" are words that characterize the male-female relationships in *Sister Carrie*, just as "defeat," "cowardice," "flight," "battle," and "defenses" are used to describe both Carrie's entrance into the city and her relationships with men.<sup>10</sup>

And yet, despite the parodic note in both novels, this double discourse--the subsuming of the discourse of female independence in a masculine language of ownership, domination, and war--should make the reader suspicious. Even though the city is represented as a female icon, it appears to be ruled by a masculine order that inevitably reaches out to take control of the women. Fanny Essler's picaresque journey toward independence is, not surprisingly, full of reversals. Looking for accommodations in Berlin, the first sign Fanny is pointed to reads: "Advice and Protection for Young Women Travelling Alone" (I, 61) a sign that is highly ironic if one considers that both Carrie and Fanny find their "protectors" in the first men they meet in Chicago and Berlin, Charles Drouet and Axel Dahl, who quickly become their lovers and without whom they feel alone, without courage, and overwhelmed by the city: Carrie "felt something lost to her, when he [Drouet] moved away. ... With her sister she was much alone, a lone figure in a tossing, thoughtless sea" (11). Despite the nausea Fanny feels about the sexual relationship with Axel ("she had to close her eyes so as not to feel repelled" [I, 82]), she needs his encouragement and jocularly: "The minute they parted,

<sup>10</sup> Arun Mukherjee's study on Dreiser confirms that this military discourse was the linguistic frame of reference of the contemporary "national apostles of success" such as Andrew Carnegie (43-44). Also, Sandy Petrey draws attention to Dreiser's usage of a double discourse in *Sister Carrie*, the language of realism and the language of sentimentalism, and it is the latter that the novel ridicules.

her courage failed" (I, 81). Drouet and Dahl are similar characters: both are happy-go-luckies, and both are the archetypal male survivors in the city in diametrical contrast to the city's (male) sacrificial victims. As the self-proclaimed protectors of females they, in fact, conquer the women in the sexual relationships, so that the protectorship takes the overtones of pimping and sexual mastery.

In their respective interpretations of *Fanny Essler* and *Sister Carrie*, Anthony Riley and Lawrence Hussman explore this prostitution in a literal sense: "Young girls from the working classes or even the petite bourgeoisie, unable to make a decent living wage, are forced to resort to prostitution to make enough money to buy essential food and clothes," writes Riley ("Greve/Grove" 46).<sup>11</sup> But Grove, like Dreiser, is concerned *not* primarily with the exploration of basic or essential human *needs* but rather with an exploration of human *desire* in an emerging consumer society. (After all, Carrie's and Fanny's motto is not "Du pain! du pain! du pain!", as Emile Zola translates the essential need of the starving workers in the archetypal naturalistic novel, *Germinal* [335].) It is psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan who has drawn our attention to the rift between (animal) need and (human) desire, a point that I will explore in more detail in the next chapter. If Fanny simply wanted to fulfill her "needs," she would be happy in her own room in her father's house, or even with her Berlin aunt, Miss Blaurock, or with her well-to-do friend Heinrich Stumpf, or with her husband Eduard Barrel, all of

<sup>11</sup> In "The Fate of the Fallen Woman in *Maggie* and *Sister Carrie*," Lawrence E. Hussman, Jr. takes a similar approach in his interpretation of Carrie Meeber, "who knows the agony of deprivation and knows that she must do anything to escape it, including using sexual favors for advancement" (100).

whom are concerned with providing for her needs.<sup>12</sup> "I don't just want what I need" (II, 34), is how Fanny summarizes her desire for "more." This insatiable desire propels and energizes Fanny's and Carry's struggles for independence, but the same desire does not ultimately "liberate" them. Rather it enchains them in the city's intricate network of power relationships.

As soon as Carrie and Fanny enter the city, they become linked to prostitution, not in the sense that they become literal prostitutes but in the sense that prostitution is inevitably projected, and imposed as a role, on the women who venture out into the city and who claim the street or the night for themselves. Bored by the pleasureless atmosphere of her apartment in Chicago, Carrie decides to go downstairs and "stand at the foot of the stairs" (36), where she is inevitably approached like a prostitute by a man. On fashionable Broadway Carrie discovers that "any one looking" at her and her friend Mrs. Vance "would *pick* Mrs. Vance for her raiment alone" (340; emphasis added). While Carrie herself uses the language of prostitution, without even being aware of it, Fanny takes pleasure in acting "as if we're like one of those" (I, 114). Here, Fanny's parodic mimicking of the role of prostitute takes on a rebellious, subversive edge, but her language is doubly ironic as it also anticipates her later need to appeal to lovers for money and parodically echoes the fact that later in the novel she is forced to recognize herself as a prostitute in these lovers' eyes.

<sup>12</sup> Also, Ellen Moers reminds us that Carrie is not starving and far from destitute, as she has two decent homes to go back to (*Two Dreisers*). It is only in *Jennie Gerhardt* that Dreiser describes a woman who metaphorically prostitutes herself because her family is in desperate need of money.

This ironic undercutting of female independence in the city also takes place in the realm of women's looking out at their new world. Fanny upsets conventions because, as her aunt puts it, "You always look people so brazenly in the face" (I, 97). Similarly, Carrie refuses to keep her eyes down and looks at Drouet, the man she has just met on the train, which prompts the following warning from Dreiser's narrator: "A clever companion--had she ever had one--would have warned her never to look a man in the eyes so steadily" (7). Carrie's gaze is not the gaze of Cixous' Medusa of which men are afraid ("Medusa" 255); it is not a look that "looks back from the place of the other" to disturb a sense of wholeness in those looked at. Unlike the Medusan look in which the female reclaims her subject status, the female gaze in *Sister Carrie* is impotent, blind, and waiting to be invested with the male desire. It gives access to the woman's body; it is the medium through which men can make Carrie yield, through which she will be seduced and turned into a "victim of his keen eyes" (222). Drouet and Hurstwood flood Carrie's eyes with their own emotions, just as the travelling salesman conquers the city by flooding it with his products. It is as a scopic master that Dreiser's male asserts his dominance, an act that ensures his survival, endurance and success in the city.

Jacques Lacan suggests that the gaze "I" encounter is "not a seen gaze, but a gaze imagined by me in the field of the Other" ("Anamorphosis" 84). In other words, Fanny recognizes her Otherness in the gaze of her lovers, and like those who look at her Fanny has often a problematic relationship to Otherness, as it is reflected in her deliberate arm's-length relationship with the chorus girls at the theatre and in her overt disgust with "the racial type" in Portugal (II, 220), indicators for her disgust with a part of herself. Fanny

Essler is in fact full of self-loathing; she often feels that she is ugly and growing old (e.g. II, 11). Also, the novel is crowded with scenes in which Fanny is shamed by the gaze of others, in which she becomes the object of "penetrating" and "piercing" gazes (e.g. II, 104, 107), gazes which often leave her annihilated and reduced to nothing. Trying to paint a picture under the "searching gaze" of Eduard Barrel, Fanny soon thinks of herself: "here I sit just like one of these genteel lady painters" (II, 105). It is not surprising that not much later she will give up painting altogether.

As Mark Selzer reminds us that realist fiction is "preeminently concerned with seeing" (111), so in Dreiser and Grove's big cities, gazes are not only omnipresent but are also explored as a sophisticated technique of power in individual relationships. In order to illustrate this idea of the city as a panoptic city jailer, in which everyone watches everyone else, I would like to recall Michel Foucault's theory of panopticism. In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault distinguishes between the dungeon, an archaic institution that conjures up darkness, invisibility and secrecy, and panopticism, which reverses the principles of the dungeon. Foucault argues that modern society is a panoptic society, ruled by the principle of Bentham's prison model, by the dream of absolute visibility, absolute legibility, and the power of the collective and anonymous gaze on each individual: "without any physical instrument other than architecture and geometry," panopticism "acts directly on individuals; it gives 'power of mind over mind'" (*Discipline* 206). Thus the ultimate effect of panopticism is self-policing; everyone becomes a self-supervisor.

Grove's and Dreiser's texts illustrate this contrast, this rupture between the ingenuity of the panoptic city, on the one hand, and the external,

inflexible eye that watches the dungeon, on the other. Dreiser and Grove locate the "dungeon" in the country, the small town, and the private domestic space, in which the individual gaze is the incestuous relationship with the family and the mirror. In a chapter aptly entitled "The Spendings of Fancy: Facts Answer with Sneers" (32-46), Dreiser also locates the dungeon in the dimly lighted shoe-factory where Carrie's enjoyment of bodily pleasure is not only suspended, but where her body is "tortured" in monotonous and menial work: "Her hands began to ache at the wrists and then in the fingers, and towards the last she seemed one mass of dull, complaining muscles, fixed in an eternal position and performing a single mechanical movement which became more and more distasteful, until at last it was absolutely nauseating" (42-43).

Grove's work starts out with Fanny in Pomeranian small-town Kolberg, where she finds herself in an almost literal dungeon, as she is locked up in her room by her father, who tries to prevent her from going to her lover and thus enacts the "Father's No" by imposing the laws of bourgeois respectability. Once in Berlin, Fanny's aunt, the maternal authority, becomes her "Kerkermeister" or prison master, who keeps her locked up in her store and is distrustful when Fanny wants to go out for a walk, very much like Carrie's maternal authority, Minnie Hanson, with whom Carrie boards in Chicago. Later in her New York apartment that Carrie shares with Hurstwood, she is isolated, and she stagnates; even after one year, she does not know anyone. Satisfying the most basic needs, these domestic dungeons give a sense of security to the women, but they are also dark, closed spaces that evoke stagnation, depression, a sense of being buried alive so that the body oscillates between two extremes, between lethargy and rebellion. Dreiser and Grove's

texts intersect to emphasize that the eye of these dungeon wards is not very effective and that such repressive power relationships are archaic. Although her father's tyranny inspires fear, Fanny easily manages to escape from her father's prison by jumping out of the window, (and although she loses her hat in the process, she does not lose much else). Carrie has even less trouble leaving the Hanson and the Hurstwood dungeons in Chicago and New York: she simply leaves little notes behind.

Dreiser and Grove juxtapose these dungeon spaces with the panoptic city, that is the public city-spaces: the streets, the cafés, the saloons, the theatres, and the hotels, spaces where the private becomes public and where life is imbued with pleasure, not repression. Not only is Fanny's relationship with Axel Dahl initiated on the street, many of the couple's intimacies are deliberately exhibited in public and draw the public's gazes: "As [Dahl] came into the café he went directly over to her, gave her a resounding kiss and fell on a second chair. ... The people in the café looked at the couple with amusement" (I, 127). The panoptic city is like the mythical Argus, endowed with hundreds of eyes, which never sleep and never tire. Private intimacies are shared with an audience of gazer; thus private pleasure is intensified and multiplied. For Fanny Essler the city is an open-ended space that means *Leben*, at the same time that she experiences the same city also as a space of subliminal, all-powerful control.

Both authors emphasize the architectural and spatial transformations that create the panoptic cityspace in which power relationships are multiplied and invested with pleasure, not with repression. *Sister Carrie* and *Fanny Essler* represent the city as a space in which the darkness of the dungeon is swept away by a flood of everlasting light, a space which conquers the black-



ness of the night with lamps, lanterns, and electricity. City lights welcome the newcomer to Dreiser's Chicago, and Fanny enthusiastically claims Berlin's bright night for herself. Chicago's best saloon, Fitzgerald and Moy, shines out "with a blaze of incandescent lights, held in handsome chandeliers" and refracted in the polished surfaces of the bar and the glassware (48). For the saloon customers, the city light is simply delight, but perversely the lighted city is also what creates social hierarchies. The "desire to shine amongst his betters" explains the popularity and success of "such a curious institution" as Fitzgerald and Moy's saloon, amidst whose sparks every customer receives a finely-tuned and -graded greeting from its manager, Hurstwood, a gesture which assigns a social hierarchy even to the socially prominent.

Dreiser's and Grove's Chicago, New York and Berlin use daylight to increase visibility by using glass in the city's architecture. The "architectonic deployment of glass," writes Gabriele Sterner, "was varied continually throughout the art nouveau period. Far from being limited to the construction of roofs and canopies, we find it in gallery windows, transparent facades, and above stairwells in arches like open umbrellas" (20). In *Sister Carrie* and *Fanny Essler*, the window is not only one of the dominant images, but both protagonists are often in proximity of windows, gaze through windows or even escape through windows.<sup>13</sup> In Dreiser's novel, as Philip Fisher points out, the windows create a "polarized world of inside and outside, actor and

<sup>13</sup> On her way to Chicago and later New York, Carrie gazes out of the train window (9), as she repeatedly gazes out of the windows of her different living spaces (12, 15, 77, 86, 174). Also, Fanny almost obsessively looks out of the window of her room in the beginning of the novel (I, 38, 47, 50) and makes her escape through the window of her father's house (I, 54). As in *Sister Carrie* characters sit by the window in restaurants and cafés (65), so do the characters in *Fanny Essler* (II, 71, 81, 89).

spectator, rich and poor" (*Hard Facts* 156), and June Howard confirms that the windows offer a location for the definition of the self and the Other (115).

While the city's glass architecture gives the appearance of social transparency, the appearance of breaking down walls and barriers, the windows in fact increase the invisible barriers between inside and outside, multiplying and intensifying the points of power in the city. As wage-seekers in the new cities, Carrie and Fanny are daunted by these big windows and the gazes they suspect behind, gazes which magnify their own sense of insignificance. Carrie only enters a store when she feels she is unobserved, and she is eager to disappear in the crowd, into the anonymity of the "not-to-be-seen," when she exits. Similarly, Fanny "stood in front of the stores not daring to go inside, and the longer she stood there, the more impossible the task became, for must not the people inside already have observed her for some time?" (I, 81). Like the prisoner in Bentham's Panopticon, who cannot see the supervisor but feels his omnipresence, Carrie does not understand the working of the city's power. For her, the city is "the mysterious city" (3); its streets are "wall-lined mysteries to her" (18), whose power networks escape her understanding. Fanny experiences similar feelings in Berlin: "A *dark perception* seemed to say that these people exercised some sort of *secret claim* on her, entertained expectations which she unwittingly did not fulfil, whereas she herself could not dare to voice her demands" (I, 67; emphasis added; 63-64 in the German text).

As the store windows increase the desire of those outside to be inside, by confronting them with their lack, their not having, their being less, so the panoptic city inevitably takes hold of the individual not through repression

and denial of the body--the more primitive strategies of the dungeon ward, but by making use of desire, by exploiting it, by tempting the victim into pleasurable submission. As Dreiser's narrator tells us:

The city has its cunning wiles, no less than the infinitely smaller and more human tempter. There are large forces which allure with all the soulfulness of expression possible in the most cultured human. The gleam of a thousand lights is often as effective as the persuasive light in a wooing and fascinating eye." (2)

The emphasis on seeing, the eye and the visual not only permeates the novel, but specular pleasure in *Sister Carrie* is a metonymic representation for the seductive power of the city, for the fact that modern power relations work through seduction rather than repression. But the transparency of the city's glass also becomes a metaphor for the illusory nature of desire itself, for the fact that desire is deeply rooted in a fantasy. The fact that glass has become so important in the city's architecture suggests that the city itself runs on, lives on, thrives on desire, illusion and fantasy, at the same time that it is inextricably interwoven in relations of power.

"A Pet of Good Fortune: Broadway Flaunts Its Joys" (331) is the title of the chapter that describes Carrie's settling into her New York flat, a title that also anticipates Carrie's later success in New York. Carrie's dreams eventually come magically true in this urban "Kingdom of Greatness" (321), when Carrie rises to fame as a Broadway actress, whose picture and name are multiplied seemingly *ad infinitum* over the big city. And yet, the narrative emphasizes that Carrie's spectacular success on stage is built on a very subliminal fantasy of power and pleasure for the individual male gazer in the audience. On stage, Carrie gives the male spectators the illusion that she is

"in need of protection" which immediately stirs up the desire "to ease her out of her misery by adding to his own delight" (205; 206). Angela Carter reminds us that this projection of female vulnerability was also Marilyn Monroe's ambivalent key to success on screen; she projected "the enigmatic image of irresistibility and powerlessness, forever trapped in impotence" (71). Also, the modern hetaira-actress, as Simone de Beauvoir has argued, "does not repudiate that passive femininity which dedicates her to man" (632); so Carrie's acting talents, according to the narrator, are based on the "passivity of soul," a soul which is "the mirror of the active world" (*Sister Carrie* 173). Carrie's face is "representative of all desire" (537) is how Carrie's last masculine "ideal," Bob Ames, puts it. But Carrie's gift of creating desire in those who look at her is ambivalent. Like Angela Carter's Monroe-like Hollywood actress, Carrie the Broadway actress also "sells, not the reality of flesh, but its image and so she makes her living, a successful but imaginary prostitute" (Carter 67).

It is thus that Carrie becomes a "celebrity, modern style" (Gerber "A Star" 15). When Carrie is on stage, men project different fantasies into her body; for each one she becomes something different, like the prostitute who is called on to become *any* feminine type her customer requires; like a porn-artist, she is detached from the desires she arouses in the male audience. But through this splitting of her identity in thousands of gazes, Carrie paradoxically also becomes frozen into the fictional, larger than life image of Carrie Madenda--the image of her fame and the fetish image of herself which she shares with her audience:

At Broadway and Thirty-ninth Street was blazing, in incandescent fire, Carrie's name. "Carrie Madenda," it read, "and the Casino Company." All the wet, snowy sidewalk was

bright with this radiated fire. It was so bright that it attracted Hurstwood's gaze. He looked up, and then at a large, gilt-framed posterboard, on which was a fine lithograph of Carrie, life-size. (546)

Here Dreiser inscribes the Pygmalion motif to give it a parodic twist. The stone picture, animated with magic, fire, and energy, seems to feed on Carrie's energies. In the end, Carrie is in danger of becoming lethargic, of losing her energy and her desire: "Unconsciously her idle hands were beginning to weary" (507). Also, the stone picture has become independent of its creators--Drouet who created Carrie's name (175) and Hurstwood who helped with a "subtle hand" to create her first success as an actress (189), so that the midwives of Carrie's career are now invited to consume the product they have helped create. And Hurstwood is not even allowed that position; he lacks the money for a theatre ticket and has to be content with looking at the advertisement.

While *Sister Carrie* implicitly critiques Carrie's imaginary prostitution, *Fanny Essler* draws satirical attention to a similar form of specular prostitution. Fanny is financially successful in her "portrayal of marble statues," images which freeze her movement and life into highly sexualized statuesque objects, such as "'Ariadne riding on the panther' and 'Venus chastising Cupid'" (I, 235). Like the city, she is a work of art who portrays living statues, and whose body, life and experiences are incorporated into her male friends' art. Her lover Nepomuk Bolle for example creates a *Gesamtkunstwerk*, with Fanny on a church-like bench and the light falling through the stain glass window (designed by Bolle) on Fanny's hands: "'Those hands!' Mr. Bolle whispered in a sonorous voice, 'Just look at those hands!' Fanny looked at her hands in amazement: they looked very pale next to the dark stained oak.

"Truly, Miss Essler,' Madame Consul said quietly, 'You have authentic Bolle-hands!'" (II, 25).<sup>14</sup> This incorporation of (or appropriation of) life into art was typical for the *Art Nouveau*-movement of the turn-of-the-century. According to Sterner's study on *Jugendstil*, the "aggressiveness of the movement reflects the artist's own aggressive feelings towards the dead, sterile historicism in design" (126). The deliberate "tackiness" of art nouveau was a conscious "assault on bourgeois taste" (Sterner 126), and yet in many ways *Art Nouveau* also re-inscribes old gender stereotypes.

Just as Else Baroness von Freytag-Loringhoven complained in her autobiography that Grove dismissed her writing of the "story of my childhood" with "ironical derision" and with shoulder shrugging contempt, so Fanny is not recognized as the artist she wants to be. She does not succeed as an actress, and her painting remains essentially dabbling that is easily dismissed by her male friends.<sup>15</sup> Like the author himself who designed the original cover for *Fanny Essler*, Fanny also works on book designs, although they never find their way in any publication. Her art is always aborted, is only measured against a "superior" male art. Fanny is not the artist she yearns to be, but is often presented as a prostituted work of art to be looked at and subjected to the sensual specular touch of every character in the novel as well as the narrator and the author. Although Grove satirizes the male artists who appropriate Fanny's *élan* and energy for their artistic productions,

<sup>14</sup> For a detailed discussion of this scene as a satire of *Neuromantik*, see E.D. Blodgett's *Configuration* 130-31.

<sup>15</sup> Eduard Barrel who recognizes that Fanny's art is a "Streben nach der letzten Verlebendigung der Detailformen" ironically teaches her to draw dead beetle legs and fly wings (409). Through his criticism, he eventually kills her art, as most of her other teachers have done before.

Grove's own transformations of Else's life-story also have the effect of making Fanny less of an artist, as well as of diminishing the artistic achievement that Else had on the stage or as a writer.

After undergoing many misadventures with various lovers and jobs, Fanny significantly "makes it" not as an artist, but as the consort of a rich lover. In her struggle to create a new identity for herself, she is often victimized because she insists on being what Angela Carter has polemically called the "good bad girl," who professes to take money only as a "gift," not as payment for sexual pleasure--a duplicitous convention that leaves her extremely vulnerable, since it allows her male lovers not only to exploit her sexually but to humiliate her at the same time. For most of her lovers, Fanny is a prostitute, albeit a special one that they need not pay because Fanny is reluctant to ask for money.<sup>16</sup> Like Carrie, Fanny also develops strategies of subversion and resistance in her relationships with men. Where Carrie verbally berates and then leaves Drouet once she has found a new lover in Hurstwood (only to leave Hurstwood, once he becomes a burden), so Fanny's often treats her lovers with an uncompromising and cold revenge for the humiliation she has suffered in the relationship. Not only does she drop lovers without blinking an eye, but she often confronts them with their own uselessness. Like the city, Carrie and Fanny leave male victims behind: Hurstwood commits suicide after Carrie leaves him in the city,<sup>17</sup> while Fanny's

<sup>16</sup> See for example Ehrhard Stein, who sees in her nothing but a prostitute, or Nepomuk Bolle who makes her feel like a prostitute when he does not volunteer but makes her ask for money.

<sup>17</sup> It is the female city that confronts Hurstwood with his "uselessness." As Philip Fisher puts it, "He is obsolete like a pair of shoes rather than aged like a man. He is a left-over and a scrap. The Bowery of New York is a collective heap of discarded men" (*Hard Facts* 175).

husband Eduard Barrel kills himself after Fanny takes off with her husband's best friend, Friedrich Karl Reelen.

Yet Fanny is not destructive but bursting with energy; she acts, she paints, she is interested in literature and critical discussions, and she is determined to live life to the fullest. The narrator describes her desire for *Leben* as "[e]ine ungeheure Lebenslust" (79), which has been translated into English as "an incredible lust for life" (I, 81). And yet, the German word "ungeheuer" literally translated means monstrous, unnatural, too much, connotations which describe how many characters (including the narrator) perceive Fanny. "Ungeheuer"--the word that Kafka chooses to characterize Gregor Samsa's metamorphosis into an insect (19)--is repeatedly applied to Fanny in the novel. She is playfully called "Ungeheuer" ("little monster" [I, 138]) by her aunt (154); she paints a picture of "the vast life" in Berlin (I, 60), "das Bild von dem ungeheuren Leben" (54), and her entrance into the city appears to Fanny as "ungeheuer erfolgreich" (62), an "enormous success" (I, 67).<sup>18</sup> Like the city, Fanny is perceived as a threat, as untamed energy and unnatural vivacity, which the males would like to direct, to channel and tame in order not to be conquered by it.

As Fanny's lovers attempt to stifle her capacity for self-representation, so Drouet and Hurstwood fail to recognize Carrie's protean potential, but can only see in her one single representation, one that is in relation only to them-

<sup>18</sup> Similarly, Fanny's courage ("Mut") is often given a negative twist in the novel. Repeatedly Fanny is linked to "Übermut" (57, 58, 65, 66, 70, 169 etc. in the German text), which the English text often translates by giving it the exclusively positive meaning of "high spirited." But "Übermut," like "ungeheuer," has a primarily negative connotation in German, implying a slippage into a dangerous situation (as in the German popular saying, "Übermut tut selten gut").



selves. Dreiser and Grove satirize their male characters by indicating how quickly Fanny and Carrie grow beyond their male lovers, become disillusioned with them and move on to new dreams. Beneath Dreiser's eulogy of the city and underneath Grove's tacit fascination with Berlin, their texts, albeit in different degrees, also present an implicit critique of the city. In the city's specular economy, women are allowed "to be," but only within the framework of a masculine structure, as art object rather than artistic subject.

In contrast to Dreiser, Grove by the end of the novel presents a view of the big city that aims at transcending its specular economy. For Fanny, Berlin becomes a new "Heimat," a new (maternal) home, a place to which she is loyal, for which she longs as she longs for her mother. Her last lover, Reelen, seems jealous of Berlin, and he travels with her from city to city, to Hamburg, to Paris, to Lisbon. Fanny feels a stranger in these cities in contrast to Reelen, who is "at home" in every single one. He imposes his own set of rules on every city, all the while Fanny yearns only for Berlin: "She couldn't be wrong about what she had felt in Berlin! But he placed no value on Berlin or on memories! He called it being sentimental" (II, 205).<sup>19</sup> In Lisbon, she finally dies, alone and homesick.

In Dreiser's city, this "maternal" quality of the city as home has been usurped by the "masculine" specular mode. New York connotes a momentary, fleeting life, without any attachments to the past, without any loyalties to past friends and family. Here, any notion of a maternal home has a nostalgic ring to it; it is evoked in the title, *Sister Carrie*, a title that suggests

<sup>19</sup> "Es konnte doch nicht unwahr sein, was sie in Berlin empfunden hatte! Aber auf Berlin und ihre Erinnerungen legte er keinen Wert! Das nannte er sentimental" (528).

a family really absent in the novel. As the *New World* metropolis, *New York* is linked to progress, expansion, growth and the future. In contrast, Grove's Berlin not only finds itself in the heart of the Old World but has a more than five hundred year old tradition, an umbilical cord that is never totally severed in the novel. Where Carrie is not just a survivor in the city but achieves a momentary specular triumph in New York, Fanny Essler dies, consumed by her own desire, far away from the city which, from a distance, seems like "Heimat."

### B. (Un)Dressing The New Woman

"One is not born a woman, but rather becomes, a woman," Simone de Beauvoir writes in *The Second Sex* (301), a point that is illustrated by *Fanny Essler* and *Sister Carrie*, as the title heroines undergo true metamorphoses which create their adult "femininity" in relationships of power. When arriving in Chicago, Carrie lacks in bodily "graces"; her hands are "almost ineffectual" and her feet, "though small, were set flatly" (3). But by the end of the novel Carrie has all the "intuitive" graces of a successful woman. Similarly, arriving in Berlin Fanny Essler is a very androgynous character with short hair and a very thin, anorexic body "without feminine curves," but then undergoes a transformation into adult "femininity." Not only does her clothing become "citified" (I, 153) in Berlin, but Fanny develops a "fuller figure" which makes her look more "feminine," and more like "a lady" (II, 143).

Michel Foucault reminds us that "it is not that the beautiful totality of the individual is amputated, repressed, altered by our social order, it is rather that the individual is carefully *fabricated* in it, according to a whole technique of forces and bodies" (*Discipline* 217; emphasis added). Dreiser's and Grove's texts illustrate that female bodies are not "naturally" given but are "fabricated" through clothing and fashion, as well as conventionalized body movements, which gain the status of "naturalness" through social practices. Carrie creates her body through conscious exercises, not so much by internalizing but by inscribing on her body the signs of what society recognizes as feminine "grace." Imitating the "graceful carriage" of the railroad treasurer's

daughter, Carrie "used her feet less heavily" (116); she purses her lips and gives her head a little toss and thus gains the first distinctions as an apprentice in the *école des femmes* of American society.

It is the narrator of *Sister Carrie* who tells the reader that "a woman should some day write the complete philosophy of clothing" (5), even suggesting that women have a "natural" affinity for clothing: "No matter how young, it is one of the things she wholly comprehends" (5).<sup>20</sup> Nevertheless, with men and women equally obsessed with clothing, the gender configuration in the realm of fashion in *Sister Carrie* and *Fanny Essler* is more complex than the simply binary gender division that Emile Zola presents in *Au Bonheur des Dames* (1883), where men are presented as the creators and sellers of fashion and women as the consumers.<sup>21</sup> Carefully dressed and defining themselves through the clothing they wear, Drouet and Hurstwood anticipate Clyde Griffiths in *An American Tragedy*, who denies his mother and sister the much needed financial help in order to buy new clothing for himself and his girlfriend. Reelen, travelling with carriages filled to the top with clothing, finds his double in Phil Branden in *A Search for America*, who arrives in Canada with "fourteen pieces of luggage," and "half a dozen overcoats" (15). And yet, Grove's male characters are usually presented in suits, coats or uniforms, while his description of female clothing is crowded with female slips, petticoats, and stockings. In Dreiser's and Grove's early fiction,

<sup>20</sup> Also Charles Drouet's love of clothing is called "feminine."

<sup>21</sup> For a discussion of the politics of fashion and consumerism in *Au Bonheur des Dames*, see Rachel Bowlby 66-82 and Margret Theobald 84-101; in *Sister Carrie*, see Bowlby 161, fn. 13.

becoming "feminine" means to become a wearer of clothing which emits sexual signs at all times.

While the men in *Fanny Essler* are usually fully dressed, Grove presents female characters who have an obsession with dressing and undressing, and in her association to "feminine" clothing, Fanny anticipates some of the female characters of Grove's later Canadian novels.<sup>22</sup> *Fanny Essler* gives much attention to the private bedroom and the female dressing room at the theatre, the latter soaked in sexuality. Joking about their male "souteneurs," the actresses satirically deflate this overt eroticism, especially in their disillusioned but also refreshingly wicked language, in their dialect, their vulgarity, and their curses against their male lovers: "'Those damn men!"; "'They're shits...all of them" (I, 187). This satiric weapon against the apparently all-powerful male "customers" is a linguistic strategy that Fanny, however, rejects for herself in order to show the world around her that she is more refined and "above" the common chorus girl.

And yet, while Fanny rejects these linguistic weapons of subversive resistance, she does not reject the signifiers of feminine sexualization. The

<sup>22</sup> Fanny Essler finds her doubles in *Settlers* in Ellen Amundson who doubles the masculine or androgynous side of Fanny and Mrs. Vogel who doubles the sexualized Fanny. Whereas Ellen is "clad like a man in sheepskin and big overshoes" (*Settlers* 21), her complementary opposite, Mrs. Vogel has a "plump body" and is clothed in a tight fitting dress: "Her waist showed a v-shaped opening at the throat which gave her--by contrast to other women--something peculiarly feminine; beside her, the others looked neuter" (29). But the split between austere masculinity and sensualized femininity is strongest in *The Yoke of Life*, where the following view of the female is filtered through the mind of Len Sterner (another of Grove's males with a negative sex obsession): "Fashion decreed skirts reaching scarcely below the knee. The world of women seemed to have gone mad with the ostentation of sex. In midwinter they wore almost transparent silk stockings; their busts rose like flowers from the calyxes of their furry wraps. Waists were of the filmiest kind, showing silk undergarments in the colours of the rainbow and betraying rather than concealing the breasts underneath (280-81).

sight of lace underwear and black silk stockings of one of the actresses--both paid for by one of her rich customers--arouses Fanny's desire to possess the same underwear and make her conclude that "her [own] underthings were plain and unmistakably bourgeois" (I, 191). Later, when her lover Ehrhard Stein wants to give Fanny a present, her only desire is for some silken slips.<sup>23</sup> If anything, Fanny has bought into what has become one of the popular myths of the twentieth century, namely that sex in any form means disruption and opposition and a break with bourgeois codes. Grove satirizes Fanny's eager complicity in her own sexualization by showing how much it is in tune with "bourgeois respectability." Earlier in the novel, it is respectable Mrs. Grünebusch, a widow and the friend of Fanny's bourgeois aunt in Berlin, who reveals in detail her husband's scopophilic obsessions: "He always stood at the bottom of the ladder and looked up at my lace panties. Ya know, I had to wear them. Nothin' was too expensive" (I, 103).

This motif of undressing women is problematic in *Fanny Essler*, in that it is explored not so much to reveal a naked body but to involve the reader in a partly satirized, but also partly complicitous voyeuristic pleasure of gazing at nudity. In his *Ways of Seeing*, John Berger draws our attention to the distinction between nudity and nakedness: "To be nude is to be seen naked by others and yet not recognized for oneself. A naked body has to be seen as an object to become nude. (The sight of it as an object stimulates the use of it as an object.) Nakedness reveals itself. Nudity is placed on display" (54). Granted, *Fanny Essler* presents a satire of female characters who

<sup>23</sup> It is noteworthy that *The Letters of Frederick Philip Grove* show the author's own obsession with underclothes. Numerous letters to his wife are crowded with references to his laundry, his shirts and underwear.

fantasize about prostitutes who "lie around naked on silk sheets with lace, and everthin' is pink" (I, 103) or who imagine "men kneeling before an altar, worshipping in intoxicating veneration" (104), but often these fantasies are also tantalizing and seductive as they appeal to the observer-reader's scopophilic and complicitous gaze.<sup>24</sup>

*Sister Carrie* complements the specular economy of *Fanny Essler* by turning its obsession with undressing around and having its male characters dressing women in moments saturated with pleasure and power. Drouet accompanies Carrie to the department store to fit her into new clothing, savouring one piece after the other, "feeling the set of it at the waist and eyeing it from a few paces with real pleasure" (85).<sup>25</sup> Drouet's pleasurable dressing of Carrie's body acts as a kind of foreplay to the sexual act itself. In Dreiser's fiction masculine specular pleasure is a synecdoche for masculine sexual pleasure; the phallic gaze is the first step in a sexual ritual that culminates in phallic penetration and "possession."

According to Foucault, the panoptic modality of power relies on "hierarchical surveillance," on perpetual assessment and classification" (*Discipline* 220) which is guaranteed through the anonymous, social gaze on the individual. When entering a Chicago department store for the first time, Carrie recognizes in the dismissive gaze of the shop girl "a keen analysis of

<sup>24</sup> In *An American Tragedy* Dreiser filters a similar sexual fantasy dressed in religious vocabulary through the eyes of Clyde Griffiths when he enters the "erotic temple" of the prostitutes (71). See also Angela Carter who notes a similarly ironic sacralisation of the female body in Sade's writing: "The female orifice is a shrine, a place of worship" (71).

<sup>25</sup> Similarly, in *Jennie Gerhardt*, Lester Cane fits out Jennie with the proper clothing, telling her: "I am going to show you what you can be made to look like" (169).

her own position" (25) and becomes immediately aware of her shortcomings and lacks, a recognition that, in turn, stirs up the desire to be in this shopgirl's "higher" position. In Dreiser's world the "fixing" of a person's identity takes place through the act of comparing; that is, identity is based on a system of difference, not on an innate, unchangeable identity. Carrie recognizes Drouet's higher position in the beginning by comparing his clothes to hers, as she later recognizes Hurstwood's superiority by comparing him to Drouet, whose shoes suddenly seem too shiny against Hurstwood's smoother leather. "The heart understands when it is confronted with contrasts," the narrator formulates (360), thus highlighting the principle on which the sense of individual identity is built. Also, the levels of the social hierarchy are differentiated from each other by mutual comparison, and the social hierarchy in *Sister Carrie* always already presupposes hierarchical surveillance.

Although Dreiser's conceptions of the human body and identity have often been attributed to his reading of Herbert Spencer and his interest in physiological theories,<sup>26</sup> Dreiser's understanding of human subjectivity goes far beyond Spencer and pseudo-science. The following passage from *Sister Carrie* deliberately draws on Spencerian and physiological discourses, but only to demonstrate that these discourses are limited in dealing with the complexities of subjectivities in a modern consumer culture:

A man's fortune or material progress is very much the same as his bodily growth. Either he is growing stronger, healthier, wiser, as the youth approaching manhood, or he is growing weaker, older, less incisive mentally, as the man approaching old age. (360-61)

<sup>26</sup> For a discussion of Dreiser and Social Darwinism, see Zanine, and Moers 133-152; for his usage of physiological and psychological theories, see Moers 159-69.



Constant comparison between [Hurstwood's] old state and his new showed a balance for the worse, which produced a constant state of gloom or, at least, depression. Now, it has been shown experimentally that a constantly subdued frame of mind produces certain poisons in the blood, called katastates.... The poisons ... inveigh against the system, and eventually produce marked physical deterioration. To these Hurstwood was subject. (362)

If one ignores the contextual framework of this quotation, it might seem that Hurstwood's bodily deterioration takes place independently from other bodies in society. However, Dreiser's narrative as a whole emphasizes that the recognition of changes within oneself takes place exclusively in intersubjective relationships. Self-recognition in *Sister Carrie* is possible only through comparison with others; even the mirror in one's own private room is only a replacement for the other's gaze. Since subjectivity in Dreiser's text is so closely linked to one's looks and appearance, it becomes paramount to take care of one's body even to the point of making it an object of almost autoerotic attention. Foucault has coined the term "bio-power" for this obsession with caring for the body that started historically in the bourgeoisie, which subjected the body to extensive scrutinies to keep it healthy, even turning it into a fetish to be cherished and loved. According to Foucault, this "bio-power was without question an indispensable element in the development of capitalism" (*History* 140-41).

As a successful manager of Fitzgerald and Moy's in Chicago, it is precisely his body that Hurstwood values: he has a stout constitution which in his society signifies the well-to-do, solid businessman, and he adorns and caresses this body with the best clothing and most careful attention. Comparing himself with others, he confirms the sense of his own importance.

Once in New York, in the big pond, Hurstwood does not plunge into absolute anonymity, as Ellen Moers (and the narrator) argue(s). On the contrary, his problem is that his identity has changed to that of thief and fugitive, a fact he cannot escape in a panoptic society. Hurstwood's problem is that at every turn he meets people from his past in whose gaze he reads what he has become. It is only logical that Hurstwood should become depressed about his new identity, and, as a result of the depression, lose interest in his body, which marks the beginning of his end. Dreiser stresses how quickly this body changes, how it becomes thinner, how Hurstwood starts looking sinister (375) and how he finally becomes physically sick (389), only to recognize this bodily deterioration in every gaze he encounters. While the caring for the body is invested with desire, pleasure and a *joie de vivre*, this process of bodily disintegration is accompanied by depression and leads to Hurstwood's suicide.

Although Hurstwood's fate anticipates Foucault's argument that the human body is not naturally given but is constructed through cultural practices, *Sister Carrie* makes us question the simple binary division Foucault makes between an archaic retributive law and a modern norm that is committed to bio-power and the preservation of life. *Sister Carrie* demonstrates that the norm is not necessarily less vicious but that it is clearly more effective than the less flexible judicial apparatus. In fact, the norm is almost demonic in its capacity to infiltrate and inhabit the human mind and body. As a victim of normative practices, Hurstwood is co-opted not only into acquiescing to, but into carrying out, his own destruction.

Although the desire to take care of the body seems to be equally strong in male and female, it is the female protagonists in *Sister Carrie* and

*Fanny Essler* for whom clothes become more important than eating. After becoming Drouet's mistress, Carrie "could possibly have conquered the fear of hunger and gone back" to a life of hard work, "but spoil her appearance?--be old-clothed and poor-appearing?--never!" (112). *Fanny Essler* draws even more explicit attention to the compulsive nature of Fanny's shopping. Fanny "only lived on coffee, bread and butter" (II, 9), but at the same time is tormented by the thought that "she still didn't have a silk petticoat" (II, 9). Clothes on display appeal to Carrie's and Fanny's desire and seduce them: "'My dear,' said the lace collar [Carrie] secured from Partridge's, 'I fit you beautifully; don't give me up.' 'Ah, such little feet,' said the leather of the soft new shoes; 'how effectively I cover them. What a pity they should ever want my aid'" (111). This animation of the clothes with seductive voices is a clever technique to emphasize how much they are invested with Carrie's desire. For Fanny, clothing behind the display windows inevitably has the same effect: "At that point a pair of dark red matt leather gloves with mother-of-pearl buttons and light grey stitching caught her eye. She was electrified: this was something she *must* have" (II, 11). She impulsively buys the gloves, not only to recognize after the purchase that she has spent her last money but also to discover that once the desired object has become a possession it ceases to be desirable: "as soon as she had got outside she was no longer happy with her purchase" (II, 11). Very much like the sexually frustrated compulsive female shoppers in Zola's *Au Bonheur des Dames* Fanny's compulsive shopping for clothing seems rooted in a sensual desire, which, however, leaves her as unsatisfied as the sexual act itself.

Jacques Lacan reminds us that desire is by nature insatiable and self-perpetuating, unlike the instinctual needs, such as hunger and thirst, which

can be easily satisfied once the proper object is found. According to Lacan, desire is not innate as instinctual needs are, but is a cultural phenomenon that has its ultimate roots in a fantasy and therefore distinguishes itself from need by its "paradoxical, deviant, erratic, eccentric, even scandalous character" (*Écrits* 286). Laplanche and Pontalis have succinctly summarized Lacan's position by making the following distinctions: "Need is directed toward a specific object and is satisfied by it. Demands are formulated and addressed to others; where they are still aimed at an object, this is not essential to them, since the articulated demand is essentially a demand for love. Desire appears in the rift which separates need and demand; it cannot be reduced to need since, by definition, it is not a relation to a real object independent of the subject but a relation to a phantasy" (483). Desire is transformed into innumerable demands without ever exhausting itself, a phenomenon that has become the basis of the success of modern consumer capitalism. Capitalist consumer economy creates continually new, desirable objects for its customers, which, however, will never be able to "fulfill" the customer completely and thus in fact perpetuate the desire for buying, perpetuate the chase for the next object that gives the illusion of being the ultimate key to satisfaction. It is in this sense that capitalist economy is built on desire.

Although it is desire which propels Fanny forward in her picaresque journey, Grove's narrator is suspicious of desire itself: Fanny buys out of a sense of pure boredom or despair, and simply jeopardizes her own situation, perpetuating the vicious circle of being without money and having to look for support. Grove's satire furthermore links Fanny's desire deliberately to a fantasy--the quest for the elusive fairy tale "prince." At the same time *Fanny Essler* also satirizes the fact that Fanny, who desires clothes as fetichized

consumer objects, becomes herself a fetishized object to be consumed by others.

Grove emphasizes that Fanny's desires are so strong and overwhelming as to become almost a torture: "Her longing had almost changed into despair. ... It was almost as if she sensed that her deep-rooted longing--a longing from which all other feelings, including her love of animals, stemmed--that this longing never could be satisfied" (I, 37). It is interesting that Grove uses the term "longing" ("Sehnsucht" 27) rather than Lacan's favourite terms "wish" or "desire" (*Wunsch, Begierde, Begehren*). "Longing" gains significance in Jane Gallop's (re)reading of Jacques Lacan's theory: "Man's desire will henceforth be linked by law to a menace; but woman's desire will legally cohabit with nostalgia: she will not be able to give up her desire for what she can never have (again)," Gallop writes (*Reading Lacan* 146). For Gallop, this nostalgia is grounded in a longing for the lost mother, "the mother as womb, homeland, source, and grounding for the subject" (148). Since the mother (as homeland) is lost forever, the "subject is hence in a foreign land, alienated" (148).

Gallop's Lacanian reading can be applied to Fanny's desire. Not only is Fanny's mother absent in the novel, but the novel is framed by Fanny's memory of her mother, a memory that is always accompanied by her desire to *return* to Berlin--"*Back to Berlin*" (I, 40; emphasis added), "*Wieder nach Berlin*" (31)--as if it were a home. Each time, this nostalgic desire to "return" is expressed in opposition to the dominating male figures in Fanny's life: the first time it is her father who wants to keep her in Kolberg, her "Vaterstadt" (54), and the second time it is her lover, Reelen, who wants to get her away from Berlin. Thus Grove inscribes Fanny's "nostalgic" desire (for her mother

and Berlin) as a deeply subversive force that becomes the root of her rebellion against masculine tyranny. At the same time *Fanny Essler* also confirms the Lacanian point that desire is "an offshoot of that part of need which 'finds itself alienated'" (Gallop 149). Although her desire is for Berlin, once in Berlin, Fanny often feels out of place; although her sense of identity is connected with Berlin (and her mother), her sense of identity in Berlin is highly precarious. It appears that the more Fanny's feels the splits and contradictions of her subjectivity, the more she feels the need to ground this subjectivity by yearning for a maternal home, for a space of origin (that she will never be able to recover).

The treatment of desire in *Sister Carrie* is somewhat different. In many ways, Dreiser's main narrative voice celebrates desire as that which rescues Carrie. Even in the end of the novel, Carrie's newly awakening desire indicates a hope that she may overcome her lethargy and renew the cycle of activity and growth: "Though often disillusioned, she was still waiting for that halcyon day when she should be led forth among dreams become real" (557). Walter Michaels has argued that Carrie's "insatiable" body is "the body of desire in capitalism" ("Response" 169). It is her desire that makes Carrie survive in her society, Michaels argues, while Hurstwood, who has stopped desiring and only lives to fulfill his basic needs, finally dies. But this interpretation of the female body as a representation of capitalist desire glosses over the gender configuration of the microcosmic power play that regulates the economy of desire in *Sister Carrie*. In *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel* (1965) René Girard has suggested the model of "triangular desire" to indicate that desire and the object of desire are never directly linked but are mediated by a third agent, a model or a rival. It is this mediation of others in

directing desire that creates relationships of power. Discussing the *nouveaux magasins* in Zola's *Au Bonheur des Dames*, David Bell points out that "in the realm of fashion the subject's needs and desires are determined by a "collective other" (112): "the individual subject never buys a fashion commodity for its intrinsic worth or usefulness but because that commodity has been designated as desirable by the Other" (112-13).<sup>27</sup>

Underneath its eulogy of desire, Dreiser's narrative presents a second, more critical voice by emphasizing that Carrie's desire for clothes is not her "own" desire but is always already mediated in her society's power structures. In *Sister Carrie* it is the male characters who play the role of mediators by initiating the protagonist into the realm of fashion. On the train into Chicago, it is Drouet's discourse that insinuates all the objects that will become desirable for Carrie: clothing, the theatre, the crowds (6). Drouet's cliché that Carrie reminds him of some popular actress (6) not only becomes a desirable goal but also becomes Carrie's identity later in the novel. Insisting "upon her good looks" (112), Drouet, like a true Pygmalion lover, quickly becomes "a good judge" and "a teacher" for Carrie the female novice; he "went on educating and wounding her, a thing rather foolish in one whose admiration for his pupil and victim was apt to grow" (113). The narrator's language exposes the relationship of power built up between the two lovers, significantly without criticizing this power relation *per se*, but even suggesting ways of how it might be even more productive if it could be carried out on a

<sup>27</sup> Thus the consumer "abdicates individuality and hears only the voice of the Other," who becomes "an almost unquestioned authority" (Bell 117). In Zola's work it is the clever "ladies' man" Mouret, who has invented the fashion machinery, whereby he awakens the desires of the bourgeois women, who in turn provide him with the money that he desires.

more subliminal level. Drouet "could not see that it would be better to make her feel that she was competing with herself, not others better than herself" (113), the narrator argues and thus advocates a principle of manipulation (and normalization) that has become common practice in modern advertisement.

According to Michaels, Drouet's "nonmimetic appreciation of the 'fine stepper' produces in Carrie, for Carrie, a 'desire to imitate her'" ("Response" 169). Drouet holds up models which indicate that Carrie is "lacking," and as a result of a newly born desire "to improve" she imitates those women that Drouet points out to her as models and thus inscribes Drouet's model of judging on her body. But voyeurism is not really an end in itself for Drouet, as Michaels argues it is. In his role of "ladies' man," Drouet represents himself in the long series of those women he seduces, and looking is the first step of this masculine form of self-representation by sexual appropriation and accumulation, so that the archetypal capitalist activity is linked, not so much to the female body, but to the Don Juan masculinity in the novel. This also explains the strong, very genuine interest Drouet has in seeing Carrie "improve": every time she develops a "new" face and a "new" body, she continues to constitute a new object of seduction for Drouet, and thus allows him to re-constitute himself as an eternal seducer-appropriator through her. Dreiser's main narrative voice does not criticize this masculine form of "self-representation" but celebrates it. Drouet, we are told, "would remain thus young in spirit until he was dead" (137). Drouet needs Carrie to represent himself, just as Carrie "thrives" socially by inscribing on her body what he points out to her as "feminine" models, a pattern that illustrates Foucault's point that individuals are always in a position of simultaneously undergoing



and exercising power, as it illustrates Foucault's point that power is not essentially repressive, but works through pleasurable seduction.

Grove gives the description of specular power relationships a more explicitly critical treatment. Like Carrie, Fanny undergoes a pleasurable metamorphosis in her looks: she becomes "großstädtisch" (174-5), "citified" (I, 153), as she becomes submerged in the big city's scopic economy.

And if she came to a display window in which there were large mirrors she would stop and look at herself and try to see herself as a stranger would see her. And each time she was surprised all over again: this was Fanny Essler? (II, 8; in the German text 282)

Not only has Fanny's own gaze been replaced by an internalized "stranger's" gaze, the reflection she sees and falls in love with is literally in the place of the commodified object in the display window. Here, the capitalist economy of desire not only seduces women into enjoying their own "fabrication" as specular objects of art, but it even seduces women into experiencing female "Selbstständigkeit" in their being seen, in their being a specular object for others. In her study on consumerism in Zola, Dreiser and Gissing, Rachel Bowlby emphasizes how much this pleasure of female looking at herself is really subjection: "It was above all to women that the new commerce made its appeal, urging and inviting them to procure its luxurious benefits and purchase sexually attractive images for themselves. They were to become in a sense like prostitutes in their active, commodified self-display" (11).

Propelled forward in her search for the elusive fairy prince, Fanny finds her masculine pseudo-ideal in Friedrich Karl Reelen, the rich archeologist who wants her to reach the pinnacle of "femininity." In long

dresses, Fanny's body "achieves" the statuesque look, and on Reelen's advice she also transforms her formerly "boyish" hairstyle:

She now wore her not very full-bodied but curly dark blond hair tied back loosely, without a part, so that both her ears, in which she wore two costly pearls, were left exposed; and the large knot that in part consisted of a wide false bun to back her own hair, hung loosely from the middle of the back of her head and reached far down to the nape of the neck, which set off the face by adding a full frame of hair around her shoulders when seen from the front. (II, 212)

The arrangement of her hair as a deliberate frame for her face reinforces the impression of Fanny as a beautiful picture. But the new hairstyle also corresponds very closely to what Ursel Lang has analyzed as the feminine hair-model ordained by the fascists in Hitler Germany, thirty years later: "Some women have their hair waved in careful ridges, kept well in order. The face, and above all the forehead, is always completely uncovered" (100). Thus Fanny carries the signs of her relationship with this tyrannical "god" imprinted on her body, as Fanny's hairstyle, clothing and body language reflect Reelen's obsession with discipline and self-control. Reelen, very much like Drouet, "corrects" Fanny's behaviour and "helps" her set new goals to "improve herself." But once involved in a relationship with Reelen she feels very soon like wearing a corset (II, 212) and resists more and more Reelen's project of turning her into a perfect wife for himself.

Douglas Spettigue opposes Fanny's "animal vitality" to Reelen's artificiality and convention ("Master" 59), although at first Fanny is not really opposed to Reelen, but is complicitous with him, in that she does not reject his "superior" standards. Eager to be linked to somebody who is so obviously of a "superior race," Fanny is not put off but drawn in by Reelen's perfect

dress, his absolutely controlled body language, and his disciplined speech. Reelen's "artificiality" becomes a means of secret communion by which Fanny and Reelen construct themselves as "superior" against the conventional petit bourgeois world that Fanny lives in.<sup>28</sup>

But while Pygmalion-Drouet thrives on Carrie's "improvements," Reelen, in contrast, is obsessed with Fanny's lacks:

She knew that she had looked her best last night. ... She hardly ever turned around anymore to stare at somebody interesting. She never smoked now, except where he would allow it. She no longer crossed her legs when they were in company, and she controlled herself in so many other ways. But sometimes she still forgot certain things. ... No longer could she ever just talk freely and enjoy herself. She always had to remember that even though these people were friendly toward her, they would laugh behind her back, and so she embarrassed him. (II, 202)

Here, we might ask, as Fanny does, why, if Reelen really wanted the "perfect" wife, did he not marry one of his "statuesque" lady friends? The answer is that Reelen can only represent himself as "complete" by defining Fanny as "lacking"; she becomes quite simply his "Other," his negative mirror image, which explains why Reelen's obsession is not with her change and "improvement" but with her flaws. Hélène Cixous' Hegelian gender critique is very appropriate to describe Fanny's relationship with Reelen. Cixous writes: "We know the implied irony in the master/slave dialectic: the *body* of what is strange must not disappear, but its force must be conquered and returned to the master" ("Sorties" 70).

<sup>28</sup> See, for example, Fanny's complicity with Reelen's arrogance during the supper at the boarding house in Berlin (II, 178-81). Fanny rejoices when Reelen manages to silence the other guests.

If Fanny is to be anything at all, then Reelen wants her to be his creation (cf. Spettigue "Master" 52). Defined by him, her past is to be ignored. It is precisely this sense of being turned into Reelen's creation that prompts Fanny's stubborn resistance, just as Carrie resists through silence, lying, and subversive plans of severing her relationship with Drouet, when she discovers that he is incapable of really understanding her. Fanny embarrasses Reelen in public through her mistakes and her moods, which remind him that she cannot be absolutely appropriated, as she continually disrupts his scheme of order.<sup>29</sup> But Fanny's mistakes also present a target through which Reelen maintains his dominance in this relationship because they indicate that his "educational" process has to be intensified. This pattern whereby Fanny's resistance turns around against her illustrates Foucault's point that there is no power relationship without resistance, but that this resistance is not outside but is in fact part of the power relationship itself. Fanny's "escape" into her past and her longing for her mother are subversive because Reelen wants her to forget her past, but her memories of her past also reaffirm his dominance because they illustrate how much she has "risen" socially through his help. Her stubborn mood vis-à-vis his self-composed politeness is clearly a resisting act but also reveals her immaturity and ineffectiveness in dealing with him.

Comparing himself to the sea-gulls on their journey to Lisbon, Reelen's reaction to the animals is one of self-recognition: "*They can live*

<sup>29</sup> In the style of free indirect discourse, Fanny herself thinks of her attitude in terms of "Trotz" (527, 529, 530), a word that denotes resistance ("obstinacy" [II, 204]), but like "Übermut," this word also has a twist into the negative in that it implies an infantile obstinacy. "Trotz" is also a strategy Fanny uses in relationship with her father (9).

alone,' he said, '... just as I can,'" while Fanny shudders: "she couldn't fly alone" (II, 219). Grove satirizes this sense of absolute self-reliance, by demonstrating that Reelen is as much a "Schablone" as the other male characters in the novel. He is not outside the hierarchy that constructs human beings but is as much constructed by hierarchical differences as the other characters in the novel. The only difference is that he, like Carrie, finds himself at the top of the hierarchy, which does, however, not mean that he is in absolute control. In Foucault's words, the "summit doesn't form the 'source' or 'principle' from which all power derives ... The summit and the lower elements of the hierarchy stand in a relationship of mutual support and conditioning" (*Power* 159). Once at the top of the social hierarchy, Reelen and Carrie Meeber, do not constitute a centralizing power, they simply become models to be imitated by others, while they themselves are perfect imitations and not really autonomous self-creators, as Reelen claims he is.

Not only does Fanny refuse to be stereotyped (Blodgett "Ersatz Feminism" 33) but, unlike Carrie, Fanny is a true "ex-centric" in the sense that she never fully belongs to any social group into which she is initiated. She never becomes a "centre" but always stays at the margins of each group, which becomes her favourite locus of resistance. Although she accepts a good part of the dominant masculine ideology, Fanny resists the definition that social "centres" inevitably seek to impose. In both novels, becoming more "feminine," is linked to a rising "fortune line," but also to circles of repetition, indicating that Carrie and Fanny never truly break out but always

return to the same power structures.<sup>30</sup> As they are elevated to the pinnacles of femininity, both heroines continue to upset conventions, but their *élan* and energy, as well as their resistance and subversiveness, are always in danger of being appropriated by, and in danger of serving, the dominant patriarchal power structures they set out to subvert.

<sup>30</sup> William Freedman explains *Sister Carrie's* structural circularity as an expression of the "unavoidable futility of [Carrie's striving]" (385). Douglas Spettigue applies a similar reading to *Fanny Essler*, arguing that the structural emphasis of the novel is on the eternal round, on unresolved repetition, or what Northrop Frye has called "ironic bondage": "the blocking force remains blocking, the hero never breaks through" ("Master" 62).

### C. Power and the Sexual Confession

Just as Fanny Essler and Carrie Meeber search for new ways of living, they also search for new voices to express their new feelings, experiences and sexualities. In many ways they resist in power relationships by manipulating language. "Love is all a woman has to give" (208), Carrie says in her role as Laura in her first amateur performance, thus articulating a cliché that seduces both Hurstwood and Drouet, but that is exposed for what it is to the reader, who knows that Carrie is deliberately playing at what she is not. After all, she has just proved in her relationship with Drouet that it is not traditional "love" that she gives him. Playing a harem girl later in New York Carrie draws attention to herself, when she steps out of the chorus to tell the visier: "I am yours truly" (474). Thus, by speaking her own words which clearly digress from the original script, while ironically acknowledging an illusory power relationship, Carrie gives her words a satirical effect. Carrie manages to steal the audience's laughter from the powerful "visier," which signifies that for the first time Carrie has become a "somebody" in front of the audience. She has gained an identity different from the rest of the chorus by challenging the conventions of speaking and also by challenging the "visier" under the guise of humbleness.

And yet, in many ways, Carrie's and Fanny's discourses of the "new woman" are problematic, as their language often acts more to entrap than to "liberate" these women. It is above all the temptation to "confess" who and what they are, the temptation to relate their new experiences in a language of

"truthtelling," that prevents a female "liberation" and that helps to perpetuate traditional power relationships. Both narratives not only demonstrate Michel Foucault's point that "modern man [sic] has become a confessing animal" but they also draw attention to Foucault's point that the confession inevitably establishes relationships of power in which "the agency of domination does not reside in the one who speaks (for it is he who is constrained), but in the one who listens and says nothing" (*History* 62). Foucault writes:

The confession is a ritual of discourse in which the speaking subject is also the subject of the statement; it is also a ritual that unfolds within a power relationship, for one does not confess without the presence (or virtual presence) of a partner who is not simply the interlocutor but the authority who requires the confession, prescribes and appreciates it, and intervenes in order to judge, punish, forgive, console, and reconcile; ... [a ritual which] produces intrinsic modifications in the person who articulates it: it exonerates, redeems, and purifies him; it unburdens him of his wrongs, liberates him, and promises him salvation. (*History* 61-62)

In a recent study Rita Felski has pointed out that much of women's writing takes the form of the confession and often draws on the conventions of the diary or the autobiography: "Autobiography has played a central role in contemporary women's writing, raising a number of questions regarding the value and limitations of this trend toward self-disclosure" (86). This impulse to confess is strong for women (and for anyone in a marginal position) because it will allow them to assert themselves as "positive" subjects, to demand the freedom to write like women, to reclaim their history, and, to be a "somebody." But this speaking of a woman's identity is also "a normalizing process by which one is classified, situated in the great table of resemblances, grounded," as Mary Lydon puts it in her Foucaultian critique of confessional practices (127).



*Sister Carrie* starts with such a female "confession." It is the travelling salesman Charles Drouet, an expert in "loung[ing] familiarly over the counter and ask[ing] some leading questions" (5), who plays the role of benevolent confessor, when he meets Carrie on the train to Chicago. He quickly manages to procure her address, an act which Dreiser embeds in a discourse of power: "Now she felt that she had yielded something--he, that he had gained a victory. ... Already he took control in directing the conversation" (8). At their second chance meeting in Chicago, the same questioning-confession pattern is repeated to reveal the truth about Carrie's miserable situation, a confession once extracted prompts Drouet to switch from questions to clear discursive imperatives: "Let me help you. You take some of my money" (68) and "Get yourself some clothes" (69).<sup>31</sup>

This confessional question/answer pattern is also what gives Fanny's first lover in Berlin access to her body: "Tell me the whole story," Axel Dahl says (I, 74), and "Fanny started to tell him everything" (I, 75). She lays open how much money she has (I, 75), gives him insight into her past, her desires, her seduction by the Baron in Kolberg (I, 75), while her new acquaintance gazes deeper and deeper into the "secrets" of her life and prompts her revela-

<sup>31</sup> Later on Hurstwood's plays the same question/answer game when seducing Carrie. He becomes "master of the situation" when she confesses that she is not satisfied with her life. At that point he is "determined to make her confess an affection for him" (137). Where a reversal in the power relationship occurs, as it does in the marriage of George Hurstwood with his wife Julia, it is accompanied by a reversal in the question-confession pattern. After Hurstwood has become infatuated with Carrie, it is Julia who asks the questions in order to elicit the sexual confession: "Where were you last night?", "Who were you driving with on Washington Boulevard?" (238) and Hurstwood realizes with dismay that her manner is "as if she were already master" (239). Julia is determined to make him confess his dark secrets--his extramarital relationship with another woman, a secret which indeed becomes her tool to make him comply to her wishes.

tions with further questions: "What sort of a baron is this?", "And what did he want?", "You didn't actually...?" (I, 75). According to Dreyfus and Rabinow's reading of Foucault's theory, there is a curious link of power and pleasure in the sexual confession; the person confessing is seduced by "all this careful attention, this caressing extortion of the most intimate details, these pressing explorations" (173).

How much this confession is tied into the power relationship is revealed when after the confession Axel claims Fanny for sexual intercourse because, he argues, she had done it with the Baron as well. He has become the interpreter of her secret confession imposing his own and society's view on her, namely that once virginity has been renounced, the woman loses the right to decide over her body. Here again is the rapid switch from questions to imperatives: "Now don't be stupid," Axel says, after which "she let him do with her as he pleased" (I, 81). The fact that Fanny accepts Axel's logic and dominance so quickly makes one wonder how much Fanny has really distanced herself from what she earlier dismissed as the old bourgeois ideas about seduction and dishonour (cf. I, 46).<sup>32</sup>

In *Fanny Essler*, pleasure shifts from the pleasure of the sexual act to the pleasure of transforming the sexual act into discourse, a pleasure that Grove's narrative exposes and satirizes as *ersatz*-pleasure that feeds on and

<sup>32</sup> Right after her sexual initiation with Baron von Langen, Fanny realizes that "she had done something that 'dishonoured' her" (I, 46) but "she did not feel sullied" (47), which suggests that she rejects the verdict of her society. Another discursive element that Drouet and Axel exploit to their advantage in their seduction of the women is by evoking a relationship which normally makes sexual relations a taboo. When procuring a room for Carrie, Drouet tells her: "Now, you're my sister" (80), when not much earlier he had referred to her as "a daisy" (60) and "a peach" (54) when talking to men as if showing off an absent trophy. Axel calls Fanny "lad" and even refers to her with the pronoun "he," which suggests an asexual friendship.

reproduces hierarchical gender relations. Like her earlier sexual contacts with men, Fanny's sexual contact with her husband Eduard Barrel leads to frustration: "'But I don't feel anything,' she sobbed" on her wedding night (II, 121). As a result, Fanny and Eduard spend whole nights talking and analyzing her frustration: "So it came to pass that this couple who could not achieve a physical union found themselves in such a state, an almost feverish logic, as a result of their nightly theorizing" (II, 141). As Eduard "suchte sie zu trösten, zu vertrösten" (424),<sup>33</sup> this discursive pleasure feeds her desire but eternally defers satisfaction.

While married to Eduard Barrel Fanny falls passionately in love and desires physically her husband's friend, Friedrich Karl Reelen. She feels privileged to have a husband to whom she can confess this love and who obliges her desires and makes sure that Reelen will be present every evening to entertain her: "It really was very nice of Eduard to let her tell him all these things! How would other men have reacted!" (II, 171). Despite the torture of their lives together, Fanny and Eduard share a sensual pleasure in discussing their relationship and her "secret" sexual passion for Reelen, a passion that Eduard does not suppress. On the contrary, he fuels and channels it to his own advantage, because it allows him to maintain his relationship both with Fanny and with his friend Reelen.

Foucault has analyzed such discursive sexual pleasures as "the pleasure of knowing that truth, of discovering and exposing it, the fascination of seeing it and telling it, of captivating and capturing others by it, of confiding it in secret, of luring it out in the open--the specific pleasure of the true

<sup>33</sup> While the word *trösten* means "to comfort her, to console her" (II, 121), *vertrösten* means putting off (even with empty promises).

discourse on pleasure" (*History* 71). Fanny's sexual truth-telling is not an isolated practice but belongs to a larger social dissemination of procedures of confession. To quote Foucault: "Campe, Salzmänn, and especially Kaan, Krafft-Ebing, Tardieu, Molle, and Havelock Ellis carefully assembled this whole pitiful, lyrical outpouring from the sexual mosaic. Western societies thus began to keep an indefinite record of these people's pleasures" (*History* 63-64). Listening to Fanny's sexual confessions and interweaving them with the contemporary discourses on sexuality, Eduard finds the perfect tool to define Fanny's identity. By adopting a psychoanalytic discourse Eduard convinces Fanny of his telling the truth about her state: "She believed him when he told her that she was sick" (II, 141), which in turn gives him the power to suggest methods for a cure. In his analysis she becomes a psychopathological creature who has to be sent to the sanatorium in order to be treated for her "disorder" by having her uterus massaged.

While Fanny secretly accuses Eduard of her sexual problems, and later imposes her own psychoanalytic argument, namely that Eduard is a "half-man" because he has given all his energy to his art, she nevertheless accepts the fact that it is she who needs treatment. Here Grove's text is very evocative of Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *The Yellow Wallpaper* (1892) in which a doctor-husband analyzes his wife and orders a rest cure that ultimately drives her into madness. But while Gilman's text criticizes the doctor's analysis as a complete misreading of the state of mind of his wife, Grove's is only in part critique, as the narrator is in "secret communion" or at least partially complicitous with the amateur psychoanalyst and husband Eduard when he imposes his interpretation on Fanny.

Throughout the novel, the narrator appears to play the role of amateur psychoanalyst himself, who sets the stage so that Fanny can speak

her (sexual) self into being. The novel starts out with a focus on Fanny's daydreams which she experiences seemingly in free association on her *chaise longue* with the narrator as an apparently impartial and objective analyst looking over her shoulder and "listening" to her sexual fantasies as they pass Fanny's half-conscious mind in free indirect discourse. It is the image of the sexually insatiable woman that is projected on Fanny in this novel, both by the male characters but also by the narrator, and to a certain degree, it is an image that Fanny promotes herself. Just as the Baroness Else von Freytag-Loringhoven identifies her younger self with her "sexattraction" (*Autobiography* 46) and confesses that the "enlargement of experience--knowledge--personality--was with me reachable only through sex" (64), so Fanny perceives her own subjectivity as inextricably interwoven with her sexuality.

If *Fanny Essler* satirizes the male characters' obsessive sexualization of Fanny, it also satirically exposes Fanny's own complicity in this process, especially through her language. The language in which Fanny describes her sexual initiation is very telling: "Sie hatte nur gewußt, wenn ich jetzt gehe, so tue ich etwas Entscheidendes, etwas was mich von allem abtrennt, das ich bisher war, und dann kommt, kommt es; das Ungeheure, das Geheimnisvolle, das, was alles in ihr lösen mußte, was alles erlösen mußte; das Geheimnis des Daseins würde ihr offenbart" (13).<sup>34</sup> In Fanny's language ("erlösen" and "offenbaren"), the sexual act takes on a religious, even an apocalyptic quality,

<sup>34</sup> "She had only known: if I go to him now, I'll be doing something crucial, something that will separate me from all that has gone before, that I previously was, and then it'll happen, it'll happen, that immense something, that mystical something that would have to release everything within her, which would save her: the mystery of being would be revealed to her" (I, 26).

an inflated language that has a satiric effect, especially in the light of the frustration she experiences in the sexual act itself. At the same time, the decision to be sexually active is a decision through which Fanny consciously defines, creates and proudly affirms herself as an active subject ("wenn *ich* jetzt gehe, so tue *ich*"). And yet, in the middle of the same sentence, the grammatical, speaking subject ("ich") is displaced by the gender neutral "es" (it), the "Other," the subconscious, which disrupts her sense of (a unified) self: the "ich" of Fanny's sentence turns into a thing of the past before the sentence is even complete ("das *ich* bisher war"). "Es" is unnamed and unnameable in Fanny's discourse but it is personified as "das Ungeheure," a word that accompanies Fanny like an epithet throughout the novel.

Foucault reminds us that "one of the first to be 'sexualized,' was the 'idle' woman. ... Thus there emerged the 'nervous' woman, the woman afflicted with 'vapors'; in this figure, the hysterization of woman found its anchorage point." (*History* 121). Throughout the novel, the narrator as well as Fanny's lovers are intent on ascribing to Fanny what Sigmund Freud had analyzed as hysterical symptoms.<sup>35</sup> The novel focuses on Fanny's sexual frustration in her various relationships with men. When Ehrhard Stein hits her and pours water over her in order to stop her crying fits,<sup>36</sup> Fanny's reaction is that "his brutality was a comfort to her. All of a sudden her behaviour did seem like theatrics" (II, 70). Although Grove's narrative criticizes Stein as

<sup>35</sup> Freud's studies on hysteria were published in 1895, and were read and discussed with growing interest by *fin-de-siècle* intellectuals (cf. Fischer 77).

<sup>36</sup> This act of humiliation is figuratively repeated in her relationship with Reelen who stops her laughter by telling her, "Das darf man nicht" (521), which prompts the following reaction: "Fanny war wie von Wasser übergossen" (521).

insensitive and even brutal,<sup>37</sup> the fact remains that the narrator also projects Fanny in the role of a hysterical woman whose symptoms are correctly analyzed by the male characters and who is brought back to her senses by her male partners. At the same time *Fanny Essler* exposes that in each case this male analysis and "cure" are linked to the most intense relationships of power in which Fanny is clearly dominated by what she perceives to be a "superior" force.

Also, it is the contemporary psychoanalytic discourse of the idle and hysterical woman that allows Eduard to define Fanny: "she was hysterical, that is to say, she had an incredibly exaggerated sensual need that remained unfulfilled for fear of not being able to fulfil that need, which in turn engendered her nervousness. This sensual need was nothing else than a secret longing for motherhood" (II, 140)—"ein verborgenes Verlangen nach Mutterschaft" (449). Eduard's claim for the naturality of motherhood, without which a woman becomes hysterical or psychologically sick, is an argument that is diametrically opposed to Fanny's own conscious rejection of domesticity and her desire for independence, as it glosses over her own desire to be an artist. This "scientific" discourse furthermore glosses over the fact that Eduard, like every other male in the novel, directs, criticizes and ultimately suppresses Fanny's creative impulse, (as it detracts from Eduard's own problems with sexual impotence). Once married to Barrel, Fanny quickly gives up her art, so that *Fanny Essler* can be credited for making a direct connection between the suppression of female creativity and a

<sup>37</sup> This criticism is evident in the choice of the name, Ehrhard Stein. *Stein* (stone), as well as *hard* underscore his brutality; *Ehre* (honour) is his *idée fixe*.

woman's dissatisfaction, frustration, growing tyranny, and hysteria, a connection that Freud has often been accused by feminist critics of not making.<sup>38</sup>

The novel also links Fanny's hysterical behaviour to her disappointment with her role in life. Having to subject herself to degrading working conditions as a chorus girl in the theatre, Fanny experiences repeated hysterical crying fits and has to be sent to a doctor for treatment. Once married to Barrel, Fanny adopts the role of the idle and sexually frustrated bourgeois housewife, whose husband has no time for her. Grove demonstrates that this role turns her inevitably into a tyrant figure who becomes obsessed with monitoring, supervising, criticizing and discharging her various maids. As a household tyrant, Fanny becomes another Mrs. Hurstwood, but while *Sister Carrie* criticizes Mrs. Hurstwood as a "castrating" character, Grove's sympathies lie with Fanny. Her obsession with household cleanliness and her growing tyranny are juxtaposed to scenes that describe her sexual frustration.

"Many late nineteenth century women felt themselves being strangled, felt as if they were losing their minds, caught in the patterns of a society which had come to see even expressions of insanity as representative of feminine devotion to the male" (37), Bram Dijkstra writes in his study on *fin-de-siècle* representations of the feminine. Despite the hysterization of the protagonist, *Fanny Essler* does not continue this literary cult and glorification of female invalidism that is so prominent in nineteenth-century writing. Not

<sup>38</sup> See for example Susan Bordo's feminist critique: "Freud never makes the connection (which Breuer had begun to develop) between the monotonous domestic lives these women were expected to lead after their schooling was completed, and the emergence of compulsive day-dreaming, hallucinations, dissociations, and hysterical conversions" (89).



only does Fanny deliberately refuse any self-sacrifice for "man," but the novel presents a deliberate parody of the motif by having her husband kill himself. At the same time, the novel avoids flipping into the opposite stereotype; Fanny may share some characteristics with, but is far from being, a stereotypical *femme fatale*. Granted, the sado-masochistic relationship between Fanny and Barrel finds its reversal and logical climax in Eduard's suicide, after Fanny leaves him for Reelen. But it has been suggested that Barrel kills himself not because Fanny leaves him but because Reelen leaves him (Blodgett "Ersatz Feminism" 33). Ultimately, the novel exposes that Fanny's frustrations and psychological problems are created by degrading living and working conditions and by the masculine refusal to acknowledge and take seriously a woman's intellectual and artistic creative energies.

By the time Dreiser wrote *Sister Carrie*, Freudian psychoanalysis was not yet known to him.<sup>39</sup> It is in *The Gallery of Women* (1929),<sup>40</sup> a collection of semi-fictionalized sketches on female friends and acquaintances that Dreiser's usage of psychoanalytic theory is similar to Grove's in *Fanny Essler*. Dreiser insists in these sketches on the "primacy" and "naturalness" of the body and its functions, but at the same time he uses Freudian theory to distinguish between women's "normal" and "abnormal" behaviour. It is above

<sup>39</sup> As Ellen Moers points out, Freud's theory only reached Dreiser after 1911, after Abraham Brill, one of Dreiser's friends, had translated some of Freud's major writings into English. According to Moers it was mainly the *Three Contributions to the Theory of Sex* which influenced Dreiser and where he found the basis for the concept of sexual "chemism" which he uses so obsessively in *An American Tragedy* to describe the sexual drive (262-63).

<sup>40</sup> *The Gallery of Women* has been neglected in Dreiser scholarship. For a very brief but illuminating discussion of the work, see Richard Lehan 140-41; see 264, fn. 11-15, for an identification of the women on which the characters of *The Gallery of Women* are modelled.

all the sketch of "Emanuela" which demonstrates the duplicitous nature of Dreiser's narrator in his relationship with a young woman whose body strikes him as "beautiful and voluptuously formed," but who refuses to fulfill what the narrator sees as her "natural" functions, namely, to have intercourse with a man.<sup>41</sup> "Was she not a clear illustration of some of Freud's prime contentions?" (II, 693), the narrator asks, and it does not seem to matter that Emanuela rejects this discourse for herself: "Oh, yes, she had read Freud, and had been impressed in part, but could not accept him fully. No. His analysis was too coarse and too domineering, left no place for anything but itself. And there was nothing that was the whole truth about anything" (II, 695). Despite her protests the narrator simply imposes the Freudian discourse as truthfully revealing the secret about her character, namely, her sexual repression, her "sex inhibition" and "the obvious pathologic fact in her case, that she was frigid" (II, 686-87).<sup>42</sup>

Very much like Grove's, Dreiser's narrative reveals that by imposing a discourse which the narrator claims to be scientific and truthful, he manages to establish a relationship of power that culminates in several overtly rapist scenes. The narrator of this sketch is painfully aware of, ashamed, and angered by the fact that he slips into the role of a rapist, but his theory helps him to shift the desire for rape from himself on his victim: "Unquestionably, in some errant, repressed and nervous way, she was thinking that I would

<sup>41</sup> Emanuela is modelled on Anne Watkins, a literary agent and freelance writer that Dreiser knew in New York (Lehan 264, fn. 12).

<sup>42</sup> Like the "frigid" Ellen for Niels Lindstedt in Grove's *Settlers*, the "frigid" Emanuela becomes the all-desired for Dreiser. As Ellen's complexion is "pure, Skandinavian white" so Dreiser stresses Emanuela's "high waxy forehead" (II, 662) and her cold puritanical beauty.

assail and overcome her, cave-man fashion, and so free her once and for all of her long and possibly,--how should I know--torturing self-restraint--slay the dragon of repression that shut the Sleeping Princess from the world of her fancy" (II, 698). Repeatedly, it is the narrator who attacks her sexually and each time he is rejected by her. At the same time, the narrator's discourse becomes obsessed with demonstrating scientifically that Emanuela's "mental opposition" and "muscular rejection" are indeed pathological, bodily reactions caused by her sexual repressions. Drawing on Freud's theory, he reads and writes her as a typical case of pathological frigidity.

The narrator of this sketch seems to be driven by the obsession to re-establish his power over a woman who not only rejects him sexually but who has been more successful as a young writer than he was (cf. II, 667). It is indeed with sadistic pleasure that the narrator insists on convincing the reader of his friend's bodily disintegration, which is accompanied by her creative stagnation, again "proven" to be scientifically inevitable because she "had never functioned properly as a woman" (II, 719). The sketch of Emanuela culminates in the narrator's quiet triumph when narrating her loss of bodily attraction.

Although apparently "undersexed," Emanuela's body is shown to be filled with sex, albeit with a "repressed," and thus hidden and concealed sexuality, surfacing, according to the narrator's analysis, in her "mothering" of the author-narrator, her cooking for him, her tucking him in in his bed. Like Emanuela, all of Dreiser's major female characters are assumed to be endowed with bodies saturated with sex, so that they cannot escape a sexual destiny. But being saturated with sex in Dreiser's world does not imply sexual activity for the female but its contrary; the sex-filled female is a rather

static target that prompts the male characters to move, a pattern that Dreiser's narrative paradoxically affirms and critiques at the same time.

According to Michel Foucault, "in the process of hysterization of women, 'sex' was defined in three ways: as that which belongs in common to men and women; as that which belongs *par excellence*, to men, and hence is lacking in women; but at the same time, as that which by itself constitutes woman's body, ordering it wholly in terms of the functions of reproduction and keeping it in constant agitation through the effects of that very function" (*History* 153). Dreiser's *Fanny Essler* and *Sister Carrie* are diametrically opposed in their treatment of female sexuality, as Fanny is driven to sexual activity by her sexual frustration, while Carrie, in contrast, does not appear to be interested in active sexuality, at all. Not only is Carrie's sexual initiation with Charles Drouet described in terms of her "yielding" and his "victory," but so is almost every other sexual relationship in Dreiser's works. "She struggled, but in vain," is how the narrator describes Carrie's seduction by her second lover, Charles Hurstwood: "Instantly there flamed up in his body the all-compelling desire" (307). The language surrounding these sexual acts is highly ambiguous, as it is overtly rapist, at the same time that it is embedded in a discourse that supports the "normalcy" of this sexuality.<sup>43</sup> This discourse implies that in order to be sexually aroused a woman has to be taken possession of completely, has to be usurped completely, has to be overwhelmed

<sup>43</sup> Earlier in the novel when Carrie is even more firmly resisting the middle-aged saloon manager's advances, her lack of passion for Hurstwood is explained by "a lack of power on his part, a lack of that majesty of passion that sweeps the mind from its seat" (241). Also, compare the narrator's discourse with Freud's language: "The sexuality of most men shows an admixture of aggression, of a desire to subdue, the biological significance of which lies in the necessity for overcoming the resistance of the sexual object by actions other than *courting*" (*Three Contributions* 569).

both in spirit and in body. In Dreiser's works beginning with *Sister Carrie*, but also in *An American Tragedy* and the *Trilogy of Desire*, sex relations almost automatically create relationships of power with the male inevitably dominating over the female by imposing a form of sexuality which anticipates the rapist sexuality from which Emanuela retreats with so much horror in the later work.

As Emanuela's stubborn sexual resistance is interpreted by the narrator as an indicator for her "abnormal" psychology, which provokes the narrator's irritation, puzzlement and impotent anger, so its "flipside"--Carrie's passive acceptance of sexuality--is sanctified by the main narrative voice as having a biological basis. Critics have commented that in crucial moments Carrie displays a striking passivity which seems to excuse her from any responsibility for her actions, a passivity which ultimately protects her "virtue."<sup>44</sup> This is typically Dreiserian, we might argue, and characteristic for both men and women in his fiction. After all, passively wavering, Hurstwood turns into a thief, Clyde Griffiths into a "murderer." Yet the important difference is that Carrie's passivity extends mainly into the sexual realm, a realm in which Hurstwood storms ahead with the passionate single-mindedness of the enamored lover. From the omniscient narrator's point of view Carrie is never a subject of the sexual act; rather sexuality, apart from being innate and constituting her body, is something that happens to her, a point that is easily accepted as a "normal" bodily reality, in tune with biology and nature, and ultimately sanctioned by the fact that it is supposed to be pleasurable for the male. And yet, the fact that Dreiser chooses a female

<sup>44</sup> See also Terence J. Matheson for a discussion of the moral ambiguity created by Carrie's passivity.

character as his protagonist who moves from one sexual relationship to the next, apparently to "give up" sexual contacts when she becomes rich, is an obvious critique of the sexual practices that the main narrative voice presents as "normal." If anything, the narrative exposes that such "normal" practices are not satisfying for women.

Also, it is in its gaps that the text signals its implicit critique of "normalized" sexuality. When Drouet invites Hurstwood to his newly established "house," thus signalling to his friend the fact of his sexual success, Carrie, as Drouet's "kept woman," is only present in the gap of the Drouet's speech. "I'll introduce you" (91), is all Drouet tells Hurstwood about her, while the object of the introduction remains suspended in a linguistic silence, not even given a name or a pronoun but somehow magically attached as a sexual body to Drouet and his "house." The effect of this gap is that the protagonist's sexuality is activated through others, comes into being and gains a life not by itself but detached from her own body, activated not in the sex act but in the pleasurable discourse of two males. This conversational gambit in which Carrie connects the two men through her very absence takes place significantly in a club which is "for men only," Chicago's prestigious Fitzgerald and Moy's. Here, female sexuality is part of a male network, easily conjured up as a gap, a hole to be filled by the male desire which it generates.

Dreiser furthermore presents a second voice that comments on Carrie's sexual initiation by subverting the comments of the main narrative voice. The only passage in the novel where Carrie is portrayed as being subject of the sexual act is filtered through the mind of a woman, Carrie's sister Minnie, who dreams that Carrie is descending in a black pit:

There was a deep pit, into which they were looking; they could see the curious wet stones far down where the wall disappeared in vague shadows. An old basket, used for descending, was hanging there, fastened by a worn rope.

"Let's get in," said Carrie.

"Oh, no," said Minnie.

"Yes, come on," said Carrie.

She began to pull the basket over, and now, in spite of all protest, she had swung over and was going down. (89-90)

This dream takes the place of the description of the sexual act itself.<sup>45</sup> In her sister's eyes Carrie is obviously responsible for her sexual relationships, but it is a responsibility of which the narrator wishes to absolve her, as he surrounds her sexuality with a discourse of passivity. And so does the author, who is partly complicitous with his narrator. After all, this passage is filtered through the mind of a thoroughly "conventional" woman, a clever authorial manipulation, as it quickly disqualifies Minnie as an "unreliable" narrative "consciousness." And yet, by presenting this second voice as subconscious--it is the voice of Minnie's dream--and by presenting it as female, Dreiser creates a classical discourse of the Other, a discourse that speaks of female sexual activity and that erupts into and disrupts the narrator's rational, monological voice that speaks of female sexual passivity. Thus Dreiser's text paradoxically affirms and critiques "normalized" female sexuality at the same time.

While in Dreiser's fictional world male seduction is an important motif, Fanny, in contrast, rejects the idea that she has been seduced, deliberately assuming responsibility for her sexual desire: "Seducer! She

<sup>45</sup> See Joseph Church's discussion of Minnie's dream as a reflection of her "own frustrated desires" (184).

hadn't needed a seducer" (I, 47). Nevertheless, *Fanny Essler* also draws critical attention to the fact that the "normal" form of sexuality is a masculine mastery over the feminine body. Fanny actively seeks the sexual initiation with Baron von Langen but in the act itself stops being an active subject and acquiesces to becoming a masochistic object: "her whole body had cried out for him. And she had had the feeling: now he can take me and do with me as he pleases. Whatever he wishes, that's what I'll do; and even if he beats me, even if he murders me--he can do all that, and I'll sink down in front of him and still be his" (I, 27-28). The reader witnesses these events after they have taken place as they pass Fanny's consciousness, a narrative technique which re-affirms the impression of a strange passivity, because when reminiscing Fanny finds herself in a state of "weariness," exhaustion, and semi-sleep.

Drawing critical attention to the sado-masochism of Fanny's sexual life--not only are many of her sexual relationships a repetition of this first sado-masochistic sexuality, but the protagonist remains unsatisfied and tortured in her sex life--Grove's satire of such male sexual dominance culminates in a very pessimistic view. Unable to break out of a circle of giving herself to "rapist" (or impotent lovers), Fanny is finally "cured" of her sexual frustration by the ultimate sexual dominator, Friedrich Karl Reelen, whose eyes are "like frozen lakes"<sup>46</sup> and who claims that "You have to have something to hit, or to tame" (II, 146-47). "Was he a sadist?", Fanny indeed asks herself about Reelen (II, 160), before she experiences a new "ecstasy" by

<sup>46</sup> If we see *Fanny Essler* as a *roman à clef*, Reelen is Grove himself and thus a satire of himself. Grove turns Reelen into a satanic creature: his eyes evoke the frozen lakes that immobilize Satan in Dante's *Inferno* (XXXIV, 10-12, 50-53) and, like Satan, Reelen is identified with a bird (*Inferno* XXXIV, 46-47; *Fanny Essler* II, 219).



being sexually "mastered" by him (II, 195). Fanny's sexual experience echoes French feminist Luce Irigaray's point that in patriarchal society women are often forced to mimic male desires if they want to experience any desire at all:

Elles [les femmes] s'y retrouvent, proverbialement, *dans la mascarade*. Les psychanalystes disent que la mascarade correspond au désir de la femme. Cela ne me paraît pas juste. Je pense qu'il faut l'entendre comme ce que les femmes font pour récupérer quelque chose du désir, pour participer au désir de l'homme, mais au prix de renoncer au leur. Dans la mascarade elles se soumettent à l'économie dominante du désir.... (*Ce sexe* 131)

By the end of the novel, Fanny finally becomes adapted to a sexuality which completely subjugates her as a woman and which is seen as "normal" by almost every character (including the narrator) in the novel. Irigaray, however, warns us not to misread such orgasmic satisfactions for a transcendence of hierarchically structured gender relations. She reminds us that often, "[les] orgasmes [de la femme] sont nécessaires comme démonstration de la puissance masculine. Ils signifient la réussite--pensent-ils--de la domination sexuelle de la femme par l'homme" (*Ce sexe* 198).

Thus Fanny's orgasm is the ultimate triumph of a normalized sexuality of mastery, and it should come as no surprise that Fanny reflects about it in a strange fascist language. She realizes that the sexual act did not work with her former lovers because they "had no race" (II, 195). Thus *Fanny Essler* exposes that the controlled, mechanical, goal-oriented, masculine form of love-making not only negates pleasure but also ritually reinscribes the binary oppositions between self/Other, active/passive, masculine/feminine, racially superior/racially inferior. To be sure, even as she acknowledges these binary

divisions, Fanny identifies herself with the second category and also finds in this position the impetus to resist Reelen and recognize him for what he is. Also, the experience of orgasmic satisfaction does not end Fanny's quest; she is as disillusioned as ever and yearns for her mother, turning her attention (back) to women.<sup>47</sup>

Grove satirizes Fanny's relationship with Reelen by constructing this character as a double of the sadistic *Neuromantik* Ehrhard Stein. Also, Fanny's act of leaving Barrel for Reelen is a repetition of her earlier leaving of Nepomuk Bolle for Ehrhard Stein. And Reelen is also a double of Fanny's father. Not only does Fanny become "Mein liebes Kind" in Friederich Karl's discourse (518, 522, 523, 531, 532, 533 etc.), but both men are "Kerkermeister" in her life who impose the constraints ("Zwang" 537) of bourgeois conventions (I, 24; II, 212). In both relationships, Fanny's rebellion is rooted in the memory of a mother-daughter alliance against the father-lover. The relationship of the nineteen-year old Fanny with her father has explicitly oedipal overtones: Fanny understood "that one could fall in love with Papa. He was strong, incredibly strong, and so blond and--yes, in fact, he was truly handsome" (I, 25). This language is echoed in her later description of her lover. Not only does she emphasize how much other women desire Friederich Karl (II, 211), but she also sees him as blond, blue-eyed, and incredibly strong (II, 194, 211). It is through these doubling devices that Grove reinforces the satire of Reelen by indicating that in Fanny's life this man is not the ultimate saviour but just another circle of repetition and

<sup>47</sup> *Fanny Essler* thus satirizes the "maschinenmäßige Liebe" ("machine-like love making") celebrated by some *fin-de-siècle* writers, among them Hermann Bahr (cf. Fischer 111; also 53-65).

another twist in the spiral of power. Like Foucault and de Beauvoir, Grove draws attention to the fact that the construction of the hysterical woman is tied into relationships which are inevitably saturated with power.

At the end of the novel Fanny turns emotionally away from Reelen and yearns for female rather than male companionship. And yet, Grove chooses to link this feminine, maternal alternative to her "peaceful" death rather than to a new beginning, with the last sentence of the novel emphasizing that if the end of desire means pleasurable peace, it also means death: "*Thus a calm death saved Fanny Essler from the greatest disappointment of her life*" (II, 232). The italics should be seen as a warning signal not to take this sentence at face value. Considering that Fanny spent her whole life in search of a "saviour," it is ironic that she should be "saved" in death. Is it Grove himself who becomes here the "authorized" saviour and gives his protagonist peace by putting an end to her desire and "allowing" her to die. Here, the saviour-author, freezing Fanny's life forces into the absolute stasis of death, becomes the last in a series of male artists all of whom try to appropriate, to channel, and to neutralize Fanny's creative energies. The satire thus turns full circle back to the author who has succeeded in what his character Reelen has failed: he has finally tamed Fanny's desire.



## Chapter 3

### THE ECONOMIC MACHINE OF POWER

#### *THE TITAN AND THE MASTER OF THE MILL*

The omnipresence of power: not because it has the privilege of consolidating everything under its invincible unity, but because it is produced from one moment to the next, at every point, or rather in every relation from one point to another. Power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere.

*The History of Sexuality* (93)  
Michel Foucault

#### A. Of Speculators, Robber Barons and Producers

In an unpublished address entitled "The Farmer's Predicament," Grove creates a binary division between the "capitalist," who multiplies money in sales transactions and the "farmer," who is "not a capitalist," because he puts his own labour into the land: "A man, then, who buys or otherwise acquires land and works it through tenants or hired labour, without himself soiling his hands, is a capitalist" (2). This binary opposition between the leisure- and money-loving, manipulating speculator-capitalist and the honest, hardworking producer-farmer is a thematic focus and structural device in Grove's novels of the soil. As Grove puts it in the unpublished novel "Two Lives": "Most rural people look on the townspeople somewhat in that way: as though they were robber barons lying in wait at every turn of the road to levy their toll on the producer" (71).

In *The Yoke of Life* (1930), for example, Grove focuses his attention on the debt-ridden family of farmer Kolm, who recognizes the roots of his

enslavement in the middleman or speculator and develops a helpless resentment with racist overtones: "Tell you,' [Kolm] said. 'Put a debt of a thousand on a raw bush farm, and you might just as well put a rope around the farmer's neck. Look how we work. The whole family's slaving away. From dawn till dark. What for? We work for the Jew. And the lawyer. To stave off foreclosure" (49). The power relation between middleman and producer is almost literally enacted in a scene when Kolm is forced to sell his potatoes to a town salesman: "Potatoes have no price at all this year," he is told, whereupon Kolm counters: "They feed as many mouths as ever" (92). While Kolm takes recourse to the traditional agrarian notion that a commodity value is determined by the use value of the commodity, the middleman, in contrast, is only interested in the commodity's exchange value, that is, its market price, and he generates his profits by arbitrarily decreasing the commodity's price when he buys, and by negotiating an increase when selling time comes. As Kolm is forced to sell his potatoes at *any* price, so he is forced to "hire out" and sell the labour of his step son Len Sterner to meet the debt payments on his farm.

Grove's celebration of the producer ideal finds its clearest expression in *Two Generations: A Story of Present Day Ontario* (1939), as well as in the unpublished "Two Lives," works in which agrarian productivity is not only linked to marriage but also to a strong matriarchal power. *Two Generations* ends like a comedy with the aging patriarch Ralph Patterson reconciled with his family after troubling (generational and marital) conflicts and, after an unsuccessful *escapade* into speculation, returning to the pioneer-agrarian mode of living, now on his wife's land, the idyllic, womb-like Sleepy Hollow,

a "hermaphroditic ideal."<sup>1</sup> Discussing Dreiser's *Financier*, Walter Michaels draws attention to "Dreiser's identification of marriage with an agrarian commitment to production and 'tangible value'" ("Dreiser's *Financier*" 287),<sup>2</sup> a connection that is also illustrated in Grove's *Two Generations*, where the marriage between Ralph and Di not only survives all trials and tribulations but leads the protagonist back to his "true" vocation: "honest" work on the land.<sup>3</sup>

On the surface, Grove's novels of the soil present a binary division of power between impotent producers and omnipotent speculators; between poor farmers and rich townspeople; between parasites and victims. Michel Foucault's theory is not very adequate when it comes to analyzing such binary oppositions: "Dominators and dominated exist no more than victims and executioners. ... With power there are no antagonistic positions: it is carried out according to a cycle of seduction" (44), Jean Baudrillard writes in his analysis of Foucault's theory. Foucault emphasizes that the characteristics of modern power are its omnipresence, its mobility, its capacity to circulate, to seduce rather than to coerce, to encourage production rather than work through repression. But such a theory does not provide much insight for Grove's farming families faced with foreclosure.

<sup>1</sup> See Nancy Bailey for a detailed discussion of *Two Generations* as a presentation of a "hermaphroditic or androgynous ideal" (186-87).

<sup>2</sup> In contrast, the "mistress" (and sexual promiscuity) are linked to the speculator's "mental manipulations" (Michaels "Dreiser's *Financier*" 287), both of which Grove rejects in his "novels of the soil."

<sup>3</sup> Similarly, in "Two Lives" Helen and Arthur lose ownership of their farm to heavy mortgage payments, but the novel's emphasis is that they never lose contact with the soil. The novel ends with an idyllic view on Helen's and Arthur's reborn love for each other.

In his critique of Foucault's theory, Jean Baudrillard emphasizes that "with Foucault, power remains, despite being pulverized, a *structural* and a polar notion with a perfect genealogy and an inexplicable presence, a notion which cannot be surpassed in spite of a sort of latent denunciation, a notion which is whole in each of its points or microscopic dots" (39). Although Foucault emphasizes power's inessential quality, power in Foucault's theory often appears as an abstract machine that takes hold of everything since it infiltrates the microcosm of the social field. Baudrillard ridicules Foucault's emphasis on the microcosm as a modern fad: "Everyone today wallows in the molecular as they do in the revolutionary" (34), Baudrillard writes, adding that "for Foucault, power operates right away like Monod's genetic code" (33-34), that is like the "'complex spirals of the DNA'" (34).

And yet, if Foucault's theory on the omnipresence of power is not very useful for a discussion of Grove's novels of the soil, it is very useful for a discussion of *The Master of the Mill* (1944). Considering the emphasis on the producer ideal in Grove's earlier novels, it might come as a surprise that in this late novel, Grove's focus shifts radically from the agrarian producer ideal to its apparent opposite, the speculator figure, an indicator that for Grove the binary opposition between speculator and producer is not as clear-cut as it appears on the surface of the agricultural novels. Grove in fact deals with manipulative salesmanship as early as 1926 in *A Search for America* and he presents a true speculator in the Americanized businessman Jim Alvin, Jane's husband in the unpublished "Jane Atkinson," but in both novels manipulative speculation is not only morally condemned but often leads to unhappiness if



not disaster in the speculator's life.<sup>4</sup> In *The Master of the Mill*, in contrast, crooked ways go unpunished; speculative trickery and manipulation lead to lasting economical success. Thus the moral rigidity of the earlier novels seems to be replaced by moral relativism, although even here the protagonist Sam Clark engages in a typically Grovian soul-searching of why and how he "has failed."

With the shift on manipulative speculation into the foreground of the novel, Grove's traditionally linear narration that characterizes his agrarian novels with its "honest" characters, changes to incorporate discontinuous shifts in time, flash-backs, and (sometimes unreliable) multiple perspectives, which seem not only appropriate but very successful in highlighting his theme of "discontinuous," disruptive, arbitrary and manipulative speculation, as well as the shifting, mobile workings of power.<sup>5</sup> This is perhaps what Grove had in mind when he spoke of the "inevitable form" of *The Master of the Mill*.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> In "Jane Atkinson" Jim not only loses his fortune in speculation, he also loses his integrity and ends in suicide.

<sup>5</sup> The novel is largely narrated through the eyes of Sam Clark, whose perspective is partly unreliable because of his approaching senility. Other narrators are Lady Clark, Sam's daughter in law, and Captain Stevens, the manager of the mill.

<sup>6</sup> Beverley Mitchell entitles her essay "The 'Message' and the 'Inevitable Form' in *The Master of the Mill*" but she never really addresses the question of why this form should be "inevitable." W.J. Keith, in "F.P. Grove's 'Difficult' Novel: *The Master of the Mill*," compares the work formally to William Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom*, thematically to D.H. Lawrence's *Women in Love*, emphasizing the paradoxes and moral ambiguities of the characters' relation to the mill. Interestingly, Dreiser's *Trilogy of Desire* follows the traditional chronological narration and has been negatively criticized because it "lacks a genuinely innovative strategy" for representing the "new man," the superman-speculator F.A. Cowperwood (O'Neill 419-21).

Owned by three generations of male Clarks, the flour mill in Langholm in Manitoba grows from a small family business in 1888 into a huge, fully automated corporate machinery with international connections in 1923. Based on Sam Clark's genial plan "whereby the mill could go on growing and growing" (65), the mill takes on a life of its own to the point of becoming self-procreative; it appears like "a fact of nature," an "outgrowth of the soil." Birk Sproxtton discusses the mill in terms of a plant (50), a living organism, which is appropriate in that the mill, as a huge, almost futuristic machine, becomes capable of producing its own abundant harvest. Nature-like it produces flour in unimaginable quantities, enough to provide not only the national demand but also the demands of other countries. Here, the modern machinery of power is in the service of production; its effects are not exclusively negative.

But the implication of the mill as "a fact of nature" goes even further. In his essay on "Dreiser's *Financier*," Michaels demonstrates that "nature" is in alliance with the speculator, not with the producer (288), a point that Grove never tires to dramatize in his agrarian novels (and which he makes most poignantly in *Fruits of the Earth* [1933], where the pioneer's constructions are immediately followed by nature's work of decay). Grove's prairie pioneers are engaged in an endless and sometimes apparently pointless struggle against the arbitrariness of nature and its power to destroy what is built by human toil.<sup>7</sup> Floods and drought work against the producers' ideal of

<sup>7</sup> For a discussion of the (inevitable) conflict between prairie pioneer and nature in Grove's works, see Desmond Pacey (*Grove* 123-29). Stanley McMullin links Grove's vision of nature and culture to the influence of the German philosopher Oswald Spengler (1880-1936) who argued that "What man strives to build, Nature tries to destroy" ("Evolution" 78). See also Beverley Mitchell who recognizes Spengler's influence in Grove's portrayal of "the machine as a curse" in *Mill* (75). Mitchell also discusses the protagonists of *Mill* as exemplifications of Henri Bergson's *homo faber* (75).

a regular harvest as compensation for their "honest" work. Nature's principle of providing cornucopian excess in some years and withholding its harvest arbitrarily in others evokes the pattern of sudden disruption and arbitrary fluctuations that the speculator thrives on. Like nature, the Clark mill has its own laws, laws which go beyond a sense of good and evil, which are indeed indifferent to morality, just as the speculator-capitalist is indifferent to the "fall" of others that make possible his "rise." By turning the mill into "a fact of nature," Grove appears to have found an appropriate metaphor to suggest that capitalism with its trickery manipulation has become all-pervasive, almost like a natural law that embraces everyone and that has displaced nature as a principle of production. Also, as nature in Grove's novels is never exclusively positive but also destructive, so the nature-analogy also evokes the destructive aspects of capitalism, as capitalism in *The Master of the Mill* dismisses the former producers--the mill-hands--as useless unemployed, a burden to society.<sup>8</sup>

It is from this angle that Dreiser's *Trilogy of Desire* (1912; 1914; 1947), and especially the second volume entitled *The Titan*, provide an excellent basis of comparison with Grove's *Mill* because in these works Grove and Dreiser are concerned with manipulative speculation in the formation of huge corporate machineries in an advanced stage of capitalism. Dreiser's Cowperwood Trilogy--an exploration of the art of manipulative speculation

<sup>8</sup> For a somewhat different reading of a similar phenomenon, see Michaels: "What is most natural about production is ultimately its refusal to respond to human intentions. Nature here comes to represent capitalism itself, not, however, as an immutable and exploitative social order but as the principle of mutability, the omnipresence and irreducibility of risk" ("Dreiser's *Financier*" 288).

and fictive transactions--is based on the life of one of the famous American robber barons, Charles Tyson Yerkes Jr. (1837-1905), who made his name as a street railway magnate, financier and art collector in Philadelphia, Chicago, New York and finally in London, England.<sup>9</sup> In the first volume of the trilogy, *The Financier* (1912), Cowperwood loses all his fortune (including city money entrusted to him) in the stockmarket crash of 1871, only to regain it in true speculator fashion through the equally spectacular fall of another famous businessman, Jay Cooke, in the crash of 1873. Walter Michaels, analyzing the first volume of the trilogy, emphasizes Cowperwood's fascination with "mental" facts, such as money, stocks, and bonds and his dislike for tangibles: "The financier's dislike of stability thus emerges even more explicitly as a distaste for [tangible] commodities" ("*Dreiser's Financier*" 280). But the financier's love of "mental" manipulations also leads to his incarceration on a conviction of technical embezzlement.

My focus is on a somewhat different Cowperwood, as he appears in the second volume, *The Titan* (1914). Here, Cowperwood is not only "sick of the stock-exchange" but expresses a strong desire to make a shift from the high-risk stockmarket into the more tangible and secure area of the street railways in Chicago, a move that is continued in *The Stoic* (1947), in which Cowperwood turns his attention to the subway system of London. From a lover of "abstract" tradings, Cowperwood turns into a "builder" of tangibles in

<sup>9</sup> For a discussion of Yerkes' biography in relation to Dreiser's Trilogy, see Gerber *Dreiser* 87-110, as well as Gerber's article "The Financier Himself"; see also Pizer *Novels* 153-200. For an historical evaluation of Yerkes' spectacular business transactions in Chicago, see Sidney Roberts' "Portrait of a Robber Baron: Charles T. Yerkes."

*The Titan*, although he never abandons his manipulative strategies.<sup>10</sup> This makes *The Titan* a somewhat different work from *The Financier* in that it presents an interesting interweaving of manipulative speculation with production, a feature that is so characteristic of Grove's *Mill*, where the Clark flour mill, although it originates in manipulative tricks, is also a nature-like production machine with an endless output not just of commodities but of the *vital* and most basic commodities of life--flour and bread.

Dreiser's *Titan* and Grove's *Mill* are saturated with images of movement, with cars, vehicles, carriages, ships, and trains, images, which are particularly apt to illustrate the interweaving of manipulative speculation with production in these novels. Connoting movement, it seems appropriate that the street railways should suggest to Cowperwood a "vast manipulative life" (*Titan* 5), that is the life of trickery, mental gambits and even poker-faced deceit. But cars are first and foremost a tangible commodity that in the case of Cowperwood's Chicago street-railways *produces* a service for the customers and thus point to Cowperwood's highly productive activities. Cowperwood's modernization of Chicago's street railway project entails the construction of (hundreds of miles of) extension lines, the equipment of the horse drawn streetcars with cable (and later with electricity), the implementation of better cars, and the improvement of the overall service for the customers. Given Cowperwood's very productive contributions to the service sector of the city, he becomes very quickly "an attractive, even a sparkling figure in the eyes of the Chicago public" (223). Cowperwood's role as a "producer" is, however, limited to entrepreneurial decisions and managerial

<sup>10</sup> Compare with Roberts' description of Yerkes: "But if Yerkes was a builder, he was nothing less than a genius at financial manipulation" (348).

functions. A whiz kid at making use of commodities already produced by others, he manages for example to lease for a nominal sum tunnels built years ago, an act that is highly productive in that it is a clever "recycling" of a commodity no longer used, which would otherwise go to waste. But Cowperwood's move is also criticized by his Chicagoan opposition, partly because the opposition has been outsmarted, but also partly because Cowperwood's move has the speculator's parasitic quality to it, the clever exploitation of somebody else's labour, and thus brings to mind Charles T. Yerkes' self-confessed secret of success, namely "to buy old junk, fix it up a little, and unload it upon other fellows" (quoted in Roberts 344).

Grove's narrative is different from his earlier novels in that it emphasizes almost obsessively that the mill, like Cowperwood's street railways, is based not so much on the Clarks' hard labour but grows out of clever, manipulative tricks and the exploitation of other people's labour. Grove highlights this feature especially in the set up of the three male protagonists, who not only double each other but together form a composite Cowperwood-superman. Like Cowperwood, Sam's son Edmund Clark, is not only a cold Machiavellian strategist but has "the rare gift of multiplying money" (*Mill* 280), and, in true speculator fashion, he conceives of "wealth as a free gift" (258) in that for him it is not based on labour. Similarly, Ruyard Clark, Sam Clark's father and Edmund's grandfather, wins himself the epithet of a "Titan of Finance" (52, 58, 70) by taking advantage of seasonal fluctuations in order to buy and sell grain at ever increasing profits. In typical Cowperwood fashion Ruyard creates "monstrous profits" by fictive transactions, such as devising ingenious sales between Ruyard Clark, Private and Ruyard Clark, Miller; or selling his lands at "a thousand times their cost

because he manoeuvred a buyer--himself, in the form of Langholm Light and Power," the mill's own electricity company (102).

The gigantic mill has its origins in an ingenious paper fiction, very similar to Cowperwood's "technically illegal" money transaction that has him convicted and incarcerated for "technical embezzlement" in his early Philadelphia years in *The Financier*. Just as Cowperwood makes profits for his own pocket by speculating with city money before the stockmarket crisis in 1871, so Grove's master financier Ruyard Clark manages to build his new mill in Manitoba in 1888 by using money cleverly drawn from a manipulative and technically illegal insurance scheme. With one single stroke in his book-keeping Ruyard declares a massive amount of his wheat "destroyed" by a fire which he himself had set, only to resell this same wheat at a huge profit after collecting the insurance premium. Like Cowperwood's city money, so Ruyard's insurance money may be seen as a "loan" because years later Sam pays back the sum plus the interest on it, ironically to discover that his father had already re-imbursed the insurance company with an anonymous money payment right after he had made his fortune. In making the Clarks "return" so obsessively to the mill's shady origins, Grove emphasizes the fact that the monumental mill originates not so much in hard labour as in the manipulator's ingenuity for turning a paper fiction into a material reality, a very "real" corporate machinery, which in turn produces vital commodities without end.

The emphasis on the creation of the mill as a production-machine echoes Grove's concern with production in his novels of the soil. As Grove's *Mill* dramatizes the motif of production in the mill's neverceasing growth, so Dreiser's novel is obsessed with the growth of Chicago (*Titan* 167, 168, 175,

185, 472), a growth on which Cowperwood's business ventures not only thrive but that Cowperwood's activities also feed. Chicago's dynamic "youth" and raw vitality become a *leitmotif* of the novel, often evoked as a magical *partout* formula of business success: "Chicago has five hundred thousand population to-day. How much will it have in 1890? In 1900? How will it be when it has eight hundred thousand or a million?," Cowperwood asks his collaborator McKenty (175).

The authors' attitudes toward ever-increasing capitalist growth--in both novels apparently the result of manipulative trickery--helps to put in perspective Dreiser's American and Grove's Canadian evaluation of big business capitalism. While the growth of Cowperwood's business is inseparably intertwined with the growth of Chicago and the growth of the population, the growth of the Clark flour mill does not entail the growth of the population, but its contrary. The mill's largest output of flour is achieved by its ultimate automation, its capability of producing massive amounts of flour and bread without any "mill-hands," which shifts the traditional power relation between the producers of commodities and the manipulative owners to a different opposition: the mill as an image of mental trickery *and* production is set against the traditional producer-labourer who is no longer needed for production. While Dreiser's narrator celebrates capitalism's ever growing progress to the point that one reader has labeled the novel a "Darwinian romance,"<sup>11</sup> Grove is much more suspicious of what he has traditionally

<sup>11</sup> See Jack Wallace's argument that Dreiser's *Trilogy* celebrates the comic, amoral, pagan, Darwinian forces, at the same time that it ridicules the "morally serious" conservative forces: "Instead of following the tradition and exposing the tragic cruelty of the urban jungle, [Dreiser] would write a Darwinian romance of the 'bohemian' financier and his role in the building of the great city" (62).



criticized as the "American" trend of commercialism in his novels of the soil. In opposition to expanding Chicago's raw vitality, the mill's ultimate growth is very equivocal, as it turns the formerly sprawling town of Langholm in Manitoba into a ghost town.

It has been argued that Grove's novel offers "an allegory of the development of Canada as a nation" (Spettigue *Grove* 124) with Rudyard representing a pioneer type of capitalism, Samuel Clark representing a "more liberal generation" and Edmund representing a "new breed of corporate executive obsessed with an abstract concept of power" (Keith "Grove's Difficult Novel" 37). Despite its validity, such an approach glosses over the fact that Sam, the humanitarian, university educated philanthropist and lover of aesthetic beauty is at heart also a speculator-salesman whose sales crews quickly grow to hundreds of men all over the country, with his sales organization reaching an international scope even before the turn of the century (*Mill* 23). As a sales genius, Sam is Rudyard's and Edmund's, as well as Cowperwood's, double. But even more importantly, *The Master of the Mill* demonstrates that all three Clarks, who profess to be so different from each other, resort to similar strategies of power, strategies which are always designed to increase "the demands of production." Thus Dreiser's and Grove's works intersect to illustrate one of Foucault's main points on the workings of modern power, namely that modern power should not be naively dismissed as negative and oppressive, as it not exterior to strategies of production.

According to Foucault, modern power is furthermore based on an insatiable desire for knowledge, transparency, a desire to bring "light" into, and thus conquer, "darkened spaces" (*Power* 152; 153): "Power never ceases

its interrogation, its inquisition, its registration of truth: it institutionalises, professionalises and rewards its pursuit" (*Power* 93). As the word speculator itself is etymologically linked to "seeing" and "spying,"<sup>12</sup> so Dreiser's and Grove's works emphasize that power is built on elaborate spy and surveillance systems, in which everyone is engaged in collecting information about everyone else because the successful speculator-manipulator is the one with some advance information over his competitors.

The first powerful businessman Cowperwood meets in Chicago is the banker Addison, whose office is arranged with glass windows, so that he could "see all who entered his reception-room before they saw him" (*Titan* 7), which indicates that the process of gathering information is inscribed in the architecture of businesses. It is especially in his highly successful entrance into the Chicagoan business world that Cowperwood demonstrates his genius as an insatiable gatherer of information. As power is based on ever increasing spirals of knowledge, so Cowperwood's first business association in Chicago is with the speculator Peter Laughlin, not because Cowperwood is interested in stockmarket speculation but because Laughlin, as a stockmarket speculator, "must have a fund of information concerning every current Chicagoan of importance" (21).<sup>13</sup> The novel is saturated with references to detectives who are hired to spy into the private lives of public figures because the gathering of information about those who are "the cynosure of all eyes" (334) means having power over powerful politicians, not so much in the sense

<sup>12</sup> Latin *speculator* means to spy, to scout; *speculator* means to observe, to spy out, to watch, to examine, to explore; to wait for.

<sup>13</sup> That Laughlin is "nothing but a source of information" is repeated a number of times (e.g. *Titan* 39, 40).

of oppressing these people but in order to make use of them, to put them to work in the machinery of power.

In Dreiser's *Titan* power relations involve "seeing" while taking precautions not to be seen. The narrative emphasizes Cowperwood's "deceptive eyes," which are "unreadable," yet at the same time "alluring" (7).<sup>14</sup> Dreiser's *Titan* and Grove's *Mill* also illustrate that the corporate machine is based on an apparatus of "circulating mistrust," which recalls Foucault's notion of Bentham's Panopticon: "In the Panopticon each person, depending on his place, is watched by all or certain of the others. You have an apparatus of total and circulating mistrust, because there is no absolute point" (*Power* 158). But as Foucault emphasizes that even the supervisor in the Panopticon should by no means be seen as "the eye of God," that is as a figure with absolute insight and absolute control, so Dreiser's *Titan* emphasizes that Cowperwood is tied into a network of spying, being the subject and object of spying at the same time. Cowperwood takes precautions not to be seen. Operating in the names of Peter Laughlin & Co, as well as in the names of his lawyers, he manages to keep his name out of the business affairs he conducts. Later Cowperwood is successful in accumulating a huge cash flow by "keeping his [financial] backers' names from view" (*Titan* 77). And yet, Cowperwood is socially destroyed in Chicago because his enemies bring to light his Philadelphia past, his prison incarceration and his scandalous divorce, so

<sup>14</sup> As Donald Pizer puts it in his discussion of Dreiser's *Financier*: "the ability to mask one's true nature and intentions" is "the key to Cowperwood's success in *The Financier*" (*Novels* 167). The first volume of the trilogy ends with an epilogue on the Black Grouper, which is, in Pizer's words, "an illustration of the principle of 'simulation' governing survival and power in all life" (167).

that the text exposes that in the social fabric's net of power, the status of the supposed superman is inevitably limited.

Similarly, *The Master of the Mill* culminates in the ingenious manipulations of the person who comes closest to being a master spy, Edmund Clark. Spying on the workers is nothing new in 1923 because Sam has used it long before Edmund; but under Edmund spying becomes an intricate apparatus of surveillance. Disguised as "repair-men, trouble-hunters, etc." his spies "could circulate through the mill without arousing suspicion" (290). In a dramatic revelation scene toward the end of the novel even the respected writer of proletarian novels, Arbuthnot, turns out to be Edmund's agent spying on his trusting fellow workers. Mr. Stevens, the general manager during Edmund's "reign," recognizes that "the true greatness of Sir Edmund" (306; also 307) lies in his organizational strength, that is, in setting up a cleverly balanced system of agents gathering and reporting information, whereby everyone involved in the spy system is in turn kept in partial ignorance, so that nobody can guess the over-all plan. Edmund infiltrates the whole social and political system with a private "secret service," which he even uses to manipulate the national government in the 1923 election campaign into giving up its projects of investigating into the mill's affairs.

Not surprisingly, all the Clarks have a "natural secretiveness" (165): Rudyard hides the intricate structure and the dark origin of the mill from his son Sam, an act that Sam resents but consciously repeats with his own son, deliberately cutting Edmund off from all information about the grandfather. The secret of the mill is, however, shared with one dark figure, Rudyard's bookkeeper and the witness of Rudyard's insurance schemes, William Swann, who is kept quiet over decades with large amounts of blackmail money,

paradoxically well documented and "kept alive" in Rudyard's bookkeeping and even transmitted as a legacy to the next owner of the mill. This life-long relationship with the blackmailer indicates that there is no such thing as a "master-spy" who pulls all the strings.

Consisting of a system of interlocking subsystems, the mill itself is "a marvel of organization" designed with the intent of "disguising and dividing the profits of the huge concern, profits which in a single aggregate would have been monstrous" (93).<sup>15</sup> After Rudyard's death in 1898, Sam's secretary Maud Dolittle becomes "nominal vice-president" of the company but as such has only a few "qualifying shares" in it, which limits the power of this office drastically. At the same time Miss Dolittle's "real" power lies in her function as sales-manager of the company, but in this function her power is disguised (and controlled) by the fact that she does not sign her letters with her own name but "as a mere formality" put the secretary treasurer's, Mr. Stevens, stamp under her letters (55), a formality which again splits and multiplies points of power within the hierarchy.

As Dreiser's and Grove's big business novels intersect to highlight the mobile strategies of modern power, they do so by illustrating two different sides of the same coin. While the common labourers are almost absent from Dreiser's text, it is through the eyes of one of the workers, Bruce Rogers, that Grove demonstrates the influence of the "machine" on the mill-hands. Bruce gives the example of the plight of an assembly line worker:

There is a girl on the bagging floor. All she's got to do is to see to it that the open end of the bag falls in the right position

<sup>15</sup> Compare to Roberts' analysis of C.T. Yerkes: "His bookkeeping methods and business tactics were so complicated that a clear account of how he captured control of Chicago's street railways can scarcely be made" (348).

under the stitching machine. The bag travels on a conveyor; the stitching machine runs of its own accord. All she needs to do is to stroke the empty end of the bag so it lies flat, and that only when it accidentally happens that it doesn't. But watch her. Her whole body is working all the time. ... She beats the rhythm with her knees. Both her elbows swing as if she had St. Vitus dance. If they didn't, her fingers would get caught by the needle; for it is a question, not of seconds but of a hundredth of a second.... (218)

This control over the body that is based on the division of tasks and its precise time-tabling is what Foucault labels "disciplinary power," whose goal is the maximization of the body's productivity. In this description presented in the voice of a worker, the emphasis is not on the achieved productivity but on the negative, inhuman side of this work, a work which distorts the body violently to the point of making it "diseased." In Bruce Rogers' words, "the machine is the boss now; it doesn't promote; it just exacts motions" (219).

In *The Master of the Mill*, the machine exerts its influence not only on the mill-hands but on all levels of the hierarchy. Sam is as much affected by it as the assembly line workers and he feels that his whole life is ruled by a machine that creates his fate and future. The machine, a central image for the mill in the novel, is also Foucault's metaphor to illustrate the workings of power in modern institutions: "One doesn't have here a power which is wholly in the hands of one person who can exercise it alone and totally over the others. It's a machine in which everyone is caught, those who exercise power just as much as those over whom it is exercised" (*Power* 156). As Foucault emphasizes that power has become "a machinery that no one owns" (*Power* 156), so even Sam, the president of the mill, is dominated by a sense of not being in control, of only being a tool to the workings of the anonymous machine. Grove makes much of the fact that those who work in the mill

somehow become an inseparable part of it, or, as W.J. Keith puts it, "those who are associated with the mill tend to give up their individual traits and...forget themselves in a function" ("Grove's Difficult Novel" 43).

To describe what he means by modern power, Foucault also makes use of the image of the pyramid, which happens to be the architectural structure of the mill:

It's obvious that in an apparatus like an army or a factory, or some other such type of institution, the system of power takes a pyramidal form. Hence there is an apex. But even so, even in such a simple case, this summit doesn't form the "source" or "principle" from which all power derives as though from a luminous focus (the image by which the monarchy represents itself). The summit and the lower elements of the hierarchy stand in a relationship of mutual support and conditioning, a mutual "hold" (power as mutual and indefinite "blackmail").  
(*Power* 159)

Similarly, the hierarchically structured Clarks' mill, "towered up, seventeen stories high, at the foot of the lake, like a huge pyramid whose truncated apex was in line with the summits of the surrounding hills" (*Mill* 2). Significantly, the apex is "truncated," metaphorically illustrating Foucault's point that those who are at the top are by no means the ultimate centre of power. As an old man approaching senility in 1938, Sam Clark is nominally in power over the mill as its president and principal shareholder, but he realizes that it is really not he but "the engineers who did what they judged should be done" (18). Thus those who have the lion's share in the decision-making remain somehow faceless and unnamed individuals in the background of the novel.

Grove goes so far as to mystify the anonymous machine as the "abode of hobgoblins." Dreiser's *Titan* moves in the opposite direction. The demonised anonymous "machine" as a representation of power relations is

replaced in Dreiser's text in favour of its presentation of an individual superman, whose triumphs re-vivify and bring to the fore an individualistic, apparently unified will, because Cowperwood "refuses to be a tool for others." This echoes the traditional American motif of the self-sufficient, self-reliant individual, although Cowperwood's selfish "I satisfy myself" is more a parody than a celebration of Emersonian virtuous self-reliance. Yet Cowperwood's manipulative genius should by no means be mistaken for the narrative's naive celebration of one individual's static and abstract omnipotence. Rather, Dreiser's text shows an ingenious insight into another side of Foucault's theory, namely, the fact that capitalism's future and ever-increasing power are based not on "fighting against" but rather by appropriating the *élan* of the opposition, a point that Grove's text virtually ignores in its emphasis on the omnipotent, omnipresent and dehumanizing machine.

Also, it is in this point that many critics have failed to recognize that Dreiser's text is highly modern and perceptive. Donald Pizer interprets Cowperwood's consolidation of the Chicago street railways as the "paradoxical position of a man whose use of the Public for his own gain also eventually benefits the Public" (*Novels* 196). However, Cowperwood's activities seem paradoxical only from a perspective that assumes a mutually exclusive division between capitalist rulers and the "exploited" mass. Foucault's theory, in contrast, teaches us that capitalism continually increases its power and effectiveness not despite, but rather by accommodating and ultimately appropriating the interests and *élan* of the opposition, which is Cowperwood's strategy in dealing with the people of Chicago. When Cowperwood arrives in Chicago, the customers of the Chicagoan street railways are genu-



inely disgruntled with the quality of the service and the conservative owners who refuse to modernize, and Cowperwood cleverly appropriates this public concern to his advantage. With the help of the powerful Irish "underworld" politician, the Democratic McKenty, he "infiltrates" the ranks of the representatives of the public, and "discredit[s] the present management" of the street railway companies who are opposed to Cowperwood's modernization scheme (*Titan* 179). Soon complaints are voiced and publicized by local aldermen, creating the impression of "a public uprising" (179) against the bad quality of the service of the railways, a move which more or less forces the owners to sell out to Cowperwood.

But just as Cowperwood appropriates the interests of the people to his own advantage, so Cowperwood's rivalling competitors, Chicago's ultra-conservative, Republican capitalists, give the spiral of power a further twist by appropriating Cowperwood's ruthless and anarchic strategies. They win over Cowperwood's Democrats in a municipal election through open corruption and bribery and by "colonizing" the ranks of Cowperwood's former supporters--the heavily populated, marginal wards in Chicago. If Dreiser's *Titan* illustrates anything, it is Foucault's point on the instability of power, which refuses to stay in one fixed locus. We are reminded here of Foucault's argument that the same discourse can be "both an instrument and an effect of power, but also a hindrance, a stumbling-block, a point of resistance and a starting block for an opposing strategy" (*History* 101). Just as the "anti-Cowperwood forces" use Cowperwood's methods and language to defeat him, so Cowperwood, after the election, targets the new political heads and thoroughly undermines the new reform course of openness and anti-corruption even before it had time to be properly implemented. The narra-

tive images the numerous reversals and shifts of power even in many of the chapter titles which take a clearly ironic ring when compared to the contents of the chapters. The chapter entitled "An Hour of Defeat" starts out with the political defeat of the Cowperwood faction but ends with Cowperwood's victory in winning the support of the newly elected "enemy" (*Titan* 320-31).<sup>16</sup>

Since modern power energizes itself through appropriation of the opposition, Foucault argues that a chasm has opened up between the centralized monarchical power of the middle age feudal system and the modern power of the bourgeoisie: "This new type of power, which can no longer be formulated in terms of sovereignty, is, I believe, one of the great inventions of bourgeois society. It has been a fundamental instrument in the constitution of industrial capitalism" (*Power* 105). This new type of power "presupposes a tightly knit grid of material coercions rather than the physical existence of a sovereign" (*Power* 104). Concerned with monopoly and the "trustifying" of companies in an advanced stage of capitalism, Dreiser and Grove, however, groping for an adequate metaphor to translate this modern phenomenon of centralized economical power, take recourse to the popular metaphor of patriarchal-monarchical power. Thus despite their differences in perspectives, both *The Titan* and *The Master of the Mill* culminate in a confrontation between what appears to be capitalism as a centralized,

<sup>16</sup> Also, the chapter entitled "New Administration" (*Titan* 332-50) emphasizes the "anti-corruption" reform course of the new politicians but ends on the corruption of the newly elected administration. Even chapters dealing with the more personal relationships indicate the ironic reversals inherent in any "victory." "Aileen's Revenge" (308-19) describes Cowperwood's wife taking a lover to hurt her husband only to discover that this act completely alienates her husband, whom she had hoped to bring back on track.

absolute power versus the mass of the people in a wild, rebelling mob. Most critics have discussed Cowperwood in terms of a centre of power--as a kind of Nietzschean superman,<sup>17</sup> and only few have recognized the narrative's equally strong parodic undercurrents.<sup>18</sup>

Apparently in contradiction to Foucault's theory of modern power, the image of a patriarchal, monarchical, and centralizing power is also omnipresent in *The Master of the Mill*, and not just in relation to the character with an obviously absolutist and totalitarian vision, Edmund. The mill itself is often presented as a "snow-white" tower, and, in the end, it is "lighted up from within" (363) at the same time that it is running without the "hands." It is precisely this representation of power as a "luminous focus" that Foucault describes as the predominant image of an absolutist, monarchical power. Secondly, in the succession of the three male Clarks, it is always the sons who set out to take over the father's power, an idea that again reinforces the patriarchal-monarchical notion of power, in which the son can only assume power after the old king is dead or removed from his position. This pattern of *Le roi est mort, vive le roi* is furthermore emphasized in the titles of the two parts of the novel: "Part One: Death of the Master"; "Part Two: Resurrection of the Master." Sam opposes his father's ruthlessness and dreams of reversing the father's schemes of workers' exploitation; he even

<sup>17</sup> John O'Neill discusses Cowperwood as an "epic hero" who is so strong that he rarely finds a "suitable opponent" (419). Donald Pizer argues that Cowperwood is "cast in a much more heroic role in *The Titan* than in *The Financier*" (*Novels* 189).

<sup>18</sup> Arun Mukherjee argues that the novel parodically reveals that "Cowperwood's claim to heroism is fictitious" (97). Dreiser "lets the reader know how little basis Cowperwood's world-view has in actuality," so that Cowperwood should by no means be mistaken for "Dreiser's mouthpiece" (96).

sees himself as a socialist who is mentally much more attuned to the workers' problems than his father ever was and he dreams of workers' participation, of raising their wages, of profit for all (26-27). Yet, once he takes over control of the mill from his father, no changes are implemented, because Sam has accepted Rudyard's legacy which is handed over like the sovereign's crown to the son. Once the master of the mill, Sam's language changes as he becomes paranoid of power sharing. Sharing or multiplying points of power might bring to light the dark history of the mill that has to be kept a secret. As the new president of the mill Sam's major concern is to hold absolute control, and thus he repeats the very strategies he had set out to reverse.

But at the same time that Dreiser and Grove let their characters evolve into monarchical centres, they also indicate that Cowperwood and Edmund fall, not despite, but because of the imperial status they adopt. In 1923, Edmund's goal is the total automation of the Langholm mill which will turn thousands of workers into unemployed welfare recipients, a move which presents the absolute triumph of manipulative trickery. It will do away with the traditional producers altogether in order to implement a much more efficient method of production. Just as earlier in the novel Sam was able to turn a workers' strike to his own advantage, so Edmund, in an ingenious move, provokes a massive workers' strike just after the mill has been switched over to complete automation and no longer needs the workers. Here the narrative's language emphasizes the workers' impotence and paralysis in the face of such an absolute and superior power. "Blindly ... they struck" (306), only to realize later on that their move of resistance has been used as a tool against them, has in fact been orchestrated from above. At the same time the narrative emphasizes the lack of control of those who organize the strike; its

causes are linked to sexual promiscuity and immorality (295), to the unreason of the mob and a Bedlam atmosphere which surrounds this move, which clearly suggests that the workers are not in control.

However, this emphasis on the Clarks' "absolute power" should not be taken at face value. It is mainly the different narrators with their limited perspectives who emphasize and eulogize the sense of an imperial power in the hands of the Clark family. Relating the history of the mill, Sam sees his father as a titan with superhuman powers; relating Sam's history, his daughter-in-law, Lady Clark and his housekeeper Otilie Charlebois turn Sam into a hero; narrating Edmund's history, Mr. Stevens praises him as a true superman who has lifted himself above the common humanity. And yet, as these narrators have only a limited and sometimes even an unreliable perspective, the reader cannot help but recognize some of the contradictions inherent in this concern with the absolute power that all the Clarks supposedly share. The different narrators are for example intent on emphasizing the absolute impotence of the workers especially when dealing with Edmund, yet the fact remains that Edmund himself is killed by one of the rebelling workers' bullets, which indicates that the workers' resistance is more powerful than Edmund's arrogant vision allows him to see. Edmund's death demonstrates that, if the workers are partially blind, so is Edmund.

Dreiser's novel also ends by turning Cowperwood into a monarchical centre, albeit with a very different emphasis and effect. *The Titan* culminates in Cowperwood's failure to secure a renewal of his franchises which are due to expire in 1903. The public's fear of "octopus-like," "giant monopoly" (532) stirs up a very powerful democratic resistance movement, when Cowperwood appeals to the state legislature for a fifty-year extension

of his street railway franchises, a move that, if successful, would allow him to establish himself as a monopolist of national, if not international stature. Like Sam, the unheroic survivor figure in Grove's novel who always keeps in the background, the conservative Chicagoan capitalists in *The Titan* retreat in time into the background and let Cowperwood take the centre stage. Cowperwood's competitors save their skin because they manage to offer to the "wrath of the mighty populace" the most visible and spectacular capitalist, Cowperwood, in whose fall the people enact a ritual destruction of the capitalist as "Boodler," "Thief," and "Robber" (539). In the end it appears that Cowperwood's capitalist rivals have become more adept at the "appropriation" game than Cowperwood himself because in the earlier American Match crisis in 1897, Cowperwood was the first to recommend this strategy of sacrificing one capitalist to save the rest.

Critics have pointed to Cowperwood's "honesty," his refusal to be hypocritical and flatter the people with empty promises in this last crisis. Donald Pizer for example writes that Cowperwood "discards hypocrisy for an open declaration of his nature, methods, and goals and thus achieves a kind of Satanic magnificence which to Dreiser is a heroic magnificence" (*Novels* 190). Nevertheless, we have to raise the question why Cowperwood chooses to be "honest" in this last crisis with the Chicagoan people, where he had successfully played the game of disguise and cunning before. It is true that, like Grove's Edmund, Cowperwood is "without a shred of true democracy" (*Titan* 27) and, although "temperamentally he was in sympathy with the mass" (27), he also has an undisguised disdain for the masses, who appear to him "like animals, patient, inartistic, hopeless" and living in "shabby homes" (187). But Dreiser's narrator also indicates that the Chicagoan "mass" could be "natural"

allies to a man like Cowperwood, because "the conventionally rooted" have a profound attraction for the "Machiavellian," and often the "average" citizen is the first "to condone" the Machiavellian force (189). In the struggle for his Chicago franchises Cowperwood simply fails at what he used to be best at; he fails to turn the people into his allies by co-opting their interests. As he desperately desires to divorce Aileen, who is identified with the common people in the novel, so his only striving is to divorce himself from the people.<sup>19</sup>

Earlier in the novel Cowperwood is aware of his "inability to control without dominating personally" (438), but it is this imperial strength which becomes Cowperwood's most important weakness by the novel's end. In the American Match crisis, which marks the climax of his powerful status in Chicago, he manages to triumph over his Chicagoan competitors by appearing like a sovereign king in person in front of all his rivals and threatening them from a position of majesterial greatness and power. The chapter in which Cowperwood thus reaches the height of his prestige and influence is entitled "Mount Olympus" (422-35) but it is also the chapter that contains the seed for his downfall. Similarly, Cowperwood's downfall is anticipated in the novel's title, *The Titan*, a title that evokes the defeat of the mythological giants in their struggle with Zeus (Feder 423). The newspapers, realizing that they can "increase their circulation, by attacking him" (*Titan* 528), manage to exploit this imperial stature and set up a public image of him

<sup>19</sup> Aileen can be seen as a double of the democratic mass in the end of the novel. Not only is she linked to the people through her Irish background but Cowperwood's language in relation to Aileen is the same as his language in relation to Chicago's people. He sees her, like the Chicagoan people, as "inartistic" and "hopeless" in her efforts to create a social home, as well as "slave-like" in her willingness to sacrifice herself for him.

as an ancient tyrannical emperor, who turns the democratic mass into slaves. Reading the newspapers, Cowperwood's new "feminine ideal" Berenice Fleming falls in love with the aging Cowperwood because "he came by degrees to take on the outlines of a superman, a half-god or demi-gorgon" (527). As she falls in love with his imperial stature, so does Cowperwood. As a result, he abandons the ways of the smooth Odysseus-like tactician that marked his successful entrance into Chicago and he becomes a true Coriolanus-figure, who prefers the eternal glory of uncompromising downfall to the unheroic stance that compromise and quiet co-optation entail. Instead of using his own tools--appropriating the interests of the people and demonstrating the beneficial aspect of his project--Cowperwood seems to relish his isolated imperial status and oscillates between offensive open bribery of people's representatives and taking recourse to a discourse of "fairness," an argument that seems strange coming out of the mouth of Cowperwood who has always trusted more his own trickery than he has trusted "fair play" or any other social conventions.

However, *The Titan* demonstrates that Cowperwood's representation of himself as a sovereign king is archaic in a realm where power is built on the appropriation of resisting opposition rather than the open fight against it. Cowperwood's spectacular "titanic" fight seems as nostalgic and ineffective a move as Edmund's display of old-fashioned valour, when he bravely steps into the limelight of the mill that is surrounded by rebelling and chaotically shooting workers in order to subdue the workers by his sheer presence. It seems ironic, though, that both capitalist visionaries, Edmund and Cowperwood, become victims of their own nostalgic dreams for the old monarchical-imperial power in which the sovereign asserted and ramified his position by his spectacular presence.



Dreiser's Cowperwood appears less flexible than the robber baron he is modelled on. In his fight for the renewal of the franchises, Yerkes was "hoping to win over some of the opposition and mollify the public by compromising" (Roberts 370); he even "purchased a newspaper, the *Chicago Inter Ocean*, and initiated a propaganda campaign for franchise extensions" (Roberts 363). While Yerkes' "street railways were poorly illuminated, filthy, unventilated, and worn out" (Roberts 352), *The Titan* plays down the fact that Yerkes' rolleys were a public hazard that Yerkes refused to improve and that the Chicagoans' demands for better transportation service were more than justified. Also, the omniscient narrator of *The Titan* is partly complicitous with Cowperwood's superman status. Through the narrator's eyes, Chicago's democratic movement is presented as a disorganized, violent mob: "those sinister, ephemeral organizations which on demand of the mayor had cropped out into existence--great companies of the unheralded, the dull, the undistinguished--clerks, working-men, small business men, and minor scions of religion or morality" (539). Cowperwood's real life model, in contrast, was faced with a well-organized democratic movement, which was effective precisely because they had cleverly appropriated Yerkes' own methods of reaching a wide public by circulating petitions, pamphlets, and leaflets, but also by bringing pressure to bear on the people's representatives through verbal attacks and threats (cf. Roberts 356-71).

*The Titan* critiques its own narrator's bias against the Chicagoan people, at the same time that it critiques capitalism itself, as it is represented in its purest by the conservative and conventional Chicago business elite. *The Titan* represents a somewhat different--much more positive--side of the dem-

ocratic movement by significantly reducing narrator interference toward the end of the novel. Dreiser incorporates, for example, a page-long pamphlet that asks citizens to "Arouse and Defeat the Boodlers" (540). The novel also switches from straight prose narrative to the conventions of a dramatic play to convey a sense of the public debate:

*A Voice.* "The interests of the people!"  
*Another Voice.* "Sit down. You're bought!"  
*Alderman Winkler.* "If the chair pleases--" (544)

Although the narrator interferes to provide information in parenthesis, Dreiser reduces the narrator's input to a minimum, and thus the three-page-long dramatic debate brings to the fore the dialogic heterogeneity of a democratic group united by their common goal to fight against exploitative capitalism and corruptive politicians.

In contrast to the unresolved contradictions of *The Titan*, *Grove's Mill* creates some ironic distance to Edmund's downfall at the same time that it creates sympathy with Sam's unheroic survival and "failure." Sam remains modestly in the background, refusing the honours of knighthood that Edmund, in contrast, eagerly accepts in lieu of his father, even insisting in everyday discourse on the feudal title of "Sir Edmund." Unlike Sam, Edmund is a visionary, but his dreams of the future are paradoxically all dressed in a vocabulary of the past. He dreams of himself as "dictator in the Roman" sense (337), who will transform society so as to "replace the present anarchy of the world" (368). Edmund's vision of capitalism has an absolutist and totalitarian focus, and the fact that the novel was written in 1944, as well as the fascist slant of Edmund's vision, suggests a vision of Nazi Germany. Similar to what Adolph Hitler's *Nationalsozialisten* preached, Edmund sees a

workers' strike in terms of a "war" (365) and argues that the class system should be overcome in favour of a higher community which melts together to a "whole," again evocative of the Nazi-*Volksgemeinschaft*, which recognizes only one undivided will.<sup>20</sup>

Edmund's automation of the mill is highly successful, and *The Master of the Mill*, like *The Titan*, makes the point that any "resistance" can easily be appropriated into the capitalist machinery. The resisting worker's bullet kills Edmund but not the mill he has helped to implement. The mill has gained a life of its own and dispenses both with the workers and with the Clarks in the end. As Edmund puts it shortly before his death: "These days, nobody is any longer master in his own house" (327). The mill as the ultimate image of capitalism lives on, whereby the power of running this machine has been dispersed into the hands of technicians. Similarly, the fall of Cowperwood does not threaten capitalism, but in fact assures the survival and consolidation of capitalist power in Chicago. This in turn illustrates Foucault's point that taking off the apex of the pyramid does not necessarily destroy the system.

Grove sees the ultimate success of manipulative capitalism in the fact that its mysteriously efficient production machines eventually do away altogether with the traditional producers--the mill hands. The metaphor of the machine in which everyone is caught is highly appropriate to illustrate power relations that result from the new nature-like speculation-production unit. But this vision of modern power is in opposition with the archaic

<sup>20</sup> Like the "fascist machine," the mill is a marvel of organization created by humans who can no longer control their own creation; the machine turns around to control the lives of those who brought it into being. Just as fascism celebrates the myth of immortality of the whole apparatus, so the corporate machine lives on even after the different shareholders die.

patriarchal, monarchical power, displayed by the three male Clarks in different forms. Grove not only maintains but strengthens this contradiction in the end, even beyond the death of the Clarks. In the end the three patriarchs die leaving the legacy of the mill to three women, Maud Dolittle, Otilie Charlebois and Maud Fanshaw, whose function it is to distribute charity to the unemployed--the "victims" of the mill. By taking recourse to an utterly fictional, utopian, and static future state in which the corporate machine can completely dispense with labour, Grove creates a whole group of unemployed who become like children in their dependency on the charity from a fabulously rich patron. This provider of necessary tangible commodities echoes the patriarchal father as well as the generously giving producer figure of Grove's agrarian novels. The state of unemployment is highly ambiguous as a modern paradise without the curse of labour because it reveals Sam's (and Grove's) longing for an archaic patriarchal power, which holds the strings even from beyond the grave.

Dreiser's *Titan* ends on his philosophical reflections on the "eternal equation" the discovery that "even giants are but pygmies" (551), and the notion that spectacular rise is inevitably followed by a downfall, an idea that has often been attributed to Dreiser's reading of Herbert Spencer. But the "equation inevitable" can be re-read in Foucaultian terms, in that any power relation always creates its own opposition, and that there is in fact no power without resistance or some form of freedom. But as Grove's protagonist superimposes his own nostalgia for the old agrarian producer-patriarch on the modern speculator, so Dreiser's narrator falls in love *not* so much with the ever flexible, cunning speculator but with a nostalgic, imperial stature of the speculator-capitalist who necessarily fails because he looks backward

rather than forward. If Dreiser's narrator partly operates in the discourse of a Darwinian romance, it seems that he is attracted not so much to the *homo sapiens* of capitalism, but rather to a capitalist dinosaur—Cowperwood the Titan. Similarly, if we see Grove's *Mill* as the Canadian version of the big business novel with its characteristic criticism of the "American" trend of manipulative commercialism, then we also have to recognize its nostalgic longing not so much for democratic freedom and subversion of the power machine but for the patriarchal power relation Grove generally associates with the agrarian producer in his novels of the soil.

## B. The Representations of Capitalist Power

There [Carnegie] has built, at a cost of more than a million dollars, a magnificent library, museum, concert hall and picture gallery, all under one roof, and endowed it with a fund of another million, the interest of which, (fifty thousand dollars per annum,) is being devoted to the purchase of the best works of American art.

Theodore Dreiser  
"Andrew Carnegie" (167-68)

Grove and Dreiser are concerned with the apparent paradox that the superman-capitalists exploit workers' labour at the same time that they devote millions to cultural donations; and that they undercut their own workers' demands for higher payments with cheap foreign labour at the same time that they establish charitable funds for the underprivileged. When Sam Clark dies toward the end of *The Master of the Mill*, he stipulates in his will that a large amount of his money will go to create a charitable fund for the unemployed, or for what he sees as the victims of the mill. In its last volume, *The Stoic* (1947), *The Trilogy of Desire* culminates in a similar pattern with Cowperwood donating his huge, million dollar art collection to a public museum and setting up a charitable fund for a hospital in which people should be treated regardless of colour and creed.

Some readers have explained these charitable impulses as an oppositional expression against capitalism--the typical contradiction between giving and taking--and they generally see in it an indicator for the protagonist's

spiritual growth, a development away from ruthless capitalism and materialism toward humanitarianism (see Hussman *Dreiser* 86, 182). However, the clever business woman Maud Dolittle in *The Master of the Mill* maintains at the end of the novel that Sam's charitable act is not really in opposition but quite in harmony with the wishes of Edmund, the most ruthless capitalist in the novel. Also, in the following quotation, Lewis Mumford calls attention to the mutually supportive facets of the position of the capitalist-philanthropist-art lover.

This hunting for pictures, statues, tapestries, clothes, pieces of furniture, for the epidermis and entrails of palaces and cottages and churches satisfied the two capital impulses of the Gilded Age: it gave full play to the acquisitive instinct, and, with the possible rise and fall of prices in even time-established securities, it had not a little of the cruder excitement of gambling in the stock market or in real-estate. At the same time, it satisfied a starved desire for beauty and raised the pursuer an estimable step or two in the social scale. (Quoted in Gerber *Dreiser* 99)

Cowperwood has an appreciation for art and he also knows very well that "the great pictures are going to increase in value, and what [he] could get for a few hundred thousand now will be worth millions later" (*Financier* 162). Dreiser's *Trilogy* furthermore calls attention to the fact that, if philanthropic activity or love of art are in opposition to capitalism, they are activities that can be easily appropriated for capitalist purposes.

We only need to look at the chapter entitled "The Planet Mars" (*Titan* 363-72) which narrates Cowperwood's gift of a \$300,000 observatory to a university to trace the underlying business motif of this seemingly generous act. This donation solves Cowperwood's imminent cash flow problem because he makes it in times when the banks, suspicious because of a forceful anti-Cowperwood campaign in Chicago, refuse to lend Cowperwood money.

Cowperwood recognizes that the gift of an observatory would have a "unique news value" (371), and the news of his generous donation is spread by the national and international media. Able to give such a gift even "in the hour of his greatest difficulties" (372)—i.e. in times of acute cash shortage—Cowperwood leaves the impression of being truly powerful. His gift turns out to be the "Open Sesame" formula that quickly re-opens the major banks' doors for Cowperwood's business; it is a clever investment, completely in tune with the laws of capitalism.

Furthermore, seen in the light of Foucault's theory, capitalism's charitable activities are not in opposition to the capitalist power principle. According to Foucault, modern bio-power gave itself the "function of administering life" rather than imposing the threat of death to force individuals into submission. Since bio-power is concerned with the "evaluation of the relationship between resources and inhabitants" (*History* 140), the strategies of bio-power are a "calculated management of life," subsuming measures of population control and demography. According to Foucault, "bio-power was without question an indispensable element in the development of capitalism; the latter would not have been possible without the controlled insertion of bodies into the machinery of production and the adjustment of the phenomena of population to economic processes" (*History* 140-41).

In the following passage Maud Dolittle in Grove's *Mill* reflects about the demands of the machine for an increased or reduced labour force:

Population will dwindle as its task disappears. The enormously increased population was needed to nurse the machine in its infancy, to teach it its paces till it could walk by itself. As the population dwindles, it will live in ever greater abundance and ease till comfort smother it, and it becomes extinct. (390-91)



As Edmund envisions a future in which the population is kept in submission through material comfort, so charity becomes the major strategy to keep the former workers "docile," who, disgruntled and frustrated, might otherwise attack the machines and disrupt production. This explains how the Clark mill can be a symbol of "ruthless capitalism" (3) at the same time that it is a symbol of benefaction and aesthetic beauty (127). For Sam, the "aesthetically-satisfying creation of the mill" is, like a work of art, "an outward manifestation of the human spirit" (371).

Similarly, Dreiser creates a connection between capitalism, art and philanthropy. As Cowperwood's passion for art is expressed by his desire to possess as many *objets d'art* as possible, Dreiser "equates art with the principle of accumulation," at the same time that he equates it also with what "would seem its opposite, the principle of philanthropy" (Michaels *Gold Standard* 79). According to Michaels, art in *The Financier* "participates in the general economy of the gift" because it gives beauty generously without ever thinking of exchange (*Gold Standard* 79).<sup>21</sup> Art is linked to the freely giving mistress in *The Financier*:

[The mistress' non-seeking, sacrificial note] appears to be related to that last word in art, that largess of spirit which is the first characteristic of the great picture, the great building, the great sculpture, the great decoration--namely, a giving, freely and without stint, of itself, of beauty. (173)

<sup>21</sup> Gerber also points to the "gift" in Dreiser's Trilogy, which establishes a connection between the capitalist, beauty, and art: "The genius for organizing an enterprise was a gift, just as a great voice, a woman's beauty, a painter's talent are gifts" (*Dreiser* 91).

Like Sam Clark, the philanthropic businessman-philosopher in Grove's *Mill*,<sup>22</sup> Cowperwood thinks of himself as having a natural affinity for art. When Cowperwood enters Chicago for the first time, he sees the city as a work of art and "he studied these streets as in the matter of art he would have studied a picture" (*Titan* 4), with the result that this "raw, dirty town seemed naturally to compose itself into stirring artistic pictures" (4). Later in the novel, the reader is told that it is "the spirit of art that occupied the center of Cowperwood's iron personality" (440) and that for Cowperwood, "the ultimate end of fame, power, vigor was beauty" (470). The narrative demonstrates that artistic representations are an intricate part of capitalist activities, and, as a capitalist, Cowperwood is driven by an overwhelming urge toward self-representation, an urge that is, however, contradicted by the fact that he professes not to care about "public opinion."

In *The Titan* and *The Master of the Mill* art is connected with the female characters. Cowperwood's wife Aileen "was truly beautiful herself--a radiant, vibrating *objet d'art*" (*Titan* 36), whose beauty is presented to the "spectators" of Chicago, the socially prominent who comment and judge the representation. To emphasize the notion of the female as art object even further, Cowperwood has Aileen's picture painted "while still young" and in the prime of her beauty, and this picture becomes part of his art collection, hung opposite "a particularly brilliant Gerôme, then in the heyday of his exotic popularity--a picture of nude odalisques of the harem, idling beside the highly colored stone marquetry of an oriental bath" (68). Gerôme's nudes

<sup>22</sup> See Robin Mathews (251-53) for a discussion of the unpublished "Spartacus" version of Grove's *Mill* that puts even more emphasis on Sam's philanthropic activities and his interests in art.

are a very apt mirror image of Aileen's picture as well as for the real Aileen. Just as Gerôme's harem suggests a cornucopia of sex for the male *potentate*, so its complement-mirror image, the picture of Aileen, celebrates sexual vitality and draws a whole number of male spectators--Cowperwood's business friends, who dream of sexual pleasure with her, but are at the same time made conscious of the "lack" of this pleasure in their own lives because they feel that they are "chained" into "conventional" relationships with "cold" and "possessive" wives. The juxtaposition of the two visual representations in the same gallery--of Aileen and the harem--work together in that they draw attention to what is really absent in both pictures: the male as owner of the picture as well as "master" over the female body. Cowperwood triumphs over all the male spectators present who are aware that he is the only one to have access to the beautiful body they admire in the picture. As the owner of the gallery, Cowperwood represents himself as a lover of beauty, at the same time that his role as a powerful master-accumulator-owner is inscribed in the gaps of the representations he owns.

Dreiser draws attention to the danger of being the centre of a representation, as Aileen is in the beginning of the novel. After Cowperwood's first social event in Michigan Avenue in which Aileen is offered as the representational "centre-piece" (in a chapter that is significantly entitled "A Test" [66-73]), it is Aileen who is dismissed by Chicagoan society as "too showy" and "vulgar," and is cut in society. The Cowperwoods' social failure is repeatedly attributed to Aileen; she is sacrificed not only by the socially prominent in Chicago but by Cowperwood as well, who distances himself from her. While Aileen becomes a social outcast, Cowperwood, in contrast, is excused and often invited alone by Chicago's rich. However, like Aileen,

Cowperwood fails toward the end of the novel, when others turn him into a static, fixed representation. As I have demonstrated in the preceding section, Cowperwood allows himself to be inscribed as a centre of power--an economical superman and demi-gorgon who exploits the masses of Chicago--in the representational world of the newspapers, which is exactly what he avoided earlier in the novel when he used Aileen as a representational focus, a representation that, once fixed, accompanies her like a dark shadow for the rest of her life. Thus the representational inscription of the static, powerful personality turns out to be self-defeating in capitalism.

From a different angle, Grove's *Mill* makes a similar point. Like Cowperwood in *The Titan*, the male Clarks are interested in the arts, and here again, it is the women who are the objects of artistic representation within the narrative, while the male characters remain outside the realm of visual representations. Several times Grove refers to the portrait of Sam's wife, Maud Carter, a painting that represents her, like Cowperwood's portrait of Aileen, "in the flower of her youth" (*Mill* 129). It is a portrait that was commissioned by Sam's father, painted by Montreal artist Langereau for \$2,000, and is placed where it is bound to draw the spectator's eye, "upstairs, in the sitting-room recess opposite the grand stairway abutting on the gallery" (38). Looking at this picture many years after its composition, Edmund's wife, Maud Fanshaw, comments: "It's a fine painting. But it tells me nothing of her real being. I look and I look. I cannot but admire. I think I'd have adored her; and suddenly I am repelled" (64). As the names of the women are doubled and tripled in three different Mauds, who become interchangeable in the mind of the aging Senator Sam, so the paintings of the women are

doubled and tripled.<sup>23</sup> Grove makes much of the portrait of "Stella" by John Everett Millais which hangs over the mantelpiece in Clark House in Langholm, a painting which "everybody mistook for a portrait of [Maud Fanshaw]" (100) because of its "uncanny resemblance." This portrait is doubled again when Edmund decides to have a copy of it made for the newly-built Clark House in Ontario. As in Dreiser's work, the women in *The Master of the Mill* are represented as visual *objets d'art* to visitors and the public. As Maud Fanshaw and her companion fill their hours with embroidering, they also appear as a visual, artistic still-life to the reader (e.g. 1, 5, 128, 202).

As in Cowperwood's life, in the lives of the three Clark capitalists, it is the women who take over the roles of representations set up for the public, representations which act as important catalysts in the economic and social power plays. Maud Carter as well as Maud Clark double each other in that they are both "regal" and "aristocratic." Like Cowperwood's wives and mistresses, they are linked to the spectacular house projects of the protagonists. Maud Carter sends her architect-brother to England to study the country estates to build the famous Clark House in Langholm in Manitoba, "on a scale unheard-of even among the wealthy in Canada" (67). The house with its fifty rooms and its up-keep costs of \$100,000 per year gives rise to rumours amongst the people of Langholm. Edmund repeats this act by building Arbala House east of Toronto, an "ostentatious private hotel, meant to dazzle people whom he wished to draw into his net by offering them social opportunities" (283). For Edmund, this house is not really to live in,

<sup>23</sup> See K.P. Stich's "Grove's 'Stella'" for a discussion of the picture in the novel.

but a "show place" in which he, together with his collaborator and wife Maud, conducts his business ventures (308).

Given the traditional secrecy of the male Clarks, the women are very important because they are offered as representations of the mill to the public eye, especially when the male Clarks prefer to retreat into the "not to be seen." Like the snow-white mill, Maud Carter appears in "snow-white" at the important social event in Langholm (140), just as the "virginal" Maud Dolittle appears in a "white fur" at a party at Langholm House many years later. As Cowperwood's wife Aileen and his mistresses are linked to beauty and self-sacrifice, so the three Mauds represent the mill as an aesthetic object, an ideal that is worth a sacrifice. The clever business woman Maud Dolittle, whose strongest concern is with the welfare of the mill, falls in love with the precocious Edmund but later makes "a supreme sacrifice by handing the man she loved to another woman" (267), namely, to Maud Fanshaw who is deemed to be the ideal wife for the spectacular business man. Maud Fanshaw, like Berenice Fleming in *The Titan*, has been brought up for the marriage market (*Titan* 530; *Mill* 276-77), and is pressured into sacrificing herself for the welfare of her family by marrying a rich man.

Whereas Aileen in Dreiser's *Titan* is a complete failure in her representational functions, Maud Fanshaw, turns out to be an overwhelming success.<sup>24</sup> As Edmund's wife, Maud is tied to spectacular parties and dinners,

<sup>24</sup> Here the parallels between Grove's *Mill* and his unpublished "Jane Atkinson" are very strong. The relationship between Edmund and Maud is dramatized as a business-relationship, based on friendship rather than (sexual) love. In "Jane Atkinson," Jane's refusal to consummate the marriage makes her an excellent business partner for her husband. However, after the sexual contact is made, she not only neglects but rejects her husband's business on "moral" grounds.

in which she plays a highly visible part in scenes carefully orchestrated by the master-manipulator Edmund, who, like Goethe's Mephistopheles, seems to be "all art." The controlled and highly orchestrated political "theatre" at Arbala House reveals the mechanism and importance of representational games in capitalism. In contrast to the monarchical sovereign who appears in front of his public as a spectacular presence to assert his power, the capitalist's strategy consists in shifting, whenever necessary, the representational focus to the figure who does not really dominate in a power relationship--his wife. When Edmund manages to gain a monopolist control over the mill by stripping Mr. Cole of the shares he held in proxy for a score of smaller shareholders, it is not Edmund but Maud who is confronted by Mr. Cole in public after he has been stripped of his power. At the same time, it is in a secret discussion between Edmund and the prime minister that Edmund asserts not only his economical but also his political dominance over the national government. This is, however, not to say that power "hides" itself. Rather, the capitalist's status is inscribed in the gaps of his representations, a technique that makes possible a fluidity and flexibility that a monarchical representation of power with its centralized, spectacular focus does not have.

The *Master of the Mill* also draws attention to the fact that the representations of the mill are by no means stable but continually shifting. The mill is represented in the three Mauds, but also in Sibyl Carter, whose entrance into Langholm coincides with the implementation of the first stage of the mill's automation at the turn-of-the-century. Unlike the images of "ideal femininity," such as Maud Carter and Maud Fanshaw, Sibyl looks very boyish and androgynous, very much like Fanny Essler. Set up as the archetypal *femme fatale*, her aim is not only to seduce the master of the mill,

Sam, but also to flirt with the mill-hands. Sibyl's sexuality seems to infiltrate the whole apparatus of the mill, a mill which towers up in front of her as a huge phallic symbol:

Leaving the office, followed by her sardonic and overpowdered maid, she went down to the carriage, stopping a moment to stare at the mill which, though an unfinished torso, was at the centre towering up to almost its present height.... (174)

It is Odette Charlebois, Sam's long-time housekeeper, who narrates Sibyl's part in the first stage of the mill's automation. As a sexualized object of sight Sibyl displaces the "regal" and dignified Maud Carter as the predominant representation of the mill in the minds of the public. She becomes a model to be imitated in dress, manner, conduct and conversation by the other women of Langholm (138). Given her image as a seductive siren, she becomes associated with the mill's destructive aspects in the public's mind. Like Virgil's Sibyl who leads Aeneas through the underworld and prophesizes that he will have to fight a brutal war before he will find a new home in Latium (*Aeneid* IV), so Grove's Sibyl is associated with the "descent" before "ascension" is possible; she represents the sacrifices that are necessary in order to reach what is arguably a higher goal--the growth (and automation) of the mill.

Like Cowperwood's Aileen, Sibyl exudes a sense of absolute transparency and a complete lack of secrecy. She is eagerly watched by the public exercising daily in a newly built gymnasium in Clark House, "half-naked." It is Sibyl who opens the doors of Clark House to the public in huge Gatsby-like dance parties, and thus provides some insights into the privacy of the Clarks. It is Sibyl who provokes the rumors of her relationship with Sam. Publicizing the intimate details of her marriage in a public divorce suit, she stirs up the



emotions of the people of Langholm, who side with her husband. The wrath of the public against Sibyl (and against the mill) culminates in a public chase in which Sibyl is stripped of her clothing, a scene that is narrated by Odette Charlebois:

All the time such of her pursuers as fell behind were replaced by fresher and younger ones. But she knew now where she was: in a moment she would be skirting the park of Clark House. Meanwhile new hands were reaching for her. Her petticoat fell; her vest; her drawers; and just as she was topping the hill, coming into the direct light, she ran naked, save for her corset. (177-78)

Culminating in this satirized assault, the spreading sexual aura in Langholm is accompanied by a hectic boom in land speculation that leads to a bust. Various narrators in Grove's *Mill* make a logical connection between the spreading sexual promiscuity, the speculation bust, and the first worker's strike. Most people involved perceive Sibyl to be responsible for the ensuing "chaos" at the mill, that is the growing liberality which culminates in the rebellious strike of otherwise submissive workers.

However, a juxtaposition of individual narrations of the same event show significant variations that point to a very different "truth," namely, that it is Sam not Sibyl who is responsible for the speculative euphoria and the ensuing bust as well as the workers' strike. Sam's dissemination of information about the mill's expansion leads everyone in Langholm to assume that the town will grow, but Sam deliberately withholds the information about the mill's automation and the fact that instead of a growing labour force, the number of mill-hands will be reduced. While Sibyl is ritually assaulted and driven out of town as the representation of the hated, destructive mill, Sam, the real instigator of the speculation bust and cause of the workers' unrest

remains out of town. It is Sibyl who takes the brunt of the people's wrath and the moment she leaves town, Sam returns to workers who are now willing to make peace and comply with the management's call for order. Thus Grove's text emphasizes that Sibyl's promiscuity is not really disruptive of capitalist processes; rather it is a clever strategy that helps the apparently innocent Sam to implement the first stage of the automation of the mill in 1901.

In complete contrast to the male Clarks' marital loyalty and faithfulness and their disassociation from promiscuity, Cowperwood collects mistresses as he collects art objects, and he sees the women in his life, like his art objects, as a barometer for his own growing "artistic" status. Not only does he seduce women by showing them his art, but most of his mistresses are in one way or another connected to the arts. Rita Sohlberg, an artist's wife and Cowperwood's mistress, is endowed with an "innate artistry" (*Titan* 113); Stephanie Platow, Cowperwood's double in promiscuity, is a gifted amateur actress. Also, Cowperwood falls in love with Berenice Fleming's picture before he sees her in person, again an indicator that the female as a representation, as *Frauenbild*, is more important than the "real" person.

As Cowperwood has a very clear notion of the hierarchy of art without ever defining the basis or standard underlying this hierarchy, so he assumes that there is a hierarchy of women, which legitimates his right to abandon one lover after the next to move closer to his "ideal." Donald Pizer as well as Lawrence Hussman take Cowperwood's "hierarchy" at face value, Pizer arguing that the women in *The Titan* are art objects in "an ascending order" (*Novels* 173), and Hussmann even recognizing underlying "religious dimensions" (*Dreiser* 85) in Cowperwood's "mystical search" for the feminine ideal (86). This argument seems in contradiction to Pizer's more convincing

point on the "picaresque" quality of the novel, a quality that is reflected in the long line of often interchangeable mistresses, whose names are accumulated and catalogued in the narrative without ever attaching themselves as separate personalities in the minds of the reader. Furthermore, lady-like and strongly aware of social conventions, Berenice Fleming, Cowperwood's celebrated last ideal (*Titan* 351f, 358), has ironically much in common with Cowperwood's first wife, Lillian Semple (cf. *Financier* 37f; 46; 52). Also, the fact that both women share their opposition to Aileen's vitality and sensuality would indicate that Cowperwood's sexual journey describes an ironic, circular movement rather than a quest for a "spiritual" ideal. As in Grove's *Mill*, Maud Dolittle recognizes that Maud Fanshaw would make a better representation for Edmund's business (and thus a better wife) than herself, so the aging Cowperwood seems to long for a more conservative, less sexual, public representation for his business ventures, and he seems to have found it in Berenice, the younger double of his ex-wife Lillian.

Furthermore, just as Drouet in *Sister Carrie* will remain "young until he was dead" because of his promiscuity, so Cowperwood's promiscuity is linked to the hero's affirmation of his "eternal" youth through the conquest of young women. His youth is contrasted with the growing old of Cowperwood's wives. In the beginning of *The Titan*, his wife Lillian appears anemic, lifeless, and faded, just as some years later, Aileen loses her charms and becomes self-destructive with her obsessive worrying and her heavy drinking. It is as a foil to a panorama of changing and aging women that Cowperwood represents himself as eternally young, and, youth in capitalism is a metonymy for business dynamics and success. As Cowperwood ritually replenishes the image of his youth and vitality through his accumulation and "possession" of

women (all of whom he sees as true "objects d'art"), so his collection of art takes on a monumental quality of static perfection intended to immortalize and eternalize Cowperwood after his death.

Just as the legendary Don Juan is killed by a stone statue, so Cowperwood is driven by the desire to immortalize himself in stone even before his death. Long before his death, Cowperwood has his tomb built as a true work of art and he plans his funeral as a moving dramatic event. In *The Stoic* Aileen witnesses Cowperwood's funeral and she is struck by "her husband's power of self-presentation" (272):

Above the doors of the tomb, in heavy square-cut letters, was his name: FRANK ALGERNON COWPERWOOD. The three graduated platforms of granite were piled high with flowers, and the massive bronze double doors stood wide open, awaiting the arrival of the distinguished occupant. As all must have felt who viewed it for the first time, this was a severely impressive artistic achievement in the matter of design, for its tall and stately serenity seemed to dominate the entire area. (*Stoic* 272)

This language evokes the spectacular, imperial self-representation that is linked to Cowperwood's downfall in the end of *The Titan*. Cowperwood's preparation of his tomb is also evocative of Petronius' satire of the nouveau riche Trimalchio who has a similar fetichized obsession with his epitaph. Part of Trimalchio's inscription reads: "HE DIED A MILLIONAIRE, / THOUGH HE STARTED LIFE WITH NOTHING" (78).

Throughout the trilogy, Cowperwood's growing desire to inscribe and immortalize his own titanic, spectacular greatness, is linked to failure and disaster. Cowperwood's monumental houses turn into sepulchers exuding a sense of failure and death. Closely collaborating with architects, interior designers and artists, Cowperwood has his huge mansion in Chicago's

Michigan Avenue built as a true work of art. The mansion is supposed to become the site of social brilliance, a self-representation of the truly successful businessman. Yet when the socially prominent refuse to frequent the house, it becomes a "costly sepulcher in which Aileen sat brooding over the woes which had befallen her" (*Titan* 381). The second, even more spectacular, house in New York "should be resplendent, a monument to himself" (381); it is intended to have "the more enduring quality of a palace or even a museum" (439). "Endure! Endure! Endure!" (*Stoic* 272) are the words that go through Aileen's mind at Cowperwood's funeral. But Cowperwood's monuments and their "enduring" quality turn out to be an illusion, just as his artful houses turn into sepulchers and thus into a parodic reversal of Cowperwood's carefully fabricated self-representation. The point of the trilogy is that nothing "endures" in capitalism. After Cowperwood's death his fortune is quickly dismantled in legal battles; his last important business transaction has to be completed by others. *The Financier* and *The Stoic* present powerful scenes in which Cowperwood's carefully accumulated properties and art-objects are auctioned off, the first after his downfall in Philadelphia, the second after his death. These fetichized objects are not suspended above time as representations of Cowperwood's immortality, but they re-enter the economic circle, becoming immediately signifiers of somebody else's success.

Like Cowperwood's self-representations, the Clark mill echoes a desire for the inscription of immortality. The mill is built in the form of a pyramid and thus evokes the tomb, an architecture in which the three male Clarks inscribe themselves for all times to come as the creators of the mill. Like in Dreiser's work, in Grove's *Mill*, the male protagonists die and the women survive the male "masters." The women are presented to the reader

at the end in a group portrait as an artistic still-life, quietly musing and philosophizing about the ever-circular movements of history. When Lady Maud, the nominal president of the mill after Sam's death, asks Maud Dolittle what she should do to run the mill, she is told: "do nothing. The mill is the mill; it lives a life of its own. From time to time turn your profits over to that fund" (*Mill* 390). But in the end the women are not just "useless adornments," as Nancy Bailey has put it (189). Rather, they are what they used to be in the course of the whole novel: a representation of the mill that makes its smooth running possible.

Finally, in radical contrast to Dreiser's novel, the three women who survive are not primarily mistresses, but mother-figures: Odette Charlebois raised Maud Carter's children, Edmund and his sister Ruth; Maud Dolittle was a mother as well as a mistress to Edmund; and Lady Clark mothered Senator Clark in the last years of his life. As the mill continues its nature-like production, so the women's function is to "shelter and feed the unemployed," as Maud Clark puts it (390); as the mill is suspended above good and evil, so the three women seem serene and impervious. And yet, many critics have seen the ending in very negative terms emphasizing the women's "sterility," because all three women are childless. In the end, it is the man-made mill that triumphs as the image of production; female childbirth has been usurped as the ultimate image of productive energy. It is significant that *The Master of the Mill* presents two mothers who die in childbirth, first Sam's mother and then Sam's wife Maud, when she gives birth to her daughter Ruth. As the representations of the maternal functions of the mill, the three women in nominal power of the mill have been stripped of their own productive capacities. The novel ends with a view on three "mothers" without children, and

this image is an indirect ironic triumph of "masculine" productivity in the form of the machine, just as Cowperwood's long line of mistresses functions as a representation of his "masculine" manipulative genius.

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## Chapter 4

### THE AESTHETICS OF POWER

#### *IN SEARCH OF MYSELF AND THE "GENIUS"*

...this book is the record of a failure; and its explanation; a double failure, an economic and a spiritual one, for ultimately the one involved the other.

*In Search of Myself*  
F.P. Grove

But the artist, poor and proud, along with his endowment of creative power, is furnished with an aggressive egotism.

"Genius and Matrimony"  
Theodore Dreiser

This juxtaposition of a Canadian and an American view of the early twentieth-century artist figure--the artist as victim versus the artist as egotist--is an attempt to throw new light on the status, function and self-perception of the realist-naturalist artist, as it is an attempt to evaluate Grove's somewhat vehement *j'accuse* against materialist "Americanism" and the rule of money, both of which Grove claims to be diametrically opposed to the arts.<sup>1</sup> Grove's and Dreiser's *Künstlerromane*, *In Search of Myself* (1946) and *The "Genius"* (1915)--both labelled autobiographical fiction (Pizer *Novels* 136-40; Spettigue *FPG* 169-96)--present artist-figures who deal self-consciously with motifs and

<sup>1</sup> This argument that money and art exclude each other seems consistent in Grove's life. In his conversation with André Gide, the German Grove said: "just because I intend to live, I say that I am not an artist. The need for money makes me write. The work of art is only an excuse" (quoted in André Gide 241). In his essay "The Plight of Canadian Fiction? A Reply [to Morley Callaghan]," the Canadian Grove writes much later: "success of a Canadian writer, especially if won in the United States, means almost certainly the ruin of that writer as a writer, though not, perhaps, as a business man" (246).

"tales from the margin," at the same time that they situate the artist figure in an emerging early twentieth-century consumer society. The authors centre on somewhat complementary figures in "complementary" countries: Grove on the artist as a "failure" in small-town Canada and Dreiser on the artist as an "egotistical" success story of urban American capitalism.

*In Search of Myself* has ignited the interest of many critics because, in a narrative set up as an autobiography, Grove relegates his identity as a writer in Germany into the gaps of the text, into the "not to be seen" and the "not to be read," thus fictionally reenacting his suicide as the German author Felix Paul Greve. Grove's *Search* thus illustrates Foucault's point that the author cannot be traced as a unified self in his/her work of art, and that the "'author-function' is characterized by [a] plurality of egos" (*Language* 130). Readers of *Search* have, in fact, been lured into resurrecting different versions of the author by rewriting him back into the text. (After all, Grove leaves a whole network of clues behind that play off against his German identity.) Some readers have recreated the author as an agency endowed with an immense power, an author who pulls all the strings and leads the reader successfully by the nose in a clever con-man's game. Other critics give the spiral of this power play between author and reader a further twist by taking their revenge for having been tricked and label the author, as Michael Darling did in a review, "a rather pathetic clown, a poor actor, and a self-confessed liar" (53).<sup>2</sup>

The death/resurrection or failure/creation pattern is woven as a ritualized play into the thematic fabric of *Search*, replayed in the narrator's repeated *Verschwinden* and *Wiederkommen*, his death and rebirth in the act

<sup>2</sup> For a discussion of the critics' obsession with Grove as a "congenital liar" and a "literary con-man," see Paul Hjartarson's "Design and Truth."

of writing. It is always failure that gives the impetus to new creation. Haunted by diseases, failures, and an oppressive sense of impotence, the narrator-novelist of *In Search of Myself* writes himself as a true *sparagmos*-figure, who is ripped apart, mutilated and has to die each time before he can come to life again.<sup>3</sup>

Yet here we are confronted with the first of the numerous contradictions of *Search*. The artist's "death," the failure to reach the ideal of perfection, the sacrifice of personal life are set up as that which gives the impetus to new creation, but at the same time the narrator presents what he claims has created his failure as an artist in Canada not so much in terms of renunciation but in terms of pleasurable seduction, temptation, and "externalisation." In *Search*, the narrator's indictment of American materialism is based on the fact that "the material things had enslaved me" (456); he is seduced and subsequently enslaved by consumer items, his radio, his car, and his house. He also confesses that his tastes are expensive and thus he becomes a double of his rejected father, set up as a "waster of money," and a squanderer of several fortunes in the childhood chapter. Paradoxically however, it is the awareness of his failure through "externalisation" that gives the ultimate impetus to write his autobiography, so that the role of money is given a complete twist in the text, contradicting, in fact, the narrator's overt commentary, as it becomes the source not the death of writing.

Economically surviving for most of his life in relative comfort--he works in turn as a day-laborer, teacher, and editor, while writing novels--the

<sup>3</sup> For a discussion of *sparagmos*, see Northrop Frye *Anatomy* 192-93; see Ira Bruce Nadel's "Canadian Autobiography," for a discussion of Grove as "the autobiographer as victim" and "impotent rebel"; see Rosmarin Heidenreich's "The Search for FPG" for a discussion of *Search* in terms of the death/rebirth cycle (69).

narrator's true obsession is money, even to the point that the concern for money "overrides all other interests," as Margaret Stobie has put it (*Grove* 177). Grove's narrator meticulously calculates the shipping costs for his manuscripts and demonstrates that, as a writer in Canada, he can only write at a financial loss:

I sent them as mail, as second-class matter. Some of them had been lost that way, but even at that the mere shipping had cost me an average of close to a hundred dollars a year. In sixteen years that had amounted to over fifteen hundred dollars. And on writing materials I had spent at least another hundred, though I had no record. If I had saved all that money and deposited it in some bank, at a bare two or three per cent, there would have been easily two thousand dollars. I had never received the slightest encouragement, to say nothing of an offer. That money had been a sheer waste. If I had saved it and, in addition, laid by ten dollars a month, the resultant capital would have amounted to what, by this time, seemed to me wealth incarnate. If only I had not suffered from that curse of the desire to write!  
(234)

Art, far from being outside the realm of money, is presented here as that which swallows money and thus involves the artist in an inevitable chase for money in order to feed the insatiable desire for artistic production. In fact, in his contemporary society, it is art which inevitably enforces the narrator's "externalisation," and I can even go further and state that his art is rooted in money in the sense that money, as one of the predominant themes of *Search*, provides the subject matter of his writing, a pre-occupation that the narrator clearly shares with his author.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> We recall another book on money and greed in *A Search for America*, where the immigrant-protagonist Phil Branden turns his back on a country that has "betrayed the dream." In almost every single work, with the exception of *The Master of the Mill*, money is that which enslaves the producer-figure, be he farmer-pioneer, or creative artist.

On the surface, Grove's *Search* echoes Gustave Flaubert's position that "les honneurs déshonorent" (quoted in Chevrel 194), but at the same time the narrator accuses his society for not providing the monetary and popular recognition that he thinks should be his, a position that echoes Emile Zola. Turning his back on a traditional romantic view of the artist as not interested in money and popular fame, Zola claims that the artist is "un citoyen libre" because he lives self-consciously off his work, refusing to be a social parasite: "L'argent a émancipé l'écrivain, l'argent a créé les lettres modernes" (*Roman* 201). The change Zola describes is the shift from *Dichterberufung* to *Schriftstellerberuf*, a movement that integrates the artist more strongly into society (cf. Chevrel 173). As a result, "L'idéal de l'écrivain, ce n'est plus le génie, la bohème, l'inspiration: c'est la régularité du labeur bien fait, *nulla dies sine linea*" (Chevrel 188). For Zola, as well as for Grove, the writer becomes a producer, similar to the farmer or the industrial worker and, like them, he or she deserves social recognition.

Thus Grove's projection of the artist-figure who is enslaved and rendered impotent by money sounds too vehement and obsessive to be taken at face value. Rather, it reveals the contradictions that capitalism creates in the artist figure, a figure both attracted and repulsed, seduced and entrapped, by this system that celebrates success as an ever growing spiral but fails to satisfy the narrator's seemingly insatiable desire for recognition. Thus the problem is not primarily "the problem of the artist's isolation in a new and thoroughly bourgeois country," as A.J.M. Smith has put it in *Masks of Fiction* (14). Rather it is a problem of the complexity and the contradictory nature of his involvement in a modern consumer culture, a problem that is contextualized in somewhat different terms in Dreiser's work.

In Gerber's words, Dreiser's *Künstlerroman* presents "an enduring contest between art and business," which are depicted by Dreiser as "mutually

exclusive" (*Dreiser* 114), a line of argument that is further developed by Pizer, in whose analysis Dreiser's artist figure can only be successful if "he does not betray his talent to the false goals of wealth and position" (*Novels* 142). In this critical discourse, being a Dreiserian artist implies almost automatically being against materialism, capitalism, and consumerism. Rachel Bowlby, in contrast, moves in the extreme opposite direction, discussing Eugene Witla as the artist as "adman" and "businessman" who offers no resistance to capitalism whatsoever (118-33).

As I hope to demonstrate, Dreiser's *The "Genius"* shows that capitalism, by no means opposed to the arts, "always already" infiltrates and appropriates the arts, even making them highly productive and driving them on to new creation by its own insatiable desire for representation. In *The "Genius,"* art and business are regulated by the same mechanism: through the circulation of money, the creation of a name for the artist-businessman, and an optimistic belief in a spiral of ever-continuing reproduction of representations and commodities. What better way to demonstrate this interpenetration than to portray Eugene Witla as a businessman in the middle part of the novel and to frame this part with a description of Witla's success as a famous painter.<sup>5</sup>

Unlike Grove's artist-hero, who aspires to being a "nameless voice" for a whole race (*Search* 154), Witla's desire to become a "voice for the country," is fed by his ambition for fame, so that his name would be "like that of Doré in France or Verestchagin in Russia" (*Genius* 100). In the narrator's words, "fame" is the all-desirable, poetically endowed with the sensuality of "the

<sup>5</sup> This point is generally interpreted negatively as Dreiser's own wavering inconsistency. Lawrence Hussman writes: "Dreiser seems unable to make the choice about whether Eugene should be an artist or a businessman" (*Dreiser* 109).

odour of the rose, the feel of rich satin" (223), yet not really different in status or quality from the names of the big American men of business: "Here were Jay Gould and Russell Sage and the Vanderbilts and Morgan," Eugene Witla reflects when he arrives in New York and asks yearningly, "Would the city ever acclaim him as it did some?" (101).<sup>6</sup>

As a young painter Witla is painfully aware that his name and his identity as an artist will be constructed by those who deal in art and who have the money to buy and own it: "In the very hour of his triumph when the *Sun* had just praised his picture, there lurked the spectre of possible intrinsic weakness. Did the world wish this sort of thing? Would it ever buy of him? Was he of any real value?" (224). After his first important exhibition, it is the newspapers that start a debate on how valuable his art is, some critics maintaining that Witla is not an "American Millet" (237), others eulogizing him as a true "artist" and promising that even financially "his turn will come" (238). After reading this public debate, Witla is filled with a new sense about the position of his name: "He was an artist in the true sense of the word--a great painter, ranking with Whistler, Sargent, Velasquez and Turner" (238). Witla's paintings have left his own hands and started their circulation through the hands of art dealers, critics, media, and buyers, a process that reproduces Witla's name--very much like Carrie's name in *Sister Carrie* (1900)--seemingly *ad infinitum* through exhibitions, newspapers and party gossip, illustrating that it is not primarily production but reception that creates the artist's name and thus his identity.

<sup>6</sup> Dreiser situates fame in the "here and now" of Witla's life, but in *It Needs to Be Said...* Grove makes a deliberate separation between "recognition," which belongs to the "here and now" and fame which is "the recompense not of the living but the dead," a definition that echoes Flaubert's disdain for popular literary success.

Similarly, in his business career as newspaper illustrator, art director and magazine publisher, Witla's meteoric rise is linked to his being able to attach himself to famous names, first Summerfield, then Kalvin, then Colfax, as it is linked to his own growing reputation. Repeatedly Dreiser stresses that it is his reputation, whether deserved or not, that moves Witla ahead. His spreading fame as a business genius is an important asset, which he nurtures and cherishes. Anticipating the style of another successful capitalist, Fitzgerald's Jay Gatsby, Witla entertains huge groups of people not because he enjoys parties but because "It's building me up," that is, it builds up the representation of himself, his name. Those who are jealous of his success attack him where he can be hurt most: they "discredit his fame" (433) and practice the "delicate art of misrepresentation" to curb Eugene's power (511). Like the reputable saloon manager Charles Hurstwood in *Sister Carrie*, Witla, the reputable businessman, brings about his own downfall in typical Dreiserian fashion, namely, by allowing a scandal with a young woman to damage his public representation.<sup>7</sup> "You're too much in the public eye" (665), he is told by his employer when asked to resign. The company has its own name to consider.

In contrast to Dreiser's almost journalistic accuracy with names, as well as his passion with cataloguing proper names and titles, Grove's text presents a play on names and a somewhat circular doubling of names, which is all the more tantalizing as it is complemented by important losses of names, memory failings and seemingly arbitrary, unexplained gaps on names. As an old man, the narrator is prompted to write his life story by his encounter of

<sup>7</sup> This social fall is similar to Charles Hurstwood's downfall after he elopes with Carrie Meeber. Also, Frank Cowperwood's social failure is partly explained with the scandal surrounding his extramarital relationship with Aileen Butler in *The Financier* and *The Titan*.



the name of a writer friend whom the narrator knew well in his youth and about whose life he is now reading in a biography. The name of this Frenchman is never communicated to the reader but magically multiplied and reproduced as a gap in front of the reader's eyes: "The bibliography was there; and it was put together with obvious care and completeness, filling eighteen pages. Translations of the works of this Frenchman had appeared in no less than sixteen countries" (*Search* 4).<sup>8</sup> The multiplication of absent names in *Search* is all the more tantalizing as it continually refers us to works of art, in this case to the biography and the books of the Frenchman writer. Similarly, the narrator hardly ever mentions the name of his mother but links her to the winged *Victory of Samothrace* (29), not only a work of art but also an anagram for the word "mother," who clearly functions as the Muse for his artistic creation.

The author furthermore doubles his own name in his writing: "thus I created Ralph Patterson and gave him, among others, one son whom I attached to myself by giving him my middle name" (20). As if to hold the reader in suspense, the narrator creates a gap by not introducing the name of Patterson's son. We are forced to read the author's *Two Generations* (1939) in order to confirm his statement as true. In this labyrinth of names the author sets up another bait for the reader by having his narrator create a character named Felix Powell, a homophone of the author's hidden German name, Felix Paul. Unlike *Two Generations*, which provides the intertextual proof for the narrator's statements, there is no manuscript on Felix Powell; its loss, or disappearance, corresponds to the loss of the author's German name. Thus what seemed to be a blind alley really turns out to be an opening in the

<sup>8</sup> This mysterious Frenchman is probably André Gide. See Spettigue *FPC* 3-55; and Gide "Conversation."

labyrinth through which the author, holding up a mask of his "dead" German identity, winks at us.

In lieu of his full name, the author only puts his initials on the book cover--FPG, which, as they correspond to the author's German initials, unify his Canadian with his German *oeuvre*. At the same time, however, these three initials--crawling into each other with the "P" completely overlapping the "F" and both superimposed on the "G"--form a somewhat enigmatic signifier, and thus become a representation of the author's name in an abbreviated, concealed and thus metaphorically "castrated" form.<sup>9</sup> The author's name as a representation of his identity as an artist stands in extreme contrast to those names that the narrator conjures up as the ultimate signifiers of artistic success and eternal fame: Homer, Goethe, Beethoven, Baudelaire, whose names, once introduced into his text, automatically assume a life and resonance of their own. These names in fact present the network of signifiers in which the narrator's name will receive its identity, not so much through its "sameness" with these names but by establishing itself as a signifier different from all the others.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>9</sup> In *Twelve Men* (1919), a collection of twelve semi-fictionalized sketches, Dreiser presents the sketch of the painter and illustrator W[illiam] L[ouis] S[onntag, Jr.], whose promising career is cut short by his sudden death (344-60). Dreiser's title presents nothing but the initials of this artist, "W.L.S.," emphasizing the artist's failure of establishing his name: "His name was in the perfunctory death lists of the papers the next morning. No other notice of any sort. Only a half-dozen seemed to know that he had ever lived" (359).

<sup>10</sup> Grove has a passion for cataloguing artists' names. See the narrator's stress on his reading list: "Add to that, as I grew up, such divers fare as Montaigne, Pascal, Keats, Shelley, Wordsworth, Hoelderlin, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Verga, Cervantes, Lope de Vega, Calderon, Lesage, Corneille, Racine, Moliere, and countless others of lighter weight" (*Search* 92). Page 92 alone enumerates forty names of famous authors (some of them repeated). K.P. Stich, in "Memory of Masters," criticizes Grove's "persistent dropping of names" (158), interpreting it as an indicator for Grove's "over-dependence on great authors and their books" (157) and draws the conclusion

Just as Eugene Witla in *The "Genius"* discovers his identity as an artist in the seemingly infinite reproduction of his name, so Grove's narrator identifies himself as an artistic failure because he "had lived and worked in obscurity" (*Search* 4):

I had never had an audience; for no matter what one may say, he says it to somebody; and if there is nobody to hear, it remains as though it had never been said; the tree falling in a forest where there is none to hear, produces no sound. (6)

Here the problem of his identity as an artist is not primarily a problem of production but one of reception and self-representation. *In Search of Myself* presents a long series of painfully created manuscripts, which, sent on their journey, inevitably return with a rejection, and thus turn into aborted art, into "spiritual self-abuse" as the narrator puts it. Manuscripts once accepted to be published, don't sell when they reach the market. The narrator's own explanations of the problem of reception--such as the cultural barrenness of Canada, the backwardness of his audience, his refusal to be a mere entertainer--explain only part of the problem and gloss over the contradictions between his overt claims and his text.<sup>11</sup> Like Eugene Witla, the narrator of *Search* sees himself as introducing groundbreaking, national motifs into the New World culture and therefore risks being rejected by his contemporaries. In *The "Genius,"* it is M. Anatole Charles, a Frenchman, who is the ultimate "authority" on art and organizes the most prestigious exhibitions of the works of "the living successful" (226). M. Charles is con-

that Grove is parasitically attached to his masters, that he is essentially a "follower," "an epigone" rather than a "master" himself (163).

<sup>11</sup> In "The Plight of Canadian Fiction? A Reply" Grove dismisses the Canadian public as "ignorant, cowardly, and snobbish": "The money standard, being the only one which it knows, is the only one by which it judges" (249).

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vinced that "there was practically nothing of value in American art as yet-- certainly not from the commercial point of view, and very little from the artistic" (226). But why are Eugene Witla's new national motifs accepted as "true art" by his contemporaries (including M. Charles) and why is the narrator's rejected? Or to tackle the problem from a Foucaultian perspective: Why does Witla's contemporary America adopt Witla's art as its form of representation, and why should the narrator's Canada be so reluctant to accept his as a representation of what it is and what it stands for? To whom does this art appeal and who rejects it and why?<sup>12</sup>

In *Search of Myself*, the narrator's fictional universe centers on the pioneer world of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century in Canada and especially on its male, uncompromisingly strong heroes--Len Sterner, Niels Lindstedt, Ralph Patterson, whom he describes as his fictional sons. At the same time the narrator interprets his own fiction as re-creating the relations between the sexes by assigning the dominance to the male:

I have been told that, in my books, woman plays a subordinate part; that, in fact, woman is represented as the obstructress in the debate of life. Probably that is true; it is true because, for the most part, it is the fact in pioneer countries. There, woman is the slave; just as she is the slave in the uncivilized steppes of Siberia. A pioneering world, like the nomadic world of the steppes, is a man's world. (223-24)

<sup>12</sup> In "'Frederick Philip Grove' and the Canadianism Movement," Stobie, however, demonstrates very convincingly that Grove's (and his narrator's) judgements are hardly fair. She shows that after the publication of *A Search for America* (1927) Grove was hailed and embraced as the "New Canadian" (179) and drawn into the "spiritual ferment of Canadianism" throughout the twenties and thirties (175). Walter Pache, in "Der Fall Grove," also argues that the upswing of Grove's career coincided with the general literary optimism in Canada, his downswing with the economic and spiritual depression of the thirties (128). Considering these insights with relation to *Search*, the narrator's insistence on his "failure" can safely be seen as a partly fictionalised account of Grove's own role as a Canadian writer. My own concern is with the fictionalised text.

Although the narrator emphasizes that his sympathies lie with women, his interpretation of what he sees as the "facts" of life relegates the roles of women in pioneer society at best to that of helpers in the "male" struggle of mastering the wilderness. We only need to look at Knut Hamsun's *Growth of the Soil* (1920)--the narrator's much admired model for his novel of the soil--to find a similar "masculine" or patriarchal perspective on the representations of the gender relations in pioneer society. If we look, however, at Willa Cather's *My Antonia* (1918) for a women's perspective on the same aspect, we find that the representations of this relationship are turned upside down, which calls attention to the arbitrariness of Grove's narrator's categorical gender divisions. In Cather's novel, it is the young immigrant woman Antonia Shimerda who takes pleasure in plowing the fields with her mother and brother, while the male narrator chooses to spend his life behind books.<sup>13</sup>

The ultimate contradiction of the narrator's position as an artist arises from the fact that the work on the soil and the reading of the novel of the soil seem to exclude each other. The farmers are workers, not readers, he claims: "The presence of that book or magazine betrayed at a glance that someone in this family-group had his eyes bent on something other than the soil underfoot; and usually it was the woman" (226). These women, he concludes, do not belong on the prairie; temperamentally and emotionally they are "fitted for the life in towns or cities" (225). Yet, at the same time he claims to

<sup>13</sup> Cather even satirizes the shortsightedness of the male narrator who tells us that Antonia's grandmother "saved" Antonia from field work by getting her a place in the household of neighbours. His gender preconceptions keep him from recognizing how much Antonia loves the work on the fields.

be incapable of writing the "life heroic" of his wife and of the female in general. (Just as in *Over Prairie Trails* the narrator's wife is only important as a goal to return home to, so in *Search* the narrator's wife's story is relegated into the gaps of the text.) Small wonder that the alleged customers--the Canadian women, to follow his own judgement--are not eager to buy this literature, so that the narrator's failure to succeed as a writer in Canada ironically re-inscribes the women's influence into his text, albeit into the gaps of his narration. Also, the narrator celebrates the pioneer motifs but at the same time tells us that he sees his general reading public in the town-dwellers, rather than workers of the soil, which creates another inevitable contradiction that serves to emphasize the inevitability (and thus, in his view, the tragic nature) of his failure as an artist in Canada.

In contrast to the prairie pioneer world of *Search*, Eugene Witla's artistic motifs celebrate the expanding cities--especially Chicago, Paris and New York. Streetscenes, the Bowery, the railroad, factories and steel works, the working women, foreigners, laborers, washerwomen and drunkards are the subject matter of his art, an art that deliberately stresses the realistic "commonplace":

Raw reds, raw greens, dirty grey paving stones--such faces!  
Why this thing fairly shouted its facts. It seemed to say: "I'm  
dirty, I am commonplace, I am grim, I am shabby, but I am  
life." (*Genius* 231)

Despite the differences in subject matter, Dreiser and Grove seem to agree on an aesthetics of beauty that includes ugliness: "An ugly thing may be described, a revolting scene may be presented in such a way as to give the treatment this element of beauty in the highest degree," Grove writes in *It Needs to Be Said...* (128).

On the surface, Witla's art may be seen as revolutionary because it turns the artistic tradition of his time on its head: he moves the motifs of the social outsider from the margins into the centre of his picture. As a result, one newspaper critic celebrates Witla's ability "to charge [life] prophetically with its own meanness and cruelty" (237).<sup>14</sup> In his first important exhibition, Witla shocks the public with his painting of a black garbage collector, a painting that is also selected by the narrator as an example of Witla's social *engagement*. And yet, the narrator's description of the picture also exposes how easily the signifiers of social criticism can serve the opposite purpose. According to the narrator's description, this picture presents

a great hulking, ungainly negro, a positively animal man, his ears thick and projecting, his lips fat, his nose flat, his cheek bones prominent, his whole body expressing brute strength and animal indifference to dirt and cold.... He was looking purblindly down the shabby street, its hard crisp snow littered with tin cans, paper, bits of slop and offal. Dust--gray ash dust, was flying from the upturned can. (236)

This painting is presented to the reader in a doubly mediated form: the visual signifier is translated into verbal signifiers, and the reader can only look at the picture by reading it through the narrator's eyes. And what we read is not so much social criticism but the representation of a social stereotype. In the narrator's description, the black man is an animalistic creature, a brute, the incarnation of Other, whose place is (and probably will be) in the decaying garbage of white America. If Witla's painting really signifies social criticism, this signifier is given a different twist in the narrator's discourse.

<sup>14</sup> In "Dreiser's *The "Genius"* and Everett Shinn" and "Dreiser and the Graphic Artist," Joseph Kwiat demonstrates that *The "Genius"* is modelled on the career of Everett Shinn, a painter of the notorious Ash-Can School, who gained their notoriety as the "apostles of ugliness" with their motifs of the violence, brutality and beauty of city life.



Also, the narrator's comments that frame the description of this painting abound in problematic contradictions that should make the reader suspicious. The narrator, for example, celebrates Eugene's critique of contemporary power relations by linguistically reinscribing the master/slave dialectics on Eugene's own artistic production process: "Eugene was so cruel in his indictment of life. He seemed to lay on his details with bitter lack of consideration. Like a slavedriver lashing a slave he spared no least shade of his cutting brush" (236). To be sure, the contextual framework signals a parodic twist: it is Eugene himself who is a slave, driven by his work. At the same time, however, Eugene's production process feeds on the master/slave relationship; as a painter he is always in a position of mastery, of control, over the subject he paints, while the marginalized subject of his painting becomes objectified in the very process of painting. It is significant that later in the novel when Eugene becomes marginalized himself--he falls sick and loses all his money, he is no longer capable of painting. Witla's painting doesn't express solidarity with the marginalized subject it portrays; rather, on the canvass, Witla ritually exorcizes and externalizes the sense of Otherness that haunts the painter.

As the "priest" of the new aesthetics of ugliness, Witla celebrates the city in his paintings as an oxymoron, as beauty in ugliness: "The paradox of a decaying drunkard placed against the vivid persistence of life gripped his fancy. Somehow it suggested to himself hanging on, fighting on, accusing nature" (*Genius* 729). Witla's art expresses sadness about the victims inevitably produced by capitalism but underneath its motifs of the margins, Witla's painting also affirms progress, movement, change and growth, in short, the very ingredients of capitalism. Also, the picture of the drunkard accuses an abstract "nature," not a unjust social system. Maybe shocking at

first sight, the naturalistic art of Witla's pictures is by no means in radical opposition to or subversive of capitalism, but can be easily appropriated by the capitalist machinery, as *The "Genius"* demonstrates.

The customers of Dreiser's successful painter artist are almost inevitably businesses and corporations who use the new art as decorations, transforming them into signifiers of what they stand for and what they would like to promote. One of the first paintings Witla sells for the wholesome sum of \$500 depicts three engines and a railroad yard and sells to the vicepresident of one of the great railroads entering New York. The record price for one of his paintings is eighteen thousand dollars (729). At the pinnacle of his power Witla is asked to decorate a great bank, as well as public buildings in Washington. In *A Gallery of Women* (1929), Dreiser presents a woman-painter in the sketch of "Ellen Adams Wrynn" who marks her first success as a painter by having her exotic scenes of Paris, painted in daring raw reds, exhibited permanently on four huge panels on one of the large department stores of Philadelphia. Here, art is assigned the function of advertisement, and the boundaries between the consumption of art and that of other commodities become erased. At the same time the panels are an advertisement for the artist herself: "And each panel signed: Ellen Adams Wrynn" (I, 145), thus turning the artist's name into a representation of a capitalist success story, a signifier of an artist who has "made it."

A pattern of highly fluctuating prices for the same art indicates that the artistic value is by no means inherent in the pictures themselves, but is continually constructed anew in the process of reception and therefore is as unstable as the capitalist market itself. Dreiser's texts draw attention to the fact that the acceptance of a particular form of art is directly dependent on political and socio-economic circumstances. In war times, Ellen Adam

Wrynn's formerly celebrated exotic paintings do not find a market. In contrast, Dreiser's sketch of "W. L. S." in *Twelve Men* presents an illustrator with a strong interest in modern machinery, for whom the war offers "a great rush of war work": "I scarcely saw him for six weeks ... but I saw his name" (358), the narrator comments on the artist's growing success. (Grove's narrator seems as dependent on, but much less aware of, socio-economic circumstances. He only introduces the war as a symbol that foreshadows the doom of his marriage [285].) Also, when the artist's luck is down--when Witla becomes sick and is unable to paint for several years or when Ellen Adams Wrynn suffers a breakdown as a result of personal problems--their art almost automatically loses their "money making capacity." Ellen Wrynn's paintings remain unclaimed in storage, just as Witla, "temporarily incapacitated" as an artist, is not able to get more than \$10 for his pictures and that only from third rate art dealers.

Grove's narrator lives in an economy which promotes the idea of success and fame but does not fulfill its "promise" of spreading his name *ad infinitum*. He reacts against this contradiction by retreating into a nostalgic dream of the artist as a romantic genius, a vision mixed with the feudal and imperialist ideal of the artist-patriarch as a potent begetter of fictional characters, a figure endowed with immense powers over others and perpetually in conflict with others. Like Goethe's Prometheus, the narrator of Grove's *Search* "wrestled with the Lord, trying to force him to delegate to me His power of giving life" (374). In other passages, the narrator is more like Goethe's Zeus himself, the god who jealously guards his power. The narrator has a vision of himself as a godlike paternal creator, a patriarch who rules as an omnipotent and omniscient father-sovereign over his fictional characters, who looks down, "as though, from the summit of a mountain" (262) on the "empire" of his creation, a master over life and death.

His characters are his fictional sons, who are doubles of himself and who come into being because he is willing to "distil my blood and infuse it into two creatures who had no right to exist on this earth except what right I had myself bestowed upon them" (373). Small wonder that this dream of absolute omnipotence over his creation is complemented by a negative flipside--his vision of himself as an absolute failure who is drained of his life-forces and then cast aside by his fictional characters, who claim their independence from the patriarchal creator-father: "The trouble was that, after all, I *had* given them birth in my mind and, therefore, power to dispose of my substance" (373).

In the title but also in his middle and first names--often abbreviated to "Gene" or even "Geni"--Dreiser presents Eugene Tennyson Witla as the artist-genius. Given the Latin root of the word, Eugene and Phil's identification with the role of the "genius" emphasizes their roles as creative producers (> Lt *gigno, genui, genitum* = to beget, to bring forth, to produce).<sup>15</sup> And yet, a far cry from the romantic genius, they are closer to Zola's description of the artist as a producer-labourer: "Aujourd'hui, il nous faut produire et produire encore. C'est le labeur d'un ouvrier qui doit gagner son pain, qui ne peut se retirer qu'après fortune faite. En outre, si l'écrivain s'arrête, le public l'oublie; il est forcé d'entasser volume sur volume, tout comme un ébéniste par exemple entasse meuble sur meuble" (*Roman* 203). The pressure to produce seems to be built into the capitalist machinery itself, subjecting the artist to serious "production" crises.

<sup>15</sup> Witla is often referred to as a genius by other characters in the novel (e.g. 232, 240, 484, 671). Putting the "genius" in the book title in inverted commas, Dreiser, however, warns the reader not to take this title too seriously.

Just as a capitalist business has to be committed to eternal growth if it does not want to fall apart, so the artist in capitalism has to make his production grow, if he does not want to fail, an idea that does not arise spontaneously in Witla but is mediated through his reading of a newspaper review about himself: "If he perseveres, if his art does not fail him.' Why should his art fail him?--he asked himself" (*Genius* 240). And yet, it does fail him. The work on his second set of paintings on Parisian scenes throws him into a mental and emotional crisis, in which his fear of failure drives him into a nervous breakdown, from which he cures himself by giving up painting for several years. It is significant that he should find his therapy and cure in manual work and business activities before he returns to his career as an artist. Also, it is as a father of a daughter that Witla returns to his art after a long absence.

For Grove's narrator and Eugene, these production crises become saturated with sexuality and are "played out" in the artists' marriages, thus highlighting the theme of the sexual politics of artistic creation. In *Search*, the narrator claims that nothing counted, "neither security nor even domestic happiness, when it interfered with my work", and adds that "the obligation under which my marriage had placed me defined itself with a clearness that was cruel" (300). The happiest time of his life is significantly when he is separated from his wife and child. If we are to accept the narrator's self-analysis, it is "externalization"--an opening up to the reality of sex, the presence of his wife and child, as well as material temptations--that cause his downfall and his failure as a writer.

In both works marriage is set up as that which "castrates" the artist's productive powers but from here Dreiser and Grove move their protagonists into different, if not to say diametrically opposed directions. Eugene rejects

marriage because his productive ideal is linked to sexual promiscuity and to a whole "gallery of women"--from Margaret Dunn and Ruby Kenny, to Angela Blue, Christina Channing, Frieda Roth, Carlotta Wilson, and Suzanne Dale--all of whom he desires to, and most of whom he does, "possess." "You have changed me so completely, made me over into the artist again" (*Genius* 542), he exclaims enthusiastically, when Suzanne Dale, who is half his age, and who claims that she is willing to, but never does, give herself to him with no marriage chains attached, the ultimate "gift" of the female to the male in Dreiser's fiction.

In Grove's work, however, marriage is linked to internalization and transcendence of sexuality, indeed the sacrifice of sexuality in the name of art and thus the creation of the work of art with his "stored-up" sexual energy.<sup>16</sup> Grove's narrator carries with him his mother's "Cassandra" warning that it is women who "make a man weak" (*Search* 94), and his becoming an artist is accompanied by a deliberate striving toward anti-sexuality in Canada, whereby he makes a conscious effort to leave his intensely sexual experiences behind in Europe.<sup>17</sup> Similarly, Eugene is obsessed with what he claims to be physical overindulgence in his sexual relations with his wife Angela, a notion the narrator supports:

He had no knowledge of the effect of one's sexual life upon one's work, nor what such a life when badly arranged can do to

<sup>16</sup> Compare to the psychological theory of one of Grove's contemporaries, Otto Rank, who writes in 1914 that "The creator impulse is not sexuality, as Freud assumed, but expresses the antisexual tendency in human beings, which we may describe as the deliberate control of the impulsive life" (140).

<sup>17</sup> For the narrator's sexual experiences in Europe see *Search* 121-22, 126, 128, 131-32; for his sexual relationship with Mrs. Broegler, see 135-43; for his reflections on homo- and heterosexuality, see 161-62. For his striving toward anti-sexuality in Canada, see for example 229.

a perfect art—how it can distort the sense of color, weaken that balanced judgment of character which is so essential to a normal interpretation of life.... (246)

Among others it is the word "normal" that strikes a false note in this quotation, especially since earlier in the novel, Eugene's art is celebrated because of its disruption of "normal" perspectives and its emphasis on a deliberate foregrounding of Otherness. Similarly odd and contradictory is the narrator's claim that Eugene lacks "knowledge" of the pernicious effect of sexuality, since it is, in fact, Eugene himself who is obsessed with the negative influence of his sex life on his art.<sup>18</sup> It appears that Eugene and the narrator are in secret communion with each other when it comes to convincing the reader of the pernicious influence of a sexuality that is initiated by a desiring woman. Eugene's strategy of making a kind of mathematical balance of psychical energy, part of which is wasted in the sex act with Angela, mirrors the narrator in *Search* who is haunted by a more general idea of waste and is equally obsessed with saving up money and storing up "wealth" because only an overabundance of both will allow him to be a writer. However, in contrast to Phil's striving toward celibacy, Eugene's striving is to break out of marriage into an illusory freedom of uninhibited promiscuity.

In both narratives, the women as wives and partners are presented as "obstructresses" in the masculine process of artistic production, although in both cases it is in fact these women who offer continual encouragement and

<sup>18</sup> Some readers have been quick to note these contradictions. See for example Gerber's reaction to this passage: "To ask a reader to accept this nonsense, in the face of Cowperwood, to whom sex was an essential spur to full living, is asking a good deal indeed. But it is asking much more to swallow it in the face of Dreiser's own life which, if we are to believe the legends he himself inspired, directly refutes everything he says about Eugene" (*Dreiser* 119).

unfailing support to their husband's artistic careers. Angela even turns herself into an efficient manager and selfless servant for her husband's career. A virtual slave to her husband's whims, the only thing she asks in return is that her husband be sexually loyal to her, which he sees as his "castration" as an artist. Grove's narrator and Eugene Witla appropriate the notion of the artist as a Faustian wanderer who has to overstep the boundaries and the demands of domesticity. But in this context the celebrated "unconventionality" of the artist is nothing but an old cliché which allows them to marginalize the "real" women in their lives in order to elevate an idealized, imaginary female Muse, against which any "real" woman is "lacking." Eugene's wife Angela becomes "Gretchen" for him, while Eugene turns into an ever-striving, amoral Faust-figure, especially when he falls into the Mephistophelian trap of seeing "Helenen in jedem Weibe" (*Faust I*, 2604). Eugene rebaptizes his mistresses into wood nymphs, into "Divine Fire" and "Myrtle Bloom," and thus celebrates an aesthetic "Frauenbild" (*Faust I*, 2600) while remaining blind to the real woman. (This also explains why Eugene's language to his mistresses strikes the reader as incredibly naive, adolescent and clichéish.)

Witla's aesthetic ideal in art is the representation of a "masculine" beauty in ugliness as expressed in the drama of the daily struggles. This "masculine" ideal in art is complemented by the "feminine" aesthetic goal Witla pursues in his private life. His feminine ideal is the "beauty of the woman at eighteen," an ideal that freezes his view of the feminine into an absolute stasis, but which in turn involves the artist himself in a chase without end after the young woman, a chase that supposedly keeps him in eternal movement and thus in eternal youth. And yet, unlike Goethe's Faust who transcends Mephisto's sensual temptations, Eugene's striving is a very



circular repetition, echoing more Molière's *Don Juan* than Goethe's *Faust*. As a result, the Faust motif in *The "Genius"* parodies rather than parallels Goethe's celebration of *Tätigkeit*.<sup>19</sup>

In Dreiser's and Grove's works creation is linked to sacrifice and death. In *Search*, the artist sacrifices his own life in the artistic process, in Dreiser's, the male artist claims an absolute freedom and an amoral attitude toward others. In *The "Genius,"* it is the women who are asked to sacrifice themselves for the artist's secularized god—his work of art. It is therefore not astonishing that Angela's birthing—*the dramatic climax of the novel and the ultimate image of production (and female prerogative)—ends in Angela's death, thus setting the artist free from the yoke of marriage.*<sup>20</sup> At the same time, it seems fitting that Angela junior, Angela's and Eugene's child, becomes the new Muse inspiring Witla's art.

Eugene's art is embraced by the critics because of its "virility" (e.g. 221, 231, 237), its directness, the rawness of its colors, the surface vitality and the struggle underneath images of eagerness, hope and desire. Similarly, Grove's narrator adopts a very masculine tone in his narration. In his "Apologia" Grove makes a plea for what he calls a masculine "unmixed style" in art" (195).<sup>21</sup> As *Search* is saturated with overt celebrations of the tragic

<sup>19</sup> Barbara Hochman traces the allusions to Goethe's Faust in *The "Genius"* but does not recognize Dreiser's parodic treatment of the motif.

<sup>20</sup> For an intriguing psychoanalytic reading of *The "Genius,"* see Richard Hovey's and Ruth Ralph's "Dreiser's *The "Genius"*: Motivation and Structure." Arguing that Witla pursues the pleasure principle "at the same time [that] he regularly tries to gain acceptance by a matriarchal superego" (171), Hovey and Ralph demonstrate that later in the novel Angela functions as a "censuring mother figure" (175).

<sup>21</sup> Also, reviewing Grove's *Settlers of the Marsh*, S. Morgan-Powell celebrates the work as "a much more virile and daring achievement in fiction than anything that had come from the pen of a Canadian author up to that time" (quoted in *Pacey Grove* 169).

spirit and tragic fate, so Grove argues in his "Apologia" that pure tragedy is "the proper food for men with masculine tastes," as is pure comedy (195). The mixture of the two, with its effects of irony and humour ("the tear in the eye and a smile on the lip" [195]), he describes as the food of a "feministic civilisation." And he asserts that "the present age is trying to rid itself of the apotheosis of the 'eternally feminine'" ("Apologia" 195). However, while Witla's "masculine" art is enthusiastically embraced by his contemporary America, the acceptance is depicted as much slower in the small-town Canada of *Search*, which indicates that the narrator's contemporary Canada is perhaps more "feminine" than he (and Grove) want to admit.

In *It Needs to Be Said...* Grove claimed that a good novel had to have "power," and he proceeds to define power as the author's ability to make others see, of reproducing in the reader's mental vision a thing, and moving up "the thing to be seen, so close that you cannot get away from it" (130). But the ultimate contradiction of *Search* is that the all-powerful author-narrator is dependent on the approval of an external readership, which, in his view, fails to see and accepts his art only reluctantly and slowly. The narrator solves this problem of his "missing" readership by turning himself into a *deus-ex-machina*, claiming that he writes for an imaginary audience, an audience which is, like his characters, the product of his creation.

Thus the narrator's theory of the artist becomes an incestuous relationship that turns even the process of reception back to the author himself. The narrative as a whole seems obsessed with creation as an incestuous doubling in the face of loss and death, and is propelled forward by the author-narrator's urge to find an illusory, undivided identity and origin which will tell him who he really is. The obsessive search for his magical origin takes the form of the search for the lost mother, who is doubled in numerous

mother-figures, from his physical mother and his nurse Annette to his maternal mistress Mrs. Broegler and his wife Catherine (who nurses him in sickness). The search for his origin is also replayed in the search for the lost home. His first home is struck by lightning immediately after his birth and burns down; Castle Thurow is a "home which remained essentially alien" (28); then Hamburg becomes his home, then Europe and finally he settles into various homes in Canada. Despite--or probably because of--these numerous homes, the narrator remains essentially a wanderer who travels through Europe quoting J.W. von Goethe in the author's lost *Muttersprache*: "*Ich bin nur durch die Welt gerannt*" (157). This obsessive desire for repetition is a striking feature of this fictionalised autobiography and, as a rule, the repetitions mirror what is really absent. The narrator for example creates seven older sisters, all of whom die. He makes much of his father's multiple fortunes, but his father dies a bankrupt man. The narrator speaks numerous languages, but as a writer he bemoans the fact that he lacks "the profound penetration of the soul" of any of them (338).

The narrator also obsessively doubles himself in his fictional protagonists: all of them are male and they accompany him all his life, sharing his life blood. But self-creation in this form can only be an incestuous doubling of the narrator's absent self. The narrator seems to be obsessed with the loss of himself and the need to recreate himself in the face of this loss. His doubling of himself suggests a regression back into the abyss, so that death and birth melt together in the artistic process:

For those figures of mine will not stay down; they won't let me rest or sleep; they want to be born into death. For what my writing does for them, as far as I am concerned, whether that writing be successful or not, is not so much to give them birth as it is to give them burial. (387)

Writing the story of his life, Grove's narrator confirms that, "In this record, I know, I am dying to myself" (387). Or, to put the narrator's infinite doubling and eternal self-reflection (or *mise en abyme*) in the language of Foucault: "Headed towards death, language turns back upon itself; it encounters something like a mirror; and to stop this death which would stop it, it possesses but a single power: that of giving birth to its own image in a play of mirrors that has no limits" (*Language* 54). In choosing an autobiographical framework, Grove, like his narrator, creates words which are put into the service of his search of himself. However, his words can only create doubles, and doubles in turn can only be fragments, so that every word he creates echoes and reverberates at the same time the hollowness at the centre of his being. At the same time, it seems to be this emptiness, the sense of failure and frustration which keeps up the desire to continue the creative process.

Finally, looking at the reception of *Search* and *The "Genius"* we discover a last ironic twist in the authors' struggle to create a name for themselves. The work that deplores the failure of the artist in Canadian society ironically became one of Grove's biggest successes; shortly after its publication, it won him the prestigious Governor General's Award for non-fiction. Many readers and critics may share Grove's overt nostalgic dream of the arts as a last haven still relatively "uncontaminated" by capitalism, which may partly explain the success of Grove's work, as it might explain the failure of Dreiser's work, in which artistic creation is deeply interwoven with the laws of the marketplace. Depicting the success story of a naturalistic painter, *The "Genius"* ironically sold badly until it gained some notoriety in 1916, when it was banned for its "lewd" and "profane" passages.<sup>22</sup> Also, *The*

<sup>22</sup> Hamlin Garland refused to sign H.L. Mencken's petition against the ban, calling the entire campaign surrounding the ban, "a piece of very

"*Genius*" has been dismissed by the critics as "Dreiser at his worst."<sup>23</sup> As Dreiser's naturalism became canonized, *The "Genius"* was relegated into the "margins" of Dreiser's *oeuvre*, lagging behind in the shadow of the fame of *Sister Carrie*, *An American Tragedy*, and *The Trilogy of Desire*. The critics' refusal to recognize Dreiser's vision of the artist as a successful money maker may be an indicator for his critics' nostalgic desire to see the arts outside, even somehow suspended above economic reality. Rather than admitting that Dreiser's artist-protagonist is a typical American success story and raises very disturbing questions about the appropriation of art by capitalism, most critics preferred to read the work as a "confirmation of popular assumptions about the artist" (Pizer *Novels* 142) and then quickly dismissed it as a bad novel. And yet, *The "Genius"* goes counter to the grain of the American literary tradition. Nineteenth-century American artists insisted on the arts as a realm of *Gedankenfreiheit*, as a space of freedom, inevitably outside and deliberately on the margins of American societal convention and constraints (cf. Poirier 5). Dreiser, in contrast, moves the arts into the economic centre and with this shift, the arts become a field on which are played out the tensions and struggles, but also the seductive games of American capitalism.

Similarly, Grove's text refuses to elevate literary creation into a falsely "liberated" space, but in contrast to Dreiser, Grove insists much more explicitly on the ambiguities of the artist's involvement and the artist's obligation to resist in a modern consumer culture. In Grove's *Search*, art and the

shrewd advertising" (quoted in Gerber *Dreiser* 125).

<sup>23</sup> See for example H.L. Mencken's early critical analysis: "'The Genius,' coming after 'The Titan,' marks the high tide of his bad writing" (87); Pizer writes that "Dreiser's portrait of the artist is not only hackneyed but inept" (*Novels* 142); or, as Gerber puts it: "In any estimation of Dreiser's accomplishment, *The 'Genius'* must rank among the weaker novels" (*Dreiser* 111).

artist's identity are created through the writer's involvement in and his (albeit failing) resistance against the omnipresent temptation of consumerism and Americanism, and, as a result of this continual struggle, he adopts an identity which has a very postmodern ring to it--an identity that refuses to be fixed or static but which is forever *en procès*, forever on the threshold between integration and disintegration. As Eugene Witla's success inscribes the triumphs and contradictions of American capitalism in the artistic realm, so the Canadian artist's struggle represents a whole nation's precarious oscillation between succumbing to, and resisting against, economic and cultural co-optation.



## Chapter 5

### POWER AND THE MODERN TECHNOLOGIES OF SELF

Ich ging auf einer schmalen Scheide zwischen zwei  
Kontinenten und so zwischen Vergangenheit und Zukunft;  
vielleicht auch zwischen zwei Mühlsteinen.<sup>1</sup>  
Stimme (23)  
Walter Bauer

#### A. Speaking a Borderline Discourse

On the surface, Theodore Dreiser's fictionalized case-study of Clyde Griffiths, a young upstart executed for the murder of his pregnant working class girl-friend, may not appear to have much in common with Frederick Philip Grove's semi-autobiographical "Odyssey of an Immigrant" across the North-American continent. Grove's hero Phil Branden, a young pseudo-aristocrat from Europe, works in turn as an omnibus waiter in Toronto, an encyclopedia salesman in New York, and an itinerant labourer on western prairie farms before becoming a teacher in Winnipeg.<sup>2</sup> What brings Dreiser's *An American Tragedy* (1925) and Grove's *A Search for America* (1927) together is a concern not only with the metaphor of America--a concern

<sup>1</sup> "I walked on a thin borderline between two continents and thus between past and present; perhaps also between two millstones" (my translation).

<sup>2</sup> See Spettigue *FPG* 170-82, 195-96 and Pizer *Novels* 203-27. Dreiser's *Tragedy* is based on the Chester Gillette/Grace Brown murder case, a trial that ended with Gillette's conviction on December 5, 1906 and led to his execution on March 30, 1908 (Pizer *Novels* 207).



inscribed in the very titles of the works<sup>3</sup>--but also with the power of the norm and the significance of marginalization in North-American society. A juxtaposition of the two works gives us insight into significant differences in Canadian and American conceptions of personal and national identity.

Throughout the novel, Dreiser presents Clyde Griffiths as a social outcast who not only finds himself between different social classes, on the borders between inside and outside, but also identifies with so many doubles (Mitchell 57-63; Lane 213-220) that the boundaries between the "self" and the "other" become completely blurred in his life. Similarly, as an immigrant, Grove's Phil Branden lives on the border between different cultures--between America and Europe, the United States and Canada. And if both protagonists suffer from their status as social outsiders, they also develop strategies to deal with their marginalization. But these strategies are very different, leading in the case of Grove's protagonist to empowerment and rescue, while Dreiser's anti-hero finally suffers complete impotence and death. Both works point to significantly different Canadian and US-American valuations of the margins.

Clyde Griffiths is condemned to die on the electric chair without knowing who or what he is, while Phil Branden makes the deliberate decision to live in Canada rather than in the United States (*Search* 382). This decision, though, is indicated not in the text itself but in a footnote. This shift from the centre of the text to its margins, I will argue, is doubly appropriate, because

<sup>3</sup> Both Dreiser and Grove insist on the representativeness of their heroes by framing the titles with an indefinite article: "A Search," "The Odyssey of an Immigrant," "An American Tragedy." For Dreiser Clyde's crime expresses "an archetypal American dilemma": "[Gillette] was really doing the kind of thing which Americans should and would have said was the wise and moral thing to do [attempting to rise socially through the heart] had he not committed a murder" (quoted in Pizer *Novels* 204).

Canada is a country on the margins of North America, and, even more importantly, because Branden chooses the margins as a privileged locus of resistance against what Michel Foucault has called "normalization" (*Discipline* 184). If Branden resists normalization, Dreiser's Clyde Griffiths not only submits to it but yearns to merge with the norm that excludes him.

Michel Foucault provides a helpful framework for exploring the motif of identity in both novels:

the subject constitutes himself in an active fashion, by the practices of self, [but] these practices are nevertheless not something that the individual invents by himself. They are patterns that he finds in his culture and which are proposed, suggested and imposed on him by his culture, his society and his social group ("Ethic of Care" 11).

Both Clyde and Branden travel through North America not so much to discover (or become alienated from) a true (innate) selfhood, as some critics have argued (Stobie 59-69; Orlov 457-61), but rather to create themselves as subjects. That process does not take place in a vacuum but is always already mediated through society and its institutions, through established discourses and practices, which seduce the protagonists into adopting the "technologies of self" that will assign them their place in the hierarchy of North-American society. Thus it should come as no surprise that in both novels the metaphors of self-creation are interwoven with metaphors of national identity.

Not only is the word "America" repeated at least one-hundred-and-thirty times in Grove's *Search*, but Grove also labels the hero's self-conscious transformation of self "Americanization." Similarly, in the first sentence of Dreiser's novel, we find the protagonist Clyde Griffiths in "the commercial heart of an American city" (*Tragedy* 7), Kansas City, which lies geographically at the "heart" of the United States. As the allusion to the "fable" in the

opening lines of *An American Tragedy* and the reference to the *Odyssey* in the subtitle of *A Search for America* suggest, both narratives follow the design of what Northrop Frye has called "fables of identity." But while Dreiser's Clyde Griffiths ultimately vanishes like a "nobody" into America, Grove's hero creates his precarious identity as a Canadian immigrant who finds his voice not by merging with, but by keeping a deliberate distance from, the new country.

"Europe regards the past; America regards the future" (*Search* 382) is Phil Branden's motto in his picaresque journey across the North-American continent. By giving Branden parents of English and Swedish nationalities--both constitutional monarchies even to the present day, Grove links Europe and Branden to a politically old, feudal, and aristocratic order. While Branden's parents are not aristocratic, Branden's slippery discourse transforms them into aristocrats: his father is a "grand seigneur" (6) and a "gentil-homme" (10) who lives in a mansion, all the while Branden himself rubs "elbows with nobility" (10).

The typically Grovian loss of family fortune, recounted in the first chapter of the novel, is a metaphor for personal failure, a failure that has become Branden's identity; in the Old World, his subjectivity had become fixed in the gaze of others. Determined to rewrite, to recreate, to refabricate his self, Branden turns his back on Europe and the gazes that have paralyzed him. The longed-for metamorphosis that is finally achieved, though, comes with the gradual and ironic realization of the fact that America has a past as well. Canadians and Americans see in Branden nothing more than the young, inexperienced newcomer, a nobody. This new gaze fills him with a sense of bottomlessness, of the abyss, or what Martin Heidegger has called *Abgrund*. "Feeling suddenly embarked upon things desperate and suicidal" (19),

Branden senses the danger of disappearing altogether, of finding his subjectivity completely shattered on the new continent.

Branden reacts to this new threat by trying to escape the gaze of the "other" altogether. In Book III, "The Depths," he decides to become a tramp, an outsider like Huck Finn. But unlike Huck, who grows precisely because he is not alone, Branden does not have a companion. Completely thrown back on himself, he is like the legendary Odysseus, who is sent on his way home with Zeus' command, "let him have no company, god or men" (*Odyssey* V, 37). In the chapter "I Come Into Contact with Humanity Again" (250-64), Branden meets a hermit who has given up speaking a long time ago and whose gaze is empty, reflecting Branden's own isolation and sense of nothingness. But Branden's language, which emphasizes the emptiness of the hermit's eye (253) and the expressionlessness of his features (252), suggests something of the wanderer's incipient realization that subjectivity can only be created through intersubjectivity, through language.

"To enter Canada is a matter of being silently swallowed up by an alien continent," Northrop Frye has observed ("Conclusion 1976" 324). But Phil Branden never becomes completely swallowed up by the new country. Rather, in the course of his odyssey, he gains a new perspective on his past, from which he never cuts himself off completely. Branden's past accompanies him to America in the literature he reads,<sup>4</sup> in the European accent of his speech, and in the image of the suitcase(s) he brings from Europe, although at no point is his vision of America "dwarfed by his

<sup>4</sup> Branden reads *The Odyssey* and the New Testament (*Search* 222), but also more modern writers such as Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus* (219). His new world experience even helps him understand old world ideas: "I suddenly seemed to understand three great historical figures that had been enigmas: Sulla, Diocletian, Charles the Fifth" (220).

memory of Europe" (Stich 163). Granted, the narrative satirizes Branden, as in the account of his arrival in Montreal like the stereotypical tourist with camera in hand, "fourteen pieces of luggage," and "half a dozen overcoats" on his arm (*Search* 15), which cumbersome burden is rapidly disposed of in the process of the newcomer's acculturation. But Branden significantly keeps back one last suitcase which he "fill[s] with some cherished trifles" and hands over to his friend Ray before he starts his tramp out West with the understanding that he will some day ask Ray "'to forward that suitcase of mine'" (222). This, in fact, happens on the last page of the novel when Branden finally decides to become "'repatriated' in Canada" (392). As the connection with Ray enables Branden to return "home" to Canada, so the suitcase encapsulates the Canadian immigrant's connection to Europe. The narrator's becoming a Canadian does not force him to break with his past but allows him to incorporate his past into his present identity, an experience that he shares with the narrator of Grove's *In Search of Myself* (1946), who chooses Canada as his home because Canada had not "entirely severed the umbilical cord" which bound it to its motherland (217).

While Branden's Canadianization connects him with both his past and his future, Clyde Griffiths' Americanization entangles him in a celebration of the future. Like America itself, the protagonist of *An American Tragedy* "amputates" time, making the new an absolute in his life. According to Michael Spindler's study on "Youth, Class, and Consumerism in Dreiser's *An American Tragedy*," most of the novel's characters are young people. Clyde identifies with the "emerging consumption-oriented sector of the economy [that] emphasized spending and gratification, not saving and denial" (78). In short, he identifies with "the emerging leisure class" (78) and an American youth culture that is deeply rooted in consumerism. In his discussion of *Sister*

*Carrie* (1900), Philip Fisher notes that Dreiser describes a "self in motion that we might call the self in anticipation": "The anticipatory self has as its emotional substance hope, desire, yearning, and a state of prospective being" (157, 159). Like Carrie Meeber, Clyde Griffiths identifies with such an "anticipatory self"; the only self he has is the one that he will become. Speeding into the future in his mind and continually creating grandiose dreams, Clyde projects an ego ideal for himself that is as inflated as it is inevitably "fictional" or imaginary (cf. Lacan 2, 15, 42).<sup>5</sup> This ego merges with, even doubles, the national ego ideal and is monstrous in its willingness to sacrifice others in order to ensure its own survival. Clyde's involvement in two fatal accidents can best be summarized by oxymoron: Clyde acts in "criminal innocence" and becomes "innocently criminal" (McWilliams 45).

Clyde's obsessive commitment to the future and America's youth culture ties him ironically all the stronger to his past. The frequent usage of the adverb "suddenly" in the text indicates that factual reality does not just occur in a continuous line but erupts into and violently disrupts Clyde's future. Clyde's first "downfall" in the novel, which occurs after his quick rise as a bellhop in the Green Davidson Hotel in Kansas City, is linked to his being pressed for time (137). Paranoid about not being able to reach the hotel in time for work after an outing in a borrowed car, Clyde and his fellow bell-hops urge the driver to speed, and, racing at breakneck speed into this future engagement, they run over and kill an eleven-year-old girl, so that the flight into the future in fact cuts him off from the future he had designed for himself. Instead of returning to the hotel, he has to flee from Kansas City

<sup>5</sup> Lacan distinguishes between the speaking "I" and the ego: "It is therefore always in the relation between the subject's ego (*moi*) and the 'I' (*je*) of his discourse that you must understand the meaning of the discourse if you are to achieve the dealienation of the subject" (90).

and hide in Chicago under a false name. Clyde is similarly "pressed for time" when confronted with the problem of Roberta's unwanted pregnancy in Book II.

Since even "the fear of death ... is psychologically subordinate to the narcissistic fear of damage to one's own body" (Lacan 28), it should come as no surprise that in Clyde's paranoia the impulse to self-protection overrides all other concerns. Haunted by the threat of having his inflated ego "decrowned," of being publicly exposed as the father of a working woman's unborn child, Clyde Griffiths knows only one reaction: to plot the murder of Roberta Alden. Although incapable of directly taking her life, Clyde refuses to come to her aid as she drowns in Big Bittern Lake after an accident. Thus Clyde's "murder" is passive; his guilt is not defined by a concrete act, but is located in a gap. Jean Paul Sartre reminds us that "The Future is not, it is *possibilized*" (186), which possibilities are filled "by the will--that is, by rational thematizing choice in terms of my possibles" (187), but readers of *Tragedy* have been quick to note that rational, thematizing choice is exactly what Clyde often lacks.<sup>6</sup> As a result, he continually brings about a (negative) present reality that he had never even conceived as being part of his possibilities.

From the beginning of the novel, Clyde's alienation is emphasized. As part of a family of street preachers singing to an indifferent audience, twelve-

<sup>6</sup> See for example Strother B. Purdy's existential reading of *An American Tragedy*, which emphasizes Clyde's passivity: "In Dreiser's world passivity means lack of will, and lack of will is fatal" (260). Similarly, Philip Fisher writes: "In the existential sense, [Clyde] does not 'do' his life" (*Hard Facts* 148). Or as Frederick Hoffman puts it: "Raskolnikov [in Dostoyevsky's *Crime and Punishment*] participates actively both in crime and punishment. ... Clyde does neither of these things. He is at every turn of event a passive observer of the scenes in which the terms of his crime and his punishment are being agreed upon" (104).

year-old Clyde becomes an object of comment, discourse, and interpretation for passers-by--and likewise for the reader--who are invited by the spectacle to see the abnormality of the youth's situation:

The boy moved restlessly from one foot to the other, keeping his eyes down, and for the most part only half singing.... He was too young, his mind much too responsive to phases of beauty and pleasure which had little, if anything, to do with the remote and cloudy romance which swayed the minds of his mother and father (9).

Dreiser's emphasis on the entrapping, scrutinizing power of the gaze in the opening scene evokes Foucault's descriptions of the power effects produced by Jeremy Bentham's prison model--the Panopticon--in which an anonymous, omnipresent gaze leads to the restructuring of the individual prisoner's self. Like that prisoner, Clyde internalizes the value system of those who look at him: "he felt ashamed, dragged out of normal life, to be made a show and jest of" (10). Clyde's restless feet and mind already move him beyond the poverty and shabbiness of his everyday life, move him into a future invested with romance and promise. But while his restless feet indicate his desire to escape (Clyde's favourite mode of problem-solving), he paradoxically remains in one spot, thus describing an ironic, circular movement suggestive less of freedom than of ritual bondage. This first scene, significantly, is repeated almost verbatim at the closing of the novel, this time with Clyde's nephew Russell as entrapped subject.

It has been argued that Clyde Griffiths is alienated from himself because he is "other-directed" (Orlov 466) in the framework of a fundamentally materialistic American society. Rather than accepting this notion of Clyde's alienation from an innate selfhood, I tend to agree with Philip Fisher, who claims that "within Dreiser's novel the question of authenticity never



exists. Clyde has no self to which he might be 'true'" (140). Instead, Clyde "gets his 'self' moment by moment as a gift from the outside" (141) in that he creates himself through imitation of others. In Fisher's view, "[i]dentity, blurred or collective, externalizes the question of who I am, converts it into the question, Who do they take me for?" (145).<sup>7</sup> This notion of a constructed identity in a social community inevitably brings to the fore the question of power relations--i.e. the construction of self in the American hierarchy of value which includes and excludes.

Eating together, dinners, banquets, parties etc. become the technologies of self in Dreiser's *Tragedy*, in which the self and the other are inevitably constituted in a hierarchy of insiders and outsiders, of superior and inferior. In Book I, Clyde shares a dinner with his bell-hop friends at Frissel's in Kansas City, an act which the narrator translates into a technology of self: "Eating here, they somehow felt older, wiser, more important--real men of the world" (57), a technology that the narrator partly deflates by showing that the partying bell-hops are far from being "men of the world." The social hierarchy is also recreated in Book II at the rich Griffiths' meal in Lycurgus, during which the family feeds on gossip and spins the tale and destiny of their poor relative Clyde who is expected to come to Lycurgus. The decision to "toss him aside" (158), if he doesn't "make good" illustrates that the original function of the ancient banquet has been parodically reversed. The family's precarious unity and social status are based on the exclusion of Clyde as the outsider, an impression that is further emphasized in the second Griffiths' dinner to which Clyde is invited but made to feel that he is not part of them.

<sup>7</sup> Fisher makes much of the uniforms in Dreiser's *Tragedy*, the "metaphor of 'set' identity" (144).

The topic of a wounded horse is enough to draw the conversation away from Clyde, the only invited guest.

The dominance of the oral metaphors in *Tragedy* also points to the question of desire and identity.<sup>8</sup> The novel, for example, emphasizes Clyde's "hunger" in the context of sexuality and desire, the fact that Clyde is "girl-hungry" (72) and "starved where sex was concerned" (66), at the same time that the text also shows its opposite--Clyde's fear of contracting "a dreadful disease" and his nausea especially in the context of sexuality. Having dinner with Hortense Briggs who promises to, but never does, "give herself" to him, Clyde is "nourished by this mere proximity to her" at the same time that he also feels "a little sick and weak--almost nauseated," afraid of the actual sexual contact with a woman who considers him her "conquest" (85, 86). Like Carrie's, Clyde's subjectivity is linked to desire, but he is also linked to its opposite--to "melancholia" and lethargy (19). Clyde often feels desire and nausea in same moment, which turns his identity into a schizophrenic self. He is not only a social but also a psychic "borderlander" for whom "the boundaries that structure the subject" collapse, to apply Kristeva's terminology (paraphrased in Barzilai 295).

The food metaphor, also predominant in Grove's *Search*, has very different ramifications and effects as a technology of self, in that Branden is consistently linked to the "basic," "essential" foods, which coincides with his search for his "true" self, a self that is stripped of all pretensions and of "artificial" desires. Branden not only starts his career as a waiter in a Toronto

<sup>8</sup> Taking a psycho-analytic approach Richard Forrey has argued that because of an unresolved oedipal complex Dreiser himself was essentially oral in his psychosexual orientation and, therefore, fictionally created eating as a metaphor for life. Forrey explains Dreiser's early fascination with Herbert Spencer's Social Darwinism as an oral fascination for a "dog-eat-dog philosophy" (343).

restaurant serving food to others, but he becomes more and more interested in limiting his food to the basic nourishment as he starts his tramp out west. This rationing of food corresponds to his efforts not only to reduce the force of desire in his life but to eliminate desire altogether in order to discover what is true "need."<sup>9</sup> Determined not to allow American society to seduce him by appealing to his desire, he becomes a tramp and a hobo and he eventually learns to determine what his needs are and how to satisfy them. The river nourishes him with the leftovers of civilization, described for example in the ham he finds along the river banks after a flooding and the corn he purloins--Huckleberry Finn-style--from fields. He receives milk from an old couple, is fed at various farms and shares a simple molasses dinner with the silent hermit.

Although Dreiser's *Tragedy* presents a whole series of important "dinners," Clyde, in contrast to Branden, is never described as eating the basic foods. Food appears in the form of ice cream and Coca Cola and alcoholic drinks; more basic foods only appear *not* to be eaten: Clyde rejects food in the prison (594) and later in the deathhouse (791). In contrast, the food imagery in *Search* evokes both the sacramental sharing of food as well as the Odyssean ritual banquets, as it culminates in a true banquet at the mecca of hobodom, the Mackenzie Farm:

We went to the cook-house for dinner. The food was good, consisting of soup, meat, vegetables, and pudding. Plenty of pies were scattered over the tables which were covered with white oil-cloth; there were large stacks of fresh bread, both white and brown, dishes of butter, pitchers with milk, and pots full of coffee and tea. As once before in similar surroundings I marvelled again at the capacity for eating which these workers of the soil displayed. (347)

<sup>9</sup> This effort to transcend desire might also explain why *America* does not incorporate a sexual relationship.

The cataloguing of the "essential" nourishments for the workers of the soil suggests the ritualistic, community-building function of the ancient banquets. This picture is also endowed with the rustic simplicity of workers who have truly earned their food, an image that conjures up the pastoral of the field.

And yet, Branden is not really part of the community he celebrates, but is separated from it by a distinct difference in consciousness. Tom Henighan, in *Natural Space in Literature* (1982), reminds us that novels that describe a pastoral of the field are usually novels of "double consciousness" (70) in which a sophisticated outsider tries to reach some kind of identification with the peasant world (53-70). Furthermore, the fictional, idyllic picture of the eating workers clashes with Branden's consciousness of the reality of their social problems (gambling, vermin infected housing, dependency on employers).

In *The Bush Garden* (1971), Northrop Frye has argued that Grove's *America* thematizes "the narrator's search for a North American pastoral myth in its genuinely imaginative form" (240). According to Frye, Edward Hicks' *The Peaceable Kingdom* is the "pictorial emblem of what Grove's narrator was trying to find under the surface of America: the reconciliation of man with man and of man with nature" (249). On his tramp across the country, the narrator of *America* discovers that uninhabited nature does not constitute a viable alternative to capitalism's rule of money, greed, and ruthless exploitation, for nature is as threatening as unbridled capitalism. In the summer, the sun burns mercilessly; Branden swallows dust and is bitten by locusts (226); then he gets soaked by gushing, drowning rain (231); at night he sleeps in a darkness that is "pregnant with danger" (233) and the winter makes him deadly sick, so that he has to take shelter in the human community

in order to survive. It is not surprising, then, that Branden should opt for a threshold space, a no-man's land, in the novel. His chosen reality is a borderline space in between two threatening forces: the borderland between primordial nature and progressive civilization (or American commercialism).

Dreiser's work presents a similar chasm. Throughout the novel, nature is contrasted with the urban setting with its high walls, its boundaries, the omnipresence of people who gaze and stare. But nature is also chilling, desolate, decadent, and it is the place where Clyde plans to murder Roberta. Dreiser, like Henry David Thoreau, operates "imaginatively in the American Eden; [but] while Thoreau sees the Golden Age constantly being renewed, Dreiser presents what is perhaps the most explicit depiction of the corrupted Garden" (Campbell 259). Clyde's true social desire is not so much to enter the successful Lycurgus business world, as numerous critics have argued. Rather, his dream is to enter the Finchley's cottage world, which has all the qualities of a true pastoral:

And then this scene, where a bright sun poured a flood of crystal light upon a greensward that stretched from tall pines to the silver rippling waters of a lake. And off shore in a half dozen different directions the bright white sails of small boats--the white and green and yellow splashes of color, where canoes paddled by idling lovers were passing in the sun! Summertime--leisure--warmth--color--ease--beauty--love--all that he had dreamed of the summer before, when he was so very much alone. (445)

Clyde's pastoral world, like the Phaiakian island in *The Odyssey*, presents a setting in which nature merges with elaborate artifice, where the sensual merges with maternal abundance, where peace and timelessness provide rest for the drifting and driven soul, a space that is utterly fictional. Given his yearning for fusion, belonging, and submerging with the idyll it should not surprise that Clyde sees his fantasy creation, Sondra Finchley, merge with the

picture before him: she wears the colors yellow and green, the colors of the picture idyll he describes (445). At the same time, Clyde himself never connects. He is an observer who looks in from the outside giving an almost impressionistic portrait of the scene before him.

A figure of alienation, Clyde is always "out of place," even as he moves through a series of city spaces. Whether visiting his uncle's rich mansion or the Finchley's cottage world (Book II), Clyde is an observer who yearns to but never does merge with the world he sees. Paraphrasing Julia Kristeva on the borderline patient who is "neither subject nor object, neither inside nor outside, neither here nor there," Shuli Barzilai reminds us that "Instead of 'Who am I?' this patient asks, 'Where am I?'" Also, the 'borderlander' is always an exile: "'I' is expelled,' or ceases to be, for, 'How can I be without border?'" (295). According to Kristeva, this liminal position entails a specific language: "the patient's 'borderline' discourse gives the analyst the impression of something alogical, unstitched, and chaotic" (42). When asked, for example, by his arch-rival and cousin Gilbert Griffiths how he likes the manual work in the basement of the collar factory in Lycurgus, Clyde answers: "I'm learning a little something, I guess" (228). On the surface, Clyde speaks the discourse of an underling who readily nods and smiles to ensure his master's approval. And yet, into his discourse erupts another voice that not only contradicts but unweaves the discursive net of conformity that his words fabricate. "A little something" denotes "Yes, I'm learning what you want me to learn," but at the same time his sentence has a very subversive undercurrent: "I'm not really learning very much! What am I doing here?"

In crisis moments Clyde's discourse tends to be emptied of meaning, encoding one message and suggesting its opposite at the same time, especially since Clyde often resorts to words such as "something," "anything," "I guess,"

and "I suppose," phrases that are open to any interpretation. Clyde's fabrication of shifty signifiers is evocative of Kristeva's analysis of a liminal language: "Beneath the seemingly well-constructed grammatical aspects of these patients' discourse we find a futility, an emptying of all affect from meaning--indeed even an empty signifier" (41). And yet, in *An American Tragedy* this shifty language has a significant impact on those in power. "That's the trouble with people who don't know. They're always guessing" (229), Gilbert aggressively counters Clyde's borderline language, thus putting the young upstart in his place by confronting him with his lack of knowledge, of education, and of proper speech. Deflating Clyde's ambitious hopes of rising quickly in the Griffiths' family business, Gilbert is keen on proving that he and his penniless cousin speak two radically languages and thus belong to two separate social classes: "'Well, the fact is,' went on Gilbert, 'I might have placed you in the accounting end of the business when you first came if you had been technically equipped for it'" (229). The narrator comments parenthetically on the power effect of Gilbert's language: "(The phrase 'technically equipped' overawed and terrorized Clyde, for he scarcely understood what that meant)" (229).

It is ironic, though, that Gilbert should dismiss his cousin as an inferior in the same breath that he offers him a better position, thus paving the way for his rival's further rise. It appears that the more the social boundaries between the two unequal cousins become blurred, the more forcefully Gilbert insists on recreating the (discursive) boundaries between them. Also, Gilbert's aggressive energy and resentful charges are rooted less in his rival's social inferiority than in Clyde's ability to present himself in society as Gilbert's physically more attractive double.

Another character in the novel who speaks a borderline discourse is Roberta Alden, Clyde's working class girl-friend and Clyde's alter-ego (Lee

Mitchell 58-63). Like Clyde, Roberta comes from a poor family and dreams of rising socially; like her male double, she is a typical "outlander" who speaks a borderline discourse. Clyde's relationship with Roberta is punctuated by two notes written to Clyde in which Roberta repeats the same sentence: "I have something to tell you" (298, 370). The "something"--the blank, the empty signifier in her writing--is that which each time triggers Clyde's reaction. Her "somethings" are open for any interpretation, and each time it is Clyde who interprets the "something" to make it fit his own purposes. He projects his desire for the sexual contact with Roberta into the first "something" and his desire to get rid of her into the second. Here, the borderline discourse is the discourse that leads to her victimization.

Dreaming of a union with the rich and beautiful Sondra Finchley of Lycurgus, Clyde future possibilities are reduced dramatically by the ironic fact that at the time when Sondra becomes seriously interested in Clyde, Roberta discovers her pregnancy and demands that Clyde marry her, a fact that critics have explained with the author's deterministic intent. Not only is the bad timing of the pregnancy a true chance event, but the lovers' sexual drives and their lack of contraceptive knowledge also suggest to many readers that the characters are deterministically bound by circumstances beyond their control.

And yet, such an approach glosses over the fact that to a large degree Clyde creates his own fate through the discourse he speaks. In free indirect discourse, Clyde unequivocally rejects the marriage with Roberta as impossible: "It could not be--ever" (416), but then deliberately creates a whole network of lies to keep the pregnant Roberta from interfering with his dream. But typically for Clyde, in his lies, he cannot help but speak in two contradictory voices. Telling Roberta that he can't marry her, "not now



anyway," not "so soon," not "at this time" (416), Clyde reveals in his obsessive negations his unwillingness to marry her, at the same time that his time adverbials signal that at a future time he might. It is appropriate that the other borderline speaker, Roberta, should only hear the second voice and should interpret it as a promise, a contract that Clyde will and must fulfill, a contract that gives her a hold over him. Roberta's interpretation of Clyde's discourse is doubly ironic in that the only consistency Clyde has revealed in the novel up to that point is that he notoriously breaks contracts. As a "borderlander," he inevitably breaks order, systems and social regulations.

Earlier in the novel, at a party with the Lycurgus smart set, Clyde manages to entertain the party guests by reading "messages written on paper and sealed in envelopes" (381). The narrator immediately deflates Clyde's reading and imaginative writing capacity by telling the reader in parenthesis that this is "(the old serial letter trick which he had found explained in an ancient book of parlor tricks...)" (381). Not only is Clyde's reading (of the messages) exposed to be imitative while giving the semblance of being creative and magical, but it is an excellent device that shows that Clyde's self-representation consists in becoming a mirror for others. Suspicious of his own language at the parties, he refuses to speak in his own voice and turns himself into a perfect echo that repeats and magnifies the speech of others and thus feeds their narcissism. This apparently insignificant gambit explains the mystery of Clyde's social success. Rich and narcissistic Sondra Finchley falls in love with him, partly drawn in by the fantasy Clyde has created about himself but even more drawn in by the fantasy he has created about her. Through his eyes, which see nothing less but a goddess in her, she is allowed to admire her own fetishized narcissistic ego.

For Clyde, Sondra is the far-away fairy goddess, who deals with her devotee at arm's length, who has little presents delivered to Clyde's door,

while her affections remain "veiled behind a tantalizing evasiveness" (373). Sondra's status never changes for Clyde; even in the deathhouse of Auburn she remains the goddess, albeit one who is no longer his protectress. The note she sends has no signature on it, a gap into which he reads the end of his dream, but clearly not the end of Sondra as a fantasy creature, so that the construct has become more real in his life than the real Sondra. Very much like Fitzgerald's Jay Gatsby, Clyde rescues part of his innocence precisely because he never moves beyond the realm of romance but remains caught in its conventions, even when he plots a murder.

Many critics have pointed to the fact that it is a newspaper article on an accidental drowning that prompts Clyde's murder plot against Roberta, an interpretation that gives the murder plan itself a deterministic twist. And yet, Clyde not only misreads but his imagination erupts into the gaps of the article to rewrite it in order to make it suit his purposes. Without realizing it, he transforms the original story from a fatal drowning accident into a murder story: "he could not help but feel sympathetic toward that unknown man at Pass Lake and secretly wish that he had been successful. Perhaps he, too, had been confronted by a situation just like this" (472). In what appears to be a typical "borderlander" move, Clyde proceeds not only to blur the boundaries but to fuse into one two mutually exclusive discourses. In Clyde's discourse, the report entitled "DOUBLE TRAGEDY" fuses with his own imaginative murder romance with a happy ending and a solution to all problems. This discursive blurring in turn makes it possible for Clyde to see himself as an imitator of somebody else's (murderous) idea rather than as an initiator of his own murderous plot.

Discussing the poetics of Dostoyevsky's *Crime and Punishment*, Mikhail Bakhtin uses the concept of the dialogue and the dialogic principle to

theorize how "the consciousness of the solitary Raskolnikov becomes a field of battle for others' voices" (88). Just as Raskolnikov switches from one position to its opposite in his deliberation of whether or not to commit a murder, so Clyde Griffiths moves from one position to the other, plotting Roberta's murder while asserting to himself, "I do not want to kill her" (465). Dreiser's semi-omniscient narration gives way to free indirect discourse when it comes to delving into Clyde's divided psyche in his plotting of the murder. Dreiser also draws on a Poe-like technique to represent the evil voice in Clyde by personifying it in the form of a Giant Efrit who seductively argues for Roberta's death.<sup>10</sup> The internal debate becomes so intense that Clyde, like Raskolnikov, becomes dominated by a psychic state that the narrator describes as "the border-line look between reason and unreason" (450). This border-line state eventually brings about the extraordinary situation--the moment of the intended murder, but with the important twist that Clyde becomes guilty of Roberta's death not so much through his own doing but through his passivity--his refusal to rescue Roberta when she drowns in Big Bittern Lake as a result of an accident, a point that I will explore in more detail in the next chapter. The internal dialogic struggle brings with it a paralyzing stasis into which suddenly erupts a third, unexpected, chance element that decides, an element which gives Clyde's crime and Dreiser's *Tragedy* a strong twist into irony.

Like Dreiser's tragic quester, Grove's wanderer is also a "border-lander." But Branden's position and experience are contextualized by Canadian rather than American values. Northrop Frye reminds us that in

<sup>10</sup> For a detailed discussion on Dreiser's usage of oriental fables and gothic symbolism in the description of the murder plot, see Thomas Riggio's "American Gothic."

Canadian consciousness, the question of "who am I?" is always deeply rooted in the question "where is here?" ("Conclusion 1965" 826). This is the very question that haunts Branden from the moment he disembarks in Montreal and feels, like Clyde, "incongruous and out of place" (15). In contrast to Clyde, Branden not only survives but prevails by consciously asserting his borderline status and by cultivating a liminal language. He maintains a delicate balance between the old and the new, between "here" and "there," between the "self" and the "other," never merging with either one.

Continually playing with, and subverting, the new world icons, the Canadian traveller distinguishes himself from his American counterpart through his self-conscious linguistic flexibility. Well equipped with hermeneutical tools on his journey across America, Grove's hero, like the legendary Odysseus, is an ingenious reader and writer who takes pleasure in deciphering the foreign-sounding American vernacular as he strives to overcome linguistic barriers. As a "linguist" (22), he quickly recognizes that the American ideal is deeply intertwined with its literature, especially with the writings of Henry David Thoreau and Mark Twain. But the immigrant-writer's desire for rendering in language the ultimate "truth" (72) of his experiences is doomed to end in frustration. Never finding the magic words that would translate his life experience adequately into language, he is forced to recognize that his representations are approximations at best, a recognition that compels him to continual revision and rewriting. In the process of describing the hermit (Book III), for example, Branden emphasizes this fellow outsider's striking resemblance with "Mark Twain in Carroll Beckwith's portrait" (252). Soon after, he revises this description by adding an allusion to the Homeric Cyclops: "There was no expression in his vacant, bold eye" (253). Continually adding to his picture, the narrator represents the hermit as

a collage of overlapping literary and popular icons, of linguistic fragments and memory pictures, as much from the old world as from the new. Never totally fixed or finished, nor ultimately blended together, these collages defy the very idea of a finished picture, as well as the concept of a perfected, static self. Considering that Canada is a mosaic of cultures and does not ask for ultimate assimilation and complete merging, this style of writing may be seen as a metonymic representation of Canada itself.

Just as the train loosely connects the different provinces of Canada, so does the image of the "wheel on rail" (25) join the different episodes of Grove's picaresque novel. Taking an ironic perspective, the narrator evokes the railroad as an icon of power and movement, a machine that disrupts the nature idyll, at the same time that the fabled iron horse also functions as an aesthetic object: "Nor had I learned as yet to stand transfixed when looking at the Titan frescoes of light effects on clouds of smoke from iron-furnace or railroad-yard" (17). Although entrapped at one point in a speeding train and subjected to painful tortures when travelling on train rods in another episode, Branden always manages to disembark, when pain threatens to overwhelm him. Unlike the American nightmare that speeds the unsuspecting Clyde along, Branden's is the odyssey of a skeptic who repeatedly distances himself from the New World and its seductive icons. He reembarks on his journey of discovery only when he feels ready.

Thus, rather than travelling in a linear fashion, Branden, like the legendary Odysseus, zigzags across the country. Although developed explicitly in the author's preface, the concept of teleology (xviii) is playfully subverted in a narrative that shows the traveller's ultimate *telos* to be utterly fictional. In *The Bush Garden* (1971), Northrop Frye argues that the theme of "Grove's *A Search for America* is the narrator's search for a North

American pastoral" (240), and such pastoral myths "do not exist as places" (241). "America is an ideal and as such has to be striven for; it has to be realized in partial victories," Branden confirms toward the end of the novel (382), emphasizing that the process--the movement toward the ideal--is more important than reaching the goal. Like Odysseus' painful passage homeward to Ithaca, Branden's route is "many-twisting" and asks for a *polytropos*, subversively scheming traveller. Cunning Odysseus tricks the dangerous Cyclops by telling him that his name is "Nobody," thus giving himself an identity that at the same time denies the very concept of identity, a trick that ensures the hero's survival (Book IX). Similarly, Branden survives not because he creates a name or a well-defined identity for himself, but because he manages to elude the notion of a fixed identity in his journey toward self creation.

✦ If anything, Grove's *Search* celebrates irony, perspectivism, and reflexiveness, subversive strategies that "express the ineluctable recreations of mind in search of a truth that continually eludes it, leaving it with only an ironic access or excess of self-consciousness" (Hassan 506). Lacking perspective, irony, distance and self-reflexivity in the discourses he uses, Clyde Griffiths' tragedy is "his failure as a storyteller or historian of self" (Mizruchi 244). Branden, however, succeeds in writing himself into being, albeit in a collage with self-conscious splits and ironic contradictions that echo the multiplicity of the larger Canadian self.

B. Caught Between Laws and Norms:

The Self on Trial

Interweaving their protagonists' tribulations with judicial metaphors, Dreiser and Grove put their protagonists "on trial," at the same time that they probe North-American social and judicial practices. Arriving in New York with all his savings from working as a waiter in Toronto, Phil Branden gets suckered into playing flip with Han the Hook and Big Heinie who pose as rich millionaires, one of them presumably drunk. As Branden understands it, the purpose of the game is to get the drunk's money and return it to him when he is sober, and it is with doubts about his own moral duplicity that Branden reflects on this scheme: "Suddenly a thought struck me, and the whole matter presented itself in a new aspect. *I had been sitting in a crooked game!* My intentions had been honest. But does the end justify the means? The fact remained that I had taken part in a conspiracy to take a man's money from him" (*America* 122-23). In the end, it turns out that it is Branden himself who is stripped of his last money and he ends up in jail because the two crooks have exchanged his money with counterfeit money, which the unsuspecting Branden spends in New York.

In his work on *The Confidence Man in Modern Fiction* (1979), John Blair gives a definition of the con-man that summarizes the moral duplicity of Phil Branden:

The con man's distinguishing characteristic lies in the uncommon relationship he maintains with the victim he exploits. Among all the varied swindlers, rogues, tricksters, and villains of literature and life, only the confidence man exacts the moral complicity of his victim as a pre-condition for

fleeing him. To defend himself against a confidence man, all the prospective victim need do is merely to act honestly. The con man preys only on those with larceny already in their souls. Hence the criminal and moral sophistication of the con man: he swindles would-be swindlers. He is the trickster raised to the second power. (17)

Insisting on discussing *In Search for America* in terms of the "innocent immigrant myth," critics have generally chosen to ignore Branden's deep complicity in his own victimization.<sup>11</sup> A duplicitous victim in the first round of crooked games, Branden "innocently" helps creating victims as a salesman of worthless encyclopedias. "I was neither cat, hawk, nor snake!" (*America* 160), he says to express his opposition against the ruthless sales strategies of his New York boss, Mr. Tinker, but he cannot leave this dirty trade either because he needs a job, and the company has a hold on him via a chain of debt.

Branden's career as a salesman ends with the police on his heels when he becomes an involuntary accomplice of a scheme to sell to gullible American millionaires a seemingly illimited number of copies of a presumably limited de-luxe edition. His cynical collaborator Mr. Williams explains to Branden the mechanism of this con-scheme: "'The whole thing is a con-game on a gigantic scale, operated with the help of two factors,' he said, 'the gullibility of the well-to-do, and the innocence of milksops as yourself...'" (212). Despite these swindles, Branden walks free, as he never becomes "really" guilty; he is always suckered into helping swindlers without profiting from the swindle himself.

<sup>11</sup> For such an approach, see *Stobie Grove* 63; *Pacey Grove* 25-26; and Stanley McMullin (11).



The same cannot be said about Clyde Griffiths. Repeatedly Clyde slips into catastrophic situations in which he leaves his moral virtue behind, as he obviously does in the death of the young girl in Kansas City and the death of Roberta Alden, but in both cases Clyde's true guilt remains deliberately very ambiguous, impossible for the reader to determine. By having Clyde, however, tried and convicted for murder in the first degree, Dreiser leaves a strong sense of the injustice of the American laws. In contrast to Grove, whose narrative attacks the unwritten norms of America as corruptive, Dreiser points to the chasm between America's laws and its norms, a chasm that Michel Foucault has explored in his critical analysis of modern society.

According to Foucault, the norms are concerned with what he calls "bio-power," that is with life, whereas the law is primarily concerned with transgression, punishment and ultimately death. "A normalizing society is the historical outcome of a technology of power centered on life," Foucault writes in *The History of Sexuality* (144). In contrast, the law "cannot help but be armed, and its arm, *par excellence*, is death; to those who transgress it, it replies, at least as a last resort, with that absolute menace. The law always refers to the sword" (*History* 144). Foucault's vision intersects here with Northrop Frye's description of the law in tragedy: "In its most elementary form, the vision of law (*dike*) operates as *lex talionis* or revenge. The hero provokes enmity, or inherits a situation of enmity, and the return of the avenger constitutes the catastrophe" (*Anatomy* 208-09).

Dreiser's *Tragedy* illustrates Foucault's point that the norm is linked to life and pleasure by showing that premarital sex amongst young people in the

early twenties is not the exception but more and more becoming a norm.<sup>12</sup> And yet, on trial, Clyde is judged by the jury partly because of the "illicit" sex relationship with Roberta Alden. Dreiser also shows that, provided one has the money, it is the norm to get an abortion in the case of an unwanted pregnancy, even though the law forbids it.<sup>13</sup> As Clyde and Roberta have no money, the norm of the rich to control their procreation does not apply to them, and everywhere they try to find "a remedy" for Roberta's unwanted pregnancy, they are quoted the law instead. Roberta, as an unwed and pregnant working woman, is understandably paranoid about becoming a signifier of "illicit concupiscence," since the norm that allows a growing sexual freedom does not stretch to include single motherhood. Thus, for a sexually free factory woman who becomes pregnant, the norm is to get an (illegal) abortion (generally performed by a local midwife) or, with the utmost expediency, to attach the "rescuing" normalizing signifier to her pregnant body--the copy of the marriage certificate. But attaching herself mentally to a norm that governs the comfortably rich and clearly excludes her, Roberta Alden fails to take advantage of any "normal" survival mechanisms, an ironic failure she clearly shares with Clyde.

Unlike *Sister Carrie*, *An American Tragedy* makes the point that norms, that is the internalized social practices, are flexible and humane, and that it is the legal and metaphorical laws and rigid conventions, as well as for-

<sup>12</sup> See the number of young people who become involved in premarital sex-relationships in the novel: Hortense Briggs, Ratterer's sisters, Rita Dickerman and her friend, and the guests in the Green Davidson Hotel in Kansas City. This sense of sexual freedom is not restricted to the lower classes but also pervades the smart set of Lycurgus.

<sup>13</sup> See for example Clyde's lawyer Alvin Belknap, whose father paid for the abortion of a pregnant girl-friend (592-93). Also, the doctor who refuses to perform an abortion for Roberta in fact does abortions but only for a significant compensation.

malized prescriptions that cause Roberta's and Clyde's tragedies. While Clyde has an intuitive understanding of norms, he repeatedly gets into trouble with the law. *An American Tragedy* does not only culminate in a legal trial and Clyde's death penalty in Book III, the entire novel is a repetition of trials, in which the protagonist is made aware of the existence of powerful laws, whose words and meaning however, only reach him via mediation. Like Kafka's Joseph K. in *The Trial* (1924), who is executed in the end without understanding what he is guilty of, so Clyde never understands the law and is dependent on those who interpret the law for him--judges, lawyers and prosecutors.

The first *ersatz*-judge in his life and interpreter of the law is his mother. It is to her that he addresses a "defense speech" right after the gruesome automobile accident in Kansas City, which cost a young girl's life. "I didn't do anything wrong," he writes to his mother protesting his innocence, but then adds the qualification "just went along" (162), so that the text he composes really speaks in two contradictory voices--his borderline discourse. The letter is written in purely confessional style--in the one page letter the personal pronoun "I" is repeated at least fifty times--but then he signs the letter with a false name, ambiguities which reflect not only the ambiguity about his own guilt but also the ambiguity about his identity. Clyde's mother is quick to pick up her role of substitute judge to help him interpret his guilt in the eyes of the law, but her discourse is as ambiguous as that of her son: "Not that I blame you altogether for all that terrible trouble you got into" (163) she writes, but then proceeds to do just that in a discourse that is loaded with "disgrace," "pitfalls," and the "devil" (163-64), which illustrates that according to the biblical law he has miserably failed. But like a true judge she also indicates a way of how he can redeem himself in the future, as the

main thrust of the letter is on "the long road ahead" (163). Phrases such as "Will you be ever watchful," "Will you stop and listen," "Remember always," "Promise me" (164) return like a refrain in her letter, so that Clyde's redemption lies in his future proving himself.

In Book II, Clyde's uncle Samuel Griffiths, whose name is linked to "good judgment" (226) plays the role of judge over Clyde's future, anticipating Judge Oberwaltzer in the later murder trial in Book III. In Lycurgus--a name that appropriately evokes the Spartan lawgiver--Clyde yearns to be given a "trial"--("I might manage if I were given a trial")--and he enthusiastically accepts the challenge imposed by the Griffiths, only to fail the test two chapters later, when he starts a relationship with a factory woman under his supervision, Roberta Alden, thus not only violating the factory law that his cousin Gilbert has laid down with so much urgency, but also violating his own promise and contract. Clyde's cousin Gilbert Griffiths plays the prosecutor and nemesis in Clyde's "trial" at the collar factory, whose suspicious charges against Clyde (228-29) anticipate the virulent and deprecating rhetorics of prosecuting attorney Orville Mason in Clyde's murder trial in Book III (639-47).

Book III of the novel is devoted to the murder trial proper, and again Dreiser's focus is to bring out the duplicities and contradictions in the participants' roles and attitudes. The jury is for example "convinced of Clyde's guilt before ever they sat down" but at the same time the jury members think of themselves as "fair" and "open-minded" (639). Prosecutor Mason emphasizes the importance of justice, "exact and fair" (640), in his opening statement, but his role in the trial is really that of the avenger of Roberta's lost honour and life, an avenger whose aggressive energy is deeply

rooted in sexual jealousy and political ambition,<sup>14</sup> which parallels Gilbert's jealousy of Clyde.

"Truth is not born nor is it to be found inside the head of an individual person, it is born *between people* collectively searching for truth, in the process of their dialogic interaction," Bakhtin writes in his analysis of *Dostoevsky's Poetics* (110). While Dostoevsky demonstrates in *Crime and Punishment* (1866) that truth is constituted through a struggle, a dialogue between different voices, Dreiser, in contrast, demonstrates how different voices or heteroglossia become erased in Clyde's trial, as one voice manages to appropriate all other (differing) voices and subordinate them to a dominant voice. Many critics have commented on Dreiser's strategy of incorporating letters, newspaper articles and even trial records verbatim in his novel, a technique that has generally been interpreted as part of his naturalistic desire for authenticity. But more importantly, these subtexts introduce a heterogeneous mixture of genre. They create a multiplicity of voices, voices in dialogic debate and opposition. Roberta's letter for example is juxtaposed to Sondra's, both speaking of their claim on Clyde (433-436). In the trial the prosecutor's text is followed by the defence speech which attempts to undo the prosecutor's text. And yet, despite this multiplication of voices, the outcome of the trial is not only a parodic truth—an oxymoronic false truth, but it is also a truth that becomes equated with one monolithic discourse that manages to absorb, appropriate and render ineffective all potentially oppositional voices.

<sup>14</sup> The narrator insists on Mason's "psychic sex scar" (504) as well as on the political advantages of a highly publicized trial to set up Mason for the upcoming county judgeship election (508).

In contrast to Dostoevsky's text, truth does not emerge in Clyde's trial. Instead, it is Prosecutor Mason's ideological stance that not only triumphs but swallows everything else, asserting itself as the "authoritative word" (Bakhtin *Dialogic Imagination* 342). As Mason introduces Roberta's letters to Clyde into the trial, her voice becomes submerged in the prosecutor's discourse because the letters are cleverly censored to support Mason's charge. Similarly, the news media do not open up a dialogic debate, but its sprawling headlines--"PROSECUTION IN GRIFFITHS' CASE CLOSSES WITH IMPRESSIVE DELUGE OF TESTIMONY' or 'MOTIVE AS WELL AS METHOD HAMMERED HOME'" (664)--present a position that merges with Mason's voice. On the surface, the discourse of Clyde's lawyer's Belknap and Jephson is diametrically opposed to the prosecutor's rhetorics: the prosecution elevates Clyde's status into that of a negative hero in a discourse that speaks of a callous bestial murderer ("a reptilian criminal" [508]), while the defence, in contrast, deflates Clyde's status by declaring him a "mental and moral coward" (669-70), a discourse that aims at absolving him of responsibility for his action. But this diametrical opposition does not create a dialogic debate whose aim is the truth but rather an either/or situation, a power struggle in which one (false) position will triumph over the other.

Clyde's discursive defence, so cleverly composed by his lawyers and so slavishly memorized by the defendant, fails not only because of Clyde's ambiguous feelings about his own guilt--he knows that he is confessing in "bad faith" when he repeats a story that has been fabricated by his lawyers--but also because he is not capable of speaking anything but a borderline discourse that says one thing and negates it in one breath. Clyde's answers to the prosecutor's questions--"I guess it is, maybe" followed by "I suppose

maybe it is" and "I don't know" (731; 732)--are typical borderline answer which say anything and nothing and leave his discourse open for any interpretation. His lips speak the memorized text--I am innocent--but into this text always erupts a subtext of gaps, memory failings, slippages, vagueness, unexplained contradictions, a second discourse over which he has no control and which subverts the main text. It is the eruption of this second discourse--"the discourse of the Other," or the language of the unconscious--that clashes with the strongly rationalized discourse that speaks of Clyde's change of heart. For the jury, this second discourse only means one thing--that Clyde is guilty in the sense of the accusation, guilty of murder in the first degree, which he is not.

Dreiser's narrative in fact puts the judicial system--jury, prosecutor, defence, and the law itself--on trial, as the narrative as a whole is concerned with setting down the "facts" in front of the reader who plays the part of the ideal jury that Clyde has never had. As readers we are to judge Clyde not so much according to legal categories but according to the norm and a sense of what is appropriate. The narrative emphasizes that Clyde is a "normal" person, who has been dragged out of the "normal" through his peculiar family history, who commits an act that a person would "normally" not do and, as a result, is crushed by the wheels of a merciless law, rather than by a "normalizing" procedure of "orthopedic" reform, which would show Clyde the way back to the norm. As John McWilliams puts it in his discussion of Clyde Griffiths and the criminal trial novel: "If criminality is conditioned behavior and free will is a mirage, the entire system of criminal law can readily seem an anachronistic outrage" (96).

"It was true..." (80), "For to say the truth..." (169), and "The truth was..." (384) are the narrator's formulae that underline that his concern is

with truth-telling and not with the empty legal rhetorics of Mason or Clyde's lawyers. But as "truth" itself is a slippery concept in Dreiser's *Tragedy*, so the narrator's role as a truth-teller is slippery. Mizruchi describes the narrator as an "ironic historian," but he also acts as a character witness for Clyde and as a lay-psychologist. In these various roles, the narrator makes much of the fact that the most obvious motivation of Clyde's murder plotting--his "temporary unreason" when faced with irreconcilable demands (463)--is never allowed to be introduced into the trial because the Lycurgus Griffiths object to it. The concept of insanity carries with it the suggestion of mercy and a cure rather than retributive punishment. Thus the narrator presents himself as a "normalizing" agent who makes a plea for life rather than death, the plea that the victimizer be reformed, not expelled, but it is also a plea that is denied by those who uphold the law.

Like Mason and the lawyers who retell Clyde's story by manipulating important aspects, so the narrator inevitably manipulates the reader's sympathy for Clyde by retelling his story to the reader.<sup>15</sup> Like Mason's and the lawyers' stories, the narrator's most flagrant manipulations centre around the recreation of Roberta's death on Big Bittern Lake. At the crucial moment when Clyde wants to kill Roberta but finds himself unable to kill, the narrator intrudes to tell the reader that physically and emotionally Clyde is not capable of killing Roberta at this moment since Clyde is caught in "a balanced combat between fear (a chemic revulsion against death or murderous brutality that would bring death) and a harried and restless and yet self-repressed desire to do" (491-92). When a few moments later Clyde lets

<sup>15</sup> Clyde's lawyers "test" various stories--from Clyde's insanity (603-604), to Roberta's suicide (604), to the eventual change of heart Clyde experienced before the fatal boat ride with Roberta (609)--in order to find the one perfect story that is bound to elicit sympathy in the jury (612).



Roberta drown after an accident without even lifting a finger to rescue her, the narrator's voice is, however, silent, replaced by Roberta's cries for help and by the strange "cry of that devilish bird upon that dead limb--the wier-wier" (493).

By shifting active present participles to passive present participles and by cutting off noun clusters from verbs (Fisher Fishkin 124-25), Dreiser submerges the two moments of decision in a language that emphasizes Clyde's paralysis and passivity. As a result, the reader is manipulated into assuming that the bodily and emotional state described in the scene preceding the accident serves as an explanation of Clyde's motivation in the scene after the accident, so that it follows that not Clyde but the circumstances have changed. This technique insinuates a deterministic interpretation to the reader. And yet, in contrast to Mason's and the lawyers' coherent, monological versions of the truth, the narrator's strategy creates dialogic interaction. The narrator's silence in the crisis moment creates a gap into which erupt an illimited number of different voices and positions, interpretations that engage in a dialogical struggle. The victim's last words--"Clyde, Clyde!" (493)--express both accusation and the plea for help that is denied. At the same time the strange devilish bird's voice erupts like a discourse of the Other insinuating Clyde's guilt, and Clyde's own reaction is truly dialogic: "he had not really killed her. No, no," he tells himself only to ask himself in the next sentence, "had he? Or, had he not?" (494). This technique of conjuring up many different voices suggests that the truth does not lie in a rigid law, in an either/or decision, but in a vigorous debate between as many voices as possible.

Like the lawyers', the narrator's story of Clyde's life is a carefully edited history, but unlike the coherent story fabricated by the lawyers, the

narrator is intent on pointing the reader to the inevitable contradictions of Clyde's story, contradictions that are shown to be part part of his identity. The narrative abounds in conjunctions such as "but," "and yet," which indicate that Clyde's life story is "many-twisting" and his discourse inevitably contradictory, a product of his position on the margins. By insisting on these contradictions of life as part of reality, Dreiser's *Tragedy* emphasizes that the law is too rigid, too inflexible and conventional to deal with reality, so that the law is inevitably unjust and inadequate, a dinosauric apparatus in comparison to the more flexible workings of the norm.

Like Dreiser's *Tragedy*, Grove's *America* presents a whole series or rather a whole network of trials; although these trials are metaphorical rather than legal, they bring to the surface a truth rather than falsehoods and lies. But in contrast to Dreiser, Grove is concerned not only with the corruption of the legal system but also with the crookedness of the American norm. The grafters, con-men, and criminals in *America*--Frank (77), Heinie the Hook and his companion (127), and Mr. Wilbur (213-16)--are never caught, let alone punished by the official judicial system. Instead, the "innocent" Branden lands in jail twice. By the end of the novel, Branden's charge against the official judicial system culminates in his discovery that the "real" criminals are the "lawyers in town" (390), who ruthlessly exploit immigrants, even operating with the help and support of the judicial institutions. Dreiser's celebration of the norms is replaced in Grove's text by Branden's Nietzschean argument that the "great man" transcends the laws established by society and formulates his own laws: "Legislation is never needed to guide the man with vision" (69). Dreiser's eulogy of the humane norm has been replaced here by a celebration of the self-imposed law that never totally escapes but resists societal control.

In Dreiser's *Tragedy*, Clyde's various confessions (some made in "bad," some in "good faith") inevitably lead to dangerous entanglements, as his confessions become the starting point for various rewritings of his story and for subsequent judgements imposed by various authorities, judgements which never seem right but always serve primarily those who interpret his story. In contrast, Grove's *America* presents us with a series of "happy" confessions, in which the culprit can finally drop the mask and become himself.<sup>16</sup> As Branden faces himself for what he really is, judgement is not so much imposed on him from another authority but is first and foremost a self-judgement. The trial as self-trial transcends the laws of society, which are presented, very much like in Dreiser's work, as ineffective and even unjust.<sup>17</sup>

Branden puts himself on trial by satirically dissecting his own self, by splitting it into young and old, naive and mature, by creating what W. J. Keith has called a "'double-view' effect" ("America" 59), or what Frances Kaye has discussed as Branden's "biformity," his tendency "to propagate opposing points of view" (35, 34). Grove draws attention to what Jacques Lacan has called "the self's radical ex-centricity to itself" (*Écrits* 171) by presenting the narrator's self as always already fragmented and split. In this double-view

<sup>16</sup> *America* is framed in a deliberate confessional mode. All the chapter titles start with the pronoun "I" or "my," and the first paragraph of the novel presents seventeen counts of the first person personal and possessive pronouns. The novel presents a series of confessions, starting with the Branden's father's surprising revelation that he has squandered the family fortune (6-9), followed by the son's confession of his immaturity in the New World (21-22), his involvement in Heinie's con game confessed to the police (125) etc.

<sup>17</sup> In an "Author's Note to the Fourth Edition," the author tells the reader that he chose a pseudonym for his hero, because the explicit dissociation of the author from his creation "gives him at the same time an opportunity to be even more personal" (*America* xviii). The "pseudonym" suggests a confessional, autobiographical mode at the same time that it ironically undercuts this mode.

perspective the first and third person intermix in the narrative with Branden representing "both the personal 'I' and the objective 'young man'" (Keith "America" 59). This double-view perspective also corresponds to Bakhtin's definition of the dialogic principle: "Dialogue may be external (between two different people) or internal (between an earlier and a later self)" (Holquist 427).

This double-view technique is an ironic technique of self-subversion<sup>18</sup> that allows the new "I" to put the old self on trial and to play the role of vicious, critical prosecutor at the same time that both young and old narrator put America on trial, testing the American reality in their odyssey across the country. Branden charges his younger self with being a "presumptuous pub" (4), an "insufferable snob and coxcomb" (3) who speaks in "nonsensical prattle" (4) and indulges in "artificial poses." Within his first year in America, Branden undergoes a transformation from the arrogant pseudo-aristocrat to the tramp, who undertakes a journey "out west" with almost no money in his pocket.

The test Branden undergoes tortures and mutilates his body, so that the narrative takes the form of "*sparagmos* or tearing to pieces," according to Northrop Frye, "the archetypal theme of irony and satire" (*Anatomy* 192). The adventures are painful ones in which the narrator's body is ritually tortured, dissected and crucified. Very soon after starting his tramp, Branden feels a "wild stabbing pain" across his back (229), his foot-joints, hips, and back--"all hurt" (230). It is the body that is the target of ritual torture and mutilation, a torture which is purifying and elevating the soul, a torture that is "Purgatory" (332) rather than ever-lasting Inferno, because it prepares for the

<sup>18</sup> See Linda Hutcheon's *Splitting Images* (100-101), which discusses a similar technique in Margaret Atwood's *Cat's Eye*.

healing and restoring of the body and soul, for a rebirth of self.<sup>19</sup> Clyde Griffiths' torture, in contrast, is mental rather than bodily, a torture that culminates in the mental inferno in the deathhouse of Auburn, a torture that leads to spiritual death rather than rebirth. In the deathhouse Clyde becomes part of a well working machine, his death completely mechanized, his soul ritually destroyed with his body.

As Branden's body is mutilated in the American experiment-- "America...had wounded and hurt me" (209)--Branden himself puts America on trial and tests it by dissecting it intellectually in the mode of satire or *sparagmos*. The first time Branden gets in contact with America's unwritten business norm--graft, practiced successfully by his friend Frank in a Toronto restaurant where Branden starts his career as a modest waiter, Branden claims that "I do not mean to defend him--nor to indict" (83; also 84), but then proceeds to do just that. He turns into a "judge," and "the eye of the law" (79), confronting Frank with "unspoken condemnation" (79). At the same time, Branden admits his own duplicity in playing judge: "Large, bold crime I could have admired" (78), Branden tells the reader, so that it is the "pettiness" of Frank's crime rather than crime itself that offends him. After his adventure with Hannon and Heinie, Branden is driven by the "desire to condemn,"

<sup>19</sup> Before his ultimate "rebirth," he dies metaphorically when he suffers from a virulent attack of pneumonia that nearly kills him. Undergoing a bodily crucifixion with "huge thorns tearing my clothes and lacerating my flesh with their points" (283), he re-enacts "Jesus [who] had been a tramp" (274). Travelling on train rods to the Western hobo-land, the body is crushed and metaphorically destroyed by a true torture machine: "the rods, a mere vibrating mass of whipping cords; our arms, springs now stretched to the snapping point-point, now compressed beyond the power of re-expanding when the roadbed rose and pressed the steel-truck upward.... I saw myself lying on the sleepers, a mangled mass of bloody flesh and crushed bones" (332).

and "to pass sentence on everything" (136), adding a little later: "'Judge not,' said Christ. But, unless I judged, I could not justify myself" (145-46).

While Clyde is tried by the self-proclaimed upholders of the American ideology, Branden puts America itself on trial by satirically dissecting not only its legal system but also the American norm. He targets American graft, greed, and snobbish gullibility with a virulent language designed to cut, deflate, and wound, before the healing process can start. Appropriating the conventions of Petronius' and Rabelais' satires, Branden loads his language with a degrading animal imagery, likening Mr. Tinker, the ruthless encyclopedia salesman, to the preying cat, the hawk and the snake (160) and multi-millionaire Mr. Kirsty to a "monkey" (197). Satirizing America's optimistic belief in progress and civilization, he dismisses these traditional values as a "chronic disease of mankind which now and then breaks out into some such acute insanity as the late war" (218-19).

Adopting another convention of satire, Grove has his narrator wear the mask of misanthropism when he launches a tirade against America's treatment of its immigrants. Instead of thanking his benefactor and saviour, Doctor Goodwin, who is part of the "ideal" America, Branden puts him on trial accusing him in a generic "you" of responsibility for the immigrant's plight in the New World (288). Similarly, Branden's charge against the young farmer millionaire Mackenzie (who lives in a "white house"!) presents the two movements of satire: first, the accusation--"You have taken [the small farmers'] land" (376)--and, secondly, the projection of a utopian order in which the millionaire should "divest" himself of his "property" (379) and thus make possible "real democracy" based on an economy of "a greater number of independent farmers" (380). The closer Branden moves to his evocation of utopia, the more virulent are his satiric accusations against "real" America.

Frequently, he voices these charges in the style of the old biblical invocations, as in his plaidoyer for a better education--"Alas! Our schools!" (302). In order not to be drawn into the powerful "normalizing" machine of American society, Branden deliberately distances himself in a discourse whose very vehemence and virulence makes us question how much he really manages to step outside the norm. According to Michel Foucault, the norm seduces rather than represses, and if anything, Branden's (younger) self is continually tempted to identify with the rule of the norm.

Branden, by the end of the novel, decides to become a teacher and in a big sweep professes to reconcile the former contradictions of his life. From an individual, he claims, he has changed to a social man, who will help the new immigrants of the country to build their partial views into total views. The reconciliation is, once again, a self-conscious usage of a fictional convention--the happy ending of the comedy, but in the context of the narrative it has an ironic twist to it. Branden has shown throughout the narrative that there are no total views, only partial views and in order to survive, the immigrants need to be able to change perspectives, to distance themselves from the self-evident, the norms, the conventions. Branden's overt "reconciliation" with society and his rebirth as a social man is highly ironic, if we consider how he fares with his friend Ivan in the narrative after they are assigned to different work tasks: "It separated my close relation to Ivan; it made me independent of him," he writes and then concludes: "That is the reason why he disappears from this story" (355). In the end, Branden is as alone as he was in the beginning of his *Odyssey*, so that his own narrative undercuts and subverts his clean conventional comedy-romance resolution.

It is Branden's deliberate decision to speak from the margins--as a hobo, as a Canadian, as an immigrant--that creates a distance between

himself and the centre of power of the new society and thus redeems him in the end. Branden also points out that "hoboism" does not become a new absolute in the narrative, as the true hobo defies definition. The hobo moves from place to place, but has also longings to settle down; he has no fixed nationality--the mecca of hobodom is multicultural and polyglot, and yet he has cultural attachments; he has friends and loyalties and yet does not belong to a particular group. Being a hobo (or a self-conscious immigrant, or a Canadian) means living on the margins, on the threshold between integration and disintegration; it means keeping an ironical distance between the ego ideal and the speaking self, between self and the centres of power; it means refusing to merge one's personal voice with a master discourse. Being a hobo, an immigrant, or a Canadian does not become a new absolute in the narrative; they all defy ultimate definitions.

In contrast to Branden's critical distance, Clyde Griffiths is seduced into turning the norm into the all-desirable. But in his desperate attempt to escape the "abnormal" in his life and to claim his place in the "normal," Clyde ironically transgresses against a normative taboo by plotting the murder of Roberta Alden. Clyde, who starts his life on the margins of his society, identifies so completely with the master discourses that he detaches himself from the subversive survival strategies known to those who live on the margins. His mother is the prime example of such a survivor; scorned by society because of her religious zealotry, she repeatedly is shown to act in complete contradiction to her religious convictions. She lies to protect her children and although she maintains a fatalistic "The Lord will provide," she is the one to speak publicly on behalf of her son once he is condemned of murder, as she speaks openly of injustice against the authorities of justice. It



is her discourse from the margin that erupts to disturb the discourses of power in the novel.<sup>20</sup>

In contrast to Grove, Dreiser also shows that the discourse from the margin is often powerless, as Clyde's mother does not manage to help him effectively, and is herself victim of another master discourse, the belief in the omnipotent Lord who "will provide." In many ways, Clyde's and Branden's strategies and goals are diametrically opposed to each other, the first operating in an *alazonic*, the second in an *ironic* mode.<sup>21</sup> Branden's *ironic* technologies of self are based on his putting the old (*alazonic*) self on trial, stripping it of its pretensions, while Clyde starts his way into the world by enlarging, increasing, elevating his self, in fact constructing it through fashionable clothing and stories that rewrite his shabby past. Branden sells his expensive suits and ultimately eulogizes the hobo's overalls, which, like Odysseus' beggar's clothes are an ingenious disguise of the "real" man, as the hobo in overalls is really the "lord of the world." In contrast, Clyde's whole yearning is to wear an ostentatious signifiers of social ease, the nice suits, which are to replace and disguise the shabbiness of his past. Ironically he ends up wearing the ultimate signifiers of degradation, the striped uniform of Auburn penitentiary and the felt slippers in which he shuffles off to the electric chair.

<sup>20</sup> Dreiser also shows that Clyde deliberately rejects the strategies of subversive fight that he recognizes amongst the workers in his uncle's collar factory in Lycurgus, as Clyde (as well as Roberta) reject the women workers' secret knowledges; most women workers know for example how to get an abortion.

<sup>21</sup> Northrop Frye defines the *alazon* as an imposter and self-deceiver who believes to be more than he really is; the *iron*, in contrast, pretends to be less than he is and constitutes an ironic principle that exposes the *alazon's* pretensions (*Anatomy* 172-75; 226-28).

In his life and death Clyde Griffiths becomes not so much a subject but subjected to the cultural codes of American society. The confessional techniques which serve as the "technologies of self" in Grove's work, are presented by Dreiser as techniques that ultimately strip the protagonist off his identity. It is this soul which is sacrificed by an America that seems incapable of dealing with the mixed signals of Clyde Griffiths' identity or "non-identity," as he is himself left without strategies to deal with the contradictions of his position and feelings. Clyde's soul is literally and ritually destroyed as he moves through the American institutions, the last of which is the mental inferno in Auburn. The Auburn death institution feeds his body but subjects his soul to a psychic torture of terror and depression, of renewed hope and repeated confrontation with the deadly process, re-enacted and imprinted on the consciousness of the condemned by a long line of executions that precede his own, deaths which he is forced to witness in "a sudden dimming of the lights" (*Tragedy* 773), as the death voltage is applied to the condemned on the electric chair. Sacrificed by a master discourse that asserts its ultimate authority, the marginalized subject Clyde Griffiths becomes an American scapegoat who is ritually cast out, made to die not just once but multiple deaths, as he witnesses a whole series of executions that precede his own. This ritual casting out of the marginalized scapegoat is a recurring motif in American literature, from the public casting out of the adulterous Hester Prynne by her Puritan community in Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* (1850), to the castration and lynching of the white man who might have "Negro" blood, Joe Christmas, in Faulkner's *Light in August* (1932). In each of these novels, the communal ego affirms itself by casting out the marginal subject who speaks the discourse of the "Other," a discourse that threatens to disrupt the imaginary unity of the communal ego (ideal). Thus the (national) narcissistic ego (ideal) inevitably feeds on its own children.

Clyde is obsessed with the idea of becoming a "somebody" but dies a "nobody." And yet, it is as a "nobody" that he recognizes that the world that condemns him retreats behind legal and other conventions that prevent them from understanding his yearnings, his desires, so that his soul also acts as an accuser against those who convicted him. Looking into Clyde's eyes during the electrocution, the Reverend McMillan faints and later recognizes that he was the last one to pass an absolutist judgement on Clyde.<sup>22</sup> After his death, Clyde's identity has been reduced to nothing, and even for his mother, there remains only the memory of a ghost that she dares not even name: "For *his* sake" (814) she says with a vacant look on her face when she hands her grandchild money for icecream. These small instances of *anagnorisis* in the face of the mental suffering that preceded give Clyde's tragedy a strong twist into irony.

In contrast, Grove's "America" is "always already" split, indeed fragmented into numerous pieces. "America" is an idealized construct, against which reality can be measured, but even the ideal turns out to be nothing absolute. "America" forms the "soil" in which the confessional immigrant-narrator deploys his "technologies of self," and becomes a new person with a new sense of self. And there is a "real" America which becomes the subject of the narrator's intellectual and ironic "anatomy" whereby US-America is linked to a set of clearly defined negatives, against which "Canadian" is set up as the unspoken, undefined opposite, and thus as a shifty, fluid, non-essential entity. Becoming a Canadian means adopting deliberately a perspective on the margins of America, a position that empowers Phil Branden's resistance.

<sup>22</sup> For a discussion of the complexity of McMillan's involvement in passing judgement on Clyde, see Hans Itschert's "The Reverend Duncan McMillan."

Grove's Branden suffers in body and dies metaphorically to be reborn in an identity that seems deliberately contradictory and "not American" and that the narrator in the end labels "Canadian." Clyde Griffiths, however, dies because America is incapable of deciphering or recognizing as its own a soul that speaks consistently contradictory borderline discourses, who fits and falls out of every norm, whose identity and language are vague and shifty. The American tragedy is that it calls for positive identifications and sacrifices Clyde who answers precisely to that call.



## Chapter 6

### POWER AND THE LIMITS OF DISCURSIVE RESISTANCE

#### A. "I'll Be My Own Master": *Maurermeister Ihles Haus* and *Our Daily Bread*

"Basically, Master Mason Ihle despised everything that was female" (99), is how Grove describes the German patriarch in *Maurermeister Ihles Haus* (1906), and if Richard Ihle is Grove's most blatantly misogynistic character, he is also "the prototype for Grove's fathers" (Blodgett *Configuration* 134). Focusing on the marginalized female characters in Grove's fiction, E.D. Blodgett has argued that Grove's patriarchs--Abe Spalding, Niels Lindstedt, Ralph Patterson, and John Elliot--are immobilized and somewhat static in their epic greatness and that it is the women in Grove's German and Canadian fiction who are not only capable of change but who also challenge the frozen systems of order set up by the men: "where the males always seem to be who they are--unchanging, hopelessly teleological--it is the females who must act" (126). Using Blodgett's gender approach as a springboard, I will show how in Grove's fiction, female action entails discursive struggle and resistance, thus illustrating Michel Foucault's point that discourse is inseparably intertwined with relationships of power (*History* 101).

With the narrative point of view focused on Susie Ihle--the rebelling daughter in late nineteenth-century imperial Germany, *Maurermeister* is concerned with "the emancipation of women or at least with their struggle against male tyranny" (Riley/Spettigue 7). Likewise, Grove's Canadian prairie novel *Our Daily Bread* (1928) traces the young generation's rebellion against the father, pioneer-farmer John Elliot, whereby the daughter's

questioning of the patriarchal authority is encoded more often in silence than in speech. While in both novels, the sons and daughters ultimately escape the patriarch's tyranny by leaving his house, the novels' thematic emphasis on generational and domestic conflicts is interwoven with a feminist subtext, namely, the women's search for new discourses that can effect significant change within the family's network of relations. Grove's women oppose, and poke holes into, what Mikhail Bakhtin has called "the word of the father," which most of them encounter "with authority already fused to it" (*Dialogic Imagination* 342).

While both novels emphasize that the daughter must dethrone the word of the father in order to resist its assimilation, they also point to the limits of discursive resistance. Questioning not only patriarchal but also matriarchal power structures, *Maurermeister* and *Our Daily Bread* address the question of female complicity that perpetuates the subjugation of women in both the German and the Canadian households. Thus in both novels, the women's struggle to subvert the "symbolic order" of the patriarch's house does not occur in a linear fashion but is full of reversals, illustrating Michel Foucault's point on the polyvalence of discourse: "We must make allowances for the complex and unstable process whereby discourse can be both an instrument and an effect of power, but also a hindrance, a stumbling block, a point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy" (*History* 100-101). Drawing attention to the shiftiness and flexibility of discourse, the German and the Canadian novel alike emphasize that the daughter's struggle against patriarchy is often a strategic game that involves a cautious maneuvering between slippery discourses. While such maneuvers allow her to defy the father's word, it is only rarely, if ever, that the daughter manages to change the patriarchal rule of the house.

The juxtaposition of the Canadian and the German novels seems especially appropriate since Grove's interest in engendered discursive rebellion is deeply rooted in his European past—in the time before his spectacular "suicide" in Germany and his "rebirth" as a Canadian writer. Both the intellectual climate and the inspiration of his "wife" Elsa (Ploetz) Endell had a strong impact on the young novelist Felix Paul Greve, and inevitably left their traces in his fiction. Elsa's father was a master mason whom she describes in her autobiography as "alternately violent-tempered and tearfully sentimental" ("Of Greve" 276), a description that closely matches Susie's father. Like *Maurermeister*, Elsa's autobiography describes "her mother's mental illness and death, her father's decision to remarry, her hatred for her stepmother and her own decision, at age eighteen, to leave home" (Hjartarson 275-76). Also, in her personal writing in the mid-twenties, Elsa alludes to her problematic relationship with her father and her struggle against her father's language,<sup>1</sup> a conflict that is conceptualized in similar terms in Grove's fiction.

While Elsa's experience appears to have provided the raw material for *Maurermeister*, Grove's shaping of his material was also influenced by the turn-of-the-century philosophical interest in language crisis (*Sprachkrise*) associated with Friedrich Nietzsche, for example, whose work Grove knew

<sup>1</sup> Shortly before her death in 1927, Elsa suggested in her personal writing that her conflict with her father (and her father's language) was never resolved: "I left my father's house, protection, money, now I am in his house back again, trodden on, jeered at ... it is my father's clutch!" ("Letters" 20). Equating the German language with "the father's" discourse, she even felt "nauseated at German sound" and longed to express herself in English--the language in which she wrote her autobiography ("Letters" 20).



well.<sup>2</sup> In the *Gay Science*--a book "of the greatest importance," according to Grove (*Myself* 166)--Nietzsche has a section entitled "Of the sound of the German language" (160-62) in which he criticizes "the militarization of the German language," a German that has turned into "Offiziersdeutsch": "welches wütende Autoritätsgefühl, welche höhnische Kälte klingt aus diesem Gebrüll heraus" (104), Nietzsche writes, "what raging sense of authority, what scornful coldness speak out of this roaring" (161). Nietzsche's critique applies to *Maurermeister* in that "wütendes Autoritätsgefühl" is precisely what characterizes the language of the family tyrant, master mason Richard Ihle, whose character is attached to the word "Wut" (rage, wrath, ire) like an epithet (e.g. 45-46; 48-49 in translation). Ihle speaks a form of *Offiziersdeutsch*, the very discourse that Nietzsche rejects as distasteful ("geschmackswidrig"). Not only is Ihle's language stripped of all music--it is pure command. Such an authoritarian language inevitably stirs up disgust ("Widerwillen"), at the same time that it provokes resistance ("Widerstand"),<sup>3</sup> not only in the language philosopher Nietzsche who makes it the target of a vicious satire, but also in Grove. He ridicules Ihle's inflexible discourse of authority through Ihle's wife and his daughters who oppose it, at the same time that they are victimized by it.

In *Maurermeister*, it is above all Susie Ihle who is linked to resistance and subversiveness. In the first paragraph, the reader sees her as an eleven-

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Grove's homage to Nietzsche in his collection of poems, *Wanderungen* (51-53), or his tribute to Nietzsche in *In Search of Myself* (166-67). "Grove did not create Nietzschean characters, but his protagonists frequently engage in philosophical questions about their existence which resemble Nietzschean inquiries" (13), writes Axel Knönagel in his study of Nietzschean philosophy in Grove's writing. Knönagel, though, does not even touch on the issue of *Sprachkrise*, in which Nietzsche's philosophy and Grove's fiction deeply intersect.

<sup>3</sup> *Gegenwider* = against, contrary to, in opposition to.

year-old leaping over ropes and chains in her little Baltic home town at the sea coast, ready to set into motion whatever is static: "The hazy stillness on the water ... demanded almost to be shattered" (13).<sup>4</sup> As Susie and her friend stalk two bourgeois lovers and call them names, it is significantly by manipulating language that the two girls disrupt the conventions and the order of the little Baltic sea town: Susie takes delight in word plays and punning, in parodically imitating the school headmaster's Saxon dialect (*Master Mason* 37), and, above all, in offending bourgeois respectability with sexual equivocation.<sup>5</sup> Even in the first chapter, Susie enjoys creating her own linguistic carnival in which she becomes linked to subversive laughter ("Lachen") and giggling ("Kichern") (14-15; in the German text 11-12).

Susie's exuberant play with signifiers--her pleasure with words, puns, and name-calling--is, to apply Julia Kristeva's terminology, a "maniacal eroticization of speech," as if she were "gulping it down, sucking on it" ("Microcosm" 42). According to Kristeva, such a "non-communicative, exhibitionistic sense of speech [and] play with signifiers" is typical for a "borderlander," a person who lacks a sense of home and of boundaries ("Microcosm" 42). Living in her father's house but destined to leave it for somebody else's house, Susie is indeed such a threshold person who finds herself "betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law," as Lynda Boose des-

<sup>4</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, the English quotations are from Paul Gubbins' translation of the work. The page references for quotations in German refer to the original German work.

<sup>5</sup> Hidden behind shrubbery Susie and her friend Betty shout to the lovers: "Ihr sollt euch vermääählen" (12), "You ought to get ma-a-a-ried" (16), and later, getting carried away by their prank, they give their earlier sentence a sexual twist: "Ihr sollt euch vermehren!!" (13), "Ought to reproduce" (17). Unfortunately the joke is somewhat lost in the English translation, as the words "vermählen" and "vermehren" rhyme in German but not in the translation. Susie and Betty also play on Karl Schade's name, calling him "Kahl" (= bald) Schade (11).

cries the precarious position of the daughter figure in a patriarchal family (67). But just as the daughter's liminal status endows her with "the special power of the weak" (Boose 67), so Susie's favourite linguistic strategy of subversion is the principle of negativity, even lying: "All we have to do is keep saying no" (18), she tells her girlfriend, when their pranks become uncovered. When accused of calling names, "Susie collected herself quickly: "That's a dirty lie,' she said, loudly and indignantly" (19). Here, the manipulation of language is a strategy that is directed against another woman, as it is often used as a weapon against her girlfriends, at the same time that it serves as a strategy to deal with a tyrannical patriarchal power at home.

An expert manipulator of signifiers outside the house Susie is, however, often silenced when she enters the literal house and rebels openly against her father: "If you don't shut your trap this instant,' Mr. Ihle flew at her with menace in his voice, 'I'll give you what for'" (102). According to Foucault, "silence and secrecy are a shelter for power, anchoring its prohibitions" (*History* 101), but, since the same discourse can be both a strategy of power and a strategy of resistance, silence can also encode an oppositional strategy. The women in Ihle's house often fight back by surrounding Ihle with silence. Occasionally leaving the house to escape the patriarch's wrath, they isolate Ihle within the house (e.g. 50), forcing him to search for companionship elsewhere.

"Father/daughter stories are full of literal houses, castles, or gardens in which fathers ... lock up their daughters," writes Boose (33). Most of *Maurermeister* is set in the house that gives the work its title, but for Susie the house is more than a simple dungeon. Showing the house, the yard and her father's shop to her friend Hedwig Ribau, eleven-year-old Susie Ihle ends up

sitting in the new family carriage, in intimate closeness with her friend: "Hier fühlte man sich geheimnisvoll in Sicherheit. Es war ein Haus im Hause" (66), "They felt secretive and secure. It was a house within a house" (68). On the surface, these sentences evoke the archetypal function of the house-image as a shelter, a facet that John Elliot in *Our Daily Bread* also connotes with his house, when he invites his daughters who are troubled in their marriages back to the security of their parental home.

But this sense of the security of the house is instantly subverted. The German phrase "geheimnisvoll in Sicherheit" is more telling than the English translation, in that "geheimnisvoll" not only contains the word "heim" (= home) but as a whole word also means the opposite of home, as it denotes secretiveness, at the same time that it is related to "unheimlich," the uncanny. "Geheimnisvoll" as a premodifier for "Sicherheit" is an odd collocation in German verging on the oxymoronic, as it appears deliberately to undermine the sense of "Sicherheit" in the rest of the house. The phrase suggests the presence of a potential intruder and disturber of peace who is not somebody outside the house, but somebody *in* the larger house itself, namely, the father figure.

The novel describes several scenes where the father intrudes suddenly and violently into her space, where he makes entrances that are like assaults on her body. Just as Elliot's daughter Gladys confesses as an adult woman, "I am afraid of him [her father], ... 'Just as mother was" (285),<sup>6</sup> so the scene in which Susie is "geheimnisvoll in Sicherheit" is preceded, significantly, by a

<sup>6</sup> In *Our Daily Bread*, Grove gives the motif of the tyrannical, wrathful father an interesting twist, since it is only very late in the novel that Elliot's wrath surfaces. In the beginning of the novel, he is introduced to the reader as "a thinker, [who] had lived a life of introspection, dreams, and ideas" (5). It is in the middle of the novel that we witness the first explosive, hateful attack on his son Arthur who refuses to become a farmer (176).

chapter that describes Master Ihle's violent entrance into the house that forces Susie and her sister to hide in the wardrobe to escape the father's wrath. Although to the reader Ihle appears very much like the comic stock figure of the ridiculously wrathful tyrant (Blodgett *Configuration* 134), for his wife and the children, the threat is real enough: "What should I do?," Mrs. Ihle asks, "When I say anything he just hits me" (49).

It is the adverb "unheimlich" (uncanny) that Grove uses when the father enters the house to indicate that, then, the "heimisch" quality becomes negated. Given this textual play on the absence of "Heim" and the novel's title with its emphasis on the house, the novel underscores the separation between "Haus" and "Heim," a distinction that Martin Heidegger emphasizes some decades later when he asks rhetorically: "do the houses in themselves hold the guarantee that *dwelling* occurs in them?" ("Building" 324). For Heidegger, "dwelling" ("wohnen") means to live in peace, to be at home, a sense that Susie only experiences in the house "within the house," where she discovers her own home, that is her body and her language in the intimacy with her girl-friend whose language Susie admires and mimics.

Susie's voice of *Widerstand*, of resistance and protest, is also developed in dialogue with her mother, but this language of *Widerstand* is paradoxically *not* directed against the father whose tyrannies she resents but against her mother, whom Susie accuses of being impotent, of not being able to protect herself or her children: "You are just as frightened of him as we are" (49), she tells her mother accusingly. Unlike Mrs. Elliot, who is set up as a strong matriarch in *Our Daily Bread*, Mrs. Ihle retreats into a language of romanticism and goes to her children for protection, occasionally sleeping in her daughter's room, to avoid being sexually assaulted by her intoxicated husband. (Grove explores this motif of rape in marriage in more explicit

detail in his Canadian work *Settlers of the Marsh*). While Susie rebels openly against her mother, she oscillates discursively between silence and eulogy in relation to her father. We are reminded here of what Luce Irigaray (*Speculum* 37-39), Jane Gallop (*Seduction*), and Christine Froula have criticized as the daughter's (or the father's) seduction. To quote Irigaray: "the only redemption of her value as a girl would be to seduce the father, to draw from him the mark if not the admission of some interest" (quoted in Gallop *Seduction* 70).

In the first part of the three-part novel, Grove provides a socio-psychological explanation for this phenomenon. The school—even a school for "höhere Töchter" with exclusively female teachers—lays the emotional seed for the daughter's identification not with a mother but with a patriarchal father figure by giving birth to children's patriotism and arousing the children's "first 'great feelings'" (90). This explains the traumatic emotional reaction to the *Kaiser's* death in the fourteen-year old Susie in 1888:

This event, the death of the old Emperor, was the first, and it remained the only experience of Susie's entire youth that caused her real and protracted grief. Even when later her mother was suddenly taken from them and died, she did not suffer so immediately and so selflessly as now in the case of this death, which in no way affected her directly. (88-89)

In Susie's young life, the old Kaiser, in contrast to her father, is the stereotyped image of a kindly old man with a white beard who loves flowers above all. This image of the Kaiser, complementing that of her wrathful, erratic, younger, self-made father works together to constitute the image of the ideal father in her mind, an image that conjures up strength and power and that partly displaces the mother as a figure of positive identification.

And yet, trying to please the father, the adult Susie at the same time tries to separate from the father, to get out of the father's house and to

escape the story he has created about her. After her mother's death and Ihle's remarriage, the eighteen-year-old Susie "felt less than ever before that her father's house was her house" (221), a situation that leads to the eventual confrontation between father and daughter. As Lynda Boose puts it: "The daughter's struggle with her father is one of separation, not displacement. Its psychological dynamics thus locate the conflict inside [the] inner family space" (33). Boose reminds us that it is the intrusion of a male rival that usually produces the dynamics in the father/daughter text: the "male-female-male syntax is the crucial construction necessary to make father-daughter texts dynamic" (32-33). In contrast, separation is not the crucial feature in father/son texts: "In the archetypal father-son structure, the son's departure is authorized inside a circular pattern that predicts both his inevitable return and the concurrent threat of displacement/usurpation that he will pose" (32). The son eventually returns to take the father's place.

*Our Daily Bread* (1928) begins at such a point of separation; it starts where *Maurermeister* ends, namely, with the children's marriage and departure. As in *Maurermeister*, the generational conflicts in *Our Daily Bread* intersect with the language issue, but are contextualized in different terms. On the surface, the generational conflict opposes Elliot's austere, saving, luxury despising life to his children's love of pleasure, luxury and the desire for quick money. Discussing his novel *Two Generations* (1939) in *In Search of Myself* (1946), Grove writes that his task had been to portray "the transition, in Ontario, from pioneer conditions to an urbanized rural life which brought about a conflict between fathers and sons" (440), an interpretation that has obviously influenced the readers of *Our Daily Bread*. Margaret Stobie, for example, describes John Elliot as "an anachronism in the commercial world": "Grove seems to be saying that the family belongs to the

agricultural phase of human existence, [and] that it cannot survive in the commercial world" (107).<sup>7</sup>

Thus, the geographical movement of the children who leave the house to find better living conditions elsewhere is interpreted by Elliot (and most readers) as their choosing different paths in their lives and their refusal to follow the old (agricultural) tradition. The novel is in fact preceded by the biblical epigraph: "And his sons walked not in his way" (iii, 1 Samuel, 8, 3). Nevertheless, Elliot (and most critics) ignore the fact that, as in *Maurermeister* the rebelling daughter is constantly in danger of being seduced (or co-opted) by the patriarchal power she rebels against, so Elliot's children are drawn into, and in many ways repeat, Elliot's fatal ways, even by attempting to create new and different lives for themselves. Almost every single son and daughter fails economically *not* because they refuse to follow Elliot's dream but because they share his obsession of claiming some territory of their own, of establishing their own "houses" of power and proclaiming themselves masters.<sup>8</sup> As Elliot makes a financial success of his land but lets it eat up his soul and destroy his emotional life, so his children opt for the pleasures of life, but become slaves to the land through the burden of debt it imposes.

<sup>7</sup> Similarly, in the words of Douglas Spettigue, *Our Daily Bread* is "the most concentrated of the novels of the decline from the agrarian mode" (132). Comparing *Our Daily Bread* with Quebec writer Ringuet's agricultural novel *Trente Arpents* (1938), Ronald Sutherland maintains that both novels introduce "the beginning of the dissolution of the old order" (6), a dissolution that is symbolized by the fact that "[n]ot one of their many children adopts the values of the father" (9).

<sup>8</sup> Elliot complains that his children don't follow his tradition but the fact remains that five of his children and their husbands and wives turn to farming to make a living (Gladys, Henrietta, Isabel, John and Norman).



But the father's influence goes even further, since the children adopt the "father's" language. Throughout the novel, Elliot is described as having a very deterministic perspective, which has little to do with the tragic inevitability that some readers see as the key to the novel (e.g. *Pacey Grove* 52). At the beginning of the novel, Elliot feels that he is being "rushed along an unknown path" (9) and in another scene, after letting his violent anger take over against his son Arthur, Elliot realizes that "he had acted under a compulsion stronger than his will" (188). Throughout the novel, Elliot absolves himself from responsibility by having recourse to a deterministic language, a discourse that is significantly repeated by his children.<sup>9</sup> Grove critiques Elliot's deterministic pessimism and emotional crustiness by presenting his growing premature senility as a metaphor for spiritual death, for a death-in-life stasis. With his white hair and beard, Elliot's old age comes to allegorize a state of mental petrification (242): "What is the use of talking?" (235), Elliot asks wearily and decides no longer to "correct" his children because they were "beyond correction" (134). And to a certain extent they are, *not* because they have gone their own ways but because they have started to adopt their father's petrified discourse: "What's the use?" is a sentence that is repeated verbatim by his sons John (241) and Norman (368) and by his son-in-law Pete (337) who, like Elliot himself, longs for death.

Early in the novel, when Elliot reflects on the characters of his children, he anticipates already the inevitable generational conflict with his children, as each child has traits of its father but also of its mother. But in all his children he also recognizes "a third thing" (12), their individuality, which

<sup>9</sup> Thinking about her sister Gladys's life, Elliot's daughter Henrietta follows the following train of thought: "Life was leading her [Gladys] along a path which she had not chosen except for the fact that she had once upon a time chosen a man, Frank Bramley, the druggist" (48-49).

he sees as "mysterious" and "incomprehensible." It is this "third thing" that explodes the binary division of paternal and maternal influence and that makes Elliot suspicious of his children. Almost like a Hawthornian villain, he hopes to read this mysterious force in order to manipulate and change it to make it serve the teleology of his life, his territorial dream of claiming as many pieces of land from the wilderness as possible. The children's only strategy of resistance is to hide this "third thing" in their relation with Elliot with the result that most of them remain strangers to Elliot. When his youngest son Arthur dies in the War in 1918, "[i]t affected his father strongly. Not that he mourned greatly; he had hardly known the boy; but the first of his children had died!" (241-42).

If Elliot's life story is tragic, it is not because "man's dream of building something permanent on the earth" is "doomed," as Pacey puts it (*Grove* 51), but because Elliot's original dream of serving "essential life" becomes corrupted and perverted through the very tool he chooses to realize this originally positive dream. The following quotation presents Elliot's reflections in free indirect discourse:

Empires rose and fell: kings and high priests strove with each other: wars were fought: ripples on the sea of life. Underneath, deep down, that life itself went on as it had gone on in Abraham's time: the land was tilled to grow our daily bread. And this life, the life of the vast majority of men on earth, was the essential life of all mankind. The city with its multifarious activities was nothing but a bubble on that sea. (190)

Although in this discourse, "empires" belong to the unessentials, in Elliot's life, it is the patriarchal dream of propagating his name and his territorial empire that has taken over his life and created the teleological quality of his life's course. The ultimate ideal of providing "our daily bread" is a beautiful

metaphor for the struggle of creation and growth itself. But in Elliot's and his family's lives, this metaphor has become frozen and petrified to the point where it has not only lost its metaphoric meaning but has become reduced to its literal meaning. Excusing her husband's insufficiencies, Gladys argues that her husband had always provided her and her children with their daily bread, a phrase that is highly ironic, as her husband has done just that. This literal provision of the daily bread parodically exposes the sterility of her and Elliot's lives, as the infinite play with signifiers that characterizes language has become reduced to one single, stable, literal meaning, an indicator that their lives have become devoid of any creative potential or spiritual growth.

On the surface, the mothers in *Our Daily Bread* and *Maurermeister* appear almost diametrically opposed to each other in their status and power. While Mrs. Ihle mostly submits to her husband's whims like an intimidated child, Mrs. Elliot, in contrast, is set up as the archetypal, powerful matriarch, with much of the narrative suggesting that she is the one who quietly dominates in the Elliot household. The novel starts out with a vignette on the matriarch's elaborate preparations to go to town: "Mrs. Elliot sat enthroned while Cathleen combed her hair, Isabel buttoned her shoes, and Henrietta laid out her dark-grey silks" (15). Meanwhile, John Elliot, who admires his wife's "quiet majesty" (264), adopts the guise of the queen's humble servant and gets the carriage ready. John Elliot and his eldest son John recognize that she, not Elliot, is the one with the power to hold the family together, and as if to prove them right, the family indeed disintegrates shortly after Martha's death.

And yet, this novel does not celebrate the power of matriarchy, but critically draws attention to the fact that Martha Elliot's power is not in ultimate contradiction with its apparent opposite, namely, patriarchy.

Martha's matriarchal powers complement Elliot's patriarchal domination in the family as they are appropriated by (and ultimately serve) John Elliot's territorial dream. Any idealization of matriarchy is undercut from the beginning of the novel, where the narrator speaks of the "worried harshness of her words" (21) toward her children, indicating that the problems of everyday life erupt into what Elliot would like to perceive as an idyllic mother-child relationship. Also, as Martha is ready to help her daughters in need, so she herself can only walk by leaning heavily on her daughters' arms, which suggests that the symbiotic mother-baby relationship is extended, albeit in a reversed form, into adult life. For her adult children, Martha never becomes Martha the individual, she always remains the archetypal Mother, an indicator that the relationships have stopped growing and become petrified.

And yet, it is Martha who repeatedly disrupts the discourse of determinism that is so characteristic of Elliot and his children, as she does, for example, when her daughter Cathleen announces the visit of Woodrow Ormond, who later becomes Cathleen's husband. In Cathleen's as well as the narrator's discourse, this union with Woodrow comes about without Cathleen's active volition: "Without taking thought of what might be implied in her words, she had issued half an invitation to him" (15). Confronting Cathleen with the fact that she has to take responsibility for her own desires-- a responsibility of which Cathleen would like to absolve herself, Mrs. Elliot asks: "[W]hy does that man come?" and "Do you like him?" (21). The conversation between mother and daughter, however, is interrupted and never continued, suggesting that the mother's discourse is not effective in disrupting the cloud of determinism that Cathleen has wrapped around herself like the rest of the (less educated) Elliot children. In her marriage, Cathleen

becomes an appendage of her successful husband; she gives up teaching for empty social functions and claims that she leads this life because of her husband, so that even the most educated of the Elliot children absolves herself of responsibility for her life's course.

Despite the differences between the two women, Martha Elliot and Bertha Ihle develop very similar resisting strategies toward the end of their lives: both women become what the German text describes as "wunderlich" (95), peculiar or odd, terms that encode the women's disruption of "normalcy."<sup>10</sup> In both cases the women react against the patriarchal structures of their households by deliberately excluding their husbands and children from their lives. Slamming doors and making loud scenes with her husband, Mrs. Ihle openly rebels against her husband's oppression by appropriating his own tyrannical strategies, while Mrs. Elliot--Bartleby-like--quietly refuses any further intimacies and contacts with her husband. By pretending to be "normal," Bertha Ihle tricks her husband into going to Bad Ems for six weeks to cure his sore throat, and then indulges in a carnivalesque buying spree while the bills for all "extravagances" welcome Mr. Ihle several days after his return home. He can do nothing but pay them. Similarly, Martha Elliot's disruptive behaviour culminates in her spectacular dancing adventure. Partially recovered from cancer surgery, she drives to a town-dance and insists on dancing with every male present, while her family at home in vain searches for the mother. "For once in my life I have had a good time!" (131), she triumphantly tells her shocked husband upon her return home.

<sup>10</sup> John Elliot summarizes his reaction to his wife's changed behaviour by formulating only one word, "which came from his lips with the peculiar quality of a bursting bubble. 'Odd!' he said, 'Odd!'" (117).

Nevertheless, just as any "carnavalesque" freedom is temporary, so a simple disruption of normalcy does not bring about genuine change. Grove's texts illustrate Michel Foucault's point that a simple reversal of the power relation does not lead to ultimate liberation but often perpetuates the structure of a power relation that can easily be reversed again: the nature of the power play itself does not change.<sup>11</sup> After what is interpreted as an aborted suicide attempt by her family and by her doctor, Mrs. Ihle is taken to a mental institution, where she dies, leaving her daughters very vulnerable in the same patriarchal family structure.

Equally incapable of communicating her resistance in an effective language, Mrs. Elliot leaves a very problematic legacy to her children; her rebelling words are related many years later through Gladys, the only witness of her mother's last days of life.

'Oh, she [Martha] cried, I don't even know any longer whether there's a God or not. If there is, I don't care. Come here, listen. I want to whisper to you. You may think I've had so many children because I was fond of them. No! They just came. Because I lived an evil life with your father. Look at me!--And she suddenly bared her body: a terrible sight! (133)

On the surface, this expression of an almost existential despair and her bitter self-condemnation as "the harlot of Babylon" (133) may be seen as a result of sexual repressions that inevitably links sex with guilt, an interpretation adopted by most critics. However, the sense of sin followed by an almost Dantean sense of retributive punishment--Martha's awareness of her destruction by abdominal cancer--is rooted in a much deeper psychological and moral feeling of guilt than her sexual language can express.

<sup>11</sup> See Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality* 92-96 and "The Ethic of Care for the Self" 11-12.

Martha's sexual language of self-condemnation is the closest she comes to expressing a mother's feeling of guilt for having borne ten children not for her own (or for the children's) sake but solely as products of Elliot's territorial dream. She realizes that through the trap of her sexuality, she has become a complicitous agent of Elliot's territorial dream and thus has sinned against her children before they were even born. In the end, she admits to herself (and to her oldest daughter Gladys) that she is close to her first born only, but that all the other children remained "strangers" in her life (88). Earlier in the novel, Martha Elliot is shocked, when her daughter Mary refuses to have any more children telling Martha that there are "ways and means" to prevent unwanted pregnancies. But Martha does not manage to find a solidarity with her daughter and formulate her newly found wisdom and her condemnation of Elliot's dream in an effective, resisting language. She rebels against Elliot by refusing to have him near her in the last months of her life, but is incapable of telling him what she accuses him of.

Unlike Bertha Ihle, who is quietly sent off to an asylum and thus effectively silenced, Martha deliberately chooses silence as her strategy: having no effective language to communicate her newly found awareness, Martha refuses to speak to most of her children. The brief legacies she communicates before her death are ambiguous and, oscillating between two extremely different discourses, they achieve the opposite of what they set out to do. As Martha can only communicate her guilt to Gladys in incoherent fragments, Gladys escapes in horror from her mother's confession by becoming even more firmly submerged in the conformity of her rotten marriage with Frank (134). Then falling back to the coherence of her "old" language with two of her other children, Martha perpetuates the patriarchal pattern even in her legacy to her children. She attempts to warn John and

Isabel not to lock themselves into the prison house of doomed marriages. But she does so by telling her oldest son John that his future wife Lillian is no "farmer's wife" (108), as she tells Isabel that her chosen partner lacks the proper "descent" (107), a discourse that is ineffective as a true warning, as it draws exclusively on the old, inauthentic vocabulary, a vocabulary that evokes marriage exclusively in terms of a "good household" and ultimately benefits patriarchy.<sup>12</sup> This warning ironically causes John and Isabel, once married, to stick it out in their rotten marriages in order forever to prove to their mother that they have made the right decision.

This motif of the mother's complicity in the perpetuation of patriarchy is also problematized in *Maurermeister*, where Mrs. Ihle tells her daughters the story of their grandmother: "The old woman, though; she made your grandfather's life such hell that once, when he was drunk, he tried to beat the old woman to death with an axe" (44). Not only has Bertha Ihle swallowed her husband's version of his mother as "a devil incarnate" (47), but Mrs. Ihle's story of her husband's origins presents the wife as the scapegoat who is responsible not only for the troubles in the marriage but also for her husband's violence. A victim of her husband's assaults, Bertha Ihle discloses in her discourse that she has deeply internalized her victimizer's rationalization, namely, that it is the woman who is responsible when she is assaulted by her husband.

<sup>12</sup> In *The Use of Pleasure* (1986), Michel Foucault analyzes the Greek patriarchal notion of the household (*oikos*) in Xenophon's *Oeconomicus* and stresses the dissymmetry of the relationship between husband and wife (156). For the male, marriage implied "being the head of a family, having authority, exercising a power whose focus of application was in the 'home'" (151). Although the wife is a key figure in the management of the *oikos* (154), it is the husband who governs and guides the wife, as she becomes the "*synergos* he needs for the reasonable practice of economy" (155).



In both novels the daughters rebel against the mother's complicity as they rebel against patriarchy itself, and yet the mother's complicity already anticipates the containment of the next generation's opposition. Just as Susie Ihle deliberately refuses to follow her sister's example of feminine conformity by becoming a "German housewife," so most of Martha Elliot's daughters attempt to resist the notion of a patriarchal marriage. The androgynous Henrietta negotiates a contract so that she will at least keep her financial independence in her marriage, but her language of patriarchal resistance inevitably slips into the discourse of the market place, as Pete can only have her "provided [he] can pay the price" (62). Once married, their relationship turns into a continual power struggle in which Henrietta eventually asserts herself as a tyrannical "master of the house" and thus as the double of her father. Cathleen speaks the language of "a new ideal of manhood" (45), but only to subject her own discourse to this new master's discourse. Isabel, like her namesake Isabel Archer, adopts a discourse of romantic love, selflessly giving her "virgin love" to redeem her husband-to-be whom everyone else despises (41), only to find out that there is no redemption in marriage.

Margaret presents the most challenging alternative. Refusing to get married so as not to be subjugated by any man, she speaks in a deliberately patriarchal language. "I'll be my own master" (110), she tells her brother-in-law, when he suggests that a woman's destiny is inevitably marriage and motherhood. Her usage of the term "master" subverts the very idea of mastery, since she refuses to be tied in any master/slave relationship. Appropriating a masculine language to resist the patriarchal notion of a woman's destiny, Margaret manages to walk a very fine line between parodic imitation of, and co-optation by, the patriarchal language.

In a sense, this is the strategy Susie attempts to use in her struggle for independence, and yet, Susie's language oscillates between Henrietta's master discourse and Margaret's parodic imitation of it. Toward the end of *Maurermeister*, Susie's rebellion against her father becomes more and more open and defiant, but at the same time her own private language of resistance also becomes more "masculine," drawing very strongly on terms that feminist critic Hélène Cixous<sup>13</sup> has identified as belonging to the masculine "economy of the proper": "Sie [Susie] wollte ein eigenes Haus haben: niemanden über sich: ihr eigener Herr sein: wer sie beherrschen wollte, der musste ihr imponieren" (243).<sup>14</sup> The language used in this quotation is the discourse of mastering and being mastered, a discourse of ruling and commanding respect, a discourse of appropriation and property, and a discourse that lacks the parodic twist that Margaret's language has. Here we might ask with Hélène Cixous:

If the position of mastery culturally  
comes back to men, what will become of  
(our) femininity when we find ourselves  
in this position?  
When we use a master discourse? (Sorties 136)

<sup>13</sup> Influenced by Jacques Derrida, Cixous distinguishes between the feminine economy of the gift and the masculine economy of the proper (*New French Feminisms* 259).

<sup>14</sup> I am quoting here in the original German because the English translation transforms Susie's obviously masculine discourse in German into feminine terms in English. In the following quotation I italicize the most problematic words: "She wanted to have her own *home* ["Haus" evokes a property = house]; nobody over her: to be her own *mistress* [German "Herr" is masculine and is linked to the verb "herrschen" = to rule over]. Whoever wanted to *give her orders* ["beherrschen" not only has the masculine "herr" in it but literally translated means "to rule over"] must *impress* her ["impress" corresponds to the German "beindrucken" which Grove deliberately does not use in the German text; "imponieren" linked to Latin "impono" is a much stronger term and has even a touch of intimidation to it]" (238).

As Susie adopts the language of patriarchy without any apparent distance to this language, she is in danger of replicating patriarchy, of accepting the master/slave power structure of her parental home and thus in danger of turning into a Henrietta-like character. She is tempted to marry Consul Blume because his title would give her the powerful status of "Frau Konsul," and the only reason that keeps her from making the ultimate decision is that the Consul lacks the one thing that would make him a perfect husband (in her eyes): he lacks masculine aggression, or in other words, he refuses to be (like) her father.

The fact that Susie decides to marry the Consul in the end suggests to most readers the end of resistance and the acceptance of a very unsatisfying reality principle. But the novel allows a more optimistic (and a more resisting) reading, as well, a reading that emphasizes Susie's growth. It is on her very last confrontation with her father, that Susie actually discovers the first traces of a new feminine voice of resistance, a language that is rooted in her childhood experience. Just as Julia Kristeva stresses the importance of negativity and disruption in relation to the masculine "symbolic order" as the most effective strategy of feminine resistance, so almost all of Susie's sentences in her last fight with her father are negations, a language that resists and exposes her father's hollow truths by simply negating his assertions. Asked to obey her new stepmother, Susie quietly responds by saying: "'That's not my mother'" (240), adding, "'My Mama is dead.'" Here, the new voice and strength of verbal resistance is rooted in her mother's memory, and it is this new voice that prompts Ihle's violent and physical attack, his "iron grip around her throat" (241), as if he wants to cut off her new empowered voice. The fact that his grip around her throat signifies a "release" (242) to

Susie suggests that for the first time in her life she has consciously distanced herself from her father.<sup>15</sup>

Granted, the novel does not ultimately resolve the father/daughter conflict and thus turns into "frustrated comedy" (Blodgett *Configuration* 137, 147), but it is equally important to note that the ending is deliberately vague and open-ended. "I've got something important to tell him" (242), is Susie's commission to the Consul, when she summons him to a neutral meeting place. "Something important" is the typical borderline discourse in which the "message" is deliberately relegated into the gaps of the text, into the "not-to-be-read." "Something important" suggests on the surface her acceptance of a union with him; but on a deeper level it may also imply that the important message is her changed attitude to this man, after she has shaken off her falsely romantic notions of the strong, masculine man modelled on her father. Susie had rejected Blume earlier because she looked at him through her father's eyes: "What would Papa think of me. He'd laugh me to scorn with the little Consul" (186).

I do not mean to read the ending in terms of a romantic resolution and even less in terms of an ultimate female liberation. Susie's need to *attach* herself to a man is highly problematic, especially since she has barely *detached* herself from her parental home. But Susie has gained a new perspective on her father, and there is hope that she has come to see the Consul's lack of aggression in a different light, after she stops looking at him through her father's censoring eyes. Also, given Susie's linguistic flexibility

<sup>15</sup> The language describing her father's attack is deliberately rapist: "But at that moment her father's great mass came lunging toward her. He seized her by the hair and flung her to the ground. Susie saw him standing over her, his face bloodshot and swollen" (241).

and her resisting courage, she has the potential to rewrite the meaning of her name and title, (should she really become Frau Konsul).

"My sympathies were always with the women. Yet I was no sentimentalist; in my books I gave the facts and let them speak for themselves," Grove writes in *In Search of Myself* (224). And yet, *Maurermeister* and *Our Daily Bread* illustrate that such "facts" may encode a masculine bias: Grove presents us with women who are discursively subversive and playful and who continually undermine and disrupt masculine self-seriousness, but Grove also limits these women's subversive powers. Martha Elliot, for example, is doomed to die once she tries to break out of discursive normalcy; realizing that she cannot communicate her legacy to her children, she dies in despair. Her daughter Margaret, the most independent woman in the novel, really lives on the border of the novel; her independence is relegated into the gaps of Grove's text, suggesting that Grove is either not willing, or not capable of writing her parodic mimicking of the patriarchal language. And Susie Ihle's story ends abruptly, once she has found a very precarious voice to confront the father, so that the seeds of her discursive resistance are never allowed to bloom in the novel.

Finally, the exploration of women's discursive resistance in *Maurermeister* and *Our Daily Bread* affirm Grove's deep interest in, and sympathy with, the plight of female characters in a patriarchal household, but the novels also point to his limitations as a male author trying to write the feminine voice of resistance. And, despite the feminist subtexts, these novels force us to recognize the author's own ambivalent nostalgia for patriarchal power structures.

B. *Jennie Gerhardt* and *The Bulwark*

Like Grove's *Our Daily Bread*, Dreiser's late novel *The Bulwark* (1946) thematizes generational conflicts. On the surface, the children rebel against their parents by setting out on paths that are deliberately different from their parents' lives. Here the austerity of Grove's pioneer world is replaced by the simplicity and austerity of Quakerism, which unsuccessfully struggles against the advances of a modern and materialistic, a luxury and pleasure loving world that apparently seduces the children and alienates them from the parents. Like Grove, Dreiser also presents a rigid and limited father-figure in the foreground of the novel, a father who dies in the end, leaving his children with very ambiguous legacies.

Despite this predominant theme of generational conflicts, many of the critics have pointed to the tone of reconciliation and the transcendental spirit in Dreiser's late work and have seen Dreiser's late writing (and especially the ending of the novel) as a radical departure from his earlier writings. Examining the imagery of Dreiser's works, William Phillips discovers that Dreiser's early social darwinistic metaphor for life--the image of the lobster inevitably feeding on the squid--is replaced by peaceful, religious icons. In *The Bulwark* Dreiser draws on the iconography of Quaker painter Edward Hicks, "in which the lion and the lamb finally lie down together along a quiet stream" (Phillips 584). It is this imagery that leads Phillips to the conclusion that "the fairy land has become the *real* world, and the world of struggle and torment only illusory" (585). Donald Pizer explores Phillips' slant on a thematic level, arguing that in *The Bulwark* Dreiser moves "his earlier amoral cosmology up a kind of ethical slope" (*Novels* 327), a view that is shared by

most critics.<sup>16</sup> Focusing on Dreiser's search for "the good father" in a more recent study, Miriam Gogol comes to the conclusion that Dreiser does not really abandon his deterministic philosophy, as most critics suggest, but that he transforms it in his late novel into "divine providence."<sup>17</sup>

Despite some dissenting angles in the critics' voices on whether or not *The Bulwark* constitutes a radical departure from Dreiser's earlier writing, they all take the religious discourse and the iconography of *The Bulwark* at face value, reading the images of transcendental peace and harmony in terms of a quasi-religious conversion of the novel's characters and even its author.<sup>18</sup> Granted that Dreiser recreates a fictional Quaker world in this last novel and treats it deliberately much more sympathetically than the other religions in his earlier works, the fact remains that Quaker readers of the text complained that Dreiser "did not fully understand their faith; that Christ is not mentioned once in *The Bulwark*, that there is not a word about social reform" (Hussman *Dreiser* 169). In many ways the characters' visions appear more firmly rooted in Dreiserian philosophy than in Quaker religion.

<sup>16</sup> Most critics anticipate or echo Pizer's line of thought. According to Philip Gerber, *The Bulwark* is another American tragedy that "reads perhaps as Clyde's would had it been written from the point of view of Elvira Griffiths" (*Dreiser* 157). According to Hussman, *The Bulwark* demonstrates a dramatic, absolute reversal in Dreiser's outlook in that the novel rejects egoistic self-interests in favour of a new "love-service ethic" (*Dreiser* 177).

<sup>17</sup> Gogol asserts that, in *The Bulwark*, "we see Dreiser, known throughout his life as a naturalist, a believer in the deterministic notion of will as subject to fate, transform that belief into the spiritual notion of total subjection to God, to 'father'" (27).

<sup>18</sup> See Robert Elias (*Dreiser* 288-93; 300-304). Gerhard Friedrich's study demonstrates how much *The Bulwark* is indebted to Dreiser's reading of Quaker literature. Jonas Spatz reads the novel in terms of the story of Job, and Sidney Richman links it to the American transcendental tradition, arguing that it "owes nothing at all to Herbert Spencer and everything to Thoreau and John Woolman" (323).

In this chapter, I would therefore like to shift the focus to a different angle and read Dreiser's treatment of Quakerism as a metaphor for individual and spiritual resistance against capitalist consumerism, whereby Quakerism functions as a sort of resisting island in a sea of struggle and exploitation that characterizes American society. Dreiser's *Bulwark* explores strategies of how to escape and resist the apparently inevitable power play of capitalism and consumerism, whose overwhelming power of appropriation Dreiser had also explored in *Sister Carrie*, *The Trilogy of Desire* and, with growing unease, in *An American Tragedy*. Although the title of Dreiser's late novel, *The Bulwark*, refers to the father figure Solon Barnes,<sup>19</sup> it is really the mother-figure who becomes the strongest locus of resistance in the novel.

Like Grove in *Our Daily Bread*, Dreiser locates the root of resistance in the feminine, by drawing on an imagery of the domestic and the home. It is Hannah Barnes, Solon Barnes' mother, who creates an ideal universe for her family that is not only apart from the rest of society but is so superior and spiritually ideal that the outside world, continually influencing and contaminating Hannah's world, cannot harm it effectively as long as she is alive. The novel describes the movement of the Barnes' family from their small, unpretentious cottage in small town Segookit in Maine to the more modern and larger Dukla near Pennsylvania. The narrator tells us that for Solon, "Segookit and his home, particularly his mother, had been his world" (14). The mother, tellingly framed by the words "home" and "world," really constitutes a whole, self-contained, separate universe in Solon's early life,

<sup>19</sup> The title of Dreiser's late novel, *The Bulwark*, is very telling, in that it implies a safeguard or defence against a danger, at the same time that it critically points to the limitations of this defensive strategy, as the bulwark as a defensive wall or fortification also carries a suggestion of the archaic with it, especially when it comes to dealing with such a flexible system as consumerist capitalism.



although the narrator's choice of past tense also indicates that the new home of Dukla creates much more serious challenges for Hannah's ingenuity for effective resistance.

However, this exploration of the feminine world of the home as a resisting world is not radically new in Dreiser's fiction. He had experimented with this motif in *Jennie Gerhardt* (1911), as I would like to demonstrate by briefly discussing this earlier mother figure and then point to the differences in the characterization of Hannah as a Quaker matriarch. Jennie creates temporary homes wherever she goes, first for her own family, then for Senator Brander in his hotel in Columbus, Ohio and after him for Lester Kane, her long-time lover, in a house he has rented for her in Chicago; she also creates a home for her daughter who later dies, and in the end for her two adopted children. Despite all her efforts, even the multiplicity of these homes points to an essential homelessness in Jennie's life. For years, she lives with Lester near Chicago's Hide Park, a name that is a very appropriate, as she has to hide who she is wherever she lives, and is not supposed to be seen (or heard) as Lester's "kept woman."

Jennie not only survives but, like Faulkner's Dilsey, she endures without ever betraying her integrity or ultimate virtue. And yet, in many ways, Jennie also slips into the stereotypical image of yielding femininity. There is no doubt that often Jennie is on the borderline of becoming a new Justine, Marquis de Sade's eternally virtuous woman, who endures physical torture and multiple rapes rather than choosing wicked resistance and subversive evil against her exploiters and torturers.<sup>20</sup> It is Jennie's yielding that invites her exploitation by the men she falls in love with and that makes

<sup>20</sup> In this interpretation of Justine, I am following Carter's discussion of "The Life of Justine" (38-77).

Jennie so appealing for the duplicitous narrator who appears to have fallen in love with her weakness himself, at the same time that his discourse exposes her victimization and exploitation: "It is a curious characteristic of the non-defensive disposition that it is like a honey jar to flies. Nothing is brought to it and much is taken away. Around a soft, yielding, unselfish disposition men swarm naturally. They sense this generosity, this nonprotective attitude from afar. A girl like Jennie is like a comfortable fire to the average masculine mind; they gravitate to it, seek its sympathy, yearn to possess it" (131).

It is the home that Jennie yearns for. She gives her daughter the name Vesta, the name of the ancient Roman goddess of the hearth and the hearth fire (e.g. Virgil *Aeneid* I 410; II 406), as well as the name of the ancient priestesses of Rome's oldest Goddess-matriarch (cf. Walker 1046). Just as the Vestals' magic female powers became limited in the course of time, so the presence of Jennie's daughter Vesta does not empower Jennie but makes her feel guilty and leads her to yield to masculine authorities even more easily. Just as the Vestals' pagan powers were destroyed through Christian influence, so Vesta dies as a twelve-year-old and leaves Jennie even more vulnerable and obsessed with guilt feelings.

Dreiser, however, demonstrates that the presence of Vesta herself presents a disruption of the patriarchal order and is a potential form of female resistance. Even the child's conception is an offence against patriarchy because Vesta is Jennie's illegitimate child. Pregnant, Jennie is subversive in her parental home, as she is later with her lover Kane by lying about her daughter and hiding her presence in a cloud of silence. Once the child is presented to the astounded male patriarchs, both men can do nothing but accept Vesta, albeit very reluctantly and puzzled at Jennie's apparent wickedness and deception underneath her innocent face. Even the name

giving is a struggle of women against male domination and results in a clever compromise. Mrs. Gerhardt suggests the name Vesta to her husband pretending it is her own choice, although in actuality it is Jennie who chose this name. Gerhardt accepts the child by imprinting his own name, "Wilhelmina" (125), on her, a name which conjures up his own German past and his desire for lineage. On the surface, Gerhardt is given his will and is thus reconciled; the child is baptized in both names, but later Jennie calls her daughter only by the name of Vesta, a name that Gerhardt himself eventually adopts.

And yet, Dreiser's narrative emphasizes the limits of Jennie's silent resistance. Jennie yearns for nothing more than a home and a sense of communion, but throughout her life as Lester Kane's "kept woman" she is the outsider, who has no place and no status, as her society only knows two discourses to deal with the "kept woman": scandal and silence. And if silence is often Jennie's most effective "reverse" discourse of resistance, it is also the discourse that perpetuates her isolation and causes her slippage into helpless pathos. When Lester Kane leaves her after more than a decade in order to marry rich and spectacular Letty Pace, he adopts the discourse of determinism to excuse his shabby desertion to himself and to the woman who has given him the gift of her life and her love without ever asking for anything in exchange. Lester tells Jennie that "all of us are more or less pawns. We're moved about like chessmen by circumstances over which we have no control" (386), thus deceiving himself about the fact that what he opts for in his life is social status rather than loyalty. Although Jennie is the only one who could expose the falsity of his discourse, she prefers to continue her ambiguous discourse of silence: "I understand, Lester," she answered, "I'm not complaining. I know it's for the best" (386). Her accusation and bit-

teness are only contained in her unspoken implication that Lester's solution (to leave her) is for *his* best, not for hers.

Jennie's silence is subversive enough to leave Lester with feelings of guilt for the rest of his life, but it is not enough to shake him out of his petrified lethargy and apathy toward life. It is appropriate that several chapters later, Lester should die and Jennie should walk not as a participant but as the excluded spectator of the procession of mourners at Lester's funeral. Having lost Lester for good, Jennie ends up adopting his deterministic discourse: "She was never a master of her fate. Others invariably controlled" (409). In the reader, this last image of Jennie evokes the pathos for the vulnerable victim rather than admiration for the woman who endures by cleverly scheming ever new strategies of resistance. Angela Carter's remarks about Sade's Justine also apply to Jennie by the end of the novel. She has become "a woman with no place in the world, no status, the core of whose resistance has been eaten away by self-pity" (Carter 57).

In *Jennie Gerhardt* Dreiser places the seed of resistance against materialism and against patriarchy in the feminine home, without allowing this resistance to become truly effective. He returns to this motif in *The Bulwark* by creating Hannah Barnes almost as Jennie's double in her desire to give to those in need and in her urge to create a home. But Dreiser also gives this motif an important twist by endowing the mother figure, Hannah, with much more powerful resisting strategies than Jennie has. Hannah's roots of resistance are, to be sure, not developed in isolation but are tied in with her Quaker religion and Quaker community, at the same time that she takes precautions never to be swallowed up by this religion. Hannah has in fact developed a language of resistance even vis-a-vis her Quaker religion, a language which guarantees that her tool of resistance against the evils of

society will never become a frozen, dogmatic discourse that can be turned against her.

Asked by her six-year-old son Solon whether "God [has] got a body like ours" (15), she resists the temptation of giving her son an easily graspable, bodily vision of God, and instead, tells him that God is "a spirit": "He is like the light which is everywhere or the air thee breathes, or the sounds thee hears" (15). By giving him concrete imagistic analogies, Hannah draws on the conventions of the parable, which allows her to speak of God at the same time that she refuses to define God in a frozen image. "Then he's not all inside our head?" (15), Solon asks, speaking not only a very masculine discourse that associates the godhood with the head, but also a discourse that appears to cut the head from the rest of the body. Hannah Barnes thoroughly unsettles Solon's vision of a masculine head-God by dressing God in a feminine language at the same time that she emphasizes that God is an individual experience more than anything else: "He is more like something that thee thinks about--something that comes to thee as a feeling more than anything else--a warming feeling" (15).

It is her transformation of the Quaker god into her own personal discourse that touches Solon to the quick and prompts him to open himself to his mother. Bursting into tears, he confesses to her his transgression, the fact that he has unwillingly killed a mother bird with his slingshot. But Hannah not only opens her arms and forgives her son. Unlike the narrator who downplays Solon's act as an "imaginary transgression" (18), the mother "found herself not a little religiously and intellectually troubled by the fact that so much ill could come about accidentally when plainly no cruelty or evil was intended" (18). This question--the problem of the root of evil--is a problem that never "ceased to trouble her" (18), which indicates that, unlike

the narrator, she is not satisfied with superficial answers but has a very skeptical attitude, raising questions rather than answering them and realizing that there are no ultimate answers to the problem of evil.

Dreiser introduces a Christian subtext in his characterization of Hannah, who is a visionary and sees into the future through her own powerful dreams and who develops miraculous healing powers, when her son becomes sick.<sup>21</sup> These analogies with the gifts of Jesus Christ are metaphors to draw attention to her most important strength: her gift of a public voice and her power to manipulate language, gifts which have been largely denied to Jennie Gerhardt. Hannah knows when to speak up and when to remain silent, and when she speaks she never uses the "masculine" preaching style. Her language is a woman's language that relates her own personal experience at the same time that it reaches out to others. Hannah creates a stir at the Quaker meeting in Dukla, when she passionately responds to another woman in need and helps her overcome her fear and despair, filling her with new hope, not by giving money, as some Quakers prefer to do, but by sharing her own experience and extending a deep feeling of sympathy and solidarity. At the same time, Hannah also acts as a catalyst that helps Solon find his own public voice, when she asks him to testify in the Dukla meeting how he was miraculously healed. Solon becomes an active part of the community by telling his own story, which is interwoven with that of his mother's.

Even more importantly, the women's and Solon's discourses on how to find new hope through communion and return to life displaces a very dif-

<sup>21</sup> It is the effect of Hannah's words and body language that heal Solon, when he is deadly sick: "Do not cry, Solon, my son, thy life and health have only now been given into my keeping. This is not the end for thee--it is but the beginning" (20), she tells him, and "she laid her right hand on his forehead and turned her eyes upward" (20).

ferent discourse that is in danger of becoming the dominating discourse in Dukla. "For a considerable portion of the time Wallin was thinking of rising and presenting his formula concerning material wealth as a stewardship under the direction of the Lord" (41-42). Justus Wallin, the rich Quaker banker is, like Solon's father Rufus Barnes, a believer in the capitalist doctrine that "God intends all forms of trade and wealth for the benefit of all men" (46-47). Thus Dreiser puts these two very different discourses in competition with each other in the same religious meeting, and while Hannah's discourse carries the day in the early Dukla meeting, it is the second (capitalist) discourse that will eventually triumph, as Solon will adopt it as a legacy from his father Rufus and his father-in-law, Justus Wallin.

Lawrence Hussman argues that in *The Bulwark* Dreiser turns his back on the typically Dreiserian celebration of sexual promiscuity and that instead he presents us with "the doctrine of one life, one love" (*Dreiser* 174). The novel starts out with an "Introduction" that describes Solon Barnes' and Benecia Wallin's marriage celebration ([v]-[viii]). This introduction is followed by the novel's first of three books which describes the Barnes' family history and ends in a very circular return to the wedding celebration that initiates the novel. On the surface, the marriage between Solon and Benecia appears to have transcended all tensions; it appears harmonious and happy, as neither of the two partners ever desires to be with anyone else. And yet, Dreiser creates an inevitable contradiction between this apparently tensionless marriage and the tensions and contradictions that surround Solon and Benecia in the world they live in. The meeting house in which the wedding is celebrated is a place saturated with tensions and contradictions: there are the wealthy Wallins in contrast to the much less aristocratic Barnes; the traditional Quaker clothes in contrast to the modern garb, the spirit of

idealism versus the materiality of the world. Dreiser also emphasizes that these contradictions are within, not outside the meeting house itself, and thus are within, not outside each individual.

Given the emphasis on these contradictions and tensions in the introduction, it appears odd that the only discourse that should bridge them is articulated in the marriage vows, which are not only highly formulaic but are also repeated verbatim four times in the novel ([v], 99, 100), thus emphasizing the imitative and parroting quality of the couple's discourse. Placed in a tension-loaded context, this discourse becomes highly parodic, as it foreshadows the reductive and imitative language that characterizes Benecia's and Solon's whole marriage and that in the long run proves highly inadequate to deal with their children and the complicated world they live in. Once married, Solon and Benecia speak only in one voice, Solon's voice: "Rarely, if ever, did Benecia speak [at the Quaker meetings]. She was too retiring and too involved spiritually with her husband to feel that she needed other than his expression" (110). Although Solon is determined to carry on his mother's legacy of resistance against the overwhelming materialism of modern life, he ironically starts a marriage in which the female voice is inevitably silenced. Thus it is with the marriage that the feminine becomes usurped in Solon's life, just as his language of resistance becomes reduced to formulaic and mediated responses.

Although loving her son as only a mother can, Hannah is painfully aware of Solon's shortcomings. His name, a short form of Solomon, which in Hebrew means "peaceable," is very appropriate to describe his quiet character but is also a parodic reversal of Solomon's proverbial wisdom.



Hannah realizes that Solon lacks imagination,<sup>22</sup> and even the narrator sees Solon's lack of interest in books as the "one serious defect in Solon's character" (30). In one of her dreams Hannah sees Solon, trying to tame a black mare, but the mare severely wounds Solon by throwing him off her back (61). Hannah intuitively feels that this dream has something to do with the family's new association with the Wallins' family and the Barnes' "shift in their material and social status" (62). On one level, the mare represents the seductiveness of Justus Wallin's materialism, but on another level the mare also represents Benecia, who, in an ironic reversal of the dream's main signifier, severely "wounds" Solon and their children because she allows herself to be tamed by him.

After years of marriage, Solon brings Benecia a gift that he sees not only as an expression of his love but also as a symbol that their marriage has transcended and resisted the transitory character of modern life. His present is a framed motto: "The words, lettered in threads of yellow, green, and blue wool: 'In honor preferring one another'" (172). The imitative quality of "kitsch" of this lukewarm love declaration parodically expose to the reader that the marriage is static and monotonous, since it has become a bulwark not so much against materialism as against the flux of time, and against Solon's fear of change and death.

Like Grove's John Elliot, Solon Barnes becomes petrified in his life and obsessed with the idea of death.<sup>23</sup> Continually confronted with death as

<sup>22</sup> As a child, he sits for hours, "gazing at nothing in particular," in "immobile silence" (*Bulwark* 14) that distresses Hannah and that she can only break by forcing him into companionship with other children.

<sup>23</sup> From the moment of his marriage, it is death and mourning that dominate over the joy of birth. First Hannah dies and Solon ages considerably in his mourning for her; her death is followed by Aunt Hester's funeral (174) and the devastating shock of his son Stewart's suicide,

a metaphor of the transitory nature of life, Solon retreats into what appear to be unchanging systems of order: "In a changing world, Solon found a pleasing stability in the routine of his business day" (172). At the same time he becomes more and more immersed in the Quaker Book of Discipline. It is not only the title of this work that should make us suspicious of the resisting value of this discourse, but Solon keeps the book together with his Bible in his desk at work in the bank. What better metaphor to describe the fact that Solon's discourse of resistance has not only entered a marriage with, but has also become appropriated by, the business discourse he speaks in the bank.

Entering the Traders and Builders Bank in Philadelphia for the first time, Solon stands transfixed because the high ceilings and the marble floors evoke in him a church atmosphere (86), and working in the bank, he feels that he is "partaking of the nature of a church" (301). Here, business life has merged with religious life, and the former religious discourse of resistance has been appropriated by the dominant discourse of money making. As Solon turns the notion of God's Divine Order into an almost fetishistic centre-point of his beliefs, his former discourse of resistance becomes thoroughly turned around to serve his society's power principle that it was intended to subvert. Solon becomes the bulwark behind which the aggressive Philadelphian bank directors hide semi-legal speculative transactions (283). Even Solon's courageous stance against business dishonesty brings only a very momentary disruption in the lives of the profit hunters.

In his business life Solon finds it difficult to read others, and this handicap is also present and has even more serious consequences in his private life; he is incapable of dealing with his children's individualistic dif-

dramatized in the father's long vigil at his son's casket (297-99). Then Solon loses Benecia who almost fades away, and the novel ends on Solon's disease

ferences. Unlike John Elliot, who is eager to "read" his children in order to be able to change them, Solon Barnes means well but has only one formula to deal with them—the Quaker Book of Discipline. As a result, his private discourse with relation to his children becomes very similar to Elliot's, in that Solon perceives his five children not only in a puzzling diversity of temperaments but that he also sees his two youngest children, Stewart and Etta, as "enigmas" (129) that he will never be able to understand. The institution of the school sharpens the conflicts between parents and children, since it is in the schools that Solon's children find what they come to perceive as the "normal" world. Just as Clyde Griffiths feels that he is dragged out of the "normal" by his street preacher parents, so the Barnes' children come to associate the parental world of Thornborough as removed from the "normal" and yearn to make contact with the seductive pleasures of the "normal" world.

As Michel Foucault draws attention to "normalization" as the ultimate and most successful power play of modern society, so Dreiser dramatizes that the world of the "normalizing" school involves the creation of individual identity through inclusion of some and the exclusion others, a process that leads to the establishment and perpetuation of societal hierarchies. Dreiser also demonstrates Foucault's point that normalization and hierarchization are inscribed even in the spatial arrangement of the school institution. LLewellyn College for Women, the ersatz-home for Solon's eldest daughter Isobel, has its dormitories arranged in such a way that "the girls were thrown into a kind of camaraderie which they could not very well avoid" (151). It is this camaraderie that Isobel had yearned for more than anything else in order to be or become "herself." But since she lacks the important social assets that the narrator claims are "beauty and magnetism" (153), her classmates never go out of their way to include her in their social activities, which has serious consequences for Isobel.

Being of a very sensitive nature, Isobel was well aware of this situation; she was represented to herself by those who did not wish her company as constantly slinking off in corners, or studying by herself, in some section or window of one of the halls or dormitories, until finally she found herself doing so, pretending to be deeply immersed in her work even when she was not." (153)

Despite the narrator's disparaging discourse, Isobel appears to enjoy her intellectual pursuits. At the same time, however, she lacks a language that would allow her to break out of her isolation and disrupt effectively the school's hierarchy that has pushed her into the margin of this community. Isobel realizes very quickly how inadequate her father's language is to deal with her specific problems: "But she, as she reasoned, was *herself*--not any other person, not George Fox nor John Woolman nor her father, who believed in both so strongly" (154). Lacking an effective language of resistance, she falls into the despair of her isolation and loneliness and adopts the very negative image that the "normalizing" school-society has projected on her, the role of envious old maid who is convinced of her own ugliness (154).

In contrast to Isobel, her two younger siblings, Orville and Dorothea, are seduced by the normalizing society without offering the slightest resistance. The first turns into a conservative lover of money, the second, Carrie-like, into a lover of clothes and social status. Orville and Dorothea are the true conformists of the novel, who take their place in the centre of the social hierarchy as husband and wife of rich partners, without ever questioning the hierarchy itself, since they can only profit from it. Escaping into the materialism that the Barnes' household has traditionally opposed, these two children are ironically the ones that on the surface create the least friction in Benicia's and Solon's household. Orville and Dorothea go through

the motions, exploiting any conventions to their own personal advantage. To give just one example. At an aunt's funeral, the narrator notes that most young women wear modern dresses which have become a convention even amongst the Quakers. The only exception is Dorothea, who wears one of her mother's early Quaker dresses and a bonnet, but clearly not for reasons of piety: Isobel "wisely decided not to express her opinion of what she considered just one of Dorothea's calculated efforts to attract attention" (176). Apparently conventional themselves, Dorothea and Orville cleverly read and exploit conventions, not because they believe in them, but because conventions are a tool to achieve the ultimate goal of capitalism: self-advancement through appropriation. Knowing no other loyalties but self-interest, both are willing to sacrifice any family ties, if the family should stand in their way of self-advancement. If Isobel is an example of marginalization, Orville and Dorothea become her complementary mirror image, as they have become thoroughly "normalized." They are society's new "positive" images that will be envied by others who are less fortunate.

The true, resisting rebels in the Barnes' family are Etta and Stewart, who search for new ways to connect with others and who reject what they see as the deadening conventions around them. Like Clyde Griffiths and his sister Esta, Etta and Stewart rebel against their parents by insisting on their right to the pleasures and loves that the world promises. Both have imagination, and both go radically different ways. In contrast to Orville, the saver of pennies, Stewart is a terrible waster of money (143), who becomes caught up in the chase for money more than any other character in the novel. He begs for money, lies for money, and he even steals money from his relatives and friends without experiencing any qualms or scruples (271). And if his passionate search to satisfy his desires is a rebellion against paternalistic supervi-

sion and guidance into a conservative business life, this rebellion should by no means be mistaken as a resistance against capitalism itself. Stewart needs money for cards, cigarettes, theatre, girls and cars (246), so that his unquenchable thirst for money is a metaphor for the insatiability of desire itself, for the force that energizes capitalism.

Like Clyde Griffiths, Stewart adopts capitalism's celebration of desire as well as capitalism's notion that anything can be appropriated, even human beings. Young women who are reluctant to become sexually involved can be persuaded with money, and if that doesn't work, there are drugs to make women acquiesce to sex. But tragedy overtakes Stewart and his friends in typically Dreiserian fashion. Their victim Psyche Tanzer dies, not primarily because she has been drugged and raped by Stewart's friend but because she happens to have a weak heart, a fact that Stewart's friend is unaware of when he administers the drug. As in *An American Tragedy*, here the narrator also interferes to manipulate, and even suspend, the reader's judgement. The narrator repeatedly speaks of Stewart's "seeming crime," when Stewart and his friends, waiting for their trial in prison, are condemned by the "inexorable law" of a vicious press and public opinion.

The real twist in this typically Dreiserian plot of crime and punishment occurs, when Stewart commits suicide in prison. Lawrence Hussman interprets Stewart's drastic act by applying a very perverse logic that turns this act of desperation into a positive act of accepting moral responsibility: "Pursued by conscience [i.e. the Inner Light], the lad kills himself in prison," which "illustrate[s] Dreiser's changed conception of individual responsibility" (*Dreiser* 159). Granted, Stewart decides on his suicide by drawing on his father's Quaker discourse, presented in free indirect discourse to the reader: "Let a jury decide what it might, he [Stewart] could never escape the jury of

his own mind, of his father's mind: the judgment of the Inner Light" (293-94). But these words cannot be taken literally, given the context of the narrative. Rather, they expose how corrupted and perverted the original Quaker discourse has become in the course of the novel, since what used to be a life-affirming, resisting language now becomes a tool of self-destruction. In Hannah's life, the inner light was connected to a very personal, warming feeling, to mercy rather than punishment, to restitution rather than revenge. The Inner Light that Solon leaves as a legacy to his children has been transformed from Hannah's vibrant resisting discourse into a patriarchal legal discourse that secretly yearns for death.

Throughout the novel, Stewart's youthful rebellion against his home is linked to the image of the car that races at breakneck speed through the countryside, "frightening the horses and chickens on the way" (256), an image that evokes Leo Marx's discussion of *The Machine in the Garden*, the motif of the machine that in the American literary imagination erupts into and disrupts the peacefulness of the pastoral nature idyll. Etta Barnes' rebellion and new vision of her life is linked not to the car but to the image of the bicycle, also a modern "machine" that symbolizes "the spinning modern world" (*Bulwark* 161), as it "aroused a desire for freedom" and the "tendency to take boys and girls into the streets and along the roads unchaperoned" (139). But the bicycle also presents the vision of a compromise, in that, unlike the car, it blends in with, never disrupts, nature. And the contrasts go even further. The car in Dreiser's novels generally divides a group into a driver--always male and mostly the leader of the group--and those who are and his own death.

being driven—generally women and their male chaperons.<sup>24</sup> Small wonder, then, that Etta sees the bicycle as a magical object that conjures up an image of female independence, with male and female each riding his or her own bike. But like the car in Stewart's life, the bicycle for Etta also conjures up a conventionalized heterosexual courtship game. From her dormitory, Etta watches a "boy" helping a "girl" dismounting her bike and then kissing her (161), an image that reproduces a stereotypical courtship pattern and has a magic touch for Etta for years to come.

At Chadd's Ford boarding school, Etta makes the acquaintance of a very androgynous teenager, Volida LaPorte, who looks (and acts) "more like a healthy, contentious boy than a girl" (161), a fact that deeply worries Solon and Benicia because they are unable to understand any woman who does not accept her "place in nature that God has designed for her" (164). The close and intimate friendship between Etta and Volida is the closest that Dreiser will ever get to the description of a lesbian relationship. As Etta begins to be interested in love, she has a "crush" on Volida (163), and it is Volida who arouses in Etta "a desire for knowledge" (165) and gives her new books to read. Solon, however, cannot acquiesce to what he perceives as the books' (and Volida's) pernicious influence on his daughter. *The Bulwark* is the only novel where the friendship of the daughter with another woman leads to the daughter's break with the father, a break that is usually initiated by the

<sup>24</sup> Dreiser's major female characters never drive cars, so that the car becomes an object of traditional gender division. Even rich Sondra Finchley in *An American Tragedy* who is repeatedly linked to the image of the car does not drive it herself, but has a chauffeur. Many of Grove's female characters, in contrast, insist on driving and owning a car (for example Henrietta in *Our Daily Bread*) as a symbol of their independence.



daughter's falling in love with a (rival) man.<sup>25</sup> Etta breaks with her parents' home (even taking her mother's jewelry) not only to attend University of Wisconsin with Volida, but also because she wants to find her own language and "think [her] own thoughts" (212). She appears to have returned to Hannah's rather than her father's legacy. She continues her self-education in Greenwich Village, where she arrives with the ambition to write and thus further to develop her own language and to "make something of herself" (232).

Etta's friendship with Volida breaks up, when she meets the painter Willard Kane and falls in love with him, and here for the first time her new ideals change. Like her brothers and sisters, she falls into the trap of the old conventions at the same time that she ironically believes that she is subverting them. "Seeking to live in a free and normal atmosphere" that is different from her home, Etta's ideal is dressed in a language of liberation. But meeting Kane, she "sensed that resistance was futile" (233) and thus adopts a deterministic language that is in extreme opposition to the discourse of resistance that she set out to speak when she left her parental home. The relationship with Kane echoes Eugene Witla's love affairs in *The "Genius"*, with the important difference that in *The Bulwark* the focus is on the woman's, not the man's perspective.

Etta's and Kane's is a love that Dreiser's text renders deliberately very problematic. Kane's is the love of the Pygmalion-artist for his own work of art, and Etta's is the masochistic love of a woman who gives all the more, the less she receives in order to maintain a relationship to which her lover has become indifferent. Not only does she "center her every thought around"

<sup>25</sup> See the relationship between old Gerhardt and Jennie, as well as Butler's relationship with his daughter Aileen in the *Trilogy*.

Kane's love (306), she also neglects her studies and her own life. Dreiser excels in exposing the duplicity of Kane who wants his freedom from Etta because "his relationship with this girl tended to reduce his aesthetic intensity" (307) but who also tells her, when he leaves her: "You have given me not only inspiration but the power to create" (309).

The novel ends on what most readers have celebrated as Dreiser's unequivocally transcendental vision. But the critics generally focus on Solon himself, who after the death of his son and his wife has completely retired from the business world and has come to rediscover the roots of Quakerism through his pantheistic experience in the garden of Thornbrough, where he discovers the beauty of the Creative Impulse (318-19).<sup>26</sup> But amidst this beautiful celebration of the creative Impulse, we should not forget that Solon's voice becomes weaker and weaker in the last chapters, as he prepares for death. It is Etta's voice and perspective that evolve and move into the foreground. Etta reads John Woolman's story to her father and to the reader, a story that encapsulates some of the themes of the novel, as it focuses on John Woolman's trying to find his own language: "My tongue was often so dry that I [John Woolman] could not speak till I had moved it about and gathered some moisture, and as I lay still for a time, I at length felt a divine power prepare my mouth that I could speak, and then I said: 'I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live; yet not I but Christ liveth in me'" (330). This language with the emphasis on the death/rebirth pattern provides spiritual help to Solon, who is about to experience his physical death and whose whole life has been a death-like stasis. But John Woolman's is above all a language of "sado-asceticism" and "sadospirituality" to use the polemical words of

<sup>26</sup> For a detailed discussion of these mystical experiences, see Pizer, *Novels* 306-07 and Miriam Gogol 25.

feminist theologian Mary Daly (36, 39). This ultimate celebration of death as the root of all life is highly parodic in the light of Solon's whole life. Also the idea of Christ taking over the body and making the individual give up his or her will appears like a perversity given the emphasis on the individuality of the Barnes' children in the novel.

The language of the love-service ethics that Etta learns from John Woolman and her father is a language that is highly problematic: "And so through her service to him she could see what it might mean to serve others, not only for reasons of family bonds or personal desires, but to answer human need" (331). This language asks for Etta's personal sacrifice at the same time that it does not give her any strategies of resistance. In other words, Etta is in danger of regressing into another Jennie Gerhardt. It is a language that makes her understand that her desire for Willard Kane was selfish, but that does not teach her anything about Kane's selfishness.

When she returns home, Etta's feelings toward her father have changed; she experiences a sense of deep responsibility and longs to speak with him and be forgiven. But he tells her, "Daughter, I know now that it is not for me or thee to judge or forgive anyone. God and God alone can forgive" (314). Comparing this language to the earlier very powerful scene in which Hannah forgives her son for killing a mother bird, one is forced to recognize that Solon's apparently humble discourse does not do very much for his daughter, to say the least. Solon absolves himself by speaking a language that sounds like an echo from beyond the grave. Although Etta feels that he loves her, Solon cannot communicate this love to her. As her father passes away, Etta sinks on her knees beside him, telling him: "Father I am not worthy of thee--but I see it [the Inner Light] now" (334). Etta's very body language contradicts the words she speaks. Confused about which

language to use, she slips into the religious formulae she believes her father would like to her. Thus the relationship to her father does not receive a new stimulus in these last months of his life. It simply becomes petrified in a relationship of absolute superiority of the God-father and inferiority of the daughter-child, as the father-figure becomes frozen in her mind as the bulwark-saint.

And yet, Etta evolves over these last months not because of but despite of her father's influence. It is Isobel who has managed to find a language with which to reach out, to help others without giving herself up. In a beautiful letter written to her sister Etta after Stewart's death, Isobel pleads with Etta to come home so that Isobel does not have to give up her teaching position, "*the only independence and adventure I have ever had*" (312). It is this letter that persuades Etta to return home to assist Isobel with her dying mother and helpless father. The novel ends with a vignette on the two sisters after their father's funeral, again a reversal of Jennie Gerhardt's lonely grieving. Weeping after her father's funeral, Etta is reproved by her brother Orville, who accuses her of having started the trouble in the family. But Etta simply replies: "Oh, I am not crying for myself, or for Father--I am crying for *life*" (337). Etta cries because after all her trials, she is still without an effective language to cope with her own life and to resist those who want to mould her according to their conventionalized images. But her language also indicates that unlike her father, she has opted for life, not death, even if it means tears and suffering. It is Isobel who has the last word: "Then Isobel, who had entered, looking for her, came forward and, taking Etta's arm, said: 'Come, Etta, don't cry, darling--we must go'" (337). It is not only Isobel's words but also her body-language that connote a revival of Hannah's spirit after Solon's

death and that account for the note of optimism that ends the novel.

## CONCLUSION

Even when it is unique, a language remains a mixture, a schizophrenic mélange, a Harlequin costume in which very different functions of language and distinct centers of power are played out...

"What is a Minor Literature?" (93)  
Gilles Deleuze/Félix Guattari

In this study I have shown how discourses structure relationships of power, how they constitute a force of resistance in power relationships and how a resisting discourse can shift and become appropriated by the dominant discourse. Dreiser and Grove explore a great variety of discursive strategies of resistance while also emphasizing the limits of such resistance and the danger of reappropriation. In their struggle against patriarchal power structures, many of their female characters (e.g. Fanny Essler, Susie Ihle, Emanuela) consciously rejects the language that others (fathers, lovers, bourgeois society) impose on them, deliberately refusing to be a dutiful daughter, a "seduced" woman, a "prostitute," a "wife," or a traditional "housekeeper." Other resisting female characters appropriate the language of the (male) masters to engage in a ruthless power struggle (e.g. Henrietta Elliot), only to demonstrate that such a strategy perpetuates and energizes the very power principle they set out to subvert.

Other female characters adopt what Foucault has called a "reverse" discourse of resistance, overtly insisting on those "feminine" attributes that patriarchy has traditionally marginalized (e.g. Jennie Gerhardt, Hannah Barnes, Martha Elliot, Bertha Ihle), but the narratives also show that these

reverse discourses are generally not outside the power relationship since reverse discourses, once put into circulation, "run the risk of re-codification, re-colonisation" (Foucault *Power* 86). Dreiser's and Grove's fiction confirms that "those unitary discourses, which first disqualified and then ignored them when they made their appearance, are, it seems, quite ready now to annex them, to take them back within the fold of their own discourse and to invest them with everything this implies in terms of their effects of knowledge and power" (*Power* 86). A re-appropriated (or co-opted) reverse discourse can thus be easily put back in the service of normalization. Martha Elliot and Hannah Barnes's matriarchal qualities are made to serve the patriarchy of the master of the house.

The French feminist Luce Irigaray argues that women have to find a space away from men in order to discover their own language, their own desires and their autoeroticism: "Now the practical question for feminism, as Irigaray sees it, is how to construct a female sociality (*les femmes entre-elles*), a female symbolic, and a female social contract: a horizontal relation *between* women" (Whitford 109). Some of Dreiser and Grove's female characters resist domination by men by moving toward an Irigarayan strategy, moving from the company of men to the company of women. Fanny Essler yearns for female friendship at the same time that she is stirred by the memory of her mother. Disillusioned with men, Dreiser's Carrie Meeber lives with her friend Lola. In many of their novels, Dreiser and Grove explore the relationship between mothers and daughters, as well as the solidarity between sisters. But Dreiser and Grove show their limitations as men writing about women, since female friendship is often indicated as a potential seed of a new women's sociality (in *Sister Carrie*, *Fanny Essler*, *The Bulwark*), but it is never developed in any depth.

Drawing on Foucault's insights into public "truthtelling" and "confession," I have explored the confession as a modern technique of power. Knowledge about the individual is the first step in dominating an individual, as Dreiser and Grove dramatize in various (especially gender) relationships. Carrie's and Fanny's experience confession as pleasurable but confessing who and what they are they also become deeply submerged in power relationships with men. Clyde Griffiths in *An American Tragedy* confesses his part in Roberta Alden's death numerous times; he confesses first in bad, later in good faith, honestly trying to communicate his guilt and trying to determine his identity. The Reverend McMillan as the literal confessor to Clyde in the deathhouse becomes an extension of the other carriers of power and truthtellers in the novel--the lawyers, the judges, and the journalists--all of whom consolidate their power at the expense of Clyde's sacrifice. Instead of finding his identity through his confession, he is condemned to die on the electric chair and he dies without having achieved any insights into himself. The truth of Clyde's guilt is not only constructed by others, it also remains a very problematic truth that is inevitably intertwined with power.

With Foucault, poststructuralist feminists have recognized that "confessing" can easily give the spiral of power a further twist, since confession does not lead to "liberation" but inevitably creates a power relationship between the one who listens, watches and registers information and the one who confesses and discloses his or her sexuality. According to Mary Lydon, women should not confess (their identities, desires etc.), but rather adopt the ingenious strategy of Homer's Odysseus, who confessed and denied his identity in one breath by claiming that his name was "nobody." The most effective strategy of discursive resistance is to poke holes in the dominant dis-



course, either by adopting a principle of negation (as Susie Ihle does) or by imitating the language of "masters" while giving their imitation a deliberate parodic twist (Fanny Essler, Margaret Elliot). Like many of their female characters Grove and Dreiser grope in the dark to find new (parodic) languages of resistance, only to find that they, too, lack a (resisting) language that would allow them to represent the female experience without stereotyping it.

Grove's Phil Branden in *A Search for America*, in contrast to many Dreiserian protagonists, manipulates the conventions of the confessional mode as a very successful technology of self; he presents us with a deliberately parodic confession. The confessing self is always already split into two halves--an older and a younger self, whereby the older self "confesses" the secrets of the younger self. The novel starts with a preface in which the author acknowledges that he has adopted a false name, the pseudonym Phil Branden in order to be "even more personal" (xviii). The narrator uses Odysseus' strategy of disclosing and hiding his identity at the same time, a strategy of resistance that helps him not to become swallowed up by the new world. Grove uses the same strategy in *In Search of Myself* in which he manipulates the conventions of the confession. By confessing a name and an identity which are part truth and part fiction and by describing an identity that is inevitably split, doubled, and multiplied, Grove creates an identity that affirms and denies identity in one breath. In this context, "confession" gains a new meaning and turns into a flexible strategy that allows the confessional speaker-writer to speak/write himself into being at the same time that he refuses to attach to himself an identity that would allow others to exploit his confession.

Dreiser's and Grove's works explore not only the modern techniques of power such as "normalization" but they also draw attention to the flexibility of modern power, the shiftiness, the desire for appropriating oppositional strategies and for energizing the power "machine" by making use of the opposition. As *The Titan* and *The Master of the Mill* show, even the capitalist supermen are "giant pygmies" who rise in order to fall, to die, to be superseded by others. What stays, however, is the machinery of power itself. In *The Titan* power is not firmly located in one central site, but circulates and continually changes its face, revealing a strategic flexibility and ingenuity for transforming itself continually.

It is this shiftiness of modern power that leads Walter Michaels to claim that Dreiser's fiction is inevitably informed by the logic of the marketplace:

What exactly did it mean to think of Dreiser as approving (or disapproving) consumer culture? Although transcending your origins in order to evaluate them has been the opening move in cultural criticism at least since Jeremiah, it is surely a mistake to take this move at face value: not so much because you can't really transcend your culture but because, if you did, if you could, you wouldn't have any terms of evaluation left--except perhaps theological ones. It thus seems wrong to think of the culture you live in as the object of your affections: you don't like it or dislike, you exist in it, and the things you like and dislike exist in it too. Even Bartleby-like refusals of the world remain inextricably linked to it--what could count as a more powerful exercise of the right to freedom of contract than Bartleby's successful refusal to enter into any contracts? (*Gold Standard* 18-19).

"Overturning the opposition between literature and the market" (Graff 177), Michaels declares the end of "oppositional criticism." But as Gerald Graff has pointed out in his critique of Michaels' approach, it appears that Michaels, who professes to distrust "transcendental categories, ends by

adopting the Market as a transcendental category" (Graff 179). Granted, according to Foucault's analysis of power relations, resistance is inevitably part of the power relation which produces it in order not only to contain it, but to energize itself through it by appropriating its élan. But Foucault never goes so far as to dismiss resistance per se as useless. On the contrary, if anything, Foucault's theory (especially in its intersection with feminist theory) encourages its readers to be resistant from as many different points as possible, just as Foucault's aim is to caricature, to subvert, to theatricalize master discourses wherever they assert their dominance.

Emphasizing naturalism's polarization of two categories of characters--those who produce signs and characters who are signs, those who watch others and those who are being watched--Howard argues that naturalism has an obsession with the "Other," which is most often presented in form of the immigrant population and the criminal type (80-81; 95). In this study I have attempted to problematize precisely such notions of binary divisions: self and Other, insider and outsider, powerful and powerless, binary divisions that, as I have shown, are never in a clear-cut opposition but rather condition each other, one making the other's existence possible. *An American Tragedy*, for example, starts with Clyde the outsider singing with his family on an intersection in the "commercial heart of an American city" (7). The apparently paradoxical location of the outsider family in the very heart of the American city inevitably problematizes the binary division between outsider and insider, between normal and abnormal. The outsider in the midst of an American city signifies that the centre and the margin belong together, engage in a complex interplay with each other, as one cannot exist without the other. This echoes the apparent thematic paradox of

the novel, namely that Clyde the social outsider is not outside the American hierarchy but is constituted by it and deeply rooted in it, at the same time that this hierarchy pushes him to its own periphery, pushes him into a space that it has declared undesirable.

Finally, Dreiser and Grove move in significantly different directions in their evaluation of desire and marginalization. Like the narrator-author of "Emanuela," most of Dreiser's fictional narrators and most of his male characters not only celebrate but claim as their right the disruption of sexual conventions at the same time that they claim to speak the "truth" of sex, a truth that promises to liberate the body from repressive social constraints. And yet, for most of the female characters, this celebrated sexual liberation is an illusion, as their bodies and sexualities are evoked only in terms of a goal that prompts the male to impose their own sexualities and to search in women's bodies what D.H. Lawrence--another problematic sexual "liberator"--has called the "bedrock of her nature." Insisting on imposing the norms of what they claim to be a "normal" sexuality, Dreiser's narrators and male characters elevate their own, masculine sexuality as the "true" standard, which not only erases any notion of a woman's sexuality but also marginalizes female sexual activity into the "abnormal." To a large extent Dreiser's fiction affirms, even celebrates, this masculine sexuality, as it affirms the Don Juan philosophy of most of its male characters with all its misogynistic implications.

And yet, Dreiser's fiction also draws attention to the gender bias, the duplicity, and the arbitrary power politics of its male characters and narrators. Dreiser's writing is full of contradictions and tensions: between the male narrators' omniscient voices on the one hand and the erupting female

voices on the other; between the narrators' rejection of conventions and their embracing of (biological notions of) normality; between the female characters' claim for independence and their subjection to masculine sexual conquering in "normalized" relationships. It is the texts' internal contradictions and tensions that inevitably unravel its inherent gender bias, and thus the texts themselves critique their narrators' and characters' misogyny from within.

Like Dreiser, Grove links desire to the modern consumer culture whose ultimate success is the individual's voluntary and complicitous submission to the dominating power principle. Grove's interest in, but also suspicion of, desire goes hand in hand with his outspoken criticism of capitalism and what he generally calls Americanism. But like Dreiser's, Grove's works never turn into monological ideology against capitalism but rather present various positions that compete and struggle with each other. Grove often presents an alternative to modern consumer culture by conjuring up an economy of saving and self-sufficiency that he links to the patriarchal producer-agrarian mode. In *Search of Myself*, the artist is born in the midst of such contradictions. Grove evokes the artist's producer function in terms of the patriarchal producer father, conjuring up an almost feudal system to describe the artist's relationship with his creation. At the same time, the artist tries to sell his art to a feminine culture and lives in the midst of a modern consumer economy which seduces him into what he calls "externalization," that is into embracing of the consumer items. It is the contradictions of this position that constitutes him as an artist but it is also these contradictions that make for an identity that is always already on the verge of breaking apart.

In their analysis of the language of another (borderline) *fin-de-siècle* writer, Franz Kafka, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari point us to the potentially revolutionary impact of the minority writer: "How many people today live in a language that is not their own? Or no longer, or not yet, even know their own and know poorly the major language that they are forced to serve?" (84). For Deleuze and Guattari, the question is how "to become a nomad and an immigrant and a gypsy in relation to one's own language?" (85), because they believe such a "deterritorialized language" to be subversive of traditional authorities in its rejection of concepts of wholeness, in its longing to break boundaries, and its yearning for multiplicities.

In Grove the immigrant writer, as well as in Grove's immigrant characters (many of whom are also writers), there is a contradictory, unresolved oscillation between territorialization and deterritorialization. Grove the immigrant from Germany produces a literature in English that sounds foreign to many native English readers; he creates a literature that breaks boundaries between the old and the new, that challenges the authorities in place. At the same time it is also a literature that yearns obsessively toward a true "mother" language, a maternal vernacular that would point to an origin, give a sense of belonging and constitute the writer as whole. Always already divided, always on the margins, on the borderline between inside and outside, Grove and his characters are propelled by this very division to continue the spiral of creation in order to achieve an impossible sense of wholeness. But into this "schizophrenic" arrangement also erupts its opposite--the desire for order, for a system, for omnipotent power, a desire that is generally represented in a language and imagery of patriarchy, of sovereign power, represented in the old prairie pioneers, in the "masters of

the mill" and in the picture of the artist who looks down, "as though from the summit of a mountain" on the "empire" of his creation (*Myself* 262). Grove often conjures up the Vergilian imperial view from above, just as he conjures up the Vergilian concept of teleology in *A Search for America*: "By writing the book, in that long-ago past, I was freeing myself of the mental and emotional burden implied in the fact that I had once lived it and had left it behind. But the present pervaded the past in every fibre" (viii). Although playing with the concept, Grove's work is not teleological in the sense of Virgil's *Aeneid*, where every action is directed by, and subordinated to, the goal of creating the Roman Empire. In Grove's *America*, in contrast, the present not only becomes interwoven with the past, but in the circular journeys that immigrant Phil Branden undertakes, the present bends backwards to join the past, since the old (European) self and the young (Canadian) self are not separate, different entities but two aspects of the same split psyche.

The complexities and contradictions in Grove's and Dreiser's writing can be best summarized with a little episode from a recent literature conference. After I had presented a paper on Grove's treatment of discursive resistance in *Maurermeister Ihles Haus* and *Our Daily Bread*, one person reacted to my paper with astonishment. How could I see in Grove's writing all these "positive" elements after so many negative points had been uncovered about this author: his lies about his identity, his abandoning his wife, his antisemitism, etc. A similar criticism could be voiced against Dreiser whose writing is clearly not free of misogyny and who, in an effort to protest British "arrogance" and to assert his German background in the United States, defended Nazi Germany (although he later rescinded his

original position). And yet, despite my own critical attitude toward both writers, I would also like to maintain that a "resisting" reading is a fruitful approach to deal with their works, as it allows us both to uncover the strategies of resistance fictionalized in their works and to point to the narrators' and authors' complicities with the power structures of the systems they describe. Dreiser's and Grove's works should be read and studied precisely because they present us with works that challenge, parody, and satirize traditional roles and stereotypes and that at the same time, by suggesting new roles and forms of living, often expose how easy it is to slip into new stereotypes and new hierarchically structured relationships of power after the old ones have been left behind.





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