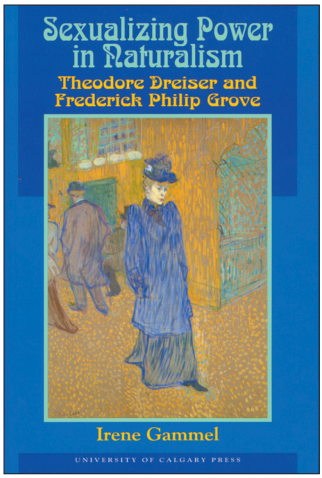


## SEXUALIZING POWER IN NATURALISM: THEODORE DREISER AND FREDERICK PHILIP GROVE

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# Power and the Docile Body

The last chapter was concerned with Foucault's critique of some of the ideological underpinnings of naturalism's treatment of sexuality; this chapter focuses on the areas in which naturalism intersects with Foucauldian conceptions of power and sexuality. Dreyfus and Rabinow have observed that Foucault "obviously rejects the naturalistic view that the body has a fixed structure and fixed needs."[1] At the same time, however, they also emphasize Foucault's invaluable insights into body-moulding techniques, a traditionally naturalist preoccupation: Foucault "is asking how the body can be divided up, reconstituted, and manipulated by society." Foucault's theory, of course, changed in the course of his life. In *The History of Sexuality* and *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1975), Foucault's theory intersects in fascinating ways with many of the classical concerns of naturalism, but the "later" Foucault revised many of his earlier statements to emphasize more strongly the

1 Dreyfus and Rabinow 111; following citation 112.

possibility of personal freedom available to individuals in the social network of power: "All my analyses are against the idea of universal necessities in human existence. They show the arbitrariness of institutions and show which space of freedom we can still enjoy and how many changes can still be made."[2] The role of the intellectual, then, is "to show people that they are much freer than they feel, that people accept as truth, as evidence, some themes which have been built up at a certain moment during history, and that this so-called evidence can be criticized and destroyed."

Foucault's early work shares with naturalist fiction a deep interest in the extent to which the human body and mind are shaped through social practices and institutions and how far human beings are free to change the constraints of their lives. As Regina Benjowski has observed in her reading of Foucault: "Diese Konstitution des Menschen als Subjekt ist im Hinblick auf den wechselnden Anteil und die unterschiedliche Effizienz von Eigen- und Fremdbestimmung für Foucault ein Schlüsselproblem."[3] Indeed, like most naturalist writers, Foucault is interested in the power effects and body-moulding techniques operating in social hierarchies and institutions (such as the prison or the hospital), and in the role of architecture and spaces as body-shaping forces. Foucault shares with naturalist fiction a critical focus on marginalized figures (the madman, the hysteric, the prisoner, the criminal), but since he is interested in showing "how we have indirectly constituted ourselves through the exclusion of some others: criminals, mad people, and so on,"[4] his theory can be applied as a critical tool to examine the use naturalism makes of marginalized characters.

Foucault's theory also intersects with naturalist fiction in his radical rejection of the self-reflective subject as the driving force of history. According to Foucault, subjectivity is deeply divided and has a life only on the basis of the external practices and discourses it internalizes. As Lee Clark Mitchell has observed in *Determined Fictions: American Literary Naturalism* (1989), naturalism anticipated these poststructuralist "attacks on the 'subject' that have become an integral part of the philosophical

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2 Michel Foucault, "Technologies of the Self," Martin et al. 11; following citation 10.

3 "This constitution of the human being as subject is a key problem for Foucault with respect to the varying degrees and different efficiencies in its self-determination and its determination through others" (my translation); "Philosophie als Werkzeug," *Denken und Existenz bei Michel Foucault*, ed. Wilhelm Schmidt (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1991) 176.

4 Michel Foucault, "The Political Technology of Individuals," Martin et al. 146.

tradition in this century." In fact, naturalism's most interesting innovation is precisely what has generally led the critics to dismiss it as bad writing: "its disruptive narratives and estranging styles" through which "naturalists challenged us to reconceive certain long-standing premises about the 'self.'" 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."[5]

Highlighting the "death" of the transcendental subject, Foucault's project has been to theorize what naturalism fictionalizes: that the subject's constitution through social practices implies its simultaneous subjection in the social network of power. This undercurrent of social determinism in Foucault's conceptualization of the body and subjectivity has perhaps been best summarized by Patrick Hutton, who contrasts Foucault's "deterministic" approach with that of Sigmund Freud (who figures prominently in Foucault's critical writing, albeit as a negative touchstone). Whereas Freud insists on the determining power of experiences that "have etched the surfaces of our psyches," Foucault examines "the formal rules that we have designed to discipline life's experiences."[6] According to Foucault, the whole social order is based on a principle of self-management that both affirms and challenges the notion of personal freedom. Subjectivity is constructed through "technologies of self," which are generally not created by the individual but are always already present in the social order: "The subject constitutes himself [*sic*] 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."[7] Foucault is interested in the determinism that results from the various ways individuals examine and classify themselves and each other in society, a technique of disciplinary power whose historical emergence he discusses in detail in *Discipline and Punish*.

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5 Lee Mitchell, *Determined Fictions: American Literary Naturalism* (New York: Columbia UP, 1989) 123, 17.

6 Hutton 136, 137.

7 Michel Foucault, "The Ethic of Care for the Self as a Practice of Freedom," interview January 20, 1984, *The Final Foucault*, ed. James Bernauer and David Rasmussen (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1988) 11.

Disciplinary power is a technique of exercising power without the use of violence. Its target is the body, which is rendered docile and productive through a host of disciplinary techniques that include spatial arrangements, whereby every body is assigned a "proper" place; timetabling, whereby the body's activities are divided according to time; isolation and recombination of different body forces in an assembly-line system; and instruction, whereby different levels of bodily expertise are demarcated from one stage to the next on the basis of examinations and testing. These disciplinary techniques hierarchize individuals on the basis of their abilities, their level, their "nature," assigning each individual a place in the scheme of order by endowing him or her with a "personal" identity. Thus, the social order is based on a continual method of comparison, of reward and punishment: "The perpetual penality that traverses all points and supervises every instant in the disciplinary institutions compares, differentiates, hierarchizes, homogenizes, excludes. In short it *normalizes*."[8]

Given this conception of disciplinary techniques, it is no coincidence that Foucault's paradigmatic model for the workings of modern power is an eighteenth-century prison model: Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon, 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 themselves continually under a supervising gaze, the prisoners will inevitably interiorize this supervising gaze, and as a result also internalize the prison rules. Thus the prisoners end up disciplining themselves: "There is no need for arms, physical violence, material constraints. Just a gaze. An inspecting gaze, a gaze which each individual under its weight will end by interiorising to the point that he is his own overseer, each individual thus exercising this surveillance over, and against, himself" (*PK* 155).

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." From the eighteenth century on, this panoptic modality infiltrated social institutions (army, schools, and medical field), serving "to reform prisoners, but also to treat patients, to instruct schoolchildren,

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8 Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1979) 183. Further references will appear in the text, abbreviated *DP*.

to confine the insane, to supervise workers, to put beggars and idlers to work" (*DP* 205). The principle of panopticism is ingenious in its simplicity: social institutions entice individuals into policing themselves, into becoming "normalized," with each individual confirming "the behavioral norms of the society at large."[9] With individuals monitoring themselves and developing "techniques of self-management," the locus of power is no longer a huge, external apparatus at the top of the hierarchy but rather is distributed in a multiplicity of different loci – in the interpersonal relationships at all levels of the hierarchy.

In its desire to create a sense of reality, naturalist fiction not only mimics these disciplinary techniques, but, more importantly, also interweaves them with the construction of individual identity. In his discussion of French naturalism, Philippe Hamon has observed that the realist-naturalist text "sometimes seems fascinated by this constructed dimension of the real that fragments not only an inhabitable space ..., but also fragments the gestures and strategies of the characters into timetables, technical directives."[10] Indeed, examples of spatial fragmentations abound in naturalist fiction: in the different floors in the building of Zola's *Pot-Bouille* (1882), in the factory of *An American Tragedy*, and in the different sections of the department store in *Au Bonheur des Dames*. In these works, spatial differences correspond to differences in the characters' activities, remunerations, and status. Spatial divisions are thus directly linked to naturalism's deterministic ideology, with architecture functioning as "a structure manipulating the characters whom it constrains to travel a particular distance" or "to carry out a particular action."[11] The compartmentalization, classification, and ordering of life are the very determinants – or technologies – that shape the emergence of various types of individuals.

Composed of "the very notion of distinction" inherent in such spatial fragmentations and categorizations, the naturalist world draws attention to Foucault's concept of disciplinary power, which constructs individuals through the very technologies that subject them, by regulating their bodies and minds. Relying on such scalar divisions, modern power does not work so much from the top of the hierarchy but is omnipresent in the social network, working at every level of the social hierarchy while regenerating the hierarchy each moment anew through the principle of

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9 Hutton 127.

10 Philippe Hamon, "The Naturalist Text and the Problem of Reference," Nelson 32–33.

11 Hamon 33.

inclusion and exclusion. By emphasizing the "reality" of these disciplinary powers, naturalist fiction – like Foucault – insists on making the body visible by showing how the biological and the historical are interwoven with each other in accordance with the development of modern technologies of power.

As a site through which docility is accomplished and subjectivity constituted, the body has also been of central concern to poststructuralist feminists. Acknowledging Foucault's invaluable insights into the sexualization of the body throughout history, Lois McNay writes in her recent work *Foucault and Feminism*: "One of the most important contributions that Foucault's theory of the body had made to feminist thought is a way of conceiving of the body as a concrete phenomenon without eliding its materiality with a fixed biological or prediscursive essence."[12] Since Foucault's theory generally glosses over the gender configuration of power, however, it was left mainly to feminists to identify women's bodies as the locus of male power.[13] Drawing on Foucault's theory of panopticism and disciplinary power, poststructuralist feminists have elaborated on the specific ways in which the female body is constructed and rendered docile in society. This is how German feminist Kornelia Hauser has "translated" Foucault's conception of power into feminist theory: "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.)"[14] Created on the basis of norms that ask for a particular female body language, advertisement often invites women to realize their particular, individual "type" by buying a particular product.

Zola illustrates this principle of power by exploring the modern consumer economy in the emerging department stores in *Au Bonheur des Dames*. Octave Mouret's new displays of varieties of colours and materials appeal to different types of women: to the aristocratic shopper, the

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12 Lois McNay, *Foucault and Feminism: Power, Gender and the Self* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992) 17. Further references will appear in the text abbreviated *FF*.

13 See Irene Diamond and Lee Quinby, introduction, *Feminism and Foucault: Reflections on Resistance*, ed. Irene Diamond and Lee Quinby (Boston: Northeastern UP, 1988) ix–xx.

14 Kornelia Hauser, "Sexuality and Power," *Female Sexualization: A Collective Work of Memory*, ed. Frigga Haug et al., trans. Erica Carter (London: Verso, 1987) 202; 200 for quotation below.

fashion-conscious sales clerk, and the economically minded bourgeois woman. At the same time, Mouret's Parisian "Paradise for Women" is a "normalizing machine" since, for an outside observer, the heterogeneous personalities melt into a homogeneous mass, into a "masse épaisse de chapeaux," as soon as the women enter the store. The very product that promises to make a woman "different" from the next person also draws her into the "normalizing" machinery, into predictable buying patterns.[15] This example illustrates that normalizing, panoptic power does not *force* women 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 Hauser describes the implications of Foucault's normalizing power for women. In *Au Bonheur des Dames*, the women are seduced by a new consumer economy that cajoles them into submission: "elles se sentaient pénétrées et possédées par ce sens délicat qu'il avait de leur être secret, et elles s'abandonnaient, séduites."[16]

*Sister Carrie* carries this point even further. None of her lovers forces Carrie Meeber 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 pregiven model; she is in "voluntary" submission to the often unspoken behavioural norms of her society, when she constructs herself according to the all-powerful American beauty myth. Thus norms and normalization go side by side with their apparent opposite, the construction of the individual and individualization. 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.'"[17] Thus by highlighting the construction of the female body while simultaneously questioning the female protagonist's freedom, naturalism exposes the cultural constraints involved in the practices and technologies of self that the social order uses to subjugate women.

At the same time, however, feminist approaches force us to raise the question whether the emphasis on the docile female body in naturalism (as well as in Foucault's theory) does not perpetuate the stereotype of the passive female victim, whose submission to a male seducer is al-

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15 For a detailed discussion of the concept of the "machine" in naturalism, see Mark Seltzer, *Bodies and Machines* (New York & London: Routledge, 1992).

16 Émile Zola, *Au Bonheur des Dames* (Paris: Unide, 1971) 74. Further references will appear in the text, abbreviated *AB*.

17 Hauser 198.

ways already predetermined. Lois McNay has summarized this feminist critique as follows: "Yet despite Foucault's assertions about the nature of resistance, on the whole, this idea remains theoretically undeveloped and, in practice, Foucault's historical studies give the impression that the body presents no material resistance to the operations of power. In *The History of Sexuality*, bodies are 'saturated' with disciplinary techniques, sex is 'administered' by a controlling power that 'wrapped the sexual body in its embrace'" (*FF* 40). Just as naturalist fiction emphasizes what Baguley calls *la chair molle*, inscribing a sexualized, subjected female body, so in Foucault's theory the language of power itself is sexualized, with a masculine seductive power "wrapping itself" around a feminized body, "penetrating" it, and putting it to work. Sexualized power presents itself in a seductive male guise, against which the feminized body knows virtually no resistance: its voluntary submission is guaranteed. Just as naturalism is characterized by a sense of inevitability, there is a sense in Foucault's theory that the seductive appeal of power cannot be escaped. The docility of the body is logical, predictable, always already assured.

Foucault's theory is characterized by certain blind spots in the domain of gender; poststructuralist feminist theory helps put in critical perspective the naturalist emphasis on a femininity that is automatically entrapped in the network of power relationships. At the same time, however, feminist theory will also be helpful in identifiying those sites in naturalist fiction in which the female body rejects the docility that Foucault sees as its inevitable fate. McNay's feminist emphasis on resistance and social change challenges Foucault's theory of the omnipresence of power: "What Foucault's account of power does not explain is how, even within the intensified process of the hysterization of female bodies, women did not slip easily and passively into socially prescribed feminine roles" (*FF* 41). This feminist perspective also helps to illuminate one of the contradictions of twentieth-century naturalist fiction: naturalism emphasizes women's entrapment in gender roles but also shows these women as challenging the very roles that confine them.

Furthermore, feminist theory is invaluable for an examination of the intersection of sexuality and power in the construction of the male body in naturalism. Rosalind Coward has argued that the male body is virtually absent in literature: "Men's bodies and sexuality are taken for granted, exempted from scrutiny, whereas women's bodies are extensively defined and overexposed. Sexual and social meanings are imposed

on *women's* bodies, not men's."[18] This feminist analysis of the male body is important for a discussion of naturalism, a literature that often presents the reader with the spectre of the disintegrating, suffering, and metaphorically castrated male body, in figures ranging from Zola's Coupeau in *L'Assommoir* to Dreiser's Hurstwood in *Sister Carrie*. The very representation of the male body seems to imply a loss of male power, signalling a process of victimization as well as feminization.

Moreover, realist-naturalist fiction is obsessed with seeing, observing, analyzing, and dissecting the physical body in microscopic detail, to make visible what seems to be invisible, to foreground the taboo, the private realm, the hidden pleasures and pains. While Foucault's concept of panopticism is important for a discussion of the all-seeing narrative "eye of power" in naturalist fiction, feminist theory draws attention to the consistent masculinizing of this panoptic eye. Naturalism offers a whole catalogue of male characters who appear to be in a position to see all (e.g., Mouret overlooking the complex operations of the *grand magazin* in *Au Bonheur des Dames*, or Cowperwood monitoring the financial shiftings in New York and Chicago), but women are seldom allowed to share this specular privilege. (One of the few female exceptions, Mme de Mertueil in *Les Liaisons dangereuses*, is a master spy, and her eventual exposure in public and the loss of one eye constitute a clear symbolic retributive punishment for overstepping social and textual boundaries.) Above all, it is the male narrators in naturalist fiction who enjoy panoptic privileges. Since the narrators are seldom dramatized (in other words, they do not appear as physical bodies in the works), they are placed in the privileged position of "seeing without being seen."[19] Endowed with an extremely powerful – panoptic – eye, they are in a position to gaze at, objectify, and desire the female characters and to comment on, rival with, or be complicitous with the male characters in the novels. Some phenomenological philosophers – above all Jean-Paul Sartre – have equated such a privileged specular position with the eye of God, or the "absolute Subject"; Foucault, in contrast, warns of a phenomenological

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18 Rosalind Coward, *Female Desire* (London: Granada Publishing, 1984) 229.

19 See also June Howard's *Form and History in American Literary Naturalism*, particularly chapter 4, entitled "Naturalism and the Spectator." Howard emphasizes that the spectator's privileged position has its limits too: "The barrier that separates the privileged spectator from the unfree actor, the free from the helpless, seems to imprison both, because the spectator rarely becomes involved in the action and when he does, his privilege seems alarmingly precarious" (126).

approach "which gives absolute priority to the observing subject."[20] And this has important implications for a Foucauldian evaluation of the narrator's position of power in naturalism.

Discussing the techniques through which naturalism makes the reader believe that the constructed world "refers to the real," Philippe Hamon has legitimized the male narrator's powerful position, arguing that this is naturalism's technique of convincing the reader of the reality and truth of what is represented: "I, the reader, need as mediator a certain image of the giver of the statements, an image of an authorized, knowing, serious narrator-author; I need to believe in him, in the competence or frankness of his telling."[21] Thus, this reliable author-narrator creates a "reality effect" through the powerful support of ideologies, academies, encyclopedias, and scientific discourses, in short through the very discourses that have been sanctified as truthful by the author's contemporary society. Hamon's theory of the narrator's credibility sounds plausible enough as long as the reader's and the narrator-author's ideologies broadly overlap; or as long as the scientific knowledges the narrator-author disseminates are deemed correct and valid according to the latest research findings. But the situation becomes much more complex when a late-twentieth-century reader is confronted with a nineteenth-century narrator whose pet ideology happens to be social Darwinism, a theory probably considered outdated and even dangerous by the majority of today's readers; or when a contemporary female reader is asked to accept as a credible truth what she might perceive as the author-narrator's sexist perspective on women.

Thus, instead of accepting the omniscient or semi-omniscient commenting male voices in naturalist texts as expressing a reliable standard whereby to judge the characters and events, Foucault and feminists ask us to see such a privileged male voice as just one voice amongst many. In his theory on panopticism, Foucault reminds us that even the supervisor in the Panopticon does not have absolute power or insight into what happens. The supervisor is only part of a larger network and by no means in a god-like position of holding all the strings. This, I would suggest, is also the position of the narrator-author in most naturalist works. Rather than submitting to the narrator's judgement, as many

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20 Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Vintage, 1973) xiv. See also Sartre's chapter entitled "The Look," in his *Being and Nothingness: A Phenomenological Essay on Ontology*, trans. Hazel Barnes (New York: Washington Square Press, 1966) 340–400.

21 Hamon 41.

critics have done, the Foucauldian reader is forced to raise questions such as: What is the bias or the 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 is the author in undermining the legitimacy of such "master discourses"? Rather than submit to the tyranny of what is to be "seen" on the texts' surface level, the reader is forced to examine what is relegated to the margins of the texts, into its gaps, into the not-to-be-seen. In other words, one of the intellectual reading pleasures of a naturalistic novel is to plunge into the network of power relationships in order to detect the narrator's ideological bias and to unravel the sexual/textual web through which the narrative voice tries to seduce the reader into complicity with a particular version of the truth. Thus the reader has to analyze how the narrator's position of power is implicated in the economy of pleasure and desire that the novel constructs.

Just as the narrative relationships in naturalist fiction are saturated with power, so its thematics and characterization are obsessed with power relations. It is this very focus on power that creates another anchorage point with Foucault's theories. Recognizing a Nietzschean will to power in human relationships, Foucault has analyzed power in terms of force relations, suggesting that rather than discuss power in terms of "contract or alienation," we should analyze it "primarily in terms of *struggle, conflict* and *war*" (*PK* 90). Indeed, the role of political power "is perpetually to re-inscribe this relation through a form of unspoken warfare; to re-inscribe it in social institutions, in economic inequalities, in language, in the bodies themselves of each and everyone of us" (*PK* 90). And this is the very conception of power adopted in naturalistic works: naturalism foregrounds power as struggle (in the paradigmatic battle between the lobster and the squid in Dreiser's *The Financier*), as conflict (between the different rivalling social factions; between male and female), erupting occasionally in physical battles (in the sexual rivalries between Gervaise and Virginie in *L'Assommoir* or between Aileen and Rita in *The Titan*), or in the very metaphors of war so prominent in Dreiser's fiction. The Nietzschean will to power is translated in twentieth-century naturalism into a "will to succeed" in a socioeconomic context and to dominate in individual relationships. In all of these battles, wars, and struggles, power manifests itself as a relation of forces.

According to Foucault, power is not something that is acquired, seized, or shared, but is exercised from innumerable points in the social hierarchy; it lives only in relationships and should thus not be equated with – or reduced to – a concrete capacity or property. Foucault shares naturalism's vision of a human world that is saturated with power: "It seems to

me that power *is* 'always already there', that one is never outside it" (*PK* 141). Thus the world is a place of perpetual struggle that should not be reduced to the binary struggle between two big subjects – the bourgeoisie versus the proletariat, for example – but instead is a place in which "[w]e all fight each other" (*PK* 208). Emphasizing the omnipresence of power, Foucault radically opposes a traditional view that links power to prohibition, to the big "No," a power that is seen as essentially repressive and negative.

This refusal to attach power to an "absolute Subject," such as "the Sovereignty of the Father, the Monarch, or the general will" (*PK* 140), leads Foucault to reject the importance of the legal apparatus in modern society. Instead, he argues, the importance of the law has been virtually displaced by a modern power that makes use of desire, pleasure, and the body, a power that works through pleasurable seduction rather than through repressive control. And yet, although naturalist fiction frequently emphasizes the predominance of the norm as an agency of power, many other naturalist works explore the power of juridical apparatuses (e.g., the power of laws denying a woman an abortion, or the law's power of taking a person's life, dramatized in Dreiser's *An American Tragedy*). Given these contradictions, it should come as no surprise that McNay has challenged the Foucauldian thesis that "[w]e have entered a phase of juridical regression" (*HS* 144). From a feminist perspective, McNay has emphasized the importance of the legal framework for women's emancipation in the struggle for equal rights: "Whilst not underestimating the discrepancy that often exists between formal and substantive rights, many freedoms have often derived from changes within the law, the most obvious example being the granting of female suffrage. Other legally established rights, such as the possibility for a woman to have an abortion, cannot be dismissed simply as another example of control over the body; rather, it has given women significantly more freedom in the control of their lives" (*FF* 45).

In twentieth-century naturalist fiction, the question of legal rights is addressed in a characteristic form. Many women are shown to claim for themselves the rights that males enjoy, so that in numerous ways their emancipatory strategies consist in appropriating the dominant masculine discourse in an effort to change social reality. Such discursive appropriations imply new freedoms for women but at the same time often reflect the fact that the women remain entrapped in the larger network of power. From a Foucauldian perspective, it could be argued that granting women particular rights at a time when juridical powers become less important constitutes modern power's clever strategy of glossing over the fact that women's bodies are controlled by a much more so-

phisticated forms of power. After all, Foucault is clearly opposed to an equation of power with enslavement: "Where the determining factors saturate the whole there is no relationship of power; slavery is not a power relationship when man [*sic*] is in chains."[22] Thus by its very definition, power always includes spaces of freedom: "It would not be possible for power relations to exist without points of insubordination, which, by definition, are means of escape."

Foucault, furthermore, distinguishes between different levels of power relationships within the social network, whereby the space for freedom differs in various types of relationships. The type of power relationship that guarantees a maximum of freedom for the partners involved consists in "strategic games" between partners, with each individual trying to "control, to delimit the liberty of others." The opposite type of relationship is characterized by "domination," or "what we ordinarily call power," since the space of freedom is greatly reduced, or can be said to exist only unilaterally. The third type, what Foucault calls the techniques of government, is somewhere in between "the games of power and the states of domination," allowing for more freedom, play, and reversal than a relationship of domination.[23]

Contradicting Jean-Paul Sartre's notion that "power is evil," Foucault describes power in terms of strategic games, manoeuvrings, and tactical shiftings. Since power is exercised from numerous points, there is no real binary division or opposition between rulers and ruled; indeed, as earlier noted, power relations could not exist without points of insubordination: "Every power relationship implies, at least *in potentia*, a strategy of struggle, in which the two forces are not superimposed, do not lose their specific nature, or do not finally become confused. Each constitutes for the other a kind of permanent limit, a point of possible reversal."[24] Although points of resistance are present everywhere in the power network, resistance will not automatically change the nature of the power relationship, but is really intrinsic to that same power relationship. Thus patriarchy can shift into matriarchy, but this is only a reversal of power relationships that can easily be reversed again: the power principle itself does not necessarily change.

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22 Michel Foucault, "Afterword: The Subject and Power," Dreyfus and Rabinow 221; following citation 225.

23 Foucault, "The Ethic of Care for the Self," 19–20.

24 Foucault, "The Subject and Power," 225.

Naturalism is full of such reversals of power that do not challenge the principle of the power relation itself: the *femme fatale* destroys males only to be destroyed herself; the male victimizer becomes victimized himself. Thus the discourses of resistance in naturalist fiction have to be examined in the larger framework of power. Also, naturalism has often presented itself in oppositional, even revolutionary, terms: as a leftist literature in a bourgeois culture, as a literature of social engagement in a period of *laissez faire* capitalism, and as an aesthetic *enfant terrible* in a culture of gentility. Foucault and feminism – with their different (even conflicting) emphases – force us to examine both naturalism's function as an oppositional force and the limitations of this opposition. With this in mind, let us return to David Baguley's emphasis on the vision of "entropy" in European naturalist fiction: "At the heart of this entropic vision of naturalist literature is the real crisis of human values, a recurrent thematics of disintegration, of spent energies, of crumbling moral and social structures."[25] This entropic vision should not mislead the reader into defining naturalist fiction too quickly as a destabilizing force. With the help of Foucauldian and feminist theories, this study will emphasize that naturalist fiction is defined by its ideological contradictions: its resisting impulses and its opposite function as the arm of power; its inscription of desire as a driving force of consumer culture and as a force that often moves beyond the boundaries of the systems of order that wish to contain it.

The ideological contradictions at the heart of naturalism are mirrored in its aesthetic and generic form, best exemplified in Grove's fiction. E. D. Blodgett has observed that Grove's works follow a comic structure, in which the female characters rebel against institutional constraints, challenging a rigid patriarchal "law," represented by comic blocking characters. Despite this comic set-up, however, the women's rebellion is always aborted: "the disruption never leads to the advent of a new order, but is at best frustrated comedy," whereby "all value-systems hang in suspense."[26] David Baguley's generic insights into naturalism's privileged endings illustrate a similar point: the deprivation ending, the banal ending, and the sententious ending all emphasize the denial of any positive "liberating" (or truly comic) solution to the problems presented. These frustrating endings reflect naturalism's frequent grounding in two contradictory ideological impulses: the oppositional, resisting impulse generally articulated in the challenging of class and gender boundaries;

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25 Baguley, "The Nature of Naturalism," 26.

26 E. D. Blodgett, *Configuration: Essays on Canadian Literatures* (Toronto: Essays on Canadian Writing Press, 1982) 147.

and the opposite impulse, articulated in a desire for order and regulation that places the new woman or the rebelling daughter back into the straitjacket of confining norms.

By claiming for themselves the right to write about sexuality, many naturalists challenged middle-class norms at the same time as they paradoxically consolidated their position as bourgeois, middle-class writers. Dreiser and Grove worked hard to overcome their *petit-bourgeois* background, reflecting in their autobiographical writing a fear, if not a paranoia, of sinking into a proletarianized lower class that they had fought so hard to escape. Naturalism's entropic vision with its challenging of systems of order also has an underside of paranoid fear: fear of women's sexual anarchy and dominance, of sexual disease, of proletarianization. These fears in turn give birth to an apparently insatiable desire for order inscribed in naturalism in a variety of forms: Zola's deterministic laws, Arno Holz's mathematical formula for naturalism, as well as the inscription of systems, categories, hierarchies, and taxonomies within naturalism's texual boundaries. These aesthetic, structural, and formal aspects underscore naturalism's desire for order. This "schizophrenic" oscillation between disorder and order causes Restif to introduce the anarchic prostitute in his fiction but also to write a treatise on how to regulate and control prostitution by turning it into a "normalized" social institution. Similarly, Dreiser's Carrie Meeber is not punished for her sexual transgressions but controlled in a much more effective way: she is seduced into voluntary submission to society's norms.

Just as Foucault denies that an ultimate liberation is possible, naturalism illustrates a very similar point. While naturalistic works have a "propensity to break through the constraints of frameworks,"[27] they seldom advocate a complete revolutionary reversal of power relations and even less the removal of forces of order. Insisting on the quiet triumph of the reality principle, naturalism demonstrates that the notion of an existential (Sartrian) freedom is an illusion, emphasizing with Foucault 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. Conversely, naturalist fiction rarely plunges into extreme irony – or the "unincremental repetition" of absurdity. Naturalism always presents a touch of social criticism and encourages a resisting position by keeping up a "realistic" hope for possibilities of social change.

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27 Yves Chevrel, *Le Naturalisme* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1982) 93.

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