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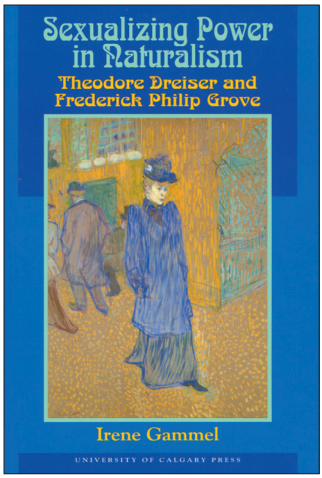

SEXUALIZING POWER IN NATURALISM: THEODORE DREISER AND FREDERICK PHILIP GROVE

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II. Dreiser, Naturalism and the New Woman

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Sister Carrie: Sexualizing the Docile Body

As a prolific producer of sexualized body-images, Carrie Meeber marks in American naturalist fiction the economic and cultural dawn of the twentieth century. Turning its back on the nineteenth-century agricultural economy, Dreiser's first novel does more than just reflect the spirit of a transitional age: it explores the deployment of sexualized power in the modern consumer and popular culture. The cosmopolitan world of *Sister Carrie* (1900) is one of casual sexuality that never leads to any permanent alliance in such forms as marriage and family. Indeed, Carrie's family truly vanishes from the textual web. The novel opens with the protagonist's train ride into Chicago, through which "the threads which bound her so lightly to girlhood and home were irretrievably broken."[1] Travelling from Chicago to New York and, as an actress, from stage to stage, Carrie Meeber remains in transit for the rest of the novel; in her

1 Theodore Dreiser, *Sister Carrie* (New York: Modern Library, 1961) 1. Further references will appear in the text abbreviated *SC*.

rocking chair, she is in motion even when she sits. This association with perpetual movement is appropriate because Carrie's body is an icon of change. When she steps out of the chorus to become a glamorous stage actress, she also emerges as the female equivalent of the American self-made man: she breaks through class boundaries, moving from her working class background to the top of the social hierarchy. Continually in movement, without any true attachments, Carrie's body is the perfect icon for the twentieth-century consumer culture.

Dreiser's radical questioning of traditional forms of alliance, to be sure, has its roots in French naturalism. As early as the eighteenth century, *Le Paysan perverti* shows a brother-sister couple undergoing their misadventures in the city; they are separated from their parents who are left to mourn the follies of their children. Zola's Nana is genetically linked to her parents, especially to her mother Gervaise's propensity for sensual "weakness," but she is really a metaphorical orphan, growing up as a neglected street urchin. In *Au Bonheur des Dames*, Denise, another orphan, arrives in Paris in charge of her younger brother. The family alliance is frequently threatened in nineteenth-century naturalism; Dreiser, however, goes a step further and initiates the twentieth century with a radical erasure of typical forms of kinship in his protagonist's life. The novel's title, then, is highly ironic, suggesting a family alliance that is virtually absent in the novel. Although Carrie's first lover, Charles Drouet, introduces himself at one point playfully as her brother, this role is the ironic mask of a womanizer who knows no loyalties.

Indeed, marriage, kinship, and a permanent name are foreign concepts to Dreiser's new woman. Carrie Meeber's two "marriages" are fakes – the one to Drouet is a mere facade, the second one to George Hurstwood is formally contracted, but is a mock wedding since Hurstwood has not even been legally divorced from his first wife. Moreover, Carrie's continual changing of names – from Caroline Meeber to Carrie, Mrs. Drouet, Mrs. Wheeler, and Carrie Madenda – reveal her lack of, or disregard for, any permanent kinship alliance. Just as she changes her names, so she changes her homes, moving from Minnie Hanson's home in Chicago to Drouet's, then to Hurstwood's in New York, only to leave Hurstwood and move into a tenement apartment with her friend Lola, and finally to settle in the Waldorf Astoria hotel, a home that subverts the very idea of a home. Carrie is truly alone, even when she is with other people. If attached, she only feels this attachment through its absence, as when she says good-bye to Drouet after having just met him on her train ride into Chicago: "She felt something lost to her when he moved away. When he disappeared she felt his ab-

sence thoroughly. With her sister she was much alone, a lone figure in a tossing, thoughtless sea" (*SC* 11).

In the light of Foucault's conception of power, this erasure of family alliances is no coincidence in a novel concerned with the sexualization of power in a modern consumer culture. In *The History of Sexuality*, Michel Foucault opposes the deployment of alliances – defined as "a system of marriage, of fixation and development of kinship ties, of transmission of names and possessions" (*HS* 106) – to Western society's deployment of sexuality, "a new apparatus which was superimposed on the previous one, and which, without completely supplanting the latter, helped to reduce its importance" (*HS* 106). Although the system of alliance and the deployment of sexuality have in common that they connect up with a circuit of partners, Foucault contrasts the two systems term by term: "The deployment of alliance is built around a system of rules defining the permitted and the forbidden, the licit and the illicit, whereas the deployment of sexuality operates according to mobile, polymorphous, and contingent techniques of power" (*HS* 106). Whereas the deployment of alliance is attached to the law and statutes, the deployment of sexuality engenders a continual extension of areas and forms of control and is concerned with the body's sensations and pleasures. Foucault summarizes the difference between the two systems as follows: "Lastly, if the deployment of alliance is firmly tied to the economy due to the role it can play in the transmission or circulation of wealth, the deployment of sexuality is linked to the economy through numerous and subtle relays, the main one of which, however, is the body – the body that produces and consumes" (*HS* 106–7).

It is Carrie's visible body (as both product of the consumer economy and specularized object of consumption) that becomes a field on which the city inscribes its network of desire and power. Disrupting forms of alliance between parents and children, brother and sister, husband and wife, Dreiser's city is a deeply sexualized space that takes hold of the individual's material body, seducing him or her into pleasurable submission in an expanding economy of consumer goods, so that "the characters in the novel are caught within the circumference of [the city's] materiality."[2]

The womanizer, with his "insatiable love of variable pleasure" (*SC* 4) and with his lack of deep loyalties, allegorizes both the erasure of forms

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2 Richard Lehan, "The City, the Self, and Narrative Discourse," *New Essays on "Sister Carrie,"* ed. Donald Pizer (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1991) 67.

of alliance and the deployment of seductive controls that take hold of Carrie as soon as she enters the city. When Carrie meets Charles Drouet, the narrator establishes a metonymical connection between his role as a "masher" and the city as a seductive magnet: "The city has its cunning wiles, no less than the infinitely smaller and more human tempter" (*SC* 2). Insisting that the "gleam of a thousand lights is often as effective as the persuasive light in a wooing and fascinating eye" (*SC* 2), the narrator simultaneously embeds Carrie's seduction by Drouet in a language of power: "Now she felt that she had yielded something – he, that he had gained a victory" (*SC* 8). And yet, while Carrie is seduced even on her way into Chicago, her allegorical "fall" also initiates her eventual triumph in the city. Just as Carrie is willing to "yield" to Charles Drouet's seduction, in order to triumph over him in the end, so her economic and social success is based on her willingness to "yield" her body to the city's seductive embrace.

If, for Dreiser, the womanizer represents the city's seductive "penetration" of the human body, the actress cum prostitute represents this material body as a specularized object of desire. In a newspaper article titled "The City," written in 1896, Dreiser evokes the big city in female terms, presenting it as the illusory fulfillment of all dreams, as a fictional cornucopia of pleasure, beauty, and sex in a framework of moral laxity. He represents the city in the figure of the naturalist 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."[3] Mary Magdalene, to be sure, 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."[4] Dreiser's analogy between the city and Mary Magdalene fits the title heroine of *Sister Carrie*, who innocently (and almost unknowingly) leaves victims in her wake.

"Yet amid all, men starve," Dreiser continues in "The City," deliberately disrupting the initial image of peace and compassion by cataloguing the "misery," the "hunger," the "isolation and loneliness," and "the

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3 Theodore Dreiser, "The City," *Theodore Dreiser: A Selection of Uncollected Prose*, ed. Donald Pizer (Detroit: Wayne State UP, 1977) 97.

4 Marina Warner, *Alone of All Her Sex: The Myth and the Cult of the Virgin Mary* (New York: Vintage, 1983) 235.

rummaging in garbage cans" of the "wild-eyed shrunken outcast," 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," 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.[5] The city turns into a naturalistic 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 is a space where "man" can survive only 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."[6]

Indeed, if Dreiser's naturalist universe is ruled by the forces of desire and pleasure that inscribe themselves on Carrie's body as soon as she arrives, it is also ruled by a Foucauldian "eye of power" that "penetrates" her body and ensures her "yielding" to the city's economy. Just as Mark Seltzer reminds us that realist fiction is "preeminently concerned with seeing,"[7] so in Dreiser's big cities gazes are not only omnipresent but are explored as a sophisticated technique of sexualized power. Inscribed in the city's architecture, the emphasis on seeing, the eye, and the visual permeates the novel. Dreiser's Chicago and New York use daylight to increase visibility by incorporating glass in the city's architecture. These windows give the appearance of social transparency, of breaking down walls and barriers, but, in fact, they increase the invisible barriers between inside and outside, multiplying and intensifying the points of

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5 Dreiser, "The City," 98.

6 Peter Conrad, *The Art of the City: Views and Versions of New York* (New York: Oxford UP, 1984) 179. Conrad 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).

7 Mark Seltzer, "*The Princess Casamassima*: Realism and the Fantasy of Surveillance," *American Realism: New Essays*, ed. Eric J. Sundquist (Baltimore & London: Johns Hopkins UP, 1982) 111.

power in the city by creating new hierarchies, intensifying the possibilities for disciplinary power. For example, Carrie, looking for work in Chicago, is daunted by these big windows and the gazes she suspects behind, gazes that magnify her own sense of insignificance. As a newcomer to the city, she enters a store only 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. Like the prisoner in Bentham's Panopticon, who cannot see the supervisor's eye but feels its omnipresence, so Carrie does not understand the working of the city's power. For her, the city is "the mysterious city"; its streets are "wall-lined mysteries to her," whose power networks escape her understanding.

Foucault describes this panoptic modality in *Discipline and Punish*. Applied to the whole social framework, the principle of Bentham's prison model implies an utopian dream of absolute visibility, absolute legibility, and the power of the collective and anonymous gaze on each individual: "Because, without any physical instrument other than architecture and geometry, [the panoptic schema] acts directly on individuals; it gives 'power of mind over mind'" (*DP* 206). In the social framework, the ultimate effect of panopticism is self-policing; everyone becomes a self-supervisor. Dreiser illustrates this (Foucauldian) rupture between the inflexible eye that watches the dungeon, on the one hand, and the ingenuity of the panoptic city, on the other. Anticipating Foucault's theory, Dreiser opposes the panoptic city with repressive, archaic dungeon spaces that fill Carrie with nausea and boredom.

Indeed, Carrie is the first in a long line of Dreiserian characters who are forced to descend into metaphorical dungeons. Like Clyde Griffiths's humiliating descent into the "shrinking room" of his uncle's collar factory in *An American Tragedy*, Carrie's entrance into the world of economy marks a "descent" into the nineteenth-century naturalist world of a dimly lit shoe factory. Here, not only is her enjoyment of bodily pleasure suspended, but 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" (*SC* 42–43). Yet Dreiser also locates the repressive power of the "dungeon" in the private domestic space, as when Carrie lives with her sister Minnie Hanson in Chicago or with Hurstwood in her New York apartment. Satisfying the most basic needs, these domestic dungeons give a sense of security to Carrie, but they are also dark, closed, claustrophobic spaces that evoke stagnation, depression, and a sense of being buried alive, so that the body oscillates between two extremes, lethargy and

rebellion. Unlike the naturalist fiction of the nineteenth century (e.g., Zola's *L'Assommoir*), *Sister Carrie* quickly "liberates" its female protagonist from this metaphorical inferno. The "eye" of the "dungeon ward" in *Sister Carrie* is not very effective, revealing such repressive relations to be archaic. Carrie has no trouble leaving the Hanson and the Hurstwood dungeons in Chicago and New York: she simply leaves little notes behind.

The factory, then, is only a backdrop that allows Dreiser to highlight the contrasting reality of the panoptic city, that is, the public city-spaces: the stores, the streets, the saloons, the theatres, and the hotels, spaces where the private becomes public and where life is imbued with pleasure and desire, not repression. 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; 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." *Sister Carrie* represents the city as a space of desire, in which the darkness of the dungeon is swept away by a flood of everlasting light, a space that conquers the blackness of the night with lamps, lanterns, and electricity. Thus, Dreiser's fiction follows the tradition of Zola's *Au Bonheur des Dames*, which contrasts the dimly lit, old-fashioned boutiques with the "foyer d'ardente lumière" of Mouret's newly emerging Parisian department store, which not only exploits but creates new desires. Mouret's *Au Bonheur des Dames* is based on the principle of Foucault's Panopticon, bathing the merchandise in light through new architectural designs: "Partout on avait gagné de l'espace, l'air et la lumière entraient librement, le public circulait à l'aise" (*AB* 193–94). Similarly, Dreiser highlights the architectural and spatial transformations that create the Chicagoan Panopticon, in which power relationships are multiplied and invested with pleasure, not repression. The panoptic city is like the mythical Argus, endowed with hundreds of eyes, which never sleep and never tire.

Illustrating the mechanisms of sexualized power, Chicago's best saloon, Fitzgerald and Moy's, is presented as such a panoptic microcosm, shining out "with a blaze of incandescent lights, held in handsome chandeliers" and refracted in the polished surfaces of the bar and the glassware (*SC* 48). The appeal of this "lighted place" is such that the narrator muses: "It must be that a strange bundle of passions and vague desires give rise to such a curious social institution or it would not be" (*SC* 52). Indeed, the club's magnetic attraction relies on creating and perpetuating social hierarchies in moments saturated with sensualized power: "Drouet, for one, was lured as much by his longing for pleasure as by

his desire to shine amongst his betters" (*SC* 52). Amidst the sparks of Fitzgerald and Moy's, every customer receives a finely tuned and graded greeting from its manager, Hurstwood, a gesture that assigns a social hierarchy even to the socially prominent. In this panoptic universe, the "eye of power" wraps itself around the individual body in a seductive embrace. Indeed, the narrator's language describing this power principle is intertwined with overt sexual tropes, as when he likens the club to "a strange, glittering night-flower, odour-yielding, insect-drawing, insect-infested rose of pleasure" (*SC* 53). In this club "for men only," the sensual attraction consists in recognizing in each other's body one's personal social status; here, the male gaze, inspecting the body of another male, is deeply eroticized. Hurstwood, "dressed in excellent tailored suits of imported goods, a solitaire ring, a fine blue diamond in his tie, a striking vest of some new pattern, and a watch-chain of solid gold," attracts Drouet's attention: "Drouet immediately conceived a notion of him as being some one worth knowing" (*SC* 49). What is sexualized in this homoerotic specular encounter is the principle of power that connects the two males; the "lure" is sparked by Drouet's recognition of Hurstwood as a socially superior person, whose acquaintance might be useful, while Hurstwood enjoys an eroticized pleasure of confirming his superior status in Drouet's presence.

Chicago's panoptic universe takes hold of Carrie's body in a similar fashion, by absorbing her into the social hierarchy in such moments of specular scrutiny. According to Foucault, the panoptic modality of power relies on "hierarchical surveillance, continuous registration, perpetual assessment and classification" (*DP* 220), which is guaranteed through the anonymous, social gaze on the individual. When entering a Chicagoan department store for the first time, Carrie recognizes in the dismissive gaze of the female sales clerk "a keen analysis of her own position" (*SC* 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 social identity takes place through such acts of mutual inspection, which are imbued with both masochistic and sadistic pleasures. In this naturalist universe, identity is based on a system of difference, not on an innate, unchangeable identity. "The heart understands when it is confronted with contrasts" (*SC* 360), the narrator formulates, thus confirming that the construction and perpetuation of the social hierarchy of power relies on such moments of social interaction, not on innate physiology. Deeply rooted in desire, such moments are imbued with pleasure and pain.

Moving beyond the conventions of nineteenth-century hereditary determinism, Dreiser's naturalism gives birth to a humanity that finds

itself on the uneasy borderline between desire and free will: "Our civilisation is still in a middle stage, scarcely beast, in that it is no longer guided by instinct; scarcely human, in that it is not yet wholly guided by reason" (*SC* 83). Although in some instances the narrator conflates instincts with desire, *Sister Carrie* reveals how much the force and direction of desire are subject to cultural influences. Indeed, the treatment of desire in *Sister Carrie* in many ways confirms the neo-Freudian theory of Jacques Lacan. According to the French psychoanalyst, 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."[8] 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. 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.[9]

In the cultural framework, then, desire is transformed into innumerable demands without ever exhausting itself, a phenomenon that has become the basis of the success of modern consumer capitalism. Creating continually new, desirable objects for its customers, this economy will never be able to "fulfill" the customer completely and thus in fact perpetuates the desire for buying, perpetuates the chase for the next object that gives the illusion of being the ultimate key to satisfaction.

Émile Zola, to be sure, was the first to expose the power principle behind the sexualized appeal of consumer goods in the modern mass market economy. His characterization of Octave Mouret appropriately interweaves the language of power with the language of pleasure: the personification of Mephistophelian seduction ("Il était la séduction" [*AB* 304]), "Mouret enveloppait tout le sexe de la même caresse" (*AB* 34). Describing modern power's use of sexuality, Foucault uses very similar

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8 *Écrits: A Selection*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York & London: Norton, 1977) 286.

9 Jean Laplanche and J. B. Pontalis, *The Language of Psycho-Analysis*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (New York: Norton, 1973) 483.

terms: "The power which thus took charge of sexuality set about contacting bodies, caressing them with its eyes, intensifying areas, electrifying surfaces, dramatizing troubled moments" (*HS* 44). With his "passion de vaincre la femme" (*AB* 194), Mouret conquers women by examining and inspecting their bodies and by touching and caressing them with new merchandise, designed not to satisfy but to awaken and inscribe on their bodies continually new "feminine" desires and pleasures, which simultaneously engender new sites of power.

Similarly, it is the Chicagoan department store – in 1884 "in its earliest form of successful operation" (*SC* 23) – that appeals, caresses and awakens Carrie's desire and takes control in shaping her body. Just as the newly installed display windows increase the desire of those outside to be inside, by confronting them with their lack, their not having, their being less, so the city's power takes hold of Carrie by tempting her with merchandise behind glass. Once Carrie has entered the department store, her body is "penetrated" by new seductive voices (that echo Drouet's voice from the novel's opening): "'My dear,' said the lace collar she 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'" (*SC* 111). This animation of the clothes with cajoling voices is a clever technique to emphasize how much they are invested with an interiorized desire. To describe Carrie's voluntary submission to these forces, Dreiser uses an appropriate double discourse. Evoking a naturalist sense of inevitability to emphasize the merchandise's irresistible power, his language also underscores a reality of free will, suggesting that there is a space of freedom in this pleasurable submission. For example, 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!" (*SC* 111–12). This space of freedom, in turn, confirms the Foucauldian idea that power includes and even produces forms of resistance. In Dreiser's naturalist universe, power never implies slavery but always entails the subject's complicitous submission to the promise of pleasure and desire.

While Dreiser's treatment of consumer seduction echoes Zola's (and anticipates Grove's) emphasis on compulsive female shopping, Dreiser's refuses to attach this desire to a psychological dysfunction. Zola, for example, explores kleptomania as a logical extension of the new consumer economy that produces new types of "voleuses," among them "les voleuses de profession," "les femmes enceintes dont les vols se spécialisaient," and thirdly, "les voleuses par manie, une perversion du

désir, une névrose nouvelle qu'un aliéniste avait classée, en y constatant le résultat aigu de la tentation exercée par les grands magasins" (*AB* 209). Grove makes a similar association between shopping and psychological disease when, for Fanny Essler, the desire for clothes becomes more important than eating. In one scene, she impulsively buys a pair of gloves and then realizes not only that she has spent her last money but also that the desired object, once it has become a possession, ceases to be desirable. For Zola's and Grove's female shoppers, compulsive shopping is rooted in a repressed or frustrated sensual desire, which leaves the customers as unsatisfied as the sexual act itself. For Zola and Grove, then, compulsive shopping is an act of *Ersatzbefriedigung*, whereas for Dreiser the pleasures of shopping are not *ersatz*, not secondary, but equal in importance to other sexual activities. If anything, Dreiser makes an effort to "normalize" the sartorial drive that stimulates Carrie into action.

The difference between Zola's conception of sexualized power and Dreiser's is even more significant in light of Foucault's theory on panopticism and power. Zola, significantly, describes Octave Mouret as "le roi absolu" in his Parisian consumer kingdom, as a figure who holds all the strings from above and whose eye sees all: "Mouret se planta, seul et debout, au bord de la rampe du hall. De là, il dominait le magasin, ayant autour de lui les rayons de l'entresol, plongeant sur les rayons du rez-de-chaussée" (*AB* 83–84). Placed in the store's strategic centre, Mouret appears like an eroticized centre of power: he is the originator of the store, the head behind its architectural design, and the head of a hierarchy of control that consists of a number of *chefs*, *sous-chefs*, and *inspecteurs* who all report back to Mouret. He is a man endowed with "le génie de la mécanique administrative" (*AB* 37). Zola does not even shrink from evoking the language of religion, whereby the department store itself becomes a modern "cathedral," with Mouret dominating over the different *rayons* as an all-seeing eye of god.

In contrast, Dreiser's conception of power is more "Foucauldian." There is no "monarchical" centre of power in *Sister Carrie*, nor do any of the characters possess Mouret's *génie* or omniscient eye. Whereas Mouret's position of power evokes the supervisor's position in the Panopticon, Foucault and Dreiser refuse to present a form of power with a capital *P*. In an interview reprinted in *Foucault Live*, Foucault highlights this point, revising his earlier position as put forward in *Discipline and Punish*: "In reference to the reduction of my analyses to that simplistic figure which is the metaphor of the Panopticon, ... it is easy to show that the analyses of power which I have made cannot at all be reduced to this

figure."[10] Dreiser's naturalist fiction illustrates the same point. There is no supervisor nor a single "eye of god" in *Sister Carrie*, suggesting that there is no undivided or ultimate locus of power. Just as Dreiser distanced himself in his naturalist fiction from his religious childhood beliefs in an all-powerful god, so he distanced himself from the idea of a unified figure of power.

Indeed, power in *Sister Carrie* does not emanate from one fixed locus but is omnipresent and widely dispersed in the social body, attaching itself to many different processes and appearing in continually new forms. "Power is not omnipotent or omniscient," but it is often "blind," writes Foucault, arguing that because of this "blindness" power is forced to devise continually new, heterogeneous strategies of control: "If it is true that so many power relationships have been developed, so many systems of control, so many forms of surveillance, it is precisely because power was always impotent."[11] In contrast to Zola's emphasis on Octave Mouret's powerful personal control, Dreiser makes his readers repeatedly aware of the limitations of those in a position of power. These limits are exemplified by Charles Drouet, who is, significantly, set up as a mediocre, banal character, just as Carrie's second seducer, Hurstwood, is confronted with his inevitable downfall after becoming caught in the city's intricate network. Likewise, Carrie herself, who eventually triumphs over the two men, is often described as blind, while her body is suggestive of sexualized docility. In contrast to Zola's personification of power in Octave Mouret, Dreiser uses Carrie's continually changing body to represent the mobile forces of power, to describe how the docile body becomes an anchor and a tool for power relations.

Much of *Sister Carrie* is devoted to the birth-giving of Carrie's body in power relationships, whereby the absence of any form of permanent kinship in Carrie's life allows Dreiser to highlight the construction of this character through norms and social practices. Carrie is not genetically determined, as Nana is, nor is she psychologized, as Grove's Fanny Essler or some of Dreiser's later characters are; instead, the technologies of her self-construction have a Foucauldian ring. Foucault has suggested that human bodies are inevitably constructed in the social network: "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" (*DP* 217; emphasis added). Adopting these social technologies, Carrie creates her

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10 Michel Foucault, "Clarifications on the Question of Power," *Foucault Live* (Interviews, 1966-84), ed. Sylvère Lotringer (New York: Semiotext[e], 1989) 183.

11 Foucault, "Clarifications on the Question of Power," 183, 184.

body systematically through daily 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 learns to use "her feet less heavily" (*SC* 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. In her poststructuralist feminist theory, Kornelia Hauser has demonstrated how much such body- and self-constructions entail the subject's "normalization "and "docility." Hauser explains that, in a consumer culture, 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. Thus, at the same time that women buy into these individualizing norms, they become also thoroughly sexualized and "normalized."[12] Carrie Meeber is born through the very technologies that subject her in the social network, so that her body and subjectivity are produced in and through power. Power anchors itself in Carrie's body, penetrates it, and achieves its docility, and through this very docility also turns her sexualized body into a new tool of seduction. Constructed through the city's myriad of sartorial and behavioural discourses and practices, Carrie's body eventually becomes a living advertisement for the modern consumer culture.

It is this bodily complicity with her consumer culture that has led Walter Benn Michaels to identify Carrie's "insatiable" body as "the body of desire in capitalism."[13] It is her desire that makes Carrie survive in her society, Michaels argues, while Hurstwood, who has stopped desiring and lives only to fulfill his basic needs, finally dies. Yet Dreiser's narrative does not unequivocally support the desire that gives birth to Carrie's body, as Michaels's argument suggests. After all, desire is also what subjugates the female body, as Dreiser demonstrates through 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.[14] It is this mediation of others in directing desire that

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12 Hauser 198.

13 Walter Benn Michaels, "Fictitious Dealing: A Reply to Leo Bersani," *Critical Inquiry* 8 (August 1981): 169.

14 René Girard, *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel: Self and Other in Literary Structure*, trans. Yvonne Freccero (Baltimore & London: Johns Hopkins UP, 1976) 1–52.

creates relationships of power. Discussing the *nouveaux magazins* in Zola's *Au Bonheur des Dames*, David Bell has pointed out that in the realm of fashion the subject's needs and desires are determined by a "collective other": "the individual subject never buys a fashion commodity for its intrinsic concrete worth or usefulness, but only because that commodity has been designated as desirable by the other."[15]

Thus it should come as no surprise that underneath the narrator's overt eulogy of desire, Dreiser's *Sister Carrie* 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 (male) 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, Charles Drouet insinuates all the objects that will become desirable for Carrie: clothing, the theatre, the crowds. Drouet's cliché that Carrie reminds him of some popular actress not only becomes a desirable goal but also becomes Carrie's identity later in the novel. Insisting "upon her good looks," 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" (*SC* 113). Drouet holds up models that 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 (nor is the model of promiscuity that Dreiser valued necessarily "feminine," as Michaels argues).[16] 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 eying it from a few paces with real pleasure" (*SC* 85). Drouet's pleasurable dressing of Carrie's body acts as a kind of foreplay to the sexual act itself. As the examples of Drouet, Hurstwood, Lester Cane, and Clyde Griffiths show, in Dreiser's naturalist fiction such moments of male specular pleasure are a synecdoche for masculine sexual pleasure; the male gaze is the first step in a sexual ritual that culminates

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15 David F. Bell, *Models of Power: Politics and Economics in Zola's "Rougon Macquart"* (Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1988) 112–13.

16 Michaels 169.

in phallic penetration and "possession." As a promiscuous womanizer, Drouet represents himself (and his male desire) in the long series of those women he seduces, and looking is only the first step of this male form of self-representation by sexual appropriation and accumulation. Thus, the archetypal capitalist activity is linked less to the female body and female desire, than to male desire and 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 reconstitute himself as an eternal seducer-appropriator through her. Dreiser's main narrative voice does not criticize this male form of "self-representation," but celebrates it: Drouet, we are told, "would remain thus young in spirit until he was dead" (*SC* 137).

The narrator, to be sure, is complicitous with his male character, even while criticizing Drouet for his crudeness and tactlessness. "Drouet was not shrewd enough to see that this was not tactful. He could not see that it would be better to make her feel that she was competing with herself, not others better than herself" (*SC* 113), the narrator argues, implicitly advocating a principle of manipulation (and normalization) that has become common practice in modern advertisement, which tells women to "improve" their own personal type and to reach their own potential by buying and using a particular product. Although most of the time the narrator sympathetically approves of what Carrie does, he is really Drouet's better double, sharing his male character's feminized, sartorial desire by helping him "dress" Carrie.

At the same time, the author also doubles himself in Carrie: she is born in the same year as Dreiser, she shares his desire for the big city, and she moves up the social ladder like Dreiser himself. Given Dreiser's Flaubertian identification with his female protagonist, the narrative-authorial participation in dressing Carrie can be seen as the author's own, safely displaced and sublimated desire for cross-dressing. Since J. C. Flugel speaks of the social curtailing of male sartorial display as "The Great Masculine Renunciation,"[17] it should come as no surprise that Dreiser simultaneously conceals and exposes his *Verkleidungstrieb* in his writing. While the authorial voice insists that a "woman should some day write the complete philosophy of clothes" (*SC* 5), Dreiser himself was a contributor to fashion magazines (like Flaubert). Overtly

17 Quoted in Apter 80, 82.

reinscribing the conventional naturalist boundaries between male and female (sartorial) desire, he covertly dresses himself in women's clothing in his naturalist fiction.

This *mise-en-abîme* of specular gazes and sensualized power penetrating the female body is carried even further when Carrie's body is on stage. Like Zola's Nana, Carrie Meeber triumphs in her society as an actress who lacks any real acting talent but successfully compensates her audience with "autre chose." And yet, Nana and Carrie are radically different characters, reflecting the cultural differences and shifts in the expressions of naturalist fiction in the twentieth century. To conceptualize these differences, recall how Nana appears on stage in the novel's opening chapter, dangerous in her nakedness: "Tout d'un coup, dans la bonne enfant, la femme se dressait, inquiétante, apportant le coup de folie de son sexe, ouvrant l'inconnu du désir. Nana souriait toujours, mais d'un sourire aigu de mangeuse d'hommes."[18] Nana's female sexuality is mythologized as she appears in her role of Venus, while she is simultaneously degraded as *La Mouche d'Or*. As a sexual icon she represents the danger of eros with its implicit threats of social contamination and corruption. The power relationships in *Nana* involve the sado-masochistic pattern so typical of naturalist fiction, whereby Nana is alternatively victim and victimizer, continually reversing positions of power without escaping the entrapment in power itself.

If Nana's prostitution on and off stage represents the late-nineteenth-century commercialization of life, Carrie's body as a sexualized beauty icon represents the increasingly subliminal seductiveness of Chicago's and New York's urbanite consumer economy. Dreiser aligns the new, financially independent woman with the naturalist prostitute, by emphasizing that Carrie's spectacular success on stage is built on a very subliminal fantasy of power and pleasure for the male audience. When Carrie is on stage, men project different fantasies into her body; for each she becomes something different, like the prostitute who is called on to become any feminine type her customer requires. Like a pornography-artist, she is detached from the desires she arouses in the male audience. In ironic reversal of Nana's power, 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" (*SC* 205–6). Angela Carter reminds us that this projection of female vulnerability was also Marilyn Monroe's ambivalent key to

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18 *Nana*, in *Les Rougon-Macquart*, vol. 2, ed. Henri Mitterand (Paris: Gallimard, 1961) 1118.

success on screen; she projected "the enigmatic image of irresistibility and powerlessness, forever trapped in impotence."[19] Like America's Monroe-like Hollywood actress, Carrie the Broadway actress becomes, as Philip Gerber has put it, a "celebrity, modern style."[20]

With her moodiness and melancholia, Carrie is a convenient popular representation in a time of economic depression, labour turmoil, and unemployment. Like Madonna in our own *fin de siècle*, Carrie offers her audience a "material" body as an object of desire, for men to be desired as a sexual object, for women to be desired as an object of imitation, and thus she survives in a competitive market economy by becoming an icon for the consumer culture herself. In her exploration of the American beauty myth, Lois Banner has pointed out that in the 1890s a new type of show girl became popular on the American stage: she neither sang nor danced but was included to show the latest in fashion and beauty. She did not participate in the physical fitness or feminist emancipation movement, but represented a conservative plump, sensual, and passive type of beauty.[21] This modern hetaira-actress, as Simone de Beauvoir has argued, "does not repudiate that passive femininity which dedicates her to man";[22] so Carrie's acting talents, according to the narrator, are based on a "passivity of soul," a soul that is "the mirror of the active world." Although Carrie rises to fame as a Broadway actress whose picture and name are multiplied seemingly *ad infinitum* over the big city, she is really a showgirl who shares with Nana the lack of any real acting talent. This aligns her more with the entrapment of the naturalist prostitute than with the new woman who "writes" her own life as an artist.

This alignment of Carrie's body with passivity and docility is deliberate, as Dreiser's journalistic writing shows, particularly his interview and article on American singer Lillian Nordica, published in January 1900 (the year of *Sister Carrie*'s publication). In her interview with Dreiser, Nordica emphasized the importance of "strength of character, determination, and the will to work" as determining factors of her successful career on stage: "I discovered that real fame, – permanent recognition, which cannot be taken away from you, – is acquired only by a lifetime

19 Carter 71.

20 Philip Gerber, "A Star is Born: 'Celebrity' in *Sister Carrie*," *Dreiser Studies* 19 (1988): 15.

21 Lois W. Banner, *American Beauty* (New York: Knopf, 1983) 152.

22 Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, ed. and trans H. M. Parshley (New York: Vintage, 1974) 632.

of most earnest labor."[23] Writing *Sister Carrie*, Dreiser decided to silence this female success story, and instead to interweave Carrie's artistic and professional career with the American beauty myth, a myth deeply ingrained in American popular culture with all its constraining and misogynistic implications. Dreiser, to be sure, invests the female beauty myth with a new meaning, using it as a subtext to inscribe in naturalism women's newly acquired powers: her ability to have her own income and to become independent of male support, and her ability to make it like a self-made man. Thus, by recontextualizing the old myth, Dreiser also gives it a somewhat new ideological twist.

When Theodore Dreiser published *Sister Carrie*, his language promoting the novel suggested a clear-cut ideological agenda: to portray life and human nature "as it is," to free his characters from the shackles of Victorian morality and to provide some kind of documentary truth on the rapidly changing social life in the city. Dreiser's representation of *fin-de-siècle* femininity, however, is by no means as clear-cut as his promotional discourse suggests: the gender ideology inscribed in his naturalism reveals deep contradictions and unresolved tensions. Although *Sister Carrie* celebrates the New Woman as an American success story, Carrie "makes it" by mimicking traditional femininity. If there is a "feminist" quality in *Sister Carrie*, it is expressed in the motif of a woman claiming a new power and role for herself while making clever use of her traditional femininity. Granted, Carrie does not speak the language of the new woman, nor is she connected with the contemporary women's movement. But at the same time as she presents herself as a "docile body" on stage, she manages to manipulate and parody the traditional text of female submission and sentimental melodrama she enacts as an actress. "[L]ove is all a woman has to give" (*SC* 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 vizier: "I am yours truly" (*SC* 474). By ironically acknowledging an illusory power relationship while using words that

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23 "The Story of a Song-Queen's Triumph," *Selected Magazine Articles of Theodore Dreiser: Life and Art in the American 1890s*, vol. 2, ed. Yoshinobu Hakutani (Rutherford: Fairleigh Dickinson UP, 1987) 38, 49.

clearly digress from the original script, Carrie gives her language a satirical effect. She even manages to steal the audience's laughter from the powerful vizier, 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 vizier under the guise of exaggerated feminine humbleness.

At the same time, Dreiser also articulates the deep crisis of masculinity produced by the spectre of a powerful women's movement. It is, above all, the novel's subtext that inscribes in Dreiser's naturalism a deeply felt "crisis of masculinity." George Hurstwood's tragedy and deep befuddlement are related, both structurally and thematically, to Carrie's social success and triumph. Indeed, Hurstwood's male powers are supplanted by female powers, and Carrie's role comes to double that of Hurstwood's first wife, Jessica. Representing the shift in women's growing social and judicial powers in American society, Mrs. Hurstwood makes her husband realize the end of his male prerogatives in the first third of the novel, just as Carrie confronts him with his limitations in the second half.

Thus, it is no coincidence that Hurstwood's confusion and downfall should be initiated by Mrs. Hurstwood's categorical demand for a divorce, an event that corresponds to the changes in marital conventions in the late 1890s. Turn-of-the-century America witnessed a rising divorce rate caused mainly by middle-class women who no longer tolerated unsatisfactory relationships with unfaithful husbands. The more specific historical model for Mrs. Hurstwood's action was probably Alva Vanderbilt's spectacular divorce from her husband in 1898 on the grounds of adultery, a divorce that signalled to males an end of their sexual prerogatives (many married men had until then enjoyed extramarital affairs as their "natural" right).[24] Similarly, Hurstwood's final quarrel with Jessica is prompted by his infatuation with Carrie and by his angry insistence on his (male) rights: "As long as I'm in this house I'm master of it, and you or any one else won't dictate to me – do you hear?" (*SC* 239), he tells his wife, only to find out that his patriarchal language of authority has lost its power. The discursive power appears to have shifted to Mrs. Hurstwood, who interrogates her husband like a prosecutor and speaks a new language of judicial empowerment: "'I'll find out what my rights are. Perhaps you'll talk to a lawyer, if you won't to me"

24 For a discussion of Alva Vanderbilt's influential social role, see Banner 191, 194.

(*SC* 239), she tells Hurstwood, who is "on the defensive at a wink and puzzled for a word to reply" (*SC* 237). Metaphorically stripped of his legal and financial powers (all his assets are in his wife's name), Hurstwood quickly moves beyond the realm of legality, eloping with Carrie after taking money from his employer, Fitzgerald and Moy's.

Although it is prompted by such shifts in legal powers, Hurstwood's downfall is mainly attributed to normative practices, illustrating Foucault's point that the juridical powers have become secondary in importance to normative powers (represented in the novel by Carrie). With Hurstwood's demise juxtaposed to Carrie's social rise, his "worn-out masculinity" is metaphorically supplanted by a new "femininity." This shift is represented in the changing sensualized body-images. It is precisely Hurstwood's body-image, carefully fabricated in Fitzgerald and Moy's club "for men only," that gives him his powerful identity. 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. In the "female" city, however, Hurstwood's formerly powerful body-image undergoes a negative metamorphosis that is spectacular in its visual impact. Once in New York, in the big (social Darwinistic) pond, Hurstwood does not plunge into absolute anonymity, as Ellen Moers (and the narrator) argues. 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. Entering a hotel lobby, he is immediately recognized as a tramp and asked to leave. It is only logical that Hurstwood should become depressed about his new identity and, as a result of the depression, lose further 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 and how he finally becomes physically sick, only to recognize this bodily deterioration in every gaze he encounters. While caring for the body is invested with desire, pleasure, and a *joie de vivre*, this process of bodily disintegration is accompanied by masochistic depression and leads to Hurstwood's suicide.

Dreiser dresses this crisis of masculinity in the typically naturalist (i.e., Spencerian and physiological) language of determinism, in which Hurstwood's bodily decline is conceptualized as a law of nature:

> 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 ap-

> proaching manhood, or he is growing weaker, older, less incisive mentally, as the man approaching old age. (360–61)
>
> 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. (*SC* 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 – psychological – 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, for the power relationship that cannot be escaped.

Through Hurstwood, Dreiser presents the spectre of the male body disintegrating, displaying its limitations in its physical materiality – its bodily pain and weakness. As the powerful male body-image thus turns into a vulnerable physical body, Carrie's physical body undergoes the reverse metamorphosis into a larger-than-life, abstract body-image of Carrie Madenda – the image of her fame and the fetish image of herself that she shares with her audience. Dreiser draws on all the registers of pathos to show that this picture finally dwarfs the male spectator, Hurstwood:

> 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.
>
> Hurstwood gazed at it a moment, snuffling and hunching one shoulder, as if something were scratching him. He was so run down, however, that his mind was not exactly clear.
>
> "That's you," he said at last, addressing her. "Wasn't good enough for you, was I? Huh!" (*SC* 546)

As one of the "midwives" of Carrie's career, helping with a "subtle hand" to create her first success as an actress, Hurstwood is now invited to consume the finished product. Yet in his despondent state, Hurstwood can no longer afford this titillating image of consumption, which confronts him with his own impotence. It is these reversals that encode

Dreiser's perception of the shifts in power between men and women in the late 1890s. The male has been "stripped" of his juridical powers but, more importantly, he is also presented as a victim of normative practices. It is the two women who emerge as female icons of power, and both display a cruel, naturalistic, indifference to Hurstwood's fate. Just as Jessica quickly forgets about Hurstwood once he elopes with Carrie, Carrie herself conveniently forgets about him once she leaves him in New York. Neither of the women is even aware of his suicide.

No longer able either to produce or to consume, Hurstwood is seduced by the panoptic city into removing himself, relieving society of the burden he has become. No longer productive in the city's consumer economy, Hurstwood becomes, as Philip Fisher has observed, "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."[25] Hurstwood is not destroyed by a retributive law – as Clyde Griffiths is in *An American Tragedy* – but he is the victim of a norm that has the fiendish power of confronting him continually anew with his uselessness. Tortured by the gazes of the panoptic city, he, significantly, commits suicide while "hidden wholly in that kindness which is night" (*SC* 554). The darkness of the night and the forgetfulness of death are the last retreat from the torturing gaze of the panoptic city: "'What's the use?' he said, weakly, as he stretched himself to rest" (*SC* 554). Since the norm is not necessarily less vicious than the traditional judicial apparatus, Hurstwood's fate makes the reader question Foucault's binary division between an archaic retributive law and a modern norm that is committed to bio-power and the preservation of life. In *Sister Carrie*, the norm is almost demonic in its capacity to infiltrate and inhabit the human mind and body, and as a victim of normative practices, Hurstwood is co-opted not only into acquiescing to but into carrying out his own destruction. Dreiser suggests that modern bio-power's commitment to life may be a seductive mask, hiding how effectively and quickly this power principle disposes of those who have become "useless" in the consumer economy.

With none of his family members even aware of Hurstwood's death, Dreiser presents a world in which the deployment of alliance has been supplanted by the deployment of sexuality. The absence of family alliance by the end echoes the novel's opening. After the description of

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25 Philip Fisher, *Hard Facts: Setting and Form in the American Novel* (New York: Oxford UP, 1985) 175.

Hurstwood's suicide, the narrative voice turns immediately to Carrie's desire: "And now Carrie had attained that which in the beginning seemed life's object, or, at least, such fraction of it as human beings ever attain of their original desires" (*SC* 554). Representative of the fleeting consumer culture itself, Carrie's desires know no loyalties, but attach themselves to new objects: "Every hour the kaleidoscope of human affairs threw a new lustre upon something, and therewith it became for her the desired – the all" (*SC* 159). Given this emphasis on female desire in Dreiser's conceptualization of Carrie's oxymoronic docile body of power, female sexuality itself deserves closer attention and will be the focus of the next chapter.

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