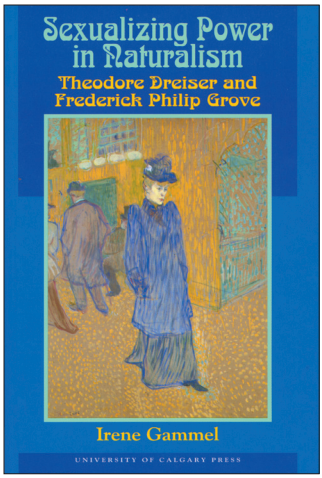

SEXUALIZING POWER IN NATURALISM: THEODORE DREISER AND FREDERICK PHILIP GROVE

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Naturalism's Specula(riza)tion: *The "Genius"*

Just as the narrative voice in *The Titan* is openly complicitous with, and seemingly seduced by, the speculator's principle of sexualized power, *The "Genius"* (1915), published only one year after *The Titan*, echoes the earlier novel's deliberate collapsing of the boundary between the naturalist expression of "hard facts" and the speculator's "fictitious" business dealings. In his autobiographical *Künstlerroman*, Dreiser examines his role as a naturalist writer in a modern consumer economy, tracing his own professional career as an artist and his private odyssey as a womanizer while detailing his mental breakdown and his traumatic bodily failings in the thinly veiled persona of Eugene Witla. Perhaps it was this autobiographical closeness, the blurring of the boundary between naturalist narrator and narrated object that created the problems in composing this naturalist tale of the artist's crisis and recovery. Contemporary readers, led by H. L. Mencken, were quick to condemn the novel as Dreiser at his worst: "The thing rambles, staggers, trips, heaves, pitches, struggles, totters, wavers, halts, turns aside, trembles on the edge

of collapse."[1] But in its very shiftiness, its many repetitions, contradictions, and slippages, *The "Genius"* also presents a kind of Lacanian discourse of the Other, a language of the subconscious that gives insights into the repressed and silenced aspects of Dreiser's naturalism.

In his persona of Eugene Witla, Dreiser conceptualizes the modern artist as a clever money-maker whose wish-fulfillment dream is best encapsulated in his desire to imitate the success of the great American businessmen: "Here were Jay Gould and Russell Sage and the Vanderbilts and Morgan," Witla reflects when he arrives in New York and asks yearningly, "Would the city ever acclaim him as it did some?"[2] When Witla finally "makes it" as an artist, he finds his customers amongst businesses and corporations: he is commissioned to decorate a great bank, as well as public buildings in Washington. Dreiser conceptualizes this issue in similar terms in the sketch of "Ellen Adams Wrynn," in *A Gallery of Women* (1929), where a woman painter marks her first success as an artist by having her daringly exotic Parisian scenes exhibited permanently on four huge panels on one of the large department stores of Philadelphia. Here, art is assigned the function of advertisement, and the boundary between the consumption of art and that of other commodities becomes erased. At the same time the panels are an advertisement for the artist herself: "And each panel signed: Ellen Adams Wrynn,"[3] thus turning the artist's name into a representation of a capitalist success story, a signifier of an artist who has "made it."

While Walter Benn Michaels has argued that for Dreiser's financier, art is as speculative as the stock market, Rachel Bowlby has discussed the artist in *The "Genius"* as a capitalist "adman" and "businessman" who offers no resistance to capitalism whatsoever.[4] Indeed, as early as 1896, in a newspaper article on "Genius and Matrimony," Dreiser presented a psychological profile of the artist that anticipated Cowperwood's narcissistic principle of power: "But the artist, poor and proud, along with his endowment of creative power, is furnished with an aggressive egotism,"[5] a principle suggestive of the speculator's "I satisfy myself."

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1 Mencken 87.

2 Theodore Dreiser, *The "Genius"* (New York: John Lane, 1915) 101. All further references will appear in the text, abbreviated *G*.

3 *A Gallery of Women*, Vol. 1 (New York: Horace Liveright, 1929) 145.

4 See Michaels, "Dreiser's Financier," 294; Bowlby 118–33.

5 Theodore Dreiser, "Genius and Matrimony," *Ev'ry Month* 2 (1896): 5–6, rpt. in *Theodore Dreiser: A Selection of Uncollected Prose*, ed. Donald Pizer (Detroit: Wayne State UP, 1977) 54.

Dreiser's naturalist aesthetics and ideology thus go counter to the grain of the American literary tradition. Many nineteenth-century American artists insisted on the arts as a realm of *Gedankenfreiheit*, as a space of imaginative freedom, inevitably outside and deliberately on the margins of American societal conventions and constraints.[6] Dreiser, in contrast, moves the arts into the economic centre, and with this shift the arts become a field on which are played out the tensions and struggles but also the seductive games of American capitalism. Indeed, the specific analogies Dreiser establishes between the naturalistic artist and the capitalist speculator are not only deliberate, but expose the ideological contradictions at the heart of his naturalism.

Naturalist fiction from the nineteenth century on articulated a commitment to social criticism in either overt or covert narrative forms. Yet the naturalist genre simultaneously perpetuates narrative positions of authority and power that echo in its very midst the (capitalist) tendency towards monopolization and centralization that it often criticizes in its thematics and structure. Although naturalist fiction frequently promotes social change, as often it confirms the ideological assumptions that help perpetuate a social and economic status quo. The working people in naturalism often emerge as a proletarianized, animalized Other, as the brute, the beast that can only be contained in acts of narrative exorcism, as June Howard has argued. These contradictions at the heart of naturalism are best illustrated by Dreiser's (seemingly incongruous but always deliberate) analogies between the naturalist artist and the capitalist speculator. A comparison of the Cowperwood trilogy and *The "Genius"* reveals that many of Cowperwood's strategies of gaining and maintaining power correspond to the epistemological, aesthetic, and ideological principles on which Dreiser's naturalism thrives.

To begin, in *The Titan* and *The "Genius"* the narrator's editorial voice shares the speculator's curiosity in and access to a world of privileged and complex knowledges; both the naturalist artist and the speculator are endowed with the ability to see ahead, to read what others are not able to decipher, and to accumulate bodies of knowledge. Philippe Hamon's theory emphasizes that naturalism's "stringing together descriptions like so many sections in the 'store of human documents'" generates "places to show off knowledge (of words and the world) and know-how (stylistic and rhetorical), and which are all carried out euphorically in enthusiastic lexical expansions."[7] The male narrator in *The Titan* typifies this point,

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6 See Poirier 5.

7 Hamon 37, 38.

"showing off" his expertise by entering the complicated world of capitalist manipulation, mental games, and speculative manoeuvrings. Sidney Roberts has noted that Yerkes's "bookkeeping methods and business tactics were so complicated that a clear account of how he captured control of Chicago's street railways can scarcely be made."[8] But by venturing into the complicated network of transactions and revealing to the reader Cowperwood's ingenious strategies of manipulation and financing, the narrator-author also draws attention to his own "superior" insight into such complicated procedures, presenting himself as the speculator's double and rival, by gathering and accumulating hidden and technically sophisticated knowledges. Conversely, the narrator's ability to collect information about the speculator also makes him a potential oppositional force, since it allows him to "specularize" and to define Cowperwood. It is the narrator who exposes the speculator as a target for attack by making his imaginary "body" of power visible for the reader.

But as a "producer" of bodies of knowledge and naturalist plots, the authorial voice also reveals a slippery complicity with Cowperwood's role. Analyzing the first volume of the trilogy, Walter Benn Michaels has emphasized Cowperwood's fascination with "mental" facts, such as money, stocks, and bonds, and his obvious dislike for tangibles: "The financier's dislike of stability thus emerges even more explicitly as a distaste for [tangible] commodities."[9] Michaels, though, conveniently limits his argument to *The Financier*, where the speculator's love of "mental" manipulations leads to his incarceration on a conviction of technical embezzlement. In *The Titan*, in contrast, Cowperwood is not only "sick of the stock-exchange" but, from a lover of "abstract" tradings, he turns into a "builder" of tangibles and thus becomes a producer-figure who never abandons his manipulative strategies. Thus the binary opposition between the speculator's "fictitious dealings" and the producer's output of tangible commodities becomes blurred. Cowperwood's modernization of Chicago's street railway project entails the construction of (hundreds of miles of) extension lines, equipment of the horse-drawn streetcars with cable (and later with electricity), implementation of better cars, and improvement of the overall service for the customers. It is these contributions to the growth of the city and its very tangible infrastructure that make Cowperwood a productive figure in the eyes of the Chicagoan public.

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8 Roberts 348.

9 Michaels, "Dreiser's *Financier*," 280.

Dreiser presents the same blurring of boundaries between artistic production and clever salesmanship in *The "Genius."* Not only in the title but also in his middle and first names – often abbreviated to "Gene" or even "Geni" – Dreiser presents Eugene Tennyson Witla as a producer-artist (> Latin *gigno, genui, genitum* = to beget, to bring forth, to produce), so that on the surface the novel appears to echo Émile Zola's conception of the naturalist artist as a producer-figure:

> Aujourd'hui, il nous faut produire et produire encore. C'est le labeur d'un ouvrier qui doit gagner son pain, qui ne peut se retirer qu'après fortune faite. En outre, si l'écrivain s'arrête, le public l'oublie; il est forcé d'entasser volume sur volume, tout comme un ébéniste par exemple entasse meuble sur meuble.[10]

Zola, then, identifies the naturalist writer as a producer-*labourer*, a skilled craftsman, while Dreiser, in contrast, signals his reservations about such an identification. As Amy Kaplan has pointed out, Dreiser "made an effort to distinguish writing from labor," thus turning his back not only on Zola but also on the American tradition represented by Edith Wharton and William Dean Howells, who valued writing as productive work. The idea of "making a splash, of promoting one's art" was more important for Dreiser than hard work, and "he also inverts a traditional causal relation to show that labor itself did not generate recognition."[11] What is needed for the artist to become a popular success in a competitive twentieth-century market economy is not only productive genius but also the speculative genius of salesmanship.

Given this deliberate analogy between the artist and the speculator, it should come as no surprise that naturalist creation (or production) is characterized by the same moral ambiguity that Cowperwood displays as a "builder" of Chicago's traction system in *The Titan*. Contributing to the construction of Chicago's infrastructure, Cowperwood's activities are interwoven with the speculator's mental manipulations. A whiz kid at making use of commodities already produced by others, Cowperwood manages, for example, to lease for a nominal sum tunnels built years ago, thus completing his street railway traction project without much effort. Although this move is an ingeniously productive "recycling" of a commodity no longer used, which would otherwise go to waste, Cowperwood's strategy is criticized by his Chicagoan opposition. If this criticism partly

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10 Émile Zola, *Le Roman expérimental* (1880; Paris: Garnier Flammarion, 1971), 203.

11 Amy Kaplan, *The Social Construction of American Realism* (1988; Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1992) 116, 128.

reflects that the opposition has been outsmarted, it also highlights that Cowperwood's use of the tunnel exposes the speculator's parasitic quality, based as it is on the clever exploitation of somebody else's "labour."

It is the same principle of "productive recycling" that characterizes Dreiser's creative strategies as a naturalist writer. In his study on European naturalist fiction, David Baguley confirms that the typical strategy of naturalist plot composition consists in recycling *faits divers*, newspaper items, or extraliterary sources, so that the boundary between imaginative creation and parasitic appropriation, between fiction and document, becomes blurred: "The journalistic *chronique, conte, vignette,* the *risqué* tale, accounts of domestic crimes, of incest and adultery, descriptions of oddities of human behaviour from the macabre to the titillating, formed a huge subliterary generic stock of anecdotes on which naturalist fiction could draw and from which it is at times barely distinguishable" (*NF* 89). Heavily indebted to his collection, appropriation, and imaginative transformation of facts and documents, of newspaper articles, letters, personal stories, interviews, and autobiographies, Dreiser's fiction has even been described by Simon During in terms of "discursive cannibalization." During writes that "whole segments of his private correspondence were absorbed into *The Genius*, for instance, almost without alteration. He plundered other 'creative' writers too, being repeatedly accused of plagiarism."[12] While in *The Titan*, the boundary between the traditionally "honest" producer and the morally tainted speculator becomes blurred, Dreiser's own "production" of naturalist fiction is fed by the speculator's principle of "parasitic" appropriation, accumulation, and imaginative transformation. Just as Cowperwood assimilates and reorganizes different street railway companies to absorb Chicago's traction system into a larger corporate company, so for Dreiser writing partly was, as During has put it somewhat polemically, "a form of cutting and pasting."

All of these analogies, intersections, and deliberate connections converge to expose the problematic ideological underpinnings that help maintain the seductive power of both the artist and the capitalist speculator, a point highlighted in *The "Genius,"* in the artist's relationship with marginalized groups and women. Just as Cowperwood does not fight against but appropriates the interests of the people to create his own success at the beginning of *The Titan*, so the naturalist painter Eugene Witla turns to the working people as the subject matter of his art. "Creativity is

12 During 225.

not open to the lower classes; and yet it is working-class life – cities, factories, street scenes – which the modern artist takes as his subject matter," Rachel Bowlby observes in her discussion of *The "Genius"* and continues: "The artist's prospecting seems in one way to resemble the customary exploitation of 'millions of people' for the individualist end of capitalism."[13] Indeed, Witla shocks the bourgeois public in his first important exhibition with his painting of a black garbage collector, a painting that is selected by the narrator as an example of Witla's social *engagement*. Yet Witla's interest in the marginalized figures of America's urban slums simultaneously echoes Cowperwood's dubious alliance with the democratic movement in the beginning of *The Titan*. In both cases, the lower classes are only tools that help create the speculator-artist's own success.

The "Genius" reveals how the authorial voice's overt commitment to social criticism is contradicted by its covert advocacy of a social status quo. The narrator's description of Witla's picture of the garbage collector exposes how easily the signifiers of social criticism can be used to serve the opposite purpose. According to the narrator's description, this picture represents

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

Witla's painting is presented to the reader in a doubly mediated form: the visual signifier is translated into verbal ones, and the reader can only look at the picture by reading it through the narrator's eyes. And what we read is not so much naturalist social criticism but the representation of a social stereotype: we are confronted with the same picture of social "Otherness" that Cowperwood imposed on Chicago's workers in *The Titan*. In the narrator's description, the black man is an animalistic creature, a brute, the incarnation of the Other, whose place is (and probably will be) in the decaying garbage of white America. If Witla's painting really articulates social criticism, the painting as signifier is given a different twist in the narrator's discourse. If there is an indictment of social conditions, it is relegated to the gaps of the text.

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13 Rachel Bowlby, *Just Looking: Consumer Culture in Dreiser, Gissing and Zola* (New York & London: Methuen, 1985) 124.

Equally problematic are the narrator's comments that frame the description of the painting. To describe the creative production process, he deploys the very metaphors of power that are used in *The Titan* to characterize the speculator's exploitation of the Chicagoan people. The narrative voice, for instance, celebrates Eugene's critique of contemporary power relations by linguistically reinscribing the master-slave dialectics on Eugene's own artistic production process: "Eugene was so cruel in his indictment of life. He seemed to lay on his details with bitter lack of consideration. Like a slavedriver lashing a slave he spared no least shade of his cutting brush" (*G* 236). The contextual framework signals a parodic twist: it is Eugene himself who is a labourer-slave, driven by his work. At the same time, however, Eugene's creative production reinscribes a master-slave relationship with the painter in a position of mastery and control, while the marginalized subject of his painting becomes objectified and appropriated into the capitalist machinery. It is significant that later in the novel when Eugene becomes marginalized himself (he falls sick and loses his fortune), he is no longer capable of painting. Witla's creation suggests very little solidarity with the marginalized subject; rather, on the canvas, Witla ritually exorcizes and externalizes the sense of Otherness that haunts the artist.

While Witla's art expresses sadness about the victims inevitably produced by capitalism, underneath its motifs of the margins his painting also affirms progress, movement, change, and growth, in short, the very ingredients of capitalism: "The paradox of a decaying drunkard placed against the vivid persistence of life gripped his fancy. Somehow it suggested to himself hanging on, fighting on, accusing nature" (*G* 729). The picture of the drunkard, significantly, accuses an abstract "nature," not a unjust social system. As the "priest" of the new aesthetics of ugliness, Witla celebrates the city in his paintings as an oxymoron, as beauty in ugliness. Maybe shocking at first sight, the naturalist art of Witla's pictures is by no means in radical opposition to, or subversive of, capitalism, but can be easily appropriated by the capitalist machinery, as *The "Genius"* demonstrates. Just as Cowperwood is obsessed with purchasing art in *The Financier* and *The Titan*, so Witla's rich customers use the new art as decorations, transforming them into signifiers of what they themselves stand for and what they would like to promote. This is reflected in the deliberate incongruity of the painting portraying a drunkard fetching a record price of eighteen thousand dollars (*G* 729). One of the first paintings Witla sells, for the wholesome sum of $500, depicts three engines and a railroad yard and sells to the vice-president of one of the great railroads entering New York.

Even more importantly, it is a sense of homoeroticized male solidarity that bonds the speculator and the artist. Cowperwood is associated with the principle of fetishized accumulation, and so is Dreiser's (as well as traditional French) naturalism. Just as Cowperwood is obsessed with the pleasure of searching for, acquiring, and incorporating into a collection precious *objets d'art*, so Dreiser's naturalism textually mimics capitalism's collectomania and fetishistic obsession with material objects and facts by indulging in long narrative catalogues, repetitions, and accumulation of similar scenes and stock characters (the doubling and tripling of seduction and desertion scenes, of mistresses and wives). Where Cowperwood collects works of art and women in an effort at an adequate aesthetic representation of his variable body of power, the naturalist author textually participates in this sexualized collectomania by indulging in descriptive accumulations and verbal hyperbole, in what Emily Apter has called rhetorical fetishism. Similarly, William Berg has noted that, although one might expect a reduction of rhetorical figures in naturalism ("since these devices appear to be ultraliterary, blatantly artificial, highly ornamental"), naturalist fiction in fact shows a profusion of tropes such as metaphor, metonymy, and synecdoche, which are privileged because they lend themselves to *visual* representation: "Zola's figuration displays decidedly visual contents, mechanisms, and relationships, thus leading naturally to an exploration of the workings of the visual imagination."[14]

The visual imagination is inevitably bound to the sexual world, and it is in their sexual politics – in the long "galleries of women" – that Dreiser's artist and his speculator insist on defending a biologically "natural" and the psychologically "normal" expression of male sexuality. Dreiser's fiction conceptualizes male power in terms of sexual promiscuity; womanizing is a characteristic common to both the naturalist artist and the speculator. Like Cowperwood's speculative genius, Eugene Witla's productive gift is linked to a whole "gallery of women" (from Margaret Dunn and Ruby Kenny to Angela Blue, Christina Channing, Frieda Roth, Carlotta Wilson, and Suzanne Dale). Womanizing not only creates a sense of male complicity, it creates a network of male power that is integral to the world of Dreiser's naturalism and that is supported by its aesthetic form and narrative manipulations. Naturalism's complicity with the male character's womanizing is reflected in its own fetishized obsession with classifying, systematizing, and hierarchizing

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14 William Berg, *The Visual Novel: Emile Zola and the Art of His Times* (State College, PA: Pennsylvania State UP, 1992) 212–13.

specularized females. Supported by the narrative desire for taxonomical order, Cowperwood, for instance, professes to have a very clear notion of the hierarchy of art (and women). His hierarchy implicitly suggests the protagonist's teleological "growth" or "progress," as he moves through the different levels of the hierarchy. This, in turn, legitimizes his right to abandon one lover after the next, or to replace one painting with a better one, in order to move closer to an artistic "ideal." Donald Pizer as well as Lawrence Hussman have taken Cowperwood's "hierarchy" at face value, Pizer arguing that the women in *The Titan* are art objects in "an ascending order," and Hussman even recognizing underlying "religious dimensions" in Cowperwood's "mystical search" for the feminine ideal.[15]

Hussman's "transcendental" interpretation, however, seems in contradiction to Pizer's more convincing point on the "picaresque" quality of the novel, a quality that is reflected in the long line of often interchangeable mistresses, whose names are accumulated and catalogued in the narrative without ever attaching themselves as separate personalities in the mind of the reader, so that the novel also parodically undercuts the notion of Cowperwood's and Eugene's sexual, spiritual, or artistic "growth." In fact, the classification and cataloguing of different types of women in the course of Cowperwood's life corresponds to naturalism's predilection for the bordello's "pile-up" effect, as Emily Apter has identified it in the nineteenth-century French realist novel: "The fact that the juxtaposition of disparate nationalities, sensual temperaments, and body types characterizes artistic collection and bordello interior alike," writes Apter, "only reinforces the epistemological connection between the two species of cabinet."[16]

Focusing on Cowperwood's womanizing, *The Titan* reveals similar contradictions that unravel the genre's male bias from within. The narrator, for instance, states that Cowperwood's promiscuity implies disruption and excess:

> As has been said, this promiscuous attitude on Cowperwood's part was the natural flowering out of a temperament that was chronically promiscuous, intellectually uncertain, and philosophically anarchic. (*T* 201)

The narrator's (manipulative) comment thus makes an implicit connection between Cowperwood's womanizing and naturalism's "entropic

15 Pizer, *Novels*, 173; Hussman, *Theodore Dreiser*, 85–86.

16 Apter 53.

vision." But while Dreiser's authorial voice conceptualizes male sexual promiscuity in terms of anarchy and disruption, the text itself frequently demonstrates the opposite: other (more conservative) businessmen also take their "human pleasure secretly" (*T* 8). Indeed, as Lois Banner's social history reveals, male promiscuity amongst America's business elite was not antibourgeois, but rather the bourgeois norm: "In their memoirs," Banner writes, "members of New York high society protect their privacy, but their indignation makes them unanimous on one issue: the men of their class were not faithful to their wives." Banner illustrates her point with the example of Caroline Astor, whose "husband spent much of his time on his yacht entertaining chorus girls." Similarly, "Alva Vanderbilt, to shame her husband, divorced him in New York on the grounds of adultery so that his infidelity would be publicly known."[17] Considering this social backdrop of "normalized" promiscuity and infidelity, the narrator's comments have to be seen as a clever manipulation of naturalism's gender ideology. While readers have made much of Cowperwood's refusal to be hypocritical, the fact is that, like the other married capitalists, he lies to and cheats on his wife Aileen in order to enjoy both the advantages of marriage and the thrill of extramarital adventures.

Conspiring to "normalize" male womanizing within the aesthetic and ideological boundaries of naturalism, the male narrators and their womanizing characters engage in some "fictitious dealings" of their own to convince the reader of the "naturality" of such male sexual politics. Although this male ethos is supported by the naturalist conventions, it also creates uneasy contradictions, as *The "Genius"* demonstrates in its exploration of Witla's relationship with his wife. Feeling entrapped in his marriage, Eugene Witla is obsessed with what he claims to be physical overindulgence in his sexual relations with his wife Angela, a notion the narrative voice supports:

> He had no knowledge of the effect of one's sexual life upon one's work, nor what such a life when badly arranged can do to a perfect art – how it can distort the sense of color, weaken that balanced judgment of character which is so essential to a normal interpretation of life. (*G* 246)

The word "normal" strikes a particularly false note in this quotation, especially since earlier in the novel, Eugene's art – like Cowperwood's business strategies – is celebrated for its disruption of "normal" perspectives and its emphasis on a deliberate foregrounding of disruptive

17 Banner 191.

Otherness. Similarly odd and contradictory is the narrator's claim that Eugene lacks "knowledge" of the pernicious effect of sexuality, since it is Eugene himself who worries about the negative influence of his sex life on his art (just as Cowperwood attributes his own social failure in Chicago to Aileen's daring sexuality).[18] This scene exposes how much the promiscuous Eugene and the male narrator are in secret communion with each other to manipulate and convince the reader of the pernicious influence of a monogamous sexuality in which the woman insists on her pleasure.

Finally, womanizing was the driving force not only for Cowperwood and Witla but for Theodore Dreiser as well, as the sexual confessions of his diaries indicate. Condoned, legitimized, and even celebrated by the male narrative voice, this principle of fetishized accumulation of women as sexual and epistemological objects is both a logical expression of naturalism's male power politics and a space that exposes its gender bias, deconstructing its claims to "objectivity" and "naturality." The pleasure of womanizing and of masculinizing the genre inevitably unravels naturalism's in-built structures of male solidarity and male power. Dreiser's naturalism is a "male club," in which a woman's appearance places her almost automatically into the bordello's *l'hétéroclite*. Yet, oscillating between anarchy and convention, between chaotic excess and obsessional taxonomical order, the naturalist speculator and the "specularizing" naturalist cannot help but expose the eroticization of male power in their naturalist club. In its politics of male promiscuity, then, Dreiser's naturalism inevitably deconstructs itself, showing that the (homo)eroticized male complicity relies on its subjugation (and, perhaps, its continued fear) of the female body.

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