



SEXUALIZING POWER IN NATURALISM: THEODORE DREISER AND FREDERICK PHILIP GROVE

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The Father's Seduction and the Daughter's Rebellion

In Grove's German and Canadian fiction, the patriarchal family is saturated with sexuality and power. Hence, it is also a privileged locus for his exploration of naturalist determinants. While *The Master of the Mill* examines the workings of psychological and social determinants through the father-son bond, many of his earlier novels explore the daughter's position in the family network and her problematic relationship with her father. Indeed, the father-daughter relationship lends itself to a naturalist exploration of power relations since, within the family, daughter and father are "the most asymmetrically proportioned" in gender, age, authority, and cultural privilege.¹ In Grove's fiction, the family has all the trappings of an imprisoning institution, perpetuating hierarchically structured gender relations from generation to generation. But if the daughter finds herself at the bottom of this hierarchy, she also challenges

1 See Lynda Boose, "The Father's House and the Daughter in It: The Structures of Western Culture's Daughter-Father Relationship," *Daughters and Fathers*, ed. Lynda E. Boose and Betty S. Flowers (Baltimore & London: Johns Hopkins UP, 1989) 19-74.

the determining structures of the family institution, just as she challenges the naturalist plot that frequently predetermines her sexualization and victimization. As often as in nineteenth-century naturalism, her desire for change is frustrated, though, as she finds herself caught in a naturalist plot of circular repetition in which the institutional framework triumphs, recontaining the daughter's rebellion and exposing the limits of her power. *Maurermeister Ihles Haus* (1906), *Settlers of the Marsh* (1925), and *Our Daily Bread* (1928) explore the father-daughter relationship by highlighting such deterministic constraints.

The focus of this chapter, then, is twofold. I will first explore the daughter's strategies of rebellion, her search for new alliances and new discourses of resistance against the patriarch's principle of sexualized power. By rebelling against the determining structures of the patriarchal family, the daughter, I will argue, simultaneously challenges the naturalist conceptualization of the female as always already seduced, enchained, and subjugated through her body and sexuality, rendered docile in the social networks. Given this emphasis on change, Rita Felski's feminist theory provides a useful starting point, since Felski has urged feminists to think of the relationship between social structures (institutions) and agency (the individual) as dynamic, not static: "Human beings do not simply reproduce existing structures in the process of action and communication, but in turn modify those structures even as they are shaped by them."² This will serve as a springboard to explore the extent to which women's (feminist) voices manage to poke holes in the father's "law" and to defy his seductive power.

By locating the daughter's struggle in a naturalist context, Grove signals that the women's struggle to subvert the "symbolic order" of the patriarch's house does not occur in a linear fashion but is full of reversals, illustrating Michel Foucault's point on the polyvalence of discourse. As Foucault observes, discourses can be "both an instrument and an effect of power," but also "a point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy" (HS 101). Drawing attention to the shiftiness and flexibility of discourse, the German and the Canadian novels alike emphasize that the daughter's struggle against patriarchy is often a strategic game that involves a cautious manoeuvring between slippery discourses. While such manoeuvres allow her to defy the father's authoritative word, it is only rarely, if ever, that the daughter manages to change the patriarchal rule of the house. While Grove's twentieth-century vision emphasizes that the daughter must dethrone the word of

2 Felski 56.

the father in order to resist its assimilation, the author also points to the limits of her discursive resistance. The naturalist frame frequently recontains the daughter, as her discourse of resistance is reappropriated and recolonized within the larger patriarchal institution.

Secondly, this chapter explores the father's strategies for holding on to his patriarchal power at a time when women demanded new rights for themselves. As the head of a patriarchal and sexualized institution, the father employs strategies ranging from his psychological "seduction" of the daughter to his use of sexualized violence against women, including physical and sexual abuse, both of which are condoned and silenced within the family. If in Grove's early fiction the daughter is frequently attached to her father in what Freud described as the Electra complex (*Fanny Essler*), in his late fiction the father-daughter plot is determined by a King Lear subtext (*Our Daily Bread*), in which the daughters come to occupy a male position and "punish" the senile and impotent father for the abuse they have suffered. But in both cases, the tenacious structures and practices of the patriarchal family predetermine the pattern of the daughters' lives. Grove's father-daughter novels reveal the author's deep concern with the institutionalization of patterns of sexualized power within the family, which allow the father's dominance to continue.

Grove's father figures are all naturalist types, characterized by a typical misogyny, rigidity, tyranny, and intellectual blindness. "Basically, Master Mason Ihle despised everything that was female," is how Grove describes the German patriarch in *Maurermeister Ihles Haus*,³ and if Richard Ihle is Grove's most blatantly misogynistic character, he is also, as E. D. Blodgett has noted, "the prototype of Grove's fathers."⁴ Focusing on the marginalized female characters in Grove's fiction, Blodgett has persuasively argued that Grove's prairie patriarchs – Abe Spalding, Niels Lindstedt, and John Elliot – are immobilized and somewhat static in their epic greatness, and that it is the women in Grove's German and Canadian fiction who are not only capable of change but also challenge the frozen systems of order set up by the men: "where the males always seem to be who they are – unchanging, hopelessly teleological – it is the females who must act."⁵ The males are comic "blocking characters," who

3 *The Master Mason's House*, ed. and intro. A. W. Riley and D. O. Spettigue, trans. Paul P. Gubbins (Ottawa: Oberon Press, 1976) 99. All further references to this novel will appear in the text, abbreviated MI. Citations from the German original are from Felix Paul Greve, *Maurermeister Ihles Haus* (Karl Schnabel: Berlin, 1906).

4 Blodgett, *Configuration*, 134.

5 Blodgett, *Configuration*, 126.

are caught in an *idée fixe*, in a monomaniacal chase for a particular goal. Richard Ihle is presented as an irate self-made man in Bismarck's Germany, and the young Swedish immigrant-pioneer Niels Lindstedt in *Settlers of the Marsh* and the old Manitoban homesteader John Elliot in *Our Daily Bread* are formed from the same mould; both are obsessed with conquering and imposing their will on the Canadian wilderness. In their discourses and practices, they all share and perpetuate the very deterministic structures that victimize the women who share their lives.

Grove's naturalism, then, targets these discursive determinants, highlighting the father's inflexible language of authority through which he establishes himself as the representative of a rigid, patriarchal law. The language of Grove's German and Canadian father figures is "indissolubly fused with its authority," to use Mikhail Bakhtin's words; fused with the family "institution," this language "stands and falls together with that authority."⁶ Exploring the Bakhtinian "word of the fathers"⁷ as a naturalist determinant, Grove's fiction also illustrates the Foucauldian conceptualization of discourse as an instrument of both power and resistance: "Discourse transmits and produces power," Foucault writes, "it reinforces it, but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it" (*HS* 101). While the father's language perpetuates the structures of female submission in the family framework, the female characters struggle against these linguistic determinants by experimenting with discourses of resistance designed to undo the father's word of authority. Yet, trying to change the deterministic course of their lives, the daughters' resistance is frequently recontained, with the naturalist plot and the "word of the father" triumphing in Grove's fiction over their demand for change.

Grove's translation of physiological determinism into discursive determinism was without a doubt influenced by the turn-of-the-century philosophical interest in language crisis (*Sprachkrise*) associated with Friedrich Nietzsche, for example, whose work Grove knew well. In the *Gay Science* – a book "of the greatest importance," according to Grove (*ISM* 166) – Nietzsche has a section entitled "Of the sound of the German language" in which he criticizes "the militarization of the German language," a German that has turned into *Offiziersdeutsch*: "welches wütende Autoritätsgefühl, welche höhnische Kälte klingt aus diesem

6 Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: U of Texas P, 1981) 343.

7 Bakhtin 342.

Gebrüll heraus," Nietzsche writes, "what raging sense of authority, what scornful coldness speak out of this roaring."⁸ "Wütendes Autoritätsgefühl" is precisely what characterizes the language of master mason Richard Ihle in *Maurermeister*; Ihle is attached to the word *Wut* (rage, wrath, ire) like an epithet (e.g., MI 45–46; 48–49 in translation). Not only is Ihle's *Offiziersdeutsch* stripped of all music – it is pure command. Similarly, in Grove's Canadian fiction the male language of barely contained violence is echoed in Niels Lindstedt's reductive voice of command in his relationship with his wife Clara Vogel, and in John Elliot's autocratic language that intimidates his children. Yet this authoritarian language inevitably stirs up disgust ("Widerwillen") at the same time that it provokes resistance ("Widerstand"),⁹ not only in the language philosopher Nietzsche, who makes it the target of a vicious satire, but also in Grove's female characters.

More specifically, though, Grove emphasizes the feminization and sexualization of discursive resistance. In all three novels, it is the women who are linked to linguistic flexibility and experimentation, opposing and poking holes in "the word of the father." This is first explored in *Maurermeister Ihles Haus*, in which Grove opposes the German patriarch's inflexible language of authority with the linguistic flexibility and exuberance of his daughter, Susie Ihle, a contrast that becomes a pattern for the Canadian prairie novels as well. In the first paragraph, the reader sees her as an eleven-year-old leaping over ropes and chains in her little Baltic home town at the sea coast, ready to set into motion whatever is static: "The hazy stillness on the water ... demanded almost to be shattered" (MI 13). As Susie and her friend stalk two bourgeois lovers and call them names, it is significantly by manipulating language that the two girls disrupt the conventions and the order of the little Baltic sea town: Susie takes delight in word plays and punning, in parodically imitating the school headmaster's Saxon dialect, and, above all, in offending bourgeois respectability with sexual equivocation.¹⁰ Even in the

8 Friedrich Nietzsche, *Die Fröhliche Wissenschaft*, in *Nietzsche* (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1957) 104; *The Gay Science*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage, 1974) 161.

9 German *wider* = against, contrary to, in opposition to.

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

first chapter, Susie enjoys creating her own linguistic carnival in which she becomes linked to subversive laughter ("Lachen") and giggling ("Kichern"). This playfulness is particularly important since "the authoritative discourse," as Bakhtin describes it, permits no play with the context framing it, no play with its borders, no gradual and flexible transitions, no spontaneously creative stylizing variants on it."¹¹

Susie's exuberant play with signifiers – her pleasure with words, puns, and name-calling – is, to apply Julia Kristeva's terminology, a "maniacal eroticization of speech," as if she were "gulping it down, sucking on it, delighting in all the aspects of an oral eroticization and a narcissistic safety belt which this kind of non-communicative, exhibitionistic, and fortifying use of speech entails." This "play with signifiers" is typical for a "borderlander," a person who lacks a sense of home and of boundaries.¹² Thus Susie's language is both a reflection of her own position and a tool that shapes her relationship with her father as one of continual (border-line) resistance, a position that refuses ultimate assimilation. Living in her father's house but destined to leave it for somebody else's house, Susie is a threshold person who finds herself "betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law," as Lynda Boose describes the precarious position of the daughter-figure in a patriarchal family.¹³

Just as the daughter's liminal status endows her with "the special power of the weak," to use Boose's words, so Susie's favourite linguistic strategy of subversion is the principle of negativity, even lying: "All we have to do is keep saying no" (MI 18), she tells her girlfriend when their pranks become uncovered. When accused of calling names, "Susie collected herself quickly: 'That's a dirty lie,' she said, loudly and indignantly" (MI 1819). Here, the manipulation of language is a strategy that is directed against another woman, as it is often used as a weapon against her girlfriends, at the same time that it serves as a strategy to deal with a tyrannical patriarchal power at home.

And yet, psychologically bound to the father-figure, the rebelling daughter is frequently "seduced" into submission to "the father's word." Grove's conceptualization of the father-daughter relationship as a deeply sexualized one has to be seen in the context of the emerging psycho-

11 Bakhtin 343.

12 Julia Kristeva, "Within the Microcosm of 'The Talking Cure,'" trans. Thomas Gora and Margaret Waller, *Interpreting Lacan: Psychiatry and the Humanities*, Vol. 6, ed. Joseph H. Smith and William Kerrigan (New Haven: Yale UP, 1983) 42.

13 Boose 67.

analysis and women's growing challenge of patriarchal prerogatives from the turn of the century on. Foucault has noted that at a time when psychoanalysis allowed incestuous desires to be articulated in language as a means of normalization, "preparations were being made to undo those reprehensible proximities in other social sectors." Consequently, the social attitude toward incest was marked by fascinating contradictions: "on the one hand, the father was elevated into an object of compulsory love, but on the other hand, if he was a loved one, he was at the same time a fallen one in the eyes of the law" (HS 130).

We find a similar ideological contradiction in Grove's sexualization of the father-daughter relationship in his naturalist fiction. On the one hand, he presents daughter-figures rebelling against the patriarchal order of their homes, searching for new languages, articulating their sexual rights, and developing new forms of independent living, thus reflecting the social increase in women's powers and rights in the early twentieth century. On the other hand, these same daughter-figures are frequently caught in an Oedipal relationship with the father. While consciously recognizing and rejecting the father's tyrannical power, they are also tied to the father-figure through their psychological disposition. Resolved to rebel and carve out their own lives, these daughters are deterministically bound in naturalist circles of repetition, internalizing the father's rule and law while simultaneously rebelling against it. In *fin-de-siècle* Germany, Grove witnessed women's growing demand for new rights, and after immigrating to Canada he was faced with Manitoba's strong women's movement, which gained for women the right to vote in provincial elections in 1916, when Grove was teaching in the province. Considering these fundamental changes for women, it is significant that Grove's German and Canadian fiction should become a field on which psychological determinants are shown to limit these new rights, further enchainning the daughter in the conventional patriarchal framework. If Grove's exploration of the daughter's condition is a critical reflection of patriarchy's power to endure in the face of legal and social changes, it also reflects naturalism's continued enchainment of the rebelling female within its secure (male) boundaries.

Interiorized (and assimilated) into the individual psyche, the sexualized relationships of power in *Maurermeister* are inscribed within the privacy and secrecy of the family home, whose space is represented as a psychical and sexualized landscape. According to Christine Froula,

the relations of literary daughters and fathers resemble in important ways the model developed by Judith Herman and Lisa Hirschman to describe the family situations of incest victims: a dominating, authoritarian father;

an absent, ill, or complicitous mother; and a daughter who, prohibited by her father from speaking about the abuse, is unable to sort out her contradictory feelings of love and terror of him, of desire to end the abuse and fear that if she speaks she will destroy the family structure that is her only security.¹⁴

In his German and Canadian fiction, Grove not only invokes this incestuous pattern but explores the father's sexualized power in spatial terms, whereby the father's house takes on an uncanny quality in which sexuality and fear, pleasure and bondage become mixed in typically naturalist forms. Indeed, the beginning of *Fanny Essler* (which is the chronological continuation of *Maurermeister*) presents the daughter locked up in her room, in metaphorical bondage, in a state of masochistic waiting that is simultaneously eroticized, as it stimulates the daughter's fantasies about an all-powerful father-figure in the guise of a younger *Märchenprinz*.

"Father-daughter stories are full of literal houses, castles, or gardens in which fathers ... lock up their daughters in the futile attempt to prevent some rival male from stealing them," writes Lynda Boose in her study on the representation of father-daughter relationships.¹⁵ This motif of the daughter's literal and metaphorical enchainment in the father's house lends itself to a naturalist exploration of sexualized "female bondage," and it is introduced by Grove in his two German novels. *Maurermeister* is set in the patriarchal house that gives the work its title. For Susie, a teenage Fanny Essler, the house is more than a simple dungeon: it is imbued with the father's omnipresence, his principle of threatening but equally seductive power. Showing the house, the yard, and her father's shop to her friend Hedwig Ribau, eleven-year-old Susie Ihle ends up sitting in the new family carriage in intimate closeness with her friend: "Hier fühlte man sich geheimnisvoll in Sicherheit. Es war ein Haus im Hause" (MI 66) ("They felt secretive and secure. It was a house within a house" [MI 68]). On the surface, these sentences evoke the archetypal function of the house-image as a shelter (a facet that John Elliot in *Our Daily Bread* also connotes with his house, when he invites his daughters, who are troubled in their marriages, back to the security of their parental home).

14 Christine Froula, "The Daughter's Seduction: Sexual Violence and Literary History," Boose and Flowers 112.

15 Boose 33.

But this sense of the security of the house is instantly subverted. The German phrase "geheimnisvoll in Sicherheit" is more telling than the English translation, in that "geheimnisvoll" not only contains the word "heim" (= home) but as a whole word also means the opposite of home, as it denotes secretiveness, at the same time that it is related to "unheimlich," the uncanny. "Geheimnisvoll" as a premodifier for "Sicherheit" is an odd collocation in German verging on the oxymoronic, as it appears deliberately to undermine the sense of "Sicherheit" in the rest of the house. The phrase suggests the presence of a potential intruder and disturber of peace who is not somebody outside the house, but somebody *in* the larger house itself, namely, the father-figure. Not surprisingly, the novel describes several scenes where the father intrudes suddenly and violently into his daughter's space, where he makes entrances that are like assaults on her body. Just as Elliot's daughter Gladys confesses as an adult woman, "I am afraid of him [her father] ... Just as mother was,"¹⁶ so the scene in which Susie is "geheimnisvoll in Sicherheit" is preceded, significantly, by a chapter that describes Master Ihle's violent entrance into the house that forces Susie and her sister to hide in the wardrobe to escape the father's wrath.

Indeed, it is the adverb "unheimlich" (uncanny) that Grove uses when the father enters the house, to indicate that then the "heimisch" quality becomes negated. The closeness with the father is so threatening that it becomes "un-heimlich" for the daughter. Given this textual play on the absence of "Heim" and the novel's title with its emphasis on the house, the novel underscores the separation between "Haus" and "Heim," a distinction that Martin Heidegger emphasizes some decades later when he asks rhetorically: "do the houses in themselves hold any guarantee that *dwelling* occurs in them?"¹⁷ For Heidegger, "dwelling" ("wohnen") means to live in peace, to be at home, a sense that Susie experiences only in the house "within the house," where she discovers her own home,

16 Frederick Philip Grove, *Our Daily Bread* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1928) 285; further references to this novel will appear in the text, abbreviated ODB. In *Our Daily Bread*, Grove gives the motif of the tyrannical, wrathful father an interesting twist, since it is only very late in the novel that Elliot's wrath surfaces. In the beginning of the novel, he is introduced to the reader as "a thinker, [who] had lived a life of introspection, dreams, and ideas" (ODB 5); it is in the middle of the novel that we witness the first explosive, hateful attack on his son Arthur who refuses to become a farmer.

17 Martin Heidegger, "Building Dwelling Thinking," *Basic Writings*, J. Glenn Gray, ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1977) 324.

that is, her body and her language, in the intimacy with her girlfriend whose language Susie admires and mimics.

In *Maurermeister*, the eruption of the patriarch's sexualized power in the midst of the family home is only insinuated, but not fully developed as a motif. (Mrs. Ihle goes to her children for protection, occasionally sleeping in her daughter's room to avoid being sexually assaulted by her intoxicated husband.) Grove's early Canadian novel *Settlers of the Marsh*, however, develops this motif further, presenting a mother figure who is brutally victimized, assaulted, and ultimately destroyed by the father-figure. On her farm in the bush country of northern Manitoba, Mrs. Amundsen is subjected to repeated rapes that are followed by unwanted pregnancies and self-inflicted abortions (at a time when even contraceptive devices were illegal in Canada). While nineteenth-century naturalist fiction frequently conceptualized female sexuality in terms of prostitution, Grove's fiction not only parodies this obsession (in *Fanny Essler*) but, more importantly, his Canadian fiction critically turns the exploration of sexualized power to rape (even rape in marriage), which has become a predominant concern in twentieth-century feminism. In the following scene, the daughter, Ellen Amundsen, becomes a witness of her father's assault, which is almost like an attack on her own body:

Suddenly I heard mother's voice mixed with groans, Oh John, don't.

I will not repeat the things my father said. An abyss opened as I lay there. The vile, jesting, jocular urgency of it; the words he used to that skeleton and ghost of a woman... In order to save mother, I was tempted to betray that I heard. Shame held me back ...¹⁸

The brutal reality of this sex act provides a parodic comment on Freud's description of the child's traumatic shock when witnessing "the primal scene," the (normal) intercourse between the parents, which, according to Freud, the child often (mis)reads as an act of violence. In Grove's novel, in contrast, the graphic nature of the rapist sexuality is shocking for the reader, as it is traumatic for the adolescent witness, signalling, through the daughter's critical perspective, a perversion of the "primal scene" and the eruption of sexualized violence in the midst of supposedly stable family life.

It was probably the outspoken feminist critique of Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven that provided the raw material for the motif of

18 Frederick Philip Grove, *Settlers of the Marsh*, New Canadian Library (1925; Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1984) 112. Ellipses are in the text. Further references will appear in the text, abbreviated S.

sexualized violence in Grove's German and Canadian novels. In her autobiography, the Baroness introduces the real-life prototype for Grove's patriarchs in her own father, whom she describes as "meanly cruel," sentimental, and "inclined to boss in the family." In fact, she accuses her father of being responsible for her mother's "dreadful death by cancer of the womb," since it is caused by her father's "thoughtless mental as well as physical conduct, that of a sovereign [*sic*] yet entirely uncultured male brute" (A 1). Since the daughter is confronted with the reality of her mother's sexual subjugation, the patriarch's power is established in his sexual right to the mother's body; and the father's sexualized power enters the daughter's space when she becomes a witness to the violation of the mother's body. In Grove's fiction it is, significantly, always the females, never the males, who witness such traumatic acts of sexual abuse and thus are forced to recognize the limits of their resistance in the material reality of their own (female) bodies.

Moreover, the daughter's physical limits echo her linguistic limits, so that it should come as no surprise that her discursive relationship with her father is characterized by silence and secrecy. As Foucault has observed, "silence and secrecy are a shelter for power, anchoring its prohibitions" (HS 101). Also, examining "The Daughter's Seduction: Sexual Violence and Literary History," Christine Froula has noted that the cultural text "dictates to males and females alike the necessity of silencing woman's speech when it threatens the father's power"; this silencing, in turn, ensures "that the cultural daughter remains a daughter, her power suppressed and muted, while the father, his power protected, makes culture and history in his own image."¹⁹

Ellen Amundsen is a case in point for such an entrapment in silence. While her solidarity with her victimized mother is accompanied by a rejection of the rapist father, she can only whisper her opposition to his sexualized violence while her father is alive. Moreover, her feelings are contradictory and confused, as the many ellipses in her confession indicate. Just as Susie is resentful about helping and protecting her mother, so Ellen is not capable of "saving" her mother by revealing herself as a witness of the rape. Not daring to shame the father, she remains silent, thus co-opting with the father's image as the omnipotent head of the family and the sole upholder of an abstract law. Before his death, she mimics the role of the obedient daughter, fulfilling his desires to the letter.

19 Boose and Flowers 112.

We are reminded here of what Luce Irigaray, Jane Gallop, and Christine Froula have criticized as the daughter's (or the father's) seduction. It was, to be sure, Freud who first noted that almost all of his female patients told stories of having been seduced by their father, a phenomenon that Freud recognized as a sexual fantasy, as an expression of the female Oedipus complex. In her critique of Freud, however, Luce Irigaray notes that "the law organizes and arranges the world of fantasy at least as much as it forbids, interprets, and symbolizes it."²⁰ In other words, it is the patriarchal law that encourages the daughter's fantasies of seduction, which in turn ensure her (pleasurable) submission to the patriarch. Jane Gallop emphasizes with Luce Irigaray how much the daughter's status, power, and identity are dependent on the sexualized terms of the patriarchal law: "If the phallus is the standard of value, then the Father, possessor of the phallus, must desire the daughter in order to give her value."²¹ Given this culturally inscribed psychoanalytic text, it should come as no surprise that the patriarchal daughter's desire for her father is desperate: "the only redemption of her value as a girl would be to seduce the father, to draw from him the mark if not the admission of some interest."²² And the only way to seduce the father is "to avoid scaring him away, is to please him, and to please him one must submit to his law, which prescribes any sexual relation."²³ This explains why Susie continues to admire her father despite his tyrannical excess and why Ellen Amundsen submits to her father's law without questioning it openly. For both daughters, submission to the father is deterministically assured.

While Susie rebels openly against her mother, she oscillates discursively between silence and eulogy in relation to her father. An expert manipulator of signifiers outside the house, Susie is often silenced when she enters the literal house and rebels openly against her father: "'If you don't shut your trap this instant,' Mr. Ihle flew at her with menace in his voice, 'I'll give you what for'" (MI 102). To the reader Ihle appears very much like the comic stock figure of the ridiculously wrathful tyrant, as E. D. Blodgett has suggested; for his wife and the children, though, the threat is real enough: "What should I do?," Mrs. Ihle asks, "When I say anything he just hits me" (MI 49). While Susie's voice of *Widerstand*, of

20 Luce Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman*, trans. Gillian Gill (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1985) 38.

21 Jane Gallop, "The Father's Seduction," Boose and Flowers 102.

22 Luce Irigaray, quoted in Gallop 102.

23 Gallop 102.

resistance and protest, is developed in dialogue with her mother, this language of *Widerstand* is paradoxically *not* directed against the father whose tyrannies she resents but against her mother, whom Susie accuses of being impotent, of not being able to protect herself or her children: "You are just as frightened of him as we are" (MI 49), she tells her mother accusingly, confirming Irigaray's point that "women's rebellions are never aimed at the paternal function – which is sacred and divine – but at that powerful and then castrated mother, because she had brought a castrated child into the world."²⁴

In *Maurermeister Ihles Haus*, Grove's concern is to show the institution-alization of the "father's seduction" in the family and the school system. The school – even a school for "höhere Töchter" with exclusively female teachers – plants the emotional seed for the daughter's identification not with a mother but with a patriarchal father-figure, by giving birth to children's patriotism and arousing the children's "first 'great feelings'" (MI 90). In 1888, fourteen-year-old Susie's traumatic emotional reaction to the Kaiser's death signals to what extent she has internalized the idea of a phallic father as the supreme love object:

This event, the death of the old Emperor, was the first, and it remained the only experience of Susie's entire youth that caused her real and protracted grief. Even when later her mother was suddenly taken from them and died, she did not suffer so immediately and so selflessly as now in the case of this death, which in no way affected her directly. (MI 88–89)

In Susie's young life the old Kaiser, in contrast to her father, is the stereotyped, sentimental image of a kindly old man with a white beard who loves flowers above all. This image of the Kaiser, complementing that of her wrathful, erratic, younger, self-made father, works to constitute the image of the ideal father in her mind, a fantasy that conjures up strength and power and that partly displaces the mother as a figure of positive identification. The death of this male icon of power is traumatic because it implies the death of the fantasy image of the phallic father, which Susie has cathected with deepest emotions.

But what about the mother's power?, we may ask, turning to an icon that is omnipresent in Grove's German and Canadian fiction. The mother is often deeply complicitous with the power structures that subjugate her, but to say that the mother is deterministically bound by the patriarchal structures is not enough. Grove's mother-figure leaves her daughter very vulnerable, occasionally even participating in the father's

24 Irigaray, *Speculum*, 106.

"seduction" of the daughter, by supporting the institutional structures, discourses, and practices that predetermine the daughter's subjugation. Mrs. Ihle, for example, carries with her a romanticized version of patriarchal power by desperately holding on to the image of her husband before her marriage, a sexualized fantasy of male power that never dies in her life, although she finds the man she lives with repugnant and ridiculous. Also, while she counteracts Susie's fantasy of the Kaiser by taking her to the cemetery to visit the grave of the maternal grandmother, Mrs. Ihle also perpetuates the male version of the family history in her daughter's life. In Mrs. Ihle's stories, the paternal grandmother, for example, emerges as a negative figure, a stereotypical castrating woman: "The old woman, though; she made your grandfather's life such hell that once, when he was drunk, he tried to beat the old woman to death with an axe" (*MI* 44). Not only has Bertha Ihle swallowed her husband's version of his mother as "a devil incarnate," but her story of her husband's origins presents the wife as the scapegoat who is responsible for both marital disputes and her husband's violence. A victim of her husband's assaults, Bertha discloses in her story that she has deeply internalized her victimizer's rationalization, namely, that it is the woman who is responsible when she is attacked by her husband.

Grove's fictional mother-figures emerge as truly naturalist figures of disillusionment and pathos, echoing both Zola's Gervaise Macquart (in *L'Assommoir*) and Maupassant's Jeanne (in *Une Vie*). Lorraine McMullen has argued that Grove stereotypes the Canadian pioneer woman in the role of Earth Mother, who is "passive, obedient, hardworking, [and a] breeder of large families."²⁵ And yet, submission to the patriarch does not necessarily mean that these women are weak or impotent. In *Our Daily Bread*, Grove introduces Martha Elliot as a powerful pioneer-matriarch, with much of the novel's language suggesting that she is the one who quietly dominates in her Manitoban homestead as a mother-queen: "Mrs. Elliot sat enthroned while Cathleen combed her hair, Isabel buttoned her shoes, and Henrietta laid out her dark-grey silks" (*ODB* 15). Admiring his wife's "quiet majesty" (*ODB* 264), her husband adopts the guise of the queen's humble servant and gets the carriage ready. Indeed, John Elliot and his eldest son John recognize that she, not Elliot, is the one with the power to hold the family together, and as if to prove them right, the family indeed disintegrates shortly after Martha's death. Yet *Our Daily Bread* does not celebrate the power of

25 McMullen 67.

matriarchy, but critically draws attention to the fact that Martha Elliot's power is not in ultimate contradiction with its apparent opposite, namely, patriarchy. Martha's matriarchal powers complement her husband's patriarchal domination in the family as they are appropriated by (and ultimately serve) John Elliot's territorial dream, supporting the determining structure of the patriarchal family.

In this context, it is significant that the patriarchal households in Grove's German and Canadian fiction are modelled on the classical Greek *oikos*, based on a European model that Grove translates into a Canadian context. The *oikos* is generally characterized by a dissymmetry in the relationship between husband and wife, as Foucault's analysis of Xenophon's *Oeconomicus* shows. Although the wife is a key figure in the management of the Greek (and Grovian) *oikos*, it is the husband who governs and guides the wife, as she becomes the "*synergos* he needs for the reasonable practice of economy." For the male, then, marriage implies "being the head of a family, having authority, exercising a power whose locus of application was in the 'home.'"²⁶ Appropriating this Greek model to conceptualize the entrapments of both the German bourgeois wife and the Canadian pioneer woman, Grove highlights the naturalist assimilation of women within patriarchal structures.

But while Grove insists on the women's enslavement as the "reality principle" of their lives, he also shows the opposite: it is the mothers who lay the seed for the daughters' resistance. When faced with death, Bertha Ihle, Martha Elliot and Mrs. Amundsen resist and break the established social, economic, and discursive patterns of the family *oikos*. Martha Elliot and Bertha Ihle, for instance, become what the German text describes as "'wunderlich,'" peculiar or odd, a term that encodes the women's disruption of "normalcy." In both cases, the women react against the patriarchal structures of their households by deliberately excluding their husbands and children from their lives. Slamming doors and making loud scenes with her husband, Mrs. Ihle openly rebels against her husband's oppression by appropriating his own tyrannical strategies, while Mrs. Elliot – Bartleby-like – quietly refuses any further (sexual) intimacies and personal contacts with her husband. Both husbands are impotent and baffled when faced with their wives' rebellion, as their language of command inevitably collapses: "Mr. Ihle countered these scenes simply by going out of the house, muttering and perturbed" (MI 97).

26 Michel Foucault, *The Use of Pleasure*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage, 1986) 155, 151.

Nevertheless, just as any “carnavalesque” freedom is temporary, so a simple disruption of normalcy does not bring about genuine change in the family institution. Grove highlights Foucault’s point that a simple reversal of the power relation does not lead to liberation but often perpetuates the structure of a power relation that can easily be reversed again: the nature of the power play itself does not change. The two rebelling wives do not manage to break out of the textual boundaries of naturalism, but are quickly recontained within predictable patterns: Mrs. Ihle assuming the role of the naturalist “madwoman” who eventually dies in a mental institution, and Mrs. Elliot finding herself entrapped in the role of the naturalist diseased female, confronted with the disintegration of her own body.

Dying of cancer, Martha Elliot struggles with new ways of articulating her rebellion against the patriarch’s rule, trying to challenge the entrapping patterns of her family’s lives. But her limits are mirrored in the inevitability of her own death: “she was turning and twisting in agony,” the narrator writes, “Little sounds, like grunts, escaped her contorted mouth in staccato sequence” (ODB 115). Dying of abdominal cancer, she is reduced to a naturalist body of pain that she can escape only by transforming it through morphine into what John Elliot perceives as “a shapeless mass of relaxed muscle” (ODB 117). Conscious of her entrapment, Martha Elliot makes a metaphorical connection between her naturalist death and the deterministic course of her life with John Elliot. In a confessional scene (so typical for Grove’s fiction), she tries to articulate her entrapment and her new skepticism by communicating it to Gladys, her eldest daughter:

Oh, she [Martha] cried, I don’t even know any longer whether there’s a God or not. If there is, I don’t care. Come here, listen. I want to whisper to you. You may think I’ve had so many children because I was fond of them. No! They just came. Because I lived an evil life with your father. Look at me! – And she suddenly bared her body: a terrible sight! (ODB 133)

On the surface, this expression of a naturalist entrapment in sexuality and her bitter self-condemnation as “the harlot of Babylon” may be seen as a result of sexual repressions that inevitably link sex with guilt and retributive punishment. However, this confession and Martha’s rejection of her husband also “push against” the boundaries of the genre, in that they signal a moment of *anagnorisis* – Martha’s recognition of her deep complicity with John Elliot’s deterministic life course: after all, her sexuality was ruled by his commission to “Bear children” (ODB 183). Thus Martha’s sexual language of self-condemnation is the closest she comes to expressing a mother’s feeling of guilt for having borne ten

children not for her own (or for the children's) sake, but as tools for Elliot's territorial dream of expansion.

Yet Martha does not manage to find a solidarity with her daughters, nor does she manage to formulate her newly found wisdom and her condemnation of Elliot's dream in an effective, resisting language. She rebels against Elliot by refusing to have him near her in the last months of her life, but is incapable of telling him what she accuses him of. After a long period of silence, she can only communicate her legacy to her children by falling back to the coherence of her "old" language that is ruled by the demands of the patriarchal *oikos*. Trying to warn two of her children not to lock themselves into the prisonhouse of doomed marriages, she tells her oldest son that his fiancée is "no farmer's wife," as she tells her daughter Isabel that her chosen partner lacks the proper "descent." Her language is ineffective as a true warning. Martha, then, remains caught in the naturalist prisonhouse of language, unable to prevent the cycle of entrapment in the next generation.

The mother's lack of an oppositional language and her aborted efforts at rebellion in the face of death anticipate the fate of her daughters; the recontainment of rebellion in the next generation takes a variety of different forms. While in *Maurermeister*, the father is presented as a static tyrant-figure, who in a last act of revenge tries to assault his daughter, the tyrant-father in *Our Daily Bread* eventually emerges as a figure of pathos who is supplanted by his powerful daughters. In *Our Daily Bread*, Grove deliberately characterizes Elliot as "a Lear of the prairies" to suggest that the daughters' continued neglect of an aging and senile father-figure can be seen as an act of passive aggression in which the women take their "revenge" for the emotional abuse they have suffered.

Yet despite these apparent reversals in power, Grove emphasizes that the changes are illusory. While most of Martha Elliot's daughters attempt to resist the notion of a patriarchal marriage, they remain entrapped in the same old snares. The androgynous Henrietta, for example, negotiates a contract so that she will at least keep her financial independence in her marriage, but her language of patriarchal resistance inevitably slips into the discourse of female prostitution, as Pete can only have her "provided [he] can pay the price" (*ODB* 62). Once they are married, their relationship turns into a continual power struggle in which Henrietta eventually asserts herself as a tyrannical "master of the house" and thus as the double of her father. Cathleen speaks the language of "a new ideal of manhood" (*ODB* 45), but only to subject her own discourse to this new master's discourse. Isabel, like her namesake Isabel Archer, adopts a discourse of romantic love, selflessly giving her "virgin love" to redeem her husband-to-be whom everyone else despises,

only to find out that there is no redemption in marriage. Margaret, however, is somewhat different, presenting the most challenging alternative of the Elliot sisters. Refusing to get married, so as not to be subjugated by any man, she speaks in a deliberately patriarchal language. "I'll be my own master while I know my mind" (ODB 110), she tells her brother-in-law when he suggests that a woman's destiny is inevitably marriage and motherhood. Yet her usage of the term "master" subverts the very idea of mastery, since she refuses to be involved in any master-slave relationship. Appropriating a masculine language to resist the patriarchal notion of a woman's destiny as a bearer of children, Margaret manages to walk a very fine line between parodic imitation of and co-optation by the patriarchal language.

In a sense, this is the strategy Susie Ihle attempts to use in her struggle for independence, and yet Susie's language oscillates between Henrietta's master discourse and Margaret's parodic imitation of it. Toward the end of *Maurermeister*, Susie's rebellion against her father becomes more and more open and defiant, but at the same time her own private language of resistance also becomes more "masculine," drawing very strongly on terms that feminist critic Hélène Cixous has identified as belonging to the masculine "economy of the proper": "Sie [Susie] wollte ein eigenes Haus haben: niemanden über sich: ihr eigener Herr sein: wer sie beherrschen wollte, der musste ihr imponieren" (MI 243).²⁷ The language used in this quotation is the discourse of mastering and being mastered, a discourse of ruling and commanding respect, of appropriation and property that lacks the parodic twist that Margaret's language has. Here we might ask with Hélène Cixous:

If the position of mastery culturally comes back to men, what will become of (our) femininity when we find ourselves in this position?

When we use a master discourse?²⁸

27 I am quoting here in the original German because the English translation transforms Susie's obviously masculine discourse in German into feminine terms in English. In the following quotation, I italicize the most problematic words in the translation: "She wanted to have her own *home* ["Haus" evokes a property = house]; nobody over her: to be her own *mistress* [German "Herr" is masculine and is linked to the verb "herrschen" = to rule over]. Whoever wanted to *give her orders* ["beherrschen" not only has the masculine "herr" in it but literally translated means "to rule over"] must *impress* her ["impress" corresponds to the German "beindrucken" which Grove deliberately does not use in the German text; "imponieren" linked to Latin "impono" is a much stronger term and even has a touch of intimidation to it]" (MI 238).

28 Cixous, "Sorties," 136.

As Susie adopts the language of patriarchy without any apparent distance from this language, she is in danger of replicating the patriarchy, of accepting the master-slave power structure of her parental home, and is thus in danger of turning into a Henrietta-like character. She is tempted to marry Consul Blume because his title would give her the powerful status of "Frau Konsul," and the only reason she is loath to make the ultimate decision is that the Consul lacks the one thing that would make him a perfect husband (in her eyes): he lacks masculine aggression, or in other words, he refuses to be (like) her father.

The fact that Susie ultimately decides to marry the Consul suggests the end of resistance and the acceptance of a very unsatisfying reality principle. But if the novel presents a naturalist circle of repetition, it simultaneously signals an open-endedness that makes possible a more optimistic (and a more resisting) reading, one that emphasizes Susie's growth and her continued challenge of female containment within naturalist (and male) boundaries. It is during her very last confrontation with her father that Susie (re)discovers the traces of a new feminine voice of resistance, a language that is rooted in her childhood experience. Just as Julia Kristeva stresses the importance of negativity and disruption in relation to the masculine "symbolic order" as the most effective strategy of feminine resistance, so almost all of Susie's sentences in her last fight with her father are negations, a language that resists and exposes her father's hollow truths by simply negating his assertions. Asked to obey her new stepmother, Susie quietly responds by saying: "That's not my mother" (MI 240), adding, "My Mama's dead." Here, the new voice and strength of verbal resistance are rooted in her mother's memory, and it is this new voice that prompts Ihle's violent and physical attack, his "iron grip around her throat" (MI 241), as if he wants to cut off her new empowered voice.

The daughter's relationship with the father thus has come full circle, in that the father's last act is to turn from the mother's body to the daughter's body as the object on which to inscribe his sexualized power. Indeed, the language describing the father's attack is deliberately rapist: "But at that moment her father's great mass came lunging toward her. He seized her by the hair and flung her to the ground. Susie saw him standing over her, his face bloodshot and swollen" (MI 241). But the fact that his grip around her throat signifies a "release" (MI 242) to Susie suggests that for the first time in her life she has emotionally distanced herself from her father. The daughter leaves the father's house but also breaks with the predictable father-daughter text, in that her separation is not prompted by a powerful father-rival who claims possession of the daughter.

I do not, however, mean to read the ending in terms of a positive resolution and even less in terms of an ultimate female liberation. Susie's need to *attach* herself to a man is highly problematic, especially since she has barely *detached* herself from her parental home. But Susie has gained a new perspective on her father, and there is hope that she has come to see the Consul's lack of aggression in a different light, after she stops looking at him through her father's censoring eyes. As a rebelling daughter-figure, she does not break out of but remains on the very borders of the naturalist genre, hovering somewhere between rebellion and assimilation.

Though in his early and in his late novels, the mothers' resistance is not very effective, Grove gives this motif a much more radical twist in *Setters of the Marsh*. This novel presents the most explicit descriptions of sexualized violence, just as it presents the most challenging alternative in its exploration of female rebellion. Here the mother's legacy turns into a true discourse of power in her daughter's life. Although deeply victimized and doomed to die, Mrs. Amundsen sheds the romantic complicity of Bertha Ihle and the confusion and despair of Martha Elliot to communicate her legacy in a powerfully feminist text, when she tells her only child, "Make your own life, Ellen, and let nobody make it for you" (S 112). At the same time, the task of effecting change – and of breaking out of the naturalist convention of the female's victimization through her sexuality – is placed, once again, on the daughter's shoulders. Ellen, to be sure, embraces this legacy with enthusiasm and conviction, just as she embraces her farm work, consciously refusing the role of farmwife-cum-child-bearer. Androgynous, like Fanny Essler, she exchanges her woman's clothing for male overalls, thus changing roles and displaying a flexibility that is in stark contrast to the rigidity of both her father and her future husband.

Like her mother, Ellen articulates her rebellion against her father's sexualized violence in the form of a sexual confession. She, significantly, confesses to Niels Lindstedt, the novel's protagonist, who is in love with her. Unlike Fanny Essler's confessions, though, Ellen's language has a shocking, disruptive, even traumatic effect on the male listener. Contextualized by Niels's courtship, Ellen's confession assumes a power that Fanny's never had: it turns into what Foucault has termed "an insurrection of subjugated knowledges." She articulates what she has kept silent for years, deliberately destroying the fantasy image of her father. Her story confronts Niels with the reality of her father's sexual assaults, her mother's abortions and eventual death. In a language of authenticity and truth, saturated with naturalist images of torture, pain, and slow bodily disintegration, she disrupts Niels's romanticized ideal of mar-

riage and his fantasy of a home with children. While his romance is best encapsulated in the enormous white house he built for Ellen, she brings his male fantasy down to earth by exposing to him the ugly reality of her mother's marriage and sexuality.

One way of reading the novel is to see Ellen in exclusively sexualized terms, to identify her "sexual repression" as part of a naturalist causal chain that leads to Niels's downfall. And yet such a reading glosses over the novel's feminist subtext. After all, it is Ellen who opens the dialogue, while Niels feels threatened by the implied changes she asks for. He has no words, but runs away in panic, retreating into a discourse of determinism that leads to his marriage (and eventual murder) of Clara Vogel. Those readers who emphasize Ellen's "frigidity" as the causal root of Niels's problem become complicitous with Niels's (and naturalism's) misogynist conception of "normal" sexuality. Such an approach also glosses over the fact that Ellen is pioneering while Niels is backward-bound. The passionate tone of her speech, her plea for friendship, and her desire for change suggest that it is not so much sexual intimacy that she rejects when she declines Niels' marriage proposal, but the patriarchal notion of sexualized power that ruled her mother's life on the family farm. In other words, Ellen's sexual confession is an act of feminist rebellion that does not create Niels's tragic enchainment in a naturalist plot, as the novel's overt text suggests, but that tries to pre-empt it.

Indeed, Ellen's feminist voice of resistance – "No man, whether I liked him or loathed him, was ever to have power over me!" (S 112) – goes to the core of Niels's (and naturalism's) sexual misogyny. It is no coincidence that she should "confess" to Niels, since her confession is intended to disrupt the binary divisions of Niels's patriarchal thinking (best encapsulated in his entanglement in the "madonna-whore complex" that determines his relationship with women). In order to achieve change, she must disillusion Niels, since he is, after all, a prototypical representative of patriarchy: he is the "strong man," he is what Reelen is for Fanny Essler, he is the father-ersatz for the daughter-lover, he is, in other words, Amundsen's younger double. Although his sexual repression is opposed to Amundsen's continued rape of his wife, Niels, like Amundsen, conceives of sexuality as an abstract principle, a "natural" right and duty, not as pleasure. Also, Niels is a powerful "empire-builder," like Ellen's father, and shares Amundsen's rigidity and determination in expanding his farm.

Even more importantly, though, Niels doubles Amundsen when he kills his wife in an act of sexualized violence. The novel dwells on Niels's anger, his rage, his "desire to kill, to crush," feelings that precede his murder. This rage is, significantly, prompted by his realization that his

wife, Clara Vogel, "did not acknowledge his right to demand: he had no authority over her" (S 159). The narrative voice (and the novel's emphasis on Niels's perspective) are deeply complicitous with Niels's sexualized violence, as in the following passage that precedes the murder of Clara: "If at that moment Niels had struck; if he had gone straight to her and torn her finery off her body, sternly, ruthlessly, and ordered her to do menial service on the farm, he would have conquered ..." (S 152). The narrative voice presents sexualized violence as a possible solution to Niels's marital problems by invoking the misogynistic cliché that what a woman really wants is to be conquered by a man in an act in which passion merges with aggression.

The novel's plot partly endorses the same misogynistic ideology: Niels can exorcize his problem only by killing Clara, by completing the naturalist plot. In narratological terms, Niels's action is predetermined according to the logic of naturalism's sexual plot. The destruction of the sexualized, prostituted female is a textual inevitability that entails narrative sympathy for the victimizer. It should come as no surprise, then, that Niels's murder of his wife has often been read as an unpremeditated act that belongs to a naturalistic world beyond the character's realm of free will and moral consciousness. When shooting his wife in an act of jealousy, Niels is represented as a character who acts under a compulsion beyond his control: "Irresistibly a clockwork began to move. There was not a spark of consciousness in Niels. He acted entirely under the compulsion of the spring" (S 186). He is tied to a woman who is sexually active and whom he has identified as the town prostitute; the murderous act is the logical consequence of the entrapment Niels feels in his marriage. Narrative manipulations, then, prepare the reader to accept Niels's eventual redemption.

And yet, in its treatment of sexualized power, *Settlers of the Marsh* also unravels its ideological contradictions: the novel does not unequivocally affirm this misogynistic vision but deconstructs it through the women's feminist voices. More specifically, Clara Vogel assumes the voice of a new woman, which is deeply unsettling not only for Niels but also for the narrative's ideological cohesion. Like Fanny Essler and Ellen Amundsen, Clara falls in love with the sexualized fantasy image of Niels as "the strong man" but quickly discovers that she has married a puritanical misogynist. She is quick in communicating her disillusioning analysis: "it is that ridiculous man-nature in you," she tells him "You married me. You don't want me any longer. But I am not to belong to any one else. I am to be your property, your slave-property" (S 153). Insisting on her sexuality and her independence, Clara, like Ellen, challenges the predictable gender pattern, thus threatening Niels's order of things. In its

exploration of sexualized violence in the domestic household, then, the novel inevitably deconstructs itself by juxtaposing Clara Vogel's and Ellen's demands for different female and sexual rights with a male narrative voice that partly condones sexualized violence against women.

Like *Maurermeister*, *Settlers* ends with an overt sense of closure that suggests a deliberate break with pessimistic naturalism and a movement into new generic and ideological transformations. After Niels's "conversion" and release from prison, he is finally reconciled with Ellen. In her feminist reading of the ending, Gaile McGregor has argued that, on a covert level, the ending presents a gender reversal of the Harlequin romance structure, which she identifies as typically Canadian: "Dominant female/submissive male: this would seem to be the only kind of marriage that 'works' in the Canadian context." By the end, so McGregor argues, Niels surrenders to Ellen "his male prerogative of initiation and structuring action."²⁹ Indeed, it is Ellen who speaks and Niels who listens; it is Ellen who wants "to see wide, open, level spaces" (S 215) and thus looks into the future, while he appears to follow her lead.

But in many ways, the novel also undermines this comic solution, turning into what Blodgett has termed "frustrated comedy," or what Baguley has described as the naturalist ending's propensity for "instigating a new (dis)order." While Niels no longer insists on his prerogatives (in fact, he lacks speech, "not [trusting] himself to speak" [S 215]), the ending also exposes how much his silences co-opt with patriarchal conventions. The only sin Niels acknowledges and repents by the end is his sexual weakness: "As for the thing that has sent me here [to the prison]. I don't blame myself" (S 201). His refusal to repent his murder of Clara creates a problematic gap that suggests that he has not really moved beyond his own (or Amundsen's) misogyny.

Equally problematic is the fact that by the end, Clara's voice of resistance has been effectively silenced, while Ellen has turned away from her mother's legacy. The invocation of comically resolved gender harmony – "No need for words" (S 216) – is deeply troubling in light of the fact that throughout the novel powerful speech has been the women's prerogative. Recognizing that her "destiny" is to have children, Ellen turns away from her mother's voice of protest to embrace her "woman's" destiny as a child bearer for the man who is the double of her patriarchal father. Also, the process of forgiveness that makes possible Niels's re-

29 Gail McGregor, *The Wacousta Syndrome: Explorations in the Canadian Landscape* (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1985) 149, 148.

joining of the human community is initiated in the novel by men. Niels is first absolved of his sexualized violence by the prison warden, whose conception of justice relies on the same patriarchal god that Amundsen invoked when raping his wife. Thus, Ellen and Clara's feminist texts in *Settlers of the Marsh* are undercut by the ending's naturalist circularity. The male – patriarchal – reality principle triumphs, with the feminist voices of rebellion safely recontained within the genre's boundaries.

Finally, matters become even more complex when we consider the (auto)biographical subtexts of *Maurermeister Ihles Haus* and *Settlers of the Marsh*. While the German novel traces the childhood of Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven, the Canadian novel fictionalizes Grove's separation from her, so that Niels becomes a double of the author, who exorcizes the memory of his own wife Elsa by metaphorically "killing" her in his naturalist novel in the figure of Clara Vogel. The naturalist author thus becomes a problematic double of his murderer-protagonist. Similarly, Clara's feminist words are very Elsa-like, as a comparison with Elsa's autobiography reveals. Like Clara, who exposes Niels's misogyny, Elsa criticized her lover FPG as "too limited masculine" and "too strictly conventional," as when she describes, in her memoirs, his lack of humour and his compulsive working habits as well as his "sinister will power," all of which combine to create a "jailer attitude" for Elsa (A 94–110). Like Niels, whose "sexual instincts were dead" (S 165) when confronted with Clara's sex drive, Felix told Elsa in Kentucky, "I don't need any woman" (A 72), keeping her sexually at a distance. Lastly, Elsa describes in her autobiography the confrontation between her and FPG on a small farm in Kentucky: "it is hard to believe that a glorious castle, built as for life can topple and vanish in disgrace – as it did – shattering into its last shame-bespattered distorted pieces in America! He had to make the experience that true quality in a woman cannot be bullied or bluffed. ... He was as incapable to grant a woman her right to personality as was my father" (A 109). Thus the author, FPG, has once again come full circle. From a critic of patriarchal father-figures in his early fiction, Grove increasingly identifies with them; from a defender of the woman's cause, he turns into an authorial silencer of the feminist voice; from a parodic transformer of the naturalist genre, he turns back to it as a haven of traditional male conventions.

"My sympathies were always with the women. Yet I was no sentimentalist; in my books I gave the facts and let them speak for themselves," Grove writes in his (fictionalized) autobiography (ISM 224). And so he does, with the effect that the women's voices erupt to contradict the male voices, including the narrative voice. At the same time, however, *Maurermeister*, *Settlers*, and *Our Daily Bread* also illustrate how much

Grove's "facts" encode a male bias. Grove presents us with women who are discursively subversive and playful and who continually undermine and disrupt male self-seriousness, but his naturalism also limits these women's subversive powers. The mother-figures, Martha Elliot, Mrs. Amundsen, and Bertha Ihle, are doomed to die once they break out of discursive normalcy, while the daughters' voices of resistance are safely recontained within male systems of order. Susie Ihle's story ends abruptly once she has found a very precarious voice with which to confront her father, so that the seeds of her discursive resistance are never allowed to grow in the novel. Ellen Amundsen's voice finally co-opts with the patriarchal voice as she embraces the woman's patriarchal destiny – to be a bearer of Niels's children. Margaret Elliot, the most independent woman in *Our Daily Bread*, really lives on the border of the novel; her independence is relegated into the gaps of Grove's text, suggesting that (without Elsa's continued help and stimulus) Grove was either not willing or not capable of writing a woman's parodic mimicking of the patriarchal language. The exploration of women's discursive resistance in *Maurermeister* and *Our Daily Bread* affirms Grove's deep interest in, and sympathy with, the plight of female characters in the patriarchal household, but the novels also point to his limitations as a male author trying to write the female voice of resistance. Thus, despite the feminist subtexts, these novels force us to recognize the author's own ambivalent nostalgia for patriarchal – and narrative – power structures.

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